

BOOK REVIEW

Lamonte Aidoo and Daniel F. Silva, eds. *Lusophone African Short Stories and Poetry After Independence: Decolonial Destinies*. London: Anthem Press, 2021. 286 pp. Bibliography. \$125.00. Cloth. ISBN: 9781785276194.

Lusophone African Short Stories and Poetry After Independence: Decolonial Destinies, edited and translated by Lamonte Aidoo and Daniel F. Silva, is a timely anthology that fills a gap in both Decolonial and Africana studies. Focused on African countries that share a common history of Portuguese colonization, with Portuguese as their official language, this book offers a comprehensive exploration of the shaping of anticolonial consciousness through literature. By presenting fiction and poetry written by authors from Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, and São Tome and Principe, the editors/translators shed light on the complexities of post-independence, decolonial perspectives and contemporary coloniality.

The book illuminates the decolonial dynamics within Lusophone Africa, as the authors aim to establish “vital terrains of solidarity and collaboration beyond the borders and divisions (political or otherwise) instituted by imperialist Europe” (3). Moreover, they posit that in these countries, the notion of decoloniality stemmed from what Amílcar Cabral called “The Weapon of Theory”, which entails educating their population and rethinking their own culture. Only then can be the reshaping of the economy and political independence be achieved. Aidoo and Silva consider Cabral’s stance to be a “deep revision of Marxism” and “an important foundation for the advancement of anticolonial theory” (4) to “inaugurate anticolonial systems of meaning” (7).

The collection is divided into five parts (one for each country), commencing with a captivating short story by the Angolan writer who also served as Minister of Culture, Boaventura Cardoso. “Pompeu e Costa Family” portrays the stark contrast between the lives of the wealthy white population and the impoverished black community. It has a powerful opening that sets the tone for the rest of the anthology. Readers will become familiar with other works, such as poems by Ana Paula Tavares, Ana de Santana, and Amélia da Lomba, three authors who bring a feminine and feminist viewpoint to the book. Besides the (de)colonial experience, diaspora is another theme that appears in Tavares’s work: “we colonized life/planting/each one/in the sea of the other” (51). Santana’s poetry is deeply ingrained in the trauma of colonization: “I count on the fingers/of my remaining hand/one by one/each century/[of the half a millennium of alien rape and murder]...” (65), while in da Lomba’s writings we find a voice committed to decoloniality, as in, “Hands draw roots of the land’s songs/Hands generate life in the identity of the flower within the letter’s

spirit” (75). Together they make up the “generation of uncertainties,” as scholar Luis Kandjimbo put it (71). This section ends with two works of fiction by Odjaki, arguably the most recognized name in contemporary Angolan literature.

Part II focuses on Cabo Verde. This section features poems by Onésimo Silveira, the human rights activist Vera Duarte, Rosendo Évora Brito, and Silvino Lopes Évora, whose *ars poetica* is also present in “What’s Poetry?” (129), while Orlanda Amarilys contributes with short stories. This section highlights the intricacies of nature and humanity, drought, and poverty that shape Cape Verdean literature, yet “freedom” is the word of order.

Part III delves into the literary landscape of Guinea-Bissau, featuring the engaged poetry of Domingas Samy, the evocative poems by Agnelo Regalla, as well as an unpublished poem by Félix Sigá titled “From Siga-mania to Felix-ment” (161). His poetry is marked by the presence of geographical elements shaping the (traumatized) human body, as in “Relief”: “Tearing the skin of the land/A trace of flesh/on the blood of stone/Writes in my arteries/An exalting desire to live” (160). Additionally, the contribution by Tony Tcheca, co-founder of the Writers’ Association of Guinea Bissau, offers a glimpse into the linguistic complexities of the region. His work is followed by poems penned by Odete Semedo, who also served as Minister of Education and of Health.

Part IV takes the reader to Mozambique. This section showcases the literary prowess of renowned writers such as José Craveirinha, Tânia Tomé, Nelson Saúte, and two winners of the prestigious Camoes Prize of Literature, Mia Couto and Paulina Chiziane. Together, these authors provide a sense of national identity, while challenging the hegemonic discourse of coloniality, as in Tomé’s poem, “My Mozambique”: “I know myself Mozambique/cistern in the financial reserves of the gods” (207) or in Saúte’s question, as it appears in the short story “The Apostle of Disaster”: “The children are supposed to eat the crisis?” (216).

Part V is dedicated to the islands of São Tome and Príncipe, and a collection of works by Alda Espírito Santo, who served in the government of her country after independence, Tomás Medeiros, an active member of the anticolonial *guerrilla*, Olinda Beja, Conceição Lima, and Albertino Bragança, who was engaged with the political reshaping of the country. Their works showcase decoloniality through activism and social awareness, as in Medeiros’ “My song to Europe”: “now that you have stamped on my face/the perfections of your civilization, /I ask you, Europe, /I ask you, NOW WHAT?” (233).

This book is an indispensable resource for scholars, students, and anyone else interested in the rich literary heritage of Lusophone Africa. The collection celebrates the intellectual and cultural leaders of the region and sheds light on the ongoing struggles against neo-colonialism. Moreover, the book ends with a list of “further readings” to augment its didactic purpose. There is a noticeable shortcoming in the exploration of Portuguese-speaking authors within African Studies and Decolonial Studies in the Anglophone world. This gap emphasizes the need for more works such as this one, especially given the limited accessibility of works published in Portuguese language.

Notwithstanding, I would like to have seen a bi-lingual edition in the spirit of didacticism, to allow students of Portuguese as a foreign language to appreciate the linguistic richness of the original works.

Tania Martuscelli 
University of Colorado
Boulder, USA
tania.martuscelli@colorado.edu
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