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ARTICLE TITLE

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*Luuanda***

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**Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA)**

Thomas Waller, 'Recreating Resistance: Translating José Luandino Vieira's *Luuanda*', *Xanthos: A Journal of Foreign Literatures and Languages*, 1 (2019), 55-65 <<http://xanthosjournal.com/issues-issue1-08-waller>>

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**Chicago Manual of Style**

Thomas Waller, "Recreating Resistance: Translating José Luandino Vieira's *Luuanda*," *Xanthos: A Journal of Foreign Literatures and Languages* 1 (2019): 55-65, <<http://xanthosjournal.com/issues-issue1-08-waller>>

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THOMAS WALLER

## Recreating Resistance: Translating José Luandino Vieira's *Luuanda*

This article critically evaluates the only extant English translation of José Luandino Vieira's 1964 short story collection *Luuanda*. I argue that the text presents three clear obstacles to translation: first, the revolutionary attitude that the text has come to symbolise is specific to the political climate of the source culture; second, its language is radically experimental; and third, the form of the text is subversive only with reference to the historico-political context of its country of origin. Through a close examination of Tamara L. Bender's attempts at negotiating these obstacles for an Anglophone readership, I explore the ways in which cultural difference can be mediated and recreated through translative practices.

In his latest documentary, dissident Chinese artist Ai Weiwei catalogues the testimonies of those swept up in the wave of mass migration caused by the greatest human displacement this planet has seen since World War II. *Human Flow*, a poetic visualisation of the ways in which cultures come into contact in times of crisis, gives expression to migrants who, in crossing cultural borders, change them, and are changed in the process.<sup>1</sup> 'When there is nowhere to go, nowhere is home' is the film's pithy promotional slogan. That space, at once empty and full of meaning, is the zone that must be negotiated in translation. It is Apter's translation zone, 'that connects the "I" and "n" of transLation and transNation', Bhabha's hybrid in-between space that 'carries the burden of the meaning of culture'.<sup>2</sup> In such a context, it does not seem out of place to dredge up an artefact from the history of relations between self and other, if only to serve as an example of the ways in which culture can be translated. Literary translation, as the most eloquent and ill-fated of such relations, provides a useful starting point. Accordingly, in the present study, I will take an English translation of an Angolan text and discuss the ways in which cultural difference is mediated and recreated.

José Luandino Vieira's 1964 short story collection *Luuanda* presents three clear obstacles to translation. Firstly, the revolutionary attitude the text has come to symbolise is specific to the political climate of the source culture; second, and not entirely unrelated, its language is radically experimental; and finally, the form of the text is subversive only with reference to the historico-political context of its country of origin.

Taking each obstacle in turn, the political implications of *Luuanda* are best illuminated by way of reference to the revolutionary and anti-colonial activities of its author, and the

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<sup>1</sup> *Human Flow*, dir. by Ai Weiwei (AC Films and Participant Media, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 5; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 56.

commotion caused by the terms of its reception. A member of the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA), Vieira was serving a prison sentence at the time of *Luuanda*'s publication for distributing so-called subversive pamphlets. Despite the incarcerated status of its author, in 1965 the book was awarded the Grande Prémio da Novelística, an act which infuriated the Salazar regime. As Tamara Bender, the English translator of *Luuanda*, explains in her preface to the book: 'Within a few weeks of the award, the Portuguese secret police raided the Society's headquarters in Lisbon, physically destroyed its offices and officially closed the Society down for the first time in its history'.<sup>3</sup> The book was now banned; however, the cause of the furor was not simply the political affinities of its author: *Luuanda* was a subversive literary text in its own right. For encoded in the work is a reality the colonial regime wanted to keep suppressed; namely, the cultural life and destitution of the *musseques*, Angola's slums. Accordingly, in *Luuanda*, the ordinary lives of the colonised take centre stage in a cultural *milieu* devastated by the injustices of colonialism. From the story of a stolen parrot in 'Estória do Ladrão e do Papagaio', to a dispute over the rightful owner of an egg in 'Estória da Galinha e do Ovo', what is presented to the reader are the everyday problems of ordinary people, but problems that nevertheless bespeak a painful existence of poverty and subjection. As Vieira himself remarks in a recent interview: 'In my characters, in my countermapping of the city of Luanda, which brought the *musseques* to the fore, cultural difference was embedded, a difference that justified claims to political independence'.<sup>4</sup> If, as Gayatri Spivak has asserted, the translator must go beyond 'correct cultural politics' and take account of 'the history of the language, the history of the author's moment', then herein lies the first obstacle to a translation of *Luuanda*: how to account for the richly subversive history of the text, whilst preserving the political urgency of the realities encoded in its language.<sup>5</sup>

The hybrid, innovative nature of this language presents a second challenge to the translator of *Luuanda*. Widely regarded as 'the first writer of prose narrative to experiment innovatively and successfully with *musseques* speech and urban Kimbundu', Vieira's fiction is characterised by its use of a Portuguese heavily inflected with the speech patterns of Angolan dialects.<sup>6</sup> This refashioning of the language of the colonisers is necessarily a political act. In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin write that the 'crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing define itself by seizing the language of the centre and replacing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonised place'.<sup>7</sup> While *Luuanda* cannot be considered a post-colonial piece of writing, as it was written during the colonial period, the notion of a seizure of power aptly describes the political radicalism of Vieira's linguistic experimentation. Indeed, the language of *Luuanda* was hybridised to such an extent that many Portuguese readers struggled to understand it, a struggle for which Vieira understandably had little sympathy. Yet, besides alienating certain readers, the use of a vernacular tongue makes the immediacy of the text's themes more

<sup>3</sup> José Luandino Vieira, *Luuanda*, trans. by Tamara Bender (London: Heineman, 1981), p. viii.

<sup>4</sup> Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, "'E Agora José, Luandino Vieira?'" An Interview with José Luandino Vieira', *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies*, (2016), 27-36 (p. 32).

<sup>5</sup> Gayatri Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 397-416 (p. 406).

<sup>6</sup> Russell G. Hamilton, 'Lusophone Literature in Africa: Language and Literature in Portuguese-Writing Africa', *Callaloo*, 14.2, (1991), 313-323 (p. 320).

<sup>7</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 38.

urgent, a fact that has led Patrick Chabal to identify in Vieira's fiction 'an exceedingly close relationship between context and text, that is between the world in which his characters live and the language in which the stories are written'.<sup>8</sup> Vieira's language is thus almost inseparable from the realities it depicts, a feature that proves problematic in translation, where 'the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text can only be signalled indirectly, by their displacement in the translation, through a domestic difference introduced into values and institutions at home'.<sup>9</sup> Here, a whole host of questions fan out before the would-be translator, the most salient of which being: How does one recreate at home a text that is essentially insular, tied to the culture of its origin by virtue of its political and lexical significance within that same culture?

Before we move on to a discussion of Tamara Bender's translation of *Luuanda*, we must first consider a third aspect of the text: its form. Vieira refers to his short stories as 'estórias', eschewing the more popular Portuguese word *histórias* in order to emphasise the importance of orality in his work. We can define the *estória* as a 'tense hybrid form whose narration centers around a particular storytelling performance'.<sup>10</sup> Vieira picked up the term from another lexical innovator of the Portuguese language, João Guimarães Rosa, adopting it because he believed it was a more accurate rendering of the Kimbundu word *missosso*, meaning 'moral story or allegory, fable, narrative, or tale'.<sup>11</sup> In his use of the *estória*, then, Vieira retains some of the formal properties of the *história* while emphasising the oral nature of the popular storytelling tradition of the *musseques*. In this sense, Vieira is making yet another political move. As Frantz Fanon wrote just two years before *Luuanda*'s publication: 'The oral tradition — stories, epics and songs of the people — which were formerly filed away as set pieces are now beginning to change. The storytellers who used to relate inert episodes now bring them alive and introduce into them modifications which are increasingly fundamental'.<sup>12</sup> Vieira's fusion of a culturally-specific narrative form with an established Western mode of representation — that is, the written word — is an example of Fanon's 'fighting phase', an almost pan-African movement whereby native intellectuals used cultural resources as weapons in the fight against colonialism.<sup>13</sup> Again, the translator is faced with a challenge she cannot ignore; that is, how to render orality in translation, how to negotiate the differences between the speech patterns and storytelling traditions of the source and target languages without damaging the political resonance bound up in that orality. Let us now take a look at the way in which Tamara Bender has dealt with these challenges in her translation of the text.

The only English translation of *Luuanda* to date, Bender's rendering represents a kind of authority in terms of translation, and our discussion is made all the more urgent for want of a yardstick by which to measure its shortcomings and successes. As a preliminary discussion, then, we might look at the motivation behind Bender's translation. As we have already seen, *Luuanda* has had a turbulent and politically-charged history. Banned twice by the

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<sup>8</sup> Patrick Chabal, 'Aspects of Angolan Literature: Luandino Vieira and Angostinho Neto', *African Languages and Cultures*, 8.1, (1995), 19-42 (p. 22).

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Venuti, 'Translation, Community, Utopia', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, pp. 468-88 (p. 469).

<sup>10</sup> Phyllis Peres, 'Traversing PostColoniality: Pepetela and the Narrations of Nation', *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 40.2, (2003), 111-17 (p. 114).

<sup>11</sup> Vieira (1981), p. vii; Ribeiro, p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 193.

<sup>13</sup> Fanon, p. 179.

Portuguese dictatorship, with a clandestine edition printed in Brazil in 1965, the text gained a subversive reputation which prefigured the way in which it was received by readers. This reputation has, in turn, played a decisive role in the various translations of the text. Indeed, it is no coincidence that the first translation of *Luuanda* was into Russian in 1968, the year of the Prague Spring in which, just like the Angolans, the Czechoslovakians were fighting for independence from an oppressive political regime — an example of the complex cultural relations between the Soviet Union and Angola that brings to light the ideological implications inherent in translation.<sup>14</sup> André Lefevere has written at length on the role of ideology in translation, and has identified a process of what he calls a ‘rewriting’ of literature that is embroiled in power relations. Translation, he writes, ‘is the most obviously recognisable type of rewriting, and [...] it is potentially the most influential because it is able to project the image of an author and/or those works beyond the boundaries of their cultures of origin’.<sup>15</sup> Several questions hence arise: which aspects of the text to project? What to foreground? What to omit, and why?

Bender’s translation appeared in the Heinemann African Writers Series in 1980. The series, now relaunched by Pearson Education, was founded by Heinemann in 1962 and was ‘to become for Africans in its first quarter century what Penguin had been to British readers in its first 25 years’.<sup>16</sup> While undoubtedly important for Africans, the series also represented an important shift of focus for Western readers, putting ‘the canonical status of works like Conrad’s [*Heart of Darkness*] in doubt, raising questions about the criterion of “artistic value” used to canonize British literature’.<sup>17</sup> The African Writers Series may have been, in the words of Chinua Achebe, ‘like the umpire’s signal for which African writers had been waiting on the starting line’, but there were still stylistic and contentual norms with which these writers had to comply.<sup>18</sup> In conversation with Ghanaian writer Ama Ata Aidoo, Rosemary Marangoly George and Helen Scott mention the ‘infamous story of one Indian African writer who was not published because the publishing industry saw her work as too experimental, not obviously based on her experiences, and therefore not “authentic” enough to fit into the Heineman [sic] African writers series’.<sup>19</sup> This is an example of the determining influence of patronage both in- and outside the literary system, of a publisher that tries to enforce the dominant, or expected, poetics upon a writer in order to satisfy the anticipated reception of its readers (a dynamic developed more fully elsewhere by Lefevere).<sup>20</sup> Turning to *Luuanda*, we can deduce that the ‘image’ portrayed by Bender in her translation consequently had to conform to the literary expectations of the Western target culture, where African writers are often characterised as overtly political. The blurb for Bender’s translation is, therefore, dominated by a description of Vieira’s political activities with comparatively little space given for a discussion of the text itself. In addition, Bender has

<sup>14</sup> Helena Riausova, ‘A Difusão das Literaturas Luso-Africanas na Rússia e Teoria das suas Relações Interliterárias’, *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 33.2 (1996), 91-95.

<sup>15</sup> André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> James Currey, *Africa Writes Back: The Launch of the African Writers Series and the Launch of African Literature* (Oxford: James Currey Ltd., 2008), p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Loretta Stec, ‘Publishing and Canonicity: The Case of Heinemann’s “African Writers Series”’, *Pacific Coast Philology*, 32.2 (1997), 140-149 (p. 142)

<sup>18</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Home and Exile* (London; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 51.

<sup>19</sup> Rosemary Marangoly George, Helen Scott and Ama Ata Aidoo, “‘A New Tail to an Old Tale’: An Interview with Ama Ata Aidoo”, *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 26.3, (1993), 297-308 (p. 305).

<sup>20</sup> André Lefevere, *Translation / History / Culture: A Sourcebook* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 15-30.

prefaced her translation with not only a further elaboration of the political history of both the text and its author, but also a brief sketch of life under colonial rule in Angola.<sup>21</sup> Historico-political circumstances are thus presented to the reader as vital to an understanding of the text, squaring with Kwame Anthony Appiah's notion of 'thick translation': 'translation that seeks with its annotations and its accompanying glosses to locate the text in a rich cultural and linguistic context'.<sup>22</sup> In such a way, Bender attempts to preserve some of the cultural texture of *Luuanda*, but this attempt is inevitably and intimately bound up with matters of literary taste and ideological concerns, conforming as it does to the image of the politically engaged African writer à la Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o or Chinua Achebe.

In terms of lexical characteristics, one of the most striking features of Bender's translation is the amount of words she has left untranslated. This is a decision she defends in her preface: 'In this English translation of *Luuanda*, some of the stylistic aspects of its language have, unfortunately, been lost. A literal translation would have made the English incomprehensible'.<sup>23</sup> Faced with Vieira's linguistic experimentation, she has opted to produce certain words as they appear in the source text and provide a glossary to explain their meaning and context, adding to the overall 'thickness' of the translation. Accordingly, in 'Estória da Galinha e do Ovo', as citizens of the *musseques* begin to mock their greedy landlord, we read: 'Everyone already knew him and his threats and the older girls *uatobaram*, whooping insults at him'.<sup>24</sup> 'Uatobaram' is explained in the corresponding glossary entry as 'Kimbundu/Portuguese; third-person plural, present tense, of verb *uatobar* which is a 'portuguesation' of the Kimbundu verb *ku toba* ('to act foolishly' or 'to say foolish things')'.<sup>25</sup> This example is interesting, since it represents the only instance in all three *estórias* where a 'portuguesation' of a Kimbundu word has been left untranslated, and a discussion of its implications will raise serious questions as to the appropriateness of Bender's translation strategy.

If, as Walter Benjamin would have it, the task of the translator is to find 'the particular intention toward the target language which produces in that language the echo of the original', then Bender has failed in her task. In fact, the hybridised lexis of the source text reaches closer to any notion of 'pure language' that the English translation could stake a claim to.<sup>26</sup> The language of *Luuanda* is that organic fusion of Kimbundu and Portuguese that Vieira grew up with in the *musseques*, and the transliteration of this dialect into the *estórias* lays out before the reader syntactical deformations that constitute a linguistic re-formation and a move towards the creation of a new language. Hence, as Benjamin conceives, 'a translation, instead of imitating the sense of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's way of meaning, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language'.<sup>27</sup> Is this not the substance of Vieira's linguistic experimentation? Indeed, Maria Tymoczko has made the comparison between translative and post-colonial writing, stating that 'the transmission of elements from one

<sup>21</sup> Vieira (1981), pp. v-x.

<sup>22</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'Thick Translation', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, pp. 417-429 (p. 427).

<sup>23</sup> Vieira (1981), p. ix.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings 1913-1926*, ed. by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 258.

<sup>27</sup> Benjamin, p. 260.

culture to another across a cultural and/or linguistic gap is a central concern of both these types of intercultural writing [that is, both translative and post-colonial writing] and similar constraints on the process of relocation affect both types of text'.<sup>28</sup> Seen in these terms, Vieira becomes the cultural translator, stretching out over the historical chasm that separates coloniser and colonised to reach for something purer. But it is a specific, contaminated sort of purity, one that shatters the sovereignty of the colonisers' language and then reconstructs it, all in the same motion, splicing in fragments of Luanda's own maternal sound, its own corrupted mother tongue.

As we return to Bender's translation now, it appears to us as something hollow. The reader becomes the voyeur, as Vieira's linguistic experimentalism is paraded through the pages of *Luuanda* and the reader is sent back and forth to the glossary in order to catch a glimpse of its inventiveness. The case of the reproduced 'portuguesation' mentioned above leads us into the crux of this inventiveness, while revealing some potential shortcomings in Bender's translation. In the word 'uatobaram', Vieira has 'transcribed the Kimbundu subject prefix *u-*, and the Kimbundu preterite tense marker *-a-*, including them in the loan-word [...] For the Portuguese-ation he added the preterite suffix *-aram*'.<sup>29</sup> To do as Benjamin says and 'incorporate the original's way of meaning' into the translation would be to come up with a similar construction in English, an anglicisation of the Kimbundu word *ku toba*.<sup>30</sup> The rest of the glossary entry for *uatobaram* tells us: 'By extension the verb also describes the act of children who clap their hands against their mouths while yelling *uatobo*, *uatobo*, meaning "you fool, you fool"'.<sup>31</sup> Taking this into account, we might end up with a neologism along the lines of *uatobe*, or perhaps the more phonetic rendering *watobe*, as in: 'Everyone already knew him and his threats and the older girls were *watobing*, whooping insults at him'. In this way, we recreate some of the lexical originality of the source text and, I believe, come closer to Antoine Berman's conception of the 'trial of the foreign' (*épreuve de l'étranger*), where translation 'establishes a relationship between the Self-Same (*Propre*) and the Foreign by aiming to open up the foreign work to us in its utter foreignness'.<sup>32</sup> Bender fails because she misinterprets the 'foreignness' of the source text. What is foreign about *Luuanda* is not the fact that it is not in English; rather, the 'foreignness' of the text is that which makes it foreign for the reader in the source language; that is, the corruption of Portuguese that also constitutes a disavowal of colonial imposition and a celebratory statement of cultural sovereignty.

Some objections may be raised here. In the attempt to reproduce the originality of the source text through the hybridisation of English and Kimbundu, we could be accused of a kind of recolonisation. In order to assess the grounds for such an accusation, it is helpful to George Steiner's canonical essay 'The Hermeneutic Motion'.<sup>33</sup> Steiner has rightly been taken to task for his deep-seated Western outlook and the phallogocentric and imperialist tone

<sup>28</sup> Maria Tymoczko, 'Post-colonial writing and literary translation', in *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, ed. by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 19-40 (p. 23).

<sup>29</sup> Tomás Jacinto, 'The Art of Luandino Vieira', in *Critical Perspectives on Lusophone Literature from Africa*, ed. by Donald Burness (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press), pp. 81-91 (p. 85).

<sup>30</sup> Benjamin, p. 260.

<sup>31</sup> Vieira (1981), p. 117.

<sup>32</sup> Antoine Berman, 'Translation and the Trials of the Foreign', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, trans. by Lawrence Venuti, pp. 284-97 (p. 284).

<sup>33</sup> George Steiner, 'The Hermeneutic Motion', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, pp. 186-91.

of much of his imagery.<sup>34</sup> In applying Steiner's translation theory to the text at hand, then, we run into a somewhat uncomfortable irony. As Steiner sees it, 'the translator invades, extracts, and brings home. The simile is that of the open-cast mine left an empty scar in the landscape'.<sup>35</sup> A scar in the landscape indeed. Steiner is useful to the extent that he underappreciates the differences, sometimes non-negotiable, between self and other. He calls for 'exchange without loss' without acknowledging the disruptive and potentially intractable quality of cultural difference.<sup>36</sup> Spivak calls this resistance 'the rhetoricity of language', warning that, should it go unheeded, 'a species of neo-colonialist construction of the non-western scene is afoot'.<sup>37</sup> These are the stakes of Steiner's translation theory, and herein is the irony. In pushing for his hermeneutic motion, the restitutive stage of his four-part theory of translation, Steiner only does damage to the difference he intends to 'equalize'.<sup>38</sup> As Tejaswini Niranjana has pointed out, 'translation as a practice shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism'.<sup>39</sup> What Steiner does not account for is the asymmetry that may characterise the parameters in which a translator operates. In the case of translating out of a 'Third-World' dialect into English, for example, the source text is subsumed by a global language, and the pretense of restitution becomes an empty gesture that echoes the vainglory of the 'civilising mission'. As Spivak asks with regard to this issue: 'In the case of the Third World Foreigner, is the law of the majority that of decorum, the equitable law of democracy, or the "law" of the strongest?'<sup>40</sup>

In this sense, perhaps my alternative to Bender's approach to translation is inadequate, amounting to no more than the subsumption of Kimbundu by another colonial language. Perhaps Bender's strategy of importing hybrids untranslated is the best an English translation could do, a twisted version of Steiner's hermeneutic motion that gives back precisely where it makes the reader work for her understanding, illuminating the source text by turning out the lights in the translation. Tymoczko reminds us that 'translation is one of the activities of a culture in which cultural expansion occurs and in which linguistic options are expanded through the importation of loan transfers, calques, and the like'.<sup>41</sup> This cultural expansion is made even more extreme in *Luuanda* by the fact that the calques in the text are loan transfers from the dialect by which the source language has been corrupted, with no relation to the target language whatsoever. So we have words like 'bitacaia', the Portuguese corruption of the Kimbundu word *ditacaia*, and the collection's title, 'Luuanda', the Kimbundu pronunciation of the Portuguese *Luanda*, all providing the reader with linguistic processes entirely alien to their own.<sup>42</sup> Bender's strategy thus appears to preclude the dangers of suppression that accompany translating into English, the language that represents, in David

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<sup>34</sup> Douglas Robinson, 'Hermeneutic Motion', in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. by Mona Baker and Kirsten Malmkjær (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 97-99; Lori Chamberlain, 'Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation', *Signs*, 13.3 (1988), 454-72.

<sup>35</sup> Steiner, p. 187.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>37</sup> Spivak, p. 399.

<sup>38</sup> Steiner, p. 190.

<sup>39</sup> Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Spivak, p. 399.

<sup>41</sup> Tymoczko, p. 25.

<sup>42</sup> Vieira (1981), p. 56.

Huddart's words, 'a threat to linguistic ecologies across the world'.<sup>43</sup> When Mieke Bal poses the timely question 'How can we work with, yet resist, the linguistic imperialism of English in the contemporary world?', perhaps here we have found an answer: translate less; import words that the reader will not understand; situate meaning around the text, rather than within it; and make the reader work harder.<sup>44</sup>

How does this approach reconcile with our third obstacle, orality? In order to import words untranslated, we must also provide a glossary, or else risk alienating the reader. Despite the fact that these were Vieira's intentions towards his Portuguese readership, and the reason that it was not until the eighth edition of *Luuanda* that he authorised the use of a glossary, glosses on untranslated words can only serve to broaden the reader's cultural awareness and thereby mitigate some of the loss, potentially damaging, as we have seen, inherent in any act of translation.<sup>45</sup> Though with the meaning of the text located in the glossary, does the text not then lose its orality? It is true that the text can no longer be read aloud without lengthy side notes that disrupt the storytelling process. On the other hand, it could be argued that the 'thickness' of the text helps to recreate this orality within the reading experience itself. By sending the reader in and out of the glossary, for example, a dialogic aspect is introduced into his reading experience, not dissimilar from the back-and-forth quality of oral interchange. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the form of the text was designed to be 'told and retold', and, with a lexis only accessible to the target audience by way of paratextual commentary, Bender's translation proves resistant to the orality set out by Vieira as one of *Luuanda*'s most distinctive features.<sup>46</sup>

In this way, we arrive at a reading of Bender's translation no more certain of its success than when we started. Typical of any translation, we could discuss the way in which it has negotiated the difference of the source text almost *ad infinitum*, for loss in translation is as inevitable as it is stimulating. Bender has failed to replicate the hybrid nature of Vieira's language but respected the fact that its inventiveness can never be reproduced without a potentially damaging change in the terms of its signification. In translation, the text has lost its original form and become reliant on contextual information that stresses its political relevance, whilst altering the reading experience of the target audience. However, there is still one complaint to be made: Bender also does not attempt to recuperate this inevitable loss. Because there is only failure in translation, a truism that stretches back to Saint Jerome as he realises: 'If I translate word for word I produce nonsense, but if I have to change something in the order of the words or their sound I could be accused of failing in my duties as a translator'.<sup>47</sup> Accepting this failure is the first step for the translator. To accept that translating is what Ortega y Gasset calls 'a utopian task' is the *sine qua non* of the act of translation. But this is only the point of departure.<sup>48</sup> What is lacking in Bender's translation is the urge to move beyond failure and into experimentation.

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<sup>43</sup>David Huddart, *Involuntary Associations: Postcolonial Studies and World Englishes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), p. 38.

<sup>44</sup>Mieke Bal, 'Translating Translation', *Journal of Visual Culture*, 6 (1) (2007), 109-124 (p. 109).

<sup>45</sup>Phyllis Peres, *Transculturation and Resistance in Lusophone African Narrative* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), p. 38.

<sup>46</sup>Ribeiro, p. 32.

<sup>47</sup>Quoted in Lefevere, *Translation / History / Culture: A Sourcebook*, p. 48.

<sup>48</sup>José Ortega y Gasset, 'The Misery and the Splendor of Translation', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, trans. by Elizabeth Gamble Miller, pp. 49-64 (p. 49).

What Spivak calls 'the politics of translation' is no doubt delicate when it comes to the translation of a text like *Luuanda*. However, it is also a text that urges the translator to, as Niranjana would have it, 'reclaim the notion of translation by deconstructing it and reinscribing its potential as a strategy of resistance'.<sup>49</sup> Resistance was the driving force behind Vieira's invention and so it should be with the translation. We think of Venuti's translation of Derrida, in which he tried to recreate Derrida's text 'by inventing comparable effects — even when they threaten to twist the English into strange new forms'.<sup>50</sup> We are also reminded of Philip Lewis who, himself a translator of Derrida, calls for 'strong, forceful translation that values experimentation, tampers with usage, seeks to match the polyvalencies or plurivocities or expressive stresses of the original by producing its own'.<sup>51</sup> A translation of *Luuanda* begins to emerge that attempts to recreate for the target language some of the political upheaval occasioned by the source text at the time of its publication. In 1964 *Luuanda* won Angola's top literary award, and the following year the Society of Portuguese Writers awarded it their highest prize for fiction. In 2006, José Luandino Vieira was awarded the Prémio Camões, the most prestigious literary award in the Portuguese language, an award which he subsequently refused. This is no second-rate author, nor is *Luuanda* a second-rate text. My final question is: is it not time we had an English translation of *Luuanda* to match the revolutionary experimentalism with which Vieira endowed his work?

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<sup>49</sup> Niranjana, p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Lawrence Venuti, 'Introduction', *Critical Inquiry*, 27.2, (2001), 169-173 (p. 173).

<sup>51</sup> Phillip Lewis, 'The Measure of Translation Effects', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti, (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 264-283 (p. 270).

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