

Moving Spaces

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Moving Spaces

*Creolisation and Mobility in Africa, the Atlantic and
Indian Ocean*

Edited by

Marina Berthet
Fernando Rosa
Shaun Viljoen



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The essays which follow were not necessarily originally presented in their current form during our workshop, or with the same titles.

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Moving Spaces: Introduction

Marina Berthet, Fernando Rosa and Shaun Viljoen

The essays in this collection, the product of an interdisciplinary workshop, address issues of the creolisation, mobility and migration of ideas, songs, stories and people, as well as plants, in the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean worlds. The volume brings together specialists from various fields – anthropology, history, language and literary studies, and geography – from various parts of Africa, Brazil, Europe and the Indo-Pacific – to discuss mobility under its diverse guises, often with the concept of creolisation in mind, as well as that of cosmopolitanism. It also turns out that languages have been very important here, as the workshop has brought together specialists working on and through Arabic, Afrikaans, Dutch, English, French, Portuguese, Soninké and Setswana, as well as Sanskrit and other Asian languages. Anglophone, on the one hand, and Francophone and Lusophone academies, on the other, were well represented, as well as Germany-based scholars.

An intriguing notion behind the conceptualisation of the workshop related to this collection has its root in a contribution by Denise Dias Barros, one of our workshop participants.¹ Dias proposed a notion of ‘places-in-movement’, namely, places which are in fact not fixed geographical locations, but fluid migratory domains where people and cultural items move more or less continuously back and forth via historically established routes. Intriguingly, Australian philosopher Jeff Malpas suggests that cosmopolitanism actually requires a sense of place – but ‘place’ here is not necessarily a specific geographical location. It can in fact be any context where human interactions take place. He does not tackle migration as such, or mobility, but in reality his notion of a sense of place always involves a dislocation of some sort. In this way, parochialism for him is not the opposite of cosmopolitanism, but rather constitutive of it. In fact, the original Greek sense of *paroikía* includes that of a place next to one’s home – that is, an extension, somehow, of one’s place of abode. The ‘other’ place is therefore contained within ‘this’ place. This conception of

1 Incidentally, Dias was a former participant in another Point Sud workshop, ‘Spaces in Movement’, held in Bamako in January 2011. Another participant, and co-editor of this volume, Marina Berthet, also took part in the same workshop. In this way, the Bamako workshop served as an initial source of inspiration for our own (see Abdalla et al., 2014).

parochialism does not amount to a negative aspect of cosmopolitanism; on the contrary, it is what allows cosmopolitanism to instantiate itself or exist at all. As a site of human interactions, place is in this way also somehow a moving space right at its inception (Miller & Malpas, 2011). We would like to retain this image of a moving space here.

Moreover, in a recent essay, Michael Pearson (2017) has written about the concept of space in the Indian Ocean world. He quotes Richard White (White, 2010; Pearson, 2017, p. 4):

I don't want to be so simplistic as to say that if space is the question then movement is the answer, but I fear that I am nearly that simple. We produce and reproduce space through our movements and the movements of goods that we ship and information that we exchange. Other species also produce space through their movements. Spatial relations are established through the movement of people, plants, animals, goods, and information.

White's formulation of the issue of space turns out to be quite apposite for our purposes here, as it emphasises movement. As we will see below, it is also important that he mentions both people and plants.

Another inspiration for the workshop and this volume, further back in time, comes from a special issue of *Social Dynamics*, on 'Oceanic Worlds', edited by two of our workshop participants (and one editor of this volume), namely, Viljoen and Samuelson (2007). That issue also contains an article on creolisation by Rosa (a workshop co-organiser and co-editor here) and Isabel Hofmeyr (a keynote speaker). This workshop therefore ultimately has multiple roots on both sides of the (South) Atlantic.

As far as creolisation goes, as Vergès (2010) indicates, it is not necessarily a notion at variance with that of cosmopolitanism. On the contrary, both are often found as concomitant processes. Her work on Réunion is very apposite in this regard: that Indian Ocean island is a place, and as such it is a hub of cosmopolitan processes, especially migrations. It is at times open to the world, and at other times it is more isolated. It is a place-in-movement or a moving space in the long run; not only is it a hub for processes of creolisation, but it is also itself constantly shifting. Vergès uses the metaphor of the ocean and the shifting coastline to explain processes of creolisation:

Creolization is understood, to borrow an image familiar to islanders, as the endless movements of the waves on the island's coasts, bringing new elements while taking away old elements. The line of the coast is

slowly changed, erosion takes its toll, but the ocean with its movement adds new deposits. The tropical winds play a role, bringing seeds of new plants. On Réunion, the physical constraints – hurricanes, fragility of the soil, presence of high mountains that divide the island into discrete territories – and an active volcano also affect the processes of creolization as they are very lively actors of the imaginary.

Loss, exile, traces, inequality, memory, adaptation, borrowing, and masculinity characterized the emergence of creolization processes on Réunion Island, which was apprehended as a local site, yet one deeply connected to regional processes and transformations. I speak of Indian-oceanic creolizations to capture this multi-layered world.

VERGÈS, 2010, p. 146

We would like to retain Vergès's poetic image here. Just like Vergès, we are interested in processes, rather than static identities, representations or fixed locales. In this, Vergès in fact explicitly closely follows in the footsteps of Glissant, her Caribbean counterpart. As South African scholar Zimitri Erasmus says:

Glissant writes against both 'Creole' – a category – and 'creoleness' – an essence and an ideology. He posits 'creolization' as a method concerned with processes by which identifications are continuously transformed and extended into new possibilities of seeing Self and Other, with no intention towards universalizing any particular possibility [...] 'Creolisation' is 'exemplified by its processes [...] not by the "contents" on which these operate'.

GLISSANT, 1997, p. 89 (Erasmus, 2011, p. 648)²

Haripriya Rangan uses the notion of creolisation to understand biodiversity. In fact, Rangan says that creolisation helps us to understand biocultural diversity. She also largely concurs with both Vergès and Glissant. Rangan states in her contribution to this volume:

I believe that creolisation cannot, and should not, be limited solely to critical analyses of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ideas of racial mixing and judgements regarding the supposed purity or degradation of cultures, languages or social practices. I find it a compelling theoretical concept for thinking about biodiversity because it directs attention

² We are grateful to both Stephané Conradie, with Stellenbosch University, and Brandaan Huijgen, with Freie Universität in Berlin, for having alerted us to Erasmus's article.

to historical experiences of uprooting, dispersal, transplanting and mixing of human and non-human life forms across space. It focuses on how these movements and interactions create new patterns of life, living, and relationships between older and newer residents in landscapes. Creolisation is, in my view, a wonderful metaphor for understanding the diversification of *bios*, or biodiversity.

Significantly, Rangan points out that metaphors help in the process of plant exchange (it is apposite to bring up here that the etymology of 'metaphor' itself points to movement). Plants move together with stories and meanings (see also our discussion of Rangan's work below). That is, ultimately plants migrate together with metaphors, lexemes (for instance, plant names) and meanings. Those metaphors and meanings actually make room for a given plant by creolising a receptive landscape. Rangan then goes on to analyse the movements of baobabs across the Indian Ocean, particularly from Africa to India. The history of migrating baobabs across Africa and the Atlantic and Indian Oceans is therefore also a history of human migrations, as well as the migration of ancestors, spirits, and various culinary and other practices. She adds:

The baobabs in the Caribbean and South America are, in this sense, embodied beings that tell the histories of enslaved people from West Africa who were transported to work in colonial plantations between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Allying phylogenetic analysis of baobab populations in South Asia with 'bi-cultural practices, i.e., words, expressions, stories and rituals, in places that incorporated the tree into their languages and social life', Rangan is able to reconnect the histories of baobabs in Africa and various parts of the Indian Ocean. Though Rangan is the sole contributor to examine plant creolisation in this volume, her seminal chapter represents a major doorway into the world of oceanic processes of migration and creolisation, i.e., into moving spaces, as well as a major theoretical contribution to the field of studies of creolisation.

In her chapter, Marina Berthet, one of the editors of this volume, also examines a process of creolisation, the oceanic creation of a *Kriola* migrating subjectivity, involving contract labourers from Cape Verde to São Tomé and Príncipe in the colonial time. She emphasises that the *Kriola* subjectivity which she examines through songs and poems is in fact a migrating subjectivity that (re-)creates itself constantly via emigration and the return of islanders to Cape Verde. Her contribution seminally emphasises the importance of (oceanic) movement in the creation not only of the artistic expressions which she

peruses, but also of *Kriola* identity and subjectivity. Her work in this way complements the perspectives put forward by both Rangan and Vergès; moreover, it also indicates that the ‘place’ here is a migrating locus, created in between migration involving at least two different island countries, namely, Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe.

If Africa and the Atlantic figure prominently in several of the essays in this collection, the Indian Ocean stands out powerfully both in Rangan’s and Andrea Acri’s contributions. In the case of the latter, monks criss-cross the Bay of Bengal and other oceanic spaces, carrying with them sacred texts and statues. Here, monks, sailors, merchants, Buddhist texts, protective amulets (*dhāraṇī*) and statues are all threatened by the perils of the oceanic crossing. If metaphors, languages and ideas cross the ocean in the other contributions, creating creolised complexes in spaces in movement, in Acri’s essay the very ocean becomes pregnant with meaning and metaphor. The merchant Vimalaśaṅkha, for instance, saves his ship from a storm, lightning and meteors sent by Nāgas (snake deities of the netherworld), by writing down a Buddhist text in Sanskrit:

‘Fear not, fear not, merchant gentlemen. Calm down. I shall save you from this ocean of trouble [...] I have the famous great spell, called ‘Amulet’ [i.e. the *Mahāpratisarādhāraṇī*]. It subdues all the wicked, being of great power and might. I am going to save you from this intense suffering and great danger with it’.

Then, at that time, the great trader painted the Great Amulet, Great Queen of Spells, and fixed it at the top of a flagstaff. Immediately after the Great Amulet had been fixed at the top of the flagstaff, all those Timiṇilas saw the ship transform into a single mass of flame. Then those Nāgas, becoming benevolent, approached them and began to pay them reverence. The Timiṇilas, having been burnt by the might of this Great Amulet, Queen of Spells, fled and were destroyed. The merchants were led by those great Nāgas to a distinguished Great-Jewel Island.

As Acri indicates, there are many such stories of near-shipwreck averted by spiritual and divine intervention triggered by someone – often a religious figure – on board with the apposite knowledge. This perspective segues into that of Rangan, who indicates that plant creolisation in the Indian Ocean is linked historically to cultic complexes, including cults of ancestors in Africa. In this way, the religious aspect of migrations and creolisation comes to the fore strongly in Acri’s and Rangan’s contributions. In fact, the metaphoric and religious dimension is also clearly central, rather than merely ancillary, to the

processes of creolisation being described here. Joaze Bernardino-Costa also mentions that aspect, albeit very briefly, when he brings up Abdias do Nascimento's references to Afro-Brazilian cults, i.e. cults which partly originated in Africa; and Rosa mentions, also very briefly, Freyre's – and Louw's and Senghor's – deep attachment to various (local) forms of Christianity, in both their personal lives and their own thought. Moreover, Alain Pascal Kaly's whole chapter is concerned with a messianic and anti-colonial movement started by a Diola prophetess, namely, Aline Sitoé. The issue also comes strongly to the fore in Uhuru Phalafala's chapter, as she mentions gnosis in Keorapetse Kgotso's poetry and life, an initially South African gnosis that would have helped him connect later with forms of gnosis in the larger black world, especially in what concerns the US (see discussion below). It is apposite to bring up here the vignette which Viljoen relates in regard to Peter Abrahams, the South African 'coloured' writer, meeting Rastafarians in Jamaica in the 1950s, who expected him to be a harbinger of African gnosis – to employ again Phalafala's felicitous term, especially as gnosis points to a non-localised, moving and experiential form of knowledge that is not academic or hierarchical only (in fact, a creolised form of knowledge, not wholly unlike varieties of tantric Buddhism as described by Aciri). We could also think of Berthet's *Kriola* migrating subjectivity in this regard, and venture that Berthet's Cape Verdean migrant artists weave an oceanic-like form of gnosis as they move around their Atlantic island worlds (in addition to Cape Verde's 'eleventh island', a term which in fact stands, in Cape Verdean Creole, for the whole world).

The places-in-movement at stake here are therefore intriguing exactly because of the processes they reveal and that go into making them. Not entirely unlike São Tomé and Príncipe and the Cape Verde islands (discussed in detail in Berthet's chapter in this volume), Vergès's Réunion island is particularly interesting in this regard, also as a generic template. It is not only an island where processes of creolisation have taken place within slave, indenture and migratory networks, but it is also importantly an island where newcomers – she points out that there were often new arrivals, especially because most labourers died early, after a harsh life – were themselves already the product of age-old Indian Ocean processes of creolisation. That was the case of, for instance, the Malagasy, whose ancestors came from age-old migrations from today's Indonesia as well as Africa, and whose language is Austronesian (i.e. related to the languages of island South-East Asia). Madagascan culture is in this way neither properly East African nor exactly South-East Asian. Also, it became further creolised on Réunion and the larger region, Mauritius and Cape Town included (Larson, 2009).³

3 One of the organisers of the Point Sud workshop, Patrick Desplat, then with the University of Cologne, presented a paper on Madagascar.

It is perhaps unsurprising that, differently to cosmopolitanism, for instance, creolisation has not often attained a heightened status in theory – in South Africa, for instance, Sarah Nuttall prefers to talk of ‘entanglement’ (Nuttall, 2009).⁴ In fact, we find it refreshing and apposite that critiques of creolisation should surface in a work such as this one which is devoted to the notion, as, for instance, in Bernardino-Costa’s chapter. After all, creolisation has never been a widely accepted notion, in spite of the fact that it has never languished in obscurity either (For the colonial origins of the issue, see, for instance, Vaughan, 2005, who, as she tackles colonial Mauritius, takes a somewhat different perspective from Larson, 2009: the latter sees creolisation as basically a colonial phenomenon.) In a recent piece based on ethnographic work carried out in Stellenbosch (a place that has incidentally been central to this project since its start), Conradie shows how complex issues of creolisation are, especially as they get deeply enmeshed in histories of apartheid violence and forced removals; moreover, she incidentally indicates how powerfully anti-creolisation apartheid turned out to be (Conradie, 2018; see also the discussion in Rosa’s chapter in this volume).

This leads us to the importance of deep histories, especially connected and global histories (Subrahmanyam, 1997; Islamoğlu, 2015). For the Indian Ocean, we have two superb approaches here, both involving perusals of very deep histories: one is by Haripriya Rangan, as she resorts to notions of creolisation to understand the deep history of biocultural heritage of plant landscapes. Rangan’s is arguably always a human history; yet, it is definitely not recorded history as such, as only plant genomics, linguistics and ethnography can help trace the movements of plants across the ocean. Not unlike humans who are seen as undesirable refugees and migrants, intriguingly, migrating plants are also often seen as ‘invasive species’. Vergès (whose work Rangan also quotes) points out that creolisation (a concept closely related to Senghor’s *métissage* and Freyre’s *mestiçagem/miscigenação*, as detailed in Rosa’s contribution to this volume) may be feared in colonial and post-colonial societies. In this regard, it is almost eerie, though perhaps not altogether surprising, that Rangan’s work points out a similar phenomenon in the Indian Ocean. She concentrates, however, on the actual case of the baobab, a tree which does not have obvious food content, but is widely revered and used across the Atlantic and Indian Ocean, in Africa, India and South-East Asia.

4 Nuttall, in her earlier work, did invoke creolisation as a way of thinking about situated cultural processes at work, but has more recently opened this up to the notion of ‘entanglement’ as she believes it is more inclusive. We are grateful to Brandaan Huigen, with Freie Universität in Berlin, for this reference.

As intimated above, Rangan's use of notions of creolisation in food and plant complexes in the Indian Ocean is both innovative and apposite. We quote now from her previous work with her colleagues:

While biological evolutionary models are often used to trace the root and the time of origin of a species and explain intraspecies variation or divergence over long time periods, such models are ineffective for understanding the translations or metamorphoses of cultural landscapes and identities through mixture, exchange, transaction and interpretation between social groups [...] Given the difficulties of using biological evolutionary models in contexts where cultural movement, diffusion and mixing have occurred frequently and over longer time periods, we have found the concept of 'creolisation' to be a useful alternative framework for tracing how introduced food plants have been translated into new landscapes and traditions.

RANGAN et al., 2015, p. 142

In this perspective, note that 'landscape' – i.e. a place including humans, plants, animals and buildings – is already the product of creolisation from the start. Rangan's work is in this way also important because it reveals the long-term implications of food cosmopolitanism and plant movements for the fashioning of cultural landscapes: the fluidity of the biogeographical transplant of species leading to biocultural fluidity in foodways and rituals of everyday life, which she describes for the baobab (and other plants in her other work), indicates that the politics of native versus non-native, authenticity and obfuscation, freedom and subalternisation, acquire different meanings and perspectives here through the deep histories of oceanic and other creolisation. In fact, when it comes to it, we could posit that plants in processes of creolisation potentially provide an immeasurably wider and more nuanced perspective than the ethno-cultural complexes which are usually the subject of studies on creolisation. It is also clear that in the study of plants in creolisation processes, much deeper histories are usually at stake than merely colonial ones, including histories which cannot be retrieved through any known colonial or even pre-colonial archives – hence, as indicated earlier, the vital importance of plant genomics, linguistics and ethnography in Rangan's and similar work. In this way, when it comes to plants, many of the issues that often surface in the perusal of other creolisation processes – such as slavery and indentureship or forced labour, to mention but two particularly thorny ones (see Berthet's and Kaly's chapters in this volume) – are inevitably nuanced by extremely ancient and complex histories of transplantation and migration. (It is apposite to

mention here that Kaly's chapter revolves around an uprising related to a religious and political conflict epitomised by the cultivation of two food plants, namely, rice and peanuts, the former a pre-colonial crop, the latter a colonially enforced one.) Of course, though the Atlantic has seemingly no similarly ancient histories of plant migration but instead merely colonial ones, the Indian Ocean perspective on creolisation being developed in Rangan's work will also hopefully allow us to cast a different light on similar processes involving plants in the Atlantic.

Rangan et al. (2015, p. 143) also suggest that:

As a theoretical framework, creolisation not only reveals cultural mixing in language and social practices, but also the ways in which different experiences of displacement and interaction create new patterns of change and stability in people's life-worlds and landscapes [...]

With respect to historical analyses of food plant diffusions and exchanges, the theoretical framework of creolisation directs attention towards regional traditions encompassing ceremonies, rituals, idioms, parables and legends that incorporate these food plants.

Back to Vergès (2010), we have expatiated above on Réunion from her perspective (see also Vergès, 1999) because its connected histories of creolisation and cosmopolitanism, though inevitably particular and unique, do provide an apposite illustration of the themes of this collection (see Subrahmanyam, 1997, for the concept of connected histories, and Islamoğlu, 2015, for global histories). In fact, it is important to reiterate that several of the contributions in this volume touch directly on the subject of creolisation, as in the case of Berthet, who compares songs, narratives and poems from Cape Verde, generated by the migrant labour diaspora in São Tomé and Príncipe, that is, cultural forms from one Creole society in another; or António Tomás, whose work is on upper-class Angolan families in Luanda whose roots are supposedly in colonial Creole society. The narratives of identity involving elite families in Luanda are in this way deeply enmeshed in shifting and contentious histories of oceanic and colonial creolisation that, intriguingly, both echo and diverge from similar histories in Brazil.

In his contribution, Joaze Bernardino-Costa looks into the hitherto little-researched links between black Brazilian intellectuals and other intellectuals in the Black Atlantic diaspora in the Caribbean and the United States. Bernardino-Costa's work introduces nonetheless an important dissonant note in the debate: he reckons the counterpart of creolisation processes in Brazil, more often than not historically dubbed *mestiçagem*, is actually a process of

subalternisation of black populations. Intriguingly, as Madagascar was mentioned above, Bernardino-Costa finds an echo in the work of Pier Larson (Larson, 2009), for whom creolisation also arises historically in the western Indian Ocean, more specifically in the Mascarenes, among Malagasy and other slave populations, as a colonial project. Likewise, Shaun Viljoen's biographical look at the trajectory of Peter Abrahams across the Atlantic, moving between South Africa, Britain and Jamaica, emphatically problematises the notion of the creole because it was used under the colonial and apartheid regimes to categorise and oppress so-called coloured populations in South Africa (Conradie, 2018). Therefore, among both the editors and the contributors to this volume, the very notion of creolisation strikes an appropriately dissonant note (for a wide-ranging critique of the notion, related to the Caribbean, see Palmié, 2006).

Larson (2009) furthermore points out that in scholarly works, creolisation is seen as a process that provides for a certain kind of cultural common ground among the creolised and other colonial populations; yet, it also very much erases, in his opinion, the African (in his case Malagasy) origins of creolisation processes, including, first and foremost, the African languages themselves (here the Malagasy language). It is intriguing to think that Larson's objection, though raised for the history of the south-western Indian Ocean (stretching from Cape Town to the Mascarenes), is actually congruent with Bernardino-Costa's view of creolisation as somehow state-enforced, societal oblivion of blackness and Africanness (though Larson's case relates to, intriguingly enough, the African-ness of an Indian Ocean creolised population, namely, the Malagasy, who have both African and Austronesian origins – see Adelaar's chapter in Campbell, 2016). Larson's perspective also gels with Viljoen's approach and his critique of attitudes to racial categories and the ideological response of 'non-racialism' to those attitudes (see also the discussion of the issue in Viljoen's biography of Richard Rive; Viljoen, 2013).

Interestingly, the issue of creole languages also appears differentially here: some linguists, such as Holm (2000), indicate that both Brazil and the Cape of Good Hope largely speak varieties of a semi-creole, called Vernacular Brazilian Portuguese by specialists in the former, but often called simply varieties of Afrikaans in the latter (Roberge, 2002). The caveat here is that neither in Brazil nor in South Africa is it normally acceptable among linguists and literate elites for their mother tongue to be dubbed any kind of creole or semi-creole. The official language of Brazil is to this day not even 'Brazilian Portuguese' but in fact Portuguese *tout court* (the assumption is that it is largely the same language as that of the former metropolis, even though that assumption is, of course, open to doubt). Afrikaans – called 'Kaaps-Hollands' in the nineteenth century or 'Cape Dutch' – used to be considered among some linguists a creole in the

distant past (until about a hundred years ago), but is now considered, at least by Afrikaans specialists, a Germanic language – not so much the daughter of Dutch, but rather a full-fledged sister (for this complex history, see Roberge, 2002). What we might call the formal politics of linguistics here is therefore, both in Brazil and South Africa, strongly inflected *against* any notion of creolisation. This is intriguing, particularly as in the former there is supposedly a state-sponsored notion of creolisation (as argued by Bernardino-Costa in this volume, and also, concerning Angola, by Tomás), whereas in the latter there was arguably historically a seemingly anti-creolisation discourse, in the guise of apartheid (see Ribeiro, 2004, 2007, and the contribution by Rosa in this volume, who argues, nonetheless, for the importance of creolisation processes in South Africa as well; see also Conradie, 2018). It is apposite to bring up this discussion here, not only because of its theoretical value, but also because Brazil and South Africa are central to Rosa's chapter; besides, Brazil also features prominently in Bernardino-Costa's contribution, as well as making an important appearance in Tomás's chapter, through the latter's discussion of Gilberto Freyre, an intellectual also discussed by Rosa.

It is also relevant to note that there is a language variety called 'Afrikaaps' or 'Cape Afrikaans'. It is not named as such by any linguists, as far as we know, but rather by groups of local youth, including scholars and artists – for instance, Adrian van Wyk (a poet in Afrikaans) and Stephané Conradie, both with Stellenbosch University.⁵ Conradie is a visual artist and scholar (incidentally one working with the theme of creolisation), partly of Namibian origin, adding yet another dimension to the issue as varieties of Afrikaans are also ingrained in parts of Namibia. Afrikaaps ('Kaaps' means 'of the Cape') would stand in contrast to official Afrikaans, as a consciously black language opposed to a medium seen historically and even nowadays as overwhelmingly identified with (white) Afrikaners (see Rosa's discussion in his chapter). Afrikaaps would also be located in spaces that during the apartheid area might have been identified with the segregated townships (and therefore not in spaces such as the formerly white-proclaimed areas); and with groups which are not socially as visible, or perhaps as vocal, as some groups of Afrikaners continue to be in their language advocacy (that is, an advocacy in favour of more standard forms of Afrikaans, such as the official medium formerly favoured by, for instance, Stellenbosch University, not to mention the South African state

5 www.omenkaonline.com/stephane-e-conradie-ordentlikheid-a-creolised-object (accessed 14 November 2017). Conradie's exhibit also invokes *ordentlikheid*, Afrikaans for decency, respectability or propriety. Her work purports to bring out the creolisation at the heart of *ordentlikheid* (see Conradie, 2018, and brief discussion above).

since 1925 until today). There is a documentary on Afrikaaps.⁶ We mention Afrikaaps here as it gives a different perspective on the issue of Afrikaans as a white, Afrikaner language, not to mention creolisation in general. Namely, we could venture that there are diverse, complex layers and perspectives at stake here, all of them somehow linked to creolisation. Rosa indicates below that echoes of this complexity are also found in the thought of N.P. van Wyk Louw, a major poet and Afrikaans intellectual.

Phalafala focuses on another South African poet, namely, Keorapetse Kgositsile, and his relationship with the black power and black arts movements, when he resided in the US. She employs 'Black World' (rather than Bernardino-Costa's revised notion of Black Atlantic, originally from Gilroy), as a play on the name of the magazine in which Kgositsile published. Her research shows how important Kgositsile's presence in black America was at that time, making an impact on African American cultural production and politics in a way that challenges set notions of Africa trailing behind America in the Black Atlantic – a point that Bernardino-Costa also raises in his chapter, which also includes a take on the life and work of Abdias do Nascimento, another Black Atlantic/Black World intellectual in exile. Moreover, the strength of Kgositsile's work also comes from his Setswana language – in reality, Kgositsile's Setswana poems end up published in a black periodical – and in this way presents us with the complexities of difference and convergence within pan-African solidarity, based on language and translation. Phalafala's essay on Kgositsile converses in this regard with Bernardino-Costa's, where it is also highlighted that language is an essential factor in the construction of a Black Atlantic (a point also noted by Larson in his work on Malagasy letters and Vaughn on Mauritian Creole). However, for Bernardino-Costa the language in question is Portuguese rather than Setswana. For him, the language aiming for universalism in the Black Atlantic is English. He accordingly reworks Gilroy's Black Atlantic to take cognizance of Brazil's black Lusophone sphere, all the while inveighing against what he posits as black Anglophone universalism. In contrast, Viljoen argues that Peter Abrahams, whose mother tongue was Afrikaans, deliberately adopts English as his way of connecting with the anti-colonial currents locally, and in Africa and the world. The language issue is significantly also central to Berthet's chapter, which deals with Kriolo, the language of the Cape Verde islands, and its artists and poets (who mostly seemingly make little use of Portuguese), as they participate in a subjectivity centred on Kriolo and migration (a *migrITUDE*, Berthet posits, a term echoing Senghor's *Négritude*).

6 Fernando Rosa watched the documentary on the campus of Stellenbosch University in September 2015, thanks to Stephané Conradie.

António Tomás, as he dissects Angolan novels on families and creolisation, makes a similar point, as the novels in question are Lusophone works, and so is – at least in part – the world they describe. Rosa, in his contribution, also points out the importance of language in the work of three Atlantic intellectuals as they develop their oeuvre in South Africa, Senegal and Brazil, respectively in Afrikaans, French and Portuguese. Language is therefore central in the processes of mobility and creolisation at stake here. Intriguingly, while Bernardino-Costa, Phalafala, Rosa and Tomás provide intellectual perspectives linked to artists and poets, Berthet concentrates on artists and performers from within a forced labour diaspora (even though they may not necessarily have taken part in forced labour migration themselves).

Interestingly, both Kgositsile and Nascimento were exiled in the US at the same time, namely, the mid- to late 1960s and early 1970s. Viljoen tells the story of Peter Abrahams, who was also an exile across the sea, this time in Britain, and then in Jamaica. Abrahams in fact died in early 2017 in the latter country, after having spent most of his life there (he left South Africa at the age of twenty to initially settle in Britain for a few years). It is intriguing to think that the migratory and related artistic and intellectual trajectories which are at stake here in this way largely unfolded from the 1950s to the 1970s, including in the case of Berthet's migrant/migrating *Kriola* artists and labourers. At any rate, Phalafala has a different perspective in comparison with Bernardino-Costa, Tomás or even Berthet: namely, she is not looking into a Setswana language sphere, as much as she is looking into what we might call the intellectual creolisation taking place between English and Setswana in the poetry and publications of Kgositsile while he was in the United States (or the black world/Black World). For her, Keorapetse uses Setswana as a door to the revelation of wisdom in African languages as a form of gnosis which is akin to that surfacing in the work and thought of intellectuals in the black world with whom Keorapetse came into contact while in exile. There is a kind of universalism here, but it is one based on a shared gnosis, rather than merely one rooted in different political and language spheres. Phalafala writes in her chapter:

What is fascinating about Kgositsile's relationship with the holy black arts trinity is that he grounds his reverence of it in its continuity with African knowledge systems and gnosis. More specifically, Kgositsile irrevocably associates Malcolm's, Baraka's and Coltrane's ideology with that of his domicile environment in South Africa, at whose centre was his grandmother, Madikeledi, the person he attributes all his knowledge to. Pivotal to this early education was her insistence on her grandson speaking only Setswana in the home, and reading Tswana literature. This shaped his political consciousness.

Though Rosa, in his contribution, does not highlight gnosis, it is also possible to think that what links the three Atlantic intellectuals he tackles comparatively – namely, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Gilberto Freyre and N.P. van Wyk Louw – are gnostic ties (partly mutually acknowledged by both Senghor and Freyre). It is also intriguing to speculate here that in this regard Kgositsile's thinking actually closely approaches facets of Senghor's, especially as the latter also arguably posits a kind of gnostic knowledge taking place in French as well as in African and other languages.

Alain Pascal Kaly tackles similar issues in his chapter. Just as Berthet does, Kaly brings up colonial forced labour, though not in migration but rather in the form of a compulsion to plant a colonial crop, namely, peanuts – a requirement resisted by the inhabitants of Casamance. Under the leadership of a young Diola prophetess, the Casamançais then raise up in protest. As we venture into Casamance, formally part of Senegal, we in fact enter a liminal region, between the more Islamicised region to the north – Gambia and the rest of Senegal proper – and the largely animist ones to the south, marked by dry- and wetlands, mangroves, waterways and a large river estuary with a long history of oceanic and inland trade. The importance of landscape, as highlighted by Rangan, comes to mind here. The region is also, unsurprisingly, a hub for historical oceanic and riverine processes of creolisation, as Peter Mark (2002) indicates. A creole language – *créole casamançais* – even exists in the area to this day, in Ziguinchor (a city which features in Kaly's paper as well as in his life, as it is his hometown). Yet, as Mark and many others show, if there can be talk of creolisation, it is nonetheless one grounded in a vastly different geographical and historical setting from that of Cape Town or Réunion island, Luanda, or even neighbouring Cape Verde (an archipelago where varieties of a related creole – related to Casamançais Creole, that is – is the main language; for a historical appraisal, see Green, 2006). Though implicated in the Atlantic slave trade and inland trade routes reaching far into the African interior, Casamance had only a feeble, often merely perfunctory, colonial presence as such (Portuguese) until the late nineteenth century, when it was ceded by Portugal to France. Instead of a substantial white minority, Casamance has had a mosaic of peoples, none of which has been decidedly dominant, not even the famous rice-growing Diola. Aline Sitoé, the prophetess in Kaly's chapter, is a Diola. Whatever creolisation has taken place is therefore one that is arguably distinctly African rather than European.⁷

7 Even the Creolophone Catholics of Ziguinchor, the main river entrepôt and town, who sport Portuguese names and have lived traditionally in houses with a creolised architecture, are

In Kaly's essay on his home region, he describes a messianic anti-colonial movement whose icon and leader is the prophetess Aline Sitoé. Her movement was also partly anti-Islamic, insofar as French colonialism and the spread of Islam in Senegal are historically intimately connected, as in the famous Islamo-Wolof complex briefly described by Kaly. Sitoé's movement was therefore not a 'tribalist' movement as such, but one of various local societies against what was locally perceived as a double colonisation by the French and Muslims through the enforced cultivation of peanuts (local societies preferred rice). As Kaly indicates, to this day Casamance remains a troubled part of Senegal, a thin strip of land and water sandwiched between Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, far from the rest of Senegal proper. Armed conflicts and an independence movement are part of that troubled history, which in fact goes all the way back to Sitoé's days in the 1940s. Until very recently, Casamance's was also mostly a suppressed and silenced history in Senegal, as Kaly stresses. Interestingly, the issue of the internal differences within the nation is highlighted here, just as it is, for instance, in Rosa's and Bernardino-Costa's contributions.

It is apposite to mention here that Senegambia is one of the oldest former colonial regions in the world, at least insofar as it has had continuous contact with Europeans since the fifteenth century. In fact, in medieval times, it also used to be the southernmost limit of an Islamic oecumene once stretching from Spain to the Senegal and Niger rivers. That oecumene itself was arguably the result of a process of creolisation. In fact, Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias, in his outstanding keynote to our workshop, laid out in considerable detail North Africa's truly wondrous medieval history of migrations and contacts (see Farias, 2004). Moreover, Senegambia was the westernmost part of the renowned Mali empire, which spawned several of its pre-colonial states. Inside Senegambia, Casamance is therefore liminal in more senses than one, especially as it lies immediately south of where most of the events and recorded histories of Senegambia have purportedly happened, at least according to much traditional historiography. This last, perhaps unsurprisingly, comes under heavy criticism in Kaly's chapter. Today the region finds itself at the confluence of no fewer than four post-colonial states (Senegal – of which it is a part – Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Guinea-Conakry), with Mali not too far away (and, in the Atlantic, the Cape Verde islands). Though its cosmopolitanism and creolisation processes are arguably quite ancient (pre-colonial included), they have seemingly not been 'normalised' within any colonial or post-colonial dispensation. Sitoé's

African. See Marks (2002). See also Lopes (1999) and Amselle (1998) for processes of creolisation in the larger region, which are pre-colonial.

famous rebellion is in this regard not so much a mostly historiographically silenced chapter of colonial history (at least, not any longer since the 1990s) as a reminder of what Larson points out (and also Bernardino-Costa, Berthet, Rosa and Tomás in this volume), namely, that creolisation can be a colonial process which remained to some extent in the hands of local Africans, including those opposing post-colonial state-building. It is also relevant to bring up here that neighbouring Guinea-Bissau – with which the Casamançais share a good deal of culture and a couple of languages, Creole included – is a famous case of a ‘failed’ post-colonial state in the region.

Andrea Acri’s work does not involve deep (and largely unrecorded) histories such as the ones Rangan has to tackle; nonetheless, the histories of esoteric or tantric Buddhism networks in the Indian Ocean between the fifth and eleventh centuries CE are also similar to that of plants, in the sense that they remain submerged, largely unwritten and hitherto little researched. Acri’s work – and Acri himself, in fact – is at the forefront of pioneering international multidisciplinary efforts aimed at unveiling those histories (see for instance Acri, 2016, Acri et al., 2017, Acri et al., 2019). In his contribution to this collection, as a consequence, he also (re)visits very deep histories. The tantric – esoteric Buddhist – Indian Ocean is arguably one that has been just as obscure as Rangan’s creolised botanical Indian Ocean, and equally enmeshed in various processes of creolisation. In this way, though esoteric Buddhist oceanic history is not so deep as plant migration history, it is all the same largely pre-colonial, as by the sixteenth century tantric networks were either in disarray or had largely disappeared, though tantra itself has subsisted in parts of India, for instance, to this day (particularly in Kashmir and Tamil Nadu), and tantric influences are still visible in many parts of the Indian Ocean (for instance, in Java). As Acri’s tantric Buddhist geography is both sea- and land-based, he speaks of the geographical region of Monsoon Asia as his historical field, a mixed region which includes Tibet and a good deal of China, as well as South and South-East Asia. Acri does a reading of the networks of religious specialists and ideas flowing in between South and South-East Asia in medieval times through the mobility and migration of monks. A seemingly arcane issue, therefore – that of largely forgotten (at least among non-specialists) movement of monks – can open the doors to a wider understanding of cosmopolitan networks and processes of creolisation in the pre-colonial Indian Ocean and Asia.

This volume therefore does not offer closure on issues of creolisation and mobility; however, it does open new perspectives on them, especially as those themes have hitherto been confined to highly specialised areas, such as the biogeography of botanical species migration, the history of tantric networks or that of contract labour migration, to mention but three key domains included in this collection of essays. Last but not least, it is also arguably a volume which

intriguingly suggests that languages are essential to all processes of creolisation, and that therefore the latter cannot be understood without reference to the former.

Given the comparatively wide-ranging themes encompassed in this volume, the editors have deemed it expedient to divide the book into three sections (following one of our anonymous reviewers' suggestions). Though we run the risk of sounding iterative, as we have already discussed all chapters above, we will nonetheless (re-)present the book in a nutshell in what follows. Part 1, 'The Indian Ocean and Creolisation', includes both Rangan's and Acri's chapters, respectively on plant creolisation and tantric networks in the Indian Ocean. We find it apposite that these two chapters should open the volume, as their theoretical perspectives, laid out in particular detail in Rangan's piece, are highly relevant for all the subsequent chapters. Next, we move on to Part 2, 'Atlantic Experiences of Creolisation', a section that ranges from Angola to Brazil to Senegal. Kaly's chapter highlights a society – that of Casamance in southern Senegal – which is the result of still-ongoing, complex processes of creolisation of a pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial nature. Berthet's chapter represents yet another important contribution to theorisation in creolisation studies, this time centred on the migratory *Kriola* cultural expressions of Cape Verdeans in São Tomé and Príncipe. Tomás's and Bernardino-Costa's chapters centre on respectively Angola and Brazil, but they also criss-cross the Lusophone Atlantic to some extent (the former towards Brazil, the latter towards Africa). Finally, Part 3, 'Race and Creolisation in the Atlantic', includes three studies by Phalafala, Viljoen and Rosa, on some key intellectuals from Brazil, Senegal and South Africa. They literally or through their work crossed the Atlantic and, as they did so, became creole cosmopolitans in a variety of languages, including Van Wyk Louw's Afrikaans and Kgotsitsile's Setswana.

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PART 1

The Indian Ocean and Creolisation



The Movement of Plants and Creolisation of Landscapes in the Indian Ocean Region

Haripriya Rangan

1 Introduction

The Sidi Sayyed Mosque in the city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat, India, stands on an island across from the entrance to the old city, engulfed by the cacophony of traffic and bustle of daily life. As you step inside the building, your eyes are drawn towards the delicately carved stone screens that bathe the space with a luminous serenity. One of these screens frames a tree carved with curling, entwined branches and leaf clusters. Weaving light and shade, the screen heightens the sense of fluidity between the inside and the outside and brings the tree into sharper focus. As your gaze traces its intricate form, you realise the tree does not stand alone but is entwined with other plants and trees within the arched frame.

Sidi Sayyed, after whom the mosque is named, was a high-ranking official in the court of one of the rulers of Ahmedabad during the latter half of the sixteenth century (Campbell, 1879). His title, Sidi, signals that he was of African heritage, most likely from some part of East Africa. The connections between East Africa and western India were extensive during this period, linked together by networks of Indian Ocean trade, political relations, migrations and cultural exchanges (Alpers, 2014). Indeed, the cultural interactions between these regions reach back over more than five thousand years during which many food crops and plants were exchanged (Rangan et al., 2012). The enduring presence of transplants from each region in the other reflects the ordinariness of such biocultural exchanges around the Indian Ocean. The screen in Sidi Sayyed's mosque is evocative not only because of its beautiful craftsmanship, but because it symbolises the interwoven histories and landscapes of the Indian Ocean and the inseparability of biological life and human culture. It is a metaphor for the diversity that emerges from the constant movement, labouring, mixing and multiplication of life, *bios*, in all its forms.



ILLUSTRATION 1.1 Carved screen of Sidi Sayyed's Mosque, Ahmedabad, India
 SOURCE: H. RANGAN (2008)
 PHOTO CREDIT BY AUTHOR.

2 The Diversity of Life

Biodiversity gained significant power as a concept during the 1980s and 1990s, and is now prominent in any discourse on ecological conservation. Introducing a volume of papers put together from a forum on biodiversity, E.O. Wilson described the concept in terms of a 'biosphere [which] is a tapestry of interwoven life forms' (1988, p. v), a diverse global resource threatened by the overwhelming human pressures, alterations and destruction of environments in every part of the world (ibid., p. 3). A subsequent definition describes biodiversity as 'encompassing the variety of life, at all levels of organisation, classified both by evolutionary (phylogenetic) and ecological (functional) criteria' (Colwell, 2009, p. 257). Colwell notes that the term is most often applied by conservation biologists and ecologists at the species level, to refer to the richness of species 'that characterise a particular biological community, habitat or ecosystem type' (ibid., p. 258). If, however, data at these spatial levels is not available, then 'political units (counties, states or provinces, or countries)

are often used as the basis for statements about species richness' (ibid.). At a landscape or larger scale, 'biodiversity is conceived [...] often in terms of the number, the relative frequency, and spatial arrangement of distinguishable ecosystem types, or ecoregions' (ibid.).

A few things become apparent from these definitions. One, humans are not included within this idea of biodiversity; the term is used specifically to describe non-human species richness at different spatial levels. Two, although the definitions attempt to demarcate non-human from human life and define biodiversity exclusively as non-human species richness, the boundaries separating the two are extremely ambiguous. As the quote from Colwell indicates, when it is not possible to obtain data for non-human species richness within such biologically defined spatial levels, then the default spaces for estimating biodiversity turn out to be human-political administrative units such as counties, provinces and nation-states; i.e., biodiversity is incorporated within the realms of human activity and their functional-political boundaries. Three, when spatial scales for biodiversity expand to encompass landscapes and regions, the divisions between non-human and human spaces become even more difficult to demarcate.

In other words, however hard we may try to conceptualise biodiversity as non-human species richness existing apart from human spaces and activity, it is very difficult to demonstrate this in reality. Biodiversity as a concept representing the diversity of *bios* is effective only when it is understood as *biocultural* diversity, the plenitude of life that emerges from the mixing of human and non-human activities.

The idea of biocultural diversity is not new. Conservationists have often invoked the links between biological and cultural diversity in the tropical regions inhabited by indigenous peoples and what they call traditional communities (Pretty et al., 2009). The very first international Convention on Biodiversity in 1992 asserted that the knowledge of biodiversity maintained by such groups and communities needed to be recognised in conservation programmes (Posey, 1999). Some studies have tried to demonstrate this by correlating the numbers of plants, birds and animals with numbers of different cultural and linguistic groups (Stepp et al., 2004; Maffi, 2005; Romaine & Gorenflo, 2017). But such attempts have been criticised for limiting biocultural diversity to a kind of static, primitive state (Hames, 2007), and for not recognising that non-traditional or non-indigenous communities have also created biocultural diversity through agriculture and gardening (Amici et al., 2015; Elands et al., 2015). Some have gone further and argued that biocultural diversity is more than a combination of wild and cultivated non-human resources associated with human groups and localities; it is *biodiversification*, a historical process involving different

patterns of continuities and discontinuities of activities across agroecological environments (Cevasco et al., 2015).

In arguing for the need to historicise biodiversity, Cevasco et al. (2015) draw on Ingold's (1993) call to recognise the 'temporality of landscape'. The landscape, Ingold argues, is not an object, but a living process, in which the patterns of activities, or taskscapes, are embodied in an array of features. It 'takes on its forms through a process of incorporation, not of inscription' (ibid., p. 162), through the rhythms of human activity resonating with those of other living things and other cycles and rhythmic phenomena such as day and night, tides, seasons and so on (ibid., p. 163). The landscape, as he says, is never a finished artefact, but always 'work in progress' (ibid., p. 162). Life (which includes biodiversification), from this perspective, is something that happens within the landscape, a 'generative field' in which 'each form takes shape in continuous relation to those around it' (ibid., p. 164).

Ingold's interpretation of landscape historicises the relationships between humans, non-humans and material life and shows how distinctions between them dissolve as their movements and activities cohere at different spatial and temporal scales. The landscape, at any moment in time, embodies the movements and changing relationships between these diversified life forms. As humans, animals, seeds, plants, wind, water move between places and interact in various ways, their relationships within an embodied landscape are also constantly changing over time. Biodiversity, then, becomes the living vocabulary that expresses the histories of a landscape through its diverse life forms and meanings. Like the vocabulary of any language, it evolves through interaction, mixing, multiplying, hybridising, abandoning, and inventing words and idioms to tell stories of the landscape and its embodied relationships with humans, non-humans and diverse forms of life.

Biodiversity, when conceptualised in this way, is markedly different from the definitions operative in conservation biology and invasion ecology. In these fields, the idea of diversity relies on three types of divisions – human versus non-human, native versus non-native, stationary versus mobile – to study biotic life within landscapes. In invasion ecology, the movement and spread of biota from one region to another is often presented as a threat (see Elton, 1958; Drake et al., 1989; McGeoch et al., 2010; Simberloff, 2011). Terms such as 'non-native', 'alien' and 'invasive species' are used to refer to biota that have either moved with, or been introduced by, humans and are accused of taking over areas occupied by native or indigenous (non-human) species (Larson, 2007; Subramaniam, 2017).¹ From an invasion ecology perspective, biodiversity

1 It is ironic that the invasion ecology discourse arose in countries such as the UK, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA, whose histories of imperialism and colonisation

conservation is about protecting native biota by getting rid of non-native species from landscapes (Guyer & Richards, 1996; Chew & Hamilton, 2011). Many ecologists have argued that this native versus non-native approach to biodiversity conservation is flawed, impractical and expensive, and have called instead for biodiversity to be rethought in terms of cosmopolitan or novel ecosystems, hybrid or recombinant ecologies (Soulé 1990; Davis, 2009; Hobbs et al., 2009). To do this, however, ecologists would need to overcome their impulse to represent biodiversity as a purely non-human and authentic expression of nature's original richness. Otherwise, as Beinart (2014) observes, even though terms like 'hybrid', 'cosmopolitan' or 'novel' ecosystems reflect a sensible way of thinking about biodiversity, it is likely that such areas will be judged pejoratively as biologically degraded rather than biodiverse.

My view is that if ecologists want to rethink biodiversity in terms of hybridity, recombinant ecologies or novel ecosystems, they will need to look beyond their disciplinary comfort zones and draw on theoretical concepts from a range of fields such as history, linguistics, geography, anthropology and cultural studies. These disciplines offer many theoretical perspectives regarding the diverse outcomes of the intermingling of human and non-human agency (e.g., Ingold, 2000; Latour, 2004; Robbins, 2004; Haraway, 2015; Lorimer, 2015). The perspective that I find most useful for thinking about biodiversity is the idea of creolisation. Creolisation is a rich concept that reveals how the movement, settlement, diffusion, modification, interaction, and mixing of life and lifeways generate new forms of life and diversity at different temporal and spatial scales. It is also a powerful metaphor that allows us to see how the interwoven histories of human and non-human life move to take root in landscapes and become, as Ingold would say, generative fields for new forms of biocultural diversity.

3 Creolisation

Creolisation as a concept emerged from linguistics and spread into other fields of cultural and literary theory. The term originates from words such as 'crioulo' in Portuguese, 'criollo' in Spanish, and 'creole' in French and English, all deriving from the Latin verb 'creare', which means 'to create'. These words were variously used from the sixteenth century onwards to refer to descendants of European settlers in the New World (Mühlhäusler, 1986). But from the

were predicated on possessing areas occupied by native peoples, killing large numbers and pushing the survivors to the margins of their societies (Crosby, 1986; Beinart & Coates, 1995).

seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, as large numbers of people from Africa were enslaved and transported to European settler and colonial plantation economies in the Caribbean and the Americas, the term came to refer to people born in these places from mixed indigenous, African and European ancestries (Eriksen, 2007; Khan, 2007; Vergès, 2007). In the field of sociolinguistics, 'creole' and 'creolisation' mainly refer to the processes of language evolution that took place in European colonies established in the Atlantic New World, the Mascarene islands in the western Indian Ocean and islands in the Pacific Ocean. These were places where interactions between European overlords and indigenous peoples, African slaves and Asian indentured labourers resulted in the creation of new mixed languages and related identities (Abrahams, 2003; Baker & Mühlhäusler, 2007; Bickerton, 2008).

While the term 'creole' retains its historically specific reference to the *métissage* or mixed racial identities produced in these places under European colonialism (Mintz, 1996; Palmié, 2007), the concept of creolisation has been used in more recent times to describe the cultural transformations emerging from the processes of globalisation. In a now classic piece published in the late 1980s, Hannerz (1987) argued that anthropologists needed to develop new macro-frameworks for making sense of the scale and complexity of cultural transformations arising from an interconnected world. He pointed out that the interactions arising from an increasingly integrated world system did not simply result in the erosion of traditional societies or replacement of local cultures by a homogeneous and dominant modern or 'global' culture. Rather, the interactions were replacing diversity of certain kinds with others. The new forms of cultural diversity, he suggested, were based 'relatively more on interrelations and less on autonomy', and the 'meanings and modes of expressing them [were] born in the interrelations' (*ibid.*, p. 555).

Hannerz' proposition provoked robust debates between linguists, anthropologists and historians. Some challenged him for diluting the historically specific meanings of creolisation associated with European histories of slavery and forced labour (Mintz, 1996; Stewart, 1999). Others criticised him for interpreting creolisation as a kind of superficial cosmopolitanism that involved 'borrowing' vocabulary from different languages and mixing together bits and pieces of different cultures (Baker & Mühlhäusler, 2007; Khan, 2007). These debates were important because they reworked the concept and offered new insights into the histories of cultural innovation and diversification emerging from creolised societies (Eriksen, 2007; Rangan et al., 2015).

I believe that creolisation cannot, and should not, be limited solely to critical analyses of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ideas of racial mixing and judgements regarding the supposed purity or degradation of cultures,

languages or social practices. I find it a compelling theoretical concept for thinking about biodiversity because it directs attention to historical experiences of the uprooting, dispersal, transplanting and mixing of human and non-human life forms across space. It focuses on how these movements and interactions create new patterns of life, living, and relationships between older and newer residents in landscapes. Creolisation is, in my view, a wonderful metaphor for understanding the diversification of *bios*, or biodiversity.

Metaphors are often analysed or judged for their aptness as conveyors of meaning but, as Moretti (2007) points out, such judgements can only be made by understanding the contexts in which they are called upon to act. Metaphors are mobilised when there is a need to relate or translate ideas and things that others may be unfamiliar with. They find forms and expressions which can make the strange familiar and thereby create room for them in the languages and places where they arrive, allow them take root, grow, and generate new kinds of stories and meanings. When a plant that is present in a landscape is said to be from elsewhere and brought there by humans, it calls us to look for the metaphors that were mobilised to bring it to its new place. It asks us to explore the metaphors that translated it into this setting. It reveals the different genres of stories and meanings that have made room for it by creolising the landscape.

The following sections of this chapter explore the metaphor of creolisation and biocultural diversity through the African baobab trees that are present in the landscapes of the Indian subcontinent. I trace the histories of their movement across the Indian Ocean, and the creolised stories that the trees embody in these regional landscapes. The empirical data and research analyses that inform these sections can be found in Rangan and Bell (2015) and Bell et al. (2015).

4 The Movements of African Baobabs across the Indian Ocean

The African baobab, also known as *Adansonia digitata*, is a charismatic tree originating from and widely distributed across continental Africa. It grows in almost all parts of the continent, excluding the rainforest areas of Central Africa, the southern temperate zones and high-altitude regions beyond 1000 metres (Wickens & Lowe, 2008). The characteristic image is of an imposing tree in the landscape, of great age and substantial girth, with large cavities in its trunk. Some large trees in Africa have diameters of over 20 metres and are estimated to be over 1300 years old (Swart, 1963; Patrut et al., 2012; Patrut et al., 2015).



ILLUSTRATION 1.2 A baobab near the Zambezi river, Mozambique

SOURCE: C. KULL (2011)

PHOTO CREDIT BY C. KULL.

Many African communities hold the tree in great veneration and regard it as a dwelling-place for ancestors and magical spirits (Armstrong, 1979; Wickens, 1982). They also value it for a variety of purposes: the fruit, leaves and roots are used as food and medicine, the bark as fibre (Burkill, 1985–2004; Gebauer et al., 2002; Gustad et al., 2004), and the tree, which often develops cavities as it ages, can serve as a rainwater store or shelter (Blench, 2007; Wickens & Lowe, 2008; Patrut et al., 2015). The baobab fruit has a hardy shell which contains a powdery, nutritious pith with a sweetish-sour flavour and plenty of seeds, which are a source of protein. The shell does not crack open by itself or rot easily, so both pith and seeds are well preserved in the pod and can be consumed many years later. The fruit becomes lighter as it dries, and can be carried easily from one place to another (Watt & Breyer-Brandwijk, 1962; De Caluwé et al., 2009; Kamatou et al., 2011). Genetic studies of baobabs in Africa have also shown that humans have been the prime agents for moving the species across the continent (Leong Pock Tsy et al., 2009). Biogeographical studies in Africa have shown that the presence of baobabs in an open landscape is often an indication of past human settlements (Blench, 2007; Duvall, 2007; Wickens & Lowe, 2008).

I provide all these details and references to establish some well-recognised facts, namely, that many African communities know a great deal about the

baobab, that there are many hundreds of names for the tree in all their languages (Wickens & Lowe, 2008), and that the tree's presence in the landscape is inextricably linked to the human histories of movement and settlement across various parts of that great continent. The presence of an African baobab in another part of the world signals the history of human voyages from the African continent, the setting down of roots and the generation of new stories in the landscapes of arrival. The baobabs in the Caribbean and South America are, in this sense, embodied beings that tell the histories of enslaved people from West Africa who were transported to work in colonial plantations between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries (Rashford, 1987).

African baobabs are found scattered across many places throughout the Indian Ocean region (Rangan & Bell, 2015). In the Indian subcontinent, African baobabs are present in greater numbers in coastal areas and towns of Pakistan and western India and some rural parts of central and south-central India. Smaller numbers are found in coastal areas of east and south-east India and settlements in the Indo-Gangetic plains (Maheshwari, 1971; Wickens & Lowe, 2008). Baobab clusters are also found in the southernmost tip of the Indian subcontinent and in north-west Sri Lanka (Vandercone et al., 2004).

Most British colonial officials and naturalists attributed the presence of the baobabs in the Indian subcontinent to Arab traders rather than African migrants (see Armstrong, 1979, and Wickens, 1982, for these accounts), and subsequent studies have repeated this attribution without question (Maheshwari, 1971; Vandercone et al., 2004). Few seemed inclined to ask why Arab traders would want to introduce the African baobab in the Indian subcontinent. What did it symbolise for them? What kinds of histories or cultural practices did they seek to convey through the baobabs in these landscapes?

When my colleagues and I set out to trace the history of the African baobab in the Indian subcontinent (see Rangan & Bell, 2015; Bell et al., 2015), we decided to combine genetic analyses of the tree with analyses of the histories of trade, exchange and cultural practices (the full details regarding sites and methods of collection are provided in the above-mentioned references). We included genetic analysis because it provides a different insight into a plant's history when it moves from its place of origin and sets down roots in another place. Put simply, genes carry geographical information. A species' population in one geographical area will have similar genetic characteristics. Genomes are generally considered to evolve slowly, and may mutate or diverge from the original population over very long periods of time. However, they contain markers that can reveal their relationships or interactions between geographically dispersed populations of the species. So, for instance, a baobab tree belonging to a population occurring near an East Africa coastal town will have a genomic structure common to other individuals of that population, but its

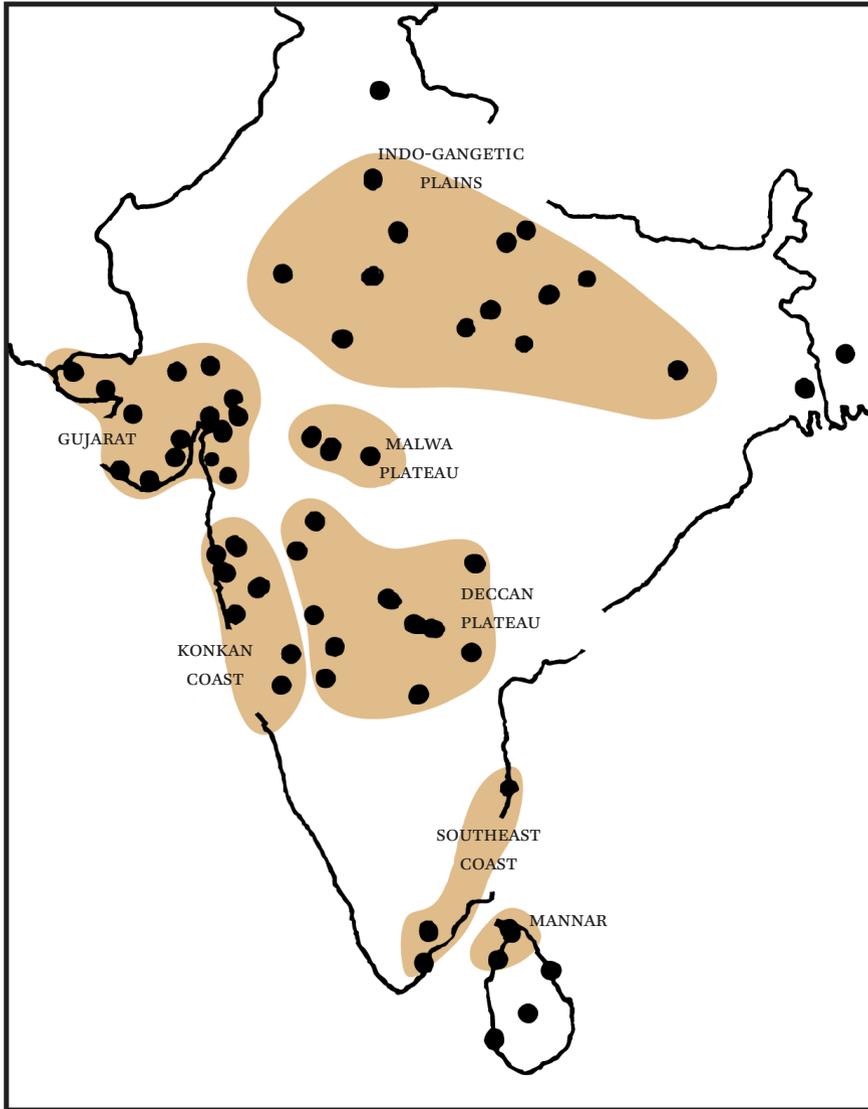


ILLUSTRATION 1.3 Broad presence of *A. digitata* in the Indian subcontinent
SOURCE: RANGAN AND BELL (2015)

genetic markers may display some features which occur in a population that is a thousand kilometres away in inland south-east Africa. This would suggest that there has been some gene flow between the two baobab populations. Gene flow occurs when pollen or seeds are dispersed by various kinds of vectors or

carriers such as insects, birds, rivers, humans or other mammals. If there is frequent and regular gene flow between two populations that are geographically distant, then their genes will show these close mutual influences. But if there is no gene flow between these two geographically separate populations, then greater distance and divergence will show between their genes. Since geographical movement or migration from one place to another is critically important in contributing to genetic variation in a species, it is possible to examine the phylogenetic structure of baobab populations in different geographical locations and analyse the closeness or distance of their relationships (Baum & Smith, 2012; Kelemen & Kelemen, 2015).

Phylogenetic analysis offered the exciting prospect of tracing the movements of baobabs from Africa to various parts of the Indian Ocean region through their own histories, and alongside human histories of trade and exchange. My colleagues and I explored connections between these two bio-histories by seeking out biocultural practices, i.e., words, expressions, stories and rituals, in places that incorporated the tree into their languages and social life (Carney, 2001; Carney & Rosomoff, 2009; Dawdy, 2000). By bringing these three patterns of time flows and forms of history together, we hoped to discover the mix of geographical origins, networks, and intensity of relationships embodied by African baobab trees in the Indian Ocean landscapes.

5 Genetic Mobilities and Histories of Exchange

The genetic analysis revealed that all the baobabs sampled from various parts of India derived their ancestry from different regions of East, south-east and West Africa (Bell et al., 2015). Most had a strong relationship to baobab populations along the Swahili coast, but with admixtures of populations from inland regions. Each tree sample had a distinctive geographical structure showing its relationship to ancestral populations from these different African regions and the overlaps and admixtures arising from gene flows between them. The baobab trees in India thus embodied the gene flow and mixing between geographically dispersed populations in Africa before they or their ancestors were brought across the ocean as seeds within a baobab fruit pod.

When we mapped the biogeographical structure of baobabs with the geographical history of Indian Ocean trade networks between Africa and India, we found that the movements of baobabs could be traced across four broad historical periods of Indian Ocean exchanges. These periods, roughly defined, were: before the tenth century CE; the tenth to the sixteenth centuries CE, when Islamic merchant networks were dominant; the sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries CE, when the Portuguese attempted to gain monopoly control over oceanic trade; and the eighteenth to mid-twentieth centuries CE, when trade and migrations between Africa, the Indian subcontinent and South-East Asia were under the combined influence of Dutch, French and English colonialisms.

The first period, before the tenth century CE, was distinguished by trading networks between north-east Africa and the Horn of Africa (present-day Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia) and north-west India that extended back at least to the second millennium BCE (see Hourani, 1995). Archaeobotanical studies have shown that food crops such as sorghum, pearl and finger millets, cow-pea, hyacinth bean, and tamarind, all of which originate from the Sudanian-Sahelian biogeographical transition zone of north-east Africa where baobabs also occur, arrived in north-west India some three to four thousand years ago (Harlan, 1971; Burkill, 1985–2004; Weber, 1998; Fuller & Boivin, 2009). A few baobab trees in north-west India revealed private alleles or mutations in their genetic structure which suggested that their ancestors could have arrived a very long time ago. It is possible that their ancestors may have arrived along with these food crops from Africa.

Between the tenth and sixteenth centuries CE, Islamic merchant trading networks extended further down the East African coastline (including present-day Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique) and linked the major ports directly

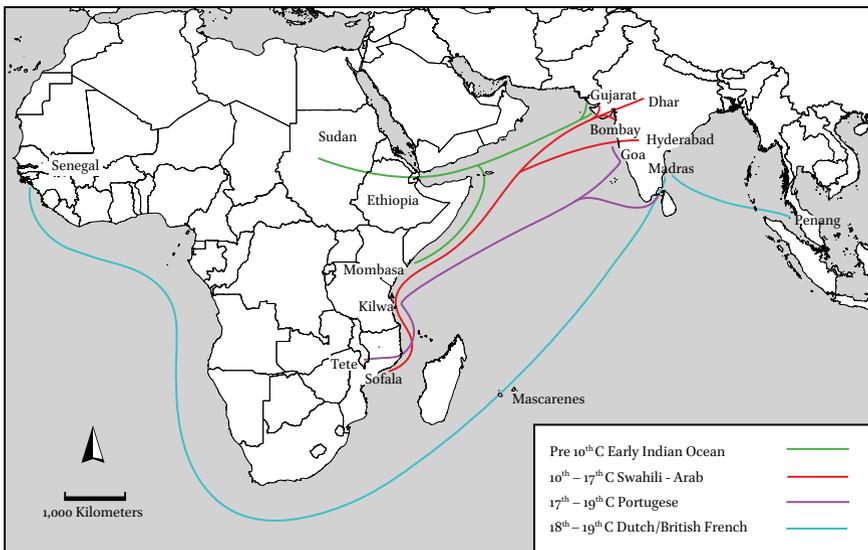


ILLUSTRATION 1.4 African baobab and human movements between Africa, the Indian subcontinent and beyond

SOURCE: BELL ET AL. (2015)

with ports and kingdoms in western and central India (Tibbetts, 1971; Alpers, 2004). The geographical overlap and admixtures in the genetic structure of East African coastal baobabs and those from inland regions corresponded with the history of increasing integration of inland and coastal trading circuits in Africa (see Ibn Battuta, 1929). The inland regions of Abyssinia, Kordofan and Nubia (in present-day Sudan) were linked more directly through these networks to ports and coastal towns in Gujarat and the west coast of peninsular India. There was a rising trend among Muslim kingdoms in western and central India to maintain African troops in their armies. During the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries CE, these soldiers were mostly enslaved men from Abyssinia and Nubia (Sadiq Ali, 1996; Pankhurst, 2003; Obeng, 2007), but as direct voyaging between Swahili ports and western Indian ports increased during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries CE, soldiers were similarly obtained from the hinterlands of Kilwa, Zanzibar and Mombasa (Lodhi, 1992; Sheriff, 2005). The strong genetic relationships between baobabs from coastal trading centres in Kenya and Tanzania and those in western and central India indicate that these African seafarers, slave soldiers and traders probably knew the nutritious value of baobab fruit and carried some pods along with other food supplies on their voyages to India (Villiers, 1952).

The entrance of the Portuguese into the Indian Ocean in the late fifteenth century CE was marked by their attempts to monopolise control over the seaborne trade. With Goa secured as the base for their Estado da India, the Portuguese tried to force trading ships to move between ports that they controlled around the Indian Ocean. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries CE, the Portuguese gained control over Swahili ports such as Mombasa, Kilwa, Sofala and Moçambique (present-day Ilha de Moçambique) and directed shipping between these places and their ports in the Indian subcontinent and South-East Asia. They set up numerous fortifications in ports along the western and south-eastern coast of India, Sri Lanka, Melaka and Timor where they maintained military troops to exercise dominance (Chaudhuri, 1985; de Silva Jayasuriya, 2007). The Viceroyalty of Goa which governed the Estado da India brought enslaved African men and women from inland Mozambique, Malawi and southern Tanzania to defend and serve in these forts (Cardoso, 2010). The overlaps and admixtures in the genetic structure of baobabs sampled at Mozambican ports and former Portuguese territories in western India confirm these geographical connections between coastal and interior areas of southern and south-eastern Africa.

From the 17th century onwards, Portuguese power in the Indian Ocean trade was challenged by Dutch, English and French mercantile interests. The Dutch VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie: 'East India Company') defeated

the Portuguese in Sri Lanka and Melaka and gained control over much of the seaborne trade in the East Indies, while the British East India Company gained dominance in India (Alpers, 2014). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries CE, French mercantile interests established sugar plantations in the Mauritius and Réunion islands in the south-western Indian Ocean, and obtained slave labour from Mozambique, which was under Portuguese control, the Comoros Islands, Madagascar (Alpers, 2005; Kull et al., 2015), and places as far away as Senegal and Guinea in West Africa (Allen, 2010). The British East India Company obtained slaves from the Gold Coast and Guinea in West Africa to serve as ship crew and as troops for protecting their forts and factories at ports on the south-eastern coast of India and Malaya (Ewald, 2000; de Silva Jayasuriya, 2009). The Dutch VOC government also obtained troops from West Africa to protect their trading forts in Sri Lanka and Java (Vink, 2003; de Silva Jayasuriya, 2007; van Kessel, 2007). The strong relationships in the genetic structure of the West African baobab population with the baobabs sampled in Mauritius, Réunion, Chennai and Penang (Malaysia) reflect these geographical connections and movements.

Thus, by weaving together the baobab genetic histories with the histories of the Indian Ocean trade, our analysis showed that the baobabs in India, South-East Asia and the Mascarenes embodied the untold histories of numerous Africans who arrived in these places as sailors, merchants, slaves, soldiers and servants. The genetic analyses of the trees revealed multiple introductions to the Indian subcontinent from different parts of Africa. Their genetic markers bore the evidence of the many long journeys, the mingling of populations, and the departures from coastal ports to new destinations in the Indian Ocean world. Each baobab's presence in these landscapes signalled a unique creole history generated from the interaction and miscegenation of Swahili, Arab, Indian, Portuguese, Dutch, English, French, West African, Malay and many more cultural influences.

6 Baobabs and Creolised Landscapes

Several scholars have observed that creolisation is a powerful concept which eludes precise definition. Stewart (1999), Stewart 2007 and Khan (2007) note that it is often treated synonymously with terms and concepts such as cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, hybridity or syncretism. Baron (2003) points out that some attempts at precise definitions have ended up sounding like chemistry lab experiments, with the use of terms such as 'amalgams', 'mixture',

'compounds' and 'synthesis'. But, as Eriksen (2007) argues, when creolisation becomes a metaphor for emergent forms of cultural mixing, then concepts such as pluralism, hybridity or syncretism can be used to trace the different patterns of creolisation generated from the movements and mixing of people, substances, ideas and meanings in places.

I mentioned earlier that most accounts of the African baobab in the Indian subcontinent (e.g., Maheshwari, 1971; Armstrong, 1979; Vandercone et al., 2004) repeat a statement, attributed to Baden-Powell, that '[t]he tree was introduced to India from tropical Africa by Arab traders' (Armstrong, 1979, p. 12), but offer no linguistic or cultural evidence to establish this connection. The Egyptian Arabic name for the tree, *ba-hobab*, which has been adopted in English, is not found in any similar form in Indian Arabic or Urdu, or for that matter in any of the Indian languages. None of the Arabic vernacular names identified in the exhaustive list compiled by Wickens and Lowe (2008) correspond with, or appear to be proto-forms for, any of the Indian vernacular names (*ibid.*, pp. 351–355, for Arabic and Indian names). Most vernacular names for the baobab in Indian languages use the suffix *imli*, *amli* or *puli*, which refers to the tamarind tree and its fruit, to describe the tree (e.g., *gorakh imli*, *chor amli*, *bondam puli*). Other names allude to its voluminous girth (e.g., elephant-tree, elephant-tamarind tree, fat-tamarind tree) or its foreign origins (e.g., *vilayati* in Urdu, *seemai* in southern Indian languages) but without any terms or references connecting it to Arabs or Arabia (*ibid.*, Appendix 1: Vernacular names, 1.3 Indian names, pp. 352–355). There are no ethnobotanical studies that show commonalities in the use of baobabs in Indian and Arabic culinary, medicinal or artisanal traditions. Wickens and Lowe (2008, p. 86) note that the characteristic uses of baobab fruit and tree parts mentioned in recent Indian literature must be viewed with caution because the authors mainly quote from studies of baobab uses in African sources.

One of the two sources that suggest African, rather than Arab, agency for introducing the baobab to the Indian subcontinent is the Hobson-Jobson dictionary of Anglo-Indian words (Yule & Burnell, 1903). The entry for 'baobab' includes a note from Sir George Birdwood, an eminent Anglo-Indian physician and naturalist who was responsible for producing a massive catalogue of the economic vegetable products of Bombay Presidency. Birdwood described the baobab as 'a fantastic-looking tree with immense elephantine stem and small twisted branches laden in the rains with large white flowers; found all along the coast of western India, but whether introduced by the Mahomedans from Africa, or by ocean-currents wafting its large light fruit, full of seed, across from shore to shore is a nice speculation' (*ibid.*, p. 577). The other source

is Burton-Page's (1969) account of baobabs in India, where he notes that the trees were present in Malwa, Khandesh, the Deccan and western parts of India where Africans had settled, and less so in other parts of India. He ponders:

If, as seems possible, there is a connection between the baobab and the Habshis, the African tree and the African people, a powerful reason for the tree's introduction is still wanting. A slave people would hardly introduce it as a specimen to remind them of home; the craving for a 'refreshing sherbet' is hardly convincing, as India is well provided with other natural resources for such purposes [...] It does seem possible, however, that its importation for a cult purpose might have been permitted. What such a cult purpose might have been does not seem possible to say; colleagues [...] have not yet been able to throw any light on possible baobab cults in east Africa or along the coast.

Ibid., p. 334

Burton-Page refers to the Africans in India as *Habshis* (the Arab word for people from Abyssinia), observing that although the term originally may have been used for slaves of Abyssinian origin in India, it was often 'applied to African slaves of other races, Bantu and Somali, imported from the Horn of Africa' (Burton-Page, 1969, p. 333). The other common term of reference for Africans, particularly in western India, is *Sidi* (Campbell, 1883). In Gujarat and Maharashtra, African Indians are called *Sidi*, *Siddi* or *Sheedi*, and in northern Karnataka and Goa *Siddi*. In Pakistan, where there is a sizeable African diaspora population in the coastal areas of Baluchistan and Sind, they are known as *Shidi* (Catlin-Jairazbhoy & Alpers, 2004). There are Sidi communities that identify as Muslim, Hindu and Christian, but their religious practices reflect a mix of Indian and African animist traditions (Camara, 2004; Karmwar, 2010).

In many parts of western India, it is common to find small shrines at the base of baobab trees that are like the baobab ancestor shrines built by families in rural areas of northern Mozambique (see Illustrations 1.5 and 1.6), but which are dedicated to various Muslim saints or Hindu gods and goddesses. In Gujarat, for instance, African Indians are a cosmopolitan mix of people whose ancestors arrived from various parts of north-east, east and south-east Africa, and often maintain Arabic and Persian appellations that signal their region of origin in Africa: *Habshi* from Abyssinia, *Nubi* from Nubia, *Misri* or *Masri* from Egypt, and *Zanji*, *Zangi* or *Zangbari* from coastal and inland regions of East and south-east Africa (Sheriff, 2005, Catlin-Jairazbhoy & Alpers, 2004). Several coastal settlements have shrines and stone markers at the foot of baobab trees dedicated to the very popular Muslim Sidi saint Bava Gor, his sister Mai Misra, and his brother Baba Habash. It is said that Bava (also Baba, the term



ILLUSTRATION 1.5 Baobab ancestor shrine, Anchilo Village, Nampula province, Mozambique
 SOURCE: C. KULL (2011)
 PHOTO CREDIT BY C. KULL.

for ‘father’ in Swahili) Gor, whose formal title is Hazrat Sheedi Mubarak Nubi, was a Muslim merchant from Nubia who came to southern Gujarat in the fourteenth century to trade in agate beads (Francis, 1986; Basu, 2004). Agate was mined near Ratanpur, a small settlement located inland from the busy port of Bharuch, and was exported through a network of traders to Arabia, Egypt and East Africa (Kenoyer & Bhan, 2004). Bava Gor is said to have vanquished a female demon that was terrorising the populace living near the agate mountain with the help of his sister, Mai Misra (from Egypt), and brother, Bava Habash (from Ethiopia).

In some places, there are baobab shrines to Khodiyar, a folk water goddess who is depicted standing in water with a crocodile by her side, much like the Mami Wata (Mother Water) spirits celebrated in various parts of West and Central Africa that are sometimes portrayed with crocodiles (Drewal, 2008). Some baobabs are sites where Hindu and Muslim believers perform healing rituals that involve tying small wooden likenesses of ailing body parts to the tree trunk, similar to healing rituals associated with the baobab tree in Africa (Wickens & Lowe, 2008). One coastal settlement with a very large baobab tree is called Mitiala, which is similar to ‘mitali’, one of several names for the baobab in the Makua language spoken by people in northern Mozambique. In other



ILLUSTRATION 1.6 *Mai Misra no takio*, Ghogha Village, Bhavnagar district, Gujarat, India
 SOURCE: H. RANGAN (2011)
 PHOTO CREDIT BY AUTHOR.

places, the baobabs are personified as *Rukhda dada* or 'grandfather tree', and have small shrines at the base similar to the baobab ancestor shrines found in northern Mozambique. Further south in the town of Savanur in Karnataka state, there is a cluster of three large baobabs with an information board which mentions the local folklore and belief that the trees were brought many thousands of years ago from Africa by the Hindu god Krishna.

The landscapes where baobabs are found today in the Indian subcontinent have been transformed by settlement, farming, grazing, urbanisation or abandonment. Some trees stand as islands amid bustling urban traffic or in public and private gardens, providing succour for birds and animals that have made cities their home. Others are scattered like sentinels within a rural mosaic of crop fields, fallows and settlements. Yet others cluster with majestic ease in areas no longer settled or used by humans, creating an amiable environment for various forms of non-human life to thrive. Even though African Indian communities may not have a visible presence in each of these places, the baobabs embody their collective and individual histories of movement, arrival, mingling and creolisation of landscapes. In every one of these places, the baobabs have added creole vocabularies, metaphors, rituals, and stories of relationships in vernacular expressions of landscapes and biocultural diversity.



ILLUSTRATION 1.7 A sign describing the baobab trees at Savanur, Karnataka
 SOURCE: H. RANGAN (2011)
 PHOTO CREDIT BY AUTHOR.



ILLUSTRATION 1.8 Baobab as healer and wish-fulfiller, Junagadh, Gujarat
 SOURCE: H. RANGAN (2011)
 PHOTO CREDIT BY AUTHOR.

7 Conclusion

In attempting to compare biological and cultural evolution, Alfred Kroeber (1963) argued that Darwin's metaphor of the tree of life could not be applied to the development of human culture in history. He observed that Darwin's tree of life, with its trunk and limbs, portrays a constant branching out, but that evolution in human culture involves both branching out and growing together. According to Kroeber, while organic life reveals evolution as a constantly diverging process, cultural life evolves through the ramification of coalescences, assimilations and acculturations. Cultural life syncretises, connects different veins, limbs and parts together, cross-breeds and spreads in different ways. A metaphorical tree of culture, Kroeber notes, would have entangled branches and limbs growing out and melding together.

The African baobabs in the landscapes of the Indian subcontinent show that Kroeber's distinction between organic and cultural life does not hold up to scrutiny. Their genetic histories and markers reveal movements, mixing, exchanges and departures that are as entangled as the human histories connected with their movements across the Indian Ocean world. The evolutionary processes of selection, drift and mutation that operate in the genetic histories (Piazza, 2007) of these translated baobabs also reveal the cross-breeding, mixing and syncretisation that occur in the landscapes where they have taken root. In other words, they embody the histories of creolised landscapes, of bio-cultural diversity being made anew.

Ingold notes that every tree in a landscape has its own unique configuration of branches that spread out, twist, bend in their own way. Each tree 'embodies the entire history of its development from the moment it first took root. And that history consists in the unfolding of its relations with manifold components of its environment, including the people who have nurtured it, tilled the soil around it, pruned its branches, picked its fruit, and [...] use it as something to lean against' (1993, pp. 167–168). This, perhaps, was the metaphor that the screen carvers of Sidi Sayyed's mosque sought to convey: the interwoven lives of diverse human and non-human ancestors in the creolised landscapes of the Indian Ocean region.

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Navigating the ‘Southern Seas’, Miraculously: Avoidance of Shipwreck in Buddhist Narratives of Maritime Crossings

Andrea Acri

1 Introduction

Within the vast region that I call ‘Maritime Asia’ (Acri, 2016, 2019), the sea was not a neutral space for dislocation, but a prime and fluid site – whether real or imagined – for interaction: between humans, between humans and nature, and between humans and supernatural agents.¹ In the context of this volume, the motifs of maritime travel and miraculous avoidance of shipwreck found in Buddhist narratives naturally lend themselves to being analysed against the wider theoretical framework of creolisation and mobility. A creolisation complex may arise from migrations, displacements and interactions across ocean routes; furthermore, as aptly noted by Rangan et al. (2015, p. 139; see also Rangan’s chapter in this volume), especially in the context of the Indian Ocean, human beings, plants and other realia moved along with stories. The circulation via the southern maritime routes of Buddhist monastic and lay agents – traders, artists, pilgrims, etc. – along with stories, cosmologies, texts and practices contributed to the shaping of a Buddhist cosmopolitan continuum articulated in Sanskrit and literary vernacular languages across much of Asia. These dynamics may add to our understanding of the networks and processes of creolisation in pre-colonial southern Asia; conversely, the concept of creolisation, not limited to narrow eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ideas of linguistic and racial mixing, could prove to be a powerful heuristic tool in

¹ Early versions of this chapter were presented in a workshop organised at the Institute for Advanced Study, Stellenbosch University (South Africa) in August 2015, and in the special series of lectures commemorating Singapore’s bicentennial anniversary, ‘1819 and Before: Singapore’s Pasts’, organised by the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre at ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in August 2018. I am grateful to Fernando Rosa and Terence Chong, respectively, for inviting me to present at those events. I also thank Vladimir Braginsky and Iain Sinclair for their feedback on a draft of this chapter, and gratefully acknowledge the help of Rolf Giebel and Iain Sinclair with the translation of relevant passages from the Chinese biographies of *Prajña; any mistakes are my own. Asterisks preceding personal names indicate that they are (often tentative) Sanskrit reconstructions from the original Chinese.

understanding the complex dynamics of intra-Asian transfer of Buddhism. As Buddhist texts and ideas crossed geographical and cultural contexts they were not only translated and adapted to local realities, but assumed new forms and lives, giving rise to novel paradigms that were exported to new 'frontiers' and, sometimes, even travelled back to their lands of (supposed) 'origin'.

This chapter hopes to contribute to the ongoing debate on creolisation by bringing into the discussion agents, materials, temporalities and geographies that are seldom associated with this phenomenon – namely, Buddhist monks, texts written in classical languages, the pre-modern ('medieval') period and the 'Silk Roads of the Sea' from the Bay of Bengal to the China Sea. It will focus on select Chinese, Sanskrit and Tibetan textual accounts, in particular the biographies of monks plying the sea routes between India and China from the fifth to the early eleventh centuries, to analyse and situate in their historical background the interwoven aspects of narrative, imaginary and factual data with respect to (miraculous) avoidance of shipwreck.² I will present the accounts by Faxian in comparison with the Chinese and Sanskrit versions of the Lotus Sūtra, then move to *Vajrabuddhi's³ and Amoghavajra's accounts and their comparison with the Vimalaśaṅkha episode in the *Mahāpratisarāvidyārājñī*. I will conclude with the Tibetan account of the journey of Atiśa to Suvarṇadvīpa, and a passage from the Classical Malay chronicle *Sejarah Melayu*.

2 Background: Networks of Seafaring Monks in Maritime Asia

As George Coedès pointed out long ago, the eastward expansion of Indic civilisation is to a considerable degree the result 'of a continual outflow of seamen, originally recruited from among "merchants of the sea", of whom many types are depicted in ancient Buddhist literature' (1968, p. 21). Indeed, the spread of Buddhism from the Indian subcontinent to Sri Lanka, South-East Asia and China via the maritime routes goes back to the early centuries of the Current Era – if not earlier, as testified to by the presence of Sri Lankan and South-East Asian toponyms in the *Mahāniddesa* and some Jātakas dating to between the late third and the first centuries BCE. Written and material evidence becomes more substantial from the fifth century onwards, testifying to an extraordinary efflorescence of long-distance maritime contacts, lasting for several centuries,

2 I should point out at the outset that, being able to read neither Chinese nor Tibetan, I will undertake my analysis from the perspective of comparative literature rather than philology, and rely on editions and translations of primary sources produced by other scholars.

3 Hereafter I will adopt the form *Vajrabuddhi instead of the popular *Vajrabodhi as the most probable Sanskrit back-translation of the Chinese *Jingangzhi* 金剛智 (see Sinclair, 2016a).

across Maritime Asia. This vast geographical expanse of sea and land largely coinciding with a trans-regional 'Buddhist Cosmopolis' became the natural theatre for the journeys of hundreds of travelling monks who crossed the seas far and wide in search of texts, teachers and patrons. The vehicles of their travels were the monsoon-driven merchant ships that plied the maritime routes connecting a web of entrepôts linking the Indian Ocean to the China Sea, carrying alongside their valuable cargos also pilgrims, diplomats and, indeed, religious personalities of disparate affiliations.

Historical records going back to at least the third century CE provide us with a picture of a steady traffic of itinerant monks travelling both eastwards and westwards along the sea paths linking the swathe of territory comprising the Indian subcontinent and Japan (Pachow, 1960; Sen, 2014). It would seem that most of the monks travelling both ways between India and China preferred the maritime route to the overland one, or at least sought to include a maritime leg in their journey, which usually included stopovers in Sri Lanka and Nusantara. No less than twenty-five monks are recorded to have arrived in China in this way between 420 and 479 (He, 2008, p. 55), and a scholarly estimate records sixty-six individuals involved in the maritime transmission of Buddhism to China, out of the total estimated number of 103 monks (Kandahjaya, 2004, p. 78). The maritime mobility of Buddhist agents, besides being numerically significant, was also quicker and easier than hitherto assumed. A case in point is the episode of the establishment of female **bhikṣuṇīsaṅgha* in China via Sri Lanka in the course of just a decade in the fifth century by the South Asian monks **Guṇavarman* (Qiunabamo 求那跋摩, 367–431) and **Saṅghavarman*.⁴ By the eighth century, sea travel seems to have become an even easier undertaking, as suggested by the fact that the Central Asian monk Amoghavajra (Bukong 不空, 704–774) was even able to send back a Sanskrit text from China to his old master **Ratnabodhi* in Sri Lanka after translating it, and that several monks are known to have made it back to their places of origin, like the Indian **Parāmiti*, who reached Canton by 705 and went back his homeland by boat, or the Korean monk Hyecho (fl. eighth century, one of Amoghavajra's disciples), who travelled to India twice within his lifespan – at least once, it seems, via the maritime route (Pachow, 1960; Deeg, 2010a).

In spite of the remarkable maritime mobility of Buddhist agents, both the Jātaka tales and the Sino-Japanese and Tibetan biographies of monks travelling

4 The latter reached China in 438 on the ship of a non-Chinese merchant called **Nandin* (Zhu Nanti) – the same individual who had brought the former to Sri Lanka and China, and who is credited with the translation of some Sanskrit Mahāyāna scriptures into Chinese (Deeg, 2010b, pp. 157–158; Silk, 2002, pp. 31–32).

from China to India and/or vice versa make clear that travel across the maritime trading channels linking the two regions was not devoid of perils. Besides imagined entities such as marine monsters, Nāgas and other supernatural beings, the most feared hindrances in the minds of the travellers were storms, unfavourable winds, pirates, and unskilled or unscrupulous crews. Faxian's account of his maritime journey to China is striking not only for being the earliest, but also for providing rare and lively details around his momentous voyage on a large, 200-passenger-strong merchant sailing vessel. Faxian's misfortunes are echoed in the biography of Vajrabuddhi (671–741) by Luxiang, and similar circumstances are associated with Vajrabuddhi's disciple Amoghavajra when he was travelling on a South-East Asian ship (*Kunlun bo* 崑崙船) from China to Sri Lanka in 741. The biographers of the Indian monk Prajña report that his sea journey to Guangzhou in China, where he arrived in 781, was marred by multiple setbacks, taking in all about twenty years (Pachow, 1960, p. 210; Copp, 2011, p. 361). Another Indian monk, *Mañicintana or *Ratnacinta (Baosiwei 寶思惟, d. 721), randomly escaped death during a storm on his way to China, while the Chinese monk Chien-chen/Ganjin (688–763) allegedly attempted the dangerous crossing of the sea that separated China from Japan six times before finally making it in 754 (Forte, 1984, pp. 301–302).

In a recent article, Himanshu Prabha Ray (2012) discusses Buddhist narratives of sea travel in the context of translocality across the Bay of Bengal as well as specific sites in the subcontinent, such as Bharhut, Mathurā, Kanheri, Ellora, Ajanta and Ratnagiri. The widespread presence of maritime scenes of navigation and shipwreck – depicting sea travel in its political, spiritual and economic ramifications – in sites located on/near the coast or along trading routes in South Asia, Sri Lanka, and South-East Asia (such as Borobudur and Angkor) suggests that those scenes, rather than being conceived of as purely symbolic and metaphysical representations of spiritual dangers, were linked to an imaginary grounded in literary heritage as much as actual experience.⁵ This, in turn, testifies to the increasing popularity of maritime travel in Buddhist communities from the sixth century onwards. The concurrent development in the same locales of 'saviour cults' focusing on the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara, Tārā (especially in her *aṣṭamahābhaya* aspect) and Mahāpratisarā as protectors of travellers, and of sailors in particular, against the perils encountered

5 See Lévi, 1931, p. 597: 'A large number of the stories of the Pali Jataka has drawn materials from the adventures in the sea. The sea and its navigation evidently occupied a large place in Indian life in the period when these stories were conceived'. The same is also the case in such texts as the *Bṛhatkathāślokaṣaṅgraha* by Budhasvāmin, the *Ratnāvalī* by Harṣa, the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, etc.

along their journeys may be due to the increasing number of merchants and monks plying the commercial routes.⁶ The material and art historical evidence is matched in pre-seventh-century Buddhist texts such as Jātakas, the *Divyāvadāna*, the *Mahāvastu* and the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*.

3 Faxian

Faxian 法顯 (337/342–ca. 422) was among the first Chinese monks to have reached India by land and sea travel. The account of his journey, the travelogue *Gaoseng-Faxian-Zhuan* 高僧法顯傳 (*The Biography of the Eminent Monk Faxian*) is the earliest in its genre. The portions that concern us here are those narrating his disastrous passage to China via Sumatra or Java and the narrow avoidance of catastrophe – shipwreck first, then a hostile crew.

Having spent some years in north-eastern India (i.e., Nālandā) and Sri Lanka to acquire copies of various important Sanskrit texts – all of which were unavailable in China – Faxian, in 408 or 409, travelled on a mercantile ship (*yānapatra*) from the eastern Indian port of Tamralipti to Sri Lanka, and from there on a large boat to China via South-East Asia. Between Ceylon and Sumatra, on the third day after setting off, the ship ran into a storm that lasted for thirteen days:

After having received these Sanskrit-texts (in Ceylon)⁷ (Faxian) embarked on a big trade-vessel which had about 200 persons on board; in the back a smaller vessel was tied (to the big one), because travelling by sea was dangerous in case that the big vessel got shipwrecked. They encountered favourable monsoon winds heading east; but after three days they encountered a violent storm and water penetrated the vessel. The merchants wanted to enter the small vessel, but the people in the small vessel feared that this would mean too many people and cut the rope. The merchants feared for their lives and were afraid that the ship would

6 At Ajanta and Kanheri, Avalokiteśvara is depicted in association with the ten dangers, including shipwreck, sometimes along with Tārā (Ray, 2012, p. 57; see also Brancaccio, 2017, pp. 67–68); at Aurangabad cave 7 we find a depiction of a shipwrecked two-mast oceanic ship, carrying a passenger clad in a foreign guise, in the panel on *aṣṭamahābhaya* Avalokiteśvara (Brancaccio, 2017, p. 69). In Ellora cave 9, the function of Avalokiteśvara is taken over by Tārā in her *aṣṭamahābhaya* form, and the same is the case in the Orissan sites of Ratnagiri (Ray, 2012, p. 59). On Avalokiteśvara as ‘Saviour of sailors’ in Sri Lanka, see Boppearachchi, 2014.

7 In this quotation and any below containing both parentheses (round brackets) and square brackets, the former are additions by the cited author while the latter are mine.

be filled with water. So they threw all the unnecessary cargo overboard into the sea. Faxian, too, threw his water-pot, his water-bowl and other stuff into the water, but he was afraid that the merchants would get rid of his sūtras and statues. So he called upon Avalokitasvara [Guanshiyin 觀世音] with devotion and took his refuge in the whole *saṅgha* of China saying: 'I have gone so far in order to seek the dharma I (now) beg for this immense stream of water to be calmed'. After having been in this storm for thirteen days they (finally) reached the shore of an island. After the high tide had gone out again they saw the leak in the ship and repaired it. After that they set off again. (Deeg, 2010b, p. 156)

The thirteen-day storm mentioned by Faxian probably took place in between Sri Lanka and the Andaman or Nicobar Islands, where the ship is likely to have eventually landed (Deeg, 2005, pp. 179–185). The detail about the smaller boat attached through a rope to the main vessel, which would have functioned as a 'tender' or life-boat in case of shipwreck, is interesting, and conforms to a relief representing just such a tender boat attached to a larger vessel on eighth-century Borobudur in Central Java (Illustration 2.1). Further, the mention of the potential casting overboard of the cargo – including manuscripts and sacred images – by the merchants strikes me as realistic, as it is in harmony



ILLUSTRATION 2.1 Ship, Borobudur, Java
SOURCE: ANDREA ACRI

with the protocol of seamanship in this type of event.⁸ This lends credibility to Faxian's account (we will encounter this detail again in the other narratives presented below), and is also indicative of the less-than-idyllic relations between traders and Buddhist monks, especially in real-life emergency situations: rather than invoking Faxian's help to appease the storm through prayers or supernatural powers, they rush to throw overboard the passengers' personal effects – including, Faxian fears, his precious Buddhist scriptures, no matter their sanctity.

In the continuation of his account, Faxian describes the perils of sea travel:

Often there were pirates at sea and if one encountered them one could not come out of it unscathed. The big ocean extends without limitation and no direction is recognised; only the movement of the sun, the moon and the stars can be observed. When the sky is covered or if it rains the ship is driven along without even having these means of orientation. After nightfall one sees huge waves grapple with each other as if they were fire-coloured giant turtles, crocodiles (or) other kinds of sea monsters. The merchants were very frightened because they did not know in which direction they sailed. The ocean was deep and (seemed) bottomless and there was no place where they could cast anchor. Only when the sky brightens up could one again recognise the direction, reposition the ship and continue the journey. If reefs are encountered there is no way to survive (this disaster). (Deeg, 2010b, p. 156)

Having sailed for ninety days, the ship ran ashore on the land of Yepoti 耶婆提 (presumably *Yavadvīpa, i.e. Java, or Sumatra) where, Faxian reports, Brahmanical and other non-Buddhist teachings were flourishing while Buddhist presence was negligible. The account continues as follows:

8 A similar note of realism is found in the episode of shipwreck narrated in the *Saṅkha Jātaka*, where the Brahmin Saṅkha travels to Suvarṇabhūmi by sea, and also in the *Mahājānaka Jātaka* (both involving the intervention of the saviour-goddess Maṇimekhala). In both accounts, instead of weeping and crying like the other crew members, the protagonist fills his stomach with sugar and clarified butter, wears tight dresses soaked in oil, cling to the top of the mast, then jumps into the water ('full of blood'), taking care to avoid the sharks that are making carnage of his companions. This strikes me as a real-life procedure to increase one's chances of survival at sea (in the *Saṅkha Jātaka*, the protagonist does indeed survive for seven days in the water before being rescued by Maṇimekhala). See Lévi, 1931, pp. 599, 603, 606.

Faxian stayed in this country for about five months until he went aboard of another merchant ship with about two hundred people. They loaded food supplies for fifty days and put to sea on the sixteenth day of the fourth month. After Faxian had settled on the ship it headed north for Guangzhou.

After one month at sea, on the stroke of the second hour at night they encountered a black wind and vigorous rainfall. All the merchants were afraid. Again Faxian begged Avalokitasvara [Guanshiyin 觀世音] and the *saṅgha* of China for support. At daybreak all the brahmins met and discussed the matter saying: 'It is because this *bhikṣu* is with us, that we are in such trouble and great misery. We should maroon the *bhikṣu* on an island. We do not need to be in such danger because of one person'. But Faxian's *dānapati* (lay supporter) said: 'If you maroon the *bhikṣu* then you have to do the same to me. Otherwise kill me. If you maroon this Sramana and I reach China (country of the Han), I will go to the ruler and report on you. The ruler of China is a supporter of the Buddhist dharma and pays reverence to the *bhikṣu* and to the *saṅgha*'. Thereupon the merchants hesitated and did not dare to abandon Faxian.

At that time it was continuously clouded; although the officers of the ship observed (the sky) they committed (navigational) mistakes. After more than seventy days they ran out of food supplies and water. They used seawater for cooking and distributed fresh water in portions of two *sheng* a person, but they still ran out of it. The merchants discussed the situation and said: 'Under normal conditions the journey to Guangzhou lasts fifty days. It is not normal that after so many days we still have not arrived there!' (Ibid., pp. 156–157)

Two details are striking here: the first is the reference to the incident between Faxian, the Brahmins on board the ships, and the crew, which may reflect, just like in the previous passage, the complex and at times difficult relationship between Buddhist monks and traders (Sen, 2014, pp. 42–43); the second is, again like in the previous passage, the prayer to Guanshiyin/Avalokiteśvara to avert disaster.

As pointed out by Hu and von Hinüber (2015), the above passages bear resemblance to excerpts from Dharmarakṣa's Chinese translation of the Lotus Sūtra. This scripture, which triggered the worship of Guanshiyin in China, was known to Faxian (unlike Kumārajīva's translation of 406), and might therefore have influenced Faxian's account.⁹ The passages run as follows:

9 See Hu and von Hinüber, 2015, p. 312; cf. Deeg, 2005, p. 572, fn. 2515.

[佛國記 T51: 866a7–14]

There are many pirates on the sea. If one encounters them, then the whole (crew) will perish. The great ocean spreads itself out endlessly, so that one has no sense of direction. Only by observing the sun, moon and stars was it possible to proceed on course. If it is cloudy and rainy, (the ship) is driven onwards by the wind without any guidance. In the darkness after the nighttime, one only sees the great waves wrestling each other and emitting a bright color like that of fire, with giant turtles, crocodiles and other sea monsters. (In such a situation) the merchants became very frightened and didn't know in which direction they should navigate. Because of the depth of the bottomless ocean, there is nowhere to drop the (perpender) stone. The right direction can only be found again when the sky becomes light. Then the (seamen) can reorient (the ship) and navigate it in the right direction. If she collides with any hidden rock, there is no way to survive. (Hu & von Hinüber, 2015, p. 315)¹⁰

[正法華經 T9:129a2–10]

Imagine that millions upon millions of people set out into the deep and bottomless ocean in order to search gold, silver and different pearls; the legendary wish-pearl like the bright moon; crystal and lapis lazuli; mother of pearl and agate; coral and amber; and their ship was fully loaded with those treasures. Suppose a powerful tempest had shipwrecked their vessel in whirling waves like black mountains, crossing the area of demons Yakṣa and encountering the fish–devils Makara. If only one person among the crew prays [*sic*] to the dread and goodness of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and calls out his name, all of passengers would be freed from the distress and demons. Because of this (mastery) he is called Avalokiteśvara. (Ibid., p. 316)¹¹

The wording of the description of the dangers encountered in the ocean shows evident similarities with the account of Faxian, as does the injunction that

10 Here I have reproduced Hu and von Hinüber's rather than Deeg's translation in order to render the comparison between the two texts exactly as it has been presented by them.

11 Compare the Sanskrit *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* 289 (Wogihara & Tsuchida, 1958, p. 362), which explicitly mention the 'demoness' island' (*rākṣasīdvīpa*; cf. below): *sacet punaḥ kulaputra sāgara-madhye [...] sa potas teṣāṃ kālīkāvātena rākṣasīdvīpe kṣiptaḥ syāt tasmimś ca kaścid evaikaḥ syāt yo 'valokiteśvarasya bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasyākramāṃ kuryāt sarve te parimucyeraṃś tasmād rākṣasīdvīpāt*. Compare 24.6: *saci sāgaradurgi pātayen nāgamakarasurabhūtālaye | smarato avalokiteśvaraṃ jalarāje na kadāci sīdati*, 'If one happens to fall into the dreadful ocean, the abode of Nāgas, marine monsters and demons, he has but to think of Avalokiteśvara, and he shall never sink down in the king of waters.'

one person among the crew should pray to Avalokiteśvara. The latter can be identified as a recurrent trope in Buddhist hagiographical literature. For instance, Huijiao 慧皎 (approx. 497–554) reports that the South Asian monk *Guṇabhadra 求那跋陀羅 (394–468), who arrived in Guangzhou in 435, prayed to Avalokiteśvara during his sea voyage from Sri Lanka to China, when there was neither wind at sea nor drinking water on board (Deeg, 2005, p. 572). This situation led Hu and von Hinüber to conclude that 'for future studies on the travel journals of Chinese pilgrims to India, such as Faxian, Xuanzang (玄奘) and Yijing 義淨, their relation with the canonical scriptures should be taken more into account, as most of the scriptures were thoroughly studied by these learned monks' (Hu & von Hinüber, 2015, p. 318). This is certainly the case, as there is ample evidence of intertextuality and cross-pollination between genres – the travelogues presenting an intriguing mix of literary images and factual data.¹² In the next section I will show that the same situation is reflected in the biographies of Vajrabuddhi and Amoghavajra, which echo Faxian's account on the one hand and a Sanskrit scriptural source – the *Mahāpratisarāvīdyārājñī* – on the other.

4 Vajrabuddhi and Amoghavajra

The fortuitous events experienced by Faxian call to mind the similar circumstances narrated in Luxiang's biography of Vajrabuddhi,¹³ another famous Buddhist master who travelled by sea from India to China via the Indonesian archipelago (i.e. Sumatra and Java). Quoted by his pupil Amoghavajra in his tale of the Iron Stūpa, Vajrabuddhi himself recounts the following:

I set forth from the western country (India) to cross the southern ocean [to Java] in a fleet of more than thirty great ships, each one carrying more than five or six hundred persons. Once, when we were crossing in convoy in the very middle of the great ocean we ran into a typhoon. All the ships we depended upon were tossed about (like drift-wood), and the ship I was on was about to be inundated. At that time I always kept the two scriptures [i.e. the full and abridged versions of the *Vajraśekhara*]

12 Of course, there may be more at stake than just literary tropes, namely the oral dimension/human element: for instance, since Guṇabhadra collaborated at Daochang temple with Baoyun 釋寶 (376–449), a junior friend of Faxian who accompanied him during part of his journey to India (Glass, 2008), it is possible that the detail about Avalokiteśvara in Guṇabhadra's account might have been inspired by either Baoyun or Faxian himself.

13 As found in Yuanzhao's 圓照 (late eighth century) *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* 貞元新定釋教, *New Bibliography of the Buddhist Teachings*.

I was bringing nearby so that I could receive and keep them and do the offerings. Now, when the captain saw that the ship was about to sink, everything on board was cast into the ocean, and in a moment of fright the one-hundred-thousand-verse text was flung into the ocean, and only the superficial text was saved. At that time I aroused my mind in meditation, doing the technique for eliminating disasters, and the typhoon abated, and for perhaps more than a quarter mile around the ship wind and water did not move. All on board took refuge in me, and bit by bit we got to this shore and arrived in this country. (Sundberg & Giebel, 2011, p. 147)

It is then recounted that ‘Only the single ship carrying His Reverence was able to escape this disaster because he recited the [*Mahāpratisarā-dhāraṇī*] (*Sui-qiū*, 隨求)’ (Chou, 1945, p. 275, fn. 19; Sundberg & Giebel, 2011, p. 139). These events occurred when the master was twenty days short of reaching the Chinese coast, thus probably in South-East Asia.¹⁴

Besides the trope of the storm, Vajrabuddhi’s and Faxian’s accounts have a few elements in common, namely: both of them recounts events that must have happened in the proximity of Java or Sumatra; the protagonists are two Buddhist monks travelling to China (via South-East Asia) on a merchant ship and carrying some important texts with them; both manage to avert disaster by means of a *dhāraṇī* – to *Mahāpratisarā* in the case of the former and *Guan-shiyin/Avalokiteśvara* in the case of the latter. Whereas Faxian manages to save his precious Sanskrit texts, Vajrabuddhi ends up losing some of them, including the full version of the *Vajraśekhara*.

Scholars have cast doubt on the veracity of Vajrabuddhi’s account. For instance, Gray, having pointed out that this is one of the few eyewitness accounts of an esoteric Buddhist text in manuscript form spanning one hundred thousand stanzas (2009, p. 13), argued that the episode of its loss might have been fabricated, and that, ‘even if Vajrabodhi had such a text, the logic of tantric discourse would require that it be jettisoned’ (ibid., p. 14).¹⁵ According to Eastman

14 Vajrabuddhi’s travels from Sri Lanka to China are considered factual by Sundberg (Sundberg & Giebel, 2011, p. 148) on account of the matching chronology of his meeting with Amoghavajra in Java. It is interesting to note that Amoghavajra’s presentation of the storm story perfectly accords with the chronology proposed by Chou (1945): Amoghavajra quotes Vajrabuddhi in the third person, confirming that the loss of the text occurred on the initial approach to China in 716, when Amoghavajra was not there. Sundberg also considers the shipwreck account historical; having noted that ‘the textual baggage brought on the same ship by Vajrabodhi was so terribly mistreated’, he suggests that its being thrown overboard may ultimately ‘have been a question of the accessibility of various items in the hold of the ship’ (Sundberg & Giebel, 2011, p. 189).

15 See in particular Orzech, 1995 and 1996, for the idea that Vajrabuddhi might have concocted the account to ‘esoterise’ the text and legitimise its transmission through initiation imparted by himself and his lineage.

(1981, quoted in Meinert, 2016, p. 345), 'it was the stormy socio-political winds that prevented a full translation of all texts at the time', probably because their sexual and 'violent' elements were deemed improper in the prevalent Buddhist and non-Buddhist religious discourse in China. Yet, even if the circumstances narrated in the account may reflect personal agendas and contemporary anxieties, as well as be modelled after standard tropes in Buddhist hagiographical literature, I believe that they cannot be entirely discounted as pure concoctions given that sea travel and shipwreck were common realities in Buddhist milieux, and are backed up by textual, art historical, and archaeological evidence. For instance, a similar circumstance is reported by Chinese monk Xuanzang (600?–664), who lost some scriptures while he was crossing the Indus river on a boat on his way back to his homeland.¹⁶ The tone of the passage strikes me as down-to-earth, and verisimilar:

His scriptures and images were loaded in a boat with his companions to sail across the river, while the Master waded through the river on his elephant. He had appointed a man in the boat to take care of the scriptures and some seeds [...] When the boat sailed to midstream, a turbulent gale suddenly arose. The waves tossed the boat and almost overturned it. The man who was asked to look after the scriptures was so frightened that he fell overboard, but was rescued by the other passengers. Fifty bundles of scriptures and flower seeds were lost, while his other property narrowly escaped damage. (Li, 1995, p. 157)

The detail about the loss of these texts is reported elsewhere in Xuanzang's biography: 'As the master had lost some scriptures while crossing the Indus, he sent someone, after arriving in this country, to Kucha and Kashgar to seek new texts' (ibid., p. 167); 'When I was crossing the Indus [on my way back home], I lost a pack of scriptures. I am now sending you herewith a list of the lost texts, of which I request that you send me new copies by some convenient messenger' (ibid., p. 233). There is nothing supernatural about Xuanzang's dispatch of an envoy to look for copies of the lost texts; more importantly, this fact mirrors Vajrabuddhi's dispatch of his disciple Amoghavajra to Sri Lanka – a journey that the latter actually undertook and accomplished successfully, and which resulted in the translation of a longer/more developed version of the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṅgraha* into Chinese.¹⁷

¹⁶ Cf. also Prajñā's biography (see p. 64).

¹⁷ It seems to me natural to ask why Vajrabuddhi would send Amoghavajra to look for the non-abridged version of the text if he had wanted to maintain this tradition as the sole preserve of himself and his lineage, and to keep the teachings of the text in their

The same circumstance of the recitation of the *Mahāpratisarādhāraṇī* to avert shipwreck while travelling by sea is associated with Vajrabuddhi's disciple Amoghavajra when he was on his way from China to Sri Lanka in 741:

In the twelfth moon of the twenty-ninth year (AD 741) he left Nan-hai on board a K'un-lun [i.e. Malay] ship. When they reached the boundary of Kaliṅga [i.e. Java] they met with a heavy storm. Each merchant, being terrified, tried to propitiate (the gods) by the method of his own country, but without result. All of them knelt down to pray for help and protection. Hui-pien and other disciples also wept bitterly. Amoghavajra said: 'I have a plan. Don't worry'. Thereupon, with a five-fingered *vajra* of Bodhicitta in his right hand and the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* in his left hand, he recited once the *Mahāpratisarādhāraṇī* and performed the rite (required for this *dhāraṇī*). The wind subsided immediately and the sea became calm and clear. Later they came across a large whale, which, emerging out of the sea, emitted jets of water like a mountain. It was even more threatening than the previous calamity and the merchant were ready to give up their lives. Amoghavajra performed the rites as before, and told Hui-pien to recite the *So-chieh lung-wang ching*. At once all the dangers disappeared. (Chou, 1945, p. 290)

Just like in the passages quoted above, it is possible that the circumstances narrated in the account may have been based on standard tropes from Chinese hagiographical literature rather than actual fact (Goble, 2016, p. 136, fn. 51); however, the information found in the Taisho canon that in 758 Amoghavajra actually submitted a copy of the *Dhāraṇī of the Great Protectress Who Is Universally Radiant, Pure, Incandescent, a Wish-Granting Gem, and the Sealed Essence of the Invincible King of Mantras* (普遍光明清淨熾盛如意寶印心無能勝大明王大隨求陀羅尼經, that is, the *Mahāpratisarādhāraṇī*) to Emperor Suzong (T2120.829b2–21) to be carried as an amulet confirms that Amoghavajra had access to a version of this text, and transmitted it to East (and, possibly, South-East) Asia.¹⁸

As noted by Hidas (2012, p. 222, fn. 178, and p. 224, fn. 184), both Vajrabuddhi's and Amoghavajra's accounts are similar to that expounded in the fifth narrative in the central and longest text in the Mahāpratisarā-corpus, the Sanskrit

'crystallised' versions. I find it more plausible that Amoghavajra's travel was moved by a genuine quest for authentic/'updated' scriptures and teachings.

18 Compare T2057.294c23–24, where it is said that Huiguo sought instruction in the mantra of Pratisāra from Amoghavajra between 763 and 765 (Sinclair, 2016b, p. 38, fn. 52).

Mahāpratisarāvidyārājñī,¹⁹ in which the merchant Vimalaśaṅkha saves his ship from a storm, lightning and meteors sent by Nāgas. On that occasion, Vimalaśaṅkha writes down the *Mahāpratisarādhāraṇī* and fixes the amulet to the top of a flagstaff. To the distressed companions approaching Vimalaśaṅkha, the trader replies (Hidas, 2012, pp. 222–224):

'Fear not, fear not, merchant gentlemen. Calm down. I shall save you from this ocean of trouble [...] I have the famous great spell, called 'Amulet' [i.e. the *Mahāpratisarādhāraṇī*]. It subdues all the wicked, being of great power and might. I am going to save you from this intense suffering and great danger with it.'

Then, at that time, the great trader painted the Great Amulet, Great Queen of Spells, and fixed it at the top of a flagstaff. Immediately after the Great Amulet had been fixed at the top of the flagstaff, all those Timiṇilas saw the ship transform into a single mass of flame. Then those Nāgas, becoming benevolent, approached them and began to pay them reverence. The Timiṇilas, having been burnt by the might of this Great Amulet, Queen of Spells, fled and were destroyed. The merchants were led by those great Nāgas to a distinguished Great-Jewel Island.

This great spell, the Great Amulet, is endowed with wisdom and it is empowered by all the Tathāgatas. This is why, Great Brahmā, it is called a great spell. It should, by all means, be held fixed at the top of a flagstaff. It calms all types of winds, cold-spells, untimely clouds, lightning and thunderbolts.

In contrast to the accounts of Vajrabuddhi and Amoghavajra, the Vimalaśaṅkha episode is markedly imaginific, with the exception of the detail regarding the employment of a drawing of the *Mahāpratisarādhāraṇī* at the top of a flagstaff. This detail may have reflected an actual practice, for the fixing of a magic item to a flagpole to produce supernatural results is a trope in Buddhist Sanskrit texts.²⁰ Other narratives around the rescue of Buddhist sea-voyagers by saviour

19 The *Mahāpratisarāmahāvidyārājñī* is the central and longest text in the *Mahāpratisarā*-corpus, which underwent considerable elaboration during centuries of textual transmission, as can be seen from the variety of manuscripts that have survived of this once highly popular text. An edition and translation is Hidas (2012).

20 See, e.g., a passage preceding the sixth narrative of the *Mahāpratisarāmahāvidyārājñī*, prescribing the veneration of a *Mahāpratisarā* amulet mounted on a flagpole on a caitya (Hidas, 2012, pp. 224–225); and a passage in *Avadānaśātaka* (2.14), prescribing the tying of a robe to a flagstaff to be paraded across a kingdom affected by plague. To Granoff (1998, p. 298), the account 'provides some details of the rituals that might well have actually been done in Buddhist India to put an end to plagues'.

deities usually mention the recitation of a mantra or *stotra*,²¹ a meditation focusing on the elected deity, or the performance of a ritual procedure.

While the account of Vajrabuddhi might have influenced the one of his disciple, it is also possible that the three accounts may have been inspired by a common source – either textual or oral narrative sources on the maritime crossings of merchants and monks circulating in Java and Sumatra, including Faxian's. An account by Yuanzhao compiled into the *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu*, as well as the Japanese master Kūkai, record that Vajrabuddhi first met Amoghavajra in Java (Chou, 1945, p. 321; Sundberg & Giebel, 2011, p. 152). The chain of transmission could have gone back and forward in time beyond Vajrabuddhi and Amoghavajra, for we know about two other prominent monks who experienced difficulties in Southeast Asian waters, namely Mañicinta(na), who arrived in Loyang in 693, and who first translated (a lacunose version of) the *Mahāpratisarādhāraṇī* into Chinese in the same year (T1154);²² and Prajña (Boruo 般若, alt. Bolaruo 般刺若, 744–ca. 810), who shipwrecked and got stranded on a beach, thereby losing all his scriptures except a manuscript of the **Ṣaṭpāramitāsūtra* that was lying there, and which he eventually translated after he arrived in China (T788).²³

21 In addition to the passages discussed in this contribution, see, e.g., the introduction of a Sanskrit commentary to the *Tārāstuti* by Candradāsa, relating an anecdote regarding the composition of the hymn: 'This Master Candradāsa, when he was onboard of a ship at sea while the ships were shattered through winds etc., uttered with great devotion, in order to name the subject of the Stotra (*stotrārtha*), [devoted] to the noble Tārā, in the beginning [i.e. as its first verse] the promise to express [Tārā's] virtues that surpass all the three worlds; [this he did by] indicating the connection [the reason for composing the work?], the subject, the purpose, etc. Through the excellence of his words the water retreated from that place' (Hanneder, 2008, p. 176). The passage is significant insofar as the tension between liturgical *stotras* and literary *stotras* 'is here resolved by explaining the religious efficacy of the Stotra through its literary qualities' (ibid., p. 176, fn. 30). An altogether similar legend is associated with Candragomin, who indeed authored a series of *stotras* to Tārā preserved in the Tibetan canon; these *stotras* describe shipwreck and other dangers of sea travel (see ibid. p. 183, and *Sragdharāstotra* by [the Kashmirian!] Sarvajñamitra, ed. Vidyabhusana, 1908, pp. 16–17, 117).

22 Mañicintana is credited with the Chinese rendering of the *Amoghapāśakalparājasūtra* (不空罽索陀羅尼自在王咒經, *Bukongjuansuo tuoluoni zizaiwang zhou jing*, *Scripture of the Amoghapāśadhāraṇī, Sovereign Lord of Spells*, T.1097; Orzech et al., 2011, p. 82, fn. 26; p. 270); Amoghapāśa is a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara whose lasso saves those in danger. Interestingly, a report by Su Ting on Mañicintana's maritime travel to China narrates about the latter's encounter with a statue of Avalokiteśvara in the Southern Seas (Forte, 1984, p. 307).

23 Chou, 1945, p. 322; Copp, 2011, p. 361. Prajña's account may be found in the *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* (T2157:891c26–892a4; cf. T2156:755c16–a16). I thank Rolf Giebel and Iain Sinclair for summarising its contents to me.

Whether actual or imagined, the above-mentioned accounts speak in favour of the popularity of Mahāpratisarā and the spell she personifies, the *Mahāpratisarādhāraṇī*, among Buddhist travellers – monks and traders alike – and match the material evidence on the propagation of her cult across the Buddhist world via the maritime routes. Mahāpratisarā was especially popular in the monastic institutions of eastern India, and was made the object of a nearly pan-Asian cult. Various textual and iconographical attestations of this protective deity are documented in Java, especially from the eighth to the tenth centuries, as well as in Bali, Sumatra, and Mindanao in the Philippines.²⁴ A gold foil recovered from the ca. tenth-century Cirebon shipwreck off the north coast of Java, containing a *dhāraṇī* addressed to an unnamed goddess, and paralleling material found in the *Ekādaśamukhadhāraṇī* and *Sādhanamālā*, confirms that these types of object were actually worn by passengers and/or crews as amulets intended to protect against the dangers of voyage at sea (Griffiths, 2014, pp. 157–159).

5 Atiśa

The imaginary and supernatural elements became predominant in the biography of the famous eleventh-century Eastern Indian monk Atiśa (also known as Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna, 980–1054), who left the subcontinent to study for a few years in Sumatra (or the Malay Peninsula) with *Sauvaṛadvīpī-Dharmakīrti and then went to Tibet. Atiśa joined a group of merchants from Nepal (!) sailing to the Golden Island in search of precious stones. He too encounters difficulties during his crossing of the Indian Ocean, namely a storm supernaturally caused by the Hindu god Śiva, who tries to stop him from leaving India to study the dharma. To defeat Śiva and his consort, Atiśa and his disciple Kṣitigarbha manifest themselves as wrathful tantric deities; the latter 'launches a preemptive strike against the enemies of Buddhism, including Hindus, Muslims, and practitioners of the Bon religion in Tibet' (Decleer, 1995, p. 532). Excerpts of the account are quoted below:

I, the monk Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna, for thirteen months was on board a ship, on my way into the presence of the guru of Golden Island. When five months had passed [on board], a son of the gods (*devaputra*), Maheśvara, in order to destroy my aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of others (*bodhicitta*), caused a storm to move in, blowing in the wrong direction. Changing himself into the great Makara ('Fish Swallower') sea monster, he

²⁴ See Mevissen, 2009; Crujisen et al., 2012; Orlina, 2012.

obstructed (our passage) in front. From the sky he caused a thunderbolt to fall right on top of me. At that time, due to my meditating on loving-kindness (wishing all beings to be happy) and compassion (wishing no living being to experience suffering), the tempest was completely calmed and I saw six great bolts of lightning stuck motionless in the sky.

Yet the Makara sea monster was still blocking (our progress) in front, and the surface of the ocean was being churned about by this strong wind with such force that this ship of ours, too, like a prayer flag flapping in a strong wind, was rocking and rolling all about. One moment it was lifted toward the sky, the next moment it seemed to be plunging into the very depths of the ocean. The four great banners, one in each direction, broke off. Although four massive iron weights had been let down (as anchors) into the depths of the ocean from each of the four directions, it was as if a massive drum was being beaten, with a howling noise, a thundering sound, light (at the horizon) and great flashes of lightning erupting, all of which made every one of the companions extremely frightened. As they were thus trembling in fear, again I entered into equipoise, meditating on loving-kindness and compassion. (Decleer, 1995, p. 535)

Imaginific elements aside, the account strikes me as a lively and quite accurate depiction of an actual incident at sea – witness the mention of the massive weights used as anchors to stabilise the ship during the tempest. The detail of the throwing overboard of anchor-stones fastened to the ship with chains during a storm is also found in the Sanskrit *Kathāsaritsāgara* and the Prakrit *Samāicca Kahā* (Schlingloff, 1988, pp. 99, 212, note 107), and must have reflected an actual best practice of seamanship.

The section of the account following thereupon contains a long and elaborate narrative featuring invocations to Raktayamāri, Tārā and Avalokiteśvara, and the transformation of Atiśa and Kṣitigarbha into the Krodha-vighnāntaka deities of Raktayamāri and Acala, respectively. This section resonates with the passages on the conquering of Maheśvara and other harmful beings by protectors of the dharma that we find in Vajrayāna texts. The setting moves from the ocean to the Hindu city of Svabhānātha (in northern or eastern India?), the Turk city in Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka, infested by demon-cannibals. After these locations are struck and burnt down by rays emanating from Kṣitigarbha, the two resume their usual aspect, and the account continues:

For twenty-one days we were utterly unable to continue, but as soon as we were truly safe from further fear, on each of the four directions (of the ship) we raised the great wind banners, we hauled up the four massive Iron (anchor weights). Then, as an opportune wind arose for one and a

half months without break by day or night, we remained on the great ocean and proceeded.

After seven months had passed, again, from in front, a storm arose and we were driven back by the wind over the distance of one day's travel. I prayed to my guru, to the precious three, and to the Ḍākinīs and dharma protectors. Soon storm subsided by itself, yet a strong wind in the right direction failed to arise. Because of the (little) merit of the sentient beings (on board), half a month was lost there, in which I meditated on the aspiration to enlightenment based on loving-kindness and compassion. Eventually a right wind arose and we took off again. It took us a further two months and twenty-six days to reach the shore across the ocean. (Decler, 1995, p. 540)

The account apparently does not follow factual space and time. All in all, the atmosphere of Atiśa's narrative is quite different from that of the accounts we have examined so far, ridden as it is with supernatural elements: the storm and danger of shipwreck appears to be just a pretext to strike and attack the enemies of Buddhism in the subcontinent and overseas. Most curious is the detail (repeated twice) that the boat on which Atiśa is travelling is 'Nepalese' – an oddity, given that Nepal is a landlocked and predominantly mountainous country; perhaps we have to understand that a Nepalese party of merchants 'chartered' the ship. Intriguingly, a Newar reminiscence of Atiśa's sea journey to insular South-East Asia may be the vignette dedicated to an image of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara – also considered the protector of the sailors – in Java in the early eleventh-century illustrated manuscript of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā* (CUL Add. 1643, folio 2 recto).²⁵ Further, Sinclair (2016c, p. 165) has noted that the identification of an image of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara at Thaṃ Bahī, the monastery founded by Atiśa, with the merchant Siṃhalasārthavāha ('caravan-head Siṃhala') of *Dīvyāvadāna* 36 etc. may be a vestigial memory of Atiśa's journeys. Indeed, both the Sanskrit and Newar versions of the *Siṃhalasārtha Avadāna* contain a narrative of shipwreck.²⁶ In the latter version the protagonist, a merchant travelling with 499 companions, having been shipwrecked on the river

25 Indeed, one notes the near absence of textual and iconographical evidence relating to this Buddha in Java – although, according to Sinclair (personal communication), there is the possibility that some Nusantara images could have been hitherto misidentified as 'standing Buddhas' or 'Śākyamunis'.

26 Cf. also the *Sārthavāhajātaka* (*Avadānasārasamuccaya*, ed. Handurukande, 1984), verses 2–19 in particular, whose general tone and specific wording (describing the frightful ocean and its denizens, including *timūnilas* and *makaras*, and resorting to the help of a Bodhisattva) present resemblances to the above-quoted accounts by Faxian, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* and the *Mahāpratisarāvīdyārājñī*.

Brahmaputra reaches the country of Ratnapura in Tambradvīpa, inhabited by flesh-eating demonesses (*rākṣasī*), and manages to save himself thanks to the intervention of Avalokiteśvara. The Nepalese version most likely originated from an early version of the *Divyāvadāna* included in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, a text related to Avalokiteśvara. The island of the *rākṣasīs* is obviously Sri Lanka, or Tambradvīpa, also mentioned in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (cf. above, fn. 10). These details are found in Atiśa's account: 'One ray of light [emitted by Kṣitigarbha] struck Lanka, the country of the cannibal-demons, and put a stop to the cannibal-demons' tradition of eating human flesh' (Decleer, 1995, p. 539). In the Newar version of the Siṃhala story, this episode was 'localized' and 'domesticated' so as to adapt it to a more familiar regional landscape (Lewis, 1993); thus, it seems to reflect the concerns of trading families, i.e. the dangers of travelling, including the constant fear of shipwreck (Appleton, 2006). In a similar way, the narrative of Atiśa's sea-passage is to be situated in an environment of maritime travel and cultural contacts between the subcontinent/the Himalayan region and South-East Asia,²⁷ which tells us a lot about the state of Buddhism in India at that time and apparently reflects the anxieties of contemporary Buddhist circles.

6 The *Sejarah Melayu*

A short passage on supernatural avoidance of shipwreck is found in the 1612 CE recension of the *Sejarah Melayu* (*Sulalatus Salatin*) or *Malay Annals*, a Classical Malay chronicle recounting earlier events related to the sultanates of the Straits of Melaka, among which is the journey of the ruler of Palembang Nila Utama Paramesvara Bhatara Sri Tri Buana to the island of Bintan in the Riau archipelago and his consecration as king of Temasek (i.e. present-day Singapore). One of those events is Nila Utama's sea voyage, believed to have taken place in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, that is, still during the Hindu-Buddhist period, when the East Javanese kingdoms of Singhasari and Majapahit exerted political and cultural influence on Sumatra after the decline of Śrīvijaya. In chapter 3 Nila Utama, who is now married to queen Wan Sri Bini of Bintan, embarks on a maritime journey to Tanjong Bemban

27 Recently, Sinclair (2016c, pp. 164–166) has argued that the eight-armed form of Amoghapāśa (whose earliest representations come from the Śrīvijayan domains) in the Thām Bahī monastery in Nepal could have been introduced in memory of its founder Atiśa, and specifically to remember his journey to the Golden Isles, many years after the fact. Both Atiśa and Sauvarṇadvīpi-Dharmakīrti were fervent devotees of Tārā, whose cult was widespread in maritime South-East Asia and may have been popularised in Tibet by Atiśa after his stay in Sumatra or the Malay Peninsula.

and sees Temasek across the water. Crossing to it, he encounters a storm and is compelled to throw overboard all the cargo until nothing remained but his own crown:

When they were come out into the open sea, a storm arose and the ship began to fill with water. Bale as they might they could not clear her and the boatswain gave order to lighten the ship. But though much was thrown overboard, they still could not bale the ship dry. She was by now close to Tělok Blanga, and the boatswain said to Sri Tri Buana, 'It seems to me, your Highness, that it is because of the crown of kingship that the ship is foundering. All else has been thrown overboard, and if we do not do likewise with this crown we shall be helpless with the ship'. And Sri Tri Buana replied, 'Overboard with it then!' And the crown was thrown overboard. Thereupon the storm abated, and the ship regained her buoyancy and was rowed to land. (Brown, 1952, p. 30)

The account of the crossing of the Straits by Nila Utama contains some familiar narratological elements: the storm, and the need to jettison the cargo – including the protagonist's crown – to avert shipwreck. Just as Vajrabuddhi loses the precious complete version of the *Vajrasēkharatantra*, so Nila Utama loses the royal diadem, which, by being thrown overboard, ultimately causes the storm to dissipate and the boat to land safely. It is possible that a literary trope might have been at play in both accounts – the one 'magico-ritual', the other (predominantly) 'royal'. In the case of Vajrabuddhi, as we have seen above, the episode of the loss of the full *Vajrasēkhara* could have been dramatised to legitimise the monk as the originator of an esoteric initiatory tradition in a foreign country. In the case of the *Sejarah Melayu*, the detail about Nila Utama's royal crown being so 'heavy' that it needed to be thrown overboard lest the ship sink suggests that this act fulfilled a symbolic and metaphysical aim: before landing in a foreign land and being crowned as its new ruler, the powerful 'Stranger King' should be deprived of his sovereignty. It is significant to mention here that Braginsky has detected a nucleus of shared narrative motifs between the *Sejarah Melayu* and other Classical Malay texts, as well as (East) Javanese Pañji romances (Braginsky, 2005, pp. 119–126, and note 37; 2015, p. 94, fn. 35). These specimens combine the motif of the shipwreck with that of the drowned crown and the prince who is thrown by the waves to the shore of the country, where he marries the local princess and becomes king.²⁸ In order

28 The texts from Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula include the *Tambo Minangkabau* (shipwreck in Singapore Straits, lost crown, recovery under the sea, Braginsky, 2015, pp. 107–108; crown lost and retrieved in the sea of Sri Lanka, *ibid.* pp. 93–94); the *Sejarah*

to do so, the hero often becomes a character of low social status, and then is upgraded to his new kingly status. This basic myth, belonging to an (archaic?) ‘royal cluster’, has been transformed in the course of time under the impact of religious and cultural ideas (Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic).

In view of the above, I think it is not beyond the realm of possibility that the Nila Utama-Tri Buana episode in the *Sejarah Melayu* could have been inspired by textual accounts or oral narratives popular in Sumatra and Java during the Hindu-Buddhist period. This hypothesis has already been voiced by Braginsky (2005, esp. chapter 2)²⁹ and Wolters (1970, esp. chapter 8), who described the connection of this text and its author (a genealogist/performer) with Śrīvijaya. Like Wolters, Kwa (2010, pp. 144–147) has regarded the *Sejarah Melayu* as a covertly Buddhist text, permeated by a worldview and political ideology stemming from the type of Sanskritic Mahāyāna/Mantranaya Buddhism practised in Śrīvijaya.³⁰ Furthermore, the text calls Nila Utama the ‘ruler of the whole of Suvarṇabhūmi’, and declares him to be the son of Saṅ Sapurba, ruler of Palembang, and brother of Sang Maniaka. As noted by Winstedt long ago (1938, p. 2), the names of these three characters apparently derive from those of the three heavenly nymphs (*apsaras*) Suprabhā, Tilottamā and Menakā featuring in Sanskrit texts, such as the *Mahābhārata*, as well as the eleventh-century East Javanese *kakavin Arjunavivāha*, as part of Indra’s entourage. Hooker and Hooker (2001, p. 40) argued that ‘at various times and in a number of places, elements of the *SM* narrative were selected for incorporation into other narratives and “localized”, and therefore the various versions of the *Sejarah Melayu* need to be considered in terms of a ‘larger corpus of narratives, each of which is aligned with some basic tenets of the *SM* tradition, but which add their own

Melayu (shipwreck and recovery of young prince by toddy tapper from Majapahit, Brown, 1952, pp. 72–75); *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* (prince survives shipwreck, Braginsky, 2015, pp. 113); and *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (king of Melaka and Hang Tuah simultaneously lose their crown and kris in the sea, *ibid.* p. 94 fn. 35, 153 fn. 53).

29 See also Braginsky, 2015, pp. 92–93, who detects intriguing parallels between the *Tambo Minangkabau* and the 1347 Padang Candi inscription issued by Ādityavarman, as well as the East Javanese *Kuṅjarakarna*.

30 It is worth stressing that the Śrīvijaya thalassocracy in Sumatra hosted renowned centres of Buddhist activity and higher learning by the seventh century, as documented by Chinese monk Yijing, who praised the high level of Buddhist scholarship he found there, where he stopped – en route from Guangzhou to Nālandā and from there back to China – to read Sanskrit Sūtras. The high level of scholarship and sustained royal sponsorship is confirmed by the evidence of the study of the abstruse Prajñāpāramitā and Abhisamayālaṅkāra literature, as well as the figures of Shihu/*Dānapāla (d. 1018), an exceptionally prolific monk-translator who in the late tenth century who reached China with a good knowledge of the languages of Sanfochi/Śrīvijaya and Shepo/Java (Sen, 2003, p. 384, Orzech, 2011, pp. 449–450), and of the distinguished Sauvarṇadvīpī-Dharmakīrti.

local inputs'. As we have seen above, this seems to have also been the case in such narratives as the *Siṃhala Jātaka*, *Dīvyāvadāna*, *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, etc. It may thus be argued that the author(s) of the (various versions of the) *Sejarah Melayu* borrowed the account of avoidance of shipwreck from an earlier source – which might in turn have derived from a Mahāyāna scripture, a Jātaka or even a monks' travelogue – reworking it in an original way and stripping out the Buddhist element so as to suit the Islamic fashion of his/their time. In conclusion, the *Sejarah Melayu* could quite aptly be considered an agglomerative, syncretic and hybrid literary source – a prototypical 'creole' text indeed, composed in a geographical milieu that has been the theatre of dynamics of ethnic, linguistic and cultural creolisation.

7 Conclusion

The material discussed in this chapter suggest that the motif of maritime travel, and the related images of ships and shipwrecks, clearly held a place in the imaginaries of the cultured elites of the pre-modern societies of southern Asia – not only those inhabiting the littoral and insular regions across the Bay of Bengal and the China Sea, but also those of the landlocked regions of Tibet, Nepal and continental China. Several sources belonging to different genres and written in different languages across a span of a thousand years – Buddhist sūtras in Sanskrit and their Chinese translations, Chinese hagiographies and travelogues, the Tibetan biography of an eleventh-century eastern Indian Buddhist master, and a hybrid Classical Malay chronicle – share the core motif of wondrous avoidance of shipwreck by a protagonist during his crossing of the 'Southern Seas' – be he a Buddhist monk plying the maritime routes from India to China, a merchant or fictitious character travelling to Sri Lanka or Java in search of wealth, or a 'Stranger King' sailing to his new kingdom. Some narratives share the motif of the intervention of a deity or supernatural force in favour of the protagonist, others the throwing overboard of important/magically charged objects. Some of the accounts strike us for their verisimilar description of calamitous events, as if they were rooted in the author's or protagonist's own experience; others for their markedly imaginary character, as if they were drawing on established literary imagery; and others – probably the majority – for a mix of both. All of them are characterised by an element of providence, yet without undermining the agency of their protagonists.

The accounts of Faxian, Vajrabuddhi and Amoghavajra, as well as the Vimalaśāṅkha episode in the *Mahāpratisarāvīdyārājñī*, are similar in that they share the trope of the 'miraculous response' (*ganying* 感應), which in the

Chinese Buddhist tradition ‘refers to the spiritual power (*ling* 靈) possessed by certain religious objects that can be awakened through acts of devotion’ (Liu, 2016, p. 23). While recent scholarship has often questioned the accuracy or truthfulness of these and other Chinese medieval travelogues, Liu (*ibid.*, p. 5) has highlighted the circumstances and various stages in which they were composed, and the inherently polyphonic nature of their narrative voices. Reading Faxian’s biographies *Gaoseng-Faxian-Zhuan* and *Foguo ji* 佛國記 (*A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms*) as ‘heterogeneous accounts’ belonging to a genre mixing verifiable historical information with legends, oral traditions and anecdotes (*ibid.*, p. 3), he has pointed out that in monastic settings, when scriptures were translated orally into Chinese, the audience was given an opportunity to ask questions and raise problems (*ibid.*, p. 13); in the case of the Daochang Monastery, where Faxian may have been asked about his travel experiences, there would also be foreign monks with knowledge of the geography and customs of the regions visited by the Chinese monk, including South-East Asia. Therefore, although Faxian’s accounts were based on his personal experience, they might have been supplemented and revised during their composition, so as to match both local Chinese context and the experiences of foreign monks. Faxian’s travels and activities ‘entered into historical memory, becoming a tale (*gushi*) circulated throughout later generations and exerting great influence within the monastic tradition’ (*ibid.*, p. 24) and mixing historical facts pertaining to his travels with other narrative details that ‘would continuously evolve over the course of the story’s circulation and retellings, with additional interpolations made by those who retransmitted it’ (*ibid.*, p. 14). Similar dynamics could have intervened in the compilation of the Chinese biographies of Vajrabuddhi and Amoghavajra, as well as in the Tibetan biography of Atiśa and the Malay chronicle *Sejarah Melayu*.

Apart from reading those narratives as repositories of literary tropes, I have argued that they match quite well the available historical evidence: for example, they are associated with a group of monks who translated into Chinese a body of related texts (e.g. the *Mahāpratisarādhāraṇī*, the *Amoghapāśakalparāja*, *Mahāyānasūtras* and *Mantranaya* texts, the *Gaṇḍavyūha/Bhadracarī*, etc.); were particularly devoted to saviour deities (*Avalokiteśvara/Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara*, *Tārā*, *Mahāpratisarā*, *Dīpaṅkara*, etc.); and visited Sumatra and/or Java, either on their way to China or as their main destinations, as in the case of Atiśa. The shipwrecks found off Java and Sumatra, some of which carry Buddhist paraphernalia and, as we have seen above, even a protective *dhāraṇī*, testify to the existence of a traffic of Buddhist monks and to the insidious nature of Indonesian waters. This state of affairs leads me to think that the

Mahāpratisarādhāraṇī was a 'must bring' item in the baggage of every monk travelling by sea from the seventh to the tenth century.

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PART 2

Atlantic Experiences of Creolisation



Aline Sitoé Diatta in the Fight Against Franco-Marabout Agricultural Hegemony in Senegambia

Alain Pascal Kaly

For decades, Senegalese history has revolved around the areas of the former Quatre Communes (Gorée, Saint Louis, Dakar and Rufisque), together with the host cities of the great Islamo-Wolof brotherhoods. A political and cultural battle has been very much (un)consciously waged by diverse politicians and intellectuals in order to legitimise the Islamo-Wolof power hierarchy. The peculiarity of the Casamance region in Senegal – a region whose history is central to what follows below – is that it has suffered a threefold colonial imprint: first Portuguese, then French, and next Islamo-Wolof. This has implied a process of homogenisation of ‘Senegalese-ness’, particularly evident in official discourse, historiography, and state practices related to citizenship. All of these have excluded, in part or wholly, the historically creolised societies of Casamance. The latter is the least Islamised region of Senegal to this day. The life and trajectory of Aline Sitoé emerges from the heart of that threefold colonisation, as well as from within Casamance’s creolised society. In this way, her insurrection represents a complex response. By looking into her uprising, we can also discern the key colonial and post-colonial silences in Senegalese historiography, as well as the latter’s conceptions of nationality and citizenship which tend to exclude creolised societies such as those of Casamance. Moreover, that triple colonisation has been made invisible by both the colonial and post-colonial historiographies of Senegal in general, and those related to Casamance in particular. Below I will try to unravel the details and intricacies of this complex process – in which creolisation is central – whose impact is felt to this day.¹

A new colonial process emerged with the independence of the United States in the late eighteenth century, and then, later, Saint-Domingue/Haiti in the nineteenth century. The two independence processes led to some of the largest losses (monetary, political, financial, prestige, military, geostrategic, cultural) for Britain and France respectively.

1 This chapter has been translated from the Portuguese by Sadakne Baroudi and revised by Fernando Rosa. French quotes translated by the author, revised by Baroudi and Rosa.

In order to make up for her great losses and meet the demands of a new phase of capitalism, France largely redrew her colonial maps to include the region of Senegambia and North Africa. Accordingly, in the north of today's Senegal, the authorities began to experiment with plants and vegetables in the Waalo region. The product that showed the greatest adaptability was peanut. In this way, throughout the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth centuries, the colony of Senegal became a major peanut producer, with strong support from the Muslim religious authorities of the Mouride and Tijaniyya brotherhoods (Copans, 1980). The extension and consolidation of that monoculture took place at the expense of subsistence crops. At the same time, there took place the consolidation of Muslim brotherhoods and the expansion and consolidation of an Islamo-Wolof internal colonisation.

Casamance is located in the south of Senegal. It has many societies, such as the Diola Kassa, Balanta Naga, Fulani, Pepels, Diola Fogny, Diola Boulouf, Bainouck, Bayot, Mancagne, Manjack and the *fihos da terra*, that is, the 'sons of the soil', speakers of Casamance Creole Portuguese. In this way, creolisation in Casamance has involved both pre-colonial African populations and an African population of Portuguese, and later also French, colonial origin (Casamance was officially a Portuguese colonial outpost until 1888, when it became French). To this spectrum must be added a population of Creole English colonial origin who moved south from colonial Gambia into the region (speakers of Aku, an English-based creole). Casamance in this way holds a unique position in Africa and perhaps the whole colonial world: it is one of the most ancient colonial regions in the world, and arguably also one of the most creolised; yet, it is also thoroughly African. Its *chef-lieu* or administrative centre, the centre of the Casamance region, is Ziguinchor, a former Portuguese colonial riverine entrepôt. Ziguinchor would serve as the setting for a unique anti-colonial movement with no clear counterparts in Senegambia.

During the Second World War, the two allied colonial powers – namely, the French and Muslims – saw their agricultural colonial intentions put in check by a young Diola woman: Aline Sitoé Diatta, or Alinsitoué Diatta, from the Casamance region. The arsenal she used to attract thousands of people from the various local societies of the region included songs, dances and rituals to make rain or protect crops against pests; rejection of peanut monocropping; and the fight against conscription of young people for the Second World War. She held that the latter was a war between whites, that the peanut crop brought hunger and destroyed the soil, and, moreover, that locals should not use the rice seed provided by the coloniser because it did not carry the benefit of the mystical protection of the ancestors and spiritual entities.

Casamance, in large part due to its uniquely creolised nature, has been at the margin of the post-colonial state in Senegal. Aline Sitoé's movement,

accordingly, has fallen into the cracks between colonial and post-colonial histories, leading to an official silence on the complexities of her uprising. This silence remains to some extent to this day. Besides, even now inhabitants bearing local surnames have to constantly prove to national authorities that they are indeed Senegalese. There is even a *certificat de nationalité* or 'citizenship certificate', an official document required from local residents by the authorities. This document is never required from a member of the larger ethnic groups thought to jointly make up the Senegalese nation, namely, groups such as the Sèrer, Wolof, Halpulaar, Diola and others. Below I will analyse how the political action centring on the young Aline Sitoé Diatta in the 1940s was one of the most significant chapters in the history of the alliance of the two main colonial powers – France and the Muslim brotherhoods in Senegal – in the Senegambia region.

Sitoé's movement started under the banner of not 'polluting the earth' and of the preservation of harmony between the worlds of the living and the dead. I will also consider how her political actions remained for more than three decades (1960–1990) under total silence in the history books related to the Casamance region, in the historiography of Senegal, and in that of Senegambia; and finally how the same Aline Sitoé Diatta was elevated to the rank of national hero in the 1990s (at twenty-five the youngest of all the heroes and someone who was neither Wolof nor Muslim – the largest Muslim brotherhoods, which determine the Wolof character of Senegal). Her becoming an official hero was a fact arising from the armed conflict stoked by the Separatist Movement of Casamance (the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance established in 1947 – MFDC, or Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance – see Faye, 1994).

1 The Historiography of Senegal and the Casamance Region

Once removed – Aline Sitoé and her lieutenants were imprisoned – her influence only continued to grow. The repressive actions of the colonial administration had contributed to the consolidation of the martyr in spite of threats made by the administration against religious practices that constituted obstacles to the functioning of colonial authority – seen to manifest from the month of April, 1943, that is, two months after the imprisonment of Alinsitoué, which was strongly celebrated in order to terrorize her followers, '*prêtresses féticheuses*' whose activities frightened the French governor of Ziguinchor. In Djibelor, in a peri-urban area of the provincial capital, the inspirational Alanguiso was found. She received a growing number of faithful by the day and declared herself loudly to be

‘the highest of priestesses’, stated that ‘the land belonged to the Diolas’, and above all, that ‘whites would have to leave the region’, and that finally, the Casamançais would be ‘their own masters’. She considered herself to be the heir of the religious philosophy of Aline Sitoé since the capture of the Prophet of Kabrousse, and said that the Diolas need only to obey her.

GIRARD, 1969, p. 234

The history books, even from independent Senegal, seem to have decided to silence this resistance. Another point of conflict lay in the imposition of peanut cultivation for export, which only aggravated the conflicts between the colonizers and the people of Casamance. For the Diolas, cultivation meant the destruction of the forest, doubly sacred as it is the source of both material existence and spiritual expansion. And there is a third element to this aversion to peanut monocropping about which little is said: during the Atlantic slave trade, one of the food staples of the enslaved was peanut. To produce peanuts, for this society whose freedom was its main concern, was the symbol of a hateful bondage.

GADJIGO, 2007, p. 66

Events in the recent history of Senegal reveal why a ban on the teaching of the history of the region was in place throughout my student life at the secondary level – both at Lycée Djignabo and Collège Saint Charles Lwanga – in the city of Ziguinchor, my hometown in southern Senegal, known as the Casamance region. The analytical reporting of these events will enable the reader to get a glimpse of the reasons for political and ideological struggles impacting the invisibility and the silencing of the history of the Casamance region, especially the struggles against colonial systems. Those struggles were mostly headed by women heavily involved in indigenous religious practices: the prophets and *prêtresses fétichistes* (‘fetishist priestesses’, the name given by the colonial administrators).

In 1979, during my first year of secondary school education at Djignabo, in the city of Ziguinchor, the capital of the Casamance region, a police officer killed a student during a very violent strike. The government sent hundreds of police officers from the Mobile Intervention Group (GMI) to the city. The killing of a student was most unusual in that the police never shot live ammunition during strikes, especially at students. The movement demanded that the Lycée director be replaced. After the death of our classmate, suddenly, our mothers, grandmothers and aunts – without distinction of ‘ethnic’ groups or religion – left their homes after lunch. What started as a small group coming out of their houses became a giant human sea of women, all wearing calabashes

on their heads. They walked silently towards Néma Stadium, situated next to the school, and then towards the governor's residence in the neighbourhood of Escale. Along the way, our mothers confronted the violent police officers in a manner that seemed rather bizarre: they took off their clothes and urinated on the boots of the officers. Instead of beating these ladies with their batons, the brutes took off their helmets and covered their eyes. It is interesting to ask why they did not beat these women with gourds on their heads. Perhaps it was out of respect for their age or for their being women. It could also have been because they were wearing the calabash on their heads. If that was the case, however, what would be the significance of a nude woman with a gourd on her head, peeing on an officer's boot?

In many societies of the region of Casamance – such as the Diola Kassa, Balanta Naga, Fulani, Pepels, Diola Fogny, Diola Blouf, Bainouck, Bayot, Mancagne and Manjack, as well as the diverse Creole groups – the calabash has various functions revolving around the protection of the mystical body, cleansing, divination rituals, funeral rites and mystical destruction. In all the above listed societies, though, the calabash is present from birth to death. This gourd is used for libations to ask for protection, health, fortune, birth, good harvests, rain, removal of pests and diseases; to cast plagues, request revenge for family and collective entities; and in many festivities, for drinking or as a musical instrument. A person wearing a calabash on his/her head is a mystically protected person, respected but at the same time feared. In my own Mancagne society, for instance, a woman is buried with a calabash (*kakana*) adorned with pearls on her head so that she can use it to wash her clothes, bathe, eat and drink during her journey in the afterlife. They say that if a woman is buried without one, she will be expelled for not bringing her container; that is, she will never become an ancestor. Her soul will go on wandering and grieving. Her lack of rest will automatically cause turmoil in the lives of her living relatives. The calabash becomes a symbol of the dialogue engaged in to appease and grant or obtain forgiveness, as much as the symbol of the connection itself between the worlds of the living and the dead. This gourd allows us to dive into the continuity between those worlds. Once energised, the calabash becomes the vehicle of communication and transmits principally to the experts who decode the invisible.

Returning to the student strike at the Djignabo school, the police did not beat the women urinating on their boots because each of them, regardless of his society or birthplace, knew the mystical power which a woman with a calabash on her head could use to provoke chaos in his life, in terms of his health or career. These Muslim and Catholic women were also deeply rooted in their indigenous religious practices and ancestor cults, as well as in many individual and collective protective entities. These are the practices that are used to solve

conflicts, as was the case in the student strike that year. The spaces of cults directed by women become the spaces in which the most relevant issues are discussed. Besides, decisions made must always have the support of entities and ancestors, who need always be consulted through experts in divination.

The calabash has another function, one much feared by the political authorities, when naked women carry it and perform dances that invoke childbirth. This reportedly aims to bring about the downfall of authority or cause political instability in the country.

According to reports from our mothers, this human sea of women headed to the Governor's Residence, where they spent hours chanting lugubrious, almost funereal songs. I remember that my mother's first act when she got home after that march was to take a bath. One wonders whether it was just a bath or a mystical cleansing.

It is important to highlight that that human sea revealed that there were no watertight borders between ethnic groups in the city. Upon arriving, each woman would take off her clothes and start singing. They would stay until late afternoon and then return home. The same week, the president of the republic promised to send an official to negotiate the end of the strike. On the promised day, our mothers went to the meeting at Néma Stadium. The latter was packed with our mothers, but that was not a big surprise: instead, the surprise was that the president of the republic had sent a Muslim religious authority! The women booed, insulted and expelled him. They then demanded from the governor a decision to end the strike. In a heavily Islamised country, where Muslim religious authority is respected, the expulsion marked the limits and responsibilities of the state and religion. Therefore, it is important to always take into account how social processes structuring subtle exclusion operate, or to be more precise, the hierarchy of citizenship.

The refusal to engage in dialogue with the religious authority and the rude expulsion from Néma Stadium provided a new twist to the involvement of the women in the strike. The number of women participating increased significantly. According to my aunt, after the expulsion of the religious authority, more and more women would arrive daily at the governor's residence, sit down and sing the funereal songs. It was on one of those days that the governor's youngest son plummeted from the second floor to the ground (he did not die). People asked themselves what would have caused the boy's fall. With his fall in mind, the frightened governor finally decided to hold further talks with our mothers and end the strike. That same week, the government sent a plane just to pick up the school director's family. It is interesting to look into how that mobilisation of city women was organised, and why they decided to strike in

that manner, wearing calabashes on their heads, nearly forty years after the Kabrousse movement headed by Alinsitoué Diatta. In fact, the latter's movement was a strong peaceful resistance, not just against the French colonial administration, but also against the Muslim authorities who were their closest allies. In this way, our mothers' strike reinserted the women into post-independent Senegal's political scene, specifically the women who were bonded by indigenous religious practices.

Years later, on the morning of 26 December 1982, in what is called 'The Casamance Rebellion', the city of Ziguinchor witnessed a procession headed by women coming from the forest and the *bois sacré* with calabashes on their heads. They moved towards the Gouvernance (central headquarters of the Casamance region) to lower the national flag and hoist a white flag which, according to the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MDFC), meant that the march was peaceful. Their demands revolved around the decentralisation of manufacturing industries and more-sustainable funding for public policies. The leaders emphasised that the region of Casamance was one of the largest producers of raw materials and because manufacturing industries were installed in the north, they were fuelling the industrial labour market for the population of the north. That peaceful 1982 demonstration created an air of tension, and the government sent hundreds upon hundreds of heavily armed soldiers to the city. The following year, during attempts to celebrate the anniversary of the 1982 action at the same location – symbolic of the central power of the state – confrontations between security forces and protesters left dozens of protesters dead (notably, many women). I do not intend to make these events the centre of my reflection, but in both instances, marches were headed by women with calabashes on their heads, singing heavy, rhythmic, lugubrious songs. For the first time, the name 'Alinsitoué Diatta' was constantly repeated, and her acts of bravery recollected.

We need, then, to explain the near-prohibition on pronouncing Alinsitoué Diatta's name and the total ban on teaching her history, especially in the south-eastern part of the Casamance region, in the national education programme.

To deprive a people of the man in whom they pride themselves as the greatest of their sons is not a happy thing, nor to be undertaken carelessly, much less by someone who himself is one of them. But we cannot allow a reflection like this to induce us to set aside the truth in favor of what are supposed to be national interests; moreover, it can be expected that the clarification of a group of facts will bring a gain in knowledge.

FREUD, 1975, p. 19

Any student born and raised in the Casamance region goes through his/her studies at the primary and secondary levels realising that there are several layers of citizenship in Senegal. The hierarchies of citizenship are reflected in the syllabi of the history of the country itself. In this way, the student will learn that there are insignificant histories and cultures. The most significant history and culture was, and still is, Islamo-Wolof, especially considering how the Wolof language became the country's *lingua franca*.

In Senegal, the historiography of Senegal, of Africa and of Africans occupies an enormous space in the primary and secondary level history syllabus. Hence, throughout my education (primary and secondary), I studied the country's history and its heroes/heroines (El Hadji Oumar Tall, Alboury Ndiaye, Ngoné Yap Diop, Diakhou Maba Ba, Cheikh Amadou Bamba, Cheikh Malick Sy, Alfa and Moussa Molo, *les Femmes de Nder*²). What is striking to note is the fact that all of them are Muslim and come from the heavily Islamised regions. My region of Casamance, especially its south-eastern part, is much less Muslim, due to later Islamisation. It had no heroes or heroines. We have to look into why teaching the local history was prohibited. Perhaps that history was not significant in relation to national history. If there are insignificant histories, that would automatically imply – ideologically speaking – that there are peoples, societies and citizens who are insignificant.

In reality, no one can claim that different peoples and societies living together constitute a nation when there is a hierarchy in the teaching of history. Political authorities cannot ignore that, pedagogically, the hierarchisation and/or silencing of the history of a society or a region contributes to weakening the self-esteem of the people, leading to self-denial and automatic othering. At fifteen years of age, a young Senegalese of Fula, Mancagne, Manjack, Sarakholé, Balantes, Pepel and other societies must get a certificate of Senegalese nationality to prove his/her 'Senegalese-ness'. For any civil service position or even for a passport, she/he will have to have this certificate of Senegalese nationality. The Casamance region is the region in which the bulk of Senegalese who must always prove their 'Senegalese-ness' are concentrated. Furthermore, depending on location, those Senegalese whose last names do not sound 'authentic' (unlike Ndiaye, Fall, Diop, Diouf, Ndour, Diène, Faye, Sene, Seye, Tall, Sy, Wade, Badiane, etc.) become the victims of various forms of humiliation and

2 'Les femmes de Nder' ('the women of Nder') refers to an incident which took place in 1820, when Mauritanian Moors attacked a village, Nder, in Waalo, northern Senegal. All the women in Nder reportedly decided to collectively commit suicide rather than to accept becoming slaves (editors' note).

extortion by agents of the state when applying for their certificates. In the case of Casamance, according to agents of the state, those indigenous to Guinea-Bissau, Guinea-Conakry and Gambia are not Senegalese. Well, coincidentally, the region of Casamance/Senegal borders these three countries. The borders of the new states were marked well before the definitive settlement of 'non-Senegalese' people. During the colonial time, in order to escape colonial brutality and punitive taxes, there were intense migratory movements among the English (Gambia), French (Senegal, Guinea-Conakry) and Portuguese (Guinea-Bissau) colonies. This made the people of Casamance, especially the city of Ziguinchor, into a highly biologically and culturally mixed population due to the intense movements resulting from individual and collective displacement. To paraphrase Paul Gilroy (2001), we can say that the ideological 'de-Senegalisation' of the Senegalese has transformed – and continues to transform – them into *citizens-intruders* in their own country (see also Bernardino-Costa's chapter in this book for Gilroy). History is the glue of the nation when memories are shared independently of origin, social class, 'ethnicity' or 'race'. In this region, we also find a strong mixture of religious practices; for example, a Mancagne family might use a Diola or Manjack entity for mystical protection. A family can worship an entity from another society without any problems, without any worry about 'purity'. The city of Ziguinchor, furthermore, is the only city in the country that has a mixed municipal cemetery (Muslim and Catholic).

Other unique features of the city of Ziguinchor include the plurality of languages spoken and of indigenous religious practices. The city is an ancient, extremely complex and fluid intersection. It is a space of intense exchange: linguistic, technological, cultural, religious and social. The people who live and pass through this space belong to societies that originate in Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Guinea-Conakry. This makes any purist narrative problematic and, above all, ideological.

During my doctoral research in 2002 and 2003, in the towns of Podor and Ndiatbé in northern Senegal, members of some Sarakholé families painfully recounted their odysseys to change their 'Malian-sounding' surnames to 'authentically Senegalese' surnames. According to Senegalese state agents in the cities of the north, the Sarakholé and Bambara – who are descendants of peoples who arrived in the north of current Senegal in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – are still treated as foreigners in their own country for having a last name that is not one of the usual ones, such as Fall, Tall, Seck, Niang, Diène, Diouf Ndiaye, Seye, Sy, Sene, Wade and so forth.

After my doctoral research during which I was confronted with the context in the north, I remembered the first time I was faced with a similar fact:

it was in Bindabane village, situated 20 kilometres from Goudomp. I went to visit my cousin, A. Kassoka, who was the director of the primary school there. The student body was primarily composed of Manjack Muslims, mostly with last names like Ndiaye, Cissé, Dabo, etc. These Manjack were automatically considered 'authentic' Senegalese and didn't need a certificate of Senegalese nationality to prove their 'Senegalese-ness'. However, even so, their Muslim parents continued their traditional religious practices, in which the slaughter of pigs and the use of alcoholic beverages were fundamental. The Fulani and the Mandinka said that they would never let a Manjack Muslim lead the prayers because they were not good Muslims. Nonetheless, what the 'good Muslims' would never grasp was the strategic pain of self-denial prerequisite to readjusting to the arrogant, dehumanising, emotionally and psychologically disintegrating demands of the post-colonial Senegalese administration. In this way, conversion to Islam and, moreover, adoption of 'Senegalese' surnames are strategic attitudes to suit imposed identities. This situation may seem humorous at first glance, but it reveals new forms of dehumanising brutality victimising peripheralised Senegalese, as highlighted by Mamadou Diouf (2001). In that context, the loss of family name commences the slow process of ancestral disaffiliation, the loss of the mystical protection of the ancestors, and the abatement of cultural and religious practices for future generations.

The authorities themselves are planting the seeds of an emotionally and psychologically unstable future in the people – as well as the politics – in Senegal when they create Senegalese 'insiders' and 'outsiders', with the latter struggling to take part in 'Senegalese-ness'. The ideological division of the Senegalese into 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (marginal, marginalised, intruding) is a purely political and ideological construction which is extremely dangerous to a nation in constant reconfiguration. What it means to be an 'authentic' Senegalese becomes clearer during the selection for positions of greater status and higher salaries. The overwhelming majority of these positions have been and still are occupied by Senegalese sponsored by family members of the largest Muslim brotherhoods.

In the south-east of Senegal, the Diolas, Fogny, Kassa, Bayot, Floup and Bainouck are citizens who do not need to prove their 'Senegalese-ness'. However, for them, their degree of humanity is – at times – linked to conversion to the Christian or Muslim religions. For many, having a Muslim name on their official documents becomes a ticket to better treatment by the police, especially after the rebellious movement in the south. All the same, socio-historical constructions of the processes of Senegalese identity have never been central themes for Senegalese scholars who study the nation. In this way, they have remained

supposedly unaware of the various forms of humiliation proffered by agents of the state itself following the Senegalese/non-Senegalese divide.

Mamadou Diouf (2001, p. 161) titled Chapter 12 of his book 'Peripheral Histories: The State and the Sereer, Halpulaar, Soninke, and Diola Societies'. In the introduction to that chapter, he points out that the neighbourhoods he refers to are made up of both physical and cultural regions. However, the members of these societies are excluded from the Wolof and Lebu centres, as well as from the Islamo-Wolof organisational structures. After this introduction, Diouf lays out an analysis of each society. Given my analytical interest, though, we will only focus on the part devoted to the Diola group.

Diouf argues that Casamance, as a geographical entity, has always been different from the northern part of Senegal, whose governing is based on the Islamo-Wolof model. Nonetheless, the singular fact that the former does not have the same political-religious structures as the latter does not represent an automatically impoverishing difference. The same issue remains unresolved when it comes to the negative impacts of the Islamic colonial processes in the heavily Islamised societies in today's Senegal. Mamadou Diouf (2001, p. 171) argues that the same model became the administrative framework, as well as the colonising economic scheme.

The *Ndiguél* country³ clearly plays a central role in Senegalese universality, 'Senegalese-ness' as Léopold Sédar Senghor says, thus creating the centre and the peripheries according to the degree of integration, first in the colonial political, social and economic systems, and then the post-colonial, as well.

What strikes the eye is that so-called central Senegal – in terms of 'Senegalese-ness' – coincides geographically and ideologically with the Quatre Communes (Gorée, Saint Louis, Dakar and Rufisque). Moreover, those are parts of Senegal which are under the religious responsibility of the authorities of the three largest Muslim brotherhoods: Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya and Mouride. Therefore, it is clear that 'Senegalese-ness' resulted from the conjunctions of the political articulations of colonial processes (territorial, administrative, religious and agricultural) involving two colonial powers whose interests were interwoven. France sought to extend its administrative domain, to 'pacify' the colony, to introduce, extend and consolidate the peanut monoculture. To be under the control of their best allies, the administration itself contributed

³ A Wolof area and town in the interior, between Thiès and Touba (editors' note).

greatly to the consolidation and the legitimacy of the religious power of the founding guides of the brotherhoods. With the benefit of support from the colonial administration, the religious authorities, while extending their areas of influence, led the consolidation of the peanut monoculture and simultaneously expanded the religion, the Wolof language and their worldview. This made them an internal colonial power, though never viewed or treated as such. They became the power base of the administration. The inhabitants of these regions of current Senegal were the first to be Islamised, as well as the first to strongly suffer the impacts of French colonisation.

Despite the overall excellence of his chapter, Diouf unfortunately tries to prove that the Diola are – contrary to popular belief – very culturally and biologically mixed, and that the Casamance region is an ‘ethnic’ hotspot of cultural, religious and linguistic minorities ready to boil over at any moment. It is, however, possible that a similar analytical probe into the Wolof or Lebu societies would also reveal what appears to be specific to the Diola. In this case, Diouf does not contribute any new analysis, but instead maintains the silence around the negative impacts of the political and ideological structuring of hierarchies of Senegalese citizenship, as well as the silencing of the history of the region in history textbooks up to the late nineties. Still, the most astounding part of the academic work of many Senegalese intellectuals (Diouf, 1998, 2001) is their belief that Casamance and its ‘population’ constitute a specific group compared with the rest of the country. Now, the military uprising and the preaching of MDFC leaders in favour of the separation of the region largely reflect the lack of democratic access to public policies, as well as shameful academic work done for decades that has ignored this region’s history in Senegal’s historiography. In this manner, the same intellectuals end up doing a disservice to the structural consolidation of a nation that came to have Wolof as its *lingua franca* and Islam as its dominant religion.

Mamadou Diouf (2001, p. 188) states that the Kabrousse Diola revolt was headed by a priestess, Queen Alin Sitoé Jatta. According to him, she was a heroine, a woman, a priestess and a queen.

She symbolizes an historical character from the margins and the radical alternative to the patriarchal Muslim and Islamo-Wolof model. Deeply rooted in the territory and totally hostile to the colonial process of assimilation and submission, she carries an imaginary whose recreation remains essential to the structure of the struggles by the geographic and/or ideological margins – and not only the Diolas.

When returning to Alinsitoué’s own discourse to form a detailed analysis of her political positions, Diouf completely misses the point, as the great themes

evoked by Alinsitoué threatened not only French interests, but at the same time, the Islamo-Wolof model, Islam itself, and the interests of the Muslim brotherhoods' authorities. According to Jean Girard (1969), Diouf (2001) and Manga (2015), Alinsitoué preached in 1942 for gender equality and the advancement of women; equal rights regardless of age; equal rights regardless of origin; the rejection of colonial cultural values; and the revaluation of the Diola week – consisting of six working days with rest on Thursdays. Moreover, she advocated for the rejection of peanut cash-cropping, which was at the core of the alliance between the authorities of the brotherhoods (Mouride and Tijani) and the French colonial administration. She also warned against the use of sugar, encouraging the use of honey instead.

Contrary to academic consensus, Alinsitoué is a Senegambian heroine. This becomes clear in the content of the letters sent by the French administrative commander of Ziguinchor to his superior – delivered by Jean Girard – according to Mamadou Diouf (2001, p. 190).

Alinsitoué had a great, hidden, spiritual influence – deeply rooted in indigenous knowledge – and founded a cult, attracting many people from different places, notably of Fogy, Mancagne and Manjack. Pilgrims also came, such as Mandinka from Sédhiou, Fulas from Vélingara, Wolof from the Gambia and even Dakar, and finally from Guinea-Bissau.

Jean Girard (1969) points out that the interrogation of prisoners captured with Alinsitoué Diatta revealed that there was a strong relationship between religious and moral order for Alinsitoué and her followers. Nonetheless, what stands is are the geographical and ethnic origins of the pilgrims: Wolof coming from Gambia and Dakar, Fulani from Vélingara, and Mandinkas from Sédhiou. Furthermore, in the context of Senegal and Senegambia, these are ethnic groups that were Islamised early on. The flight – especially of the Wolof from Gambia and from Dakar, of the Fulani and of the Mandinka – forces us to delve analytically into the relations between the Muslim authorities and their followers.

We should ask how Muslim authorities managed, throughout the colonial process and independent Senegal, to become *de facto* political authors. Bou-bacar Barry (1985, pp. 136–137) provides us with an excellent analytical track. According to this thinker, during the Atlantic traffic, the Waalo political authorities had strong trade links with the slavers selling their subjects, and also incited conflicts in order to capture more people to be automatically sold as prisoners of war. One of the solutions found by the subjects of the empires of the Waalo and Djolof was converting to Islam. The converted would then benefit from the military protection of the marabouts.

The Islam that had been of the Court, a monopoly of the authorities, will be increasingly rejected by this aristocracy that will keep this hostility to the colonial conquest in 1855. On the other hand, the population, constantly plundered, will be increasingly attracted to Islam, preached – this time – peacefully by marabouts who will turn a strong current of opposition to the aristocratic regime of the Brak [...] The war of the marabouts, despite its short duration, was an important turning point in the history of Senegal [...] It is clear that the marabouts were defeated, notably in Futa Toro. The spiritual ancestors of whom, with Suleyman Bal, took up the armed revolution in 1776. This revolution, mainly directed against the domination of the Moors and with the aim to stop the negative effects of the slave traffic, shows the continuity of this movement of marabouts who, under the cloak of Islam, reveal the expression of a new political, economic and social ideology in the States of Senegambia.

Ibid., pp. 136–137

For all of the information covered by Barry's reflection, we will focus only on the conversion to Islam as a means of security against human traffic. When the population of the Waalo and other neighbouring empires saw that their own political authorities sold their subjects into the Atlantic slave trade, they turned to the authorities of the marabouts for salvation. Yet, now – in the twentieth century and heavily Islamised – the Wolof, the Fulani, the Mandinka and blind followers of their religious leaders were going in great numbers to the city of Kabrousse where Alinsitoué preached. This time, they were fleeing the brutalities committed by the French colonial administration with the connivance of their own religious leaders. Again, they were being abandoned by their own political and religious authorities. To escape colonial brutalities (slave labour, taxes, conscription for the World War, exploitation) the fugitives began to relativise the weight of their religious beliefs and ethnic affiliations. Regaining humane and humanising treatment became more important. Their going to Kabrousse shows us, in fact, the population's rejection of their own authorities unable to defend them against colonial brutalities committed by the French in Senegal, the British in Gambia and the Portuguese in Guinea-Bissau.

An anonymous document outlines the philosophy that informed the movement headed by Alinsitoué: 'Her political discourse (1941–1942) integrated social and cultural dynamics that promoted a type of organization of social relations, new for most, especially when taking into account the political and ideological situation of the moment. She preached for the full equality of the sexes and social advancement of women; equal

rights for people of different age groups; equality between individuals regardless of their origins; safeguarding ancestral cultural values and the total rejection of colonial culture; the reinstatement of the Diola week (*ujaj*) of 6 working days with one day of rest instead of the Western seven-day week' [...]

Her action was based on the rejection of the peanut crop monoculture – the product *par excellence* that configured 'the Wolof *Ndiguél* countries' – the call, by any means, to resist the colonial administration, for the deliberate quest for restoration of worship and celebration returned to a new authenticity of sacred objects and rituals.

DIOUF, 2001, pp. 188–190

However, even more intolerable for the colonial administration and religious authorities was the figure of the leader herself: a youth preaching the end of patriarchy, equality between men and women; and an end to producing the product that formed the basis of the colonial economy, as well as of the Muslim brotherhoods. Moreover, in preaching equality between men and women, Alinsitoué was challenging access to land in Diola societies. In these societies, women have no right to inherit land. To make up for this, from the day that a Diola girl starts working in the rice paddies, a part of each harvest is saved for her. On the day of her wedding, she takes all the rice she has saved up over the years to her husband's house.

It's worth noting that the other reason for taking this stored food is to avoid submission to and dependence on the new partner, so as to help with the household expenses. This rice is consumed by the woman until the harvest of the first planting the new couple do together on the husband's land. This culture of independence for the Diola woman is so strong that, for example, every time a woman goes to visit her married daughter, she takes the amount of rice that they will consume during the stay (it is shameful not to), while the men can go without taking anything, or at most, a beverage (Bunuk). This attitude embodies the Diola woman's fight against machismo and in favour of the primacy of women's autonomy.

The Wolof, Fulani and Mandinka flight to Kabrousse leads us to affirm that the conversion to Islam seemed to be of a strategic order, to either guard against something or gain something. Jack Goody (2001) argues that in many cases, religion is only one, non-determinant component of identity. In the case of the Muslim fugitives finding safety in Kabrousse, it is clear that Islam was not the determining factor of multiple identities, but rather – according to the same thinker – a sometimes differential element. In the case of Alinsitoué, preaching the return to indigenous religious and spiritual practices in

■ Reference Goody (2001) is cited in the text but not provided in the reference list. Please check.

the twentieth century relocates the Diola societies and their followers to the stage of pre-colonial and pre-Islamic 'barbarism' as far as Catholic colonial authorities and religious Muslims were concerned. It was the embodiment of the failure of the 'civilising mission'.

Another remarkable attribute of Alinsitoué Diatta was her ability to bring people of different societies and religions together. Her movement had repercussions in three colonies (the French colony of Senegal, the English colony of Gambia and the Portuguese colony of Guinea-Bissau) and also in Dakar, which was part of the Quatre Communes, whose inhabitants were French citizens. The flight of indigenous people from three colonies – along with French citizens of Dakar – exposed, together, the level of colonial brutality. This made Alinsitoué a most dangerous person, not only to the French administration, but equally to the English and Portuguese. Moreover, when preaching equality among individuals without regard to origin, she was challenging the rigid hierarchies in Wolof, Mandinka, Sereer and Halpulaar societies, resulting from established and rooted beliefs about purities and impurities due to caste affiliations, as well as among white French settlers and Senegalese blacks.

We cannot forget that the colonists gave themselves the divine responsibility of the 'civilising mission', believing themselves being divinely superior to the colonised blacks. However, it is extremely important to note that when Alinsitoué claimed equality regardless of origin, she also denounced the hierarchies established between the inhabitants of the Quatre Communes (Gorée, Saint Louis, Dakar and Rufisque) who were French citizens and the black colony of Senegal;⁴ between urban and rural; between white Europeans and black Senegalese; between genders; between Catholics and non-Catholics, and between Muslims and non-Muslims in the colony itself. She called for equality without taking into account any 'ethnic', regional, 'racial', gender, religious, geographical, professional or caste origins. This preaching seemed to draw the attention of the post-independent Senegalese government authorities to the dangers of the negative impacts of structuring mechanisms for the abduction of the state by the authorities of the major Muslim brotherhoods. For decades, positions of higher prestige and better salaries were occupied by the 'Senegalese' sponsored by family members of these fraternal orders. This context dominates appointments to positions in public administration to this day. Currently, armed and ideological conflicts that devastate the contemporary world

4 The Quatre Communes were originally old colonial settlements on the coast whose inhabitants were eventually granted full French citizenship (regardless of race, religion or origin). By contrast, the rest of Senegal was by 1900 a colony whose inhabitants were merely colonial subjects (editors' note).

in Africa, Asia and Europe revolve around religion; struggles for recognition of 'ethnic' identities traditionally made invisible or repressed; and women fighting for equality. When preaching of the 'Diola week' and the valorisation of Diola rites and rituals, Alinsitoué was also emphasising that modernity would only be possible first by rooting it in the cultures of each society and then by opening up to others. Modernity – of a human being or a society – implies the capacity for dialogue and, at the same time, for creating dialogue on the basis of equality across different cultures. The devaluation and the denial of one's own culture in relation to the coloniser (Arabo-Muslim and French-Christian) lead to the emotional and psychological disintegration of the colonised. The subject ends up unable to participate in the movement of universal civilisation (to give and receive it) as advocated by Léopold Sédar Senghor (on Senghor, see also Ribeiro's chapter in this volume). Contrary to ghettoised interpretations where Alinsitoué would be just a Diola heroine, her political speeches aimed at a much fuller mental decolonisation of the colonised subject and, at the same time, reinforced the value of cultural structures – intangible and material – so that the colonised might be modern and open to foreign cultures without the unhealthy fascination with the coloniser's civilisation. This reveals how well Boubacar Boris Diop (1990) and Mamadou Diouf (2001) stressed that Alinsitoué's time in Dakar put her in touch not only with the French colonial brutalities, but also with the social relations of other Senegalese societies.

Boubacar Boris Diop, in his *Les tambours de la mémoire* (Diop, 1990), is the only Senegalese writer to have fictionalised Alinsitoué Diatta in a novel. However, the plot line does not allow the reader to recognise that the character (Queen Johanna Simentho from the Wissombo region) is based on the story of Alinsitoué Diatta herself. In the book, two middle-class youths – Fadel and Badou – from the city of Dakar are disillusioned with their parents, who are agents of and ardent collaborators with the French colonial administration. They witness Queen Johanna Simentho's struggle against colonisation and adopt her new alternatives for claiming human dignity. When taking this attitude, the young Fadel comes into ideological collision with the interests of his father, Madické. However, the youth never stops to question the tacit alliance between Muslim authorities and the French, for the 'good' of French colonisation. If it were not for the author's own words, I never would have known that the novel had a character based on the story of Alinsitoué Diatta.

This is not specific to post-colonial Senegal. The political speech of heroes and heroines originating from marginalised societies – in terms of citizenship – in various parts of the world have been made invisible throughout national and universal historiographies (see for instance the work of Chamoiseau, 1992; Diop, 1990, 2007; Depelchin 2011; Vergès, 2001, 2006; and others).

The contents of Alinsitoué Diatta's rhetoric seem like prophetic words today when we look analytically at the 'causes' of conflicts that are plaguing people in various parts of the world: post-colonial political histories.

In the case of Senegal, the 1982 armed uprising – known as the Casamance 'problem' – forced both intellectuals and politicians to rewrite the historiography not just of the country, but also of the citizenry itself (Awenengo-Dalberto, 2010).

Conflicts and separatist movements in Eastern Europe and Africa, as well as the new religion-driven conflicts (Al Qaeda, Islamic State, Boko Haram, Chebabs, Jemaah Islamiyah, Emirate of Caucasia, Abu Sayyaf, Daesh, Front Al-Nosra, etc.) are generating debates about the negative impacts of GMOs in rural areas; debates about the negative impacts of monoculture imposed during colonial processes in the Americas, throughout Africa and in Asia; thousands of young people risking extreme danger to get to the El Dorados of Europe and the United States. All those debates and facts make Alinsitoué's political discourse increasingly present. Alinsitoué Diatta's refusal to embrace any 'universal' religion (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) shocked in both the colonial and post-colonial periods and made her a great threat. This also largely explains the silencing of her fight against various political, economic, religious and 'ethnic' sectors whose 'Senegalese' society worked on the basis of differentiated socio-racial and religious levels in a pyramid ideologically prepared by leaders of the two colonial powers (Arabo-Muslim with the leaders of the brotherhoods, and French-Christian).

The so-called 'Casamance Rebellion' was actually a rallying Senegalese movement, the deep analysis of which enables us to realise that it requires a profound historical reassessment of the structural kidnapping of the nation-state by the Islamo-Wolof 'conglomerate' with the complicity of the French administration. It took the armed uprising of the MDFC, starting in 1982, for the political authorities and intellectuals to begin to change their attitudes towards the rewriting of history and of the Islamo-Wolof model. Presently, when taking a critical look at the prohibition on teaching Casamance history – for more than three decades after the country's independence – the following questions arise. Perhaps the prohibition stems from the fear of resurrecting Alinsitoué's politics. Or perhaps this assumed fear really reflects a deeper shame. What Senegalese historians and politicians do not yet grasp is that history only becomes a unifying pillar when memories are shared. In this way, the political themes of Alinsitoué Diatta's speech cry out for the sharing of memories.

Alinsitoué Diatta's primary political warning ended up coming true: peanut monocropping impoverished the soil. This is why the regions of Senegal where

this monoculture was deeply implanted are unfortunately the same regions that today find masses of people living at the threshold of food insecurity.

Because of the lack of implementation of any policies of equality regardless of origin, positions of greater prestige and higher salary have continued for decades to be overwhelmingly occupied by Senegalese men sponsored by the Muslim authorities of the main brotherhoods. This was most striking during both mandates of President Abdoulaye Wade. Wade was, however, the first head of state to officially ask the French about Sitoé's actual fate and for the repatriation of her mortal remains (the whereabouts of which remains unknown to this day). Sitoé's story continues, therefore, to illustrate the complexities of Senegal's and Casamance's creolised society, and how the latter is silenced in official Senegalese discourse and historiography (Awenengo-Dalberto, 2010).

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The Wretched Without History: Reflections on Music and Literary Creation in the *Kriola* Migration in São Tomé and Príncipe

Marina Berthet

Dès lors qu'il recouvre la capacité de se dire avec les mots qui sont les siens, le voyageur est celui qui vient réinsuffler une puissance nouvelle à la question du départ.

CANUT & SOW, 2014¹

This is a story that features the harmattan, the Atlantic, cacao, and the circulation of women, children and men between the Cape Verde archipelago and the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe, as well as the ships plying the route between the former and the latter.² Against the background of the West African coast, São Tomé and Príncipe came to acquire its own complexity within the colonial Portuguese empire of the nineteenth century as it was intent on reinventing Brazil on the other side of the ocean.

There took place several migrations to these cacao-producing islands: Portuguese colonial agents, migrants from several parts of the world looking for better lives, and an agricultural labour force sent to the cacao and coffee plantations. About a century separates the arrival of the first men and women from Cape Verde, a Portuguese colony at the time, and the last arrivals closing the cycle of labour migration on the eve of the independence of the former Portuguese colonies in the 1970s. Their destination was the local plantations called *roças* in São Tomé and Príncipe.

The diverse Cape Verdean migrations left a mark on local references created about São Tomé and Príncipe in the Cape Verde islands themselves.

1 'As soon as he recovers his ability to think himself in his own words, the traveller is the one who comes to instil again a new power into the issue of departure'.

2 The translation of this chapter (from French and Portuguese) was done by Fernando Rosa, and revised by the author. Creole lyrics translated by the author.



ILLUSTRATION 4.1 Roça Rio de Ouro, nowadays called Agostinho Neto – the most famous *roça* in São Tomé
SOURCE: MILTON GURAN

In Africa, Cape Verdeans settled in the former Portuguese colonies (Angola, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Guinea-Bissau) and in Senegal. In the case of São Tomé and Príncipe, local memories and data on migrations have led journalists, writers and artists in general, as well as plantation labourers, to voice their emotions, opinions and interpretations. Most recently, Leão Lopes filmed in São Tomé some Cape Verdeans who became the ‘last contract labourers’ (‘os últimos contratados’). I highlight here three landmarks of Cape Verdean forced migration, in the form of three historical ‘artistic objects’ related to the interpretation of Cape Verdeans’ immigration to São Tomé: the sonnet by Eugênio Tavares (1867–1930), ‘Emigração (a propósito da emigração para S. Tomé),’³ written in 1912; the *morna*-style song ‘Caminho de São Tomé’, written by Abílio Duarte and initially sung by the famous Cape Verdean singer

3 Here are a few names of renowned artists who sang or wrote about migration to São Tomé: Gabriel Mariano (1928–2002), Kodé di Dona (1940–2010), Orlando Pantera (1967–2001) and Ntóni Denti D’Oro (b. 1926).

Bana,⁴ together with the band Voz de Cabo Verde (1966); and the film mentioned above by Leão Lopes, released in 2010. In these three works, the artists construct São Tomé as a tragic destination that leaves traces and traumas in the memory and experience of migrants, but also in the families that stay behind in Cape Verde.

Singers, for instance, have evoked, through different Cape Verdean music styles (*mornas, coladera, funaná, finaçon ...*), the sad migrants, the exile to São Tomé and Príncipe, and the hard work in the plantation, the cacao inferno. I interpret those artistic expressions as aesthetic movements that allow us to understand how art influences the imaginary, as far as certain social facts are concerned. In general, I analyse the written accounts⁵ and expressive practices as expressions of art that sing, relate, and give sense and meaning to migration as a social phenomenon. In this way, I reflect on 'evocative practices' created by Cape Verdeans – here mainly literature and music – in order to interpret migration seen as forced and traumatic by the plantation workers who came to São Tomé and Príncipe. Onésimo Silveira, for instance, is one of the most quoted authors in relation to the issue of migration. In his book *Toda a gente fala: sim senhor* (1960), the writer resorts to his own experience when he migrated to the *roças* of São Tomé and Príncipe.

4 'Caminho di São Tomé' (music and lyrics by Abílio Duarte): Oi ó ki sodad / Kin tem Di nha fidjinhú ki bai Pa caminho di São Tomé / Kel carta branca / Kim recebê / Enganam q'era mortaia / Nha fidjinhú morrê també / Ó nha fidju / How I miss you / Your mother / Cannot stand anymore Carga na cais / Levam nha vida / Nha fé cabá / F'ká só tristeza / Ondas na mar / Bibem nhas lágrimas / Nha fidje / Oi ki sodade / M'fiká / Mi só tá tchorá / Bô mãe / Ja ka podê / Carga na cais / Levam nha vida / Nha fé cabá / F'ká só tristeza / Ondas na mar / Bibem nhas lágrimas / Nha fidje / Oi ki sodade / M'fiká / Mi só tá tchorá. Translation in Cidra (2015, p. 312): 'Oh how I miss / My dear son who went onto São Tomé's road / That white letter that I have received / It deceived me, it was a shroud. My dear son died / Oh son of mine / How I miss you. Your mother cannot stand anymore the cargo in the harbour. It took my life away. My faith is over / Only sadness remains / The sea waves drank my tears / Son of mine, how I miss you. I was left alone crying / Your mother cannot stand anymore. The cargo in the harbour took my life away. My faith is over. Only sadness remains / The sea waves / Drank my tears / Son of mine / How I miss you / I was left / Alone crying'.

5 Rui Cidra (2002) suggests the terms *cultura expressiva* ('evocative culture') or *práticas expressivas* ('evocative practices') to indicate cultural expressions which link sound, text and movement. Those expressions would take a central place in the social experience of Cape Verdeans. Moreover, Cidra states that the concept of *cultura expressiva* 'translates cultural expressions whose forms of practice and conceptualisation do not fit a rigid definition of categories [...] such as music, poetry, dance, etc'. On the global stage, *cultura expressiva* corresponds to multiple modes through which different social groups tackle diverse elements – form, colour, sound, language, speech, body movement – through meaningful cultural production with an aesthetic value.

This approach has already been employed both in music and academia. In this regard, I quote for instance from the work of Rio Machado,⁶ who chose to make a CD of Cape Verdean songs which recount the relations between the islands and other Portuguese colonies. Unhappiness, frustration and defeat are characteristic features of Cape Verdean assertions about migration to the cacao islands.

Later, the artistic repertoire⁷ of the Cape Verdean archipelago about migration to São Tomé and Príncipe (henceforth STP) led Cape Verdeans to rediscover, after independence, that tragic episode of their history, as well as to recover the memories of migrants themselves. I can mention in this regard the band Os Tubarões ('The Sharks'); women singers of a new generation, such as Lura or Mayra Andrade, which has brought back to light Orlando Pantera's song 'Tunuka'; or the diffusion of Leão Lopes's documentary about 'last contract labourers' in the Vatican. In fact, the different interpretations of migration led Leão Lopes to make *The Last Contract Labourers*, on Cape Verdeans who still reside in STP. Sharing a past of migration to STP induces Cape Verdeans to tap into the experience of thousands of hard-pressed peasants. Nonetheless, they also tap into a local imaginary interwoven with reconstructed memories and accounts about those who departed, those who returned and those who died in STP. All those elements also make up what I call the *Kriola subjectivity of migration*.⁸

Kriola as used here is a term chosen by Cape Verdeans as a name for themselves. It refers not only to the *Kriolu* or *Kriolo* language, but also to a feeling, a way of being that comes before, and goes beyond, Cape Verdean national identity. To be *Kriolo* is also to belong to a given imagined community, that is, a community of feelings and meanings that is constantly reimagined. A *Kriola* migration subjectivity would correspond to an inner domain shared by both migrants and those who stay behind. Both of these groups create an empathy

6 See Pacheco's (2003) article 'Happy People Have No History, but the Wretched Do'. In this article, Rui Machado says: 'There was so much material from São Tomé [where many died on the *roças*] that I might as well have made a double CD! It is in the countries where migration has not been so successful that a greater amount of music and poetry has come up'. See also: www.ruimachado.com/cabo-verde-canta-a-cplp.php.

7 It is worth reiterating Cidra's observation (Cidra, 2008) to the effect that, while most of Cape Verdean music has been created by people as they migrated, the sharing of feelings and the experience of dislocation is common to all Cape Verdeans.

8 I choose here *Kriolo*, written with a capital 'K' in order to distinguish it from Portuguese language usage which employs a small 'c'. By *Kriolo* I mean a subjectivity of migrating as a human experience possessing diverse connotations, one of which is expressed by *Kriolo* itself. The latter is also a language of affectivity, a way of being, a subjectivity situated between local and national identity.

and a narrative thread related to migrating. On the website *Carnets Anthropologiques* (2014), it is noted that what is meant by *Kriolo* is 'an original identity dynamics overflowing the habitual paths of national identity in order to feed the myth of a Creole culture which goes beyond the community of the country's residents'. This is related to a conception of transnational identity based on the *Kriolo/u* language. In other words, to be *Kriolo* is a subjectivity, a feeling of belonging, or a motif running through political and historical contexts, and in this process the latter are constantly transformed and re-signified.

In this way, *Kriola* subjectivity, rather than pointing to a nation welded to a national identity, helps us to think about another kind of identity, how a *Kriola* deals with migration and how she lives, while she travels, an ontological experience (Berthet, 2018, p. 324). From that ontological perspective, those who migrate and those who stay interpret, explain and give sense to their existence and experiences. I consider that *Kriola* subjectivity leads people to share specific emotions while migrating, getting to know and experiencing new places. It also feeds into the imaginary of life histories, criticisms and testimonies related to agricultural labour, enriching all of those themes with images, songs and common spaces shared by *Kriolos*. In his poem 'Emigração', Ovídio Martins asks his compatriots to remain silent in order to better listen to the cry of their brothers in STP. ('Silêncio Cabo-Verdianos! / Choram irmãos nossos / nas roças de São Tomé').⁹ In this way, the poet's empathy makes him cry blood tears in homage to the pain and suffering of his brothers.

I believe that representations of and references to *Kriola* migration and forced labour in STP play a pre-eminent role. That imaginary allows for the existence of *Kriola* subjectivity which converses with the concept of a community of sentiment as proposed by Appadurai (2001, p. 7). In my understanding, this Cape Verdean community of sentiment acts collectively in relation to shared references and a common history of migration. According to Appadurai, the imaginary is local and 'autonomous' in relation to a possible imaginary linked to a national identity. The latter is also shot through with political notions, but is very distant from that of the migrants. The local imaginary – created by a community of feelings – leads to the production of ideas, discourses and social practices that safeguard, for instance, the local rights of migrants as a community in exile. Those under contract that would play music brought music styles to STP that are still played today, not only among Cape Verdean communities on the *roças*, but also in different local and national festivals in São

9 'Silence, Cape Verdeans! / Our brothers are crying / on the *roças* in São Tomé' (translator's note).

Tomé. Quitinho De Brito¹⁰ arrived in São Tomé in 1953, and worked on several *roças* (such as Monte Café, São Nicolau). He started playing the accordion at the age of twenty-three. He still lives in São Tomé. More recently, he created a band called Lembra Tempo which plays Cape Verdean tunes. In his turn, Beneditino Rubalo Fernandes, born in São Tomé to Cape Verdean parents, lived on Santiago Island in Cape Verde between the ages of four and sixteen. He would later return to São Tomé in order to live on the Caldeiras *roça*. He seems to be among the last musicians to play and own a diatonic accordion.

Appadurai gives a greater emphasis to 'local identity' as the main inspiration for that imaginary. As for the notion of a community of feelings, he also suggests the relevance of continuity, in relation to not only the individual, but also spaces. According to Rui Cidra (2008), we can observe a continuity between spaces which are defined not from a geographical but instead from an existential perspective. Here, while appropriating Appadurai's reflections, nonetheless I consider that the *Kriolo* imaginary is distinct from the national one. Migration and mobility as social practices are interpreted here as sources of inspiration for artistic expressions. Besides, the circulation between different spaces is not seen as rupture, but instead as the continuity of a community of belonging and a new life experience. This community of belonging strengthens itself through the circulation of people, goods and ideas. In this way, those who migrated and stayed abroad and those who remained in their country of origin are connected. It is the sharing of a tangible experience that grounds social ties within the *Kriola* community of feelings. The awareness of belonging to this community helps overcome the distance between people, as it creates a sense of continuity between different spaces.¹¹ In this sense, Évora (2003) suggests that individuals are linked to each other – wherever one is, one shares a repertoire of artistic expressions that nurture new migratory currents. The dynamics of migration reminds us of a continuing cycle of movements that are created, cross each other, and endlessly invent and reinvent themselves. Évora mentions the existence of complex networks that establish themselves between migrants, on the one hand, and those staying home, on the other, 'within a single space' whose continuity is guaranteed by exchanges, social relations, modes of communication, expressive practices, money remittances and the subjective dimension of the economy.¹²

10 <https://fr.ulule.com/funana>.

11 I am grateful to Denise Dias Barros for her suggestions here.

12 The country's economy is partially based on economic exchanges that take place between migrants and those who remain in Cape Verde – for instance, in the domain of telecommunications, remittance and exchange bureaux, the remittance of diverse goods, the national airline TACV (Transportes Aéreos de Cabo Verde), and a building company catering

The notion of space becomes much more fluid in that context of comings and goings, travels, and the circulation of objects such as the accordion (Cidra, 2015, p. 320). Relations between migrants and their families who have stayed behind in Cape Verde become links. Music, but also religion, among other domains, are moments and practices that bring together migrants and non-migrants. Laurent and Plaideau (2010), in their analysis of the religious practices of Cape Verdean migrants, mention the lack of separation between migrants and non-migrants. They aver that:

The family must stay together at all costs, as witnessed by the ‘domestic altar’ set up in memory of the disappeared; migrants and the deceased are ranged on it without distinction, in order to keep, as a last resort, the ideal of a united and stable family [...] By placing the spirit of the deceased at the centre of their doctrine, they [the migrants] re-establish the dialogue between the ancestors and the modern man, and also between the island space and the migratory flows that go through it. In that way, they set up a veritable ‘religion of travel’.

Along with the authors¹³ quoted above, I relate – albeit only in part – the notion of *Kriola* subjectivity of migration to the conceptual framework developed by Guattari. According to this author, subjectivity is plural and polyphonic and escapes the opposition between individual and society, or, in our case, between migrants and those who remain behind in Cape Verde. In this way, migration can be thought of as a movement of subjectivisation that creates ties and attachments which can be shared. I resort here to Guattari’s explanations of the process of subjectivisation in poetry (Berthet, 2018). When he mentions the idea of ‘innovative subjectivity’, he enhances the value of the role of the poet or singer (amateur or professional) who pens or sings a poem, as he/she thinks about his/her reader or listener.¹⁴ Kodé Di Dona, a famous Cape Verdean singer, sings in the first person his experience of embarking to

to Cape Verdeans who return after the end of a professional life abroad. The nature of this economy can be gleaned by bringing up the case of Cape Verdeans living in Boston who managed to lease a whole aircraft for the Boston–São Vicente island trip on New Year’s Day in 2012.

13 Here, I am not able to go in detail into the notion of culture as belonging in the domain of subjectivity and identity formation as proposed by Bhabha (1994) and Hall (1996). However, I do not consider that subjectivity necessarily leads to culture or a social identity.

14 Guattari says: ‘This poetic-existential catalysis that we find inside scriptural, vocal, musical or plastic discursivities, almost synchronically engages the enunciative re-crystallisation of the creator, interpreter and devotee of the art work’ (Guattari, 1992, p. 31).

São Tomé. In this way, he creates empathy with his public as well as his Cape Verdean compatriots in STP. Take for instance the poem 'Comissário ad hoc' by Gabriel Mariano (from the 1960s). Unlike the majority of poems that address forced labour from the perspective of contract labourers, the poet chose to deal with the travel conditions of the migrants, but addressing himself to the 'foreman of the slaves', a Cape Verdean who, as a master on board, takes his countrymen to the plantations on STP. This 'foreman' is called the 'ad hoc commissary' (Berthet, 2018, p. 316). The same poet resorts in this way, just as other artists do, to a vocabulary and common language that more specifically define migration to STP. Terêncio Anahory's poem 'Canção da roça' not only calls out the treatment given to Cape Verdean labourers on the *roças* and addresses his compatriots (a device used by many poets), but also puts forward flight as a solution and a way to stress the union of the *Kriola* community. The poet also employs the phrase *caminhu longi* ('long path') that we find for instance in the famous piece 'Sodade', better known in Cesária Évora's interpretation, or in a poem by G. Mariano.

As Guattari said, whoever writes takes on the sonorous word, its musicality, its meanings, its verbal links, its *intonational*, emotional and *volitional* aspects, while taking inspiration from attachments which can be shared by all. Poems and above all songs make *Kriola* share the same emotions. Poetic creation allows an author to become active and express feelings that trigger/bear sounds, words that refer back to movements and gestures. It is important that I should stress here the merging between creator (singer, poet, etc.), performer (in the case of songs) and the aficionado of art – here, all the *Kriola* people.

Poems and songs are in this way shared between creator, performer and the public. This last actively participates when it comes to circulating these art forms and appropriating them. Aesthetic choices create an empathy between artists (who are migrants too) and migrant plantation workers, on the one hand, and their families, on the other. Cidra (2015) mentions, for instance, Bitori di Nha Bibinha, Kodé di Teti and Nésio Moniz, (accordion) musicians who went to São Tomé in their youth or childhood. They live through the experience of working on the *roça*, at the same time that they search for an accordion in order to play in local events. Musicians who play in São Tomé often return to their homeland, and they are bridges between families in Cape Verde and those who stay in São Tomé, before they finish their contracts and return. According to those interviewed by Cidra, they would buy accordions in São Tomé (not in Cape Verde). These instruments would cause a stir among Cape Verdeans, who would then reinvent a *Kriola* subjectivity through practices related to dance and music. Migrants nurture their repertoire with emotions they experienced while migrating. As those emotions become shared references, expressive practices create a feeling of belonging to the same world of understanding,

attachments and subjectivity. In the case of songs, Dias (2011) analyses those – based on the *morna* and *coladeira* styles – which emphasise the theme of immigration in general. According to Bialoborska (2016, p. 99), Cape Verdean contract labourers would sing different music styles on the *roças*. There were also *tchabeta* dancers who took part in the balls. However, as those styles were sung on the *roças*, they were not well known among the inhabitants of São Tomé. Nonetheless, after independence in 1975, they would become more interested in the cultural activities available on the *roças*. Through the art of *tchabeta* performance on the *roças*, Cape Verdeans and their descendants would reinterpret their original cultural practices. This is brought up by Carla Semedo (2016) in her analysis of musical narratives of the groups Ouro Verde and Raiz di Tera. Both were created in São Tomé in order to explore how Cape Verdeans have made use of a new territory (namely, São Tomé) as their point of departure and in order to fashion counter-narratives (of protest, criticism and humour). According to Semedo, the *batuko* bands have fashioned narratives that not only convey information, but also make visible the experience of Cape Verdean contract labourers. Moreover, they also sing about the various migratory waves in different countries. Summing up, Cape Verdeans generally consider that theirs is a migration which has transnational practices. Dias (2011) considers music as a form of communication based on transnational practices, and observes that Cape Verdeans have constructed a series of mechanisms that allow the maintenance of links between migrants and non-migrants. The continuity of this society in time and space depends on various practices shared among migrants. The music produced by Cape Verdeans is fundamental to the construction of ties that unify their diasporic society.

The merging between music and other forms of art exists for the *Kriola* community, which is no longer divided between the diaspora society and those who remain on the islands. In relation to forced labour in STP, it is in the main literary texts (especially poems) and newspaper articles that have started to spread information about forced migration and labour. Rocha (2010) has observed that, as the number of articles, criticisms and poems about forced migration and labour kept piling up, as they tackled their subject, a ‘great degree of unanimity’ would arise among journalists, researchers, writers and artists from different generations. It is this assumed unanimity which leads to a notion of continuity and fusion – beyond borders – and to the feelings underlying a *Kriola* subjectivity of migration. Fusion is present not only across generations, but also, equally, in the arts (that is, literary, musical and others artistic expressions).

The first to tell the story of migration are consecrated artists and journalists. In order to better capture their sensibility at the moment of creation, I find it useful to notice or scrutinise how they create their works. Travel is a

fundamental element in their artistic production. It is possible that the three trips made under contract by Nha Balila, a *batuko* and *fição* singer, have had a transformative influence on her career. This great artist has been to São Tomé island. After her return, she kept to those music styles. Later, in the 1980s, she would create her *batuko* band, Bali Pena ('It Pays' or 'It is Worth the Trouble').¹⁵ Zé Luis's life is also an example of the relevance of travel to the subject's artistic production. Zé Luis went to Príncipe Island with his parents under contract. Together with labour, music was also part of his life 'para matar a saudade' ('in order to keep homesickness away'). Besides working as a cabinet-maker, this musician returned as an adult to Cape Verde, where he started singing in serenades as well as taking part in other diverse cultural and musical activities. In this singer's repertoire is included the Cape Verdeans' unofficial anthem, 'Sodade' (by Zeferino). The lyrics bring up his own experience as the son of contract labourers.

However, there is concomitantly a space-time that precedes migration and seems just as relevant – in relation to inspiration and the creative impulse – as the moment of departure. Cidra (2002) considers that the social experience of music, poetry and dance within community networks represents the main medium of relating emotionally and intellectually with one's territory of origin (namely, Cape Verde). Knowledge about the migratory experience in this way includes references to music and poems. It is a knowledge acquired before that experience. From a young age, the Cape Verdean child listens to voices telling the story of migration (Canut & Sow, 2014, p. 10).

Canut and Sow see in the migratory experience and the figure of the migrant the fundamental elements of the creation of language, and of artistic and discursive production. They employ the notion of the *disneur* ('teller', 'performer', 'rhetorician'): this notion encompasses the voice of artists in a polyphonic register, amateurs or professionals, producers of a single work or of a multitude of artistic expressions. In their text, the *disneur* is the traveller who, when he creates and expresses himself, recollects the multiple senses of the word 'migration'. The creative impulse in writing, or any form of expression, on the part of the migrant, is therefore nurtured by various experiences (prior to departure), and comes forward during the migratory experience.

In the domain of writing, the expression 'migrant writing' has been chosen by

15 www.portaldoconhecimento.gov.cv/bitstream/10961/238/3/Anexo%202%20-%20Personagens%20do%20batuko.pdf.



ILLUSTRATION 4.2 Daily street scene in São Tomé – a woman vendor hides from the sun
SOURCE: MILTON GURAN

many scholars, such as, for instance, Robin (1989), in order to describe the literary production of migrant writers living through feelings of displacement related to their destination. In French, the phrase *écriture migrante* ('migrating writing') has been consecrated by Haitian writers Jean Jonassaint (1986) and Berrouët-Oriol (1986). The phrase has come to define the production of texts by travellers, immigrants, displaced persons, refugees, exiles and expatriates. In this context, Harel (2005) and Moisan (1987) attempt to understand the literary styles that configure those texts. They have identified their poetic languages (a poetics of exile, loss – a transnational poetics). Another consecrated phrase is *migritude*, put forward by Chevrier (2004). He reflects on writing in the context of the migration of African writers. *Migritude* is a word that links migration and Negritude, especially when employed by West African Francophone writers. According to Chevrier, *migritude* possesses its own style and aesthetic value, preferential subjects, and emotions which are acknowledged during the experience of migration. The writing that I analyse (Berthet, 2018) is situated between the concepts of *écriture migrante* and *migritude*. My intention here is not to classify literary production, but rather to understand it as an expression, a cry, an expressive practice on the subject of displacement.

I follow Hadjukowski-Ahmed's perspective. He considers that writing in exile is constructed in a space of 'communicating vessels' that constantly defines itself (Hadjukowski-Ahmed et al., 2009). It is therefore not possible to ascribe a fixed definition to these expressive practices. Furthermore, I believe that 'writing regimes' of migration, or tin-trunk literacy (Barber, 2008) – that here would be a tin-trunk literacy of migration – includes all the elements described above. At the same time, the notion of writing regimes of migration opens up a range of possibilities, where writing is not pinned down to a single definition, style or language.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, diverse Cape Verdean writers and journalists circulated inside the archipelago, as well as along international routes to the United States, Europe and Africa. Great names such as Eugénio Tavares, Osvaldo Alcântara (1907–1989)¹⁶ and Onésimo Silveira (1935–)¹⁷ have lived through one or more experiences of migration. During their journeys, they pored over the migrating experience of others, their countrymen on the way to STP or elsewhere. However, many authors – for instance, the poets of *Certeza* and *Suplemento Cultural* and the writers of *Nova Largada* – wrote about São Tomé even if they had never gone there. In their interpretations, they bring up the colonial strictures for contract labourers destined for STP, as well as the working conditions imposed on them en route and on arrival. They would share similar aesthetic strategies to express the sadness and the shame of the colonial government, and their empathy with the contract labourers in São Tomé and Príncipe.

In the case of music, and, more specifically, musical modes of production, the *funaná* is one of the favourite styles used to talk about STP that enter into dialogue with the oral tradition of the Cape Verdean islands. If *morna* is seen as the musical style for the migrant's longing (*saudade*), *funaná* resonates with the migrant's experience. The latter is also often considered to be the musical genre that brought forth resistance to the Portuguese colonial regime.

16 www.antoniomiranda.com.br/poesia_africana/cabo_verde/osvaldo_alcantara.html.

17 www.escritas.org/pt/biografia/onesimo-silveira. *Toda a gente fala: sim senhor* was first published in the former periodical *Imbondeiro*, in Luanda, in its Caderno no. 9 in the 1950s (Silveira, 1960). In relation to novels, I can point to his *A sage das as-secas e das graças de Nossa Senhora* (Silveira, 1991). In his poem, 'O Regresso' ('The Return'), an uprising is announced through the forced migration to the *roças* on São Tomé and the Cape Verdean return to that island after a period of hardship: 'E trazem a certeza mordaz da desgraça irremediável / Esses escorraçados do destino que foram matar a fome / E regressam com a insaciável sede e fome de justiça' ('And they bring along the mordant certainty of irremediable misfortune / Those chased away by destiny who went to sate their hunger / And return with unquenchable thirst and hunger for justice') (Silveira, 1991, p. 80).

Concomitantly musical genre and ballroom dance, *funaná* has always been despised as corrupting and degrading.

I have nonetheless opted here for a musical genre more orientated towards women. This genre does not usually tackle, as far as my research could unearth, the voyage to São Tomé. *Batuku* (also known as *sambuna*) is a genre of music made by women for women. It brings up, with both irony and empathy, women's routine and their existential and social difficulties. *Finaçon* is sometimes considered a variant of *batuku*, but they differ in rhythm, for instance. *Finaçon* is a much longer (in terms of duration) improvisation than *batuku*. *Finaçon* is usually sung by a woman. However, I have chosen here to quote from a *finaçon* sung by a man known as Ntóni Denti Doro. In his case, (Berthet, 2018), Ntóni¹⁸ employs the drum in order to beat time to the accompaniment of string instruments. This follows a different pattern from that of the *batuku* bands, which do not employ (or at least have not employed for a long time) any instrument, beyond a piece of cloth stretched between the legs, to accompany the soloist's voice. The lyrics in the note below are from a *finaçon* sung by Ntóni Denti D'Oro: after a lament (*lamentação*), namely, 'Oia, nha mai nha mai', Ntóni introduces himself and employs a series of proverbs such as this one: 'Naris moda sinu dia dimingu' – that is, a nose that looks like a Sunday's church bell, or behaves as an accusing woman: 'N'ten fastiu di kel homi' ('I am tired of this man'); he then ends by mentioning the trip to Guinea, the land of abundance of both coffee and money ('Guiné txon di kafé/ Guiné txon di dinheru').¹⁹

His is an improvised composition that does not always present a logical sequence of linked verses. Ntóni Denti D'Oro declaims, cries and sings the tragic destiny of those who went to STP. He points out, with barely concealed

18 In 1998, Ntoni Denti d'Oro's first recordings came out as a CD: *Dez Granzim di Terra*, a CD devoted to Cape Verde in the series *Viagem dos Sons*, made by Tradisom for the Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses; and the CD *Cap-Vert Batuque et Finaçon*, launched in France. It was the result of recordings made during a programme of Radio France Culture.

19 Transcribed by Domingas da Costa Pina. This *finaçon* lasts for approximately 16 minutes.

Oia oia, nha mai nha mai [...] / Nhós mandan txabeta di bolta / Ami ki é Ntóni Denti d'Oro

Djan bedju n'ka bali más / Homi feiu galanti / Son kumpridu kadera baxu / Pé moda tranka simitéri / Boka moda kusa koba txon / Odju moda lua tras di kutelu / Naris moda sinu dia dimingu / N'ten fastiu di kel homi / Ki nen si kombersu n ka ta kré obi / Ami sin manda Pedru ba Guiné / Guiné txon di kafé / Guiné txon di dinheru / N'skrebel ku babu di nha boca / N'fla ô homi

Nhu mostran kasa Fernandi Sosa / Pan bá santa nomi na papel / Pan bá sul / Pamo nos tera ka teni nada / É flan o mininu bó é tantu pikinoti / N'ka ta pobu na kontratu / É pidin nomi di nha mai / É pidin nomi di nha pai / É pon nomi na papel / É mandan povu San Tumé / Oi mai oi mai [...] Ami sima n'odja un lantxa sai lá / Mediatu subi é djobén [twice].

emotion, the condition of labourers on the *roças* in STP, and their suffering in the face of colonial oppression. Through the lyrics of his song, we obtain a description of the cruelty perpetrated by Portuguese bosses, and references to and criticism about the migration to the south. He also mentions the story of a woman who, like many other Cape Verdean women, was the victim of sexual violence on the part of her boss. It is the only song²⁰ I know which describes the suffering of a Cape Verdean woman labourer, her confrontation with the plantation owner and the consequences of her rape on her return to Cape Verde, when the owner summons her to see him. The singer proposes subverting the colonial order. He is a renowned singer of *batuku* among women. He employs both *simboá* or *cimboa* (a music instrument) and a drum in a musical genre in which usually the only accompaniment is a piece of cloth stretched between one's legs. Ntóni Denti D'Oro here takes on his role as cultural transmitter as he lays bare his emotions, while emphasising in a sensitive way the drama of many Cape Verdean women in STP.



ILLUSTRATION 4.3 Children descended from Cape Verdean families at the agricultural colony (*dependência agrícola*) Plancas 1, São Tomé

SOURCE: MILTON GURAN

20 I refer here to recorded music. It is quite possible that *batuku* and *finaçon* groups have tackled this theme in unrecorded songs.

1 Migration to STP – a Common Link among the *Kriolos*

Forced emigration (called such by two researchers, namely, Antonio Carreira and Leão Lopes Filho) to STP is a 'story of the wretched'. Innumerable authors, artists and writers, whether or not they have travelled to STP or other destinations, have been inspired by the tragic and traumatic experience of emigrants in STP. The paradigm of the contract labourer²¹ is quite common, in essence, in the poetic and musical repertoire of the archipelago, where it has become a favourite theme for expressive and artistic creations.

Even though most of these artists did not live through the tragic experience of migration to STP themselves, they did manage to create common ties of attachment with those who were contract labourers, and their descendants. The former, of course, had migratory experiences of their own. Thinking about migration implies adopting an approach which involves circling around, that is, making, among other movements, an all-round circular movement. In my view, the way in which these artistic creations are in movement with their authors, singers and listeners puts them within a plural territoriality (*pluriterritorialidade*). In this context, they are concomitantly reconstructed and reinterpreted by the migrating imaginaries that remain linked to the islands.

The *Kriola* subjectivity of migration is the source of sensitivity that unites the migrants. Independently from destination, it creates the necessary empathy for understanding the diverse forms of migration practised by Cape Verdeans. The subjectivity and sensitivity of poets and composers, as well as their creative impulse, have helped them in the process of narrative inclusion of the contract labourer in art. Through different aesthetic choices and diverse styles of music, authors and artists come together in order to translate – in a melancholy or vehement language – the process of labour contracting. They are assumed to unanimously portray STP as a tropical inferno. They associate their work with images and representations which have left their imprint on all generations of Cape Verdeans. To listen to narratives about the contract labourers of STP is to listen to the history of the country told through its artistic repertoire, feeding into the imaginary of its historical emigration. The latter has left scars and traumas in the history of Cape Verde. As they sharply criticise the forced migration to STP, artists interrogate their own identity and their own relationship to the contract labourer. They reconstruct an imaginary of sentience and ordinariness. Moreover, the styles, heterogeneity of expression and attachment to their own society of writers and singers allow for the

21 This phrase was proposed by Nadir Souza.

structuring of political struggle, and the experience and expressive practices of music and poetry.

The emigration to STP has always been feared, denied, criticised. It did not even guarantee an improvement in personal finances or health for the migrants. The historical and collective memory created in relation to Cape Verde's artistic repertoire is then shared by *Kriolos* spread around the world. It becomes a transnational memory. Emigration to STP could never be an initiatory voyage of discovery. For those who returned to their homeland, they had already become other people, because, in the eyes of those who stayed, they carried the stigma of colonial violence (Diome, 2009, p. 166).

Above, I have often employed subjectivity as a key to a better understanding of the links between art and migration. I am reminded in this regard of a quote by Angolan poet Mario Andrade, about the poetic contribution on migration to STP.

From the urban periphery or from the sanzalas [slave quarters] to the roças and mines, the path of the contract labourer has been a living, bloody testimony to the routine of Portuguese colonialism. Forced labour has undoubtedly been the most tangible scourge inflicted on the society of the lands of the continent and the islands. In this way, poets, as they become aware of that vast undertaking of objectification, have found an adequate style to express the horror of those facts, and extract the ultimate meaning of the emerging revolts.

quoted in DUARTE, 1977, p. 12

Glissant has translated in other terms the notion of a thought common to the islands and their artists. For him, it is an inclusive thought that offers an alternative to authoritarian thoughts. He calls it *pensée archipélique* ('archipelagic thought'). Should we perhaps think of *Kriola subjectivity* as rooted in an archipelagic thought – namely, a thought capable of translating the emotions of those who circulate, a thought common to Cape Verdeans spread as far as the eleventh island of the archipelago?²² It would be premature to answer in the affirmative; nonetheless, this serves as the starting point for a reflection which I would like to develop in the future. I should close this chapter by explaining that I have tried to link my intuition with the arguments I have come across along the way, against the background of my field research, various readings and listening to artistic expressions. My chapter is full of gaps, imprecisions,

²² The archipelago of Cape Verde is made up of ten islands. A popular saying has it that the Cape Verdean diaspora lives on the eleventh island, that is, the world.

uncertainties and repetitions that may require an extra effort on the part of the reader. In this way, my reflections have become fragments glued to these pages, leading me to play here the role of a *glaneuse* (female gleaner), on the basis of a (purposefully) non-linear narrative and reasoning.

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Family Matters: Creolisation and the Production of a Sign in Luanda (Angola)

António Tomás

Family has become in recent decades the most important social aggregator in Angola, particularly in the capital of Luanda. It is not that kinship no longer has such relevance, or that people are not building forms of relatedness in other ways. What has changed, however, is that family has come to be related to the process of class formation. Since the early 1990s, Angola has been through a transition from socialism to capitalism as the principal way of organising the national economy. Up to 1975, Portuguese colonialism curtailed every path Angolans could fathom to accumulate wealth. The socialist regime that took over at that time, when the country became independent, did the same, in the name of the 'socialisation of the means of production'. However, things changed in early 1992, when the country swerved to capitalism, and some people were faster than the others in accumulating wealth. To justify this distinction, they could not say that they had inherited anything from their ancestors. They could argue, however, that they were fitter than others to accumulate on account of the symbolic capital they had. Being members of prominent families, a socially identifiable patronymic, or being descended from a known patriarch would do the same job. That was the condition for the transformation of symbolic into real capital. In this sense, capitalism became a matter of sign production.

In this chapter I am less interested in tracing the genealogy of this process, although I will mention it, than I am in discussing the modes by which family, as a sign, has come to dominate Luanda's social landscape. To do so, I will be analysing a couple of ethnographic vignettes and discussing *The Book of Chameleons*, by José Eduardo Agualusa, to gain insight into the emergence of the sensuous quality of names in Luanda.¹ I also will discuss *Gloriosa Família*, by Pepetela (1997), in which the question of the ideological formation that animates family names provides interesting ethnographic material. Both novels are staunch critiques, if not parodies, of the importance Luandans attach to

¹ The first edition of *The Book of Chameleons* was published in English in 2007. It was translated from the Portuguese version, entitled *O Vendedor de Passados* (Agualusa, 2004).

family and particularly to their family names – whenever they have a sound one. But as we have learned from Bakhtin, novels are heterogeneous, open to different and contradictory meanings, and sometimes they even help to disseminate the meaning that their creators intend to criticise (Bakhtin, 1981). I read these novels for the ways they help to crystallise the consciousness of an *époque*. For novelists cannot help but work with the signs their cultures make available to them.

Novels have played a central role in the construction of modern Angola. Visiting Angola in 1976, Gabriel García Márquez noted that a great number of the members of the then recently founded União de Escritores Angolanos (Union of Angolan Writers) were nationalists and a number of them had spent time in the prisons of the Portuguese colonial regime.² Novels were not only instrumental in imagining the new nation, but they were also sites of experimentation. The variant of Portuguese that is spoken today in Angola, or the idea that the Portuguese spoken in Angola had its own characteristics, was for the first time rehearsed in the literature of Luandino Vieira (2006). Later on, the literature of the likes of Vieira became part of the pedagogical programmes for the next generations of Angolans. The point I am trying to make here is that novels, in Angola and elsewhere, should not simply be seen as sites of the reproduction of reality. In some instances, they create or validate signs that become reality.

The fundamental question this chapter purports to deal with concerns the production of signs or, more specifically, the conditions that preside over the emergence of particular kinds of signs, in this case the family. Here, in a way, I am attempting to put Karl Marx upside down. For Marx, although the fetish was embedded in the commodity itself, culture, the category that encompasses kinship, was the reflection of relations of production. In Angola, however, because of the nature of production itself, which is largely limited to the off-shore exploration of oil, symbolic production comes first and has then to be translated into physical capital. I agree with Franz Fanon, then, when he writes that in the colony, ‘the economic structure is also the superstructure’ (Fanon, 1963).

1 (Not) Giving Name

To illustrate the ways in which family matters have become an issue of public concern in Angola, it is sufficient to dwell on the case of the alleged daughter

² In fact, one of the first organisations was founded in post-colonial Angola, in November 1975. Agostinho Neto, the first Angolan president, was himself, as a poet, a member of this organization (García Márquez, 1999).

of the former president of the republic. In 2010, news circulated in the country that there was a woman, originally from Congo, claiming to be a daughter of the president of the republic, José Eduardo dos Santos. Although the public television station TPA had not reported such news, the president felt the need to be interviewed so as to stop the rumours.

What is quite interesting in this is that dos Santos has always been a very circumspect person. He may be fond of the reproduction of his image on the national currency and on billboards all over of country, but these images appear as if they were part of a cult of personality that he does not condone, and that takes place beyond his own volition. In the last thirty years, only two journalists have had the chance to interview him, namely the Portuguese journalist Maria Elisa, in 1991, and more recently, in 2003, the (also Portuguese) journalist Henrique Cymerman. Dos Santos avoids crowds, he is not even popular among Angolans, and he rarely speaks off-script. In this regard, if he has become the most powerful institution in the country, dwarfing even his own party, it is because he has succeeded in building what in a different context has been called a 'rhetoric of invisibility' (Gil, 1995).

That said, the president caught the whole country by surprise when in September 2010 he responded to a journalist of TPA who had approached him to ask a 'personal and intimate question' (YouTube, 2010). Interestingly enough, the journalist did not have to spell out the facts that he wished the president to comment upon, asking him simply if he had heard the rumours that were circulating through private press outlets claiming that dos Santos had fathered a Congolese child during the years that he was living in Congo Brazzaville, in the context of the national liberation struggle being waged there in the early 1960s. That child, now a grown woman called Josefa, was then in Luanda claiming his paternity. Dos Santos spoke to the TV station, during prime time, for four minutes, without being interrupted by the journalist, on facts of his life that he had never commented on publicly. He started his remarks by saying that he had not read the material – he has never admitted that he reads the private press, which he cannot control as he controls the public press – but that members of his family had briefed him on the contents of the reports. He then commented on the allegations. He first advised Josefa to keep looking for her father, since, according to the information she gave, 'Mr José Eduardo dos Santos' – referring to himself in the third person – was not her father. Secondly, he challenged the evidence Josefa gave regarding her paternity. She was looking for an 'Edú', which is a diminutive of Eduardo, but he had never been called by this name. 'I am not Edú. I am José. In my house, my relatives call me Zé'. He then proceeded to give a long list of the names he had been called by since his years in high school. Eduardo, he construed, was not his name but his father's name. Furthermore, dos Santos said that he had arrived in Congo in November

1961, when he was nineteen years old, and left for the Soviet Union in July 1963, at the age of twenty. During those months, he had only thought of Angolan politics, and had not befriended any Congolese family, let alone had sexual intercourse with a Congolese woman. Therefore, he philosophically concluded, 'there cannot be any child' (ibid.).

Dos Santos only weighed in on the hotly debated subject of his possible paternity to stop the ubiquitous rumours. Some people also speculated that dos Santos was only having a private conversation in public with members of his family, who had received Josefa Matias with the promise of introducing her to her alleged father. In this sense, dos Santos was sending a message to that part of his family, while reassuring the other part, particularly his heirs, that he would not recognise any other child. A vast majority of commentators on popular Angolan news sites, such as *Angonotícias*, for instance, wondered why dos Santos did not simply submit himself and Josefa Matias to a DNA test so as to prove or disprove the veracity of her allegations, since by publicly commenting on such matters he was giving his word against scientific evidence, or against something that could be proven scientifically.

But this was not necessary, since it was not the truth that was at stake here. What was important was the voice of the president, or that he addressed the matter in his own voice. In a system of signs such as the one in Angola, where dos Santos is the master of a 'master signifying' system, or the chief encoder of the encoding machine, he not only creates statements, but also the conditions of validity for these statements (Austin, 1975). In this sense, what is relevant here is not whether Josefa is dos Santos's daughter, but whether or not he will recognise her. By this gesture, dos Santos was performing an illocutionary act, which has been defined by Austin as performing an 'act in saying something' (Austin, 1975). Or, as Alexei Yurchak has suggested in a different context, dos Santos, in this case, was engaged in a performance that had to be not true or false, but rather successful or unsuccessful (Yurchak, 2013, p. 258). In this sense, calibrating the success of dos Santos's utterances requires us to deal with the conventions and the proper context in which dos Santos's speech act was deemed successful.

Furthermore, this vignette also reveals another very important aspect of Luandan political culture: the importance people attribute to names and family names. It is noteworthy that the thrust of the argument for dos Santos to refuse the paternity of Josefa was her failure to call him by the proper name: José, or his nickname Zé (since Edú is his father's name, even if for the whole country he is also known as Zé Dú). This shows the extent to which names in Luanda have a sort of double contingency (Luhmann, 1995). A name is not only the designation by which someone is known. Whoever addresses another person by a name is marking the degree of relationship with that person. In this

sense, this is to say not just that intimate people have the licence to call people by their nickname, but that the name by which one chooses to address someone indicates the pattern of the relationship between the addressed and the addressee. In this sense it is understandable that some people take their father's first name instead of their father's family name, since this is how a given family sees the continuation of the father in the son. For instance, although in Angola, as everywhere in the Portuguese former colonies, people tend to take their family names as the last name, in Angola some people may have their father's name as the last name. A person called Miguel da Silva Pedro, for instance, is likely to have taken Pedro, his father's name, after da Silva, his family's name. However, even in this case, the family name is no less important, as I will show in the remainder of this chapter. Luandans, by the way they pronounce names, can turn common names into marks of distinction. In the Portuguese of common usage in Luanda, people may say that a given person *belongs* to a given family: 'ele é dos da Silva' (he is of the da Silva family); it is implicit that anyone who hears this knows who are the da Silvas, and that those da Silvas that are referred are not any da Silvas, but a very particular cluster of da Silvas.

So, the point here is that to be a part of the family is to be granted the right to use a particular name, or to be granted the opportunities associated with a particular class of people, or a cluster, that is associated with a particular name. This, as we will see throughout this chapter, may give a number of advantages – a licence to pursue certain careers, for instance – but it also gives people a share of or access to channels of distribution. The link between family and economy does not have to be rehearsed here. Long ago, Marx and Engels made the case that the formation of family is the product of capitalism, especially when it comes to matters of inheritance (Engels, 1972). In Luanda, however, in the context of the emergence of capitalist forms of appropriation, this is not the case yet. For someone like Josefa, for instance, the desire to be part of dos Santos's family is motivated less by the expectation of inheritance, and more by the opportunities that such association can bring (Marques de Morais, 2011). Key to this is that family has been conceived of as a unit of production. I will come back to this later.

2 The Seller of Past or Genealogical Anxieties

In the novel by the Angolan writer José Eduardo Agualusa, *The Book of Chameleons*,³ the main character, Félix Ventura, has a very uncommon métier:

3 The original title is *O Vendedor de Passados*, or the *Sellers of Pasts*. I prefer to refer to this book by its original title because something seems to be lost in the translation.

he sells pasts or, less poetically, he fakes genealogies. His business card reads: 'ofereça aos seus filhos um futuro melhor' ('provide your children with a better past') and his clients are members of the 'new bourgeoisie', or people who need a good past, 'a name that resonates nobility and culture' (Aqualusa, 2004). To forge personal histories, he has to have an eye on history. He is an archivist, a collector of facts, storing news from newspapers and TV, which he uses in quite contradictory ways: as the necessary supplement of truth that gives subsistence to his fictions, but also as a way to vindicate the truth. He also uses the same material when he suspects that the president of the republic has been replaced by a double, by comparing the hand the president uses to make his signature in his archived footages of TV news.

Ventura sees himself as an artist, and his work as not simply faking documents, for the construction of genealogies, and the insertion of a subject into a given family tree, requires more than that. It is important that the subject inhabit the space that is opened up by the invention of memories. This is what takes place when, one day, Ventura is visited by a new client who wants to become José Buchmann. Ventura provides him with fake documents, such as an ID, a passport and a fake biography. He is the grandson of Cornélio Buchmann, a Boer who migrated to Angola at the beginning of the twentieth century. He is among the South Africans allowed to live in the southern Angolan locality Chibia, founded by Portuguese from the island of Madeira. Ventura and Buchmann become friends, and the first observes the second going through a metamorphosis, by changing the way he dresses, the way he speaks and so on.

Later in the novel we learn that José Buchmann is the Portuguese Pedro Gouveia, who used a fabricated identity to perform an act of revenge for the torture he was subjected to during the events of 27 May 1977. Although, the novel lacks verisimilitude, in the sense that in the almost lawless society of post-war Angola nobody has to go through all of this to commit a crime, the book is more a satire of the attachment to family name in contemporary Luanda than a commentary on vengeance. There is, for instance, the story of a minister who hires Ventura to dust off his genealogy. Ventura not only inserts him in the family tree founded by Salvador Correia, the liberator of Angola from the Dutch occupiers in 1648, but also ghost-writes his memoirs, in which this genealogy plays an important part.

Although this story seems to have been taken from the canon of magic realism, there is some truth in it. In fact, Aqualusa has only translated into novel form a number of stories that have circulated for years in Angola, mostly in Luanda, about the anxieties over family names. I can give an ethnographic example that shows the extent to which Luanda's reality was a major source of inspiration for Aqualusa. Once, in 2009, I went to the Banco de Poupança e

Crédito (Bank of Savings and Credit, BPC) to interview a veteran clerk who, in the summer of 1975, had taken part in the founding episode of the Angolan National Bank, called the 'Assault on the Bank'. Ever since the Carnation Revolution had taken place in Lisbon in April 1974, and it had become clear that colonialism was coming to an end, settlers had increased their remittances to Portugal. To prevent the soon-to-be country of Angola from experiencing a financial haemorrhage, a number of low-ranked Angolan clerks took over the bank and nationalised the reserve.

Now retired, the former clerk received me in the towering BPC building, where he still maintained an office, to discuss the details of the 'Assault'. During our conversation, I tried to ask him various questions on the subject I was interested in, but he kept changing the topic to the history of his family. His family name was Moreira, a quite a common family name, and yet he considered himself *a* Moreira from the main branch of the family tree, and thus a direct descendant of a Portuguese ancestor who had moved to Angola in the early nineteenth century. More significantly, he told me that over several years he had painstakingly amassed information on his family history, which he had then tried to publish in the form of an illustrated book. But he had not done so because he encountered resistance from a cousin who threatened to sue him if he published the book. His cousin was the son of a single mother, who had raised him and his siblings by washing clothes at home for white clients during late colonialism. This is a common story in Luanda for people who came of age during the last years of the Portuguese presence in Angola. And Moreira's cousin himself had recounted it many times. It was in the heyday of socialism, Angola was the 'fatherland of workers', and people sought to emphasise their working-class roots. But things have changed since then, and in the quest for belonging to the burgeoning national bourgeoisie a 'better past' has to be invented.

3 Creole Society

Perhaps in Agualusa's satire, Moreira's cousin would be good material for Ventura's creative powers. But reality in Luanda, as elsewhere in the world, is always more complex than anything fiction can convey. 'Past', or 'genealogy', is simply one of the terms by which the family sign comes into being. If we may use here de Saussure's distinction between diachronic and synchronic identities, genealogy only explains the term 'succession', or, as de Saussure has it, 'relations between successive terms that are substituted for each other over time' (de Saussure, 2011, p. 140). The other element is selectiveness, which,

although it also cuts through time, is more synchronic than diachronic. For understanding the case of Angolan families that claim the status of quasi-nobility, the reflections of Denise Youngblood on the disappearance of her black grandmother from her narrative stories is worth consideration (Youngblood, 2001). Although Youngblood is addressing a very different context, what is relevant here is the relationship she construes between the family and the nation to suggest that the criteria by which certain family histories circulate and others are occulted may be related to the body politic and its politics of memory. Or, as she puts it, the rhetoric of family is only supported when 'defended by the prevailing national ethos, and sustained by the centrality of a specific kind of people' (*ibid.*, p. 64).

I follow Youngblood in these considerations, since she provides a very interesting alternative to the terms in which family, or kinship, have been debated in much of African studies. The critical purchase of such a line of enquiry reveals not only the relationship between family and nation, but more importantly the relationship between family and ideology. If nationalism is the production of the nation's imagination, as Anderson (2006) so powerfully argues, the family in Angola is the best site through which to understand nationalism.

The powerful Angolan families claim to have ancestors among, or to be related to, the creole society that flourished in the late nineteenth century (Dias, 1984). Although the Portuguese crown claimed possession of the Angolan territories, Portugal did not have the capacity to fully dominate the vast country. So a number of natives gained great prominence in various aspects of national life: in the army, the clergy, the colonial administration and commerce. Some of them became prominent journalists, and intellectuals who flirted with nationalistic ideas of liberalism current at the time.⁴ As the economy of Angola was particularly dependent on slavery, the fortunes of the native elite were anchored in the slave trade. Still today, a part of the distinction between those who belong to the elite – within the same families – and those who do not is tacitly predicated on the distinction between those who are descendants of slave masters and those who are descendants of slaves.

Local families of Luanda lost their political prominence with the brief experiment in the administrative decentralisation of Angola, in the 1910s, when Norton de Matos was appointed Angola's high commissioner. De Matos decreed and created conditions so that the 'colonization by white families exclude[d] from the colonial nucleus individuals of black race' (de Matos, 1926, p. 30). So when large numbers of Portuguese came to Angola from the 1930s

4 For a discussion of the nationalistic project of this generation, see, for instance, Andrade, 1997.

on, and especially to Luanda, local families had to be relocated from the centre of the city to the new *musseques* (slums). A number of those families were descendants of the creole society of the late nineteenth century (Monteiro, 1973). This is why the literature on Angolan nationalism persistently remarks the protest of Angolans against the loss of certain privileges that the members of these former elites experienced, and sees this protest as continuous with more vehement liberation struggles (Laban, 1997). However, the history of Angolan families is more complicated than that.

If those names, as floating signifiers, have passed from one generation to the next, it was not on account of a patriarchal society that tends to preside over these things. Rather, single mothers guaranteed the transmission of the family names. The family story of Moreira's cousin, rather than being the exception, is in fact the rule. Although some members of Angolan society had been prominent in the colonial period, the colony did not offer them the conditions for the reproduction of any privileges. Fernando Mourão, for instance, says that it was not as a result of being dispossessed of their land by the state that those traditional families saw their prominence dwindle in the subsequent decades. Those families' patriarchs have many offspring, which has contributed to the dispersal of their wealth (Mourão, 2006).

Access to education was limited, and with the transformation of Angola into a settler colony, precisely those Africans who held elevated social positions quickly moved down the social ladder. Very few households subsisted intact from this process. Polygamy was common. A significant number of the Angolans who attended school in the 1960s⁵ were raised by single parents. Some of them took the names of their fathers, who had other families, and sometimes had their tuition paid by them (Mourão, 2006). But this generation relied mostly on the effort of mothers, washing white men's clothes to make ends meet. It was not uncommon for women to have children with different fathers, but raise them by themselves, or with the help of an estranged father. These women were the guarantors of the continuity of those family names that later served as the symbols of the emerging bourgeoisie. This is the case for many families that may now claim to be descended from powerful masters in the nineteenth century. When those who make these claims are pressed to tell the stories of their families, one finds out that the central figure is not a patriarch, but likely a woman, who had children with different men, and whose children took their various fathers' names. That some of these names have

5 Portuguese colonialism intentionally thwarted the progress of Africans. Until late 1950, a number of laws prevented Africans from advancing beyond primary education. For a discussion on these laws, and their eradication, see Oliveira, 2006.

become respected, and that their bearers have rewritten their genealogies, is to a considerable degree the work of economy and ideology, and is related to the forms of self-justification by which Portugal attempted to maintain its colony.

From the standpoint of ideological production, this process began long before independence. When the British and the French were preparing their African territories for decolonisation, the Portuguese had either to follow suit, decolonising, or to justify their mission in Africa. Portuguese settlement in Africa was recent and could not aspire to bring about the sort of political reality that the South Africans were pursuing with apartheid. So when nationalistic claims for self-determination reached the UN, the Portuguese, to discredit them, made the case that their colonial rule was instrumental in creating multiracial societies in Africa. The theories the fascist Portuguese state employed were a free adaptation of the Luso-tropicalism proposed in the 1930s by the anthropologist Gilberto Freyre as the model to explain the formation of Brazilian society, or the so-called Brazilian racial democracy. For Freyre, Brazil was a racial democracy by virtue of the patriarchal structure of the society formed in the sixteenth century, between masters and slaves. Contrary to the British colonies of North America, Freyre argues, in Brazil masters mixed with slaves, sexually and culturally, and the outcome was the formation of a racially diversified society free of the racial tensions that characterised many other post-slavery societies (Freyre, 1980).

Freyre had studied in the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University, in the 1920s, where he was a student of Frantz Boas and Ruth Benedict. It is not a surprise that the work of Freyre bears the stamp of the ideas developed by this department in those years. Columbia's school of anthropology was then at the vanguard of debunking the evolutionist theories used to explain the formation of human groups. Instead of biology, this school would emphasise culture; instead of innate characteristics associated with races, this school would argue that the social milieu has a decisive role in cultural differentiation. Freyre comments on this, echoing, to a great extent, Boas's thinking: 'once we have discarded ethnic as well as geographic and economic determinism, and look upon race, milieu, and techniques of production as forces which condition human development without determining it rigidly and uniformly we are free to interpret this development in terms of its own dynamics' (ibid., p. 426).

More significantly, Freyre also stresses that the benign character of the Brazilian people is due to the plasticity of the Portuguese, who were already historically infused with and strongly influenced by Jewish and Moorish traits. In the absence of any good justification for remaining in Africa, the Portuguese appropriated Freyre's ideas to argue that the outcome of their presence in Africa was the formation of multicultural societies, as had been the case in Brazil

(Castelo, 1998). The Estado Novo, then, commissioned Freyre to do a series of works on the Portuguese in Africa, of which the travelogue *Aventura e Rotina* (*Adventure and Routine*) is the best known (Freyre, 1953).

The work of Gilberto Freyre has played out in the Angolan present in two major ways. Firstly, Freyre has brought to the Angolan debate the quest for the social blueprint, for the social matrix of the nation. Secondly, a strong sector of the population, especially the members of the remnants of creole society, promoted these ideas to mark the fact that Angolans are different from other Africans by virtue of having more similarities to the Brazilians. One of the staunchest defenders of such views is precisely José Eduardo Agualusa, the author whose novel was discussed above,⁶ but we will see that he is not the only one to deploy Freyrian concepts when we examine *The Glorious Family*, by Pepetela.

Agualusa's most recent novel is unapologetically Freyrian in the way it praises the adoption of the Portuguese language by Angolans (especially Luandans). Like Freyre, praising the benignity of slavery in Brazil, Agualusa erases the violence that is implicit in the fact that most Luandans speak Portuguese today as their own language. The novel revolves around a study of neologisms being undertaken by a Portuguese linguist of Angolan origin. He is particularly interested in the fact that, suddenly, a number of neologisms have been adopted by speakers of Portuguese in different parts of the world, including Portugal and Brazil. Agualusa's purpose is to celebrate the contribution of African languages to the formation of the Portuguese lexicon. To do this, Agualusa has to convert to his project the most recalcitrant enemies of the Portuguese order. In one chapter, Agualusa invokes one of the most illustrious descendants of the creole families, Mário Pinto de Andrade, the nationalist and founder of the MPLA, saying: 'when he was a child, Portuguese was the language of the house, and Kimbundu, the language of the yard. In the comfort of the bourgeois living room, people spoke Portuguese. In the yard, with servants and friends, people used Kimbundu' (Agualusa, 2010). He refers to these yards as 'amiable places of conviviality and exchange' (ibid.). Here we can see some of the topics discussed by Freyre in many of his studies: the house and its divisions, as the space for the masters and the space for slaves. Furthermore, there is something else at play here. It is not the case here that Mário de Andrade, as a nationalist and

6 Angola has an even stronger movement at odds with any form of foreign influence that was deemed neo-nativism by the Angola art historian Adriano Mixingi, who puts neo-nativists against neo-Luso-tropicalists, among whom he situates José Eduardo Agualusa (Mixinge, 2009).

critic of Luso-tropicalism, could not make such statements.⁷ What is lacking is the context that allowed the emergence of these cultural formations: colonialism. Only by the erasure of colonialism in such a context can one understand the extent to which the ideology that was once used to justify the presence of Portugal in Angola is still in use today, albeit for different purposes. The names, and the identities inherited from colonialism, are among those ideological devices still in place.

4 Family as the Economic Infrastructure

Frantz Fanon aptly stated that in the colony, ‘the economic infrastructure is also the superstructure’ (Fanon, 1963, p. 39). Fanon was referring to the colonial ‘compartmentalized world’ where ‘you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich’ (ibid., p. 5). For the post-colony, and particularly for Angola, this formula has to be reworked: the superstructure is the economic infrastructure. For the difference between infrastructure and superstructure, according to Marx, resides in the correspondence between the modes of production and the social relations that produce and are produced by the modes of production. In places such as Angola in general, and Luanda in particular, where the economy depends on oil and its potential for exchange at a price imposed by the consumer countries, exchange becomes itself the mode of production and produces the economic infrastructure.

I owe this line of reasoning to the exceedingly stimulating work of Jean Baudrillard on the relationship between exchange and ideology. Baudrillard attempts to dismiss the ‘absolute contingency’ (Morris, 2000) of use value by dismissing ‘the anthropological illusion that claims to exhaust the idea of utility in the simple relation of human need to a useful property of the object’ (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 132). Furthermore, Baudrillard castigates Marx for being so vigilant in the ways that he unveils the work of ideology implied in the constitution of fetishes, those theological things, while failing to apply the same kind of theoretical alertness to the analysis of use value, which Baudrillard calls a ‘mythology’ (ibid., p. 134). It is, then, in reference to a system of meaning deprived of use value that every commodity is for exchange, and names constitute commodities that may illuminate the question of symbolic production in Angola.

⁷ Although they had to be read alongside the lines of the critique of Luso-tropicalism by Mário de Andrade (Andrade, 1955).

Marx and Engels, as I have already said, have insisted that the formation of the concept of family is not unrelated to property rights in the context of a burgeoning bourgeoisie in Europe, which is inextricably related to the anxiety of inheritance (Engels, 1972) Such an argument depends on there being fixed assets to conserve and transfer, whether these assets are reproduced or are the means of reproduction. In Angola, this is not quite the case: the production of signs of distinction is related to the formation of the networks of distribution and the structures of belonging that are crucial in an economy where distribution is itself production. The collapse of the centrally planned economy paved the way for this change of course, in the sense that Angolan leadership became increasingly convinced that the path to development lay in the formation of a national bourgeoisie. Steady steps along this path were taken in 1992. But the peace agreement and the advent of multiparty elections brought about new fears. UNITA of Jonas Savimbi (the guerrilla movement which fought the MPLA's hegemony) was cleared to participate in the electoral process without disarming its men. Besides, not only was Jonas Savimbi convinced that he would win the elections in a landslide, but also he announced the witch-hunt UNITA would indulge in as soon as it took power. In the run-up to the elections, a number of members of the MPLA abandoned the country and many others sent their families abroad. A luxurious hotel-ship was docked at the Port of Luanda, presumably, to provide shelter to members of the Angolan government in case something went wrong in the days ahead or after the elections.

It was amid this climate of fear and concern regarding the future that a number of very prominent members of the MPLA convened, in September of 1992, a week before the elections, to create a conglomerate of economic interests called GEPI (Sociedade de Gestão e Participação Financeiras – Business Management and Equity Society). Various prominent members of the MPLA, MPLA representatives in the national parliament, and a major Angolan public foundation, Sagrada Esperança, signed the company's founding charter. GEPI's portfolio included a diversified set of economic interests including aviation, real state, fisheries, media and so on (Marques de Moraes, 2012). According to Rafael Marques, the idea that presided over the formation of this group, which would coordinate in the coming years the transfer of public assets to private ownership, was to put the vital sectors of the country's economy into the hands of the regime's most trusted people in such a way that if power passed to the opposition, these people could still manoeuvre the political scene by their hold on those vital areas of the national economy.

The orchestration of this plan transpired through a number of private conversations, and even found its way into the pages of Angolan newspapers. And cynically, this move has not been described as corruption or unlawful,

but simply as a necessary step in bringing about a national bourgeoisie whose interests and portfolio could then be disengaged from the state. The national bourgeoisie, then imagined, had on the one hand to become totally free from the state without, on the other, relinquishing its control. This is, for instance, the spirit of a famous op-ed piece written by João Melo, a prominent MPLA representative in the national parliament, journalist and opinion maker. In his piece published in the official *Jornal de Angola*, Melo begins by justifying the MPLA's model of wealth creation by citing Marx saying that 'capitalism was born with its hands full of blood' (2008). He suggests that corruption, the undue appropriation of state goods, was a form of wealth accumulation in post-colonial Angola as legitimate as capitalism was for Europe in the wake of industrialism. For him, there is no other way. Colonialism did not allow the formation of a local bourgeoisie, and during socialism private property was subsumed under the 'collectivization of the means of production' (ibid.). That said, the only avenues open for private accumulation had to pass through the state one way or another. He then enumerates the five major ways in which Angolans made fortunes in private business through or with the state: (1) taking advantage of the strategies of the commissions; (2) buying state property at low prices; (3) arbitrating between currency, in the context of a double exchange rate; (4) using privileged information; (5) taking advantage of a position in the government to create business, by demanding participation in projects presented by others, demanding bribes to allow projects to go through, or putting some projects in their own names, or in the names of figureheads (ibid.).

In this way, a small group of Angolans detached themselves from the whole population to become members of the first bourgeois class in the post-colonial country. The first phase was then concluded. Melo also voices another assumption that has gained currency among this privileged circle: this loophole had then to be closed. This is being achieved in law through the recent interventions of the president of the republic, on the basis of claims about the high levels of corruption in the country. He did this first through a speech in which he pledged 'zero tolerance' for new cases of corruption, suggesting also that old cases of corruption, especially those of illicit enrichment, would be pardoned.

However, the loophole could not be closed, since the class of Angolans who, thanks to the operations Melo describes, became part of the national bourgeoisie has never become economically autonomous. This class of people still depends heavily on the state to run their businesses. This has partly to do with the structure of the Angolan economy itself: the extraction of oil in Angola takes place in enclaves and, as Ferguson states, 'very little of the oil wealth even enters the wider society' (Ferguson, 2005, p. 378). In this context, then, the circulation of money is not anchored in production, but rather in exchange,

arbitrage and the myriad ways assets can be produced by controlling the paths of money. In brief, proximity to the state is still the only way wealth can be accumulated and, more importantly, maintained. It is more the rule than the exception that the trailblazers of Angolan capitalism still run their businesses from their official government offices.

These officials of the state are also involved, or have members of their families who are involved, in the country's different economic ventures. In this way, family has functioned as the linkage between the public and the private, between the state and society. The resources of the state pass along the channel controlled by those with access to the means. For such an endeavour, alliances have to be made. For the most part, as Melo notes, family settings such as the traditional Saturday late lunches are the occasions when such exchanges take place. Or, as Melo points out, it is at marriages and funerals that 'Angolans do the real politics' (Melo, 2008).

5 Symbolic Reproductions

No other family in Angola has claimed nobility more than the Van Dúnems. They are represented by various members in the government, and in the office of the President. In their family trees, there are various doctors, generals and colonial clerks who occupy the highest offices available to Africans. They claim to have their origins not in nineteenth-century creole society, but in the seventeenth century. According to this narrative, the founder of the Van Dúnem family was a slave-trading Dutchman, part of the army that occupied Angola from 1641 to 1648. As royal concessioners, they were the owners of the land that stands not very far from what is today the airport of Luanda, which was taken by the state to build the neighbourhood of Cassequel (Mourão, 2006). Like many other creole families, they fell into disgrace during late colonialism, and only after independence, and particularly since 1992, have they reclaimed their status of quasi-nobility.

The foundation of the Van Dúnem family is the theme of the novel *Glorious Family*, written by Pepetela. Although it is a historical novel, whose actions take place in the seventeenth century, Pepetela is clearly writing about the Angolan present, since the kind of social relations he describes are unapologetically contemporary. The novel has some Freyrian undertones, as I have already mentioned. It is not a coincidence, then, that the subtitle of the novel is precisely *In the Time of the Flamingos*, according to Freyre, 'a phrase the country folks still use in referring to something unusual, extraordinary, marvelous, almost diabolical, a piece of engineering or art which seems to them beyond the

technical ability of a Portuguese or a native son' (Freyre, 1980, p. 6). Through this connection, part of the intention of the author is revealed. Pepetela has argued many times that the Dutch occupation of Angola marked the moment when this territory fell under the control of Brazil: not only during the occupation of a part of Brazil by the Dutch (from 1630 to 1654), who occupied Angola to take hold of slave supply, but especially after the liberation of Angola by an army financed and equipped by Portuguese settlers in Brazil. Portugal would only effectively gain control over Angola at the time of Brazil's independence, in 1822, and particularly with the official end of the South Atlantic slave trade, in the mid-nineteenth century. Like Agualusa, Pepetela may have also been moved by the attempt to explain the formation of Angola through Brazilian Luso-tropicalism.

Any attempt to read Pepetela's *The Glorious Family* univocally may be complicated by the simple gesture of putting this novel in the context of Pepetela's oeuvre. Pepetela – a white descendant of a family with four generations in the country – is the Angolan author whose oeuvre is most associated with the formation of Angola as a nation. He is a practitioner of a kind of demiurgical literature halfway between myth-making and nation-crafting. A member of the MPLA almost since its foundation, in the early 1960s Pepetela was an organic intellectual in the strictest Gramscian sense: as a 'constructor, organizer and permanent persuader and not just a simple persuader', who is endowed with 'organizational and connective' tasks, exercising the functions of social hegemony and political government' through building hegemony across society (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12). In this guise, Pepetela wrote the first textbook of Angolan history, taught in guerrilla camps early in the 1960s, when the project was to justify Angola's autonomy. More significantly, Pepetela is also the author of the widely read *As Aventuras de Gunga* (*The Adventures of Gunga*), which narrates the life of a boy who was killed by Portuguese soldiers for refusing to reveal the location of a guerrilla military camp. The books were part of the educational curriculum for Angolans who attended school in the first years of independence.

In this sense, as Frank Marcon suggests, citing James Clifford, the oeuvre of Pepetela is allegorical, insofar as the 'allegorical dimension of a novel is its capacity to convey something else beyond what is written, something like a moral of a narrative, that constitutes itself as a moral in the head of those who read it' (Marcon, 2005, p. 20). The ultimate goal of Pepetela was to narrate the nation itself, or the project of nation unfolding since independence. Furthermore, Pepetela also served as the deputy ministry of education, and his books have benefited from wide dissemination throughout the country.

In the late 1980s, Pepetela parted ways with the MPLA and his novels became more critical. He is the author of a novel called *Os Predadores* (*The Predators*), whose plot revolves around the formation of the national bourgeoisie through the schemes that Melo outlined, by the conversion of public assets into private wealth. *The Glorious Family* is part of this intermediary moment when Pepetela is no longer writing the nation, but he is not yet openly criticising what the national project has become. Although *The Glorious Family* is assumed to be a satire of the Van Dúнем, and their pretensions to quasi-nobility, it is nonetheless allegorical. If, on the one hand, Pepetela is deconstructing the myth of the Van Dúнем family's direct descent from Dutch occupiers – suggesting that Van Dúнем descendants may have inherited the name, since it was the practice that slaves took the names of their masters – he is also, on the other hand, invested in working on a structural template of the Angolan family. In this sense, the relevance of the novel for this chapter's argument is to be found in the moments when it fails to be historical. For instance, Pepetela credits the Van Dums (the name of the family found in the novel) with having invented the Saturday, which in Luanda is the day the extended family meets for late lunches that often last late into the night. This is the moment that Melo had in mind when he refers to the family lunches as the occasions at which the country's powerful families discuss business and politics.

The Glorious Family narrates the machinations of a Dutch trader, Baltazar Van Dum, who is an inhabitant of Luanda before the occupation of Angola by the Netherlands, in 1641. The Van Dums are a self-contained and independent family, a unit of production. Baltazar Van Dum could have built his house within the perimeter of the fortification, which is where white people live. But instead he lives on the outskirts, not very far from what is now Quinaxixe Square (in the city's centre). He is the owner of a dozen slaves who work for him on the small plantation he keeps and in his trade with the natives.

Balthazar keeps an 'official wife', Dona Inocência, with whom he has eight children. These are the children of the Big House, recognised as such. The others, the ones not recognised, live in the yard with the slaves, even if many of them have a skin colour and facial features that leave few doubts that they count among Van Dum's progeny. One of those children is Catarina, only a year junior to Nicolau, Van Dum's eldest son. Catarina helps at home with the domestic chores, like a simple maid, for Dona Inocência wants to constantly show her that 'she was inferior in rights to her children, born in the home, and according to every precept of the Catholic Church' (Pepetela, 1997, p. 22).

The Van Dums are a unit of production in the sense that every member has to channel his/her effort into working for the family in any capacity. Women

help in the house, and men and boys work in the slave business or in agriculture. Freyre was an anthropologist with a keen interest in houses and architecture, and his books are full of descriptions of how people live. Such is also the case for *The Glorious Family*. The Big House is a vast one-storey structure, surrounded by the slave quarters, in a yard with other smaller houses used as warehouses and rooms for free slaves, slaves and animals.

The businesses that Van Dum conducts, selling slaves or crops or other products, depends on the alliances he can forge with government officials. It had been this way with the Portuguese and it was not different with the Dutch. So for Van Dum, there is no separation between family and politics. His business opportunities depend on his offspring marrying key people in the colonial administration. For instance, he offers his daughter Matilde to a French Huguenot military officer, saying: 'I would like to be your father-in-law, it has been such long time since we have done business together' (ibid., p. 280). Implicit in this phrasing are the ways in which Van Dum combines forming kinship with doing business. Furthermore, Van Dum loses business opportunities and business associates when one of his sons, Ambrósio, gets romantically involved with Angélica Ricos Olhos, a Brazilian prostitute deported to Luanda for having killed a Dutch military officer. This son's affair poisons Van Dum's relationship with Cornelius Ouman, the Dutch governor, and the other in-laws.

One day, another of his sons, Rodrigo, approaches Van Dum and confesses that he is deeply in love with a young woman. Rodrigo is the most trusted of his sons, seen as his principal heir, so Van Dum is sad that the marriage of Rodrigo will estrange him from his son. But he changes his mind when he realises that Cristina, the young woman Rodrigo is in love with, is the daughter of D. Agostinho Corte Real, who is the governor of the Island of Luanda (the island that at that time was still part of the powerful Kingdom of Congo). Van Dum reflects in his monologues on the advantages of such a marriage between Rodrigo and Cristina:

so far we have got only slaves from Kimbundu-speaking places, who are undoubtedly the best slaves. But it could be advantageous to spread the business within the Kongo kingdom. With the support of Mani-Luanda, who is an aristocrat of the kingdom, it may be easier to establish this liaison. And even among the Dutch we are going to have more influence. Ultimately, we are going to be kin to the governor of the Island of Luanda.

Ibid., p. 85

So when the families agree on the marriage of their children and the bride price is set, Van Dum is not surprised to realise that it is even more expensive than he previously thought. He raises the funds, for he only has his eyes on the

advantages of the marriage and the prospect of expanding his business to the Kingdom of Congo (ibid., p. 90). After the wedding, Rodrigo leaves his father's house and settles at the house of his father-in-law, from whom he receives help in starting up a business that consists of salting fish to sell. One time when Van Dum talks to Rodrigo, who briefs him on the progress of his business and the fact that his father-in-law gave him the initial capital for starting the venture, Van Dum realises that he can no longer count on Rodrigo to take over his business. He then turns his attention to Diogo, teaching him the nuts and bolts of his business. But the problem is that Diogo is one of the sons 'born in the yard and never recognised' (ibid., p. 113). Balthazar produces an illocutionary act, by giving his name to his son, by means of which Diogo becomes a legitimate member of his family: 'now you use my name, because you're my son, and you will take care of my estate in my name' (ibid., p. 115).

6 Conclusion

The incorporation of Diogo into the Van Dum family allows us to see how ideology fits into the broader discussion of family in Luanda. We have seen, as elaborated by Yurchak, that performance can be successful or unsuccessful. I have introduced an example of each type of performance outcome in this chapter. In the case of Diogo in Pepetela's novel, we have a successful performance, by which Diogo is authorised to use his father's name and, consequently, take care of Van Dum's businesses. By contrast, President dos Santos's refusal to recognise his alleged daughter – regardless of whether or not she is the daughter of the president – provides us with a case of unsuccessful performance.

My goal in adducing these examples is to demonstrate the ways in which belonging, or being included, in these powerful families may open up opportunities for symbolic production, or, in other words, to the myriads of material and affective advantages that may be available as a result of being part of such a family. More importantly, I am also gesturing to an understanding of family that takes into consideration some premises of descriptivism in analytical philosophy, regarding the relationship between the name and the cluster (Žižek, 1989). Kripke states that the 'referent of a name is determined not by a single description but by some cluster of family' (Kripke, 1972, p. 31). Kripke is referring to a name such as 'Aristotle'. To be identified as Aristotle, the philosopher, a number of descriptions have to be added to his name: that he was born in Greece, that he is the author of *The Politics* and so on. This scheme may also apply to the formation of these types of families in Luanda. Families are clusters, loosely associated with a name, to which a number of properties may be ascribed. This is, in the example already given, what allowed Moreira to conceive

of his family as a particular class of Moreiras. In the same way as Aristotle is not any Aristotle, the Moreiras form a group associated with a particular history and thus a particular place in society.

Pepetela's novel *The Glorious Family* is more of a satirical take on the Van Dums. But in talking about the emergence of the Van Dums, Pepetela cannot help but provide us with a template for the explication of the formation of urban kinship. And this tells us a lot about the relationship between ideology and cultural practice. It is not only the case here that Pepetela is a writer gifted in transforming local histories and percepts into novels. What is more the case is the extent to which novels, as ideological constructs, help in crystallising the worlds that are fictionalised. Thus, the circulation of an understanding of family and belonging through the mass media (as in the vignette on the intervention of dos Santos regarding Josefa that opened this chapter) is at the service of the 'distribution of the sensible', as Rancière would put it, within society.

In conclusion, this Chapter is about the production of signs, and more particularly the production of a very specific sign, family. My point is not that this has been invented, or created recently, for there is a history of kinship that shows the extent to which Angolans, and in particular Luandans, have always been attached to their kin. Here, I have tried to understand the production of signs in relation to class formation or the emergence of the national bourgeoisie. Suddenly, then, to be part of a group, or to be associated with a group, became a way in which symbolic capital could be turned into real capital. To make my case I have used two kinds of evidence. The first is gleaned from real life, and the second from novels. Here, my point was not only to show the ways in which novels and real life communicate. I wanted also to show the role of the novel in condoning, even while condemning, certain practices.

Here, the point is not just to read novels in order to interpreting how they reflect reality. Rather, at stake here is the extent to which novels, in particular the novels I have discussed in this chapter, are themselves the product of the process they describe, namely nationalism, or the implication of writers such Pepetela in the struggle for independence, but also the formation of the Angolan sensibility for family's names, through the influence of Luso-tropicalism.

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Caliban and the Black Atlantic: Connections Between Black Intellectuals in Brazil and the Caribbean

Joaze Bernardino-Costa

1 Introduction

The figure of Caliban harks back to the voyages of European navigators and their encounters with the New World. Years later he gained notoriety when Shakespeare (1564–1616) resorted to him in *The Tempest*. ‘Caliban’ in Portuguese is also an anagram of *canibal* or ‘cannibal’.¹ The word first designated the Carib Indians who inhabited the Caribbean, described as savages who would feed on human flesh. With the arrival of enslaved Africans, Caliban became African (Henry, 2000).

I have borrowed ‘Caliban’ as a metaphor-concept in order to refer to the Afro-diasporic population. The latter was racialised with the coming of colonial modernity. Differently from its original use referring only to the black population of the Caribbean, here I propose to expand its use in order to refer also to blacks in the Black Atlantic, that is, blacks in the Americas, Africa, Europe and the Caribbean. All of them have been linked through dialogue, interaction and exchanges going beyond the borders of nation-states.

The racialisation process to which blacks in the Black Atlantic have been subjected has come together with a lack of acknowledgement of their humanity. In other words, following Frantz Fanon’s seminal reading of colonialism, a zone of non-being has been created, where the white man’s imperial gaze has fixated the black man (Fanon, 2008). This zone of non-being described by Fanon corresponds to the established differences between conquerors and conquered. Aníbal Quijano (2005) mentions these differences from the perspective of the coloniality of power.

As a reaction against that long process of racialisation and dehumanisation, the Black Atlantic’s population has over time engendered political and emancipatory projects which aim at a process of complete decolonisation. Moreover, these projects aim to push forward the political and administrative

¹ The translation of this chapter was done by Fernando Rosa and revised by the author.

decolonisation carried out in the beginning of the nineteenth century in the Americas and in the mid-twentieth century in Africa and the Caribbean.

These political and emancipatory projects are generated from the Calibans' political and epistemic location. In spite of the fact that the diverse Calibans which we can locate in the Black Atlantic create knowledge from their specific locations, their discourses converge into an emancipatory project for a new humanism. This will allow the black population to engage their respective societies as historical actors.

In this way, the metaphor-concept of Caliban does not refer only to a monster incapable of speech. Differently from the character in Shakespeare's play, here Caliban becomes a transmogrified concept used to refer to Black Atlantic intellectuals. The latter think, talk and generate knowledge from their own location within the power relations of colonial modern society. Instead of being a problem, that location acts as a locus for enunciation which affords a privileged viewpoint on modern hegemonic society.

In this way, the aims of this chapter lie in a reflection on Caliban's location as a political and epistemic locus for knowledge production; and in the creation of convergences between the diverse Calibans in the Black Atlantic. In order to achieve this, I have divided the chapter into three sections. In the first section, I discuss a transformed concept of Caliban as knowledge creator on the basis of Aimé Césaire's reinterpretation of the Shakespearean play's Caliban as an African in the diaspora. In the second section, I attempt to describe the Black Atlantic as a space of connections and convergences of diasporic blacks beyond the notion of nation-states. Finally, in the third section, based on Abdias do Nascimento's works, I indicate that the connection and convergence of blacks through diaspora is only possible through the affirmation of blackness, understood as a political and existential act. This act allows the black person to not lose herself in the nation's hegemonic and homogenising discourse.

The affirmation of blackness is particularly important and meaningful as a counter-hegemonic narrative in Brazil, in particular, as well as in general in countries formerly colonised by Portugal. Tomás's chapter in this book also calls attention to that fact. *Luso-tropicalismo* – in the words of one of its great proponents, Brazilian Gilberto Freyre, a model of civilisation created by Portugal – was made into state policy in Brazil, and later in Portuguese colonies at the time (Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique). According to Freyre (1940), Portugal created a model of colonisation and civilisation in the tropics whose hallmark was not economic and political interests, but instead empathy with the land and peoples of the tropics. Freyre argued that this resulted, from a racial point of view, in a deep and exemplary miscegenation that lessened the importance of race. *Luso-tropicalismo* came with the belief that the 'world created by the Portuguese' had solved racial

issues. It created within the Brazilian intelligentsia – and even Brazil’s foreign policy – an avoidance of Africa and the Black Atlantic’s intellectuals.

The affirmation of blackness, through Caliban’s metaphor, means a rupture with Brazil’s hegemonic pact. In contrast to that pact, it brings affirmation and a search for affinities not only with intellectuals in the Black Atlantic, but, in particular, with our African roots.

2 Caliban as Knowledge Creator

As a character in *The Tempest*, Caliban is a slave. Prospero – the deposed Duke of Milan – cannot do without him:²

But as ‘tis,
We cannot miss him; he does make our fire,
Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices
That profit us.

Act 1, Scene 2

Caliban, described as a ‘thing of darkness’, only learned how to talk through the intervention of Prospero and his daughter, Miranda:

I pitied thee,

Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other when thou didst not, savage,
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish. I endowed thy purposes
With words that made them known.

Act 1, Scene 2

The Tempest was inspired by the voyages of European colonisers.³ It constructs an image of Europe as a benchmark for civilisation, progress and modernity, in contrast to an unknown, barbaric and backward ‘New World’. For the imperial Prospero, the native Caliban is identical to nature, a cannibal, a child without language, and, for this very reason, potentially open to enslavement. Just like brute matter, Caliban’s labour should be exploited for Prospero’s imperial purposes. As compensation for Caliban’s work, Prospero should teach speech to him.

The Tempest’s plot represents a new view of existence as the global conquest of nature and of the history of the world in the process of being shaped

² All the extracts from *The Tempest* that follow are taken from Shakespeare, 2002.

³ The play is believed to have been written in 1611.

(Henry, 2000). As a key symbol of Europe, Prospero incarnates the role of a wise man who uses his magical powers, and controls nature for and submits it to his purposes. His knowledge allows him to control the natural resources of the island, Bermuda, where his daughter Miranda and he find themselves. This island was previously inhabited and ruled by Sycorax, an evil witch born in Algeria and expelled from there pregnant with child, namely, Caliban. Between Sycorax's death and Prospero's arrival, Caliban becomes the owner of the island. With Prospero's arrival, Caliban turns into a slave who unsuccessfully rebels against his master. In order to control nature, Prospero also counts on another slave, namely, Ariel, an ethereal, obedient spirit.

At the play's end, Ariel, the submissive slave, gains his freedom. Meanwhile, Caliban, as a rebellious slave, remains in captivity. However, he comes to terms with his condition at last, promising to obey Prospero, perhaps in order to one day be in his master's good graces and obtain his freedom from him.

It is important for my argument below to stress that even after learning how to use speech, Caliban still remains closely linked to nature, condemned to the condition of a subject of exploitation, domination and study. Besides, grasping his master's language does not confer full human status on him.

Shakespeare's play was recast in 1969 from the point of view of an African in the diaspora, namely, Aimé Césaire (1913–2008). There are two alterations and a new element in *Une Tempête*. As for the former, Ariel is now a mixed-race slave, and Caliban a black slave; regarding the latter, there is now Exu, an Oriša from an African religion who acts as a messenger between the spiritual and the material worlds. As he is responsible for linking the two worlds, he can make the link either easier or more difficult. In Césaire's reinterpretation of the play, Exu makes a quick appearance which disconcerts Prospero.

Ariel, in *Une Tempête*, is an ambiguous slave. He claims to be Caliban's brother: 'Brothers in suffering and slavery, but Brothers in hope as well' (Césaire, 2002, p. 26). Nonetheless, he acknowledges that both of them desire freedom, though through different means. Ariel avoids confrontation with his master. He also refuses to resort to violence; instead, he appeals to Prospero's conscience. At the end of the play, after several instances of loyalty to Prospero, Ariel is gifted his freedom.

Caliban is, on the contrary, convinced that Prospero will not acknowledge his humanity in exchange for nothing; that, rather, he is seeking to conquer it. In this way, continuous struggles come up between them. One of these struggles concerns learning language:

Prospero: [...] you could at least thank me for having taught you to speak at all. You, a savage ... a dumb animal, a beast I educated, trained, dragged up from bestiality that still clings to you.

Caliban: In the first place, that's not true. You didn't teach me a thing! Except to jabber in your own language so that I could understand your orders: chop the wood, wash dishes, fish for food, plant vegetables, all because you're too lazy to do it yourself. And as for your learning, did you ever impart any of that to me? No, you took care not to. All your science you keep for yourself alone, shut up in those big books.

Ibid., p. 17

The language mentioned by Caliban is language as not only a tool for communication, but a symbolic system that allows us to name, classify, sort out and represent things. Prospero has never shared that dimension of language, allowing for the production, control and dissemination of knowledge. Besides, Prospero has taken the legitimacy out of Caliban's knowledge in the name of the former's civilising mission.

Caliban's struggle has other dimensions. It is a struggle to establish his identity. Caliban refuses his name, because Prospero gave it to him during a fit of hate. Instead, he calls himself x:

Call me x. That would be best. Like a man without a name. Or, to be more precise, a man whose name has been stolen. You talk about history ... well, that's history, and everyone knows it! Every time you summon me it reminds me of a basic fact, the fact that you've stolen everything from me, even my identity!

Ibid., p. 20

Caliban tries not only to achieve and re-establish control over the world, but also to define his own identity through speech. Until this point, his identity had been defined by Prospero's imperial gaze. Prospero fixated him through a few stereotypes: monster, stupid, savage, ignorant, etc. Caliban will fight to give new meaning and sense to his identity through the control of representations and the construction of his own image. This will be a crucial fight for the conquest of freedom and humanity, as encapsulated in a nutshell in Caliban's last speech:

For years I bowed my head, for years I took it, all of it – your insults, your ingratitude ... and worst of all, more degrading than all the rest, your condescension. But now, it's over! Over, do you hear? Of course, at the moment you're still stronger than I am. But I don't give a damn for your power or for your dogs or your police or your inventions! And do you know why? It's because I know I'll get you [...] Prospero, you're a great magician: you're an old hand at deception. And you lied to me so much,

about the world, about myself, that you ended up by imposing on me an image of myself: underdeveloped, in your words, undercompetent that's how you made me see myself! And I hate that image ... and it's false! But now I know you, you old cancer, and I also know myself! And I know that one day my bare fist, just that, will be enough to crush your world! The old world is crumbling down!

Ibid., pp. 61–62

Differently from Ariel, who has gained his freedom through an act of condescension on Prospero's part, Caliban proposes to struggle, not to be assimilated by Prospero, but in order to transform the world as built by the latter. His discussion generates, for the first time, doubts about Prospero's identity and the world the latter has created: 'Well, I hate you as well! For it is you who have made me doubt myself for the first time' (ibid., p. 63). Prospero's doubt opens up the possibility not only of the transformation of the identity of each character on his own, but also of the relationship between them. Both Prospero's and Caliban's identity has been built through the colonial relationship as it divided those who were fully human from those who were only partially so.

The concepts-metaphors of Prospero and Caliban have inspired many studies and comparisons between Europe and other parts of the world. Those concepts-metaphors refer to the binaries peculiar to Western modernity: culture/nature, civilised/savaged, modern/traditional. The concept-metaphor Caliban, initially restricted in its references to the Caribbean (Henry, 2000; Retamar, 2004), came to be employed by other authors to indicate the contact zone between colonisers and colonised (Santos, 2006). In this new usage, Caliban becomes a transmogrified concept. Also, as it takes on Caliban's transformed identity, it is supposed that this 'dark being' takes part in the production of knowledge and reclaims its full humanity.

This concept-metaphor allows us to transcend national and continental borders, and think about networks of horizontal solidarity among diaspora blacks who have undergone a process of political, economic, cultural, cognitive and spiritual colonisation. At the same time, blacks have – akin to Caliban in Césaire's play – rebelled in order to reclaim their freedom and humanity.

This concept-metaphor allows black and African intellectuals and activists to go beyond national borders and establish trans-Atlantic connections. As will be seen below, intellectual, activist and artist Abdias do Nascimento is an excellent example of this trans-Atlantic dialogue, in the wake of other intellectuals such as Aime Césaire (briefly brought up both in Alain Kaly's and Fernando

Rosa's chapters in this book) and Keorapetse Kgosisile (the latter is treated in Phalafala's chapter in this book).

3 The Black Atlantic as a Space of Connection and Convergence of Calibans

Dialogues among Calibans happen mainly in the space which Paul Gilroy has called the Black Atlantic (both Kaly and Phalafala also mention his work in their chapters). The value of that space is that it places in the foreground the discussion on transit, communication, connections and convergences among diaspora blacks, beyond the nation-state. Not only black music, film and arts circulate between Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean and Europe, but also projects of emancipation, notions of autonomy and citizenship. The emphasis placed on the vernacular culture of the Black Atlantic represents the genuine value of mutation, hybridity and mixture. It is for the most part through the dissemination of a vernacular culture that aesthetic and religious projects can criss-cross the Black Atlantic. As projects of political emancipation circulate, so do black intellectuals and their ideas.

On the one hand, the concept of a Black Atlantic allows us to think about narratives not centred on Europe, from the perspective of those who have not been fully acknowledged in their humanity by modernity. On the other, these narratives allow us to see black people as actors and people with the ability to create intellectual legacies (Gilroy, 1993, p. 40).

From an analytical point of view, Gilroy's conception of the Black Atlantic has fulfilled its heuristic role, one that I have made my own here. However, we cannot subscribe to Gilroy's perspective as a whole, especially not his political stance, namely, his criticism of American racialism. He calls this last an ethnic particularism which then circulates across the Black Atlantic. In fact, Gilroy proposes giving up the concept of race for purposes of cognition and solidarity. He has made his position clearer in his later book, namely, *Against Race* (Gilroy, 2000).

Gilroy's attack against some black intellectuals and activists has made his theory attractive to various conservatives all over the world. Besides the issues pointed out by diverse critics of the Black Atlantic's monolingualism – namely, that it does not take into consideration speakers of French, let alone those of Portuguese and Spanish – there is an emphasis on black intellectuals from the United States. Moreover, one of its most serious issues is an abstract universalism as an alternative to dialogue based on the race of the Black Atlantic, and an

assumed passivity of the non-Anglophone in relation to the message of blacks from the United States.

Gilroy, in his conclusion to *The Black Atlantic*, stresses that politics in our century will not have as its main axis conflict based on the colour divide,

but the challenge of just, sustainable development and the frontiers which will separate the overdeveloped parts of the world (at home and abroad) from the intractable poverty that already surrounds them. In these circumstances, it may be easier to appreciate the utility of a response to racism that doesn't reify the concept of race, and to prize the wisdom generated by developing a series of answers to the power of ethnic absolutism that doesn't try to fix ethnicity absolutely but sees it instead as an infinite process of identity construction.

GILROY, 1993, p. 223

As mentioned above, we need not take on Gilroy's perspective as a whole. That being the case, some thoughts are apposite here. First, the borders separating the developed areas of the world from poor ones continue to be racially marked. The divide between wealthy and poor areas coincides with separation between whites or racially hegemonic groups, on the one hand, and blacks or racially subaltern groups, on the other. Unfortunately, overcoming the colour line (Du Bois, 2007) is not something that will happen only due to a political statement, but should instead include profound transformations to the economy, politics, culture, etc. Brazil has been a nation which has tried to overcome its racial problems merely by stating the 'myth of racial democracy'.⁴ This has not solved the racial issue in the country; instead, it has only postponed confronting it.

Next, Gilroy assumes that there has been a reification of the concept of race. He then suggests 'an infinite process of identity construction'. His argument assumes a supposed passivity of blacks in the diaspora in relation to the racial discourse originating in the United States. Once again, from a Brazilian perspective, that argument is questionable, to say the least. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and up until today, there has been a profound and wide-ranging consensus to the effect that Brazilian black identity reinvents itself at every turn. It is a rare black Brazilian intellectual who mentions race as a reified notion and natural essence. In its place, we find instead

⁴ A myth often ascribed to the work of Gilberto Freyre (translator's note). See below. See also Chapter 9 in this volume, as well as Chapter 5.

a recurring political act of self-affirmation as black (Ramos, 1957; Nascimento, 1978, 1982, 2002;). It is also a political strategy of affirming one's humanity. The act of affirming a black identity, among Brazilian black intellectuals, has been understood as an act determined not by biological condition or social structure, but instead by a political choice on the part of a political agent. Besides, that act has resulted from race relations in a strictly Brazilian context. It is therefore not the result of a presumed, ill-considered adherence to hegemonic ideas that may circulate across the Black Atlantic.

Gilroy's criticism of a presumed political essentialism implicitly comes together with the accusation that those who resort primarily to political identities are not sophisticated enough from a theoretical point of view. In this way, they can and ought to be discarded. In this sense, his criticism has served to block the process of political liberation rather than rally social actors around one political flag. In other words, his supposedly progressive criticism ends up leading to political stasis.

Instead of Gilroy's abstract universalism, I propose an 'other universalism'. I shall follow below Ramón Grosfoguel's discussion of Aimé Césaire.

In his resignation letter to the French Communist Party in the mid-1950s, Césaire strikes at the abstract universalism of Marxist Eurocentric thought in the following terms:

Provincialism? Absolutely not. I'm not going to confine myself to some narrow particularism. But I don't intend either to become lost in a disembodied universalism. There are two ways to lose oneself: through walled-in segregation in the particular, or through dissolution into the 'universal'. My idea of the universal is that of a universal rich with all that is particular, rich with all the particulars, the deepening and coexistence of all particulars.

CÉSAIRE, quoted in Grosfoguel, 2012, p. 95

The notion of a disembodied universalism is fundamental to my discussion here; it is in fact a synonym for the abstract universalism which I have critiqued above. Abstract universalism is a particularism which makes itself hegemonic, and presents itself as disembodied and disinterested, as it hides its place of enunciation (Grosfoguel, 2012). This is shown, for instance, by the hegemonic discourse we come across in Brazil, as it hides the point of view of descendants of Europeans through the idea of nation, on the one hand, while on the other it sees as particular the discourse of Brazilian blacks and indigenous people. That point of view also sees the discourse of the latter as subject to their bodies.

Differently from this, the other universalism put forward by Césaire allows for the co-existence of particularities, without the need for each particularity to conceal itself behind an abstract or disembodied idea. We can call such universalism that allows for the co-existence of particularities a concrete universalism. Differently from abstract universalism which establishes a hierarchical relationship, concrete universalism assumes a political project that sets up relations among diverse particularities on an equal footing. In this way, this universalism presents the possibility of a democracy qualitatively different from that based on abstract individualism (Grosfoguel, 2012).

This concrete universalism resonates with Abdias do Nascimento (1914–2011), one of the few Brazilian black intellectuals who can effectively travel, just as his books do, across the Black Atlantic. In an article from 1979 in *Quilombismo* (Nascimento, 2002), Abdias do Nascimento presents a definition of universalism:

Even though historical progress leads us to that radical universalisation, I want to go on loving myself and affirming my blackness which is, in itself, a universal value [...] My blackness is an integral part of my historical and spiritual being, and if the Western world goes on oppressing and humiliating the black man, and expropriating his humanity, it is up to the offended party to reclaim his humanity. That reclamation begins with the reinstatement of his integrity.

NASCIMENTO, 2002, pp. 152–153

Besides making explicit the economic dimension of what may potentially become a universal civilisation or concrete universalism, Abdias do Nascimento, similarly to Aimé Césaire, does not let go of particularity, nor does he intend to erase the speaking position of the subject that enunciates the discourse, in the name of an abstract universalism. Césaire and Nascimento therefore are of the same opinion when it comes to their understanding of universalism as a notion that does not abstain from particularity.

As Africans in the diaspora, each of them connects to the other, and they bring their political ideas and projects together within the Black Atlantic. However, at the same time, they affirm themselves as African-Brazilian and African-Caribbean in their respective existential contexts. Moreover, both of them affirm their Negritude, and throw themselves into a concrete struggle in their respective countries, without losing their Afro-Atlantic dimension.

This is a key transformation that I apply to the concept of Black Atlantic. This concept only makes sense for my purposes if it does not assume the erasure of particularism for the sake of an abstract universalism. Rather, I interpret

the Black Atlantic as a space that allows for exchange, swaps and dialogues that transcend national particularities while concomitantly allowing for the affirmation of blackness. It also strengthens its actors as they act upon their respective places of origin. In other words, I use the concept of the Black Atlantic here as a space of dialogue, reflection, connections and convergences that allows for the affirmation of a body-geopolitics of knowledge (Mignolo, 2003; Grosfoguel, 2012).

The affirmation of blackness or the black body is fundamental as a counter-discourse to that of modernity as based on an abstract universalism. This last privileges a white point of view without stating it. The black body's affirmation, or a Caliban's perspective, brings to the fore the struggle of blacks in the diaspora, against the persistent legacy of colonialism: the binary division of the world between the domains of being and non-being (Fanon, 2008). Similarly to Caliban, diaspora blacks also inhabit a domain of non-being. In this way, they are not seen as fully human, or as knowledge makers. Instead, they are the raw material or bodies at the service of the construction of Prospero's world.

The affirmation of one's body is therefore the condition for dialogue among Black Atlantic Calibans. It is the place of enunciation of a body that, in some of its geopolitical localisations, has been seen, through Prospero's imperial gaze, as sub-human or not-human. To affirm the black body, instead of assimilating it in Ariel's manner, is the condition for knowledge production from Caliban's point of view – a knowledge that can question Prospero's identity, as well as that of his world.

4 The Affirmation of Blackness as a Condition for Caliban's Dialogue in the Black Atlantic

In this section I shall tackle the central importance of the affirmation of blackness as a necessary step towards a Black Atlantic dialogue. I have chosen to focus here on the oeuvre of Brazil's Abdias do Nascimento.

The affirmation of blackness will play a double political role here. First, it will allow us to contemplate the possibility of constructing a black narrative within the nation-state. Next, it will also be the rallying point and link with other black subjects in the Black Atlantic. In other words, dialogue in the Black Atlantic assumes a body and a geopolitics of knowledge in which black subjects do not lose themselves, or become invisible within an abstract universalism.

The history of the black movement in Brazil in the last century merges with the life story of Abdias do Nascimento, a painter, poet, dramatist, politician

and black intellectual. Among his numerous achievements, I will stress the following: in the 1930s he took part in Frente Negra Brasileira, the most important black organisation in the country at the time. He founded in 1944 the Teatro Experimental do Negro ('Black Experimental Theatre'). In 1968, while he was in the United States on an exchange visit with the local black movement, he could not go back to Brazil due to the radicalisation of the military dictatorship oppressing the country since 1964. During this period, he taught at State University of New York in Buffalo and at Obafemi Awolowo University (formerly the University of Ile-Ife) in Nigeria. Back in Brazil, he became a congressman in 1983, and in 1994 a senator intensely engaged with racial issues (Nascimento & Nascimento, 2000).

The time he spent abroad was fundamental to his dialogue with the Black Atlantic. As a lecturer at SUNY and Obafemi Awolowo University, Abdias do Nascimento had the chance to discuss his ideas with C.R.L. James, Aimé Césaire, Wole Soyinka (who directed Nascimento's play, *Sortilégio* (Sorcery)), Stokely Carmichael, Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Amílcar Cabral, Julius Nyerere, Samora Machel, Agostinho Neto and Léopold Senghor. He discussed the ideas of Fanon, Du Bois, George Padmore, Malcolm X, Richard Wright and Marcus Garvey. He got involved in the anti-apartheid dialogue related to South Africa, and followed the struggle for decolonisation in Mozambique and Angola. Abdias do Nascimento's encounter with and participation in pan-Africanism and the politico-poetic movement of *Négritude* reinforced his racial consciousness about race discrimination in his country. It also deepened his understanding of the need to formulate proposals for constructing an authentic democracy based on his nation's disinherited citizens. In order to counter the accusation that blacks in Brazil have imported foreign ideas, it is important to stress that the ideas of Nascimento and other Brazilian black intellectuals have converged with those ideas, projects and proposals from other blacks in the diaspora. The argument that Brazilian blacks were or are imitators of foreign ideas is the product of a perspective which is arrogant, to say the least, as well as incapable of taking seriously black intellectuals as self-reflexive intellectuals. Nonetheless, this does not mean that their ideas were generated in isolation. On the contrary, emergent ideas in Brazil's context converged with those generated in other contexts, and then the two sets of ideas entered into reflexive dialogue with one another.

The black man's/woman's affirmation will be the key to dialogue in the Black Atlantic. It will be the condition for the black man's/woman's participation in a concrete universalism wherein he/she need not conceal his/her geopolitical and bodily siting. From another perspective, the black man's and black woman's affirmation will oppose the assimilationist national ideology which has put forth the mulatto as the typical representative of the nation.

Brazilian society's hegemonic discourse was based until the 1990s on the myth of racial democracy (*democracia racial*) combined with the notion of whitening (*embranquecimento*) (Guimarães, 2006). That ideological perspective has been present throughout the twentieth century. It was believed that racial miscegenation or *mestiçagem* (*mestiçagem racial*) would lead to the whitening of the whole population. The main thrust of the myth of *democracia racial* – the harmonious, biological miscegenation between whites, blacks and Amerindians – was towards the whitening, never towards the blackening, of Brazil. If we start from an acknowledgement of the main thrust of the process of miscegenation, we notice, within the discourse on a Brazilian nation, an efficient racism, albeit one that is camouflaged, veiled and subtle. As a result of this efficient particularistic discourse in universalist disguise, the economic, sociocultural, political and military structures, as well as the main narrative on the nation, have been dominated by whites.

In this way, both internally and internationally, a discourse on the Brazilian nation has been made from Propero's or Ariel's perspective, the latter being the mulatto (or the light-skinned black) who is submissive and obedient towards the national hegemonic narrative. The mulatto has Europe as his reference point, a symbol of prosperity and modernisation. The mulatto desires to be white. We are faced here with colonialism's pathology as described by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*. The Martiniquan psychiatrist asks: 'What does a man want? What does the black man want? [...] The black man wants to be white' (Fanon, 1967, pp. 8–9). In Fanon's book, he analyses the Antillean black's frustrated attempt at wearing white masks. This attempt becomes frustrated because the black man will then be fixated by the other's imperial and racist gaze. That fixation is expressed in the most eloquent sentence in the central chapter of Fanon's book, 'The Fact of Blackness'. As he walks down the streets of Lyon, France, Fanon hears a child's comment:

Mama, see the negro! I'm frightened! Frightened! Frightened! [...] I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: Sho' good eatin.⁵

FANON, 1967, p. 112

⁵ Grove Press's translator has chosen to render *y'a bon banania* as 'sho' good eatin'. *Y'a bon banania* refers to advertisements for a powder for a sweet beverage (with chocolate) sold in France from the First World War until the 1960s. The ad supposedly depicted a *tirailleur sénégalais* or Senegalese (i.e. West African) French colonial soldier (from the mid-1850s to the 1960s), with a stereotyped, foolish grin on his face (author's and translator's note).

In a world divided by colonialism or the colour line, as mentioned by Du Bois, the black man is concomitantly both extremely visible and made invisible. He is seen merely through stereotypes, at the same time that he is not seen through his individuality. In this manner, from that perspective, all blacks are Shakespearean Calibans, raw material. They are all a body that is not capable of creating knowledge. In other terms, the black body has been made extremely visible through the imperial gaze, as an object of study, at the same time that he has become invisible as a knowledge-creating subject. Even as he creates discourses, those discourses have been ignored by the Prosperos.

The affirmation of blackness means that the black body, until now objectified by the stereotyped gaze of a hegemonic society, becomes a means of resistance and knowledge production. In this sense, central to the view of history from the perspective of blacks in the diaspora, is a gaze turned not only towards the past; instead, it is also a perspective capable of imagining another world, a world where the Western man's universalism can be overcome. In its place, there can emerge a concrete universalism that takes into account the various particularisms.

When was Caliban ever able to present a black view of Brazilian history?

The black man's version of his own history only emerges from his own affirmation as a black man. As he affirms himself as a black man, he takes leave of the one-sided discourse of the nation-state. Abdias do Nascimento's affirmation as a black man took place early in his life. Nonetheless, a peculiar and unique moment of his affirmation happened during the General Assembly of the Second World Festival of Black Arts and Culture in Nigeria in 1977 (FESTAC '77). After his submission and request for participation had been turned down by the festival's organisers, Brazil's official delegation tried to silence him. At that moment, Nascimento raised his voice, and referred to himself not as a representative of Brazil, but as a 'survivor of the República de Palmares' (Nascimento, 1978, p. 40).⁶

To identify oneself as a survivor of the República de Palmares, or as a maroon (*quilombola*) from Palmares, means to claim the right of not being diluted and erased within a national hegemonic discourse. This implies claiming Caliban's positionality and creating a discourse which takes into consideration, to my mind, the body and a geopolitics of knowledge. The latter is a knowledge with a strong decolonising potential. The Quilombo dos Palmares is a symbol

6 República de Palmares – more usually called Quilombo dos Palmares (*quilombo* is a maroon territorial community) – refers to colonial Brazil's largest maroon community, which is reckoned by some to have been organised as a polity or proto-polity. It remains a powerful symbol of black autonomy in the country (translator's note).

of thousands of other maroon communities which have existed across the country, but which did not have their existence acknowledged by the official historical narrative. From the point of view of the *quilombos*, instead of an idyllic history of racial mixing (the myth of *democracia racial*), we are faced here with a history of resistance against a process of dehumanisation of the black population. We are also faced with a space of creativity in which blacks in the diaspora have sought a new way of living through the invention of a new society.

My mention of *quilombos* above is not merely a descriptive historical and sociological mention, but one related to an idea and a power. Both bring to today's world an ideal and practice of liberation offering the possibility of transcending the feeling of hopelessness for blacks who want to affirm themselves as black. Abdias do Nascimento conceptualises his *quilombismo* (marronage) based on the histories of resistance of Brazilian blacks, provided by the countless cases of *quilombos*:

Quilombos have come about from that vital demand from enslaved Africans, in an effort to reclaim their freedom and dignity through flight from captivity and the organisation of a free society. *Quilombismo* was structured through forms of association. Those forms might come up in the middle of hard-to-access forests, which made their own defence and social-economic organisation easier. They might also take on the forms of organisations which were permitted or tolerated, often with ostensibly religious ends (Catholic), or else aims which were recreational, charitable, sports-related, cultural or related to mutual assistance [...] They were veritable foci for physical and cultural resistance. All that network – associations, confraternities, clubs, societies, religious grounds (*terreiros*),⁷ religious centres and lean-to's, *afoxés*,⁸ samba associations (*escolas de samba*),⁹ *gafieiras*¹⁰ – were and are *quilombos*, now legalised by dominant

7 *Terreiro* is a word associated with the grounds or compounds belonging to Afro-Brazilian religions (translator's note).

8 *Afoxé* is a song and dance genre (or rather, genres) and ensemble intimately linked to *candomblé*, an Afro-Brazilian religion of Yoruba origin. As *candomblé* is invariably associated with *terreiros* (though not all, nor even most, *terreiros* are related to *candomblé*), by a synecdoche here *afoxés* become places (translator's note).

9 An *escola de samba* – literally, a 'samba school' – is a specific association, normally with a fixed geographical location, related to the song and dance genre of the same name. Each 'school' often has a distinctive style and separate tradition (translator's note).

10 A *gafieira* is a kind of traditional popular ballroom which features certain song and dance genres, often with an Afro-Brazilian origin or influence (translator's note).

society. On the other side of the law, there are those *quilombos* which were discovered and became known to us. However, both those which are legal and those 'illegal' make up one domain, a single human, ethnic, and cultural assertion, in a time which brings together a practice of liberation, on the one hand, and taking control over one's own history, on the other. I call *quilombismo* a complex of meanings, an Afro-Brazilian praxis.

NASCIMENTO, 2002, pp. 264–265

As praxis, *quilombismo* – differently from a society based on the abstract universalism of the nation – turns towards the construction of a democratic, pluri-cultural and, in the main, pluri-racial society. Differently from the homogenised nation, where blacks exist only if they assimilate or engage in miscegenation, in the democratic, pluri-cultural and pluri-racial society envisaged by Abdias do Nascimento, blacks are guaranteed the right to asseverate their own human, ethnic and cultural being.

This is where we find the main feature of a democratic, pluri-cultural and pluri-racial society: not only is there a formal guarantee in regard to access to jobs, homes, and free or affordable health care; there is also the call for black people's existence as black persons.

That implies a profound transformation in current society – one in which particularism hidden behind abstract universalism loses its privilege. It may in this way be repositioned so as to allow for the emergence of a concrete universalism. This last will in turn allow for a concrete universalism that will permit equal exchange among multiple particularisms.

In this way, instead of a single, homogeneous and hegemonic narrative of the nation, maroon practice allows us to contemplate multiple and plural narratives of history and existence. It is a new way of organising the field of knowledge, as well as a life where people who were until now erased, silenced and made inferior are able to affirm their existence and narrate their own history.

In this way, taking up a position as a Caliban is an eminently political act and choice available to every black person in the diaspora. It is certainly not an essentialist position. It is also not exclusive to black people. Many white people have identified themselves with the political cause of Calibans, and have as a consequence worn 'black masks'. In this way, they have contributed to the possibility of constructing a pluri-cultural and pluri-racial democracy. Bringing in Caliban perspectives has also been relevant within the humanities in the Black Atlantic. In this sense, it is of the utmost importance that we de-centre Europe as a locus of creation of knowledge and discourse.

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PART 3

Race and Creolisation in the Atlantic



My Name Is Afrika: Keorapetse Kgositsile in the 'Black World'

Uhuru Portia Phalafala

The relationship between black South Africa and black America stretches as far back as the turn of the twentieth century. It is marked by intellectual exchanges and collaborations through letters and black periodicals, pan-African conferences, and sustained relations between South African exiles living in the black diaspora. The noted problem in the study of these exchanges (Masilela, 1996; Chrisman, 2000, 2002; Robolin, 2012) is that black South Africans almost always appear as mimickers of Afro-American culture, and Afro-America as the vanguard of black modernity. This chapter seeks to remedy this transnational literary state of affairs by investigating South African writer Keorapetse Kgositsile's prominent presence in the Afro-American periodical *Negro Digest*, later *Black World*. I put that periodical's editor Hoyt Fuller in conversation with Kgositsile to show how Kgositsile's immersion in Afro-American culture and politics, reflected in *Negro Digest*, challenged the narrow limitations of the 'negro' world, and agitated an expansive view of the diaspora among Afro-Americans, witnessed in the periodical's name change to the more inclusive *Black World*. I argue that the awarding of the second Conrad Kent Rivers Award to Kgositsile, at the helm of the black arts and black power movement in 1969, signal his important contribution to Afro-American cultural production.

I focus particularly on Kgositsile's deployment of his native Setswana language in his work that appears in *Negro Digest*, and build upon Brent Edwards's (2003) argument that black international cultures are characterised by a 'great majority of peoples of African descent [who] do not speak [...] English' as a first language, which concludes that 'the cultures of black internationalism can be seen only in *translation*' (ibid., p. 7; original emphasis). Elsewhere (Phalafala, 2017) I centralise the Setswana language in Kgositsile's work, and demonstrate how it recalibrates identity as an ongoing production of collective memory, entangled in his ongoing becoming in the black diaspora. There I show how African oral traditions and literary forms are productive, generative and transformative in his work published in black arts America, thus complicating and enriching scholarship on Africa's relationship with its diaspora. In his work, roots exceed ethnic and nation boundaries, and merge with his

diasporic routes, in a dynamic I propose we call *roots en route*. This heuristic is undergirded by literary critics (Henderson,¹ 1969; Raditlhalo, 2012) who have read Kgositsile as a bridge between Africa and America, as well as Kgositsile's own proclamation that 'Africa on the continent and Africa in America exist interwoven in my work' (Rowell, 1978, p. 31). *Roots en route* holds together both locally specific cultural inheritances *and* mobility in contexts of black internationalism. The heuristic still reframes the diasporic space as a vibrant, transformative locus of black cultural engagement as defined by Paul Gilroy (1993), but also factors in transnationally shuttled indigenous languages and aesthetics, their processes of being carried across through translation, and their cultural and political capital in black diasporic relations. I will show how African roots become the point of convergence and conviviality between Kgositsile, Fuller and the black world.

1 Setswana Roots and Routes

Kgositsile's essay 'Brother Malcolm and the Black Revolution' appears in the *Negro Digest* of November 1968, and in it he laments the death of Malcolm X. He prefaces his essay with Langston Hughes's poem 'Harlem', quoted verbatim. Kgositsile's opening lines state that he writes the essay 'with something bordering on fear', but,

also running through my mind are the following words of Setswana wisdom; a Motswana doctor throws his bones and when they tell him of an irretrievable loss he will say:

'Se ileng se ile
Se ile mosimeng, motlhaela-thupa
Lesilo ke moselatedi'

Kgositsile then proceeds to translate the Setswana proverb as, 'what is gone is gone / it has gone down the hole, the-unreachable-by-rod / the irrational (i.e. the unwise and ill tempered) is he-who-follows-it' (Kgositsile, 1968a, p. 42). This essay also appeared in the black arts movement's seminal anthology *For Malcolm: Poems on the Life and the Death of Malcolm X* (1969). It is important for

1 Stephen Henderson writes of him: 'Willy [Kgositsile] speaks from Black Africa to Black America; from Black America to Black Africa. He is of both worlds but not divided. There is a powerful harmony within him, a universal blackness' (Henderson, 1969, p. 118).

various reasons which I will outline here, before making my case for Setswana *roots en route*. The colossal figure of Malcolm x and his stature in the black arts and black power imagination has to be stressed here. Scholars of those movements mark the assassination of Malcolm x as the inauguration of the black arts movement (BAM). They offer a 'holy black arts trinity', with Malcolm x as the father, Amiri Baraka as the son and John Coltrane as the '(n)ever present holy ghost' (Fenderson, 2011, p. 5). Kgositsile expounds on this sentiment in his essay: 'to know you love, to know you are loved; this is supreme. This was, and will always be, the godly power in Malcolm, his energy, spiritual. Malcolm was our Sun, our Son [...] St. Malcolm was such a man' (ibid, p. 6). Kgositsile seems to postulate that Malcolm is the sum total of the holy trinity. What is fascinating about Kgositsile's relationship with the holy black arts trinity is that he grounds his reverence of it in its continuity with African knowledge systems and gnosis. More specifically, Kgositsile irrevocably associates Malcolm's, Baraka's and Coltrane's ideology with that of his domicile environment in South Africa, at whose centre was his grandmother, Madikeledi, the person he attributes all his knowledge to. Pivotal to this early education was her insistence on her grandson speaking only Setswana in the home, and reading Tswana literature. This shaped his political consciousness. In his interview with Rowell (1978) Kgositsile confides:

Although I am only a few years younger than Baraka, he had quite an impact on me as on any other black person in New York who was trying to write at that time [...] in terms of thinking, not style [...] I would say that the impact of someone like Baraka made or fertilized the ground, say in my mind, to be receptive immediately to people like Malcolm, Fanon, and others. What that did, too – which is interesting, because it might not have happened if I had not come here – was to open up in me memories of earlier wisdom during my young years in South Africa. Weirdly enough, I recalled a lot of things I had read in Tswana and Sotho literature, which, later, I think, informed the music or the rhythm in my work.

Ibid., p. 30

The impact of Baraka, Fanon and Malcolm, in terms of thinking, of ideology, opened in Kgositsile memories of earlier Tswana and Sotho (Sesotho is a cousin language of Setswana, alongside Sepedi too) wisdom during his young years in South Africa. More importantly, this wisdom would not have surfaced in his mind as 'wisdom' had it not been in relation to Malcolm's and Fanon's, as he seems to suggest. That is, the revelation of this gnosis – knowledge gained

through lived experience, as opposed to the scientific thought much celebrated by Western enlightenment and colonial modernity – as wisdom is rooted in pan-African dialogue. With regard to these years of accumulating wisdom in his youth, he explains to Rowell, ‘my earliest memories go back to two very strong women – my grandmother and my mother – in that order. Practically everything I write is tied up with some kind of wisdom I got from them in that hostile environment’ (Rowell, 1978, p. 23). Kgositsile’s choice of words in both quotes, ‘wisdom’ and not ‘knowledge’, subsumes a specific knowledge system, one that exceeds the boundaries of scriptural economy: oral traditions. This act of bringing Fanon’s, Baraka’s and Malcolm’s knowledge into relation with the wisdom of his grandmother and mother, as well as Tswana and Sotho literature, forges continuities between the epistemologies of his people and the black diaspora. This institutes the pan-African ideology that his people and those in the diaspora are one.

Kgositsile proceeds in his essay by postulating that Malcolm understood Africa as inclusive of African societies wherever they may be, and cites a stanza from his poem ‘The Elegance of Memory’, dedicated to his grandmother Madikeledi, as a reason for Malcolm’s pan-Africanist vision:

There are memories between us
 Deeper than grief. There are
 Feelings between us much stronger
 Than the cold enemy machine that
 Breaks the back [...] there are
 Places between us deeper than
 The ocean, no distances.

KGOSITSILE, 1968b

Malcolm’s spirit and determination is brought into close proximity with his grandmother’s (as well as Fanon in the essay in question). The above poem is one of four parts, clustered under the title ‘Point of Departure: Fire Dance Fire Song’, first published in the *Negro Digest* of July 1968. The four movements are prefaced with the following revealing anecdote:

A wise man told me in Alabama: ‘yeah, Ah believes in nonviolence alright. But de only way to stay nonviolence in dis man’s country is to keep a gun an’ use it’. Four years earlier another wise old man had told me the same thing near Pietersburg in South Africa. He said his words of wisdom in Sepedi.

Ibid., p. 44

Kgositsile creates clear arches between African oral traditions and those of Afro-America, as well as grounding both cultures' knowledge in that tradition. More importantly, he celebrates gnosis: these old men are 'wise', not from scientific knowledge but from lived experience. He demonstrates clearly in these poems in four movements that the 'point of departure' is a point of *return*. He decisively superimposes Tswana wisdom onto Malcolm's words:

'Revolution is based on land. Land is the basis of freedom, justice and equality', Brother Malcolm taught us. Because it is on land that a people builds a nation. The Setswana word for 'peace' is '*kagisano*', which literally means 'building together'. Brother Malcolm continued ...

KGOSITSILE, 1968a p. 9

Here Kgositsile uses 'nation' to allude to the Nation of Islam, which marks Malcolm's turn to radical politics, and concludes his essay with that nation's greeting 'As Salaam Alaikum' – 'peace be upon you'. This is particularly interesting because Kgositsile seemingly moves from land to peace quite incoherently, highlighting the challenge of spatial fissure and disarticulation² presented by the two disparate geographical sites. Informed by pan-African ideology, where 'there are places between us deeper than the ocean, no distances', Kgositsile draws from Setswana wisdom to imply that as much as revolution is fought over land, and the Afro-American struggle for civil rights is fought on American land while his particular struggle is for land in South Africa, the desire is the same: *kagisano*, or peace, which is the basis of freedom, justice and equality. It is worth noting here the proclamation of Leroi Jones (later Amiri Baraka, after converting to Islam) proclamation that 'in America "Black" is a nation', echoing the rhetoric of black nationalism of the day. The unifying factor and rationale for Kgositsile's solidarity with their struggle is that Setswana wisdom tells him that peace – the absence of struggle – is grounded in 'building together'. He was determined to build the black nation of Afro-America with them. This is how the dynamic of *roots en route* functions in his work; his Tswana roots exceed ethnic and nation boundaries to inform his routes, enabling his work to function as geopolitical and ideological bridge between black southern Africa and black America. Roots are a point of departure, and also a point of return.

When we contextualise the opening of this essay as I have done above, we can start to analyse what the Motswana doctor and the Setswana proverb are

2 Kgositsile himself was not a member of the Nation of Islam, and in fact at a later stage expresses his contempt at the shift from Jehovah to Allah, which he sees as delaying the revolutionary process.

deployed to do by Kgositsile. The wise doctor, not of scientific medical training, represents a gnosis that unifies Africa and its diaspora. Proverbs are gleaned from communal regimes of truth that inform the society's values. They are rooted in communal wisdom – in this instance, in Tswana wisdom. Kgositsile deploys the Tswana proverb in this essay to give universal status to a particular incident so that the gravity of it does not destroy the spirit of the people. Malcolm's death was a tragic and devastating loss to 1965 black America, hence Kgositsile opens his essay with the line, 'I write this with something bordering on fear'. This fear, this untimely death of Malcolm, and its blow is soothed by his routing of a Motswana doctor to ground this loss in a lineage of black pain in order to breathe a spirit of healing into the collective black wound.

He conjectures, 'we can now look at the festering sore, the tragedy of our dream deferred' (Kgositsile, 1968a, p. 6). He links these feelings of devastation in the present time to Africa, and to the Harlem Renaissance by citing Hughes. He also opens up future time, where as long as the dream is deferred there will be others who will die for the cause of black liberation, and who should also remember the wisdom of this proverb. His rationale is that we are here today because the spirit of those in Africa and in the middle passage was not defeated by white supremacy and colonialism, neither was the spirit of those on plantations in the making of America, or in Harlem in the first half of the twentieth century. This proverb advises us not to follow down the hole that which is gone, to try and retrieve it, for it is gone; but rather to map the trajectory of this pain to find strength to overcome and continue fighting. He advises us to follow in the ways of Malcolm, 'our monumental spiritual thrust' (ibid., p. 5). His body might be annihilated but his spirit is not gone; the spirit of Malcolm is a synecdoche for the spirit of the people, and must not be weakened.

We see the Motswana doctor appear again in the *Negro Digest*, now *Black World*, in November of 1972. This time he is in a short story, 'The Favourite Grandson', and he is once again invited to divine over death rituals. In this short story Kgositsile recounts the events leading up to, and after, the death of his beloved grandmother. The funeral was held in his natal village, mentioned in the short story, of Dithakong, in Mafikeng. After the burial followed the ritual of cleansing family members, which Kgositsile writes from the perspective of a pre-pubescent boy:

And cleansing! The mixture that doctor had prepared could not have been clean to anyone who had cared to look. He had had a sheep slaughtered; he had then taken excrement from its bowels, mixed it with some herbs from his horn, added water and, after all the relatives, first the men and then the women, had taken off all their clothes, he had dipped his oxtail

whisk in the sheep mess and whipped everybody all over their body with it. No, I was not going to have *that* all over my body.

KGOSITSILE, 1972, p. 56

A younger Kgositsile was innocuously disdainful of the traditional practices and ceremonies of his roots, as a child being raised in the city – ‘the people of the village, including all my other relatives, usually treated me as if I had, with malice, violated something sacred to the village by having been born and grown up in the city and not known the ways of the village’³ (ibid., p. 55). These two cited excerpts illuminate our understanding of our early psychological and social development: gnosis is experiential. At first the ways of the city and its promises of progress and modernity lure us, while the ways of our people seem moribund and archaic. Those in the cities judge the villages’ backwardness, and those in the villages look on with malice at those in the cities who have no sense of their customs and communal values and beliefs. There need not be a bifurcation, as Kgositsile shows in his work, between traditions and modernity, between Africa and its diaspora, between sets of knowledge systems. Continuity is cherished in his work, and he effortlessly uses a Setswana proverb to speak of Malcolm X’s death to the Afro-American community, as well as relying on the wisdom and rituals of a Motswana doctor to soothe his personal pain of exile. This way, the point of departure becomes the point of return through language – *roots en route*. The traditional rituals and ceremonies, the ways of his people in the villages, and their bones and oxtail whisks are routed to Afro-America, finding continuities and utility in that context. The presence of Tswana wisdom and roots in the *Negro Digest/Black World* challenges and enriches Africa’s relationship with its diaspora in those studies. I examine this below through Kgositsile’s relationship with Hoyt Fuller, the editor of that periodical.

2 Hoyt Fuller and the Black Aesthetic

In his ‘Journey towards a Black Aesthetic: Hoyt Fuller, the Black Arts Movement and the Black Intellectual Community’, Jonathan Fenderson (2011) conducts a study of the activist and cultural worker Hoyt Fuller. Fenderson’s study situates ‘Hoyt Fuller as the “midwife” or “dean” of the Black Arts Movement’ in his capacity as editor of *Negro Digest/Black World*, from 1961 to 1975. Founded

3 It is important to point out that Kgositsile only found out he was born and spent the first few years of his life in Dithakong, only after he returned from exile in 1990.

in 1943⁴ in Chicago by John Johnson publishers, the magazine served as a critical vehicle for political thought during the civil rights movement, and would be the mouthpiece of the black power movement and its cultural wing, the BAM. It is 'the largest literary magazine in American history' (Lewis, 2010). If the genesis of the black arts movement is marked by Malcolm X's death, then its conclusion is considered to be related to 'John Johnson's decision to stop the production of *Black World* magazine and [the] termina[tion of] its editor, Hoyt Fuller' (ibid), in 1976. Incidentally, the end of 1975 also mark the ends of Kgositsile's exile period in the USA.

Fuller, according to Fenderson, helped to rouse (inter)national sensibilities among black intellectuals, artists and activists, 'much like the position granted to Alain Locke by scholars of the Harlem Renaissance'. He was central to Kgositsile being dubbed a bridge between Africa and America in the black arts milieu, through Fuller's commitment to publishing Kgositsile's writing in *Negro Digest*, thus immersing him in the literary production of 1960s and 1970s 'African American' writing in a material and concrete manner. Kgositsile's work first appears in the *Negro Digest* as early as 1967, in which he is central to defining a burgeoning black aesthetic that would inform black arts cultural production. As a result, 'by 1968', as Natalie Crawford has observed, Kgositsile 'had become one of the central poets of the Black Arts Movement' (2007, p. 113). It is fascinating that Fuller is christened the Alain Locke of the BAM, for I seek to bridge the Harlem Renaissance with that movement through two key figures: Conrad Kent Rivers and Gwendolyn Brooks. These two poets, together with Fuller, fought and appealed for Kgositsile's place in the BAM. I shall return to this later.

In the intensifying fights for civil rights and rise in black power of the mid-1960s, writers wanted to 'establish a black literature founded on new aesthetic principle' (Lewis, 2010, p. 24). With Hoyt Fuller at the helm, these writers 'developed theories about the black aesthetic [...] in their essays and poems contributed to the periodicals' (ibid.). Kgositsile had been a firm advocate of this principle, and had stated in the *Negro Digest* of January 1968 that 'the establishment of "a black aesthetic" is the only future the black writer has':

4 *Negro Digest* was founded by the same publishers as *Ebony* and *Tan* magazines, and was issued on a monthly basis between 1942 and 1951, when it was discontinued. Publisher John H. Johnson wanted to renew the magazine and 'join in the presentation of "negro" news, covered increasingly in periodicals with international circulation' (Lewis, 2010, p. 19). The magazine was revived in 1961 and, until 1965, 'specialized in popular articles digested and reprinted from other magazines, many of them white in orientation [...] In both intention and tone, *Negro Digest* of the early 1960s was integrationist' (ibid.). The year 1965 marked a radical change in the magazine, with the emergence of militant writing in the black arts.

There is no other way it could be if the art reflects and reflects upon the lives of Black people. The point of view of Black writers is Black and their experience as Black people colors their ethics and aesthetics, if they are honest people.

Ibid., p. 18

In these early days of *Negro Digest's* transitioning to a more radical magazine, Fuller took a liking to Kgositsile, who brought to the nascent black arts movement a specific (South) African experience. Fuller formed a camaraderie with Kgositsile, based on the unique writing of the latter, whom the former published with great enthusiasm. He wrote about him in the above-cited issue, 'Kgositsile is a refugee from South Africa [...] Mr Kgositsile has the advantage of being familiar with many African writers unknown in America, but he also is very much a part of the contemporary black writers' scene in America' (ibid., p. 18). Based on these aesthetics debates, a seminal anthology of the period *The Black Aesthetic*, edited by Addison Gayle, was published in 1971. Gayle adapted Fuller's practice of including poets as theorists of the black aesthetics. Kgositsile's essay 'Paths to the Future' appears therein, and first appeared in the *Negro Digest* of September 1968. Also important to mention is another seminal BAM anthology, *Black Fire: Anthology of Afro-American Writing* (1968), which included Kgositsile's poetry despite the 'Afro-American' identity the anthology's title signalled. At this juncture, the two labels 'negro' and 'Afro-American' inadvertently precluded Kgositsile.

These events, alongside African American's repudiation of the label 'negro', led to the name change of the magazine from *Negro Digest* to *Black World* in 1970, based on 'Fuller's view that the magazine ought to be a voice for Black people everywhere'.⁵ The name change reflected Fuller's vision of reflecting 'the widespread rejection of "negro" and the adaptation of "black" as the designation of choice for people of African descent and to indicate identification with both the diaspora and Africa'⁶ – this after Kgositsile's work made frequent appearances in the magazine, in his capacity as a short story writer, essayist, poet, book reviewer and interviewer. He was a regular contributor to the magazine, and its covers regularly carried his name as a point of attraction for readers. It is these conjugations and convergences between Kgositsile's political and cultural activities within the BAM that informed Crawford's observation that Kgositsile's 'deep immersion in the [BAM]', 'the larger significance of his

5 www.english.illinois.edu/maps/blackarts/historical.htm.

6 www.english.illinois.edu/maps/blackarts/historical.htm.

presence in *Black Fire*⁷ and 'his Black Arts and post-Black Arts publications by Third World Press' reveal that 'the story of black diasporic relations during the [BAM] is only beginning to unfold' (Crawford, 2007, p. 119). Most importantly, she contends that his presence in the BAM 'complicates the packaging of the core identity of the 1960s and 70s Black Arts Movement as African-American'. I see this complication as productive to our understanding of Africa's relationship with its diaspora, and provide further research below that enriches this 'complication'.

Kgositsile's first collection of poetry, *Spirits Unchained*, was published in 1969 by Dudley Randall's Broadside Press, which positioned itself to publish the outpouring of poetry by black writers in that milieu. However, by 1968 Kgositsile has already concretised his position in the BAM, and had won the second Conrad Kent Rivers Award – named after the poet who had died the previous year – administered by *Negro Digest*. The award was in the form of prize money in the amount of \$500. According to literary scholar and writer Sterling Plumpp, 'Fuller made sure [Kgositsile] got the Conrad Kent Award'.⁸ The first Conrad Kent Rivers Memorial Fund Award had been presented to Carolyn Rodgers of Chicago in 1968. It took some convincing at the time, among a large pride of poets, to choose a South African native as the winner of a poetry prize that honoured African American poetry. However Fuller appealed with much conviction, supported by Chicago poet laureate Gwendolyn Brooks. Thus began the relationship between Fuller and Kgositsile.

In 1971 Doubleday published Kgositsile's third collection of poetry, *My Name is Afrika*. The collection was initially submitted to Columbia University as part of the requirements for the fulfilment of Master's Degree in Arts. In its manuscript state, it was dedicated 'For Malcolm and Frantz Fanon'; however, the published version is dedicated 'to Hoyt W. Fuller'. The introduction to the collection is written by Brooks, whom by now had formed a solid literary friendship and camaraderie with Kgositsile. Brooks had been part of an older generation of writers who saw the 1960s black liberation movements as positively turbulent. As Plumpp told me, Brooks 'was not afraid of the possible chaos that could arise from these young poets' (interview, 2014). Brooks 'wrote about black people with great eloquence' (ibid), and in her *Family Pictures* (1970) she pens three poems dedicated to 'Young Heroes', Kgositsile being one of them. This way Kgositsile became a permanent feature in the family album of the black arts era. 'Young Heroes: Keorapetse Kgositsile (Willie)' became

7 *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing* (1968) is the BAM's bible, edited by Larry Neal and Amiri Baraka.

8 In an interview conducted in Chicago in September 2014.

the introduction to *My Name is Afrika*. The three-part poem 'Young Heroes' was further published in another seminal black arts anthology, *The Black Poets* (1971; edited by Dudley Randall).

Brooks was an advocate of Kgositsile's work, and highly recommended his poetry for the anthology *The Poetry of Black America: Anthology of the 20th Century* (1973), introduced by Brooks. In her introduction she writes, 'many applauders of black poetry have never heard of the searching New York poet Raymond Patterson, or of the carefully rich technics of Audre Lorde and Keorapetse W. Kgositsile' (Adoff, 1973, p. xxx). Brooks, Kgositsile, Randall and Haki Madibhuti (formerly Don Lee, owner of Third World Press,⁹ which published Kgositsile's second collection, *For Melba*) collaborated as co-authors of the book *A Capsule Course in Black Poetry Writing*, published by Broadside Press in 1975. These collaborations, literary dedications, intertextualities and mutual support all underpinned the 'textual Atlantic' or 'textscape'¹⁰ (van der Vlies, 2007) at the time. I echo Brent Hayes Edwards (2003, p. 115) here and argue that the book culture of the black arts era should be read as a technical means for representing an imagined community. Fuller's *Negro Digest* and the seminal BAM anthologies provide an ideal site to study these communities. I explore it further below.

3 Kgositsile in the *Black World*

In the *Black World* of March 1975, Plumpp wrote a long and moving ode, 'Seasons (For Keorapetse, Hoyt, and Ayi Kwei)'. The poem is penned for Kgositsile, Hoyt Fuller and Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah, and will help to return us to the initial argument on gnosis and its place within the dynamic of *roots en route*. The title of Plumpp's poem riffs on the title of Armah's second novel, *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), an epic that attempts to reimagine African history of the past two thousand seasons through the lens of pan-Africanism. Readers of *Black World* were treated to a fourteen-page excerpt from Armah's novel in

9 An earlier assertion by Margo Crawford suggested that Kgositsile's work being published by Third World Press (TWP) tells us that the story of the BAM is only starting to unfold. TWP's motive, emblazoned on the verso side of its publication's covers, was to capture the ethos, or black aesthetic, of black people.

10 Andrew van der Vlies adds, 'attending to text and print cultures in the textual Atlantic, to the material fates of texts in print and in constant physical and metaphorical movement, allows us to cast light on the processes by which writing from South Africa and the United States circulates and is transformed in transnational spaces of exchange and appropriation' (van der Vlies, 2007, p. 53).

the December 1973 issue. Plumpp follows the form of the epic in his four-page poem, in three parts: part one's subheading, 'what the voice sees', draws on Kgositsile's proclivity for 'synaesthesia' and 'distortion' (Jaji, 2009, 2013) in his own work. Synaesthesia in Kgositsile's poetry, argues Jaji, distorts the senses; in this specific case, 'what the voice sees' is a 'concatenation of the modes of sense perception [...] and performs a solidarity among the senses'. Jaji extends this solidarity as 'a metaphor for solidarity alongside difference, and in Kgositsile's writing it is used to figure solidarity between African American and South African liberation struggles' (Jaji, 2013, p. 106). In particular, Jaji writes about synaesthesia between vision and hearing, reading and listening, and the literary and the musical in Kgositsile's poetry. We shall observe below how Plumpp deploys music to foster pan-African solidarity.

Plumpp's tribute to Kgositsile's poetic repertoire opens this epic:

for a people who been so long
 in reggays of storms trapped
 aboard blues and crying for
 limpopo moons to burn away
 seasons where death blew
 like saxophones of wind

The first line delineates 'a people', blacks in Africa and its diaspora, who for two thousand seasons have been enslaved, and who continue to be 'trapped'. The first stanza of this epic traverses expansive time, and situates Africans on both sides of the middle passage, the exit port ostensibly being Armah's Ghana. This ominous liminal position is a historical fissure, which Plumpp seeks to fill, between people so long separated in Africa and its diaspora, and aesthetically between literary and musical forms. He cites Limpopo moons to celebrate Kgositsile, Limpopo being another body of water akin to the Atlantic – the Limpopo River that Kgositsile physically crossed to escape the dragnet of apartheid in 1961. Plumpp draws parallels between the Africans 'trapped aboard' the ships of the middle passage and the deadly Limpopo River itself, populated with ferocious crocodiles. The dual function of these bodies of water is as both crossings and trappings: black lives ended at the bottom of the Atlantic, having been thrown 'aboard', while other black lives were ended abruptly by crocodile jaws. Historical crossings have brought these four men – Plumpp, Kgositsile, Fuller and Armah – here in present time, in black America, in this poem and in this imagined community of the *Black World*. Music – blues, reggae ('reggays') and jazz ('saxophones') – heard in this era and seen in the literature of the authors celebrated here, 'burn[s] away seasons where death blew'. That is,

the blues, reggae and jazz all soothe the spirit of the people and alleviate the impact of their long journey of strife.

The third part of this epic is subtitled ‘what the legend of the soul brings’ and celebrates what has survived and outlasted the middle passage.

even now
 bending with blues
 sharpening juju spears
 to sacrifice me on calypso altars
 i
 can sing with the skin of thousands
 pulling dreams of tomorrows
 onto paths today with
 marching feet in zimbabwe
 azania mozambique kingston
 or attica
 i
 can walk with my tongue
 [...]
 speaking in a million dialects
 of collective dances for freedom

The legend of the soul brings African roots – the ‘juju spears’ used in ceremonies and rituals – en route to the Atlantic. Calypso and blues, both entangled with plantation work songs, bring the Caribbean and African American struggles in solidarity with the African fight against white supremacy and imperialism in ‘zimbabwe / azania mozambique kingston / or attica’ in present time. ‘Azania’ is inspired by Kgositsile’s author biography in the *Negro Digest/Black World*, which always stated that he was from Azania, the desired name for a decolonised South Africa. Like Kgositsile in the essay on Malcolm X, Plump calls on the juju, a West African indigenous spiritual practice, akin to the practice of a Motswana doctor, to divine over and soothe black suffering. Plump’s call on the healing powers of the juju in this imagined community represented in the *Black World* is exemplary of the dynamic of *roots en route*. In appeasing the juju, he is able to ‘sing with the skin of thousands’ despite the linguistic differences, and ‘walk with [his] tongue’ – a reference to dancing to songs (blues, jazz, reggae, calypso) that sprout from the same roots. ‘Skin’ also refers to the skin of the drum, which is also a reference to the continued use of drums on both sides of the Atlantic. The ‘million dialects’ that he is able to speak in are afforded by his African *roots*, and constitute the ‘legend’ of the souls brought

en route across the Atlantic. 'Legend' here functions to pun on legendary, as well as the oral tradition of storytelling – legends – that continues to survive the test of time. A consciousness of the large black world is what brings together Plump, Armah, Fuller and Kgositsile in this poem and in this periodical.

Lastly, the dialects and languages of the millions in Africa are celebrated in this black community of the *Black World*, as uniquely witnessed in the January 1975 edition, which published Kgositsile's poem 'Places and Bloodstains: Notes for Ipeleng' in English (Kgositsile, 1975). The poem was followed by its Setswana translation, 'Mafelo Le Dilabe Tsa Madi (Ya ga Ipeleng)' (ibid, pp. 62–65). Fuller's editor's note at the end of the English version of the poem states, 'on the following pages, "Places and Bloodstains" appears in the poet's native language. Mr Kgositsile was born in Azania (South Africa)'. This was a characteristically bold editorial decision by Fuller – to dedicate fourteen pages to an excerpt from Armah's novel, and to publish Kgositsile's poem in Setswana, in his magazine. The publishing of Kgositsile's poem in Setswana shows how the issue of language in the diaspora was considered by Fuller as productive, and not problematic. It emphasises the reinforcement of a necessary black aesthetic within the black power milieu, grounded in African languages, and which Kgositsile physically and ideologically stood for. The significance of his presence in the black world/*Black World* in that era cannot be overemphasised.

4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have drawn from Kgositsile's less-studied literary forms, his essay and short story, published in the *Negro Digest/Black World* to show how that periodical – the largest counter-cultural magazine in African American history – potentially provides us with a site to study relations between black South Africa and black America at the height of the black power and black arts movements. I have shown how Kgositsile's immersion in the black world, encapsulated in the essay on Malcolm X, and his commitment to shaping a new literary ethos of black aesthetics, offer us new ways of reading Africa's relationship with its diaspora. Kgositsile's native Setswana and southern African roots are also demonstrated to provide a new site of relation: a knowledge system that awakens him to the wisdom of his culture and customs, rooted in community. It is in the community of the black diaspora that he realises that this knowledge is mutable, productive and transformative, and he leans on it as a source of political, social and cultural conviviality. This way, he discovers a language – a black aesthetic – with which to communicate with the black

world, and the periodical *Negro Digest/Black World* became, as Brent Edwards (2003, 115) surmises, a technical means for representing an imagined community. In citing Hughes in his essay, Kgositsile makes a concerted effort to map and establish continuities in black expressive cultures and epistemologies, from African oral traditions to the Afro-American literary and oral landscape. Similarly, Hughes's poem 'Harlem' decisively links the black arts and black power movements with the Harlem Renaissance. This is observed by literary scholar Plumpp, whose poem dedicated to Armah, Fuller and Kgositsile cites African roots and gnosis as the unifying factors of the continent, via the routes of the southern and northern Atlantic. Kgositsile's poem written in Setswana and published in *Black World* by the visionary Fuller cements this diasporic community as one with many languages that sprout from the same root.

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Peter Abrahams: Living and Writing Pan-African Humanism

Shaun Viljoen

I'm looking for a house
In the world
Where the white shadows
Will not fall.

LANGSTON HUGHES, 'House in the World'¹

A number of intriguing, crosscutting and paradoxical aspects of the life and work of Peter Abrahams become evident in his two memoirs, *Tell Freedom* (1954) and *The Coyaba Chronicles* (2000), written more than half a century apart, on different continents and in different hemispheres. The experiential in his formative early life as a black person in an oppressive, racist country combines with the non-racial, humanist, Marxist and Pan-Africanist influences. His life experiences – his intimate relationship with places he inhabited and his close relationships with the women in his family and his female and male friendships as well as those with the marginalised and destitute – were formative in shaping his deep empathy for others. A conscious non-racialism is evident in both autobiographical works, and was central to the writer's response to the pervasive presence of both institutionalised and attitudinal racism and inequality both in his native South Africa in his early years, and in the larger twentieth-century world he inhabited. His ideology of non-racialism, though, I argue, combined with an acute consciousness of being black and with a critical pan-Africanism, formed in his early years in South Africa, on his middle journeys through Britain and France, and in his sixty-one years in his adopted home, Jamaica.

The drive to write is for Abrahams an existential imperative that impels him to experiment with various modes of fictional, factual and hybrid forms. He

¹ The poem is quoted in a tribute to Peter Abrahams by Hein Willemse (2017).

does so in order to explore, to remember, to question, to imagine and to articulate, for himself and his various publics, what it means to be fiercely individual and simultaneously assertively black – part of larger anti-colonial black struggles for equality and freedom in the twentieth century.

Peter Abrahams (1919–2017),² South African-born novelist, pan-African intellectual, British and Jamaican citizen, wrote novels, short stories, poetry and pieces of journalism, as well as two memoirs. The earlier one, *Tell Freedom* (1954), recounts his years as a young boy, nicknamed Lee, growing up in abject poverty in ‘the lower and blacker end’ (Abrahams, 2000, p. 5) of the non-white location of Vrededorp, Johannesburg, in the 1920s and 1930s. It recalls his drive to survive and educate himself and his quest from early in his teens to become a storyteller, a writer, in a society governed by dehumanising and violently maintained racial hierarchies. His father, James Henry Abrahams Deras, who died when Abrahams was five years old, was a tall, thin, dark-skinned man from Ethiopia (known as Karim Abdul when he lived in Addis Ababa) (Abrahams, 1954, p. 11) who came to Johannesburg to work in the mines. His mother Limmie (Angelina née DuPlessis) was a coloured domestic worker who had been previously married to a ‘Cape Malay’ man and had African and French ancestry. James Currey, writing about Abrahams as the first South African published in the Heinemann African Writers Series (*Mine Boy* was republished in 1963 as the sixth text in the series), states that ‘his ancestry could be traced to the Khoisan’ (2008, p. 187). This could only have been on his mother’s side.

His mother, together with his aunt Mattie (Margaret), his brother and two sisters, and his cousin Catherine, provided his ‘circle of love, the people who made up his world’ (Abrahams, 2000, p. 2). *Tell Freedom*, with its vivid realism of growing up black and poverty-stricken in Johannesburg in the 1920s and 1930s, reminds us that the cornerstones of apartheid were instituted long before its acute, legislated version of the post-1948 period. The memoir, perhaps more accurately called an autobiographical novel because of the numerous narrative strategies that imitate a Bildungsroman, reads like an adaptation of Dickens’s *Great Expectations* with its depiction of both poverty and the expectations of the young protagonist to make something of his life. The book ends on the verge of the Second World War when, at twenty, Abrahams finally manages escape the country by getting work as a stoker aboard a merchant navy

2 Peter Abrahams was born on 3 March 1919 as Peter Henry Abrahams Deras. In the autobiography *Tell Freedom* the protagonist goes by the name of Lee De Ras. Stephen Gray makes a fascinating claim that Lee De Ras only becomes Peter Abrahams when he abandons Afrikaans as his mother tongue and adopts English around the age of fifteen. This happens when he is exposed to the world of books and discussion, all in English, at the Bantu Men’s Social Centre in Johannesburg (Gray, 1990, p. 14). Abrahams died on 18 January 2017.

ship docked in the harbour in Durban. After two years of work on the ship he settles in England, 'and within ten short years he emerged as the best-known African writer in the Western world, a position that virtually forced him to become a spokesman for the entire continent and especially for that corner of it from which he had emigrated' (Lindfors, 1994). For a decade and a half, England provided him with the freedom to live without constant harassment, fear, violence and acute poverty, and to write.

The second memoir, *The Coyaba Chronicles* (2000), written almost fifty years later, is a sequel of sorts – the first chapter in fact recounts the family relations covered in *Tell Freedom*. This time, though, the autobiography is primarily concerned with the struggles of black people more globally throughout the twentieth century, and how these have intertwined with the life of the author. The subtitle of the memoir, *Reflections on the Black Experience in the Twentieth Century*, declares the perspective that marks the work from beginning to end. It takes as its cue the words of one of the intellectuals Abrahams greatly admired, W.E.B. Du Bois, who declared that 'The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line; of the relations between the lighter and the darker races' (Abrahams, 2000, p. 8). In the autobiographical narrative, Abrahams tells of his life since boyhood as bound up with the anti-colonial struggles and the battles of Africans and the diaspora, and concludes that these are inextricably entangled with other major questions and conflicts central to the history of his century – the independence struggles, the two world wars, the rise of America and dominance and contradictions of capitalism, the polarising Cold War, the continued oppression of women, the threat of nuclear and ecological destruction, and the rise of new technologies with their threats and opportunities. In the course of the autobiography he gives frank, critical accounts of numerous black intellectuals, politicians and artists with whom he had contact and exchanges – George Padmore, Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Gerard Sekoto, Norman Manley, Michael Manley and Nelson Mandela. He is also keenly aware of how the world of leading black luminaries more often than not excluded women and often did not even acknowledge their roles in black struggles.

In *The Coyaba Chronicles* Abrahams tries to make sense of these questions and moments of acute national and global tensions from the perspective of a writer and deeply engaged black intellectual, recounted from his home on the hills of Coyaba, Jamaica, where he lived for more than sixty years till his death in 2017 at the age of ninety-seven.³ *The Coyaba Chronicles*, unlike *Tell Freedom*,

3 The Jamaican media described Abrahams being found dead on 18 January 2017, and the post-mortem revealed he died from 'blunt-force trauma to the head, neck, and chest'. (The

is a conventional autobiography in form, and is marked by a reflective and also strident, often polemical tone, foregrounding the histories of black people and black intellectuals who touched Abrahams's life in one way or another. By the time he got to write the autobiography, he had lived a long and engaged life in Africa, Europe and the Caribbean, and was a key political player in Jamaican, Caribbean and global pan-African political life. Kgomotso Masemola's claim (2004, p. 47) that the 'singular achievement of Peter Abrahams was to have imported to South Africa the literary modernism of the Harlem Renaissance' is also a point made by iconic writers who worked in his wake, like Es'kia Mphahlele, Nadine Gordimer and Richard Rive. However, *The Coyaba Chronicles* is mainly political in focus rather than literary, and it foregrounds the various ideological influences on Abrahams's outlook as well as the ways in which Abrahams and his formative African years had an impact, in turn, on black thought, and the culture and politics of the African diaspora and Jamaican public affairs. Interestingly, as tributes at the time of his death reveal, in South Africa, Britain and America Abrahams is remembered mainly as a key literary figure and literary pioneer; in Jamaica and the Caribbean he is remembered mainly as a public intellectual – as a journalist, radio commentator and influential advisor to Prime Ministers Norman and Michael Manley. Both these personae, the literary figure and the public commentator, I suggest, had co-existed in Abrahams's life and work since his early adult years. His writing grapples with form to give expression to both of these dimensions in his life.

1 The Experiential

Abrahams's sense of himself in the opening chapters of *Tell Freedom* is of a member of a deeply caring family, a family in the wider sense. Aunt Mattie becomes another mother after his father dies and his mother slips into ill health. To ensure the boy can be fed and cared for after they lose their breadwinner, he is taken by train to the siding town of Elsberg,⁴ where his relative Aunt Liza

Gleaner, 2017). Norman Tomlinson (sixty-one at the time), husband of one of Abrahams's caregivers, has been accused of his murder.

4 Brooks Spector claims that this was the small town of Elsberg in the Northern Cape (2017), which would mean Abrahams was relocated to a town hundreds of kilometres away from his home. There is also an Elsberg, now part of the city of Germiston and which is part of the greater Johannesburg metropolitan area. It is not clear which one Abrahams refers to, although the long train ride suggested by Lee in the autobiography suggests that Brooks Spector is correct.

becomes a third mother to him for five years, before he can return to his own mother and his family in Vrededorp. It is in Elsberg that he first experiences first-hand the vicious and violent manifestations of white racist attitudes. White schoolboys pass him and a friend and taunt the dark-skinned boys with 'Bloody kaffir', 'Your fathers are dirty black bastards of baboons' (Abrahams, 1954, p. 37). Lee retaliates by fighting back but is overpowered by blows to his head and passes out. In stark contrast, it is also in Elsberg where he meets a young Zulu boy, Joseph, whom he befriends while wandering alone in the veld along the river. He is struck by Joseph's pride in his Zulu ancestry, prompting him to ask questions about his own ancestry and where he belongs. There is a touching reciprocity in the friendship across apartheid categories that are of no consequence to these two boys. Like Lee, Joseph has no father. Joseph's pride is equally evident when he introduces Lee to his mother: '[t]his is my brother Lee of the Coloured, little mother'; the mother in turn addresses Lee as 'my son' (ibid., p. 46) – a moment of warm, wholehearted acceptance of a stranger into the family. Abrahams selects moments like these as they clearly make a deep impression and take on, for the reader, the force of a symbol of what it is Abrahams gives value to and what becomes foundational in the life of the boy and the man.

This encounter with Joseph establishes for Abrahams a 'cross-racial' friendship that breaks down the racial categories constructed to differentiate the boys and keep them separate physically and affectively; it asserts a non-racial view of the friendship when the narrator poetically describes the bond as 'the voices of two children in laughter'. Yet, at the same time, this moment equally asserts and reclaims these very racialised categories as badges of pride ('Lee, Coloured!' the boy now proudly claims; ibid., p. 44), and ultimately of Africanness: 'There were Joseph's tales of black kings who lived in days before the white man' (ibid., p. 45).

These are the beginnings of Abrahams's ability to hold seemingly contradictory worldviews – a non-racial view of others alongside an assertion of a political and cultural blackness that found its expression first in liberal humanist assertions of the equality of all human beings and later in his pan-African beliefs and activism, themselves a natural extension of his sense of his blackness as a boy and young adult growing up in Johannesburg.⁵ Like Es'kia Mphahlele's African humanism, Abrahams's pan-African humanism is defined by a

5 Catherine Woeber (1997, p. 88) identifies three stages in Abraham's outlook and work: 'His *oeuvre* shows how he turned in succession to Marxism (*Mine Boy*, 1946), liberal humanism (*The Path of Thunder*, 1948) and Pan-Africanism (*A Wreath for Udomo*, 1956)' to find, she claims, 'an antidote to racism in his own lifetime'.

perspective that combines liberal humanist and Africanist elements as well as anti-colonial and egalitarian strands. Ruth Obee claims that 'Fanon, Mphahlele, and Biko are all black humanists shorn of white liberalism. They seek to free blacks from psychological oppression by affirming black history, values, and culture and by insisting that blacks must look to their own community for leadership' (Obee, 1999, p. 8); this could aptly include Abrahams as well. Unlike Mphahlele's African humanism, deeply concerned with questions of tradition, culture, oppression, nationalism and egalitarianism primarily in Africa, Abrahams's pan-African humanism is broader in that it has similar preoccupations and asks similar questions, but with the global black diaspora equally in mind. Abrahams, all his conscious life, it seems, persistently asked questions too of his allegiance to organisations that gave expression to his ideas: 'With all my friends, I argue. This is why I can't belong to any party, because I want to ask questions' (quoted in Vivan, 1989, p. 4). Paradoxically, he insisted on remaining fiercely individual in order to give expression to the interests of the communities of black people the world over.

In *Tell Freedom*, sisters Mattie (who becomes a prototype for the character Leah in his novel *Mine Boy*) and Limmie are 'as near white and the other as near black' (Abrahams, 2000, p. 4) as can be, yet both are 'coloured'. This must have been one of the first triggers for the young boy's questioning the logic of the notion of 'race' classification and hierarchies. Aunt Mattie is admired by the young Lee, but he also despises her for the way she falsely accuses him of stealing half a crown. He is also ambivalent about her illegal liquor trade as a Skokiaan Queen, which helps to keep the family afloat but which also gets them into trouble with the apartheid police. However, in the later memoir Abrahams remembers less of the intense hurt the earlier one depicts and instead admires his aunt's ability to keep the family alive, and of all the influences in the family, he credits her with shaping his worldview. Fair-skinned Mattie is described in the later work as being able to communicate with all kinds of people in a number of languages, including the darkest-skinned fellow Skokiaan Queen and the itinerant 'little man', possibly her lover, her 'Pickanin' as she called him, who was 'black as only one from Nyasaland could be' (*ibid.*, p. 5). Mattie opens her house to strangers: 'All manner of people came, staying for a day, or weeks, or even years' (*ibid.*, p. 7). The narrative of these same familial characters of his childhood in the opening chapter of *The Coyaba Chronicles*, now written from a perspective of more than seventy years later, has few of the gritty, fraught tensions and ambivalences of the earlier memoir. Instead, it approaches that period of his life with intense curiosity, even regret, over questions he now has and which he had never even considered then: how was the family, particularly Aunt Mattie, able to create such a haven of deep caring,

love, generosity, gentleness and hospitality in a society so riven and racist, so unequal and extremely violent in the policing of its hierarchies? Perhaps this is a question which he has always asked of himself, less consciously in his youth but more so in his later years. Abrahams has commuted his affirming experiences from childhood into an ethics – humanist, reflective, egalitarian and black-centred – of how to be in the world.

2 Non-Racialism, Pan-Africanism and Questions of Allegiance

Crain Soudien, writing about the life and work of South African political intellectual Neville Alexandre (1936–2012) and his ideas about race and change, reiterates Alexandre's view that 'the extraordinary paradox that prevailed ... continues to define the "race" debate to this day – that one could *know* that "race" was false, nonsense, but still act politically and ethically as if it was true' (Soudien, 2016, n.p.). This paradox between knowing and being, between belief and action, is, I suggest, equally true of the writing, thinking and actions of Abrahams with regard to the question of race. He regarded all as equal no matter what their colour or origin, but he also insisted on adopting a black ontological perspective on the past and present, and charting a progressive future. Not only were Abrahams's non-racial beliefs born out of his life experiences from an early age, but his ideas on race were given more conscious form by his contact with the world of formal and informal education – with progressive teachers in his schooling⁶ and the men and women in the Bantu Men's Social Centre (where he found work as a teenager),⁷ as well as members of struggle and communist organisations in Johannesburg and Cape Town in the 1930s. Through the books, debates and LP records at the Bantu Men's Social Centre (2006) he was introduced to black American intellectuals, writers and artists, who become figures of inspiration, providing models for his way of looking at

6 Abrahams attended the Anglican Diocesan Teachers' Training College (Grace Dieu) until seventeen and then St Peter's Secondary School for a year. Both these institutions, Woeber states, 'were run by the monks of the Community of the Resurrection, who came from a strong working-class environment in Yorkshire (although many of them were upper-class Oxbridge graduates), and whose radical theological and political views were usually at odds with those of the colonial establishment' (Woeber, 1997, p. 89).

7 According to the records of the Bantu Men's Social Centre, 'the Society was formed in Johannesburg in 1923 with the object of forming a nucleus for social intercourse for natives employed on the Witwatersrand'. Interestingly, the vision and resources for its founding came from Congregational minister Rev. Ray E. Phillips (1889–1967) of the American Board Mission in central Johannesburg.

the world and for ways of writing about his worlds – Paul Robeson, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer and, above all, W.E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963), who remained deeply influential on the question of the place and future of black people in the world, right to the end of Abrahams's life. His mother tongue and his only language all through his childhood, was Afrikaans, and in his teens, especially during contact with the Bantu Men's Social Centre, he deliberately adopted English as his primary way of connecting with the anti-colonial currents locally, and in Africa and the world. At both the teacher training college and the high school he attended he learned about literature, Marxism and communism from a few of his more dedicated and radical teachers critical of colonial oppression and racism. A number of these individuals were products of British working-class-focused theology and left-leaning political ideology.

However, as much as Marxism, in *Tell Freedom*, provides an early framework for making sense of his situation in South Africa he soon abandons it as a determining outlook as he is stifled by the allegiance organised communism demands, and he is suspicious of the motives and questions the sincerity of some of the white communists he encounters. On the other hand, he does acknowledge the profound friendship of some of these cadres, whom he says made him realise that skin colour does not determine one's ideas. His dis-ease with organised left-wing politics is evident when he spends a few months in Cape Town as he desperately tries to get out of South Africa and be free, free to be a writer: 'Perhaps life had a meaning that transcended race and colour. If it had, I could not find it in South Africa. Also there was the need to write, to tell freedom, and for this I needed to be personally free' (Abrahams, 1954, p. 311). There is a brief episode in the Cape when the young nineteen-year-old Lee makes contact with the coloured medical doctor and left-wing Trotskyite intellectual Goolam Gool, and his sister-in-law Cissey Gool, both leading figures in resistance politics in the Cape at the time. Dr Gool is generous and hospitable when Abrahams arrives in the Cape penniless and homeless, and offers him a place to stay. However, Abrahams finds the strident Marxist positions of the Cape intellectuals, the bitter feuds between the Stalinist and Trotskyite factions, terribly alienating. His scepticism of Cape left-wing politics is fuelled both by his wariness of party politicking as well as his mistrust of middle-class urbanity.

Instead, when he settles in London after the war, he gets actively involved in the burgeoning independence movement that occurs around the world and in Africa. His pan-Africanism is seeded, I suggest, by his mother's stories of his Ethiopian father and his ancestry, by Joseph's tales of Zulu kings, and by his

encounters with black American writers such as Du Bois. In London, he acts as publicist for the Manchester conference of pan-African leaders, held in 1945, which Du Bois addresses (Abrahams, 2000, p. 46). These contacts and the intellectual optimism of the time affirm his belief in the ideas of pan-Africanism and of the necessity of independence from colonial fetters.

Another dimension of his pan-Africanism, one that enmeshes with his respect and regard for ordinary and marginalised people, manifests itself in a fleeting moment recalled in *The Coyaba Chronicles*. Abrahams recalls an encounter with a group of Rastafarians on the verdant hill near Rock Hall, off the Red Hills Road above Kingston, where he and his wife Daphne had built a house in the wild veld and raised their three children and generations of dogs, and which they made home for rest of their lives. Abrahams was by this point an established radio journalist in Jamaica, and advisor to Norman Manley, leader of the People's National Party (PNP) and the country for a while, whose caring social welfare policies Abrahams admires, reminding him of the post-war social democratic welfare state in Britain which directly helped him and his family to survive in comfort during the time he lived in England before moving to Jamaica in the mid-1950s. It is commonplace for Jamaicans, Abrahams claims, to regard Rastafarians as filthy, weed-smoking thieves and rapists. The encounter he describes involved eight or so men, two of them clearly the Rastafari elders of the group. They were hot and sweating from a long trek across the hills to talk to Abrahams, who invited them onto his veranda, but they preferred to sit on the steps. They had come to talk to their brother from Africa, from Ethiopia. Why was he in Jamaica and not Africa? He must be a Rastafarian, then? Could he help them repatriate to Africa? He spent a while telling them his history, and that he had sought refuge in that place because he had made, in the words of Langston Hughes, 'a house in the world where the white shadows will not fall'. He told them about the strife in Africa, the troubles in Zion. They departed, Abrahams feels, disappointed, just as he was because he 'had no "good" answers'. He is reminded of his idea that there should be talk and action about reparations for the dislocation of the millions of Africans forced into slavery during the trans-Atlantic enslavement. As in the encounter with the people of the Cape Flats in *Tell Freedom* which I examine later, we see Abrahams immersing himself body, heart and mind in the lives of the poorest of the poor. He listens and is deeply disturbed. His pan-Africanism is one that is also grounded in empathy for the most marginalised in Jamaican society – a place he was initially entranced by as a refuge for black people, though over time he became increasingly critical of its leadership, governance and aspects of its cultural life.

3 Writing, Readers and Form

Abrahams returned to South Africa in 1952, fourteen years after he left the country. He had been commissioned by the London *Observer* to do a series of reports on the 'colour bar' in South Africa and Kenya (Wade, 1972, p. 98). Both *Return to Egoli* (1953), a work of reportage of this visit, and *Tell Freedom* (1954), a 'dramatized autobiography', as Wade calls it (Wade, 1972, p. 99), resulted from the trip. In *Return to Egoli*, Abrahams feels that the statistics and factual reportage

were cold, lifeless things that did not convey mood and feeling, pain and laughter; and, anyway, the libraries were full of books filled with figures and political treatises. I wanted to reach the hearts and minds of some of the 33,000,000 non-whites who live under the rule of the 3,000,000 whites in the vast areas of South, Central and East Africa.

ABRAHAMS, 1953, p. 9

By the time of the publication of *Return to Egoli*, Abrahams had been writing mainly fiction – short sketches, stories and novels – but had also been writing articles in the late 1940s for newspapers such as the *Reynold News*. Abrahams shifted quite easily from fictional to factual forms, trying to move and inform his readers; he also, I suggest, experimented with a hybrid form in *Tell Freedom* where selected facts are brought to life through the deployment of narrative strategies common in fiction. In fact, the early fiction, on occasion, is strongly inflected with autobiographical elements. Stephen Gray points out that Abrahams experimented with a combination of fictional and autobiographical forms in *Dark Testament* (1942), and suggests that while these earlier works cover the same thematic ground as *Tell Freedom*, they cover different incidents; thus we are to read Abrahams's version of himself in his first memoir not 'as documentary fact, but rather as symbolic construction' (Gray, 1990, p. 6).

Stephen Gray, in one of the most detailed analyses of the work of Peter Abrahams and the way in which he was a pioneer of the autobiographical form that became so popular with black South African writers, quotes James Olney on the phenomenon of autobiography as a mode of writing among black South Africans in the 1950s and early 1960s:

Autobiography, as a number of observers have remarked, has been, over the past twenty years, the finest literature to come from creative writers

of South Africa. For various reasons – social, political, and psychological – South African writers of our time have found autobiography to be the form best adapted to expressing, recreating, or reacting to their experience.

ibid., p. 2

Yet Abraham's early work such as *Tell Freedom* is more accurately thought of as hybrid rather than simply generic, as fictionalised autobiography. One reason for this perhaps is the fact that the form as Abrahams invented it allowed for the protagonist to be a unique individual with a unique story, yet which was at the same time the story of *all* young black South African men and women growing up with the realities of racism and its attendant psychological and physical violence. Also, the hybrid form allows the author to both tell a story and at the same time comment more directly, as the author, on public life.

Kolawole Ogungbesan represents a trend in literary critique that feels obliged to identify strengths and weakness of the works of an author, be these fictional or autobiographical, as part of its critical analysis of a text. While this is not primarily an interest here, I find he does make a few pertinent observations about the form and character of *Tell Freedom*. He finds the work of autobiography (as he calls it) episodic in structure, and fittingly so for a genre which, unlike a novel, he claims, needs to 'make incidents fuse into a unified whole' (Ogungbesan, 1979, p. 89). He also finds that the characters in *Tell Freedom* 'are as wooden as in any of his novels' (ibid., p. 90). More recently criticism of literary works has come to accept a far greater blurring of boundaries between perceived genre, and more interesting for my reading of Abrahams and his work is the question: what work is this experimental blurring between fact and fiction doing in the first novelistic memoir? I suggest that this seamless and continual shifting between genre is symptomatic of Abrahams exploring his memories, ideas, feelings, relationships associated with his old home. Thus the creation of rounded character is not the central authorial concern here; rather, Abrahams authors an individual and egocentric consciousness in Lee in relation to others in the context of a particular place and time. The hybrid literary form becomes an experiment with a personal and political voice.

At the start of *Tell Freedom* Lee recalls his very first memory – that of being in the comforting presence of his father and mother. While he tells us that his father was the son of land owners and slave owners, his stronger sense of his father is gained through the 'wonderful' stories his mother recounts and makes him repeat – of his father's Ethiopian lineage, which included heroism in the battle against the Italian colonisers, and of his travels in Europe. At the age of eleven, not ever having been to school as he needed to work at odd jobs to

help the family afloat, he is confronted by a young Jewish woman who takes it upon herself to get him into school. Once there he learns to read and write and discovers a whole new world of stories in books: 'With Shakespeare and poetry, a new world was born. New dreams, new desires, a new self-consciousness, were born [...] I lived in two worlds, the world of Vrededorp and the world of these books' (Abrahams, 1954, p. 161). With this strong sense of his own double life, the writings of Du Bois and his notion of the 'double consciousness' of black people in America clearly held startling resonance. How did all these stories and books translate into his compulsion to write?

A few of the episodes Abrahams elects to narrate in *Tell Freedom* are 'symbolic constructs' of the way experience, ideas and values came together and impelled the young man to write. One such episode occurs during his brief stay in the Cape. In contrast to the full and active life of the sophisticated and fairly well-off Gools and a few other Cape intellectuals he meets, he encounters the life of people living on the desolate flatlands of the outskirts of Cape Town, on the Cape Flats. Here he undertakes to help establish a primary school in an impoverished church and teach there for a few months, living in a shack with the only other teacher. On his first visit, he travels from the city by train. 'Entering the Cape Flats', Abrahams says, 'was stepping into a new Dark Age'. The desolation of the place and destitution of the people seem to overwhelm him:

The earth, here, is barren of all but the hardiest shrub. It is a dirty white, sandy earth. The sea had once been here. In its retreat it had left a white, unyielding sand, grown dirty with time. Almost, it had left a desert. And in this desert [...] men had made their homes [...] The people gathered in their tin church [...] I found it hard to believe that these dried-up creatures were human. But they were such humans as I had not seen in all my wanderings through the land.

ibid., p. 287

The paradox, that in such hostile, alien conditions he finds creatures who are nevertheless still human, marks a moment in the prose when the author/protagonist autographs into the text an abiding fascination with how ordinary people survive and assert their humanity.⁸

⁸ Wilfred Cartey says that the depiction of the poverty and hardship of the people of Vrededorp is imbued with a strong sense of hope. However, he says of this episode: 'No such

But just when we have been drawn with Abrahams into this other Cape cosmos – a dark Dickensian past, or the past of the poorest in his Vrededorp but even worse – that is the antithesis to the urban, politicised and endowed Cape, we are told of a nameless stranger, a man from Namaqualand, arrived on the Flats that winter: ‘He came among us and made our misery seem like paradise. He was a walking skeleton. He had walked all the way from South West Africa [... he] told us calmly his people were dying of starvation, that they had eaten all the snakes and lizards they could find’. It is the memory of this surreal man and his ‘quiet statement about death’ that leads Abrahams to *write* this moment, to ‘tell’ it, calling it ‘Cape Flats Limited’. What strikes one here is that in his life and work Abrahams has, since childhood, and continually thereafter, immersed himself bodily, intellectually, affectively and through written narrative in the worlds and dilemmas of the most marginalised (black) human beings.

Crucial to the question of the autobiographical form in its various temporal and spatial contexts is the question of who the imagined readers are, whom the voices in the text address. While Abrahams, like his novelist successor Richard Rive, claims that he initially wrote for a white liberal audience,⁹ one that held some power to effect social change, I suggest that the imagined or intended audience is far more varied and shifting. It was only after a certain point in his writing life, Abrahams claims, that he began to write consciously for a black rather than a left-leaning/general/white audience (Vivan, 1989, p. 4). He dates this shift to the writing of his sixth novel, *A Night of their Own* (1965), which, interestingly, was his first publication after he had settled in Jamaica; he had not written and published any literary work for almost a decade. Abrahams might see this work, about a courier for the underground struggle in South Africa, as marking a turning point in his notion of who he writes for, but, despite the revolutionary focus and the cross-racial love affair between the black

momentary hope is held out to the people of the Cape Flats, however. Here, poverty is unremitting’ (Cartey, 1970, p. x).

- 9 Writer Richard Rive (1930–1989) labels the black South African prose writers of the 1950s and early 1960s, inspired by the realism and political relevance of Abrahams’s *Dark Testament* (1942), as ‘protest writers’. He says of this school of writers: ‘Protest writing is essentially by blacks and geared towards whites who they feel have political and economic power to influence and effect change’ (Rive, 1979, p. 62). Rive also reaches a point in his writing life when he abandons the notion of protest writing and its implied audience, and during the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement in the early 1970s, writes instead, I suggest in my biography *Richard Rive: A Partial Biography* (Viljoen, 2013, p. 134), largely for himself and a more locally situated black (as in black, coloured and Indian) audience.

protagonist and an Indian woman, in the work itself there are no narrative features that make it evidently more geared to a black readership than, say, the earlier and more compelling novel *The Path of Thunder* (1952). I suggest that the rhetoric about the change in their writing with regard to the question of audiences that both Abrahams and Rive deploy, influenced by James Baldwin's scathing criticism of Richard Wright's characterisation of the young black man Bigger Thomas in *Native Son* (1940) as stereotyping black men and perceived to be written for a white audience, overstates the profile of the readership of works by black writers. Wright's novel, for example, was a primary source of inspiration for Abraham's own work as well as that of countless young black intellectuals and ordinary black readers across Africa and the African diasporic world. More significant, I think, is the fact that Abrahams's audience for his journalism and radio pieces that took most of his writing energy once he had settled in Jamaica was pointedly a local Jamaican and Caribbean one. Also, in episodes in the writing, as in the 'Cape Flats Limited' piece mentioned above, it can be argued that writers at times write merely for themselves, that the notion of an audience disappears and the writer goes into a state of flow or altered consciousness during moments in the writing process. Nadine Gordimer aptly claims that the relation between fiction and reality is 'part mystery to writers themselves' (Gordimer, 1995, p. 3). I suggest an element of such mystery is also present in the multi-dimensional relations between writer, reader and form. If form is to be a writer's vehicle for experimentation and exploration of affect, ideas and voice, the journey into the unknown remains a constant and necessary part of this quest.

4 Conclusion

Nadine Gordimer, writing mainly about *A Wreath for Udomo* (1956), which is set in West Africa and anticipates the failures of African nationalism in the transition into and period post independence, calls the novel 'prophetic' (Gordimer, 1973, p. 35) and concludes that 'Peter Abrahams not only saw clearly the problems of attaining African power, he also saw where, through the individual, the problem was linked to a universal one, the problem of whether the integrity of individual relationships comes first in a valid morality' (ibid.). In fiction, in fictional autobiography and through radio broadcasting and social commentary generally, Abrahams again and again places individual human integrity in critical relation to larger questions of sociopolitical conflicts and movements as they affected black people in the twentieth century and into the twenty-first.

To the end, he remained engaged and questioning even as he was assertive and dogmatic.¹⁰ He broadcast political commentaries on Radio Jamaica for forty years. He was a news commentator until he was eighty. ‘The fact that on the day of his death, at the age of 97, the *Gleaner* had published a letter by Peter speaking to contemporary issues facing the country is an indicator of how sharp and relevant he remained to the very end’, Press Association of Jamaica president Jackson Miller claims (*Jamaican Observer*, 2017). What Crain Soudien says of the iconic intellectual Neville Alexander’s thinking about race and global society in the early twenty-first century could easily be said about the way Abrahams conducted his life: ‘while the principles of what one ought to be doing, in his case, those of the unconditional equality of all human beings, remained and would remain the same over time, *how* one came to exemplify and practise those principles were never static or inflexible questions’ (Soudien, 2016, n.p.). In both his fiction and his non-fiction, and most interestingly in his experiments with hybrid form, Abrahams combined an intuitive and considered non-racialism, rooted in life experiences, with a pan-African perspective. He lived and wrote this critical pan-African humanism in the hope of creating a house ‘where the white shadows will not fall’.

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Afrikaanse Kultuur, Luso-tropicalismo and Négritude in the Twentieth Century: An Atlantic Revisitation via an Indian Ocean Island

Fernando Rosa

Die vernaamste taak van 'n gesonde volkskritiek is om die versteende gedagtes wat vyandig aan die lewe van die volk is, op te spoor en deur ontleding skadeloos te maak. Ons mag nie die ou klere van Europa of van enige ander land of eeu dra nie.¹

(The main task of a wholesome people's critique is to track down the fossilised thoughts that are inimical to the people's life, and make them harmless by means of analysis. We should not don Europe's old clothes, nor those of any other country or century.²)

1 Introduction

This chapter is intended to be a revisitation of some of my own work as well as various locales and times in the Atlantic world, particularly Brazil, the Caribbean and Senegambia, but also South Africa (see Ribeiro, 2004a, 2004b, 2007; Fernando, 2012; Rosa, 2015, 2016). In particular, it will invoke a broad spectrum of connections and threads, encompassing the work of three intellectuals who were contemporaries, namely, Gilberto Freyre in Brazil, Léopold Sédar Senghor in Senegal and N.P. van Wyk Louw in South Africa. They were dissimilar personages in more ways than one, and there is, as a result, no easy way to tackle them together, especially in a short chapter such as this one. What

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- 1 'Die Waansin van die Versteende Gedagte' ('The Absurdity of Fossilised Thought'), Louw (1939b, p. 14). The author is grateful to the Department of History, Stellenbosch University, for inviting him to present a previous version of this chapter at their seminar on 15 August 2017. A special thanks goes to the seminar organiser, Albert Grundlingh.
 - 2 All translations from Afrikaans, French and Portuguese are by the author.

follows below is therefore tentative at best. Senghor was a poet, philosopher and politician; Freyre was a scholar – mostly a sociologist and historian – and a writer; and Louw a poet, intellectual and an academic. Nearly all the luminaries mentioned here continue to be deconstructed and criticised to this day in various ways, with diverse results. My angle here is purposefully different, as will become clear below. My intention is to retrieve the figures in question, as far as possible, as sources of inspiration for the present and the future, especially in relation to their countries of origin – namely, Brazil, Senegal and South Africa – but also the larger world these seminal intellectuals were clearly concerned with.

2 Cosmopolitanism and the National Moment

I will begin here with a brief assessment of Louw's thought. Compared with both Freyre and Senghor – both well-known intellectuals – Louw is a relatively obscure character, on occasion, intriguingly, even inside South Africa itself.³ A good deal of his work remains untranslated to this day. He was nonetheless influential in securing and maintaining an Afrikaans cultural sphere, especially from a critical perspective (Giliomee, 2007; Moodie, 2009). He was also seemingly always deeply conscious of the fragility of the project of a domain of Afrikaans language and culture, inside Afrikanerdom itself, regardless of any external threats. In this way, differently from either Freyre or Senghor, Louw faced a peculiar predicament as a leading figure of a people who often saw themselves as a minority, and a beleaguered one at that. According to Giliomee, Louw posited three crises that the Afrikaners faced in the twentieth century: military conquest by the British during the South African War (1899–1902),⁴ followed by foreign (Anglophone) immigration (and later, we might add, internal African migration to the cities); an intellectual 'implosion' in which a critical part of the Afrikaner intelligentsia itself considered the existence of Afrikaners as a distinct cultural group no longer important; and an ethical crisis in which a people preferred mere survival (say, as a citizen of South Africa) to 'survival

3 There is no doubt, however, about his prominence in Afrikaans circles: Coller and Steyn, for instance, indicate that, though there were other Afrikaans figures who were even more dissident than Louw, such as Jan Rabie, arguably only D.J. Opperman was as influential (Coller & Steyn, 2005, p. 76).

4 This war is traditionally called in Afrikaans *Tweede Vryheidsoorlog*, or the Second War of Liberation. The first war of liberation would have been the one against the British to secure the independence of the old South African Republic (the Transvaal) and the Orange Free State in 1880–1881.

in justice' – i.e. *voortbestaan in geregtigheid* (Giliomee, 1994). This last would turn out to be one of Louw's most lasting ideas, especially as it would influence dissident Afrikaners such as André du Toit, a political scientist, philosopher Johannes Degenaar (who published a book called exactly *Voortbestaan in Geregtigheid* – Degenaar, 1980) and the internationally renowned dissident poet Breyten Breytenbach. Louw's relationship to apartheid was reportedly always complex and even contentious, as he did not harness himself to any ideology; besides, he put forward the need for a critical stance at all times in relation to the exercise of power by Afrikaners (Steyn, 1998, vol. 11, pp. 639–642, 784–788; Giliomee, 2007). For Louw, the central issue related to his notion of survival in justice was encapsulated in his question: 'Is it possible for a small *volk* to survive long if it becomes hateful or something evil for the best in – or outside – its ranks?' (quoted in Giliomee, 1994, p. 532). This question would powerfully reverberate across the work of many Afrikaner intellectuals.

Sanders (1999), for instance, has a completely negative evaluation of Louw's *voortbestaan in geregtigheid*: for him,

latent in calls for *geregtigheid*, and in a rhetoric of multi-nationalism [i.e. South Africa as a kind of federation of different peoples – see below], lies a deeper racism: an unquestioned assumption, with little attention to black political opposition, of white, 'European', political prerogative. The rhetoric of this assumption, I propose, also makes it impossible for Europe and its intellectuals to absolve themselves of complicity in apartheid.

SANDERS, 1999, p. 607

For Sanders, therefore, Louw was an apologist for apartheid (in fact, not entirely unlike the way in which Freyre is considered in many quarters an apologist for Brazilian racism, and Senghor an apologist for 'Negro-African' essentialism⁵). Though Sanders's view is undoubtedly much closer to current perspectives and stereotypes in academia as far as Louw (and other Afrikaner intellectuals) is concerned, I have chosen a different approach here. In particular, I do not see the comparative point of harping on essentialism (real as it may have been in the different cases under consideration here). In this way, though I am not denying the relative value of Sanders's and similar perspectives, I have chosen to stress certain strands of connected histories of specific processes of creolisation and nationalism, as, I hope, will become clear below. My methodological

5 For Freyre, see Bernardino-Costa's chapter in this book, and also Bernardino and Ribeiro (2013).

point in leaving aside universalist analyses based on demonstrations of essentialism, as this last underpins discourses and practices of power, valuable as they may be, is in this way related to the fact that the many attendant ambiguities and complexities evident in those processes are erased when the focus is mostly or solely on essentialism and power structures. Moreover, that erasure takes place because the stress is inevitably on essentialism as a thoroughly transnational phenomenon centred on a civilisational behemoth, namely Europe or the West, analytically set apart from the rest of humanity, which arguably makes it difficult or even impossible to grasp the import and saliency of certain processes of creolisation.

At any rate, all the contradictions facing Afrikaners in the twentieth century somehow find an echo in Louw's thinking and work; in turn, we could posit that Louw reiterates to Afrikaners in general a mythopoetic, modified version of that echo (Jordaan, 2007). The basic idea shared by all of the Afrikaner intellectuals mentioned above is a seemingly simple but actually intricate one – intricate because it has had several divergent versions and has always been contested, to the effect that Afrikaners were and are a *kulturele gemeenskap* – namely, a distinct cultural community – and that other South Africans were and are somehow also members of other such communities (an equally contested view). Though the apartheid regime became eventually associated by outsiders and even insiders with a white supremacist version of this notion (an association Louw in particular strenuously fought against, for instance, when he lived in the Netherlands during the first decade of the apartheid era), that idea itself was, for Louw and the other Afrikaans intellectuals briefly touched upon here, not necessarily racial, let alone supremacist – an important point that Sanders and others like him, in my opinion, easily lose sight of. It was, nonetheless, very much a linguistic idea, even though, it must be added that – contradictorily and tragically and as, in fact, Louw himself would point out – about half or more of all *Afrikaanssprekendes* (Afrikaans speakers) were officially declared ineligible to become Afrikaners or 'co-nationals', because of their race (and hence the importance of not altogether neglecting essentialism here). Louw – and those influenced by him, such as du Toit, Degenaar and Breytenbach – nonetheless managed to keep alive the ethical issue brought about by the very existence of Afrikaners as a *kulturele gemeenskap*. Giliomee in reality goes as far as to argue that that ethical issue – of 'survival in justice' (that is, in justice as far as *both* one's community *and* other communities are concerned) – eventually helped to bring about the demise of apartheid (Giliomee, 1994, p. 530).

It is therefore from within the crucible of many ambiguities and contradictions that Louw would arise and develop his influential voice and ideas (see

Giliomee, 1994, for a good summation of Louw's views in the 1950s). Louw was in fact one of the very first to bring up concepts such as 'separate development' in the South African context, which would later become enshrined by the apartheid regime, and in this way eventually become internationally infamous. Giliomee (1994, pp. 535–536) says of him:

Louw [...] made his stance in respect to a specific area of dissatisfaction with Verwoerdian policies, namely the rigid segregation of the predominantly Afrikaans-speaking coloured people. Like the Afrikaners, they formed about 10 per cent of the total population and could not in any way be considered a threat to Afrikaner survival. In an introduction to the book *Die Opkoms van die Derde Stand*,⁶ Louw enthusiastically welcomed its call for the reintegration of coloured people into the social and political life of the Afrikaner community. The coloureds were in fact brown Afrikaners, Louw wrote, and the hurtful apartheid policies to which they were subjected had no base in history or morality. Louw took a less conciliatory line towards the African section of the population, urging them not to be deceived into believing that all of South Africa belonged to them.

We can safely say that Louw had both views which went against apartheid policies of his own time *and* opinions which nowadays seem unpalatable. Also, his views can easily be countered by evidence of discrimination. Besides, apartheid definitely took a toll on coloured communities, which inevitably makes Louw's remonstrations retrospectively sound hollow or irrelevant.⁷ He can hardly be accused, however, of indifference to historical processes of creolisation, or even indifference to ethics, let alone of merely standing for any straightforward 'apartheid mindset'.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Freyre and Senghor – both authors who are seemingly the antipodes of Louw in more ways than one – would also develop their ideas and work in the crucible of many complex threads, if in predicaments that were more than slightly different from South Africa's, and also following paths that might be more than a little dissimilar from Louw's (for a comparison including Freyre, but not Louw, see Ribeiro, 2007). I am therefore not claiming

6 'The Rise of the Third State', a book on coloureds by D.P. Botha published in 1960 (Botha, 1960).

7 See for instance Willemse (2011) for a good historical and political appraisal; for an excellent ethnographic one, centred on a community in Stellenbosch which suffered forced removal, see Conradie (2018).

here that all three authors necessarily had a good deal in common with each other. However, Louw did share with both Freyre and Senghor a deep concern for the *geist* (spirit, mind) and the *volk* (people, especially as a *kulturele gemeenskap* or 'cultural community', however variously defined). Besides, as I hope will become clear in what follows, all three authors would also become entangled with each other's countries, and even, in the cases of Freyre and Senghor, entangled with one another on a personal level. In the case of Freyre, in spite of his pandering to two right-wing dictatorships, one in Brazil and another in Portugal, his reputation is apparently being quietly consolidated across political divides. In fact, certain sectors of academia and the black movement seem to be the only ones to vocally disparage Freyre's figure and work nowadays. Intriguingly, however, it is exactly in Brazilian academia that Freyre's reputation as a scholar and visionary writer is quite solid; nonetheless, this does not mean that his ideas, let alone his political leanings, are necessarily subscribed to, in part or *in toto*. To put a complex matter in a nutshell, Freyre's current value is that of an intellectual who managed to project the notion of Brazil as a potential global powerhouse (powerfully evoked, for instance, through Freyre's own famous tropes of Brazil as a tropical Russia or China – see Freyre & Ribeiro, 2001) onto the world stage, with more than a modicum of success (see Burke & Pallares-Burke, 2008, for a fairly comprehensive and balanced evaluation of Freyre's life and work; and Pallares-Burke, 2005). Whatever its shortcomings, Freyre's mythopoetic view of Brazil certainly remains powerful. Moreover, he in fact worked on a major theme of current value: that of processes of creolisation and their larger meaning in nation-building (see discussion in the next section). His is, in this way, not merely another narrative among other narratives: the very fact that black intellectuals in Brazil still feel that they have to both ritually invoke and criticise him, almost as a matter of course, is a sure sign of his enduring power as well as that of his ideas (see for instance the discussion in Bernardino & Ribeiro, 2013, and Bernardino-Costa's chapter in this volume). Again, though I am not necessarily subscribing to Freyre's views here (let alone his political choices), I *am* claiming that the baby of creolisation cannot be thrown out with the bathwater of authoritarianism – this conundrum remains a major, if largely unacknowledged and unspoken, point of convergence between the various Atlantic histories at stake here, intriguingly, both for the right and left: namely, the complex historical imbrication between forms of government with processes of creolisation, especially those with deep historical roots. As I will argue in the next section, democracy and a view of creolisation are not necessarily incompatible (as much ranting against Freyre's ideas, for instance, seems to imply), nor are either of them, separately or together, incompatible with nationalism.

Moreover, it is more than mildly intriguing that all three luminaries under discussion here should have been Atlantic intellectuals who were nationalists writing in a language other than English. There is something provocative about all three: today, when decolonising the mind seems to be a call heard in many quarters, they are an interesting case in point. Namely, they are all anti-colonialist in their different ways, though Freyre at times is so in an almost convoluted way: from behind the bulwark of Brazil's more than a century of independence, in the 1950s Freyre famously willingly let his work be used by the Salazar dictatorship to bolster Portuguese colonialism in Africa and India. This is not so contradictory as it may seem (needless to say, I am not trying to exculpate Freyre here), though the notion behind it sounds quaint and hard to comprehend nowadays: Aimé Césaire and Léon-Gontran Damas (both socialists like Senghor, and like him founding members of the *Négritude* movement) advocated – and obtained – that their countries, respectively Martinique and Guyane, should remain within the fold of the French Republic, though, from 1946, not any longer as colonies but instead as *départements d'outre-mer* (that is, full-fledged French departments located overseas – Blérald, 1986). This is in practice an admittedly tricky status (the Caribbean is not France, after all) that they (together with Réunion and Mayotte in the Indian Ocean – the former is discussed below – and Guadeloupe, the latter also in the Caribbean), as luck would have it, maintain to this day. Not unlike Senghor, who became president of Senegal between 1960 and 1980, Aimé Césaire spent several decades as mayor of Fort-de-France in Martinique (see also a partial discussion of his work in Bernardino-Costa's chapter in this volume). It is also not incidental that before 1946 the status of the citizens of all four soon-to-be *départements* (Mayotte only became one very recently) had a good deal in common with that of the famous four communes of Senegal where Senghor lived (Johnson, 1971; Diouf, 2000; see Alain Pascal Kaly's chapter in this volume); and that Césaire, Damas and Senghor all met in Paris as students, where they jointly concocted the *Négritude* movement.⁸ In this way, the Atlantic histories I am very partially bringing up have a very important Caribbean chapter to them, though it is one

8 There is a vast literature, needless to say, on *Négritude*. See for instance Jack (1996), who also presents a good view of the problems associated with the definition and study of the movement. Noland (2015) entirely disregards Senghor and concentrates instead on Césaire and Damas. The latter (a Guyanais from French Guiana) is the most neglected member of the trio, as Porter (2010) indicates, though things are beginning to change, as the work of both Noland (2015) and Miller (2014) show. My guide for Senghor's own approach, besides some of Senghor's own texts, is Diagne (2008, 2012), who presents a fairly comprehensive, in-depth appraisal of Senghor's thinking.

I cannot go into detail about here. I should note, however, that I am not the first to have noticed an important similarity between Brazil and West Africa in relation to ‘assimilation’ (Spitzer, 1990; see also Ribeiro, 2004b; Rosa, 2015, Chapter 2).⁹ Moreover, there was also Portuguese colonialism in Senegambia and neighbouring Cape Verde, and, of course, diverse processes of creolisation of different origins (Boilat, 1853; Brooks, 2003; Green, 2006; see also Marina Berthet’s chapter in this volume).

Senghor invoked a *civilisation de l’universel* – and, indeed, he was very, perhaps even terminally, Francophone (it is no wonder he found a seat for himself in the highly prestigious Académie Française); but it was an African perspective – especially African art – that he said was one of the best and most important manifestations of African philosophy within the *civilisation de l’universel* (Diagne, 2008). Intriguingly, Freyre also clearly had the ambitious project of demonstrating that what he called the Portuguese way of colonising was an example to the world at large because of its apparent success in Brazil and elsewhere (Ribeiro, 2007). As for Louw, he was clearly both proud of and concerned about Afrikaans art and culture (see for instance his books of essays from the late 1930s, namely, *Lojale Verset* and *Berigte te Velde* – Louw, 1939a, and Louw, 1939b. See also Louw, 1986). Strange as this may sound nowadays, Afrikaner nationalism was once a model (especially during and after the South African War), including in the colonial world. It is intriguing to think that it is only because of apartheid that this era now seems long gone to most people’s minds. Peculiar as it may seem from today’s perspective (where it has almost inextricably been associated with apartheid), Afrikaans culture did have in its ideological baggage the ambition to be a model for what Senghor called *dialogue des cultures*, hence Louw’s *voortbestaan in geregtigheid*. Louw’s notion clearly not only implies an acknowledgement of other communities, but is also based on the idea that there should be a common ground of justice to all of them.

I mention this because I believe that there are implications here which are not merely of a justificatory nature (say, as mere justification for a practice of power), let alone retrospectively apologetic. One such implication is that versions of Afrikaner culture and nationalism were local projects, tapping into ancient histories of creolisation, with ultimately universalising ambitions; the other is those projects existed in an Atlantic environment where other nationalist, language-based projects also sprouted, such as Freyre’s and Senghor’s. It is

⁹ For a limited comparison between South Africa and Suriname, see Ribeiro (2002); for one between Brazil and South Africa, see Ribeiro (2004a).

good to remember here in this regard, for instance, that by 'Portuguese', Freyre did not mean only or mostly the people, but also, importantly, the language. Senghor also became notorious as he was accused again and again of pandering to Francophone ambitions to universalise French, as well as supposedly pandering to Eurocentrism. In his thinking, however, French did have a special role as the language par excellence of the *civilisation de l'universel*. As for Louw, as a stalwart of Afrikaans letters (as well as one of the most prestigious and revered poets and cultural figures in Afrikaans of all time), the language itself was part and parcel of what he had to offer as a poet and national (i.e. Afrikaner) intellectual. Once more, what unites all three of them, across the wide gulfs of language, culture and the specific historical contexts separating them, is their non-Anglophone language-based approach and nationalism (including anti-colonial nationalism). Moreover, they all stand equally accused, to varying degrees and in diverse ways, of essentialism. I cannot take stock here of the truly vast store of criticism levelled at them from many different quarters.¹⁰ Instead, what intrigues me here is the comparative resilience of their stature, their work and, above all, their ideas, especially in their own countries and communities; and the fact that, while being firmly locally rooted, they all tap into the histories of old processes of creolisation, *as well as* into cosmopolitan perspectives.

If we can claim that all three cosmopolitan intellectuals under scrutiny here were linked to and identified with projects with humanist and universalist ambitions, these are nonetheless ambitions which are highly localised in their manifestation and expression – and also highly localised in terms of language: in this way, Afrikaans, French and Portuguese are not merely ancillary to those projects but in fact fundamental to them. Senghor, for instance, arguably successfully faced colonialism by reaching the highest pinnacles of the French language, and mastering and creolising Western thought – all of which he arguably did with flying colours (for instance, he joined the prestigious Académie Française and also became a member of the Assemblée Nationale. It is also said that the Germans who captured and kept him prisoner during the war had a high respect for him because of his obvious deep knowledge of German scholarship). That does not mean, however, that he was assimilated or colonised, contrary to what is perhaps the most current stereotype about him and his thought. Senghor was no more a Frenchman (except on paper) than Louw was a Dutchman, or Freyre a Portuguese. This is an extremely

10 Both Bernardino-Costa and Tomás take stock of Freyre's work from a critical perspective in their chapters in this volume, respectively in relation to Brazil and Angola. See also Bernardino and Ribeiro (2013).

important point which criticism of these figures seems often to have missed.¹¹ Nor are they colonials – or, worse, colonialists – as such. Moreover, all three were convinced, in their own way, that the *civilisation de l'universel* (to take up now Senghor's cherished expression for the sake of all three figures) had an ethical value – Louw's *geregtigheid* – which manifested itself particularly powerfully, not to mention felicitously, through local arts and culture – arts and culture, that is, which were couched in and somehow sprang from specific languages, but which had nonetheless a universal or universalising appeal, paradoxically or not, exactly because of their rootedness. Of course, both Freyre and Senghor openly invoked creolisation (whereas Louw would invoke creolisation indirectly – say, through his championing of the notion of coloureds as part of the Afrikaner cultural community, as well as through his perception that Afrikaner culture is constructed through time and is therefore no monolith). I could also venture that Freyre and Senghor, but particularly Senghor, rather colonised the colonial project from inside its own language, as did, in his own manner, Louw (who incidentally first wrote poems in Dutch and English as a young man, before he ever ventured into Afrikaans). Their approach to language is connected to the fact that language for them was not merely related to rhetoric: it was also, importantly, a cognitive tool with very specific moorings, though we have to add a caveat here. Senghor, for instance, was a Serér and a multilingual African. Though he apparently never writes in them, there are therefore other languages standing right behind or next to his embrace of *francophonie*, as he himself reminds us on occasion.¹² In South Africa, Nadine Gordimer admired Senghor's ideas and poetry, and wrote very positively about both (Gordimer, 1999).¹³ According to Gordimer, Senghor 'proves that it is possible to keep your own culture and identity intact [not unsurprisingly, as Gordimer no doubt knew, a major cornerstone of Louw's notion of *kulturele gemeenskap*] while fully appropriating another; while participating widely, opening yourself to thought-systems, ideas, mores, of other peoples' (Gordimer, 1999, p. 53).¹⁴

11 For criticisms of Senghor, see Harney's discussion (Harney, 2004).

12 See for instance Senghor's translations and discussion of Serér and Wolof poetry in his essay, 'De la négritude' (Senghor, 1988, pp. 123–130). See also Diagne's discussion, where he states that Senghor conceived of himself as a poet in between French and Serér/Wolof (Diagne, 2012, p. 39).

13 Another famous South African writer, namely Es'kia Mphahlele, was seemingly admiring of Senghor's *Négritude* (see Harney, 2004, p. 45).

14 I am grateful to Alain Pascal Kaly, with Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, for this reference. I am also indebted to him for having introduced me to Senghor's work, and discussed it extensively with me over the years. See his chapter in this volume.

3 Enter the Island

Je suis né sur les bords de l'océan Atlantique, à Joal, un village du Sénégal, qui, avec l'île de Fadiouth, constitue, aujourd'hui, une commune de quelque quinze mille âmes [...] Le nom portugais de *Joal*, qui est un nom de famille, me rappelle qu'il avait, là, dominant la plage, un de ces nombreux forts que les Portugais [...] avaient bâtis [...] A leur ombre, ceux-ci avaient établi des comptoirs, où ils se livraient au commerce des 'épices', de l'or, de l'ivoire, mais aussi de l'ébène. Cependant, ils ne nourrissaient aucun préjugé racial ni culturel, comme le prouvent les nombreux métissages qu'ils y réalisèrent, dont mon nom de *Senghor*, dérivé de *Senhor*, est l'une des preuves vivantes. Sans parler des gouttes de sang portugais qui, au fond de mes veines, chantent de nostalgiques *saudades*.

SENGHOR, 1988, p. 10

(I was born on the margins of the Atlantic at Joal, a village in Senegal. Today it is a commune of about fifteen thousand souls, together with the island of Fadiouth [...] The Portuguese name of *Joal* – a family name – reminds me that there once was there, towering over the beach, one of those innumerable forts built by the Portuguese [...] The latter built trading entrepôts in their shadow, where they devoted themselves to the trade in 'spices', gold, ivory but also ebony. However, they nurtured no racial or cultural prejudice, as evidenced by the many *métissages* which they occasioned there. My name *Senghor*, derived from *Senhor* [gentleman, sir], is one of the living proofs of that. This not to mention the drops of Portuguese blood which, deep in my veins, sing nostalgic *saudades*.)

Incidentally, *Ce que je crois*, the book where I came across the quote above, was published in 1988, and therefore one year after Freyre's death in 1987.¹⁵ I am not of course implying that Senghor wholly subscribed to Freyre's work, nor am I presenting this passage here as a sort of vindication of the latter's views (or as vindication of Senghor's, for that matter). Nonetheless, Senghor knew Freyre personally and also openly admired his views. He also nominated his own nephew, Henri Senghor, as ambassador to Brazil in 1963. He himself went there on an official visit in 1964, just after the military government had taken power in the same year (Dávila, 2010b, pp. 127–131). Earlier, Freyre had also visited Dakar, for instance, in 1930 (Dávila, 2010b, p. 6). Incidentally, Dávila,

15 On Freyre, see, for instance, Bosma and Ribeiro (2007) and Ribeiro (2007), as well as Burke and Pallaes-Burke (2008).

in his first chapter, provides a fairly extensive and critical appraisal of Freyre's work, especially as it relates to Brazil's and Portugal's ties to Africa. Curiously, Dávila (2010b, p. 119), while admitting that Senghor followed Freyre in the latter's view of Brazil, and pointing out that Freyre admired Senghor's views, says that Freyre considered *Négritude* 'un-Brazilian'. I cannot go into the matter in detail here, but it is not difficult to see why: Freyre was openly in favour of a European, Christian civilisation, albeit a creolised, non-imitative one (in this, Louw would have no doubt recognised himself in Freyre's thinking, had he ever come across it, as *Afrikanerdom* has been traditionally defined in terms of a Christian legacy; Senghor also explicitly defined himself as Catholic); yet, he was also, significantly, against narrowly identifying 'race' and 'civilisation' (another point in common with Louw, incidentally). Revealingly, this became clear in a report which Freyre was asked to provide to the United Nations in 1954, in relation to apartheid in South Africa, then still in its infancy. As Dávila quotes (2010a, p. 137), Freyre states that:

when we listen to South Africans, who consider blacks as an obstruction to European civilisation, or to a Europeanised Africa, saying that black Africans 'have contributed nothing new to the domain of ideas, have added nothing to the devising of the machines that make life comfortable', we Brazilians think at once about the discoveries made in our country, not by men with a good percentage of white blood, but by men who would be called black in the United States, such as Machado de Assis or Tobias Barreto, or by blacks such as Dom Silverio, the former archbishop of Mariana, or Juliano Moreira, eminent psychiatrist to whom we owe the development of therapeutic techniques for mental disturbances in Brazil; or Teodoro Sampaio, a renowned geologist and geographer, all of whom had almost no white blood in their veins.

It is intriguing to think that Freyre's views here are not exactly the antipodes of his contemporary Louw's (whose existence the former in all probability never suspected), especially taking into consideration that the latter criticised the application of apartheid policies to coloureds. Freyre's view was that white South Africans should be educated (*sic*) to accept others as their co-nationals. He was nonetheless sceptical about the possibility of using a Brazilian approach in South Africa. Of course, Freyre's language and notions now inevitably sound outdated, post Bandung in 1955, the wave of decolonisation in the 1960s and the end of apartheid in 1994. Nonetheless, my point here is that Freyre's universalism is not of a completely different kind from that of Senghor (not to mention Louw's), as the latter no doubt noticed. Freyre's favoured term

was *miscigenação*, whereas Senghor would prefer *métissage*. Revealingly, neither of these terms really translates well into English (though they both have a Hispanophone equivalent of sorts, namely, *mestizaje*, a word which is also nowadays sometimes used in English). Nonetheless, I find *creolisation* more apposite here (even though it is a term which, as *créolisation*, is much more common in French than in Portuguese: the term is hardly used in Brazil, for instance). One objection I have met over the years against using *creolisation* as a concept is that it is supposedly not broad enough, and that, now in the words of a colleague based in the US (I am paraphrasing here), ‘*creolisation erases histories of oppression*’. Incidentally, the latter is, significantly, one major accusation levelled against Freyre’s work again and again – namely, that it supposedly masks the constitutive racism inherent in Brazilian society. (I do not believe this to be indeed the case, though arguably Freyre himself contributed at times, while he was alive, towards creating this view. See Bernardino-Costa’s chapter in this book.) This is a complex debate and I cannot go into it here. Suffice to say that Vergès offers a way out of this apparent conundrum: namely, she willingly admits – and even, in her work, abundantly documents – that the histories of processes of *creolisation* are anything but edifying (see Vergès, 1999, 2010; Vergès & Marimoutou, 2012).

Next I will scrutinise what she says, as I believe it is important for my purposes here. As her work is discussed at some length and quoted in the introduction to this volume, I will therefore not discuss it in detail here (see also Vergès, 2010, pp. 145–146). First, she emphasises that Réunion is not an African, a French or an Asian island. Instead, it is an island of *creolisation* (Vergès, 2010, p. 135). Though it is also a *département d’outre-mer*, just like its sister former *vieilles colonies* in the Caribbean, namely, Guadeloupe, Guyane and Martinique, and a *creolised territory* to boot just like them, it is not really a former Caribbean plantation colony. There are therefore both major commonalities and great differences between Réunion, on the one hand, and its Caribbean counterparts, on the other. In reality, people came to Réunion (which had no indigenous population before the French took over in 1642) from all over the Indian Ocean, as slaves, indentured labourers, immigrants; differently from the situation in the Caribbean (where processes of *creolisation* usually arose only between slaves and colonisers, though there were also indigenous peoples originally, for instance, the famous Caribs), those newcomers themselves were also the issue of ancient, pre-colonial processes of *creolisation* in the Indian Ocean. In turn, on Réunion, they engaged in further processes of *creolisation* with locals.

Suffice to say that Vergès hardly qualifies as someone trying to gloss over histories of oppression. (In fact, upon close reading, not even Freyre – who is

accused of romanticising ‘racial harmony’ – really does that. In reality, violence often oozes out of the pages of his main works, unsurprisingly enough, as he was, when at his best, a great historian and sociologist, instead of the nincompoopish, openly manipulative ideologue he is often depicted to be – as Araújo, for instance, has pointed out; see Freyre, 1933 [1986]; Araújo, 1994.) For Vergès, the paradox with which creolisation faces us is that, out of a brutal and violent history of inequality and oppression, there arises a culture that nonetheless shows an incredible capacity to ‘adapt and adopt’. I concur. Vergès goes as far as to state that it is as if peaceful conditions do not bode well for processes of creolisation (*sic* – Vergès, 2010, p. 146). To my mind, she sounds almost Freyrean when she says that. She then concludes:

The practices of creolization incorporated the histories of inequality and brutality, and the melancholy of lonely men. Yet, and this deserves our attention, these men, slaves, indentured workers, and poor whites gave us the world that today offers us the capacity to adapt and adopt, to be flexible, decentred and able to develop a theory of the subject which is not contained within the limits of imperial sovereignty.

VERGÈS, 2010, pp. 147–148

Vergès’s work provides in this way a relevant perspective on creolisation, not only in regard to the arts and culture, but also in terms of social processes (she also unwittingly, to my mind, provides in a nutshell the key points of much of Freyre’s and Senghor’s thinking too). Creolisation is not harmonious or predictable either, and furthermore it stresses agency on the part of the ‘recipient’. Moreover, it often seems, as Vergès indicates, to undermine the truth of fixed identity (hence, unsurprisingly, it is often not found to be acceptable historically by either the left or the right). At any rate, Vergès’s theorising of creolisation allows for a rethinking of the work of the Atlantic intellectuals I have briefly presented here. Our societies (in this specific case, Brazil, Senegal and South Africa) issue from histories of inequality and oppression. In fact, this is a major theme of Atlantic and Indian Ocean histories, albeit in different ways. Merely bringing that fact up, however, is not enough.

To my mind, it is also not only important, but even imperative, that we put to use the intellectual and ideological resources bequeathed to us by our ancestors at this historical juncture of increasing transnationalist globalisation and violence. Needless to say, this requires a mode of intellectual appropriation which is a far cry from mere deconstructionism, no matter how critical. The other central aspect of the issue is the past. The question here is: can we

reclaim it for our future? How do we accomplish this, and help shape our future through a creative and imaginative effort? I think that, at this historical juncture, this is the critical issue at stake here. Nonetheless, retrieval of the past here is not carried out for justificatory or apologetic purposes, let alone for purposes of conservation as such (I therefore wish good luck to anyone interested in doing any of that). Instead, it is done for the sake of a creolisation of our future, a creolisation done with and through our focused intent and concentration in the present. As Vergès points out, creolisation, even under horrendous conditions of inequality (such as those prevailing under colonialism), ultimately depends on the agency of individuals, and, therefore, there is fundamentally nothing stopping it from happening, even as was, in fact, the case under the extreme conditions of slavery and indentureship. That is, creolisation depends on us, and, as Vergès and others show, it takes place in quotidian life first and foremost (that was also arguably the point of Freyre's historical works, not to mention a good deal of Senghor's creative ones). It is also vital that we remind ourselves that, whatever their shortcomings, and those of their projects, not to mention their politics and personal lives, Senghor, Freyre and Louw furthered creolisation in their various ways, in their work and no doubt also in their lives, with more than a moderate degree of success. Moreover, they did so in the not so distant past (Senghor died in France as recently as 2001). In this way, I believe we could do worse than getting inspiration from them, even though we may not exactly be able to follow in their footsteps.

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