Reflections of orality in the contemporary narrative of Angolan literature: readings in Boaventura Cardoso

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Abstract: This study presents reflections on the symbolic capital of oral Angolan tradition, attesting to the proximity between orality and writing in Boaventura Cardoso’s narrative fiction. To this end, the works *Fogo da Fala: um conjunto de contos* and *A Morte do Velho Kipacaça* were selected for analysis. A structuralist approach was adopted as a theoretical framework for the investigation. However, the central aim of the article is to highlight the impact and the importance of orality in the contemporary narrative of Angolan literature, with Boaventura Cardoso as a starting and ending point. The article argues that orality is imposed not only as a source and a substrate, but also as an affluent and confluent of literary production engaged with references of Angolanity. The study also seeks to establish guidelines for a more theoretical study of oral literature in Angola and beyond.

Keywords: orality, writing, *Fogo da Fala*, *A Morte do Velho Kipacaça*, Boaventura Cardoso.

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Introduction

There is a construction of the oral universe that is characteristic of Boaventura Cardoso, a contemporary writer of Angolan literature. In the field of Angolan literature, Cardoso needs no introduction. As a short story writer, he is an expert creator of form and content. He usually seeks to restrict himself to a narrative language where orality and writing are close together. The word contemporary is synonymous with a new moment, a new generation, which is a modernity that was concerned with updating the literary assumptions in Angola. That is to say that these assumptions are related to a particular linguistic register of Portuguese that emerged and began to be inserted by a group known as the ‘generation of 50’. This was a group of young people educated in Portugal who broke decisively with the cultural pattern of colonial power and committed themselves to restore endogenous knowledge and values. Through their work, Angolan literary productions opened new horizons of so-called Angolanity. To illustrate some significant contributions of that particular landscape of Angolan literature, we have chosen the following authors as representatives of the group which rose to boost it:

- Agostinho Neto: *Impossible Resignation; Holy Hope; Nausea; Dawn.*
- António Jacinto: *Poem; Granny Bartolomeu; In Kluange of Golungo; Surviving in Tarrafal of Santiago; Prometeu; Fables of Sanji.*
- Luandino Vieira: *Luuanda; We Are People from Makulusu; The Real Life of Domingos Xavier.*

At the same time, these linguistic subversions are part of a new form with aesthetic value, contributing to the promotion of an Angolan literature that is decolonised from Portuguese literary production.

In this study, the main aim is to analyse, in a very precise case, the proximity between orality and writing in the work *Fogo da Fala* by Boaventura Cardoso (hereafter BC). We restrict ourselves to four short stories from the work in order to carry out a more in-depth analysis of the corpus. During this exercise we will discuss some assumptions of the storytelling paradigm, but the main focus is to verify how the aspects of orality influence BC’s stories.

Before beginning along this path, the theoretical basis of the analysis needs to be clarified: structuralist thinking is adopted here as a theoretical framework of the investigation. Instead of describing the author’s conscious and unconscious experience, which is an essential principle of European phenomenological ideas, we seek to identify the underlying structures that make the object of study possible (*Culler 1999*), thus opting for a framework focused on endogenous knowledge.
The study is divided into three core sections. In the first, some theoretical assumptions about the concept in question and the dichotomy of orality and writing in Angolan and African literary production are briefly presented. In this section, the opinions of several scholars who have already looked into this reality will be discussed, but it is not the aim of the article to present these aspects in depth. In the second section, the essential particularities of the writer are highlighted in a very limited way; it is not a biobibliography. An analysis of the relevant short stories is presented in the third section, demonstrating how writing and orality are two sides of the same coin in BC’s narrative structure.

In Africa, orality plays an important role in society. In many parts of the continent it is still the most important means for the dissemination and inculcation of social, moral, philosophical and religious values. It is the fundamental means for the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next. Therefore, it is in orality where much is still preserved (Ki-Zerbo 1999). Thus, in the literary production of some Angolan writers, some peculiar marks of orality are explored in order to share space with the practice of writing. Examples include Luandino Vieira with his works ‘In the Old Age in the Life’ and ‘True Life of Domingos Xavier’, and Jorge Macedo with his works ‘Geography of Courage’ and ‘People of My Neighborhood’. In this sense, when speaking about orality, it is essential to refer to some particularities of the oral universe that are presented in the domain of writing.

What do we understood by orality? At what levels is it different from writing?

It would be a very arduous task indeed if this study were intended fully to address orality, because orality is a river of many different tributaries. However, it is acknowledged that both orality and writing have their own distinct features, a fact that makes it possible to distinguish one thing from the other. According to Guerreiro & Mesquita (2011), Paul Sebillot (1846–1918) coined the term oral literature to designate a mix of literary narratives and cultural manifestations, transmitted orally, that is, by non-graphic processes.

Still, the expression ‘popular literature of oral tradition’ is used to designate the vast set of popular texts which are produced and transmitted by the people by voice. This category encompasses tales, legends, myths, recitations, romances, proverbs, rhythmic speeches, prayers and magic formulas. In the same vein, reference is made to popular literature as the set of significant linguistic-discursive practices, oral or written, worked by the poetic function, according to the conditions specific to each genre, which are both produced and accepted and, therefore, transmitted by the people, individually or in groups (Guerreiro & Mesquita 2011).

According to Nunes (2009: 33), ‘popular literature’ is associated with a social entity that does not use usually writing to represent its verbal art. For the author, the concept of popular literature refers to a literature that expresses, in a spontaneous and natural way, and in its profound genuineness, the national spirit of a people.
Orature, in this context, appears in opposition, in extension and meaning, to the label literature, which refers to writing, to lyrics, to a visual and graphic component (Nunes 2009: 31). Therefore, the term orature arises from the need to separate the literary production of oral tradition from the literary production whose inclination is towards the written verbal language.

**Characterisation of oral literature**

It is important to appreciate that there is a wide literature which illuminates the pedagogical, didactic and moral qualities of oral literature and which also allows us to understand its qualitative differences from written literature. These factors need to be considered in analysing BC’s text, for they allow us to explore the ways in which the juxtaposition of oral and written forms allows the author to achieve a plurality of ends.

Nunes (2009), when addressing the theme of Angolan and Mozambican orature, characterises them as exemplary and pedagogical because they have an indigenous code of conduct and, finally, they are universal in character.

According to the author, the exemplary and pedagogical character acquired by the narratives of oral tradition allows the transmission of all types of values, whether educational, social, political-religious, economic or cultural. The semantic content of these narratives indirectly contains rules and interdictions that are transmitted to the listening public. This public assimilates these values and contributes to preserving the good functioning of the community. The narrative works as one of the main vehicles for the transmission of knowledge, creating a connection between the generations of a community. It has become, over time, a powerful educational medium at the service of education and training of the younger generations.

As for the code of conduct, Nunes claims that the oral tradition narratives present an elementary indigenous moral code – the just punishment of faults such as envy, presumption, disobedience, selfishness, homicide and kindness, and the reward of cunning and intelligence. They are illustrations of the triumph of wisdom over brute force. In the group of stories, the small, the simpleton, the disinherited and the detested, through their wisdom, end up doing better in life than their persecutors and often become the latter’s benefactors. At the same time, ogres, who represent brute force, matter without spirit, are defeated, punished for their wrongdoing and usually quartered (to allow the escape of the victims they had swallowed). The glorification of wisdom or goodness is the subject of almost all the tales.

Finally, the author makes reference to a universal character. Each individual who hears the narrative is able to understand that the conflicts presented in the plot may
well occur among the group of which her or she is part. The questioning and the doubts posed by the listener in the face of the problems presented prove that her or she reflects on what he or she hears. However, at the same time, all elements of the community perceive the conflicts conveyed by the narratives.

Santos (2014) points out the pedagogical, cultural and social functions, in addition to the aesthetic function, as the main aspects of orature; that is, it teaches, serves as a repository of the knowledge of groups and communities and, finally, being essentially an experience of the collective, contributes to the creation of bonds. It is an art that reaches children, young people and adults and whose most relevant texts belong to the collective heritage of humanity.

Meanwhile, Dias (2012: 55) reiterates the pedagogical character of oral literature, concluding that orature has, over time, been a privileged vehicle for sharing within a community an essential set of knowledge, religious beliefs, superstitions and moral and ethical values, assuming an important role in socialisation and in the education of populations. Guerreiro and Mesquita state the following:

It has an invaluable pedagogical character, functioning as a bridge between generations, perpetuating a body of knowledge almost hereditary, in the biological sense of the term and constituting a universal heritage of Humanity. This cultural manifestation, and verbal art, brings together, in itself, exceptional modelling ideological powers, meeting the erudite school practice, based on the written word, scientific or not, conveyed by the school building. Today, the School transcends the field of merely writing and reincorporates, in parallel with other cultural practices, the oral, virtual and open text, as a psychopedagogical and pedopedagogical tool, in particular.¹ (Guerreiro & Mesquita, 2011: 162)

In a similar sense, when reflecting on the importance of endogenous symbolic capital in education and in the construction of individuals’ world views, wa Thiong’o considers that:

written literature and orature are the main means by which a particular language transmits the images of the world contained in the culture it carries ... and culture carries, particularly, through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other beings. (wa Thiong’o 1986: 15–16)

In sum, there is a wide body of analysis which coheres around core elements of oral discourse. Oral discourse reflects moralities and metaphysics of society and has a pedagogical function to (re)construct social cohesion. It is therefore clearly a vital

¹Translation by the author.
element of postcolonial African literature, to be reinscribed in and alongside the written form that has come to predominate.

**Classification of oral literature**

There have been many attempts to classify and define oral literature, some of the most relevant of which we will discuss here. On the one hand, classification can follow a thematic perspective in which narratives of enchantment, whose characteristics derive from the supernatural – that is, that which is amazing and miraculous – predominate. On the other hand, they may focus on animal narratives/fables, in which the characters in the fable are anthropomorphised. Then again, aetiological narratives explain other important aspects of orality, including banter or deception, in which the morning-time is often a defining quality (Nunes 2009).

According to Nunes (2009), Junod (1975), in the work *Cantos e contos dos ronga* (the Ronga are a group of Bantu people chiefly from southern Mozambique; it also the Bantu language spoken by Ronga people), presents a typology of five categories to facilitate the reader’s understanding. Animal Tales are mentioned first as being the most original and precious part of Ronga folklore. They celebrate the deeds of the hare, the sand frog, the chameleon, even the swallow in their wanderings with large animals – large and stupid – such as the elephant, the antelope and even the human. The typology’s second category, referred to as Wisdom of the Little, comprises mainly stories of human beings – children, the impoverished – who, by virtue of their intelligence or with supernatural help, triumph over the contempt with which they are treated and achieve miraculous successes. The third category, enjoyed especially by children, is Stories of the Bogeymen (ogres), in which the wisdom of weak creatures allows them to triumph over these horrible and cruel monsters. The fourth group is Moral Tales, stories from which a lesson is drawn, although the narrators do not always realise this and do not think in any way in terms of morals. Finally there are Foreign Tales, composed under the influence of either blacks from other tribes, Indians or Arabs, numerous in the region, or even through the influence of the Portuguese. In this case, it is difficult to know to what extent these stories are indigenous.

In the literary domain, there appears to be a system of apartheid. Literature is divided into two parts. On the one hand, there is oral literature, which is considered to be mediocre, or the least good. On the other hand, there is written literature, considered to be the most organised in an aesthetic and linguistic sense. Its literariness is more complex and deliberate due to the fact that there is a creative subject. In view of this imposed hierarchisation, oral literature is increasingly subjugated. But it is necessary to acknowledge that ‘the inauthentic and the disorganization exist in both oral and written literature’ (Saraiva 1975: 107). Therefore, ‘contempt and
inattention towards so-called popular literature is much more than a contempt and inattention of a literary order: it is contempt and inattention to popular people’ (Saraiva 1975: 105).

Oral literature differs from writing in several particularities. Each follows a guiding principle, although both have the same common denominator: literature, that is, the use and appropriation of literary language. There is no doubt that orality and writing have different characteristics. While the first is usually confined to the voice, the second clings to the written form as its support for realisation. Although there is a transition from oral texts to writing, it is necessary to bear in mind that the latter is not a registered voice. At the same time, ‘the voice is not a sound isolated from register’ (Zumthor 1997: 70). And the transposition of orality to writing has been increasingly inflecting texts of an oral nature (Júdice 1995: 119).

Orality is appreciated in Africa as far more than a means of communication, as it provides a means to preserve the wisdom of one’s ancestry. In this sense, ‘the word transmitted in orality leads to the ancestral heritage so valued by this culture’ (Nascimento & Ramos 2011: 457).

In order to identify the specific features of oral texts and written texts, it is necessary to discuss the axial characteristics of orality, as well as those of writing. There are several explanations of the origin of orality and writing. However, we will not explore the mythical approaches that surround them here. Rather, we seek to describe the essential particularities of both in order to highlight, in a more precise way, their respective features (Tito 2018).

Unlike writing, orality points us directly to the voice, that is, to what is spoken. In this context, the transmission passes through the sound that produces speech. For this reason the voice has a specific mode of existence – it makes use of the magical power of the word (Meireles 1983).

It is impossible to point out all the characteristics related to orality. But it is known that it is usually characterised, on the one hand, by a more familiar style of language, providing a natural manifestation. On the other hand, orality is characterised by the harmonic use of choruses, repetitions, assonances and parallelisms and by their systematic exploration.

Since oral texts are at the service of memory, they rely on the evocative force of successive repetition of the same phrase, made rhythmic at the same time by the constant

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2 Malamoud (2000) is absolutely right in saying that sounds precede words. This means that in orality there is a kind of hierarchy, where everything starts with sound or pronunciation (sound – word – phrase).

3 This naturalness, which is a particular form of orality, does not mean freedom in the face of linguistic manifestation. There are established rules that must be considered in order for communication to have the desired effect.
number of syllables and the melodic structuring of tones, which facilitates the memo-
risation of oral tradition (Bosi 2004; Halbwachs 2006). However, these texts are more
rigorous than they appear to be, which is why they invite the audience to share in the
search for meaning, having, for this reason, a dialogical structure. However, texts in
oral literature, in contrast to those in writing, are not limited to an elite; this has a
tendency to diminish the social prestige of those texts of oral record such as proverbs,
songs, riddles, fables and other texts of this nature.4

Bâ (2010: 167) states that ‘writing is one thing, and knowledge, another. Writing
is the photograph of knowledge, but not knowledge itself. Knowledge is a light that
exists in man. The tradition of everything that our ancestors came to know and that
is latent in everything they transmitted to us.’ This indisputable assertion demon-
strates the dependence of writing in relation to orality. The latter is where latent
knowledge rests. Therefore, without voice and speech there can be no harmonic sig-
nals to support graphemes. For this reason, writing constitutes the photograph of
knowledge. In other words, it is the shadow of the body of orality. However, without
speech, writing cannot be fully grasped. Thus, orality is the primary element, and
writing is the secondary. Nevertheless, ‘what happens in writing is the full manifest-
tation of something that is in a virtual state, something nascent and inchoative, in
living speech, namely, the separation of meaning in relation to the event’ (Ricoeur

As much as the process of writing these texts amplifies the naturalness of orality,
it will never be possible to destroy the essence of oral literature. For this to become
evident, however, it is necessary to recognise the true marks of orality, because only in
such conditions can it be preserved. Orality must be defended so that it is not confined
by the normative standards of writing.

In fact, the process of writing is a long way from responding to the linguistic
devices that orality requires. While one needs the voice exclusively, the other is done
only in writing. And, in accordance with Zumthor (1997: 13), ‘the voice goes beyond
the word. The voice does not bring the language: the language moves through it, with-
out leaving traces.’ Therefore, the voice (the pure manifestation of orality) goes far
beyond what the written word can represent. But it must be borne in mind that orality
is not reduced to vocality: gesture is present along with voice, even if it is limited to
simple mimicry of the face, namely movements of the eyes and eyebrows (Dournes
2000). This is the point of intersection between oral literature and dramatisation.5

The narration of oral texts requires, for the most part, the representation of what is

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4 See, for example, Vansina (1982).
5 This aspect of the approach to oral literature and theatricality is described more fully in Bologna (2000).
narrated. However, at the moment of its realisation, orality requires true naturalness. For this reason, a familiar language is manifested in it, without great stratagem, providing listeners with an immediate understanding.

Nevertheless, understanding the nature of orality before going through the complex structure of writing can enable greater understanding and perhaps lead to the mastery of writing. But how should orality be classified, especially in these times when, increasingly, texts are transported from orality to writing?

The transformation, by collection and anthologising, of oral texts into writings leads to neglect of their pure nature, thus legitimising ‘a classification of orality in pure, mixed and secondary’, explains Zumthor (1997: 76).

In this domain, pure orality is present in societies that in precolonial times did not practise writing, including extensive territories formerly called the Third World, such as several African countries. With regard to mixed orality, it coexists with the practice of writing. Finally, secondary orality is part of a regime of hegemony of the written text. In this, the practice of orality enters the sphere of writing, to the point of being, at times, reduced to the declamation of the products of writing. This last case is experienced in Europe as well as in some parts of Africa that continue to embrace colonial culture and that deny orality in favour of writing. This, as we know, has a nature of its own, totally different from the oral.

However, orality excels in the speaker’s native language. It uses repetition. A narrative can be repeated several times since the main objective is for everyone to use, without any obstacle, the dialogue of the community. This enables these stories to be related by a certain speaker, on a certain day and in a certain place, in front of a specific audience (Alexandre 2000).

Orality, in its various texts, shows an economy of discourse because excessive information makes memorisation difficult. Another key feature of orality is mobility. That is, oral texts are mobile and have the ability to change, to receive new characteristics over the course of time (Cuisenie 2000).

**Angolan oral tradition analysis**

In the case of Angolan orature, the classic analyses have been provided by Estermann, Chatelain and Ribas, whose works will be discussed here. The contributions of these scholars, two of whom were engaged in missionary activity, facilitated the rescue and (ac)knowledge(ment) of Angolan literature of oral tradition.

Chatelain (1964) carried out important work in the domain of the Kimbundu language, whose first written version dates back to 1894 with an English translation. In the work *Contos Populares de Angola*, the author mentions that in African folklore, stories of animals and fables predominate. Chatelain fits the narratives into six classes:
1. traditional fictional stories;
2. stories presumed to be true;
3. historical narratives;
4. stories with a certain moral philosophy;
5. proverbs and anecdotes;
6. poetry, music and riddles.

Estermann (1971), in turn, oriented his studies to the oral literature of the people of south-west Angola, who comprise the ethnolinguistic groups Nhaneca-Humbe, Herero and Ambó. He ordered them in five classes, namely:

1. everyday life stories;
2. animal tales;
3. tales in which anthropophagous monsters intervene;
4. tales of wonder;
5. tales that contain mythological elements.

Finally, Ribas, in the same segment, in Missosso, Vol. 1, surveys Angolan orature, highlighting tales, riddles and proverbs of Ambundu origin. The author shows that Angolan oral literature is rich in content. As a framework for a secular tradition, it includes tales, riddles, sayings, disdain, imitation of animal voices, songs, children’s pastimes, prayers and so forth (Ribas 2009: 83).

For Ribas, the tales reflect aspects of real life:

They include the most varied characters: men, animals, monsters, mermaids, souls. If, sometimes, the action takes place between elements of the same species – a fact, moreover, more common – at other times, however, it takes place mixed, in a participation of different beings. […] The riddles, same as stories, are revealed in the evening, either in the glow of the moonlight, or in the blazing of bonfires, or even in funerary vigils, in thick and tasty curls of smoke, in a general distribution to the listening public. Accommodated on mats or rugs, the participants, namely women and children, some lying on one side, some sitting on the other, the elders in the caress of the Quifunes, voluptuously sharpen their imagination. They launch intricate guesses, tear off the veil of mystery; this is the climate of thought […] The proverb – wise reflection of life – takes the top spot in the literature of a people. This truth, proclaimed by scholars, finds no opposition in the oral archive of Angolans. Intelligently condensed, it mirrors the wisdom manufactured by experience. Hence, as among other peoples, speakers can adopt a characteristic philosophy, sometimes circumspect, sometimes amusing, and sometimes sentimental.6 (Ribas 2002: 87–97)

6 Translation by the author.
Therefore, ‘fables, legends, myths, wonderful tales and novels of chivalry are narratives that circulate orally and, we may say, constitute the prehistory of literature. Children listened to the narratives of the elders in evenings by the warmth of the fireplace for centuries …’ (Guerreiro & Mesquita 2011: 154).

Thus, proposals for the classification of orature generally converge in some aspects, which suggests a universal classification of the same, for example, the imaginary aspects, the presence of the wonderful, the predominance of ghostly beings (fairies, ogres, muquixe [a ghostly being with a human body and the head of an animal], mermaids, etc.), the fabulous language, with the protagonism of animals, many of which are universally referenced (tortoise, fox, lion, rabbit, etc.). However, the differences are often related to issues of an endogenous nature, such as the culture or world view of each group of people – not to mention the point of view of the authors who set out to study the different literatures of oral tradition.

Accordingly, we are convinced that the classifications of Angolan orature proposed by Estermann, Chatelain and Ribas encompass all the relevant stages and groups. Therefore, according to the context or situation in which this symbolic capital is shared, it is up to the social institutions to select those collections that reflect greater affinity between the public and the narrators, according to the age of the target audience. For example, in the case of children, these may be fables, tales of wonderful characters, especially those that have a moral purpose; riddles also prove to be suitable to the minds of children and young people.

In addition, there is an attempt being made in the Angolan oral canon to adapt oral techniques in written discourse. This is especially evident in the work of writers such as Luandino Vieira, Wanhenga Xitu and Boaventura Cardoso. It can also be seen in poetry in the work of Viriato da Cruz (see Riaúzova 1986; Macedo 1989).

However, similar to national literatures in most African countries, Angolan literature began and continues to be written in the language of the former colonial oppressor, a language which under the circumstances has already undergone an appropriation process. Hence, the use of the Portuguese language has always been among the main arguments for questioning the African dimension of Angolan literature. Such a fact would open room for a dialogue with wa Thiong’o, as he put forth the reflection that ‘the only question that preoccupied us was how best to make the borrowed tongues carry the weight of our African experience by, for instance, making them “prey” on African proverbs and other peculiarities of African Speech and folklore’ (1986: 7). The brief analysis of this article shows precisely how Boaventura Cardoso, despite resorting to a language of European origin in his literary production, manages to be faithful to the specificities of the Angolan Bantu philosophy with which he adorns the aesthetics of his texts.

7 Translation by the author.
Boaventura Cardoso: life, work and literary style

The Angolan writer and poet BC was born on 26 July 1944 in Luanda. He spent part of his childhood years, before starting school, in the province of Malange, and attended and completed his primary and secondary studies in the city of Luanda, after which he entered higher education in the area of social sciences. A man of culture, he has already held several leadership roles in Angola.

In his youth, BC was a member of the generation of 70, an Angolan literary and cultural movement, alongside many other Angolan writers, namely Manuel Rui, Jofre Rocha, Ruy Duarte de Carvalho and Jorge Macedo. The generation of 70, an intellectual movement made up of young people from various former Portuguese colonies who were studying in Portugal, met at the Casa dos Estudante do Império. It was here that the members of the generation of 70, who were engaged in literary production characterised by cultural and political intervention, first sought to contribute to the independence of their fatherlands.

Like all the literary production of the emblematic figures of this generation, BC’s works are marked by traces of a genre of literature referred to as guerrilla and infused with revolutionary values and ideals, in which writing is used as a weapon in the search for independence and freedom. What emerges is a metaliterary process in which writers, through engaged literary production, fight for social justice and for the improvement of people’s living conditions in their country.

As already noted, in this writer’s production the illusory antagonism between orality and writing is replaced by an explicit dichotomy between the two forms of discursive representation. Thus, the records of the speeches that shape his narratives, clearly reproduced from oral tradition, are recreated, through the artistic and aesthetic genius of the author, with simplicity and mastery. This means that BC is able to use the literary recreation of popular speech and oral tradition as symbolic capital, not simply as an exercise of cultural affirmation, and this ends up constituting the style and aesthetic form of the writer’s literary production, as we demonstrate in the following pages. The author does so by inserting in his tales different formats of oral speech.

Making use of his mastery of the sociolinguistic situation in Angola, BC, in addition to recreating popular language, uses the so-called improper diglossia, alternating the use of Portuguese (normative and non-normative) and Kimbundu (one of Angola’s Bantu languages), as a strategy for the emancipation of an emerging national literature. He is a member of the Union of Angolan Writers (UEA) and author of the following works: Dizanga dia Muenhu; O Fogo da Fala; A Morte do Velho Kipacaça (short stories); O Sino do Fogo; Maio, Mês de Maria (romance); and Mãe, Materno Mar.
BC is positioned at the top of the pantheon of modern Angolan literature. His work is best known through the aforementioned novels and unusual tales. In this piece, our analysis of the orality and the writing in his textualisation is limited to his short stories.

The Boaventurian short stories are closer to the *hybrid identity* acknowledged by Chinua Achebe (Lopes 2016). However, by allowing experiences of form and style, Cardoso, while exploring paths and breaking with formal writing of European origin, turns to the traditional Angolan narrative style. (Martinho 2005, cited in Lopes 2016: 26)

BC’s prose rhythm is marked ‘by a colloquialism inherent to the oral rhythm itself, punctuated by factual expressions, interjections, curses, exclamations, lenga-lengas’ and other resources (Mata 2014: 154). These particularities will be presented in the analysis of the tales ‘Pai Zé canoa miúdo no mar’, ‘Mona kassule é Ngamba’, ‘Canto da fome and Kalu’ and ‘As garinas e o esquema’.

During the analytical process, there was no need to interpret the stories. The focus was limited to identifying oral assumptions in the narratives to be analysed. The analytical intention is to feel the intensity of the words, observe the image resource in the stories and see how the literary language is used.

Rhythm is an indispensable element in the stories of BC. There are melodic phrases that sound like a song. Apparently, the technique of narratives of oral tradition is refined. In these, there is a strong association between narrative and song. However, in the stories by BC that were chosen for this study, there is a mark of resistance. In other words, there is a preservation of orality. The rhythm is not left out and repetition is a mark of discursive intensity in the narrative fabric of the stories. These sequences of sentence structures – ‘It was raining. It was raining. Big rain’ – demonstrate the author’s capacity for creativity through the particular rhythm he brings to his literary work. While this sequence is structured in Portuguese (Tinha chuva. Chovia. Chuva grande), and despite the richness of the rhythm it suggests, it clearly denotes a distance from standard European Portuguese. Moreover, the writer recreates the oral use of the popular linguistic register. This exercise is a sign of resistance in terms of linguistic style in the literary production in the Angolan context and in BC’s literary work in particular. It is indicative of the type of reformulations of Angolanity that were achieved by the generation of 50.


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8 Translation by the author.
It was raining. It was raining. Big rain. [...] The song grew ... The whip marked the rhythm of the song on the back of a black person [...] Song. Work. Song. Work. Song. Work [...] Song. Strength! Strength! Work! Forced labour! Strength!\(^9\)

Andou, andou, andou. [...] Pai, mãe e mona kasule: o reencontro bandeira branca no camião reentraram Kariango.

Walked, walked, walked. [...] Father, mother and mona kasule [last born]: the reunion of the white flag on the truck re-entered Kariango.\(^10\)

The issue of literary resistance in BC’s stories is strictly associated with the construction of hybrid identity in literary culture in Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa, and the case of Angola makes this clear. The structure of Portuguese, a previously unknown language, started to share space with the nature of orality, a true palimpsest. [...] Ninguém percebia as contas que o patrão fazia. Os contratados não sabiam ler, nem escrever. [...] Nobody noticed the accounts that the boss did. The contractors did not know how to read or write.\(^11\)

Allegory is also an important feature of the stories. There is always a lesson, a need to think and rethink, a fabric of complete and, to some extent, complex meanings in which dexterity is needed to conceive the overall meaning of the narrative. In tales, the discourse is full of colloquiality, a particular phenomenon of orality.


The child’s curiosity is a spring of water, to stop is to stop the wind with your hand. Life at sea, he wants to know all. Father Zé always responds, patience is his middle name.\(^12\)

Colloquial language does not detract from the discourse of BC’s stories. On the one hand this is an aesthetic choice, and on the other hand it is evidence of a language (Portuguese) whose standard form has not been mastered by the majority of the people, a language that is used as one wants and is able to, in the most natural and colloquial way possible. As long as it fulfilts the postulates of communication and satisfies the will of the majority, the language is used.

\(^9\) O canto da fome, pp. 25–6, in O Fogo da Fala by Boaventura Cardoso. Translation by the author.
\(^10\) Mona kasule é ngamba, pp. 77–8, in O Fogo da Fala by Boaventura Cardoso. Translation by the author.
\(^11\) O canto da fome, pp. 25–6, in O Fogo da Fala, by Boaventura Cardoso. Translation by the author.
\(^12\) Pai Zé canoa miúdo no mar, p. 91, in O Fogo da Fala, by Boaventura Cardoso. Translation by the author.
While analysing the stories of BC, it became clear that they should be seen from the perspective according to which orality is characteristic of the African cultural field and is the dominant discursive form if not the only one (Aguessy 1977). Orality plays an important role in modern Angolan literature. And because of this, the Angolan writer felt, or even feels, the need to emphasise the mark of orality, since this is the dominant discourse in Angola. Nevertheless, it should be noted that here there is no longer a pure orality because it has already transformed itself in the form of writing.

Proverbs and riddles in the tale *A Morte do Velho Kipacaça*

Proverbs

Proverbs – wise reflections on life – occupy the top place in the literature of a people. This truth is proclaimed by scholars and finds no opposition in the oral archive of Angolans. ‘Intelligently condensed, it mirrors the wisdom fertilised by experience. Hence, as well as in the culture of other people, it encloses a specific philosophy, sometimes circumspect, sometimes amusing, sometimes sentimental’ (Ribas 2002: 96).

Proverbs are used within the Bantu tradition in different contexts as they perform different functions, both pedagogical – in the sense that they ensure, complete and reinforce the education of an individual throughout her or his existence with the aim of ensuring her or his socialisation – and in terms of customary law – to solve problems between members of the same group or between different groups. In the tale *A Morte do Velho Kipacaça*, these functions are perceived in the conversations of elders to transmit values, rules and customs, or even to resolve conflicts in which the triumph of truth and wisdom stands out.

*A short critical summary of ‘The Death of Old Kipacaça’ and ‘The Fire of the Speech’ by Boaventura Cardoso*

‘The Death of the Elder Kipacaça’ (*A Morte do Velho Kipacaça*), found in the third and final chapter of the literary work under study, is a short story which provides the title of the entire book. Evoking a suspense that presents itself as an aesthetic break, dialogues are made in direct discourse for the first time in the short stories that make up the book.

The tale presents the image of an old man and emphasises his value within the cultural environment of Bantu communities. Through oral traditions (proverbs, riddles and short tales), the author brings to his literary work the wisdom and the role
of an elder within his group. In a very transcendental and marvellous way, the literary work suggests a new meaning for the concept of death. Thus, in ‘The Death of the Elder Kipacaça’, death is no longer the opposite of life. It is, however, an opposite condition to birth, and there is an extended life and a purpose to be accomplished after death.

Concerning ‘The Fire of the Speech’, the title and the style of the subtitles underline the literariness of the texts they cover while also highlighting the author’s affirmation in the whole act of writing. Thus, in this story, in addition to BC’s individual use of language, it is also important to consider the metaphorical and symbolic links that the story establishes with fire. In terms of style, it is important not to lose sight of its connection to the first word of the phrase.

In this case, the writer works with language like the man who, with fire, works with glass or iron. Fire is the moulding, transforming force. Speech makes the language ductile; it makes it affectionate. He experiences it and adapts it where the norm could constitute a stagnating or blocking factor. And he seeks, without destroying it, to open the language to new expressive horizons.

Therefore, the present article deals with literary works that better demonstrate the way in which, through his evident creativity, BC masters the language of popular register and the speech and wisdom of the Bantu community – and opens up speech to shape Angolanity anew.

The following proverbs from the tales summarised above serve to illustrate the point:

- Não pergunta ngó o porquê é que o carneiro não tem dentes em cima. (Cardoso 1987: 38)
  Don’t ask why the sheep has no teeth on top.
- A surucucu só morde quando lhe pisam então e se lhe metem o dedo na boca! (Cardoso 1987: 38)
  Surucucu only bites when it is stepped on and a finger is put in its mouth!
- O rato onde está a deixar as pegadas das patas, também está deixar as da cauda! (Cardoso 1987: 42)
  Where the mouse is leaving footprints, it is also leaving tail prints!
- Não se deve fazer carícias a um cão danado. (Cardoso 1987: 43)
  You should not pet a naughty dog.

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13 There are certain realities that are dogmatic, that transcend our capacity for perception.
14 Patience has limits.
15 The behaviour of parents is also reflected in that of their children.
16 A gentleman cannot be educated with soft words.
O câgado pode empoleirar-se na árvore, embora por si não seja capaz de o fazer! (Cardoso 1987: 49)\(^{17}\)
The turtle can perch on the tree, although it is not able to do it on its own!

No dia em que morre o elefante, não é o mesmo em que ele apodrece! (Cardoso 1987: 52)\(^{18}\)
The day the elephant dies is not the same day it rots!

These proverbs are typically used in significant communication contexts. In the oral tradition, they are chosen and employed according to the interaction and its meaning. BC employs them in the same way in his literary work: for instance, the proverb ‘Don’t ask why the sheep has no teeth on top’ (Cardoso 1987: 38) is used for problem resolution and for dealing with dogmatic and transcendental instructions, similar to the context of African oral traditions, whereby a single, short proverb is able to convey the meaning of long tales and stories, strong beliefs, philosophy and a way of life.

In African oral traditions, a proverb functions as a summary of a longer tale or story. At the same time, a story is seen as an expanded version of a proverb: among the Bantu community, when a story is introduced, it is commonly emphasised by a related proverb. For instance, the story ‘The Death of the Elder Kipacaça’, in terms of philosophy and moral and pedagogical values, is intrinsically related to the proverb ‘The day the elephant dies is not the same day it rots’, meaning that death and other difficult circumstances are not the end of life, so we should always be calm and persevere.

**Riddles**

In addition to proverbs, we also find, in the short story, riddles that, according to Ribas (2002), are narrated in the evening, under the light of the moon or a bonfire, either in simple entertainment of the spirit or to assuage grief over someone’s death (Ribas 2002: 97). Like proverbs, they teach important lessons for society and encourage critical reasoning and reflection, so that, through them, participants can understand the conception of the world in Africa (Aguessy cited in Silva 2009: 87).

(A sting opened up from the savannah to the muxito. What is it?)

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\(^{17}\) Do not be puffed up about taking a place in the sun and being prominent in society, because someone put you there.

\(^{18}\) In certain delicate situations, common sense, calm and thoughtfulness are required.
– Ongo Soytéé kate ku munguila – the answer made of voices. (Cardoso 1987: 60) 
(The jaguar is spotted from head to tail.)

– Awa yaya, awa yassala, oh? (Cardoso 1987: 60) 
(Some go and others stay, what is it?)

– Omema yaya, ye sekele kyssala – vibrant, the answer appears in everyone’s mouth. 
(Cardoso 1987: 60) 
(On the riverbed, the water goes and the sand stays.)

– Nanhy kamokotika pu kwako? (Cardoso 1987: 61) 
(What is it that cannot be contained in a closed fist?)

– Kala lytúbia. (Cardoso 1987: 61) 
(It is red-hot coal.)

– Wenda njyła, Ólonda Óyulu, Akutuka Mulungu, Ly Xytu Yé Ku Munjimbo. 
Ohy? (Cardoso 1987: 61) 
(Walk paths, over mountains, go down through valleys and canyons, always with 
the piece of meat in your mouth. What is it?)

– Laháku. (Cardoso 1987: 61) 
(It is sandals or shoes.)

(It is there, but it is here simultaneously. What is it?)

– Búndu19 – they all answered in chorus. (Cardoso 1987: 62) 
(It is the fog.)

Riddles, like proverbs, are part of African oral traditions and have been used for generations as an efficient way to share or disseminate the people’s way of life. This particular form of orality is also a tested method to sharpen the brain and stimulate wisdom and intelligence among young generations.

**Final considerations**

The literary and aesthetic Angolanity in the work of Boaventura Cardoso demonstrates the African dimension of Angolan literature. Moreover, it also affirms endogenous knowledge insofar as it calls for a view and criticism based on a literary theory that takes into account Angolan geography, culture and history. These comprise the respective conditions of production, thus deconstructing Eurocentric genealogies, as reflected by Mata (2014: 29):

[There is an] absence of ‘exemplary’ cultural canons and corpora on which theories are based, consisting of African cultural texts (both written and oral) that form

19 It is the fog.
the ‘colonial libraries’, of which Mudimbe speaks. Instead, the subalterns’ cultural experiences – of colonised peoples – and their cultural contributions are relegated to a secondary place labelled ‘local knowledge’ that the Western philosophical tradition does not consider relevant.\textsuperscript{20}

Thus, for African literature, and Angolan literature in particular, orality does not represent a mere source of literary currents, but, rather, it reveals itself as an integral part of the form and aesthetics of endogenous literary production.

In this order of ideas, orality precedes and, concomitantly, succeeds writing. For it not only generates but is also diluted in orality, which encompasses many other artistic expressions that go beyond the limits of writing.

Boaventura Cardoso, an emblematic figure in modern Angolan literature, exemplifies this process. His writing proceeds by recreating both popular speech and discourse in the local Bantu language (Kimbundu) and aspects of Angola’s oral tradition, thereby asserting itself with a peculiar style of making literature and setting a milestone in the construction of literary Angolanity and the African dimension of Angolan literature.

In the writer’s tales, and especially in the work *O Fogo da Fala* discussed in this article, discursive records are reproduced from oral tradition. The simplicity and mastery with which they are recreated reveal the artistic and aesthetic genius of the author.

This reading and brief analysis of BC, far from being proposed as a finished study, opens perspectives for new horizons, especially with regard to the study of the relationship between literary recreation of orality and literary Angolanity. This claim is based on the assumption that, in Cardoso, we are looking at one of the main figures in Angolan national literature. A broader analysis might depart from this point and examine the constitution of a corpus based on the literary production of writers such as Luandino Vieira, Wanhenga Xitu and BC himself. In the genre of poetry, the work of Viriato da Cruz plays a prominent role in Angolan literature.

Based on the above, allow me to bring this analysis to a preliminary close with the following observation: responding to the need for affirmation of Angolan languages, the local culture conveyed by them and the difficulty that Angolan writers face in producing texts in Bantu language, BC (and many others who resort to the practice of inserting fragments of the orature in Bantu language and/or literal translation and explanation) finds a strategy that allows him to reach the largest possible number of readers, inside and outside Angola, and, concomitantly, to pen his own answer to the following question posed by wa Thiong’o:

\textsuperscript{20} Translation by the author.
The question is this: we as African writers have always complained about the neo-colonial economic and political relationship to Euro-America. Right. But by our continuing to write in foreign languages, paying homage to them, are we not, on cultural level, continuing that colonial slavish and cringing spirit? What is the difference between a politician who says Africa can not do without imperialism and the writer who says Africa can not do without foreign languages? (wa Thiong’o 1986: 26)

As mentioned above, BC’s perspective, as demonstrated in the linguistic style and aesthetic value of his stories, is different from that of wa Thiong’o: he demonstrates that, from a colonial linguistic heritage (Portuguese in this case), we can create, recreate and promote a literary production that clearly preserves African traditions and their particular philosophy of life, showing that languages themselves also assimilate the cultural context of the geographical space in which they are inserted. In this sense, a language of European origin, being flexible and permeated by African traditions and values, is no longer an extension of imperialism but becomes a decisive tool of confrontation and affirmation.

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To cite the article: Ferreira do Nascimento, S. (2022), ‘Reflections of orality in the contemporary narrative of Angolan literature: readings in Boaventura Cardoso’, *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s6): 77–98. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s6.077

*Journal of the British Academy* (ISSN 2052–7217) is published by
The British Academy, 10–11 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH
www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk