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**Life is a Thriller**  
Investigating African Crime Fiction

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Edited by

Anja Oed  
Christine Matzke



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To the memory of Ben R. Mtobwa (1958 – 2008),  
with respect and affection

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## PARODY IN ANGOLAN CRIME FICTION: PEPETELA'S JAIME BUNDA

Doris Wieser

Arthur Carlos Maurício Pestana dos Santos, better known by his alias Pepetela (a translation of 'pestana' [eyelashes] into Umbundu) is one of Angola's most prominent writers. The author of seventeen novels, two plays and a book of tales won the most important prize of lusophone literature, the Prêmio Camões, in 1997. With his novels *Jaime Bunda*, *Agente Secreto* (2001), published in English as *Jaime Bunda*, *Secret Agent* (2006), and *Jaime Bunda e a Morte do Americano* [Jaime Bunda and the death of the American]<sup>1</sup> (2003), he broke new ground in his fiction because, for the first time, he chose the crime novel as a genre. He has since returned to writing novels without a specific genre but has affirmed that he intends to continue the Jaime Bunda series sometime in the future (Wieser 2010: 18 and 33).<sup>2</sup>

In the Jaime Bunda novels Pepetela makes use of, or appropriates, an originally western literary model and confronts it with Angolan society. He uses the genre of the crime novel as an architextual system of reference (Genette 1979) in order to achieve a humorous narration of social detection and double critique. This technique can only have an effect on readers if they know the model. Today crime fiction is a global phenomenon in literature as well as in the audiovisual media. The classic works of the genre (like the novels of Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler) have been translated in multitudinous languages and are part of our globalised imagination. On the other hand, a lot of crime novels have been adapted to the cinema (like Ian Fleming's James Bond novels), and private TV channels are dominated all over the world by American police procedurals and legal dramas like *CSI*, *Navy CIS*, *The Closer*, *Criminal Minds*, *Law and Order*, *Criminal Intent* or *Boston Legal*. Thus readers and viewers have certain expectations of crime fiction, and cunning authors like Pepetela play on these expectations accordingly. Even if the rise of crime fiction on TV is recent in Angola, Pepetela acknowledges that he himself is an avid consumer of these shows:

Em Angola é fenómeno recente, mas crescente. Eu, por exemplo, que tenho televisão por cabo, sou um grande consumidor dessas séries, como sou de romances policiais. (Wieser 2010: 34)

[In Angola, this is a recent but growing phenomenon. I, for example, have cable TV and I'm a big consumer of these series, as well as of crime novels].

By means of a parody, Pepetela makes use of the globally understood patterns of the crime genre in order to dissect Angolan society, as the author himself has declared on a number of occasions (Tomás 2001, Loimeier 2005). In the following

1 All translations from the Portuguese are mine, unless indicated otherwise.

2 Besides the Jaime Bunda novels Pepetela wrote another short crime novel, *O Terrorista de Berkeley, Califórnia* [The terrorist from Berkeley, California] (2007), which he claims not to be very proud of (Wieser 2010: 32).

examination of the Jaime Bunda novels I will point out how he inverts these patterns and transforms his novels into so-called 'false crime novels'.<sup>3</sup>

### An Angolan James Bond

Pepetela's novels take place in the very beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Angola is a democracy by then but still suffers from the consequences of many decades of war. The war of independence from 1961 to 1975 was followed by a civil war between the MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola) and UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola) which lasted until 2002.<sup>4</sup> During the constitutional reform in 1990–1991 the MPLA government abandoned its adherence to Marxism. Economic dependence on the USA then seemed to be unavoidable because of its strong interest in Angola's petrol resources. According to Pepetela, Angola thus passed from colonial dependency upon Portugal to a postcolonial economic dependency on the US, which is not very different to colonialism (of course, often termed neo-colonialism) (Wieser 2010: 25).

In the first novel, *Jaime Bunda, Agente Secreto*, Jaime Bunda must solve the murder of a fourteen-year-old girl.<sup>5</sup> It is his first case. Jaime is an opportunistic secret service police apprentice and an admirer of American crime fiction. The fact that the fictional Angolan secret service agency SIG (Serviços de Investigação Geral) assigns the inquiry to a beginner suggests that the solution of the case is not exactly considered a priority. The objective is to pacify public opinion with a conspicuous but in fact shallow, 'façade' investigation. But in fact, Jaime Bunda progresses from investigating an almost completely unfounded false suspicion into a big case. The fact that the main suspect turns out to be a bigwig in an ominous secret police institution (the so-called 'bunker') does not make things easier. In the end, Jaime unmasks a money laundering gang that the suspect met by pure chance. What in the end resembles a triumph for Jaime, is for the reader no more than an ironic – seemingly illogical – succession of coincidences, which Bartlett (n.d.) rightly calls

3 Pepetela (Wieser 2010: 19) calls his novels *falsos policíacos* or *anti-policíacos*. Latin American authors like Paco Ignacio Taibo II (Mexico) and Leonardo Padura (Cuba) use the term *falso policial* in a similar way in Spanish. As far as Taibo's novels are concerned, reviewers and the author himself usually use the term *nueva novela policíaca* or *género neopolicíaco* (Leinen 2002, Castillo Granada 1999). Padura has described what he refers to as *falso policial* in an interview (Wieser 2010: 150). Similarities and differences still need to be investigated properly.

4 In the civil war the two opposing sides were supported from overseas, the MPLA by the Soviet Union using as a proxy troops from Cuba and UNITA by South Africa and other western countries. These circumstances intensified the ideological purposes of the civil war. In 1991 however the MPLA officially abandoned socialism. But only in 2002, when the UNITA leader Savimbi died, the civil war came to an end. Today the MPLA is the leading party and provides the president.

5 An earlier version of the following interpretation was published previously in German (Wieser 2006). The English version has been substantially revised.

in his review "the efficiency of his incompetence". The case of the murder of a fourteen-year-old girl is solved ultimately by Jaime's colleagues in the Department of the Interior.

In his second, rather more serious novel, *Jaime Bunda e a Morte do Americano* Jaime is directly confronted with an affair involving the economically and militarily all-pervasive USA. The SIG sends him on a new case to the city of Benguela (Pepetela's birth place, incidentally), where a housekeeper has found an American engineer shot dead. The sensitive relationship of Angola with the 'big brother' USA gives the case a particular explosiveness. Bunda succeeds in arresting two suspects, the pickpocket of the trains, Júlio Fininho, and his lover, the prostitute Maria Antónia. The United States put great pressure on Angola as the suspects are thought to have been carrying out terrorist activities, and demands a rapid and comprehensive explanation. As a consequence, the local police tortures the suspects and declares Júlio guilty of murder. However, the reader knows and Jaime Bunda assumes that the suspects are actually innocent, but their forced confessions have calmed things down and Bunda can return to Luanda. In a second, alternative epilogue Jaime finally provides the true perpetrator, an American friend of the victim, and the solution of the case. The de facto innocent Júlio, however, dies in prison as a result of the torture.

According to a final note by the author, the plot of the story is based on a true incident in the 1950s. The essential difference in the murder case of the novel lies certainly in the fact that at that time the dead individual was a Portuguese (representing colonialism) and not an American (representing neo-colonialism). This is treated by Pepetela not only in an indirect way, retelling the incident under different signs, but also by making a character in the novel directly relate this 'true' incident. A poet in the novel, called "o mais-velho Raul" [elder Raul], provocatively draws a parallel between the former colonial power Portugal and the neo-colonialist power of the USA on the basis of the similar set-up of the felonies (Pepetela 2003b: 110).

Already in the titles of the two novels it becomes apparent that on the one hand they stand in the tradition of crime fiction, but on the other hand they seek to parody and deconstruct it, and in this way they become 'false crime fiction'. The name of Pepetela's detective deliberately recalls James Bond. The secret agent of Her Royal British Majesty with all his perspicacity, technical equipment and sex-appeal is being parodied and ironically distorted by his Angolan counterpart. The name Bunda derives from a physical attribute of Pepetela's protagonist. In Portuguese 'bunda' means 'backside' and indeed Jaime Bunda is a young man with a really prominent bottom.<sup>6</sup> He distinguishes himself not only because of his superlative inertia, but also through his outstanding clumsiness:

Toda a gente sabia que o estagiário Jaime Bunda não corria, era contra os seus princípios de vida. (Pepetela 2003a: 14)

[Everyone knew that apprentice Jaime Bunda did not run, it was against his principles. (Pepetela 2006: 12)]

6 The character is inspired by a basketball player whom Pepetela witnessed playing after Angola's independence (Wieser 2010: 20).

Thanks to this peculiarity he managed to flatten out a chair with his large posterior during two idle years in the secret service headquarters. Yet Jaime Bunda's real surnames originate from two eminent creole families, MPLA politicians. Stephen Henighan (2006) derives that from the fact that Jaime Bunda was born in the same neighbourhood as the Angolan president José Eduardo dos Santos and the cabinet minister Pedro Van Dunem, the Bairro Sambizanga, and that he has two distinguished surnames: "O seu verdadeiro [nome] era cumprido, unindo dois apelidos de famílias ilustres nos meios luandenes" (Pepetela 2003a: 13) ["His real name was long – two surnames of illustrious families in Luanda circles" (Pepetela 2006: 11)]. He consequently represents the one-time revolutionary elite who Pepetela wished to become the bearer of national culture, the *Angolanidade*, but who abandoned the revolutionary nationalist ideology (Henighan 2006).

When Bunda is finally entitled to take action, he tries to emulate his role model by all possible means because "Bond era um dos seus heróis" (Pepetela 2003a: 34) ["Bond was one of his heroes" (Pepetela 2006: 32)]. However, he is neither provided with the physical and intellectual capabilities, nor the technical gadgets:

O James Bond resolvia logo o assunto com um aparelho qualquer, mas ele era um James Bond subdesenvolvido. (Pepetela 2003a: 120)

[James Bond would have quickly solved the problem with some gadget or other, but he was an underdeveloped James Bond. (Pepetela 2006: 113)]

The anti-hero Jaime Bunda is the distorted picture as a negative of the British model. Here it stands for a surrogate of the Anglo-Saxon and consequently the American tradition<sup>7</sup> of crime fiction, and American popular culture on the whole. The multifaceted references in Pepetela's novels to crime fiction (as a genre) stretch from James Bond to the mentioning of other – mainly American – crime writers. Bunda explains that the motivation for his work with the secret service is based on his reading experience:

Foram certamente esses livros que o levaram a aceitar a proposta do primo ... que lhe levou para os SIG. (Pepetela 2003a: 27)

[It was certainly these books which had led Jaime to accept the proposition from his cousin ... who got him into the SIG. (Pepetela 2006: 24)]

This means that his vocation to become a detective is derived from his experience with fiction, not reality. This foreign fiction, which he deeply admires, has had an impact on his perception of the world. It is a world in which good and evil can be distinguished. However, the 'good' has the 'licence to kill' its opponent. It can use violence to defend democracy and western interests. The belief in a positive outcome of the investigation and consequently the belief that a crime can normally be solved and the truth is discernible are also part of this pattern.<sup>8</sup> Readers all over the

7 Bunda's role models are exclusively authors who wrote in English.

8 The rationalistic and ideological basis, which those writers quoted by Bunda have, cannot always as easily be summarised as the one in Ian Fleming's *James Bond*. My apologies for being imprecise, but this is not the place for detailed analysis. More on the ideology in the James Bond-novels can be found in Eco (1998), for example.

world very probably have almost the same idea of crime fiction as it continues to be transmitted by the above-mentioned TV series as well as James Bond movies. Jaime summarises these stereotypes as follows:

Nunca há crime perfeito, a justiça sempre triunfa, o Mal será vencido, tinha aprendido estas verdades absolutas nesses livros. Pois bem, ia mostrar que os seus ídolos Spillane [sic], Chandler ou Stanley Gardner estavam cheios de razão e não há crimes perfeitos, há é investigadores imperfeitos. (Pepetela 2003a: 27)

[There is no such thing as a perfect crime, justice always triumphs, evil will be conquered, he had learnt these absolute truths in those books. Well then, he was going to prove that his idols Spillane, Chandler or Stanley Gardner [sic] were absolutely right and that there are no perfect crimes, there are imperfect investigators. (Pepetela 2006: 24)]

Jaime Bunda often quotes his literary role models (Wallace, Spillane, Dickson Carr, Chester Himes, for instance) (Wieser 2006). He quotes eclectically and opportunistically what suits him to defend his position. He surprises Kinanga, his colleague, with his insolent arrogance and makes him wonder if there is a genius hidden in the apprentice investigator:

Por vezes dá a idéia de ser ingénuo, logo a seguir tem uma frase assassina. (Pepetela 2003a: 47)

[At times he gives the impression of being simple-minded, then follows up with a killer phrase. (Pepetela 2006: 45)]

Kinanga, who is an avid reader of crime fiction himself, has a plentiful supply of common sense. He criticises the lack of realism in the Perry Mason novels by Erle Stanley Gardner and refers to Simenon as a positive counterexample, as Simenon is considered as being a realistic author of detective stories:

Concordaram os dois que os livros que Perry Mason protagonizava eram especiais, Bunda não vendo defeitos mas Kinanga defendendo que eram no entanto pouco realistas, pois nem sempre em casos reais o assassino está no tribunal prontinho para ser desmascarado como Mason sempre fazia, o que para o outro era um detalhe insignificante, o que interessa é a fábula nele contida. Kinanga cometeu o erro de falar em Simenon como um dos seus preferidos, o quê?, um europeu, os europeus nunca souberam escrever policiais. (Pepetela 2003a: 46)

[Would the two agree that the books in which Perry Mason was protagonist were special, Bunda not seeing any faults but Kinanga arguing that they weren't that realistic, because in real cases the murderer did not always appear in court to be exposed as quickly as Mason always did, which for the other was an insignificant detail, what was important was the message contained in it. Kinanga committed the mistake of mentioning Simenon as one of his favourites – who? – a European, the Europeans never knew how to write detective novels. (Pepetela 2006: 44)]

Jaime responds to Kinanga's criticism in an arrogant and extremely unobjective manner. According to Jaime the lack of realism in the Perry Mason novels is nit-picking. Simenon is incapable of writing good crime novels, for he is European. The only European writer who is respected by Jaime is Conan Doyle for he writes in English, in the "língua de gringo" (Pepetela 2003a: 46) ["the gringo's language" (Pepetela 2006: 44)].

In the second novel Jaime's twisted interpretation of crime fiction reaches another climax with a deliberate misinterpretation of the development of Rex Stout's famous character Nero Wolfe. The sense of the hypertext is changed and the hero Nero Wolfe seemingly unmasked. What originally worked as an indicator of the acumen and instinct of the detective – i.e. the complete absence of physical action during the investigation – suits Jaime Bunda's own inactivity and thus seems to legitimise his laziness:

Nero Wolf [sic] nunca sai de casa e resolve todos os enigmas, sempre a cultivar orquídeas. Tem um assistente que é o caxico de serviço, faz todas as investigações e leva os dados para o patrão ... O caso termina quando o extraordinário Nero Wolf [sic] reúne os suspeitos em sua casa e desmascara o assassino ali mesmo. Um primor de dedução lógica. Stout é um dos meus favoritos, aprendo muito com ele. (Pepetela 2003b: 57)

[Nero Wolfe never leaves his house and solves every crime cultivating orchids all the time. He has an assistant who is the deferent servant, he does all the investigating work and takes the information to his patron ... The case ends when the extraordinary Nero Wolfe assembles the suspects in his house and unmasks the murderer right there. A masterpiece of logic deduction. Stout is one of my favourites, I learn a lot from him.]

When inspector Kinanga explains how he finally caught the killer of the girl at the end of the first novel it becomes clear that what Bunda has learnt from Anglo-Saxon crime fiction contributed little to his solving the crime. Old Dona Filó has identified the car of the perpetrator by putting her hands, which have mystic powers, on the passenger seat and sensing the presence of the victim. On the other hand, Jaime's pseudo-rational investigation methods lead via detours to an outcome, however, not of the originally investigated case. The crime, which was believed to be insolvable, is easily solved in an unorthodox manner, from a western point of view. Dona Filó's testimony cannot be used in court because the judicial system in the former colony is still orientated towards European norms:

O testemunho de Dona Filó nunca pode ser considerado. Como sabe, a nossa justiça rege-se pelos princípios europeus, racionalistas e cegos. (Pepetela 2003a: 305)

[The testimony of Dona Philo would never be considered. As you know, our justice system is governed by European principles, rational and blind. (Pepetela 2006: 287)]

This shows that the *self* and the *other* do not go together and that globally accepted patterns have to be transformed according to the local reality. The *other* element in the system of justice makes the punishment of the perpetrator impossible. Once again western methods become subject to irony. At the same time Angolan society is being criticised and urged to develop its own specific and appropriate approaches.<sup>9</sup>

9 Magic plays a special role in the second volume, too. The former girlfriend of the suspect, Júlio Fininho, cannot cope with the split-up from her lover. By using magic she wants to 'chain' them together forever. A misunderstanding causes the witch to cast a spell that keeps him 'in chains' (i.e. takes him to prison) for life. From that perspective the imprisonment of Júlio is no longer attributed to Jaime's criminological skills and American methods but to magic, which diminishes the achievement of pseudo James Bond.

In the second novel Pepetela pokes fun at American devices. At public receptions in the Benguela governor's palace unpleasant odours, i.e. farts, are regularly smelt. In order to find out where these smells come from, the secret service has imported special smell sensors from the USA. The sensors are attached to the guests' chairs and a red light signals the occurrence of methane in the vicinity. By means of extensive effort and the use of this gadget the case is solved; the farts are the governor's. No such devices are used in Angola to solve serious crimes, of course, nor are they used in the USA, even though the episode with the farts comically represents them as superfluous toys from America.

In this way the Anglo-Saxon crime novel is ridiculed *ad absurdum*. Fun is poked at forensic methods which are thought to be culturally inadequate. Thus the entire James Bond ideology is undercut. Jaime Bunda's mind is ideologically colonised, despite the fact that the country is not physically, i.e. militarily, colonised or occupied. The grand narrative of Marxism, to which the MPLA once adhered, is replaced by another grand narrative, that of American popular culture (Henighan 2006). Bunda colonises himself voluntarily by a behaviour which Homi Bhabha calls mimicry. The desire for the *other* causes Jaime Bunda to imitate his role model in a camouflage-like manner, but without achieving the same identity. Mimicry as a partial presence of the *other*, its metonymic repetition and doubling leads also to the disparagement of the authority of the role model because it is being abused and becomes a merely observed, parodied object.

Because of the 'bad copy' Jaime Bunda constitutes, the reader becomes not only aware of the deficits of the original, but also of the wrongdoing of the imitator who has mentally not yet been decolonised. Bhabha's (1995: 86) often-quoted dictum "almost the same but not quite" is obviously being distorted in Pepetela's writings by putting the differences between Jaime Bunda and James Bond in stark contrast. Thus the mimicry only functions in Jaime's mind. Moreover 'almost the same but not quite' is being perverted to 'almost the opposite but not quite'. It is mimicry which has gone badly wrong. As Pepetela states with regard to the 'imported' foreign role models of society or ideologies:

Nós já copiamos muitas coisas, mas as cópias nunca são tão boas como o original. Muitas vezes o original também não achei tão bom, e a cópia é ainda pior. (Wieser 2010: 26f)

[We have already copied a lot of things, but the copies are never as good as the original. A lot of times even the original wasn't so good, I think. And the copy is even worse.]

### From anti-hero to pseudo-hero

As I have argued, in the first novel Jaime Bunda is portrayed as an anti-hero. He is obese and behaves like an arrogant know-it-all and sycophant towards his superiors. He is condescending towards his subordinates. He shows clearly how hierarchies are formed, and how violence and nepotism can take over. In the first novel Jaime Bunda does not hesitate to use torture and he acts out his James Bond role all too literally when he shows a complete lack of scruples. For him violence is a legitimate means to discover the so-called truth (his James Bond ethos), although

he's often too dull to apply it himself. He prefers to copy Nero Wolfe's example and let the others do this physically tiring, dirty work for him:

Bunda não era propriamente contra a violência ... Mas era contra o seu esforço físico. (Pepetela 2003a: 255)

[Bunda was not actually against violence ... But it was beyond his physical capabilities. (Pepetela 2006: 241; literally: "... But he was against using his own physical effort").]

His admiration for the USA, which initially is mainly based on his love of US crime novels and films, takes on a political dimension in the second novel. Here he naïvely defends things which crime fiction seems to justify and which the USA have carried out in the not-so-distant past:

Então não eram os americanos os melhores amigos do mundo, sempre prontos a defender a democracia, mesmo que às custas de uns quantos bombardeamentos selectivos? (Pepetela 2003b: 155)

[Weren't the Americans the best friends of the world, always ready to defend a democracy, even if it cost a few selective bombing attacks?]

Due to the MPLA's socialist past, however, the USA's relationship with Angola has been marred by mistrust. The special emissary, Shirley, who Jaime supposes to be an FBI agent, refers to this fact quite strongly on a number of occasions:

E nós ainda não esqueçamos que vocês eram todos comunistas aqui. ... Todos uns comunistas reciclados em democratas. (Pepetela 2003b: 212)

[And we still have not forgotten that all of you were communists over here. ... All communists recycled into democrats.]

Jaime clearly recognises that his country could become a target of the so-called 'selective bombing attacks' which are mentioned above. The USA suspects that the murder of the American engineer in the second novel could be of a terrorist nature. In the course of the novel this suspicion is shown to be groundless and ridiculous, yet the USA increasingly puts the Angolan police on the spot to the point where they begin to abuse the prisoners in order to get quick results. For the first time, Jaime expresses doubts regarding his idol, the USA, which is personified by the FBI agent: "começava a ficar irritado pela insistência da gringa" (Pepetela 2003b: 190) [he started to get irritated by the insistence of the gringa]; and he begins to feel superior to it.

During the torture scenes the FBI agent looks away on purpose and speaks hypocritically of human rights and the ethos of non-interference, which was promoted by American TV series but which was never practised in reality.<sup>10</sup>

Se acharem que é útil continuar com a sessão, por favor - disse a americana. - Eu é que não devo saber de nada ... Estamos proibidos de tratar mal prisioneiros ... Bem, o que eu quero são resultados ... Protestar contra os vossos métodos é interferência e nós respeitamos a vossa independência. (Pepetela 2003b: 217)

<sup>10</sup> Another example of this is the 'main directive' of the crew on the *Starship Enterprise* in the *Star Trek* series. US politics does not follow this directive either.

[If you consider it useful to continue with the session [= torture], so please - said the American. - But I mustn't know about anything ... We are prohibited from using violence against our prisoners with violence ... Well, what I want are results ... To protest against your methods would be interference and we respect your independence.]

Jaime, however, believes that the prisoners are innocent and distances himself more and more from his American idols. His pride in his country, Angola, and the voice of his own ego increasingly take over from his obedience to the USA. However, his change of heart is only temporary and incomplete. The anti-hero only changes his character as much as he has to in order to appear in a more positive light than the representatives of the USA. Only by doing this can the criticism of the USA in the novel be effective. Yet, Jaime never produces a solid set of arguments, or an Angolan model of his own that Pepetela so badly wants: "Já é altura de tentarmos resolver os nossos problemas nós próprios, com a nossa cabeça" [It's time that we try to solve our problems ourselves, using our brains] (Wieser 2010: 26). In this case it would be more appropriate to speak of a pseudo-hero who only assumes the honourable characteristics of the hero for a short time and only in a specific situation, but who feels no particular concern for the prisoners. A serious change of heart on the part of the main character in the novel would not really be convincing. At the end Bunda denies all responsibility for the tortures in a most unheroic way: "E ele não se sentia responsável pelas asneiras do Trindade e sequazes" [He didn't feel responsible for the foolish actions of Trindade and his men] (Pepetela 2003b: 221).

In the first epilogue the true identity of the murderer is not revealed. Even if the ending is not satisfactory from a moral point of view, it is still the most likely one, given the inner logic of the fictional world of the novel. However, Pepetela creates an alternative ending. In it, Bunda finds a former friend of the victim guilty of the crime. The latter was motivated by jealousy. Thus we have two happy endings: the mystery is solved and the guilty party is punished, as you would expect of a crime novel that follows the popular structure of this genre. The second ending is entitled "segundo epílogo possível" [second possible epilogue], yet it seems less plausible in the context of the novel. Because the writer offers two alternative endings the outcome of the novel is somewhat unclear. The first ending describes a solution that is favoured by the 'Empire', the second ending is not at all what the USA would wish to happen. The USA has to admit that one of its citizens committed the murder, which would remove all suspicion of possible Angolan terrorist activities. At the end, the powerful Americans are shown to be failures by Jaime Bunda's macho attitude: the dead man was impotent (in contrast to the 'potency' of the USA) and the FBI agent was a lesbian. Her lack of sexual interest in Jaime did not result from his big backside but from a flaw in her own character. At the end, Jaime triumphantly states "pouco se ter instruído com os éfebistas" [to have learnt very little from the FBI agents] (Pepetela 2003b: 258). His conclusion shows neither him nor the USA in a good light.

At this point both the Angolans and the Americans are criticised: the Angolans for their inability to construct a proper national identity and the Americans for their interference. Pepetela openly and clearly criticises the USA as a neo-imperialist power that secretly instigates many human rights atrocities in the Third World. He also blames the USA for making sure that Angola remains a colony and for



preventing any independent development there. It does not need to be elaborated that the role of the USA in his work is shaped by 9/11 and the subsequent global war on terrorism. In the same breath Pepetela criticises his fellow countrypeople for their opportunism and inability to think for themselves.

### Pepetela's false crime novels

As I have demonstrated above, crime fiction forms an architectural system of reference in the Jaime Bunda novels. Pepetela's novels therefore turn out to be at once global and local, which is often referred to as 'glocal'.<sup>11</sup> They are global because the architect, which is part of the grand narrative of American popular culture, is known and understood all over the world. Local because, in our case, a postcolonial author imprints his unique Angolan stamp on it, maintaining all the time an ironic reference to the model. He creates, on the one hand, a close connection to our global world, opening the doors by means of the genre for foreign readers, and, on the other hand, an ironic distance from global behaviour patterns, contrasting them with a local reality. To further define this, Bakhtin (Bachtin 1979: 244) offers a useful category: according to his definition, 'hybridity' means combining two different social codes or languages within a single utterance, either intentionally or not. If a novel is intended to be a hybrid, the author deliberately uses two distinguishable, heterogeneous types of discourse to achieve a certain effect.

In Pepetela's novels, hybridity is not primarily constituted by different forms or styles, but rather by different ways of perceiving the world. On the one hand, there is the perspective of traditional crime fiction, on the other a highly critical and ironic parody. This makes the Jaime Bunda novels, and false crime novels in general, 'intentional hybrids' in the full Bakhtinian sense. If an entire genre is transferred to a different context in a process of intentional hybridisation, the author creates an intermediate layer of authorship, an 'archi-author', through whose eyes the author sees. By doing so, an author can self-critically distance himself from his own work in a special way, which, in Pepetela's case, enables him to criticise his own country more effectively.

Summing up, 'false crime fiction' as in Pepetela's novels can be characterised as follows: (1) crime and criminal investigation are used merely as vehicles for analysing society and do not constitute a narrative interest in themselves; (2) the central investigator is an anti- or pseudo-hero, a negative caricature that distorts the globally transmitted standards of crime fiction, i.e. the grand narrative of American popular culture; (3) this anti-hero's mind is colonised by the teachings of the genre, which exposes copy and original as inadequate for dealing with reality; (4) the false crime novel as a narrative form is an 'intentional hybrid' because it combines two heterogeneous perspectives in order to impose a self-critical distance between author and work; (5) the false crime novel is a *glocal* discourse, i.e. it is at

11 For a discussion of 'glocalisation' see Robertson 1995.

once globally and locally legible because it deals with globally known patterns that are applied to a local context.

Whether those characteristics are also applicable to the novels of other authors would be an interesting avenue for further research. This would also entail the question of how useful the notion of the false crime novel is for describing a general tendency in contemporary crime fiction.

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