

Luanda – A spatial national metonymy in *O herói* and *Na cidade vazia*

Bruno Gonalo Nogueira Sales¹
University of Georgia

Abstract: Through the analysis of the Angolan films *O herói/The Hero* (2004) and *Na cidade vazia/The Hollow City* (2004), this study identifies the filmic depictions of Luanda as a critical site for understanding the continuous struggles of the nation to form itself, to overcome the challenges left by its colonial legacy, and to address those that arise from its internal sociopolitical struggles. By the end, the focus is particularly on the spatial representations of the Luanda and how they render the growing inequity of Angolan society visible, as well as revealing a milieu that consistently erects obstacles to the completions of the protagonists' ambitions. Lastly, the films' distinct temporal settings allow us to assess different historical perspectives of these ongoing individual and societal processes, which includes discrete idealized and projected outcomes for the nation.

Keywords: Luso-African cinema. Angola. Luanda. National identity.

Both in reality and in fictional depictions, Luanda emerged as an apt metonymy for the national developments intrinsic to Angola after its independence was claimed in 1975. Administrative, ideological and ethnical turmoil resulted in intermittent periods of war and peace, which exerted a significant impact in the subsequent cultural, political and conceptual redefinitions of what this nation wanted to become and the values its society wanted to uphold. Using David Birmingham's nomenclature system articulated in *Empire in Africa: Angola and its Neighbors* (2006), Angola experienced four distinct periods of war, namely, "the colonial war (1961–1974), the international war (1975–1991), and the periods of the two civil wars (1992–1994 and 1998–2002)" (SILVA, 2011, p.189).

As such, a nation that was formed under the Marxist-Leninist ideals of a just, united, and equalitarian society quickly saw these initial post-colonial aspirations challenged by bellicose fluctuations, cold-war era political interventions, and the adoption of different economic models. These transformations associated with the edification of Angola as a nation resulted in the demographic explosion of Luanda, its capital city, and with this boom, Luanda

¹ Licenciado (2000) e Mestrado (2013) em Lnguas Romnicas pela Universidade da Gergia. Presentemente frequenta o programa de Doutorado da Universidade da Gergia em Lnguas Romnicas e ensina Portugus na Universidade da Pennsylvania. A sua pesquisa concentra-se em Literaturas Lusfonas contemporneas e em Teoria Literria.

emerged as reflection of the nation's sociocultural complexities: the merging of different ethnic groups, the infrastructural shortcomings, the ideological divisions, and the economic disparities.

In this work, I will identify the representations of these phenomena in two Angolan films: Maria João Ganga's *Na cidade vazia/Hollow City* (2004) and Zézé Gamboa's *O herói/The Hero* (2004). I will demonstrate how, in both cases, the spatial setting of Luanda aptly reflects the development of Angola, through the metonymy of its capital city, in the periods represented in the selected films. As Fernando Arenas summarizes, in both films,

Luanda plays a significant role given its status as a microcosm of the Angolan nation that grew exponentially in large part due to the war, while creating a mass exodus from rural areas into the capital city stretching Luanda's infrastructure to capacity as well as exacerbating socioeconomic hardship for many. (ARENAS, 2011, p. 154)

Ultimately, I will evidence how the historical setting of these films in periods of relative peace, registers both the consequences of war and remnants of optimism, as well as the effects of both in the aspirations of the ideals of the independence movement. Consequently, I will first focus on the inhospitable barriers that the city erects to the ambitions of the films' protagonists and, in second place, I will highlight how the visual depictions of Luanda reveal both the war-torn dilapidated nation, as well as the uneven distribution of economic resources.

A hollowed city through the gaze of a lost child

Maria João Ganga's *Na cidade vazia* is set in 1991 in Luanda, and as such it falls at the end of the international war. According to António Márcio da Silva, this war gained this denomination because, "Angola became a battlefield for some international foes to fight each other [...]. The [...] USSR and Cuba supported MPLA but the United States of America and South Africa supported UNITA" (SILVA, 2011, p.189). This period lasted 16 years, and it proved to be extremely disruptive.

In the film, the first indication of this grim reality is displayed in the first scenes, which show a group of young orphans being transported in a cargo airplane, accompanied by nuns, soldiers, military supplies, and a coffin. Among them is the protagonist, N'dala (played

by Roldan Pinto João), an 11-year-old boy from the region of Bié. This point of origin is pertinent because Bié was one of the rural regions afflicted with the kidnapping and involuntary conscription of children into UNITA's guerrilla units. It is for this reason that this group of children, representative of many more, is being transported to Luanda.

However, immediately after the landing, unwilling to live in the Catholic orphanage and motivated by the desire to return to Bié, N'dala escapes and sets out on his adventure in Luanda. This doubling of intentions elicits the doubling of a prototypical Angola: the viewer is offered N'dala as a potential identification of this new period of relative peace, which optimistically appeared like a historical turning of a new page; but, it is also in the presence of the spatial depiction of Luanda, whereupon a tattered visualization of the nation emerges in the film.

In regard to the inhospitality of Luanda, N'dala faces several obstacles that preclude him from being able to return to Bié, not the least of which is the need for survival. This primordial necessity is both advanced and hindered by the cast of characters that constitute *Nacidade vazia*, each offering the young protagonist some service, but some asking more in return. As Sheila Petty remarks in "Aesthetic and narrative strategies in the films of selected African women directors":

The film chronicles how N'dala, a young man with an internal sense of honour, is slowly compromised by the city's corrupt state, resulting in his eventual death in a robbery gone wrong [...] As an innocent, N'dala is confronted by several corruptive forces. (PETTY, 2012, p. 149-150)

In this process, N'dala meets four crucial characters: António, a fisherman who exposes him to traditional values, by telling the story of Kianda, a mystical mermaid; Zé, a boy about his age, who introduces him to other boys and to the experience of being a child in Luanda; Rosita, a prostitute who reluctantly offers him a place to stay; and, Joca, a scam artist, who initially serves as a role model, but later becomes N'dala's downfall.

N'dala's survival tribulations can be divided into two camps: formative and destructive. According to Petty, this dichotomy is, "the case in many sub-Saharan African films, [whereupon] the negative influences in N'dala's life are contrasted with positive ones" (PETTY, 2012, p. 150). In this regard, António and Zé fall clearly into the first category. The fisherman, who lives on the beach across from the bay of Luanda, provides the protagonist a place that is both reminiscent of Bié and an escape from the urban pitfalls of Luanda. It is at

the beach, in Ant3nio’s tent, that N’dala spends his first night, and it is there, towards the end of the movie, that he resolves to move. Additionally, through the tale of Kianda and through the craft of fishing, Ant3nio not only presents N’dala with a plausible resolution to his existential conundrum, but as Robson L. Dutra suggests, Ant3nio also provides N’dala with, “values like ancestry and the transmission of knowledge frayed by the war” (DUTRA, 2013, p. 154; my translation)². Lastly, for Petty, the importance of the role of the fisherman is further underscored by, “his belief in traditional ways, evidenced by his attempts to guide N’dala through oral tradition” (PETTY, 2012, p. 150).

On the other hand, Z3’s relevance is highlighted initially because it is through this character that Maria Jo3o Ganga references Pepetela’s classic *bildungsroman*, *As aventuras de Ngunga* (1972), when he is assigned the protagonist’s role in his school’s staging of the novel. In his article, Dutra (2013) examines this intertextual relationship extensively, but for the purpose of our analysis it suffices to showcase this curious intertextual asymmetry, since it might have been expected that N’dala play the role of Ngunga. The fact that he does not only foreshadows dissimilar denouements for each child protagonist, but also establishes an ideological difference between the two, as Dutra points out, “N’dala is characterized by his contemplative appearance, raw and without the politicization that marked the 60s and 70s, which no longer exist in this time of enunciation” (DUTRA, 2013, p. 154; my translation)³. In other words, Maria Jo3o Ganga safeguards N’dala from the military and militant role that Pepetela imposed on his child protagonist, and through whom he attempted to recruit future generations of young men. Beyond this important theoretical distinction, Z3 facilitates – for better and for worse, N’dala’s integration into Luanda. He provides guidance to N’dala, protecting him from some of the potential dangers of the city, giving him clothing and shelter, taking him to the movies, and introducing him to other children, and teaching him how to play.

Unfortunately, it was also through Z3 that N’dala met the corruptive forces identified earlier by Petty, namely Rosita and Joca, who fall clearly into the pernicious camp. Although both also exert some positive influences on N’dala, more importantly, they come to symbolize the loss of innocence of the protagonist and the gradual derailment of his quest. Rosita propels him into the growing sphere of influence of Luanda’s grey market, where N’dala initially takes up a position selling contraband cigarettes on the street. Additionally, she exposes

² “[...] valores como a ancestralidade e a transmiss3o de saberes esgarados pela guerra” (DUTRA, 2013, p. 154)

³ “N’dala 3 caracterizado pela forma contemplativa, crua e sem a polinizac3o que marcou as d3cadas de 60 e 70 e que j3 n3o existe mais na 3poca enunciada” (DUTRA, 2013, p. 154)

N'dala to the ugliness of the world: prostitution, exploitation, and survival at all costs. As Dutra describes, N'dala's dealings with Rosita put him face to face with:

[...] a somber aspect of the city that forces those youngsters to abandon school, their playfulness, their innocence, and their puerile dreams, so that like precocious adults, they have to struggle to survive through relationships with others who are equally prostituted and disassociated from any remnant of ideals like fraternity and respect. (DUTRA, 2013, p. 155; my translation)⁴

As for Joca, he abuses his initially positive big-brother role by convincing N'dala to assist him in a robbery without telling the boy the whole truth beforehand. As a result, it is at his service that N'dala both kills and is killed: first shooting the person whose house they were robbing, and then –in a moment of tragic irony – after becoming transfixed by a painting that presumably he identifies as Kianda, and oblivious to the recovery of the man he shot, he is himself shot to death.

As for the spatial depiction of Luanda, *Na cidade vazia* creates a binary opposition between the desired return to the rural roots of N'dala in Bié and the dangerous and unfriendly urban death traps of Luanda. Reoccurring scenes that juxtapose urban and rural spaces accentuate this pervasive sense of not belonging.



Fig. 1: N'dala's first view of Luanda

Amidst these, two sequences stand out. First (Fig. 1), immediately after he leaves the airport, a long panoramic shot, frames N'dala in the urban immensity of Luanda, offering a clear contrast between the scale of subject and place. In the film, the shot slowly pans and

⁴ [...] um aspecto sombrio da cidade que faz com que aqueles jovens abandonem a escola, as brincadeiras, a inocência e o sonho pueril para, como adultos precoces, lutarem pela sobrevivência em meio a outros igualmente prostituídos e dissociados de qualquer ideal de fraternidade e respeito. (DUTRA, 2013, p. 155)

zooms in on the protagonist, in an effect that makes time seem like it is coming to a standstill and thusly communicating N'dala's presumed shock and apprehension.



Fig. 2: N'dala's panic in the city

Shortly afterwards, another sequence (Fig. 2) exhibits N'dala surrounded by cars and subsumed by the city's traffic. As the figure above shows, the protagonist's previous awe has been transformed into panic. In the film, the sequence progresses by underscoring N'dala's urban ineptitude by parading his struggle with the simple task of crossing the street. Regarding this cinematographic techniques, Sheila Petty proposes that:

Ganga uses close-up reaction shots throughout the film [...] [which] are often loosely framed, distancing the subject and placing him or her in context with the surrounding space. Moreover, these reaction shots are frequently associated with N'dala and as such close-ups often occur without dialogue, they create a moment of contemplation. This allows the audience to consider the ideological implications of the events experienced by N'dala. (PETTY, 2012, p. 150)

In this case, Maria Joo Ganga's filmic language enhances the depiction of Luanda as spatial metonymy for the nation in the way it frames its subjects in relation to its surroundings is such a visually cacophonous fashion.

As such, a clear sense of contrast between the immensity of the city and the displacement of the subject is portrayed, which foretells the impending struggle and remoteness N'dala will face. Moreover, within the confines of Luanda, another contrast is constructed between the purely urban space and the bay of Luanda. In the first case, the film frames the protagonist in the run-down lower-class neighborhoods, which encapsulate the dangers he faces and his ultimate demise, while the beach appears as spatial and existential

refuge, a place that resembles home. Lastly, one object crystalizes N'dala's presence in Luanda: his tin toy car. This toy is important for two reasons: first, because it represents the potentially creative power of N'dala, and by extension, it provides evidence of an alternative future where he could rely on his own productive capabilities. Second, the tin car traces an imaginary line wherever the young protagonist goes, a line that attests to his provenance, providing a possible and desired way back, but also a line that registers and inscribes his presence in Luanda, his travails, his encounters, his process.

The hero's quest for completion

Z    Gamboa's *O her  i* is set in 2002 right at the end of the second civil war, and accordingly, as Arena indicates, the film "portrays a climate of uncertainty in postwar Luanda during the months immediately following the war's end, where thousands of people desperately search for loved ones who disappeared during the war" (ARENAS, 2011, p. 155). The film focuses on a war veteran, Vit  rio, who returns to Luanda, after 20 years of battle, decorated with medals, but marred by the loss of one of his legs. The presence of ideological and spatial markers is much more explicit in this film than in Maria Jo  o Ganga's, so much so that two scenes would almost suffice in exemplifying this contrast: the opening shot (Fig. 3), characterized by overview aerial shots of the *musseques* of Luanda, as well as of the industrialized areas of the city; and, the end sequence (fig. 4), which again provides an overview of the Angola's capital, but this time mixture of an eye level long shot and aerial views focus on the developed portions of the city's bay area, featuring the newly constructed high rises and the beautiful bay area beaches.



Fig. 3 e 4: Luanda's urban disparities in *O Her  i*

In this regard, Luanda's spatial depiction in the film conjures the social economic divisions and inequalities and, by extension, it frames the byproduct of the nation's failures and challenges since its foundation, namely, the failure to create an egalitarian society and the challenges to recuperate those lost ideals. As Mark Sabine comments:

The lack of water and power supplies, sewerage, or refuse collection, the inadequacy of roads, public transport, and law enforcement, and the paucity of opportunities for education and gainful and legitimate employment suffered by the inhabitants of the *musseques* is abundantly demonstrated as the film's protagonists are introduced, and is contrasted with the luxury enjoyed by a small coterie surrounding the upper echelons of the MPLA government, and living in opulent gated communities near the city's waterfront. (SABINE, 2011, p. 204)

Accordingly, Z  z   Gamboa visually elicits the existence of two Luandas: the underprivileged Luanda constituted by decaying architecture and the affluent Luanda, which is populated by the new and majestic structures, in other words, the city of those who have been abandoned and that of those who inherited and perpetuated the colonial power structure. Implicit in this division is the fact that a large portion of Luanda and Angola's inhabitants live in precarious conditions, which is particularly relevant to Vit  rio, whose struggle for post-war social reinsertion is at the core of the film's plot.

Consequently, this spatial configuration in the *O her  i* also displays the socioeconomic segregation that afflicts and defines the nation by rooting different spheres of characters in distinctly different settings. Much like *Na cidade vazia*, Z  z   Gamboa's film relies on a diverse set of characters to structure the protagonist's quest. On the one hand, Vit  rio (played by Makena Diop) is directly aided by Maria B  rbara/Judite⁵, Joana, and ultimately by Manu (played by Milton Santo Coelho); while on the other hand, his journey is undermined by the actions and attitudes of society at large, by a gang of street children and by Pedro and his uncle, the Minister of the Interior. Two significant differences between the two films emerge in the comparison between the travails of Vit  rio and N'dala: in Vit  rio's case, the burden of responsibility falls on an impersonal representation of society instead of specific people, and while N'dala fell victim to a tragic end, Vit  rio is able to accomplish his objectives. Yet, Vit  rio also echoes the alarms of failed ideologies, as N'dala did in his reference to Ngunga. As Sabine correctly articulates, "Vit  rio, born roughly five years before

⁵ As the character herself explains in the film, "Judite is my war name, Maria B  rbara Sim  es, that's my baptism name" (HER  I, 2004).

independence, and press-ganged into the MPLA army aged fifteen, has grown not into the ‘New Man’ of which his parents’ generation dreamed, but rather into a war-torn and traumatized subject” (SABINE, 2011, p. 209). In this case, the reference is the Marxist ideal of the ‘New Man’ that were taken up the MPLA.

Vit3rio’s journey is set off by the end of the war and his return to Luanda, where his first destination is a hospital in search of a prosthesis. Although he succeeds, with the helpful evocation of his war hero status, he soon realizes that the sensation of wholeness provided by the prosthetic leg is apparently an illusion. In this regard, the protagonist’s body is agglomerated into the collection of spatial depictions, since much like the nation he has emerged from twenty years of battle irrevocably marred by the experience, and much like Luanda his personhood also exhibits a visible lack and incompleteness. As Ant3nio M3rcio da Silva acknowledges, this sequence identifies two shortcomings of Angolan society: the poor conditions of the health care system, which particularly dire in a country emerging from decades of war; and, “it is also implied that if a person has connections, a social position and/or money he may be able to get what he needs” (SILVA, 2011, p. 194).

Subsequently, the optimism afforded him by the acquisition of a prosthesis is short-lived since even when he is walking on two feet, he is denied employment at a construction site, where he is advised to pursue more adequate work that isn’t so physical. In this case, not even the evocation of his hero status allows him to circumvent his physical precariousness. Moreover, he again experiences the limitations of his post-war status when, in a local bar/brothel, he is diminished and humiliated by the discriminatory treatment of the others clients. Lastly, the film evidences Vit3rio’s existential struggle when it is revealed that he has no place to call home and he is relegated to sleeping on the street.

However, it is after one of these homeless nights that Vit3rio’s true quest begins, once he realizes that his prosthesis has been stolen. And, it is through this action that the film launches its first indictment against Angolan society, for what else could be inferred when a war hero is not only made to sleep on the street but also when he wakes up to the reality of having his prosthetic leg stolen, other than that the failures of this new nation have been profoundly inscribed into the behavior and ethical code its own people?

Nevertheless, Vit3rio’s attempt to recover his prosthesis exposes a number of beneficial and detrimental characters and institutions. First, he finds solace in Maria B3rbara/Judite, a prostitute, whose great war sacrifice was her separation from her son. She becomes Vit3rio’s lover, gives him a roof and a bed, and above all the hope that together they

can start a productive life, where they can both overcome their personal war stigmas. It should also be noted, as Silva states, that Maria Brbara/Judite’s importance in the role is amplified by the fact that it:

illustrates different struggles women went through during the wars and their situation in post-war Angola. Her role implies that although women struggled and suffered throughout the wars they continue to be marginalized and exploited by a patriarchal masochistic society in the aftermath. (SILVA, 2011, p. 195)

In second place, Vitrio is helped by Joana, a Portuguese teacher in Luanda, who straddles both socioeconomic spheres. As a teacher she offers mordant criticism of the Angolan state of affairs, giving voice to an ideology that recognizes the severe issues at the heart of the education system and in society at large. Yet, as the daughter of a well-connected Portuguese man, she has ties to the old colonial power structure, as well as access to the oligarchical power circles. Her ambiguous status is visible in two distinct ways: first, it is made visually evident because she lives in an affluent apartment building that starkly contrasts with, for example, Maria Barbara/Judite’s house; secondly, because of her romantic involvement with Pedro, who is the film’s representative of the new political power, since it is stated that he has just returned to Angola after attaining a post-graduate degree in the US. Additionally, Pedro is the nephew of the Minister of the Interior.

Along with aforementioned spatial socioeconomic markers, it is this scalene triangle whose vertices are Vitrio, Joana, and Pedro along with his uncle, that most succinctly encapsulates the pitfalls that, as the Gamboa’s film suggests, post-war Angola must surmount if it wants to return to the original ideals of the independence era. Joana, who meets Vitrio fortuitously outside a hospital, and becomes indignant when she hears of his story and promises to help him, both because she empathizes with him, but also because she sees in it a greater opportunity for the government to start righting social wrongs. When she first appeals to Pedro, putting in action her personal access to political connections, he is dismissive, apparently seeing nothing wrong with the situation or any immediate political gain for himself or his uncle. However, in a later scene we are shown a meeting between Pedro and his uncle, where a political angle has been determined: Pedro points out that this would be a perfect opportunity for his uncle to reach the masses – i.e. manipulate public opinion – and gain popular votes. His uncle initially questions the idea, cynically dismissing the concept of

democratic suffrage, to which Pedro replies that even if the votes do not really matter it is still always important to have popular support. Consequently, Z    Gamboa appears to be displaying the crux of the problem: the enormous gulf between the popular and the power spheres, the apparently irreconcilable nature of the needs of the people and the cynical, egotistical and cavalier motivations of the political leadership.

At last, but certainly not least, one final character plays a determining role in reuniting Vit  rio with his prosthesis, and ultimately facilitating his reinsertion into society: Manu, an orphaned boy determined to find his father, who he imagines as a war hero and who he hopes is still alive. Through a series of incidents, which emblematically represent the problems of child homelessness and crime, as well as the predominance of the grey market in Luanda, Manu gains possession of Vit  rio’s prosthesis from a local junkyard, that as Arena observes:

can (and must) also be read as emblematic of an economy driven by the predatory greed of the Angolan elites and foreign allies that permeates to a degree the social interactions among the majority poor (as witnessed by the actions of the young shantytown bullies), but that above all forces them to trade in “scraps” and “residues” in the black market in order to creatively survive. (ARENAS, 2011, p. 150)

As the prosthetic leg was introduced to him as a war souvenir, it becomes a signifier for his absent father (or better yet, for the fading hope that he will reappear), and on several occasions holds in up to the moon in a ritualistic attempt to summon his lost father.

After the aforementioned radio speech by Pedro’s uncle, beckoning for the leg to be returned, Manu’s grandmother, Flora, upon discovering the prosthesis in Manu’s bedroom forces him and return it at the radio station, and it is at this point that Vit  rio recovers his wholeness. However, more significantly, this moment serves to reunite more than just war-hero and lost limb, indeed it becomes the zenith of social and emotional reintegration, as a trinity of fulfilled vacuums materializes: Manu finds his prosthetic father, Maria B  rbara/Judite finds her prosthetic son, and Vit  rio finds his prosthetic self, and, in all, they find each other and form a new family, with the added bonus that Vit  rio also finds a job, as driver for, presumably, the minister of the Interior.

Final considerations

In conclusion, both films, *Na cidade vazia* and *O herói*, offer their audiences allegorical representations of Angola's war-ridden tribulations in its drive for nationhood via the metonymic depiction of its capital city. In both cases, Luanda assumes a central role, both in evidencing the stark contrast between the rich and the poor, elicited by its spatial filmic representation, but also in the sense that through those sociohistorical developments it became a place where a disparate range of sociocultural elements of the nation-at-large congregated, transforming it, for better or for worse, into a comprehensive microcosm of Angola.

However similar, and at times overlapping, both filmic depictions may be, it is in their divergences that the most valuable interpretations reside. In Maria Joo Ganga's film, which focuses on the perspective of a child, all hope is lost in a city filled with traps and dubious characters. This sense of bleakness is only made starker by the fact that it is tendered through the gaze of a child, who not only loses his innocence, but also his life. While in Z     Gamboa's film, despite its undeniable social critique, the possibility of a happy end prevails, even if in reality it may not be scalable. Nevertheless, through the symbolism of prosthesis and substitution, a provisional recipe for success is provided, and its main ingredient is one's ability to adjust one's expectations and to be flexible. Still, both filmmakers appear to agree on one thing: this is not the Angola that was envisioned after its independence from Portugal in 1975, and the road back to those ideals and forward towards the consolidation of its stability appears to be long and arduous.

Bibliographic references:

- ARENAS, Fernando. *Lusophone Africa: Beyond Independence*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- BIRMINGHAM, David. *Empire in Africa: Angola and its Neighbors*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006.
- CHABAL, Patrick. *A History of Postcolonial Lusophone Africa*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002.
- CIDADE vazia, Na. Dire o: Maria Joo Ganga. Lisboa: Animat grafo II, 2004.
- DUTRA, Robson L. Revolu o e p s-colonialismo numa cidade ainda vazia. *Mulemba* RJ: UFRJ, vol. 1, n. 9, 144-161, jul./dez. 2013.
- HER    , O. Dire o: Z     Gamboa. Lisboa: David e Golias, 2004.
- PETTY, Sheila. Aesthetic and narrative strategies in the films of selected African women directors. *Journal of African Cinemas*. Bristol, UK: vol. 4, n. 2, p. 145-155. out. 2012.

SABINE, Mark. Rebuilding the angolan body politic: Global and local projections of identity and protest in *O Herói/The Hero* (Zézé Gamboa, 2004). *Journal of African Cinemas*. Bristol, UK: vol. 3, n. 2, p. 201-229. mar. 2012.

SILVA, António Márcio da. Viewing the Angolan experience of war and peace through the filmic representation of Luanda in Maria João Ganga's *Na Cidade Vazia/Hollow City* (2004) and Zézé Gamboa's *O Herói/The Hero* (2004). *Journal of African Cinemas*. Bristol, UK: vol. 3, n. 2, p. 187-200. mar. 2012.

Luanda – Uma metonímia espacial para a nação em *O herói* e em *Na cidade vazia*

Resumo: Através da análise dos filmes angolanos, *O herói* (2004) e *Na cidade vazia* (2004), este estudo identifica as representações fílmicas de Luanda como um ponto de referência crítico para a compreensão das dificuldades contínuas da formação da nação, das tentativas de ultrapassar a sua herança colonial e da sua capacidade de resolver os desafios inerentes às suas tensões sociopolíticas internas. Para tal, eu concentro-me especificamente nas representações espaciais de Luanda e na forma como estas tornam palpável a iniquidade socioeconómica angolana, ao mesmo tempo que revela um meio armadilhado de obstáculos que se interpõem às ambições dos protagonistas. Os diferentes contextos cronológicos dos filmes analisados proporcionam-nos perspectivas históricas distintas deste processo, as quais incluem diferentes desfechos idealizados e projetados para a nação.

Palavras-chave: Cinema luso-africano. Angola. Luanda. Identidade nacional.

Recebido em: 21 de agosto de 2016.

Aprovado em: 19 de novembro de 2016.