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Divergent Metaphors: The Intertextuality between Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto

By

Jeremias Alberto Zunguze

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Hispanic Languages and Literatures

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Candace Slater, Chair

Professor Estelle Tarica

Professor Jeroen Dewulf

Fall 2014

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Jeremias Alberto Zunguze

Abstract

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Professor Candace Slater, Chair

Examining intersections and divergences between the often-compared Brazilian modernist João Guimarães Rosa and the Mozambican postmodernist Mia Couto, I propose an intertextual reading to broaden the perspective on their linguistic and thematic likenesses and subjective and cosmovisional differences. This study traces the trajectories of their orality and representation of the marginalized, especially children, from the point of view of race and identity. My research covers approximately two decades of work by each author, including Couto's *Jesusalém* (2009), *Estórias abensonhadas* (1994), *Cronicando* (1991), and *Vozes anoitecidas* (1987) alongside Rosa's *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (1956), *Primeiras estórias* (1962), *Corpo de baile* (1956), and *Sagarana* (1984).

I find that contradictions in Rosean portrayals of *mestiço*-white versus Afro-Brazilian children reveal hierarchically racialized attitudes in Brazil's social foundations that are at odds with the postcolonial values of Couto's Mozambique. The legacy of Portuguese colonialism evident in the polarizing orality expressed by Rosean backlanders—whose narrations categorically render blacks as caricatured, dehumanized, and tragic in juxtaposition to the *mestiços*' embodiment of the full range of human experience and transformative individual potential—functions as a discursive strategy to challenge Gilberto Freyre's dominant racial discourses on Lusotropicalism, *mestiçagem*, and racial democracy. Conversely, Couto's narrations on the black experience are free of the racial stereotype, unindividuated uniformity, and tragedized foreclosure of patriarchal characterization, despite also exploring the violence and poverty left in the wake of imperialism. Like Rosa's more privileged *mestiço*-white children, capable of positive transformation no matter how marginalized their circumstances, Couto's children—rich or poor, orphaned or parented, black or *mestiço*—capitalize on the imaginative and sometimes magical “exercises of childhood,” often while reconnecting to the indigenous and sacred practices of their ancestors. Unlike Rosa's most heroic children, Couto's do not usually dramatically improve in socio-economic conditions. Instead of the more linear worldview of scrappy self-determination or meritorious individualism that earn Rosean protagonists upward mobility, the Coutian protagonist follows a more circular pattern of self-discovery grounded in collective interdependence and a plurality of native traditions.

For Heather and Betinho

For my parents, Alcina and Alberto

For the Zunguze family

For the Mothershead family

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Introduction

. . . all the differences of a society might be reduced to a single form, to the organization of a world-view, to the establishment of a system of values, to a coherent type of civilization.

Foucault

The current economic, cultural, and political relationship between Brazil and African nations of Portuguese official language sparks interest in comparative literary studies. Historically, a one-way cultural circulation in the area of literature precedes this contemporary relationship. The spread of Brazilian literary artifacts among African intellectuals in the former African Portuguese colonies can be traced back to the 1950s (Chabal, *Vozes Moçambicanas* 30-32), especially the literature produced by *modernistas*. African poets in the Portuguese language, such as Agostinho Neto and José Craveirinha, do acknowledge reading such Brazilian Regionalist authors as Jorge Amado, Graciliano Ramos, and Raquel de Queiroz, to name a few (Laban 83). The contemporary Mozambican writer, Mia Couto also points to the Brazilian late modernist author, João Guimarães Rosa—who wrote between the mid-1930s and mid-1960s—as a significant literary model. In Couto’s own words, “*Guimarães foi uma iluminação para mim, uma descoberta importantíssima*” (Salem et al).

The pioneering scholarship on this transatlantic literary circulation and transaction tends to come almost exclusively from this perspective of “influence” (Daniel, “Mia Couto” 3; Matos 136-137; Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura 221-284; Nenevé and Siepamann), attempting to trace how the literary conventions of Brazilian authors have transferred to the works of Mozambican writers. Comparative studies of Mia Couto and Guimarães Rosa tend to follow this cause-effect reading paradigm with a specific focus on pointing out the Brazilian author’s legacy in, influence on, and kinship with Couto’s language, theme, and worldview. Though my own research explores these rich, stimulating, and illuminating comparative studies, the primary goal of my dissertation is to offer an viewpoint from which to examine what brings these authors together and also what sets them apart.

Beyond theories of heritage, influence, and kinship, this dissertation draws on Julia Kristeva’s theory of “inter-textuality” (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 59-60) in reading the relationship between these two authors. To avoid what Graham Allen observes as the “danger of [intertextuality] meaning nothing more than whatever each particular critic wishes it to mean” (2), I will use *intertextuality* as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, “the need for one text to be read in the light of its allusions to *and differences from* the content or structure of other texts” (my emphasis). I emphasize the “*differences*,” because intertextuality, as it is defined here, does not merely trace an allusion in “content or structure” back to its originating text, but it allows the later text to create “differences from the content or structure of . . . [preceding] texts.” Moreover, I use intertextuality from the notion that a text’s dialogue with previous works is merely an “intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning)” (Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader* 34). Therefore, when Mia Couto’s language and theme intersect with Guimarães Rosa, they are repeated as codes deactivated from all sorts of previous metaphor and meaning, constituting another metaphor whose meaning does not necessarily lead back to the original

linguistic or thematic reference. In other words, literary allusions to Rosa can remain in the space and time that Couto's own narrative represents. As I demonstrate in Chapters Two and Three, reading the intertextual patterns of language and their perspectives on the representation of children reveals an ontological and epistemological difference between both authors.

Intertextuality allows me to examine repetition of previous aesthetic conventions without denying these conventions the potential to reproduce new forms of meaning. My dissertation intends to highlight the often overlooked differences between Mia Couto and Guimarães Rosa in order to broaden their undeniable relationship and, in so doing, reveal a much more complex and nuanced relationship than has been previously examined.

In concentrating on influence, heritage, and kinship, current studies by comparativists of Brazilian traditions and those of African nations in the Portuguese language— such as Gramiro de Matos, Ana Cláudia da Silva, Susana Ramos Ventura, and Mary Louis Daniel, among others—tend to focus on pinpointing aesthetic origins, sources of meaning, and transmission of worldview, rather than on surveying the broader “intersection of textual surfaces.” For example, Gramiro de Matos's theory of Brazilian Modernism/Regionalism's influence on intellectuals of Portuguese-speaking Africa leads him to the following conclusion:

o Manifesto da Poesia Pau-Brasil (1924) e o Manifesto Antropofágico (1928) que teve a participação de todas as tendências estéticas, filosóficas e políticas do Brasil contemporâneo, exerce[ram] grande influência internacional, principalmente na África de língua comum— onde precedeu e ampliou o conceito de Negritude, através da filosofia da descolonização cultural e independência nacional subjacente no movimento . . . com destaque para a incorporação das questões sociais e humanas dos negros, politizando a estética do Negrismo . . . As obras saídas do movimento, principalmente as dos romancistas nordestinos das décadas de 30/40, além de ter desempenhado um papel importante na formação e emergência do realismo crítico, complexo e social das literaturas africanas de língua comum, contribuíram para a afirmação da consciência nacional negro-africana. (136-137)

There is a pervasive presumption that Brazilian Modernism/ Regionalism had an ideological, philosophical, and political effect on African intellectuals writing in Portuguese, who—upon coming into contact with Modernist aesthetics— became conscious of the universal issues affecting blacks. While Mozambican authors do recognize in such Brazilian Northeastern writers like Jorge Amado some aesthetic patterns—like the dehumanizing effects of Luso-Brazilian colonialism, including racism, slavery, and poverty—common to the black African experience, Gramiro de Matos seems to attribute the affirmation of black African consciousness to Brazilian thinkers. This is common in theories of influence—as I discuss in the following chapter— especially their focus on how older written traditions transmit agency, morality, and universality onto, not necessarily younger, but historically more oral traditions (Clayton and Rothstein 5). In so doing, this scholarship overlooks African intellectuals' own aesthetic tools with which to grapple with colonialism and to convey their own consciousness, history, culture, and worldview. In fact, in Southern African writings that date as far back as 1846, Christian B.N. Gade finds references to a distinctly Southern African social consciousness, called “*ubuntu*” (303-329), which no doubt contributed to “*a afirmação da consciência nacional negro-africana*”

long before Brazilian Modernism/ Regionalism. The *ubuntu* philosophy maintains that the humanity of the individual is inextricably bound to the humanity of the collective group, therefore a very divergent value system from “white myths regarding the Afro-Brazilian as an individual” (Brookshaw 155). As Couto explains, when discussing Bantu languages and cultures, “*estamos perante uma filosofia diferente, outra maneira de ver o mundo*” (Salem et al).

Theories on the origins of conventions and passed-down legacies also draw upon documentation of an author’s own acknowledgement of interaction with his precursors. Mia Couto’s recognition that “*Guimarães foi uma iluminação para mim, uma descoberta importantíssima*” prompts Da Silva and Ventura to conclude that “*o conceito de influência . . . aproxima-se bastante do tipo de relação existente entre Rosa e Couto*” (226). Defending their argument with assumptions about the shared history of colonization between Brazil and Mozambique, Da Silva and Ventura write that the works of these authors “*apresentam condições sócio-históricas semelhantes. . . Não são poucas as similaridades situacionais—fatores relativos à base sócio-cultural—que aproximam os países de língua oficial portuguesa, especialmente aqueles, como é o caso do Brasil e de Moçambique, que foram objetos da dominação colonial portuguesa.*” A supposed resemblance in socio-historic conditions between Brazil and Mozambique makes the case of Guimarães Rosa’s influence in Mia Couto seem obvious at first glance. Indeed, Miguel Nenevé and Rose Siepamann also emphasize the authors’ mutual experience with Portuguese Imperialism, pointing out: “*Entre os escritores brasileiros que deixaram influência em sua alma e em seu jeito de escrever, está o mineiro João Guimarães Rosa,*” especially “*a tradição oral . . . tanto o brasileiro como o moçambicano de certa forma escrevem uma literatura descolonizadora*” (Nenevé and Siepamann). Mary Louis Daniel ventures even further than the “socio-historic similarities” of these postcolonial nations and, like Nenevé and Siepamann, attempts to get to the very heart—“*influência em sua alma e em seu jeito de escrever*—of Mia Couto’s language, ideology, and worldview. She writes, the “short fiction of Mia Couto . . . evokes strongly Guimarães Rosa’s linguistic innovation as well as his compassionate and sensitive treatment of children, animals, and the elderly and marginalized of society. . . . [These] facets of his fiction so strikingly show his *kinship with the cosmovision* and stylistic tastes of João Guimarães Rosa” (my emphasis) (Daniel 1-3). All of the aforementioned studies purport cosmovisional, linguistic, thematic, and socio-historical resemblances between Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto and, most importantly, the Brazilian author’s influence on, legacy in, and kinship with the Mozambican writer. However, as I argue in Chapters One and Three, Mozambique’s socio-cultural experience with colonization and its aftermath is really quite different from Brazil’s—just as much of Mia Couto’s language, metaphor, and cosmovision are also quite different—when examined within their full historical, political, social, and narrative contexts.

Meanwhile, Mia Couto’s acknowledgment of Guimarães Rosa as “an illumination” must also be left within the full context of the Brazilian interview from which these words come as well as the historical context in which he began his writing career. In the interview, Couto explains that, during the Mozambican Civil War (1977-1992), “*nós tínhamos a guerra e não havia coisas do Brasil circulando*” (Salem et al). Instead of a Brazilian influence, Couto credits the Angolan José Luandino Vieira as his “*primeira influência grande*” for Vieira’s fusion of Portuguese “*com o linguajar de Angola, particularmente dos subúrbios de Luanda.*” In fact, Couto had already published both *Raiz do Orvalho* (1983) and *Vozes anoitecidas* (1986) before,

in his own words, “*tomei conta de que existia um tal João Guimarães Rosa.*” By this time, Couto describes having already begun to engage with “*essa coisa do como é que eu vou escrever usando esta língua portuguesa herdada dos portugueses com uma estrutura, uma lógica, uma racionalidade e como esta língua pode contar as histórias que eu quero, como pode dar luz a esses personagens que vivem numa outra cultura.*” In other words, Couto had already been consciously working with the idea of how to bend the Portuguese language’s “structure,” “logic,” and “rationality” to his own cultural, sociolinguistic, philosophical, and artistic will. He also had already studied closely how Vieira’s works “followed the structure of the African oral narrative and dealt with the harsh realities of Portuguese rule in Angola” (Ray 550), a nation with not only closer geographic proximity to Mozambique but—more importantly—with political, social, and linguistic struggles much more closely related to Mozambique’s own “*condições sócio-históricas.*”

Only after publishing his first two books does Couto come into contact with Guimarães Rosa’s *Primeira Histórias*. “*De facto, foi um momento mágico,*” Couto says, but not because of “*condições sócio-históricas semelhantes,*” “*similaridades situacionais,*” “*fatores relativos à base sócio-cultural,*” or even a shared history of “*dominação colonial portuguesa,*” as other critics argue. It was Guimarães Rosa’s language itself that was “magic”:

A escrita do Guimarães Rosa está cheia não só desse trabalho de reconstrução de uma língua mais plástica, mas também há ali um convite para que a oralidade invada a escrita, numa espécie de transbordação daquilo que é a lógica da escrita, que se deixa ir por uma outra lógica. Acho que é mais do que um trabalho lingüístico-poético. É uma coisa que tem a ver com a fronteira entre a oralidade e a escrita, isso é que foi importante para mim. (Salem et al)

For Couto, Guimarães Rosa showed the “magic[al]” possibility of blurring the lines “between orality and writing,” removing the limitations on the “logic of writing,” so that the writing itself could speak with “*uma outra logica*”—a logic of orality. This “*trabalho lingüístico-poético*” and, more—the removal of a hierarchy between the written and spoken word to create a more faithful mimicry of local linguistic and cultural experience—was immediately similar and familiar between the authors. This “illumination” or discovery of Guimarães Rosa’s linguistic creativity cannot, however, be stretched into transmissions of agency, ideology, and socio-historic conditions.

So, what sets these so often compared authors apart from one another? Among the various masters in Portuguese language, Guimarães Rosa is unquestionably one of the most innovative and widely referenced by other authors from the Lusophone traditions. This is yet another reason why Mia Couto calls him “an illumination.” From a formal point of view, Guimarães Rosa’s avant-gardist linguistic tendencies abolish the formalities between speech and writing, as Couto observes above. Furthermore, Rosa displaces the act of writing from a strictly written paradigm to a more carnivalesque aesthetic expression, a language of multifaceted and multilayered idiom that expresses different points of views and a sort of universal freedom, as in

a “carnival” scene defined by Mikhail Bakhtin.¹ His carnivalesque project has undoubtedly set the standard for linguistic creativity so high that it has inspired the active participation—and not just the passive imitation—of African authors in Portuguese language, including both Mia Couto and Luandino Vieira. When these authors intertextualize Guimarães Rosa’s language and theme, the cosmovisions—or value systems—that they convey do not essentially lead back to an origin outside of the contexts of their own narratives. Indeed, one of the only ways for these authors to step out from the enormous shadow of this literary giant’s aesthetic contributions is to capitalize on Guimarães Rosa’s innovative language and themes to express their own linguistic, cultural, social, and national values and identities.

Although Couto’s narrative certainly demonstrates the Rosean thematic and linguistic affinities that Daniel, Da Silva, and Ventura’s scholarship point out, it proves problematic to also allege “kinship with the cosmovision . . . of João Guimarães Rosa.” *Cosmovision*, from the Spanish “*cosmo + visión*,” according to the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, makes “reference to Meso-American peoples: a particular way of viewing the world or of understanding the universe.” Like ideology,² cosmovision entails both an ontological and epistemological value system of ideas, meanings, and beliefs that an individual or a collectivity has or envisions about the world or reality. While later authors, texts, or traditions may be influenced by and have a kinship with previous writers, archives, and cultures, cosmovisions are bound to their intrinsic subjectivities.³ That is, individual experiences and multidimensional relationships (to others, things, history, morality, etc.) do not form a simply personal point of view but rather become part of a wider, more complex network of texts, institutions, and discursive practices that produce those particular worldviews. Cosmovisions are products of human construction and consciousness and, as such, do not exist prior to a certain discursive structure but are created by human beings in the very practices of human consciousness. In fact, from a Foucauldian subjectivity perspective, cosmovisions are methodologically, archeologically, and genealogically fashioned. As “[a]rcheology refers to a method of revealing how systems of knowing—or epistemes—organize a given text[,] . . . [g]enealogy involves a reconstruction of the origins and evolution of discursive practices with a nexus of power relations” (Lawrence and Aisha 6). Foucault’s insistence on reading a given text archeologically and genealogically forces us to read a cultural artifact—including its cosmovision (system of ideas, values, and beliefs)—within the historical context or networks of power that produced it. Historicizing comparatively will then reveal that the value systems aestheticized in Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto are constructed differently and organize different systems of knowing. This dissertation proposes that the differences between these cosmovisions, including language and socio-historical predicaments, are evident within the very similarities on which the current scholarship concentrates.

Although some influence by Guimarães Rosa cannot be denied, equating Guimarães Rosa’s cosmovision and socio-historical predicaments to Mia Couto’s literary project imposes

¹ Mikhail Bakhtin defines a “carnival” scene as “not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is

² I use the concept of ideology according to Raymond Williams, “a relatively formal and articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs, of a kind that can be abstracted as a ‘world-view’ or a ‘class outlook’” (Lawrence and Karim 183).

³ According to Michael Foucault, subjectivity, or “mode of subjectivation,” is “[t]he way in which the individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognizes himself as obligated to put it into practice” (*History of Sexuality* 27).

artificial limitations on the Mozambican author and inaccurate interpretations of his work. It is binding a worldview of one author to that of another, when their subjectivity and discursive sites are archeologically-genealogically divergent. It forecloses Couto's ability to signify a different kind of metaphor in the process of articulating a system of ideas, meanings, values, and beliefs about a particular tradition. It also overshadows the Mozambican writer's legitimacy and originality. Contrary to what is usually alleged, my reading of their narratives—notwithstanding their deployment of similar thematic and linguistic conventions—finds divergent metaphors with completely different aesthetic impressions and value systems.

While acknowledging the historical juncture between the traditions represented in Mia Couto and Guimarães Rosa, it is also important to make clear the differences in their presumed similar social-historical contexts. In current comparative studies between Latin American traditions and African traditions in Portuguese language, there is an intention and tendency to loosen the temporal constraints between the two geopolitical spheres in order to posit “a common postcolonial identity on the basis of a shared political experience such as decolonization” (Fidian 5). Glossing over the profound differences in histories, cultures, and worldviews represented in “*literatura descolonizadora*”—in the name of showing “a common postcolonial identity” and “political experience” of “decolonization”—misses, in my view, the whole purpose of comparative study, especially in the case of Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto. Since history works in tandem with aesthetics and the overall value system that a certain author, work, or tradition metonymize, I believe that we can scrutinize the socio-historical quandary between the Brazil and Mozambique represented respectively in Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto and still see both similar postcolonial factors and dissimilar decolonizing political experiences. Seeing the similarities between the socio-historical conditions of these “contact zones”⁴ wrought by Portuguese colonization as the evidence of influence, heritage, and kinship underestimates the differences—which, I argue, are more significant than the similarities—between the value systems represented in Mia Couto and Guimarães Rosa.

Although Brazil and Mozambique share the same colonizer, their patterns of colonization, and postcolonial articulation of identities are different. A look at the two former colonies' distinct routes to independence reveals that the births of these independent nations differed from the start. “Brazil's independence in 1822 occurred almost as a formality [just fourteen years after King Dom João VI unprecedentedly moved the seat of the Portuguese empire from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro]. Rather than a sharp break with the past, a long evolutionary journey with roots at least as far back as the sixteenth century can be identified [in Brazil's path to independence]” (MacLachlan 1). Mozambique, on the other hand, remained an Overseas Province of the Portuguese empire for nearly five centuries after Vasco da Gama's landing in 1498, only gaining its independence in 1975 following a violent ten-year revolutionary war.⁵ For Mia Couto, the socio-historical predicaments of having lived almost one-third of his lifetime under the longest-standing European colonial empire, another third of his lifetime in a country at war (revolutionary and civil wars), and the most recent third of his

⁴ I use the term “contact zones” as defined by Mary Louise Pratt, that is “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today” (8).

⁵ For more information, see Newitt.

lifetime in a developing country grappling with its post-war and postcolonial formation most certainly orient his language and worldview.

Indeed, Couto speaks of the “*circunstância histórica realmente singular*” of not only being “older” than his country but also of his participation in “*o nascimento de uma literatura nacional . . . [que] é contemporâneo do nascimento da própria nacionalidade.*” (Felinto). Although Merilene Felinto calls this “*o exercício de humildade que é fazer literatura de ficção num país pobre como Moçambique,*” Phillip Rothwell recognizes how Mia Couto’s often overlooked postmodern linguistic tendencies contribute to an important running socio-political critique of Mozambique during his lifetime:

By concentrating on his role as a linguistic renovator, many critics of Couto’s work have hitherto failed to realize how the author diegetically plays with the concepts behind postmodernism, principally the dissolution of binary frontiers, to critique various political systems that have been grafted onto his nation from the outside. . . . Couto destabilizes the patriarchal model of colonialism and interrogates the praxis of scientific socialism that affected Mozambican society at distinct periods during its history. (19)

From a postcolonial point of view, the closure of binary oppositions is a vital discursive strategy towards the authorization and articulation of the colonized subject. It questions all authority: the legacy of Portuguese colonialism, its assumed ontological hierarchies, and even the “praxis of scientific socialism” (Rothwell 19) that came to replace colonial power in the newly independent Mozambique. The following stories of origins from *Estórias abensonhadas* (1994): “*Lenda de Namarói*” and “*Nas águas do tempo*” — which I examine in Chapter Three — exemplify how Mia Couto undertakes this postmodern project through a persistent archeology and genealogy of native myths, local languages, and marginalized subjects. Both the myth of a genesis without men — “*No princípio, todos éramos mulheres*” (Couto, *Estórias abensonhadas* 141) — and that of the first human being coming from “*uma dessas canas*” (15) growing in the river are creation stories that relate the origins of the colonized subjects on their own terms, giving voice to their own cosmivision by subverting Judeo-Christian mythologies and all non-native archetypes that do not properly identify the marginalized subject. Since Mia Couto is a white Mozambican descendant of Portuguese settlers, these aesthetic tendencies towards native traditions can be interpreted, on the one hand, as the very personal and existential prerogative of a settler descendant to find and constitute his own national roots through the native. On the other hand, because the native presence in Mozambique comprises the majority of the nation’s population, the indigenous subject’s history and mythology are collectively significant to the formation of a national identity.

Whereas Couto “destabilizes the patriarchal model of colonialism” (Rothwell 19), Guimarães Rosa writes of Luso-Brazilian colonialism, slavery, and its rippling effects from the perspective of the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery (Bergad 251). Today, historian Colin M. MacLachlan calls race as well as “[s]lavery’s heavy historical burden . . . and its lingering consequences” (MacLachlan xx) two of Brazil’s major concerns and challenges. These historical quandaries also orient Guimarães Rosa’s language and cosmivision. As I analyze in Chapter Two, both his novella, “*O burrinho pedrês*” in *Sagarana* (1946) and “*Campo geral*” in

Corpo de baile (1956) in addition to the novel, *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (1956) restage plantation life with its unequal social and economic structure and marginalized subjects such as “*agregados*,” indentured servants, and slaves. Because he narrates within the patriarchal setting, Guimarães Rosa’s orality resurrects those “binary frontiers” (Rothwell 19) present in the Big House between master and slave, white and black, Self and Other.

Reading Guimarães Rosa’s mimicry of the language of the Big House through the lens of Walnice Nogueira Galvão’s concept of “ambiguity,”⁶ Rosa’s orality reveals contradictions in representation of the marginalized subjects. As I evaluate in Chapter 2, the orality of the Big House—in works such as *Grande Sertão: Veredas* and “*Campo geral*” in *Corpo de baile*—repeats patriarchal tradition, language, and thought to expose Brazil’s social foundations as a site of violence and to unveil the racial unconscious⁷ of the backland society represented in his narrative. I have developed the idea of racial unconscious with two meanings in mind. First, racial unconscious describes the deep-seated, automatic, often illogically founded store of feelings, thoughts, and utterances about race—specifically, about the racial characteristics of the proverbial Other—that become expressed without an awareness of the political and/or social implications and connotations of these attitudes and words. “[T]he kind of lapse that can occur when certain manners of polite repression are waived” and “the simple expedient of demonizing and reifying the range of color on a palette” (Morrison 11, 7) both provide glimpses behind the curtain that veils this sort of racial unconscious. I intentionally avoid using *subconscious* for this term, because the racial *unconscious* is not *beneath* consciousness. As the above definition and terminology intend to point out, there is a certain ignorance, carelessness, or unawareness that hide one’s own racial unconscious from consciousness, but this leaves open the possibility for the root of these racially unconscious mental and speech acts to be discovered (brought into consciousness) and even modified.

By conjuring the tensions repressed within the Brazilian racial unconscious through the realistic orality of backlanders, Rosa also debunks the romanticized version of colonization legitimized by Gilberto Freyre’s widespread racial and social formation theories including “Lusotropicalism,”⁸ “*mestiçagem*,”⁹ and “racial democracy.”¹⁰ Here—in the contrast between

⁶ In her study of *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, Walnice Nogueira Galvão has noted “ambiguity” as the organizing principle in Guimarães Rosa: “*A ambigüidade, princípio organizador deste texto, atravessa todos os níveis; tudo se passa como se ora fôsse ora não fôsse, as coisas às vezes são e às vezes não são. Como, todavia, êsses pares não chegam em a constituir-se em opostos, antes vivenciando-os o sujeito alternadamente sem que a tensão entre eles engendre o novo, não se pode falar em contradição mas apenas em ambigüidade. . . Se o princípio organizador é a ambigüidade, a estrutura do romance é também é definida por um padrão dual recorrente. A coisa dentro da outra, como o batizei, é um padrão que comporta dois elementos da natureza diversa, sendo um continente e outro conteúdo*” (13).

⁷ To construct the idea of racial unconsciousness, I have built on the concept of “unconscious” developed by Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Jacques Lacan. From a Lacanian view, I see the racial unconscious, like language, as functioning to both express and hide racial/racist desires (Leitch 1281). From a Jungian standpoint, I see that the racial unconscious can be personal, but is often culturally-bound, and therefore, collective with archetypal, hereditary, and repetitive feelings on racial distinctions taking both private and public expression through images, literature, and mythology (988). From the Freudian, I view the racial unconscious in relationship to a “hidden reservoir of repressed desires” that often invades the consciousness to express a narcissistic love of Self through aversion, hostility, and repugnance towards the Other (916).

⁸ Freyre saw an exceptional social relation between the Portuguese colonizer and non-European colonized subjects summarized in the following words: “Given the unique cultural and racial background of metropolitan Portugal, Portuguese explorers and colonizers demonstrated a special ability - found among no other people in the world - to adapt to tropical lands and peoples. . . he immediately entered into cordial relations with non-European populations he met in the tropics. . . The ultimate proof of the

glorifying the *mestiço* and yet permitting “the black body a shadowless participation in the dominant cultural body” (Morison 10)—points to the second definition of the constructs of racial unconscious, which make up a purposeful repression or refusal to acknowledge social norms that promote racial prejudices and/or differences in racial treatment. By exposing the Brazilian racial conscious through the linguistic and aesthetic repetition of colonial ontological hierarchies, Rosa’s writing represents a shocking collision with, and rejection of, “projected . . . ideal[s]” (MacLachlan) of the supposedly “exceptional,” “cordial,” “non-Racist” Portuguese colonial legacy. At the same time, without showing any sign of even figurative reformation, redemption, or emancipation of the marginalized Afro-Brazilian subject, Rosa’s reiteration of the patriarchal tradition, language, and cosmovision towards the already marginalized black subject, reinforcing a sort of double marginalization. Recalling Galvão’s theory of ambiguity, Susana Kampff Lage suggests that the “*uso paradoxical que [Guimarães Rosa] faz da língua*” (35-36) shows the author to be more preoccupied with the aesthetics of language and less concerned with an “*apologia de uma moral pragmática, que obrigasse a um engajamento político diretamente ligado aos problemas imediatos.*” Toni Morrison sums up this tricky work of how “writers transform aspects of their social grounding into aspects of language” (4) especially “under the pressure that racialized societies level on the creative process,” (xiii) like this: “National literatures, like writers, . . . do seem to end up describing and inscribing what is *really* [even unconsciously] on the national mind” (14, my emphasis). I argue that what is on the mind of Guimarães Rosa and the Brazil that his writing represents is very different from the preoccupations of Mia Couto and the Mozambique that his narrative represents.

In order to demonstrate the similarities in language and yet these glaring differences in cosmovision between Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto, my first chapter addresses the general problems surrounding influence, heritage, and kinship, particularly their history, application, and implications in relating one author to another. Though undeniably interesting and useful in opening debate on the intertextuality between Rosa and Couto, the above concepts of influence, heritage, and kinship overlook the interaction of a myriad of archives and aspects—ideological, historical, and subjective— that converge in the interweaving of the Mozambican tradition with Mia Couto’s aesthetics prior to his contacts with Brazilian *modernismo* and Guimarães Rosa. My first chapter demonstrates the differences and specificities in the shared history of Portuguese colonization, revealing divergent socio-economic structures and socio-historical predicaments that produce—and are *reproduced* in—their works. My research takes into consideration Brazil’s colonial and imperial interests in Portuguese Africa (i.e., the importation of slaves from

absence of racism among the Portuguese, however, is found in Brazil, whose large and socially prominent *mestiço* population is living testimony to the freedom of social and sexual intercourse between Portuguese and non-Europeans. Portuguese non-racism is also evidenced by the absence in Portuguese law of the racist legislation in South Africa and until recently in the United States barring non-whites from specific occupations, facilities, etc. Finally, any prejudice or discrimination in territories formerly or presently governed by Portugal can be traced to class, but never colour, prejudice (Bender 3-4).

⁹ According to Freyre, “[e]very Brazilian, even the light-skinned fair-haired one, carries about with him on his soul, when not on soul and body alike—for there are many in Brazil with the mongrel mark of the genipap— the shadow, or at least the birthmark, of the aborigine or the Negro” (*The Masters and the Slaves* 278).

¹⁰ Although “racial democracy” is associated with Gilberto Freyre, a precise term is not found in his work (Souza & Sinder 119). The term Freyre used is “social democracy” and it appears in *O Mundo que o Português Criou* (46, 51). Nevertheless, more than “social democracy,” “racial democracy” has become more associated with Freyre by various critics. For more information see Da Costa 234-246 and Twine 6.

Mozambique as well as Angola)¹¹ and the social and cosmovisional consequences of that historical intersection. Guimarães Rosa's narrative aestheticizes and reiterates these socio-historic elements through the master/slave episteme or white/black racial "ideologeme."¹² Reading the literary code's transmission through influence, heritage, and kinship narrows or confines Mia Couto's considerable communication with Guimarães Rosa's work and rationalizes the ideology of the colonizer who envisions his hegemonic influence on the colonized.

The second part of this first chapter utilizes intertextuality as a theoretical concept that acknowledges the factual genealogy and the actual necessity of communication between linguistic conventions, while allowing for a broader perspective on these author-to-author, text-to-text, and tradition-to-tradition interactions. Despite its apparent relationship with previous texts, authors, or traditions intertextuality insists that the true meaning of a latter text, author, or tradition is primarily anchored in a specific discursive network that produces and is reproduced by a certain writer, archive, or culture. As products of Portuguese colonization and eventual independence, from an ideological point of view, the literatures of Brazil and Mozambique contest colonial domination and the legacy of colonialism as much as they result in the postcolonial paradoxes of expression using the same linguistic and cultural tools left behind by "cultural imperialism."¹³ Although the Brazilian *modernistas'* aesthetic project displaced "the nineteenth century deterministic notion of race" and positivistic perceptions of African and Amerindian races "as the key concept for social analysis and aesthetic production" (Nava and Lauerhass 45) they did so while retaining European values and¹⁴ Eurocentric principles remaining from colonialism. Even the works of Brazilian regionalism, as exemplified by Jorge "Amado's novels[,] may . . . be important vehicles for the preservation of African culture in Brazil, but they also preserve and reinforce white myths regarding the Afro-Brazilian as an individual" (Brookshaw 155) white myths that are generally interrogated or even rejected by the Mozambican value system. In contrast, the fundamental worldview at the heart of the Mozambican contemporary tradition is the constitution of a "temporal caesura" (Bhabha 340),¹⁵ not only as a historical moment but also as an epistemological and ontological instant in which human discourse destroys "the binary structure of power and identity" (Bhabha) especially in

¹¹ For more information on this issue, see Capela 80.

¹² The term *ideologeme*, here, should be understood as episteme or, as defined by Julia Kristeva, the "intertextual function . . . which gives a text its historical and social coordinates and which relates the text to the other signifying practices which make up its cultural space" (Nöth 379).

¹³ I use "cultural imperialism" as defined by Edward Said, that is, the undeniable fact that imperialism has left a cultural legacy in the previously-colonized civilizations that remains today and is still very influential in international systems of power and governance.

¹⁴ See Luis Madureira's "A Cannibal Recipe to Turn a Dessert Country into the Main Course: Brazilian 'Antropofagia' and the Dilemma of Development" in which he argues that the author's cultural and political emancipation proposed by their concept of "antropofagia" is based largely on European cultural and epistemological values. David Brookshaw has also observed, "The Modernists, belonging as they did to this latter stage, sought in the Indian and the Negro, not a paradigm of Christian virtue, but rather the exotic, the pagan, the sensual, the embodiment of a counterculture" (91).

¹⁵ Here, I echo Bhabha referencing Fanon (3380367); they both see the "temporal caesura" as a historical time intervened by "the imperative that 'the Black man must be Black; he must be Black in relation to the white man'" (340). The black presence and experience are articulated not as an alternative identity, but rather as an identity marked by difference. "'The Black man is not. [caesura] Any more than the white man'" (Bhabha's insertion). It is the historical moment that instates a differential history in relationship to the colonial narrative, a space for postcolonial intervention and interrogation "the point at which we speak of humanity through its differentiations . . ." (341).

regard to the indigenous Afro-Brazilian. If we read Mia Couto from the perspective of intertextuality with Guimarães Rosa on the issues of orality and race, for example, we see that linguistic codes attributed to the Brazilian author—including the portmanteau and themes on children and the marginalized of society—are, indeed, intertextualized in Mia Couto; they are intersected as already displaced codes which now belong to a different subjectivity structure. This displacement should not be taken as accidental, but rather “it is part of the structure of discursive conventions to be cut off from origins” (Culler 102). In other words, notwithstanding the logic of origins and historicity in the transmission of aesthetic conventions, it is important to read texts from their own particular cosmovision or worldview.

To give a concrete example of fundamental differences in cosmovision, my second chapter discusses Guimarães Rosa’s orality and its representation of children. These thematic and linguistic conventions are the two major aesthetic elements in which the current scholarship sees an affinity in cosmovision between the two authors. Linguistic resources including portmanteau, neologisms, folk etymology, and proverbs fall under the general category of orality not as the pure spoken word, but as Galvão defines it, “*uma oralidade ficta, criada a partir de modelos orais mediante a palavra escrita*” (70). Many have exhaustively discussed Guimarães Rosa’s orality and its “ambiguities” (Galvão) in conveying the concept of the formation of the Brazilian society, especially in regard to class (Bolle), tradition, and modernity (Chagas) in the Brazilian civilization. Others have focused on Guimarães Rosa’s language and the “metaphysical” (Utéza) and “philological” aspects (Coutinho). The interest of this dissertation is to add something that, to my knowledge, has not yet been examined in depth: the study of Guimarães Rosa’s orality and its representation of children from a racial point of view in *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (1956), *Corpo de baile* (1956), *Primeiras estórias* (1962), and *Sagarana* (1946). My study of Rosa’s orality is less preoccupied with form or structuration¹⁶ and more concerned with content, specifically that of cosmovision, ideology, or point of view in regard to the world or the history that it articulates.

Studies on representation of race in Guimarães Rosa mostly tend to repeat the customary discursive practice on “*mestiçagem*”¹⁷ as the dominant racial discourse in the Brazilian social formation. This is true in Guimarães Rosa’s narratives of protagonists with white or of mixed ancestry—especially between the white master and the native woman—who identify themselves with Eurocentric racial values. As I demonstrate in Chapter Two, all of the following characters fit into this *mestiço*-white value system: Riobaldo of *Grande Sertão: Veredas*; Miguilim in *Corpo de baile*’s “*Campo geral*,” the children protagonists in *Primeiras estórias* including the narrator of “*A terceira margem do rio*,” the schoolchildren of “*Pirlimpisquice*,” the Meninos of “*As margens da alegria*” and “*Os cimos*,” Nininha of “*A menina de lá*,” and Moço of “*Um moço muito branco*” as well as the cowboys of *Sagarana*’s “*O burrinho pedrês*.” However, if we

¹⁶ For more information, see Daniel’s *João Guimarães Rosa: travessia literária* and the following articles: Eduardo Coutinho’s “*Guimarães Rosa e o processo da revitalização da linguagem*,” Euryalo Cannabrava’s “*Guimarães Rosa e a linguagem literária*,” Rui Mourão’s *Processo da linguagem, processo do homem*,” and Heroldo de Campo’s “*A linguagem do lauraetê*” all in Coutinho 202, 264, 283, 574.

¹⁷ In his study of *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, Bolle asserts that Guimarães Rosa, like Gilberto Freyre, reiterates and reifies the issue of *mestiçagem* through the description of Riobaldo’s identity, an illegitimate son of a rich, white master and a native, poor woman (274-277).

carefully read Guimarães Rosa's language and representation of race, his orality questions *mestiçagem* as the racial metonymy through which to read the Brazilian society. By restaging the Afro-Brazilian to return to the colonial theater—in such works as “*O burrinho pedrês*,” “*Campo geral*,” “*Pirlimpisquice*,” and *Grande Sertão: Veredas*—Rosa offers the black child as an exception and an ontological question to that hegemonizing hybrid racial formula. To do this with a “touch of verisimilitude” (Morison 15), his orality devises such linguistic tactics as polarizing othering, repetition of colonial language, and violation of the personhood of the black individual being described. This example, from “*Dão-Lalalão (O Devente)*,” in *Noites do Sertão* demonstrates the abovementioned tactics of an othering repetition of colonial orality and violent objectification of the black body: “*O preto Iládio, belzebú, seu enxofre, poderoso amontado na besta preta. Ah, negro, vai tapar os caldeirões do inferno! Tu, preto, atrás de pobre de mulher, cheiro de macaco...*” (114). In just the two sentences that depict Iládio above, the black color is repeated four times, very typical of the Rosean orality's emphasis of racial difference, functioning to whiten the mestiço subject by darkening the Afro-Brazilian. As Rosa's language is often characterized by ambiguities, Iládio's animalized and diabolic description stands out as an unambiguously negative—quite literally damning—example of a linguistic strategy that unmasks true racial antagonism in the Brazilian patriarchal society. Reinforcing ontological hierarchies between *mestiço*-white Self versus the Afro-Brazilian Other, in which blackness “is considered the negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first” (Derrida, *Dissemination*) the black Rosean character is darkened, made ugly and grotesque, projecting intimate social fears of the diabolized black, while inevitably elevating the image of the *mestiço*-white. In chapter Two, I explore this paradox of how Rosa's language both questions *mestiçagem* as well as elevates *mestiçagem* at the expense of the black character.

In Chapter Three, I discuss how Mia Couto intertextualizes Guimarães Rosa's orality and thematic use of childhood to project a decisively Mozambican cosmovision. First, I pinpoint, in Couto, linguistic creativities and innovations that intersect with Rosa's orality such as the creation of portmanteaus, neologisms, and translation of popular language. Then, I show that Couto's archival interest in Mozambique's indigenous speech, mythology, and practices has little in common with Rosa's racially polarized language and context of the Brazilian backlands. While the orality of the backlands distorts the image of the Brazilian indigenous or black, Couto's orality functions to represent the logic and aesthetics of native cultures, which I analyze in two Mozambican creation stories from *Estórias abensonhadas* (1994): “*Nas águas do tempo*” and “*Lenda de Namarói*.” Both of these myths reconstruct the origins of the colonized subject, voicing a Coutian cosmovision outside of Judeo-Christian mythology whose archetypes, such as the curse of Canaan¹⁸—often intertextualized in Rosean orality—have inadequately represented and historically justified the subjugation of the colonized and the black.

Chapter Three also distinguishes the Coutian childhood from the Rosean. Just as Couto erases the hierarchical forms of language, he does so in characterization—regardless of race or color—as well. Unlike the Rosean backland's dichotomous relationship between *mestiço*-white and black children whose identification and symbolization are still anchored on patriarchal views, Mia Couto's children are articulated from a postcolonial space marked quite literally by a

¹⁸ “Cursed be Canaan; a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers” (Genesis 9:25).

revolutionary relationship to colonialism. In Chapter Three, I specifically explore the postcolonial characterization of the following both black and *mestiço* children: “*negros, mais de pele mais clara*” (Couto, *Jesusalém* 15), Mwanito and Ntunzi in *Jesusalém* (2009); the indigenous Ronga and Macua narrators of “*Nas águas do tempo*” and “*Lenda de Namarói*” in *Estórias abensonhados* (1994); and the black child protagonists, João and Jardineiro in *Cronicando*’s “*A asenção de João Bate-Certo*” and “*O jardim marinho*,” as well as Azaria and Filomena in *Vozes anoitecidas*’s “*O dia em que explodiu Mabata-bata*” and “*A menina de futuro torcido*.” As Ntunzi reflects on the various shades of skin color represented by his own family, “[*e*]sta humanidadezita, unida como os cinco dedos . . . éramos igualmente negros,” he speaks for the equality of representation that each of Couto’s characters receive regardless of circumstance or status. Couto’s *mestiço* and *mulato* children are not depicted at the expense of the African, nor do black children receive any distinguishable preference or priority in Couto, despite their majoritarian numbers in the Mozambican society. All these subjects inherit the colonial history that contributed to their present-day marginalization, and they all receive equal narrative, aesthetic, and protagonist treatment.

In conclusion, I hope that this dissertation will strengthen the understanding of the distinctions and connections between the cultures of Latin America and Lusophone Africa through the undeniable dialogue between Mozambican contemporary authors and the Brazilian *modernistas* as exemplified here in the comparative study of Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto. As I intend to demonstrate, there was, there is, and there will continue to be a transatlantic cultural transaction between this African nation and that of Latin America, a practice that once was unidirectional and that today— with the wider introduction, circulation, and publication of Mozambican writers in Brazil—is becoming bidirectional. My primary aim throughout this introduction is to offer an alternative reading that shows the limitations of such hermeneutic tools as influence, heritage, and kinship to recognize the full communication between Mozambican authors and Brazilian writers as well as between the cosmovision of their distinct cultural contexts. As implied in the title of this dissertation, *Divergent Metaphors: The Intertextuality between Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto* is an effort to show divergence that are fundamentally ordered by the respective historical legacies that Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto inherit and by the epistemic structures and discursive spaces from which they enunciate in their own times. If we read their works as cultural metaphors about their respective postcolonial nations, both Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto critically challenge and grapple with the legacy of Portuguese colonialism. By persistently doing so, they are both equally caught in the dilemmatic web of cultural imperialism, through the adoption of the Portuguese language as the sole dominant language of power and enunciation and the adaption of the novel as a cultural form for “normative pattern of social authority.”¹⁹ While Guimarães Rosa consolidates the cultural imperialism in the Brazilian geography, history, and society of the *sertão* by introducing it as a noteworthy national space, Mia Couto does the same with the Mozambican savannah that

¹⁹ According to Said “the novel, as a cultural artifact of bourgeois society, and imperialism are unthinkable without each other. Of all the major literary forms, the novel is the most recent, its emergence most datable, its occurrence the most Western, its normative pattern of social authority the most structured; imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that is impossible . . . to read one without in some way dealing with the other. . . The novel is an incorporative, quasi-encyclopedic cultural form. Packed into it are both highly regulated plot mechanism and an entire system of social reference that depends on the existing institutions of bourgeois society, their authority and power” (Hale 692-715).

extends outside of urban areas. However, their regulatory social systems and the discursive conventions promote different cosmovisional perspectives.

If the practice of postcolonial aesthetics is to account for and to combat the remnants of colonialism, expose the negative effects of globalization, and to open socio-cultural space for marginalized peoples whose voices were previously silenced by the dominant ideologies of colonial power and identity (Fanon, Bhabha, Spivak), then Guimarães Rosa's case is as richly complicated as Mia Couto's is complex. From the perspective of orality and, principally, its aesthetization of race through children, Guimarães Rosa's language engages and critiques the discourse on Portuguese colonialism, while reiterating a great deal of Eurocentric values based on the white-black traditional binary structure along with its chain of metonymies that prevail in the Americas. I believe he does so consciously as a linguistic strategy to show the significance of blacks in the making of the social fabric and to unveil the racial unconscious concealed by the hegemonic worldview of *mestiçagem* within the Brazilian society. Nonetheless, the aesthetic outcome of his orality in the representation of children is a reproduction of a colonial attitudes and subjugating language against blacks. Juxtaposed to this, the intertextual orality and its representation of children through race in Mia Couto constitute a decolonized African culture which tends to erase the racial binary opposition structure to account for and combat the residues of Portuguese colonialism and the prevailing effects of globalization, to carve out a socio-cultural space for the marginalized people—including indigenous blacks, *mestiços*, and whites born in the colony—whose history was previously silenced by the dominant ideology of the Portuguese colonial power and identity. In sum, Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto may use many of the same linguistic and thematic conventions, yet they construct divergent metaphors influenced not by one another, but by their own worldviews.

Chapter I

Problems of Influence, Heritage, and Kinship

In a comparative study, the concepts of influence, heritage, and kinship can prove both simplistic and complex. On the one hand, some critics have used an author's overt acknowledgment of contact with a predecessor as the basis for very narrow presumptions, absolutisms, and interpretations about the derivative nature of the latter author's work. Once this relationship between authors has been expressed, or exposed, this scholarship generally becomes preoccupied with uncovering every aesthetic similarity. On the other hand, some scholars have looked at influence, heritage, and kinship with skepticism,²⁰ even when the concepts are simply used in broadly speaking terms. Moreover, one of the most intellectually challenging tasks in studying latter authors—particularly those who not only recognize their readership of previous writers, but also whose narratives are apparently furnished with linguistic and thematic resources of their precursors—is trying to sift through the similarities to find true uniqueness and originality, without merely yielding to perhaps misleading claims of influence, heritage, and kinship. Why are these terms so problematic?

Although they are very instructive in studying a relationship of one author to another, the concepts of heritage, influence, and kinship need solid definitions and specific applications so as not to diminish the work of latter authors. The present scholarship that defines an aesthetic transmission from author "A" to "B" claims influence, heritage, and kinship in such overarching elements as language, theme, and cosmivision. However, presuming that this communication takes a one-way, direct route of transmission seems oversimplified. When carefully scrutinizing the writer described as a literary heir of one single literary forefather, I find substantial evidence of more multiple and polymorphic sources of influence, heritage, and kinship. All of the authors, texts, and traditions with which the author has had contact may be counted and accounted as legitimate sources of some sort of influence, heritage, and kinship. In other words, his sources cannot, in any way, be reduced to one single author, movement, or tradition. Asserting that an author "B" has solely—or even primarily—been influenced by, has inherited from, or has a kinship with an author "A" is so narrow and simplistic that it both permits problematic applications and transmits misleading implications.

Before discussing the problems of heritage and kinship, I would, first, like to trace the historical use of the concept of influence in comparative studies. Although the advent of influence in comparative studies was not until the mid-eighteenth century, the term can be traced as far back as the time of the Scholastic Latin of Aquinas (Bloom 26-27; Clayton and Rothstein 4-5). From Latin *influere*, the term was used in theology, astrology, and medicine (Juvan 2). In medicinal and astrological usage, "to be influenced meant to receive an ethereal fluid flowing in upon one from the stars, a fluid that affected one's character and destiny, and altered all sublunary things. A power—divine and moral—later simply a secret power— exercised itself, in defiance of all that had seemed voluntary in one" (Bloom). From a theological belief, influence "denoted energy that flows from higher, more powerful agencies . . . gods, muses, and saints . . .

²⁰ Hassan, Kristeva, and Bloom name a few of the scholars discussed in this chapter, who are dissatisfied with the limitations of theories of influence, heritage, and kinship.

into the spirituality of mortals and changes their behavior or ways of expressing themselves” (Juvan). Having divine, heavenly, and therapeutic origins, influence, as a hermeneutical tool, enters comparative literature as metonymy charged with transmission of higher powers to express a vertical flow of energy from top (“stars,” “gods,” and “saints”) to bottom (mere mortals or humans).

Due to its origins, the concept of influence came into comparative literature with an inherent hierarchical relationship between higher entities that are considered the originators of inspirational powers, and the lower beings, considered mere receivers of those faculties. As a result, it was used with “interest in [the] originality and genius” (Clayton and Rothstein) of influential authors and their respective transmission to latter authors. Literary comparativists read authors with these original metaphors in mind, pinpointing both negative and positive values of their literary production. While comparativists searched for new signs of latter writers’ true “originality” and “genius,” they still evaluated influences that diminished each later writer’s claim to such ingenuity and brilliance. Thus, “it was only natural for critics, bent on evaluation, to look for influences that lessen an author’s claim to genius and for poets, bent on [their own] immortality to guard against such influences by searching for the new in both style and subject matter” (Clayton and Rothstein; my insertion). The introduction of influence in comparative literary criticism of the mid-eighteenth century was based on a belief that authors were creators comparable to the gods, and—like them—their work had an influential ethical power that could be passed down through an endless generation of writers.

The tendency to read latter authors through influence was also common in nineteenth-century historicism. Literary comparativists focused on the role of “agency” (Clayton and Rothstein) transmission through the history of literature and literary creativity. This perspective was adopted by such prominent scholars as Ferdinand de Brunitière based on the principle that among “all the influences which operate in the history of literature, the influence of works on works is the main one” (quoted in Clayton and Rothstein). Meanwhile, “discovering the parallel between the literature of two nations was put to the service of a crude cultural imperialism; a work, a movement, or an entire national literature was exalted to the degree that it was able to exert a hegemony over the literature of other countries” (Clayton and Rothstein). Reading was focused on how major literatures with longer formal traditions, particularly the British and French, influenced the agency, morality, and universalism, especially of those literatures produced in colonies. As a result, influence during this period “is implicated in rationalizing ideology of the conqueror, the colonizer, who envisions his influence as a hegemonic penetration of the conquered, the colonized” (Clayton and Rothstein 152). From this perspective, only the traditions produced in and by the colonial powers influenced the colonized with their cultural imperialism.

The hegemony of influence began to be questioned in the mid-twentieth century. Scholars shared a general concern with the attempt to distinguish “genuine influence” from commonplace images, techniques, or ideas that could be found in almost any writer of a given period (Clayton and Rothstein 22). This involved differentiating resources that could be seen as pure influence from those that were merely common subject matters. In North-American academia, Ihab H. Hassan was one of the first to raise the question on influence in the mid 1950s, pointing out its “naive and causal expressionism” in the study of a relationship of one

author to another, as if the ideas, trends, and values of an author were directly apparent within another's (Hassan 68). Without disregarding traces of the former author in the latter, Hassan expanded the traditional concept of influence to expect more depth, allow more complexity, and emphasize the importance of the latter author's subjectivity—including biographical, sociological, and philosophical background—in interpreting the relationship between authors (Hassan 73). Hassan's criticism generated rippling effects on the theorization of influence within the United States' critical scene. It expanded the concept "to include the notions of context, of allusion, and of tradition" (Clayton and Rothstein 6) in the study of relationships between latter and previous authors. Broadening the concept of influence shifted the focus from transmission of patterns to transformation of historical matter (Clayton and Rothstein), although the concern of these studies was still akin to many aspects of mid-eighteenth-century studies. For instance, they still posited aesthetic transmission, cause-effect phenomenon, and vertical hierarchy between previous authors (creators and geniuses) and latter writers (receivers and apprentices).

A seminal example of the twentieth-century take on influence is Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973). Bloom's central argument is that, in their creative process, talented poets are challenged by an uneasy and unavoidable relationship with their precursors (Bloom 5-16). While acknowledging that every poet is influenced by extraliterary experience, Bloom argues that the poet is inspired to write by reading another's poetry and will tend to produce work that is derivative of this existing poetry, and, therefore, weaker. Because a poet must forge originality as a way of asserting his own artistic prowess, he must figuratively kill his poetic father (Bloom 5), an ambivalent sort of love-hate relationship that inspires a sense of anxiety in living poets. For Bloom, influence is a poet's personal persistent struggle with his precursor "even to the death" (Bloom) like the mythical burden of Oedipus. The provocative nature of Bloom's theory of influence is expressed in statements such as this: "The meaning of a poem can only be another poem" (Bloom 94). Bloom's interpretation of an inherent transmission between poems revolutionarily reallocates the "anxiety of influence," but once again invokes the old intersubjective relationship between latter and previous authors.

This brief history intends to demonstrate how the theory of influence has been employed and discussed by comparative studies. The main problem in these studies of influence lies in the "concept still bear[ing] the mark of [its] origin" (Clayton and Rothstein 5) along with its metaphors of causality, transmission, and intersubjectivity. The connotations and denotations associated with influence can be extended to the concepts of inheritance and kinship too. While *kinship* means "recognized ties of relationship, by descent, marriage, or ritual, that form the basis of social organization" (*Oxford English Dictionary*) *inheritance* signifies a "coming into, or taking, possession of something, as one's birthright; possession, ownership; right of possession" (*Oxford English Dictionary*) of something that previously belonged to someone else. Like influence, heritage and kinship are charged with metaphors of aesthetic legacy, filiation, and affiliation between latter author and precursor. The application of these theoretical tools hastily disseminates misleading impressions of some sort of agency, ideology, and worldview causality or transmission from one author to another, as exemplified in the following section.

Implications of Relating Mia Couto to Guimarães Rosa through the Lenses of Influence, Heritage, and Kinship

In a 2007 interview with Faculdade Cásper Líbero, a Brazilian School of Journalism, Mia Couto expressed his fascination with Guimarães Rosa as well as the influence the Brazilian author has had on him in the following words:

O Guimarães foi uma iluminação para mim, uma descoberta importantíssima. Eu tinha feito já um livro, “Vozes anotecidas,” em que eu me deparava com essa coisa do como é que eu vou escrever usando esta língua portuguesa herdada dos portugueses com uma estrutura, uma lógica, uma racionalidade e como esta língua pode contar as histórias que eu quero, como pode dar luz a esses personagens que vivem numa outra cultura.

Luandino foi a primeira influência grande. Ele faz isso com o linguajar de Angola, particularmente dos subúrbios de Luanda. Depois, numa entrevista que Luandino deu, eu tomei conta de que existia um tal João Guimarães Rosa deste lado. Mas não tinha nenhuma maneira de chegar até ele, porque nós tínhamos a guerra e não havia coisas do Brasil circulando. Pedi a um amigo que me trouxesse um livro, trouxe “Primeiras Estórias.” De facto, foi um momento mágico. A escrita do Guimarães Rosa está cheia não só desse trabalho de reconstrução de uma língua mais plástica, mas também há ali um convite para que a oralidade invada a escrita, numa espécie de transbordação daquilo que é a lógica da escrita, que se deixa ir por uma outra lógica. Acho que é mais do que um trabalho lingüístico-poético. É uma coisa que tem a ver com a fronteira entre a oralidade e a escrita, isso é que foi importante para mim. (Salem et al)

More than just summarizing Mia Couto’s elaborate and personal acknowledgment of a relationship with Guimarães Rosa, the above statement has commonly been accepted quite literarily by the current scholarship as crucial evidence in support of the factual influence of the Brazilian author on the Mozambican. Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura have, in fact, concluded, “*Essas declarações explicitam a influência exercida na escrita de Couto pelo contato com a obra rosiana, servindo de fundamento a uma possível investigação dessa natureza,*” (Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura 227) because the “*conceito de influência . . . aproxima-se bastante do tipo de relação existente entre Rosa e Couto*” (Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura 226). In addition, “*A marca da oralidade nos textos, bem como a presença de neologismos, comuns nos dois autores, foram estratégias de construção lingüística que se tornam mais frequentes em Mia Couto nos textos publicados após o contato com a obra rosiana*” (Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura 228). Earlier on, in her important pioneering article, “Mia Couto: Guimarães Rosa’s Newest Literary Heir in Africa,” Daniel made more than just observations, but also a statistical study of the following “Rosean” linguistic techniques occurring in the Coutian narrative:

Word blending (especially portmanteau words): 30% of total
Words generated by other categories of the same base morpheme (post-adjectival nouns, post-nominal verbs, post-adjectival verbs, post-nominal adjectives, and post-verbal nouns): 14%

Modification of proverbs or set phrases: 14%
Folk etymology: 14%
Inter-paradigm influence: 14%
Altered affixation: 10%
Simple internal phonological change: 3%
Echoic devices (e.g., “palavra puxa palavra”): 1% (Daniel 12-13)

Daniel concludes that these linguistic techniques show the Mozambican author’s heritage of and kinship with the cosmopolitan of the Brazilian author. The notion of Guimarães Rosa’s influence in Mia Couto and the Mozambican writer’s inheritance and kinship with the Brazilian author are also shared by Nenevé and Siepamann, who state, “*Entre os escritores brasileiros que deixaram influência em sua alma e em seu jeito de escrever, está o mineiro João Guimarães Rosa,*” especially “*a tradição oral . . . tanto o brasileiro como o moçambicano de certa forma escrevem uma literatura descolonizadora ao voltar para o seu passado, ao resgatar ditos populares, provérbios do povo da terra, mitos escondidos nos distantes confins*” (Nenevé and Siepamann). As pioneering works of criticism that touch on important points of contact or dialogue between Mia Couto and Guimarães Rosa, these studies are very instructive to the beginnings of comparative studies between these two authors. Still, even here, I find the application, definition, and contextualization of the concepts of heritage, influence, and kinship to be as problematic and misleading as in other comparative studies. What are the conscious and unconscious implications and undertones in reading the Mozambican author’s communication with the Brazilian writer through the means of influence, heritage, and kinship?

While these concepts may generally be used to point out the communication among authors or traditions, influence, heritage, and kinship are narrowly applied to pinpoint fixed points of meaning. As Clayton and Rothstein affirm, although “influence should refer to relations built on dyads of transmission from one unity (author, work, tradition) to another[,] . . . influence studies often stray into portraits of intellectual background, context, and . . . agency” (Clayton and Rothstein 3-4). Such is true in the scholarship in question on influence, heritage, and kinship. Rather than loosely seeing in Mia Couto’s narrative linguistic reminiscences, ample and simple reiterations of those linguistic resources attributed to Guimarães Rosa, the current studies tend to drift into hasty conclusions about the cause-effect transmission of the Brazilian author’s agency and ideology to the Mozambican writer. Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura, for example, interpret that within the process of communication from the former to the latter there is a “*modificação da forma mentis e da visão artística e ideológica do receptor*” because “*a influência é uma aquisição fundamental que modifica a própria personalidade do escritor*” (Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura 227). In other words, their study of Guimarães Rosa’s linguistic influence on Mia Couto strays from the clear, concrete, and indisputable linguistic traces into the murkier waters of “*forma mentis,*” (i.e., philosophical and psychological bodies of knowledge). This overreaching argument suggests that the receipt or inheritance of Guimarães Rosa’s linguistic creativities and innovations fundamentally changes Mia Couto’s mentality, “artistic vision,” ideology, and personality, especially as a fellow writer of a decolonizing literature.

In addition, Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura argue that the Brazilian author influenced the Mozambican writer in the “*busca de uma linguagem que dê conta de expressar a*

mestiçagem cultural moçambicana . . . A necessidade de subverter a língua . . . transformar a língua do colonizador em instrumento cultural de resistência, de manutenção da identidade nacional (cited in Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura 229). As one of the major linguistic revolutionaries of the traditions in Portuguese language, Guimarães Rosa is, unquestionably, what Mia Couto, himself, acknowledges as “*uma iluminação para mim, uma descoberta importantíssima.*” Indeed, Mia Couto, even at the beginning of his career as a published writer, had long been asking a fundamental question: “*como é que eu vou escrever usando esta língua portuguesa herdada dos portugueses com uma estrutura, uma lógica, uma racionalidade e como esta língua pode contar as histórias que eu quero, como pode dar luz a esses personagens que vivem numa outra cultura?*” Writers like José Luandino Vieira and Guimarães Rosa provided solutions to this question. First Vieira—with the “*linguajar de Angola*”—and then Rosa—with his ability to transcend the “*fronteira entre a oralidade e a escritura*”—demonstrated that the formal Portuguese language could be maneuvered, remodeled, and remolded to mimic a specific socio-linguistic location. In particular, Guimarães Rosa’s linguistic creativities and innovations essentially gave Mia Couto the reassurance that, yes, within fiction, it is possible to legitimately manipulate the normative patterns of the Portuguese language to recreate a more flexible language that allows oral traditions to cross the boundaries of literature and encompass new forms of reasoning. However, before jumping to conclusions about Rosean influence on Couto’s decolonizing ideology, it is important to note that, before coming into contact with the Brazilian author, Mia Couto had already written *Vozes Anotecidas* (1987), a short story collection in which some of the shared linguistic creativities and innovations of authors writing in contact zones were at work, especially orality as well as salvaging and inserting folk etymology within the Portuguese language.

Meanwhile, as the following interview with Marilene Felinto attests, Mia Couto, from an agential point of view, was already ideologically resistant to the colonizer even before becoming a writer or reading Guimarães Rosa:

. . . eu era já membro da Frelimo, já era militante da causa da independência e isso para mim era muito mais empolgante.

Eu vivia isso muito mais do que qualquer outra coisa. Portanto, quando chegou o momento da pré-independência, 1974, um período de transição, a Frelimo pediu-me para que eu, como se dizia na altura, me infiltrasse. Havia uma campanha de infiltração nos órgãos de informação, que estavam nas mãos dos portugueses. E eu fui destacado para essa tarefa. Gostei muito de fazer isso, porque tinha idéia de que estava fazendo qualquer coisa ética, em nome do país.
(Felinto)

Before commenting on this citation, I would like to provide brief biographical background on Mia Couto’s place in colonial Mozambican society, which unquestionably positions him as a decolonizing agent even before coming into contact with the Brazilian author in the 1980s. Although the Portuguese Colonial Act of 1930 (Newitt 448-453) proclaimed equality under the law, at least, among its white citizens from/in the metropolis and those from/in the colonies, in the practice of everyday citizenship, Mia Couto, as a white man born in the colony, was considered a second class citizen: “*Eu era tido como branco de segunda, porque nasci aqui. Eu não tinha acesso a certas funções no governo colonial. Meus pais eram brancos de primeira, e*

eu era branco de segunda . . . aquilo estava hierarquizado” (Felinto). While first-class citizens were those whites born in Portugal, Mia Couto, born in the colony, occupied the unofficial but practical second-class, the third-class consisted of “*assimilados*,”²¹ and unassimilated indigenous blacks occupied the bottom rank. This colonial social hierarchy made Mia Couto resistant to the system; in fact, he became a journalist and militant who, earlier on, was compelled to see a radical necessity of subverting the colonial cultural apparatus by sneaking into the “*órgãos de comunicação*” and using them for the cause of the Mozambican Revolution. He used both the media and the Portuguese language as instruments of emancipation, transforming them into tools of cultural resistance, formation, and maintenance of a national identity. Mia Couto was already an active member of the generation that fought against Portuguese colonization and for the subsequent independence in Mozambique. His writings remain faithful to the emancipatory cause beyond the ideals of the revolutionary party FRELIMO, whose ideology—since the fall of the Berlin wall—has shifted from socialist to capitalist (Chabal et al 58-72). Couto’s active revolutionary participation—this “*coisa ética, em nome do país*”—was already an act of cultural self-determination from a decolonizing standpoint.

Given these facts, the agency transmission perspectives currently used to study the influence of Guimarães Rosa on Mia Couto may be informative, but they narrow—if not, disregard altogether—the Mozambican author’s body of knowledge or “*forma mentis*,” which existed prior to coming into contact with the Brazilian author. The current scholarship generally ignores or excludes a wide net of other significant forces that are expressed in Couto’s narrative through language. Attributing Mia Couto’s linguistic ideology—especially his tendency to subvert the language of the colonizer as an instrument of resistance and construct narratives that promote national identity—to Guimarães Rosa’s influence also overlooks evidence of the Brazilian author’s linguistic ambiguity towards decolonization. In fact, my reading of Guimarães Rosa’s virtuoso linguistic creativities and innovations, elaborated later in chapter two, finds ambivalence in tone and perspective, at once, decolonizing as well as repeating the discourse of colonization, particularly in regard to the Afro-Brazilian subject.

The presumption of shared heritage between Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto also tends to be stretched into supposed resemblances in socio-historical background—both in the authors’ personal lives and in their literary works. This is what the following statement—quoted partially in the introduction and requoted here in greater length and context—suggests:

suas obras, embora pertençam a diferentes âmbitos culturais, apresentam condições sócio-históricas semelhantes. . . . Não são poucas as similaridades situacionais—fatores relativos à base histórico-social—que aproximam os países de língua oficial portuguesa, especialmente aqueles, como é o caso do Brasil e de Moçambique, que foram objetos da dominação colonial portuguesa. . . . As confluências históricas entre Brasil e Moçambique. . . não se limitam à situação de ex-colônias de Portugal, mas se fundam, sobretudo, na condição de subdesenvolvimento que condiciona a produção cultural. (Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura 233-234)

²¹ From the context of the Portuguese Empire and Colonial Act, “*Assimilados*” were a small group of indigenous blacks supposedly integrated within the white community through formal education and conversion into Catholicism (Mondlane 48).

From this point of view, some of the apparent socio-economic and socio-historical likenesses between Brazil and Mozambique include the common history of Portuguese colonization; the subsequent rise of these former colonies into independent nation-states; and the representation of those economic, social, and historical ingredients more or less common to those literatures produced in contact zones. However, the above quotation oversimplifies the similarities and overlooks the differences in economic, historical, and social specificities of each historical case, which, in my view, are overwhelmingly greater than their presumed resemblances. Núbia Chagas points out something radically different: “*estamos tratando de autores que produziram suas obras em espaços completamente diferentes, com culturas distintas, apesar de terem em comum, uma colonização cujo colonizador foi o mesmo—o português—, [sic] o que não significa que as diretrizes tenham sido iguais nos dois países*” (Nubia Chagas 9). Though bold in its dramatic contrast with Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura’s concept of influence, Núbia Chagas’s claims fail to provide concrete examples of how exactly these former Portuguese colonies differ in socio-historical conditions and socio-economic structures. Brazil and Mozambique are former Portuguese colonies; therefore, according to Da Silva and Ventura’s interpretation, the narratives produced in these cultural locations would be akin in all the above aspects. Like Núbia Chagas, I disagree with Da Silva and Ventura’s interpretation of exaggerated kinship between narratives produced in former Portuguese colonies, and I will provide specific evidence of their socio-cultural differences and literary distinctions.

Although the argumentative support for theories on this relationship between Latin America and the former colonies in Africa is often misleading, it is undeniably true that Mia Couto’s literary production is situated within the context of the Mozambican economic history, consistent with Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura’s description, “*uma precária condição de subdesenvolvimento . . . válida também para os países africanos de língua portuguesa*” (Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura 234). Mozambique, in which and about which Mia Couto writes, is consistently ranked among the lowest GDP-producing countries in the world (Hanlon) with a socio-economic structure that does not yet allow for it to be read from the point of view of development or division of classes based on Western models. The nation-state functions with heavy reliance on foreign finance and its economy is among the poorest in Sub-Saharan Africa (Newitt 551-557). Mia Couto’s narrative is produced by and reproduces this underdeveloped socio-economic structure as reflected in his characters (black, *mestiço*, East Indian, juvenile, elderly, etc.), the majority illiterate, poor, and marginalized by colonialism, civil war, communism, and globalization. Despite enduring extremes in social, historical, and economic conditions, Mia Couto’s characters—through stories—show a resilient, relentless, and obstinate spirit of survival. In fact, this is where their true heroism lies. Mia Couto, as a writer, is certainly conscious of literature and its role in social reconstruction and historical transformation. Indeed, his own precarious state as an author in a largely illiterate society and the resulting dependency of nearly all Mozambican writers on the former metropolis to publish and even consume their work mirrors—or perhaps amplifies—this underdevelopment. All of these cultural and socio-historical predicaments both give shape to and are meaningfully shaped by Mia Couto’s narrative through language. His overall literary project can be seen as functioning as an alternative narrative that recounts the historical and social transformations otherwise disregarded by economic statistics and infrastructural development. Considering himself an elder in what he calls the “*circunstância histórica realmente singular*” of being “*mais velho que o meu país[.]*”

Couto quite consciously and conscientiously participates in a literal “*nascimento de uma literatura nacional*” (Salem et al). In this sense, his is a literature of formation that describes a Mozambican identity that goes beyond customary socio-economic terms, beyond the representation of society as the analogical socio-economic resemblance, and into a relationship with a postcolonial “*nascimento da própria nacionalidade*.”

Couto’s narrative is, therefore, very different from Guimarães Rosa’s narrative with its linguistic ambiguities revealing an ambivalent socio-economic structure marked by the concurrent development and underdevelopment that produce and are reproduced by his work. It is important to anchor Guimarães Rosa’s narrative to the time in which he wrote most of his books: the 1950s was an important economic moment in Brazilian history, epitomized by the construction of Brasília, the federal capital; the dawn of the automobile industry; and the birth of bossa nova (Wisnik 216). These forms of development can be said to have contributed to the decisive formation of a Brazilian society organized into classes that follow a Western paradigm (MacLachlan xxi). While modernization took place through this developmentalist project, “Brazil continued to be a country of great regional disparities and social inequalities” (Dunn 39). These socio-economic inequalities are reflected in Guimarães Rosa’s narrative through his protagonists who are masters and slaves, rich and poor, literate and illiterate. Guimarães Rosa’s work is not only shaped by this stratified socio-economic structure but also mimics it to render meaningful and realistic the concept of modernization in Brazil. To use José Miguel Wisnik’s words, “*a modernização e o atraso, o desenvolvimentismo e a miséria, as bases arcaicas da cultura colonizada e o processo de industrialização . . . não podiam ser compreendidas simplesmente como oposições dualistas, mas como integrantes de uma lógica paradoxal ou complexamente contraditória, que nos distinguia e ao mesmo tempo nos incluía no mundo*” (216-217). Although Brazil “struggle[s] with one of the world’s most unbalanced distributions of wealth . . . [and its] mass-market economy is retarded by poverty[,] . . . Brazil should not be seen as a Third World country. A vital, energetic middle class exists in every way comparable to Europe and the United States. . . . Its economy is the largest and most technologically advanced in Latin America” (MacLachlan). Similarly, the linguistic creativities and innovations in Guimarães Rosa, especially the erudite-popular and modern-archaic paradoxes, and the creation of neologisms is an attempt to reflect the symbolic socio-economic structure in Brazil. These socio-economic conditions that shape and are shaped by Guimarães Rosa’s narrative are enough to establish a major difference with those that produce—and are produced in—Mia Couto’s work just as they are sufficient to establish a divergence between the postcolonies from which they enunciate.

Once again, calling Brazil and Mozambique’s socio-historic conditions “*semelhantes*” is problematic, especially when drawing conclusions on the impact of socio-historic conditions on “*produção cultural*.” In fact, this idea may be implicated with rationalizing the ideology of the colonizer who envisions his influence as a hegemonic dissemination of the colonized. Just to give an important parenthetical psycho-socio-historical note of background, Brazil’s history is paradoxically that of a colonized nation as well as an unofficial colonizer of Africa. The early nineteenth century witnessed this unprecedented imperialist project, when prince regent Dom João VI, soon to be the king of Portugal, fled from Napoleon by moving the capital of the Portuguese Empire and the royal court to Brazil (Capela 80). Socio-historically, Brazil became an ambiguous settlement, markedly different from the other Portuguese colonies by occupying

the paradoxical, if not oxymoronic, status of metropolis-colony. Brazil's postcolonial trajectory was also unique, transforming from empire (1822-1889) to republic, but retaining—from 1808 to 1888—control of the colonial power that Portugal had instituted in relationship to its African colonies (Capela 88) especially in the forms of slavery and the slave trade. “Rather than a sharp break with the past” (MacLachlan 1) Brazil's political independence was inherited by whites along with cultural autonomy envisioned from their dominant ideological standpoint within a slave-holding nation.

All of these socio-historic and psycho-historic predicaments are retrospectively reflected in the Brazilian narrative's intimate episteme. In Brazil, the colonized Indian and his language are epistemically and ontologically incorporated in the national imaginary as a miscegenated mythical figure and idiom. The Afro-Brazilian dialect and words of African origin are used subversively in relationship to the language of the colonizer, but the Afro-Brazilian is depicted as a tragic subject. Aesthetically and discursively, both the Negro and the indigenous are predominantly imagined from a perspective of “cultural diversity.”²² That is, they are basically considered subjects of anthropology, their cultures merely epistemological objects and objects of empirical knowledge. In other words, Brazilian whites and *mestiços* who identify themselves within a Eurocentric value system mediate and meditate on their identity through the indigenous and black as anthropological objects.²³

Digging more deeply into the above socio-historic and socio-cultural juxtapositions between Brazil and Mozambique reveals more contrast than kinship in these authors' respective heritages and cosmovisions. Moreover, to label Mia Couto as “Guimarães Rosa's . . . literary heir” can be considered misleading, inaccurate, and trivializing. These generalizations would make it appear as if Brazilian history—especially the agency and ideologies of cultural self-determination produced by it—were transmitted to the rest of the former Portuguese colonies. In other words, because Brazil was the first of the former Portuguese colonies to undergo the process of decolonization, this line of thinking would interpret Brazil as the leader, or at least the role model, of the others' decolonizing movements. Applying the very same deductions to this comparative study makes the authors' relationship seem as if Guimarães Rosa—the precursor author, writing from this Latin-American underdeveloped and former Portuguese colony—passed down that moral agency and linguistic decolonizing ideology to Mia Couto—his successor, also from an underdeveloped ex-colony of Portugal—to work on the same literary and cosmovisional project in Mozambique. Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura, for example,

²² Bhabha writes, “Cultural diversity is an epistemological object— culture as an object of empirical knowledge” (49-50). Usually there is one hegemonic culture— in the case of Brazil a white point of view— that conceals the various cultural differences (*pluribus unum*).

²³ Roberto González Echevarría has noted an intimate relationship between the Latin-American aesthetics and anthropology. As Echevarría states, “Anthropology is the mediating element in the modern Latin American novel because of the place this discipline occupies in Western thought, and also because of the place Latin America occupies within that discipline. Anthropology is a way through which Western culture indirectly affixes its own cultural identity. This identity, which the anthropologist struggles to shed, is one that masters non-historical cultures through knowledge, by making them the object of its study. Anthropology translates into the language of the West the cultures of the Others, and in the process establishes its own form of self-knowledge through a kind of annihilation of the self” (358-380).

consider that Mia Couto's "*maior contribuição talvez esteja mesmo em corroborar— com a autoridade do grande escritor— a busca de uma linguagem que dê conta de expressar a mestiçagem cultural moçambicana*" (Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura 229). Another example is Nenevé and Siepamann's comparison of the authors' sense of *saudade* for what has passed or lamentation for what could have been, which are common sentiments expressed in the Portuguese language. By starting from a standpoint of a shared Portuguese language and history of colonization, these scholars begin to wander away from a specific focus on the intersection of Mia Couto's linguistic strategies and fall into overgeneralizations about Mia Couto as a mere "corroborator" of the "*autoridade do grande escritor*" (Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura 236). These oversimplified readings fail to leave a space of linguistic authority for the Mozambican author. Although Mia Couto's linguistic resources and thematic contents do intersect with those attributed to Guimarães Rosa, he does not corroborate his precursor's value system. On the contrary, my intention is to point out a surface of meaning where Mia Couto becomes not an authority under Guimarães Rosa's umbrella but rather an author and authority of his own right.

First of all, Brazil's continuation of slavery, after gaining its own cultural autonomy and political independence from Portugal, further socio-historically separates this former Portuguese colony in Latin America from ex-Portuguese colonies in Africa, such as Mozambique. At the core of its social formation, Brazil is a society built on foundations of slavery much like the United States, except Brazil hung on to slavery more than two decades longer than the United States—longer, in fact, than any other Western civilization. MacLachlan observes, "Brazil and the United States endure the self-inflicted stain of slavery and its lingering consequences. Shared experiences, from the relatively static condition of bondage to the fluid one of race in a free society, challenge both countries" (xx). This is very important in reading Guimarães Rosa's narrative, especially with regard to class and race/ethnicity. As Morrison describes it, "Living in a nation of people who *decided* that their world view would combine agendas for individual freedom *and* mechanisms for devastating racial oppression presents a singular landscape for a writer" (xiii; author's emphasis). Guimarães Rosa weaves into his original linguistic innovations these colonial remnants of hierarchies based on race/ethnicity together with ambiguities and ambivalences in tone, tongue, and metonymy. In the following chapter, I demonstrate these racial ambiguities and ethnic ambivalences with my own reading of black children in *Grande Sertão: Veredas* and "*O burrinho pedrês.*" As heir to Brazil's "long evolutionary journey with roots at least as far back as the sixteenth century" (MacLachlan 1). Guimarães Rosa recreates and innovates the Portuguese language to grapple with this legacy of colonialism, slavery, and their rippling effects in the Brazilian society represented in his work.

When comparatively reading Mia Couto with Guimarães Rosa, the Brazilian author's use of language has to be understood from this historical evolutionary point of view. While the Mozambican writes within a nation that has made a clear—even revolutionary—break from its recent historical past, allowing its indigenous population to reclaim its own history within the dominant culture, the Brazilian works within a more ambiguous and ambivalent national history and social formation. With colonial influence traced back to the sixteenth century, Brazil's socio-historical timeline and Guimarães Rosa's narrative still reflect the marginalization of indigenous and African populations. All this is aestheticized in Guimarães Rosa's overall narrative through orality, especially the fragmentation and incomprehensibility of his interpretation of the Tupi

language in such works as “*Meu tio o Iauaretê*” (Guimarães Rosa. 2001: 191-235) a novella in *Estas estórias* (1969), and black speech confined to conditions of slavery and restrictions on fully speaking in such stories as “*Dão-Lalalão (O Devente)*,” a novella in *Noites do Sertão* (1965). Again, this is reminiscent of what Morrison describes as “the sometimes allegorical, sometimes metaphorical, but always *choked representation* of an Africanist [and, in this case, also indigenous] presence” (Morrison 17; my emphasis and insertion).

In contrast, Mia Couto’s representation of the African and indigenous is never “choked.” In fact, the autochthonous languages salvaged and incorporated in Mia Couto’s narrative are still vibrant and verisimilar to those various native languages spoken today by millions of Mozambicans of mainly indigenous black, *mestiço*, East Indian, and/or Portuguese descent. This, realistically and symbolically, fulfills that attempt to assert the Mozambican people’s cultural tradition and their repressed history. However, like the overall histories of the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, this cultural assertion is both formed and informed by a hybridity, a cultural sign that eradicates the colonial hierarchies, does not desire a romantic past, nor does it privilege a homogenizing present. This is inherent to the temporal caesura that I briefly define in the introduction. Although international traces can be found in Mozambique’s official history as far back as the Arab presence in the eighth century (Bonate) within its historical timeline there is a sharp break with the colonizer’s enduring narrative.

Though this temporal caesura intrinsically carries irreducible remnants of Portuguese colonialism, it manages to retrieve an enunciative space for the indigenous black majority and other minority subjects whose histories and traditions were utterly repressed for almost five centuries. Mia Couto’s archeology and genealogy of native African mythology, demonstrated in such works as “*Nas águas do tempo*” and “*Lenda de Namarói*,” articulate a traditional break with colonial thought, language, and tradition. We can read in his narrative lines a “cultural difference”²⁴ — or even “antagonism” in relationship to the colonial narrative — that “is the process of the enunciation of culture as knowledgeable, authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification” (Bhabha 50). Such historical discontinuity also opens a space for those subjects hierarchically considered second and third rate-citizens or non-citizens — including assimilated and non-assimilated blacks, *mestiços*, and whites born in the colony, like Mia Couto himself — in relationship to the Portuguese citizens born in the metropolis. Socio-historically, Mia Couto’s narrative represents a once colonized and enslaved culture and society. The Mozambique imagined in Mia Couto endures the psychopathological effects inflicted by Portuguese colonization and enslavement as the nation struggles to come to terms with its not-so-distant colonial past — on its own terms — through resistance, transgression, and translation. The urgency of this literary project — “*estamos criando aquilo que são os mitos fundadores da nação*” (Salem et al) — echoes throughout Mia Couto’s narrative. Even with linguistic creativity and innovation that inevitably carry remnants of colonialism, Couto’s point of view nevertheless splits radically with the past by, as discussed in chapter four, erasing the colonial binary oppositions both in temporal and qualitative senses.

²⁴ Bhabha’s point in differentiating “cultural difference” and “cultural diversity” is to stress the necessity to rethink the traditional notions of cultural identity, which have informed the process of decolonization, the antagonistic view of “culture-as-political-struggle” and the concomitant growth of nationalism, “constant national principles” of the postcolonial world (52).

After dispelling misleading comparisons between socio-historical conditions and cosmovisional projects, it is important to return to critiquing the concepts of influence, heritage, and kinship for their questionable hierarchical relationship between latter authors and their precursors. As Clayton and Rothstein point out, “behind an idea of influence lie dubious normative judgments about originality” (Clayton and Rothstein 12). The current scholarship in question assigns the highest value to the undeniable linguistic originality of Guimarães Rosa—“*grande escritor*” (Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura 236), “the Brazilian literary giant” (Daniel 1). This acclamation, in itself, is merited, and I do not wish to diminish this praise with my own investigation. Instead, I mean to draw attention to the fact that calling Mia Couto the “faithful literary heir to the Master of Minas Gerais” (Daniel) does more than just assign a lower value to Mia Couto’s narrative or imply a lack of originality in his work, it—more problematically—trivializes Mia Couto’s literary project and, potentially, the trajectory of Mozambican postcolonial aesthetics, especially when supporting such scholarship with inaccurate assumptions about the socio-economic, socio-historic, and psycho-historic predicaments reproduced by these authors’ texts. Again, as Clayton and Rothstein recognize, the theorization on “influence has smacked of elitism, the old boy networks of Major authors and their sleek entourages” (Clayton and Rothstein 3). When comparative criticism uses phrases such as “faithful literary heir to the Master of Minas Gerais” or outright classifies “Mia Couto’s neologistic creations and innovative linguistic usage . . . [as] somewhat *less erudite than Guimarães Rosa’s*” (Daniel 16; my emphasis) this carries in its conscious and unconscious intentions that traditional passive relationship between the Master and the Apprentice or the Major and the Minor author. While it is valid to cite the many commonalities between the language and themes of Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto, it is also imperative to differentiate what sets them apart in their own right. Some examples of these differences include the lack of “*uma espécie de saudade do que aconteceu*” in the Mozambican author, the different types of “*literatura descolonizadora*” expressed through their shared use of language, and sentiments that are not held in common between the Brazilian and Mozambican cultures respectively represented in Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto’s work. It is within these significant differences that Mia Couto’s own linguistic creativity and innovation take off in their own direction, metaphor, and cosmovision.

Although the study of a relationship of an author to an author through influence, heritage, and kinship may be effective in a broader sense, their application in relating Mia Couto to Guimarães Rosa is inadequate because of their ontological and epistemological simplicity. The concept of influence in particular “has not possessed the vocabulary necessary to describe the interaction of polymorphous ‘sources’ that overdetermine the characteristics manifested by a given literary work” (Clayton and Rothstein 205). This can be extended to the notions of heritage, affinity, or kinship, which—as shown through substantial evidence above—have thus far permitted blanket overgeneralizations about shared history and cosmovision and allowed for a certain lack of finesse in the comparative studies on these authors. This kind of study of influence—which suggests that in the communication process from Guimarães Rosa to Mia Couto there is some sort of worldview transmission—endows the work of the precursor with, as Tilottama Rajan puts it, “the status of transcendental signified that precedes its perpetuation through filial texts” (Clayton and Rothstein 61-74) authors, or traditions. In other words, the cosmovision and socio-historical predicaments articulated through Guimarães Rosa’s signs, linguistic techniques, and themes transcend those redeployed in Mia Couto’s narrative since—

through influence, heritage, and kinship—they already imply all determinations of meaning. While the communication of Guimarães Rosa with Mia Couto is indisputable, the above readings specifically claim a ruling discursive hierarchy of the Brazilian author. In general, they also establish a hegemonic hierarchical model between Brazilian Modernism and the postcolonial Mozambican tradition, particularly in regard to the articulation of such social issues as “*Negritude*,” “*descolonização cultural e independência nacional*,” “*incorporação das questões sociais e humanas dos negros*,” “*estética do Negrismo*,” “*afirmação da consciência nacional negro-africana*” (Matos 136-137). How, then, can we effectively relate one author to another, particularly Mia Couto and Guimarães Rosa, without yielding to deceptive and depreciative assertions of influence, heritage, and kinship?

The Proposition of Intertextuality

Intertextuality is not an ultimate answer to the complicated question above; it is rather an effort towards finding a better concept to relate an author whose linguistic and thematic resources are attributed to another. Influence, heritage, and kinship do not possess the lexicon to fairly describe the interaction of multifarious origins that come into weaving a given literary work or tradition and the polyphonic aspects that constitute an author’s background. The concept that I propose, like its antecedent theoretical concepts, still has its own limitations, including its lack of a solid definition and a unanimous methodological application as a concept. Graham Allen observes the following problem with intertextuality:

The term is defined so variously that it is, currently, akin to such terms as ‘the Imagination’, ‘history’, or ‘Postmodernism’: terms which are . . . underdetermined in meaning and overdetermined in figuration. Intertextuality . . . is not a transparent term and so, despite its confident utilization by many theorists and critics, cannot be evoked in an uncomplicated manner. Such a term is in danger of meaning nothing more than whatever each particular critic wishes it to mean. (Allen 2)

The expansiveness, flexibility, and complexity, which make intertextuality so difficult to define, also facilitate its assertion of subjectivity in comparing an author to an author, a text to a text, or a tradition to a tradition. Criticism that reads some kind of communication between writers, texts, or traditions through the lens of intertextuality tends to meticulously detach or desacralize such subjective matters as agency or cosmovision from the very intertextual process. While focusing on a common, coherent, intertextual space between authors, texts, and traditions, these readings also acknowledge that the sources that converge in the author’s body of knowledge, in the weaving of a text, or in articulating a tradition are considerably diverse. Such subjective elements as belief, economy, moral, space, time, tradition, a literary movement, an individual author, and a particular work are legitimate objects of intertextuality.

I adopt this concept due to its more nuanced and multifaceted approach to relating author to author, text to text, tradition to tradition. Clayton and Rothstein observe that intertextuality may be seen as an enlargement of a familiar idea or as an entirely new concept to replace the outmoded notion of “influence” (3). As a broader notion in terms of scope, intertextuality becomes much less of a structuralist investigation of influence, heritage, or kinship but rather a

poststructuralist study of impersonal, conscious, and unconscious authorial intentions in the field of textual weaving. While it recognizes the structural communication in codes between earlier and later authors as intrinsic, inevitable, and indispensable; intertextuality also opens a space for latter authors to break away, create discontinuity, and assert autonomy in their own texts or traditions, bound to their own particular subjectivity, context, and discursive practice.

Seen from a brief historic-theoretical background, intertextuality has its origins in the twentieth century. Although many credit Julia Kristeva as having formulated and developed the concept, Allen sees intertextuality as having been born to modern linguistics, especially in Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (Allen 8). In his study about the linguistic sign, particularly how language works, Saussure hypothesized that "a sign can be imagined as a two-sided coin combining a *signified* (concept) and a *signifier* (sound-image). This notion of the linguistic sign emphasizes that its meaning is non-referential: a sign is not a word's reference to some object in the world but the combination, conveniently sanctioned, between a signifier and a signified" (Allen; author's emphasis). Words in various languages are not only different; they also vary in their process of naming objects. When words refer to things, it is not because certain objects are inherently identifiable as such, but because signs are associated with concepts of particular things. In other words, "[s]igns are arbitrary, possessing meaning not because of a referential function, but because of their function within a linguistic system as it exists in any moment of time" (Allen 8-9). Languages are systems of random and differential signs which do not possess their specific form because of what the natural world means, but because they have become conventions within a specific moment of time. Saussure's observation on the arbitrary nature of linguistic signs has tremendous implications on the traditional view about the meaning of using language (Allen). While the customary conception assumed that the speaker originated the meaning embedded in words, Saussure's findings replaced that view with the notion that any speech act stems from a conventional and pre-existing system of signs (Allen), which gives birth to the concept of intertextuality.

Other scholars credited with the origins of the concept of intertextuality include Bakhtin and Valentin Voloshinov, who take an approach of language and linguistic communication far beyond Saussure. While Saussure's concept of the sign "stems from a vision of language as a generalized and abstract system, for Bakhtin it stems from the word's existence within specific social sites, specific social registers and specific moments of utterance and reception" (Allen 11). In contrast with Saussure, Bakhtin and Voloshinov find no specific moment of time in which signs become conventions. This is based on the following fundamental premise:

language is in a 'ceaseless flow of becoming'. Language, seen in its social dimension, is constantly reflecting and transforming class, institutional, national and group interests. No word or utterance, from this perspective, is ever neutral. Though the meaning of utterances may be unique, they still derive from already established patterns of meaning recognizable by the addressee and adapted by the addresser. (Allen 18)

In the speech act, the receiver may identify and redeploy patterns of meaning originated by the sender, but language, fundamentally, articulates and vehiculates constantly changing social values bound to "institutional, national and group interests." The communication act is not bound

to a particular point of view and social consciousness. Further, “the unique discursive event [inter]connects class relations between addresser and addressee, but also to the more immediate and brief phenomena of social life and, finally, with the news of the day, hour, and minute” (Allen). Because of its interconnection with time, “class relations,” and other social aspects of life, the meaning in a speech act yields various significations. As Allen puts it, “The most crucial aspect of language, from this perspective, is that all language responds to previous utterances and to pre-existent patterns of meaning and evaluation, but also promotes and seeks to promote further responses” (Allen 19). A discursive event is an identification, a reaction, and a redeployment of previous utterances and patterns of meaning which themselves take different significations. Otherwise, any formal verbal construct would not be possible.

This fundamental nature of language brings us to the concept of intertextuality as formulated and developed by Kristeva during the 1960s, from her interaction with Bakhtin’s social ideas on “dialogism”²⁵ and Saussure’s theory of semiology. Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality comes from her notion that a text is a dynamic site or “mosaic of quotations” (The Kristeva Reader 37) where multiple relational processes take place rather than fixed points of meaning (36). Otherwise, one could not understand an utterance or even a written work if they were singular in meaning and unconnected to previous works. Kristeva’s viewpoint recalls Roland Barthes’ description of a text as “a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds” (S/Z 5) or a text as “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (Leitch 1468). Both Barthes and Kristeva call our attention to the fact that any “literary structure does not simply *exist* but is generated in relation to *another* structure. . . the ‘literary word’ . . . [is] an *intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings” (The Kristeva Reader 35-36; author’s emphasis). Within the literary enterprise, there is an intrinsic and necessary communication of literary codes. When we relate codes of a latter text to those of a previous one we ought to think of this relationship as an “intersection,” “in relation to,” and “quotations” of codes or signifiers and not as a transmission of meaning, agency, or ideology. Writing already has a conventional verbal relationship with previous texts and a later text intrinsically and necessarily “cites,” “intersects” or “relates to” traces of previous texts. Given this conventionality and subjection to rules of textual generation, “rather than confining our attention to the structure of a text we should study its ‘structuration’ (how the structure came into being)” (Chandler). While we can pinpoint in a latter text “textual intersections,” “relations,” and “quotations” of codes of a previous text, the meaning of a latter text does not lie on previous sources, resources, or conventions, but rather on a larger nexus of texts, institutions, and discursive practices to which it is interconnected.

This constitutive element of language is seminal in relating an author to an author, a text to a text, or a tradition to a tradition because it takes comparative studies beyond the structuralist theories of influence, heritage, and kinship. As Allen points out, “[t]his transition is often characterized as one in which assertions of objectivity, scientific rigor, methodological stability and other highly rationalistic-sounding terms are replaced by an emphasis on uncertainty,

²⁵ For Bakhtin, “dialogism” is a constitutive element of language, communication, and cognition that acknowledges that discourse is interdependent between the speakers, texts, traditions, etc. Language, communication, and cognition always involve interaction with and response to others’ words, ideas, contexts, etc., rather than passive communicative relations. Discourse is intrinsically heteroglossiac, polyphonic, and double-voiced (Leitch 1190-1220).

indeterminacy, incommunicability, subjectivity, desire, pleasure and play” (Allen). If the previous concepts assert an existence of stable meaning and objective interpretation of linguistic codes, the concept of intertextuality warns us right away that there is a greater level of instability, “uncertainty,” and “indeterminacy” in those literary conventions conveyed by previous authors, texts, tradition to later writers, archives, or traditions. Intertextuality informs us of the possibility of “incommunicability” in their very same perception of communication between a latter and a previous author, archive, or tradition. In addition, it reveals that those very same intertextual literary codes are inherently bound to other “subjectivity, desire, pleasure and play.” Therefore, I propose intertextuality in relating one author to another, because the notion is more effective in its application and has fewer limitations than its previous theoretical counterparts. Intertextuality possesses and provides critical procedures for interpreting the interaction of polymorphous sources that converge in the weaving of a literary work or tradition, while acknowledging the subjectivity of both earlier and later authors’ work. In my view, a comparativist study should recognize necessary interaction and inevitable communication between latter and previous authors, texts, or traditions, but this communication ought to be read as potentially active, responsive, and transformative. When codes already employed by previous writers, archives, or traditions are intersected by latter authors or in latter texts or traditions, their original meaning—albeit seemingly identifiable—reflects, represents, and becomes transformed by a different set of “institutional, national, and group interests.” The original meaning, then, foregrounds and is foregrounded by a different subjectivity structure. The intertextual process fundamentally desacralizes the so-called “original” ideological and metaphorical signification that previous codes carry; at the same time, it activates the very same conventions with a different discursive system.

The Intertextuality between Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto

Every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written . . . can be cited, put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion. This does not suppose that the mark is valid outside its context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center of absolute anchoring. This citationality, duplication, or duplicity, this iterability of the mark is not an accident or an anomaly, but is that . . . without which a mark could no longer even have a so-called “normal” functioning.

Derrida

How can we still speak of artistic innovation in today’s globalized world, where authors even overtly confess to having found their inspiration from preceding “literary giants?” How can we speak of narrative uniqueness and originality in a time when texts, no matter how creative, seem to be simple patchworks of old archives?²⁶ How can we talk about cultural independence and representativity in a postcolonial time in which the former official and unofficial metropolises still have a significant cultural presence in their former colonies? My proposal of intertextuality is an attempt to recognize individual originality, innovation, and independence in literary production while acknowledging cultural, authorial, and textual interconnection. As

²⁶ According to Allen, “[i]n the Postmodern epoch, theorists often claim, it is not possible any longer to speak of originality or the uniqueness of the artistic object, be it a painting or a novel, since every artistic object is so clearly assembled from bits and pieces of already existent art” (5).

Allen observes, intertextuality is “a useful term because it foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence in modern cultural life” (Allen) while centering on how language reflects and transforms “class, institutional, national and group interests”—or subjectivity. This subjectivation, reperspectivation, and reinstitutionalization of aesthetic and discursive codes determine the present notions of artistic innovation, textual originality, and traditional uniqueness. Cultural, archival, or writerly creativity does not necessarily involve random and decontextualized aesthetic codes, but rather in their placement within a particular socio-historical site, moments of utterance, and locus of enunciation.

In contemporary criticism, the concept of intertextuality is not a supplementary method of reading a certain author, text, or tradition, but rather a comprehensive reading of its own. This is a significant, in a sense, imperative theoretical tool for reading modern cultural production. Mary Orr indicates the usefulness of intertextuality in comparative studies as follows:

By highlighting unvoiced modes of intertextual work in other guises—paraphrase, formulaic expression, variant, recontextualization, translation—various tacit critical agendas behind intertextuality’s representations become visible. Among intertextuality’s most practical functions is (re-) evaluation [sic] by means of comparison, counter-position and contrast. (Quoted in Martin)

Indeed, it is precisely for “comparison, counter-position and contrast” that I propose intertextuality in comparing Mia Couto to Guimarães Rosa in order to reveal underestimated differences that coexist with their obvious linguistic and thematic likenesses. Indeed, in uncovering critical points of divergence, “uncertainty,” “indeterminacy,” “incommunicability,” “counter-position,” and “contrast,” intertextuality also discovers where such artistic qualities as innovation, originality, and *uniqueness* are profoundly located. Intertextuality proves capable of locating independence in modern artistic production. Therefore, applying intertextuality in reading Mia Couto’s aesthetic intersections with Guimarães Rosa broadens and deepens interpretation of their dialogue, showing that their similarities in language and theme are marked by their differences in subjectivity and in the constitution of value systems.

Reading Mia Couto from this perspective demonstrates the effectiveness of intertextuality in simultaneously acknowledging his contact with Guimarães Rosa while impersonalizing this filiation and affiliation. In this case, intertextuality enlarges the scope from one single-source of Brazilian influence to take into account the multifarious traces or “dialogue among several writings” that converge into weaving the Mozambican author’s work and the conscious and unconscious body of knowledge—including socio-historical and cultural background, moral and philosophical ideologies, personal beliefs and perceptions—that constitute his subjectivity. As elaborated in the introduction, Mia Couto’s candid acknowledgment of Guimarães Rosa as an important, illuminative “discovery” has provided fertile ground for studies of influence. And yet, the quotation that I have already frequently cited—“*O Guimarães foi uma iluminação para mim, uma descoberta importantíssima*” (Salem et al)—as well as the full context of the interview in which he spoke these words also lend themselves to intertextual interpretation. First, Couto refers to Rosa as “*uma iluminação . . . uma descoberta,*” literally repeating two times the word *uma*—“an” or “one”—as in, Rosa is *one* among many influences, illuminations, and discoveries within the Coutian subjectivity. Indeed, in the full text of the interview, Couto cites one Angolan,

one Portuguese, and seven Brazilian writers who inspired his “*fascinação*,” “*marcaram muito minha geração*,” or “*foram importantes também*” (Salem et al). If the number of Brazilian writers seems unbalanced, it is important to note that the interview was conducted in São Paulo for an audience of Brazilian students and that these responses were prompted by this question: “*Qual [é] a influência de outros escritores brasileiros . . . ?*” (Salem et al). Even when specifically asked about the “*ressonância de Guimarães*” (Salem et al) in his work, the fact that Couto strays at all from Rosa and his Brazilian counterparts to reference the Angolan Luandino Vieira twice as “*a primeira influência grande*” (Salem et al) as well as to emphasize poetry as having the biggest mark on his prose is interesting and perhaps unexpected in this context.

In addition to establishing a variety of influences from at least three countries as well as the genres of poetry, prose, and music, an intertextual reading of what I will call the “*O Guimarães foi uma iluminação*” interview should also focus on what Couto demarcates here as precisely “*isso . . . [na ‘escrita do Guimarães Rosa’] que foi importante para mim*” (Salem et al)—specifically, “*um convite para que a oralidade invada a escrita, numa espécie de transbordação daquilo que é a lógica da escrita, que se deixa ir por uma outra lógica*” (Salem et al). For Couto, Rosa’s orality offers “*um convite*,” an invitation to re-read and rewrite orality, as he further explains in a 2002 interview with Marilene Felinto: “*eu leio Guimarães Rosa, eu leio 50 vezes a mesma página, porque aquela escrita me atira para fora da escrita, me empurra para fora da página, porque me acendem vozes dos contadores de histórias da minha infância*.” This insight into Mia Couto’s process as a reader also reveals something about his subjectivity and, therefore, the multi-layered influences that his writing intertextualizes. As Barthes affirms, “reading . . . is not an innocent subject, anterior to the text . . . This ‘I’ which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite or, more precisely, lost (whose origin is lost)” (10). Often asked to elaborate on his own influences, Mia Couto discloses more of the “I” (the Self) who first approached Guimarães Rosa’s texts, invariably returning to the aesthetics and logic of orality—but never exclusively Rosa’s or even Luandino Vieira’s: “*Eu não faria isto se não estivesse marcado antes de Guimarães Rosa, antes de Luandino Vieira, se não estivesse marcado por isto que é um processo que não é só lingüístico, não é, nem letrado*” (Felinto). He describes an influence that at once precedes and supersedes all literary influences: “*a maneira como eu escrevo nasce desta condição de que este é um país dominado pela oralidade*” (Felinto). In other words, he considers the orality of his narratives a product of something much deeper than his literary influence, something in the essence of his own cultural and sociolinguistic experience: “*Eu estou trabalhando numa lógica que ultrapassa a questão literária, uma lógica de povos que estão tomando o português como empréstimo, criando em cima desse português coisas que são da sua própria cultura*” (Salem et al). This is one of several of Couto’s statements that point to a “plurality of other [Mozambican oral] texts, of [national, cultural, and local] codes which are . . . lost” in—or at least, missing from—the current scholarship on influence.

From an intertextual point of view, Culler explains, “the act of writing or speaking . . . inevitably postulates an intersubjective body of knowledge” (112) and any verbal structure “is intelligible only in terms of a prior body of discourse—other projects and thoughts which it implicitly or explicitly takes up, prolongs, cites, refutes, transforms” (Culler). Citing his own cultural body of discourse—in which even a local furniture vendor advertises a cupboard, not with the Portuguese word *armário*, but with a very Mozambican portmanteau word, *arrumário*

(Salem et al) —Couto postulates that Mozambicans share an “*universo da oralidade*” (Felinto) in which the struggle to express a local “*sistema de pensamento*” (Felinto)—or native body of knowledge—necessitates not a “scholarly” or “literary” innovation of the Portuguese language but an everyday, popular innovation in orality. Therefore, *outside* literary influence did not necessarily initiate Couto’s decision to put this Mozambican orality into writing: “*eu já queria fazer isto { ‘antes de [ler] Guimarães Rosa, } porque já estava contaminado primeiro por este processo que não é literário, é um processo social das pessoas que vêm de outra cultura, pegam o português, renovam aquilo, tornam a coisa plástica e fazem do português o que querem*” (Felinto). Instead, he regards his contact with the writing of Guimarães Rosa and Luandino Vieira as well as the music of Caetano Veloso, Chico Buarque, and Gilberto Gil as legitimizing his own creative project: “*Eu sabia que eu queria fazer isso, mas eu precisava de uma credencial do mais velho que disse ‘esse caminho é abençoado’*” (Felinto). Again, the influence of these writers and artists was not in *initiating* Mia Couto’s orality but in *valorizing* the decolonized subject’s rightful use and rich reinvention of what had hitherto been considered “*uma língua dita dos povos pequenos, uma língua da periferia*” (Salem et al)—even by Mozambicans who, Couto confesses, “*tínhamos vergonha de falar a língua do colonizador, a língua dos mais pobres*” (Felinto).

Then, how do we reconcile Couto's declaration—and comparativist scholarship’s acceptance—that “*a minha geração e a geração anterior foram muito marcadas pela literatura brasileira*” (Felinto) with his often overlooked assertion that he would have imbued his work with orality and linguistic innovation anyway (i.e., independently of these models) due to the richness in orality of his own cultural heritage? Intertextuality is up to the challenge of answering this question, because it allows for the plurality, the paradoxes, and the perplexities of sources that influence a writer’s body of knowledge. Again, an author’s own text is an absorption of various authors, texts, and traditions. Previous historical, social, collective, and personal experiences—including contact with the abovementioned authors, poets, artists, oral traditions, and written archives—are all legitimate sources of influence in Mia Couto’s writing. Relegating Mia Couto’s narrative to the status of a literary effect of the Brazilian author (Daniel, Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura) misses the larger picture of those other—known and unknown—social, ethical, historical, literary, and linguistic aspects that join in the weaving of his narrative, not to mention the general discursive practice that both orients and is oriented by his narrative. As mentioned above, it suggests a transmission of language, meaning, and cosmivision—all that is significant—from Guimarães Rosa to Mia Couto, when I believe that the Brazilian author—like the other multifarious, traceable and untraceable sources— is one more prominent, even illuminating, record in Couto’s body of knowledge, like a beautiful tile—even a jewel—within the mosaic of Couto’s subjectivity. Broadening Mia Couto’s intertextual body of knowledge destabilizes the assumptions that his shared narrative conventions can be attributed to a single source. Instead, intertextuality visualizes his writings as a wide-ranging network of codes that intersects Guimarães Rosa and other explicit and implicit authors, texts, traditions—including those conscious and unconscious moral, literary, linguistic, and socio-historical factors—that orient and are oriented by a particular discursive convention. This is the reasoning behind my proposal of intertextuality between Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto: I wish to demonstrate the variety and richness of not only the sources in the Mozambican author’s narrative but also in the language, meaning, and cosmivision of Mia Couto’s work itself.

Mia Couto unquestionably reiterates, redeploys, and recreates some of those aesthetic conventions attributed to Guimarães Rosa. His work employs those linguistic and thematic resources—such as orality, the portmanteau, and morphological creativities—that were comprehensively developed by and attributed to the Brazilian author within the traditions in Portuguese language. Couto also intertextualizes such themes and metaphors as children, the elderly, and the marginalized of society, as Daniel has noted. When these thematic and linguistic conventions attributed to Guimarães Rosa are repeated in Mia Couto’s narrative, they are, however, redeployed and reinvented as codes displaced in signification. This may, of course sound paradoxical and nonreferential from the perspective of aesthetic legacies. “It is not that each convention or moment of a code had a determinate origin that the accidents of history have obscured. Rather, it is part of the structure of discursive conventions to be cut off from origins” (Culler 113). When one culture, archive, or writer “takes up, prolongs, cites, refutes, [or] transforms” (112) codes from another author, text, or tradition, there is an intrinsic and necessary process of loss, displacement, or an irreversible metamorphosis of signification governed by a particular discursive regulation. While authors, texts, or traditions intertextualize literary conventions from other writers, archives, or traditions, the act of representation and institutionalization of those codes is different in each case. From the point of view of intertextuality, aesthetic conventions (i.e., codes, signs, themes, metaphors) are in a continuous process of reinvention, and becoming that constantly reflect a particular discursive institution, group, national, or personal interest.

My reading of both the original codes and their intertextuality reveals great ontological and epistemological differences. Whether in the innovations of orality and portmanteau or in the themes on children and the marginalized of society, the conventions intertextualized in the Mozambican writer’s narrative certainly stand for a divergent metaphor and a different cosmivision. To illustrate these differences, let us review statements on race. The first is from Guimarães Rosa’s “*Corpo fechado*” in *Sagarana* (1946): “*Esse era bom. . . Homem justo. O que ele era era preto. . . Mais preto do que os outros pretos, engomado de preto . . . Eu acho que ele era preto até por dentro! Mas foi meu amigo. Valentão valente, mesmo*” (Sagarana 267). Something inventive about this citation is its highly oral register, a stylistic unifier and written word based on oral ways of speech. The poetic nature of the sentence and its repetitive internal rhyme with “*preto*” has almost a musical effect, and the overall sentence is verisimilar to words spoken in the privacy of an intimate conversation between friends who are not black. For the speaker, an absent friend’s blackness is both a noteworthy topic of discussion and a problematic taboo. In general, this statement hints at those complex socio-historical relations and beliefs that, in my reading, constitute Guimarães Rosa’s attempt to unveil the racial unconscious and demystify the social theories that have played a key role in society. The contrasting phrases—“*bom,*” “*justo,*” “*amigo,*” “*valente*” versus “*preto*” repeated four times, each time with greater intensity, “*Mais preto,*” “*engomado de preto,*” “*preto até por dentro!*”—provide evidence of a certain ambivalent hesitation and derisive exaggeration that blackness inspires in Rosa’s speaker. It should be noted that the protagonist speaker is a former “*jagunço,*”²⁷ a marginalized member

²⁷ Jagunço “was the name applied to armed hands or bodyguards, usually hired by farmers and ‘colonels’ in the backlands of the Northeast of Brazil. They were hired to protect their employer’s lands against invaders and feudal enemies, and also to control their slaves and indentured servants. Some farmers formed their own private militias with a number of heavily armed jagunços. There were also free-lancing or mercenary jagunços, who could be hired for temporary conflicts, as vigilantes, or for contract murders. Local folklore says that jagunços with yellow eyes are particularly fearsome and efficient. . . The term was later

of Brazilian society, whose narrative voice is an attempt to refashion the Self as a recognizable identity in society. However, in the self-fashioning process, there is clearly an othering viewpoint in which the narrative voice re-enunciates the Other as a “nigger”—even if his “friend” is a “good,” “just,” and “brave” “man”—to distance and differentiate himself from the black *jagunço*. In other words, the speaker is essentially meaning something to this effect: “I may be a *jagunço*, but at least I’m not a black one,” or “he may be my friend, but he’s a black one.” Since the black subject, or in this case object of conversation, is already a social outcast like the protagonist *jagunço*, the orality here produces a double-marginalization of the Afro-Brazilian—black and *jagunço*—both praised and derided privately by his own friend. In Rosa’s work, the black subject never directly interprets his own situation; he always remains a subject—or caricature—of someone else’s narration, whose identity is enunciated, interpreted, and often exaggerated by a white/*mestiço* intermediary point of view. This is where Guimarães Rosa both strategically and creatively uncovers racial divisions and tensions beneath the surface of the diverse Brazilian social fabric. He reveals, too, a divergent metaphor.

In juxtaposition to Rosa’s brief excerpt of racial commentary, here is a statement on race from Mia Couto’s “*Mezungos*,” a short story in *Cronicando*: “*os senhores me desculpem, por favor. Os senhores são brancos e branco é dono e patrão, mandador da ordem. Eu, aqui onde me estou ver, sou um pobre preto, acostumado da sua raça*” (*Cronicando* 98). Reading Mia Couto’s statement as intertextual with the one discussed above, one finds that his sentence is different in metaphor and cosmivision, although—at first glance—the language and theme have resemblances. Like the *jagunço* statement, this quotation shows a high mimetic orality as a stylistic strategy created from oral patterns through the written word. While the statement carries irreducible remnants of colonial racial reference, the self-identified “*pobre preto*” marginalized subject enunciates himself as a subject of difference on his own authority without an intermediary to interpret his own situation in society. This speaker is “*acostumado da sua raça*”—as if to say, “I may be ‘*um pobre preto*,’ but I am comfortable in my own skin.” Without derision or rudeness, he speaks plainly about racial divisions and inequities. In fact, his paradoxically polite and gentle language—“*Os senhores me desculpem, por favor.*”—that addresses and interprets the Others directly (i.e., not talking about them behind their backs) offers subtle critical commentary on the unjust social order created by “*brancos*,” “*dono[s]*,” “*pat[rões]*,” “*mandador[es] da ordem.*” Here, Couto touches on the postcolonial conditions of social, economic, and racial marginalization—as does Rosa—but Couto’s originality resides in the fact that his first-person speaking voice is both poor and black, radically destabilizing the colonial othering discourse. Indeed, the Coutian poor, black marginalized subject speaks for himself—leaving those margins and taking center stage—to question postcolonial and even globalized socio-economic marginalizing systems as if to say, “I am comfortable in my own skin, or my conscience is clear, because the ‘*pobre preto*’ did not create these marginalizing conditions. Is the ‘*mandador da ordem*’ comfortable in his white skin; is his conscience clear?” This redemption and empowerment of the black marginalized subject to directly address not only the white “*patrão*” but also his social conditions shows precisely where Mia Couto’s linguistic creativity and thematic innovation diverge in metaphor from Guimarães Rosa’s.

extended to name any kind of rural bandit or outlaw, such as the ‘cangaceiros’ (of which Lampião is the most notorious example)” (www.wikipedia.org).

My point in this section and in the overall argument of this dissertation is that when Mia Couto intertextualizes those aesthetic conventions of which Guimarães Rosa is a pioneer, Couto intertextualizes them as displaced literary codes. Then, they become conductors of a different cosmovision—that is, history, morality, belief system, etc. Their very different discursive objectives make it necessary and obligatory for intertextual aesthetic codes to be detached from their origins and recontextualized in a specific space, time, and subjectivity. While the linguistic and thematic interfaces in the Mozambican author’s narrative lead us to consider Guimarães Rosa as one contributor to a linguistic “code which makes possible the various effects of signification” (Culler). Mia Couto’s text “casts a wider net to include” other codes, other influences, other institutions, and other discursive practices. As soon as one limits those repeated aesthetic codes by considering them akin to, inherited from, and influenced by the Brazilian author, their meaning will prove evasive in relationship to their previous signification, so elusive that tracing them back becomes incoherent. This includes their cosmovision, their socio-economic structure, their socio-historic conditions that produce them, and their worldview that they represent and reproduce. If redeployed, artistic conventions signify a divergent metaphor from the original, it is legitimate so say that they are also invented and renovated as new—not derivative—aesthetic conventions of their own merit. An intertextual reading provides comparative studies the space to find these divergences between and innovations in both the predecessor, Guimarães Rosa, and the successor, Mia Couto.

Chapter II
Restaging the Big House:
Orality and the Double Symbolization of Children in Guimarães Rosa

I will continue to want to say that fiction offers us an experience of the discontinuities that remain in place “in real life.” That would be a description of fiction as an event— an indeterminate “sharing” between writer and reader, where the effort of reading is to taste the impossible status of being figured as object in the web of the other. Reading, in this special sense, is sacred.

Spivak

Childhood is a central topos in João Guimarães Rosa’s aesthetics. The child is both a privileged object and a subject of Rosean social, cultural, and political concern. Describing the child’s place within the enormous magnitude of Guimarães Rosa’s body of work, Henriqueta Lisboa points out, “*na realização dessa obra monumental e complexa, a infância assume, quer na qualidade de tema quer como presença ou vivência, importância liminar e até fundamental*” (Coutinho 170). Rosa expresses the childhood motif through a wide range of metaphors; “children appear variously as . . . victims[,] . . . survivors with resilience and strength, and . . . symbols of hope and optimism” (3). They demonstrate “*uma extraordinária sensibilidade poética*” (Coutinho 178), “*uma capacidade muito grande de sonhar, ou de transfigurar a realidade a partir da fantasia, da imaginação*” (Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura 248). There are also those “*dotados de poderes extraordinários . . . dons divinatórios e encantatórios*” (Coutinho 157-161). Indeed, the child in Guimarães Rosa has various mythological and archetypal functions, including good and evil, morality and immorality, the sacred and the profane. With their innocence, imagination, idealism, and even victimization, they find their own creative means of perceiving, remembering, thinking and speaking about the world. While the well documented findings on Rosean children from scholars such as the above-cited Lisboa, Daniel, Nunes, Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura inform my own research, I would like to add yet another function and symbol of a unique childhood experience—that of the black child—which, to my knowledge, has not yet been given in-depth analysis in the existing scholarship. From a racial point of view, children in Guimarães Rosa’s narrative receive inequitable aesthetic treatment by color. Even when they share specific qualities, characteristics, motivations, or actions, *mestiço*-white and black children do not reproduce an equal metaphor in Rosa’s works. In my reading, the Rosean childhood is as segregated as the backland society from which his characters come—not just in their contextual circumstances but in the very details of their characterization. Invariably, the favorable qualities and creative possibilities of hope, resilience, and imagination that the current research attributes to Rosean childhood in general are all more specifically linked to *mestiço*-white children and not found in the Rosean Afro-Brazilian child.

One of the most outstanding and paradigmatic of Rosa’s children is Miguilim in “*Campo geral*,” a novella from *Corpo de baile* (1956). The eight-year old nearsighted boy—who lives with his parents in Mutum, the backlands of Minas Gerais—has often been described as creative, observant, and imaginative (Coutinho 174, Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura 254-255). Lisboa summarizes the extraordinary perceptiveness and charm of this very special Rosean child: “*seu psiquismo, intuições e reações, experiências afetivas, reflexões mentais, problemas morais, deslumbramento diante da natureza, apreensiva sensibilidade, fascinação pelas sete cores,*

desejo de compreender e ser compreendido, pudor no sofrimento, faculdade de contenção, fantasias despautadas, chegamos à conclusão tranquila de se trata de um menino poeta” (Coutinho 174). Aided by the acute awareness and observation expressed in Miguilim’s orality, behavior, and sensitivity, the third-person narrative voice manages to delve profoundly into the lives of his household. His *mestiço* family is divided into those with “*cabelo preto*,” like his mother and himself, those with “*cabelos . . . louros*,” and those who are “*ruivados*” (Rosa, *Corpo de baile* 19) like his father, the owner of the farm on which they live and work. Within the household there are also maids and indentured servants who are black, like Maria Pretinha, the cook, and Mãitina, an ex-slave. Miguilim’s experience is a critique of Brazilian patriarchal social formation, particularly its violence and hierarchical socio-economic structure. The boy witnesses servitude and exploitation of characters such as the often inebriated Mãitina, who is accused of witchcraft and identified as “*preta de um preto estúrdio, encalçado, transmanchada de mais grosso preto, um preto de boi*” (35), as well as Maria Pretinha who “[t]inha os dentes engraçados tão brancos, de repente eles ocupavam assim muito lugar, branqueza que se perpassava” (30). While the highly racialized and emphatically negative depiction of these black women mirrors the portrayal of Rosean black children, I will first focus on the *mestiço*-white children with whom they are juxtaposed. Their epistemic and socioeconomic subjugation also translates into paternal domestic violence within the family, as the father mercilessly beats and physically abuses both Miguilim and his mother. Raised within a violent and hierarchical familial context, his identity becomes fashioned by this microcosm of Brazil’s pervasive social issues, and the sensitive Miguilim grows conscious that—no matter how humble his own circumstances may be—his racial identity and socio-economic status are dichotomously different from Mãitina and Maria Pretinha’s. While his childhood and nearsightedness symbolize his innocence and self-preservation from the greater adversities that surround him, Miguilim’s departure to study in the city under the sponsorship of a doctor—who diagnoses the child’s myopia—is a narrative attempt to metaphorically deliver the boy from patriarchal violence from which the Afro-Brazilian characters have no literal or figurative escape.

Various *mestiço*-white child-protagonists in Rosa’s works—“*infantes de extrema perspicácia e aguda sensibilidade, muitas vezes dotados de poderes extraordinários, quando não possuem origem oculta ou vaga identidade*” (Coutinho 157)—follow the symbolic archetype of Miguilim. From Guimarães Rosa’s *Primeiras estórias*, many heroic children are found in such short stories as “*As margens da alegria*,” “*A menina de lá*,” “*Pirlimpisquice*,” “*Um moço muito branco*,” and “*Os cimos*.” Like Miguilim who travels to the city, “*Os cimos*” and “*As margens da alegria*” are Bildungsroman stories of transformation about young boys who journey from their birthplaces and homelands to alternative spaces that play a role in their education. “*As margens da alegria*” is the story of Menino who travels “*com os Tios, passar dias no lugar onde se construía a grande cidade*” (Rosa, *Primeiras estórias* 49). The idea of travelling and the actual trip—flying by airplane, sitting by the window, and watching the “*móvel mundo*” (49) from above—enchant the child: “[e]ra uma viagem inventada no feliz; para ele, produzia-se em caso de sonho.” Menino’s dream is realized when he arrives at a destination—though a summer house located not too far from his home—in which everything seems to have “*mágica monotonia*” (50). Marveled by the flora and fauna of the natural world, “[o] Menino via, vislumbrava” and learned each plant and animal by name in an “*incessante alegria*” (51). His excitement, one day, comes to an abrupt end, however, when the boy discovers that the turkey he has been following was slaughtered for his uncle’s birthday: “*Tudo perdia a eternidade e a*

certeza . . . as mais belas coisas se roubavam. Como podiam? Por que tão de repente? . . . O Menino recebia em si um miligrama de morte” (52). Menino is further distressed when his Tios take him to the site where the new city is being built and the boy witnesses men laboriously working and nature being destroyed by their machinery: “*Mal podia com o que agora lhe mostravam, na circuntristeza . . . uma planta desbotada, o encantamento morto e sem pássaros . . . no mundo maquinal, no hostil espaço; e que entre o contentamento e a desilusão . . . Abaixava a cabecinha.*” Menino is a symbol of innocence, discovery, happiness, enthusiasm and sudden sadness, disillusionment, and cultural shock, discovering that the nature of living things, especially in a world governed by adults, also involves death and destruction. As such, “*As margens da alegria*” is a formation story in which a boy gains “*uma sabedoria infusa*” (Coutinho 157) at the expense of his own childhood innocence: “*O Menino se doía e se entusiasmava*” (Rosa, *Primeiras estórias* 53). By the end of the journey, Menino has acquired the complete spectrum of an initiatory experience: joy and sorrow, fascination and repulsion, simplicity and maturity.

Another coming-of-age story is “*Os cimos*,” also a tale of a boy named Menino who must move away from home, when his mother is too ill to take care of him: “*Por isso o mandavam para fora, decerto por demorados dias, decerto porque era preciso*” (201). Contrary to the boy in “*As margens da alegria*,” the child in “*Os cimos*,” begins his story frightened and distraught over his mother’s illness: “*Sabia que a mãe estava doente . . . O Menino cobrava maior medo . . . Outros sustos levava.*” On his flight aboard an airplane, fears of his mother’s infirmity distract him from the sky’s beauty: “[*n*]em valia espiar, correndo em direções contrárias, as nuvens.” This Menino’s despair renders him incapable of appreciating the good people who care for him or the natural world that his uncle tries to share with him on the Jeep excursions that the two take together. Menino’s isolation only intensifies until, suddenly, the sight of a toucan eating the fruit from his uncle’s fiddlewood trees rescues him from his silent solitary state: “*o Menino apressuradamente se levantava e descia ao alpendre, animoso de amar*” (206). Replacing his pain with long-lost affection, “[*o*] Menino não quis entender perigo . . . A tornada do pássaro era emoção enviada, impressão sensível, um transbordamento do coração . . . de que podia se servir para consolar-se com, e desdolorir-se” (207). The therapeutic visits of the toucan strengthen the suffering child’s heart—“*conseguindo afugentar a mágoa que ele sentia pela mãe enferma, distante*” (Coutinho 159)—allowing him to reach a level of emotional maturity that tempers his fear and sadness with hope and optimism: “*o Menino, em seu mais forte coração, declarava, só: que a Mãe tinha de ficar boa, tinha de ficar salva!*” (Rosa, *Primeiras estórias* 206). Again, the Rosean child often dramatizes a full spectrum of human emotion and experience: “*a iniciação se complete . . . unidade de tudo . . . plenitude do mundo*” (Coutinho 158-159).

The complexity of these formative experiences filled with hope, resilience, and optimism alongside fear, struggle, and doubt make up the wholeness—or completeness—of Guimarães Rosa’s *mestiço*-white children. Even those who are mystical, already bestowed with incomparable powers—including the “*rapaz enigmático, de ‘Um moço muito branco,’ que veio não se sabe de onde . . . Comparável a um anjo, o Moço cândido e distante*” and “*a esquisita Nhinhinha, de ‘A menina de lá’ . . . de palavras poucas e extravagantes, . . . contemplativa . . . fala com as estrelas, o vento, o sabiá*” (Coutinho 161)—continue to rise in honorific status throughout their narratives. Belonging to a family structure with mythical abilities, Nhinhinha,

too, performs miracles like a saint. The trustworthy Moço—described as “*um anjo*,” “*cândido*,” “*distante*,” and “*superior*,”—also comes to “*operar prodígios*.” They both play on the strong religious beliefs specific to the backlands, but also pertaining to Brazil as a whole, projecting idealized versions of both the local and national cultural and spiritual identity. Rosa’s *mestiço*-white children show a clear and optimistic sense of self—honest and superior, capable of wonders like Moço and Nhinhinha; sensitive and strong, expressing the complexity of human nature like the two Meninos; thoughtful and poetic, deserving of emancipation like Miguilim. Afro-Brazilian children, on the other hand, are almost indistinguishable in the Rosean narrative, representing only a vague sense of humanity—characterized by moral and physical inferiority, uniformity and simplicity in their caricatured existence, unredeemably suffering and chronically tragic, until their inevitably mysterious disappearances once they have played their minor narrative roles. In other words, the Rosean black child has no identity, no hope, and no future outside of a servile or slave-like existence; such children serve only as the antithesis to all that their *mestiço*-white counterparts personify. Alfeu, “*Pretinho*,” and Guirigó, whose characterization I analyze below, exemplify those othered children that Coutinho only marginally mentions, when he discusses mainly the gifted: He extols the incredible insight and sensitivity, even extraordinary powers sometimes, of Rosean children “*quando não possuem origem oculta ou vaga identidade*.” The Afro-Brazilian children of Rosa occupy precisely that narrative space of obscured origins and identities, so who are they, and why do they stay on the margins when their *mestiço*-white peers ultimately manage to escape marginalization?

As Guimarães Rosa’s narrative background contains only a minority of black children, very few scholars²⁸ have questioned, or even commented on this population’s exceptional function and consistent symbolization in his narrative. Always as minor characters, a handful of black children are visible in several of Guimarães Rosa’s narratives in which their parents are servants or slaves. In “*Pirlimpsiquice*,” a short story in *Primeiras histórias* (1962), a black boy named Alfeu creeps briefly in and out of scenes from the narrator’s nostalgic memories of his own childhood. In “*O burrinho pedrês*,” a short story in *Sagarana*, a nameless slave child, called only “*pretinho*” has been sold to a far-off plantation, misses his mother, and laments his fate in just a few haunting scenes. Finally, in *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, perhaps the most prominent of the Rosean black children introduces himself as “*Guirigó . . . Minha graça é essa. . . Sou filho de Zé Cância, seu criado, sim senhor*” (*Grande Sertão: Veredas* 369). Examining these invariably unredeemed characters raises another question: what does the scholarship have to say about the presence of black children in Rosean literature?

The absence of studies on Afro-Brazilian childhood in Guimarães Rosa has to do with priorities in Brazilian discursive practices, particularly the preoccupation with a dominant

²⁸ In all of my research, I have not found a single critical examination of Afro-Brazilian children as a subclass in Guimarães Rosa’s works, although scholars might make mention of individual black Rosean characters. Tatiana Alves Soares Caldas, in “*O cego e a criança no meio do redemoinho*,” for example, considers Guirigó as representative of the devil in *Grande Sertão: Veredas*. Adélia Bezerra de Menezes also comments that the many insults hurled at Iládio in her study of “*Dão Lalão (O Devente)*” reflect the racial unconscious of even contemporary Brazilian social life. Still, to my knowledge, there is a complete lack of scholarship on Afro-Brazilian children as a literary topos in Guimarães Rosa.

*mestiço*²⁹ ideology. This singular viewpoint reveals the *mestiço* child as the majoritarian child, while concealing those differences contained in the child figure, especially in a multiracial nation like Brazil. In fact, sorting these differences brings to surface issues of race, which Thomas Skidmore explains go generally unmentioned on by Brazilian scholarship: “Brazilian scholars, especially from the established academic institutions, continue for the most part to avoid the subject of race, in virtually all its aspects . . . regard[ing] the question of race and race relations as a virtual nonsubject” (Skidmore xi). The investigation of the figure child, in Guimarães Rosa, has commonly been from a paradoxically homogeneous and hegemonizing perspective of *mestiçagem*. In his study of *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, Willi Bolle reiterates this predominant discourse: “Guimarães Rosa retoma discretamente o tópos da nação miscigenada, presente na interpretação de Euclides, assim como em percussores como Martius e Sílvia Romero, e em seguidores como Darcy Ribeiro” (Bolle 277). Guimarães Rosa undoubtedly writes from and is responding to these dominant racial discourses. His narrative genealogically traces the child as a result of a “união carnal de um senhor, colonizador, com uma coitada moradora, quase escrava, pertencendo à população primitiva do país” (Bolle 275-276). For example, the above-mentioned Miguilim, Meninos, Moço, and Nhinhinha in addition to every single child protagonist of *Primeiras histórias* are *mestiço* or white descendants of the slave master. While tracing the *mestiço*-white child as the majoritarian child, Guimarães Rosa, however, goes beyond the customary concealing discourse of *mestiçagem* and undertakes an archeology of the Afro-Brazilian child—specifically, his slave heritage—to show his antagonistic presence within the nucleus of the Brazilian social formation.

A close look at the short story “*Pirlimpisquice*” provides a very concise illustration of the conflicting accounts of childhood personified in black versus *mestiço*-white children in Guimarães Rosa’s works. The main narrative is that of a former student, looking back upon his childhood with nostalgia to recount his participation with about a dozen classmates in a particularly memorable school performance. Occasionally, the narrator drifts from his main characters to describe not a classmate, but—as he regards this Other child—an annoying presence lurking on the school grounds. This, of course, is Alfeu, whom the narrator introduces in the first paragraph as “o em-diabo pretinho, Alfeu” (Rosa, *Primeiras Histórias* 83). Alfeu’s unwelcome presence in this childhood memory offers an alternative view of Brazilian childhood to that of his more privileged counterparts.

The narrator of “*Pirlimpisquice*” reports the general concerns of schoolchildren as the work and play of the *Colégio*: going to class, studying for exams, rehearsing for plays, playing with language, and inventing their own shows. “[O] pretinho Alfeu, filho da cozinheira, e aleijado,” however, belongs behind the scenes, occasionally sneaking out of the servants’ sphere when the school authorities “não o via[m] e mandava[m] embora” (85) “[C]apaz de deslizar ligeiro por corredores e escadas, feito uma cobra[,] . . . vinha escutar os ensaios, detrás das portas” (87)! Also, repeatedly characterized as a snake—“O Alfeu não sorria: sibilava” (88)—he steals sweets and treats from the kitchen to buy favor with the schoolchildren, robs the priests’ cellar of a bottle of gin, spies on the rehearsals of the children’s theater, and leaks their secret performance details to competitors, but the narrator refuses to call him a traitor: “*Haveria entre*

²⁹ This point of view is summarized in Antônio Cândido’s words: Brazilians are “um povo latino, de herança cultural européia, mas etnicamente mestiço” (143).

nós um traidor? Não. Descobriu-se: o Alfeu” (87). To be called a traitor would make him at least human; instead, the narrator prefers animal descriptors. In addition to mentioning Alfeu’s hissing and slithering entrances and exits throughout the story, the narrator immediately follows his negation of Alfeu’s traitorous role with an insult, “*Descobriu-se: o Alfeu. O gebo[.]*” The *gebo*, a non-native humpbacked breed of ox from East Asia, is a reference to Alfeu’s own hunchback, “*corcunda*,” and perhaps also his genealogy from a distant continent. Even as an adult, the narrator looks back on Alfeu’s surreptitious childhood activities disdainfully. Crafty and clever in his own way, as the schoolchildren glorified in the narrative are in theirs, Alfeu still belongs to a sort of underground or underbelly of the school from which the servants—and the children of the servants—are not permitted access to the educational or recreational opportunities of a more privileged class.

Alfeu’s blackness—as “*pretinho*” (83 and 85)—is the story’s only mention of race, and he is the only marginalized child in the dozen or so children in the short story. Therefore, it can be extrapolated that none of the others is a descendant of slaves. According to the narrator, these schoolchildren grow up to become professionals, including an “*aeroviário*” and a “*bookmaker*” (83). As for the Afro-Brazilian child, the son of a kitchen servant, his future occupation is left only to rhetorical question: “*E o em-diabo pretinho Alfeu, corcunda?*” With no answer for Alfeu’s fate, this limited imagination for Alfeu’s future possibilities—despite an entire narrative devoted to reifying imaginative, creative, and innovative childhood—reveals so much about Alfeu’s circumstances. With an arguably comparable inventive and resourceful childhood, his own cunningness on the fringes of school life is depicted as illegitimate, immoral, and so unseemly and unchildlike that the narrator reverts to zoomorphic metaphors. While creative genius and artistic prowess characterize the majoritarian Brazilian child, physical defects (such as being hunchbacked and walking with a limp) and animal traits (hissing and slithering like a snake and hunchbacked like a Zebu) identify the Afro-Brazilian child. Here, in just the nine economical pages that compose this short story, Guimarães Rosa outlines the general parameters for what defines the trajectories of Rosean children of a privileged class and race versus an underprivileged class and race. As “*Pirlimpsiquice*” exemplifies, one childhood becomes a symbol for potential and the other a symbol for degeneracy.

I wish to discuss this paradigm of Afro-Brazilian childhood within larger social, political, and cultural contexts as well as part of the overall Brazilian social formation. Afro-Brazilian children’s slave lineage, their simplistic identification by skin color and degenerate body—“*pretinho*” and “*corcunda*”—as well as their metonymic recurrence as a “*diabo*” unquestionably constitute crucial elements of conscious and unconscious construction and symbolization in juxtaposition to the ontological, metaphysical, and metaphorical characterization of the *mestiço*-white child. A seminal example is Guirigó’s childhood and overall representation in relationship to Riobaldo’s in *Grande Sertão: Veredas*. The child Guirigó’s depraved portrayal serves as what Morrison calls “black surrogacy” (Morrison 13) or

what Herman Melville called ‘the power of blackness,’ especially . . . in a country in which there was a resident population, already black, upon which the imagination could play; through which historical, moral, metaphysical, and social fears, problems, and dichotomies could be articulated. The slave population, it could be and was assumed, offered itself up as surrogate selves for . . .

meditations on terror—the terror of . . . powerlessness, Nature without limits, . . . internal aggression, evil, sin, greed. (Morrison 39)

Although Riobaldo and Guirigó are people of color, from the perspective of Guimarães Rosa's orality, the latter is extremely darkened, "*pretinho . . . retinto*," his body deformed, "*mal aperfeiçoado*" (Rosa, *Grande Sertão: Veredas* 369) and his personhood demonized, "*coitadinho diabinho*" (430) to the point that he literally embodies Riobaldo's own violent, metaphysical, and existential struggle with temptation, cruelty, and evil.³⁰ In personifying all of Riobaldo's violent fears and transgressions, there is no room in Rosa's narrative for both Guirigó and Riobaldo to be redeemed. Instead, Guirigó is offered up "as [a] surrogate"—if not, as a sacrifice—allowing Riobaldo's resurrected characterization to be whitened—*mestiço*—improved in social class from *jagunço* to *fazendeiro*, and glorified for physical strength and exaggerated masculinity—"*O sertanejo, é, antes de tudo, um forte*" (quoted in Galvão 19).

Biographically, both characters are born victims of the socio-economic structure of a patriarchal system; they experience poverty, misery, violence, and marginalization. Riobaldo, vividly remembers the hardships of his childhood like this: "*Vivi puxando difícil de difícil[;]*" (Rosa, *Grande Sertão* 9) "*eu não sabia ler[;]*" (105) "*não tive pai . . . Não me envergonho, por ser de escuro nascimento. Órfão de conhecimento e de papéis legais*" (39) "*[m]inha mãe morreu . . . De herdado, fiquei com aquelas miserinhas—miséria quase inocente*" (103). Nonetheless, as a child, Riobaldo gains the advantage of schooling and shelter from his rich, rancher (god)father. As an adult, Riobaldo rises from rags to riches, becoming the master of his own Big House and plantation through an inheritance that would be impossible to the son of a slave, such as Guirigó, "*filho de Zé Cância*" (369). Guirigó is a young *quilombola*, a runaway slave, caught by the adult Riobaldo's band of *jagunços*, when the child burglarizes a deserted Big House. While Riobaldo's situation improves throughout the course of the novel, Guirigó remains shackled to much more than just his verisimilar place in society as a slave or a fugitive; he continues to be associated with corruption, savagery, and evil thoughts and deeds throughout his caricatured presence in Riobaldo's narrative. Riobaldo uncertainly hedges his bets between the Devil and God, by superstitiously keeping the slave child for himself on the non-preferential left side of his horse as a sort of talisman of evil in this violent and dangerous world of the *Sertão*, while he keeps a wise and innocent old blind man on his right side as a talisman of good.³¹ Though Guirigó attempts to escape slavery and finds a measure of paternalistic, superstitious, and self-serving protection from Riobaldo, he is never clearly liberated in circumstance or metaphor. His lack of emancipation, decadent childhood, and aesthetically negative descriptions serve to offset Riobaldo's positive portrayal, innocent childhood, and rise to social and economic prominence.

While all of the children in Guimarães Rosa, to a certain extent, share the symbolism of resilience and survival often due to marginalized socio-economic status; black and *mestiço*

³⁰ According to Tatiana Alves Soares Caldas, "*Guirigó alegoriza, para Riobaldo, a imagem do diabinho que traz as tentações, a vontade de praticar a crueldade gratuita*" ("*O cego e a criança no meio do redemoinho*").

³¹ The relationship between Guirigó and Riobaldo as discussed below—in the section "Mirroring the Big House: Ambivalence in *Grande Sertão: Veredas*'s Orality and the Representation of the Black Child"—is rather interesting both from an aesthetic and metaphorical points of view. When Riobaldo finds the black boy, he does not only see him as a little devil, "*capeta*" (Rosa 439) or "*aquele diabrim*" (424), but he also sees the boy as his mirror image, especially when it comes to violent acts.

children do not have the same aesthetic value, metaphor, or fate. The evidence provided in the previous paragraphs is enough to begin to postulate this unequal and dependent character. Despite being victimized and marginalized, *mestiço* children's representation is redemptive, whereas the aestheticization of black children is always tragic. In fact, they are restricted to what Freud has called the "uncanny" or the aesthetic of dreadfulness, horror, terror, fear, and yet the secretly familiar (Leitch 824-841). This aesthetic value is formulaic and archetypical of the Rosean black character in all of the works that I have studied. In "*Dão Lalalão (O Devente)*," another description of Iládio, a black *jagunço* who has slept with the *mestiço* protagonist's wife, when she used to work as a prostitute, demonstrates a recurring association between the black figure and evil, animalistic physicality: "*Ao ver àquele negro Iládio, goruguto, medonho . . . Até o almíscar, ardido, desse, devia de estar revertendo por ali . . . era um bicho peludo, gorjala, do fundo do mato, dos caldeirões do inferno*" (Rosa 68-69). In "*Campo geral*," the elderly Mãitina, a runaway slave—who, according to family lore, was found in a rainstorm—is harangued by the family matriarch, an overtly religious grandmother, condemning the African woman's own religiosity as pagan and her gods as demonic: "*Traste de negra pagã, encostada na cozinha, mascando fumo e rogando para os demônios dela, africanos! Vem ajoelhar gente, Mãitina!*" (35). Finally, a black female prostitute who is being auctioned on the plaza in "*A hora e vez de Augusto Matraga*" of *Sagarana*, is described as undesirable for her skin color just as much as her crippled body: "*Angélica era preta e mais ou menos capenga, e só a outra [mestiça] servia*" (335). These absolutely negative physical and spiritual guises ought to be read, first, from the historical moment that Guimarães Rosa's works persistently and unflinchingly investigate—both the colonial and the post-imperial Brazil in which blacks were either slaves³² or had only recently been emancipated, and seen through the cosmivision of the Big House. As such, the narrative has to lend mimetic reality to that patriarchal epoch in order to conform to the verisimilitude of the everyday life of being a slave—or slave descendant—and the worldview of the master.

Attached to the narrative history, these portrayals also need to be read from the time in which Guimarães Rosa wrote, the 1950s. These highly racialized constructions of the black character are irrevocably shaped by the authorial subjectivity, that is, the larger social, cultural, and political contexts through which this social type was viewed in the moment of their aesthetic conception. During Guimarães Rosa's literary production, Freyre's racial theories about *mestiçagem*, Lusotropicalism, and racial democracy in the origins and evolution of Brazilian society were still widely accepted. Freyre's ideologies on racial and social relations discredited "scientific racism" leading the Brazilian elite to conclude that—unlike the United States or Nazi Germany, "where systematic repression of racial minorities was still practiced" (Skidmore 209)—there were no residual racial antagonisms in Brazil. By unearthing race and bringing it to the surface with its old, negative metonyms, Guimarães Rosa responds, in part, to that sort of revisionist or sanitized version³³ of Brazil pervasive in his time and that—as is well documented—has lingering consequences today (MacLachlan xx). My reading of *Grande Sertão: Veredas* and "*O burrinho pedrês*" from these intertwined historical perspectives—

³² According to Bolle, from a historical point of view, Guimarães Rosa is continuously interested in conducting an archeology and genealogy of the Big House, its social and economic system, and so his narrative "*não estuda o negro per se, mas em 'sua condição de escravo'*" (277).

³³ "I have made much here of a kind of willful critical blindness—a blindness that, if it had not existed, could have made these insights part of our routine literary heritage. Habit, manners, and political agenda have contributed to this refusal of critical insight" (Morrison 18).

Freyre's romanticized version, history's unvarnished realities, and Rosa's narrative viewpoint—with the complexity of their conscious and unconscious underpinnings will reveal both the socio-historic—racial, cultural, and political—continuities and discontinuities in place within the Brazilian society represented in Guimarães Rosa. His orality and its archeology of the Brazilian social formation provide a much richer, deeper, and more complex society than the one envisioned in theories of *mestiçagem*, Lusotropicalism, or racial democracy. Beyond his language's extensively explored ambiguities, my first hypothesis on the representation of the black child is that Rosa's ironies, repetitions, polarities, and deployment of violence in contact zones make up rhetorical strategies to unveil the racial unconscious concealed by Freyre's popular racial and social theories. My second hypothesis is that the metaphor on the Afro-Brazilian child, and black childhood in general, reproduced by the above conventions that compose Guimarães Rosa's orality, reinforce not only the colonial language towards the black child but also the colonial cosmivision towards the black child. In sum, the black child embodies an ambivalent metaphor on this "unsettled and unsettling population" (Morrison 6) paradoxically right in the middle and, at the same time, on the margins of Brazilian history.

“E o menino preto?”: “O burrinho pedrês” and Unveiling Racial Unconscious in the Brazilian Backland

The racial unconscious, as I mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, has two definitions. The gratuitous, naive, and ignorant expressions, utterances, and metonymies that backlanders use to identify the Afro-Brazilian subject are clear examples of the first definition of racial unconscious, which point to a cosmivision of color that they backlanders, themselves, do not show any cognizance, self-awareness, or even self-consciousness for displaying. In the case of their orality of the Big House, their racial unconscious is clearly tied to the vestiges of colonialism, whether they realize this or not. The second definition that I have assigned to the racial unconscious encompasses the undervaluation of racial differences as political actors within a social system. When ideologies attempt to institute a majoritarian collective identity by avoiding or ignoring the Other, this institutionalized “silence and evasion” on matters of race—which I also call racial unconscious—become “the habit of ignoring race[,] . . . [mis]understood [by the majoritarian society] to be a graceful, even generous, liberal gesture[,] . . . [but] allow[ing] the black [or insert any marginalized Other's] body a shadowless participation in the dominant cultural body” (Morrison 9-10). Thus, the racial unconscious has both an unintentional way of revealing itself and a very intentional way of being concealed, or removed from public discourse as well as from scholarly attention. Through “*O burrinho pedrês*,” Guimarães Rosa dramatically unveils the racial unconscious within the Brazilian society represented in this story. In order to understand his liberal project, I would like to delve deeper into the worldviews about racial/social relations among the Brazilian elites who were Guimarães Rosa's contemporaries, particularly around 1908-1967, a period corresponding to the authors lifetime.

Brazil as a society, from its origins and development as a modern civilization, had conventionally been visualized through the lenses of Lusotropicalism, *mestiçagem*, and the myth of racial democracy. All of these concepts were extensively developed by Gilberto Freyre, in *Casa-Grande e Senzala* (1933) and *O Mundo que o Português Criou* (1940), and are epistemically related to one another. Lusotropicalism and *mestiçagem* are foundational for their enduring analysis of the origins of Brazilian modern society. Freyre saw something uniquely

more benevolent about Portuguese Imperialism—specifically, the Portuguese colonizer’s supposed “cordial relations with non-European populations” in the colonies (supported by *mestiçagem*), his presumed lack of racism and discrimination against the colonized (as evident in “[t]he absence of formal segregation”) (MacLachlan 239), and his alleged openness to interracial marriage and have offspring with indigenous women.³⁴ The *mestiçagem* phenomenon inspired the Brazilian sociologist to postulate on Brazilians as a racially, ethnically, and culturally collective fusion of three main social groups—the European, the Amerindian, and the African.³⁵ Within and through *mestiçagem*, Freyre was prone to see and foresee what he wrote in a social democracy,³⁶ as elaborated in *O Mundo que o Português Criou*, which scholars have since commonly referred to as a racial democracy.³⁷ “In its simplest formulation, th[is] ‘myth’ is that all Brazilians, regardless of ‘race,’ enjoy equal opportunities and live in a racially harmonious society” (Fuente 73). Although Freyre considered a social/racial democracy to be “Luso-Brazilian civilization’s most original and a significant legacy to humanity” (Sousa and Sinder 122) racial democracy was officially declared a myth after President Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s election in 1994 (MacLachlan 238) twenty-seven years after Guimarães Rosa’s death and seven years after Freyre’s.

The above theories on racial/social relations were formulated around what I have named the racial unconscious. The *unconscious*, here, has to be understood from a Lacanian point of view,

not a hidden reservoir of repressed desires but rather a form of rhetorical energy designed both to disguise and to express those desires, which exist for psychoanalysis only in their effects. ‘The unconscious is structured like language,’ This means not that the unconscious *is* language, but that the

³⁴ Freyre saw an exceptional social relation between the Portuguese colonizer and non-European colonized subjects summarized in the following words: “Given the unique cultural and racial background of metropolitan Portugal, Portuguese explorers and colonizers demonstrated a special ability—found among no other people in the world—to adapt to tropical lands and peoples. . . he immediately entered into cordial relations with non-European populations he met in the tropics. . . The ultimate proof of the absence of racism among the Portuguese, however, is found in Brazil, whose large and socially prominent *mestiço* population is living testimony to the freedom of social and sexual intercourse between Portuguese and non-Europeans. Portuguese non-racism is also evidenced by the absence in Portuguese law of the racist legislation in South Africa and until recently in the United States barring non-whites from specific occupations, facilities, etc. Finally, any prejudice or discrimination in territories formerly or presently governed by Portugal can be traced to class, but never colour, prejudice (Bender 3-4).

³⁵ According to Freyre, “[e]very Brazilian, even the light-skinned fair-haired one, carries about with him on his soul, when not on soul and body alike—for there are many in Brazil with the mongrel mark of the *genipap*—the shadow, or at least the birthmark, of the aborigine or the Negro” (*The Masters and the Slaves* 278).

³⁶ According to Freyre, “*as áreas de formação portuguesa—formação por meio da mestiçagem—constituem hoje uma antecipação ou, mais do que isso, uma aproximação, daquela democracia social de que se acham distantes os povos actualmente mais avançados na prática da tantas vezes ineficiente e injusta democracia política*” (Freyre, *O Mundo que o Português Criou* 51). In addition, “[h]á, diante desse problema de importância cada vez maior para os povos modernos—o da mestiçagem, o das relações de europeus com pretos, pardos, amarelos—uma atitude distintamente, tipicamente, caracteristicamente portuguesa, ou melhor, luso-brasileira, luso-asiática, luso-africana, que nos torna uma unidade psicológica e de cultura fundada sobre um dos acontecimentos, talvez se possa dizer, sobre uma das soluções humanas de problema de ordem biológica e ao mesmo tempo social, mais significativas do nosso tempo: a democracia através da mistura de raças, do cruzamento, da miscigenação” (46).

³⁷ Although “racial democracy” is associated with Gilberto Freyre, this exact term is not found in his work (Sousa & Sinder, 119). The term Freyre used is “social democracy” (Freyre, *O Mundo que o Português Criou* 46, 51). Nevertheless, more than his own term, “racial democracy” has become critically associated with Freyre (Costa 234-246; Twine 6; Fuente 73-79).

unconscious is *like* a language—a foreign language. In other words, the unconscious is *structured*, not amorphous, and it *speaks* rhetorically through the dreams, mistakes, and symptoms of the subject. (Leitch 1281, emphasis by the author)

Freyre's theories are rhetorical strategies “designed both to disguise and express” the sociologist's own projected racial/social “dreams” and “desires” about the overall socio-historical outcomes of Luso-Brazilian colonialism. Freyre's stylistic combination of “eclectic research with a strong streak of romanticism” (Bender 5) allows his racial theories' half-truths—or partial memories—to conceal more than they reveal of Luso-Brazilian Imperialism's “mechanisms for devastating racial oppression” (Morrison xiii) from a more complete memory of Brazilian history.³⁸ Although he may have “subverted the racist assumptions of contemporary social analysts such as Oliveira Vianna [. . . by ‘stressing the positive contributions of Africans and Amerindians to Brazilian culture, a]t the same time, Freyre created the most formidable ideological weapon against anti-racist activists”³⁹ by providing “a sanitized version of Brazil's long history of colonization and slavery.”⁴⁰ Envisioning the *mestiço* as the Brazilian majority's racial composition and dominant class, ironically, and perhaps unintentionally, unveiled within the Brazilian racial unconscious a whitening dream and desire to dilute the black experience of slavery and oppression. In fact, the African presence—phenotypically, racially, and socially unaltered by *mestiçagem*—was completely left out of the equation.

Scholars recognize that Guimarães Rosa was not only aware of the racial unconscious embedded in Freyre's social theories on race, but that he was in constant dialogue with his worldview (Bolle 9, 265; Fortes). Rosa's work repeatedly responds to his contemporary predecessor, actually, intertextualizing Freyre's flawed historical-sociological view of the origins and development of the Brazilian modern society. Rita Felix Fortes points out Guimarães Rosa's “*diálogo com a arcaica estrutura patriarcal—cujo paradigma social não revelado é a obra de Gilberto Freyre—indiscutivelmente subjaz à obra rosiana como um todo. . . . Guimarães Rosa também dialoga de forma contundente com a formação da sociedade patriarcal rural brasileira.*” Guimarães Rosa's *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, is particularly concerned with those social, economic, and historical issues that have preoccupied the major historiographical and sociological “*ensaios de formação*” like Gilberto Freyre's *Casa Grande e Senzala* among other works by Brazilian major sociologists and historiographers.⁴¹ Meanwhile, Rosa also consciously

³⁸ According to Viotti da Costa, “[s]ome twenty years later, a new generation of social scientists studying race relations in Brazil . . . piled up a new harvest of evidence that Brazilian whites were prejudiced” (234).

³⁹ Carlos Hasenbalg, as quoted by Twine, affirms, “[h]is emphasis upon the plastic character of the Portuguese colonizers [*sic*] cultural background and the widespread miscegenation among the Brazilian population lead him to the notion of racial democracy” (6).

⁴⁰ According to Twine, “Blacks were not legally discriminated against but were ‘naturally’ and informally segregated. The majority of the black population remained at the bottom of society with no chance to move up. Possibilities for social mobility were severely limited for blacks, and whenever blacks competed with whites, they were discriminated against” (6). Brazil's “*mestiçagem*” was an ideological project through which the Brazilian elite formulated a national mission to justify the “whiten[ing]” of the “racial stock.”

⁴¹ According to Bolle, the comparison between Guimarães Rosa's *Grande Sertão: Veredas* “*com os principais ensaios de formação—os livros de Euclides da Cunha, Gilberto Freyre, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Caio Prado Jr., Celso Furtado, Raymundo Faoro, Antônio Candido, Florestan Fernandes, Darcy Ribeiro, que constituem o cânone dos retratos do Brasil—permite recolher melhor, Grande Sertão: Veredas, os fragmentos esparsos de uma história criptografada, que o leitor é*

engages and challenges their overgeneralized objective investigation about the true formation of Brazilian society. Like Freyre, Guimarães Rosa undertakes “*uma arqueologia do regime escravocrata, apoiada num estratégico mapa das fazendas*” (Bolle 265) and “*lugares emblemáticos da ordem escravocrata que são as casas grandes*” (283). Unlike his precursor who superficially excavates the Big House to support his own theories on racial harmony and “*equilíbrio de antagonismos*” (Bolle; Nava and Lauerhass 54), Guimarães Rosa digs radically deeper and reveals profoundly richer and more complex racial/social dynamics within the patriarchal system. In “*O burrinho pedrês*,” the author also carries out an archeology of the Big House, its morality, economics, and social relations as a way to reveal the racial unconscious embedded in Freyre’s theories.

“*O burrinho pedrês*” is a tale about a little old donkey, called Sete-de-Ouros. Though too frail to be ridden, a group of cowboy “*agregados*,” or indentured servants (“*Agregado*,” *Dicionário Huais*)—including João Manico, Francolim, Raymundão, Zé-Grande, Silvino, Badu, Benevides, Leofredo, Sinoca, Tote, and Sebastião—take Sete-de-Ouros to accompany cattle that are going to be sold by their owner and rancher, Major Saulo. During their journey, we learn that Silvino wants to kill Badu over a disagreement about a girl. Francolim leaks the secret to the boss, Major Saulo, who does nothing to prevent the premeditated crime. After Silvino’s unsuccessful attempt to instigate the cattle into trampling Badu, he then plans to kill him on their return, when they will have to cross a flooded river. On the return, Badu is drunk, so the other cowboys leave him behind with the donkey. Nine cowboys—Manico, Benevides, Silvino, Leofredo, Raymundão, Sinoca, Zé-Grande, Tote, and Sebastião—die while crossing the river. Surprisingly, Sete-de-Ouros heroically saves Francolim’s life as well as the once endangered life of Badu.

The central story is anthropomorphically “focalized”⁴² on the donkey, Sete-de-Ouros, “*muito idoso . . . decrepito*,” and yet, somehow “*sábio*” (Rosa, *Sagarana* 11-12) enough to save the only surviving horses and humans from drowning. Sete-de-Ouros’s existence revolves around the patriarchal system and its moral and socio-economic authority represented by Major Saulo, who controls the *agregados*/cowboys and owns the *fazenda*, the cattle, the horses, and the donkey. However, there is another marginal story—as it is common for Guimarães Rosa to cleverly spin tangential tales within the greater plot—on which I would like to focus without overlooking the main account. Thus, I will “counterfocalize”⁴³ the chief story in order to reveal this peripheral and yet powerful account, because it completes the overall narrative ontologically, metaphysically, and metaphorically. On their way to sell the cattle, João Manico recalls a black boy that he once took on a different trip. The third person narrative voice introduces the nameless boy in the following words:

incentivado a reorganizar . . . o romance de Guimarães Rosa é o detalhado estudo de um dos problemas cruciais do Brasil: a falta de entendimento entre a classe dominante e as classes populares, o que constitui um sério obstáculo para a verdadeira emancipação do país. Ao comparar o Grande Sertão: Veredas com os referidos ensaios sociológicos e historiográficos, cheguei à conclusão de que esse livro é o romance de formação do Brasil” (9).

⁴² I use “focalization” as described by Mieke Bal, “the relation between the vision and that which is ‘seen,’ perceived” (142).

⁴³ “Counterfocalization,” according to Spivak is a reading strategy whose objective is to “shuttle between focalization and the making of an alternative narrative as the reader’s running commentary” (“Ethics and Politics” 17-31).

Um negrinho, que tinha também. Assinzinho, regulando por uns sete anos, um toquinho de gente preta . . . O fazendeiro que vendeu o gado pediu a seu Saulinho para trazer, para entregar a um irmão, no Curvelo, e seu Saulinho prometeu . . . A' pois, o tal pretinho era magrelo, com uns olhos graúdos, com o branco feio de tão branco, que até mesmo, Deus que me perdoe, mas eu acho que alguns pretos têm o branco-dos-olhos assim só para modo de assombrar a gente? (Rosa, Sagarana 61)

This account is important because it brings to the Lusotropicalist space of origins and its miscegenist principles, a subject that creates an antagonistic and yet complementary presence within the patriarchal social system. In fact, he is an important human resource and commodity whose absence would make the whole patriarchal economic structure imperfect. Manico explains that the boy is a seven-year-old slave to be delivered with the cattle: “*Olha, assim uma vez, que nós chegamos no sítio de um homem sem um braço . . . pagou à toa . . . sem precisão. Naquele tempo, isso era bom dinheiro . . . Mas, como eu ia contando, a gente estava desgostosa com aquele restolho de boiada má sem qualidade . . . Mas, o pior, Deus que me livre dele, foi o menino . . . o pretinho . . .*” (60). Now, with all of these elements—the “*menino pretinho,*” the master Major Saulo, the Fazenda da Tampa, the cowboy *agregados*, the cattle, the donkey—Guimarães Rosa provides a complete archeology of the rural patriarchal system, its everyday life, its society, morality, economy, and cosmovision. This is to say that he shows a richer, deeper, and more complex Lusotropicalist site of origins in the Big House. If for Freyre, the ancestral space, from a social/racial relations standpoint, is characterized by an “ultimate proof of the absence of racism . . . [and] any prejudice or discrimination” (Bender 3-4) based on skin color, Guimarães Rosa’s orality and representation of this seven-year-old boy unveils the racial unconscious, showing a radical contradiction to the selective memory of Lusotropicalism. “*E o menino preto?*” (Rosa, *Sagarana* 61). This direct question mirrors Guimarães Rosa’s radical interrogation of Freyre’s concealing discourse of miscegenation in the Brazilian space of origins. Rosa retrieves the missing race, subject, and history, inserting the “political rationalization of agency within the [patriarchal] social system” and reasserting “the treatment of the individual as a political actor.” The Rosean Big House, then, becomes a monument of the history of slavery and its ontological resentments, rather than Freyre’s idealized site of “fraternization between distinct cultures” that lived in an “equilibrium of antagonisms” (Nava and Lauerhass 54). Instead of a “relatively tolerant morality,” Guimarães Rosa exposes oppressive cruelty in the patriarchal system.

The absolutely unredemptive violence is concretized through the memory of the slave child, his long journey on the back of a horse, and his terror and tears throughout the whole ride. As previously noted, the patriarchal system legitimizes the abduction of this boy from his mother in order to be sold with animals, a reminder of a little-mentioned historical fact in Lusotropicalism that the slave trade authorized the Brazilian site of origin to be populated by unwilling human captives stolen from their homelands and sold like cattle. Throughout the long devastating journey, the boy cries incessantly:

. . . E, aquilo, ele chorava, sem parar, e de um sentir que fazia pena . . . Não adiantava a gente querer engambelar nem entreter. . . Eu pelejei, pelejei, todo-o-

mundo inventava coisa para poder agradar o desgraçadinho, mas nada d'ele parar de chorar . . .
—*Que inferno!* [. . .]
— . . . *O pretinho vinha comigo na garupa, dando soluços grandes, e molhando minhas costas de tanta lágrima.* (Rosa, *Sagarana* 61)

The demonstrative pronoun “*aquilo*,” exclusively reserved for a thing or object, describes quite literally the condition of the little slave boy in this society. His long travels away from his mother to a new slave master—“*a gente tinha ido por longe, muito longe mesmo, no fundo do sertão, lá para trás dos Goiás*”—recalls the infamous Transatlantic Passage from which there would be no return, now intertextualized and contextualized in the Brazilian backland on a provincial *sertanejo* horse. Something of particular interest in this passage is Guimarães Rosa’s orality and its irony—as in the *agregados* conspiring with, and subscribing to, the system that creates the child’s heartbreaking situation and yet still hoping to “*agradar o desgraçadinho*”—revealing the cruelty and violence of their own racial unconscious alongside the more benevolent human tendencies to placate a crying child. Along the journey, the boy constantly pleads to return to his mother even just to see her from afar working in the master’s yard: “*Ai, seu mocinho bom! Ai, seu mocinho bom! Me deixa eu ir-se’ embora para trás . . . Eu só queria poder sentar agora, um tiquinho, naquela canastra de couro, que tem lá no rancho de minha mãe. . . . Queria só ver, de longe, a minha mãezinha, que deve de estar batendo feijão, lá no fundo do quintal*” (61-62). When the cowboy, insensitive to the underlying cruelty of the situation, incongruently tries to cheer and calm the boy—“*Eu pejejei, pejejei, todo-o-mundo inventava coisa para poder agradar o desgraçadinho, mas nada d’ele parar de chorar*”—another possible interpretation of this ironical expectation involves the *agregado*’s attempt to placate his own conscience, though there is little evidence that he clearly acknowledges the significance of the boy’s pain or his own complicity in causing the very human pain. Instead, his racial unconscious represses the systematic brutality of the situation.

These ironically unconscious signs of violence turn to conscious violence, when the cowboys can no longer tolerate the boy’s crying: “*O pretinho, a gente perdeu a paciência com ele, e o Zacarias, que era o capataz nosso, passou nele um aperto: — ‘Se você chorar mais, dianhinho, eu te corto a goela, e amarro teu difuntinho preto em riba daquele boi jaguanês’ Então o desgraçadinho arregalou muito os olhos, parou no meio do choro, ficou quieto e não gemeu mais*” (62). Because the cowboys are incapable of comprehending the little black boy’s sorrow and fear, they call him “*dianhinho*,” or little devil, and Zacarias menaces him with a gruesome death threat. This death threat recalls what even Freyre conceded in terms of a “sadist” and “masochist” hierarchical relationship on the *fazendas* (Freyre, *Casa-Grande e Senzala* 76-77). Nevertheless, the Rosean narrative contradicts the identification of the slave as a masochist, revealing that the slave did not take pleasure in or show a predisposition towards abuse or domination but was rather coerced into submission by an extremely violent and sadistic system.

When the relentlessly weeping child’s pleas fail to move the cowboys, who silence his sobs with graphic threats of slicing his throat and hanging his lifeless body on the back of a cow, the boy resorts to singing his lamentations. Here, Manico recounts how “*o pretinho começou a cantar*”:

. . . *Ah, se vocês ouvissem! Que cantiga mais triste, e que voz mais triste de bonita! . . . Não sei de onde aquele menino foi tirar tanta tristeza, para repartir com a gente . . . Inda era pior do que o choro de em-antes . . .*
 [. . .] *E o pretinho cantava, quase chorando, soluçando mesmo . . . Era assim uma cantiga sorumbática, desfeliz que nem saudade em coração de gente ruim . . . Mas, linda, linda como uma alegria chorando, uma alegria judiada, que ficou triste de repente:*
 . . . *“Ninguém de mim / ninguém de mim / tem compaixão. . .”*
Aquilo saía gemido e tremido, e vinha bulir com o coração da gente, mas era forte demais. (Rosa, Sagarana 63)

The singing appears to affect Manico, his fellow cowboys, as well as the cattle; the child’s desperate coping mechanism manages to stir some limited comprehension of a deep and “beautiful sorrow.” In this, we witness yet another irony, because Manico still lacks the requisite empathy for the child’s plight to identify “*de onde aquele menino foi tirar tanta tristeza.*” Despite the boy’s youth, degradation, and grief, he alone is able to name exactly what the cowboys lack for him, lamenting: “*Ninguém de mim / ninguém de mim / tem compaixão.*” With even more tragic irony, his “*cantiga sorumbática*” echoes the simple, repetitive prayer—“*Tem piedade de mim.*”—which Manico, in fact, alludes to with his comment about the song sounding more sorrowful than the regret of a sinner, or “*saudade em coração de gente ruim.*” And yet, unlike the hope that even a sinner has in being granted mercy, compassion, “*piedade,*” the innocent child expresses with tragic clarity that “*ninguém*” has, or will ever have, compassion for him. Eventually, his captors forbid even his singing: “*Octaviano pediu a seu Saulinho para mandar o pretinho calar a boca.*” On top of his displaced and enslaved circumstances, the slave child is finally deprived from all subjectivity. Indeed, in addition to relinquishing his tears and his song, he stops speaking—“*não dava mais resposta, quando a agente queria puxar conversa*”—and eating altogether—“*Também, não quis comer nem nada*” (62). Through orality, Guimarães Rosa reveals the slave child’s striking perceptiveness about his own hopeless captivity as well as the captors’ shocking—though perhaps necessary to carry out their roles within the patriarchal system—insensitivity to the child’s pain.

The orality in “*O burrinho pedrês*” reveals the patriarchal ancestral site as an ontological ground of violence. Racial resentments are unconsciously projected, externalized, and reified in various ways by the narrative voice. They are spotlighted foremost through the black boy’s physical characteristics, constantly described through skin color, “*negrinho,*” “*pretinho,*” “*menino preto,*” “*toquinho de gente preta.*” The black color and personhood are unquestionably metaphors for ontological difference in the patriarchal social formation. In stark contrast to Freyre’s cosmivision of *mestiçagem*, which, he claimed, inspired from the foundational site a “racially harmonious society” with “*uma atitude distintamente . . . luso-brasileira . . . que nos torna uma unidade psicológica e de cultura,*” Guimarães Rosa offers to the Brazilian foundational narrative the cosmivision of the Big House and *fazendas*, socially/racially asymmetrical sites with violent antagonism, cruelty, and lack of empathy towards the “*toquinho de gente preta.*” The Lusotropicalist place of origins, from a racial standpoint, may be characterized by *mestiçagem*, but it also visualizes a black presence and difference, which are appropriated by the power and domination of the patriarchal system. As such, the black presence and experience are, consequently, memories of violence and its chain reactions. Like his

exaggerated dark skin color, the boy's disfigured physical features — “*magrelo, . . . olhos graúdos, com o branco feio de tão branco . . . de assombrar a gente*” — are, also, metonymies for the grotesque nature of the slavery's legacy in the original Lusotropicalist site. Guimarães Rosa's orality and narrative structure unflinchingly retrieve and assert this horrible memory — warts and all — as part of the untold stories of Brazil's historical, social, and racial formation.

It is not by chance that this marginal story of the black boy in “*O burrinho pedrês*” emerges as both a bad dream and a haunting recollection. Indeed, the child's story is recounted within a conversation between two men, Sebastião and João Manico, who are fated to die in their last journey to deliver cattle. Something interesting in their dialogue is that it re-dramatizes the polarities between consciousness and unconsciousness on the subject of slavery and the very strong, visceral, and even mystical distaste and disdain for the black race in the ancestral site: “*Mas, como eu ia contando, a gente estava desgostosa com aquele restolho de boiada má sem qualidade . . . Mas, o pior, Deus que me livre dele, foi o menino . . . o pretinho . . .*” (Rosa, Sagarana 60). Since Sebastião is unfamiliar with the story of the slave boy — “*Que pretinho, Manico?*” — Manico vividly recounts the story of the child. He remembers being disgusted — “*a gente estava desgostosa*” — with the poor quality of all of the commodities — both cattle and human — that he was to deliver, but the intensity of his recollection of the boy — “*o pior, Deus que me livre dele*” — reveals that he is still disturbed by the memories associated with this child. As he recalls below, he never makes the delivery, due to a horrifying stampede that pulverizes the bodies of two fellow cowboys beyond recognition and precipitates the child's disappearance:

. . . *Então, eu acho que cheguei a dormir, mas não sei . . . O canto do pretinho, isso havia! . . . E sonhei com uma trovoadá medonha, e um gado feio correndo, desembolado, todo doido, e com um menino preto passar cantando toda a vida. . . sentado em cima do cachaço de um marruaz nambiju! . . .*
. . . *Foi de verdade? Foi visão de sonho? Eu já estou velho, para querer saber. Muita gente acha que sim, mas só tem coragem de dizer que não! Sei lá . . . Mas — Virgem Santa Mãe de Deus! — acordei, de madrugada, foi com os gritos do patrão. Que é do gado?! Só o rastro da arrancada. Tinham arribado, de noite! . . . Mas, ainda foi mais triste: no lugar onde deviam de ter ficado Aristides mais Octaviano, nem cadáver!: os bois tinham passado por cima, e, eles, mais os arreios que estavam servindo de travesseiros para eles dormirem, estavam pisados, moídos, tinham virado bagaço vermelho . . .” (64)*

The initial hallucinatory “*visão de sonho*” — uncertain whether it is real, dreamt, or a mixture of the two — precedes the actual scene of mysterious horror and violence that seems to recall the terrifying death threat: “*eu te corto a goela, e amarro teu difuntinho preto em riba daquele boi jaguanés.*” But, in addition to the casualties suffered by the cowboys, it is as if the cattle themselves suffered at least approximations of the fate promised to the boy in Zacarias's cruel threat of violence:

— *O resto! O resto foi que nós levamos mais de uma semana, para poder ajuntar as reses outra vez . . . Tinham expandongado por ali a fora, e a gente foi achar uns atolados no brejão, outros de pescoço quebrado, caídos no fundo das pirambeiras, e muitos perdidos no meio do mato, sem nem saber por onde dar*

volta para acharem o caminho de casa . . . Outros tinham rolado rio abaixo, para piranha comer. E, os que a gente pôde arrebanhar de novo, deram, mal e mal, uma boiadinha chocha, assim de brinquedo, e numa petição-de-miséria, que a gente até tinha pena, e dava vontade de se botar a bênção neles e soltar todos no sem-dono! São, são, não tinha quase nenhum . . . Eram só bois náfegos, vacas descadeiradas, bezerros com torcedura de munheca ou canela partida, garrotes com quebra de palheta ou de anca, o diabo! E muitos desmochados ou de chifre escardado, descascado fundo, dando sangue no sabugo, de tanto bater testada em árvore . . . Por de longe que a gente olhasse, mesmo o que estava melhorzinho não passava sem ter muito esfolado e muita peladura no corpo . . . Um prejuízo! (65)

The mystery behind this accident which led to so much carnage and for which there is no clear explanation contrasts with the meticulously detailed specificity of the very corporeal destruction of both men and beasts, foreshadowing the final accident to come, which will kill all but two cowboys and the donkey, Sete-de-Ouros.

“*E o pretinho, Manico?*” asks Sebastião, his curiosity reflecting the reader’s concern for the child, but there is no resolution to the boy’s story. “*Ah, esse ninguém não viu, nem teve notícia dele mais! Coisa.*” Instead, all of the violence seems random and pointless, there is no telling whether the child lives or dies, and his presence persists only as frightening memory of this terrifying experience. Despite playing what might seem a minor role in the overall plot, “*o menino preto*” comes to stand for not just pain and dread; in at least five ways, he stands for compounded tragedy: First, there is the grief for the loss of his mother and his home (not to mention the freedom that he has never known). Second is the horror of the scene of carnage from which he is never seen again. Third, for Manico and the cowboys, is the unsettling sadness that even just the incomprehensible memory of the boy’s passionate sobbing and elegiac singing stirs, and, fourth, the dreadful context of knowing that this precedes—if not, serves as a portent to—the above bloody “*prejuízo*” of men and cattle. Fifth, even remembering the tragic slave boy precedes the final tragedy, the death of Manico, Sebastião, and seven of their fellow cowboys. In sum, the boy—be it in person or in memory—seems to represent more than his own unbearable loss but the many chains of tragedy that link together in “*O burrinho pedrês*” and the patriarchal system itself.

Throughout “*O burrinho pedrês*,” the patriarchal system’s arbitrary nature of cruelty and loss is also reflected in the precarious life on the *sertão*—creating a foreboding sense of repulsiveness and disgust, infirmity and decay, fear and danger—manifested in different animals, people, and landforms. The story’s namesake donkey, Sete-de-Ouros, is “*decrépito mesmo a distância*;” Major Saulo’s cattle are a “*restolho de boiada má sem qualidade*” and the child, “*magrelo, com uns olhos graúdos, com o branco feio de tão branco.*” They all make up a picture of unhealth, an aesthetic effect and rhetorical strategy to counteract the idealized—perhaps beautified—version of Lusotropicalism. This is unquestionably Guimarães Rosa’s harsh critique on the corruptibility of the patriarchal commodity, in particular, and economic system, in general. The infirmity devastates the people, the animals, and even the land through which the cowboys travel; “*todo lugar tinha dado peste*” (60). The deadly disease that plagues the backlands along with the treacherous river that takes so many lives compose an even greater

representation of the patriarchal system as a hostile, unhealthy, and dangerous environment in a temporal and qualitative sense. Just as the slave boy is victim to the cruel capriciousness of his masters, the slaveholders themselves are caught up in and fall to the furies of the natural world:

E era bem regolfo da enchente, que tomava conta do plaino, até onde podia alcançar. Os cavalos pisavam, tacteantes. Pata e peito, passo e passo, contra maior altura davam, da correnteza, em que vogava um murmúrio. A inundação. Mil torneiras tinha a Fome, o riacho ralo de ontem, que da manhã à noite muita água ajuntar, subindo e se abrindo ao mais. Crescera, o dia inteiro, enquanto os vaqueiros passavam, levavam os bois, retornavam. E agora os homens e os cavalos nem entravam, outra vez, como cabeças se metendo, uma por uma, na volta de um laço. Eles estavam vindo. O rio ia. (69)

Floods may function as metonymy of natural phenomena to express the wild, excessive, and violent nature of patriarchy, and slavery in particular, but I think that the function of floods is more complicated than that in “*O burrinho pedrês*.”

In fact, the cowboy Badu, one of the only survivors of the flood, evokes another significance of the river, when he refers to the power of the Rio Preto in a popular song that, ironically, glorifies the valiance of “*um negro*” who resists subjugation: “*Rio Preto era um negro / que não tinha sujeição. / No gritar da liberdade / o negro deu para valentão . . .*” (55). The key to interpreting these descriptions of the indomitable, dark river and even the portrayal of the darkened sky—“*Em cima, no céu, há um pretume sujo, que nem forro de cozinha*.”—lies in the unsubjected Black River, one force and form of blackness that the patriarchal system cannot rule. The Black River embodies the power and freedom that the black child lacks and, therefore, causes the cowboys fear and superstition (even afraid that singing the above song will provoke the rain).⁴⁴ Indeed, a flood of this power does cause their eventual death: “*desciam toros flutuantes, e corpos, mortos, ou meio . . . era a barriga faminta da cobra, comedora de gente . . . Com um rabejo, a corrente entornou a si o pessoal vivo, enrolou-o em suas roscas, espalhou, afundou, afogou e levou . . . tumulto de braços, avessos, homens e cavagalduras se debatendo*” (71-72). This drowning death of cattle, horses, and cowboys in compounded tragedy with the earlier scene of trampling and disappearance of the child reveal the complete antithesis of Freyre’s concept of an “equilibrium of antagonisms,” a veritable whirlpool of suffering from which few escape. This calls to mind Morrison’s research interest in how literature shows “the impact of racism on those who perpetuate it [,] . . . the impact of notions of racial hierarchy, racial exclusion, and racial vulnerability and availability on nonblacks who held, resisted, explored, or altered those notions” (11). In this Rosean narrative on Lusotropicalist origins, “racial hierarchy, . . . exclusion, and . . . vulnerability” effect mysterious tragedy on almost all sides. Perhaps that is why Badu, one of the three survivors, does not mourn his fellow cowboys, but “*começou a cantar um ferra-fogo—dança velha, que os negros tinham de entoar em coro, fazendo de orquestra para o baile dos senhores, no tempo da escravidão*” (Rosa, *Sagarana* 73). The tragic memory of slavery is all that seems to persist in this narrative—its song, dance, laments, suffering, and violence—at the expense of the patriarchal property and even the proprietors.

⁴⁴ “*Deixa de chamar mais chuva, vá-s’embora, Badu!*” (55).

My goal, here, has been to show how Guimarães Rosa archeologically engages previous discourse on social formation to unveil the racial unconscious and its socio-historical effects in the Luso-Brazilian site of origins represented in “*O burrinho pedrês*.” While Freyre promoted Lusotropicalism and *mestiçagem* as the exclusive social/racial formative experience at the site of origins, Rosa’s narrative work shows that he saw through to the racial unconscious at the heart of those theories. For Freyre, miscegenation was “*uma das soluções humanas de problema de ordem biológica e ao mesmo tempo social, mais significativas do nosso tempo: a democratização de sociedades humanas através da mistura de raças, do cruzamento, da miscigenação*” (Freyre, *O mundo que o português criou* 46). While miscegenation attempted to find a solution for the racist problems of the epoch,⁴⁵ this view of society was “a positivistic and logocentric argument . . . that sees in the biological, economic, and cultural whitening . . . a series of steps towards ‘progress’ . . . [A]s such[,] it refers to conquest, slavery, neocolonialism, and dependence” (Rojo 26). The orality in “*O burrinho pedrês*” questions *mestiçagem*’s treatment of Lusotropicalist conquest and slavery by restaging the child slave in the colonial theater and underscoring the treatment of his race. While Rosa certainly represents miscegenation as an inevitable occurring racial phenomenon—in fact, most of his characters and narrative voices do represent a *mestiço* point of view—this *mestiçagem* is “nothing more than a concentration of differences” (Rojo) in the foundational site. In other words, the *fazendas* as places of origins cannot simply be read as miscegenation laboratories, but rather as spaces of antagonistic concentration of *mestiço*, white, black, and indigenous children whose childhood is marked by often painful difference.

The orality in “*O burrinho pedrês*” also deconstructs the lingering ontological cosmivision of the times in which it was written. Reading “*O burrinho pedrês*” from the historical context of its production, we can infer that the author undertakes this project to raise socio-political consciousness about such social relations and racial differences,⁴⁶ to address the remnants of racial antagonisms in the social psyche and language. In a sense, he held up a mirror to the racial unconscious of his own time by exploring the racial unconscious of a much earlier foundational time. Adélia Bezerra de Menezes makes such a case in her study of “*Dão Lalalão (O Devente)*,” pointing out that Guimarães Rosa’s often racialized language is an author’s attempt to call attention to the “*injúrias racistas— tão presente[s] nas piadas étnicas, politicamente incorretíssimas, e no entanto povoando o imaginário popular, e as modinhas de bar dos brasileiros, mestiços que somos*” (Menezes 158). Through “*O burrinho pedrês*,”

⁴⁵ Freyre’s idea of “*mestiçagem*” as the exclusive reading of race in Brazilian society, although problematic, it emerged in a time when racial miscegenation was deeply pervaded by nineteenth century pessimistic racial views and prejudiced by Spenserian and Social Darwinism theories and other negative ideas about mixed-race individuals developed by such thinkers as Gobineau, Agassiz, and Bunfon (Nava and Lauerhass, 46). According to this racial worldview, a multiracial population like “Brazil was [culturally] condemned to congenital inferiority” (Bender 4). Freyre, discordant with this European pessimistic opinion, reflected on what seemed real about his own society and attempted to subvert “the nineteenth-century deterministic notion of race as the key concept for social analysis and aesthetic production” (Nava and Lauerhass 45). He did so by looking back at the *mestiçagem* in the colonial social formation of a society dominated by Portuguese Imperialism as a positive and optimistic social phenomenon, but he was also prone to see it as a hegemonizing and homogenizing racial/social categorization.

⁴⁶ As Ana Valeria Beserra Costa notes, “*O ano da publicação de Sagarana (1946) corresponde a uma frase de transição da vida política do Brasil e por isso de incertezas de indefinição de rumos, além das várias tentativas de democratização da sociedade brasileira com a constituição de 1945 (5a brasileira e 4a da República) que trazia em seus artigos e leis um tom mais liberal do que as anteriores devido à derrota do regimes ditatoriais pelo mundo*” (61).

Guimarães Rosa raises social consciousness about the appalling socio-historical conditions that first spawned these racial slurs, jokes, and violent language. In addition, he exposes how the elitist mentality that legitimized theories of Lusotropicalism, *mestiçagem*, and racial democracy had conspired to keep these realizations subdued within the racial unconscious, hidden from the Brazilian popular psyche and imaginary.

The archeology and genealogy of the *fazenda*, however puts Guimarães Rosa's discourse in a dilemmatic spot. Despite the liberal views on stirring racial and historical consciousness within Brazilian society, confining black childhood as perennially chained to the *fazenda* raises an infinite number of questions on the inherent contradictions and/or complications of unveiling the racial unconscious and marking racial difference at the expense of the most vulnerable black surrogate, a slave child. In repeatedly imitating the black child's subjugation and degradation, does his orality reinforce the social hierarchies of the patriarchal system? The lack of a clear emancipation—even in a figuratively redemptive way—for the black child, coupled with a persistent repetition of those traditional Western racial binary oppositions—white versus black, human versus animal, good versus evil—bring me to my second hypothesis, which is of the ambivalence of Guimarães Rosa's orality and imagery.

“Menino Muito Especial”*: Ambivalence in the Orality of *Grande Sertão: Veredas

We are left, as readers, wondering what to make of such prophecies, these slips of the pen, these clear and covert disturbances. And wonder, as well, why they are placed so frequently in the mouths of black men.

Toni Morrison

If Guimarães Rosa excavates the Big House to reveal those racial/social resentments masked by Freyre's ideologies in the ancestral site, his orality and its portrait of the black child raises a number of ethical, authorial, and political questions that complicate the analysis of his work, especially taking into account the era in which he wrote his narratives. Though his rhetorical strategies work to uncover the racial unconscious, Guimarães Rosa's aesthetic tactics to salvage the human identity or dignity of this marginalized subject. As his language contests and grapples with the legacy of Luso-Brazilian slavery and colonialism, he does, indeed, show an ideological sensitivity and sensibility towards “the marginalized of society”—particularly the *sertanejo* and the backlander child. Still, I see in Guimarães Rosa's linguistic imagination an inability to grant the colonized black child, what Mia Couto calls, even “*um pouco mais de justiça*” (*Cronicando* 20) by granting his Afro-Brazilian subjects not only a realistic experience of subjugation but also realistically human traits versus merely objectified, caricatured, belittled, and/or bodies and minds. This inability, besides being partially bound to the author's subjectivity, is inherent to the very socio-historical structure of the Big House that his narrative repeatedly contemplates. This persistent preoccupation with the archeology of the *fazenda* as a site of historical memory requires the patriarchal structure, its moral and economic system, and its racial and social dynamics. The attempt to reveal the true history of slavery has to, categorically, reconcile with the uneven social language and worldviews of color at work at the site of origins.

Verisimilitude in orality and history seem inadequate to make a full intercession on behalf of the Afro-Brazilian child's fully humanized characterization. As I mention in the first chapter, "[r]ather than a sharp break with the past," Brazil's history shows "a long evolutionary journey with roots at least as far back as the sixteenth century." Guimarães Rosa's narratives, in general, and *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, in particular, have two priorities. The narratives are primarily and persistently preoccupied with resurrecting various historical moments and movements in Brazilian history—including the Colonial, Imperial, and the Republican (Galvão 22, Bolle 388) to work out unconscious social predicaments. Secondly, the works subvert traditional views on Brazilian history and culture through the emancipation of the marginalized *mestiço sertanejo* child. Nonetheless, this alternative history has to fit within—and not break too sharply with—Brazil's prolonged "evolutionary journey" out of colonialism in order to retain enough semblance of reality. That is why the narrator-protagonist of *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, Riobaldo, after having fiercely fought various battles on the fringes of a society that marginalizes him, ends up inheriting two Big Houses, solidifying himself within the society and inevitably repeating the cycle of oppression and marginalization towards Others. From a racial standpoint, as it was from the beginnings of Brazil's colonization, color becomes a metonymic tactic with which to mark ontological hierarchical differences, a metaphysical strategy through which to mediate and meditate upon body, mind, soul, and cosmovision. How, then, does my reading of orality's role in mirroring the Big House cosmovision shed light on issues related to symbolization of the black child in *Grande Sertão: Veredas*? How does the black child's portrayal in the novel relate to a continuous processes of the *mestiço*-white child's self-fashioning and dichotomist institution of difference? My hypothesis references Morrison's proposal for further critical attention: I postulate that *Grande Sertão: Veredas*'s orality of the Big House will only permit the Afro-Brazilian child's presence as, what Morrison calls, a "surrogate and enabler[, . . .] the vehicle by which the . . . [the *mestizo*-white] self knows itself as not enslaved, but free; not repulsive, but desirable; not helpless, but licensed and powerful; . . . not damned, but innocent; not a blind accident of evolution, but a progressive fulfillment of destiny" (51-52).

Grande Sertão: Veredas is made up of Riobaldo's lengthy, meandering, and tangled pathways of autobiographical memory recounted to an unidentified male listener from the city, whose presence is only suggested by a series of interrogative, explanative, and suggestive statements including whether or not the Devil exists. By the time that the narration takes place, Riobaldo has already become a rancher, inheriting his property from his (god)father, Selorico Mendes. Raised by a poor single mother, "*quase escrava, pertencendo à população primitiva do país*" (Bolle 276), Riobaldo was born to an unknown father who only later is revealed to be his beloved godfather, the benefactor of his unlikely formal education. He becomes a tutor of a prominent local rancher, Zé Bebelo whom Riobaldo sees forming an army of *jagunços*—a sort of armed bodyguard hired by farmers and colonels to protect their property in the backland—to stamp out other local competing *jagunço* gangs. Riobaldo runs away from his godfather's ranch and joins another band of *jagunços* led by Joca Ramiro. He becomes a valued member of the band and begins to rise as a preeminent fighter and a leader. He meets Diadorim, Joca Ramiro's "son" who—as the end of the novel reveals—is actually a female in *jagunço* disguise. Throughout the novel, Riobaldo and Diadorim develop a never consummated (homo)erotic relationship. When Joca Ramiro's men defeat Zé Bebelo, the wars seem to be over until there are reports of Joca Ramiro's lieutenants, Ricardão and Hermógenes, murdering their leader. This

causes Ramiro’s army to split into two—one led by Ricardão and Hermógenes and, the other, of which Riobaldo is part, led by Medeiro Vaz. When Vaz dies, Zé Bebelo returns as leader. They survive a long-lasting siege by Hermógenes and Ricardão’s men, but Zé Bebelo loses the spirit for fighting. After waiting weeks in a village plagued by small pox, Riobaldo takes command and sends Zé Bebelo into exile. Riobaldo, then, believes he has made an uncertain pact with the Devil to kill Hermógenes and leads his band across a hostile desert. After successfully ambushing and killing Ricardão and his men, the band then goes after Hermógenes. Finding him in hiding, Diadorim—who wants revenge against Hermógenes for having killed “his” father—dual with knives to both of their deaths. When Diadorim’s body is washed for burial, Riobaldo discovers that she had been a woman. Riobaldo discharges himself from the *jagunço* lifestyle, inherits two Big Houses, and settles down as a landowner.

As with “*O burrinho pedrês*,” I will also counterfocalize Riobaldo’s central memory in order to comment on a marginal and yet powerful childhood story intrinsically related to the focalized narrative. When Riobaldo and his army of *jagunços* make their way towards overthrowing Hermógenes, they encounter the runaway slave, Guirigó. Stunned by the boy’s sudden appearance, Riobaldo describes the child in the following words:

Era um pretinho . . . rapazola retinto, mal aperfeiçoado . . . Bezerra doente, de mal-de-ano. . . Tão magro, trestriste, tão descreiado, aquele menino já devia de ter prática de todos os sofrimentos. Os olhos dele eram externados, o preto no meio dum enorme branco . . . O couro escuro dele era que tremia, constante, e tremia pelo miúdo, como que receando em si o que não podia ser bom. E quando espiava para a gente, era de beiços, mostrando a língua à grossa, colada no assoalho da boca, mais como se fosse uma língua demasiada demais, que ali dentro não pudesse caber; em bezerra pesteadado, às vezes, se vê assim. Menino muito especial. (Rosa, Grande Sertão: Veredas 369-370)

These frequent and formulaic aesthetic tactics and linguistic strategies that consistently project the black child in Guimarães Rosa’s orality mirror the cosmovision of Luso-Brazilian colonialism—ontologically, metaphorically, and metaphysically—with its divisions, omissions, paradoxes, and violence. In speaking with “a vocabulary designed to disguise the subject” (Morrison 50) instead of to fully humanize the character’s portrayal, this orality recalls and alludes to that disdainful gaze, speech, feeling, and thought of the master towards the slave, the white towards the black within the cosmovision of the *fazenda*. This is what Morrison calls the “master narrative that spoke *for* Africans and their descendants, or *of* them”. This representation of the black child also mirrors what Bhabha calls “mimicry,” a colonial discourse and its institution of identity through irony, repetition, and ambivalence, which reproduces a desire for difference (Bhabha 122).

Although Bhabha observes mimicry as a discourse from the context of British Imperialism, and Morrison explores the master narrative in North American literature, I extend these discursive strategies to encompass the Luso-Brazilian contact zone. European colonialism, to a certain extent, shared a communal vision of domination; a common ontological, metaphorical, and metaphysical cosmovision towards the enslaved black articulated in terms of polarities between colonizer and colonized, white and black, Self and Other, human and not-

fully-human. These traditional polarities did not stand as independent and equal, but rather as hierarchically interdependent subjects of which the first envisioned the Self—white, colonizer, human—through a corruption, negativity, and dehumanization of the Other—black, colonized, not-fully human. Characterizing the Afro-Brazilian child through an unmitigated redeployment of these metaphysical dichotomies—that were developed in their original contexts to disguise or mimic the black Other—reflects and resonates with both the master narrative and mimicry’s vocabulary, thoughts, traditions, and, ultimately, cosmovision of patriarchy.

From the perspective of instituting identity, when I read the above literary encounter, I see a constant construction of the *mestiço*-white Self through a determined destruction of the black Other. In the meeting between Riobaldo and Guirigó, Rosa’s language acknowledges the historical fact of the existence of runaway slaves through the portrayal of a *quilombola*, who has escaped the plantation that still enslaves his father. The child’s fugitive state has the potential to express not only his own rejection of slavery but also the socio-historic conditions represented by the *quilombola* who formed their own communities of resistance. These *quilombo* groups showed the “ability of blacks to carve out their own social and cultural community within the hostile environment of a Brazil ruled by whites” (Brookshaw 290).⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the narrative voice tends to oust Guirigó from this historical stage, displace him from any sense of community, and dismiss his political rationalization of agency by degrading and distorting not only his racial identity, but also his humanity. The orality insists on signifying the boy as the most aberrant of children, so the character becomes—not historically real or even characteristically human—a projection of the cosmovision of the figure “I” expressed in the narrative voice. Bhabha provides an explanation for how mimicry can speak with “indeterminacy,” a “forked, not false” tongue (122). On the one hand, the verisimilitude of orality reproduces the speaker’s attitudes with meticulous socio-historic realism. On the other hand, these realistic utterances towards and about the Other do not just fail to produce a credible likeness of the Other, they are never meant to in the first place, because their very intent is “the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal” (122). Moreover, the ambivalence, or “double articulation” that expects realism in the orality of the speaker but not in the object of his speech is “a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power” (122).

In this “process of disavowal,” Guimarães Rosa obviously gives Riobaldo’s narrative voice “[t]he authority of that mode of colonial discourse of mimicry” (122). In narrating his own childhood retrospectively, Riobaldo can reinforce the difference of his own childhood in relationship to that of the black child he encounters. Mimicry also allows Riobaldo to “appropriate” Guirigó for his own narrative’s autobiographical agenda while using the “process of disavowal” to distance himself from the evils in Riobaldo’s own past that Guirigó comes to represent. His *mestiço*-white gaze constantly fixates on othering Guirigó’s racial identity—with terms such as “*pretinho*,” “*rapazola retinto*”—reducing him to a metonymy of color. Ironically, a *mestiço* illegitimate son of a wealthy white landowner and a poor woman of indigenous ancestry, Riobaldo consciously reconstructs his own identity through the Other. His reduction of Guirigó to the economy and metonymy of color creates a “metonymic displacement”—a process

⁴⁷ For more details on the historical and symbolic meaning of *quilombo*, see Brookshaw 282-294.

of fashioning difference in which “[c]olor coding and other physical traits become metonyms that displace rather than signify” (Morrison 68). In other words, he displaces the ignominy of his own marginalized and illegitimate birth by transferring the degradation onto a black surrogate.

This strategy of manufacturing hyperbolized difference between Self-childhood and Other-childhood is, secondarily, focused on “[f]etishization” of the body, “establishing . . . major difference where difference does not exist or is minimal” (68). Guirigó—like the hunchbacked Alfeu in “*Pirlimpisiquice*” and the nameless black child in “*O burrinho pedrês*”—is described as physically crippled and deformed: “*Tão magro,*” “*mal aperfeiçoado,*” “*olhos dele eram externados, o preto no meio dum enorme branco,*” “*era de beiços, mostrando a língua à grossa, colada no assoalho da boca, mais como se fosse uma língua demasiada demais, que ali dentro não pudesse caber.*” This disfiguring and dismembering description of repulsive physical qualities—indeed, evocative of Manico’s complaint, “*eu acho que alguns pretos têm o branco-dos-olhos assim só para modo de assombrar a gente!*”—is then internalized—just as Miligido was alleged to be “*preto até por dentro*” (Rosa, *Sagarana* 61, 267)—to evaluate Guirigó’s emotional condition in the same way: “[T]restriste . . . *aquele menino já devia de ter prática de todos os sofrimentos,*” also alluding to his apparently guilty conscience “*como que receando em si o que não podia ser bom.*” The narrative voice finally equates the boy’s seemingly sick, sad, and guilty soul with derogatory zoomorphic metaphors—“*Bezerro doente, de mal-de-ano,*” “*bezerro pesteadado,*” and “*couro escuro.*” As Tatiana Alves Soares Caldas observes, “*significativamente, as passagens em que o pretinho aparece colocam-no como uma representação do que há de mais primitivo e impulsivo no homem*” (Caldas). These animalized descriptions, besides continuing to “displace rather than signify,” reproduce “[m]etaphysical condensation”—that is, a discourse that “[c]ollaps[es] persons into animals [and] prevents human contact and exchange”—which “allows the writer to transform social and historical differences into universal differences” (Morrison 68). Whether Rosean orality, through Riobaldo, expresses the universality of life on the backlands (Cândido 122, Bolle 47)—as Cândido asserts, “. . . *o sertão é o mundo*”—or even just a cosmovision representative of a foundational site within Brazilian history and literature, then, wouldn’t Riobaldo’s encounter with Guirigó—including all of its major racial, corporeal, and historical differentiations—show, too, something greater—on either a national or universal scale—about how the Afro-Brazilian faces degradation even by the once marginalized *mestiço*?

The treatment of Guirigó—similar to the treatment of black children in all of the abovementioned Rosean works—reveals that the Brazilian racial unconscious, like Freyre’s social democracy, does not accommodate a subjective space for the Afro-Brazilian unless he has been sufficiently whitened—and therefore, humanized—by *mestiçagem*. Moving from this broader implication to one more localized in Rosa’s work, both the cosmovision of his narrative and its construction with colonial discursive strategies restrict even imaginative space for a redemptive, humanized portrayal or role for the Afro-Brazilian character. And so, within this context and these constraints, Rosa offers “an *ironic* compromise” (Bhabha 122): He can both expose the brutality of the Afro-Brazilian—particularly, slave—experience, while also using the black slave’s degradation to assist in the literary resurrection of his *mestiço* protagonist. The Rosean slave is, moreover, both a slave to historical condition and literary device.

This double-victimization is further expressed when the narrative voice refers to the boy as a little devil or a demon, as is every single black child in all of Guimarães Rosa's abovementioned works. In order to understand Guirigó's demonization, we must first return to the metonymy of the "bezerro," or calf, introduced in the novels opening scene:

— *Nonada. Tiros que o senhor ouviu foram de briga de homem não, Deus esteja. Alvejei mira em árvores no quintal, no baixo do córrego. Por meu acerto. Todo dia isso faço, gosto; desde mal em minha mocidade. Daí, vieram me chamar. Causa dum bezerro: um bezerro branco, erroso, os olhos de nem ser—se viu—; e com máscara de cachorro. Me disseram; eu não quis avistar. Mesmo que, por defeito como nasceu, arrebicado de beijos, esse figurava rindo feito pessoa. Cara de gente, cara de cão: determinaram—era o demo.* (Rosa, *Grande Sertão: Veredas* 7)

In addition to introducing Riobaldo's narrative voice and his superstitious beliefs that run throughout the novel's entirety, there is also something comparable, here, between the anthropomorphization of this demonic creature—"bezerro branco, erroso, os olhos de nem ser," "arrebicado de beijos"—and the zoomorphism of Guirigó—"Bezerro" "de beijos" with "olhos . . . externados." The child Guirigó is associated with a demonic calf, very much like the slave child—in "*O burrinho pedrês*"—is called "um dianhinho," as is "[O] em-diabo pretinho Alfeu." Furthermore, there is something eerie and preternatural—"muito especial"—in Guirigó's sudden apparition "quase debaixo dos cavalos," like the visitation of the phantom "demo" calf and the mysterious disappearance of the slave child in "*O burrinho pedrês*." Caldas explains Riobaldo's repetitive use of the demonic metaphor for—"àquele diabrim" or "coitadinho diabinho" (*Grande Sertão: Veredas* 424, 430)—for Guirigó: ". . . alegoriza, para Riobaldo, a imagem do diabinho que traz as tentações, a vontade de praticar a crueldade gratuita" (Caldas). Riobaldo's mimicry of Guirigó's dark, dreadful, diabolic nature allows him to disavow his own cruel and violent tendencies and project them onto his black surrogate.

Guimarães Rosa's orality of mimicry repeats the association of black with evil that runs throughout Western aesthetics and Biblical tradition, its "symbolism . . . an intricate part of European culture, inhabiting its folklore and its literary and artistic heritage" (Brookshaw 4). More than just an "[e]conomy of stereotype[, that would allow] the writer a quick and easy image without the responsibility of specificity, accuracy, or even narratively useful description" (Morrison 67), Rosa's imagery and orality are neither quick nor easy. Instead of mere stereotype, his imagery and orality are unflinchingly brutal, specific, and repetitive, depending upon the fetishization of minimal differences until they grow grotesquely powerful enough to empower his protagonist and his narrative. Edward Long, as quoted by Bhabha, notes that African descendants "are represented . . . as the vilest of human kind," based on the "pretension of . . . what arises from their exterior forms" (Bhabha 129, author's emphasis). Though Riobaldo commits treason; commits senseless acts of violence, including rape and murder; and commits his soul to the Devil; he, ironically, feels the need to keep Guirigó, "vilest of human kind," at his side in order to defeat the most dreaded of *jagunços*, Hermógenes. In so doing, he is able to assume the power of vileness without taking responsibility for that vileness. Nonetheless, Riobaldo frames his connection with the boy as more of a provider:

E, por nada, mais me lembrei, de repentinamente, do menino pretozinho, que na casa do Valado a gente tinha surpreendido, que furtando num saco o que achava fácil de carregar. E tiveram de campear esse menino. Ele estava amoitado, o tempo todo, com a boca no chão, no meio do mandiocal. Quando foi pego, xingava, mordida e perneava. Ele se chamava Guirigó; com olhares demais, muito espertos. – “Guirigó, tu vem vestido, ou nu?” Como que não vinha? Aprontaram um cavalo para ele só, que devia de se emparelhar com o meu, da banda da minha mão esquerda. (Rosa, Grande Sertão: Veredas 417)

However, giving Guirigó a horse and taking him along, here, is not a liberating gesture: “*O que ele afirmava . . . era que . . . queria salvar seu corpo, queria escape. Se abraçava com qualquer poeira*” (370). As if the child is truly a “*diabrim*” or “*diabinho*,” Guirigó mysteriously appears right after Riobaldo has made a deal with the Devil on his way to “[*a*]cabar com o *Hermógenes! Reduzir aquele Homem!*” (393). Towards the end of the battle, Guirigó, literally holds the key to Hermógenes’s wife’s captivity and whispers entreaties that seem to revive Riobaldo when he falls unconscious in the last battle: “*Ouvi os rogos do menino Guirigó . . . esfregando meu peito e meus braços, reconstituindo, no dizer, que eu tinha estado sem acordo, dado ataque, mas que não tivesse espumado nem babado*” (557). This fetishization gives the child strange protective powers, as not merely a juvenile sidekick to Riobaldo’s violent and evil deeds, but as the absolute embodiment of all that evil so that Riobaldo can be “*reconstitu[ido]*,” find redemption upon his return to civilization.

In his own violent pursuits, Riobaldo ironically keeps Guirigó close to his left side, while also distancing himself from both the violence and the evil that the boy comes to represent by alleging that the child is compelling his strong desire to kill.

Até que, um certo momento, o pretinho Guirigó se chegou sorrateiro, e emitiu em minha orelha. – “Iô chefe. . .” – arenga do menino Guirigó, que às vezes bem não regulava. O capeta – ele falou no capeta? Ou então, só de olhar para ele, eu pensei no capeta; mas, que era do capeta, eu entendi. Daí, de repente, quem mandava em mim já eram os meus avessos. Aquele homem tinha quantia consigo: tinha consciência ruim e dinheiro em caixa . . . – assim eu defini. Aquele homem merecia punições de morte, eu vislumbrei, adivinhado. Com o poder de quê: luz de Lúcifer? E era, somente sei. A porque, sem prazo, se esquentou em mim o doido afã de matar aquele homem, tresmatado. [. . .]

Mas, aquilo de ruim-querer carecia de dividimento – e não tinha; o demo então era eu mesmo? Desordenei, quase, de minhas ideias. Eu matava um tiquinho, só? Em nome de mim, eu não matava? Só forcejei por sobrenadar alto em mente o mando daquela vozinha. Ru, eh, masquei meus beiços, eu arrebeintasse. Vi que acabava tendo de matar, e era o que eu mesmo queria. Como que tivesse espalhado, ombro com ombro, pelos inteiros cabíveis do Chapadão, os diabinhos, mil e mil, tocando lindas violas – para acabar com o que eu mesmo me falasse, e de mim quisesse por valia me entender, contra o que o demônio-mestre tinha determinado . . . Sendo que mal resisti, nas últimas, saiba o senhor. Ah, mas. E é preciso, por aí, o senhor ver: quem é que era e que foi aquele jagunço Riobaldo!

*Pois em instantâneo eu achei a doçura de Deus: eu clamei pela Virgem . . .
 Agarrei tudo em escuros—mas sabendo de minha Nossa Senhora! [. . .]
 — “Senhor mata? Senhor vai matar?” — o pretinho só se saiu pelos olhos.
 [. . .] “Senhor mesmo é que vai matar?” — o menino Guirigó suputou, o diabo
 falou com uma flauta. (439-443)*

Riobaldo almost comes to a conscious, albeit ambivalent, realization of the violent Self versus the violent Other at play in his relationship with Guirigó— “*o demo então era eu mesmo?*” “*quem é que era e que foi aquele jagunço Riobaldo!*” With an enduring desire to establish difference though, Riobaldo insists upon projecting his vicious experience onto the Other. In this continuous tension between two polar opposing forces— “*doçura de Deus*” versus “*luz de Lúcifer,*” good against evil, virtue in opposition to deviance—the second term, or negative power in each pair (Lucifer’s light, evil, deviance) is ascribed to “*o pretinho Guirigó . . . que às vezes bem não regulava.*” Guirigó is framed as offering the lure of temptation in whispers to Riobaldo’s left ear: “*se chegou sorrateiro, e emitiu em minha orelha.*” The first qualities— good, virtue, and “*doçura de Deus*”—represent another choice for Riobaldo. Stirred by “*o diabo [quem] falou com uma flauta,*” he invokes God and the Virgin Mary to exorcize the evil: “*Sendo que mal resisti, nas últimas, saiba o senhor . . . Pois em instantâneo eu achei a doçura de Deus: eu clamei pela virgem . . . minha Nossa Senhora!*” Residing in the mystical space between God and the Devil—a space that recalls Freyre’s mythical “equilibrium of antagonisms”—which Riobaldo believes to be paradoxically both protective and vulnerable to temptation, he is faced with what his narrative frames as a moral choice. Conveniently choosing “the sweetness of God” in hindsight, once he has already tasted the sweetness of victory over his enemy, Riobaldo ultimately distances himself from Guirigó and all he represents, including his own pact with the Devil.

The cosmovisional view of the black child character associated with “*diabrim*” or “*diabinho*” and every black character standing for the metonymy of the Devil runs throughout the Rosean narrative’s orality, mythology, and metaphysics. The symbols and metaphors through which Guirigó is constructed are, in fact, entrenched in the historical and psychological experiences that *Grande Sertão: Veredas* represent. The demonization of blacks and prejudice against them in “Brazil, as in other countries of the New World,” according to Brookshaw, “has been and is still among the most entrenched in our historical experience because of centuries of slavery” (4). Rosa’s narrative suggests that the deep historical effects of slavery still reside in the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious of Brazilian society. While the former involves what Carl Jung calls “repressed feelings and thoughts” that constitute the personal and private side of psychic life, the latter comprises a “structure of inherited feelings, thoughts, and memories that all human beings possess . . . ‘archetypes’ . . . primordial images from the earliest stages of human existence . . . that connect and unify the major symbol systems of the worlds’ myths, religions, and literatures” (Leitch 988). Western aesthetics, says Brookshaw, play into the worldview that associates blackness with evil. As such, there is something archetypal about the color black passed down through “feelings, thoughts, and memories” on racial difference that play an intricate role in the aesthetization and symbolization of Guirigó as a “*diabinho.*”

In fact, a centuries-old mythological character associated with both the indigenous and the African in Brazilian popular tradition, long preceding any of Guimarães Rosa’s writings, is

Saci—a one-legged, pipe-smoking black boy with holes in his hands. Saci’s magical hat gives him the power to appear and disappear wherever he pleases, allowing him to play mischievous, and sometimes wicked, tricks on unsuspecting victims (Lobato). Undoubtedly intertextualized⁴⁸ with Sacian mythology, Guirigó’s characterization plays on this archetype, both physically and psychologically. Although Saci is sometimes depicted as *mestiço* or *mulato*, Guirigó’s skin is decidedly “*preto reluzente*.” Instead of Saci’s one leg, Riobaldo specifically mentions “*áquele sacizinho de duas pernas*,” (Rosa, *Grande Sertão: Veredas* 418) cementing Guirigó’s relationship with Saci’s archetype, while distinguishing him, too, with two legs. Saci’s punctured hands bring to mind Guirigó’s description as “*mal aperfeiçoado*,” and his trickster-like character, Guirigó’s “*senvergonhice*” “*com olhares demais, muito espertos*” (417). Finally, Saci’s wicked nature reminds us of every Rosean black child that has been called “*em-diabo pretinho*,” “*dianhinho*,” “*diabrim*,” “*diabinho*,” or “*capeta*” by Rosean narrators, *mestiço* overseers, and white masters. The repetitive descriptors that Rosa’s narratives employ on the black child—as ugly; deformed; having large, scary, strange eyes and/or mouths; animal-like; demonic; entering and exiting the plot like a phantom—clearly intertextualize the archetypes and metonymies of color with which Brazilian folklore, collective unconscious, and colonial memory already resonate.

According to Bhabha, this recurring, diabolized “black presence . . . tethered with treacherous . . . primitivism and degeneracy will not produce a history of civil progress, a space of the *Socius* (Bhabha 60). Therefore, once Rosa’s primitive, degenerate black child has sufficiently served his master protagonist’s narrative purpose, he vanishes from the plot like the archetypal Saci in Brazilian folklore disappearing in a whirlwind; like the nameless child slave in “*O burrinho pedrês*” who “*ninguém não viu, nem teve noticia dele mais*,” and like Alfeu in “*Pirlimpisiquice*,” whose childhood peers grow up to be educated professionals while his whereabouts are only interrogative. These questionable exits of black children from Guimarães Rosa’s plots are just as mysterious as their entrances. In fact, the small slave child’s introduction—“*Que pretinho, Manico?*”—begins with almost the same question—“*E o pretinho, Manico?*”—that signals his mysterious leave-taking. “*E o em-diabo pretinho Alfeu . . . ?*” The undetermined future of even the most minor of the abovementioned characters, Alfeu, inspires the question: Whatever happened to him? Although—in Guirigó’s case—it could be predicted that he, too, would take his leave from the central plot, it is still somewhat unexpected—especially considering his more prominent minor role in Riobaldo’s narrative—that Guirigó’s sudden disappearance goes completely unmentioned. These questions, then, remain: What happened to Guirigó in the end, and what is the significance of his withdrawal from the text?

The last scene in which Guirigó appears is dramatic, but he is already on the periphery of this drama. In order to understand his leave-taking, it is important to return to an examination of what brought him briefly to the spotlight in the first place. I have already detailed the process through which Guimarães Rosa has drawn Riobaldo and Guirigó together with the intention of juxtaposition and differentiation based primarily on racialized language within the mimetic vocabulary of his socio-cultural context and on dehumanizing fetishization of the black body that reveal the racial unconscious of his characters and his society. Next, I have described the ambivalent process of disavowal, which requires enough proximity with the Other to amplify the

⁴⁸ “*áquele sacizinho de duas pernas*.”

differences between the Self and the Other, but also calls for a rejection of the Other for—and distancing the Self from—the very characteristics that have been amplified and/or manufactured in the Other. Guirigó’s abrupt departure from Riobaldo’s narrative is the culmination of this disavowal process. Using a perversion of Matthew 6:13 as a sort of roadmap, the diabolized child Guirigó paradoxically leads the violent *jagunço* Riobaldo “into temptation” (my emphasis) in order to “deliver” Riobaldo from the evil projected upon him (Guirigó) by Riobaldo’s mimicry (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible*). The intensity of the terror and violence that they confront, commit, and endure together correlates with the intensity of temptation and evil that Riobaldo projects on the child at his left hand. And so, when Riobaldo’s fighting days are done, in a climactic finish rife with paradox and irony, both his sworn enemy and his dearest companion lie dead. Staggering “*permeio o menino Guirigó e o cego Borrromeu*” (Rosa, *Grande Sertão: Veredas* 559)—in ardent tears at the sight of his beloved Diadorim’s body—Riobaldo hears the last words that either his figurative shoulder devil or his figurative shoulder angel will utter in the novel. In a spontaneous, unison cry of “*Ai, Jesus!*” they make their last appearance in Riobaldo’s narrative, as if in an exorcism, appealing to Jesus before (like the slave child in “*O burrinho pedrês,*”) “*ninguém não viu, nem teve notícia dele[s] mais!*” Only indirectly does Riobaldo address the banishment of these respective representatives of evil (Guirigó) and of good (the blind man, Borrromeu), when he ultimately denies the Devil’s existence: “*O diabo não há! . . . Existe é homem humano*” (*Grande Sertão: Veredas* 568). Having now drawn this conclusion, from the comfort of his own *fazenda*, he is able to dismiss when his servants “*determinaram*” that a strange calf “*era o demo.*” In fact, he won’t even look: “*eu não quis avistar*” (7). As Riobaldo defines it, there is no longer room in his cosmovision for the inhuman or the diabolic.

By banishing his own imaginative “primitivism and degeneracy [that] will not produce a history of civil progress,” he reclaims his life story as a record of “civil progress,” now populating his narrative and his *fazenda* with “*homem humano*” in “a space of the *Socius*” (Bhabha 60). Below is a veritable litany of “*homem humano*” who accompany his rise as the new master of Selorico Mendes’s bequeathed *fazendas*:

E sozinhozinho não estou, há-de-o. Pra não isso, hei colocadoi redor meu minha gente. Olhe o senhor: aqui, pegado, vereda abaixo, o Paspé—meeiro meu—é meu. Mais légua se tanto, tem o Acauã, e tem o Compadre Ciril, ele e três filhos, sei que servem. Banda desta mão, o Alaripe: soubesse o senhor o que é que se preza, em rifleio e à faca, um cearense feito esse! Depois mais: o João Nonato, o Quipes, o Pacamã-de-Presas. E o Fafafa—este deu lances altos, todo lado comigo, no combate velho do Tamanduá-tão: limpamos o vento de quem não tinha ordem de respirar, e antes esses desrodeamos . . . (22-23)

Guirigó’s obvious absence from the list of *jagunços* that guard Riobaldo’s inherited land as well as from the roll-call of laborers who work the plantations and serve the Big House confirms that Riobaldo classifies him as neither human nor as man. Nevertheless, the mysterious absence of this “*Menino muito especial*” after accompanying Riobaldo’s narrative for nearly two hundred pages, leads to more ambivalence, more questions than conclusions, which—as I have shown—is typical for the disappearance of the Rosean black child. Like a cowboy searching for the lost slave boy or the nostalgic narrator wondering whatever happened to Alfeu, we are left to ask: *E o*

menino Guirigó, João? Was he a figment of the imagination? Was he really an evil spirit, or a little devil? If he was human, does this absence equate to an escape from the patriarchal system, or does it simply reflect the omission of slaves or children (or both) from the official list of human resources? Perhaps the unknown and insecure are telling signs of the Afro-Brazilian experience within the patriarchal colonial system.

Of the many Rosean children, those whose potential are realized and whose fate seem secure are those who mark themselves as decidedly different from the Afro-Brazilian child. Even the humble *mestiço* child can grow up to become the master, but he inherits more than just the Big House; he also assumes—in fact, depends upon—the colonial cosmovision on race and patriarchal hierarchy to justify his own rise in power and prominence. Still, as not to oversimplify the *mestiço* point of view, it is important to recognize just how unique such perspective from the marginalized *agregado* or *jagunço* cowboy on the subjugation of the Afro-Brazilian Other is within the popular rhetoric of *mestiçagem* of Guimarães Rosa's time. What distinguishes Rosa's *mestiçagem* from Freyre's is the *mestiço*'s own proximity with, perspective on, and motive for distancing himself from the black character. Also coming from humble and humiliated origin, “*quase escrava*” (Bolle 276) the *mestiço* protagonist-narrator is able to describe in unflinchingly gruesome detail—like the function of a slave narrative—what the daily business of slavery really looks and sounds like. While this was revolutionary within a time that romanticized Lusotropicalism, at the same time, the Rosean *mestiço*-child-become-master narrator must go to great lengths to prove that he is not, in fact, a slave and that he is suitable to become the master. And so, his narrative ironically takes on the colonial tone, mimetic orality, and thematic metonymies of the master narrative (as opposed to a slave narrative) that the patriarchal system uses to rationalize and legitimize the inevitability of the evil and inferior black subject's status in society. Using these literary strategies to demonstrate the *mestiço* child turned protagonist's own worthiness for redemption; the fear, violence, and suffering that mark the black character—even when humanized enough to inspire pity in the *mestiço* protagonist—become symbolic of the unredemptive state, tragic outcome, and ambiguous future of the black child.

Chapter III

Staging the Present, Making it Equal: Indigenous Oral Traditions and the Representation of Children in Mia Couto

The undeniable intertextuality between Mia Couto and Guimarães Rosa resides in various linguistic and thematic domains. As I mentioned in the introduction, some pioneering comparativists⁴⁹ first studied this relationship from a transmission and causality point of view. They point out how the Mozambican author's orality⁵⁰ recalls, "in many respects the world of Guimarães Rosa" (Daniel 3), specifically speculating on similarities in their presumed cosmovisional and socio-historic perspectives in addition to their thematic and metaphorical treatment of children and childhood. My own comparative study between Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto takes into consideration the historical predicaments that both authors inherit, grapple with, and attempt to render meaningful. This context sheds light on the subsequent cosmovisions and socio-historic conditions that inform their literary and social commentary. My aim in this chapter is to show that Mia Couto intertextualizes Rosean-like linguistic and thematic resources to express a very different point of view on race and the colonized subject.

As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, Guimarães Rosa writes from the point of view of a historical continuum with the Luso-Brazilian history of colonialism, slavery and their lingering consequences. These socio-historical factors orient his orality and his intention to use the *mestiço*-white narrator-protagonist to both underline and undermine his country's preeminent social discourse on the legacy of Lusotropicalism. Although his language does assert African intertwined with indigenous traditions, his narrators invariably speak with a mimetic orality that exposes racial antagonism within the Lusotropical space. Here, Riobaldo remarks on the existence of a distant and indigenous nation, outside of the physical contact zone, but not beyond the reach of highly racialized orality: "*Quem tem mais dose de demo em si é índio, qualquer raça de bugre. Gente vê nação desses, para lá fundo dos gerais de Goiás*" (*Grande Sertão: Veredas* 20). With shocking candor, Rosean orality reveals the alienation and othering of groups residing outside of *mestiçagem*. In the last chapter, I discussed at length the consistent portrayal of Afro-Brazilians within the patriarchal system. I want to re-emphasize Bolle's observation that Guimarães Rosa "*não estuda o negro per se, mas em 'sua condição de escravo'*" (Bolle 277). As mentioned in the introduction, Iládio from "*Dão Lalalão (O Devente)*" exemplifies the humiliated condition of the slave in graphic detail, characteristic of Rosean narration: "*rolava de besta abaixo, se ajoelhava . . . o preto Iládio deitado na poeira . . . tremia de mãos e pernas.— 'Tu é besta, seô! Losna! Trepá em tua mula e desenvolve daqui. . .'* —*Soropita comandava aquele grande escravo aos pés de seu cavalo*" (*Noites do Sertão* 114). Setting his *mestiço*-white narrator in a position of power allows all Others (especially the indigenous and Afro-Brazilian) to be identified through the language and thought of the Big House—which, as Rosa's detailed accounts of the rural patriarchal system show, certainly does not equate to a socially or racially

⁴⁹ These include Daniel in "Mia Couto: Guimarães Rosa's Newest Literary Heir in Africa" and Cláudia da Silva and Ramos Ventura in *Ciranda de escritas*.

⁵⁰ As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, orality encompasses the well documented "[w]ord blending," "[w]ords generated by other categories of the same base morpheme," "[m]odification of proverbs or set phrases," "[f]olk etymology," "[i]nter-paradigm influence," "[a]ltered affixation," "[s]imple internal phonological change," and "[e]choic devices" ("Mia Couto: Guimarães Rosa's Newest Literary Heir in Africa, 12-13).

democratized setting. Therefore, *mestiço*-white and Afro-Brazilian children are—ontologically, epistemologically, and mystically—portrayed through a repetition of the traditional opposing conditions, as in Self versus Other, always from the elevated viewpoint of a *mestiço*-white narrator who invariably distances his own rising status from the unredemptive and/or tragic fate of the Afro-Brazilian.

As I outlined in chapter two, this reiteration of hierarchy and patriarchy, often coming from the orality of protagonist-narrators who themselves come from humble, marginalized origins, has a number of implications, some of which are conflicting, that I will quickly review below. First, the narrator's highly racialized, often dehumanizing, language towards the Other unveils the racial unconscious in the backland society. Second, this discursive tactic demystifies the Brazilian dominant historical, social, and racial discourses that mythologized a romantic intercultural contact zone. Third, the *mestiço*-white narrator's orality candidly reveals a more realistic historical experience of the violent attitudes and treatment endured by Afro-Brazilians in the social formation and evolution of the country. Fourth, the reiteration of the traditional patriarchy's ontological and epistemological dichotomies always foreclose the Afro-Brazilian to a caricaturized existence on the page and a tragic, often mysterious conclusion to this black minor character's role. Finally, in employing the black character as a surrogate for the fear, loathing, violence, and ultimate tragedy of the Lusotropical contact zone, the Afro-Brazilian character functions to propel the *mestiço*-white narrator-protagonist's story towards his own redemptive state. Therefore, the redeemed *mestiço* and the tragic *pretinho* create an ambiguity in the Rosean narrative; these characterizations paradoxically expose the cruelty and injustice of colonial racial hierarchies but also reinforce these racial hierarchies.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Mia Couto unquestionably discovers in Guimarães Rosa the linguistic innovation of “*alguém que dizia ‘isto pode-se fazer literariamente’*” (Felinto) with language. Couto describes Guimarães Rosa, Luandino Vieira, and a number of authors, poets, and even singers/songwriters⁵¹ as having confirmed for him the validity, the value, and the beauty of using the Portuguese language to express Mozambican postcolonial experience.⁵² From a lifetime in a country where native orality comeslingles with schooled Portuguese, from his work as a *frelimista* journalist infiltrating a colonial Portuguese newspaper on behalf of the Mozambique Liberation Front,⁵³ and from publishing his first collection of Mozambican poetry before coming into contact with the Rosean narrative, Mia Couto's literary trajectory is based upon principles of linguistic, cultural, and political resistance to the confines of the Portuguese language—and patriarchy for that matter—and is also founded

⁵¹ Couto's interviews with Salem et al and Felinto quote him as recognizing many literary influences, including these fifteen: Guimarães Rosa, Luandino Vieira, Manoel de Barros, Drummond de Andrade, João Cabral de Melo Neto, Adélia Prado, Manoel Bandeira, Vinicius de Moraes, Chico Buarque, Sofia de Melo Braga, Graciliano, Jorge Amado, Caetano, Chico Buarque, o Gilberto.

⁵² “O Chico, o Caetano, o Gilberto, essa gente nos fez ter orgulho desta coisa. Porque até certa altura até tínhamos vergonha de falar a língua do colonizador, a língua dos mais pobres mostrando que essa língua era rica e brilhava quando era cantada. Então isso tem que ser continuado, e isso sempre foi feito contra a corrente, sempre foi feito por pessoas e não por instituições” (Felinto).

⁵³ See Couto's first-hand account of his involvement with Frelimo in the interview, “Mia Couto e o exercício da humildade,” with Marilene Felinto.

upon a poetic sensibility to the open possibilities of language to express the orality and the logic of his own culture. Upon coming into contact with, first, Vieira and, then, Rosa, he explains, “*Eu sabia que eu queria fazer isso, mas eu precisava de uma credencial do mais velho que disse ‘esse caminho é abençoado’*” (Felinto). He saw in his precursors’ orality a linguistic project that “*é mais do que um trabalho lingüístico-poético.*” These writers demonstrate that Portuguese language can be refashioned into a more malleable device for mimicry in which writing is not an independent structure of signification but excessively permeated by speech, thus challenging the traditional writing logic to make room for traditional orality of cultures like that of the backlands of the Rosean *sertão*, the suburbs of Vieira’s Luanda, or the undefined regions of Couto’s Mozambique. This was a project that already resonated with Couto’s previous body of literary, journalistic, and political work and continues to be clearly intertextualized in his work today.

To respond to previous scholarship on Mia Couto’s supposed kinship with or affinity for the Rosean cosmivision, I intend to show how Couto’s intertextuality with Guimarães Rosa’s language, its patterns of sign making and relocation in the narrative, does not repeat Rosa’s worldview but expresses Couto’s own unique cosmivision. Contrary to the Rosean narrative’s context of slavery and patriarchy, Mia Couto writes from a perspective of historical break in relationship to the Portuguese history of colonialism,⁵⁴ including its “*prazo*”⁵⁵ system and “*chibalo*,”⁵⁶ or forced labor in Mozambique. The Mozambican Revolution, culminating in independence in 1975, is the ultimate violent mark of this temporal caesura, an event for which Mia Couto worked politically and literarily. This historical predicament is reflected in his use of language, particularly guiding the point of view of his orality. Unlike the Rosean orality of the Big House, Couto’s language does not repeat, but interrogates Portuguese colonialism, questions racial hierarchies, and dissolves the traditional metaphysical dichotomies. As Couto explains in the preface of *Estórias abensonhadas*, “*Estas estórias falam desse território onde . . . todo homem é igual*” (7). One of the aesthetic effects of this linguistic and conceptual innovation is equalizing the dichotomist perspective between orality and script, which allows for the unwritten history of the colonized to rise from obscurity as an alternative to the well-known recorded history of the colonizer. The translation of indigenous mythologies from native languages to Portuguese, in stories such as “*Lenda de Namarói*” and “*Nas águas do tempo*,” for example, retrieves a history of the Mozambican marginalized subject that was unrecognized by colonial history.

Couto’s consciousness of and resistance to oppressive hierarchical forms of identity also take expression in the way his orality interrogates “[*o racismo colonial . . . contra os mulatos, e os pretos*” and the classism against whites, like himself, born in the colony. For Couto, who was

⁵⁴ “In reality, Couto is much more radical than many critics have hitherto realized. . . . [H]e chooses to subvert and exploit European paradigms in order to fashion a complexity analogous to that of his nation. His texts challenge the monism of the early years of the Frelimo regime as much as they rebuke colonialism” (25).

⁵⁵ “Prazos” were a social, political, and economic structure during Portuguese colonialism introduced in sixteenth century and abolished in early twentieth century (Newitt 217). Newitt compares them with “hologram, presenting a different image according to the angle of vision. To the Portuguese they were land grants held under Roman Law contracts of emphyteusis, but from the African perspective they were essentially chieftaincies . . . part of a complex system of social and economic relations bounding together all the peoples of the region. This dual character [of the prazo] was a unique interface between Africa, Asia, and Europe and led to the growth of syncretic cultural and social forms which . . . evidently had considerable vitality” (Newitt).

⁵⁶ See Newitt 406, 410, 412-413.

considered “*branco de segunda*”⁵⁷ within his colonial homeland, orality’s potential to deconstruct patriarchy and hierarchy is very personal and intertwined with asserting the independence of his country. This cosmivision could be summed up in his own words: “*falar a língua do colonizador, a língua dos mais pobres mostrando que essa língua [é] rica e brilh[a] quando [é] c[o]ntada. Então isso tem que ser continuado, e isso sempre foi feito contra a corrente, sempre foi feito por pessoas e não por instituições*” (Felinto). Indeed, having endured first-hand the arbitrary divisions of colonial rule, often senseless violence of two wars, and disillusionment with his own political party,⁵⁸ Couto expresses a belief in very personal literary work “*feito contra a corrente*” and dismisses institutional authority.

To redress the institutionalized ontological and epistemological order that repressed Mozambican identity for centuries, one of the concerns of his work is to dissolve colonial hierarchies of race, class, gender, and identity. Colonialism is not, however, absent from this postcolonial work, but his narratives moves beyond patriarchal confines, especially in terms of modes of representation. Through the abolition of those colonial divisions between *brancos*, *mulatos*, and *pretos*, his language authorizes his subjects’ identities and forms of expression. For Couto, the identity of the marginalized subjects can only be constituted through questioning colonialism, refashioning the colonizer’s language, asserting indigenous cultural traditions and points of view, and writing an alternative history. “*Em todas as estórias se reconhece o trabalho profundamente pessoal de recriação da linguagem, o aproveitamento literário da fala popular moçambicana*” (*Estórias abensonhadas*, Dust Jacket). Still, the defeat of colonialism and the reclamation of the indigenous do not give the native Mozambican subjects, cultures, and philosophies priority or hegemony in Couto’s works.

Instead, the native myths are often understood, in Couto, through the simultaneous presence of Christian and Islamic traditions, which have coexisted syncretically, interdependently, and independently for centuries with the indigenous traditions in Mozambique.⁵⁹ Multi-layered examples of this coexistence and hybridity can be found in Couto’s *Estórias abensonhadas*, post-war short stories concerned with the archeology of Mozambican oral traditions. In the case of two stories, “*A Praça dos Deuses*” and “*Lenda de Namarói*,” Couto writes epigraphs, specifically citing the oral histories—in one case, “*recolhido pelo padre Elia Ciscato*” (13) and, in another, retold by “*Che Amur*”—which respectively “*serve[m] de carço a*” (181) each of the above published stories. While *Che* (from Couto’s reference to Che Amur) has a folk etymology from the Arabic *Sheikh*,⁶⁰ an honorific Islamic title used in northern Mozambique, *padre* (from Couto’s citation of padre Elia Ciscato) is the title of a Catholic priest, in this case, Elia Ciscato, who studied northern Mozambican ethnic groups (Rothwell 137). Although Che Amur and padre Elia Ciscato are actual people from whom Couto

⁵⁷ “O racismo colonial era contra os mulatos, e os pretos. Eu era tido como branco de segunda, porque nasci aqui. Eu não tinha acesso a certas funções no governo colonial. Meus pais eram brancos de primeira, e eu era branco de segunda. Meus filhos seriam brancos de terceira, e aquilo estava hierarquizado” (Felinto).

⁵⁸ See above-mentioned Felinto interview.

⁵⁹ “Since the time of the pharaohs the Mediterranean world had participated in the trade of the Indian Ocean. . . . As a by-product of this trade the peoples of the Indian Ocean received the monotheistic religions of the Middle East” (Newitt 13).

⁶⁰ “*Sheik*.” Thefreedictionary.com. Thefreedictionary, 2003. Thefreedictionary, Web. Sept. 10, 2013.

gathered oral histories, they can also be seen as emblematic entities of the religious, cultural, and mythological coexistence and hybridity at work in Couto's country and in his texts. While the *padre's* title denotes his authority on Judeo-Christian mythology, *Che* connotes high status in the Islamic culture. Ironically, the Christian priest and the Islamic *Che* do not recount their own mythologies to Couto, but that of the indigenous of their areas, representing a diversely textured hybridity in their collaboration to translate native myths into the Portuguese language. From a nationalistic point of view, the Mozambican myth that Couto recounts—as I argue in “*Lenda de Namarói*” and “*Nas águas do tempo*”—is now marked by multiple layers of multicultural and multilingual translation into Portuguese language.

This hybridity also affects the Mozambican subject. In fact, Mia Couto's language often portrays this hybrid subject visually as *mulato*, *mestiço*, or “*negr[o] de pele mais clara*” (*Jesusalém* 15). Using the term *mulato* or *mestiço*—another intertextual element that he shares with Rosa's preoccupation with *mestiçagem*—to signify a predominantly black Mozambican society is somewhat radical, problematic, and vulnerable to criticism for its racial whitening connotations. However, I do not read Couto's *mestiçagem* to be a commentary on the dominant race; it is rather a displaced term—absent of the othering discourse of his predecessor—attempting to signify cultural hybridity of the modern Mozambican society. In *Jesusalém*, for example, a family is made up of a black, former revolutionary father, a mother who is “*um bocadinho mulata*” (15), and lighter-skinned black children to metaphorically bring together the different groups that had been divided by colonial hierarchies and that still compose postcolonial Mozambique. Couto's narrative is a performance of multiracial, multilingual, and multicultural integration that would not be possible in terms of colonialism, its patriarchal language and racist/classist attitudes towards blacks, mulatos, *mestiços*, and second-class white citizens. “*Por isso, quando conto a minha história me misturo, mulato não das raças, mas das existências,*” explains a narrator in *Vozes anoitecidas* (75). The metaphor of *mestiçagem* is part of Mia Couto's ongoing aesthetic project to erase even the remnants of patriarchy's traditional polarities. This chapter will examine how these hybridities and intertextualities—in orality of language and thematic employment of the marginalized—play out in such novels as *Jesusalém* and short stories as those in *Estórias abensonhadas*, *Cronicando*, and *Vozes anoitecidas*.

Archival Translation of Oral Traditions in Two *Estórias abensonhadas*

Estou contando coisas que nunca soube. Por minha boca falam, no calor da febre, os que nos fazem existir e nos dão e retiram nossos nomes. Agora, o senhor me traduza, sem demoras. Não tarda que eu perca a voz que agora me vai chegando.

Mia Couto

Mia Couto's “*Lenda de Namarói*” and “*Nas águas do tempo*” are two outstanding narratives concerning the genesis story as conceived in Mozambican tradition. While “*Nas águas do tempo*” provides a southern story of creation, “*Lenda de Namarói*” represents the north. A native Macua woman, the wife of a northern *régulo*,⁶¹ narrates “*Lenda de Namarói*” to

⁶¹ A *régulo* was an indigenous chief appointed by the the Portuguese colonial administration whose role was overseeing the village, including collecting taxes and recruiting labour (Newitt 382 and 87).

an implicit listener whom the epigraph identifies as the abovementioned Father Elia Ciscato. The creation myth she tells can be summarized in the following excerpt:

Vou contar a versão do mundo, a razão de brotarmos homens e mulheres No princípio, todos éramos mulheres. Os homens não haviam. Assim foi até aparecer um grupo de mulheres que não sabia como parir. . . . Aconteceu então o seguinte: as restantes mulheres pegaram nessas inférteis e as engoliram, todas e inteiras. Ficaram três dias cheias dessa carga, redondas de uma nova gravidez. Passado esse tempo as mulheres que haviam engolido as outras deram à luz. Esses seres que estavam dentro dos ventres ressurgiram mas sendo outros, nunca antes vistos. Tinham nascido os primeiros homens. (141)

While the Macua legend above centers on the creative wisdom and power of the indigenous woman, “*Nas águas do tempo*” is a childhood memory of a modern-day Ronga man who recalls the times when his grandfather would take him down the river to a mystical lake in order to teach him about the ancient traditions and eternal wisdom of the water: “*Ele me segurava a mão e me puxava para a margem . . . me conduzia, um passo à frente de mim . . . Depois viajávamos até ao grande lago onde o nosso pequeno rio desaguava. Aquele era o lugar das interditas criaturas. Tudo o que ali se exibia, afinal, se inventava de existir. . . . Dizem: o primeiro homem nasceu de uma dessas canas*” (14-15). Couto composed these stories, published in *Estórias abensonhadas*, after the Mozambican Civil War, “*entre as margens da mágoa e da esperança.*” Lasting over fifteen years, the war—to Couto—seemed to have left his country in “*apenas cinzas,*” until he reports to have discovered “*no mais inacessível de nós, lá onde a violência não podia golpear, lá onde a barbárie não tinha acesso . . .*” what he calls, the voices of the land: “*Em todo este tempo, a terra guardou, inteiras, as suas vozes*” (7). “*Lenda de Namarói*” and “*Nas águas do tempo*” are representative of Couto’s literary project to reconstruct the nation by beginning a creative archive of the land, including Mozambican languages, mythologies, and cultures that transcend the country’s history of colonization, violence, and regionalism in a literature that connects all the people.

Though Couto’s “*Lenda de Namarói*” and “*Nas águas do tempo*” form intertextual intersections with Rosa’s “*A terceira margem do rio,*” a short story in *Primeiras estórias* (1962), the thematic similarities diverge in metaphor. The rivers, the parental figures, the young boys turned men or, in the case of “*Lenda de Namarói,*” the first childlike men to become partners to female creators may recall other genesis stories—that of the biblical Adam and Eve⁶² and that of Noah⁶³—with their aquatic, terrestrial, temporal, and intergenerational symbolism; but neither Rosa’s nor Couto’s short stories take moralistic stances. Also, only Couto’s recount indigenous mythology and, like the biblical Genesis stories, discuss the origins of man and woman. In “*A terceira margem do rio,*” the Rosean *pai-filho* relationship is filled with haunting *saudade*, abandonment, rejection, and discontinuity, as the son incessantly laments the father who has forsaken him for a mysterious otherworldly existence on the river: “*Ele estava lá, sem a minha tranquilidade*” (81). The river on which the father floats in isolation—“*de dia nem de noite, da*

⁶² Genesis 2:4-3:24

⁶³ Genesis 5:32-10:1

forma como cursava no rio, solto solitariamente” (78)—serves as an insurmountable border between generations as well as between the physical and spiritual worlds. Conversely, the Coutian relationship between grandfather and grandson shows intimately interdependent generations with fundamentally connected historical identities, mirroring and feeding into each other like the story’s water and time. Almost like life-giving blood coursing through the veins of one generation after another, the narrator associates the river with “*as velhas palavras de meu velho avô: água e o tempo são irmãos gémeos, nascidos do mesmo ventre. E eu acabava de descobrir em mim um rio que não haveria nunca de morrer*” (*Estória abensonhadas* 17). Couto’s river, in “*Nas águas do tempo,*” is a metaphor for continuity and immortality, a metaphysical space where the living can still access the non-living ancestors. The river allows the traditional to permeate into modern life, just as it allows the self-exiled men of “*Lenda de Namarói*” to rejoin their creator women until “[o] mundo já quase não dispunha de dois lados” (143). Indeed, the Coutian narrative aims to bridge Mozambique’s societal divides—“*costurassem as duas margens em que sua carne se havia aberto*”—created by colonization’s systematic cultural imperialism and institutionalized patriarchy as well as the foreign “*modelos de governação que foram instalados, [depois da independência] quer fossem primeiro socialistas quer fossem depois capitalistas . . . deslocados de nós, [e que] não despertavam aquilo que era a cultura mais profunda . . . o fator religioso*” (Felinto). Couto imbues his narratives with what he calls this very African religiosity, creating permeable spaces—not borders—between what Western traditions consider to be clearly defined boundaries. What is known and unknown, what is nontransmittible between the living and the dead, what is divisive between the male and female, even what is untranslatable between “*a religiosidade dos africanos*” (Salem et al) and the Christianity of the Portuguese are all perceived divisions that Couto’s stories imaginatively, even religiously, overcome.

The Coutian narrative’s concern with connecting contemporary postcolonial and post-war literature to indigenous traditions—especially “*a religião da África [que] permeia todos os outros campos de existência*” (Salem et al)—demonstrates a limited thematic and cosmovisional intertextuality between Couto’s work and Rosa’s. Yet, there is still ample evidence of recognizable Rosean-style orality in Coutian narration. A side-by-side comparison of Couto’s and Rosa’s works finds the following intertextualized linguistic characteristics. First, there is the distinctive innovation in word blending, as is custom—according to Couto—in the everyday orality of even the Mozambican marketplace, where a salesperson might advertise a cupboard as an “*arrumário*”⁶⁴ without even realizing that he has both invented a word and intertextualized a word previously published by Couto (Salem et al). Samples of invented portmanteau words found in Rosa’s short stories include “*sussurruído,*”⁶⁵ “*desnacer,*”⁶⁶ and “*malandraja*”⁶⁷ (*Primeiras estórias* 72, 97, 161); while Couto introduces the words “*desabandonado,*”⁶⁸

⁶⁴ *arrumar + armário*

⁶⁵ *sussurro + ruído*

⁶⁶ *des + nascer*

⁶⁷ *mal + andrajo*

⁶⁸ *des + abandonado*

“*crepusculando*,”⁶⁹ and “*desbengalado*”⁷⁰ (*Estórias abensonhadas* 13). Both authors creatively play with meaning and morphology to create often-humorous oxymoronic compounds and contractions of words. Second, the incorporation of local terms within the Portuguese lexicon also distinguishes the works of both authors as well as their own highly oral societies. In Rosa’s backlands, however, purely indigenous words—such as the Tupi “*catu*,” good; “*poranga*,” beautiful;⁷¹ or “*tuxa morubixa*,” chief⁷²—are extremely rare, and are more often used in nonsensical fragments of speech or, as I will discuss below, Lusophonized composites that “*misturam o português, o tupi e o animal dos resmungos e rugidos*” (Galvão 21). While the native Tupi language, in Rosa, often functions to “equat[e] speech with grunts or other animal sounds[,] clos[ing] off the possibility of communication” (Morrison 68); Couto’s indigenous narratives employ countless examples of indigenous terms—like “*namwetxo moha*,” ghost in Sena; “*xipefo*,” kerosene lamp in Xitswa and Xangana; and “*tchova-xitaduma*,” hand-driven cart in some southern Mozambican Bantu languages (*Estórias abensonhadas* 15, 23, 52)—to denote culturally and contextually relevant objects and concepts bound to the daily experience, speech, and cosmovision of Mozambicans in various local languages. Third, the Lusophonization of regional native terms commonly enters the orality of these authors, as in the Tupi-Portuguese fusion at work in Rosa’s writing⁷³—“*pajeando*,”⁷⁴ practicing spiritual, prophetic and healing duties (*Primeiras estórias* 193); “*tapejar*,”⁷⁵ to guide, to know the path; and “*colominhando*,”⁷⁶ acting like a boy (*Grande Sertão: Veredas* 112, 176)—next to the way diverse Mozambican languages comingle with Couto’s “*zululuava*,”⁷⁷ made one’s self dizzy, and “*tchovar*,”⁷⁸ to push (as in the cart, *tchova-xitaduma*) in Xitswa and Xangana (*Estórias abensonhadas* 37, 45). A fourth common linguistic technique is the mimicry of expressions common in Brazilian versus Mozambican spoken Portuguese. For Rosa, this sounds like “*Cê vai, ocê fique, você nunca volte*” (*Primeiras estórias* 77). For Couto’s narrative, colloquial expressions—“*Mas vocês vão aonde?*” “*Voltamos antes de um agorinha.*” (*Estórias abensonhadas* 13) and “*Sempre em favor da água, nunca esqueça!*” (14)—show his aesthetic sensibility to popular language and add to the verisimilitude of his characters’ dialogue. Mia Couto observes his country’s regionalist sociolinguistic tendencies—“*É um processo muito livre aqui.*”—to reinvent their own forms of Mozambican Portuguese: “*As pessoas misturam português e como dizia uma camponesa da Zambézia, ‘eu falo português corta-mato’*” (Felinto). With a keen ear for Mozambican popular

⁶⁹ *crepusculo* + *ar* + *ando*

⁷⁰ *des* + *bengala* + *ar* + *ado*

⁷¹ For more detail, see Heroldo de Campos’s “*A linguagem do Iauaretê*” (Coutinho 557).

⁷² See Perrone’s “*Notas para facilitar a leitura de ‘Meu tio o iauaretê.’*”

⁷³ For more information, see Manuel Cavalcanti Proença’s “*Trilhas no Grande Sertão*” in *Augusto do Anjos e outros ensaios* (213).

⁷⁴ *pajé* + *ando*: *Pajé* is a “chefe espiritual dos indígenas; misto de sacerdote, profeta e médico-feiticeiro” (Martins 367).

⁷⁵ *tapejara* – *a*

⁷⁶ *colomim*, *kulumi* + *nhando* (Martins 126)

⁷⁷ *Zululuani* – *ni* + *ava*

⁷⁸ *kutchova* – *ku* + *ar*

speech, like the work of his predecessor in the Brazilian Portuguese of the rural backlands, Couto's mimicry assumes the form and content of the spoken word, intertextualizing the everyday orality and the indigenous influences in Mozambican Portuguese. It is nearly impossible to measure the specific grades of influence of Couto's own cultural background—having spent his childhood developing a poet's sensibilities at the feet of local storytellers and a lifetime in a country flourishing in inventive uses of "*português corta-mato*"—versus the influence of Rosa's enormous body of linguistic innovation and ingenious orality. What is more definitive is that the intertextuality between Couto and Rosa resides most prominently in linguistic and stylistic similarities in orality, but the divergences are most strikingly discovered in the representation of indigenous speech and the identity of the colonized subject.

The vitality of Couto's orality—in form and content—is deeply rooted in Mozambican oral traditions that pre-date contact with the Portuguese language and continue to supersede, what Couto calls, "*o universo dos que lêem . . . tão pequeno*" (Felinto). In colonial Mozambique, indigenous peoples had limited access to formal education and, therefore, limited proficiency in Portuguese⁷⁹ as well as low rates of literacy, which persist today. What developed out of native traditions, regional differences, and linguistic necessity—in a large country with various ethnic groups, about two dozen indigenous languages,⁸⁰ and even more dialects (Firmino 49)—was a Portuguese marked by hybridity and orality. Rothwell notes that Couto's narratives employ his country's orality and worldviews, which "establish his reputation as a writer who poetically recast[s] the Portuguese language, coloring it with the hue of Mozambique" (18). Couto, himself, often credits his orality "modestly . . . [to the] inspiration [that] comes from listening to what people say in the streets, on the buses and in the market places" (Chabel et al, *The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa* 78). He also conducts fieldwork in rural regions of Mozambique to reclaim indigenous language and mythology, "*pergunt[ando] sempre come se diz nas línguas locais certa palavra, certo conceito*" (Salem et al). He describes the humility that a writer gains from "*as circunstâncias de Moçambique [i.e., the poverty and illiteracy that plague many of the former Portuguese colonies] . . . porque tu aprendes que ser escritor é uma coisa pequena, que faz muito bem ao ego*" (Felinto). These circumstances also make the Mozambican orality all the more significant. Mozambicans have made the language their own, fused it with native languages, and impressed upon it their own worldviews. The society's myths, archetypes, legends, proverbs and modes of conception of the world remain mostly spoken in various Mozambican languages, including Portuguese. Both the myth that the first human came from "*uma dessas canas*" (Couto, *Estórias abensonhadas* 15)⁸¹ and that of an origin exclusively from women (141) exemplify how mythologies in Mozambican society are conveyed through the spoken word. The delicate and yet enduring nature of the reed serves as a reminder of the oral

⁷⁹ See Chapter 3, "Righting Wrongs for Writing Rongas: The Politics of Literacy and Orthography," in Rothwell's *A Postmodern Nationalist*.

⁸⁰ For more details, see Gregório Firmino's *A "questão linguística" na África pós-colonial: O Caso do Português e das Línguas Autóctones em Moçambique*.

⁸¹ Henri Junod, a Swiss Protestant, missionary, and anthropologist recorded this Southern Mozambican myth of the creation of man: "The first human beings came out from the *lihlanga*, the reed, say some, from the *nhlanga*, the marsh of reeds, say others. These two versions seem to answer to two different conceptions. The first is that one man and one woman suddenly came out from one reed which exploded (*baleka*) and there they were! According to the second, man of different tribes emerged from a marsh of reeds, each tribe already having its peculiar costume, implements and customs" (348-350).

tradition's tenuous survival throughout Mozambique's five hundred years of colonization as well as through its violent history of two consecutive wars. With elders teaching and retelling and Couto's narrators recounting and translating what they have heard and learned, Couto's narratives create a record of indigenous stories that celebrate life's essential connection with ancestors, spirituality, tradition, and land. In this postcolonial project, the stories and mythologies of diverse cultures and languages that make up Mozambique experience a rebirth: timeless stories of humanity and ancient stories of cultural tradition take their rightful place within the paradoxically still very young canon of independent Mozambique's "*mitos fundadores da nação*" (Salem et al).

Mia Couto's narrative negotiates, mimics, and translates various Mozambican oral traditions—asserting, retrieving, and citing native myths, languages, and worldviews—as a way of avowing their form, content, and power to tell a history that is written for and spoken by the colonized subject. This postcolonial revision of history establishes what Bhabha calls “a discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference” (Bhabha 55) in relationship to Portuguese colonialism. According to Bhabha, the translation of traditional oral histories into Portuguese language may intertextualize “modern Western form,” but it retains the “cultur[al differences] from the [original, in this case oral] national text” (Bhabha). Therefore, recording native mythology creates a “temporal break or caesura” (340) from the patriarchal system by restoring the colonized subject's authorization to speak freely. Also, translating these stories from various regional languages to the national Portuguese language cements them together in a unified, but pluralistic, national literature. Aided by translation, hitherto marginalized voices take first-person narrative perspective in both “*Nas águas do tempo*” and “*Lenda de Namarói*.” These narratives record the marginalized voice taking authority over the traditions being recounted from his/her own first-person perspective. “*Meu avô, nesses dias, me levava rio abaixo, enfilado em seu pequeno concho*” (Couto, *Estórias abensonhadas* 13) begins “*Nas águas do tempo*.” As the indigenous narrator immortalizes lessons learned in intimate conversations between his childhood self and his grandfather aboard a tiny handcrafted canoe, both the Macua subject matter and the narrative voice would have been quite literally unheard of during Portuguese colonialism with “its assumed hierarchical forms of rationality and universality.”⁸² But, even more dramatic are the “opening lines of the tale[, ‘*Lenda de Namarói*,’] alert[ing] the reader to the fact that the spoken voice being read is that of a woman who, as such, is traditionally silenced” (Rothwell 139). “*Sou mulher*,” she proclaims, “*preciso autorização para ter palavra. Estou contando coisas que nunca soube. Por minha boca falam, no calor da febre, os que nos fazem existir e nos dão e retiram nossos nomes. Agora o senhor me traduza, sem demoras. Não tarda que eu perca a voz que agora me vai chegando*” (Couto, *Estórias abensonhadas* 141). A marginalized indigenous woman receives that authorization from her ancestors—not from a colonizer, not from her husband, not from the translator, or even from Couto, but from, within her own cultural beliefs, those forbearers whom she openly refers to as creators—who speak through her dreams and through her words to tell a collective ancestral story in Macua (one of Mozambique's many native languages). Demanding Father Elia Ciscato translate “*coisas que nunca soube*” into Portuguese, her speech act represents a radical postcolonial posture that asserts authority on native traditions unknown to the priest—and the Lusophone world—and yet allows her a reciprocally reliant relationship between narrator and

⁸² *The Location of Culture* 339.

translator to retell the Macua story for all of Mozambique and the Lusophone world. Indeed, her authoritative voice literally commands translation—“*o senhor me traduz, sem demoras.*” Metaphorically, however, she does not reverse the hierarchy by putting herself on top; characteristic of a Coutian narrator, she levels hierarchical relationships. In that space between the polite formality and the urgent assertiveness of her formal command, she addresses Father Elia as an equal, without shame, candidly narrating a counter-story to Adamic male origins and even giving the priest an account of the world’s first sexual encounter. Recognizing with powerful clarity that her regional story has universal social value that merits translation, she requires interpretation from a man who is presumably, in his own right, well versed in languages and mythologies but not an expert on the traditions of this land. From a postcolonial perspective, this unprecedentedly establishes a relationship of equals working together in honor of ancestral memories to retell and translate native teachings and philosophies. This elevates the role of traditional knowledge as well as the process of translation through which indigenous ontology, episteme, and cosmovision not only find a wider audience, but—more importantly—move beyond the regional to connect with the multicultural and multilingual mythology of the nation.

Meanwhile, the translated speech in “*Lenda de Namarói*” and the myth in “*Nas águas do tempo*” destabilize various colonial institutions including Portuguese administration, Roman Catholicism, and Western knowledge. First, the grandson narrator of “*Nas águas do tempo*” does not need the mediation of a Western translator; in postcolonial Mozambique, he is automatically authorized to and inherently capable as a representative of Ronga tradition to interpret his own ancestral story. An interesting and ironic dynamic between narrator and translator in “*Lenda de Namarói*” resides in their very identities—the narrator being the “*mulher do régulo de Namarói, Zambézia*” (Couto, *Estórias abensonhadas* 139) and the translator being a Catholic priest. According to their roles in a patriarchal society, the narrative could have followed a hierarchal paradigm of a confessional (i.e., asking for a blessing and forgiveness from the priest). Instead, the *mulher do régulo* rejects such a humble tone, even indirectly challenging her husband’s power to enforce colonial law, because the *régulo* represents the Portuguese colonial government, which worked in tandem with the Catholic Church. In accepting responsibility for the Macua myth’s interpretation, Father Elia—“the guardian of Christian orthodoxy . . . rooted in the myth of Adam and Eve” (Rothwell 138)—must first suspend his own role in the church—that of disseminating Judeo-Christian mythology and Roman Catholic teachings. This suspension of traditional patriarchal roles allows the translation itself to convey the Macua woman’s authentic voice and authority without the condescending tone or moralistic judgment characteristic of colonial-era translations of Mozambican traditions to European language.

Henri Junod, for example, a Swiss Protestant missionary and anthropologist, spent more than three decades—between 1889 and 1920—studying Southern African ethnic groups.⁸³ Eighty-one years before Mia Couto, Junod first recorded “the myth of the reed” (Junod 303) in volume two of *The Life of a Southern Tribe* (1913). After collecting several versions of the creation myth in Southern Africa, Junod concluded, in his own words, that “the origin of man and death are the two great subjects on which the imagination of the Bantus has tried to throw some light, and that, though the moral element is strangely lacking in these myths, yet there is a

⁸³ For more details see Harries.

striking resemblance between them and the Biblical story” (351). Here, the European anthropologist undervalues the “moral element” in the native belief system but recognizes “a striking resemblance between . . . the Biblical story” and the Ronga myths of the “first human beings c[oming] out from the *lihlanga*, the reed” (348) growing in the rivers. The association of life and water, or life having origins in water, does recall Genesis 1:20: “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures. . . .” However, the Biblical creation story separates the above birth of animal life from the beginnings of humans. The Macua story inverts the Biblical story’s sequence of man coming first and then woman, envisioning a world first populated by women who became the forbearers or mothers of human kind. Couto inventively crafts his narrators and even their translators to appear on the fictionalized page as if they were primary historical sources, unencumbered by Eurocentric value systems, authorized to articulate their own indigenous cosmovisions. Therefore, the Coutian versions of Mozambican myths—of which “*Lenda de Namarói*” and “*Nas águas do tempo*” are representative—establish a tone, not of superiority, but of equality with the Biblical story of creation, reclaiming the Mozambican stories, traditions, and history to resurrect the once degraded identity of the colonized in relationship to the colonizer.

More than challenging the Edenic myth—a foundational story of the Portuguese patriarchal tradition—restoring the indigenous woman to the center of creation seeks the retrieval of a primordial matriliney as an alternative to the hierarchies of patriarchy. In fact, before colonization, Zambézia marked a geographical and cultural difference between “social patterns” in Mozambique, with the north being predominantly matrilineal, and the south structured around patrilineal lineage (Newitt 149). A conversion of the traditional matrilineal northern society came with the Portuguese occupation and institution of a 16th-century colonial land-grant system. Though called land grants, *prazos* functioned more like serfdoms on which indigenous Mozambicans worked as slaves or provided military power on land controlled by local chieftains. “[F]rom the African point of view[,] they were essentially chieftaincies and as such part of a complex system of social and economic relations bounding together all the peoples of the region. . . . Their society was a unique interface between Africa, Asia, and Europe and led to the growth of syncretic cultural and social forms, which like the *prazos*, evidently had considerable vitality” (217). In addition to *mestiçagem* itself, something that distinguished the *prazos* in “*províncias onde a presença portuguesa é mais antiga, como a Zambézia*” (Felinto) was that they were granted to women who were racially European, Asian, or of mixed ancestry between Eurasians or Afro-Europeans. Taking advantage of a traditional indigenous social pattern of matriliney in the north of Mozambique—“a means by which the colonial power hoped to foster European settlement in the Zambesi region” (Rothwell 138)—“*prazos* were to be granted to women on condition that they married a Portuguese, and would descend from mother to daughter, . . . [with] the main objective . . . [being] to encourage Portuguese men to seek wealthy marriages and settle in east Africa” (Newitt 224-225). These matrilineal *prazeiros* gave rise to powerful women called “Zambesi *donas*” (Rothwell 138) dominated mainly by an elite class of locally born Afro-Portuguese, called *muzungos* (Newitt 227) or Asian-Portuguese women married to Portuguese or Indians. Although “males of the Afro-Portuguese community (and, they hint, the females as well) had numerous unofficial partners taken from the African community, and their offspring were accepted as part of the *muzungo* population[,]” historical records confirm the marginalization of the African indigenous with “statistics contain[ing] no examples of African partners in the official marriages of the *prazo*-holding elite” (Newitt 227).

Spanning “from the sixteenth century to . . . the 1930s,” Newitt calls the *prazos* “one of the most durable and influential of the country’s [i.e., colonial Mozambique’s] institutions” (Newitt 217) while Rothwell sums up their legacy as exemplifying patriarchy’s perversion of northern Mozambican traditional matrilineal values—“male colonizers using women to enforce a redefined notion of colonial morality based on a stable, racist domesticity” (Rothwell 138). The history of Zambézia’s *prazeiro* laws and practices shows a systematic subjugation of the non-European indigenous, and especially indigenous women, who could be captured and offered by “muzungo warlords” as incentive to recruit fighters for their *prazos*’ private armies (Newitt 220). This is the context from which the “mulher do régulo de Namarói, Zambézia” dramatically finds her voice.

The marginalization of black women in the history of the *prazos* suggests the identity and socioeconomic position from which the *mulher* narrator in “*Lenda de Namarói*” speaks. Within this colonial setting, the urgency of her message—“*Sou mulher, preciso autorização para ter palavra . . . Não tarda que eu perca a voz que agora me vai chegando.*”—suggests multiple anxieties. First, the speaker knows that her free expression is prohibited by the patriarchal institutions, including her *régulo* husband’s chieftaincy. Second, her identity and lineage, although affected by the *prazo* system, fall outside of—in fact, hierarchically beneath—the matrilineal practice, so she has been taught to deny even her own authorization to speak. Third, her intrepid words contrast with the above circumstances of repression, revealing an underlying spirit of survival and resistance that, speaking for the marginalized of the Coutian society, “*se ocultou no mais inacessível de nós, lá onde a violência não podia golpear, lá onde a barbárie não tinha acesso*” (Rothwell 138). By reclaiming her mythology, unscathed by colonization’s perversions of hierarchy and patriarchy, she refuses to relinquish a subjectivity that can only be articulated through African matrilineal ancestry. This cultural heritage—as opposed to the socioeconomic status of the Zambesi *donas*—ultimately, give her story the legitimacy, authority, and identity to outlast colonization and find its place in the foundational mythology of the independent nation.

The story of creation in “*Lenda de Namarói*” and “*Nas águas do tempo*” are, indeed, metaphors for the quest for forms of temporality, subjectivity, and knowledge that come from within Mozambique’s cultural traditions versus the forms imposed by European colonization. Both the myth of female creation and that of creation in a river of reeds show a self-determined desire to pave a mythical space with which the Mozambican people might identify their origins. Couto demonstrates in his representation of regional geographic features like rivers and mountains the sanctity of ancestral birthplaces: “*Aqui a terra é uma igreja, os mortos são enterrados. E aquele é o lugar onde eu me comunico com o divino, com o sagrado. O valor da terra aqui tem que ser também dimensionado nesse aspecto*” (Felinto). Here, Couto touches on the invisible scale and dimensions of the land’s value that cannot be measured by Western standards, but this has not stopped scholars from trying to measure and quantify spaces of origins. Indeed, the Spanish missiologist and anthropologist Bishop Francisco Lerma Martínez, who has collected northern Mozambican oral traditions, like “*Lenda de Namarói*,” from “*anciãos de Maúá*” (Martínez 40-42) attempts to show Mount Namuli’s calculable significance by citing facts and figures:

As tradições . . . são unânimes em indicar o monte Namuli como o lugar originário primordial. Este monte, de 2419 m de altura, está situado na serra de Gurúe, a norte da província da Zambézia. . . . Por tudo isto considera-se o monte Namuli como o lugar da unidade originária e constitutiva do povo macua. . . . o berço do povo. Testemunham-nos os ritos tradicionais e a literatura oral. ‘O Mito do Monte Namuli’ encontra-se presente nos momentos mais importantes do ciclo vital, aparece na iniciação, nos ritos de cura, nos funerais e numa grande quantidade de provérbios usados em muitas e variadas circunstâncias da vida.
(Martínez)

As is common in scientific language, the anthropologist attempts to quantify the figurative and literal dimensions of “*monte Namuli*” within the traditions of the “*povo macua*.” He describes the mountain in measurable terms, such as “2419 m[eters tall],” and documents the metaphoric presence of the mountain in specific rights of passage and traditional orality. Ironically, Couto—a trained biologist—seems to switch roles with the missiologist bishop. Couto’s treatment of the land is much more religious than scientific. As in the Biblical scene of Moses,⁸⁴ warned to remove his sandals on holy ground, the Coutian child-turned-adult narrator is reprimanded by his grandfather for attempting to “*colocar pé em terra não-firme*” (Couto, *Estórias abensonhadas* 15). According to Couto, Mozambican ancestral lands represent the “*mais inacessível de nós*,” where “*a terra guardou, inteiras, as suas vozes*,” untouched by the “violence” and “barbarism” of wars and institutions.

Unlike a mere record of the measurable dimensions and number of citations that define Mount Numili or the rivers within these geographic and cultural spaces, Mia Couto’s accounts of the ancestral sites emphasize their immeasurability and eternal nature—“*fosse ali a manhã eternamente ensonada. . . . onde o horizonte se perde*” (Couto, *Estórias abensonhadas* 14). The journey by boat cannot be drawn on a map—“*naquele lugar se perdia a fronteira entre água e terra*” (*Estórias abensonhadas*)—and only silence answers the question “*vocês vão aonde?*” Instead, the boat, though seeming to float aimlessly “*onda cá, onda lá, parecendo ir mais sozinho que um tronco desabandonado*” (13) always finds its way, though there is no estimating the trip’s length: “*Neste lugar, não há pedacitos. Todo o tempo, a partir daqui, são eternidades*” “*Garantido era . . . chegada a incerta hora*” (15, 13). The river’s depths are also unknown; “*não encontrei nenhum fundo, minha perna descia engolida pelo abismo*” (15). As for Mount Namuli, its two sides—“*dois lados [do ‘mundo’]*” (143)—are divided by another river of indefinite and changeable width: “*o fiozinho de água engrossava. O regato passava a riacho, o riacho passava a rio. . . . No final, o curso de água voltou a ser o que tinha sido: um fiozito, timiúdo*” (142-143). Like the river, the earth itself—as amorphous as water—seems to expand and contract: “*O mundo já quase não dispunha de dois lados*” (143). Through this highly aestheticized language that fuses prose together with poetry, Mia Couto recreates enduring, mystical, and limitless archetypal spaces that resonate with the national imaginary beyond the confines of Western anthropological or scientific study. Mount Namuli and the rivers are places wrought by ambiguous space and time— with literal and figurative, historical and ahistorical existence—

⁸⁴ “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5)

with measurable⁸⁵ and immeasurable dimensions of height, width, and depth. Their actual and mythical spaces and times create a living history that infuses the everyday with the sacred, the postcolonial with the pre-colonial, and the modern with the ancient.

This creative resurrection and revision of Mozambican literature and history does more than just redress patriarchy's degradations to and omissions of the colonized subject's stories and traditions; Couto's creative project also addresses the skepticism of youth, modernity, and even the postcolonial Mozambican governments (both socialist and capitalist) (Felinto) towards the traditional and the religious in the Mozambican cosmovision. Couto speaks of the relevance of his literary objectives in terms of his works' productivity and function in contemporary and even future society:

Eu não vejo que só este livro ou só a literatura por si mesmo possa trazer uma idéia de Moçambique que seja produtiva, que seja funcional. Estamos a falar de coisas que precisam ter futuro, que tem que criar futuro. Essas coisas [os livros] precisam ser produtivas, não podem só fazer apelo à história do passado, devem ter alguma coisa que punciona a dinâmica de hoje. (Salem et al)

"*Nas águas do tempo*" depicts this intergenerational relationship between foundational beliefs and contemporary-to-future practices, "*sobretudo, naquilo que toca na relação com o divino . . . a religiosidade dos africanos*" (Salem et al). Specifically, the narrator details a common prayer practice expressed in a waving ritual. The "*pano branco*" and "*pano vermelho*" are symbolic artifacts in sacred sites. Like rivers from which the first humans came and to which the grandfather goes to die, the *panos* represent two sides of a spectrum that complete one another—life (*branco*) and death (*vermelho*)—as well as religious and healing practices. With this tale, Mia Couto also attempts to reclaim and affirm the old religious practices—"a *aquilo que [é] a cultura mais profunda, que [é] a alma mais funda deste país. . . àquilo que é a religião, o fator religioso*" (Felinto)—that were banned first by the colonial system and then by the Frelimo government.

After independence, Frelimo worked to dismantle the Catholic Church due to its nearly five-hundred-year complicity with colonialism. The Church had worked in tandem with Portuguese colonization to convert, assimilate, and abolish indigenous religious practices associated with paganism. Ironically, Frelimo also attempted to root out local Mozambican traditions deemed tribalist and obscurantist,⁸⁶ misguidedly—in Couto's view—attempting to ignore and/or remove African religiosity from Mozambican citizenship. In fact, Mia Couto believes that this was one of the trigger issues for the Mozambican Civil War:

Os próprios africanos também não entendem que têm de procurar esse entendimento do que eles são, das suas dinâmicas atuais, a partir deste entendimento do que é a sua ligação com os deuses. E eu acho que a Frelimo falhou principalmente aí. A guerra que se instaurou foi também uma guerra

⁸⁵ Francisco Lerma Martínez recorded a 2,419-meter measurement (40).

⁸⁶ See Harrison.

religiosa, era uma guerra de identidade, à procura de identidade. E isso explica a violência que essa guerra assumiu . . . Eu acho que teve várias origens, uma delas é a religiosa. A Frelimo era um regime marxista. Combatia a religião de frente. Não chegou a atuar como a União Soviética porque não conseguia, não tinha capacidade, mas queria. O que foi mais grave foi o que foi mais silencioso e que não era visível, porque era essa guerra contra esta religião africana, que é a religião dos antepassados. E aí não há uma instituição. Esta religião africana não tem vínculo com o Vaticano, não tem um corpo separado. O líder religioso é ao mesmo tempo o líder político, é o que faz a gestão da terra, são os chefes das famílias. Essa agressão acabou por ter conseqüências que eram logo imediatamente políticas (Felinto).

Couto has come to believe that dislocated Western discourses of power (i.e., colonialism, socialism, capitalism) do not adequately recognize indigenous religions, particularly their vital importance in the “*alma mais funda*” of national identity and cosmivision. Like the narrator in “*Nas águas do tempo*,” who only after his grandfather dies is able to see the mystical *panos*, Couto confesses his regret at “*demor[ando em p]erceb[er]*” the national implications of denying independent citizens the right to practice their traditional religious beliefs “*quando já era demasiado tarde*” (Felinto). As his fictional narrator comes to see the value—in fact, a sense of immortality “*em mim um rio que não haveria nunca de morrer*”—in the “*lembrança [d]as velhas palavras [e tradições] de meu velho avô;*” Couto, too, returns to these traditions as an elder concerned with passing on vital traditional knowledge to his readers—“*A esse rio volto agora a conduzir meu filho, lhe ensinando a vislumbrar os brancos panos da outra margem.*” Instead of looking to foreign political and economic systems to govern Mozambican society, Couto now works to retrieve and assert the traditional knowledge and actual practices of the people that have survived the rise and fall of governments. He also strives to construct a national identity and collective imagination.

The Image of Children in Mia Couto’s *Jesusalém* and Other Stories

Like Guimarães Rosa’s children, no other Coutian character epitomizes this spirit of resilience and survival—a figure who bridges the past, the present, and the future—than the Coutian child. As Daniel observes “[c]hildren occupy center stage in numerous narratives of Mia Couto, both short and long, evoking in many respects the world of Guimarães Rosa” (3). Such Rosean creative children as Miguilim in “*Campo Geral*,” the wise, like Menino in “*As margens da alegria*,” and the intrepid, like young Riobaldo in *Grande Sertão: Veredas* can also be found in Mia Couto’s narrative. Couto’s Azaria in “*O dia em que explodiu Mabata-bata*” of *Vozes anoitecidas* and both Mwanito and Ntunzi in *Jesusalém* stand for such Rosean-like metaphors as innocence, victimization, resilience, survival, hope, strength, and optimism. Despite their many shared aesthetic qualities, the identification and symbolization of Rosean and Coutian children as subjects differ both ontologically and epistemologically. As explored in Chapter Two, Rosa’s *mestiço* and Afro-Brazilian children do not receive equal aesthetic treatment. *Mestiço* children such as Miguilim, Menino, and the child Riobaldo are humanized with a range of positive and negative characteristics, becoming archetypal national symbols of redemption and triumph; yet Afro-Brazilian children like Alfeu, Guirigó, and the nameless slave child are portrayed with universally negative and dehumanizing attributes that metaphorize unredemptive suffering and

tragedy. Rosa's black children are darkened, sickened, and corrupted so as to improve in juxtaposition the *mestiço* child's social status, physical robustness, and good fortune. This mode of representation critiques both black subjectivity and experience within the Brazilian patriarchal social formation. However, their ontologically and metaphysically polarized identification through the use of colonial language reinforces their already othered and marginalized condition. To be a black child in Rosa's narrative is to be defined as an inevitable symbol of despair, victimization, and pessimism. From a postcolonial perspective, their process of individuation reproduces a vague sense of identity. Moreover, Guimarães Rosa's children are articulated from an archeological and genealogical perspective within a patriarchal system whose language is still heavily concerned with racial biases, divisions, and hierarchies.

Although Mia Couto clearly shares Guimarães Rosa's preoccupation with race and *mestiçagem* in the narration of national identity, the tone, symbolism, and viewpoint of his language differ from Guimarães Rosa's orality of the Big House. Couto is conscious of postmodern politics of identity as opposed to the patriarchal racial and cultural agenda from which his predecessor writes. In addition, writing in a predominantly black society, his orality is freed of stereotype and objectified language towards the African subject, as he represents characters who are "*obviamente . . . negros, quase todos eles, a não ser que eu [Couto] identifique-me de outra maneira*" (Felinto). By "*outra maneira*" of identification, Couto means representing characters that, in addition to black, are *mulatos* or *mestiços*. Regardless of whether they are black, *mulato*, or *mestiço*; literate or illiterate; parented or orphaned; Couto's children receive equal aesthetic treatment. His characterizations fully humanize the physical, psychological, and linguistic traits of all marginalized characters; and his narratives provide deeply rooted socio-historic and national context for these characters' struggles and experiences. They are all meant to fulfill the ideals of the Mozambican Revolution and postcolonial objectives by liberating those subjects and histories marginalized by dominant worldviews including colonialism, globalization, and even some traditional views.

Mia Couto's characters, in general, and children, in particular, "*falam desse território onde . . . todo homem é igual,*" where both "*o mal e o bem-trapilho costumam no pano da desilusão o mesmo sonho . . . que o mundo poderia ter um pouco mais de justiça*" (Cronicando 20). This should not, however, be understood as an idealistic attempt to erase race in the articulation of identity. On the contrary, in Mia Couto's narrative, there is a "constant preoccupation with race, doubtless the result of his own ambiguous position as a white writer in a predominantly black space" (Rothwell 106). While "[s]everal of Couto's strongest characters are mulatto women" (Rothwell), his concern for fashioning race as part of his subjects' identity, however, is not articulated in terms of dichotomies. Mia Couto's equality among Mozambican men and women, "*o mal e o bem-trapilho,*" the black, the white, and those in between extends to his representation of children, all of the above having experienced the subjugation of colonialism, endeavoring to sew together the national fabric in a postcolonial nation. For Couto, children—already victims of patriarchy, war, and poverty—represent the potential for rising out of marginalization to be represented not in a highly idealized and populist way, but in a way that recognizes the realities of their very difficult conditions and situations. Their very survival depends upon many of the characteristics glorified in the Rosean child—imagination, creativity, rebelliousness, strength, and hope—but they are universally attributed these qualities whether black, white, *mulato*, or *mestiço*.

Even some of Mia Couto's "most pessimistic" short stories that represent "child victims" (Daniel 3), such as "*O dia em que explodiu Mabata-bata*" and "*A menina do futuro torcido*" in *Cronicando*, symbolize clearly humanized identities struggling with brutal and violent experiences. "*A menina do futuro torcido*" is the story of Filomena, a young black girl whose poor mechanic father, Joseldo Bastante, unintentionally jeopardizes her life in the hope of raising all of his twelve children out of poverty. From a far-flung village, Filomena's father learns of an entrepreneur in the city who has earned great fame and fortune by investing in a young contortionist's performances. Believing he could do the same by learning to contort his own daughter's body, he ironically extols the newfound comfort and dignity that material success could bring to the entire family: "*Quando você for rica há-de dormir até de colchão. Aqui em casa todos vamos deitar bem*" (Couto, *Vozes anoitecidas* 128). In order to train her, though, the father puts Filomena through brutal and rigorous physical exercises, including tying her all night to "*um daqueles enormes bidões de gasolina. . . . para que as costas dela ficassem noivas da curva do recipiente*" (128). Even before ending the training session, the girl's body is already damaged, "*torcida para trás, o sangue articulado, os ossos descontraídos. Queixava-se de dores e sofria de torturas.*" Although this suffering may evoke that of the Rosean Afro-Brazilian child at the hands of the slave overseer, Couto does not allow Filomena's misery and identity to vanish mysteriously disconnected from the rising trajectory of another protagonist. In fact, however tragic, Filomena remains the very human protagonist of Couto's narrative, her identity clearly connected with her family, her community, and her nation in contrast to Rosa's black characters whose polarized identities and future outcomes all remain ambiguous.

This unusual story of paternal economic despair that leads a father to sacrifice his own daughter in a pathetic attempt to overcome poverty critiques the affects of capitalism's blinding "*sonhos de riqueza*" (131)—justifying that "*não pode querer a riqueza sem os sacrifícios*" (128)—on the impoverished family, and especially the child. After waiting to no avail for "*o empresário*," who symbolizes globalization's excessive wealth and elusive promise, to "*passasse pela vila*" (128), the poor parents take their crippled child to the rich man in the city hoping he will hire her as a contortionist for his acrobatic show. With one glance, before even evaluating Filomena's performance, the entrepreneur "[j]á disse, não quero. Essa menina está é doente. . . . achando graça aquela menina tão magra dentro de vestido alheio" (131). Like someone else's red dress, "*alheio*" describes this whole contortionist ordeal that the girl is forced to endure. As Daniel points out, "[t]he attraction of the circus sideshow, an urban innovation foreign to all the family's traditions, is as deceptive as it is alluring for all members of the family and most especially for the young girl on whom all have placed their hopes" (3). In a veritable contortionist act, indeed, of traditional values twisted into modern configurations, the customary paternal practice—especially prevalent in rural communities—of depending on one's children for economic stability combines with a reformed gender role that puts the modern female to work in a city still dominated by a male work force. Filomena's tragic fate symbolizes much more than just her father's misguided and violent economic endeavors or her family's failed dreams of material comfort, the child's victimization demonstrates the absurdity and cruelty as well as the miserable outcomes of dislocated foreign economic systems forced upon traditional rural people in postcolonial Mozambique. Unlike the suffering, often nameless and future-less, black figures in Guimarães Rosa's narratives, Filomena's tragedy in Mia Couto

remains very human and linked to the fate of the nation; it is the social system in which her family desperately tries to survive that is, instead, displaced and degraded.

The violence against Filomena resembles Azaria's death in "*O dia em que explodiu Mabata-bata*." In this story of a poor indigenous shepherd boy, the protagonist Azaria witnesses one of his uncle's cows, Mabata-bata, step on a landmine: "*Rebentou sem um múúú. No capim em volta choveram pedaços e fatias, grãos e folhas de boi* (43). Far from realizing what has happened, the child mistakes the explosion for a bolt of lightening: "*Talvez Mabata-bata pisara uma réstia maligna do ndlati*" – "*a ave do relâmpago*" (44). Feeling confused and guilty for the death of the valuable cow "*destinado como prenda de lobolo do tio Raúl*" (43), the orphan Azaria fears his caretaker uncle's physical punishment and abuse, "*maus tratos*" (44) that "*ia matar-lhe de porrada*" (46). With "[a] ameaça do tio . . . [e a] aquela angústia com[endo]-lhe o ar todo" (44), the boy decides to run away: "*Havia uma só solução: era fugir, tentar os caminhos onde não sabia mais nada.*" However, on his way to cross the river, Azaria, like Mabata-bata, also steps on a landmine: "*De súbito, deflagrou um clarão . . . O pequeno pastor engoliu todo aquele vermelho, era o grito do povo estourando*" (48). As he dies, Azaria believes he is flying on the thunderbird, his death representing Mozambique's "horrific civil war that victimized children and peasants" (Rothwell 112) and turned the homeland into a hostile environment. Just as the "young boy[']s . . . dreams are crushed by an uncaring and exploitative uncle," whose deprivation of his orphaned nephew includes "not allow[ing him] to attend school" (111), the limitations on the child's full development embodies the unfulfilled and aborted potential of the newly independent nation whose revolutionary hopes, ideals, and dreams were destroyed just two years after independence by a civil war that would last for nearly sixteen years.

The language in "*O dia em que explodiu Mabata-bata*" also emphasizes various traditional cultural practices and modern socioeconomic circumstances associated with poverty, including limited educational opportunities and child labor. In the beginning of the story, Azaria is introduced as "*o pequeno pastor*" (43) "*com os seus calções rotos, um saco velho a tiracolo*" (44). This poor shepherd child works for Tio Raúl, since the boy has been orphaned by war, undoubtedly, by the civil war. Like Filomena's, Azaria's descriptions fit the definition of "child domestics" or "domestic workers," "children under the age of 18 who work in other people's households" including their own parents' or guardian's "doing domestic chores, caring for children and running errands, among other tasks" for pay or not (Child Labor Rapid Assessment Mozambique 45). Azaria is a family servant, "*O serviço arrancava-o cedo da cama e devolvia-o ao sono quando dentro dele já não havia resto de infância. Brincar era só com animais*" (44-45). This exhausting work only guarantees him room and board, a prototypical case of child labor that Couto's language brings to surface. According to "2012 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor," "[c]hildren in Mozambique are engaged in . . . particularly . . . dangerous work in agriculture and domestic service . . . [and] herding livestock" (1). This socioeconomic practice may remain accepted within Mozambican social norms, but its negative effects on children are certainly questioned in Couto's narrative. For example, Couto comments on not only how Azaria's long hours of herding livestock interfere with his schooling, but on the injustice of depriving orphans what one's own children enjoy: "*Os filhos dos outros tinham direito da escola. Ele não, não era filho*" (Couto, *Vozes anotecidas* 44). Although Azaria's lack of formal education in comparison to his schooled peers may seem reminiscent of Alfeu's marginalization

in Rosa's "Pirlimpsiquice," unlike Alfeu's depiction, Azaria shows an awareness of his own deprivation, an attempt to escape his circumstances, and even an assertiveness to voice his desire to go to school—"Tio: próximo ano posso ir na escola?"—in a way that the portrayal of Alfeu, limited to haunting the corridors and shadows of school life, never allows (48). Education in a postcolonial nation like Mozambique is not only an essential element of emancipation, but it is also an important foundation of nation building. Despite the fatal ending of "*O dia em que explodiu Mabata-bata*," Azaria's appeal to go to school, his attempt to escape across the river, and his belief in rising on the thunderbird symbolize a desire to free the self from a land ravaged by war and the very circumstances that marginalize him.

The most symbolic stories in which Coutian children seek to liberate the self and dream alternative existential spaces are in *Cronicando*'s "*A ascensão de João Bate-Certo*" and "*O jardim marinho*." "*A ascensão de João Bate-Certo*" is the story of a country boy who initially dreams of going to the city: "*Queria ir lá, capturar aquelas visões . . . ver os edifícios. Apreciar os cimentos escalando altura, pisos e sobrepisos, num andamento de andares*" (29). Upon João's return to the countryside after his long-awaited excursion to the city, he seems preoccupied by the heights that he has seen, if not stunned into quiet contemplation by his urban experience: "*nem mais se executou fosse para que fosse. Ficava a viver devagarinho, sentado, em artes de devaneio*." Once the rains stop, he eventually awakens from his contemplative, perhaps disillusioned, state and "[c]omeçou a construção de uma escada . . . ascendendo ao céu. Até que não se distingua, perdido entre nuvens e cacimbos" (30-31). Marveling at the clouds covering João's clothing, which, indeed, confirm that he has been to the sky and back, the villagers start to gather around the boy with their personal "*pedidos: me traga um rádio, parelhagem, bacecola. . . Me traga, João, por alma de teu pai, saúde de sua mãe*" (32). The sky—the most universal and symbolic space of freedom—becomes an alternative location of hope and provision, beyond which the rural landscape or even the urban townscape can provide the people. From the boy who "*se mantinha prisioneiro do mesmo chão*" (30), João's ascension into the sky—much like Azaria's vision of flying away on a thunderbird—shows a poor rural child striving for an elevated "*rés-do-céu*" (29). "*Como se os dois soubessem que um mundo feito só de justiça não será coisa para este tempo*" (20), Couto's children are searching for "[*uma*] *subidoria*" (30), a level of autonomy and self-determination as well as a world that is better than Azaria's landmine-infested earth or João's hopeless "*lugar . . . terrídeo, vizinho da areia*" (29). Both indigenous Mozambican boys are active participants—and protagonists, in fact—in pursuit of their own destinies as opposed to the Rosean *pretinho* minor characters without the vitality of characterization to even hope for elevated circumstances or fates.

Another Coutian narrative that offers a new space for a child to explore his desire to liberate the self is "*O jardim marinho*," in which a boy "*nasceu cego para as coisas da terra. Só via o mar e o que nele havia. Sabia caminhos nas águas, carreirinhos*" (Couto, *Cronicando* 53). More than being blind to the dry land, "[*a*] *ndar em terra enjoava-lhe. Tinha temor de pisar em solo firme, de cair no duro chão. Até o verde terrestre lhe incomodava. O menino não sabia tocar as folhagens, ásperas e secas*" (*Cronicando*). For this child, the earth is a distressing and insufferable place to live, recalling the above-mentioned injustices and dangers of a hostile, war-torn environment beset with landmines, child labor practices, and insufficient schools; so the ocean become the only space the boy can comfortably and confidently identify himself in addition to live, play, and even go to school: "*Quero a minha escolar no mar, pai. Em terra não*

posso” (53). Choosing to learn from the ocean—“*Dava nome às ondas, de uma a uma*” (*Cronicando*).—and dreaming to be a “*jardineiro, plantar nas ondas*” (54) the child grows up to “*desped[ir dos pais] . . . perdendo-se no azul inatingível*” (55). The child Jardineiro’s blindness to all things from dry land evokes Azaria’s inability to understand the incomprehensible intentional and yet random act of violence contained in each landmine. Couto’s narratives like “*O jardim marinho*” restage children from innocent victims in a world full of harsh postcolonial realities to knowing visionaries of more hospitable spaces, active in their own self-preservation, particularly from a country ravaged by civil war.

Unlike the insurmountable racial divisions experienced by Afro-Brazilians in Rosa’s portrayal of the patriarchal Brazilian backlands, Couto’s depiction of postcolonial Mozambique provides an equally redemptive experience for both his black indigenous and *mestiço* children. Seminal examples are Mwanito and his brother, Ntunzi, two *mestiço* boys whose deceased mother Dordalma was a *mulata* in one of Couto’s latest novels, *Jesusalém*. Granting the child Mwanito wisdom and clarity in the orality of his narration that evoke both the Rosean and the Biblical⁸⁷ glorification of childhood’s gift of perception, Couto’s *Jesusalém* is the boy’s first-person narrative of his family’s ambiguous exile from urban life to the remote countryside during the Mozambican Civil War. With the young narrator, Mwanito, is his older brother, Ntunzi; his uncle, Aproximado; and the family servant, Zacaria Kalash—all of whom are led by the boys’ father, Silvestre Vitalício. A former revolutionary of indigenous African descent, Silvestre, ironically, becomes an oppressive patriarchal figure, stripping his children of their very childhood in a fruitless attempt to save them from “*este mundo podre*” (81). From a postcolonial and war-torn Mozambique that has completely disillusioned this past freedom fighter, Silvestre demands that his family leave their homeland to take refuge in the ruins surrounding an abandoned Portuguese colonial administration building. Silvestre names this new settlement Jesusalém, and, like the archetypical Adam⁸⁸ in an antithetical Garden of Eden, gives everyone, except Mwanito, a new name. Mwanito keeps his name, as Silvestre explains, for three reasons. First, his father refers to his youth, as the youngest member of this band of exiles: “*Este ainda está nascendo*” (42), and—indeed—Mwanito’s identity continues to reveal itself throughout the course of this historically bound fictional account of the marginalized Mozambican family. Second, Silvestre considers all of the three elders, himself included, and even the older child, Ntunzi, culpable of some unnamed sins—one of which, no doubt, is remembering the Lado-de-Lá, the outside world from which Silvestre is fleeing. Only Mwanito is innocent—not having eaten from the proverbial tree of the knowledge of good and evil⁸⁹—having no memory of his lost mother or his lost homeland, memories that Silvestre expressly forbids in Jesusalém. Third, the younger child “*nem carece de nenhum nome ... basta-lhe assim . . . Mwanito*” coming from the common noun “[d]iminutivo aportuguesado de ‘mwana’, ‘rapaz, menino, filho’, em chissena, língua do Centro de Moçambique” (44). Therefore, this figuratively nameless, orphaned, homeless, and blameless child becomes Silvestre’s chosen instrument—“*um afinador de silêncios*” (16)—to silence painful memories of “*tantas raivas acumuladas*” (17) from the past.

⁸⁷ The first six words of this quotation are commonly used to glorify the truth and wisdom of childhood: “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger” (Psalm 8:2).

⁸⁸ Genesis 2:20

⁸⁹ Genesis: 2:17

Establishing a series of prohibitive laws against reading, writing, praying, remembering, dreaming, and departing even imaginatively from the settlement “[c]omo faria outra qualquer criança” (27); Silvestre bans all of the activities that Mwanito only realizes later could have been the “*exerc[ícios d]a minha própria infância*” (131). Even as a small child playing in the abandoned wreckage of a truck, “*meu favorito brinquedo, meu refúgio de sonhar . . . eu podia ter inventado viagens infinitas . . . [m]as isso nunca sucedeu: o meu sonho não aprendera a viajar*” (27). Silvestre nearly extinguishes his favored son’s natural childish curiosity, causing Mwanito to feel himself “*envelhe[cer] desde nascença*” (131). But, beyond any other of Mwanito’s childhood deprivations, what he feels most profoundly is the absence of his mother, Dordalma, who died mysteriously when the boy was still too young to remember. Ntunzi, however, vaguely remembers his mother and implicates his own father in the death of Dordalma— “*O cabrão matou a nossa mãe . . . Talvez*” (51). —which begins to explain their abrupt abandonment of the city for this new restrictive sort of half-life, where childhood itself is virtually extinct. The longing for his mother and the disturbing thought that his father may have been involved in her death— “*Esse ‘talvez’ me sobrou como um peso na consciência*” (51).—instigate Mwanito to begin to question his father’s authority and to work to uncover his family’s history. Moreover, the driving force of the narrative becomes Mwanito’s reclaiming of the vestiges of childhood creativity and fashioning of his identity inextricably linked to the lost history of both parents as well as that of the homeland. Under the tutelage of his rebellious older brother to clandestinely learn to read and write, Mwanito is not only able to recover his mother’s forbidden memory and his father’s abandoned history; in so doing, he is also able to redeem his own once nameless, orphaned, and exiled state. By rereading and rewriting his own history— “*Quanto mais decifrava as palavras, minha mãe, nos sonhos, ganhava voz e corpo. . . A escrita me devolvia o rosto perdido de minha mãe*” (46-47).—he is no longer an “*emigrante de um lugar sem nome, sem geografia, sem história*” (21).

Mwanito’s relentless search for his mother leads to an awareness of his—and, in fact, his nation’s—historical and socioeconomic inheritance of victimization and marginalization. His identity bears resemblance to all children in Mozambique whose actual circumstances carry the lingering effects of a history of Portuguese colonialism, only worsened by postcolonial violence and economic hardship. Indeed, Mwanito recalls with a sense of irony one of the most traumatic recent historical experiences of the nation—the Mozambican Civil War:⁹⁰ “*A guerra roubou-nos memórias e esperanças. Mas, estranhamente, foi a guerra que me ensinou a ler as palavras.*” (44). Mwanito, retrospectively, realizes that the first letters that he tried to decipher were written in Russian from labels on containers of war ammunition, before finding “*outros, . . . que, segundo [Zacaria], eram a tradução que o Ministério da Defesa fizera dos originais em russo . . . [para] puro português*” (45). Metaphorizing some of the underlying causes of the civil war in Mozambique, “*me iniciei soletrando receitas de guerra*” (46) denotes more than Mwanito’s formative experiences in literacy. “[A] guerra que me ensinou a ler” also shows a realization about the origins and significance of that war in relation to the government and the people that Silvestre and his children represent. As the Russian characters on the military boxes in Silvestre’s personal arsenal imply, Mwanito’s father, the former freedom fighter who becomes a

⁹⁰ For more details on this topic, see Newitt 563-577.

patriarchal figure to his own family, stands for a generation of revolutionaries who struggled to end Portuguese rule, only to adopt other foreign—Marxist-Leninist—ideologies. Though they intended to govern and unite Mozambique—by “vehemently discourag[ing] any show of tribal identity” (Rothwell 23), “aggressive[ly] promot[ing] . . . Portuguese” (Rothwell 25) as a single officially legitimized language,⁹¹ and forcibly imposing monistic (25) dogma⁹² upon an ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse nation—their policies resulted in what Couto considers the alienation of the people and their traditional ways of life,⁹³ mirrored in *Jesusalém* by the antagonism between father and sons.

One of these dogmatic policies that Silvestre enforces is a prohibition of religious or spiritual practices,⁹⁴ especially the indigenous customs related to honoring the ancestors, which Couto alludes to when Mwanito reports how Silvestre’s censorship manages to depopulate and clear the “*território*” of his dreams, “[o] país das almas”: “*O país dos defuntos estava anulado, o reino dos deuses cancelado*” (20). In addition to demonstrating his violent, though often hypocritical, disdain towards prayer and religiosity, Silvestre forbids even the most involuntary and subjective of mental activities—including dreaming and remembering—in his children: “*Vou dizer uma coisa, nunca mais vou repetir: vocês não podem lembrar nem sonhar nada*” (19). This prohibition of dreaming, remembering, learning, and practicing popular and indigenous cultural traditions reflects Mia Couto’s critique of what Franz Fanon calls the “incapacity of the national bourgeoisie in the underdeveloped countries to rationalize popular praxis, in other words their incapacity to attribute it any reason” (Fanon 97-98). Ironically, both the colonial and first *postcolonial* Mozambican governments considered indigenous Mozambican practices to be regionalist, tribalist, divisive, obscurantist, and anachronistic; Silvestre Vitalício symbolizes their tyranny and failure to unite the country—or, in Silvestre’s own case, a family—by erasing traditional knowledge, memory, beliefs, and customs. Through Mwanito’s unrelenting struggle to excavate the foundational stories of his identity, Couto “challenge[s] the monism of the early years of the Frelimo regime as much as . . . [he] rebuke[s] colonialism” (Rothwell 25), reflecting Couto’s assertion that “[a] guerra que se instaurou foi também uma guerra religiosa, era uma guerra de identidade, à procura de identidade. E isso explica a violência que essa guerra assumiu” (Felinto). *Jesusalém* demonstrates this misguided war against traditional

⁹¹ “The Frelimo government, like the Portuguese administration that it replaced, refused to categorize as literate those who had a reading knowledge of African languages but who, by a quirk of history related to the language policies followed by certain religious missionaries, never learned literacy skills in Portuguese” (Rothwell 42).

⁹² “In postindependence Mozambique, the dogma of the Frelimo government—based on a rhetorical fusion of scientific socialism and unifying nationalism—presupposed a totalizing truth that could logically account for all actions and situations in morally charged binary terms, and which sought to banish the multiple perspectives on reality that Mozambique’s complex, cultural syncretism offers” (Rothwell 29).

⁹³ “Num certo momento particular, eu acho que todo o povo moçambicano comungava com a Frelimo. Era o grande objetivo nacional. Mas depois o que surgiu foi que alguns dos dirigentes da Frelimo se tinham afastado por causa do exílio, por causa de serem formados na Europa, por causa de terem sido atraídos pelos modelos soviéticos de experiência e distanciaram-se culturalmente do país. E o que eles desconheciam eram suas próprias raízes. Aprenderam a desconhecer isso. E os grandes erros tiveram uma razão mais cultural do que política, se é que se pode separar assim” (Mia Couto. Interview with Marilene Felinto).

⁹⁴ “Even in the self-proclaimed atheistic model of scientific socialism under which postindependence Mozambique labored, dogma occupied that sanctified space that rescinds free thought and attempts to reduce the number of possible explanations for any phenomenon to a unified truth” (Rothwell 30).

religions, identifying it as one of the main triggers for the civil violence that victimized Mozambican people, leaving not only children orphans from their families but a whole society suffering from internal and existential civil violence.

Domestic violence is a central theme in *Jesusalém* and it takes different shapes and forms in Mwanito and Ntunzi's respective experiences with many parallels to the roots of the civil war.⁹⁵ The boys' positions as both victims and witnesses of their father's harsh methods of governing the family translate into the national realm, socially, politically, and culturally. Under the Marxist-Leninist regime of Mozambique's first president, Samora Machel, "more in line with the ideology of Mao than Marx" (Rothwell 77), Mozambican people did not have the right to speech against the government. "Machel dealt savagely with his own political opponents" (23), employed "brutal tactics . . . to maintain discipline among [Frelimo's] adherents" (43), including "extrajudicial killing" (44), "forced resettlement of peasants into villages," and "deport[ed] . . . deemed-to-be undesirable elements from urban areas to rural reeducation camps" (77). In fact, *Jesusalém* itself resembles, at least figuratively, such a reeducation camp,⁹⁶ where "*fica[mos] aprisionados . . . Apesar da solidão, não nos podíamos queixar do ócio. O nosso quotidiano estava regulamentado do nascer ao pôr do Sol*" (Couto, *Jesusalém* 40). Here, with the "*único propósito: empoeirar . . . o juízo*" of its inhabitants (26), Silvestre installs himself as "*o único Deus que nos cabia*" (37), "*esse saber absoluto*" (36), implementing a "*desbaptismo*" (42) to erase their former identities, giving "*ordens que . . . eram mais e mais controversas*" (39), and requiring the boys to "*varrer os atalhos,*"⁹⁷ moreover, reenacting the socially and politically repressive relationship between subjugated citizen and totalitarian state.

Two social and political responses to this authoritarianism are embodied in Ntunzi's rebellious resistance and Mwanito's silent obedience: "*Eu era crente das palavras paternas. Ntunzi, porém, considerava tudo aquilo um delírio*" (23). Though he feels guilty—"Uma culpa me raspava o peito" (17)—for being preferred by his father over his older brother, Mwanito is convinced that he has been born to "*estar calado. Minha única vocação é o silêncio. Foi meu pai que me explicou*" (16), evoking both the old adage that a child should be seen and not heard as well as the political restrictions on speech in a dictator state. When he sees his father "*possuído pela violência*" (52), especially towards his own beloved brother, "*Ntunzi, meu único irmão, único vizinho da minha meninice*" (53), Mwanito is both pained and conflicted by dual allegiances to both his brother and his father. Incapable of repudiating his father—because ". . . eu nunca tinha tido mãe. Eu era filho apenas de Silvestre Vitalício. Por esta razão, não podia ceder aos convites que meu mano diariamente me endereçava: que eu devia odiar o nosso progenitor" (65-66)—Mwanito silently witnesses his father's repeated "*pancadas que . . . destinava no seu próprio filho,*" (53) "*bateu-lhe com tal violência que o mano se apartou dos*

⁹⁵ "Although justifiably a heroic figure, with a clear and equitable vision of what he wanted his nation to become, Machel's disregard for the exigencies of international politics and local traditions, and his ruthless obstinacy in dealing with unsavory opponents were factors that led to the rise of Renamo and plunged Mozambique into a particularly vicious civil war" (Rothwell 23).

⁹⁶ For more information on reeducation camps in Mozambique, see José Pinto de Sá, "*Os campos da vergonha: a história inédita dos 'centros de reeducação' em Moçambique*" Magazine No. 277 / 25.6.95 <macua.blogs.com/moambique_para_todos/>

⁹⁷ The verb *varrer*, to sweep, was used in Frelimo's coded language of intimidation, meaning to eliminate those who were perceived as anti-government.

sentidos” (63). Unable to intervene with his spoken voice, Mwanito’s written voice becomes an important and liberating discovery, significantly made possible by the defiant Ntunzi against their father’s wishes, the older brother instructing the younger, “*Você deve ter medo é de não saber*” (46). Finally, having excruciatingly watched one of the most violent of tortures against his brother— “*Nessa noite, Ntunzi dormiu amarrado no curral. Quando amanheceu ele estava doente, tremendo de febre . . . meu único irmão, único vizinho da minha meninice estava-se afastando para os aléns*” (53)—Mwanito finally breaks his silence, publicly writing all over the landscape with a beanpole, scribbling prayers in the dirt, “[o] *chão . . . convertendo numa página onde semeava a espera de um milagre . . . [que] salvasse meu irmão*” (53). Indeed, Mwanito does not just associate literacy with his brother’s salvation but also his own rebirth, “*rabiscava na areia do quintal e eu, deslumbrado, sentia que o mundo renascia como a savana depois das chuvas*” (46).

In fact, beginning with the scribbles in the sands and his “*primeiro diário,*” written within a deck of playing cards, “*de queixumes, esperanças e confissões*” (47) that he would never dare to speak aloud, attributing Mwanito’s burgeoning writing voice to a rebirth of the entire savannah relates the records he keeps with reclaiming something larger than himself. For Couto, this is “*um projeto de nação*”:⁹⁸ to struggle against Silvestre’s repression of memories by “*mostrando a História através das pequenas histórias,*” albeit fictionalized, due to a very real national phenomenon— “*o facto de que Moçambique resolveu de maneira cirúrgica o problema da memória da guerra . . . traumática de 16 anos, um milhão de mortos, e se tu fores a Moçambique hoje, ninguém fala mais nisso, não existiu, como se houvesse um apagamento, quer dizer, uma esponja que passou. Isso é um consenso silencioso que mostra que talvez seja uma melhor solução essa amnésia coletiva*” (Salem et al). As Mwanito discovers, the ability to read and write creates “*um ponte entre tempos passados e futuros, tempos que, em mim, nunca chegaram a existir*” (Couto, *Jesusalém* 46). Mwanito’s literacy enables him to investigate and document—through his own informal interviews and letters that archive the adults’ private conversations—the stories that restore roots to the family tree, the “*embondeiro que [ia] arrancando as próprias raízes*” (20), grounding his own biological, cultural, and historical identity within the context of family heritage and socio-historic realities of Mozambique during the 1970s through the 1990s. By sixteen years of age, roughly equal to the number of years of the Mozambican Civil War—never having, in *Jesusalém*, “*livro, nem caderno, nem nada que fosse parente da escrita*” (45) until the foreign visitor, Marta, introduces her own papers—Mwanito

⁹⁸ Although quotations from the following excerpt of an interview with Mia Couto are cited above, a more complete context is provided here: “. . . acho que a literatura pode ter alguma função nessa invenção de um sentimento de nação, um projeto de nação. Uma das coisas que eu vejo que pode ser importante é o facto de que Moçambique resolveu de maneira cirúrgica o problema da memória da guerra. Nós tivemos uma guerra traumática de 16 anos, um milhão de mortos, e se tu fores a Moçambique hoje, ninguém fala mais nisso, não existiu, como se houvesse um apagamento, quer dizer, uma esponja que passou. Isso é um consenso silencioso que mostra que talvez seja uma melhor solução essa amnésia coletiva. Mas, por outro lado, é preciso pensar que esse tempo tem que ser nosso. Nós temos que resgatar esse tempo, não pode ser um tempo do esquecimento, temos que ter acesso. Se queremos, vamos lá. A literatura pode ser um convite para reduzir para esse tempo, sem o dedo culpabilizante de quem teve responsabilidade nas coisas. Acho que a literatura moçambicana está fazendo isso, está mostrando a História através das pequenas histórias, criando um sentimento de que essa história é bonita, que vale a pena ter essa história, mesmo que não seja muito verdadeira – nenhum país tem uma história completamente verdadeira. Nós [escritores moçambicanos] estamos criando aquilo que são os mitos fundadores da nação” (Salem et al).

resourcefully manages to piece together all of the oral histories that his childhood silences allow him to hear, on which Marta's letters elaborate, and his own persistent literacy inspire him to record. He recounts, then, a chronicle of his family's history: recovering his "*mulatozito*" maternal grandfather's heritage "*da Muchatazina*" (79); his mother's great beauty "*vestida para semear devaneios*" (257); his parent's intense love affair "*como vento e vela, lençol e peçoço*" (80); his half-brother's biological father, Ernestinho Sobra (Zacaria's legal name), "*lembrando-lhe o eterno pecado de Dordalma*" (287); his own parentage by Dordalma and Mateus Ventura (Silvestre's birth name), "*luz dos seus olhos*" (287); Dordalma's violent gang rape "*arremessada no solo, entre babas e grunhos, apetites feras e raivas de bicho*" (257); Mateus's shame-filled contempt for his wife's suffering, "[*q*]ue ele . . . já sofrera vexames que bastassem" (259); Dordalma's ensuing hopelessness and eventual suicide, "*pendurada na árvore . . . como um fruto seco*" (260); and, ultimately, his father's "*bondade[,] . . . desempenho . . . [de] ser pai . . . [e sua] tentação . . . [de] guardar para si os filhos, fora do mundo, longe do tempo*" (81). With both the triumphs and the tragedies of his family history, Mwanito reclaims his lost childhood and his lost homeland, no longer an orphaned exile, connecting his existence to a family no longer fragmented, but "*toda inteira*" (256), and a country no-longer war-torn, but united.

Meanwhile, just as Mwanito's constant preoccupation with breaking the collective silence on his mother's life story relates to a longing for the more enduring record of cultural and ancestral memory that the written word provides, Ntunzi's dream— "*só sonho: escapar de Jerusalém. Ele conhecera o mundo, vivera na cidade, lembrava-se da nossa mãe*" (59)—encompasses his burgeoning adolescent desires for autonomy, socialization, and identity. While Mwanito's is a more subtle, peaceful, and mental liberation; Ntunzi's attempts at escape are more blazon, militant, and physical. Eight years older than Mwanito, eleven at the time of his mother's death, Ntunzi remembers his childhood before the tragic chain of events that propel the surviving family to Jerusalém. As Mwanito would say, his older brother has already "*exercido a [sua] própria infância*" (131), and now, approaching adolescence, knows how to play, to imagine, to lie, to cheat, and to defy authority. Countless times he fearlessly confronts Silvestre's taboos, as in secretly teaching his brother to read, write, pray, swim, play, and remember as well as provocatively interrogating his father's lies: "*Ntunzi repetiu a frase, como se raspasse unha sobre vidro . . . assunto interdito, mais proibido que a reza, mais pecaminoso que as lágrimas ou o canto*" (37). Even in his sleep, Ntunzi challenges the patriarch: "*De quando em vez, dava por meu irmão sonambulando, clamando com voz que não era a dele: —Mateus Ventura, [calling Silvestre by his true name,] vais arder no fundo dos infernos*" (42)! In addition to nightly entreaties for his younger brother to "*desejar a . . . morte [de Silvestre] . . . tanto quanto ele a desejava*" (66), Ntunzi tries to run away three times. The first time, after walking nearly twenty kilometers to leave the gates of Jerusalém, Ntunzi is suddenly crippled by fear, which he believes to be a curse, but point to his inability to save just himself: "*Era feitiço, sim. Mas não lançado . . . Era o pior dos maus-olhados: aquele que lançamos sobre nós próprios*" (71). Second, "*Ntunzi anunciou que ia fugir com a estrangeira,*" a Portuguese woman, Marta, who unexpectedly visits the settlement: "*Estava, segundo ele, tudo acertado. Planificado até ao mais ínfimo pormenor*" (167). Their plan is for Marta to aid in Ntunzi's escape by driving away with Aproximado's truck, but the following morning, "*a viatura despertaria parálitica, descalça sobre o chão escaldante da savana*" (171), again, unable to deliver Ntunzi alone, without the collective group of people with whom his identity is inextricably bound. Finally, Ntunzi manages to steal the repaired car, attempting again to flee with Marta and Mwanito, but he crashes,

because he doesn't know how to drive. Like Azaria, in "*O dia em que explodiu Mabata-bata,*" who wants to elude the tyranny of an uncaring uncle—Ntunzi's plans symbolize more than just the quintessential childhood run-away fantasies, but an urgent strategy for survival foiled by attempts to leave his family behind.

Ntunzi's foiled struggle to escape the confines of Jesusalém, which he associates with the exhaustion of not living, eventually leaves him so emotionally depleted that ". . . *entrava em greve de existir. Mais grave que qualquer doença, era essa total desistência dele*" (72). More than once, the same courageous, insubordinate, and protective Ntunzi—who teaches his little brother to fear only his own ignorance—appears to be on the brink of death and despair from his environment's extremes of physical child abuse and deprivation. As much as Ntunzi's guidance leads Mwanito to reclaim his lost childhood, Zacaria's intervention on behalf of Ntunzi correlates with his biological son's recoveries from Silvestre's severe beatings, Jesusalém's painful reclusion, and, later, the city's "*nada recomendáveis*" temptations (248). Though the surprising revelation of Zacaria's paternity is not revealed until the end of the novel, in hindsight, his advocacy saves Ntunzi's life again and again. Dipping Ntunzi's lifeless body seven times into the mystically healing waters of "*a coisa mais viva e verdadeira que acontecia em Jesusalém . . . aquele rio sem nome*" (28), Zacaria takes Ntunzi to the only "*estrada aberta, sulco rasgado sem interdição*" (30) in a land otherwise dominated by Silvestre's "*país dos defuntos anulado[s]*" (20). Recalling the paternal relationship and the celebration of ancestral customs in "*Nas águas do tempo,*" this is a more devotional baptism than the anti-baptism that Silvestre institutes upon their arrival in Jesusalém. "*Debaixo de água . . . [onde] enxergam-se coisas impossíveis de imaginar*" (28), Zacaria invokes what seems like a miracle, breaking the fever that dangerously grips Ntunzi after a merciless beating at the hand of Silvestre and a night tied up in the corral. In a sacred place like this, Mateus Ventura's father, long ago, "*rezava junto aos rios quando queria pedir chuva.*" Again, it is to this indigenous ancestral space—where the children have gone to cry and pray freely, and where even Silvestre, himself, will one day not be able to resist praying and paying his own respects to the ancestors, calling the river "*Rio Kokwana. . . Quer dizer 'avô'*" (115)—that Zacaria first relieves Ntunzi of his dangerous fevers and initially reveals his redeeming paternal connection with his son.

After Ntunzi's "*convalescença*" from the profound despair that gripped him after his failed first attempt to escape Jesusalém, he and Mwanito go to "*viver com Zacaria Kalash . . . [p]ara desnuearmos os espíritos e, ao mesmo tempo, aprendermos os enigmas da vivência e os segredos da sobrevivência*" (90). Once again, Zacaria uses his traditional knowledge to refresh Ntunzi's spirit, teaching each boy to carry and use a weapon as well as to track and hunt an animal with expertise, respect, and even some humor; while also revealing something of his own family tree, and therefore, Ntunzi's inheritance as well: "*Neto de soldado, filho de sargento, ele mesmo não tendo sido outra coisa senão um militar. . . . Na sua língua materna nem havia palavra para dizer soldado. . . . Foi assim {'lutara[m] sempre do lado errado'} desde sempre na sua família: o avô lutara contra Gungunhana, o pai se alistara na polícia colonial e ele mesmo combatera pelos portugueses na luta de libertação nacional*" (91-92). With its comical tone, this invocation of family tradition begins to lift Ntunzi's formerly sorrowful spirits and renew his health. When Zacaria jokes about having "*munções . . . mais que suficientes para exterminar várias humanidades[, t]odos se riam menos [Mwanito]*" (93), signifying the younger brother's distaste for military life as much as the older brother's delight in it. Indeed, from his

first hunting trip with Zacaria—who asked Ntunzi to take a final shot that the old soldier was, ironically, too “*arrependido*” by the sight of blood to take himself—“*Ntunzi tomou o gosto da pólvora*” (98). In fact, when the family finally returns to the Lado-de-Lá, the city of Ntunzi’s birth, and the nineteen-year-old Ntunzi begins to be enticed by the nightlife, adopting what his family sees as a self-destructive lifestyle, Zacaria—“*adivinha[ndo] o que lhe haveria de acontecer . . . na cidade*” (250)—entices him to leave “*seguir[ndo] de passo militar, em exacta cópia dos modos de Zacaria*” (252). Enlisting in the army, Ntunzi “[p]rogredira na carreira militar,” becoming—like Zacaria’s father, Ntunzi’s paternal grandfather—a sergeant, “*sargento Olindo Ventura*” (283), but—rectifying the errors of his forefathers who fought against Gungunhana⁹⁹ and Mozambican liberation or even his adopted father who fought against colonialism only to install a patriarchy of his own—Sergeant Olindo Ventura represents the hope of the post-war independent state. Accepting Zacaria as his military confidant but “*Silvestre manter-se-ia seu único e legítimo pai*” (288), Olindo/Ntunzi’s expression of sympathy and forgiveness for Silvestre—hitherto sentiments only harbored by Mwanito—show the transformative power of the traditional knowledge and family inheritance that Zacaria shares with his now legitimized son.

The children of *Jesusalém*, like their peers in *Vozes anoitecidas* and *Cronicando*, grow up in conditions much too harsh to simply idealize the beauty or innocence of their infancy. Without exception, Ntunzi, Mwanito, Jardineiro, João, Azaria, and Filomena—who face the violence and poverty left in the wake of imperialism—know all too well “*que um mundo feito só de justiça não será coisa para este tempo*” (Couto, *Cronicando* 20), but Mia Couto does not stop with simply describing the graphic details of his most vulnerable characters’ marginalization. No, Couto does not flinch at demonstrating the injustices either, but he leaves no character—young or old, orphaned or parented, black or white, *mulato* or *mestiço*, man or woman, rich or poor, Mozambican or foreigner—to suffer in obscurity or to face tragedy without offering some inherent redeeming qualities and the mitigating factors of both the most intimate and even incongruous of interpersonal connections: for Ntunzi, it is matrilineal historical literacy aided by both a protective brother and an unlikely visitor; for Mwanito, paternal heritage from an illegitimate father and a deceased mother; for Jardineiro, alternative vision supported by a family willing to construct a new home on the shores of a more hospitable space for their son; for João, escalating dreams that liberate not only his own imagination but offer hope to his impoverished community; for Azaria, traditional mythology that links the stories of the ancestors with the fatherless and motherless of the present; and for poor Filomena, her tragic protagonism, in itself, critique her very human suffering within a family structure that is distorted by economic desperation. Couto’s children’s reciprocal relationships with the families and communities that aid in salvaging one another’s humanity from the dehumanizing effects of war and poverty recalls an Nguni proverb, associated with the *ubuntu* philosophy that historically pertains to specific ethnic groups¹⁰⁰ in parts of southern Mozambique and neighboring countries, “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*’ (often translated as ‘a person is a person through other persons’)” (Gade

⁹⁹ Gungunhana was an indigenous leader who ruled the kingdom of Gaza, Southern Mozambique, from 1885 to 1889. See Newitt 348-355.

¹⁰⁰ The Nguni, for example, come from “a subdivision of the southern Bantu-speaking peoples, living mainly in southern Africa . . . [with] a common historical origin and speak[ing] closely related languages” (“Nguni” *Oxford English Dictionary*).

1).¹⁰¹ The *ubuntu* worldview's emphasis on interpersonal relationships to define, connect, and even improve human experience relates to the Coutian protagonist's more circular pattern of self-discovery grounded in collective interdependence and a plurality of native traditions that leave no room for the foreclosures of patriarchal characterization. This contrasts sharply with the more linear worldview of scrappy self-determination, meritorious individualism, and othering discourse that propel Rosean protagonists' upward mobility. Unlike Rosa's most heroic children, Couto's do not usually dramatically improve in social or economic conditions. Within the humble means of national circumstances and local conditions, Coutian children capitalize on the imaginative and sometimes magical "exercises of childhood," while reconnecting to the indigenous and sacred practices of their ancestors. Again, collectively, not independently, each child's quest represents a small part of a cumulative postcolonial and post-war movement "*que, no actual hoje, bem que o mundo poderia ter um pouco mais de justiça*" (20).

¹⁰¹ I mentioned this Southern African philosophy of *ubuntu* in my introduction to illustrate just one example of an indigenous African value system, but it is in no way intended to represent the whole of the continent, the whole of a country, or even an essentialist assumption about a whole ethnic group, especially in the contemporary context of cultural hybridity and religious syncretism that socio-historic circumstances and human nature have spread.

Conclusion

Sharing legacies of Portuguese colonization and language; affinities for marginalized, especially youthful, characters; and a well-documented dialogue that transcends geography and history; it is tempting to subscribe to theories of influence, heritage, and kinship in the comparative study of Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto. However, studies of influence, with their singular focus on tracing the origins of textual similarities, can become so myopic that such scholarship risks losing sight of significant, even glaring differences. For example, exploring the condition of the Afro-Brazilian child in Guimarães Rosa's versus Mia Couto's narrations, it is impossible to completely agree with Daniel's assessment that "Couto's appeal to human solidarity independent of ethnic, social, and political affiliation echoes Guimarães Rosa's comprehensive, non-sectarian, apolitical stance" (1). On the contrary, both authors take very political stances in three ways that are indicative of the commonalities and disparities between their literary projects. First, Rosa and Couto take similar liberties with the structures of Portuguese language to express the orality of marginalized subjects' speech patterns, but more importantly, to share these subjects' respective ways of looking at, thinking about, and engaging with societies in which geo-political forces are ever-present in the conditions of their daily lives. Second, Rosa's *sertanejo* narrations distort the black body and identity, repeatedly using skin color, strange eyes and lips, disgusting deformities, animal traits, frightening devilishness, and ambiguous fates as descriptors for Afro-Brazilians. This distortion is political in its frank disclosure of the repressed racial unconscious residing beneath Brazil's myth of racial democracy, just as it also serves to reinforce the *mestiço* priority in racial hierarchies that still carry colonization and slavery's subjugations. Third, Couto's narratives both dramatize and metaphorize the rise and fall of Mozambique's governments, the causes and effects of its wars, the failures of foreign dogmas and institutions, the value of indigenous traditions and cultures, and the equal capacity for even the most marginalized of subjects to work for collectively redeeming acts of justice. An intertextual reading is more apt to highlight these underlying inconsistencies between authors, as intertextuality's dual focus on textual intersections and divergences provides greater perspective on the big-picture historical events, social movements, and personal lives distinctly experienced by each individual author and that find expression in their language, theme, and worldview.

In terms of language, Couto paradoxically pays his respects to the Brazilian author's innovations while rejecting the polarizing aspects of Rosa's orality. It is already well documented that the Brazilian author's linguistic innovation reverberates in the works of the Mozambican. When Rosa writes "*Pirlimpsiquice*" (*Primeiras histórias* 83),¹⁰² Couto replies "*pirilampiscavam*" (*O gato e o escuro* 7).¹⁰³ To Rosa's "*estupefatura*" (*Primeiras histórias* 83, 173), Couto responds with "*estufefarto*" (*Estórias abensonhadas* 184). Though not always so close in approximation, the portmanteaus, neologisms, Lusophonization of indigenous terms, and references to native words demonstrate, in both authors, a resembling polyphonic vitality and sociolinguistic reality of the imagined communities that their fiction represents. Sharing form in language, however, does not equate to sharing content. Mia Couto's narrative does not

¹⁰² *Pirlimpimpim + psico + ice* (Martins 387)

¹⁰³ *Pirilampo + piscar*

participate in the racially polarizing language of the Big House. The obvious fact that his books—like his country—are populated with almost all black Africans, some *mestiço* or *mulato*, makes it incongruous—as well as offensive—to reproduce the othering discourse on, and objectification of the black body and subject, that Rosa’s mimetic orality adopts from the Big Houses that rule the Brazilian backlands.

This abrupt disconnect from Rosean language should have alerted earlier scholars to the fact that Rosean and Coutian works do not “*apresentam condições socio-históricas semelhantes*,” and that the Mozambican author does not share “kinship with the cosmovision” of the Brazilian. Though they both may be concerned with the effects of colonization, the world of the Rosean narrative is still ruled by the patriarchal system and its dichotomous views of the Self versus an imagined Other. Rosa’s language represents children in roughly two archetypes: the tragic Afro-Brazilian and the heroic *mestizo*-white. While, to a certain extent, they share such qualities as marginalization and victimization, their characterizations are diametrically opposed. Children on the Rosean *mestiço*-white continuum—such as Miguilim and young Riobaldo—also struggle with the hardships of life within the patriarchal system, but their circumstances of birth are redeemed. Riobaldo describes his childhood as illiterate, undocumented, and orphaned. When he says, “*De herdado, fiquei com aquelas miserinhas—miséria quase inocente*;” this recalls, at first, the suffering of children like the nameless slave child in “*O burrinho pedrês*,” but the word *inocente* immediately removes the association with any of Rosa’s diabolized black characters—young or old—including the slave boy, Alfeu, Guirigó, Iládio, and Mãitina, who have each been called “*em-diabo pretinho*,” “*dianhinho*,” “*diabrim*,” “*diabinho*,” “*capeta*,” “*dos caldeirões do inferno*,” or “*negra pagã, . . . rogando para os demônios dela, africanos!*” Unlike the Afro-Brazilians marked with the stain of evil connotations “*engomado de preto . . . até por dentro*,” Riobaldo feels no shame in the humble, even humiliating, circumstances of his birth, though what he mentions is feeling no shame for his *mestiço* skin color: “*Não me envergonho, por ser de escuro nascimento*.” Significantly, the *mestiço* marginalized subject need not be ashamed of the “*escuro nascimento*” that he would condemn—even damn—in his Afro-Brazilian counterpart, because his childhood, in juxtaposition to the black, is imbued with the potential for his own transformation.

At the same time, there is a minority of black children whose grotesque physical and spiritual representation propagates an ambiguous sense of identity that necessarily contrasts with the clearly identified *mestiço* protagonist. This vagueness is, first, focalized on their physical descriptions displaced into unrelenting stereotypes outside of the realm of human experience—as in slithering, vanishing, or conjuring evil—and of human physiognomy—as in protruding eyeballs, swollen tongues, or an animal’s hide. Their black color, as mentioned above, is incessantly used in disparagement to metonymize their perceived moral and physical inferiority in contrast to their either robust and valiant or sensitive and gifted peers who reside within the *mestiço*-dominated patriarchy that has replaced colonization. Their incomplete journeys, mysteriously appearing and disappearing from the narrative without past, future, and very little individuated presence demonstrate the ambivalent experience of being so barely visible on the margins of the rural Brazilian patriarchal system and yet essential to the interpretation of *mestiço* identity at the center of this society. By embodying the sins and fears projected upon them, and, then, conveniently departing from the plot without a word of their whereabouts, they are easily forgotten in the triumph of the *mestiço* experience or easily blamed in the tragedy. After all, once

the *mestiço* protagonists have managed to overcome great odds to become tutored and schooled, landowners and slaveholders, bookmakers and aviation workers, conservationists and naturalists, saints and soothsayers—who remembers the minor Afro-Brazilian characters? Not even the scholarship has yet carved out a space for Rosa’s lost black children. But, in the agony of defeats—big or small—when the cattle are lost, cowboys are trampled, a cherished friend is killed, or an annoying childhood memory is recalled, they return as reminders of suffering or discomfort that is not their own. The ambiguity and strangeness of their identities in contrast to the clear vitality and mortality of the *mestiço* raises the rhetorical question that is beyond the point of their existence on the page: Are they real or imagined, mortal or mystical? In future research, I am interested in returning to Guimarães Rosa not to prove or disprove these children’s corporeal existence but to further develop an understanding of the black characters’ function in a more ambitious and comprehensive reading of all of Rosa’s works. Are there differences in the characterization of the younger, more Sacian, figures versus the older Afro-Brazilians? Does the age of the elders provide any redemptive qualities, such as a more grounded historical timeline, and therefore a clearer sense of individualism, or are they simply more grown-up versions of the black children? Do my findings hold up to the test of Rosa’s enormous body of work? Are there exceptions? If so, how are exceptional Afro-Brazilians different from others, including the *mestiço* protagonists? I propose that Guimarães Rosa’s Afro-Brazilian subjects, though minor characters, deserve further research, not in isolation, but as an integral part of the narration of Brazil’s social formation.

Meanwhile, in the narration of Mozambique’s historically-bound present, Mia Couto’s language—coming from a revolutionary background and perspective—dismantles the hierarchies of race, ideology, and class established by the dominant worldviews of Portuguese imperialism, scientific socialism, and globalized capitalism that have governed his nation. By reclaiming the stories of those oppressed by these systems and ignored by official history—what Luís Carlos Patraquim calls, “*pequenas verdades dos pequenos e esquecidos personagens de cuja soma total, derrogados do que não interessa do seu valor intrínseco, O Discurso da História se faz*” (Couto, *Vozes anoitecidas* 16-17)—Couto writes an alternative history “*de quer[er] iluminar o lado de sombra . . . desta saga histórica que nos envolve*” (16). This is not a romanticized or idealized—but perhaps revolutionary—version of not just the past—but its links with the present and future—in a country that Couto calls not only “*pobre mas . . . empobrecido. . . de ideias, da erosão da criatividade e da ausente [sic] interna de debate*” (Couto “*Economia - A fronteira da cultura*”). What both Patraquim and Couto specifically point to are the shadows of an “impoverished” official history that hide forgotten and inconvenient truths of the past, and that—if left in the dark—allow for the justification of continued injustices:

Porque eu creio que a História oficial do nosso continente foi sujeita a várias falsificações. A primeira e mais grosseira destinou-se a justificar a exploração que fez enriquecer a Europa. Mas outras falsificações se seguiram e parte delas destinaram-se a ocultar responsabilidades internas, a lavar a má consciência de grupos sociais africanos que participaram desde sempre na opressão dos povos e nações de África. Esta leitura deturpada do passado não é apenas um desvio teórico. Ela acaba por fomentar uma atitude de eterna vítima, sugere falsos inimigos e alianças sem princípios.

É importante fazermos nova luz sobre o passado porque o que se passa hoje nos nossos países não é mais do que a actualização de conviências antigas entre a mão de dentro e a mão de fora. Estamos revivendo um passado que nos chega tão distorcido que não somos capazes de o reconhecer. (Couto “Economia - A fronteira da cultura”)

Couto’s narration, therefore, of the experiences of the most vulnerable victims of such socio-historic distortions and “connivances”—children like Filomena—does not falsely show dramatic rescues or excuse internal forces—including “[d]iversas elites africanas . . . beneficiárias desse[s] fenómeno[s] histórico[s]”—from the tragic outcomes of abandonment and abuse, danger and violence, poverty and ignorance. Couto’s children cannot participate in the kind of Bildungsroman stories that redeem Rosa’s most advantaged children. There is never a giant leap of progress for Couto’s Ntunzi or Mwanito, Jardineiro or João, Azaria or Filomena, because the objective of their fictional stories is the narration of national realities and responsibilities that the official history—which Couto criticizes as “*a história colonizada*”—would rather blame on external forces, lacking the critical thinking and “*escrúpulos morais e intelectuais*” to address these socioeconomic and socio-historic conditions honestly and effectively. Couto calls for an interdisciplinary revival of Mozambican history linked with present concerns of the people: “*Vamos ficando, cada vez mais, a sós com a nossa própria responsabilidade histórica de criar uma outra História. . . . A nossa única saída é continuar o difícil e longo caminho de conquistar um lugar digno para nós e para a nossa pátria. E esse lugar só pode resultar da nossa própria criação.*”

Moreover, in his effort to rewrite the national history—with “*a coragem de assumir-se com verdade com a antítese do lugar comum*”—through fictional but truthful narrations of the country’s most marginalized citizens, Couto neither sentimentalizes the difficulties that his compatriots face nor does he glorify their heroism. What is redeeming in his characters is their very humanness; this humanity is what raises figures from tragic circumstances to “*um lugar digno.*” In response to the violent and dehumanizing divisiveness of colonization and war, which left behind what he calls “*destróços sem íntimo*” (Couto, *Estórias abensonhadas* 7), Couto reconstructs intimate, interpersonal, even familial relationships often between the most unlikely of pairs of elders and children without the traditional dichotomies between majority and minority or patriarchal polarities between Self and Other. For Couto, what becomes universal in the identity, and redeeming to the condition, of all Mozambican children is the family—though not necessarily blood-related—and the community—“*[e]sta humanidadezita, unida como os cinco dedos*” (Couto, *Jesusalém* 15)—as important social units that connect the child to his or her sense of selfhood. Although the *ubuntu* cosmovision—as Couto calls it, “*esse conceito [que] diz que ‘eu sou os outros’*” (Couto “*Economia - A fronteira da cultura*”)—is also tied to this sense of self coming from a sense of community, I must, now, point out the limitations of *ubuntu* to describe the great diversity and range of Mozambican experience and traditions—from north to south, from coast to interior, and along the borders of six different countries. Indeed, a plurality of cultural and linguistic values makes up the Mozambican worldviews. *Ubuntu*’s philosophy of collective interdependence—versus the hard-won independence of Brazilian frontier life—and sense of the essential interconnectedness of human identities—versus the fragmentation represented by Rosa’s Afro-Brazilian children or the individualism of Rosa’s *mestiço* protagonists—is merely a starting point from which to distinguish at least one major thematic

difference between Couto and Rosa. Ironic only because of the context of this discussion of the *ubuntu* spirit, it is important to newly underscore how Couto is known for his radical independence in thinking, dismissiveness towards dogmas, and distrust for institutions. Fully recognizing that he has vehemently warned against ascribing philosophies—including *ubuntu* specifically—to a contemporary sense of “*africanidade*” (Couto “*Economia - A fronteira da cultura*”), my conclusions on the thematic importance of family and community in the development of the Coutian child are framed as merely an intertextual intersection with just one of many indigenous philosophies.¹⁰⁴

Unlike the racial biases that segregate the transformations and characterizations of the Rosean child, every Coutian child experiences some form of redemption from a marginalizing situation no matter what his or her racial or socio-economic background. Also, as mentioned above, Couto’s children do not improve their situations by going-it-alone, although this does not foreclose the potential of the child to rebel, dream, create, and/or strive for alternative experiences. As resilient and inventive as the most heroic of Rosa’s protagonist children, Couto’s children still need a connection with tradition or a familial relationship—though it is not imperative for them to be of the same lineage, race, or demographics—to experience even the most modest sort of redemption. From these inclusive families or communities, children do not necessarily receive protection—as there are abusive, patriarchal figures as well as violent and hostile conditions that sometimes harm Coutian children, who inhabit war-torn and impoverished environments—but a connection with tradition, history, mythology, ancestry, and sometimes just the moral support of dreaming or suffering together collectively fulfill the Coutian narrative’s concern with the capacity of human connection to create small stories of social justice that rebuild a nation in which “[p]or incontáveis anos as armas tinham vertido luto no chão” (Couto, *Estórias abensonhadas* 7). His children’s dependence on accessible representatives of unvarnished history and the ancestral past enacts a reciprocal relationship in which this past—and the history of the nation—also depends on the child, in the retelling of these stories, to have a future.

For the future of research on Mia Couto, a vast field of study still remains in the area of race and identity. This project of comparative study between Guimarães Rosa and Mia Couto began by hypothesizing the existence of more intertextual intersections in their portrayals of *mestiçagem* than were actually found. In contrast to the dramatic differences in Rosa’s racial depictions, I was not able to distinguish the *mestiço* Coutian child’s characterization from the black. In Couto, the black and the *mestiço* are treated as aesthetic equals. My next project on Mia Couto will pursue a more concrete definition of his complex conceptualization of *mestiçagem* and the implications of him ignoring the politics of race as an element of establishing identity. For now, I understand Couto’s use of *mestiçagem* only in how it differs from Rosa’s. While Rosa’s shows polarization within the Brazilian social formation, Couto’s shows cultural hybridities within a majoritarian black Mozambican population. In Rosa, the black color establishes unindividuated difference in relationship to whites and *mestiços*, while in Couto shades of black color in the spectrum of indigenous, *mestiço*, and *mulato*—versus the uniform *preto* of Rosa’s black subjects—reveal “*um mosaico de diferenças que são um dos mais valiosos*

¹⁰⁴ It is also important to note that Gade, whom I cite in both the introduction and Chapter 3, has traced an evolution in *ubuntu*’s definitions in writings from 1846 to 2011 (1).

patrimónios do nosso continente” (Couto “*Economia - A fronteira da cultura*”). How, then, is this different from Gilberto Freyre’s own idealized version of *mestiçagem* as collective national identity? More importantly, how does Couto’s concept of racial identity compare to portrayals of race within the context of his own country’s discursive practices? Does the fact that Mia Couto is a white Mozambican distinguish his proposal of *mestiçagem* from that of indigenous and *mulato* Mozambican writers and intellectuals? Some suggestions for further comparative study with Couto include João Dias, José Craveirinha, Luís Bernardo Honwana, Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa, Paulina Chiziane, and Lília Momplé. Continued investigations of race in Mia Couto should be less concerned with comparing him outside of his country and more connected with exploring his work within Mozambique’s postcolonial traditions. This will shed more light on the racial ideologies to which his language is anchored and his radical proposal of *mestiçagem* as a concept through which to read the Mozambican society represented in his narrative. His literary project is a personal, creative, and critical effort as much as it is part of a collective and national vision.

Intertextuality has allowed this dissertation to distinguish Rosa and Couto’s local/national aesthetic and ideological tendencies while acknowledging global/international interconnections among their literatures. Indeed, there is a clear and deliberate convergence between the Mozambican writer and the Brazilian, as both Lusophone authors rely on what Patraquim calls the “*descolonização da palavra*” (Couto, *Vozes anoitecidas* 16) in terms of rewriting the conventions of the Portuguese language to most authentically represent the oralities of their own distinct socio-historic and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, this relationship does not make the later author’s creative vitality derivative or subordinate of the former. As José Craveirinha, considered one of Mozambique’s greatest poets, affirms, “*Mia Couto apareceu-nos a confirmar que todo e qualquer acto criativo na área das artes (plásticas ou literárias) não consiste em ser autor de coisa jamais feita, ser pioneiro ou dela ser o descobridor*” (Couto, *Vozes anoitecidas* 9). Craveirinha touches on this intertextuality—that according to Kristeva, Barthes, and Derrida—can maintain the singular creativity of both authors who share artistic constructs that express their own ideas. In fact, Couto, too, discusses the misunderstandings, and perhaps the fruitlessness, of looking for what is “*originariamente*” or “*verdadeiramente nosso*” in an increasingly globalized world with a history of five centuries of contact between Lusophone countries:

*essas coisas acabam sendo nossas porque, para além da sua origem, lhes demos a volta e as refabricamos à nossa maneira. A capulana pode ter origem exterior mas é moçambicana pelo modo como a amarramos. E pelo modo como esse pano passou a falar connosco. O coco é indonésio, a mandioca é mais latino-americana que a Jennifer Lopez mas o prato que preparamos é nosso porque o fomos caldeando à nossa maneira. (Couto “*Economia - A fronteira da cultura*”)*

This reading of Mia Couto in relationship to Guimarães Rosa has attempted to contextualize the socio-historical predicaments that their narratives envision as well as the social, political, and moral issues that they articulate *nas suas próprias maneiras*. Though they inherit the legacies of Portuguese colonialism, including most especially language—just as the *capulana*, *coco*, or *mandioca* from India, Indonesia, and Brazil—the ingredients of their orality may be similar but their finished products are certainly their own.

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