

THE PORTRAYAL OF CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD IN ANGOLAN LITERATURE THROUGH JOSE LUANDINO VIEIRA'S "A ESTÓRIA DA GALINHA E DO OVO"

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Abstract

Throughout the history of literature, children's characters weren't presented as active subjects in society, because they were muted and subordinate voices represented by adults - (Wearden et.al. 2000); Driscoll, 1989) and Gilbert, 2000). However, with the emergence of children's voices, they began to articulate a world distinct from that portrayed by adults. In light of this, the essay, informed by sociological perspectives on childhood defended by Bodrova & Leong, (2007) and Vygotsky (1962), has two major objectives: (i) to provide a panoramic overview of the developmental and historical phases of children in Angolan literature and (ii) to examines the presentation of children as symbol of conflict resolution, courage and hope for a better future. The essay employs a textual analysis of "A Estória da Galinha e do Ovo" one of three stories from the short story collection Luuanda written by Jose Luandino Vieira. Drawing on Tania Macêdo's article, "Monandengues, Pioneers, and Catorzinhas: Children of Angola" (2007),, this analysis offers a comprehensive depiction of childhood in Angolan literature during pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods The essay highlights how child characters exemplify the transformations in Angolan society and literature, presenting a path to understanding childhood in the country.

Keywords: colonialism, children, Angola history and literature, conflict resolution, courage, hope.

Introduction

This essay examines the portrayal of children and childhood in Angolan literature through the textual analysis of Jose Luandino Vieira's "A Estória da Galinha e do Ovo". Through the analysis of selected primary and secondary texts, the study embarks on the sociological perspectives and literary analysis and interpretations of the construction a childhood from Western and traditional African contexts, emphasizing their roles in societal development. It is pertinent to posit that the notions of childhood differ from one society to another, despite their commonalities. The analysis seeks to answer two critical questions:

(i) what are the notions of ‘child’ in traditional African contexts and how do these differ from historical concepts elsewhere? And (b) what are the essential features of the adult-child relationship regarding the African socio-cultural and historical contents? The article is divided into five interrelated parts. The first is the general overview. The second serves as the theoretical foundation and focuses on the definitions and categorization of childhood based on the sociocultural ideologies influenced by Leonard, 2016, Qvortrup 1989 and Norozi & Moen, 2016 Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Vygotsky, 1962, among others who advanced that culture and social interactions are vital in the construction of children knowledge and their development in the society. The third analyses Jose Luandino Vieira’s “*a Estória da Galinha e do Ovo*” as a short story written with the objective of portraying African children and their relationship with African and European adults depicted in the story. The fourth is intergenerational relationships and their effects on the plot and themes. The fifth is the conclusion which reflects on children’s roles as voices of change within Angolan society. It is expected that through this essay, the author will be able to reflect on and project the daily life of the Angolan people, portraying the experience of the Luandan musseques – (poor neighbourhoods) - familial relationships, societal behaviours, and evolving cultural ideas that signal the dawn of a new societal structure: one that amplifies the voices of children and marginalized groups..

The sociocultural theory proposed and postulated by Lev Vygotsky (1962), advances that culture and social interactions are vital for the construction of children's knowledge and development. Proponents of this theory such as Bodrova & Leong, (2007); among others, stress that social interactions are essential to children’s understanding and interpretation of cultural expectations of the sociocultural contexts of families, religious and community institutions where they found themselves. The short story “A Estoria de Galinha e Ovo” is illustrative of Vygotsky’s ideas that social interactions with adults, friends and foes, and nature are vital for their growth and knowledge. Through their inter-relationship and interaction, children can learn and employ necessary tools which can be adapted positively for the betterment and progress of their community. This will be illustrated in the course of the essay. This theoretical framework underscores the importance of knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, sociocultural values and traditional, social interaction are key elements needed for the development of African children which is achieved through interactions within the socio-cultural and traditional environments.

1. Who is a child? Definitions and scope of childhood and children.

This study is a critical re-appraisal of the history of children’s literature in Lusophone African countries, with a specific focus on Angola. This is because Angola is one of the leading contributors to this literary genre. . To understand its origins and development, it is essential to explore its evolution during colonial and post-colonial periods. Bukenya, A *et al* (1983) in their book titled *African Oral Literature for schools* suggested that one of the easiest ways to examine or study any discipline of human endeavour is to understand its definitions and scopes. This is important because it enables readers and/or researchers to grasp the full meanings, concepts and roles of such area or discipline. Additionally, it helps the reader and/or researcher get a better understanding as well as serves as a signpost that gives a clear cut direction on the subject, which helps in the evaluation of the discipline and at the same time, facilitates making correct judgement. In this regard, Vučković-Šahović *et.al.*, (2012) highlight the lack of a universally accepted legal definition of childhood. However, based on Article 1 of the “Convention on the Rights of the Child”, (1989), he defined a child as every human being

below the age of eighteen years unless under the applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.” What is unique is that it is a nurturing and learning period, where the child depends solely on his/her parents and the society for survival.

In some traditional African societies, a person can be considered a child or an adult due to his/her social status, mental or physical capacity to engage and carry out specific tasks, roles and duties in his/her community and not by the number of years he/she has lived. For instance, among the Bagisu of Uganda and the Babukusu of Kenya, as soon as a boy or girl is circumcised, such a person is considered as adult because genital mutilation is the rite of passage into the world of adult. Wekesa (2023) Wagner, G., (1970) and Vansina, L., (1985). Conversely, in other contexts, an unmarried person is considered a child and in the same vein; a man will only be seen as an adult after he gets married and has children of his own.

2. Insight on José Luandino Vieira: Forerunner and Prodigy of Angolan Literature

José Mateus Vieira da Graça, popularly known as José Luandino Vieira, is a Portuguese-born Angolan poet, short story writer, and translator. He was born on May 4, 1935, in Lagoa do Furadouro, in Ourém (RTP Notícia, 2007). At the age of three, his parents moved to Angola, where he spent his childhood in a multicultural environment. The challenging experiences of Portuguese colonisation profoundly influenced his development as a writer and heightened his sensitivity to social and cultural issues (Linhas de Espuma, 2012). Despite being white, he is regarded as a truly Angolan citizen due to his active participation in the national liberation movement. As a tribute to his beloved city, Luanda, he adopted the name "Luandino" and made significant contributions to the independence of the People's Republic of Angola (Ecosfera Portuguesa, 2013).

Luandino completed his primary and secondary education in Luanda, later working as a commercial manager to sustain himself. Due to his activism and opposition to the Portuguese colonial government, he was accused of having political affiliations with Angolan nationalists and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). This led to his arrest in 1959 by the PIDE (International State Defense Police) during a crackdown known as the "Processos dos 50." Two years later, in 1961, he was rearrested by PIDE and sentenced to 14 years in prison for security reasons (Nos Diário Gal, 2020). He was subsequently transferred to Tarrafal Concentration Camp in Cape Verde, where he was incarcerated for eight years. Upon his release, he was placed under house arrest in Lisbon (O Público & Agência Lusa, [no date]).

Luandino and other notable Angolan intellectuals such as António Cardoso, Arnaldo Santos, and Henrique Abranches belonged to "Geração da Cultura," which emerged in the late 1950s with the aim of continuing the work of the Movimento dos Novos Intelectuais de Angola (MNIA, 1948) and the literary magazine *Mensagem* (1951–52). However, thanks to his literary skills, creativity, and the impact of his works, Luandino established himself as one of the most prominent figures in Lusophone literary circles of the 20th century (*Porta da Literatura*). Most of his writings were produced during the 1960s, notably his two most significant books, *Luanda* and *Nós, os do Makulusu*. The former represented a literary revolution, while the latter, written within two weeks according to the author, is semi-autobiographical and provides an experiential testimony and analysis of colonialism from the perspective of white society.

Following Angolan independence, Luandino held several key positions. He organized and directed Popular Television of Angola (1975–1978), led the Revolutionary Orientation Department of the MPLA (1979), and oversaw the Angolan Cinema Institute (1979–1984) (Ecosfera Portuguesa, 2013). In the literary sphere, he was one of the founders of the Union of Angolan Writers in 1975 and served as its secretary-general until 1980. He also became the deputy secretary-general of the Association of Afro-Asian Writers (1979–1984) and later its secretary-general until 1989 (O Mirante Cultura, [no date]).

Luandino's works address social and political issues, reflecting the struggles of the Angolan people. He was instrumental in promoting literature in national languages, thereby enriching the appreciation of Angolan culture. His literary output is typically divided into two phases. The first phase, influenced by Maupassant's narrative model, is characterized by classical Portuguese-style storytelling. Works from this period include *Nós, os do Makulusu*, *Luuanda*, and *Vidas Novas*, which, while innovative, remain within the bounds of European Portuguese literary norms. The second phase, beginning with *Luuanda* (1963), introduced significant innovations to Lusophone African literature. Luandino domesticated the Portuguese language, incorporating Angolan slang, neologisms, idioms, and oral traditions to craft his unique literary style (Laranjeira, 1995).

Some of his key novels include:

- *A Vida Verdadeira de Domingos Xavier* (1961, 2003)
- *João Vêncio: Seus Amores* (1979, 2004)
- *Nosso Musseque* (2003)
- *Nós, os do Makulusu* (1974, 2004)
- *O Livro dos Rios* (2006)
- *O Livro dos Guerrilheiros* (2012)

Significant short stories include:

- *A Cidade e a Infância* (1957, 1986)
- *Duas Histórias de Pequenos Burgueses* (1961)
- *Luuanda* (1963, 2004)
- *Vidas Novas* (1968, 1997)
- *Velhas Histórias* (1974, 2006)
- *No Antigamente, na Vida* (1974, 2005)
- *Macandumba* (1978, 2005)

Luandino's writing authentically represents the struggles for freedom and national identity, making his work foundational to post-colonial literature. His works, deeply rooted in Angolan culture, reflect its rich oral traditions, the fight for independence, and the complexities of the country's social fabric (Leite, 1998). Luandino was honored with numerous literary awards, including the Angolan National Literature Prize. In 2006, he was awarded the Camões Prize, the highest literary honor for Portuguese-language writers. However, he declined the award "for intimate and personal reasons," citing his perceived inactivity as a writer at the time. Angolan poet Zetho Cunha Gonçalves believes that Luandino Vieira and other writers who fought against Portuguese colonial oppression should be celebrated as national heroes. Despite this lack of

recognition, it is undeniable that Luandino's works remain vital milestones in Angola's literature and history.

3. Introducing *Estória da Galinha e do Ovo*: An Allegory of the Colonisation of Angola

Estória da Galinha e do Ovo is one of the three short tales that comprise Luandino Vieira's *Luuanda*. The other two are *Vavó Xixi e Seu Neto Zeca Santos* and *Estória do Ladrão e Papagaio*. These stories were written with the sole objective of depicting the day-to-day activities of the Angolan people—both children and adults—during the colonial era. Together, they portray a society in which the majority (mainly Africans) suffer various forms of exploitation and manipulation at the hands of a small but powerful and oppressive colonial elite and its agents.

In *Luuanda*, these three tales collectively present an oppressive and hostile environment where Africans endure immense hardships. They reflect the writer's concerns and preoccupations regarding the socio-cultural, economic, and political anomalies prevailing in Angola during the oppressive Portuguese colonial period, vividly demonstrating his compassion and empathy for the less privileged members of society. Poor communities in Luanda—such as Sambizang, Icolo, and Catete (musseques)—where these stories unfold, mirror the miserable living conditions faced by the Angolan people. Luandino Vieira's choice of environmental and situational settings is unprecedented; it reflects his deep awareness of the magnitude of the difficulties confronting his people.

As Luandino Vieira states in his book: > "...It also narrates the lives of these people in a musseque that is not the one of my childhood, but rather a recreation of that childhood musseque. All of this—something I experienced as a child and later recounted—enriched me."

In *Estória da Galinha e do Ovo*, the author illustrates the negative effects of colonisation by showing how the elders—who are supposed to be the custodians of their forefathers' traditions and culture—have abandoned them. It is also evident that the younger generation has failed to respect the elderly. Furthermore, there are constant disputes among neighbours who are meant to live in peace and harmony within their communities.

Thus, the tale was written with the objective of seeking a genuine and lasting solution to social strife—a conflict not caused solely by Angolan men or Portuguese colonial forces, but also by the erosion of traditional wisdom and feminine engagement. The narrative highlights the efficient, pragmatic, and timely intervention of children who, through their intuitive understanding of nature, can communicate with animals and gain a profound insight into the true nature of life.

From the title of this short story, one can deduce a modern retelling of the fable "The Hen and the Egg," in which various social stereotypes attempt, from their own perspectives, to resolve the question of who rightfully owns the hen and the egg. In this context, the egg serves as both a metaphor and a symbol of truth, the origin of life, and the driving force of the narrative. This is well demonstrated by the portrayal of Bina's pregnancy, represented by the image of a male child residing within her. It is the child characters—untainted by Western education—who use their knowledge of local, traditional African logic to settle the dispute over ownership of the egg.

It is important to note that none of the adult characters is able to reach a fair and just judgment. The abilities of these children, who can communicate in the “language” of hens, undermine the illegal, authoritarian, and repressive measures of the police. Simultaneously, they raise awareness among the women about the need for mutual solidarity and—above all—the imperative to protect the egg, which serves as a symbol of future generations (Santilli, 1980).

The emphasis on traditional knowledge, acquired through indigenous practical experience and long-established societal values, leads us to conclude that the solution to social conflicts is not found in imposed and predetermined laws. Rather, it lies in addressing the differences within black Angolan cultures. It is not a division between white and black but, more insidiously, a division among blacks—a divide that can be overcome through mutual understanding and commitment.

4. Representations of childhood in Angolan literature

The conditions and situations of children are important key elements needed as veritable tools that have been sources of attention among scholars, critics, and students of Angolan and lusophone African works of literature. In the Lusophone literary cycles, on the one hand, authors like Castro Soromenho, Luandino Vieira, Maria Eugênia Neto, Maria Celestina Fernandes, Pepetela, Boaventura Cardoso, Manuel Rui and Ondjaki and on the other hand, **critics** such as Patrick Chabal, Ana Mafalda Leite, Inocencia Mata, Salvato Trigo, Pires Laranjeiras, among others, have employed and discussed this burning issues of childhood from different perspectives in a significant way to promote and project African cultures and traditions, teach and educate readers, criticise and condemn bad governance, praise their leaders. According to Macêdo (2007: 358), these children's characters are portrayed in different phases and perspectives, which are characterised in four¹ distinct categories: (i) monandengues, or monas, (ii) pioneers, (iii) catorzinhas and (iv) roboteiros, which are categorised as follows: (i) Children in pre-colonial rural setting; (ii) pre-war colonial setting; (iii) colonial war setting; (iv) Children in independence setting; (v) Children in post-independence or civil war setting; Children in urban setting and Children in modern setting.

In her insight on the depiction of infancy and children in Angolan literature, Macêdo (2007) posited that

[...] perhaps few characters can exemplify the transformations that the country and Angolan literature have undergone in the last fifty years like children's characters, insofar as the various names they receive are an indication of these changes, as well as their configuration, which indicates new ways of narrating. [...] In this sense, following their changes, whether in profile or in their appointment, [...] allows us to see, in addition to literary changes, the profound changes that occurred in that society.

We can infer from this quote that the children's characters demonstrate the changes that both the country and Angolan literature have undergone in the last fifty years and that the

¹ I am of the opinion that it should be five because this critic excluded playful and hopeful children characters that were born during and after the civil war. These characters are always happier and joyful a chaotic hopeless situation in which they live.

children's characters give us positive visions of a better Angolan society full of greater achievement, growth and development.

Pre-colonial rural setting

The traditional setting serves as the starting point for the evaluation and representation of children in Angolan literature. The literature in this period was predominantly oral, which is conveyed through songs, proverbs, myths and short stories. There are narrators, usually elders who related these stories and fables to listeners (children). Some of the characters depicted performed the roles of obedient children who in their day-to-day activities explored their environment, internalised and uphold the socio-cultural values, and observed dedicatedly what is expected of them to do as members of the society, where everyone is a Good Samaritan. These children see themselves as members of a society who must work collaboratively for the betterment of their community.

Colonial setting

Monandengues or Monas are Kimbundu's words used to designate a child. These words are used to symbolically describe and represent children who live in Angola during the period of colonisation and liberation struggle. African children are depicted negatively through the racist eyes of European writers and philosophers who saw nothing good in African cultural beliefs and practices. In his work titled *Terra Morta* (1961), Castro Soromenho introduced children of mixed-race descent who are used to work in Angolan farms and also used as forced labourers' in road construction, and as instruments for the perpetuation of the colonialist relationship. Due to the advent of colonial administrators, children depicted in some of the texts written by Angolan writers in this period demonstrated high level spirit of patriotism to their community. As Macêdo (2007: 360) highlights, these characters play the role of guaranteeing the Angolans freedom and safeguarding future hope of her people in the realisation of a peace and harmony of an independent State of Angola. The problem of each individual who was suffering from the hands of the colonial administration became a collective problem. In other words, whatever affects an individual or community is the problem of everyone. It is in that spirit that made all members of the community gathered to resolve the ownership brawl between two neighbours for the ownership of the egg in "*Estória da Galinha e do Ovo*". There is a strong community spirit to resolve internal and external conflict. The children in the pre-colonial and colonial setting learn the traditional ways of life and are well integrated in the community. This integration is facilitated by their interaction within the community with different segments of the society, who teach them what they should know regarding the rules and regulations governing the society and punish them whenever infringe these laws. In most of the works produced in this era, children are portrayed as characters living a serene, peaceful, happy and stable life in their community.

Colonial liberation setting

The second category is the children's characters who joined the liberation movement, due to the ill-treatment they suffered from the colonialists, to fight for their rights. This group of children are referred to as the **pioneers**. Macêdo (2007: 364). These children's characters experienced difficult moments of colonial oppression and violence, deprivation and extreme poverty, racial discrimination and conflict. And, for this reason, gives them cause to fight bitterly to struggle for their self-realisation and autonomy. Illustrative of this type of character is Ngunga, in *Aventuras de Ngunga* (1983), written in 1972 by Pepetela. The story describes the life of a thirteen-year-old war orphan who wants to become a guerrilla and fight against injustice

that had turned him into a second-class citizen in his community. This novel portrays the pain, orphanhood of war and the need to realise revolutionary ideals that will change the modus operandi of the obnoxious colonial regime to a favourable African lead self-government. Through this figure of young Ngunga, an exemplary pioneer, we notice the violence that accompanies the experience of the war of independence and the long years of civil war that happened after the liberation of Angola. Birmingham (2001: 172) emphasizes that, over decades, [n]o child grew up in Angola without running the risk of facing daily violence, political violence, violence from criminal gangs, domestic violence, recruitment violence, exile violence, the violence of fear penetrating an entire society and an entire generation.

Children in independence and post-independence setting

It is a period in the Angolan literary cycle where children's characters play pioneering roles. Manuel Rui's two novels, namely *Cinco Dias Além da Independência* and *Quem me Dera Ser Onda* are typical examples that illustrate this period. In the first novel, a group of pioneer youths participated actively in the conflicts that took place in Luanda days before the proclamation of independence, while the second novel describes the complex post-independent Angolan society and the traumatic effect of 1975 colonial war, corruption, prejudice and freedom, and the desire of the population to adapt to the new reality fruit of the achievements of this Revolution. It also explores the theme of childhood in post-independence Luanda, which is based on the story of João, Maria and his beloved friend, the piglet Carnaval.

Children as victims of war

The last two categories are the *catorzinhas* and *roboteiros*. They are victims of colonial and independence wars who lived in the streets of Angola. They suffer the consequences of war and the disorder in Angolan society. This type of character started appearing in Angolan literary scenes from the 1980s until today, and they depicted different scenarios of desperation, disillusionment, hope and disenchantment. In this regard, Macêdo (2007: 367) states:

The dreams generated from independence did not become a complete reality and, therefore, we will see in the literature created from the end of the 1980s onwards the presence of children's characters whose profile is quite different from those presented so far, since they are, above all, aggressive and disconnected from their families, as they are "street boys and girls".

The *Catorzinhas* –poor female children characters who are forced into prostitution for survival due to socio-cultural, economic and political factors they faced in their land. These characters are present, for example in «O feto», one of the short stories from the collection of short stories titled *Filhos da Pátria* (2001) written by Joao Melo, which describes the difficult life of a female child character who had to engage in prostitution to cater for members her family. She had to undertake abortion severally and risked the possibility of damaging her womb which might prevent her from conceiving in future. This story was narrated by a 14 year young girl, who was talking to a reporter and police officers that wanted to resolve the mystery of a foetus which was thrown into a debris bin. In the short story by Fragata de Moraes entitled «Martinha», from the book *Momento de ilusão* (2000), we can observe child prostitution and the helplessness of different kids, as well as in the short story by Jacques Arlindo dos Santos, «O coronel do prédio

do cão». Also, Oliveira Cortines (2012: 86) mentions some other works starring *catorzinhas*. For example, João Melo, in *Filhos da Pátria* (2001), presents the short story «O feto», in which the character, a little cat, prostitutes herself so that her family can survive. For having unprotected sex, she got pregnant without knowing who was responsible, and consequently had to undergo an abortion because she didn't want to have a fatherless baby – and later abandoned the **foetus** in a secluded area of her neighbourhood. Another story that is similar to the above is titled *Tio, mi dá só cem*, (Uncle, my only one hundred), It exposes the marginalized and disillusioned life of a young boy who lives in the Angolan post-colonial society. The author brilliantly and dazzlingly elaborated the quest for daily survival against violence and subjugation, as well as the problems this young chap had to face in a society which failed to live up to its responsibility of catering for its youth. These stories, according to Monteiro Nunes Campos (2018: 65): «represent, in a generic way, the marginalized, disillusioned and violated childhood produced by post-colonial society».

Children in post-war environment

The last group are called the *roboteiros*. These are young boys who live and work for survival in Luanda's popular market. A notable example of this type of character is Zeca Santos, the main character in the short story «Vavó Xíxi and her grandson Zeca Santos», from the book *Luanda*, by José Luandino Vieira – is forced to subject himself to humiliation and inhuman treatment in an attempt to overcome hunger and poverty is affecting him and his grandmother. Another example of this type of character is found in the literary text *Roque, romance de um mercado* (2001) written by Hendrik Vaal Neto and Oliveira Cortines (2012: 87).

Children in urban setting and modern era

The children characters presented in this environment witnessed the consequences of moving from the calm and friendly traditional rural setting to an unfamiliar and unfriendly urban environment. The children are uprooted and without any preparation for cosmopolitan life, they leave the peaceful patrimonial farms to settle in the city of Luanda. So they are engaged in relentless struggle for survival. As these children characters are abandoned to their fate in a strange land, they lose the collective support and togetherness that characterised the traditional set-up. They are forced to become individualistic and self-centred due to emotional and materials inadequacies. The absence of a decent shelter compounds the predicament of the child. He is brought up in a slum for he lives crowded up with his sibling and parents in a one room apartment or in a small mud house in a slum. As the economic hardship bites harder, the child is forced to help make ends meet. His education is interrupted from time to time because of the family's impecuniosity.

In his evaluation of children literature written in and/or outside Angola in recent years, Silva (2016: 32) informs that child's characters and their social space can be seen in different urban and rural landscapes, marked by precariousness, loss, mourning and orphan-hood. The characters are, in general, prostitutes, aborted children, abandoned/street children, youth in conflict, which are based on scenes from Angolan daily life. Some Angolan authors who deal with this subject-matter are João Melo, Pepetela, Manuel Rui or José Eduardo Agualusa. According to Silva (2016: 33), suffering and the precariousness of survival conditions remain recurring themes in Angolan literature, but new symbolic meanings also appear.

Children in a modern era

The last category is that of innocence, indifference and nonchalance— these are children characters that are carefree and playful in the mist of the chaos of the civil war and post wars Angolan societies. The modern child cannot afford to bask solely in traditional values, nor should he flounder in the conflicting and confusing urban milieu. He demands a modern society where both parents are immersed in the new culture. He needs parents who have had the experience of marrying traditional and modern values, parents who have chosen modernism at the expense of traditionalism. Education brings a good job which in turn improves on the economic wellbeing of her future family. This assures a good measure of material comfort for the child. Ondjaki's works, particularly *Uma escuridão bonita: estórias sem luz elétrica* (2013). According to Silva, 2016: 33, Ondjaki's works are full of happiness and joyful moments in a simple narrative style in which children characters serve as symbol of harmony and peace, and hope for a better future. Oppression, sadness, violence and war are softened by childhood light-hearted and joyful spirit anchored in beauty and dreams of a better future » (Silva, 2013: 33) In this context, Silva informs that the literary production studied here presents itself from two contradictory perspectives: positive and negative- on the one hand as a symbol of renewal and hope, and on the other as precariousness, degeneration and hopelessness.

Roles played by children

It is an open secret that children play various significant roles as protagonist, deuteragonist, antagonist, static and dynamics characters through different functions they perform. These characters can be heroic or antiheroic, dynamics, statics, round, stock, and symbolic based on the inspirations and creativities of the writers. They carry out different roles as lover, orphan, hero, freedom fighter, obedient or rebellious child, jester, slave, care-giver, adviser, outlawed, explorer, magician, innocent, creator, sage, ruler, among others. Based on this, it can be said that there is a wide range of children's characters and different ways in which they are represented. But, all in all, they all have one common objective and characteristic which is – the desire to have a better society which will guarantee their social and psychological well-being, protect and guide them from insecurity as well as meet their needs. These children represent justice and a hope for a better future. Pires Laranjeira, 1995: 128. For example, in “*A Estória da Galinha e do Ovo*,” Beto and Xico resolve the dispute between two neighbours over possession of the egg through ingenuity and traditional wisdom, symbolizing the triumph of a new order over colonial domination. All the characters that appeared in the plot tried to resolve the dispute to their, for their own benefit but failed woefully. It is the boys, Beto and Xico, in collaboration with the hen, who resolved the dispute in favour of the community, without anyone being disadvantaged, using a traditional indigenous strategy. It is observed that in all this commotion children presented themselves not only as the saviours of the Angolan people but also as symbols of hope, because they resolve the dispute by playfully through their innocent acts. Regarding children, Pires Laranjeira (1995: 128) states the following: “Children and young people always have, in Promethean and African literatures, a very important role, as lockpicks of the future, symbolizing, ultimately, the triumph of the new over the old tradition, and over colonial domination”. From this enlightening quote, one can infer that the children, in this case, Beto and Xico, represent hope for a better future because of the capacity and knowledge they adopted to overcome colonial domination, represented by the sergeant. It is worth mentioning that the story takes place during the period of the struggle for Angolan liberation, in an

environment of cruel repression by the colonialists. Macêdo (2007: 360) stress that during this oppressive environment, children stand out.

Children begin to emblematically represent courage, expectation, faith, optimism, future hope and believe that the Angolans are capable of resolving their individual and collective their disputes without the interference from external forces.. [...] This type of narratives was constant during the period of liberation struggle and it was not uncommon for them to see children performing the role of fighting against colonisation by seeking fiercely for their freedom and liberty from the yoke of colonialism as well as promote social peace and security needed for the good governance and administrative management of an independent Angolan state.

To conclude this section, it will not be wrong to affirm that the two monandengues, Beto and Xico, not only reflect and serve as bearers of hope but also the triumph of a new order of an Angolan society full of great development and success. In other words, through the traditional techniques that were learnt from their elders, these children were able to subvert the authoritative, obnoxious and oppressive power of the colonialists invaders represented by the brutal and corrupt colonial police. These children symbolise the advent of a new order, which is no longer one of injustice, impositions and oppression, but “that of putting a total end to oppression” (Martin, apud Portela Silva, 2013: 146).

It is crystal clear that education is presented in the narrative, “*Estória da Galinha e do Ovo*”, as combative instrument to fight against foreign domination. Among the various resources that the MPLA used during the fight for independence, education stands out as a “device that generates awareness and drives social change” (Andrades da Costa, 2016: 644

Relationship between children and elders

Elders in the majority of traditional African societies are revered as custodians of wisdom and cultural heritage, as well as “source of knowledge who serve as role models for the present and up-coming generation” Leite (2012). According to Alves do Nascimento and Mendes Ramos (2011: 456-458), they are carriers of knowledge, and guardians of the spiritual treasure and traditions of their respective communities. Because of their lived experience, they are considered to be wise and knowledgeable with a lot of wisdom. Based on this, they give advice as well as share these lived experiences with the younger generation, which is why they are respected by the community. It is the old who connects the past to the present, and in this way preserves our cultural and tradition values. There is a mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship between the older and younger generation. While the former are blessed with knowledge and wisdom the later are blessed with innocence, vitality and desire to live a better world for themselves and their society. The elders also perform the role of nurturing, educating and caring for the younger generation. They serve as source of inspirations as well as teach them moral lesson (on how to obey, valorise and uphold the norms, cultural practices and values, as well as the tradition and customs of their forefathers).

5. The relationship between children and older people in *Estória da Galinha e do Ovo*

In *Estória da Galinha e do Ovo*, the oldest woman in the community, who happened to be the grandmother of the boys, reveals, according to Galhego (2010: 172): «the rich socio-cultural patrimonial heritage and traditional values of Angolan society that must be preserved and transmitted to children». The old woman's words have authority, as they are bearers of knowledge in the socio-cultural context in which they live. She seeks to resolve the conflict through her wisdom and her respected word, which Laranjeira (1995: 127) considered as “respected traditional mechanisms,” that seek for the unity and progress, and development of the community which is buttressed by the community's respect for the elderly: “So, grandma?! Speak then, you are our oldest... [...] Everyone was silent, their eyes fixed on the lady's face full of life experience and wisdom [...] Nga Zefa and Nga Bina looked at Grandma, waiting for the old woman to resolve the conflict” (Vieira, 1981: 132, 134). It is true that this oldest woman had a lot of wisdom and experience, unfortunately she couldn't solve the simple but complicated case. As indicated earlier, it was the children character represented by Beto and Xico, who save the chicken and thus resolve the dispute. They imitate the animals' speech and upon hearing the song, Zefa recognizes her son's voice very well, because she knew that the boy imitated all the animals: “-It was Beto! He looked like a rooster. I bet Cabíri is already henhouse” (Vieira, 1981: 152). Apart from their mother who was very happy with the boys' attitude to save Cabíri, it is worth highlighting that the grandmother was carried-away happily by the charm of the boys' play: «Vavó Bebeca smiled too» (Vieira, 1981: 152). We noticed that Luandino Vieira gives the kids a lot of importance when it comes to solving the problem. They are the ones who resolve the dispute and not the elders, as expected.

In this story we observe and understand clearly the relationship that is established between children and older people and how it is intertwined. In the view of Galhego (2010: 172), the voices of the children, Beto and Xico, are responsible for the construction of a time-space marked by curiosity and the desire to discover reality, while the older generation reveals to us all the wisdom accumulated throughout of life, as well as the tradition and knowledge that is passed on to the younger generation. In this case, grandfather Petelu teaches his grandchildren the acts of imitating animal's sounds to his grandchildren. It was this act which Xico learnt from Petelu, his grandparent that he put into practice while playing with his younger colleague Beto, Xico that amazed and baffled the people who were at Mama Bina's yard. Since no one was rearing any livestock in the yard, they all wonder why they were hearing the sounds of animals- peep, peep, peep, calling chicken, the sound of corn falling on the swept floor around them. (Vieira, 1981: 126).

This quote highlights a playful moment in which the children imitate animals - Children, as explained by Galhego (2010: 172), use their imagination to have fun and, in this case, it was their grandfather who had taught them the game, which he had probably learned in his childhood while playing in the street and those that are conveyed by oral tradition. We note that old Petelu shows that despite his age he has not said goodbye to childhood: he also speaks the language of animals. In our view, the grandfather is a significant person, since he is the one who teaches the boys to talk to the chicken and understand it. We can say, and agree with Galhego (2010: 172), that he is the one who starts the game. Finally, we observe that children and older people play together, are happy, learn, resolve conflicts and “reveal the importance of playing and of not losing sight of this time of childhood, whether as a child who welcomes the playfulness of this time, or like the old man, who, upon entering the space, recognizes it and appropriates it, looking for [...]

the toys, the voices, the stories, that is, the child who stayed there in the space of a time saved by memory» (Galhego , 2010: 177).

6. Conclusions

The essay has explored how Jose Luandino portrays children in “A estória de galinha e do ovo” from socio-cultural perspective. The story depicts the experience of the Angolans during the colonial period and the socio-cultural differences between traditional and western knowledge, the conflict for the ownership of egg by the women and efforts to resolve this conflict. Luandino’s intention is to illustrate the importance of traditional African education, the growth and development of children in the traditional African setting and the impacts of these children in their society. These Europeans with their so called civilisation mission successfully mislead Africans, through the establishment of churches, schools, tax offices, police stations and courts and hospitals, to forgo their rich cultural values and traditions, as well as punished those who failed to follow the rules and regulations they set up to perpetrate their obnoxious rules. This ploy consequently had nefarious and despicable effects on African who were made to accept Western Civilisations and reject traditional African values.

Luandino represents African children as progressive and intelligent peace maker, and with a superior knowledge, despite being abused, muted and relegated as second class citizens by the colonialist. Through the lens of sociological perspective, the essay employs the use of socio-cultural theory development defended by Vygotsky among others to stress the importance of traditional African culture and social interaction as tools and signpost for the development and growth of children in Angolan society. This is because child’s development is inseparable from socio-cultural activities. Through this novel, Luandino stresses the importance re-enforcing the learning and teaching of traditional African cultural practices embedded within the socio-cultural and traditional contexts in order to successfully transform African children into protectors and defenders of African heritage and patrimony as well as being the “porta-voz” of their people who can boldly stand proudly anywhere in the world as ambassadors of their continent. Additionally, the narrative critiques the destructive effects of colonialism, where there was a constant clashes and struggle between the Western Europeans and African indigenous people. A situation in which the Africans are always at the receiving ends because they are oppressed by the oppressive machineries put in place to subdue the colonised Africans. Consequently, Luandino reechoes the cultural struggle of Angolan and their efforts to overcome the heavy burden of cultural colonisation and disorientation inflicted on African in their own continent.

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