

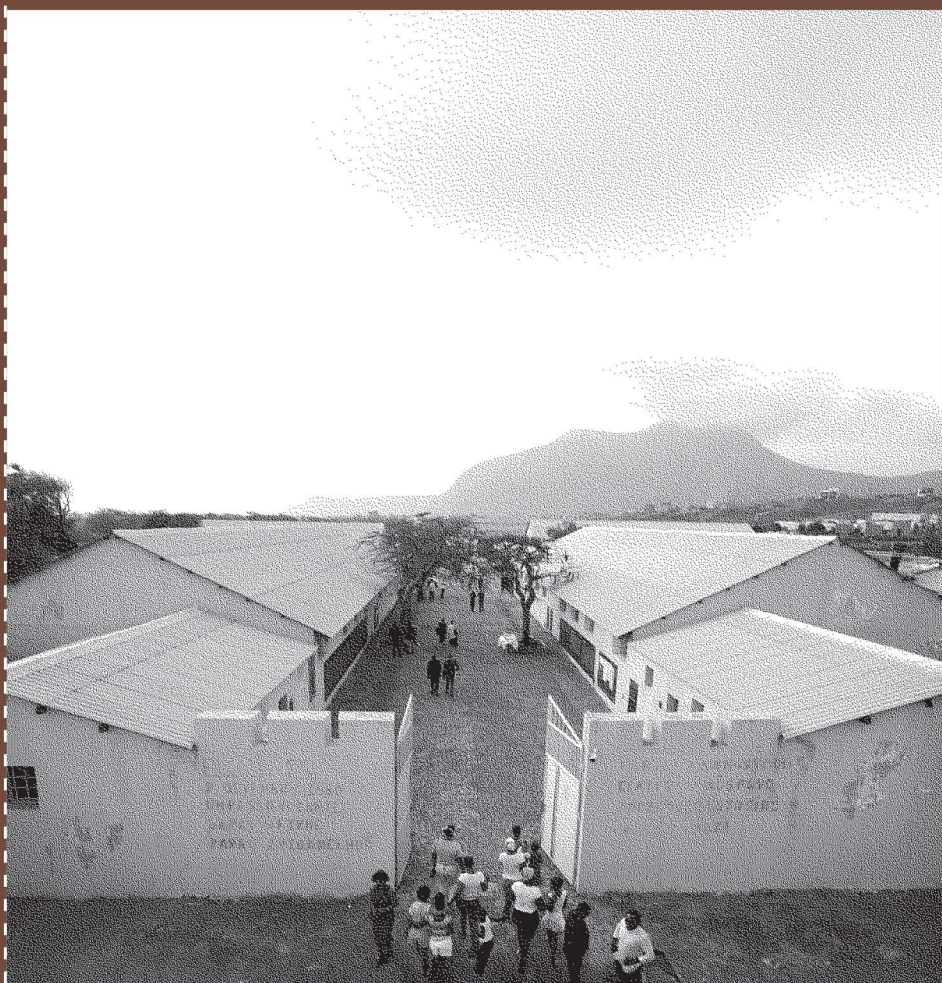


PERUGIA STRANIERI
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IL TURISMO LETTERARIO IN LUOGHI DI CONFINO, ESILIO E PRIGIONIA

Literary tourism in places of confinement, exile and imprisonment

a cura di Giovanni Capecchi e Yannick Gouchan



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Rita Baleiro

NARRATIVES OF RESISTANCE: LUANDINO VIEIRA AT TARRAFAL
AND LITERARY TOURISM

Abstract

This chapter examines Luandino Vieira's writings in the confines of Tarrafal prison, an incarceration site created by Salazar's authoritarian regime in 1936. Situated on the remote shores of Cape Verde, Tarrafal is a testament to the enduring echoes of oppression and resilience of those who opposed Portuguese rule in Africa and advocated for the independence of colonies such as Cape Verde, Angola and Mozambique. Throughout his incarceration in Tarrafal, between 1964 and 1972, the Portuguese Angolan writer and political activist produced over a thousand texts, later assembled in *Prison Papers: Notes, Journal, Correspondence* (2015). After interpreting Luandino Vieira's texts, focusing on the layers of the act of writing as resilience, survival, and political engagement, this chapter navigates the interplay between this narrative of resistance and a site of cultural memory: the Tarrafal Museum. The aim is to offer insights into the transformative and enhancing role of literature in the experience of this site, contribute to the research of literary tourism in Cape Verde and add to the study of literary tourism on the African continent, which is still scarce.

Keywords: Luandino Vieira; Tarrafal prison; Tarrafal museum; literary tourism; the act of writing.

1. Introduction

Across many destinations, former prisons have become tourist sites, and research has investigated this trend worldwide.¹ In Portugal, researchers have also analysed the colonial period prison museums from the angle of dark tourism.² However, the literature review revealed a dearth of

¹ D. Urquhart, *Understanding the attraction: Prison tourism and the public gaze*, «The British Journal of Criminology», 62(6), 2021, pp. 1359-1379, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azab096>; J.Z. Wilson-S. Hodgkinson-J. Piché-K. Walby (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of prison tourism*, Palgrave MacMillan, London, New York 2017.

² B. Coutinho-M.M. Baptista, *De Belém ao Tarrafal: O turismo negro como veículo de narrativas múltiplas (pós-)coloniais*, in M. M. Baptista-S. V. Maia (Eds.), *Colonialismos, Pós-colonialismos e Lusofonias*, Aveiro 2014, pp. 579-588; B.Coutinho-M. M. Baptista-M. Martins-J. Rebelo, *Portugal, land of tourism: Dissonances and touristic uses of the Estado Novo's heritage*, «Lusophone Journal of Cultural Studies», 5(2), 2018, pp. 233-251; D.

studies focusing on prisons, literary writers and literary tourism.³ Hence, this chapter focuses on the texts that José Luandino Vieira (b. 1935), a Portuguese-Angolan writer and activist who advocated for the independence of the Portuguese colonies in Africa, wrote in Tarrafal prison from 1964 to 1972, the year he was sentenced to house arrest in Lisbon.

José Luandino Vieira's birthname is José Mateus Vieira da Graça, and although he was born in Portugal, he lived in Angola from an earlier age. In Luanda, he completed his secondary education, published short stories and drawings, worked as a film critic for a local newspaper, joined the National Liberation Movement of Angola - Angolan Liberation Army (NLMA-ALA) and, thus, became a target of Salazar's state defence police, in 1959. When the NLMA-ALA joined the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in 1960, Luandino participated in the ranks of the MPLA, collaborating in the nationalist struggle against Portugal. Because of this political project, he ended up a prisoner of Salazar's regime in 1961, when he was just twenty-six years old.

Departing from the assumption that literary authors' personal written accounts are a medium, amongst several others (e.g., photographs, documentaries), to actively produce collective memory and foster remembrance of historical contexts,⁴ this chapter analyses Luandino's texts and proposes that these accounts can be a strategy to create and sustain the Tarrafal Museum of Resistance (on the site of the former prison), not only

Gallinaro, *O papel do Museu da Resistência de Chão Bom no desenvolvimento turístico da vila do Tarrafal – Cabo Verde*, in *Actas do I Seminário de Investigação em Museologia dos Países de Língua Portuguesa e Espanhola*, Vol. 3, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, Porto 2010, pp. 114-123; A.R.N.L. Oliveira, *A musealização de heranças difíceis: O caso do Museu do Aljube - Resistência e Liberdade*, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisbon 2015; J. Sarmiento, *A sweet and amnesic present: The postcolonial landscape and memory makings in Cape Verde*, «Social & Cultural Geography» 10(5), 2009, pp. 523-544, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649360902974456>.

³ As far as I know, only two papers take the scope of literary tourism: R. Baleiro-A. Coelho-Florent, *Dark literary tourism in difficult heritage: Exploring the potential of the Chão Bom Resistance Museum*, in S. C. Pascoal-L. Tallone-M. Furtado (Eds.), *Dark Heritage Tourism in the Iberian Peninsula: Memories of Tragedy and Death*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne 2023, pp. 32-56; R. Baleiro-A. Coelho-Florent, *I have my eyes fixed ahead: A contribution to the African literary landscape*, «Journal of Tourism & Development», 42, 2023, pp. 211-223, <https://doi.org/10.34624/rtd.v42i0.32691>.

⁴ A. Erll-A. Rigney, *Literature and the production of cultural memory: Introduction*, «European Journal of English Studies», 10(2), 2006, pp. 111-115, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13825570600753394>.

as a place of memory, as a museum is,⁵ but also as a (dark) literary tourism destination.

The organisation of the chapter is as follows. Firstly, it briefly describes the history of the Tarrafal prison, then, delves into Luandino's paper prisons, with a particular emphasis on the act of writing while imprisoned, it draws an overview of what the museum offers to its visitors, and it ends with a final section, in which I present suggestions to take literature as a medium of remembrance that can add literary meaning to the experience of the museum.

2. The Tarrafal Penal Colony

The Portuguese Estado Novo regime under António de Oliveira Salazar: an authoritarian and nationalist regime that ruled from 1933 to 1974, established the Tarrafal «penal colony» in 1936 on Santiago Island, in Cape Verde.⁶ The construction of this prison was motivated by the urgent need to incarcerate the regime's opponents, namely those «who, having been interned in another prison, have shown themselves to be refractory to the discipline of this prison or harmful to other inmates».⁷

To build the penal colony, the Portuguese mostly resorted to the prisoners and for long years, the detainees lived in canvas tents, which was particularly harsh due to the scorching climate of the region. They had no running water (they had to transport it from a natural source two kilometres away), food was poor, and disease and psychological and physical torture were frequent.⁸ In 1954, following national and international protests, the prison was closed for construction. It reopened in 1961 as the «Chão Bom Labour Camp»,⁹ and by this time, most detainees were African independence activists.¹⁰ This change in terminology (from «pe-

⁵ P. Davison, *Museums and the re-shaping of memory*, in G. Corsane (Ed.), *Heritage, museums and galleries: An introductory reader*, Routledge, Abingdon 2004, pp. 202-214.

⁶ *Decreto-Lei n.º 26.539*, «Diário do Governo», Series 1, no. 94, 23 April 1936, p. 445. <https://files.diariodarepublica.pt/1s/1936/04/09400/04450447.pdf>.

⁷ *Ivi*, p. 446.

⁸ Cf. J. Sarmiento, *A sweet and amnesic present*, cit.

⁹ «Diário do Governo» Series 1, no. 139/1961, 17 June 1961. <https://files.diariodarepublica.pt/1s/1961/06/13900/07150715.pdf>. Although the official name was «Chão Bom», it was and is commonly referred to as «Tarrafal».

¹⁰ D. Andringa, *Tarrafal, Memórias do Campo da Morte Lenta [Film]*. Fundação Amílcar Cabral and Fundação Mário Soares, Lisbon 2010.

nal colony» to «labour camp») reflected a larger manoeuvre of Salazar's regime to appease the international pressure on Portugal. In this context, Salazar had already determined the replacement of the word «colony» with «overseas province» and «empire» with «Portuguese overseas territory», hoping to create the notion that Portugal was a multicontinental and multiracial state rather than a colonialist and an imperialist.¹¹ This strategy, however, did not stop the spread of commonly addressing the Tarrafal prison as the «slow death camp», «swamp of death», and «death camp»¹² as torture, malnutrition, lack of water, and disease persisted.

During its thirty-one-year existence (from 1936 to 1954 and from 1961 to 1974), the prison held 588 prisoners (361 Portuguese, 107 Angolans, 100 Guineans and 20 Cape Verdean nationalists).¹³

Following the Carnation Revolution on 25 April 1974, which ended the Estado Novo regime and initiated the decolonisation of Portuguese territories, Tarrafal was closed on 1 May 1974. From that day on, the former incarceration facilities have been a military base, a warehouse for the National Supply Company, and a school. In 2000, with the support of the Portuguese government, the Cape Verdean government inaugurated the Tarrafal Museum of Resistance, which was classified as a national heritage site in 2006. On 25 April 2024, the Cape Verdean authorities applied to UNESCO to classify the former prison as a World Heritage site.¹⁴ The fifth section of this chapter provides more details on the museum.

3. Luandino Vieira's «Prison papers»: The fragments that convey the whole

On 20 November 1961, the Portuguese state defence police arrested Luandino for his involvement in the movements for the independence of Angola and sentenced him to fourteen years after accusations of treason and terrorism. After a brief incarceration period in Lisbon, he was sent

¹¹ N. Valério, *Cartas e leis orgânicas do império colonial português*, «Working paper», 71, Lisbon School of Economics and Management, Lisbon 2021.

¹² Barros, V., *Campos de concentração em Cabo Verde: As ilhas como espaços de deportação e de prisão do Estado Novo*, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra 2009, p.175.

¹³ Centro de Documentação do Tarrafal, *Presos políticos e sociais*, 2024, <https://tarrafal-cdt.org/livro/presos-politicos-e-sociais>.

¹⁴ S. Ribeiro, *Governo formaliza e promove candidatura do Campo de Concentração do Tarrafal a Património Mundial*, «Expresso das Ilhas», 26 April 2024, <https://expressodasilhas.cv/cultura/2024/04/26/governo-formaliza-e-promove-candidatura-do-campo-de-concentracao-do-tarrafal-a-patrimonio-mundial/91154>.

to Angolan prisons, where, for two years, he moved among detention centres, and, in 1964, he arrived at the Tarrafal prison, where he remained for eight years. This is what he wrote when leaving prison in Angola on 31 July 1964:

Now, another phase begins with this journey and prison in Cape Verde. Will I return alive? Dead is not a possibility to consider... I leave calm and confident about the future. I have K. [his wife Linda], Xexe [his son], my country, my people and a fight that is one of the last in favour of future new life on our planet. May I, now, in 1964, Angola, Africa, be always worthy of these future men.¹⁵

In the first quarantine month, when he remained separated from the other prisoners, he had some books to keep him company: the *Bible*, a *Kimbundu* (an Angolan dialect)-*Portuguese Dictionary*, an English edition of William Shakespeare's complete works, language manuals and exercise books in Kimbundu, Italian and Russian (the guards mistook the Russian manual for a Greek manual and only seized it six months later).¹⁶ Reading and drawing had always been his two favourites, and that is what he did when he arrived at the Camp.¹⁷ The following paragraph is his description of what he encountered on 13 August 1964, and Figure 1 is his drawing of the prison:

The Camp is the usual concentration camp layout: double rows of barbed wire with others across, guardhouses with armed sentries on the corners, dogs, lights and barracks [...]. Everything looks old and worn, decrepit. This must be the famous Tarrafal, which reopened when the Angolans were sent here. We arrived at 6.20 p.m. on the 13th, we were put into a huge barrack – 3 beds with barely clean clothes, a washbasin with an enamel jug and basin, a bidon of water, a jug of drinking water and a 20-litre can for necessities and rubbish. There are no drains, no piped water.¹⁸

¹⁵ M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi (Orgs.), *José Luandino Vieira. Papéis da prisão. Apontamentos, diário, correspondência 1962-1971* [*Luandino Vieira. Prison papers. Notes, diary, correspondence 1962-1971*], Caminho-Leya, Alfragide 2015, p. 540. All translations from *Prison papers* and other documents written in Portuguese are mine.

¹⁶ *Ivi*, p. 1028.

¹⁷ M.C. Ribeiro-R. Vecchi, *O Tarrafal é a prisão em mim: Entrevista com Luandino Vieira*, in M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi (Orgs.), *José Luandino Vieira*, cit., pp. 1040-1075.

¹⁸ Cf. M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi, *José Luandino Vieira*, cit., p. 548.

of something», a «fraction of something», and a «part of an unfinished or incomplete text».²¹ Its Latin etymology unveils the verb *frangere* which means to break, shatter, tear, dilute. Hence, the fragment is always associated with the notions of broken and incompleteness. As a result, the «research tradition on the fragment [...] has tended to focus on the fragment's (ruined) form and (incomplete) content.»²² However, in Luandino's *Prison papers*, the fragments, as fractions, hold the principle of semantic interdependence as they are textual units resulting from the totality of an experience of monitored imprisonment by the same subject. Although they are fragments, they are the outcome of an incessant writing process which conveys a patchwork of the prison experience in their assortment, and they gain completeness when the reader understands them as a collection of time-situated portraits of a subjective experience of confinement, forced silence and resistance.

Luandino wrote and drew in loose pages and seventeen notebooks (the first ten in the Angolan prisons between 1962 and July 1964; the eleventh in Angola and Tarrafal, and the remaining six in Tarrafal). On each notebook cover, Luandino drew the title: *Ontem, Hoje, Amanhã* [Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow]. Figure 2 illustrates one of the covers, where he also copied a poem – «Vilancete Castelhana de Gil Vicente» – about hope when life is challenging, by the Portuguese poet and novelist Carlos de Oliveira (1921-1981).

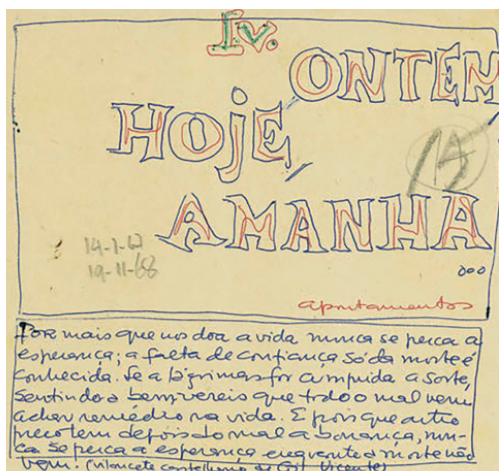


Fig. 2: Cover of notebook no. 15. Source: M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi (Orgs.), José Luandino Vieira, cit. (no page number).

²¹ *Fragmento*, in *Dictionary of Contemporary Portuguese Language*, Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, Lisboa 2001, p. 1809.

²² C. Elias, *The fragment: Towards a history and poetics of a performative genre*, Peter Lang, Lausanne 2004, p. 1.

4. Incarceration and the act of writing

Prior to his imprisonment in 1961, Luandino had already written poems and short stories, as stated in the introduction of this chapter. However, Tarrafal made him a writer.²³ He explained that his journey towards becoming a writer in the Tarrafal prison was largely the result of a fundamental difference between the prisons in Luanda and Tarrafal. If, in the first, Luandino shared a community, a national feeling, and the enemy was outside, in Tarrafal, the enemy was not outside; the enemy was the severe natural context and the extreme isolation (he was in an archipelago, on an inland, in a prison) which were against the condition of human beings. That made him turn inwards, or, in his own words, «Tarrafal is the prison in me»,²⁴ and it took him three years to adjust to that environment. In this context, becoming a writer in prison met his needs and intents. On the one hand, he was determined to become a writer to remain loyal to his political project: «It was not about being a great writer, but it was about contributing to Angola's independence in the broadest sense of the word "independence", via literature and my training as a writer. It was not just political independence but the cultural contribution to a national identity, consciousness, and values that, according to certain theories, shape the nation.»²⁵ On the other hand, in a place where he was permanently monitored, where he wandered «like a ghost», where he could only grasp «the surface of things», where his memory fails «to hold»,²⁶ and from where there was no escape: «We were on an island, the island was in the middle of the Atlantic, inside the island we were in the middle of the countryside, we had no contacts»,²⁷ writing was also a means to survive, to access his emotions, to be autonomous and keep memory.

²³ L. Vieira, *Os anos de cadeia foram muito bons para mim*, [Interview by Alexandra Lucas Coelho], *Público*, 1 May 2009, <https://www.publico.pt/2009/05/01/politica/noticia/os-anos-de-cadeia-foram-muito-bons-para-mim-1377921>.

²⁴ M.C. Ribeiro-R. Vecchi, *O Tarrafal é a prisão em mim*, cit., p. 1049.

²⁵ M.C. Ribeiro-R. Vecchi, *Entrevista a Luandino Vieira*, «JL – Jornal de Letras, Artes e Ideias», 1178, 25 Nov.-8 Dec. 2015, pp. 10-11.

²⁶ M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi (Orgs.), *José Luandino Vieira*. cit, p. 901.

²⁷ L. Vieira, *Os anos de cadeia foram muito bons para mim*, cit.

The following passages in *Prison papers* portray these effects:

Only when I write to K. do many truths emerge that I have inside and do not realise: as it happened today about Xexe and sadness. It seems my thoughts are only expressed through words [...].²⁸

I write too much; it's a temptation to compensate for how little I speak. I put too much literature into my writing, but that's all I live on.²⁹

Every day the happiness and pain of writing the story for history. Nervousness and a racing heart, I suffer with what I tell. I want to make it the best I've ever done, the best I know how.³⁰

After one year in Tarrafal, he felt numb and lost in a daze of meditation about what he would do if free.³¹ He no longer recognised the person he was a year before: «I feel a huge gap between who I was in 1964 and what I am now! Luandino seems like something that will never be again.»³² In the face of these feelings, his writing urgency expanded; he needed to remember «what he was living»,³³ and he begged his memory not to betray him: «Memory, memory, don't fail me, sift through everything so that what's essential [...] remains, and the years lost become years gained».³⁴

It was difficult for him to sit down and write,³⁵ so he started walking around the prison often, writing in his head: « [...] I could see the Portuguese soldiers looking at me. They must have thought I was crazy, walking backwards and forwards, talking to myself. Talking to myself meant mentally reading out loud what I was already writing in my head. So, when they closed us down, [I wrote] [...]».³⁶ Such was his creative

²⁸ M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi (Orgs.), *José Luandino Vieira*, cit., p. 792.

²⁹ *Ivi*, p. 798.

³⁰ *Ivi*, p. 793.

³¹ *Ivi*, p. 722.

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi, *Entrevista a Luandino Vieira*, cit., p.10.

³⁴ M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi (Orgs.), *José Luandino Vieira*, cit., p. 896.

³⁵ *Ivi*, p. 978.

³⁶ L. Vieira, *Os anos de cadeia foram muito bons para mim*, cit. He wrote on paper and his typewriter, a Hermes Baby: «The typewriter is the tool of my trade [and] my trade is telling stories» in M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi (Orgs.), *José Luandino Vieira*, cit., p. 680.

process and after having «the key phrases, the links, the strong points», everything sketched out and lined up in his mind, he «just sew», «assembled», «copied», «amended» and «rewrote», but «more slowly, slowly, with difficulty - I exhaust myself.»³⁷ This was the writing process of *Nós, os do Makulusu* [*Us, from the Makulusu*]³⁸ in Tarrafal, in just eight days, between the 16th and the 23rd of April 1967: «This book had been inside me for a long time. I could not find a way. I knew it hurt, and when things hurt, I must write.»³⁹

In prison, he wrote and published this book, along with *Luuanda*⁴⁰ (1964) and *Vidas Novas* [*New Lives*] (1968). As the guards took all the papers the prisoners kept,⁴¹ the pages of these manuscripts were hidden in a false bottom of a leather bag (as a shoemaker's son, he had learned how to sew leather) and passed on to his wife, who typed them.⁴² His wife helped him take his texts out of prison on other occasions, but a large portion of the manuscripts (assembled in *Paper Prisons*) were smuggled out with the help of Ana de Tchuntchum, a lady who sold fresh milk at the prison gate. As soon as he arrived in Tarrafal, Luandino slowly built a friendship with her, and in December 1969, he found a way to offer her a present and, in return, he asked her to hide his manuscripts at her home, which she did until he was released.⁴³ About the patience he needed to gradually gain Ana's trust, Luandino compares it with the year and a half it took him to tame a sparrow in Tarrafal (which he successfully accomplished and granted him the awe of the guards who called him a wizard).⁴⁴

The publication of *Luuanda* (three short stories set in Luanda's slams, written in an experimental narrative style incorporating elements of the oral language of the inhabitants of the slams) had a tremendous impact

³⁷ M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi (Orgs.), *José Luandino Vieira*, cit, p. 978.

³⁸ The plot of this book is set in the poorest Luanda neighbourhood, which provides the book's title, and it portrays the violence of colonialism and the struggle for national liberation.

³⁹ L. Vieira, *Os anos de cadeia foram muito bons para mim*, cit.

⁴⁰ *Luuanda*, written in Angolan prisons, contains three short stories with characters blemished by the asymmetries caused by colonialism and the violence that presided over daily life in the Portuguese colony.

⁴¹ M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi, *Entrevista a Luandino Vieira*, cit., p. 11.

⁴² Memorial to political prisoners and persecuted people, *José Vieira Mateus da Graça* (*Luandino Vieira*), s.d., <https://memorial2019.org/presos/jose-vieira-mateus-da-graca-luandino-vieira>

⁴³ M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi (Orgs.), *José Luandino Vieira*, cit, p. 1028, p. 1062.

⁴⁴ M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi (Orgs.), *José Luandino Vieira*, cit, p. 1062.

in Portugal among the critics who considered it the founder of Angolan literature.⁴⁵ As a result, in 1965, the Portuguese Writers' Society (PWS) awarded *Luuanda* the «Grand Prize of the Novel», the most important prize at the time. Soon after, the PWS's headquarters were vandalised and closed by the state defence police by order of the Ministry of Education, and the PWS members, who had awarded the prize, were arrested by that same police force on the charges of honouring a writer who fought Salazar's dictatorship.⁴⁶ Luandino, in prison, knew nothing about this, although he found out what had happened months later via a telegram. When he read it, he wrote: «Apart from the initial surprise, I didn't think any more about it. Could it be that, deep down, I doubt myself that much?». ⁴⁷ What he only realised later was that the isolation in Tarrafal not only broke him physically⁴⁸ but caused a fracture in his identity, and he had started to «devour himself». ⁴⁹ The lack of mail and visits for extended periods had aggravated his psychological condition.

However, two years later, in 1967, an event in the prison organisation had a tremendous positive impact on Luandino and the other prisoners: the opening of the chapel-school library after the donation of 400 books by the Gulbenkian Foundation.⁵⁰ The impact was so strong that, already as a free man, he wondered if *Nós, os do Makulusu* would have been written without the library, as the available books aided in constructing that novel.⁵¹ The library offered him an opportunity to begin his literary practice, which, as he recalls, happened after his political project.⁵² Always side by side with a guard, he became the librarian; a routine that

⁴⁵ Vide F. Topa-E. Pereira (Orgs.), *De Luuanda a Luandino: Veredas*, CITCEM, Afrontamento, Porto 2015

⁴⁶ M. Ferreira, *Luuanda / Sociedade Portuguesa de Escritores: Um caso de agressão ideológica*, in AA.VV., *Luandino. José Luandino Vieira e a sua obra: Estudos, testemunhos, entrevistas*, Edições 70, Lisboa 1980, pp. 106-116.

⁴⁷ M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi (Orgs.), *José Luandino Vieira*. p. 657.

⁴⁸ M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi (Orgs.), *José Luandino Vieira*. p. 714.

⁴⁹ M.C. Ribeiro-R. Vecchi, *O Tarrafal é a prisão em mim*, cit., p. 1053.

⁵⁰ The Gulbenkian Foundation, founded in 1956, is based in Portugal. It promotes the development of people and organisations through art, science, education and charity, for a more equitable and sustainable society (v. <https://gulbenkian.pt/>).

⁵¹ M.C. Ribeiro-R. Vecchi, *O Tarrafal é a prisão em mim*, cit., p. 1050. See also L. Vieira, *Os anos de cadeia foram muito bons para mim*, cit.

⁵² M.C. Ribeiro-R. Vecchi, *O Tarrafal é a prisão em mim*, cit., p. 1052.

kept him sane,⁵³ along with teaching the illiterate prisoners, reading, and meditating under the acacia trees, namely the one in front of the library.⁵⁴

Despite having lived challenging moments in Tarrafal, always trying to stay mentally and physically healthy, looking back, Luandino does not resent anything or anyone in Tarrafal: first, because incarceration was a consequence of his own political project, not someone else's project, but his own,⁵⁵ second, in his view, he emerged a better man: more patient and determined,⁵⁶ and third, the experience of prison allowed him to frame everything he had lived before that moment and incorporate his vision of history, the world, and the future.⁵⁷ Eight years after his release, he stated: «I never felt so at one with myself physically as I did in prison. At the same time, I never felt such discomfort from a psychological and emotional point of view»,⁵⁸ a statement that very likely can only be fully understood by someone who lived a similar extreme experience or a declaration that incorporates St Augustine's usage of memory: «When I use memory, I ask it to produce whatever it is that I wish to remember.»⁵⁹

When editing *Prison Papers*, the Angolan novelist, although he acknowledged the suffering in prison as real, stated he could sense some «distortion» of reality and strangeness reading those texts, maybe because, he added, it is impossible to accurately convey what causes pain; contrary to happiness, which is easier to communicate.⁶⁰ However, he chose not to tinker with the texts, correct or revise them, because «you can't bring a dead man back to life even if you cut his hair and nails and shave him.»⁶¹ It is unbearable to change what happened, and the novelist wishes his texts to remain truthful to the violence of incarceration and a

⁵³ M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi, *Entrevista a Luandino Vieira*, cit., p. 11.

⁵⁴ F. J. B. Martinho, *João Vêncio Revisited*. In F. Topa-E. Pereira (Orgs.), *De Luanda a Luandino: Veredas*, CITCEM, Afrontamento, Porto 2015, pp. 161-172.

⁵⁵ M.C. Ribeiro-R. Vecchi, *O Tarrafal é a prisão em mim*, cit., p. 1072.

⁵⁶ L. Vieira, *Os anos de cadeia foram muito bons para mim*, cit.

⁵⁷ M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi, *Entrevista a Luandino Vieira*, cit., p. 11.

⁵⁸ M. Laban, *Encontros com Luandino Vieira, em Luanda*. In *Luandino: José Luandino Vieira e a sua obra (estudos, testemunhos, entrevistas)*. Edições 70, Lisbon 1980, pp. 9-82, quote, p. 71.

⁵⁹ St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. by R.S. Pine-Coffin, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1961, p. 222.

⁶⁰ M.C. Ribeiro-R. Vecchi, *O Tarrafal é a prisão em mim*, cit., p. 1071.

⁶¹ M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi (Orgs.), *José Luandino Vieira*, cit, p. 866.

helpful testimony to the history of Angola and Angolan literature.⁶² That is the only legacy he aims to leave through his textual productions because, although he does not wish to live in the past, the past is in him, and the facts and feelings he narrated on those pages, he would narrate again today even though he still wonders how those years were even possible.⁶³

Despite the fragmentary and fractured nature of the texts, *Prison Papers* are an archive of (sometimes) forgotten acts that should remain alive, because they are: «[...] twelve years of a person's life multiplied by every second that, in those twelve years, multiplied by everything that came into [his] mind [...]».⁶⁴ They hold Luandino's literary project, personal story, and political mission of an independent Angola, and they would have been lost if the writer had not had Ana de Tchuntchum's friendship; she allowed him to gain the years lost.

Currently, the Museum of Resistance should continue this pursuit, taking Luandino's catalogue of the Portuguese colonial and authoritarian past and communicating it.

5. The Tarrafal: Museum of Resistance

According to the Museum's website,⁶⁵ the musealisation process underwent four stages. The first, between 2000 and 2009, was financed by the Secretary of State of Portuguese Cooperation, and the Museum consisted of just one exhibition room focused on the years 1936 up to 1954. The second stage started on 1 May 2009, following an international symposium on Tarrafal, with another exhibition room about the years between 1961 and 1974. The third stage started at the beginning of 2016, with the inauguration of a visitors' circuit that starts at the entrance and goes through the former housing of the staff, the officers and the guards, the prisoners' barracks and the weapons' house. In the fourth stage, in 2021, with the support of the «requalification, rehabilitation and accessibility national programme», some buildings were reconstructed, exhibition contents were added, and improvements in functionality were made.

⁶² M.C. Ribeiro-R. Vecchi, *O Tarrafal é a prisão em mim*, cit., p. 1074.

⁶³ M.C. Ribeiro-R. Vecchi, *O Tarrafal é a prisão em mim*, cit., p. 1075.

⁶⁴ In X. Costa, *Os Papéis de prisão de Luandino Vieira*, «Nòsdiário», 16 December 2015, <https://www.nosdiario.gal/articulo/lusofonia/papeis-prisao-luandino-vieira/20151212141042043210.html>.

⁶⁵ Museu da Resistência, 2024, <https://tarrafal-cdt.org/escrito/museu-da-resistencia>.

At present, visitors can access the prisoners' pavilions, the laundry, the medical office, the latrines, the library, the kitchen, and the exhibition «From repression to freedom», organised according to the two phases of the Camp (1936-1954 and 1961-1974). There is the option of a guided tour,⁶⁶ and visitors can watch short films with historical footage and former prisoners' testimonies, photographs, artefacts, and chronological information boards with the Camp's prisoners' names. The library has around one hundred books on the memories of former prisoners, the historical period, and books banned in Portugal and its colonies during the Estado Novo. The Museum did not restore the cells, whose walls are still dirty with graffiti names and sentences; and on 1 May 2024, *i.e.*, the fiftieth anniversary of the prisoners' liberation, it launched the «online Tarrafal documentation» (<https://tarrafal-cdt.org>). Figure 3 displays a photograph of the Museum taken on that same day.



Fig. 3: The Tarrafal: Museum of Resistance. Photo by Miguel Figueiredo Lopes on 1 May 2024. Source: Presidency of the Portuguese Republic, <https://www.presidencia.pt/atualidade/toda-a-atualidade/2024/05/comemoracoes-do-cinquentenario-da-liberacao-do-campo-de-concentracao-do-tarrafal>.

⁶⁶ F. M. Gomes, *Campo do Tarrafal: O campo da morte lenta*, «Alma de Viajante», 22 December 2018, <https://www.almadeviajante.com/campo-do-tarrafal>.

On the Cape Verdean Cultural Heritage Institute website, one can read that this museum aims «to preserve and perpetuate the historical memory of the Estado Novo government and of the struggle for independence of the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, namely Angola, Guinea Bissau and Cabo Verde.»⁶⁷ Combining these aims with Rojek's and Urry's notion that literary texts (along with theatre plays, films and TV series) are «files of representation»⁶⁸ that can change the visitors' gaze and add new meanings to sites of violence and death, I suggest bringing Luandino's written repertoire to the experience of the museum (experience being an umbrella term for the several modes through which one lives and knows their surroundings), as it would steer the visitors' perspective and, thus, give a new (literary) meaning to the site. The final section of the chapter expands on the options the museum could take.

6. Final considerations: Literary tourism and the strategies to enhance the experience of the museum

Before, during and after prison, Luandino has always understood writing as a political act,⁶⁹ however, incarceration added nuances to that project that also became a survival and resistance strategy and a plan to hold memory.⁷⁰ Just like *Prison papers*, the Tarrafal Museum is a reservoir of cultural memory,⁷¹ and bringing Luandino's narrative testimony and the museum together seems paramount to enhance the remembrance dimension of the museum visitors' experience. Besides, Luandino's fragmentary textual production in prison (along with the novels he wrote) can establish their own memory (as they bear the genuine power to retrieve events from the past) and serve as a medium of cultural remembrance that,

⁶⁷ Instituto do Património Cultural de Cabo Verde, *Museu da Resistência*, n.d., <https://ipc.cv/en/museus/museu-da-resistencia>.

⁶⁸ C. Rojek-J. Urry (Eds.), *Touring cultures: Transformations of travel and theory*, Routledge, Abingdon 1997, p. 53.

⁶⁹ M.C. Ribeiro-R. Vecchi, *O Tarrafal é a prisão em mim*, cit., p. 1052.

⁷⁰ E. Scaraggi, *Escrever é resistir. Práticas de resistência nos papéis da prisão de Luandino Vieira*, «Literatura e autoritarismo», 31, 2018, pp. 23-34, <https://doi.org/10.5902/1679849X31044>.

⁷¹ A. Erll-A. Rigney, *Literature and the production of cultural memory: Introduction*, «European Journal of English Studies», 10(2), 2006, pp. 111-115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13825570600753394>.

alongside the photographs and information boards, in the museum, will shape the narrative of the past and provide a bridge between generations.

Therefore, I suggest the museum displays passages of *Paper Prisons* (fragmenting once more the parts that establish a representation of the whole), produces audio-visual readings of these texts, stages some of them, draws attention to the acacia trees still on the premises, and exhibits the books that, in the library of the prison, had a stronger impact on Luandino.⁷² By implementing these strategies, the museum would not only be a cultural tourism destination but also a dark literary tourism site where literary writers were incarcerated and whose meaning is produced after the mediation of literary texts and writers' biographies.⁷³ If the museum embedded the visitors' experience (also) in literary heritage, it would potentially offer visitors a more concrete dimension of the prisoners' inner strength, the physical and psychological suffering inflicted by authoritarian regimes and the importance of preserving democracy.

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⁷² Some examples: *The grapes of wrath*, by Steinbeck, *Port wine* by Alves Redol, *Delfim* by José Cardoso Pires, *El Siglo de las Luces* by Carpentier, novels by Aquilino Ribeiro, *Grande Sertão Veredas* and *Sagarana* by Guimarães Rosa (these two books were critical to Luandino's writing style, in which language is also a character); cf. M.C. Ribeiro-M.V. Silva-R. Vecchi (Orgs.), *José Luandino Vieira. Papéis da prisão*, cit. p. 1053).

⁷³ R. Baleiro, *Dark literary tourism*, in R. Baleiro-G. Capecchi-J. Arcos-Pumarola (Eds.), *E-Dictionary of Literary Tourism*. University for Foreigners of Perugia, Perugia, 2023, <https://www.unistrapg.it/en/dark-literary-tourism>.