

**GENDERING THE NATION:
WOMEN, MEN AND FICTION IN GUINEA-BISSAU**

by

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ABSTRACT

The significance of gender to depictions of the nation is a significant discussion within African fiction. Guinea-Bissau, however, has been somewhat neglected. This thesis will re-dress this imbalance by juxtaposing Abdulai Sila's *Mistida* trilogy with fiction by Filomena Embaló, Domingas Samy and Odete Semedo. It considers the symbolic representations of women in Sila's work, where he writes the colonised nation upon the female body, and attempts to create women's agency by inscribing them with future power. However he simultaneously eradicates their historical importance. I explore the narratives of female-authored fiction and argue that whilst there is a tendency to write about inequality in the domestic space, women are equally concerned with discussing national identity and experience through the prism of the intimate. I revisit Sila to examine the significance of masculinities to his narration of the nation. He repeatedly complicates the image of a national hero in texts that connect Guinea-Bissau to global black masculinities and inscribe the crises of the post-independence nation upon the male body. Insofar as the literary imaginary contributes to the construction of nationhood in Guinea-Bissau, this thesis demonstrates that the negotiation of gender symbolism and power relations are intrinsic to this process in fiction.

*I dedicate this thesis to my Nana,
who had a passion for education.*

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CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter 1.	
Writing a Female Nation	16
The fecund female body as the violated colonial nation	17
The Janus face of male-authored fiction	37
Chapter 2.	
Women's Writing: The Intimate and the Nation	50
Writing Marriage	55
Writing the Domestic Space and Tradition	61
The Intimate Looking Out: Society's Conflicts	66
The Intimate as Testimony: Questioning National Memory and Identity	70
Chapter 3.	
Society Manifest in the Masculine: Cabral and his Lost Legacy	79
Complicating Masculine Archetypes in Guinea-Bissau	85
African-Americans, Africa and Global Black Masculinities	94
Writing Post-Independence Disillusionment onto Male Bodies	102
Conclusion	112
Appendix: English Translations of Portuguese Quotes	117
Works Cited	129

INTRODUCTION

Concepts of the nation are often examined in the study of post-colonial African literatures and discourse. These nations were at first rarely more than imposed boundaries created by the collective of imperial regimes and often had little to do with existing territories, kingdoms, hierarchies and communities. Literatures considered as post-colonial have, by their nature, focused on reconciling pre-colonial structures, the colonial experience and the cultural, social and political recovery from imperialist oppression in the contemporary age. The significance of gender in forging a sense of national identity and an identifiable nation has been of great academic interest, as critics address the interactions between the symbolic gendering of the nation, the relationships between the genders and nationalism, and how the gender of the writer affects their imagining of the nation.

With healthy critical gender discourse developing on other African countries through their literature, I am now bringing Guinea-Bissau into this conversation. This thesis intends to contribute towards a better understanding of the location of Guinea-Bissau in the West-African, Luso-African and post-colonial debates on gender identities and their expression. In its readings of both male and female-authored works, it will bring a new conversation into play between these different perspectives, on the way they each represent both their own gender and the other, and what this might help us to understand about Guinea-Bissau itself. It will bring together discourses on national identity with narratives of gender to attempt to help us better understand the significance of gender roles in a country that is struggling for stability 40 years after independence from Portuguese colonial rule.

Representations of gender and the nation are important in considering lusophone African post-colonial discourses, which are juxtaposed with the forcefully hyper-masculine

Portuguese colonial rhetoric that expressed a near sexual desire to possess that which in the heteronormativity of the period must accordingly be imagined as a female African continent. The homogenised, mythologised Africa in the imperialist imagination was a virgin, a dark seductress, a fertile body waiting for *exploração*, meaning both exploration and exploitation in Portuguese. Luso-African post-colonial responses to and reflections on the gendering of territory and nation have been the focus of notable scholarly work on the literatures of Angola and Mozambique but it is yet to be seen in detail how writers from Guinea-Bissau respond to this problem.¹ In fostering anti-colonial nationalism, the party who led the struggle for independence, PAIGC (*Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde* - Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde), did not attempt to argue that the Guinean nation predated colonialism (Lopes, 1987: 42), but acknowledged that the colonially-created nation was used as a base for a nationalism formed to unite the various ethnic groups and communities against the oppressive behemoth of imperialism. As Guinean nationalism and the construction of a Guinean nationhood have therefore been a necessary reaction to colonialism, the gendering of the nation in the national imagination must also be considered so. This is not to assert that Guinean writing responds to nothing more than the colonial past. As this thesis intends to demonstrate, the post-independence experience of the people of Guinea-Bissau has been equally as important in affecting how their writers gender the nation.

The west coast of Africa in the Guinea region was exploited by the European slave trade from the mid-fifteenth until the late nineteenth century (Rodney, 1970; Havik, 2004; Nafafé, 2007; Hawthorne, 2010; Green, 2012). Bowing to British pressure, Portugal outlawed slavery in 1822, although the trade nevertheless continued clandestinely for some time

¹Throughout this thesis Guinea-Bissau will also be referred to as Guinea, and its inhabitants as Guinean and Bissau-Guinean. This should not be confused with the neighbouring country the Republic of Guinea, which is not mentioned in this thesis.

(Forrest, 1992; Hawthorne, 2010). Much of the fabric of the society of the region was left enormously different, because 'lineage patterns, political structures, labour organisations, gender relationships and the manifestation of ritual power' had all evolved and changed in response to the European presence and its consequences (Green, 2012: 284).

With changes to socially accepted morals in the nineteenth century, the treatment of native peoples as subhuman became unacceptable and was replaced by white patronisation and paternalism. Attempts at increasing the then quite limited Portuguese influence throughout the Guinea-Bissau area came in the form of often violent so-called pacification campaigns, and from the early twentieth century forced labour was a common method of the assertion of European rule (Forrest, 1992; Havik, 2004). According to Forrest (1992: 20), the shortage of material resources available to colonialists prevented this flagrantly racist disregard for human rights from producing much infrastructural progress, serving principally to cement the racial hierarchy well into the second half of the century. Natives were able to somewhat transcend the misfortune of their race to the superior level of *assimilado* through fluency in the Portuguese language, having a profession, owning property, or completing military service, yet they would still never be granted any political rights (Lopes, 1987: 27; Forrest, 1992: 22). The colonial drive for maximum exploitation of African land and labour for the gain of the metropole was carried out short-sightedly and there was no effort to invest in social or economic development beyond that goal until the threat posed by the nationalist liberation movement sparked desperate attempts at improving infrastructure in the late 1960s (Forrest, 1992). Portuguese colonialism in Guinea-Bissau has been described as 'retrograde' (Lopes, 1987) and 'backward' (Abreu, 2012), yet the colonisers had a tendency to blame the 'natural indolence' of Guinean producers (Havik, 2004: 334) and the 'proverbial insalubrious nature' of the territory (ibid: 339).

The PAIGC, the driving force behind the nationalist, anti-colonial movement, was formed in Guinea-Bissau in the mid-1950s² after a group of like-minded Guinean and Cape Verdean intellectuals were brought together by the task of ‘raising mass consciousness of the ideas of nationalism’ (Lopes, 1987: 29). Although Cabral and his comrades were always careful not to align the party with any political ideology, the PAIGC manifesto was very much of the socialist African liberation politics of the day (Chabal, 1983; Galli and Jones, 1987; Lopes, 1987; Forrest, 1992, 2002). According to Chabal (1983: 2), ‘[Cabral’s] respect for human rights and his ambition to establish a state structure that would pursue socialist policies without recourse to political oppression set him apart from many other revolutionary leaders of the twentieth century.’ The group sought to unite different class and ethnic groups around the common cause of colonial oppression, promoting Cabral’s notion of cultural nationalism: that the principal that the culture of an oppressed people is their ‘seed of protest’. He argued that total colonial rule and oppression relied on the destruction of the culture of the oppressed party, yet that that very imposition of colonial culture would eventually be met with rejection and this, in turn, fostered an increased assertion by the oppressed of their own culture – an assertion that preceded liberation struggle (Cabral, 1984). Guinea-Bissau’s small population, today around 1.6 million, has always been highly ethnically diverse. Djaló (2012) counts twelve separate major ethnic groups and eleven minority groups, most of which are dying out.³ Guineans are proud of the diversity of their heritage and the cultures they

² The exact year of the party’s founding had always been recorded as 1956, however whilst researching for his 2011 monograph *Amilcar Cabral (1924 – 1973) - Vida e Morte de um Revolucionário Africano*, Julião Soares Sousa found that the correct date was in the year 1959. *A Semana*, 30/06/2011. <http://asemana.publ.cv/spip.php?article65881&ak=1>

³ “[O]s Baiotes, os Balantas, os Banhuns, os Bijagós, os Brameos ou Mancanhas, os Cassangas, os Felupes, os Fulas, os Mandingas, os Manjacos, os Nalus e os Pépeis. Existem outras pequenas minorias étnicas [...] entre outros: os Bagas, os Bamburas, os Cobianas, os Conháguis, os Jacancas, os Jaloncas, os Landumas, os Padjadincas, os Quissincas, os Saracolés e os Sossos” (Djaló, 2012: 21).

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represent, and consequently of the strength of the unity created in asserting the one, national culture against colonial oppression.

Such ethnic diversity involves, of course, linguistic diversity. According to Nafafé (2006: 171) there are more than 23 major spoken languages in Guinea-Bissau, although he notes that some sources count as many as 31. The most widely spoken language is *Crioulo - crioulo guineense* in Portuguese - which was brought about by the colonial contact between Portuguese and African languages, facilitating communication between lusophone merchants and Africans, as much as between different African groups (Nafafé 2006; Embaló 2009a). It became widespread during the anti-colonial war, functioning as a unifying force both logistically and culturally, bringing communities of various ethnicities closer and mobilising thousands to the nationalist cause (Hamilton, 1984: 215).

With slow but steady mobilization throughout rural areas, the movement successfully grew from its intellectual core to the mass of peasants who became the body of guerrilla infantry that physically fought the war (Urdang, 1979; Lopes, 1987; Forrest 1992). Progress in gender equality was important to the PAIGC's politics, and the role of women in the struggle was of great significance - to the extent that Urdang observed that women reacted first and most strongly to mobilization (1979: 115). As of the early 1960s, the PAIGC encouraged women to assert themselves within their roles in order to break down resistance to women's advancement and take the first steps towards their emancipation (Gjerstad & Sarrazin, 1978: 45-46). The leaders of the movement insisted that women were to be integrated into all levels of the liberation infrastructure and that of the independent nation that would follow (Urdang, 1979: 125):

Even during the popular mobilization phase, it was mostly women who made their homes available for clandestine Party meetings, secretly distributed propaganda

material and concealed militants pursued by the [...] (PIDE), the Portuguese political police. It was they who transmitted secret messages, provided liaison, organized assistance for political prisoners and directly participated in clandestine political work. When the struggle moved on to the armed phase, as guerrilla groups began to enter the forests in the south, again it was women who provided information on the movement of the Portuguese troops and prepared meals, which they took to the different guerrilla camps. Later, when military operations intensified, women began to supply the fronts carrying out, like the men, long marches through the forests. They ended up joining guerrilla groups, after first learning to handle weapons.

(UN CEDAW 2009: 12. See websites bibliography)

By the early 1970s the PAIGC held near complete power over the rural areas of Guinea-Bissau and had vastly increased the infrastructure in those zones with a school system, health care stations and even local 'People's Stores' that established economic flow based on locally produced goods and some consumer products (Lopes 1987; Forrest 1992). The establishment of structures to aid personal and community development granted a formerly denied yet initially basic agency to the Guinean people. This in turn inspired trust in the nationalist struggle, upon which it founded further influence and strength. At this point, the Portuguese defence had been reduced to relying almost solely on its air force, yet despite the damage inflicted by aggressive incendiary bombing, the PAIGC retained its position of strength (Forrest, 1992: 35). Amílcar Cabral's assassination by a group of his supposed comrades on the 20th January 1973 could have been a great setback to the effort, but, as Forrest observes (1992), it seems to have galvanised attacks on the Portuguese. Soviet support in the form of anti-aircraft missiles gave PAIGC forces the final advantage they needed to intimidate the former colonial power into stasis, and the party declared its independence on

September 24th 1973. The end of the dictatorship in Portugal brought about by the Carnation Revolution on the 25th April 1974 then provided the mutually acknowledged end to colonial rule.

After the achievement of independence, Guinea-Bissau did not follow the egalitarian trajectory envisioned by Cabral. The economic policies pursued by the governments of Luiz Cabral, Amílcar's half-brother, who ruled from independence to 1980, and then that of João Bernardo "Nino" Vieira, who deposed Cabral in a coup in 1980 and ruled until 1998, were unpopular with the majority of the population. Reliance on external economic bases stunted growth of the domestic market (Galli 1990; Forrest 2002), and much of the finance coming into the country lined the pockets of elites and their close friends and associates (Galli 1990: 66). The already considerable rift between the government in Bissau and the majority rural population continued to widen as economic means and the limited investment in infrastructure were concentrated on the capital (Galli 1990: 66).

Corruption at various levels of an ever-inflating state bureaucracy, an increasingly factional and personalised form of politics and inefficient management of resources pushed the ruling class yet further away from the populace and augmented the disillusionment of the post-independence age (Galli 1990; Forrest 2002). Vieira's regime became increasingly authoritarian and the man himself came to represent the stereotypical sub-Saharan African autocrat, to the extent that in 1994 many thought his victory in the first multi-party election was rigged (Forrest, 2002: 253). He was eventually deposed in a coup in 1999, the culmination of a bloody year-long civil war. Vieira, backed by external military forces, faced a rebel group led by General Assumané Mané and representing the majority of Guinea-Bissau's own military. Forrest posits that popular hostility toward the Vieira government was the rebels' primary motivation, the rulers having 'manifested in virtually every sphere of

public policy-making a profound disregard for the ordinary Guinean and a willingness to extend autocratic rule in order to preserve power' (2002: 256).

Political instability continues to mar economic and social development and multiple attempts at establishing democratic processes in Guinea-Bissau today. Bordonaro (2009) suggests that still today the prominence of key players and the forming of alliances described by Forrest (2002) in the 1990s continues to contribute to 'the irrelevance of the state' in this ever erratic political sphere. Since the civil war, the military has repeatedly thwarted attempts at establishing a stable democracy, with two further coup d'états in 2003 and 2012 and the assassination of (the then re-elected) president Nino Vieira in 2009. The international drug trade is known to hold an ever-strengthening sway, and takes advantage of the country's porous coastlines as a transition point between South America and Europe. Indeed, certain high-level officials are even implicated in this criminal network (Cf. web references: UNIOGBIS, Articles on "Guinea-Bissau and Drug Trafficking"; Ferret, 2007; Nossiter, 2013). The socio-cultural effect of this political precariousness, state fragility and rife corruption is that Guinea-Bissau is, to cast a stark, statistical light on the situation, among the twenty poorest nations in the world (UNIOGBIS "Country Profile"). It is also among the least democratic nations in the world, holding joint eighth place with Syria (The Economist, 2011), and it is the fourth worst country in which to be a mother (Save the Children, 2012).

One of the Portuguese colonialists' key methods of dominance was keeping the vast majority of the native population poorly educated. The purported process of civilisation in Guinea-Bissau only went so far as to make the native people more efficient instruments of exploitation and therefore facilitate colonial economic expansion (Mendy, 1980: 13-14). Although educational infrastructure has greatly improved over the last 30 years, meaning that almost three quarters of children do start primary school, widespread poverty nevertheless

affects their chances of finishing, and only 22% of children complete secondary education (Pôle de Dakar, 2013: 17). Political instability and lack of investment in recent years has left teachers unpaid and under-trained, buildings in disrepair and schools forced to close for around a third of the time (IRIN, 2013). As of the most recent survey, literacy in Guinea-Bissau stood at 42% (UNIOGBIS “Country Profile”), which begs questions of the state of the written literature coming from so little opportunity for investment. With such a weak and recently established educational infrastructure in comparison to other Portuguese-speaking African countries, and the resultant scarcity of written literary culture, it is not surprising that publications from Guinea-Bissau have received somewhat infrequent and only recent scholarly attention. Although a number of poetry volumes were published from the time of the anti-colonial struggle, the first publication of prose fiction did not come until 1993. It is the small, and thus the more crucial, body of prose fiction that this thesis will examine in the light of the discourse of the gendered nation.

Several general histories of Portuguese-language African literature have been published since the late colonial period. Both *Literatura Africana de expressão portuguesa* by Mario de Andrade (1968), and Russell Hamilton’s *Voices from and Empire* (1975) suffer from the same lack of available material from Guinea-Bissau. Volume two of Hamilton’s *Literatura Africana, Literatura Necessaria* (1984), covering Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe preceded the publication of any fiction in Guinea-Bissau. Hamilton does, however, provide a thorough argument for the role of the anti-colonial war in fostering a generation of poets and the importance of their work in legitimising Crioulo as a literary language. In 1995, Pires Laranjeira published *Literaturas Africanas de Expressão Portuguesa*, unfortunately just a little too early to include Sila’s first two novels in his scope.

Yet, curiously, it was not too late for him to have recognised the existence of Domingas Samy's *A escola* (1993) though which he neglects to do.

A small handful of lengthy works have been published that focus entirely on the literature of Guinea-Bissau, and that bring their predecessors of the wider lusophone community up to date. Most notable among these are the ground breaking contributions made by Moema Parente Augel who, in addition to several more books and magazine and journal articles, has published two books exploring the literature of Guinea-Bissau as a field, *A Nova Literatura da Guiné-Bissau* (1998) and *O Desafio do Escombros: Nação, Identidades e Pós-colonialismo na Literatura da Guiné-Bissau* (2007). In the first of these, Augel provides a detailed guide to the national literature including poetry, fiction and theatre and a brief overview of the resident publishers. She describes the history and situation of literature in a country that during the colonial period had approaching 100% illiteracy and still has around 60%. Augel continues Hamilton's campaign and devotes a chapter to the potential of Crioulo as a literary language, exploring its importance to such a linguistically diverse nation and its literary manifestations. Giving quite detailed synopses of Abdulai Sila's novels, which she links to their socio-historical context throughout, Augel argues that the work of this '*pioneiro do romance guineense*'⁴ (1998: 331) is fundamentally inspired by the trials and tribulations of the nation, and he takes quite seriously his '*dupla responsabilidade e função como escritor e intelectual*' (1998: 356). The detail of Augel's research provides crucial information in understanding the context from which Sila's fiction emerges. This connection between writer and nation is much more thoroughly explored in *O Desafio do Escombros*, where Augel examines much of that same literature with a considerably more theoretical and interpretive

⁴ All translations from Portuguese to English can be found in the Appendix. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

intention, as is quite evident in the full title. Augel argues that literature is crucial in the construction of Guinean national identity, as writers question hegemonic discourse and deconstruct the historical narratives that attempt to place the nation as an apparatus of the state's power hierarchy. She finds that they have moved on from confrontation with the coloniser to '*meter os dedos nas próprias gangrenas*' and seek an antidote (2007: 364), in a process of national self-affirmation that puts the concerns of the community before the needs of the individual. Augel finds that Guinean writers create intermediaries between different facets of traditional Guinean cultures and the present day problems that the nation faces in order to forge a path forwards to a prosperous future. Yet missing from her exploration is any thorough examination of how gender features or functions in relation to the nation, to nation building or to national identities – and it is this significant gap that this thesis aims to fill.

Editors Margarida Calafate Ribeiro and Odete Costa Semedo's *Literaturas da Guiné-Bissau: Cantando os Escritos da História* (2011) continues the process of bringing Guinean literature into the context of the 21st century and contemporary academic discourse with a collection of readings from an international group of writers reflecting on works from and inspired by Guinea-Bissau. As the title suggests, these essays present readings of Guinean prose and poetry as they relate to national history, the nation and feelings of national identity. Accordingly with Augel's monograph, the editors make the bold claim that '*mais do que qualquer área de saber, é a literatura, pela força da sua expressão, que vai configurar a ideia de uma nação guineense*' (11). It is evident throughout the essays included in this collection that this artistic function of building a national identity and a concept of the nation is seen by critics and writers to be an intrinsic part of Guinea-Bissau literature, yet they do not venture into an exploration of the possible connections between images of the nation and gender.

An edition of the Brazilian journal *PAPIA* co-authored by Brazilian linguist Hildo Honório do Couto and Guinean writer Filomena Embaló, “Literatura, Língua e Cultura na Guiné-Bissau” (2010) adds another broad survey to the critical works with a nationally-specific but culturally-wide focus. Post-colonial prose literature forms one part of this highly informative edition. It also includes linguistic variants in some detail, along with the history of the presence of the Portuguese language, colonial literature, Portuguese language poetry and Crioulo prose and poetry, as well as proverbs and ‘*Outras Manifestações da Cultura*’. This last takes in the visual and performance arts, the social groups *gãs*, magazines and music. Couto and Embaló’s work on the Portuguese language prose is mostly limited to formal analysis, description of the stories and brief analysis of the authors’ connection to the country in their writing – be it linguistically (said of Sila) or through negotiation of national identity (said of Embaló). They provide a valuable introduction for the unfamiliar reader to the contemporary literature of Guinea-Bissau and the culture in which it exists.

Meanwhile, other Portuguese language African literatures have received attention from scholars interested in gender in the lusophone world: Owen and Rothwell’s edited volume *Sexual/Textual Empires: Gender and Marginality in Lusophone African Literature* (2004) provides a collection of very useful critical explorations on the theme of gender in lusophone African literature, particularly with regard to masculinities in the post-colonial age in essays by Igor Cusack and Mark Sabine. Interestingly, however, none of the essays in the collection focus on Guinean literature. This marginalises Guinea-Bissau, the spotlight rather remaining on the much denser and more readily available literary offerings of Angola and Mozambique, yet also taking in Cape Verdean literature with an essay by Ellen W. Sapega. Hilary Owen’s monograph *Mother Africa, Father Marx* (2007) examines four Mozambican

women's narration of the nation over the second half of the twentieth century and the important female perspective they bring to the traditionally male expression of nationhood.

From the current critical work available, one struggles to develop an understanding of the extent of the significance of gender in Guinea-Bissau fiction. Furthermore, we do not yet know what might be learned from observing the differences in gender representation between male and female authors. Where gendered themes are apparent and central to the narrative, such as in Domingas Samy's stories in *A escola*, the connection between the author's gender and the storylines produced are astutely examined; Augel described Samy's stories as carrying, among other merits, '*a marca da mulher (...) impregnados da preocupação pela condição feminina, pela posição da mulher na sociedade guineense*' (1998: 324-5). Philip Rothwell's excellent article "Placing Women's Time in a Colonial Space" (2004) thoroughly analyses the relationship between the 'subaltern positionalities' of Portuguese and African women in colonial space and time in *A Última Tragédia* (Sila, 1995). Beyond these readings however, there is little of significance done to address the potency of gender throughout the discourse formed in the prose fiction of Guinea-Bissau. While among these critics there are several tentative ventures at reading the significance of gender in Guinean prose fiction, there is a scarcity of work that approaches these narratives as potentially gendered, or explores the importance of gender to the construction of the idea of the nation – despite the nation itself forming such a critical focus of them. In order to fill this gap in academic knowledge, I will examine the novels of Abdulai Sila and the prose fiction of Domingas Samy, Filomena Embaló and Odete Semedo in terms of gender representation, symbolism and power. I will pay specific attention to the behaviours of men and women, their relationships, their attitudes and the ideas they are imagined to represent. I will examine if and how gender is used to

shape narratives or to reflect on themes that reach much further than the basic day-to-day human interactions of life.

Chapter 1 takes Abdulai Sila's trilogy,⁵ *A Última Tragédia* (1995), *Eterna Paixão* (1994) and *Mistida* (1997)⁶ as a basis for examining the use of the female body as a colonial trope, and the continuing narrative reliance on this trope beyond colonialism. It explores the potential effect on national memory of male-written history upon the female body and of Sila's highly optimistic attempts to grant women a political agency whilst simultaneously writing their history for them. In Chapter 2 I will move the focus from women being bodies that are written upon to women as writers (Campos, 2006), as I explore the thematic priorities, expressions of female experience and the comments made on gender roles in Domingas Samy's volume of stories *A escola* (1993), Filomena Embaló's novel *Tiara* (1999) and Odete Semedo's 2-volume collection of short stories *Sonéá: histórias e passadas que ouvi contar I* and *Djênia: histórias e passadas que ouvi contar II* (2000). This will move on from Sila's novels to examine what women writers bring to the established discussion on being women, being Guinean and identifying the nation. Chapter 3 returns to the three Sila novels, to bring a reading on masculinities and men into the conversation on gender and the nation. The chapter will examine the interactions between men and their environment, their history, their society and each other, through the lives of the colonised man, *assimilados*, an African-American pan-africanist and the disillusioned men of the post-independence decades. It will explore the changing portrayal of men and masculinities in the colonial period through to the pre-civil

⁵ The term trilogy is used here most loosely. As Salvadori (2009) thoroughly discusses, the three novels, despite having been published in 2002 in one volume as *Mistida (trilogia)*, were not written with the intention of being published in one volume and do not possess the temporal and spatial continuity expected of a commonly-defined trilogy. Salvadori argues that the main cause for their being read as a trilogy comes from their consistent intertextuality.

⁶ Abdulai Sila's novels will be referenced in-text as *A Última Tragédia – AUT*; *Eterna Paixão – EP*; *Mistida – M*.

war 1990s, examining the innovative evolution in Sila's narrative of the Guinean man – from historical figures and the nation's agent through to the scarred, weakened bodies upon which the disillusionment of the post-independence period is written. The thesis will bring together these narrations of the nation and of men and women as contrasting symbols, objects and agents to demonstrate that, in its distinct mission to contribute to the building of nationhood, the fiction of Guinea-Bissau can be shown to gender that very nation in its imagination.

CHAPTER 1.
WRITING A FEMALE NATION

From the outset of European discovery and colonisation, foreign continents were consistently imagined as ‘libidinally eroticized’ ‘porno-tropics’ (McClintock, 1995: 22); virgin and ripe for penetration by European male civilisation. This gendering of the ever-increasing geographical sphere of western enlightenment and its unavoidable connotations of sexual violence fulfilled fantasies of a feminised world literally spread out for male exploration, to be later divided and ‘deployed in the interests of massive imperial power’ (ibid: 23). This gendering of strange lands has been described as more than a straightforward ‘symptom of male megalomania’; it was demonstrative of acute male paranoia and anxiety at boundary loss, thus the feminising of dominated land granted pioneers the reclaiming of a gendered hierarchy (ibid: 24). The concept of lands being virgin implied their passivity and emptiness in the time preceding European presence (ibid: 30). Upon penetration by white male potency, and its vanquishing of that virginity, the land in colonial discourse became fecund and expectant of insemination with civilisation.

The dominant image of Africa’s fecundity was not denied in African discourse, as the trope of Mother Africa has been common in anti-colonial and nationalist struggle. According to McLuskie and Innes (1988: 4), African male writers’ adoption of the trope was a replication of the ‘coloniser’s mythologizing of Africa as the Other, as Female, as treacherous and seductive...’ that was transformed into what Stratton (1994: 40) describes as ‘an image of Africa as warm and sensuous, fruitful and nurturing’. As will be clear in the first part of this chapter in my gendered reading of Abdulai Sila’s *A Última Tragédia*, this transition was not

without damage. Not only was the African continent imagined and exploited as female, but also, in literature, women have been depicted as the personification of the feminised continent – and as such the cultural, physical and psychological damage wrought upon the land is inscribed on the female body.

Contrary to Amílcar Cabral and the PAIGC’s policy of all-inclusive national culture, the distinct – and in the case of Guinea-Bissau, fictional – female historical passivity is continued in Sila’s third novel, *Mistida*, as women are conspicuously absent from the narrative of an anti-colonial war in which they did, in fact, play a crucial role. In the second part of this chapter I will explore this gendered historical exclusion and its replacement with an imagined matriarchal future for Guinea-Bissau as a furthering of the male writer’s dilemma in attempting to create female agency whilst trying to reveal its denial under colonial patriarchal culture.

The fecund female body as the violated colonial nation

The plot of *A Última Tragédia* centres on Ndani, a thirteen-year-old girl who is alienated from her village due to a claim made by the local *djambakus*⁷ that she is inhabited by an evil spirit that will bring bad luck to those around her. Escaping to Bissau, she is taken in as a servant by a colonial official, Senhor Leitão, and his wife, Dona Maria Deolinda. The wife first dehumanises and then catholicises her, and the husband rapes her. She eventually returns to her hometown, Biombo, where she is “discovered” by Bsum Nanki, known by his social title *Régulo*,⁸ a highly respected and moral local leader in Quinhamel.⁹ Against his

⁷ *Djambakus* are religious specialists who collaborate with and consult spirits in order to work against sorcery. They are also consulted as healers with herbal medicinal knowledge and their own spiritual powers. (Einarsdottir, 2004: 34).

⁸ Moema Parente Augel (2007: 58) defines the title *Régulo*: ‘o termo régulo [...] do léxico português [...] é um diminutivo de rei, e o fato do colonizador empregar um termo que significa ‘reizinho’ ou

advisors' warnings of the now widely spread claim that she is cursed, Régulo chooses Ndani as his new wife. However, the morning after their wedding, her virginity cannot be proved and so Régulo rejects her. He subsequently withdraws into himself and begins a downward spiral of physical and psychological decay. As if to increase the blame placed on Ndani, Régulo's death interrupts a secret on-going project between him and the Teacher¹⁰ to transcribe the former's plans for a peaceful method of ousting the Portuguese from power. The Teacher has horrific premonitory nightmares of war that make him all the more desperate to find out Régulo's plan, however but Régulo dies before he is able to. Ndani lives in a socially-imposed virtual solitary confinement in the ostentatious house her husband had bought to out-do the colonial *Chefe* – until she falls in love with the Teacher and they move to the coast, to a town called Catió. Here Ndani is happy; '*Finalmente o seu sol ia começar a arder*' (AUT 148). The new local *Administrador*, promoted from *Chefe* in Quinhamel, visits Catió and, when he dies of natural causes following a football match, the corrupt mechanisms of the colonial machine bring about the arrest of the Teacher, who is eventually sent to the penal colony of São Tomé. After years of habitually returning to the port from where her husband was exiled, Ndani, unable to cope with the loss and her perpetual pain and misfortune, is overwhelmed by the sea and, as the narrative appears to suggest, takes her own life in the ocean.

Augel observes that Sila '*[pretende] (...) que o drama de Ndani seja a derradeira infelicidade a abater-se sobre o povo guineense, ávido de liberdade e de justiça*' (1998: 346).

'pequeno rei' para designar o chefe máximo dos agrupamentos étnicos pode espelhar o menosprezo eurocentrado do expoliador, pois se tratava muitas vezes de soberanos senhores de muitas riquezas, de grande poder e respeitabilidade. Hoje em dia, o termo se generalizou, sem que se pense mais nessa carga depreciativa.'

⁹ A small town to the west of Bissau (Augel, 2007: 134).

¹⁰ Régulo appoints the Teacher, a Guinean black missionary from a different area of the country, for his newly built school. His job title is capitalised and stands for his name throughout the novel. I will explore the Teacher as a character thoroughly in the third chapter of this thesis.

In this chapter I will explain how Ndani represents not only the Guinean people as a whole, but also the figurative Guinean colonial nation. She is exploited by the imperial master under the guise of religious education as well as by overt, violent physical subjugation. Seemingly freed by her kin, she is once again physically exploited and granted no more agency in their hands than in those of the Portuguese. Finally, striving towards an independent and prosperous future, she must once again fight the past and present demons of colonial corruption and racist injustice. As narrative parallels are drawn between the subjugation of women by men and that of the colony by the metropolis, colonial injustice and abuse is written upon the female body and psyche. Here the female association of Africa is prevalent in both the colonial act, whereby a perceived ultra-fecund land is explored and exploited, and in the autochthonous response to that abuse of his Mother Africa. (Rothwell 2004).

The diffusion of the colonial myth of black racial inferiority is manifest in Ndani's experience from the very beginning of the novel, even before she has any contact with people outside of her own community. She is first educated via cultural experience, with stories brought back to the *tabanca* (Crioulo - rural village, town) by those who have worked in the *prasa* (Crioulo - city) for the whites not to question her subservience or treatment as subhuman. In her move to Bissau, Ndani learns to accept, fear and spread the word of a God brought from overseas, meanwhile being forced to reject her own culture. Finally, she must accept the invasion and violation of her body as the possession of the colonial man. It is not, however purely the content or form of colonial education that is significant; its very existence must be interrogated.

Upon their so-called discovery of newly claimed continents, colonialists of all the imperial nations governed on the basis that their race granted them an inherent superiority over those they now commanded. In turn, the according status of inherent inferiority placed

upon the autochthonous population justified that they be treated, initially, as animalistic and savage sub-humans. In the frank and unrelenting words of Fanon:

As if to show the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation, the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil. Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values. It is not enough for the colonist to affirm that those values have disappeared from, or still better never existed in, the colonial world. The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values [...] He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces (1963: 32).

Reports of the extent to which the Upper Guinea Coast (Rodney 1970) was exploited and the effects this had upon the native population vary. However, it was undoubtedly sufficient to cause at best 'great disorganisation' to the African societies left in its wake (Rodney, 1970: 100), and at worst peaking when the Spanish Indies and Portuguese Brazil were exploiting the labour force so thoroughly that it consistently had to be renewed by the thousands (ibid 240). In the second half of the eighteenth century Brazil was taking in 10,000 slaves a year, a quota that the coastal area around and including what is now Guinea-Bissau fulfilled when the Angolan trade could not keep up with demand (ibid). Bowing to British pressure in 1815, Portugal forbade its nationals from involvement in the transoceanic shipping of slaves north of the Equator, meaning that slave exports from Bissau and Cacheu dropped dramatically that year (Hawthorne, 2010: 3). Nevertheless, this did not bring about the final

end to slavery, as it continued clandestinely throughout the nineteenth century (Forrest, 1992; Hawthorne, 2010).

West Africans were enslaved by several means: raids were the predominant method, some conducted by Europeans, but the far greater part by Africans on Africans of other ethnic groups. Criminals were sold as punishment and prisoners of war exchanged hands for money. Reportedly - although this is disputed – there were even some who sold themselves and their families in times of famine (Mannix and Cowley, 1963; Hawthorne, 2010). Even though slave raiding became something of a profession for certain native groups (Rodney, 1970: 106), their participation was not eager and willing, and communities were forced to comply for fear of being attacked themselves (Rodney 1970: 105; Hawthorne 2010: 64). Rodney (1970) has found that this method of gaining slaves was most prevalent among hierarchical societies, as it abused existing divisions between privileged and under-privileged strata. Furthermore, the aggravation of this social division created a new underclass whose social position was ever distant from that of the elites who conducted the enslaving on behalf of European traders and the riches they had to offer (ibid). In the same volume Rodney writes that the 'inter-ethnic wars', which are often cited as having provided a great number of prisoners to slave merchants in West Africa, were not in the pursuit of political domination, for the advancement of territories or caused by long-fostered disputes, but were conflicts engineered by settlers and their descendants who fanned the flames to feed their trade supply. As Rodney states (1970: 121), 'no moral price or human suffering was too high to pay for the monetary gain from the trade in slaves and from the extension of capitalist production into the New World.'

As both a moral and political compass of the time, the church's relationship to slavery in the region was somewhat ambiguous. While some opposition by the church is recorded, there

appears to be no evidence that missionaries' and church dignitaries' complaints of immorality were heeded. Rodney (1970: 105) records that Spanish Capuchins carrying out missionary work in the late seventeenth century on the Upper Guinea coast wrote that they were threatened into blessing slaving expeditions or face hanging. Those Catholics who vocally opposed the slave trade did so in theological terms, albeit vastly unconvincingly: 'They agreed that by doctrinal writ it was possible for an individual to be 'justly' enslaved, and that capture in war, for example, provided a 'just title' for enslavement. But they then proceeded to show that the Atlantic slave trade bore no relationship to this theoretical model, because the "wars" were themselves products of the trade' (ibid: 119). Christians also took up opposition via the question of baptism; Dom Frei Victoriano Portuense, Bishop of Cape Verde at the end of the seventeenth century, wrote, 'Knowing the manifest injustices by which people are made slaves in Guinea, the only excuse (and even this is not sufficient of an excuse) is to say that these gentiles are being taken out to receive the light of the church' (ibid: 120). However, as the majority of traders did not bother to baptise their slaves (ibid), we can assume that their protestations fell upon deaf ears. According to Rodney's sources, opposition flourished at various levels of church hierarchy, but evidently not enough to sway traders from the temptations of empirical wealth and power. Religious discourse enjoyed greater precedence with the transition from slavery, via military occupation, to colonial administration and dominance. Portuguese colonizers wished to avoid the creation of a *mestiço* class, which they deemed too likely to take influence away from their racial superiors, thus education of the natives and their integration into the labour force was preferable (Havik 2004: 331). At this point, the concept of 'raising the "moral condition of the indigenous population" (...) emerged as a major theme closely associating secular with religious (Roman Catholic) institutions in a historical "civilising mission"' (ibid).

In the following quotations from Havik (2004: 333) a local born missionary priest explains the positioning of Guinea-Bissau in the colonial order – and the gender-laden discourse of Portuguese colonialism becomes apparent. The priest’s description of the colony’s relationship to Portugal exposes the newly prevalent view of the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised: ‘Guinea [as a relatively underdeveloped colony] is similar to a child that if not well fed, well directed and educated, will not give good results, neither would it be useful to itself or the motherland.’ Therefore, ‘the motherland had the obligation to breastfeed its children, until they were strong enough to work. And in the full of life the robust son, strengthened by the sweet vigour of its mother's milk will pay the debt of gratitude on the sacred loan.’ Not only was the territory of Guinea-Bissau the suckling babe of the Mother metropolis, but this same notion was applied to the inhabitants of the colony. Indeed, Stoler (1995: 141) qualifies ‘this discursive connection between the “savage as child” and the “child as savage”’ as crucial to the study of colonialism.

This discourse led into a new period of colonialism, exemplified in *A Última Tragédia* by Dona Deolinda’s relationship with Ndani, where its perpetrators insisted that their actions were driven by a desire to do good for their subjects in order to help them attain civilisation, and a status closer to that of being white. For all these proclamations of benevolence, numerous critics have explored the importance of the same problematic desire-driven racism as the fuel of colonial activity. Stoler (1995: 171-2) draws together a highly constructive, if non-exhaustive, catalogue of authors who place repressed desire at the heart of colonial racism: it is the projection of the white man’s desires, or of his inner repressed ‘libidinal man’, upon the black (Fanon, 1967; Winthrop Jordan, 1968); and/or it is the manifestation of the European’s identification with ‘those who live as he once did or as he still consciously desires to live’ (Rawick, 1972). The Brazilian sociologist and pioneer of Lusotropicalism

Gilberto Freyre (1946) even claimed that the extraordinarily active Portuguese libido accounted for the differences in colonial racial prejudice in comparison with their more sexually conservative European neighbours. This new, purportedly benevolent form of imperialism, despite proclaiming to have the salvation of the colonised at heart, nonetheless did not elevate the situation of its subjects much higher than that which they had been confined to as slaves, nor did it grant individuals any further agency or their culture any recognition.

The first time that Dona Deolinda meets her new *criada* she treats her as though she is little more than an animal: she ignores her, then she sprays her with the garden hose, perhaps as an attempt to scare her off, but also in a symbolic attempt to cleanse her garden of the girl's perceived inherent dirtiness: her race. In the eyes of her *patroa*, Ndani is only elevated to the status of another human being following the former's "near-death" experience whilst on a boat in stormy seas. The incident forces Deolinda to reassess her role as colonizer, leading her to seek religious counsel:

[...] os europeus vieram à África para salvar os africanos. [...] dantes esta salvação consistia em levar os negros para longe, lá para as Américas, onde não teriam nem as máscaras nem as estatuetas que veneravam, e muito menos as árvores sagradas... Mas depois viu-se que esta não era o melhor método e então tivemos nós os europeus que vir para a África ensinar a religião cristã e salvar as vossas almas (AUT 40).

This explanation seems no more complicated or reasoned than that which would be given to a child, and it is thus that Deolinda not only accepts it but uses it as a foundation for her forthcoming good-doing and God-fearing. The simplistic explanation also whitewashes the entire concept and history of slavery as an apparently benevolent removal of Africans from their perceived negative cultural influences, intended entirely for their own good. Liberation

theologians argue that there is little use in searching for any deeper reasoning behind religion's acceptance of and cooperation with colonial oppression, because in colonial Christianity's riding on the idea that God loves the oppressed, the Gospel became the very justification for that oppression (Erskine 1981: 116). Throughout the European colonies theology was even used as a basis for maintaining racial servitude, as slavery was defined as 'God's punishment of the first Negroes' (Zinzendorf in Erskine 1981: 21). Thus conversion to the Catholic faith would serve to free their descendents, 'not from control of [their] masters, but simply from [their] wicked habits and thoughts...' (ibid). The evangelising mission provided 'the crux of Portugal's imperial doctrine' so that, over the centuries, 'territorial aggrandisement and economic exploitation became equated with the fulfilment of an evangelical duty, as Marcelo Caetano put it, "to extricate them from the darkness of paganism and save their soul"' (Mendy, 2003: 49). The Portuguese even went so far as to legislate this belief in the Colonial Act of 1930, which stated that: 'It is the organic essence of the Portuguese nation to carry out the historic function of possessing and colonizing overseas dominions and civilizing the indigenous populations therein contained' (in Mendy, 2003: 49-50). According to the theologian Erskine, 'The European zeal to "Christianise" and "civilise" the world often provided a rationale for Third World oppression' (1981: 5); the Christian church's insistence on the superiority of their religion over that of so-called pagan peoples bolstered the racist rationale of imperial domination (ibid: 6). Indeed, Silvio Torres Saillant has argued that the inferiorisation of [O]thers lies at the heart of colonial Christian piety;¹¹ there is no further rationalising to be done. Any deeper rationale for Christianisation itself is foggy and perhaps not surprisingly hard to come by, and liberation theologians have seemingly never quite

¹¹ Professor Torres was kind enough to share this idea with me in conversation following his guest lecture "Overcoming the Columbian Legacy: Toward a Humane Cultural History" at the University of Birmingham, UK on the 26th September 2012.

worked out the contradiction inherent in ‘the Christian’s God of love, the God of the church responsible for oppression’ (Erskine, 1981: 17). Erskine repeats the conclusions of Third World theologians meeting in 1976; that European countries grew in wealth and power directly via the underdevelopment of the countries that they colonised and not, as the wives of some Portuguese colonial militia believed, ‘*porque os estávamos a ajudar a desenvolver*’ (Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, 2007: 152).

Deolinda does not only see herself on a holy mission, but also a patriotic one: ‘*Ela servia a Deus e à pátria ao mesmo tempo. Tal como os descobridores portugueses. [...] o nome dela também poderia um dia aparecer nos livros da história de Portugal...*’ (AUT 56). Once again, Deolinda repeats colonial rhetoric as if from a record, aligning herself and her mission within that of the European and Portuguese colonial vanguard. She names some of her patriotic heroes (AUT 56): Vasco de Gama, who opened up trade routes round the coast of Africa to Mozambique and into the Indian Ocean that became key to the slave trade (Albuquerque 1987); Diogo Cão, the first European to ‘discover’ the mouth of the Congo River whose land claims led to the Portuguese presence in Angola (ibid.); and Nuno Tristão, who ‘discovered’ and made some of the first navigations of African mainland coast between the Cape Verde islands and Guinea-Bissau (Rodney, 1970: 71) These names are dropped with inarguable faith in the positive light of their actions and achievements and of their consequences, just as Deolinda never imagines questioning her own.

Sila here depicts the God-fearing, well-meaning colonial citizen as an easily manipulated, uneducated, naive adult who accepts simplistic and shallow justification for the colonial mission. He represents the colonial settler woman as an inferior agent of the exploitation of the imperial regime, and to a certain extent another victim of a system that expected her to reproduce rhetoric but simultaneously denied her voice (Rothwell 2004: 73).

Amilcar Cabral and the PAIGC often stated that their war was against the Portuguese colonial regime, not against the Portuguese people who themselves were suffering under its fascist oppression and who were fighting a 'common struggle against the same enemy forces' (Cabral, 1974: 16). It could be argued that Deolinda's ignorance of the reality behind her being willed to spread the word of God represents the author's recognition that whites too were to some, although significantly minor, extent exploited via a bourgeois notion of education to fuel the means of the regime. Women under the Salazar regime were, after all, legally treated as minors (Ballesteros Garcia 2001: 212) and subjugated to forms of oppression in the metropolis, although far from as institutionally violent, as Africans were in the colonies. The 1933 Portuguese Constitution stated that all citizens were equal before the law, 'except for women, the differences resulting from their nature and for the good of the family' (Guimarães, 1969 in Fernandes, 1996: 41). The husband was the head of the family and as such dictated all familial and marital matters, he was allowed to beat his wife, her property was under his control and she needed his permission to obtain a passport or travel abroad (Fernandes, 1996: 42). This gender prejudice is not to exempt the colonial wife from responsibility for her actions, but carries great weight in the ambiguity inherent in her position as both 'colonized and colonizer, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting.' (McClintock, 1995: 6).

Despite Deolinda's absolute belief in her new mission to educate the natives to carry the word of God where the Portuguese cannot, support for her cause is far from universal among her compatriots. The opposition that she faces functions as the voice of persistent Portuguese reticence to educate colonized subjects. The Portuguese empire, through inefficiency and a desire to keep its overseas 'provinces' as intellectually incapacitated as possible, failed to install a system of education or bring schooling to the majority of the

population of Guinea-Bissau, which was consequently the Portuguese colony with the most scarce and limited education system (Mendy, 2003). This reluctance is figured in Deolinda's colonialist friends, who claim that, '*Escola para indígena e só confusão. Preto que sabe ler é anarquista. Aliás, ele já é anarquista por natureza, se aprende a ler então é o caos total*' (AUT 59).

As liberal and lenient as Deolinda may seem to her compatriots, her actions beg questions about who benefits from her purported benevolence and indeed, the extent to which the adjective benevolent can be attributed in this case at all. According to Fanon, 'the man who adores the Negro is as sick as the man who abominates him' (1967: 8); this patronisation of the African people is as reprehensible as the racially-driven hatred that drove the enslavement and subjugation it seeks to excuse. The fundamental belief behind both attitudes is that the black race is inherently inferior to the white, and therefore whether bestialising or infantilising its members, the psychological and social end result on both parties and on the world that they cohabit is the same. Neither slavery nor paternalism granted agency to or bestowed sovereignty upon the colonised and both prevented them from becoming autonomous subjects. As discussed above, the evolution from slavery to paternalism reflected wider, international changes in the standing of universal human rights, however the desire at the core of the actions of the Portuguese colonizer in Guinea-Bissau remained unchanged. Just as the catholic mission enforced its status of superiority by co-opting in the oppression of the colonised and then bolstered its appearance of benevolence by "saving" those same oppressed people, Deolinda's drive to save the native population through education really only serves her own pride and the perpetuation of the imperial system. It also demonstrates another facet of the coloniser's deprecation and violation of native cultures, whereby she aims to imprint upon the mind of the colonised that she needs to be rescued from her primitive self

and her savage culture. The evolution that she is expected to take is towards that of mimicry, driven by 'the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*' (Bhabha, 1994: 86. Emphasis in original).

Ndani's colonial conditioning begins in her own village, as the imperial reach infiltrates an otherwise purely non-colonial space via the advice of her stepmother, who has some experience of servitude in white households. The need to complete tasks exactly as the white master requires is acknowledged and accepted, as Ndani '*Decorara tudo e aprendera inclusive algumas regras do comportamento que os patrões brancos exigiam dos criados pretos, maneiras próprias de responder, gestos indiciadores de obediência e de subserviência*' (AUT 23). Indeed it is not only passively accepted, but Ndani takes on both the role of the instigator of education, asking for lessons from her stepmother the teacher, and also the role of willing pupil. She sees that she must be educated to meet the standards expected by the white employers, and although she does accept the social superiority of the whites, stating, '*branco pobre não existe*' (AUT 24) (Valandro 2011: 56), she does not necessarily whole-heartedly believe that they are inherently superior. Rather, she finds the whites' customs not only wholly alien but also quite bizarre and initially takes any strange action that she does not understand to be '*uma atitude talvez normal entre os brancos*' (AUT 24). The extent of Ndani's colonial conditioning is shown in her inversion of the colonial myth of innate black hyper-virility transferred onto the black female body as a hyper-fecundity. Ndani internally ponders why white women have so many fewer children than black women, when they seem to take much more pride in showing off the accomplishments of those few children that they could be very happy with more. She questions, '*Ou será que mulher de branco não dá para parir muito, como mulher de preto pode?*' (AUT 34). However here the myth of the hyper-fertile black other is inverted to create a myth of the under-fertile

white other: a white inadequacy rather than an animal, black over-savagery. The roots of resistance are revealed in the mind of the colonised, as owing to their proximity to European ideas and education, the colonised state of being 'almost the same but not quite' evolves and the balance wavers from mimicry toward menace (Bhabha, 1994).

Deolinda's decorating of Ndani with a crucifix necklace forms a material symbol of her increasing transfer into the European world of the church - at least in the eyes of her *patroa*. With triumph and a certain amount of affection, the Portuguese woman fastens the chain around the girl's neck, the jewellery now symbolic of the colonial yoke and her new enslavement to biblical studies. It also serves to replace the protective *gris-gris* that Ndani's father had once given her to wear around her neck and, as Valandro notes (2011: 56), a symbol of the parallel that Ndani draws between the two worlds of black and white, African and European. The charm, given to her by her father to ward off the bad spirits that were said to inhabit her, had soon been lost, causing her father to angrily proclaim he could do no more to protect her. Deolinda intends the crucifix to perform the same role of spiritual protection. However, as we learn later in the narrative, the woman's obsessive evangelising contributes to her husband's feeling of neglect that, in turn, is blamed for his consequent rape of Ndani. Deolinda and Ndani's physical stance at this moment forms a perfect image of colonial patronisation; the woman stands smiling with her hands on the girl's shoulders and the girl thanks her, '*falara baixo, com os olhos no chão, com muita humildade*' (AUT 41). This is how the colonised must accept the gift of education and salvation from their master. Internally, however, Ndani sees going to church as yet another mundane task that she has to carry out under boss's orders, '*como lavar prato sujo*' (AUT 54). Ndani recognises the degree of hypocrisy in the colonial religious mission, where salvation is imposed on the purportedly needy primarily by violence, and then via the allegedly peaceful process of evangelisation.

Going to mass is like cleaning dirty dishes or, for the European, a dirty conscience. Indeed, from the very moment of Deolinda's suggestion that Ndani begins to attend church, the girl recognises the cultural effacement involved in this change in her circumstances, regardless of the apparently well-intentioned motivation: '*Ainda há dias estava convencida que finalmente as coisas tinham começado a correr-lhe bem, mas eis que a senhora vem com a história de ir à igreja*' (AUT 39). Ndani understands that she is not being called 'to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor' (Fanon 1963: 32).

Throughout the first two chapters of the novel, in which Sila's female protagonist is working as a *criada*, she is referred to as '*Ndani, aliás Daniela.*' This repeats Dona Deolinda's mishearing of the girl's name and failure to be able to repeat the sounds, suspiciously taking it as 'a communist name' such as Tânia or Dânia (AUT 31). Portugal was one of the founding members of NATO and therefore avidly anti-communist. Moreover, communism was often equated with anti-colonialist movements; therefore these two concepts were to be jointly feared by representatives of Salazar's regime in Africa (Rothwell 2004: 79). This repeated doubling of the girl's names reflects the internal confusion that the renaming causes within her, confusion brought about because she is denied the agency to name herself and the right to her own African name. This in turn reflects that which Fanon (1967) explains as the removal by the coloniser of the colonised's right to self-define; any existing status or definition being wiped out and replaced with the imposed inferiority and fixed identity brought with the arrival of the European coloniser. It also firmly places, as per the colonial setting, the Portuguese version of the girl's name, and therefore the Portuguese culture, as superior to and preferable over the African (Valandro 2011: 53). This forced mimicry, and denial of Africanity is spread further into physical appearance, as Deolinda is strict about

Ndani not having braids in her hair for church, demanding she brush it out to look less '*indígena*' (AUT 46).

Within the context of the church, the narrator refers to the women and their maids who attend mass using their full Christian names, for example '*Maria da Esperança, criada da Dona Maria dos Anjos*'; '*Maria Clara, criada de Dona Maria Clarice*' (AUT 46). Maria was a common choice for colonial women renaming their African servants with Christian Portuguese names, sometimes even giving them the same name of their last servant for convenience (Rothwell, 2004: 80), whilst *Dona* is the recognised form of polite address for senior women throughout the lusophone world. The narrator's repetitive use of these sets of prefixes, however, appears to such an extent that narrations involving any more than two woman-servant pairs become confusing to the point of the ridiculous, and the mimicking of their use is rendered almost mocking (Bhabha, 1994). Furthermore, represented in this gender group and their names is the pressure placed upon the women to fulfil the mother/whore dichotomy of being both sexually attractive and virtuously devoted to the (national) family. Within the church, women are grouped into one identity under the virtuous prefix of the *Virgem Maria*, which sits in a neat contrast to their bickering, rivalry, gossiping and backstabbing, as once again Sila refers to the hypocrisy of the colonial mission as a gentle, kind-hearted veneer coating a bitter, dangerous interior.

Whilst Deolinda is – consciously or unconsciously – ignorant of the connotations of the religious machine that she helps to fuel, her more educated husband sees his work as a civil servant as having nothing whatsoever to do with the Mission, and he appears to understand that there was nothing remotely religious or realistically benevolent about the colonial presence in Africa. Senhor Leitão represents the unashamedly and overtly violent side of the imperial machine and its mark on the national body. Unlike the colonisation of the

country, his physical colonisation of Ndani features on no more than one page of the novel. Nevertheless, the brevity of the narration of the rape does not indicate any lesser impact on the girl's life. This event in the novel is, of course, of accurate historical and social relevance, as rape has long been, and still is, used as a weapon of war and the oppression of populations as a whole and women in particular, and the colonial period was no different. Lusotropicalism, the euphemistic term used by Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre to define the character of Portuguese colonialism, converted colonial occupation and war into a sovereign mission, and within that mission rape became an '*acto de dádiva e partilha*' (Santos 1985 in Ribeiro 2002: 167). Karamcheti (1999: 167) refers to rape as 'the master trope of colonial discourse,' as the violated land is expressed as the female form of Mother Africa. She writes of the sexualisation and romanticisation of European exploration and exploitation described as the 'penetration' of 'virgin foreign territories' and 'their taking by the virile masculinity of colonial force' (ibid: 125).

The narrative of the novel points the finger of blame for the rape at Deolinda: '*As exigências da missão e os sucessos contínuos da sua acção afastavam-na cada dia mais do seu lar. As suas preocupações pelas almas a salvar levaram-na a esquecer um vício antigo do marido: violar criadas*' (AUT 66). The narrator crisply echoes the imperial patriarchal rhetoric: she neglected her husband's needs, so her husband raped the maid; therefore she is to blame for the rape. He did no more than that which he is naturally driven to do, and contemporary discourse dictates that she should expect this result to her actions. For Phillip Rothwell, Deolinda's neglect is an attempt to step out of the European woman's place in history by the hearth, in the role of a reproductive object and into man's time, where history is written and starred in (2004: 74). The place of the woman within the home formed a solid pillar of the Novo Estado's socio-political ideology: 'The great nations should lead by

example, keeping women at their hearth. But these great nations seem to ignore [the fact] that the solid constitution of the family cannot exist if the wife lives outside of her home. This is how evil grows and dangers become more prevalent' (Salazar quoted in Ballesteros Garcia, 2001: 206). Deolinda's straying from her proper place brings about the 'violence of the unsanctioned rape' as 'the system cannot cope with the lapse in the colonial gender code' (Rothwell 2004: 74). However, let us dare to bring Leitão's own agency into consideration, and posit that there is more to his motivation to rape than his wife's disruption of an imposed system. Fanon scrutinises the colonial myth of the black man's virility and sexual superiority, placing a white thirst for sexual revenge as the fundamental purpose of lynching (1967: 159), from which I argue there emerges the idea that white rape of the black woman could also be performed as sexual revenge, as the white man acts upon his need to prove that he has ultimate (sexual) power. Therefore, Leitão's rape of Ndani stems from his innate insecurity as a representative of the ultra-masculine colonial machine that must constantly reassert its power in every way possible in order to maintain it. The fact that the rape occurs at the same time that Leitão is hoping for a promotion up the ranks of this machine, as well as his wife contending his status as head of the family with her own work, deepens the significance of his need to assert his power.

Deolinda, despite debating ruining her husband's career, does not speak out and denounce his misdeed because of the failings this would expose. Within the context of British colonial India, Paxton argues that rape charges against the male coloniser were rare, as they exposed the failure of the apparently benign paternalism that they were supposed to extend to the Indian women whom they were assigned to protect (1999: 14). In a similar vein, Deolinda refrains from reporting Leitão because she would thus expose the failure of her own benign paternalism and inability to evangelise even her own husband. The Portuguese evangelising

mission did not denounce colonial rape of women, nor of the land, just as it neglected to expose an uncountable amount of other human violations, because to do so would highlight its own failures and the vacuity of its piety. Looking further east in Africa, the power of this potential exposition is evident in the contribution of Roger Casement. His reports on the inhumane treatment of native people in the Belgian Congo helped bring about the end of ‘evil’ Leopoldian domination, and simultaneously provided the British government with metaphorical arms to control rival European powers (Louis, 1964; Hasian Jr., 2012). This dichotomy of the feminine versus masculine colonialism of Ndani as the nation is juxtaposed when Deolinda asks herself, *‘Qual devia ser a posição de uma mulher católica e civilizada, cujo marido cometia sistematicamente actos indecentes, crimes repugnantes, pecados imperdoáveis?’* (AUT 66). Deolinda evidently sees no wrong in her own acts, but as we have seen, her putative benevolence is akin to a masked cultural rape wreaking damage that is as penetrating and dangerous as the physical violation by her husband.

The repercussions of the rape continue to damage Ndani’s chances of a happy life. In the narrative build up to their wedding, Régulo’s insistence that it would be impossible for his young wife-to-be Ndani to be anything other than a virgin, despite knowing she worked as a servant in a white household, suggests his ignorance of the extent of white exploitation of Africans in their employment. If this is so, one must question if it could really be that rural men were unaware of what the systematic rape that was part and parcel of European colonialism, or whether the stubborn Régulo is so set on completing his master plan of having the perfect wife in the perfect house that he blinds himself to the very real possibility of his bride-to-be not meeting social expectations of virtue. When on the morning after their wedding there is no proof of Ndani’s virginity, Régulo’s demise begins, and once again the traditional, automatic patriarchal blaming of women leads to the community’s blame being

placed on Ndani, and she is ostracised. Not only do Régulo and the community blame Ndani for her earlier rape and its consequences, but their blame places the old man as the real victim, as their wedding and his dying are linked twice in the collective memory of the community mourning the loss of their leader: '(...) *era tão intenso que fez lembrar um outro acontecimento ocorrido há cerca de dois anos antes*' (AUT 119); '*fizeram surgir novamente a recordação do último casamento do Régulo*' (AUT 120). Furthermore, Régulo was only driven to formulate the plan that brought them to be married because his pride was wounded by the Portuguese *Chefe* and he wanted revenge. Here the colonial male conflict is acted out upon the female body and it is she who is left damaged. Not only is the woman caught up in this struggle, but it is also she who is blamed when battles are lost on either side. Women in these contexts become doubly victimised, as men claim credit for development and simultaneously absolve themselves of responsibility.

As Augel observes, '*Os três diferentes caminhos percorridos por Ndani exemplificam os destinos da mulher Africana: como criada dependente dos patrões estrangeiros, como esposa num casamento forçado, como mulher independente que escolhe ela mesma o seu companheiro e enfrenta todas as convenções sociais por esse amor*' (1998: 343). Despite the ardour and determination with which Ndani fights against the *azar*, the misfortune that repeatedly throws obstacles in the way of her happiness, and therefore the strong female characterisation of Bissau-Guinean women that she represents, it would be difficult to argue the case for her being categorised as a specifically feminist character. She forms, rather, the body of the Guinean nation upon which colonial history and its cultural, physical and social brutalities have been written. Sila chooses a female character in line with a view that he unfolds throughout his trilogy and which will now be further explored; that women and their

as yet mostly unrecognised and unutilised capacities could forge a new nationalism and a hopeful future for a perpetually conflict-torn post-independence Guinea-Bissau.

The Janus face of male-authored women

McClintock (1993: 66-7) introduces 'the gendering of nation time' as a furthering of Nairn's figuring of the nation as the modern Janus:

(...) the temporal anomaly within nationalism - veering between nostalgia for the past, and the impatient, progressive sloughing off of the past - is typically resolved by figuring the contradiction as a 'natural' division of gender. Women are represented as the atavistic and authentic 'body' of national tradition (inert, backward-looking, and natural), embodying nationalism's conservative principle of continuity. Men, by contrast, represent the progressive agent of national modernity (forward-thrusting, potent and historic), embodying nationalism's progressive, or revolutionary principle of discontinuity.

In "Janus and gender: women and the nation's backward look" (2000) Tricia Cusack further explores the argument that the opposing faces of the nation-Janus are differently gendered, women occupying the backward look, encompassing them as mothers of the nation and entrenching them within the private, apolitical and ahistorical sphere of the family and familial home. Meanwhile, in the forward look of this traditionally gendered Janus, men are identified as 'leaders of the nation and the fount of the nation's native skills and genius ... the patriot's patrimony' (T. Cusack 2000: 546). In the novel *Mistida* Abdulai, Sila to a certain

extent conforms to this traditional articulation of nationalist ideology as he erases women from History, curiously confining his depiction of the anti-colonial conflict to an exclusively male space and time. However, with the liberty afforded to the author of fiction, he imagines a future space where participants – in this case women – go beyond what is historically evidenced, although he does so not entirely unproblematically. I will here interrogate Sila's erasure of women from Guinean history and go on to explain his inversion of the faces of this conceptual Janus. I will explore his placing of men and the specific masculinities they represent as the face of the nation's violent past and a once hopeful nationalism now hampered by corruption, thus allowing women to emerge as the forward-looking face of a progressive nationalism. I will examine this by addressing three factors that Tricia Cusack (2000) uses to situate men in the forward look and women in the backward with reference to the novel in question: the existence of political activity as an exclusively male prerogative, the exclusion of women from the masculine national polity and its foundations, and the impediment of their role in the family to women's political activity and responsibility.

In the historical annals of the majority of societies, the role of women is unstressed, reduced, ignored or even erased. Regardless of the presence, influence and actions a woman or group of women may in reality have commanded in the past, the reporting of that reality in History as the purported factual recordings of events remembered and studied from that time onwards tends to neglect the input of female actors in favour of their male colleagues. Images of heroes live on and are sustained through popular discourse and its images, whereas heroines struggle to be remembered on equal terms to the men of their era and impact. If one were to take *Mistida* as the basis on which to make historical assumptions about the Guinean war for independence, women would never have been present on this stage acting out the process of liberation. They would appear in the final act, arriving to sweep up the dead bodies

and debris of their country once the *Tuga*¹² had disappeared, sitting by to watch their men folk politicise the aftermath. Aside from prostitutes, casual lovers and the hysterical wife and mother of a dead Portuguese soldier, there is no mention of women within the narrative of the colonial war. *Mistida's* named female characters, the elderly Mama Sabel, who is also referred to as Mbubi (*Eterna Paixão*); a woman suggested to be Ndani from *A Última Tragédia*; and the young, carefree Djiba Mané and her friends, only appear within the context of their own personal battles and are not mentioned in relation to the national fight for the independence of their country from Portuguese imperial rule. However, as I established in the introduction, there is no doubt that women played a recognised and significant part in the anti-colonial war.¹³

Women's place in the liberation movement formed an important part of the anti-colonial programme of the PAIGC, and Cabral stated that victory in the revolution would only truly be achieved with the full participation of women (1974). The national anthem, written by Cabral himself, does not talk about sons and brothers, as is the case with the majority of African national anthems, but of the unity of an immortal country.¹⁴ The names of certain soldiers and commanders, such as Titina Silá, Canhé Na N'Tungué and Teresa Badinca are still celebrated as war heroines today by those who remember their significant

¹²A Crioulo word, originally denoting a Portuguese soldier, today more commonly used as an adjective for any Portuguese or white person. From *(Por)tuga(l)*. (Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa Contemporânea, 2001).

¹³ Aliou Ly's 2012 PhD thesis "*Courage does not come from a Sardine Can but From the Heart*": *The Gendered Realms of Power during Guinea Bissau's National Liberation Struggle, 1963—1974* has broken considerable ground in the provision of oral female sources on the anti-colonial war, but unfortunately the existence of this dissertation came to my attention too late for its highly relevant research to be used here. This is highly lamentable given Ly's argument that 'a focus on women's narratives dramatically shifts scholarly understanding of this and other liberation wars, away from ideology and charismatic leadership, and toward the personal and collective reasons for women's participation' (Ly, 2012: 9).

¹⁴ This significant point was made to me by Dr. Igor Cusack in an email on 2nd Dec. 2012. Cf. I. Cusack, 2005; 2008.

contribution to the war for independence (UN CEDAW 2009: 12). However, as the collection of twenty first century testimonies *Storias di Mindjeris* demonstrates, the significance of women in national memory appears to be decreasing with time: '*Nós tivemos mulheres na luta de libertação nacional que são os nossos exemplos, olhamos para elas todos os dias... Mas a geração mais nova conhece a história dessas mulheres? Não podemos deixar que o tempo apague a história destas mulheres, que a História nos apague*' (Gui N'Djai quoted in Moreira, 2009: 54). As this memory of women's physical participation in the national liberation movement, their military leadership and their role in forging an independent future for their country fades and is replaced by an entirely masculine image, young girls and women are thus exposed to fewer historical female icons. It is, in this respect, slightly worrying then that Sila excludes women from his war narrative rather than highlighting the role they played in recent and significant history, and one must consider the extent of the damage risked in erasing the little place in History that women had.

It is also necessary to question the end to which Sila excludes or ignores female participation in the colonial war. As chapter three of this thesis will further demonstrate, Sila presents readers with a dichotomy of a violent and corrupt male past and present contrasted with a hopeful and peaceful female future for Guinea-Bissau, and the absence of women from the narration of that violent past could be used as a tool to emphasise their role in the future. However, one must consider whether it is damaging to erase the little place in politicised national memory that the women of Guinea-Bissau have in order to construct the national future on female foundations. In attempting to give women a more prominent role in the future, Sila may be at risk of reducing their historical agency, a critical flaw in his otherwise somewhat feminist narrative. Augel (2001: 64) cites the various ailments and disabilities of the characters in the novel as being consequences of '*o roubo da memória, sem a qual a*

História não é possível. However, in excluding women from his version of History Sila steals from national memory the recognition of the crucial input of women in the national liberation struggle. Cross-culturally, role models and historical icons are seen as important images to be held in esteem in order for children and adults to be inspired, yet within *Mistida*, Sila replaces historically accepted female war icons with more fragile future constructs in order to inspire the young women of his country. In doing so, one could accuse him of having failed to embrace all of the elements of the PAIGC's liberation discourse or, given the relatively limited readership he would anticipate for his novel, perhaps he takes for granted that his readers would be fully aware of the critical role played by the women of Guinea-Bissau in the fight to oust the coloniser from their land. Either way, the consequence of this weakness is that women and their role in History is forgotten, their contribution buried under the bodies of the men who fell with them.

The inclusion of women in the past war narrative would not necessarily cast them within the shadow of responsibility for violence, nor the perpetuation of the corruption that pervades the ranks of government. All those involved in war are portrayed by the narrator as to some extent being victims, even Amambarka and Nham-Nham who are ultimately victims of their own greed, bloodthirstiness and madly corrupted nature, as I will examine in chapter 3. As Sila does not assume any connection between male war hero-victims and the present corrupt government by which they are so disillusioned and which often contribute to their post-war sickness, this reluctance to include women within the war narrative is somewhat confusing. If his intention is to clarify a difference between the dark and light, past and future, despair and hope, then this is as problematic as the traditional gendered Janus that posits women purely in the traditional past of the nation. The foundations cannot be laid for a positive future with just one of the sexes, whilst the other is locked into its violent, power-

hungry and greed-driven past. I will now examine this bright, hopeful, feminine future that forms Sila's inversion of the traditional Janus to place women in the forward look.

Tricia Cusack notes that, “‘Civic’ nationalism has [...] been conceived and practised in gendered, not universalist, terms in so far as political activity has been represented as a masculine prerogative’ (T. Cusack 2000: 543). However, the character Djiba Mané enters the political space and converts this prerogative to a female one. It is important here to explain the meaning of the novel's title. Augel (1998: 349-50) explains that *mistida* has various meanings and that Sila plays with them throughout the text, although for any Guinean reader the intended meaning would be quite clear. The word comes from the common Crioulo verb *misti* - to wish, desire or covet - and concerns some business or task to be completed for personal advantage. It is used most commonly in the novel in the phrase *safar a mistida*, which Augel (2007: 317) translates as ‘*uma tarefa urgente a ser cumprida, um negócio inadiável a ser tratado, um certo e enigmático empreendimento a realizar*’. Djiba has a great thirst for power and she eventually rises to the head table of national government, from where she wishes to fulfil her own *mistida* with the help of her friends. This, along with their recuperative presence after the bloodshed in the final chapter, places them as Sila's projection of the positive female potential in the possession of political power and the satisfaction it brings. This is diametrically opposed to the negative image of power, influence and their consequences that has appeared thus far with a predominantly masculine political space; that is, within the space of Guinea-Bissau's failed transition from a colonial state to the nation of Cabral's vision, or anything close to progressive and egalitarian (Cf. chapter 3; Forrest 1987, 2002; Galli 1990).

Sila's reversal of the Janus's gendered gazes as a means of reconstructing the nation with the greater prevalence of women involves aspects of reinventing political bases, even

that of nationalism itself. Enloe (2000: 44) states that ‘nationalism typically has sprung from masculinised memory, masculinised humiliation and masculinised hope’, yet through his female characters, Sila brings feminised memory, humiliation and hope into play as equally crucial aspects of the nation, and thus of reclaiming a once potent nationalism that has begun to wither under the weight of mass socio-political despair. As I argued above, on the grounds of memory, the body of the novel is lacking as it fails to document women’s place in national memory at all. The humiliation of a nation is inherent in imperial and slave history – female as much as male – yet this memory is maintained in an increasingly masculinised history that leaves little ever decreasing space for feminine figures. In *Mistida* Ndani, the barefoot woman wearing a head scarf is humiliated by the growing, taunting pile of rubbish that attempts to displace her and disrupt her life; that is, by a physical representation of the putrefaction of the state (Augel 1998: 352). Meanwhile, Mama Sabel personifies a need to resolve and move on from the past that is maintained by a fervent hope for an improved future for the generations to come: ‘*Precisava de continuar a encarar a vida ... com fé e esperança num dia melhor... Se não chegasse com ela em vida, podia sempre chegar depois, para os seus netos ou bisnetos*’ (100) . Tricia Cusack (2000: 544) expands upon Enloe’s idea, stating that ‘masculine hegemony in the modern state has frequently been maintained by social networks based on male bonding’. Despite some vast differences in age, roots, experience and outlook on life, the women in *Mistida* forge bonds through support and cooperation on the basis of which a social network is formed to challenge masculine hegemony at the *Kambansa*, the figurative River Crossing (Augel 2001: 66)¹⁵ of the final chapter’s title.

¹⁵ Augel (1998; 2007) most helpfully and thoroughly explains in Portuguese many of the key Crioulo words and phrases included in the text which are not already explained by the author. The Portuguese to English translation is my own.

Citing Yuval-Davis (1997), Tricia Cusack (2000: 544) addresses the exclusion of women 'from the collective "we" of the body politic', which forces them to 'retain an object rather than a subject position ... In this sense the construction of womanhood has a property of "otherness"'. The othering of women within the novel is undeniable given their ahistoricity and marginal social position; however the masculine standard to which they are Other is here not represented as the traditional, stoic and trustworthy patriot's idol. As I will explore in greater depth in chapter 3, Sila rather displays the impermanence, fragility, and corruptible nature of the masculine norm that the nation regards as the only possible master, in order to display the female Other as a viable and indeed preferable alternative. Women are therefore not Othered in terms of estrangement and exclusion but rather by way of a proposed example of the alternative that is open to the people of Guinea-Bissau, and to which they might look in the quest for resolution of national ills. From their enforced situation outside the traditional polity, its normal social rules and their consequent expectations, women may find themselves freer to act against those norms and therefore in a position of strength. Via their position of alienated alterity, the women in *Mistida* reclaim the right to self-define that the female nation was denied under both Portuguese rule and as subject of the patriarchal postcolonial state. In writing generally of post-Independence disillusionment in African fiction, Kehinde (2004: 238) comments that 'promoters of this literary canon, [believe] that novels of disillusionment give expression to a profound rejection of African societies as they are presently constituted, especially in terms of their human dimensions'. In these terms, the reader of *Mistida* is encouraged to look upon the existing "we" of the body politic with abhorrence and observe its rejection by Sila, via the women of his society, and their quest for a new, more representative social constitution.

In her analysis of the gendering of nationalisms, Tricia Cusack discussed the existing political power imbalance between the sexes being due to their respective encumbering or non-encumbering by 'the institution of the family' (T. Cusack 2000: 546). Yet Sila's exposure of the way in which that unencumbered power has been wielded in the public, and indeed the private, business of the state in Guinea-Bissau suggests that this lack of family duty may leave those in power devoid of certain empathies and humanitarian capacities. Mama Sabel provides attentive and loving care for a young woman who indirectly attempts to ruin her business but needs the older woman's help, and the old woman displays fierce reluctance to ever give up working despite her age and ill health. She worries for the state of her country, for the prevalence of negligence in business and the systematic unwillingness to accept responsibility for the corrosion of the nation's well-being. Djiba Mané expressly loves her friends, and it is their strong bond that brings them back together after ideological misunderstanding and separation to form a plan to '*safar a mistida*'. They had fallen out as Djiba's friends had struggled to understand her newfound obsession with power and the need for satisfaction in her work, perhaps due to their confinement within a dominant patriarchal mindset that prevents them from comprehending why a woman would want to get into the male space of politics. This problem, however, is overcome through their bond. Finally, Ndani's determination to battle against endemic social problems for the means to support her children, reunite her family and bring some light of hope to their lives places the final piece to this image of the attributes that the Guinean woman can bring to politics that the men apparently do not. Meanwhile, the novel's masculine figures – all enjoying freedom from being 'encumbered' by the responsibilities of family - are either driven by greed, obsessed with hatred, are violent with their subconscious consumption by the memories of warfare over which they are given exclusive rights, or are muted, blinded, tortured and suffering physically,

psychologically and spiritually because of their attempts to work within or against the existing patriarchal system. I will explore this in greater detail in chapter 3.

Through women, nationalisms have identified the nation as an organic family unit, placing women as Mothers of the Nation, and thus men as Fathers and heads (T. Cusack, 2001: 543), however those same nationalisms often prevent women from becoming political via their situation within the regular family unit. As we have seen, nationalisms have worked on the assumption that the institutions of family and state government must remain mutually exclusive and thus, as within patriarchal societies, women are typically bound to the hearth within the home, excluded from the body politic. Sila follows the ideology of the PAIGC of the anti-colonial period by opening up new pathways whereby the skills and instincts developed through an imposed traditional existence within the mechanics of the household and neighbourhood family – be they care, pragmatism, financial planning or accepting responsibility for mistakes - might be recognised as valid equipment for the familial gender to be granted greater presence within the familiarly-structured nation. Whether incidental or not, Sila appears to suggest that women would handle power better because they are situated and educated as the brain and heart of the family, even though this is a socially unrecognised role that is predominantly attributed to their male partners. On the other hand, men are traditionally automatically placed as the head of the structure because of the power they are granted on the grounds of their gender, rather than via dedication to the sustenance and maintenance of the family. As the family has been portrayed as a ‘microcosm of the social order’ (Sluga, 1998: 93), male political authority found foundations in men’s seat at the head of the family. However this heading of the family is primarily figurative, whilst the real burden of parenthood and its practical implications, from which a perceptible education in

leadership and governance may be learned, falls upon the women of Guinea-Bissau, as chapter 2 will show in greater detail.

Sila's future narrative of a Guinea-Bissau centred on women's potential is flawed in its exclusions of them from history, but it can be found to be additionally problematic in its expectations of female nature. Without women having had the historical opportunity to prove themselves in positions of power, the writer resorts to inscribing them with the benevolent attitude and capacity that he assumes them to possess. It could be said that the author's grief for the lost bond with his mother of the oedipal stage has resulted in a positive effect, seeking to regain that bond via re-identification with women, rather than with negative effect, whereby the grief turns into anger towards women (Williamson in Lange 2008: 2). Precariously, he does not consider the potential of their vulnerability to vices or temptations, their corruptibility or the way in which their presumed natural humanity might give way under the pressure of governing power. As admirable as this might be, one cannot avoid the possible fundamental core of this process; that women are a "blank page" upon which the author creates them exactly as he would wish them to be (Gubar, 1980), that the male author is the ventriloquist to the female character-nation, putting into their mouths the words and into their hands the actions with which he expects them to act. In this instance, Sila displays his sharp self-awareness at the very end of the novel, as the narrator is removed from his position as omniscient author to appear in his own narration being interrogated by Mbubi and Ndani who label him a *djidiu di caneta* - a Crioulo term roughly translated as a "pen-poet", "pen-rhapsodist", "storyteller with a pen", or "pen-singer".¹⁶ They admonish him for renaming

¹⁶ These approximate translations are my own based on *Caneta* being the Portuguese for 'pen' and the following definitions of a *djidiu* by Augel (2007: 322): '*Os bardos ou griots, os djidius, como são chamados na Guiné-Bissau, transmitem através do canto e da narração o que a memória coletiva armazenava, os feitos épicos ou gloriosos da coletividade e, além de louvores, mostra de simpatia ou de subserviência, incluem em seu repertório críticas aos príncipes, aos chefes e aos dirigentes. Ainda*

them, exiling their teachers and husbands and stealing their stories to mutate and retell them as he wishes. Thus they reclaim the narrative from him, leave him feeling shaken and aimless, and they walk off to join '*as mulheres que abnegadamente lutavam pelo resgate da esperança*' (M 212). This is echoed in the epilogue to *A Última Tragédia* where he casts doubt over Ndani's suicide, opening a discussion about the fluid nature of stories as they are told and retold. He questions the validity of his novel by situating himself as any other oral storyteller and his story as one version of a series of events, rather than bestowing upon it the prestige traditionally granted to the written over the oral literature in western culture. Sila nevertheless evidently has a particular agenda in mind, his construction of a hopeful future for his country, and the construction of positive feminist characters to inspire. Over two centuries ago Mary Wollstonecraft wrote that negative stereotypical portrayals of women in literature were damaging to the development of their place in society, as detrimental patriarchal accounts of women may be accepted as truths and perpetuated by both sexes (Wollstonecraft 1792; Robbins, 2000; Lange 2008). Conversely, one must consider that Sila's writing of positive, strong, capable female roles might support the creation of positive self- and societal belief in women and their potential as the necessary agents of change. Nevertheless, this would be infinitely more powerful were women to write it themselves, with their own voice.

This example of a male writer bestowing on women an agency that they already had returns us circularly to the writing of the nation upon the female body as in both instances the author is open to criticism for denying women their own word whilst exposing their societal lack thereof. The colonialist imposed his perception of fecund, needy and violable femininity upon the land that he colonised, and just as the male writer perpetuates this imagery by

hoje são populares no país e em todo o continente.'; and this by João Ferreira: '*Ele é um divulgador da literatura oral e pode ser caracterizado como um trovador andarilho, apátrida, que anda de terra em terra, exercendo sua missão de poeta e de cantor.*'

denouncing the pillage of Mother Africa, he further puts words into the mouths of the women of the future, arguably prolonging into the future their lack of agency. In Sila's work *Ndani* primarily functions as the body of the nation, the site upon which colonial assimilation, abuse and rape is enacted and where the nation satirises colonial justification. Furthermore, she acts as a symbol for Guinean women as a collective Other within their own nation, blamed for all evil and misfortune and their bodies violated as a part of the process of a marital culture within which they are objects of property. The women in *Mistida* provide Guinea-Bissau with potential national heroines of humility, with the power to save the nation once they are given the space to do so, simply by doing what they have always done but with the new grasp of a power won once men have been destroyed by their own masculine archetypes. Yet one must continue to tread carefully when it is a male author who creates the female figureheads about which one reads. In order for the male author to avoid imposing his will, however positive, upon women, there must be a counterweight to his word, and the real female nation must be asserted. For this, women writers must raise their voices, pick up their pens and reclaim the discourse of their half of the population of Guinea-Bissau.

CHAPTER 2.

WOMEN'S WRITING: THE INTIMATE AND THE NATION

The intimate in women's writing at its most basic can be understood as the space constructed upon the landscapes of desire, domesticity and maternal experience, usually but not always confined to the physical space of the home. The intimate can, however, be more thoroughly examined as a prism through which authors communicate the interactions between the private, and the political and the historical. This chapter will show, through the analysis of the fiction of three women authors from Guinea-Bissau – Odete Semedo, Domingas Samy and Filomena Embaló, that the intimate aspects of women's lives are utilised as a means of articulating experience, and providing new perspectives on wider social, political and historical subjects. Through analysis of these texts it will be demonstrated that the intimate is not limited to explorations of the corporeal, domestic and marital, or love experiences of women, but can be considered as an alternative narrative lens on the world to contrast with the perspective presented by the standard, that of the male writer, to which women's writing is othered. The most traditionally intimate narratives will be seen to be used to comment on issues that are most easily identifiable as exclusively female, such as aspects of sexual health, women's bodily experience and, most significantly in these texts, on traditional marriage practises in Guinea-Bissau. Through that same lens of the intimate, however, writers' focus moves on as they use different familial and personal relationships as a channel for reflecting on Guinean social narratives that reach beyond the typically intimate space of the home. Looking yet further out from the domestic space, this lens figures as the use of a confessional

and testimonial form of writing with which authors tackle the much broader narratives of national identity and colonially-imposed historical class difference.

Throughout this analysis there will also be, where appropriate, a comparison with Sila's novels and consideration of the views and ideas that are complicated, brought to the fore or contradicted by the particular subjectivities presented by the female authors. I will place these authors' works in relation to the novels of Abdulai Sila, both in terms of their representations of gender, their response to the gendered portrayals featured in the male canon, and in considering the contribution they make to the small body of works that form the published fiction of Guinea-Bissau. Where Sila turned gendered concerns into national narratives acted out symbolically on allegorical bodies, I will show that when female authors of fiction choose to write about intimate concerns they use individual examples as case studies for the sufferings and prejudices typical of women's lives in Guinea-Bissau. They condemn the status quo of gender inequality via strong women and girls who rebel outright against aspects of their personal subordination at great risk to themselves and others, a characteristic absent from Sila's female characters who are strong but not rebellious.

This chapter will examine the work of three women authors in order to bring into discussion the female literary voice from Guinea-Bissau. Only one novel has thus far been written by a woman in Guinea-Bissau: *Tiara* by the Angolan-born, naturalised Guinean Filomena Embaló. *Tiara* follows the life of a young woman, whom Nascimento (2012) defines as a classically romantic heroine, from her war-torn home country to the former metropolis to another African country still fighting for independence from colonial rule. The other works consulted here are *contos*, short stories. Domingas Samy published the very first book of fiction to come from Guinea-Bissau but received little acclaim. Her work, a volume of three stories titled *A Escola* (1993) is, of course, significant to such a study as this and will

be shown to be of considerable literary worth in investigating the situation and concerns of women in her country. As the titles suggest, Odete Semedo's two volumes *Sonéá: histórias e passadas que ouvi contar I* (2000a) and *Djênia: histórias e passadas que ouvi contar II* (2000b) provide insight into Guinean oral literary culture, including both stories and the depiction of the context in which they told, whilst also providing important social commentary on Guinea-Bissau at the turn of the twenty-first century.

A significant argument in the study of African women's writing is that its principal function has been to dispel the misconceptions and stereotypes that are (re)produced by male authors, and the struggle faced by women writers who must confront the stereotypes of their gender created by the male literary canon (Davies, 1986; Ogunidipe-Leslie 1987); they must 'write back' (Arndt 1997). These stereotypes are likened to the historical struggle of the (male) African writer of the mid-twentieth century in redressing the false images of his people written in the European colonial text (Jones et al.: 1987).¹⁷ Indeed, Molaria Ogunidipe-Leslie (1987) posits that it is the even the duty of the woman writer to correct these false images. Women have traditionally been confined to literary stereotypes in oppositional binaries (Ogunidipe-Leslie, 1987; Schipper, 1987; Arndt 1997). Of course the most simplistic and commonplace binary of all is that of the good woman, pictured as the traditional, loving mother, and the bad woman, being the modern, vicious, untrustworthy girl or whore. Further popular binaries feature the 'sweet mother', symbolic of fecundity and sacrifice, often conflated with Mother Africa, and the corresponding figure of the erotic lover, an

¹⁷ Moreover, Jones et al. assert that women writers have faced the same historical struggle in being neglected by male critics, observing that the Euro-centric is replaced by the African male-centric to reflect an equal subordination of a newer body of writers. The editors therefore emphasise the need for a certain flexibility and open-mindedness in approaching the work of African women writers, all the while being conscious of the risk of leaving women outside of the official circuit by placing them in a 'separate women's tradition' (Schipper in Jones, Palmer, Jones, 1987: 4).

essentialisation of women as passionate and sensual beings, limited to ‘phallic receptacles’ (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1987: 6). A further oppositional binary is used to represent the conflict between modernity and tradition via the ‘sophisticated city girl’, divorced from her rural roots and community, often a prostitute, and the ‘rural woman’, a static, naïve ‘pot of culture’. The significant presence of these binaries in the male gaze will be explored in Abdulai Sila’s *Eterna Paixão* in the following chapter. These reductionist dualisms are not purely the work of African male writers, but as Nnaemeka states (1997: 2-3), also of – principally western – feminist scholarship that all too easily seems to ‘straightjacket’ a complex fabric of issues into oppositional binaries that greatly over-simplify the reality from which texts emerge. Women African writers may, of course, also be found to perpetuate stereotypes and therefore be to a certain extent complicit in their resultant oppression.

Within the comparable African-American context, Patricia Hill Collins (1991) coined the term ‘controlling images’ and argued that their creation enabled social injustices to be presented as entirely natural, inherent aspects of society. Furthermore she states that, ‘objectification is central to the process of oppositional difference. In binary thinking, one element is objectified as the Other, and is viewed as an object to be manipulated and controlled’ (1991:77). There is therefore, a need to disrupt these binaries and their inherent objectification of women. Nnaemeka calls for greater consideration of the ‘gray areas’, where a woman may be both ‘benevolent *and* malevolent, healing *and* lethal, traditional *and* modern, victim *and* agent, goddess *and* whore’ (1997: 2-3. Author’s own emphases). This mythification of African women is argued to be an attempt by African man to justify his conservatism, and is symptomatic of his yearning for ‘the pre-colonial past where he was definitely king, father, husband and ruler’ (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1987: 8). Furthermore, it has been observed that most female characters in male-authored African novels are defined by

their relations to men: they are always a daughter, a wife, a mother (Frank, 1987; Davies, 1986). Frank claims is it only through the work of women novelists that we may meet more 'women characters with a destiny of their own' (1987: 15).

Beyond addressing men's literary illustrations of archetypal female characters, women writers can bring to the fore a more adequate exposure and analysis of issues that exclusively affect their gender and have been somewhat neglected or distorted in men's writing such as polygamy, childrearing, motherhood, wifhood and subordination (Jones et al., 1987: 2). Ogunjipe-Leslie (1987) also suggests that one consider what the bodily, biological experiences of menstruation, sex, childbirth, and the menopause might bring to women's writing in the way in which they affect their senses, their use of imagery and their personal writing styles. In a somewhat problematic article Femi Ojo-Ade states that only women can best represent their interests in society as, 'only a mother knows what it is to bear a child' (1991: 21).¹⁸ This brings into discussion the complications inherent in the representation of all African women by one, usually privileged, subgroup. African women writers are called upon to speak for their silent cohort yet, according to Ward (1997: 122) they have been effectively silenced as 'unrepresentative' when they have not coalesced to the generic models dictated by patriarchal images. Whether women attempt to speak against their misrepresentation and are disregarded or they do not wish to make the bold claim to represent their entire gender, either possibility lends great weight to Spivak's claim that 'the subaltern cannot speak' (1994).

¹⁸ In this article Ojo-Ade somewhat chauvinistically complains about the writing of the highly praised Nigerian writer Buchi Emecheta, 'In certain cases, personal tragedy, become obsessive and obstructive, has continued to color the writer's opinion. (...) My feeling is that the first event [her husband burning her first manuscript] has affected her later works, which contain some resentment toward men' (1991: 21). As if African women may have no other reason to feel resentment toward men than the writing of one influential woman, he goes on to demand that 'her viewpoint ought not to be turned into a war cry for every African woman' (ibid). Despite believing that only women are qualified to speak for women, this is countered by an apparent belief that if they have bad things to say about men from personal experience their opinion is somewhat devalued.

Writing marriage

The tumults of marriage are a popular theme in female-authored fiction all over the world, and these women's narratives are at times brutally honest about the situation of many women in Guinea-Bissau. In “A Escola”, the title story and first of Samy's *contos*, there is a recurrence of women experiencing marital abandonment, where they are left to shoulder the burden of running the family home and providing for often ungrateful children. She focuses on the great sacrifice made by women whose lives come to revolve around their offspring, whilst their ex- and not-quite-ex-husbands are silently absent and often in bed with the other, stereotypically younger woman. The protagonist's mother in “O destino” (Samy) is also left to struggle through poverty to raise her son alone as his being the illegitimate son of her white colonial master leads to the paternal family inevitably ostracising her and the child. These female-driven narratives are motivated to reveal the apparently common domestic labour imbalances lived by women in Guinea-Bissau, both where racial and class divides push women to economic peripheries and in more relevantly present-day instances, where polygamy and adultery deal women an emotionally, physically and economically harsh hand in life.

More specifically, forced marriage is a highly prominent theme in the works dealt with here, a foregrounding that is reflective of the fact that it is commonplace in Guinea-Bissau and the authors' concern with it. Guinean families and communities marry off their daughters as a means of improving or maintaining their social status and as an economic good, as brides are exchanged for favours as well as money (G. R. Ribeiro: 78). For those who receive a wife, they receive an additional member for the community work force, a valuable asset in a predominantly agricultural society (*ibid*). Of course, arranged marriage does not merely have

economic and social implications, but functions as a means of control over female sexuality and a limitation of sexual freedom (ibid: 79). The dangers reach beyond the psychological; in Guinea-Bissau arranged marriages typically involve girls aged between 12 and 16 years old and in 50% of cases their intended husbands are between 20 and 24 years older than them, therefore they are put at risk of sexual transmitted diseases, including AIDS, and of pregnancy from a much younger age, increasing the risks to both mother and child (ibid). Although increasingly more girls are willing to reject the marriages imposed by their families, this is not to say that their opposition is accepted or dealt with peacefully; of those girls who run away to seek safety with sympathetic relatives, neighbours or with church missions, those who are found by their family often suffer public humiliation, corporal punishment, incarceration and/or food deprivation (ibid). From the collection of testimonies *Storias di Mindjeris* (2009) one can discern that forced marriage is still a part of life for many women Guinea-Bissau, '*o casamento forçado é (...) violento e é feito por todas as raças na Guiné, até cristãos*', and that it has not evolved to the benefit of women: '*dentro de nós não gostamos, mas temos de aceitar*' (Sanu Mané: 26).

Throughout these narratives these writers seem to suggest that, just as in many countries and cultures all over the world, marriage in Guinea-Bissau is often a contract of convenience influenced by status, money and social pressures rather than a situation borne purely of love and romance. For poorer families this connection serves the purpose of freeing up the home of the financial burden of a daughter, or earning money through a dowry, whilst for better-off families marriage alliances can mean greater financial or social influence. In Semedo's "Aconteceu em Gã-Biafada" (2000b) the beautiful, young Lamarana is forced to marry a rich and powerful old man by her authoritarian father; Samy's Maimuna, the ambitious young girl who gives her name to the second short story of *A Escola*, is similarly

destined to be married off to a significantly older business man by her abusive patriarch; and forced marriage is once again the subject of 'Mara Cassamenti', a short story published with an accompanying commentary by Embaló on the cultural blog *Didinho* (2009b). Embaló's Tiara's life is overturned by the spectre of forced marriage when she finds her seemingly perfect husband is also married to a girl in his village whom he claims he was forced to impregnate by his oppressive matriarch in order to carry on the family line, suggesting that forced marriage is not just a concern for women but at times can also be acted out against the wishes and well-being of men. Through their narratives these female authors evidently wish to argue that forced marriage is rarely anything but detrimental to the physical and psychological well being of girls and women. Furthermore, given their mutual locality in Guinea-Bissau and the temporal proximity of their publications, they appear to suggest that its practise is a contravention of whatever progress may have been made in gender equality and the promotion of female agency during the anti-colonial war and by the PAIGC. After all, it is difficult to propose that women might be respected as political agents when their gender kin are bought and sold as financial or labour assets, much like animals.

It is highly significant here that many of the women and girls in these narratives rebel against the imposition of marriage. Nnaemeka (1997:4) posits that African women writers "recast the victim status" by foregrounding members of their gender as 'agents of insurrection and change operating within oppressive situations.' She expands to clarify that it is not so important whether or not the agents survive their insurrection or not, but it is their decision to take action to rescue themselves that is most significant. This is illustrated perfectly in Semedo's tale of Lamarana, who, in the first of the two narrations of her story, is killed along with her lover, Saliu, with whom she is both escaping and eloping. In the retelling of the tale in the following pages, however, Lamarana and Saliu manage to get away and eventually

meet a very happy ending. Although the active audience of young children present in the telling of this story object to the sad ending and call out for the happier version, Lamarana's rebellion is central to both storylines. Samy is similarly determined that her Maimuna be an 'agent of insurrection' as, with the help of her brother, cousin and boyfriend, she escapes on the night of her arranged wedding and the couple emigrate to Cuba where they fulfil their dreams to train as medical professionals before returning to Gabú, in east Guinea-Bissau, to practise.

Through the rebellion of their female characters, women writers promote female agency, an agency which, it is important to note, is more subdued in Sila's female characters. The oppressed women that Sila writes, despite their strength, do not rebel directly against the impositions of patriarchy but rather work to change their fate from within the means granted to them by that framework. They do not take risks that could threaten their safety and they appear somewhat, perhaps unwillingly, driven by the necessity to conform to what is expected of them within the surroundings that they inhabit. The exception to this is Djiba Mané, who shocks and even estranges those around her by deciding to become a politician and even more so by succeeding in her dream. The symbolic social and political significance of both her determination and success must not be demeaned, however this male narration over-simplifies the process. Djiba returns to the narratives a self-made woman with considerable political influence but without the author attempting to deal with the inevitable struggles and prejudices she goes through in the process. Although it is noted that her close friends are unnerved by her new desire for power, Sila does not attempt to deal with the difficulties she faces in her climb to the top, not the inevitable push to be recognised as intellectually equal by her male colleagues within government and by the public, nor the possible everyday sexist

remarks and comments that a woman in her position might face. There is no exploration of just how rebellious an action this is.

Whilst few involved in the debate around forced marriage in Africa attempt to argue its benefits for the young women involved, debate around polygamy proves to be much more complicated, and this is apparent in these authors' relative silence on the subject. Throughout the texts reviewed here there is little treatment of polygamy, despite its continued high prevalence in Guinea-Bissau; this omission therefore makes a surprising contrast with their apparent enthusiasm to expose the inherent misogyny of forced marriage practises. At the time of her observations Urdang (1979) concluded that polygamy was notably on the decline, as young Fula women claimed that they would insist their future husbands not marry more than one wife and did not anticipate this would be a problem for them. However, according to Einarsdóttir's anthropological observations of the Papel ethnic group in the Biombo region throughout the 1990s (2004) polygamy was still an accepted and everyday part of family life. So very evident here, as in many aspects of Bissau-Guinean society, is the rich and complicated map of ethnic and cultural differences that are ever-present at the individual and familial level of the country, as geographically small as it may be. According to the 2009 report to the UN CEDAW committee, despite the fact that polygamous marriages are not legally recognised in Guinea-Bissau, they are common practise in rural communities and, as of data collected in 2006, almost half of married Guinean women are in polygamous marriages (CEDAW 2009 in SIGI "Gender Equality in Guinea-Bissau"), casting considerable doubt over Urdang's review of the situation.

It is curious then that these three Guinean women authors choose to deal with this highly contentious theme to a very limited extent, if at all, in their fictional works and with seemingly little will to seriously grapple with it. In Semedo's "Sonéá" (2000a), although Tio

Kilin has had several wives, only one is still alive, and she is quite elderly. Interactions between her and the young Sonéá are mentioned fleetingly; the elder's initial suspicious regard for her fades as she observes the paternity of the traditional arranged marriage. In *Tiara* there is a brief mention of differing attitudes towards polygamy. Kiki, Kenum's village wife, had accepted from the start that her husband also had a city wife but the deception is too much for Tiara. Although Embaló sends a clear message in having her highly intelligent, lovable heroine dismiss the possibility of a polygamous marriage at its very suggestion, this ensures there is no further discussion of the experience of women in polygamous marriages nor of the practise itself. Tiara and Sonéá are, however, the only two women narrated in these works who experience polygamy. This silence, which to some extent makes these women complicit in the prevention of thorough questioning of oppressive patriarchal practises, requires some interrogation.

Although one might assume that the inevitable fact that most authors are educated and therefore of a class or social group that may not practise polygamy means they might not feel qualified to write about the issue, polygamy is not exclusively practised by lower classes – one only has to look at the consider the several African heads of state who have more than one wife, most famously South Africa's Jacob Zuma who has three wives and is apparently engaged to numerous more women (Fadumiye, 2012). Moreover, this difference of personal experience has not stopped these authors from writing about the lives of single mothers in poverty. Whereas there is little attempt to argue that forced marriage is at all beneficial to women, there are still voices, both male and female, coming from Guinea-Bissau and other African countries that claim that given the highly uneven gender distribution of household labour, most women, especially those in rural milieu, actually want their husband to take an additional wife or two in order to free them of a portion of the burden (Urdang, 1979: 163).

Moreover, there are arguments, again predominantly coming from rural populations, that the exchange of daughters for dowries is too important an economic base for the situation to be revolutionised in a humanitarian action (Ibid: 19). Perhaps polygamy in Guinea-Bissau remains too polemical an issue for even the most vocal of female, feminist or womanist writers to tackle at this current time. One must question, however, whether the valuing of one man at the worth of several women and the unavoidable gender imbalance this perpetuates might not be far more economically damaging than a society-wide development away from the practise. Deeper discussion of this topic steps towards pushing for a utopian revolution in gender labour roles to the detriment of tradition, at which point one must most willingly acknowledge one's status as an outsider, and privilege as a white, western feminist.

Writing the Domestic Space and Tradition

As I have so far described in the marital sphere, these women writers produce a varyingly critical social commentary on the subordination of women in Guinean society, and particularly within the private, familial space. Women use their writing as a means of calling the attention of men and women alike to the harm done by the continuation of attitudes and traditions that privilege men and punish women for their gender. Beyond traditional marital relationships and practices, further exclusively female intimate experiences are dealt with in writing this social critique and call for progression.

Literary reflections on the bodily experiences specific to the women of Guinea-Bissau are somewhat scarce in these particular texts. However Filomena Embaló tackles certain issues vehemently elsewhere, in her blog posts on the cultural website *Didinho*, principally

around the now illegal practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), *fanadu* in Crioulo. After years of lobbying the government for concrete legislative action against the often life-threatening rite, she reservedly praised the government's decision to outlaw FGM in 2011, whilst reminding readers that official government condemnation was only the first small step, as successful change would require a major shift in social attitudes (Embaló 2011). Indeed, during the liberation struggle the PAIGC had attempted to sensitively address this issue through education, teaching that the practise was unnecessary rather than admonishing the family and heritage of those who were circumcised, or whose families practised the tradition (Urdang, 1979: 186). Embaló (2011) reiterates that the cultural roots of the tradition can only be dealt with via thoroughly educating and informing on a mass scale about the risks to girls, women and their future children. Furthermore, she comments, those people who earn from carrying out the practise must be directed towards other professional means of income.

On the subject of young victims of traditional misogynistic practises, she reminds readers that for all the Guinean constitution defines and defends human rights, in practise that very legislation is '*completamente alheia às comunidades rurais [...], regidas, acima de tudo, pelas tradições ancestrais*' (Embaló 2010). All in all, the move away from harmful traditions demands the not inconsiderable feat of '*[um] processo real de desenvolvimento cultural, social e econômico da população em geral*' (Embaló 2011). Experiences of FGM and the practise of *fanadu* are absent from the fiction explored here, although Embaló writes some commentary on societal attitude towards it: Tiara's views on the subject, which are evidently those of Embaló, are clear from conversations with her husband and she introduces her women's literacy class to practising debate via the topic. Significantly, she is warned to keep away from the subject by a hostile colleague and her husband advises her to take heed for fear of her safety. With such a small corpus of female-authored works coming out of Guinea-

Bissau trying to garner the same respect enjoyed by those of Abdulai Sila and other male counterparts such as Tony Tcheka, perhaps, as with polygamy, these authors are reluctant to engage themselves in another such a polemic and potentially culturally divisive dialogue. One must also consider the fact that these women have published one or two prose volumes each, and that to shoehorn in discussion of every issue affecting their gender into that corpus might be imposing and with too obvious a social rather than literary agenda.

Domingas Samy to some extent deals with sexual health issues, although in a much more pedagogical than literary form. The title of *A Escola*¹⁹ perhaps incidentally reflects the intrinsicness of education to both the form and the content of her narrative. The first *conto* of the volume, of the same title, decries a lack of appreciation of the necessity of schooling for girls. The three teenage friends in the story, Maria Sábado, Nena and Cristina, all attend school but there is a not unsubtle contrasting of their attitudes towards education and the trajectories of their individual lives. Maria Sábado and Nena don't take school too seriously, preferring to hang out with boys and go shopping. The former has a young, unwanted baby whom she leaves with her already overburdened mother to take care of, whilst we are told that the latter has had a backstreet abortion and, at the end of the story, dies of AIDS. Cristina, meanwhile, has a close and caring relationship with her mother, devotes herself to study and doesn't care for flirting or fashion. The delivery of the narrative also takes on a distinctly pedagogical tone, as Samy's barely disguised warnings of the risks of unprotected sex, backstreet abortions and taking education for granted appear in somewhat unnatural and imposed dialogue. The unrealistic interactions between the women in *A Escola* sometimes bare down excessively on the flow of the narrative, as Augel remarks that in the story there is evident, '*talvez de uma maneira por demais insistente, um certo didatismo, uma preocupação*

¹⁹ School

moralizante um tanto ingênua por parte da escritora [...] Também incomoda um pouco o discurso por demais enfático e repetitivo dando um lugar de destaque à instrução, ao valor intrínseco da escola...' (1998: 326). Augel emphasises that this is not to detract from the great merits of Samy's fiction, which lie in '*[a] sua capacidade de retratar certos aspectos da sociedade guineense e [...] no fato dos seus contos serem narrados a partir de uma perspectiva feminina, ressaltando a posição da mulher e as suas dificuldades face à atual conjuntura de transição que a Guiné-Bissau atravessa*' (1998: 326).

In *Tiara*, Embaló reflects tentatively on women's bodily experience when the protagonist falls pregnant but then loses the ability to have children. There is, however, little reflection of this as a corporeal trauma and the incident instead highlights the vastly unjust demonization of women that has also been explored by Sila, whose women characters have been shown to suffer due to their social association with evil and their being the site of blame for disruptions to the patriarchy's moral and social codes. After Tiara is wounded by a shell blast during the anti-colonial war not only is the baby in her womb killed but the reproductive capacity of her body is also destroyed. Her husband's domineering, manipulative matriarch had already rejected her on the grounds of her being a foreigner, and furthermore she had once had designs for her son to marry the girl she had chosen for him from their village. When Kenum's mother finds out that Tiara is infertile, therefore nothing short of a failure in fulfilling her singular role in life, the young woman is coldly and wholeheartedly rejected and there is no possibility of her ever being accepted by the mother or any other member of Kenum's family. Across Africa, as much of the developing world, female infertility carries a great social stigma and infertile women experience community and familial ostracism (WHO, 2010: 881). Dehumanised as an economic burden upon the community, they are said to be

cursed, their husbands often take an additional wife or relationship in order to have children, they suffer disrespect and isolation, and they must carry the full burden of blame for what is generally an equal infertility rate between the sexes (WHO, 2010: 881). Not only do barren women fail to carry out their traditional, natural purpose – to provide heirs for the continuation of lineages – but, as Larrier (1997: 194) proposes on a figurative level, the sterile woman is ‘the inversion of the *mère/terre* trope’ that idealises and fetishises both the land and the female body. Tiara is therefore potentially readable as a female national allegory, as she simultaneously comes to terms with both her destroyed reproductive potential and the ever-decreasing hope for a fruitful, egalitarian and uncorrupted post-independence nation, her body comes to represent ‘the broken promises of African independence’ (Larrier 1997: 194).

Blame is also shown to be assigned to women for non-bodily faults. In Samy's “Maimuna”, after the young girl runs away on the night of her forced marriage her violent father blames her mother and the latter is ostracised by her remaining family. Sadly, this case is not an imagined one: G. R. Ribeiro (2013) reports the account of Fanta Kassama who, at the age of twelve and facing a marriage with a seventy year old man, wanted to run away but went ahead with the marriage for fear of her mother being beaten or shut out by the family. Blame is not only arbitrarily displaced between women by men for actions that anger patriarchal authority, but the matriarch is also shown to subject her own sex to punishment. In her starkly-titled blog post “Casamento ou Morte!” (2010) Embaló explores the real life case of Tânia Na Ntchongo, a fifteen-year-old girl from southern Guinea-Bissau who was beaten to death by female relatives for refusing to marry the man chosen for her. She debates the appropriate way to judge women who inflict this sort of punishment upon their own gender, not wanting to deny these women's ‘*consciência da violência dos seus atos*’ whilst remembering that their actions stem from a sense of duty instilled in them by patriarchal

society to continue venerated traditions. Perhaps also to blame are society or the state who, Embaló argues, '*em mais de 35 anos de independência não conseguiu promover o desenvolvimento das suas populações*'. Embaló, Samy and Semedo have an evident desire to address intimate concerns that exclusively affect women and are symptomatic of the gender inequalities that exist in Guinea-Bissau. However, as the following analysis will determine, the lens of the intimate is also used by these women to discuss wider social issues.

The Intimate Looking Out: Society's Conflicts.

The lens of the intimate can be used to look outwards from the most private life experiences to view societal structures and frictions from a particularly female perspective. The disharmony caused by the infringement upon tradition by modernity has been an oft-trodden path in African fiction throughout the late twentieth century to present day and they are often reflected upon as, to quote Kurtz, '[a] series of interchangeable dichotomies' (1998: 143). Among these dichotomies are the social friction and mistrust wrought by the differing lifestyles and values of urban and rural communities, and by the development of different attitudes between the generations. The colonial roots of socio-geographic divides have been most famously reflected upon by Chinua Achebe, but also by Meja Mwangi's *Kill Me Quick* (1973), Modikwe Dikobe in *The Marabi Dance* (1984), more recently in Crystal Ading's *Against the Gods: Wendy's War* (2008) and, as we have seen in this thesis, Abdulai Sila's *Eterna Paixão* (1994), to name but a handful. Further to addressing the conflict that occurs culturally between Guinea-Bissau's rural communities and those of the cities, or the *prasa* in Crioulo, the authors reviewed here also address intergenerational friction in an attempt to

reflect upon the modernisation of the country or, better said, the way in which modernisation pulls at different actors in society (Augel, 1998: 322). These women authors choose to address these issues via domestic relationships, and the presence of these conflicts as they are seen from work within the intimate space.

As mentioned above, it is discernible from the positive way it is dealt with that the traditional marriage between Sonéá and *tio* Kilin in the story “Sonéá” is probably not intended to be an avenue for discussion on arranged marriage or how the imposition of traditions affects female individuals more than males. Their relationship rather serves to highlight the differences and misconceptions that cause tension and conflict between urban and rural inhabitants, as for all that *tio* Kilin admires his young companion’s intelligence, curiosity and sharpness, he regards the education and living of the *prasa* with great suspicion: *‘lá na prasa as pessoas nunca acreditam em ninguém e em coisa alguma (...) Aqui, nós acreditamos em nós, nos outros e na natureza (...) Aqui não há limites para acontecimentos’* (Semedo, 2000a: 100). Sonéá’s initial homesickness is healed by the bond she develops with Kilin, the community and her surroundings and she comes to hold a great respect for the wisdom of elders and the traditional, rural way of life, just as Kilin’s curiosity for her reading and writing come to get the better of him and he asks her to read to him. As Augel notes (1998: 322-3), Samy also reflects upon the collision of rural traditions with more modern ways of thinking via the intimate space in her story “Maimuna”, where a young girl yearning for education and a career runs away from her family and the marriage they have arranged for her for economic ends. Semedo’s reflections on urban-rural conflict nevertheless reach beyond the intimate, private space. Augel (2007: 159) examines Semedo’s story “Kunfentu: stória da boa nova” (2000a) as a satirical take on the consequences of bringing the very modern and alien custom of elections to traditional societies, producing abundant and occasionally amusing confusions,

which she writes as dialogue between women at a polling station. Ideas from the urban world, which usually were once also foreign there, are essentially considered more positively than those to which the local, rural community is accustomed however, as Augel observes, '*[o]s ventos da modernidade sopram às vezes de uma forma violenta, desorganizando as estruturas tradicionais*' (2007: 159).

Intergenerational conflict is explored through the mother-daughter relationship – a common theme in African women's writing (Davies 1986: 16). Between the mothers and their daughters in "A Escola" Samy describes a lack of understanding and empathy with regard to differing priorities, as the young appear to their parents to be superficial, ungrateful and lazy whilst the latter struggle to earn enough to sustain their families and keep up with domestic tasks. Where the children and teenagers do not help their mothers in order to dedicate time to their schooling, however, their lack of domestic participation is forgiven and even encouraged, as is the case of both Cristina in "A Escola" and João de Esperança in "O Destino". Samy apparently wishes to impart the view that school is so important a factor of modernity that some compromise must be made by household labour and traditional tasks, and that housework must not keep the young, especially girls, out of education. Differences in values between the generations are also present in Semedo's "Sonéá", as the title protagonist puts up with continued admonishment from her mother for having prioritised her career, epitomised by the latter's disdain for '*[essas] conferências*' (2000a: 63), above her marriage, which broke down in the time prior to the narrative present.

In her story "O Destino", Domingas Samy makes use of this perspective from the intimate to discuss the class conflicts of Guinea-Bissau's colonial past. The story spans several decades of the twentieth century, taking place between Guinea-Bissau and the metropolis, to deal with colonial class relations. It is highly significant here that Samy has

chosen to write about the social and racial injustices wrought by colonialism via the impact they have had upon personal and familial relationships, marriage and love; via the intimate. It begins with two siblings, Anazinha and Albertinho, who must leave school to be taken in by well-off family friends after their father is murdered by the PIDE, the Portuguese secret police working under the Portuguese dictatorial colonial regime, for involvement with the PAIGC, leaving their mother too poor to look after all of her children. Albertinho is worked especially hard and beaten by his matriarchal boss, a woman who has little more than disdain for her own baby daughter, Nandinha. Despite being very young himself, Albertinho virtually raises Nandinha and they develop a very close bond. When a businessman friend of the family visits he sees great potential in the now teenage Albertinho and asks if he might take him to Portugal as a business apprentice, where he could also go back to school. His sister, Anazinha, meanwhile has fallen pregnant by João, the son of the family for whom she worked, and she is thrown out. She works tirelessly to bring up her illegitimate son, João de Esperança, who has grown up to be a very intelligent, diligent boy. As the years pass, Nandinha persuades her parents to allow her to go to Portugal to study, where she is reunited with Albertinho and their affection develops into love, marriage and children. Her parents, however, are so against her being in a relationship that crosses their deep racial and social boundaries that they cut her off completely. João de Esperança, now of college age, goes to Portugal to live with his uncle Albertinho and aunt Nandinha and study law. He returns to Bissau and becomes a famous and highly successful lawyer. When his father unwittingly requests his services, the two discover their relation and João senior now wishes to welcome his success-story of a *mestiço* son into the family, somewhat superficially insisting he take the family surname as recompense for decades of neglect. The young man firmly refuses, furious

with the way his mother was treated and fiercely proud of her relentless work to raise him through and out of dire poverty.

Although this is a story about a young, impoverished woman forced to raise her illegitimate son alone - a plot that inarguably makes a point on gender inequality and social misogyny - Samy successfully communicates the lesser mentioned complexities of colonial class prejudice that was, and continues to be, suffered in Guinean society and which complicates the binary prejudices of race and gender. Anazinha and Albertinho suffer intersectional prejudice for being both black and poor, whereas whilst João's father is Portuguese and his mother white Angolan, Nandinha's mother is half Guinean and half Capeverdian, and João's wife is half Syrian and half (Guinean) Fula, they all enjoy the same social status simply because of their class. Only once João de Esperança has climbed to the socially superior level of a highly successful, educated professional is he considered appropriate for association with his predominantly white, middle-class blood relations. As Augel notes (1998: 324), the narrative breaks with conventional patterns as here the young, white, rich girl Nandinha chooses to go against her parents' wishes to marry the black, socially inferior Albertinho. These breaks with the norm form part of Samy's drawing out of the complexities of the cultural, social and political reality of Guinea-Bissau; a reality that she chooses to explore through specifically intimate experiences.

The Intimate as Testimony: Questioning National Memory and Identity.

As an avid campaigner for women's rights in Guinea-Bissau, Filomena Embaló does not neglect to deal with gender-focused themes in her work – indeed, they form a significant

part of the material on her blogs – yet they do not form the core of the novel *Tiara*'s concerns. Rather, the author chooses to engage more critically with the lived experiences of contemporary African history, the fallout of colonialism and problems of personal national identity. She explores these themes through the biographical account of a particularly strong and determined young woman who flees to the fictional but obviously connoted former colonial metropolis Terra Branca from the civil war in her equally fictional home country Porto Belo. In the generic European country, the continent being homogenised as socially and climatically cold, rainy and, of course, white, she meets and marries a guerrilla fighter from another fictional country, Muriti, which is still fighting for independence from a colonial power. She returns with him to his homeland to play an active role in the liberation struggle via women's education and then after the war in the Ministry for Justice. Embaló's use of a sensitive, strong, and highly empathetic female protagonist allows the lens of the intimate to direct the observation and recounting of these national and continental struggles. The placement of one woman's testimony in the centre of semi-fictional historical narratives both vastly broadens the scope of the this perspective, and fills the gaps of female subjectivity left by male-authored literary accounts of history.

The apparently ambiguous, fictional locations featured in *Tiara* have strikingly familiar colonial and post-colonial histories and through them the author depicts a continent of shared experiences, traumas and abuses, characterised nevertheless by complex cultural differences. The protagonist is from Porto-Belo, a country long since liberated from colonial rule that has fallen into a protracted civil war, and after marrying she emigrates with her husband to his native Muriti, which still fights for its independence. Nascimento (2012) attempts to analyse exactly which luso-African countries Porto-Belo and Muriti allegorise, focusing on the fact that Embaló was born in Angola in 1956 but has lived in Guinea-Bissau

since 1975 and adopted the nationality and culture as her own (Embaló, 1999). Guinea-Bissau was the first of the five Portuguese African colonies to achieve independence, officially just one year before Angola, yet, as Nascimento notes (2012: 33), Porto Belo has been free for thirty years whilst Muriti still fights, thus Embaló ruptures historical chronology in order to juxtapose ‘*os desdobramentos e as desilusões do período pós-independência*’ with ‘*as utopias revolucionárias*’. Moreover, Tiara herself notes the lack of discernible difference in the running of her home country Porto Belo after the handover of power from European colonial officials to nationals of the privileged, mixed race class, a complaint often made in Guinea-Bissau before the birth of democracy in 1994 as most PAIGC heads were Cape Verdean at that point. Contrary to her temporal-historical allegory of Muriti as Angola and Porto Belo as Guinea-Bissau, Nascimento places Muriti as Guinea-Bissau in terms of race relations, as in both the fictional and the real the colonial government would not allow interracial marriage in order to prevent the creation of a privileged mixed middle class, whilst in Angola, and Porto Belo, the colonizer fostered a mixed race class for administration, which became alienated from the black majority. Despite Nascimento’s well-presented case for Embaló’s fictional countries allegorising aspects of specifically Guinea-Bissau and Angola, it is perhaps all too easy to immediately assume that the author’s fiction is so confined to the national boundaries within which she has lived. Rather, the historical and social experiences of the territories created in *Tiara* might be seen as more general examples of the pre- and post-independence periods of many, if not most, colonised African countries. Making use of Benedict Anderson’s concept of nations as *imagined communities* (1983) we can see that Embaló breaks down the imposed borders between African nations to unite cross-cultural and -national common experience. Manipulation of race relations; colonial subjugation; long and bloody struggles for independence contrasted with non-violent political negotiations between

the departing colonial power and the middle class, usually of a more privileged, mixed race; post-independence abuses of power; parties that fought for national independence but turned against minority social groups once in government; the consequent disillusionment with power: experiences that can be found across the continent and, indeed, across the post-colonial world. Despite these historical commonalities, Embaló is careful not to allow her invented African nations to be seen as culturally uniform, noting that although Tiara feels a definite proximity to ‘*os muritanos*’ in their sharing of ‘*os mesmos valores fundamentais*’ (Tiara 22) there are nevertheless ‘*particularidades culturais próprias a cada povo e [...] religiões diferentes*’ (Tiara 22). When Tiara begins her new life in Muriti, she soon finds that submersion in Muritian society brings another degree of cultural intensity altogether, and one can observe that these ‘cultural peculiarities’ have evolved in Tiara’s mind to the country being ‘*tão diferente da sua*’ (Tiara 161) to the extent that she has great difficulties in adjusting to her new surroundings. This repeated return to the protagonist’s emotional reactions to her surroundings and the attention that is drawn to her attempts to locate herself and her culture in relation to that of others brings to the fore the particularly intimate, testimonial nature of the novel.

In the analysis of Sila’s *Mistida* in chapter one I suggested that this particular male author’s neglect of female participation in Guinea-Bissau’s war for independence is unfortunately reflective of an overall historical forgetfulness on a general societal level. Embaló’s testimonial narrative of national memory brings to the fore women’s participation in the anti-colonial struggle. The initial contribution women made to the anti-colonial struggle in Guinea-Bissau was as an extension of their traditional roles – preparing and delivering food and water, transporting goods, as nurses and carers – and the PAIGC used this to demonstrate how crucial women’s roles were to the struggle as well as to everyday life. They encouraged

women to assert themselves within their roles in order to break down resistance to women's advancement and take the first steps towards their emancipation (Gjerstad & Sarrazin 1978: 45-46). Gradually, women were encouraged to play yet more politically active roles, voice opinions and have confidence in their contributions to the struggle. The integration of women into the village decision-making body as elected representatives on the village council brought about a crucial qualitative change in the status of women and the value of their role in society (Urdang 1979: 127). Despite constant encouragement from the party, however, women faced the barriers of tradition, as still not all men were persuaded of the idea of gender equality and, moreover, many women were still hesitant to participate in the process of such dramatic changes to their daily lives and roles (Urdang 1979: 88).

Despite women having played an extensive role in the conflict, their participation and the emancipation it was set to roll into seem to have been all but forgotten Sila's literary account and national memory. Embaló contributes to the correction of this omission through Tiara's time in Muriti, where she immediately invests herself in managing a regional women's literacy programme, devoting herself even more so when her husband leaves to fight in the war. Through her and the women around her we are educated on the hardships of women's lives in rural Africa, both within and regardless of the context of war. Without the domestic appliances and processed goods that the self-confessedly privileged Tiara is used to, *'todo o trabalho doméstico era um empreendimento que exigia um esforço físico'* and moreover women's lives are mentally unstimulating: *'simples (...) [s]empre igual, dia após dia. Vida dura, muito tempo resignada...'* (Tiara 161). Tiara's Muritian friend Zada represents a typical case of the women who grasped at the opportunities presented by the anti-colonial struggle to fight against gender-specific inequality as much as its colonial and class-driven counterparts. A hard life of domestic work, an arranged marriage, additional child-rearing, not

having a voice in the community and having no access to education have led Zada to want to ‘*insurgir*’, ‘*avançar*’ and ‘*compreender o mundo*’ (ibid); to fight for something better for her own daughters, all the while recognising the difficulties she faces in going against traditions and persuading her community that they will all benefit from advancing women’s status.

Through Tiara’s testimony Embaló develops her socio-political commentary into the post-independence period. Once Muriti has won independence the country does not develop into the post-colonial dream that the Party, much like Guinea-Bissau’s own PAIGC, had proclaimed it was fighting for. Tiara, her husband and their close allies all become greatly disillusioned with the corrupt nature of the political establishment within which they work, but are reluctant to leave for fear of giving free rein to dishonesty and unaccountability. Although Embaló does apportion blame to those of a political culture that had allowed corruption to become ‘*prática corrente*’ (Tiara 208) and whose ‘*ideais revolucionários tinham dado lugar à luta pelos interesses pessoais*’ (ibid) she nevertheless acknowledges that the projections of post-independence utopias were impossible for being just that; unattainable and unrealistic (Tiara 207).

Additionally to her and her associates’ attempts to uphold the pre-independence philosophy, Tiara is further ostracised because of her nationality. The female perspective is undoubtedly important to the narrative, however what is more significant is Tiara’s status as a foreigner, and it is this stigma, rather than that of being a woman, against which she has had to fight harder throughout her life, ‘“*[T]ive que fugir do meu próprio país por motivos raciais. Em Terra Branca eu também era estrangeira! Como vês, em qualquer país do mundo eu estou sujeita a ser alvo de reacções destas. No fundo sou uma cidadã do mundo, sem terra própria...*”’ (Tiara 208). It is this, as well as her difficulty in responding to her good friend Gino’s question, ‘*Sentes-te muritiana?*’ (Tiara 217) that brings the novel to be more

identifiable as a work that deals with constructions of national identity, belonging and the experience of diaspora, rather than solely the expression of female experience. It is, rather, the female expression of lived experience; a distinctly intimate, confessional lens that brings new depths to the representation of women in fiction. Embaló brings her perspective to complicate the binaries that have confined women in male-authored literature, to create a more realistic, complex woman. Equally as importantly, we learn about what motivates individual women to behave certain ways and to take action, rather than their behaviour functioning as one particular, predetermined aspect of a set type.

Given Embaló's personal history the novel could be an attempt on the part of the author to assert and justify, via Tiara, the fact that she feels a naturalised Guinean despite having being born and raised in Angola. The novel was written during Guinea-Bissau's 1998-99 civil war, when a thus far unwavering sense of being Guinean was disturbed by the events taking place in her adopted home (Couto & Embaló, 2010: 83). Embaló was able to some extent able to resolve her consequent crisis of identity through writing a protagonist in similar tumult, reconstructing her own identity via Tiara (ibid). She explores the internal conflicts of identity inherent to the experiences of being a foreigner, even in a country where she feels at home, “*[O] facto de te sentires algo não é suficiente para sê-lo, porque não o és, perante os olhos dos outros*” (Tiara 217). This leads to her broader questioning of the relevance of nationally confined identities to people who exist as part of a multi-national African diaspora, constantly moving in the perpetual tumults of conflict and transition, “*Não preciso mais de saber se me sinto muritiana ou portobelense. Sou o que sou: o resultado da minha caminhada neste mundo, com tudo aquilo que assimilei, um ser sem fronteiras, evoluindo num mundo por vezes hostil, mas certamente destinado a ser povoado, num futuro, mais ou menos próximo, por seres universais*” (Tiara 217). Embaló herself today defines her identity as multi-faceted,

shaped by the cultures and experiences in which she has been immersed, and her homeland as the collective of countries that have contributed to the construction of that identity (Couto & Embaló, 2010: 83). Nascimento (2012: 36) notes that Tiara is '*um protótipo do mais puro Romantismo*' a classical heroine, '*[f]orte, bela, inteligente, justa, divertida, solidária, abnegada, enfim não se encontram defeitos nela...*' and, furthermore, that *Tiara* may well be classed a coming-of-age novel. The lens of the intimate is key to Embaló's writing of these aspects of Tiara, however romantic and idealised a character she might be. Whilst the dominant discourse of the novel is one of the experience of negotiating identity and nationality, it is significantly dealt with from the intimate, female perspective.

This chapter has explored the themes dealt with in women's writing from Guinea-Bissau by considering the lens through which these particular writers perceive their surroundings, the societal structures shaping them and their relationships with those around them. As is evident, these women are highly concerned with communicating the issues and experiences particular their gender via the intimate space that is the home, their daily life, their interactions with the people closest to them and the social and physical experiences that derive exclusively from their gender. Yet at the same time they make use of the highly intimate concerns of marriage and familial obligation to write about women who are agents and actively rebel against the impositions of patriarchal society upon their life, whatever the cost, and in exploring the intimate concerns of their bodies they speak out against the blame attributed to their gender for perceived misdemeanours over which they have no control. By situating popular narratives of dichotic social friction within intimate, familial relationships, these authors further expose the pressures that work upon women in their everyday toil as much as in the shaping of their life over decades. Furthermore, women writers' use of the

intimate lens to confront the more overtly harmful, racially driven social fractures that were first carved during the colonial era and continue to cause vastly damaging poverty brings the female contribution and expression to the fore in literary discussion of these issues. Filomena Embaló additionally questions border-focused concepts of identity and the male-centric recording of history by maintaining a female perspective that allows the exploration of these themes in a quite confessional, intimate and revelatory tone, bringing women's driving forces into play in these depictions of them as human beings who are justly as complicated as men. Throughout all of these themes these authors crucially explore their own complexities and remove themselves and their gender kin from the symbolism created for them in the male literary canon, which functions simultaneously as both pedestal and fetters.

CHAPTER 3.

SOCIETY MANIFEST IN THE MASCULINE: CABRAL AND HIS LOST LEGACY

To speak of masculinities as a separate concept from men is to accept that the two are not synonymous. It is to accept that men do not form a homogenous group but that, as multiple individuals and types, they play roles in their society that interconnect in a complex network of relationships, with each other in a network of masculinities, and with other genders. These masculinities differ not only in their characteristics but in the power and influence they hold over other groups, or the extent to which they are influenced. A hegemonic masculinity, as introduced in 1985 by Carrigan, Connell and Lee, is the most dominant form of masculinity within a given space and time, which establishes the cultural norm for what it is to be a man, and silences or fights against other present forms of masculinity (Ouzgane and Morrell 2005: 4). The potential fluidity of the hegemonic masculinity is important, and is a perhaps obvious but nevertheless significant point in emphasising the importance of exploring masculinities as particular to their societies and spaces: 'Hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable' (Connell 2005: 76). The questions that arise from venturing into a study of masculinities necessitate an analysis of the different masculinities present, whether obvious or not, and also those that are not present and why they are not. This analysis must delve into the relationships and co-existence of different masculinities, and also into their formation; the processes, conflicts and bonds that led to their existence. One must explore the social influences and political factors that have affected and effected their construction, what forces maintain or perpetuate them, and what forces maintain

the existing balance of power between different masculinities. Furthermore one must examine the effect of the hegemonic masculinity upon other members of society, both men and women.

This chapter will demonstrate that in addressing the colonial and post-colonial periods in *A Última Tragédia* and *Eterna Paixão* respectively, Abdulai Sila's fiction presents us with new ways of looking at the masculine in Guinea-Bissau. In addressing the key masculinities of these two works of fiction I will not only explain Sila's complicating of existing masculine categories but I will also suggest that he offers a more contemporary and socially relevant benchmark by which they might be considered. Male characters are measured by their pragmatism and determination in their attempts to contribute to and develop their society for the good of their people; that is, by their proximity to the memory of the icon Cabral. The fact that one of these characters is an African-American will place the discussion on masculinities in Guinea-Bissau within the broader discussion on global black masculinities and the Pan-Africanist movement. Furthermore I will argue that in a country that at the time of *Mistida's* writing was simultaneously recovering from colonial conflict and verging on civil war, and where Cabral's philosophy seemed to fade day by day, those masculinities that are narrated in this novel represent two conflicting sides of the contemporary nation: the cause and the effect of post-independence disillusionment. Firstly the agents, those who represent the corrupt brutality of the few at the top, and secondly the victims, those who lose their agency and become the disempowered figurative nation chained to the past; the site upon which the nation's psychological and physical scarring is borne.

Within the frame of post-colonialism, much discussion of masculinities begins, unsurprisingly, with reference to the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised

males. One of the most influential works covering the dynamics of this relationship is undoubtedly Fanon's exploration of the psychological damage caused by colonialism upon both parties, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967). He explores the simultaneous emasculation, infantilisation and bestialisation of the black colonized male whilst exposing the essentialist white origins of the characteristics claimed in racist rhetoric to be inherent to 'the Negro' man: he is stupid, barbaric, evil, uncultured, and simultaneously childlike and a rapist. It is through his relationship with the white European and the superimposed euro-centric reality in which he must live that the black man is forced to see himself, and thus he comes to despise himself. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), reportedly the most widely read African novel (Miescher and Lindsay 2003: 1) is one of the most famous fictional texts dealing with this personal and interpersonal masculine conflict. Achebe's protagonist Okonkwo, a powerful and revered traditional authority, loses first his son to the colonial mission and then his power to the colonial structure, as the formerly respected power basis of valour and seniority comes to mean nothing in a colonial system where power is granted to the man who learns to be most like the colonizer (Miescher and Lindsay 2003: 1).

The white European undoubtedly fits the role of the hegemonic masculinity within the colonial period, and within the national colonial space, however within communities and smaller spaces, from which the coloniser was excluded, hegemonic masculinities relative to the space do still emerge. In her study of Zimbabwean Tsitsi Dangaremba's *Nervous Conditions*, Kathryn Holland (2005: 122) identifies certain points along a spectrum of colonial masculinities, at its centre the 'Big-Man', who, in the absence of the colonizer, can also be placed as a hegemonic colonial masculinity, as the top of his own hierarchy. The Big-Man's wealth is measured materially, by the food, drinks, cloths and ornaments he owns, many through contact with Europeans, but also through the presence and loyalty of family,

friends and supporters. His followers perform(ed) multiple tasks in return for his financial and social support - a network that upheld his status (Holland 2005: 122). The Big-Man's status also came from '[incorporating] an interesting blend of indigenous and Western images: money, wife (wives), generosity towards friends, social drinking, Western clothes and mannerisms' (Akyeampong, 1999: 223). As economic difficulties made this status ever more difficult to achieve, the elements of Western masculine authority present in this archetype became more prominent, and newer modes of African masculinity emerged, including that of the 'native intellectual'— much problematized by Fanon (Holland 2005: 123).

Moving to the one extreme of her colonial spectrum of masculinity, Holland presents the 'early colonial native', albeit via a character who 'demonstrates the shortcomings of the mid-level man within an African patriarchal system': reinforcing local patriarchal conditions, believing in witchcraft and medicine, he is also accused of his 'simpling palpability' at the hands of the Big Man and is '[useless] within his family and wider community' he lives in crumbling and ragged 'undesirable' surroundings (Holland 2005: 125-6). Holland goes on to explore the concept of the 'the good native': '[A] hybrid figure, determining which traditional values to retain and which to discard as he enters the European roles and spaces offered by [the Big Man]' (Holland 2005: 126). This hybridity is highly problematic as his rejection of certain local values cannot go unnoticed by his community, and serve as a cause for conflict and the breakdown of relationships. The final example explored is that of the 'late or post-colonial' masculine: '[he] balances an awareness of his sexuality with other aspects of his personality and his intellectual pursuits (...) maintains a deference to his elders and yet speaks out in defence of certain persons or ideals (...) appears to assert a certain confident physical and psychological masculinity, one working free from restrictive understandings of the good native' (Holland 2005: 131-2). Again, this development is not without problems as much of

his personal progress is superficial and he finds himself under great and varying internal and external pressures (ibid).

This figuring of a spectrum of colonial masculinities is very useful as a starting point for analysing African masculinities, their pressures and conflicts. However it is by no means exhaustive, nor does Holland propose that it be, its linear structure relies upon the expectations of the coloniser rather than being inclusive of wholly African expectations, and it associates a man's power with his proximity to the colonial hegemonic masculinity. For example, Régulo in *A Última Tragédia* doesn't fit into any of the specific points along the spectrum made by Holland: He rejects European values but remains powerful and revered within his community; he holds on tightly to traditional rites, rituals and views; he looks beyond the present to the post-colonial and attempts to figure a future for his country without his ideas being influenced by the colonial social order.

Igor Cusack (2004) analyses the masculinities presented in the fiction of the Angolan author Pepetela. He finds 'The young pioneer': a boy turning guerrilla fighter who strives to fulfil characteristics of most hegemonic masculinities such as being brave, never afraid and disgusted at the thought of humiliation, yet is also sincere, modest and self-controlled whilst also possessing 'feminine' qualities such as being forgiving, generous and empathetic (I. Cusack 2004: 106-7). This model evolves into the Comrade Guerilla, who shares many of the characteristics of organisations that pride themselves in their hegemonic masculinity such as the US Navy, whilst also possessing the capacity to confide, share problems, hopes and dreams with each other, express their weaknesses and have an open interest in the mind and intellect (I. Cusack 2004: 108-110). Finally, Igor Cusack examines the effect of Angola's transition from a Marxist ideology to inevitable capitalism on the evolution of a new masculinity to oppose Marx's New Man: 'It was the entrepreneurial capitalist male who

would inherit the power to construct the new nation (...) the representative of the wheeler-dealing capitalists (...) the archetypal hegemonic male – independent, risk-taking and aggressive’ (I. Cusack 2004: 113-114).

Mark Sabine, in his analysis of the Mozambican Honwana’s *Nós Matámos o Cão Tinhoso*, explores the author’s placing of gender politics as central to the lusotropicalist politics that governed and attempted to justify Portuguese colonialism: ‘the lusotropicalist thesis relies on a fantasy of the hyper-masculinity of the Portuguese coloniser, who through sexual relations with black women disseminates European “civilisation” where there is African “barbarity”’ (Sabine 2004: 25). In Honwana’s novel, this emasculation of African men serves as an allegory for the literal emasculation of the African continent as the author explores the brutal labelling of black men as pertaining to an ‘inadequate or aberrant masculinity, which serves to dissimulate not just arbitrary racism, but also the impotence and incompetence of a brutal colonial patriarchy’ (ibid: 24-25) Furthermore, ‘[t]he aggressive effacement of the black patriarch not only necessitates the valorization of violence as “manly”, but also marginalizes the values which Honwana ascribes to an indigenous paradigm of masculinity: bravery, endurance, dignity and deference to elders’ (ibid). Honwana warns of the implications of this adoption of western hegemonic masculinity running into the Mozambique’s future postcolonial situation: ‘Boys and youths are traumatised by denigration in as far as they identify as non-white; but they are equally damaged insofar as their aspiration to “white” manliness entails acceptance of colonial society’s valorization of aggression and violence’ (ibid: 29). The study of masculinities in African fiction is an evidently growing field, but there is still space to examine the masculinities present in the fiction from Guinea-Bissau.

Complicating masculine archetypes in Guinea-Bissau

In exploring the prominent masculine icons in contemporary Guinean cultural discourse, the eminence of the founder and leader of the PAIGC Amílcar Cabral cannot be matched. Forty years after his assassination, Amílcar Cabral is still revered as a national hero and to this day must be the most celebrated man in Guinean history. There is, no doubt, a certain amount of romanticising of Cabral in national memory, yet in reading biographies and taking advantage of the wealth of both contemporary and archived interviews and testimonies released to commemorate the 40th anniversary of his death, it is apparently impossible to find any negative, aggressive or discrediting descriptions of the leader.²⁰ He imagined the very best for his country and his people, perhaps causing his people to therefore remember him only as the very best.

Patrick Chabal (1983) thoroughly analyses the numerous strengths of Cabral's personality that made him such a successful leader, sitting within his effective combination of political, military and social skills (1983: 15). Cabral had a deep respect and concern for human rights and a consequent ambition to build an independent socialist state without recourse to violence or oppression (ibid: 2); he showed an interest in every individual that he met, situating himself with natural ease as a comrade rather than solely the boss (interview with Mendes quoted in ibid: 63); he was a charismatic leader with an unusual ability to convince and bring about consensus (ibid: 142) and a natural diplomat (ibid: 83) with an 'almost puritanical notion of what [the] responsibilities [of honesty and morality] implied' (ibid: 179). Cabral brought to his party and the guerrilla war 'the charismatic authority,

²⁰ Cf. Chabal, 1983; Manji & Fletcher Junior, 2013; Rocha, Cordeiro & Bourgard 2013.

leadership ability and ideological lucidity' that were 'crucial' to their success in the struggle for independence (Forrest 1987: 99). The one weakness that might be found in his character is a certain overly-trusting nature, perhaps even a naivety, which could ultimately be blamed for his vulnerability to assassination. Cabral didn't believe in the use of violence to maintain authority and, 'wrongly assumed that his sway over party members was sufficient to prevent any further attempt on his life' (Chabal 1983: 135). He didn't take any special precautions over his personal safety, having 'sought to build a party based upon trust and mutual understanding'; he was unprotected and unarmed on the night he was killed (ibid.). The decade following independence, and indeed those beyond it, were, and still are, marked by brutal competition, personal conflicts and violent power struggles (Forrest, 1987: 96). This emergence, domination, and consequent prominence of the personalities implied by periods of such tumult implies quite some change in the masculinities that came to dominate Guinean politics and national discourse thereafter and up to the publication of Abdulai Sila's novel *Mistida*, and this will be shown below to bear quite some influence upon his narrative of the Guinean man.

As this section will explore, elements of Cabral's celebrated character and policies appear in Sila's male characters, primarily in the politically and socially progressive nature of Régulo (*AUT*); but also in the Teacher's sensitivity and empathy (*AUT*); and in the pan-Africanist agronomist Dan (*EP*), through his almost naïve faith in his colleagues and his promotion of similar economic policies, such as the concentration of resources on the development of agriculture as the core of the nation's economy (Chabal 1983: 164). These depictions of highly respected masculinities as somewhat influenced by or representative of Cabral do not, however, possess such an apparently perfect nature. Through their faults, weaknesses and mistakes they serve to complicate the idealised masculinity manifested in the

iconic, heroic image of Cabral in what may be an attempt to humanise the image of the once successful Guinean leader; an attempt to demythify an icon in order to make his unique mode of leadership more attainable and once again realistic in a country losing hope.

Through these distinguished male characters Abdulai Sila also successfully complicates the existing theoretical categories of African men in general, such as those presented spectrally by Holland. As mentioned above, this spectrum creates a valuable starting point from which one may analyse the different masculine figures in African culture. However within this range Holland appears to perpetuate a reliance upon colonial expectations of African men: the material and social value they possess, their relative civilisation in terms of colonial religion and technology, their rejection of African social values and culture in favour of the European. Throughout his trilogy Sila presents the critical reader with a number of male characters that do not allow us to get too comfortable in our categorisations, as difficult as it might be to resist their neat temptation, whilst also utilising those male roles to allegorise certain aspects of society with which he wishes to wrestle.

In the two principal male characters in *A Última Tragédia*, Régulo and the Teacher, Sila depicts the very human contradictions that give fluidity to his literary representations of masculinities, whilst simultaneously using them as a mirror for the general conflict of pressures upon the African man and of the power struggles present between different male social actors. The contradictions and oppositions present in the social and personal conflicts of the men of Guinea-Bissau are manifest in their thoughts and actions, social interactions, cultural outlook and, most significantly, in their vastly differing treatments of women, via their respective relationships with Ndani.

In her thesis *A Díficil Mistida Guineense: Nação e Identidade da Guiné-Bissau através da trilogia de Abdulai Sila* (2011), Valandro thoroughly explores the depiction of

Cabral that Régulo represents: both emphasise the necessity for Africans to move towards independence by thinking for themselves and for decisions to be made collectively within communities; they share a mutual interest in understanding their enemy's strengths and weaknesses in order to better fight him; they agree that only by meeting colonial brute force with equal brute force will they defeat it; and they both pioneer local education for all African children (Valandro 2011: 58-62). The figure of Sila's Régulo, the highly respected chief of a community in Quinhamel, further complicates the categorisations of African men set out in the previous literature mentioned above. We might see him as fulfilling the role of the Big Man; materially and socially rich, reigning at the top of his own local hierarchy and respected by all those beneath him. However, contrary to traditional depictions of the Big Man, he maintains his status within the village in spite of having refuted all cultural appropriation beyond building a vast European-style mansion with which he seeks to shame the Portuguese administrator into submitting to his superiority. Although he seeks to understand the culture of the white man it is primarily as a means of knowing his foe's drives and weaknesses for, *'quando uma pessoa consegue descobrir as fraquezas do inimigo poder vencer, mesmo se for mais fraco'* (AUT: 101).

Despite being the image of Guinea-Bissau's national hero and a fierce upholder of local culture and human rights, in reading the novel with a critical gender focus, Régulo is undeniably chauvinistic in his thoughts and personal relationships. Régulo's determination to find the perfect wife to complete his scheme of revenge brings out the chauvinistic nature of Sila's politically heroic Cabral-esque character:

... onde é que podia encontrar uma mulher assim, ainda solteira? [...] Quem disse que ela tinha que ser solteira? Mesmo que tivesse homem, ele tomava. Tomava a mulher, mas sem o homem, isso deve ficar claro. Pagava dinheiro aos parentes todos

para calar a boca. O pai não quer? Dá-lhe dinheiro; se quiser vacas ou porcos, também pode ter. A mãe pensa que é vergonha demais acabar o casamento da filha de um dia para outro? Dá-lhe também dinheiro, ou então roupa fina ou fios e brincos de ouro, tudo serve. Depois é só os tios, as tias, irmãos, primos e não se sabe que mais. Dava dinheiro a todos! (AUT 88)

He clearly sees his – as yet undiscovered - perfect future wife as a possession to be taken, stolen, exchanged or bought at whatever cost. Despite the fact that other female relatives may be bought off, there is no question whatsoever of the girl herself having any agency in the matter of her marriage or its negotiation. Once Ndani has been chosen to be Régulo's wife his appreciation of what she represents to him deepens yet it still involves nothing of her own agency or individual traits beyond that of being a relatively well educated, single and attractive woman: '*Ela representava também o seu rejuvenescimento, novas energias de que precisava para a longa luta que ainda tinha pela frente*' (AUT 99). He depends heavily upon the significance of the union and what he hopes will be its impact on his fortunes, however both the marriage and his future wife are still commodities to form part of his plan and the final material jewel to his crown with which he intends to regain total power over his dominion, taken from him by the Portuguese administrator. Although it is significant that Régulo's desire to possess Ndani is depicted principally as a reaction to the emasculating threat presented by the colonialist, it does not explain this attitude towards any of his other wives.

Their sexual relationship to him is a pleasure claimed by right and brute force '*Nos primeiros dias choram muito, mas depois... são como o fogo... Um fogo ardente, que ele vai ter que extinguir todos os dias*' (AUT 101-2), whereas to Ndani it is nothing more than a

repeat of the rape she suffered at the hands of her colonial master, Senhor Leitão: '[...] quando viu o Régulo aproximar-se dela com uns olhos que brilhavam tanto quanto os do senhor Leitão...' (AUT 148). Here Sila narrates the rhetoric of patriarchal tradition, whereby sex serves the purpose of a man's pleasure and marital right, without acknowledgement to the cost or pain caused to his wife. In contrast, the description of the first time Ndani and the Teacher have sex, its significance also noted by her consent, verges sensually on the spiritual, and serves as her catharsis: '*Pela primeira vez na sua vida, [ela] entregou-se voluntariamente a um homem. [...] [Q]uando esse prazer se libertou do cativo e percorreu todo o seu corpo, provocando convulsões inolvidáveis, ela sentiu-se ressuscitar lentamente, com um novo corpo e uma nova alma [...] segredou-lhe ao ouvido: "Obrigada. Salvaste-me..."*' (AUT 133). Even before their relationship is consummated, it is quickly apparent in their meeting that they have a profound effect on each other and they soon fall utterly in love. The Teacher's behaviour towards Ndani never manifests anything less than respect, support and admiration - all aspects that stand vastly apart from her treatment by all other men in her life: her father, Leitão and Régulo.

The Teacher's sensitive treatment of his future wife is one of several aspects that clearly denote his distance from the hegemonic aggressive colonial hyper-masculinity, yet in further analysis, one can see that the transition experienced by the Teacher serves to complicate several categories by proving their fluidity. As an orphan he was brought up by the mission and educated to become a teacher who would spread Christianity amongst his fellow Africans. His absorption and acceptance of religious teachings is initially a model of the mission's intention. As 'the good native' examined above he appropriates the culture and religion of the coloniser yet, given his mission upbringing, he experiences little of the consequential alienation from his own community that Holland (2005: 126) describes. That is

until he offers Ndani a copy of the Bible and receives an unanticipated hostile reaction, apparently quite unaware of the cultural discipline and physical oppression meted out in the name of and by means of that same book; the Teacher has accepted the colonial rhetoric of “community”: Marcelo Caetano, former Portuguese minister for the colonies and later prime minister from 1968 to 1974, described Portuguese colonialism as somewhat unique in the imperial world, ‘a paternalistic process of government and administration, but in this paternalism are implicit loving care, human solidarity, Christian communion’ (quoted in Mendy 2003: 35). This was obviously rejected by African nationalists in the colonies, and Mendy (2003) has shown the detail in which it proved to be meaningless in the practice of forced labour, the lack of infrastructure and education, the exceedingly violent punishments given out for minor misdeeds and, of course, the integrity of cultural assimilation to the regime. As discussed in chapter 1, the evangelising mission was presented as the principle motivation and justification for colonial expansion and occupation of foreign lands therefore, as is evident in the case of the Teacher, those Africans who were granted the so-called privilege of being chosen as proponents of the mission had to be as convinced of their role as any Portuguese missionary was, and assimilated into the culture. Assimilation under the Portuguese would only go so far as it was possible to maintain the colonial hierarchy and keep natives in their rightful place. Just as, culturally speaking, the Teacher forms, in Bhabha’s terms, a hybrid identity that goes on to threaten colonial authority, so he also forms a hybrid masculinity that shakes categorisations. He is chosen by Régulo in unusual circumstances to be the village teacher, a decision that bemuses the evidently colonially-conditioned local children as they wonder whether this black man could really be capable of teaching them as the typical white missionary would. Appiah, in his foreword to a recently translated edition of *Black Skin White Masks*, summarises Fanon’s analysis of this: ‘Black children raised within

the racist cultural assumptions of the colonial system, [*sic*] can partially resolve the tension between contempt for blackness and their own dark skins by coming to think of themselves, in some sense, as white (hence the “white masks” of the title)’ (Appiah, 2008: xi). Although these children do not explicitly associate themselves with whiteness, they have nevertheless appropriated white judgement of their own race.

Following the first and only session of transcribing Régulo’s philosophical monologue, the Teacher is thrown into moral confusion as conflict emerges between his missionary education and Régulo’s revelatory reflections upon the actions of the white colonisers. The rift between the white colonialists’ systematic violent punishment of innocents and the commandments taught by the white missionaries brings him to question whether the priests are even aware of what their compatriots have been committing in the name of salvation. However, just when it might seem that the educated hero might grab at the hypocrisy rife in the very presence of the mission, he falls once again into confusion as he is astounded by the contents of Régulo’s speech; ‘*Como é que ele soube de todo isso se nunca tinha ouvido falar do Evangelho?*’ (AUT 142). The level of indoctrination of one of the most intelligent characters of the novel emerges as the Teacher finds it hard to shake off his learned, arrogant assumption that only those taught as Catholics can live by such a strong sense of justice. Nevertheless, the development of his increasingly anti-colonial sentiment shows his thoughts advancing from his mission-orientated social conditioning. This peaks in Catió, the coastal town where he and Ndani move to start a new life and a family. Like his father before him, a point arrives at which he can no longer abide the physical provocations of white colonialists and he reacts with aggression, consequently being wrongly accused of murder and exiled to São Tomé (Augel 1998: 342). Unlike Cabral, the Teacher is unsuccessful in overthrowing colonial authority but his educational trajectory is similar: a

combination of the external colonial and the internal African that help them to empathise with those around them and question their situation as critically as possible.

Whilst still in Quinhamel with his feelings for Ndani growing, biblical rhetoric weighs heavily on his conscience like a putative benevolent form of the colonial yoke; he knows it is God's law that he must not covet his neighbour's wife and that it would be sinful to not only break God's law but to also contradict the rules he teaches every day in school. Finally his growing feelings and passion persuade his conscience to justify his actions: *'[O Régulo] tinha rejeitado a mulher, tinha-a abandonado na solidão daquela imensa casa, não quisera saber dela [...] Ele tinha violado o pacto de casamento e ela deixara conseqüentemente de ser sua mulher. Era um casamento forçado, não valia'* (AUT 136). Consequently he follows another of God's laws to 'love thy neighbour': *'Tinha pura e simplesmente amado uma criatura abandonada, que todos rejeitavam'* (AUT 136-7). The Teacher sees the community's suspicion of Ndani's supposed curse at the root of her rejection, and thus his frustration builds against *'Crenças pagãs [...] crenças em seres e poderes inexistentes'* (AUT 137). He takes on the role of the colonial religious teacher, choosing to be his own version of a good Christian instead of accepting the rumours of bad spirits. Thus in the Teacher we find a muddling of categories reflective of certain conflicts within the colonizer-colonized relationship, and of Cabral's and his colleagues' journey towards fighting the coloniser; the "good native" is not restricted to forever believe in his oppressive education, yet that is not to say that his education will either force him to retreat to or forever cut him away from the culture of his community. As is evident in the life of Amílcar Cabral, colonial investment in a man most certainly does not blind him into loyalty to the imperial machine.

Already we see how the converging levels and ambiguities of supposedly archetypal African masculinities are manipulated by Sila, yet he complicates this further in the

relationship between the Teacher and Régulo. Initially it is one of respect, as Régulo realises the significance of employing an educated black man as his village's teacher and bringing in a black role model for the children of his community, and the Teacher similarly venerates the village leader for his philosophical reflections. Their respect evolves to trust as Régulo begins to entreat the Teacher with his ideas and thoughts on a liberated Africa and the potential of unchained people given the responsibility of building their own nation free from oppression. This respect does not diminish despite the Teacher's disapproval of Régulo's neglect of his young wife. The power struggle between the traditional African authority and the mission-educated young man is a commonly treated narrative in colonial and postcolonial fiction, and in the iconic *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe 1958) it results in the death of the African patriarch. Sila, however, seeks compromise between Régulo and the Teacher to form a prospective cooperation based upon their very different respective knowledge, educations and social influences. This cooperation, in its inclusivity of the traditional and the modern might form a foundation upon which the independent Guinea-Bissau could be built, and is therefore somewhat reflective of the philosophy of Cabral's PAIGC.

African Americans, Africa and Global Black Masculinities

Given the birthplace, nationality and early development of one of Sila's male protagonists, an analysis of the author's use and manipulation of archetypes of African masculinity would not be complete without considering the role of African American masculine models. This is not the sole connection made across the Atlantic to African

American culture, as among the predominantly Guinean epigraphs in *Mistida* are the carefully selected lyrics of two key Afro-Caribbean/American cultural icons, Bob Marley and Jimmy Cliff.²¹ The novel's close is marked by a group of young children singing Bob Marley's *Redemption Song*, whose lyrics are taken from a Mark Garvey speech. In *Eterna Paixão*, Dan Baldwin's first journey to Africa is to attend the Zimbabwean Independence celebrations in 1980, at which Bob Marley performed and which are said to have had a significant effect on his spirituality and connection to the Pan-African movement (*Marley* 2012), an effect also felt by the fictional Dan.

To some extent Dan fits the archetype of the American Black Intellectual (Gates 1997), indeed as Hamilton notes (1996: 78), the author James Baldwin most probably influenced Sila in naming his hero. Dan was brought up in horrifying circumstances and fought to succeed in life via education, nevertheless continuing to experience and bear witness to alienation from both his generally less educated racial community and from the (white) race of his educated class. His father was lynched and his home destroyed by the Ku Klux Klan, and later, when his mother died of ill health that could have been resolved with adequate free medical care, he alone has to dig her grave. He and his sister were eventually taken into an orphanage but there she was raped by one of the owners and, faced with the burden of silence in exchange for a home, she committed suicide. Like most Afro-Americans of his time he lived through the very worst that American society could give. Dan earns a scholarship to attend the University of Georgia, Atlanta, where he is educated as an agronomist, perhaps not incidentally the same field in which Amílcar Cabral was educated in Portugal, showing another parallel that may be drawn between the icon and Sila's leading

²¹ I. Madjudho: "There is one question I'd really like to ask: Is there really a place for the hopeless sinner who has hurt all mankind just to save his own" Bob Marley, 'One Love' (15).
VIII. Yem-Yem: "Now that you feel like a fish in water you are wondering what's the matter... Remember you said it couldn't happen to you!" Jimmy Cliff, 'House of Exile' (157).

men. He begins to get involved in civil rights activism yet retains a self-confessedly ignorant view that Africa *'era qualquer coisa de atrasado, ruim, horrível...'* (EP 35). His mind is opened up by his flatmate and colleague, the not coincidentally named Mark Garvey, who introduces him to *'a outra África que nunca aparecia nos meios de comunicação e da qual tão pouco se sabia'* (EP 34). Mark functions exactly as his namesake, as the voice of the American Pan-Africanist movement, a determined supporter of black intellectual independence, an advocate for African and black unity and an articulate painter of a positive picture of the African motherland of the diaspora. For many people of African descent born in the Americas, most certainly not exclusively those within the pan-Africanism movement, Africa is, to quote Augel (1998: 338), *'...frequentemente símbolo de um passado feliz e sem degradação, sinônimo de uma época de equilíbrio e de harmonia, em que a ordem social ainda não tinha sido alterada pelo tráfico de escravos. É o lugar da liberdade anterior à escravidão e por extensão da liberdade da opressão social, das misérias econômicas, de redenção.'* With Dan's newfound appreciation for his roots in the African continent and his involvement in the civil rights movement he feels a growing solidarity with the people of the land of his ancestors and develops a determination to return (Augel 1998: 337).

Via Dan's representation of Mbubi, Ruth, and the African continent itself, the implied author exposes his hero's slipping into 'the idealization of women and motherhood in the Negritude vein – woman as supermother, symbol of Africa, earth as muse' (Davies 1986: 15). The Négritude movement attempted to replace colonial images of Africa as savage and treacherous with positive images of warmth, sensuality, fertility and nurture by using the black woman as the embodiment of African culture (Stratton 1994: 40). However, according to Stratton (ibid) this went no further than to replicate conventional colonial modes of representation and reproduce stereotypical images of Africa from Western discourse.

Moreover, this perpetuated the conventionally patriarchal trope of the male speaker/agent and the female listener/object and reinforced the African woman's status as an aesthetic object (ibid: 41). In Augel's analysis of *Eterna Paixão* (1998: 338-39) she posits that the two female characters are representative of two very different faces of Africa: Ruth is figuratively the post-independence continent once full of hope but now crumbling to corruption, whilst Mbubi is representative of maternal, fertile Africa, the retainer of ancestral knowledge and the traditional female bosom at which Dan finds solace. Augel goes on to propose that the bond between Dan and Mbubi functions as an umbilical cord, as he eventually comes to thrive in her ancestral village, Woyowyan (1998: 339). Thus the two women form the oft-repeated and opposed female stereotypes in African fiction (Schipper, 1987: 45): Mbubi as the good, representing the traditional loving Mother Africa, the rural; and Ruth as the bad, the modern, evil, vicious and beautiful, often urban girl.

Throughout the novel, the intensity of Dan's heterosexual male gaze towards African women is powerful and unavoidable, indeed women are far more consistently objectified than in Sila's other novels. This could be an (non) intention on the part of the author to subtly underline some supposed more objectifying (African) American male gaze or, given the fact that this novel is narrated from the third person perspective of a young male, whereas his others have multiple perspectives of both genders, it is just as likely a factor of necessity due to the nature of the character. The sexuality of the male gaze is more persistently foregrounded here in contrast with Leitão and Régulo in *A Última Tragédia*, yet its predatory nature is still less threatening and more loving than that expressed by the two colonial characters.

Through Dan's eyes women are introduced primarily by their physical appearance and are mostly sexualised, but even where they are not objectified they are still introduced as

primarily physical beings; even the mother figure Mbubi: *‘Mbubi era uma senhora que, apesar do corpo e da idade que aparentava ter, era muito ágil e solícita. As pessoas achavam-na gorda, embora ela nunca tivesse reconhecido tal facto’* (EP 13). Ruth's introduction in the text carries an unavoidably sexual tension:

Ela era esbelta, com um andar invulgar que induzia um movimento vibratório às suas nádegas, fazendo-as sobressair e ganhar uma forma e proporções que não aparentavam ter quando parada. [...] ...as pernas, cujo volume e forma pareciam de uma obra esculpida. [...] ... uns seios redondos que, desamparados, dançavam ao ritmo dos passos. (EP 22)

As Stratton critiques Négritude's worship of the African female physical form (1994: 41), the postcolonial gender reader may critique Dan for his repeated tributes to Ruth's body, as his attraction to explore it is positioned alongside his desire to discover the African landscape. When Dan thinks back to the moment when he first met Ruth, in a hotel in Atlanta following the conference at which he won his first trip to Africa, her sexualisation is as apparent as ever, but it is also imbued with Dan's admiration of her as the equally problematic universalised African Woman:

Nunca tinha estado com uma moça africana e nunca lhe passara pela cabeça que podia existir algo do género da atracção que sentia naquele momento. Seria essa atracção uma virtude da mulher africana, um dom natural que a sua africanidade lhe atribuía? Significava isso que todas as moças africanas eram tão sensuais e atraentes como aquela que tinha naquele momento à sua frente? (EP 44)

In Dan's gaze Ruth is rendered passive, as within this first meeting Ruth does very little talking, and her inclusion in the narrative of this scene mostly consists of her figuration in Dan's gaze as he observes her and notes his response to her every move, visually devouring her like prey: '*A seguir, viu-a dar um, dois, três mais passos em sua direcção, com toda a sua elegância e com o seu sorriso sedutor*' (EP 59); '*Ainda viu a ponta da língua preguiçosamente abandonada entre os lábios. Uns lábios carnudos que haviam tomado a dianteira...*' (EP 60). Even when Ruth does talk, Dan pays no attention to what she says but focuses instead on the intoxicating effect of her speech upon his body and senses.

Russell Hamilton suggests that the implied author's delineation of Ruth focuses on her European rather than typically African features or behaviours and thus in her is manifest 'the threat of neo-colonialism and the novel's condemnation of an African elite' rather than a particular message of race; through Ruth it is implied that Western assimilation is representative of a 'lack of nativism and, by extension, patriotism and pan-Africanist commitment' (Hamilton 1996: 76). However, as the above quote establishes (EP 44), in assuming Dan's early perspective, her objectification as the African Woman is difficult to deny. It acquires a non-sexual connotation when they move to the continent as the emotion he expresses in thinking of her is one that limits her to the symbolism of her race and gender, and its significance to his work. She is, to some extent, a trophy wife: '*Lembrou-se das emoções e do profundo orgulho de ter a namorada africana ao lado durante os comícios públicos em que discursava longamente, (...) d[o] "Espírito de Dignidade do Africano"*' (EP 64). The combination of memories that Dan relates here is also significant. Juxtaposed in his thoughts are the first time they made love and their landing on African soil, which he describes as '*o clímax de um acto que começara com um simples olhar numa suite do Marriott em Atlanta*' (64). He sees his arrival in Africa as a continuation of his consummation of love for and with

an African woman. Returning to the Mother Africa trope, this sexual metaphor can be extended to imply a conception followed by a re-birth upon arrival in Africa and Dan's consequent sensation of coming back to his human ancestral origins, to Mother Africa.

The hopeless and troublesome tendency of American Pan-Africanism to romanticise the trope of Mother Africa and the essentialised primarily sexual Africa Woman are critiqued by Sila in the concurrent, gradual shift in Dan's relationships with the land and with his wife. Mark's convincing image of the African man characterised by justice and solidarity crumbles piece by piece the more time that Dan spends in the city and involved in government. He discovers a different Africa, and struggles to put into writing its depiction, which will shatter the Africa in which Mark believed and preached:

[A África] com cara cruel, que reprimia barbaramente, [a África] com mãos sanguinárias, que assassinava nas prisões; [...] de olhos vedados, perdida na corrupção [...] Como é que iria falar da barbaridade de toda aquela máquina repressiva, daqueles batalhões de especialistas da tortura? [...] Como é que iria fazer-lhe crer, sem pôr em causa a amizade que os unia [...] que naquela África que ambos tanto amavam, portadores do “Espírito de Luta pela Dignidade do Africano” eram perseguidos, torturados e assassinados... (EP 71-2)

Similarly, his relationship with Ruth breaks down on multiple levels. His initial faith in his wife sharing his ethos, based upon her education, her being an agriculturalist and her African Woman physicality, is broken as she becomes partisan to the very profit-over-welfare politics with which is he so disillusioned. She aligns herself with both corruption and the persecution of those who disagree with the policies of the nation's leaders (Augel 1998: 335). Moreover, as Dan suffers with depression and frustration that *'aquele fogo que antes ardia e irradiava*

tanto calor, já não existia mais' (EP 96). Ruth appears to radiate success and power. His uncharacteristically violent reaction upon discovering that she has been having an affair with David, a colleague who had always been very quick to contradict Dan's opinion, results in his imprisonment. The disproportionate punishments and torture that he suffers there – into which David has indirect input – are the culmination of Dan's awakening to the reality of Africa as a troubled continent and African women as equally as inhomogeneous and multi-faceted as any other human beings. Thus Sila to some extent rebukes the Pan-Africanist idealisation of the continent and simultaneously warns of the societal complications of the male-driven Mother Africa trope and its restriction of women as individuals, explained thus by Mariama Bâ: 'Social pressure shamelessly suffocates individual attempts at change. [...] We no longer accept the nostalgic praise to the African Mother who, in his anxiety man confused with Mother Africa' (quoted by Schipper 1987: 47).

Despite his initial misled idealism, the fact that Dan goes on to build a rural utopia in Woyowyan (Augel 1998: 340), Mbubi's ancestral village that he turns into a haven of education, healthcare and progressive technical agriculture, betrays Sila's indication of this man as representative of an ideal, a masculinity that may work as an example for African men themselves and perhaps even a projection of what Amílcar Cabral himself could have achieved had he not been assassinated. Dan's trajectory in this narrative has been analysed as that of a mythical national hero (Hamilton 1996): a journey through an awakening, construction of an identity, evolution into a respected regional visionary and finally ascension to national hero. Sila's presentation of the African American intellectual who is (re-)Africanised (Hamilton 1996: 81) in his myriad of men serves as an observation of the construction of an ideal masculinity. Dan is the educated, just, well-intentioned, much-loved yet strong man who holds the future of society in his hands yet he has flaws to expose and

naiveties to be resolved. What Dan initially lacks is Cabral's experience of and proximity to the society that he wishes to develop, and what Dan has – but Cabral lost – was the security and lifespan to achieve this. However the fact that Dan is only able to achieve this on a local, not national, scale is perhaps a reflection of some doubt on the part of Sila that Cabral's project could ever have been realised at the national level.

Writing Post-Independence Disillusionment onto Male Bodies

Disillusionment with post-independence regimes is a well-trodden path within postcolonial literature from across the African continent, and the sphere of lusophone African writing is no different. Arenas (2011: 165) classes the case of Guinea-Bissau, and the responsive writing of Abdulai Sila as 'relatively less dramatic' than their Mozambican and Angolan counterparts (Arenas 2011: 165) however this comparison may be grounds for debate elsewhere. Regardless of the political classification of the parties involved, Arenas adequately summarises the responses of the writers of each of the countries: 'Many writers feel that the ideals of a truly egalitarian and democratic state were betrayed once the liberation movements came to power and that not only did these parties remain entrenched with the advent of the market economy ... but political and economic corruption also became endemic' (ibid: 164). As the introduction to this thesis has set out, the post-independence period in Guinea-Bissau left the population, who had fought and suffered through the war for democracy, fair treatment and improved quality of life, were left questioning what difference had been made. In addition to the corruption, externally-imposed and inappropriate financial structures and factional politics, the Guinean people found themselves governed by brutish figures.

Recurring throughout Sila's trilogy is a particularly aggressive, colonial-esque masculinity, that represents certain caricatures from contemporary discourse but is used to figure the government of Guinea-Bissau in the post-independence era. In *A Última Tragédia* Sila manipulates the traditional postcolonial trope of the colonised female body violated by the European invader, to place the Guinean man as an additional perpetrator of this abuse. In a socially critical stance taken throughout his three works of fiction, the author subtly criticises Guinean men's – for the ruling and military elite has remained predominantly male since the colonial era - misuse of their own land, power and autonomy in the post-independence period. This represents an important stage in the maturity of the post-colonial reflective process where, following the defeat of the external enemy, writers look within to interrogate internal actors and the masculinities they represent. Régulo's failure to even attempt to rehabilitate Ndani from her colonial trauma, nor acknowledge that his forcing himself upon and into her body could inflict the same damage upon her allegorises the ravaging and raping of the country and oppression of its people by an external oppressor, only to be re-oppressed and neglected by its own people following the acclaimed liberation, as discussed above. In *Eterna Paixão* this interrogation of male rule is much more explicit as a young, hopeful and inspired African American activist "returns" to a somewhat romanticised African motherland to give back via his education as an agronomist. He soon becomes disillusioned with the money-grabbing and corrupt nature of most of those in power. When he publicly objects to the arrest, imprisonment and torture of the ambassador who first brought him to the country - his first experience of the corrupt side of the system - he becomes a figure of suspicion. After passionately attacking his wife's lover he is put in prison and somewhat excessively punished, which he puts down to his interference in the case of the ambassador. Sila quite openly

criticises the workings of the post-colonial regime, its brutality, profit-driven neglect of the poor and needy, and its quickness to punish those who disagree.

This narrative openly criticises the abuses of both the Cabral (1974-1980) and Vieira (1980-1998) regimes. Vieira's regime became increasingly oppressive and it is his narcissistic, tyrannical form of rule that is reflected in certain male characters in *Mistida*. Vieira was known to unleash vicious attacks on his opponents and sent police to watch and threaten them; he was constantly protected by a small entourage of personally selected bodyguards and isolated himself more and more from those within his own party (Forrest 2002: 254). He was the country's most famous and esteemed war veteran (*ibid.* 251) yet as little social change was effected the population came to trust him less and less. In the early 1990s multiparty elections were set as a new condition of international funding, yet when Vieira won the first set of elections, held in 1994, many believed that he had rigged them (Forrest 2002: 253). Galli (1990) and Forrest (2002) argue that impending democracy even exacerbated the autocracy of the regime as Vieira and other top state officials concentrated power in the hands of increasingly few.

This aggressive, unheeding and selfish masculinity is figured in *Mistida* as Nham-Nham and Amambarka; two indisputably horrific characters who are placed in the novel to graphically hyperbolize Sila's contempt for the behaviour and attitudes of his nation's governing ranks. Described by Augel (1998: 353) as '*aberrante e assustador ... parricida, ganancioso, viciado e execrável*', Amambarka flatters Nham-Nham with lies of his imaginary worshippers in the world outside the underground bunker to which the latter is confined, whilst simultaneously imagining his bloody demise to be replaced by himself. Nham-Nham, '*um ser repugnante e alienado, cego pelo poder, entorpecido pela bajulação, idiotizado mas perigoso, completamente dependente do diabólico Amambarka*' (Augel 1998: 352), is a

caricature of those in power in Guinea-Bissau who accumulate wealth and influence for personal gain with little care for the thousands in poverty or the democratic processes that they claim to adhere to. They represent all that is wrong with existing Guinean hierarchy, a social infrastructure from which the author wishes to move on, and thus they occupy the backward look of the Janus of the nation explored in the first chapter of this thesis; a backward look containing a backward, unchanging and degenerative masculinity.

Throughout *Mistida* men do not only form the narrative of an exposed male rule that is further oppressing the nation, but it is also men, or specifically male bodies, who bear not only the physical and psychological scarring of the anti-colonial war, but also the physical manifestations of the post-Independence disillusionment from which they are prevented from moving on. Be this a willing and intentional removal of male agency on Sila's part or an unintentional one; in *Mistida*, men are not permitted escape from the collective punishment for the system that their gender is posited as being responsible for. As the following close analysis of the text will demonstrate, this novel sits in stark contrast to traditional tendencies to represent the nation and the injuries brought upon it through the violated female body.

The Commandant, feeling so hopeless in the face of the ongoing conflicts, governmental decay and betrayals of a regime he fought in good faith to install, disables himself by refusing to open his eyes in order to escape the world around him: '*Cada um está é a roubar*' (M 19); '*Este mundo é cheio de hipocrasia... E de maldade... é o que há mais*' (M 21); '*Há cinicismo a mais*' (M 25). Given that the Commandant's mission, which he still refuses to abandon despite repeated reminders that the war is long since won, is that of manning a watch tower, '*Até o dia em que definitivamente regressarem o orgulho e a dignidade na nossa terra*' (M 20), his loss of sight impedes him from carrying out his self-imposed duty to his nation, his very *raison d'être*.

In the *Tribunal de Redenção* a famous former political commissar has internalised the guilt of not being able to fulfil his word to his students of all that he had promised during the war, '*Durante a luta falava sempre de um país que iriam construir e que seria o orgulho de todo o africano; um país forjado na luta, onde reinaria a fraternidade e a justiça social; um país sem lixo, sem corrupção, sem violência; um país onde todos seriam irmãos e camaradas*' (M 47). Many years after the end of the struggle, some of his former pupils come to him with a demand: '*... queriam que lhes mostrasse onde estava o país que ele lhes tinha prometido... Eles queriam ver a justiça, a camaradagem, a solidariedade... Queriam saber onde estava o patriotismo, o espírito da luta*' (M 49). Should his personal anguish for having preached so vehemently about this post-independence land that never came to fruition not be enough, he internalises responsibility for the disappointment of his pupils - representative of a generation of young men and women who, like the rest of the nation, hoped that they were being led towards a brighter and more promising future - and the burden is such that he completely loses that tool that was so important in his role of building national hope; his voice. Just as the Commander's capacity to fulfil his own self-set agenda is ruined by his blindness, disillusionment prevents the Commissar from contributing to society with his own gift.

Each day the group of prisoners in the *Tribunal de Redenção* take turns to share their story; why they are in prison, the suffering they have experienced on their journey at the hands of both the colonial regime and its successor governed by former comrades who continue the programme of oppression, and the physical and psychological suffering that continues to haunt them all individually and as a collective. It is not they who are in the dock but they are confessing, on behalf of their persecutors, the disgraces of the latter. In confiding in each other '*...tornavam o próprio sofrimento mais ligeiro e restituíam alguma cor a esperança*' (M 43) They find life that bit more digestible by shaming those who have tortured,

maimed, humiliated and impoverished them rather than internalise that shame. Despite the alleviation sought and found in these confessions by proxy, the reclaiming of power and self-narrative and the assertion of free will that they represent, the prisoners are nonetheless incarcerated and have no liberty beyond the decision to tell these stories. They are subject to the whims and contradictory regulations of the undemocratic, corrupt regime that has slipped quite neatly into the boots of the imperial power that they had driven out, and with not much recognisable difference between the two. Indeed, Asumane Mané's rebels, whose rising partly instigated the civil war in 1998-9, openly compared their struggle to that fought against the Portuguese (Forrest 2002: 256). The prisoners in the *Tribunal de Redenção* are physically incapable of contributing to the construction of the Guinea-Bissau for which they had fought, and any space they had for intellectual contribution has been confiscated, a loss that is doubly allegorised in the Political Commissar's muting.

Word of the repercussions of the war on these men and their suffering is discussed in chapter 'III. *Sem Sombra de Duvida*', which narrates one veteran's case of what might today be diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder that drives him to alcoholism. He is haunted by the memory of the first *tuga*, Portuguese man, that he killed in combat. It takes the physical form of a shadow that weighs around his neck and prevents full, free use of his body. Manifest in this man's mental torment and confusion are many signs of the post-war age: the ruining of two great men into blindness and muteness discussed above; the pessimism and misfortune of his country, '*nesta terra duas coisas boas não acontecem juntas*' (M 62); the driving of his people into political passivity, '*A melhor coisa que de facto uma pessoa pode fazer nos tempos de agora é ouvir passadas*' (M 63); and the lack of response from anyone to the oft-posed question, '*Mas o que é que está a acontecer neste pais?*' (M 75). The shadow of neo-colonialism plays an important role in this mentally-painted picture of contemporary

Guinea-Bissau as a comrade attempts to wake the protagonist up to his reality '*Eles é que estão a mandar outra vez na nossa terra! Já corromperam todo o mundo, não reparaste ainda? ... Estamos a ser outra vez escravos deles*' (M 73). As discussed above, international agencies had a significant part to play in the attempted reconstruction and development of Guinea-Bissau, and thus it was not only the politicians who opened the door to them for their own personal gain who are seen as culpable for the poor results for the people of Guinea-Bissau. In Sila's narrative the IMF and World Bank, among others, morph with the retreating shadow of the Portuguese colonial ruler to form a monolithic, homogenous, white western They, driven by profit and fuelled on the exploitation of the African We in the national conscious.

The veteran finds momentary peace when, in a violently emotional outburst, he recognises the relative irrelevance of his own culpability within the entire context of the colonial war. He addresses the inescapable apparition of the dead soldier, '*Disse-lhe várias vezes que... se tinha uma reivindicação a fazer que fosse apresentá-lo aos que o tinham mandado para a guerra numa terra onde não tinha nada que buscar; esses, sim, eram os verdadeiros e únicos criminosos*' (M 76). Although the speaker directs this at the spirit, it is he who needs to hear this negation of his responsibility in ending the life of another within conflict. However his peace is short lived and his torment resurges as he then dreams of a visit by bailiffs from Bretton Woods, the monetary system established by industrial nations in 1944 that later gave rise to the International Monetary Fund.²² After then hallucinating the dead Portuguese soldier's mother and young wife who relentlessly sob, begging for the return of their hero and weeping tears of blood that he struggles to scrub from his mind's eye, the

²² BBC. *How Bretton Woods reshaped the world*. 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7725157.stm>. Accessed 8/10/12.

veteran is scarred with insomnia curable only with increasingly copious amounts of *cana*.²³ When he seeks help from an old comrade, now an *Alto Dignitário da Nação*,²⁴ the state representative's solution is to give his suffering comrade a pile of notes, enough for more *cana* and a prostitute for every time he suffers from these nightmares. Sila depicts a generation of veterans trapped in a traumatised post-war psychological memory who are now also being clawed at by neo-colonial financial systems, and the state's solution is to cover the wound with a sticking plaster of intoxication and prostitution.

Yem-Yem, 'the executioner', is similarly psychologically and spiritually tormented by the current state of his country's governance and a deep mistrust of a political sphere that '*Estragou amizades, estragou casamentos, estragou a confiança e agora até queria estragar a terra. Só porque todos queriam mandar e ninguém queria deixar*' (M 171). When Yem-Yem experiences something akin to a self-led exorcism of aggression and his military uniform is transformed into a clean, white *bubu* - a traditional Islamic tunic -, he appears to inhale peace and announces that something has to change in the country, however he is promptly taken down by machine gun fire. Sila posits that even those men who choose to reinvent themselves by breaching their position within the military machine to become proponents of progression and call for a cleaning up of national politics cannot escape the violence of their own gender tradition.

Throughout his trilogy Abdulai Sila makes headway with two innovations in the study of gender and postcolonialism: the masculine ideal and the body of the nation. African literary masculinities have previously been considered in relation to colonial masculinities and

²³ *Cana* is an alcoholic drink made from fermented sugar cane.

²⁴ A high dignitary of the nation

European expectations of civilisation or progression. Throughout his trilogy Sila offers a new masculine ideal by writing characters that echo but also humanise the memory of Cabral and thus make the possibility of attaining success with his social philosophy somewhat more tangible. In my attempt to consider Sila's more deeply explored masculinities by their Cabral-esque qualities I do not intend to assert that my quite exclusive comparison is any more comprehensive than in considering them on a colonial spectrum, but I do claim to bring their interrogation to lie within the sphere of Bissau-Guinean national culture and iconography. Sila complicates existing models of African masculinity by manifesting the political and cultural attitude of Cabral in more human, flawed figures: the traditionally misogynistic but politically progressive leader, the colonial mission teacher who questions his education and attempts to be freed from its the aggression of its culture, and the Western idealist with an oppressive gaze who must be Africanised in order to fulfil his social potential and become the national hero. The negotiation of masculinities in post-colonial and post-independence Guinea-Bissau is brought into the global discussion via the narrative presented in *Eterna Paixão*. Through Dan's paralleled romanticisation of Africa and African women and the destructive results of his encounter with the their respective realities, Sila critiques the self-serving idealisation of the American Pan-Africanist movement, which he places as far removed from helping the people of Africa. Advancing his frustrated critique of post-independence governance, Sila innovatively moves on from the earlier inscription of the nation upon the female body by looking inwards domestically. He writes the diseases of corruption and ego as male caricatures and inscribes the consequent sufferings of their inflictions upon the male body, which it tortures, torments, blinds and incapacitates.

CONCLUSION

In writing this thesis the overall aim was to begin a research discussion on the significance of gender to the post-colonial literature of Guinea-Bissau. I sought to find the key concerns of men and women writers, the extent to which these explicitly involve gender and how gender implicitly influences them. This would involve closely scrutinising the representations of the males and females in the novels and short stories in question in order to interrogate power dynamics in play, as they are intentionally narrated but also as they exist between the author, their narrative and the people they figuratively and literally narrate. The project was inspired by existing critical work on other European-language African literatures, particularly those on luso-African literatures and those that explored gender relationships. More specifically, inspiration came from the lack of existing knowledge on these themes as they appear in the literature of Guinea-Bissau.

Expressions of culture from the post-colonial societies of former Portuguese colonies provide insight into the relationship between people and the newly independent state, people and their history, and between people and their imagining of the future potential of their nation. They inform interested parties locally, continentally and internationally on how a nation views itself, how people view themselves and each other. Furthermore, a study of the writing of gender, representation and power not only helps us to understand the society in question but also brings further examples to contribute to the wider international and interdisciplinary debates. Study of the interaction between the concepts of gender, representation and nationalism have been highly productive in the field of franco-African and anglo-African post-colonial literary criticism, yet study on Portuguese speaking African countries and their literary production have proved less popular until recent years. Within that

gradually growing field, the majority of research has been undertaken to understand how writers from Mozambique, Angola, and the African diaspora in Portugal narrate gender in making sense of national experience in their literature. These scholars have brought fascinating insight into the roles that men and women play in these societies, how they reflect on their national and personal histories, indeed how these two interlink, and how they imagine the construction of a secure future. Despite some academic steps being made into the fiction of Guinea-Bissau, this country's literature remains relatively unexplored by the academy. Guinea-Bissau is proudly home to one of the most inspirational and respected revolutionaries of the twentieth century; it boasted a principally egalitarian army within which even in the 1970s women commanders, if in fewer numbers, garnered the same respect as their male comrades; and it was the first Portuguese colony to gain independence, nudging the dominoes that collapsed towards the Carnation Revolution. Yet so much has failed since those years of social potential, political vigour and fierce national pride. An interrogation of the contribution this country's writers have to make to the discussion on gender and the nation is therefore a vastly fruitful topic for the interested researcher, which this thesis has attempted to demonstrate.

The first chapter sought to address the representation of women in the imagination of a male writer, namely in the fiction of Abdulai Sila. It sought to understand the significance of women in his narratives, the effect both colonial and anti-colonial rhetoric may have had on his writing and what we might learn about women in Guinea-Bissau through his reflections. It established that although female characters are prominent in Sila's fiction and he succeeds in addressing a number of gender concerns, his writing of them is far from unproblematic. The protagonist of *A Última Tragédia* functions as a symbol for the colonial nation, demonstrating the author's continuation of the colonial and pan-Africanist trope of Africa as female, and

perpetuating the disempowerment of women that this entails. The behemoth of colonialism itself, and its simultaneous drives of hatred and desire are also represented by gendered facets: the purported benevolence of evangelism as female and the explicitly violent as male. Nevertheless, the results of the two are clearly equally detrimental. Going beyond historical symbolism, Sila successfully exposes the blaming of women that was inherent to both colonial Portuguese and Guinean cultures, as the colonial woman is represented as not only a proponent of the imperial regime but also as a victim of its manipulation and misogyny, and the colonized woman is doubly victimised. In Sila's novel *Mistida*, I found that although he attempts to grant women the political space and agency that they have otherwise been denied, in doing so he erases them from his narrative of the nation's history. When the male writer graciously attempts to bestow upon women an agency that they already once had, it is revealed how men retain for themselves the potential to empower. In attempting to expose colonial and post-independence societies' denial of female agency the male writer inevitably partakes in that negation of voice.

The second chapter moved on to women writers in order to see how their side of the conversation might interact with that of Sila. It attempted to establish the key themes with which Guinea-Bissau women's writing is concerned, how they choose to write about them and how they represent themselves and other women. I argued that the women's fiction from Guinea-Bissau demonstrates that the intimate can be considered as a lens that shapes women's expression of personal life but also can be used to comment on the world around them and much wider societal themes. Rather than write women as symbols, female writers tend to narrate individuals and their experiences, nevertheless sometimes at risk of perhaps limiting women's experience to one purely of suffering. The theme of marriage stands out most prominently, particularly as Embaló, Samy and Semedo speak out unanimously against forced

marriage, a protestation that they communicate by means of the rebellion of women and girls against their own forced marriages. This rebellion promotes female agency and is a key contrast with Sila's women. Be that as it may, there is an intriguing silence on polygamy in these books, despite its prevalence in Guinea-Bissau, showing perhaps a reluctance to deal with truly polemical issues, and making these writers' silence an indirect act of complicity in its perpetuation. Although themes of the female body are dealt with to some extent, female corporeal experience is not ventured into very far. Whilst Samy sends out clear pedagogical messages on sexual health, Embaló but tentatively explores the corporeal experiences of infertility and rather focuses on the effect that this has on a woman's identity and standing in African communities, furthering a discussion on blame. I argued that these women writers demonstrate that the intimate can be used to critique wider social issues including urban-rural conflicts, intergenerational differences and the encounters between the colonial classes. Filomena Embaló breaks furthest away from writing about exclusively domestic female experience in her narrative of an anti-colonial war and its aftermath. Through *Tiara* we are brought to recognise both the unifying experiences and vast cultural differences between African nations, and to question the confines of national identity. Furthermore, Embaló works toward restoring women's lost place in history by writing militarily and politically active women. What all of the writers studied in this chapter succeed in doing is writing women in all their complexities and removing them from the male-imposed confines of symbolism and ahistoricity.

In the third and final chapter I discussed the importance of interrogating masculinities in examining the contribution from Guinea-Bissau to wider gender-critical post-colonial research. I examined the parts played by men in male narrative, the types of masculinities that come to the fore in Abdulai Sila's writing and what we might understand about Guinea-

Bissau and Guinea-Bissauan men by questioning the male characters that he writes. I examined how the ethics and traits of revolutionary leader Amílcar Cabral emerge in Sila's protagonists and how their failings are used to reflect back upon and humanise the idealised masculinity of this national hero, rendering the appearance of another like him more plausible. Not only do Sila's male protagonists humanise an idealised masculinity but they also serve to complicate existing critical categorisations of African masculinities in prose fiction. He presents us with new ways of considering the masculine in Guinea-Bissau that are not measured by proximity to the aggressive colonial hegemonic masculinity or their acceptance of European norms. Rather they are observed with regard to their ability to critically evaluate the traditional, the colonial and the modern in attempting to establish a positive future for their country. Through Sila's trilogy one is also able to place Guinea-Bissau masculinities within the wider network of global black masculinities. Beyond bringing an international context to the men developed in his novels, Sila makes use of this to critique Pan-Africanist ideology and reflect upon its lack of connection with the real rather than the idealised, imagined Mother Africa of its discourse. In doing so, Sila somewhat unselfconsciously delegitimises Pan-Africanist symbolising of African women and the African continent. Men are further used as a means of social critique in *Mistida* where Sila makes use their bodies to allegorise both the causes and effects of post-independence disillusionment to develop a new gendered trope. He writes the ills of the present day as grotesque puppet-like sycophants and the effects of their actions as disease, disability and trauma on the weakened bodies of men, thus delegitimising male power in an attempt to make way for the thus far stifled voices of women.

Despite the hitherto lack of close examination of the theme, gender is evidently of great significance in Guinea-Bissau fiction. I have shown that within this small field of literature there is a demonstrable progression in post-colonial gender discourse, as gender is

used in fiction to critique the nation symbolically, allegorically and overtly. In parallel with women's writing developing out from very personal domestic matters to questions of national identity, Sila's gendered symbolism of the nation has developed from the colonially influenced trope of the virgin, female continent to the new trope of a scarred male nation. This negation of male hegemony coupled with the female-written assertion of women's agency establishes a positive path towards gender equality in Guinea-Bissau which, as sociological sources have evidenced, may be unfortunately very ambitious for the near future. Ribeiro and Semedo (2010) state that the literary imaginary of a people is crucial to their nation building, and I have argued here that gender is highly significant in the fictional narratives of the Guinean nation. It is then implicit that gendered national narratives are contributing to the shaping of Guinean nationhood insofar as literature may in reality be able to contribute in a country with such a disproportionate number of people who are unable to access that cultural medium.

APPENDIX
ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF PORTUGUESE QUOTES

All translations are my own.

Introduction

Page 10.

‘pioneiro do romance guineense’
‘pioneer of the Guinean novel’

‘dupla responsabilidade e função como escritor e intelectual’
‘double responsibility and function as writer an intellectual’

Page 11.

‘meter os dedos nas próprias gangrenas’
‘to put their fingers in their own gangrene/ulcers’; ‘pick at their own scabs’

‘mais do que qualquer área de saber, é a literatura, pela força da sua expressão, que vai configurar a ideia de uma nação guineense’
‘due to the force of its expression it is literature, more than any other area of knowledge, that will configure the idea of the Guinean nation.’

Page 12.

Outras Manifestações da Cultura
Other Cultural Manifestations

Page 13.

‘a marca da mulher (...) impregnados da preocupação pela condição feminina, pela posição da mulher na sociedade guineense’
‘the brand of a woman (...) impregnated with concern for the feminine condition, for women’s position in Guinean society.’

Page 14.

assimilados

Assimilated people. The term *assimilado* was used under Portuguese colonial rule to describe those native people who had achieved the status of ‘civilisation’ according to imperial standards, but were nevertheless still to be defined by their non-European origins.

Chapter 1

Page 17.

Footnote 7.

‘o termo régulo [...] do léxico português [...] é um diminutivo de rei, e o fato do colonizador empregar um termo que significa ‘reizinho’ ou ‘pequeno rei’ para designar o chefe máximo dos agrupamentos étnicos pode espelhar o menosprezo eurocentrado do expoliador, pois se tratava muitas vezes de soberanos senhores de muitas riquezas, de grande poder e

respeitabilidade. Hoje em dia, o termo se generalizou, sem que se pense mais nessa carga depreciativa.'

'The term Régulo, [...] from the Portuguese lexicon [...] is a diminutive of king. The fact that the colonizer used a term which means 'little king' for the highest chief in ethnic communities reflects the plunderers' Eurocentric disdain, as it was often used for sovereign lords of great wealth, power and respectability. Today the term is used more generally and has lost this pejorative connotation.'

Page 18.

'Finalmente o seu sol ia começar a arder'

'Finally her sun was going to start shining.'

'[pretende] (...) que o drama de Ndani seja a derradeira infelicidade a abater-se sobre o povo guineense, ávido de liberdade e de justiça'

'intends (...) for Ndani's drama to represent the ultimate unhappiness which represses the Guinean people, who yearn for freedom and justice.'

Page 22.

mestiço

An adjective to describe mixed race people.

Page 24.

'[...] os europeus vieram à África para salvar os africanos. [...] dantes esta salvação consistia em levar os negros para longe, lá para as Américas, onde não teriam nem as máscaras nem as estatuetas que veneravam, e muito menos as árvores sagrados... Mas depois viu-se que esta não era o melhor método e então tivemos nós os europeus que vir para a África ensinar a religião cristã e salvar as vossas almas.'

'The Europeans came to Africa to save the Africans. (...) before then, salvation meant taking the blacks far away, over to the Americas, where they wouldn't have any of those masks or statues that they worshipped, and certainly no sacred trees... But this wasn't found to be the best way so we Europeans had to come to Africa to teach you about the Christian religion and save your souls.'

Page 26.

'porque os estávamos a ajudar a desenvolver'

'because we were helping them to develop.'

'Ela servia a Deus e à patria ao mesmo tempo. Tal como os descobridores portugueses. [...] o nome dela também poderia um dia aparecer nos livros da história de Portugal...'

'She was serving God and the fatherland at the same time, just like the Portuguese navigators. (...) one day her name too could appear in books about Portuguese history.'

Page 28.

'Escola para indígena e só confusão. Preto que sabe ler é anarquista. Aliás, ele já é anarquista por natureza, se aprende a ler então é o caos total'

'School for the indigenous would cause mayhem. A black who knows how to read is an anarchist. They're anarchists by nature anyway, if they learned to read it would be total chaos.'

Page 29.

‘Decorara tudo e aprendera inclusive algumas regras do comportamento que os patrões brancos exigiam dos criados pretos, maneiras próprias de responder, gestos indiciadores de obediência e de subserviência’

‘She had learned everything by heart and had even learned some rules of behaviour that the white masters demand of black servants: the correct ways of answering, gestures showing obedience and subservience.’

‘branco pobre não existe’

‘there’s no such thing as a poor white’

‘uma atitude talvez normal entre os brancos’

‘perhaps normal behaviour amongst whites’

‘Ou será que mulher de branco não dá para parir muito, como mulher de preto pode?’

‘could it be that a white man’s wife can’t give birth as much as a black man’s?’

Page 30.

‘falara baixo, com os olhos no chão, com muita humildade’

‘she spoke in a low voice, with her eyes cast to the floor in humility.’

‘como lavar prato sujo’

‘like cleaning a dirty plate’

Page 31.

‘Ainda há dias estava convencida que finalmente as coisas tinham começado a correr-lhe bem, mas eis que a senhora vem com a história de ir à igreja’

‘For days she’d been convinced that things were starting to get better, but now Senhora came up with this going to church business.’

Page 32.

‘Maria da Esperança, criada da Dona Maria dos Anjos’; ‘Maria Clara, criada de Dona Maria Clarice’

‘Maria da Esperança, servant to Dona Maria dos Anjos’; ‘Maria Clara, servant to Dona Maria Clarice’

Page 33.

‘acto de dádiva e partilha’

‘[an] act of giving and sharing’

‘As exigências da missão e os sucessos contínuos da sua acção afastavam-na cada dia mais do seu lar. As suas preocupações pelas almas a salvar levaram-na a esquecer um vício antigo do marido: violar criadas’

‘The demands of the mission and the continual successes of her activity took her further from her hearth each day. Her concern for saving all those souls caused her to forget an old vice of her husband’s: raping servants.’

Page 35.

‘Qual devia ser a posição de uma mulher católica e civilizada, cujo marido cometia sistematicamente actos indecentes, crimes repugnantes, pecados imperdoáveis?’

‘What should a catholic, civilised woman do when her husband systematically commits indecent acts, repugnant crimes, unpardonable sins?’

Page 36.

‘(...) era tão intenso que fez lembrar um outro acontecimento ocorrido há cerca de dois anos antes’ (AUT 119); ‘fizeram surgir novamente a recordação do último casamento do Régulo’

‘its intensity reminded them of another event that happened around two years earlier’; ‘again they brought up memories of Régulo’s last wedding’

‘Os três diferentes caminhos percorridos por Ndani exemplificam os destinos da mulher Africana: como criada dependente dos patrões estrangeiros, como esposa num casamento forçado, como mulher independente que escolhe ela mesma o seu companheiro e enfrenta todas as convenções sociais por esse amor’

‘The three paths taken by Ndani represent the destinies of the African woman: as a servant dependent on foreign masters, as a wife in a forced marriage, [and] as an independent woman who chooses her own partner and fights against social conventions for love.’

Page 40.

‘Nós tivemos mulheres na luta de libertação nacional que são os nossos exemplos, olhamos para elas todos os dias... Mas a geração mais nova conhece a história dessas mulheres? Não podemos deixar que o tempo apague a história destas mulheres, que a História nos apague’

‘We had the women who fought for liberation as our role models; we looked to them every day... But what does the youngest generation know those women’s history? We can’t allow time to erase these women’s history, for History to erase us.’

‘o roubo da memória, sem a qual a História não é possível’

‘the theft of memory, without which History is not possible.’

Page 42.

‘uma tarefa urgente a ser cumprida, um negócio inadiável a ser tratado, um certo e enigmático empreendimento a realizar’

‘an urgent task to be completed, an undelayable matter to be dealt with, a certain enigmatic venture to realise.’

Page 43.

‘Precisava de continuar a encarar a vida ... com fé e esperança num dia melhor... Se não chegasse com ela em vida, podia sempre chegar depois, para os seus netos ou bisnetos’

‘She had to continue facing life in the same way ... with faith and hope in a better day... If it didn’t come in her life time, it could always arrive later, for her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.’

Page 47.

Footnote 15.

‘Os bardos ou griots, os djidius, como são chamados na Guiné-Bissau, transmitem através do canto e da narração o que a memória coletiva armazenava, os feitos épicos ou gloriosos da coletividade e, além de louvores, mostra de simpatia ou de subserviência, incluem em seu repertório críticas aos príncipes, aos chefes e aos dirigentes. Ainda hoje são populares no país e em todo o continente.’

‘Bards or griots, djidius as they are called in Guinea-Bissau, use song and narration to transmit what collective memory would store, the epic or glorious feats of the collective and, as well as praise, showing kindness or subservience, they include in their repertoire criticism of princes, chiefs and leaders. Still today they are popular in Guinea-Bissau and throughout the continent.’

‘Ele é um divulgador da literatura oral e pode ser caracterizado como um trovador andarilho, apátrida, que anda de terra em terra, exercendo sua missão de poeta e de cantor.’
He is a performer of oral literature and can be characterised as a roaming troubadour, without a homeland, who walks from country to country, carrying out his mission as poet and singer.

Page 48.

‘as mulheres que abnegadamente lutavam pelo resgate da esperança’
‘The women who were fighting selflessly to rescue hope’

Chapter 2

Page 56.

‘o casamento forçado é (...) violento e é feito por todas as raças na Guiné, até cristãos’
‘forced marriage is (...) violent and practised by all races in Guinea-Bissau, even Christians’

‘dentro de nós não gostamos, mas temos de aceitar’
‘deep inside we don’t like it, but we have to accept it.’

Page 62.

‘completamente alheia às comunidades rurais [...], regidas, acima de tudo, pelas tradições ancestrais’
‘completely alien to rural communities (...) who are ruled, above all, by ancestral traditions.’

‘[um] processo real de desenvolvimento cultural, social e econômico da população em geral’
‘A genuine process of cultural, social and economic development of the population as a whole.’

Page 64,

‘talvez de uma maneira por demais insistente, um certo didatismo, uma preocupação moralizante um tanto ingênua por parte da escritora [...] Também incomoda um pouco o discurso por demais enfático e repetitivo dando um lugar de destaque à instrução, ao valor intrínseco da escola...’

‘a perhaps overly insistent didacticism and a rather naive, moralising preoccupation on the part of the writer (...) The discourse is also disturbed somewhat by being overly emphatic and repetitive, foregrounding education and the intrinsic value of school.’

'[a] sua capacidade de retratar certos aspectos da sociedade guineense e [...] no fato dos seus contos serem narrados a partir de uma perspectiva feminina, ressaltando a posição da mulher e as suas dificuldades face à atual conjuntura de transição que a Guiné-Bissau atravessa'

'her capacity to illustrate certain aspects of Guinean society and (...) the fact that her stories are narrated from a female perspective, highlighting women's position and the difficulties they experience in Guinea-Bissau's current transitional crisis.'

Page 65.

Casamento ou Morte!

Marriage or Death!

Page 66.

'consciência da violência dos seus atos'

'consciousness of the violence of their actions.'

'em mais de 35 anos de independência não conseguiu promover o desenvolvimento das suas populações'

'in more than 35 years of independence has not managed to promote the development of its peoples.'

Page 67.

tio Kilin

Uncle Kilin.

'lá na prasa as pessoas nunca acreditam em ninguém e em coisa alguma (...) Aqui, nós acreditamos em nós, nos outros e na natureza (...) Aqui não há limites para acontecimentos'

'There in the prasa people never believe in anybody or anything (...) Here, we believe in ourselves, in others and in nature (...) Here there are no limits to what can happen.'

Page 68.

'[o]s ventos da modernidade sopram às vezes de uma forma violenta, desorganizando as estruturas tradicionais'

'[t]he winds of modernity sometimes blow too violently, disorganizing traditional structures.'

'[essas] conferências'

'[those] conferences'

Page 72.

'os desdobramentos e as desilusões do período pós-independência' (...) "as utopias revolucionárias'

'the unfolding of the post-independence period and its disappointments' (...) 'revolutionary utopias.'

Page 73.

os muritanos

the Muritians

‘os mesmos valores fundamentais’
‘the same fundamental values’

‘particularidades culturais próprias a cada povo e [...] religiões diferentes’
‘cultural peculiarities unique to each people and (...) different religions.’

‘tão diferente da sua’
‘so different to her own’

Page 74.

‘todo o trabalho doméstico era um empreendimento que exigida um esforço físico’
‘all the domestic tasks were a physically demanding undertaking’

‘simples (...) [s]empre igual, dia após dia. Vida dura, muito tempo resignada...’
‘simple (...) always the same, day after day. Resigned to a hard life for a long time.’

Page 75.

‘insurgir’, ‘avançar’ and ‘compreender o mundo’
‘rise up’, ‘advance’ and ‘understand the world’.

‘prática corrente’
‘current practice’

‘ideais revolucionários tinham dado lugar à luta pelos interesses pessoais’
‘revolutionary ideas had given way to the fight for personal interests’

“‘[T]ive que fugir do meu próprio país por motivos raciais. Em Terra Branca eu também era estrangeira! Como vês, em qualquer país do mundo eu estou sujeita a ser alvo de reacções destas. No fundo sou uma cidadã do mundo, sem terra própria...’”

“‘I had to flee my own country because of my race. I was a foreigner in Terra Branca too! You see, in whatever country, wherever in the world, I’m the target of reactions like this. Deep down I’m a citizen of the world, without a motherland...’”

Page 76.

‘Senteste muritiana?’
‘Do you feel Muritian?’

“‘[O] facto de te sentires algo não é suficiente para sê-lo, porque não o és, perante os olhos dos outros’”

“‘Just feeling that you are something isn’t enough to make it so, because you aren’t that thing in the eyes of others.’”

Page 77.

“‘Não preciso mais de saber se me sinto muritiana ou portobelense. Sou o que sou: o resultado da minha caminhada neste mundo, com tudo aquilo que assimilei, um ser sem fronteiras, evoluindo num mundo por vezes hostil, mas certamente destinado a ser povoado, num futuro, mais ou menos próximo, por seres universais’”

“I don’t need to know anymore if I feel Muritian or Porto Belan. I am what I am: the result of my journey in this world, with everything that I’ve picked up, a being without boundaries, evolving in a sometimes hostile world which is nevertheless destined to be populated, somewhere in the near or distant future, by universal beings.”

‘um protótipo do mais puro Romantismo’
‘a prototype of the purist Romanticism’

‘[f]orte, bela, inteligente, justa, divertida, solidária, abnegada, enfim não se encontram defeitos nela...’

‘strong, beautiful, intelligent, fair, fun, supportive, unselfish –they are no defects to be found in her.’

Chapter 3

Page 88.

‘quando uma pessoa consegue descobrir as fraquezas do inimigo poder vencer, mesmo se for mais fraco’

‘[W]hen a person manages to find out his enemy’s weaknesses he can win, even if he’s weaker.’

‘... onde é que podia encontrar uma mulher assim, ainda solteira? [...] Quem disse que ela tinha que ser solteira? Mesmo que tivesse homem, ele tomava. Tomava a mulher, mas sem o homem, isso deve ficar claro. Pagava dinheiro aos parentes todos para calar a boca. O pai não quer? Dá-lhe dinheiro; se quiser vacas ou porcos, também pode ter. A mãe pensa que é vergonha demais acabar o casamento da filha de um dia para outro? Dá-lhe também dinheiro, ou então roupa fina ou fios e brincos de ouro, tudo serve. Depois é só os tios, as tias, irmãos, primos e não se sabe que mais. Dava dinheiro a todos!’

‘Where could he find a woman like that still unmarried? (...) Who says she has to be single? Even if she had a husband, he would take her. He’d take the woman, but without the husband, of course. He would pay all the relatives enough to shut them up. If the father doesn’t like it? Give him money; if he wants cows or pigs, he can have those too. And if the mother thinks it’s too shameful to break off the girl’s marriage just like that? Give her money too, or fine clothes or gold chains and earrings, it would all do. Then just the uncles, aunts, brothers, cousins and who knows who else. He would give them all money!’

Page 89.

‘Ela representava também o seu rejuvenescimento, novas energias de que precisava para a longa luta que ainda tinha pela frente’

‘She also represented his rejuvenation, new energies which he needed for the long fight ahead.’

‘Nos primeiros dias choram muito, mas depois... são como o fogo... Um fogo ardente, que ele vai ter que extinguir todos os dias’

‘For the first few days they cry a lot but afterwards... They’re on fire... A burning fire which he would have to extinguish every day.’

Page 90.

‘[...] quando viu o Régulo aproximar-se dela com uns olhos que brilhavam tanto quanto os do senhor Leitão...’

‘... when she saw Régulo come near her with his eyes shining just like Mr Leitão’s...’

‘Pela primeira vez na sua vida, [ela] entregou-se voluntariamente a um homem. [...] Quando esse prazer se libertou do cativo e percorreu todo o seu corpo, provocando convulsões inolvidáveis, ela sentiu-se ressuscitar lentamente, com um novo corpo e uma nova alma [...] segredou-lhe ao ouvido: “Obrigada. Salvste-me...”’

‘For the first time in her life she gave herself willingly to a man. (...) When that pleasure freed her from her tyranny and ran through her entire body, provoking unforgettable tremors, she felt herself slowly brought back to life, with a new body and a new soul (...) She whispered in his ear, “Thank you. You saved me...”’

Page 92.

‘Como é que ele soube de todo isso se nunca tinha ouvido falar do Evangelho?’

‘How could he know all this without ever having heard the Gospel?’

Page 93.

‘[O Régulo] tinha rejeitado a mulher, tinha-a abandonado na solidão daquela imensa casa, não quisera saber dela [...] Ele tinha violado o pacto de casamento e ela deixara conseqüentemente de ser sua mulher. Era um casamento forçado, não valia’

‘[Régulo] had rejected his wife, abandoned her to be all alone in that huge house, he didn’t want to hear anything about her (...) He’d violated his marriage vows and consequently she was no longer his wife. It was a forced marriage, it didn’t count.’

‘Tinha pura e simplesmente amado uma criatura abandonada, que todos rejeitavam’

‘He had purely and simply loved an abandoned creature that everybody had rejected.’

‘Crenças pagãs [...] crenças em seres e poderes inexistentes’

‘Pagan beliefs (...) Beliefs in non-existent beings and powers.’

Page 96.

‘era qualquer coisa de atrasado, ruim, horrível...’

‘[Africa] was some backward, horrible ruin...’

‘a outra África que nunca aparecia nos meios de comunicação e da qual tão pouco se sabia’

‘the other Africa, that never appeared in the media and about which so little was known.’

‘...frequentemente símbolo de um passado feliz e sem degradação, sinônimo de uma época de equilíbrio e de harmonia, em que a ordem social ainda não tinha sido alterada pelo tráfico de escravos. É o lugar da liberdade anterior à escravidão e por extensão da liberdade da opressão social, das misérias econômicas, de redenção.’

‘... often a symbol of a happy and un-degraded past, synonym of an era of balance and harmony, in which the social order still had not been altered by the trafficking of slaves. It is

where freedom before slavery existed, and therefore freedom from social oppression and economic misery; the place of redemption.’

Page 98.

‘Mbubi era uma senhora que, apesar do corpo e da idade que aparentava ter, era muito ágil e solícita. As pessoas achavam-na gorda, embora ela nunca tivesse reconhecido tal facto.’

‘Mbubi was a woman who was very agile and solicitous, despite her body and the age she looked. People thought she was fat, though she had never thought so.’

‘Ela era esbelta, com um andar invulgar que induzia um movimento vibratório às suas nádegas, fazendo-as sobressair e ganhar uma forma e proporções que não aparentavam ter quando parada. [...] ...as pernas, cujo volume e forma pareciam de uma obra esculpida. [...] ... uns seios redondos que, desamparados, dançavam ao ritmo dos passos.’

‘She was svelte, with a unique walk that made her buttocks vibrate, making them jut out and take on a shape and proportions they didn’t seem to have when standing still (...) her legs, whose volume and form were those of a sculpture (...) her round, unsupported breasts which danced to the rhythm of her steps.’

‘Nunca tinha estado com uma moça africana e nunca lhe passara pela cabeça que podia existir algo do género da atracção que sentia naquele momento. Seria essa atracção uma virtude da mulher africana, um dom natural que a sua africanidade lhe atribuía? Significava isso que todas as moças africanas eram tão sensuais e atraentes como aquela que tinha naquele momento à sua frente?’

‘He had never been with an African girl and it has never crossed his mind that an attraction like the one he felt at the moment could even exist. Could this attraction be a virtue of African women, a natural gift granted by their africanity? Would this mean that all African girls were as sensual and attractive as the one in front of him at that moment?’

Page 99.

‘A seguir, viu-a dar um, dois, três mais passos em sua direcção, com toda a sua elegância e com o seu sorriso sedutor’

‘Then he watched her take one, two, three more steps towards him, in all her elegance and with her seductive smile.’

‘Ainda viu a ponta da língua preguiçosamente abandonada entre os lábios. Uns lábios carnudos que haviam tomado a dianteira...’

‘He could still see the point of her tongue abandoned lazily between her lips. Plump lips which had pouted forward.’

‘Lembrou-se das emoções e do profundo orgulho de ter a namorada africana ao lado durante os comícios públicos em que discursava longamente, (...) d[o] "Espírito de Dignidade do Africano”’

‘He remembered the emotion and deep pride in having an African girlfriend at his side during public rallies where he gave long speeches, (...) about the African Man’s Spirit of Dignity.’

‘o clímax de um acto que começara com um simples olhar numa suite do Marriott em Atlanta’

‘the climax of an act which had begun with a simple glance in a suite at the Atlanta Marriott.’

Page 100.

‘[A África] com cara cruel, que reprimia barbaramente, [a África] com mãos sanguinárias, que assassinava nas prisões; [...] de olhos vedados, perdida na corrupção [...] Como é que iria falar da barbaridade de toda aquela máquina repressiva, daqueles batalhões de especialistas da tortura? [...] Como é que iria fazer-lhe crer, sem pôr em causa a amizade que os unia [...] que naquela África que ambos tanto amavam, portadores do “Espírito de Luta pela Dignidade do Africano” eram perseguidos, torturados e assassinados...’

‘The Africa with a cruel face, who punished barbarically, the Africa with bloody hands who murdered in the prisons; (...) blindfolded, lost in corruption (...) How would he speak of the barbarity of that great repressive machine, of those battalions of torture specialists? How would he be able to make him see, without putting their friendship at risk, (...) that in that Africa which both of them loved equally, those who carried the ‘Fighting Spirit for the Dignity of the African’ were persecuted, tortured and murdered...’

‘aquele fogo que antes ardia e irradiava tanto calor, já não existia mais’

‘That fire which had kindled and burned with so much heat didn’t exist anymore.’

Page 104.

‘aberrante e assustador ... parricida, ganancioso, viciado e execrável’

‘aberrant and frightening ... parricidal, greedy, dependent-addictive and execrable’

‘um ser repugnante e alienado, cego pelo poder, entorpecido pela bajulação, idiotizado mas perigoso, completamente dependente do diabólico Amambarka’

‘a repugnant and alienated being, blind with power, stupefied with flattery, idiotic but dangerous, completely dependent upon the diabolical Amambarka.’

Page 105.

‘Cada um está é a roubar’

‘What everyone’s doing is stealing.’

‘Este mundo é cheio de hipocrasia... E de maldade... é o que há mais’

‘This world is full of hypocrisy... And evil... More than anything else.’

‘Há cinicismo a mais’

‘There’s too much cynicism.’

‘Até o dia em que definitivamente regressarem o orgulho e a dignidade na nossa terra’

‘Until the day that hope and dignity return to our land for good.’

Page 106.

‘Durante a luta falava sempre de um país que iriam construir e que seria o orgulho de todo o africano; um país forjado na luta, onde reinaria a fraternidade e a justiça social; um país sem lixo, sem corrupção, sem violência; um país onde todos seriam irmãos e camaradas’

‘During the struggle he always spoke of the country that they were going to build, which every African would be proud of; a country build on struggle, where brotherhood and social

justice would reign; a country without rubbish, without corruption, without violence; a country where everyone would be brothers and comrades.’

‘... queriam que lhes mostrasse onde estava o país que ele lhes tinha prometido... Eles queriam ver a justiça, a camaradagem, a solidariedade... Queriam saber onde estava o patriotismo, o espírito da luta’

‘They wanted him to show them where this country he'd promised them was... They wanted to see justice, camaraderie, solidarity... They wanted to know where the patriotism and the spirit of the struggle had gone.’

‘...tornavam o próprio sofrimento mais ligeiro e restituíam alguma cor a esperança’
‘they lightened their own suffering and restored some colour to hope.’

Page 107.

‘nesta terra duas coisas boas não acontecem juntas’

‘in this country two good things don't come along at once.’

‘A melhor coisa que de facto uma pessoa pode fazer nos tempos de agora é ouvir passadas’
‘The best thing that a person can really do these days is listen to stories.’

Page 108.

‘Mas o que é que está a acontecer neste país?’

‘But what's happening to this country?’

‘Eles é que estão a mandar outra vez na nossa terra! Já corromperam todo o mundo, não reparaste ainda? ... Estamos a ser outra vez escravos deles’

‘It's they who are in control of our country again! They've already corrupted the whole world, hadn't you noticed? ... We're going to be their slaves again.’

‘Disse-lhe várias vezes que... se tinha uma reivindicação a fazer que fosse apresentá-lo aos que o tinham mandado para a guerra numa terra onde não tinha nada que buscar; esses, sim, eram os verdadeiros e únicos criminosos’

‘He said to him several times that... if he had a complaint to make that he should take it to those who had sent him to war in a land where he had no business going; yes it was they who were the true and only criminals.’

Page 109.

‘Estragou amizades, estragou casamentos, estragou a confiança e agora até queria estragar a terra. Só porque todos queriam mandar e ninguém queria deixar’

‘It ruined friendships, it ruined marriages, it ruined trust and now it even wanted to ruin the country. Just because everyone wanted to take control and nobody wanted to let it go.’

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