Postcolonial turn : re-imagining anthropology and Africa
Devisch, R.; Nyamnjoh, F.

The Postcolonial Turn

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African Studies centre

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
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Acknowledgements

The Postcolonial Turn: An Introduction

Adebayo Olukoshi & Francis Nyamnjoh

A Scholarly Debate

This book engages a scholarly debate on the postcolonial turn in the academe, and in anthropology in particular, in and of Africa. Sociocultural endogeneity and its shadow side –namely the largely fantasised alterity projected onto the alien socioculture– as well as the cross-pollination between so-called 'universal' science –in fact most often Western-derived science– and local knowledge systems, are core themes in the book. More specifically, how do local knowledge practices take up, along their own genius, existential issues and epistemological perspectives that indeed may interrogate or enrich more global transcultural debates and scholarly reflexivity?

Within the afore-mentioned feat, the present book revisits a number of promising endeavours towards Africa's re-appropriation of endogenous intellectual and sociocultural ideals. Its strong concern is about today's anthropology and its relevance in the self-critical postcolonial production of knowledge in and of Africa that moreover breaks open Africanist scholarship onto questions of broad scholarly relevance, if not of cosmopolitan concern. To take up this feat, the book first reissues a selection of updated recent CODESRIA publications (*Africa Development – Afrique et développement* 2005 no3, and *CODESRIA Bulletin* 2008 no1-4) devoted along this theme to major postcolonial, African and European, scholars who seek to define the position of the postcolonial anthropologist and other social scientists in and of Africa. The book, moreover, includes other markably innovative contributions that show how genuine African knowledge practices, locally rooted, are of global significance and/or articulate themselves onto cosmopolitan political scenes.

Intellectual Colonialism versus the Pursuit of Endogeneity

Chapter two examines a first commitment, namely by the late professor Archibald Monwabi Mafeje **(trained in natural sciences and anthropology)** to truly decolonise social sciences from biassing Eurocentric rationalist, modernist development theories that dismiss any active role to African peoples' genuine local cultures in their self-critical and endogenous emancipation. Professor Mafeje's discourses and publications do transcend disciplinary boundaries and are characterised by a staunch contribution towards endogenously re-asserting in and for Africa and the larger academe Africa's intellectual capabilities and ideals. As an academic sojourner conscious of the history of Africa over the last six centuries, professor Mafeje –fondly known as Archie– rallied his colleagues to resist the intellectual servitude on which all forms of foreign domination thrive. He was intransigeant in his call for the liberation of our collective imaginations as the foundation stone for continental liberation. In all of this, he also distinguished himself by his insistence on scientific rigour and originality. It was his trade mark to be uncompromisingly severe with fellow scientists who were mediocre in their analyses. The power of his pen and the passion of his interventions always went hand-in-hand with a uniquely polemical style hardly meant for those who were not sure-footed in their scholarship.

Archie Mafeje, South-African by birth, completed his undergraduate studies and began his career as a scholar at the University of Cape Town, but like many other South-Africans, he was soon forced by the apartheid regime to go into exile where he spent the better part of his life. He obtained a PhD in Anthropology and Rural Sociology from Cambridge University in 1966. In 1973, at the age of 34, he was appointed Professor of Anthropology and Sociology of Development at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague by an Act of Parliament and with the approval of all the Dutch universities, and became the first African scholar to be so distinguished in The Netherlands. That appointment bestowed on him the honour of being a Queen Juliana Professor and one of her Lords. His name appears in the prestigious blue pages of the Dutch National Directorate.

Archie Mafeje's professional career spanned four decades and covered three continents. From 1969 to 1971 he was Head of the Sociology Department at the University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania before moving to The Hague as a visiting Professor of Social Anthropology of Development and Chairman of the Rural Development, Urban Development and Labour Studies Programme at the Institute of Social Studies from 1972 to 1975. It was here that he met his wife and life-long companion, the Egyptian scholar and activist, Dr Shahida El Baz. In 1979, he joined the American University, in Cairo, as Professor of Sociology. Thereafter, he took up the post of Professor of Sociology and Anthropology and Director of the Multidisciplinary Research Centre at the University of Namibia from 1992 to 1994. Mafeje was also a senior fellow and visiting or guest professor at several other universities and research institutions in Africa, Europe and North America. He is the author of many books, monographs and journal articles. His critique of the concept of tribalism and his works on anthropology are widely cited as key reference materials. He also did path-breaking work on the land and agrarian question in Africa.

Professor Mafeje returned to South-Africa several years after the end of apartheid where he was appointed a Research Fellow by the National Research Foundation (NRF) working at the African Renaissance Centre at the University of South-Africa (UNISA). In 2001, Archie Mafeje became a member of the Scientific Committee of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and in 2003 was awarded the Honorary Life Membership of this Council. In 2005, Professor Mafeje was appointed a CODESRIA Distinguished Fellow in conjunction with the Africa Institute of South-Africa, in Pretoria. Wednesday 28 March 2007, professor Archie Mafeje passed away, in Pretoria.

Through his sustained critique of African anthropology as a handmaiden of colonialism and call for social history to replace it as a discipline, Mafeje witnesses to his total discomfort with the epistemology of alterity and exogenously generated and contextually irrelevant knowledge produced with ambitions of dominance. This is all the more problematic, as Jimi Adesina (sociologist at Rhodes University, South-Africa) in chapter three argues, when such knowledge is passively internalised and reproduced by the very

people whose ontology and experiences have been carefully scripted out by misrepresentations informed by hierarchies of humanity structured, inter alia, on race, place, class, gender and age.

As John Sharp (social anthropology, University of Pretoria) argues in chapter four, what Archie Mafeje objected to about anthropology which he once described as his 'calling', "was not its methods of research or the evidence that could be produced by careful participant observation. Even at his most critical he took care to endorse the value of this form of inquiry relative to others". He remained faithful to the fact "that any attempt to understand the circumstances of people in Africa required firsthand inquiry into what they made of these circumstances themselves". What he objected to therefore, "was an anthropology in which particular epistemological assumptions … were allowed to overwhelm whatever it was that people on the ground had to say about the conditions in which they found themselves". If Mafeje objected to this kind of anthropology, it was –as John Sharp states– "because anthropology was the discipline he knew best –the one he had said was his 'calling at the outset of his professional career".

Mafeje spent the best part of his life and scholarship contesting the racialised epistemological underpinnings of a system of social knowledge production into which Africans have been co-opted and schooled as passive consumers without voice even on matters pertaining to their very own realities and existence. In this regard, Mafeje's unwavering pan-Africanism has always resonated with CODESRIA's mission of increased visibility for African scholars, African scholarship and African perspectives on African and global issues. Yet, his call for the valorisation of Africanity, its creativity and innovations has not meant easy endorsement for all that claims to be Afro-centric. He has been especially critical of well-meaning but poorly conceived and even more poorly articulated attempts at affirming Africanity such as "African renaissance" (Maloka 2008). The extent to which African scholars buy these aspirations in principle and in practice would determine the degree to which Mafeje and CODESRIA have succeeded in making these battles and lofty heights truly collective and pan-African beyond rhetoric.

Fred Hendricks (2008) and others have in their turn challenged Mafeje for freezing his intellectual gaze narrowly on Africa South of the Sahara, and for inadvertently reproducing ideas about

"a disaggregated and dismembered Africa" in a pan-Africanism that had little real room for North Africa beyond the fact of his considerably long period of stay in Cairo and being married to Shahida El Baz, an Egyptian and mother of his daughter Dana. But such criticism could be countered by the fact that he did not necessarily have to study Egypt or North Africa in order to consider the region as part of his pan-African project. In the absence of personal scholarship, Mafeje used other indicators to affirm his belonging to North Africa and esteem the region in his pan-Africanism. As Jimi Adesina depicts in chapter three, he probably felt more at home in Egypt than he ever did in South-Africa, especially following his return under the post-apartheid dispensation, where he increasingly felt isolated and lonely, and indeed, where he died unattended.

To measure the fullness of Mafeje's Africanity and pan-Africanism, it is appropriate to go beyond scholarly declarations and appreciate the social relationships he forged and entertained in his life in and away from a place called home, motherland or fatherland. According to Kwesi Prah (2008), Archie Mafeje exuded an "effortless worldliness" that gave him a rare "vibrant and sublime cosmopolitanism"; and as a veritable cosmopolitan African, he was used to describing himself as "South-African by birth, Dutch by citizenship and Egyptian by domicile". Kwesi Prah writes of Mafeje's impressive familiarity with Western literature, Dutch art, "sophisticated and totally uncommon knowledge of European wines", and culinary skills and accomplishments. Just as "his often placid exterior belied a stridently combative spirit and expression" in debates, Archie Mafeje's committed pronouncement and writings on pan-Africanism and the importance of decolonising the social sciences, often took attention away from the cosmopolitan that he was –leading to misrepresentations even by fellow African intellectuals.

Far from being essentialist, Mafeje was a person to whom belonging was always work in progress to be constantly enriched with new encounters and new relationships, and never to be confined by geography or boundaries, political or disciplinary. His deep embitterment came and/or was exacerbated when those claiming him failed to demonstrate the nuances and sophistication that made

of him the cosmopolitan intellectual and African that he was. As Jimi Adesina reminds us, the meaning of Archie Mafeje for three generations of African scholars and social scientists is about encounters and the relationships that resulted from those encounters. To John Sharp, Archie Mafeje will be remembered as a scholar who spoke truth, unfailingly, to power; and who over the years carefully worked out how best to support his political convictions by means of the research he did. In speaking truth to power, he had come to master the art of hard and uncompromising intellectual argument, without having to resort to personal animosity or the denial of respect for those with whom he came to argue.

Archie Mafeje has fought the battle and run the race successfully. We will surely miss his thoughtful insights, his strident rebukes, his loyal friendship, his companionship, and –yes, his wit, humour and expert culinary skills that included an incomparable knowledge of foods and wines from all corners of the world. For those he has left behind, especially those of us whom he inspired, the challenge before us is clear: Keep the Mafeje spirit alive by investing ourselves with dedication to the quest for the knowledge we need in order to transform our societies –and the human condition for the better.

The Borderlinking Anthropological Endeavour

Next to the above scrutiny, done by scholars from within Africa's academe, of the racialised versus endogenous epistemological underpinnings of social science, part two discusses another attempt at understanding African knowledge practices from within, along their transcultural significance. It concerns René Devisch, an anthropologist from the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium who in the 1970s as researcher has come to participate in Yaka society of Southwestern DR Congo. During annual research sojourns since 1986 in Kinshasa's shantytowns, he has worked first and foremost with healers and independent Christian healing communes. In his academic lecture, given at the award of an honorary doctorate granted him by the University of Kinshasa in April 2007, on the very topic 'What is an anthropologist?', Devisch concentrates on the bifocal gaze of the Africanist anthropologist. By applying his or her comprehension of an African society and culture towards

clarifying much unthought in his or her home culture in the North, the postcolonial anthropologist seeks a form of mirroring, or more precisely borderlinking or reciprocal inspiration between the so-called scholarly anthropological habitus and insights in local sociocultures in both Africa and Europe.

One can gauge some of the significance of the recognition by the University of Kinshasa –only the tenth such award in the fifty years' history of that university– from the remarks of the Dutch anthrolopogist Wim van Binsbergen:

> "When, nearly half a century after the end of colonial rule, an African university grants an honorary degree to a prominent researcher from the former colonising country, this is a significant step in the global liberation of African difference (to paraphrase Mudimbe's 1997 expression). The African specialist knowledge institution declares itself to be no longer on the receiving and subaltern side, but takes the initiative to assert its independent scholarly authority, and thus redefines the flow of North-South intellectual dependence into one of intercontinental equality"*

At the onset of his academic lecture, Devisch looked back at his studies of philosophy and anthropology in the late 1960s in Kinshasa –deeply marked by the sociopolitical and intercivilisational contestations by Négritude and African philosophy that were prevalent at the time. As a European anthropologist engaged in a quest to neutralise as much as possible his ethnocentric bias, it has been his lasting attempt to understand subaltern groups and the rich potential of their knowledge and lifeworld endogenously, that is, in their own terms. Most of his research experience has been gained in the context of observing Yaka men's and women's major concerns and their interplay with the economic and political mutations, both in their natal region in Southwestern Congo and Kinshasa's shantytowns (Devisch 1993, Devisch & Brodeur 1999).

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* On their side, René Devisch and his colleague Filip De Boeck acted as promoters of the honorary doctorates which their Alma Mater, the Catholic University of Leuven, granted two African scholars, namely the late Jean-Marc Ela in 1999 and Valentin Mudimbe in 2006.

Subsequently, Devisch has attempted to apply his understanding of local Congolese lifeworlds to an investigation of both some much-overlooked Eurocentric assumptions of his socialisation in his native Flanders in Belgium, as well as much unthought in the doxa and episteme of the Western-derived social science traditions he was trained in (Devisch 2007). He situates his anthropological endeavour in the 'shared borderspace' that may develop in-between a transcontinental plurality of lifeworlds, traditions of thought and scientific disciplines. Very much aware of the trauma of the colonial intrusion also in its present disguises, and left with a gnawing sense of moral debt contracted by his generation of social scientists who came to Africa in the early days of independence, he nevertheless feels somewhat revalidated in his anthropological endeavour by the interpersonal loyalty that his many African co-students, colleagues and hosts have extended to him over the years. He invites us to reflect on contemporary anthropology's intercultural commitment to a multisited dialogue. He thereby came to develop an anthropological approach from the double perspective of looking at local practices, wherever, from the perspectives of 'here' and 'over there', the 'local' and the 'glocal' (a neologism for the joint bifocal, 'global and local', perspective). He thereby came to selectively integrate into his perspective and theorising both the Western scientific rationality and the innovating heuristical force of African knowledge systems and practices.

A profound respect for diverse ways of life, for plural gender-specific procedures of signification, as well as a capacity for empathy, unprejudiced dialogue and self-critical co-implication, together constitute, we believe, the golden thread in extended fieldwork along which the anthropologist can investigate groups or networks and their lifeworld from within. Such genuine com-passionate intersubjectivity involves seeing local realities primarily from the perspective and in terms of the communities or networks concerned. And yet there remains a paradox, since researchers subsequently represent their insights largely in the academic traditions of persuasion derived from Eurocentric modernity. As the late Archie Mafeje observed, a core question for the anthropologist is how much his or her report does remain a form of Western-centric scrutiny of

cultural codes unwillingly obnubilating local society's proper genius. There is the constant risk of exoticising, if not othering, the locals: this is a risk derived at least in part from the Western scholarly tradition of the book and of objectifying distancing that, as Mafeje suggests, exclude a multivalue logic in favour of reductionist subject-object dualities.

As Mafeje, Adesina, van Binsbergen and Devisch argue below, one mainstream discourse in the classical Western social science tradition continues blithely to privilege phallo- and logocentric Enlightenment rationality, the in principle autonomous self and human rights –this last understood in the individualistic terms of contemporary Western patriarchal culture –promoting itself as the global project and bearer of personalist progress to all nations. In the transatlantic mass media radiating from the North, this personalist perspective operates in a kind of dialectical tension with the more materialist techno-scientific discourse, deploying in ethnocentric fashion its projected phantasms in particular with regard to the populations south of the Sahara, like to non-literates and impoverished rural or displaced people. This is the case even when the processes of Westernisation of education and state building are engineered in full or in part by the very Enlightenment rationality that is prejudicially and lastingly subjugating local knowledge practices to the hegemonic (post-)Enlightenment modernity. However, as Koen Stroeken in chapter twelve most innovatively argues, transnational and transgressive youth cultures and their heterogenous efforts at self-invention, side-to-side to the many-tongued electronic networking as well as the open-ended digital narrativity in today's media world, compel us more than ever to seek and lay bare new local modes of creative border transcendence. Some modes entail a subversive critique of the self-serving ruling institutions. Ever sensitive to what is obfuscated in the encounters of civilisations, many an anthropologist has wondered if the North in its tendency towards othering the partner in the truncated intercultural contact, is not seeking in some insidious way, to metabolise an 'un-thought'. Is this shadow zone not unconsciously rehearsing some form of collective *angst* in secular bourgeois socioculture in the face of death, finitude, the unforeseen, the

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passionate and the hybrid? It is why the transnational mass media from the North relentlessly project the doom of death and the passionate on some alleged 'religious subaltern periphery' associated with the South?

Living in the shattered worlds of shantytowns may force anthropologists to expose themselves to a ruthless interrogation of their partly defensive intercultural narratives as well as of key concepts in social sciences –which unnoticingly may reissue the "Invention of Africa" as Mudimbe (1988) has unmasked. On the contrary, going hands with Mudimbe's attempt at "a sort of archaeology of African *gnosis*" (Ibid.), there is, for instance, as Devisch and Stroeken point out, the exposure to the local epistemologies that a number of postcolonial anthropologists are seeking. It is about epistemologies in as much as these characterise rule-governed commonsensical thinking, or the more intuitive practical thinking, as well as the reflexive and systematic, but culture-specific, understandings of the order of things and the human condition. The anthropologist thereby must open up to lifeworlds that unfold themselves through the interplay of everyday practices and the manifold interventions, motions and messages of humans, ancestors and non-human agents, or visible and invisible forces. All this may unfold in interactive and culture-specific –very likely not Enlightenment and Christian –sites of emerging meaning production and innovative world-making. Youngsters, initiates, mourners, charismatic communes, rejoicing people, bring this about in -an ambience of miming, parody and mimicry through practices such as sensing out of liminal situations or domesticating the unforeseen and the invisible through playful and polysemic display of ambiguity and catharsis, or also propitiating agency in musical or streetwise culture.

The anthropologist may indeed feel interrogated by the clash between the postcolonial state institutions, and/or the intrusive and exogenous civilisational models conveyed by transcontinental media or school education regarding public display of gender identity, affection, religiosity, sexuality, material and social success, on the one hand, and the subaltern people's clinging to home-born beliefs, modes of living, habitual techniques and skills, on the other. Hence, the anthropologist, to Devisch and Stroeken, is witness, in the youth

cultures and new religions, to so many subaltern urbanites' transcultural bricolage of both a forceful identity display and its constant refashioning or reframing in the multiple selves within the communities and networks studied in the shantytowns, like in the charismatic prophetic communes.

These experiences may force many a social scientist beyond the neutral objective stance of science. He or she may become more and more reluctant to leave out of the picture the shocking effects of estrangement, uncertainty or disarray, and as the countertransferential dimension in the discomforting or even uncanny experience of these effects. Here, some social scientists of the type of intellectual ideals of Mafeje may find a way out of the intellectual conflict, either in emancipatory involvement with their host group, or in subversive artistic and rhetorical productions in either militant or aestheticising writing on one's own society. By doing so, anthropologists in particular may be able to show how much these artistic productions have imbibed or overcome the imaginary colonial and postcolonial identity or knowledge constructs –a reality unmasked in particular by Devisch, Mafeje, Mudimbe, Stroeken, van Binsbergen and Werbner. As van Binsbergen and Werbner also argue below, depicting or differentiating so-called 'traditional' and 'modern' people or societies as incarnations of 'local' versus 'globalising', 'premodern' versus 'modern', 'irrational' versus 'rational' lifestyles is largely a fiction of the media and constructivist leanings in the social sciences. But it is a myth that in many ways shapes perception and action in a world where reality is often hostage to constructivist ideology.

All this reinforces the need to take, in North and South or 'centre' and 'periphery', a new and bifocal look from 'there' to 'here' as well as from the local to the global, and vice versa. Applying in the 1980s the anthropological insights gained in the corporeal symbolism in Yaka socioculture to his research in Belgium with family physicians and psychiatrists, Devisch was led to trace in a phenomenologically inspired perspective the impact that the culture-specific moulding of the body and eating patterns, but also of family interaction has had on many a patient with chronic epigastric complaints, both autochthonous and allochthonous in multicultural Flanders (Devisch 1990). From the late 1980s, an even greater challenge was posed,

from the late 1980s on, by his constant shuttling between, on the one hand, his Flemish culture of origin and the University of Leuven, and on the other the hospitality of diverse subaltern communities, both rural and in shantytowns, for research stays in southern Ethiopia and Tunisia, and for *in situ* supervision of African and European doctoral students during their anthropological fieldwork in eight African countries.

Upon the invitation from CODESRIA, Wim van Binsbergen and Valentin Mudimbe react on Devisch's academic lecture on his anthropological engagement. This is followed by Devisch's rejoinder, that closes part two.

Professor Wim van Binsbergen (research director in social anthropology at the African Studies Centre Leiden and professor intercultural philosophy at Erasmus University Rotterdam) starts to interrogate the constitutive grounds of the hermeneutic endeavour towards the host culture from within. He weights the epistemological solidity of a passionate ethnographic sensitivity that seeks to resonate with the many hosts' sociality, inventive governance, numinous powers and healing arts. His essay keeps a Janus-like spiralling tension between the contradictory impulses in the intercultural encounter aimed at by the social scientist: on the one hand, the pull towards clarity of thought and, on the other, the more empathetic fascination for the inexpressible, invisible, hence numinous. He moreover offers lucid postcolonial interrogations regarding our ethnocentric blockage for open-minded intercultural encounter and science-sharing in academia or cyberspace, between and across North and South, and South and North. Thus, he invites us to rethink, in and from a multicultural variety of social scenes and epistemological presuppositions, our by definition limited and biasing modes of understanding reality and representation, meaning and agency, culture and power, as well as space, place and time (or locality and belonging, identification and history).

Indeed, anthropological fieldwork and the subsequent scholarly reports may for the author and reader entail major dislocations from the interactional, the verbal or the observable to the spheres of the transactional, the multisensory co-implication, the auspicious event and the invisible realm. An ethically committed anthropologist, however, cannot go on excluding from the intercultural encounter

whatever appears to be at odds with the Eurocentric academic's secularised worldview, or with a hegemonic mode of sensory and objectivist data acquisition canonised by phallogocentric Enlightenment rationality.

Moreover, in chapter seven, professor Valentin Y. Mudimbe (professor of literature at Duke University Durham, and the chairman of the International African Institute London) offers a throught-provoking assessment of the possibilities and impossibilities of the human sciences in Africa. Drawing on an exceptionally wide-ranging intercivilisational expertise and an expert scholarly scrutiny of the great philosophical studies in relation to self and other in society as well as to knowledge acquisition, Mudimbe's magnanimous letter to Devisch invites the latter to enter the intercultural hospitality of a meditative walk along the Benedictine tradition. He invites Devisch in particular to critically reflect on the philosophical underpinnings and major phenomenological understandings of the most fundamental and therefore interculturally comparative process of cultural shaping: how to make the body a site of *the Rule*. Translated into the thematic of the Kinshasa Academic Lecture: how to subdue the culture-specific biassing blind spots, passions and errors characterising ethnocentric misunderstanding and misrepresentation, to an empirically sound and transculturally valid scientific anthropological practice?

Having, two decades ago, forcefully resisted the missionary and evolutionist *Invention of Africa* (Mudimbe 1988), professor Mudimbe now scrutinises, with incisive awareness, the phenomenological and discourse-based modes of keeping intact the intersubjectively most engaging intercultural knowing and comprehending. If it is not the salvationist mission or the humanitarian impulse in the name of something bigger than us that validly urges a genuine intercultural *epoche*, nor the embarassment or the moral guilt for respectively his or her ancestors' or predecessors' so-called premodern ways of life or colonial intrusion, is it then perhaps the Other's precariousness and ethical appeal, or rather mere fascination, that urges the anthropologist's commitment? Drawing on his background in philology and along the lines of the Foucaultian approach of structured discourses, as well as cutting across major philosophical

and empirical anthropology, Mudimbe examines the gravitational field in which the intercultural anthropologist is moving. He defends the classical plea for keeping the ethical commitment distinct from the proper neutral scientific endeavour and agenda in line with its rules for empirical and historical-contextual enquiry that aims at interculturally valid scientific knowledge.

In the final chapter of part two, 'A Shared Borderspace', Devisch offers a rejoinder to both van Binsbergen's and Mudimbe's comments. Pursuing the anthropological debate regarding the specificity and invaluable strenghts of the African forms of knowledge, Devisch first identifies, the issue of whether the empathetic anthropologist can or should espouse, in terms of his or her own canons, the distress or the beauty of the encounter, hence the dignity and numinous inspiration, the sanctification of sorrow and spiritualisation of suffering in line with the cultural milieu of the host group. How is this problem to be expressed or theorised? Interaction in the unstable borderzone between the here and the there, the living and the deceased, the visible and the invisible, the auspicious and the uncanny –whether in dream-sharing, ritual, sacrifice, divination, witchcraft, healing, pilgrimage, poetry, dance or song, Islamic or Christian liturgy– makes the anthropologist indeed attentive to what is not rule-governed, representable, visible, speakable or verbal.

A second concern highlighted by Devisch regards the anthropologist's tuning in with the given sociocultural orientation and the local forms of 'co-naissance' or co-implicating comprehending –as will be clarified in the following section on cross-pollination. Anthropology, of a postcolonial and postmodern signature and heavily drawing on co-implicating participant observation, is summoned to seek critical insight into the culture-specific ways of feeling, seeing and trans-subjective, hence inter-corporeal, modes of bringing about, hence subverting figuration, interlocution, recollection, empowerment and comprehension. He or she is thereby led to focus on the knowledge, values or imaginaries that are endogenous to particular cultural sites, as well as on their explanatory tropes, their interpretation and generalisations. This focus may inspire some form of unprecedented transcultural approach that can trace possible homologies between age-old crafts

or rituals, contemporary aesthetics (think of Stroeken's analysis, in chapter twelve, of the hip-hop *Bongo Flava* in Tanzania) or techno-scientific developments, and futurist techno-human virtual reality. Is it not the role of anthropology or intercultural philosophy to also unravel the unthought –both the most original or the deeply suppressed and eventually the order of the uncanny– in the host society, just as in mainstream Western consciousness? What readily comes to mind here are the genuine, original modes of comprehending and knowing as well as their authoritative use in society, of the arts of language play, of dealing with the human body and the senses in resonance with the social and cosmological body, or of palaver, reconciliation or aggression, in the fold of images, fantasies, experiential gestalts and desire of sorts, in many African societies.

A third concern addresses the experiential and culture-sensitive phenomenological rendering of people's knowledge and the genius of their culture. As a scholar engaged in a daily and studious participation in local knowledge practices, the participant anthropologist may indeed pursue to gradually learn the local knowledge and start practising some of its modes. Does such participant comprehension validly enable a disclosure from within, that is, in the terms and/or perspective of the given practices? And it is on that concern that Professor van Binsbergen and Professor Mudimbe remind Devisch of the pitfalls of a just appreciation of both local knowledge and the intercultural learning.

A fourth concern of the anthropological endeavour, advocated for by Devisch, radically opposes some of the deconstructionist stances taken in Anglo-American postmodern thinking. The fundamental authority for the anthropologist is precisely the culture-sensitive and culturally embedded (thus unavoidably culture-bound) intellectual and existential interdependence of field and text. It moreover entails the anthropological sensitivity for life-bearing thinking and speaking through the voice of things and artefacts, and for the intersubjective engagement and self-critical reflection. Such an approach to the culture-sensitive, specialist and intersubjective encounter from within a shared basis of valuation bears witness to the ever-emerging possibilities of a mutually enriching human co-implication. It would involve the artfulness,

the dignity and the domestication or, literally, the home-coming of more and more lucidly interweaving 'glocal' worlds –in a process which marks our challenging era with hope.

Cosmopolitan Sciences and Local Knowledge

The book's major objective concerns comprehending, in their originality, the many forms and instances of endogenous knowledge production in Africa from within their given socioculture. Conversely, in scrutinising genuine African knowledge practices, it simultaneously seeks to assess the blind spots in Western-style social sciences. As Jane Flax (1990) so aptly characterises, the modern patriarchal science discourses are basically geared towards representation, the unitary subject, stable meaning, linear narrative and paternal authority. On their side, Devisch and Stroeken very much subscrive to Mafeje's and Adesina's quest to neutralise as much as possible ethnocentric and modernist bias. Indeed, many a postcolonial anthropologist's first attempt is to understand subaltern individuals, networks or groups and the rich potential of their knowledge and spirituality endogenously, that is, in their own terms. The use here of the term 'endogenous' –somewhat akin to vernacular, site-specific or local– with regard to a particular (professional or interregional) network or society, as focus of anthropological study, is, as Devisch points out, certainly not intended to suggest a unity, homogeneity or clearly distinguished culture or bounded group. Rather, he has in mind a capacity of interrelated subjects and of cultural matrices to exercise self-orientation and critical insight from an earlier or more primary and endogenous wellspring of inspiration or reference, largely carried by the mother-tongue and home culture. By local knowledge or mode of knowing, Devisch refers to any given professional network's or group's unique genius and distinctive creativity or heterogeneity. This genius puts a characteristic stamp and orientation on what its members develop as local and possibly long-range patterns of knowledge and epistemology, metaphysics, worldview and local technologies.

A popular etymological interpretation of the French notion of *connaissance*, comprehending, understood is that of *co-naissance* (literally co-birth; but colloquially referring to habitual and sub-reflexive modes of experiential knowing and insight). Devisch argues that the popular interpretation of *co(n)naissance* offers an insightful linguistic rendition of the sensuous and co-affecting intercorporeal, dialogical and co-implicating encounter and feel-knowing of the world in which the participant anthropologist is gradually engaged. *Co(n)naissance* rests on the emotional, hence intercorporeal, comprehending and co-implication of the subjects in a compassionate communal action. Think of an apprenticeship, a palaver, banter, a marriage or a healing, in which the sharing of knowledge becomes *co-naissance* or an intercorporeal and intersubjective knowing and knowledge-sharing in an ethical attitude (Ettinger 2006).

Academe in contemporary Africa could possibly enhance its social and (geo)cultural relevance by selectively integrating, with its epistemology of scientific rationality and objectivity the innovating force of local, such as African, traditions of knowledge practices and systems. This endeavour is moreover inspired by the now classical debate regarding *Black Athena* (Bernal 1990, van Binsbergen 2003) as well as by the *African Renaissance*. The latter was first formulated by Cheikh Anta Diop, and reformulated by South-Africa's 1999-2008 President Thabu Mbeki to cast off Africa's apartheid and postcolonial intellectual servitudes, as well as to affirm Africa's civilisational genuineness and bundle the multiform cultural assertivity from within the many local communities and social movements in particular in the suburbs throughout the Continent. Parallel to it, others are taking it to task to bringing out the plural versions of *afro-modernity* (Deutsch *et al.* 2002, Hanchard 1999). Hence, on the global scene, the civilisational, regional, professional or artistic plurality of modernities –poignantly depicted in the 2000 Millennium Quartet miniseries of *Public culture*– and their many transnational, diasporic crossings increasingly bear witness to the transcontinental multicentredness of cultural history in the make.

This is evocative of the powerful calls made in the early post-independence decades made among others by Anthony Kwame Appiah, Jean-Marc Ela, Paulin Hountondji, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Ali Mazrui, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Okot p'Bitek. They in particular called

for the adaptation of education and research to the polyvalent African contexts. Our plea moreover draws on a few recent studies examining the mutually enriching relationship between the Western-born sciences and culture-bound or local knowledge practices. We think of the programmatic studies undertaken by, or in line with, *the Subaltern Studies Programme* at the Delhi School of Sociology (Nandy 1988), or launched by the periodicals *Public culture* and *The South Atlantic Quarterly*. There are moreover the so-called Orientalist studies examining how philosophical, religious, psychological and mathematical notions from classic Arabic civilisation, India, China, and Japan have been drawn into Western thought from the 16th, 17th century onwards. A number of Arabo-Islamic and Southeast Asian scholarly traditions and institutions have relentlessly tried to contextually adapt the adopted Western intellectual traditions to their own genuine ones.

Against a monolithic view of knowledge production and the tendency to universalise Western-born science, Theophilus Okere, Chukwudi Anthony Njoku and René Devisch (Whelan Research Academy, WRAC, at Owerri in Southeastern Nigeria), in chapter nine, call attention to the unique genius and distinctive creativity and originality which underlies the production of originary knowledge. This is tapping from its culture-specific wellspring in a vernacular language-bearing group and along the lines of its ontological order and epistemological tradition. They moreover concentrate on the cross-pollination in African academe between cosmopolitan sciences and the infinite local ways of being and knowing, without homogenising the plurality nor mastering the differentiation. They take seriously the fact that, at its roots, knowledge production is always co-shaped by both drawing on, and outreaching beyond the inner capacities and the particular sociocultural context in which it develops as local knowledge. They argue how the colonial era helped to rub in African people's mind the assumptions and presumptions of Western science inferiorising and derailing the production and sharing of local knowledge and its artefacts in cultures other than the West. The study also highlights the mission of the Whelan Research Academy. Its general objective is to foster advanced research in the entire field of the humanities and social and behavioural sciences, as well as stimulate scholarly

interaction in an interdisciplinary and international setting. The uniqueness of the Academy above all lies in its particular aim which is to enhance a cross-pollination between the afore-mentioned cosmopolitan sciences and the plurality of local African knowledge practices and living arts. The Academy aims at a vigorous interrogation of their rooted and vital gender-specific authenticity, and of their freedom and tendency to polyvalent discontinuity and transgressivity, as well as of their original contribution to global Academia.

In his contribution, 'Is There One Science, Western Science?', professor Theophilus Okere (professor of philosophy at Claremont College California, president of WRAC) argues how science is all too easily associated with one of many forms of knowledge. Indeed, all humans by nature desire to know, and distinguish themselves by the wonder of knowledge. If all cultures have developed their own form of knowledge, the spectacular success in the West of a certain form of knowledge, science, as Okere states, has with colonisation, Western modernity's imperialism and the informational globalisation led to its being prejudicially seen as universal. The technical, material and liberal economic success of the West and its emancipation ideology of Enlightenment *ratio* have tended to keep out of focus many local forms of, and contribution to a potentially very rich, globally shared, mosaic knowledgescape. It has tended to inhibit or even prevent the development of a really plural and rhizomatic human-knowledge project for contextually dealing with the real world problems of high complexity. Natural science's very success, due essentially to its sustained and competing application to utilitarian technology has, in the context of the colonial and early postcolonial power hegemony of the West, enabled the development of a mistaken superiority of Western-style science over other forms of knowledge.

It is of utmost importance to understand that science is not free of culture. It is, rather, not only full of culture but also does not function independently of its culturally-rooted and specific language-bearing practitioners and their vested interests, whatever their claims to a lay status and neutral stance. Western scientific – today largely anglophone– knowledge-building connotes an institutional or bureaucratic setting ruled by the notion of

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systematised inquiry and ordered rationality, such as, financial and intellectual accounting. As powerfully argued by Ashis Nandy (1988) and unmasked in Laura Nader's book (1996), Western-centric scientific knowledge-building is ruled by a group of people united by a common competence; it has erected boundaries and a very pervasive oppositional thinking: autonomous self versus other, science versus religion, rational versus magical, universal versus particular, theoretical versus practical, or developed versus underdeveloped. As a matter of fact, the practice of science mirrors the compartmentalised societies in which it is embedded. Western-style science has the tendency to create an inferior or incompetent other so as better to reinforce its own hegemonic role. The future of lasting peaceful co-existence in the world and the re-balanced ecosystem may depend, in part, on the geocultural emancipation of plural local knowledge modes and forms.

In his paper, professor Paulus Gerdes (**PhD in mathematics and PhD in anthropology; former Vice Chancellor of the Universidade Pedagogica at Maputo Mozambique, president and co-founder with professor Ahmed Djebbar of the International Studygroup for Ethnomathematics and of the International Association for Science and Cultural Diversity)** traces a history of colonial and postcolonial reflexivity regarding mathematics, education and culture in Africa, that culminated in the emergence of ethnomathematics as a research field. A brief overview of ethnomathematical research in Mozambique and of historical research related to mathematics in Africa is presented. It is followed by examples of the integration of ethnomathematics into teacher education so as to stimulate the development of a sociocultural mathematical awareness. The paper concludes with a few trends in education in Africa using elements and ideas from ethnomathematics.

The 'Clash of Civilisations' Revisited

In chapter twelve, Dr. Koen Stroeken **(anthropologist, lecturer University of Ghent)** deals with a vibrant form of hip-hop music genre of rap that in the last decade emerged in Tanzania and is gaining wide public exposure thanks to its political tenor. First, the

study illustrates how hip-hop lyrics reflect Tanzanian political history and in part determine it. Bongo Flava, as the local hip-hop genre is called, has gained credibility by reinterpreting Nyerere's normative legacy and by expanding freedom of expression in the country, while unhampered by factors that normally mitigate the social impact of popular culture. Second, the article explores the global relevance of Bongo Flava. The latter attempts to outwit the sophisticated social indifference and neoliberalism of postcolonial rulers and ruled. Partly inspired by African American popular culture, many songs expose the postcolonial strategy of survival, which is to immunise oneself against the threat of commodification by fully embracing it, the contamination yielding extra power. The lyrics, in their irony and pessimism, exhibit the same immunising tendency. However, this tendency is curbed by two principles that safeguard streetwise status: the rapper's willingness to 'duel', hence lose face and accept defeat, and the Kiswahili credo of activating *bongo*, 'the brains', doing the right thing amidst a vortex of pressures, seductions and desires.

The article confronts a dominant Western-style postmodern position in social sciences, which has proven counterproductive and in fact by underpinning self-critique, thereby feeding neo-colonial centre-periphery relations. Recent scholarship practised in Academia's few international languages, has followed a complicit course, omitting to ask how much the global dimension of modernity decomposes into specific cultural outcomes or 'modernities', and how to train the eye for the inverse, namely the local phenomenon of global significance? Despite its appearance as a particular African identity in the making, Tanzanian rap, or Bongo Flava, has since the late 1990s dealt with events constituting 'the times' –our times. Why, indeed, would we limit the relevance of these artists's accounts of 'the world' (*dunia*, Swahili) to the cultural reality of their local worlds? Why would Africanness exclude them from insight into the global system we all partake of? These artists rhyme about 'the world', 'people' and 'life'. But for a long time Africanists were supposed to localise their use of such concepts, as if in the end their selves could reflect no more than an African's world, people, life. And so they were prevented from renewing long-standing debates on existential issues, on what it is to know and to be a

social being. Scholars in the classical social sciences prevented them from breaking their modernist deadlock on how to talk about the good life and inspire values without becoming moralists. Many Bongo artists have found a way to socially critique, without echoing the coloniser and preacher disregarding the cultural basis or alleged relativity of one's values. This is no minor feat. Not only do these artists defy in this a dominant current of Africanist scholarship. Their streetwise approach, which very much reminds of the 'subversive' position of Interlacustrine mediumistic movements, and outwits the ruling logic of self-seeking predation whose cynical pragmatism to our knowledge no other philosophy has yet been able to defeat.

In his critical study of 'Christian Moderns' in the matricentric Christian healing communes in Kinshasa's shantytowns, René **Devisch** examines how they define and interpret their identity in the face of challenges imposed by a Eurocentric modernity that was most promising, yet proved to be very deceptive. From the late 1980s, the millenarian appeal of the widespread neo-Pentecostal churches and kindred prophetic healing communes of the sacred spirit constitute a reaction to both the bankruptcy of the state political messianism and the then rampant economic inflation. The prophetical faith healing communes are centred around mothers as life sustainers and care deliverers. Research results show that the members quite surreptitiously combine tradition-bound localisms and Eurocentric modernity through their liturgies, and their petty trade for gaining the daily food for the family. The communes incite people's dreams of reconnecting with a benign autochthonous origin or regenerative source of life and healing, now associated with being-born-again in the (ancestral-cum-sacred) 'spirit of the other world'. Sermons in the faith-healing communes qualify such reorigination of the local lifeworld and the indwelling of the spirit in the born-again as an antidote to the traumatic memory of the former colonial master's intrusive and burdening presence in people's sovereign territory. The alien inputs, ranging from missionary Christian salvationist views on the individual, to technology and money, are in part associated with the work of *sataani*, the local name for the Christian notion of Satan. But *sataani* depicts the deceitful ruse or subduing machinations associated with Westernisation's intrusive

nature seen as ensorceling. In order for members to make liberating use of the Western inputs, this satanic materialist and individualist deceit needs to be exorcised and subdued to communalism.

The communes bear witness to the living experience of local culture and the search to remobilise a communitarian ethos, which were and are still rejected by Western-style heralding of modernisation. In fact, facing existential challenges, adepts of the prophetic communes tend to turn not so much to the Christian notion of conscience and illumination by the Holy Spirit, but to their own understanding of the sacred spirit. This combines both the holy spirit and the ancestral spirit, participating in the healing process of the most afflicted group members. Devisch argues that, although these communes entail a critique of postcolonial modernity, the aspect of modernity which they parody most is its utter contempt for endogenously-oriented localisms, their achievements and values.

The cultural reorigination of local societies and (professional) networks is moreover designed as an antidote to the ambience of persistent crisis of the public institutions, such as the hyperinflation and the breakdown of political leadership, of civil and health services as well as of the school system. The communes adopt the term 'dollarisation' that popular culture has coined, to designate the catastrophic economic imperialism, whereby the former colonial multinational business is suspected of continuing its exploitation, now through joining a complot, deemed satanic, with contemporary wealthy Congolese and expatriates for exploiting the nation's mineral resources. The communes increasingly and overtly diabolise the local heirs of the colonial master –namely the party-state, the consumerism market and neocolonial multinationals– as the root cause of people's hardships and misfortune. Through the very alternation between the adepts 'rejoicing, speaking in tongues and (ecstatic) dancing in the spirit', on the one hand, and the highly dramatised chasing out of evil as a way to healing, on the other, the communes of the sacred spirit bear witness to the adepts' basic confrontation with a bipolar inter- or otherworldly otherness, seen as both divine and occult, epiphanous and uncanny.

In his paper 'Responding to Rooted Cosmopolitanism', Richard Werbner (social anthropology, University of Manchester) explores locally rooted sociocultural loyalties towards one's local society and

home culture in Africa, that however are lastingly heading towards a transnational sense of mutuality in an open-ended cosmopolitanism. His focus is more precisely on how leading university-trained Ashanti or Kalanga families, in respectively postcolonial Ghana or Botswana, for love of their people are investing in both cosmopolitan political practice and decentring geocultural problematics. One of the mechanisms concerns a translocal construction of authority at the edges of the grids of both the postcolonial state and multinational organisations which by their very nature emphasise boundaries and neat territories of competence. But the translocal authority construction, on these edges, is all the while being rooted in practices and imaginations of the local cosmological and kinship foundation of belonging and moral identity. Such rootedness taps from the local imagination and modelling of place, home, authentic humanness or self, which is breaking away both from all too segmentary local ethnic traditions and bonds, as well as from the Westernising colonial and Christian civilising mission –was seeking to upgrade, if not all together break with vital kinship loyalties and views of the interhuman and the afterlife.

More concretely, the essay focusses in on the late Richard Ngwabe Mannathoko, belonging to Botswana's first postcolonial generation. The study depicts in particular his top political and business career ('founding and leading member of the civil servants' association – the precursor of a union –, an NGO head, ambassador and multinational director, real estate investor, lawyer and large scale farmer'). He was constructively engaging in respectively his native Kalanga base, the national state and multi- and transnational networks, ideals and tasks. Mannathoko's funeral, early in December 2005 in his home city of Francistown, poignantly witnessed to the postcolonial significance of his rooted cosmopolitanism. Political leaders from the national and international scenes, the capital's cultural elite, side to side to his family, came to re-assert a common engagement across differences of identities, ethnocultural communities and worlds. His family's undergoing and overcoming of colonial segregation by race, of mineral spoliation and of sociopsychic rupture are evocative of the trauma that centuries long spirit mediums have gone through. We would speculate that the ambience of the funeral reminds the making present of the

ancestral land and powerful spirits of the honoured deceased's forebears, so that they now re-become the guardian of late Mannathoko's transworld destiny. The funeral works through the mixed, if not duplicitous 'glocal' fate of his people in the tenebrous transition constitutive of the cosmopolitan character of serious participation in the postcolonial political and (geo)cultural scenes.

Opening up the Research Design in and on Africa

In the closing chapter, an Epilogue to the book, Francis **Nyamnjoh** indirectly raises the question of how more effectively involve not only African scholars but also local experts and communities. Scholars, experts and communities focus on agency in the research design and implementation towards increased endogeneity in knowledge production and dissemination. Are the issues we seek to research of importance to those who 'innocently' allow us into their lives, and to what extent have they consciously or unconsciously shaped our theoretical and methodological trajectories? Is it useful or not to have a negotiated and nuanced understanding of agency based on the literature (orthodox and alternative) and, even more importantly, on the life situations and social positions of Africans in and beyond the confines of a place called Africa?

Nyamnjoh's literary account of Peaphweng Nyu's divination – which could easily stand for divinatory séances in any African society– depicts in lively detail a millennia-old core institution and practice. Diviners in Africa, whether female or male, are perceived by their communities as mediums of spiritual 'forces'. As people perceive it, the latter loom beyond the reach of mere visually inquired 'factual' knowledge, yet dawn through their repeatable dramatic force-effects on the diviner's body and senses, dreams and state of trance, or through a subsequent change of the client's health or capacities. Divination rests on the widely shared assumption of an *interconnectedness between worlds*. The diviner testifies to the perspicacious insight that the visible or tangible worlds –sky, earth, underworld, and the relevant social and bodily realms– are each in its own modus, pervaded by interdependent and interinformed, invisible or intangible forces. These are figured as ancestral shades,

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spirits, witchcraft or sorcery, that affect the lives of the living. With regard to this interconnectedness, fully initiated and respected diviners are viewed as capable, through their heightened intuition or perceptiveness of authoritatively disclosing the client's predicament.

As a matter of fact, divinatory practice has been so much misunderstood by research in the Western-style social sciences in Africa, along the lines of the alleged rural-urban, past-present, magic-reason divides. While overcoming the latter that loom large at the classical social sciences' horizon, in its depiction of the popular discourses and nuanced understanding of the skilled agency of diviner and consultants and drawing on an understanding of the life situation of those concerned, the Epilogue brings the book to an exciting end. And thereby divination, side-to-side to many related modes of experience and social practice at the margins of Judaeo-Christian and modernist traditions, provocatively throws out an enigmatic but promising research design regarding culturally-shaped knowledge and consciousness.

Epilogue

CODESRIA believes in debates that recognise and provide a level playing field for African contributions and perspectives. This is a way forward in the collective quest to minimise the catalogue of misrepresentations of which Africa and African scholarship are often victim. Such dialogue, mutual recognition and respect should help to convince African and non-African social scientists alike about their integrity and science vis-à-vis Africa and its predicaments. Indeed, CODESRIA believes the twenty-first century marked by globalisation and the contestation and renegotiation of disciplinary boundaries and social identities to be particularly opportune for paying greater attention to changing what is produced as knowledge in and for Africa. Even more importantly, it is time to interrogate the institutional cultures within which that knowledge is produced, in a view to encouraging greater and more genuine collaboration that draws from different disciplinary boundaries.

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Part 1

A Staunch Critique of Intellectual Colonialism and the Pursuit of Sociocultural Endogeneity

Africanity: A Combative Ontology[*]

Archie Mafeje

Prelude

This article is inspired by *Out of One, Many Africas* (1999), an incredible intellectual insurrection instigated by William Martin and Michael West. For their courage, persistence, and intellectual integrity, they deserve, and the recognition. The best way of appreciating their contribution would have been to review their book in full but for me there was the danger of biting more than I could chew. Therefore, I chose to respond to some of the leading ideas in the book these include the pending demise of Africanity, and the necessity of Afrocentrism. As would be readily agreed, these issues are as big as they are controversial but intensely that even 'distinguished elders' are willing to the chagrin of 'Brave New World' advocates. Even so, the risk is not too great since they have the advantage of hindsight, unlike neophytes who are often too easily infatuated with fashions. Since fashions are very changeable, it stands to reason that ahistoricity is a greater risk than historicity. To evolve lasting meanings, we must be 'rooted' in something.

The fashionable 'free-floating signifier' is an illusion in a double sense. First, nobody can think and act outside historically determined circumstances and still hope to be a social signifier of any kind. In other words, while we are free to choose the role in which we cast ourselves as active agents of history, we do not put on the agenda the social issues to which we respond. These are imposed on us by history. For example, we would not talk of freedom, if there was no prior condition in which this was denied; we would not be anti-

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racism if we had not been its victims; we would not proclaim Africanity, if it had not been denied or degraded; and we would not insist on Afrocentrism, if it had not been for Eurocentric negations, Secondly, unlike, the illusory 'free-floating signifier', it is the historical juncture which defines us socially and intellectually. At this point in time there are certain critical issues which African scholars have to clarify so as to indicate what might be the underpinnings of the eagerly awaited African renaissance.

Of necessity, under the determinate global conditions an African renaissance must entail a rebellion – a conscious rejection of past transgressions, a determined negation of negations. Initially, such representations will not be credited by those who uphold the status quo. If they be robust and persistent, they will sooner or later elicit a plea from men and women of reason and goodwill for a dialogue. Not surprisingly, this is already happening. Before they have rediscovered themselves and have exorboured on the continent for so long, African scholars are being invited to an extraverted contemplation about 'our common future'. The ostensible reason is that such self-affirming constructs as 'Afrocentrism' are too confining and will succeed only in 'ghettoising' African intellectuals. These entreaties should be resolutely spurned because the classical liberal idea of a universal (WO) man is like a mirage in the face of self-perpetuation hierarchies in Bush's and Clinton's 'New World Order'. For the Africans who are at bottom of the pile, authentic representations need not connote anything more than that 'charity begins at home (a very fitting Anglo-Saxon adage) which is a conscious refusal to be turned into 'free-floating signifiers'. Thus, Africanity, if properly understood, has profound political, ideological, cosmological, and intellectual implications.

Africanity versus Afrocentrism

Although in current debates the two terms are often used as interchangeable or, at least, as having a common referent, this need not be the case. Conceptually, it is possible to distinguish clearly between the two. Contrary to the suppositions of the Temple University school represented by Tsehloane Keto (now back in South Africa) in *Out of One, Many Africas* which made a regarded as

methodological requirement for decolonising knowledge in Africa or as an antidote to Eurocentrism through which all knowledge about Africa has been filtered. Although this had been justified by appealing to dubious 'universal standards', the fact of the matter is that Africa is the only region which has suffered such total paradigmatic domination. In a simple and unpolemical manner Kwesi Prah (1997) in an unpublished but pointed communication makes the same observation:

> Rather strikingly, in comparative terms it is remarkable that when Chinese study Chinese culture and society in their own terms and for their own purposes, western scholarship does not protest. This is because the sovereignty of Chinese scholarship on China is accepted. India and the Arab world have almost reached that point. Russians do not look west for understanding their society… Neither do the Japanese.

Interpreted this way, Afrocentrism is nothing-more than a legitimate demand that African scholars study their society from inside and cease to be purveyors of alienated intellectual discourse. It is only logical to suppose that when Africans speak for themselves and about themselves the world will hear the attentive voice, and will be forced to come to terms witch thin the long-run.

The underlying belief that this will issue in authentic representations. Indeed, it is only logical to suppose that when Africans speak for themselves, the word will hear the authentic voice, and will be forced to come to terms with it in the long-run. This might prove to be a long march, especially under the unfavourable educational conditions in Africa and the prevailing dearth of requisite scholarship. But the principle is a noble one and is worth nurturing. Once again, Kwesi Prah (op.cit) has argued that if we are adequately Afrocentric the international implications will not be lost on the others. In this context he recalls Mao Tse Tung's words of wisdom regarding internationalism: 'If what we say and do has relevance for our humanity, its international relevance is guaranteed'. Asia in general is a living example of this. However, mutual awareness or recognition does not breed universalism, as the dominant West has been preaching since its ascendancy. Contrary

to current western suppositions about 'globalisation', different conceptions of humanity and different ways of ordering human life might well lead to polycentrism rather than homogeneity/ homogenisation.

Insofar as this is true, 'universal knowledge' can only exist in contradiction. It is perhaps recognition of this historical experience that led to the questioning of classical European epistemological suppositions, especially by the post-modernists who proffered a dialogue between cultures as the only way forward. It seems that, theoretically, even this can only suffice if by' culture' is meant civilisations in which the intellectual and scientific function is primary by some curious coincidence; Afrocentrism might be an appropriate response. It is this probability which African scholars have to investigate with all seriousness. What forms of accumulated knowledge do Africans scholars have to investigate do Africans have? Are they serviceable under modern conditions? Modern Africans justifiably reserve the right to address this question themselves. Why not? They fought colonialism successfully and have delivered Southern Africa from white settler tyranny. They are making steady progress in the arts and, as the records of the African Academy of Sciences show, they might yet prove themselves in the field of science, given enough resources and opportunities which are non-existent at the moment. As can be seen, the is absolutely no reason why Afrocentrism as an epistemological /methodological issue should be ideologies or demonised secondly, it is a mistake to presume that it can be grow on foreign soil or be universalised before its birth. Probably, Kwesi Prah speaks for a significant number of indigenous African scholars when he declares: 'We must be national before we become international'. This would seem to contradict the supposition that Afrocentrism is or could be transatlantic, short of ideologising it for other reasons – a problem to which we will return.

Africanity versus Vindicationism

Unlike Afrocentrism, which we argued was basically referential, Africanity has en emotive force. Its connotations are ontological and, therefore, exclusivist. This is to be expected because its ontology

is determined by prior existing exclusivist ontologies such as white racist categorisations and supremacist European self-identities in particular. These insinuated that blacks were inherently inferior. Hence, the New World, especially, felt the need to prove themselves and thus produced what Martin and West call the 'vindicationist' intellectual tradition. On this side of the Atlantic this found its greatest ovation in Senghor's famous concept of 'Negritude' and to some extent in Nkrumah's idea of 'African personality'. The idea of a distinct inner quality, being, a 'black soul', if you like, was not an appeal to greater human qualities. For people who had been degraded and accorded a sub-human status, it would not take muck effort to fathom this reflex. Probably, even this would not suffice for ordinary Africans who are not vindicationists but firmly believe that they, as a people, are endowed with greater human qualities the whites. In Bantu languages the collective abstract noun for describing this is *ubuntu,* which is not translatable into English (carelessly translated, it comes out as 'humanity' which is a generic term with no social-cultural connotations). Highest among these qualities are human sympathy, willingness to share, and forgiveness. It is interesting that during his African tour His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, acknowledged the same revelation (probably with South Africa in mind) for which he specifically commended and blessed the Africans.

Africanity has been developed into something much bigger than simply a state of social and spiritual being. It has become a pervasive ontology that straddles space that time. This could not have been of any special significance to his listeners because these are taken for granted. Rather, it is their absence which draws attention and comment. It is a reflexive dialogue which makes it easy for ordinary Africans to make a distinction between themselves and others, without feeling the need to develop it into a discourse. In the hands of modern black intellectuals Africanity has been developed into something much bigger than simply a state of social and spiritual being. It has become a pervasive ontology that straddles space that time. Instead of being limited to continental Africans, it extends to all black of African descent in the Diaspora, especially African-Americans.

Inevitably, it acquired racial overtones precisely because it is a counter to white racism and domination, especially in America. However, its intellectual project is much wider than this. Among other things, it aims to gain respectability and recognition for the Africans by establishing the true identity of the historical and cultural African. This has necessitated excursion into the past, going as far as the beginnings of the Egyptian civilisation in Nile Valley, and the deciphering of African cosmologies and myths of origin. This is undoubtedly a continuation of the 'vindicationist' tradition in which the first generation of African-Americans played a leading role. But in the present juncture, African-American scholars have been joined by a younger generation of African scholars and this has presaged a possible rupture in what Martin and West, perhaps unwittingly, refer to as a 'seamless treatment' of all people of African descent. Certain discontinuities are beginning to manifest themselves.

From what one can discern, the idea of Africanity as perceived by African scholars such as Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Kwesi Prah. Pauline Hountondji, and Valentin Mudimbe refer to what is considered to be the essence of Africa, as apposed to distorted images that have been imposed on the continent by others (meaning Europeans and Americans). The point of reference is the history and cultural underpinnings of contemporary African societies. It is hoped that a genuine understanding of this heritage will enable African scholars to develop theories and paradigms that will help the Africans to combat foreign domination and to forge an independent Pan-African identity. In other words, the emphasis on Africanity struggles for a second independence in Africa or an African renaissance. It has more to do with African meta-nationalism than race or colour. Therefore, those who feel compelled to declare that 'Africa is not black' or that 'Africanity is regressive' are barking up the wrong tree. In Africa only Southern African white settlers, who are the prime authors of racism, are preoccupied with colour and are unable to deal with their Africanity for they have persistently played 'European' to the extent that they unconsciously granted that they were aliens whereas blacks were 'natives'. Thinking individuals amongst them are acutely aware of this anomaly.

Africanity inspired by political and ideological struggles for a second independence in Africa or an African renaissance. It has more to do with African meta-nationalism than race or colour. Therefore, those who feel compelled to declare that Africa is not black or that 'Africanity is regressive' are barking up the wrong tree.

Africanity is an assertion of an identity that has been denied; it is a Pan-Africanist revulsion against external imposition or refusal to be dictated to by others. In this sense it is a political and ideological reflex which is meant to inaugurate an African renaissance. In our view, this should not be confused with black solidarity in the original Pan-Africanist sense, which included blacks of African descent in the Diaspora. This is still valid and desirable. But, socially and conceptually, it is odds with reality. Culturally, socially, and historically the African-Americans and the West Indians have long ceased to be Africans unless we are taking biology, which itself is highly hybridised. Black Americans are first Americans and second anything else they choose, like all Americans. This also applies to the West Indians or Caribbeans. The historical and cultural heritage and contribution of the black Americans to the making of America is largely denied and grossly understudied by American standards. Like Africanity for the Africans, this is a provenance of Black Studies, correctly conceived. Irrespective of what they do, black Americans cannot hope to re-appropriate Africa. Any attempt to do so can only lead to intellectual confusion and conceptual distortions.

There is already Evidence of this

Earlier, reference was made to a threatened rupture between black American notions of Africa and those of indigenous Africans. Henry Louis Gates Jr. made a name for himself when he published *The Signifying Monkey: A theory of African-American Literary Criticism (1988),* which made extensive use of Yoruba symbolism, and subsequently established a big Afrocentric empire for himself in Harvard. But in the meantime, the authenticity of his representations had been questioned by Oludemi Taiwo in an article entitled, significantly enough, 'Appropriating Africa: An Essay on New Africanist Schools' (1995). Using very fine tools indeed and relying on greater command of Yoruba semiotics, he demonstrated that Gates had done less

than full justice to his chosen texts. There is no doubt that what gave Taiwo enough courage to tackle a black American celebrity such as Gates is the fact he was standing on home ground, the ultimate firma terra. Nonetheless, it is Taiwo who goes on a space Odyssey riding trains from Kampala to Mombasa or Timbuktu in glorification of Africa on TV. Has 'Skip' Gates Jr. become an intellectual tourist in the name of Afrocentrism? Anthony Kwame Appiah, the author of the celebrated *in My Father's House* (1992), who is Ghanaian by origin but ended up in Harvard as a member of Gates' 'Dream Team; suffered a similar interrogation in the hands of a fellow-Ghanaian, Kwesi Prah. Surprisingly enough, Prah questioned the authenticity of Appiah's conception of the African and eventually accused him of holding the stick from the wrong end by 'accusing the victims' for what had been imposed on them by colonialism. Here, the only possible conclusion to draw is that Appiah's discourse is extraverted precisely because it is not Afrocentric in Prah's sense of the term. In the meantime, African students in the United States have complained that Appiah is not accessible to them because he has priced himself out of their reach and that he is unwilling to stoop to conquer - another instance of 'accusing the victims'. Certainly, there is something afoot but as yet has not been problematised.

Towards the end the Civil Rights Movement, black Americans came to Africa in droves. They found it very different and by their confession preferred home, despite their initial romantic desire to rediscover their roots in Africa. On their part, the Africans complained that the black Americans thought and behaved like whites, including the tendency by some to raid the continent for exotic artefacts to go and sell in America. In Tanzania they were referred to outrightly as *bazungu* (whites), their colour notwithstanding. In the is not simply a problem of false consciousness, as some idealist Pan-Africanists would like us to believe. Over time the two cousins have grown apart and reality their common African identity cannot be assumed. We have the experience of Liberia and Sierra Leone where the arbitrary return of ex-slaves by Britain and United States led to the establishment of a dual society, wherein the 'westernised' ex-slaves reserved the right to lord it over the natives. The rest is well-known to the Africans

but they are too embarrassed to talk about it openly. But one thing certain, judging by the turn of events in both countries, the creation of Liberia and Sierra Leone by foreign powers was not a felicitous event by any means. This marks the limits of transcendental Africanism.

For the time being, it can be stated with a fair amount of certainty that, whereas at the political level there is a great deal co-joins Africans and the blacks in the Diaspora, namely, what Skinner identifies as white racism and 'paradigmatic hegemony' of the West, historically, culturally, and sociologically a significant, and sociologically a significant disjunction exists between the two. Skinner, who is an unflinching defender of Africanity in the vindicationist tradition, is equally convinced.

That ontological to a universal African culture are unsustainable and that African-Americans distort certain aspects of African culture to suit their needs. To kwanza which, according to *the Economist* as quoted by him (Martin and West, op. cit, p. 80), the founder 'concocted his festival by borrowing from a number of cultural sources…His idea was to create a ritual for America's blacks to express pride in their African roots'. Of course, Skinner does not say anything about continental Africans who trade in African 'culture' in America for their own opportunistic purposes. All this makes nonsense of ontological claims to authenticity and African cultural identity which transcends all boundaries. It not fraudulent, these claims are nothing more than an adulteration of the truth.

Under the present international and racial dispensation some have more and some have much less. That is the rub, and the only rub. By insisting on Africanity the Africans are staking their claim. For this reason, it would be incongruous, if the instruments for establishing Africanity were forged elsewhere. In the same way that Afrocentrism cannot be imported from America, Africanity cannot be nurtured outside Africa.

In the totality of things, Afrocentrism mode in America is a contradiction in terms. Black Americans, no matter how well-intentioned they are, cannot make indigenous knowledge for Africans in Americans nor could continental Africans do the same for any length of time in America. While individual African-Americans can become 'experts' on Africa, they cannot in the name of Africanity

speak for the Africans. African scholars mentioned earlier, is an insistence that the Africans think, speak, and do things for themselves in the first place. This does not imply unwillingness to learn others but a refusal to be hegemonised by others, irrespective of colour or race.

In one of his many political pamphlets, Kwesi Prah once remarked regretfully that in the past African presidents have always had foreign advisers. In the case of Nkrumah, to one's surprise, he included George Padmore, one of the founders of Pan-Africanism. This is a strong indication that in the new Africanity the primacy is on African self-autonomy. In spite of any possible temptation, this cannot be described it is the right of all people of the world. The only difference is that under present international and racial dispensation some have more and some have much less. That is the rub, and the only rub. By insisting on Africanity the Africans are staking their claim. For this reason, it would be incongruous, if the instruments for establishing Africanity were forged elsewhere. In the same way that Afrocentrism cannot be imported from America, Africanity cannot be logy; it is inseparable from the projected African renaissance. It is a necessary condition for the mooted African renaissance, the second independence of African meta-nationalists.

One is aware of the fact that in making the various distinctions and sociological observations in the preceding section, one is treading on hollowed ground and that one might incur the wrath of black essentialists and black intellectual careerists alike. But that is no reason why black intellectuals with any integrity at all should forsoever deceiver themselves or bury their heads in the sand in an ostrich-like fashion. The truth is staring them in their faces, despite any grand-illusions about a universal African culture immune to space and time. Whites in Southern them-selves, instead of reserving the right to tell African, meaning how to be like themselves, a presumption which is anti-African in a profound historical, social, and culture sense. Africanity is an antithesis of this and, like all social revolutions, its terms of reference are exclusive of its negations. It is an attempt to put an end to domination and self-alienation and the collective level but anchored in this denied, hot piece of land, full of strange venomous creatures.

Africanity and the End of African Studies

The rise Africanity, as is defined in the foregoing discourse, spells doom for African Studies for the simple reason that African Studies is an American for their purposes, good or bad. African Studies are an anomaly in African found only in South Africa, the vortex of white racism. To study themselves, Africans do not need African Studies as a separate intellectual or political endeavour. In instituting African Studies both the American and the white South Africans were politically and ideologically motivated. Now that those considerations have fallen by the wayside since the end of the Cold War and of Apartheid in South African, both Americans and white South Africans are going to find it nigh impossible to sustain or to redefine African Studies. The fundamental reason is that, as an intellectual enterprise, African Studies were founded on alterity. If those responsible deny this absolutely, then they will be bereft of Africanity in the contemporary setting. Jane Guyer in defending what is clearly her vested interests states: Research on Africa by African scholars as well as ourselves, is not just a geographical stake in an 'area studies' world; it is a contribution to the understanding of global phenomena and common human experience that has made African culture and societies 'special cases' (as quoted by Martin and West, op. cit; p 11).

This is a convenient afterthought and evades the issue altogether. African culture and societies became 'special cases' to whom and why? That is the question. There is nothing Martin and West Know about the history of African Studies in America that Jane Guyer does not know. She knows as well as anybody else that what she proclaims has never been the case and that is why African Studies is in a big crisis at this historical juncture. African scholars predicted this not because of their own growing intellectual maturity. The article written by Mahmood Mamdani, 'A Glimpse at African Studies, Made in USA', which appeared in the CODESRIA *Bulletin*, No. 2, 1990, was a clear signal and spoke for a sizeable constituency of African scholars. The turning point was the meeting of thirty Africanist scholars at the Carter Centre in Atlanta in February, 1989.

The design of the American Africanists were thoroughly exposed. Instead of looking at themselves, they treated the whole indictment as an individual aberration (see Goran Hyden's rejoinder: 'Mamdani's One-eyed Glimpse', CODESRIA Bulletin, 4, 1990).

Nevertheless, the rebellion continued and reached a climax in a meeting organised by Martin and West at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 1994. The African participants rejected in no uncertain terms the idea of African Studies 'made in the USA'. Most outspoken amongst them was Micere Mugo from Kenya. The Africanist antithesis, as can be seen in the introduction to *Out of One, Many Africas,* vindicated the position of those American scholars such as Martin and West who had been arguing for developing a new concept of African Studies. Although there are some Africanists such as Jane Guyer who sincerely believes that African Studies 'made in the USA' can still be redeemed, it is apparent that the rise of Africanity and Afrocentrism is its ultimate negation. American scholars. It marks the end of Africa by white American scholars. It marks the end of their taken-granted intellectual hegemony and institutionalised domination in African Studies. One suspects that there will be a forced retreat into traditional disciplines from which lone (not lonely) American scholars will pursue their research interests in Africa. It is conceivable that the institutional void created by the disappearance of African Studies 'made in the USA' will be filled by such African organisations as CODESRIA, OSSREA, AAPS, SAPES/SARPIS, CASAS, CAAS, etc. these are potentially democratic institutions because they are rum by African scholars themselves and not beholden to any government. If they prove viable, it might be appropriate for foreign scholars to work through them, while waiting for the revival of the collapsed African universities. In other words, they hold prospects for intellectual and scientific cooperation which could be of great mutual benefit, as against the historical imperialistic appropriation of Africa by others.

In this millennium everybody will pay lip-service to universalism but it is equally evident that all comers are going to pursue their parochial interests. Naturally, this will happen under different guises. The irony of all these developments is that there might never be any African Studies anywhere in the future. Christopher Fyfe and Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch in *Out of One, Many Africas* both report

the decline of African studies in Britain and France, respectively, as a sequel to the end of empire and growing self-assertion by Africans. Americans as the last-empire-builders might suffer the same fate. Coquery-Vidrovitch thinks that the collapse of empires, whether political or intellectual, is an auspicious event since it creates opportunities for new initiates, especially by those who had been denied. In the Francophone she sees a new universalism spear-headed by the youth from the, former French colonies. While one shares Coquery-Vidrovitch's revolutionary optimism, one is inclined to think that she underestimates nationalism in the developing world as a reaction to one-dimensional globalisation from the West, which transcends any supposed division between Francophone and Anglophone. Theoretically, it is arguable that the national democratic revolution had been aborted in Africa. Responses are symptomatic of this. As was suggested earlier, this has nothing to do with colour or race but with domination and the resultant politics of independence. It is predictable that in this millennium everybody will pay lip-service to universalism but it is equally evident that all comers are going to pursue their parochial interests. Naturally, this will happen under different guises.

As was hinted above, African Studies will certainly be one of the casualties of the new millennium. It has reached its atrophy in Europe and America and it cannot be resurrected in Africa. There has never been any "African Studies" in African universities, except in the damned Southern African settler societies. There, they had replicated the colonial paradigm, wherein white subjects studied black objects. In the ensuing process of subordination and subordination black were not allowed to study themselves, except as aids. After independence in the sub-region it was supposed that African Studies could be rehabilitated by upgrading the African handy boys and girls. Those who so they had not clearly discerned the rising tide of Africanity in the aftermath of the fall of the old order. They thought that they could stage-manage the whole thing. How mistaken they were, as is shown by the Makgoba affair at the University of Witwatersrand and the Mamdani fiasco and the ensuing debacle of the envisaged African Studies at the University of Cape Town which blew in their faces.

Owing to either their insularity or isolation, the South African white academic community behaved as if they lived in a cuckoo-land of their own. They could have learnt from the experience of the British and French colonialists and fellow-American upstarts in Africa. This is apart from the fact that they were caught between the devil and the deep sea and could not define themselves as they were neither European nor African. In the newly conceived but doomed 'African Studies' who is going to study whom? Africanity predicates that there shall be neither white subjects nor black objects. Therefore, a plague upon both their houses and everlasting blazes upon Gomorrah and Sodom.

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Against Alterity – The Pursuit of Endogeneity: Breaking Bread with Archie Mafeje

Jimi O. Adesina

Introduction

The passing away of Professor Archibald Monwabisi Mafeje on 28 March 2007 was a great shock to so many within the African social science community and beyond. At a personal level, it was particularly shocking: Archie, as we fondly refer to him, was to be with us at Rhodes University (Grahamstown-iRhini) for Thandika Mkandawire's DLitt graduation ceremony and we had worked frantically to finalise Archie's travel arrangements just the Friday before he died. He was to return to Grahamstown in May for an audio-visual interview that I was to have with him, exploring his biography and scholarship; I had sent him the questions and he was keen on the project. Scholarship is biographical, and it is even more so in Archie's case. It was going to be a time to break bread with this most engaging of scholars; elegant in thoughts and taste. I had wanted to test out some of my hypotheses regarding the contours of his works and life with him; 'sort out' a few nagging issues in his works. Although he had been in poor health for a few years, when we sat down to what turned out to be our last dinner in Pretoria in February 2007, he was in the best shape in which I had seen him since 2002. He had spent December 2006 and January 2007 in the Transkei (South Africa), among family members. He had received herbal treatment, he said, which proved quite helpful. His hands (especially the fingers) were much improved, and he was going back to Mthatha (in the Transkei) on Tuesday 27 March as part of the arrangement to resettle in the Transkei by mid-year. Walter Sisulu

University in Mthatha had agreed to provide him a place to work and reflect; and he would be able to continue his treatment. I thought we would have him around for many years to come.

All these reflections are anecdotal, and as with anecdotes there will be as many as the number of individuals who encountered Archie. By themselves, they may be of limited intellectual significance. In this instance, it is in the personal that I seek the scholarly. The loss of someone like Archie pushes us to search for meaning that is both deeply personal and intellectual.

Meanings and Encounters

The meaning of Archie Mafeje for three generations of African scholars and social scientists is about encounters. For some it would have been personal, for others it was through his works, and for most in the community the encounter via scholarly works became personal and intimate. And Archie reciprocated more than most. Babatunde Zack-Williams, in an intervention at a February 2006 conference in Pretoria, spoke glowingly regarding the impact that Archie's 'The Ideology of "Tribalism"' (Mafeje 1971) had on him. Tunde wondered aloud why Archie was absent from a conference in a city of his residence on how to reinvigorate the study of Africa. The impact that Tunde referred to is shared by many, but I missed that by some five years. My encounter was through his 'The Problem of Anthropology in Historical Perspective' (Mafeje 1976). I was a first-year undergraduate student at Ibadan, and I had been rummaging through the journal section in the basement of the University of Ibadan Library. I came across a new issue of the *Canadian Journal of African Studies* and pulled the copy off the shelf. I suspect it was the name *Mafeje* in the contents page that drew my attention. I had never heard of him, which might be forgiven in a fresh undergraduate. I started nibbling through the article. By the time I got to the third page, I was hooked. I took the journal to the sitting area and buried my head in it. It was so elegantly written, with incredible detailed knowledge of the field and the debates from various parts of the world. His conceptual handle on the debate so rigorous and velvet, it was incredibly exhilarating. While taking no prisoners, he did not mind taking himself a prisoner too. Kathleen

Gough had charged anthropology with being "a child of Western imperialism" (Gough 1968), which I found delightful. In response, Raymond Firth (Firth 1972) rebuked Gough and others like her; quite the contrary, Firth insisted, anthropology was a "child of Enlightenment." Mafeje's response in the 1976 article was: "What's the point of dispute, folks? Imperialism is the child of Enlightenment, anyway." It was so detailed and elegantly argued I walked on air for days afterwards.

I was not to meet Archie Mafeje in person until 1992, at the CODESRIA General Assembly in Dakar. It was an incredibly engaging experience, and I got a copy of his *Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations* (Mafeje 1991). He autographed my copy with the words: "With pleasant memories after a most vigorous encounter with the irreverent but a welcome sense of rebellion – Dakar 15/2/92." The 'irreverence' was around the debate we kicked off at the assembly on 'icons.' I had argued that a viable intellectual community develops around iconic individuals, events and/or idea. I told Archie that we won't act like the Orthodox Church; we won't polish our icons and put them on a pedestal. When we disagree with them "we will kick their butts." He was quite tickled by it. Jibrin Ibrahim would later take a dip at being iconoclastic in an article, 'History as Iconoclast: Left Stardom and the Debate on Democracy' (Ibrahim 1993). The problem is when you denounce Issa Shivji for "Manichean vituperations," as Jibrin did, you should expect to have your feathers plucked; and plucked his feathers were. The 'icons' were not going to roll over and die or rock in their chairs watching the sun set (Amin 1993; Mafeje 1993). Even so, Archie and Samir were as gentle as one could expect of them in the circumstances. Issa stayed out of it. Archie's focus was on conceptual rigour as a prelude to political action as well as empirical misrepresentations of what the iconic 'Left stars' did or did not do. He probably thought Jibrin was mistaken but not an 'enemy.'

My take on the idea of 'icon' and iconic ideas was quite different from Jibrin's. It was about constructing our intellectual community rooted in ideas firmly grounded in our conditions and drawing critical scholarly inspirations from those who went before; not in squeamish adulation but critical engagement. But to return to Archie, the *Theory*

and Ethnography of African Social Formations is another example of what Mahmood Mamdani called Archie's 'artisanal' approach to intellectual work: painstaking and rigorously argued.

The 1992 encounter speaks to what many people confuse as intellectual arrogance and gladiatorial stance in Archie Mafeje. He demanded of you a rigorous engagement with your field, extensive depth of knowledge, and knowing your onions inside out. But even the most brilliant mind is not infallible; Archie knew that. He lived on rigorous intellectual engagements and a willingness to engage with you if you thought he had not finely tuned his ideas. But ideas were not just esoteric things for their own sake. They are important because they mean so much one way or another to the lives of millions on our continent. That is why he comes across as fierce on 'dangerous' ideas – as in his contentions against Ali Mazrui – or those who subsist on 'the epistemology of alterity' (Mafeje 1997b: 5). It would equally explain why he chose not to have a public spat with Ruth First after her response (First 1978) to his article on the Soweto Uprising (Mafeje 1978b). Ruth First was a comrade even though they inhabited different points in the anti-Apartheid struggle.

Against Alterity

If there is a common thread tying all of Archie Mafeje's professional writings, as distinct from his more political writings, it will be the relentless contestation of the epistemology of alterity and the pursuit of endogeneity. Endogeneity, in this specific case, refers to an intellectual standpoint derived from a rootedness in African conditions; a centring of African ontological discourses and experiences as the basis of one's intellectual work. "To evolve lasting meanings" Mafeje (2000: 66) noted "we must be 'rooted' in something." Central to endogeneity is averting what Hountondji (1990) referred to as 'extroversion.' In spite of the claims of being nomothetic in aspiration, social analysis is deeply idiographic. Those who exercise undue anxiety about being 'cosmopolitan' or universalist fail to grasp this about much of what is considered nomothetic in the dominant strands of Western 'theories.' All knowledge is first local; "'universal knowledge' can on exist in contradiction" (Mafeje 2000: 67). It is precisely because Max Weber

spoke distinctly to the European context of his time, as Michel Foucault did for his that guaranteed the efficacy of their discourses. "If what we say and do has relevance for our humanity, its international relevance is guaranteed" (Mafeje 2000: 67).2 In this paper, I will limit my focus to this aspect of Mafeje's works.

While 'The Ideology of "Tribalism"' is often cited as the launching of Mafeje's3 attack on alterity, the drive for the centring of the African 'self-knowing' is evident in *Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township* (Wilson & Mafeje 1963); co-published with Monica Wilson, his supervisor at the University of Cape Town. The preference for the research subjects' own self-definition – e.g., 'homeboys' rather than 'tribesmen' – in the book presaged his 1971 paper. A similar mode of writing, which proceeds from the subject's perspective, is evident in two of his other works published in the 1960s: 'The Chief Visits Town' (Mafeje 1963) and 'The Role of the Bard in a Contemporary African Community' (Mafeje 1967). However, in contrast to the muted negation of alterity in these earlier works, 'The Ideology of "Tribalism"' was a more self-conscious critique of the continued use of 'tribe' and 'tribalism.'

While Mafeje's paper was not new or alone in contesting the concept of 'tribe' and 'tribalism – cf. Vilakazi (1965), Magubane's 1968 paper (republished in 2000: 1-26) and Onoge's 1971 paper (published 1977) – that much Mafeje (1971: 12, 1996: 260-1) himself specifically mentioned.4 Nonetheless, Mafeje's intervention was a focussed 'deconstruction' (Mafeje 1996, 2001) of the categories on conceptual and empirical grounds. Empirically, Mafeje argued, the word 'tribe' did not exist in any of the indigenous South African languages – or to the best of my knowledge, any that I know. Conceptually, those deploying the concept are unable to sustain it on the basis of their own definitions of tribe(s) (hence tribalism). It is a method of critique that defines Mafeje's scholarship, anchored on conceptual rigour or its absence.

'Classical anthropology' Mafeje noted (quoting Fortes & Evans-Pritchard's 1940 *African Political Systems*) defined tribes as "self-contained, autonomous communities practising subsistence economy with no or limited external trade" (Mafeje 1971: 257). Others (citing Shapera's 1956 *Government and Politics in Tribal Societies*) would define tribes as a group of people who claim "exclusive rights

to a given territory" and manage "its affairs independently of external control" (Mafeje 1971: 257). In this sense, tribes are defined by subsistence economy, territoriality, and ruled by chiefs and/or elders. Anthropologists and others who persisted in using 'tribe' and 'tribalism' as their framework for analysing Africa were violating their own rules. Territorial boundedness, political and economic isolation, and subsistence economy no longer apply under the conditions of colonialism. To argue, as Gulliver did (in the 1969 edited volume *Tradition and Transition in East Africa*) that they continue to use 'tribe' not out of 'defiance' but because Africans themselves use it when speaking in English (Mafeje 1971: 253-4) would be woolly-headed. Mafeje did not "deny the existence of tribal ideology and sentiment in Africa... The fact that it works... is no proof that 'tribes' or 'tribalism' exists in any objective sense" (1971: 258-9). The persistence of 'tribalism' in such context is "a mark of *false consciousness*." (Mafeje 1971: 259, emphasis in original). More importantly, that cultural affinity (what he called 'cultural links') is deployed in securing "a more comfortable place" is no evidence of 'tribalism.' More forces may be at work than 'tribal' identity, including occupational and class identities. Mafeje cited Mitchell's 1956 monograph, *The Kalela Dance* and Epstein's *Politics in an Urban African Community*, which both point to such alternative explanations.5

At the heart of Mafeje's argument is anthropology's conceptual conundrum. The categories might have been valid once, Mafeje argued, but not anymore because the colonial encounter ended the territorial and political isolation of the 'tribes' and their subsistence economies. Further, the 'territoriality' that was supposed to be the conceptual basis of 'tribes' did not exist in Mafeje's reference group, the AmaXhosa; they were never organised under a single political unit even when found in the same region. This is a theme Mafeje returned to in his 1991 book in the case of the Great Lake Region of East Africa. In spite of these, anthropologists who studied sociational dynamics outside the 'tribal homelands' persisted in deploying the categories. It is this invariant commitment to the categories that Mafeje called 'tribal ideology' or the 'ideology of tribalism.' It was no longer scholarship but ideology – not that Mafeje thought scholarship could be non-ideological.

The new army of political scientists trouping into Africa in the periods immediately before and after 'independence' would go on to deploy the same mode of writing and thinking. If the anthropologist could be excused because the study of 'tribes' is his/her *raison d'être* the Africanist political scientist had no such excuse (Mafeje 1971: 257). The result is that similar phenomena in other parts of the world are 'explained' differently – with 'tribe' or primitivity being Africa's explanatory category. The tribal categories are used simultaneously to explain 'pattern maintenance and persistence' and the failure of 'modernity'!

Much in the same way that Magubane's vigorous critique of the Manchester School (Magubane 1971) was liberating for many African students studying anthropology or sociology in the United States at the time, Mafeje's paper, of the same year, had similar edifying effects on the same cohort of African students studying in the UK or Anglophone Africa, as Zack-Williams has noted.6

Mafeje pursued his line of thought at the expense of conceding that the category might have been valid at an earlier time (Mafeje 1971: 258). Not only does anthropology deal with its objects of enquiry outside of history, it is ill equipped to address the issues of history. The 'isolation' (political and economic) and territoriality that were supposed to define the African communities before the colonial encounter hardly stands up to scrutiny when approached from the perspectives of history and archaeology. Neither about Africa, Asia or the Americas, is it possible to sustain the claims of territoriality and isolation. None of the groups in West Africa that are still routinely referred to as 'tribes' would fit the definition hundreds of years before the first intrepid anthropologist arrived on their doorsteps. Further, the very act of naming and labelling requires encounter. 'Germanic tribes,' as a label, is only feasible in the encounter with the Greek or Roman 'Superior Other' who does the naming and the labelling. Isolation is thus unimaginable. "Alterity rather than any conceptual validity is foundational to labelling one community of people a 'tribe'; another a nation." The Germanic tribal Other is immediately the 'Barbarian': an inferior Other. The appropriation of such alterity by the labelled is one of the legacies of colonisation, such that it is still possible for Africans themselves to speak of their local potentates as 'tribal authority'! What is

required at the level of scholarship and everyday discourse is the complete extirpation of the category of tribe – evident in Mafeje's works from 1963 to 2004, but insufficiently extirpated, conceptually, in 1971.

The same extirpation cannot be said for the category of 'Bantu-speakers' (Mafeje 1967, 1991), which he used as a shorthand for speakers of 'Bantu languages' (2000: 67). Even if it is possible to categorise the 681 languages referred to by linguists as belonging to the 'Bantoid' sub-set of the 961 languages in the Benue-Congo group – itself a "sub-family of the Niger-Congo phylum"7 – labelling the languages as 'Bantu' is the ultimate in extroversion and alterity. While the languages may share linguistic characteristics and *Bantu* generally means 'people' (*Abantu* in IsiXhosa), none of the groups is self-referentially 'Bantu.' The labelling is rooted in European alterity, which found its apogee in the Apartheid racist group classification, with all Africans designated 'Bantu' – hence Bantu education, etc. A geographic classification, similar to 'Niger-Congo' rather than Bantu, might be less eviscerating. Even if one were to accept the singularity of classification involved – '961 languages' as so linguistically close as to be given a name – it does not explain why Africans have to absorb the alterity. What is more, other linguists consider Malcolm Guthrie's method, which is the source of the classification, as deeply flawed. The role of missionaries in inventing the fragmentation of African languages and then scripting exclusive ethnic identities on the back of such fragmentation is widely known (Chimhundu 1992). Undoing this fragmentation has been the essence of Kwesi Prah's Centre for the Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) in Cape Town. The idea of 'Bantu-speakers' is an aspect of the inadequate 'negation of negation' (Mafeje 2000: 66) that I had hoped to explore with him in the audio-visual interview planned for May 2007. It is a task that we must take upon ourselves as surviving African scholars.

Negation of Negation: Mafeje on Anthropology

Mafeje's (2000) 'Africanity: A combative ontology' is perhaps his most eloquent and elegant enunciation of the twinned agenda of the "determined negation of negation" (ibid: 66) and the pursuit of

endogeneity. The former requires an uncompromising refutation of the epistemology of alterity which has shaped modes of gazing and writing about Africa and Africans. Such negation of alterity is the beginning of the journey to affirmation: a method of scholarship rooted in the collective self and speaking to it without the anxiety regarding what the Western Other has to say or think about us. In its specific sense, the two write-ups (Mafeje 2000, 2001) were in reaction to the 'cosmopolitan' anxieties of the postmodern monologue that Achille Mbembe sought to foist on the CODESRIA community. The year 2000 marked the reappropriation of the institution from the intellectual misuse to which it had been subjected.8 Mafeje's pieces were an ode to a recovered patrimony. However, Mafeje's 'determined negation of negation' goes back much further, and its object was the discipline of anthropology as the epitome of alterity.

'The Problem of Anthropology... ' (Mafeje 1976) was an intervention in the debates between different factions of anthropologists: on the one hand, the new generation of anthropologists with a radical orientation, and on the other, an older generation of 'mainstream' anthropologists. Kathleen Gough represented the former and Raymond Firth, the latter.9 While Mafeje mentioned Magubane (1968) as one of the new generation repudiating mainstream anthropology, Magubane was never an anthropologist; he trained at the University of Natal as a sociologist.

As mentioned earlier, 'The Problem of Anthropology...' was elegantly written – in the best tradition of Mafeje's scholarship. Elegant erudition aside, Mafeje's contention was that anthropology had passed its 'sell-by' date, and it was time to move on to something different. "Among the social sciences" Mafeje argued, "anthropology is the only discipline which is specifically associated with colonialism and dissociated with metropolitan societies" (1976: 317). The alterity associated with anthropology is not accidental or temporal; it is immanent. If as Raymond Firth (1972) claimed, anthropology is "the legitimate child of Enlightenment," the leading intellectuals of the Enlightenment, unlike latter-day anthropologists, were preoccupied with accounting for "the moral, genetic and historical unity of mankind" and "had little regard for exotic customs" (Mafeje 1976: 310). However, insofar as the scholarship of the

Enlightenment "sought to make its own anthropological viewpoint universal" (ibid.) it inspired a 'civilising mission' in relation to non-European peoples – a pseudonym for pillage and imperialism. Anthropology, as a discipline, is rooted in this venture; it is in this sense that, contrary to Firth's claim, anthropology is a child of imperialism, and a foster-child (if not grandchild) of Enlightenment. English socialists like Beatrice Webb, for instance, did not think it strange to talk of East Asians as savages (Chang 2008); Christian missionaries took such labelling for granted: a pervasive conception Africa and Africans that has received a renewed impetus. Anthropology is one discipline founded on such inferior othering of its 'objects' of study.

Unlike Gough and others who sought to reform anthropology, Mafeje's contention is that epistemic 'othering' is so *immanent* to anthropology as to be its *raison d'être*. The point is not to reform it but to extirpate it. Mafeje uses 'anthropology' in at least two senses: anthropology as a conceptual concern with ontological discourses (Mafeje 1997a:7), and anthropology as an epistemology of alterity. While Mafeje associate the latter with the discipline, it is equally as much a mode of thinking and writing that considers the 'object' as the inferior or the exotic Other. It is the latter that one would classify as the 'anthropologised' reasoning about Africa – a discursive mode that persists and what I consider the *curse of anthropology* in the study of Africa. As a discipline, however, Mafeje was careful to distinguish between the works of colonial anthropology (most emblematic of British anthropology) and works of practitioners such as Maurice Godelier and Claude Meillassoux. The former is more foundationally associated with anthropology "as a study of 'primitive' societies" (Mafeje 1997a: 6); the latter, Mafeje insisted, must be taken seriously: "their deep idiographic knowledge, far from diminishing their capacity to produce nomothetic propositions, has helped them to generate new concepts" (Mafeje 1991: 10). They approached the African societies on their own terms – without alterity.

Anthropologists may claim they are no longer concerned with 'tribes', but alterity remains their *raison d'être*. The study of the 'exotic Other' is only a dimension of alterity; often the 'less-than-equal Other. As an undergraduate, I had the good fortune of studying in a university which insisted from the early 1960s to eliminate

anthropology. Even so, my first-year teachers included social anthropologists who came with anthropology's mode of native gazing, which struck me then as the 'sociology of the primitive Other.' It was probably the reason why Mafeje's 'The Problem of Anthropology...' resonated so much with me when I first read it. The claims by contemporary anthropologists that they are committed to the wellbeing of their research subjects or that field method defines their discipline are rather lame. Even the most racist colonial anthropologists made similar claims of adhesion to 'their tribes.' We will address this further later in this paper.

Further, ethnography is no more unique to anthropology than quantitative method is to economics. The methodological opaqueness of the anthropologist's 'field method' quite easily gives way to methodological licence. Since the function of anthropologists is to 'explain' exotic, foreign cultures, and strange customs to their compatriots, methodological licence and the erroneous coding of the 'objects' of anthropology are taking on the same instrumentalism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century's new age of Empire as applied anthropology did under colonialism. Closely associated with the epistemology of alterity is erasure, which becomes distinctly imperial at inter-personal levels; and those attempting erasure tend to employ derision and intellectual bullying.

In response to Mafeje's (Mafeje 1996, 1997b) critical review of Sally Moore's book (Moore 1996: 22), More sought to deride his claim that he "might have prevailed on Monica Wilson not to [use the tribal categories] in *Langa*" (Mafeje 1997b: 12). Moore's response was that while Mafeje might have been responsible for the fieldwork, Wilson produced the manuscript, an assertion that hardly reflects well on her own understanding of the process of producing a manuscript. Authorship, if that is what this confers on Monica Wilson, does not mean exclusivity of even the most seminal ideas in a manuscript. Significantly, Moore confused 'detribalisation' used earlier by the Wilsons for a rejection of the category of 'tribe' or 'tribalism.' Conversely, Moore failed to account for the recurrence of this rejection of alterity in two other publications by Mafeje (Mafeje 1963, 1967) in the same period. She might simply never have bothered to read them.

In response to Mafeje's observation that she failed to account for the works of African scholars in her book with the lone exception of Valentin Mudimbe, a distinct form of erasure, Sally Moore's response was twofold. First that she left out the works of African scholars like Magubane and Mafeje because she concentrated on books and monographs not journal articles (Moore 1996: 22). Second, that she cited many more other African scholars. On both accounts, she was less than candid. The sources she used are profuse with journal articles – German, French, English, etc. (Moore 1994: 135-60). Several of these are American anthropology journals, including *Current Anthropology* in which Magubane's piece appeared. It is difficult to imagine that Moore was unaware of Magubane's 1971 paper at the time it was published given the uproar it generated and her seniority – she was Chair of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Southern California at the time.

On the second charge, Moore's response was that she did nothing of the sort and listed several African scholars she claimed she cited. Other than Mudimbe, she engaged with none of the others. When she did, if one can call it engagement, they were part of general citation rather than an engagement with their ideas. The two references to Onwuka Dike (Moore 1994: 11, 15) were from his obituary on Melville Herskovits. You would hardly know that Dike founded the famous Ibadan School of History. The references to Jomo Kenyatta were either incidental to Moore's discussion of Malinowski or an oblique reference to Africans publishing "ethnographic monographs of their own peoples" or "emigration" (Moore 1994: 132-3). In the latter, Kenyatta was part of five Africans grouped together, but the reader will have no idea what exactly they wrote. The reference to Paulin Hountondji was second-hand, and part of African intellectuals who "rail against what they see as the misreading of outsiders" (Moore 1994: 84): hardly an evidence of intellectual courtesy.

The only African scholar she discussed with any degree of 'seriousness' was Valentin Mudimbe, an even so, it was in a remarkably derisive and imperial manner. She referred to him as "a Zairean who lives in the United States," like he did not belong. Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa* was dismissed as "complex, indigestible, and highly opinionated" (Moore 1994: 84), without any apparent awareness that to label someone opinionated is to be

opinionated. If one were to look for the enduring tendency to treat Africans and their intellectuals as children one need go no further than read Moore. She would make similarly condescending remarks about Mafeje in a later article (Moore 1998), labelling his work as driven by 'polemic strategy', 'noises', 'diatribe', etc. As before, Moore failed to engage with a range of Mafeje's works or even the 'Anthropology and Independent Africans' (Mafeje 1998) to which she claimed she was responding. Again, you might be forgiven for thinking she was talking to a two-year old! How, for instance, is the crisis of funding that African universities face an answer to the alterity immanent to anthropology? It was as if Africans will have to choose between alterity and generous funding. Yet the high point of the rejection of alterity was when research funding was readily available *within* the universities themselves. The University of Ibadan (Nigeria) rejected the idea of a Department of Anthropology in the early 1960s when it did not have any problem of research funding and its staff had no need to seek external funding. The researches undertaken by Kayode Adesogan,10 in organic chemistry, were funded entirely from grants from the university (Adesogan 1987). It led to his contributing more than twenty new compounds to the lexicon of chemistry, precisely because his scholarship was rooted in endogeneity (Adesina 2006: 137). The same can be said of the diverse schools of History in Africa – from Dar-es-Salaam, to Ibadan and Dakar. They flourished in the periods *before* the funding crisis. What they shared in common was an uncompromising rejection of the colonial racist historiography (Adesina 2005, 2006). The difference in chemistry and history is that alterity is not immanent to them. History did not originate in the study of the 'primitive Other' nor reserved for it. It was, therefore, amenable to epistemic challenge on its own terms. The same cannot be said for anthropology!

Mafeje was fundamentally right in seeing through this in his review of Moore's book. He ended the review by saying he did not mind the candour of those who write about Africa as:

> Simply a continent of savages (read 'tribes') and venomous beasts… As a matter of fact, I like black mambas lethal as they are and wish Africans could learn from them. Perhaps, in the circumstances their continent would

cease to be a playground for knowers of absolute knowledge and they in turn would lose their absolute alterity (1997b: 14).

It was a 'call to arms' that many failed to heed. The debate in *African Sociological Review* 2(1), 1998 is interesting for the persistent claims by the professional anthropologists that Mafeje's critique was *passé* (Laville 1998). If anthropology has transcended its alterity, why do so many anthropologists persist in exoticizing their 'objects' of enquiries? When the professional anthropologists transcend alterity, how will the result be different from sociology? If, as Nkwi (Nkwi 1998: 62) argued, "the trend in African anthropology is towards the interdisciplinary approach" is the 'discipline' still a discipline? Nkwi is right in arguing that more Africans were engaged in active objections to anthropology than Mafeje acknowledged: Mafeje mentioned himself and Magubane. A case in point is Omafume Onoge at Ibadan. But Mafeje was referring to focussed dissembling of anthropology's epistemology of alterity not the "narcissism of minor differences" within the camp (cf. Ntarangwi, Mills & Babiker 2006) that the deliberations of the African anthropologists he was critiquing represented. Most Africans simply walked away from the discipline rather than dissipate their energies in arguing with the 'owners' of the discipline. Central to this is the inherently racist nature of its discourse – alterity. I recognised the racist epistemology in my first term as an undergraduate; Mafeje (1976) only confirmed what I knew. More than 30 years later, we have African students expressing similar feelings within a few days of being in their first-year anthropology class at Rhodes University. It is either the discipline has overcome its epistemology of alterity or it has not. Clearly it has not, precisely because whatever the negotiations around the 'protective belt' of the discipline's core discourse, the core remains rooted in alterity.

The claim to field method (ethnography) as a defining aspect of anthropology is equally intriguing. Ethnographic technique was used before the rise of anthropology and is used in other disciplines beyond anthropology. As Mafeje (Mafeje 1996) noted, he did not have to be an anthropologist to write 'The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations' (Mafeje 1991). I made extensive use of ethnographic technique in my doctoral study of a Nigerian

refinery (Adesina 1988); I did it as a sociologist. A discipline's claim to being mono-methodological is hardly a positive reflection on its credibility. Research problems suggest the research techniques to adopt, not the discipline; most research issues would require multiple research techniques, not being wedded to a particular research technique.

Anthropology was born of a European intellectual division of labour. When they stayed home and studied their own people, they did sociology; when they went abroad to study other people, ate strange food and learnt strange customs and languages, they did anthropology (Adesina 2006). The idea of a 'native anthropologist', as Onoge noted, is a contradiction. In spite of protestations to the contrary, anthropology is still more oriented towards the study of the 'exotic Other' than not. When they write about their own societies most still write as if they are outsiders. In 2007, it is still possible to come across a manuscript written by a Yoruba medical anthropologist with a title that reads in part: "...of the Yoruba of South-western Nigeria." It is the kind of extroversion that Hountondji (Hountondji 1990, 1997) warned against. Clearly, if the audience was conceived as Yoruba such exoticization would not be necessary.

Those who wish to study non-Western societies in the tradition of Godelier and Meillassoux should get beyond casting these societies as exotic objects that need coding for the 'non-native' audience and broaden their methodological scope; in other words, move over to doing sociology.

Against Disciplinarity and Epistemology?

However, two issues that I have argued with Mafeje about and would have dismissed at the planned interview are his repudiation of 'disciplines' in the social sciences and 'epistemology. ' Given his ill-health in the four years before his death, I thought it would be taking undue advantage of his health condition to raise these issues on the pages of the *CODESRIA Bulletin*. In an intellectual appreciation such as this one these concerns are worth flagging. Mafeje's rejection of disciplines, I suspect, derives from his recognition that to develop a robust analysis of any social

phenomenon you need the analytical skill drawn from a diversity of disciplines. Nevertheless, to reject disciplinarity on such ground is to confuse issues of *pedagogy* with those of *research*. While knowledge production is inherently inter-disciplinary, inter-disciplinarity works *because each discipline brings its strength to the table* of knowledge production. We address the broad scope of knowledge essential to rigorous analysis by offering 'liberal arts education', but in the context of disciplinary anchor. From the point of pedagogy, transdisciplinarity is a recipe for epistemic disaster: you end up with people who are neither conceptually rigorous nor methodologically proficient. They are more likely to regurgitate than be profound. Mafeje's own profundity comes from fusing his trainings in biology, sociology, social anthropology, philosophy and economics rather their absence.

Mafeje's rejection of 'epistemology' is rooted in his aversion for dogmatism, but that is hardly the same as epistemology, which as any dictionary will attest is "the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge, its presuppositions and foundations, and its extent and validity". The study of specific epistemic standpoints – from positivism to Marxism and postmodernism – is the business of epistemology. The crisis of dogmatic adhesion to an epistemic standpoint can hardly be construed as a crisis of epistemology. Postmodernism's pretension to being against grand narratives ended up erecting a grand narrative of its own. What it had to say that was brilliant was not new, and what was new was not brilliant. We deconstruct postmodernism's deconstructionist claims precisely from the standpoint of epistemology – accounting for a paradigm's presuppositions, foundations, claims to knowledge production, extent and validity, as the dictionary says.

The Pursuit of Endogeneity

Right from the start of his intellectual career, Mafeje's rejection of alterity was not simply a matter of rebellion; it was immediately about affirmation. It is instructive, for instance, that not one of those who purported to contend with him in the *ASR* 'debate' showed an awareness of anything Mafeje wrote before 1991. As mentioned earlier, the idea of endogeneity is about scholarship

'derived from within', and that is not simply a matter of ethnography. Rather than works of anthropology, Mafeje's sole-authored works in the 1960s (Mafeje 1963, 1967) are works of profound 'endogeneity.' They reflect a strong sociological mindset, combining fine field-craft with analytical rigour. For instance, Mafeje located the *imbongi* or bard in a comparative context, Mafeje (1967: 195); he drew comparison with the Celtic bards; an immediate extirpation of alterity that would have marked the *imbongi* as a 'praise singer' of a primitive culture.11 He demonstrated their role as social critics who can be withering in their poetic social commentaries. Rather than 'tribe' or 'tribal' Mafeje used the categories of 'South African bard' and 'South African traditional bards.'

The profundity of *the Theory and Ethnography of an African Social Formation-* (1966) – apart from its artisanal nature and conceptual rigour – derives from Mafeje's effort to understand the interlacustrine kingdoms *on their own terms* – from within and without the burden of fitting them into particular 'universalist' typologies. In the process all manner of intellectual totems were overturned. I suspect that this is what Mafeje meant by his rejection of 'epistemology': the freedom to allow the data to speak to the writer rather than imposing paradigms on them. What such scholarship calls for are authentic interlocutors able to decode local 'vernaculars': the encoded local ontology and modes of comprehension (Mafeje 1991: 9-10, 2000: 66, 68). Mafeje argued that this is what distinguished Olufemi Taiwo's account of the Yoruba from those of Henry Louis Gate and Kwesi Prah's interlocution of the Akan codes from Antony Kwame Appiah's. This capacity, as others have demonstrated, does not come simply from being 'a native' (Amadiume 1987, Nzegwu 2005, Oyìwùmí 1997); it requires endogeneity; it requires being authentic interlocutors. The result in the case of the latter has been seminal contributions to African gender scholarship without the anxiety of wanting to be cosmopolitan. The same applies to the diverse African schools of history.12

In earlier works, such as his review of the 1980 book that Harold Wolpe edited on *The Articulation of Modes of Production,*' Mafeje (1981) demonstrated such profundity as an interlocutor, decoding the local 'vernacular'. Added to this was a more conceptually rigorous handle on what Etienne Balibar meant by 'social formation' and why

Wolpe's idea of 'articulation' is a misreading of Balibar. Similar capacity is evident in his 'Beyond Dual Theories of Economic Growth' (Mafeje 1978a: 47-73). The village ('traditional' economy) is intricately linked to the 'modern' economy of the cities. Some thirty years after Mafeje's critique of the 'dual economy' thesis, the debate on 'two economies' is going on in South Africa without as much as an acknowledgment of his contribution on these areas. Similarly, the collection of essays in a special issue of *Africanus*,13 concerned with a critique of the 'two economies' discourse in South Africa and Wolpe's 'articulation of modes of production' as the basis of some of such critiques, did not contain a single reference to Mafeje's works in these areas.

For Mafeje

> Afrocentrism is nothing more than a legitimate demand that African scholars study their society from inside and cease to be purveyors of an alienated intellectual discourse... when Africans speak for themselves and about themselves, the world will hear the authentic voice, and will be forced to come to terms with it in the long-run... If we are adequately Afrocentric the international implications will not be lost on the others (2000: 66-67).

The resulting product may "well lead to polycentrism rather than homogeneity/homogenisation... mutual awareness does not breed universalism" (Mafeje 2000: 67).

A Return to Intimacy

Archie, Bitter?

Let me end by returning to the personal. One of the things I have heard said about Archie – apart from the tendency to describe his style of writing as 'gladiatorial' – is that he was in the end a bitter man. The same 'Mafeje scholar' would claim that he never transcended his being denied the appointment to the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 1968. Archie's rejection of an honorary doctorate by the university is offered as an illustration of such

bitterness and failure to 'get over' the 1968 experience. This was a subject that I explored in an interview I had with Archie in the early hours of 28 October 2007 in Pretoria. I asked him for his sense of the 1968 experience – I made no reference to any characterisation of him regarding that experience; just his own sense of the experience. Specifically, I asked for his understanding of the roles of several individuals and the fact that Michael Whilson was the beneficiary of the post he was denied. What struck me in Archie's response was his immense generosity of spirit towards the individuals who, in his argument, were 'trapped' in history – in terms of institutional constraints and the limits of 'voluntarism. ' If there was any trace of bitterness, I could not detect it. It gave me an insight into a style of his writing that I initially found irritating – the tendency to use third-person pronouns as if he was separate from the processes of history that he was discussing. It is a style that is quite evident in his last works on anthropology (Mafeje 1997b, 1998, 2001). It was in those early hours of the morning that I realised that it came from his training as a biologist in the 1950s and a style of scholarly writing that separates the 'scientist' from 'the object' of research. Thinking of Archie as dispassionate may be something of an oxymoron, but it is this capacity to see the other side even when he disagrees with them that I detected; it is one that allows him to relent when he thinks you had a better handle on an idea or issue. It could be argued that what I experienced is an instance of the problem of phenomenological research: the research subject as a knowing subject, telling the researcher what s/he wants to hear; a dissembling key informant.

First, there was no reason for Archie not to express very strong feelings about the subject; he is widely acknowledged as a victim of institutionalised racism. Hours before, we had dined at his preferred restaurant in Arcadia, Pretoria and we had engaged in the usual vigorous discussion of a range of issues. He won a few, but got his white wine wrong! Why would he suddenly go mute on me? The interview was not on record – there were no tapes; there was no reason why this most passionate of intellectuals should suddenly grow reticent. It was one of the ideas that I wanted to explore before we got to the formal, recorded, interviews.

Second, there is independent evidence of such absence of bitterness. A few years after the 1968 incident, Archie collaborated with others in a collection of essays in honour of Monica Wilson (Mafeje 1975). Michael Whisson was a co-editor of the volume. Finally, when in February 2007 he raised the issue of his intellectual isolation over an intimate dinner, at his favourite restaurant in Waterkloof, Pretoria, it was about the disparity in the relative intimacy he enjoyed within the CODESRIA community and his intellectual isolation in South Africa, it was about his returning home to exile, not UCT, and it was expressed more in sadness than bitterness.

What did Archie have to say for his rejection of the honorary degree? The university's manner of making amends should not be simply about him. In the absence of an acknowledgment of the injustice done to *all* people of colour who went through the university, as staff or students during the period of Apartheid, accepting the honorary degree would be to individualise what is owed a wider collective. At the individual level, an acknowledgment of what is being atoned ought to *precede* the award, rather than an oblique assumption that it was, *ipso facto,* an act of atonement. Rather than bitterness, Archie's rejection was based on principle; it was a decision that took him long and hard to reach. A formal apology was sent posthumously to the Mafeje family in South Africa – in a letter dated 5 April 2007 from Professor Njabulo S. Ndebele, the university's vice chancellor.

Generous and Loyal

Archie was as gentle as he was vigorous in debate. Over dinner, with a glass of red wine and steak in tow, he was a 'master craftsman,' but you need to listen carefully because of his constant reflexivity and the subtlety and nuanced nature of his discourse. Such reflexivity dot his works: a capacity to argue with and dismiss some of his earlier writings (see for instance, Mafeje 1971, 1978a, 2001, Mafeje & Nabudere 2001). Many of us who have had the privilege of this encounter will attest to how much of his ideas have shaped our scholarship; but that was because he did not expect you to treat him as an oracle. Listen, but engage with equal vigour. The age difference between you and him counted for nothing; he considered

you an intellectual colleague and if you are a comrade, he took you even more seriously and demanded more of you. In his last few years he nibbled at his food rather than ate heartily; the discussions you had seemed to fill him more than the food.

Archie was a man of immense generosity of spirit and loyalty. I would arrive in his apartment outside Pretoria to find that he had neatly made the bed for me in the guest room, with clean towels and toiletries neatly laid out. After a long evening of dining out – and he dined like a Bedouin – he would engage you in discussions into the early hours of the morning; never about trivial matters. He would worry whether you were fine, if you needed coffee or tea. It would be a delight if you shared a glass of red wine, then you got down to serious discussion.

The tragedy for all of us, especially in South Africa, is that Archie did not die of natural causes – he died of intellectual neglect and isolation. In spite of the enormous love of his family and loyal life-long friends, Archie's oxygen was vigorous intellectual engagement. He lived on serious, rigorous and relevant scholarship. Starved of that, he simply withered. After four decades in exile, he returned home in 2002 to exile. Yet the gradual dissipation of our intangible intellectual heritage in South Africa by our failure to nurture the heritage we have in people like him is not limited to him. The twenty-fifth anniversary of Ruth First's assassination in Maputo passed in August 2007 with few national acknowledgments. This I find confounding. If Archie's passing away forces us to rethink how we engage with this heritage we might as yet salvage something for a new generation that desperately needs intellectual role models, not just business tycoons.

Lessons of Mafeje's Scholarship

The lessons that a new generation of African scholars can take from Mafeje's scholarship are many. I will mention four:

1. Deep familiarity with the literature and subject,
2. Writing;
3. Immense theoretical rigour; and
4. An unapologetic and relentless commitment to Africa.

Over time, Mafeje moved from being proto-Trotskyite (in the tradition of South Africa's Non-European Unity Movement) to being Afrocentric,14 but these were simply the scaffolding for deep social commitment. Noteworthy is that a rejection of dogmatism did not result in eclecticism in Mafeje's hands. You cannot walk away from any of his papers without being struck by his voracious intellectual appetite and deep familiarity with his field, even when he moved into new fields. He took the field craft seriously and was 'artisanal' in connecting the dots. But more significantly, his prodigious intellect was immediately grounded in addressing real-life problems; scholarship (however profound) must find its relevance in engagement. Mafeje's works on agrarian and land issues, development studies, democracy and governance, liberation scholarship, African epistemic standpoints, etc., constantly challenged and prodded a new generation to think large and engage in issues around us. The policy implications are enormous. He was uncompromising in demanding that Africans must insist on their own space; be completely unabashed in rejecting every form of domination. But averting alterity is not about being marooned on the tip of criticism; it must move from negation to affirmation.

Notes

1 Quoting Mao Zedong via Kwesi K. Prah.

2 The shift from first-name term of endearment to formal academic reference is also because while the earlier part is personal, this and the following sections are more of breaking academic bread with a progenitor.

3 Much of the claims of taking on Mafeje, especially Sally Moore's, failed to acknowledge this; further on this later in this paper.

4 J.C. Mitchell, *The Kalela Dance* (Rhodes-Livingstone Papers No.27, Lusaka, 1956); A.L. Epstein *Politics in an Urban African Community* (Manchester, 1958)

6 See the comments of the African reviewers to whom Magubane's paper was sent by the editor of *Current Anthropology*: Onoge, who met Magubane in the US, described him as 'the most exciting African sociologist' of the time (Onoge 1977 [1971]).

7   See, http://www.powerset.com/explore/semhtml/Bantoid_langages. Also see, http://www.ethnologue.org/.

8   Tiyambe Zeleza has documented his own experience of the silencing of alternative voices to Mbembe's monologue. The institutional dimensions drove CODESRIA to the precipice of extinction. For the relentless protection of our patrimony, generations of African social scientists will owe Mahmood Mamdani, the CODESRIA President at the time, a world of gratitude.

9   This distinction is, of course, relative. Kathleen Gough was born in 1925 while Raymond Firth was born in 1901. The distinction is more one of relative accretion to 'classical anthropology.'

10 Retired Professor of Organic Chemistry, University of Ibadan (Ibadan, Nigeria).

11 The similarity included the mode of self-appointment, being arbiter and conveyer of public opinion, etc. In this Mafeje registered a disagreement with the claim by the eminent linguist, A.C. Jordan, that the *imbongi* has no 'parallel... in Western poetry.' In the same breadth Mafeje pointed to the non-hereditary nature of the *imbongi* in contrast with the European bards.

12 See Toyin Falola's (2000) collection of JF Ade Ajayi's papers for insights into the methodological and epistemological issues that shaped the Ibadan School of History. Onwuka Dike was the founder and inspiration of the schools.

13 Volume 37, Number 2, 2007. *Africanus* is a journal of Development Studies published by the UNISA (University of South Africa) Press.

14 My appreciation to Thandika Mkandawire, an enduring *mwalimu*, in this regard.

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Mafeje and Langa: The Start of an Intellectual's Journey

John Sharp

Archie Mafeje's contribution to Monica Wilson's research project in the township of Langa in Cape Town was crucial. Wilson employed Mafeje as the project's field researcher from late 1961 to mid-1962. He worked very hard in this capacity, explaining – in a letter to Wilson – that, particularly in the early part of his field research, he had hardly left Langa before midnight on any of his research days.[1]

Mafeje's long hours in the field provided Wilson with the detailed case studies of life in Langa that had been sorely lacking before he came along. He also provided acute insight into the ways the different categories of residents related to each other, and their views and opinions of each other. He introduced her to the terms – such as 'ooscuse me', 'ooMac', and 'iibari' – the residents in these various categories used to refer to each other, providing sensitive explanations of their connotations, and when and where they were used or not used.

The Langa Project

The Langa project had been in considerable trouble before Mafeje was recruited as field researcher. It had actually commenced as early as 1954, shortly after Wilson's own appointment as Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The project had been conceived as a study of African urbanisation in Cape Town, and it was an interdisciplinary endeavour involving Professor Jack Simons from the School of African Life and

Languages and Dr Sheila van der Horst of the university's Department of Economics. Wilson was to contribute an ethnographic study of contemporary urban life, Simons a history of the African presence in the city (with a special focus on the changing legal constraints on this presence), and Van der Horst a study of African industrial workers.[2]

Wilson and her colleagues faced several difficulties with regard to the project in the course of the 1950s. Funding was secured from the state's National Council for Social Research in 1954, but the council insisted that the UCT researchers should link up with a team of University of Stellenbosch researchers that was embarking on a broadly similar project among the so-called 'coloured' inhabitants of the city and its immediate environs.[3] This 'racial' division of labour may not have been uppermost in the researchers' minds at the outset, but it soon came to be accepted that UCT was studying the African population of Cape Town, and Stellenbosch its coloured inhabitants.

The Stellenbosch researchers included Professor R.W. Wilcocks, who was well known for his part in the Carnegie Commission of Inquiry into the so-called 'Poor White Problem' in the 1930s, the sociologists S.P. Cilliers and Erika Theron, and the anthropologist (or *volkekundige*) J.P. Bruwer.[4] There is nothing in the record (in the Wilson papers in the UCT Archive) to suggest that there were any tensions between the two sets of researchers on personal or explicitly political grounds (although the Afrikaner Nationalists had taken over the government in 1948 and were beginning, slowly, to elaborate the policy of apartheid). But there were signs of divergence over objectives and methods of research between the two parties. The UCT researchers saw their endeavours as being of the nature of pure research, and Wilson, in particular, laid great emphasis on the necessity for detailed, qualitative inquiry. The Stellenbosch researchers, on the other hand, seemed more inclined to think in terms of policy research, and to deploy the more rapid research techniques they deemed appropriate to this end.[5]

Wider political circumstances impacted on the project when the National Council for Social Research refused, in 1955, to fund a period of research leave for Jack Simons on the grounds that the National Party government had declared him a 'listed' person

(because of his communist sympathies). The UCT researchers were incensed at this obstructionism, but their Stellenbosch counterparts were not unsympathetic to the difficulties Simons faced, and the council was persuaded to change its decision in 1957 (although by then it was no longer possible for Simons to take the research leave for which he had applied earlier).[6]

Wilson's main difficulty in this period was the Social Research Council's rigid insistence on the submission of regular progress reports as the key to renewed research funding. This insistence evidently drove her close to despair, and she considered throwing in the towel on her portion of the project on several occasions in the late 1950s.[7] The problem was the extraordinary difficulty of finding a suitable researcher to conduct detailed field research in Langa. Wilson may have compounded the difficulty by her apparent insistence that any researcher had to have a Cambridge – or, at a pinch, an Oxford – background in order to qualify as suitable. She managed to employ the Cambridge-trained A.R.W. Crosse-Upcott, who had some experience of fieldwork in rural Tanganyika, for twenty-one months between mid-1955 and the end of 1957.[8] But after he left the project, to take up a permanent position in Tanganyika, Wilson went through a list of potential fieldworkers, only to be disappointed by her failure to engage their services. One of the people she tried, without success, to involve in the project was John Middleton, recently graduated from Oxford, who provided relief-teaching in Anthropology for a period when Wilson was on sabbatical leave.

Wilson was to send Mafeje to Cambridge in 1966, after he had completed a Masters degree in Social Anthropology at UCT under her supervision. In 1961 he was in his final year of a BA degree, with majors in Social Anthropology and Psychology (he already held a BSc degree from UCT). Mafeje passed his Anthropology successfully at the end of 1961, but failed the final examination in Psychology. He told Wilson he was furious at the lack of self-discipline he had shown in approaching this final examination, not least because he was obliged to take time off from the Langa research in order to prepare for the supplementary examination – which he negotiated successfully – early in 1962.[9]

The quality of the information Mafeje acquired in the field is best understood by comparing his findings with those of Crosse-Upcott. In a rather defensive response to a request from UCT's Principal in 1959 for a yet another progress report, Wilson explained that Crosse-Upcott 'disliked town work, and though he worked hard he did not prove as good an urban field worker as he had been in a remote district'. He left her '560 pages of typed notes, reporting his observations and interviews', but she complained that 'the great difficulty in anthropological research is that it is almost impossible for one investigator to make much use of field material collected by someone else'.[10]

The small portion of Crosse-Upcott's tome that I have examined – an eleven-page report on the first nine months of his field research – gives some indication of why Wilson should have come to these conclusions.[11] He appears to have been very tentative in his approach to the residents of Langa, fearing that – aside from the 'leading personalities' with whom he conducted 'private interviews' – they were bound to regard him with animosity. His report referred to the need to avoid 'arousing concerted opposition from potentially hostile quarters', as well as 'publicity that would enable extremists to sabotage the survey'. Why he believed that Langa was peopled by 'extremists' who were necessarily 'hostile' in the mid-1950s is hard to say. Wilson observed later that 'at the time of the investigation what the inhabitants of Langa regarded as a case of corruption by a European (official) was being discussed everywhere', but she gave this as the reason why some of the things people had said to Crosse-Upcott were 'probably libellous', not as a pointer to the fact that they would not speak to him at all.[12]

Crosse-Upcott began his study of social groups in the township by looking at the churches, on the grounds that they were 'strong, friendly, and sophisticated'. His report divided the churches into 'established' and 'independent' categories, and then spent a good deal of time explaining that this 'demarcation is blurred', to such an extent that even the 'ultra-conservative African priesthood of the Anglicans' shared much of the 'nationalistic outlook typical of the "independent" Churches'. This same outlook was also to be found among the leaders of the sporting, recreational, occupational and commercial groups whom he had interviewed (in much less

detail than the church leaders), and he warned that since the leaders of the women's groups he had encountered were 'both articulate and aggressive, investigation of their affairs must proceed with caution'.[13]

Mafeje's Field Research

Crosse-Upcott may have become less hesitant as he proceeded further with his field research, but Wilson still noted in 1959 that he had 'failed to collect material on various topics (e.g. kinship and the groups of "homeboys") on which I pressed for information'.[14] Mafeje supplied material on these issues in abundance, as shown by the letters he exchanged with Wilson during his field research, and the relevant parts of the eventual book. In my opinion the best part of *Langa* is the one dealing with the 'six "home-boy" groups' (Wilson & Mafeje 1963:56–73), particularly insofar as it was able to compare the histories of these groups on the basis of when their respective members first arrived in Cape Town and the social class they achieved in the city. And I would go further to say that the chapters of the book in which Mafeje's hand is most evident as field worker (such as those on 'Home boys', 'Kinsmen', and 'Arbitration in Disputes') are far more convincing than those that relied largely on Crosse-Upcott's efforts ('Churches' and 'Clubs'). Mafeje was clearly able to give Wilson much more ethnographic detail with which to work than his predecessor had managed.

Mafeje was, of course, an 'insider' in a way Crosse-Upcott could never have been. This was not only because was he a native Xhosa-speaker, like most of the residents of Langa, but also because of his political activism, which one doubts he kept entirely to himself in the field. In the 1950s he had been associated with the Society of Young Africa (SOYA), a youth organisation affiliated to the All-African Convention (AAC), which had been founded in the mid-1930s to mobilise popular opposition to Herzog's segregationist bills (Kayser & Adhikari 2004:8). The AAC had joined forces with other movements in the 1940s to form the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), which positioned itself to the left of the African National Congress (ANC) at the time, insofar as it took an avowedly non-racial stance from the outset, and envisaged a struggle

for freedom that would necessarily involve a socialist revolution in the wake of national liberation (Kayser & Adhikari 2004:5). The Cape Peninsula branch of SOYA had at least a hundred members by the end of the 1950s, drawn from working youth in the city's townships and students at tertiary institutions such as the University of Cape Town (Kayser & Adhikari 2004:9). It is therefore likely that Mafeje was known to some of Langa's younger residents in this capacity, although he may have sought not to draw too much attention to his link to SOYA when dealing with the relatively large number of middle-class, 'ooscuse me' people in the township, who were more likely – on the basis of Crosse-Upcott's comments – to have been aligned with the ANC.

On the other hand, this link may have stood him in good stead with the migrant workers in the so-called 'barracks' in the township, and with at least some of the residents of the 'zones' (the intermediate area – between the barracks and the 'respectable' family housing – where many, not-quite-'middle-class' people still retained strong links with the Eastern Cape countryside). In the wake of the Sharpeville shootings, the Langa uprising, and the march on Cape Town by 30,000 people in March 1960, the NEUM constituents decided to launch a new organisation to take advantage of what they regarded as the 'pre-revolutionary' conditions that had arisen in the country. Mafeje was one of the founder members of the African Peoples' Democratic Union of Southern Africa (APDUSA), formed at a secret meeting in the Cape Peninsula in January 1961 (Kayser & Adhikari 2004:5). APDUSA was intended to realise the NEUM's objective of a non-racial struggle to overthrow white supremacy and achieve national liberation as a prelude to a socialist revolution. It sought to forge an alliance between the urban proletariat and the rural 'peasantry' to this end, and therefore made the issue of land redistribution in the countryside central to its programme.

APDUSA's programme was elaborated over time, of course, particularly at and after its first National Conference in 1962 (Kayser & Adhikari 2004:9). This means that, even if he had wanted to do so, Mafeje may not have been in a position to discuss its finer points with the migrant workers and members of the 'home-boy' groups in Langa during his field research in late 1961 and early 1962. Yet

the general thrust of the programme, and particularly its focus on migrant workers as the bridge between proletariat and peasantry, seem evident in the interest Mafeje took in the circumstances of the residents of the Langa barracks, and the detailed case histories of the 'home-boy' groupings he passed on to Wilson. His careful noting of which of these 'home boys' still had access to rural land, even if they had spent a great many years working in the city, may have had a significance for him far beyond what Wilson read into it.

But it is important to bear in mind that, his personal credibility in Langa notwithstanding, Mafeje was also a student who had only just completed his undergraduate studies in Anthropology, as well as a neophyte field researcher working under a professor whom he clearly regarded with considerable respect. At this stage, and for a good many years after this, Mafeje indicated to Wilson that social anthropology was his chosen field and, indeed, his 'calling'.[15] He also gave evidence of a deep regard, both professional and personal, for his mentor. He wrote, for instance, in response to Wilson's comments on one of his field reports, that

> It is very important for me to hear your comments because, as it happens, out of the many people through whose hands I have gone, you are one of the few I do not only approve of but also have complete faith and trust in. This explains, love for social anthropology aside, the tremendous pleasure I derive in working for you. You might not believe me when I tell you that, at the present moment, there is nothing I enjoy more than working on the Langa study.[16]

Mafeje was 24 years old when he wrote this effusive passage at the start of the 1960s. As another of Wilson's students (a decade later), I can empathise with the sentiments he expressed in it, sensing that he was responding to the intriguing combination of scholarly erudition, regal bearing and personal vulnerability that was manifested in the way she related to junior colleagues in whom she took an interest. My reference to 'junior colleagues' is intentional since, in my experience, Wilson made a point of treating the arguments and observations of students in whom she saw promise with great seriousness, giving them the impression that they had been admitted to an inner circle of fellow professionals (or at least

professionals in-the-making). It is clear, from the correspondence concerning Langa between them, that she regarded Mafeje in exactly this light, and one may speculate that he was the student on whom she honed her skill in this regard. Wilson certainly let him know how impressed she was with his field reports, but did so in subtle ways, often combining praise with an injunction to expand his interpretation of events or go back to the field to seek further detail.[17] More explicit praise for his efforts, and open acknowledgement that they were vital to her attempt to rescue the Langa project from the doldrums in which it had landed in the late 1950s, she reserved for her communications with other people.[18]

> The part of privileged student was not always easy to play. Exactly how much intimacy was being granted by one's distinguished mentor? This question seems, on occasion, to have exercised Mafeje.

> I would be very pleased if you could tell me what you feel about this work and things in general. To be honest, I am anxious to hear from you. Silence from you affects me very unfavourably. The fact that you are my professor cannot be overlooked. I enjoy doing this work only if you are pleased or satisfied with it. I should imagine this would be the attitude of any student. Now, as it were, I am not certain whether one could really speak to one's professor as I am doing at the moment. Anyway, I hope you will understand my position.[19]

These personal exchanges are, I think, essential background to an appreciation of Mafeje's response to the manuscript of the *Langa* book, which Wilson gave him for comment prior to its publication. Wilson wrote the text on her own, drawing on the field reports by Crosse-Upcott and Mafeje, but she acknowledged the latter's contribution by publishing the book as a joint endeavour. Mafeje was forthright in pointing to mistakes in areas – such as the correct spelling and use of Xhosa terms – where his knowledge was clearly superior to hers. He was similarly direct in dealing with her notoriously wayward spelling and syntax in English. The didactic tone he adopted in these instances is self-conscious, and no doubt afforded him more than a little satisfaction.

> I found this chapter very weak in punctuation. Adverbial clauses of condition, time, and concession introduced by 'if', 'when' and 'though', respectively, are often not marked off by a comma from the principal clauses they precede. When a complex sentence is introduced by a relative clause instead of the principal clause, the two clauses are always separated by a comma. … I found the same thing in the use of 'but', introducing an adversative clause or to express mere contrast. 'But' introducing the above mentioned clauses is always preceded by a comma unless, by doing so, the writer gets the feeling of 'over-stopping'.[20]

Mafeje was also direct in his response to broad political issues that arose in Wilson's text. Referring to a passage in the draft of the chapter on 'Classes and Leaders' (Chapter 7), Mafeje wrote sharply 'You describe Noni Jabavu's book "Drawn in Colour" as admirable. From what point of view is it so? One critic, an African writer and nationalist, remarked that the book is "thoroughly drenched with snobbery".… I also do not like the tone of the book. It is riddled with sentimentalism, and its condescending attitude is simply nauseating'.[21] What Wilson made of this spirited sally one does not know, but it is noticeable that she made no reference to the 'admirable' character of Jabavu's work in the final text, and mentioned her book only in a footnote.[22]

On the other hand, at the end of his commentary, Mafeje gave Wilson's text his unstinting approval.

> Other than the few points I have raised, I am satisfied with the exposition of facts in this work. I am also in agreement with the fundamental ideas expressed – that is, at no time did I find myself forced to compromise my ideas. I am particularly pleased about this because I look at this study as purely scientific work which has nothing to do with what white or black nationalists feel or think. It grieves me to think that under present conditions the[re are] certain truths which, though demonstrable, cannot be stated.[23]

Such wholehearted approbation gives pause for thought. In the light of his subsequent, and well-known, reservations about the whole 'acculturation' paradigm in anthropology (of which the book on Langa was clearly part), why should he have praised Wilson's text in this fashion? Why should he have been able to express severe criticism of Jabavu's 'condescending' views about the thin veneer of 'civilisation' she encountered among the people of Uganda (Jabavu 1960), and yet have overlooked Wilson's notorious conclusion that 'the innumerable associations of the modern African townships (such as Langa) may, indeed, be seen as a school for civilisation', where Africans ostensibly 'gained experience in the organisation of groups which are no longer based on kinship and which are part of a money economy' (Wilson & Mafeje 1963:179)?

The evidence on the relationship between Mafeje and Wilson persuades me that one cannot reasonably ascribe the former's praise for the *Langa* draft to mere dissimulation. I do not think one can say that Mafeje indicated his agreement with 'the fundamental ideas expressed' simply for strategic reasons – in order either to flatter Wilson or to avoid criticising her. Nor do I think it would be fair to either party to suggest that Mafeje sought refuge in the idea that the Langa manuscript was 'purely scientific work' that had 'nothing to do with what black nationalists think'. This particular comment was in many ways a straightforward statement of his personal position, since he was never – either then or in his subsequent career – a narrow African nationalist. One of his admirable characteristics was that he remained true, throughout his life, to the principles of the NEUM and the African Peoples' Democratic Union, particularly regarding the importance of non-racialism and the need for the liberation struggle to continue beyond the first phase of national revolution. Fifteen years beyond the end of apartheid in South Africa, his long-standing insistence on these principles looks ever more appealing.

But in the early 1960s, one may venture to suggest, Mafeje had not yet worked out how to bring the principles derived from his political activism to bear on his standing as a beginning anthropologist. His contribution to the Langa project through his field research was masterly, but it would take him another decade and more to arrive at a position from which he could use this field

research to formulate a convincing counter to Wilson's liberal interpretation of his and Crosse-Upcott's findings. Wilson's argument that the basis of social cohesion among Langa residents was undergoing a radical transition from ascription to achievement, and that social groups based on common interest were replacing those grounded in the generalised solidarity of kinship, was given added weight by the presence of so-called 'middle class' (or 'ooscuse me') people in this township in far greater numbers than in other, similar areas with which she and Mafeje were familiar. Moreover many of these people would doubtless have endorsed her liberal insistence that there was nothing, apart from the white government's intransigence, that could have prevented this wholesale transition to 'civilisation' from succeeding.

Rethinking *Langa*

The flaw in this conviction was easy to identify when confronted with Jabavu's views about faraway Uganda, but it was probably much more difficult for Mafeje, at this early stage, to make his own observations in Langa speak to the same objection. He returned explicitly to this issue only in 1975, in his contribution to Wilson's Festschrift (Whisson & West 1975). By this time, of course, he had his own Cambridge PhD under his belt, had been through the chastening experience of the 'Mafeje affair' at the University of Cape Town, and had been joined in interrogating the shortcomings of liberal South African anthropology by compatriots-in-exile such as Bernard Magubane (1973). Moreover the field research Mafeje had undertaken in the Transkei in the mid-1960s gave him deeper insight into circumstances in Langa, and his contribution to *Religion and Social Change* turned on a comparison between these two field sites.

Viewed on its own, Langa seemed to be an exemplification of the 'modernisation' story Wilson had sought to tell. Many of the migrant workers, who were at the bottom of the social hierarchy (and at the spatial margins of the township), were reported still to be pagans. Most of the urban residents, on the other hand, were identified as Christians, but they fell into two categories in which there was a correlation between social class and the 'types' of church to which people belonged. The 'respectable', middle-class people

belonged mainly to the established churches, while the less respectable, lower-class urban residents adhered to one or other of the independent churches in Langa. Wilson's intention was, no doubt, to provide a more subtle account than this, but one could certainly read into the text of *Langa* a very straightforward story about the sequence of steps by which the urban encounter was 'schooling' black South Africans in Christianity in particular, and 'civilisation' in general.

The Transkei studies provided the vantage from which to give an alternative account of Langa. They allowed Mafeje to make two crucial points. One (which was well-known from Mayer's work in East London, but was not clearly spelt out in Langa) was that the Christian-pagan (or School-Red) division was a long-standing rural phenomenon (Mayer 1963). The other was that, in the Transkei settlements he studied, adherents of the independent churches were looked down on by established-church Christians and pagans alike. Even the All Saints Mission Station, indeed, constituted a social environment in which Anglicans and pagans regarded each other with a strong measure of respect, in part because this distinction did not correspond, anywhere near as clearly as in Langa, with social class and standing. Moreover the 'Red' pagans at the mission station were conscious, and proud, of their paganism. Mafeje argued that they were 'militant' pagans, who deliberately refused to succumb to the self-alienation they saw among their Christian neighbours, and in this respect they stood in contrast to the 'defensive' pagans of the outlying settlement he studied, who – in the absence of in-their-faces antagonists – were merely waiting disconsolately for the tidal wave of 'western' civilisation to break over them (Mafeje 1975:177–84).

His Transkei observations allowed Mafeje to supplement the initial questions about the character of social groups and the types of churches in Langa (which he acknowledged had been 'inane') with an attempt to grasp what Christianity meant for people in the different social classes evident in Langa (Mafeje 1975:167). He emphasised that there were both pagans and Christians among the migrant workers in the barracks, pointing out that if the pagans appeared in any way apologetic about their beliefs this was because they, like their Christian counterparts, were at the bottom of the township's socio-economic hierarchy. There was little space for

militant paganism in Langa. On the other hand, however, there were many merely nominal Christians, particularly among the township's youth, who were contemptuous of the Christian piety displayed by their elders, whether aligned with the established or the independent churches. In his reconsideration of the material, Mafeje clearly found these young people the most interesting category of the general population, mainly because they – like the militant pagans in the countryside – had come closest to realising that Christian piety went hand-in-hand with the 'respectable' people's willingness to mimic white, middle-class civilisation in all respects, and to ignore the obvious contradictions, as well as the costs in terms of 'self-alienation', involved in doing so.

Mafeje's contribution to Wilson's Festschrift was, in my opinion, the best piece in an otherwise pedestrian collection. This was, in large measure, because he succeeded in introducing many of the principles of his political activism into his reconsideration of the Langa field material. By 1975 he had clearly worked out how to formulate academic questions that were firmly grounded in his political convictions, and he did this by showing that some of the people in Langa, and indeed also (and perhaps particularly) in the Transkei, came close to sharing his understanding that a social order grounded in racial capitalism – not simply 'white domination' – constituted the major problem facing black South Africans.

> Does 'social change' or 'being civilised' mean, unambiguously, being assimilated into the white middle-class cosmic view? What will it take for that view to transcend itself? (Mafeje 1975:184)

Mafeje looked, in this context, to what he hoped was the growing influence of the militant urban youth, and the militant pagans in the countryside, for the answer to his questions. Whether the answer still lies in these particular categories of the population is, no doubt, a subject for contemporary debate. But the questions he posed remain as pertinent today as they were a quarter-century and more ago.

Mafeje's reformulation of the Langa material marked a formal, and obvious, break with the teachings of his distinguished mentor. Yet this break was achieved without any hint of hostility or rancour.

One might reasonably expect no such hint to be apparent in a contribution to a book intended to honour Monica Wilson and her scholarship. But it is also the case that there is no evidence of any parting of personal ways in the private correspondence between Wilson and Mafeje in the 1960s and 1970s. Their regard for each other survived the ordeal to which it was subjected during the abortive attempt to appoint him to a teaching position in the Anthropology Department at the University of Cape Town in 1968.[24] At the height of this crisis, Wilson wrote to Mafeje in Cambridge to suggest that he might wish to consider turning the job down, because the South African government's hostile reaction to his initial appointment indicated that any career he might have at the university would be neither easy nor of long duration. Mafeje's reply was solicitous and firm. He regretted the difficult situation in which Wilson had been placed on his account, but he also declined the idea of withdrawing from the job.[25] For many years after this he continued to address Wilson in his letters as 'Aunt Monica'.

Speaking Truth to Power

In the light of his later writings, we have become accustomed to the idea of Archie Mafeje as a scholar who spoke truth, unfailingly, to power. The value of the archival material relating to his early career is that it shows that he had to work hard to develop the skill to be able to do this. He did not criticise the *Langa* manuscript on substantive or theoretical grounds in the early 1960s. The fact that he did not do so was not an indication that he was unwilling to criticise his mentor, or that he had not yet arrived at the political principles that guided his later work. His endorsement of the manuscript suggests, rather, that he had not worked out how to marshal the findings of his field research in Langa in a way that would allow him to support his political convictions by means of his anthropology. His contribution to *Religion and Social Change* shows, on the other hand, that he had found a way to do this by the mid-1970s.

The start of Mafeje's intellectual journey therefore tells us several important things. One is that it requires time, and careful reflection, to be able to speak truth to power effectively. Another important

insight is that while speaking truth to power calls for hard and uncompromising intellectual argument, it does not require personal animosity towards, or the denial of respect for, those with whom one comes to argue.

A third lesson, on which I wish to dwell for a moment in concluding this article, is that the act of speaking such truth is most effective, in the case of an anthropologist, when it is grounded in a sophisticated understanding of one's own ethnography. In this respect I am struck by the fact that Mafeje always insisted on the importance of his ethnographic inquiries, even when, in later years, he explicitly turned his back on the notion that he was an anthropologist (Mafeje 1998a, 1998b). What he objected to about anthropology was not its methods of research or the evidence that could be produced by careful participant observation. Even at his most critical he took care to endorse the value of this form of inquiry relative to others. In this respect, one may say, he remained faithful to Wilson's injunction that any attempt to understand the circumstances of people in Africa required first-hand inquiry into what they made of these circumstances themselves.

What Mafeje objected to, by contrast, was an anthropology in which particular epistemological assumptions – which he invariably characterised as 'Western' – were allowed to overwhelm whatever it was that people on the ground had to say about the conditions in which they found themselves. In this article, I have shown how he developed his argument on this score in his early research in Langa. Liberal observers such as Wilson suggested that Africans in towns had embarked on a process of social transformation that would remake them, ever more closely over time, in the image of 'Western civilisation'. This was not in all senses incorrect, since these observers would have been able to point to people in places such as Langa who believed that they were undergoing this process of refashioning themselves. But the crucial point, at which Mafeje had arrived by the mid-1970s, was that this was by no means true of all the residents of Langa. This insight allowed him to distinguish between 'assimilation' as an analytical framework (which he, like Magubane, rejected outright), and 'assimilation' as an ideology to which some people in Langa undoubtedly subscribed. It also allowed him to argue that their adherence to this ideology was something

that had to be explained by means of a more acceptable analytical approach, giving rise to his insistence that many of the 'respectable' residents of the township had become caught in the contradictions of a form of nationalism that encouraged them to mimic 'Europeans' in order to demonstrate that they were every bit as good, and as sophisticated, as the latter were purported to be.

Mafeje knew that the presence of such people had to be acknowledged. But he also knew that it was necessary to show, as Wilson and other liberal anthropologists had not, that there were others in Langa who had not succumbed to these contradictions, and were on the road to overcoming them. Liberal anthropology could accommodate a narrative of African liberation based on assimilation, but it could not recognise the voices of the people who challenged the assumptions on which this narrative rested.

Mafeje objected to this kind of anthropology because anthropology was the discipline he knew best – the one he had said was his 'calling' at the outset of his professional career. Had he had cause to express himself with equal fervour in respect of other disciplines, he would no doubt have found the epistemological premises of their liberal versions as objectionable as those of liberal anthropology. What clearly distressed him in later years was the attempt by African scholars to resuscitate a form of anthropology that had evidently learnt nothing from his own confrontation with liberal thinking, and that sought – from a position of self-imposed disadvantage – to mimic 'Western' academic orthodoxy.

Notes

1. University of Cape Town, Manuscripts and Archives Division, Godfrey and Monica Wilson Papers, BC 880 (hereafter BC 880), Correspondence with Archie Mafeje re Research 1960–1, K1.2 (hereafter K1.2), Mafeje to Wilson, 22 July 1961.

2. BC 880, Proposals, correspondence, reports 1953–1962, K1.1 (hereafter K1.1), Proposal to the National Council for Social Research (NCSR), 29 March 1954.

3. BC 880, K1.1, NCSR to University of Cape Town (UCT), 25 April 1954.

4. BC 880, K1.1, Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Ontwikkeling van Wes-Kaaplandse Navorsingsprojek.*

5. BC 880, K1.1, Wilson to T.B. Davie, 17 May 1954.

6. BC 880, K1.1, Minutes of a Meeting of the Supervisory Committee, 3 June 1957; Wilson to UCT Principal, 6 October 1959.

7. BC 880, K1.1, Minutes of a Meeting of the Liaison Committee for Research on Non-Europeans in the Western Cape, 18 August 1956; Minutes of a Meeting of the Supervisory Committee, 3 June 1957; Wilson to UCT Principal, 6 October 1959.

8. BC 880, K1.1, Wilson to UCT Principal, 6 October 1959.

9. BC 880, K1.2, Mafeje to Wilson, 20 January 1962.

10. See note 8.

11. BC880, K1.1, A.R.W. Crosse-Upcott, *Progress Report on a Survey of Langa African Township, July 1955–March 1956.*

12. BC 880, K1.1, Wilson to UCT Principal, 6 October 1959.

13. See note 11.

14. See note 12.

15. BC 880, K1.2, Mafeje to Wilson, 13 February 1962.

16. BC 880, K1.2, Mafeje to Wilson, 20 January 1962.

17. BC 880, K1.2, Wilson to Mafeje (undated).

18. BC 880, K1.1, Wilson to Secretary, National Council for Social Research, 20 June 1962.

19. BC 880, K1.2, Mafeje to Wilson, 18 January 1962.

20. BC 880, K1.2, A. Mafeje, *Comments on the Manuscript* (undated).

21. See note 20.

22. Wilson & Mafeje 1963:143.

23. See note 20.

24. UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archives Division, Sir Richard Luyt Papers, BC 1072, Mafeje Affair 1968, B2.

25. BC 880, Correspondence, K1.

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Part 2

Bifocality at the Core of the Borderlinking
Anthropological Endeavour

What is an Anthropologist?

René Devisch

Academic Lecture on the Occasion of the Honorary Doctorate in Anthropology at the University of Kinshasa on 4 April 2007[1]

Mr Rector Lututala Mumpasi
Mr Dean Shomba Kinyamba
Your Excellency, Ambassador of Belgium, Johan Swinnen
Your Excellency, Monsignor Nzala Kianza, Bishop of Kwango Diocese
Dear Professor Lapika Dimomfu, my Promoter
Dear Professor Mwene Batende, my Co-promoter
Dear Colleagues
Dear Students
Distinguished Guests

Throughout this address, I would like to invite you to follow us, namely *Maama* Maria my wife who is here with us today and myself, into four journeys or comings and goings; first, between Flanders and Congo; second, between our University of Leuven and the University of Kinshasa; third, between the clash of civilisations and the role of the anthropologist of tomorrow; and finally, between lifting my mourning period for two fellow anthropologists and my auspicious good wishes.

Journey 1: In the Congo, 1965–1974?

One does not become an anthropologist by birth, but nevertheless … In other words, the anthropologist is rooted in a 'family novel' and its places of memory.

From my mother and my father I cherish my childhood memory of their giving in the 1950s-60s a diligent and very warm welcome to numerous assistants and dealers who stepped over our parental farm. The farm was situated on the border with France and just a dozen kilometres away from the North Sea; during the night we could see the lighthouse in the port of Dunkirk. The farm stood on a piece of land bordering that part of France where persons of my parents' generation spoke Flemish, whereas my cousins and nieces over there indulged in the French language adopted by the French state and thus spoken in schools. During my childhood, the on-foot smuggling of farm produce, tobacco and strong alcohol was rampant. In my imaginary, the petty smuggling turned the frontier into a passionate zone of border crossing: residents such as my father would help small smugglers who walked by to avoid being detected by the somewhat rapacious surveillance of Belgian or French customs officers.

In my childhood fantasies and memories, the borderzone thus constitutes a driving force of my family novel and people's ingenuity and boldness. Besides, that borderzone casts my mind back to pressingly transmitted family traumas caused by the two World Wars into which my father, mother and their families, had been sucked, and grand-uncles and uncles perished. In the family novel, the borderspace also marks the tension my parents experienced in their own childhood. Reformist emancipation ideals subordinated the Flemish vernacular shared at home to the civilising French language spoken and written at school and in well-off circles in Flanders. It is this tension that they have passed on to us, their children.

The Intercultural Borderspace and the Intersubjective Borderlinking Constitute the Anthropologist's Biotope

I first set off for Kinshasa in 1965, finding myself here in the middle of a frantic and newly independent Africa. In the Golden Sixties, the West was basing its optimism on its trust in exact sciences, technocratic engineering, industry, nation-state, and on intellectuals' commitment to people's emancipating conscientisation worldwide. As a young man, I was fascinated by the intercultural encounter with the 'other' in his or her individual and sociocultural originality. I felt particularly attracted by the way Charles de Foucauld, a former officer in the French armed forces, became a hermit and self-taught anthropologist while living among the Touareg in Tamanrasset, on the South border of Algeria along one of the oldest trade routes across the Sahara. His life has never ceased to instil in me an ideal of respectful and sensitive encounter with the cultural other.

During my MA studies until 1968 at the Canisius Institute of Philosophy in Kimwenza-Kinshasa, it was especially Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology (focusing on the intersubjective encounter, the lifeworld, the body-subject and sensoriality) that served as our gateway through the then emerging 'Bantu' philosophy pioneered by Hountondji, Kagame and Tempels. I have just revisited my lecture notes taken some 40 years ago during Johan Allary's classes on militant Négritude. It derived its impetus, among others, from the writings of Frantz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire (in particular his 1950s *Discourse on Colonialism*), Camara Laye, Mongo Beti, Sembene Ousmane, and their successors. In 1967 Johan Allary and I bravely undertook to set up a small Africanist library at Canisius Institute of Philosophy, quite ostentatiously close to the Rector's room.

In my third year of philosophy, Lévi-Strauss's writings came to be an exemplary source. I was especially moved by the widely appealing and radically non-ethnocentric humanism, and thus by Lévi-Strauss's structuralism to which I dedicated my Master's dissertation. Opening a school of thought for Western postmodern intellectuals to no longer positioning themselves as universalist role models, Lévi-Strauss radically invalidated the scandalous cultural evolutionist norm of the racist hierarchy between societies. It is still worth saying that such a hierarchy was introduced by evolutionist anthropology and applied by colonialism and embarrassingly so by ethnocentric colonial ethnography. I distinctly remember how I

learned the basics of the Kongo language during my weekly visits to Kimwenza village on Kinshasa's border, and my annual learning stages in Bandundu region. I hold in mind how we led efforts at Canisius to have some communal life among fellow students coming from three continents and having very different sensibilities and civilisational aspirations. Both experiences taught me how much, among ourselves, we valued very differently the connection between facts and words, body and senses, feelings and thoughts, sign and reason –which moreover we defined quite differently.

While studying philosophy, and then here at the University of Kinshasa Campus, I got infused by the aspiration for 'mental decolonisation' –as the expression was coined by Mabika Kalanda in his 1965 booklet *La Remise en Question*. As a young Belgian having arrived in Congo in its early independence days, I felt torn between a depressing consciousness of shame towards those Africans, recently colonised, with whom I rubbed shoulders, and a moral debt and wish for reparation. At the same time, I felt intrigued by what I fathomed was some sort of 'hide-and-seek' game that the Congolese people had invented in face of their colonial and missionary 'othering' or 'alterisation': how did they manage to resist or parody the Belgian colonial master's and missionaries' *civilising mission* imposed upon them? This, indeed, demanded that they should be converted, school educated and develop in the white man's image?

And the dawn of the African continent –freeing itself from the colonial powers– appeared to me through a contract or complicity between the generations of North and South. It was a complicity for a united confidence in social and cultural creativity which now entirely rested on everyone's shoulders. I felt invited to such a contract but also to shouldering the heavy moral debt as a Belgian. And, I must say, the successive calls to regain social and cultural legacy expressed themselves only much later in the successively appealing injunctions toward decolonisation, Zairean authenticity, enculturation, afro-modernity.

> *The Decolonisation of Lovanium University –a Daughter University of Leuven– and its Emancipation as* UNaZa *(Université nationale du Zaïre, to become later Université de Kinshasa) Heralded for Me a Transsubjective Repositioning as an Aspiring but Allochthonous Anthropologist.*

Upon completion of my philosophical training I originally wanted to study agronomy as a contribution toward sustainable development. Nevertheless, I was incited to undertaking a training course in anthropology. After my one year of undergraduate studies at the *Université catholique de Louvain,* I came back to the Congo in 1969 to live with a small community in Livulu and later in the then student residential accommodation known as Home 7, with the aim of studying anthropology here at the University Campus. I gained exposure to the radical aspiration for 'mental decolonisation' expressed by those students associated under the name of 'Présence universitaire' –which the young assistant professor Valentin Mudimbe was centrally associated with. The dissertations I submitted to the department of sociology and anthropology, by way of examination for various lectures, focused on the following questions: how can we understand, in their own terms, the daily practices of Bandundu villagers, their modes of production and exchange, their palavers and their rites? The Dakar School for African Psychopathology, to which the course by Professor Ellen Corin introduced us, inspired my enduring interest in medical anthropology and intercultural psychoanalysis.

During the 1970–71 academic year, as students we felt mobilised by President Mobutu's powerful call to decolonise and thus emancipate the Zairean sovereign identity. At the same time, the popular imagination bestowed upon the white man the title of 'uncle' –*nos oncles les Belges.* This role was henceforth being defined in terms of duties towards nationals rather than rights –as the coloniser had arrogantly been pretending at. I left the campus of Kinshasa in July 1971. At this time my Zairean fellow students who were still in full education got forcibly recruited into the army at the Tshatshi military barracks on June 4, following a spate of arrests for their so-called civic insubordination and high treason against the Head of State. As far as my personal story is concerned, this raid of the army into university life enforced the choice I had just made, which was not to seek permanent residence in the Congo. In fact, following long discussions with the two leaders of the students-soldiers, Gakodi and Mbonyinkebe, I had chosen to reverse my itinerary: to learn in depth about life here in the Congo and then make it truthfully known in Europe. It was in keeping with such a choice that I had left the

Kimwenza community one month earlier, a community that had so generously offered and allowed me access to the very rich Congolese experience and for which I remain evermore grateful. I choose to devote body, mind and soul to an audacious, though temporary, adoption as a would-be anthropologist within a village community in Kwango land in the Bandundu region.

This region of Bandundu is located away from the major national scene, that increasingly became the battleground for two competing ideologies: the party-state's ideology for the recourse to authenticity versus the so-called Eurocentric civilising mission of the Christian churches and the non-governmental organisations for development. In Kwango, I had only just become a witness to punctual major stakes in economic zaireanisation in the administrative and commercial centres undertaken by the Mobutist party-state, its militant administration and army. And paradoxically, within the host community in Kwango, the cultural shock brought about through the zaireanisation movement prompted my search for a deep layer of cultural and identity authenticity. It meant a search both from beyond the prejudiced gaze that the colonial mission had projected onto the 'native' Kwango people –namely of Yaka, Kongo and Lunda ancestry–, and from beyond those models and prejudices devised by colonial masters and partly internalised by the people.

> *During the Anthropological Fieldwork, it is the Access to the Intersubjective and Collective Memory that Constitutes the Main Crucible for a Professional Anthropologist.*

From December 1971 until October 1974, I lived as anthropologist among the Northern Yaka people of the Bandundu province, some 450 kilometres to the Southeast of Kinshasa[2]. The Northern Yaka inhabit a rural area, with on average some 120 inhabitants per village, located in the thinly populated Northern Kwango region of huge savannah and steppes bordering Angola. As small-scale farmers and hunt-gatherers, their daily domestic and public life is since the 1970s increasingly overshadowed by scarcity. The patterns of time and space have virtually been unaffected by small incursions of the cash economy. It is a society devoid of a statist edifice,

autochthonous or Christian monotheist religion or any overall master discourse. It is fair to say that literacy among the Yaka has not been a mutational force and has hardly shaken this society to its foundations and beliefs.

I enjoyed hospitality in the chiefdom of Taanda, standing within one-day walking distance from the Angolan frontier, on the one side, and bordering the Wamba river, on the other side. It is a grouping of some thirteen villages where daily life seemed well anchored in the local lifeworld. The choice has been suggested in these terms by Léon de Beir, a Jesuit missionary who, in 1938-39, had recorded there in great detail the religious life and ritual practices –and I had brought with me to the field a photocopy of De Beir's manuscript. I lived in the same village, Yitaanda, throughout the period of my field research, leaving it only for brief stays in surrounding villages. The Catholic parish of Imbela at some 60kms from Yitaanda welcomed me several times, as did the University of Kinshasa, for brief stays of concentrated work on my research notes. My wife Maria interrupted her teaching of physics and mathematics at lyceum level in Flanders to join me for the last four months of research in Yakaland.

Anthropological research is carried out in proximity, and sometimes face-to-face in a shared borderzone with a host community or network. It entails a profound respect for diverse ways of life, a capacity for compassionate listening and selfcritical empathy, discrete participation in village life, and a propensity for collective and respectful dialogue in the language and manner of the host group. This constitutes, I believe, the golden road along which the anthropologist can investigate a group and its lifeworld from within. Anthropologists heed the plurality of words and listen to both common and dissident voices and messages. They listen to the collective hopes of their hosts, or gradually sense the traumatic memories that are blocked in their bodies and imaginary or incorporated in their bodily hexis. Whoever works wholeheartedly and for some years in host groups becomes kneaded by their practices, in a fever that gives one a taste for the hosts' audacity and ingenuity, but also summons solidarity with the hardships and wounds inflicted by life. In this sharing, anthropologists thereby go so far as to turn their attention to gestural expressions and body

language: they seek to share to some degree and grasp the hopes and fears, the worries and sadness, the enthusiasm and anxiety, the blanks and shadow zones in groups and persons.

You may consent that after such an intense intercorporeal and intersubjective endeavour, it is no easy task to disentangle, in the anthropological writings, *who* really speaks and *who* acts in the transmission of messages, signs and psychic forces. This rich information and experience co-opt the anthropologist in very vital but enigmatic webs between the living and deceased, the visible and the invisible, the sayable and the unspeakable, words and what is beyond, the foreseeable and unforeseeable, the reflective and the unthought-in-thought. Such webs have unfolded in the presence of the anthropologist, for example, in palavers, humour, play, joy, parody, reported dreamwork, instances of deep disruption or loss, pain or anxiety, anger and fight, divinatory oracles and sacrifices.

In such a deeply moving transsubjective experience –and regardless of whether he or she is male or female, novice or fully-fledged researcher, autochthonous or allochthonous– the anthropologist can be moved between appeal and enthusiasm, or bafflement and anxiety. In the scholarly or public opinion expressed 'here' and 'over there', the anthropologist is often likened to a romantic or a rebel in pursuit of some more authentic human affections inasmuch as he or she does not feel good about him- or herself, his or her group or lifeworld. This witnessing, co-affecting and co-implicating experience might apply to many an African anthropologist who, as common parlance would state it, 'descends from university to come and live amongst his own people's elders who remained in the village or got integrated in the city'. The same is true of a European anthropologist seeking some adoption in an 'alien' society. Anthropologists of my blend are, thus, torn between captivation for the unknown and an innermost wish to learn from being genuinely affected by subordinate people who are jettisoned in adversarial sociocultural alienness by Eurocentric ideological constructs of Progress and sovereign Reason. My arrival in Yitaanda in North Kwango revived my childhood memories at the banks of the North Sea. As a child I experienced, in the face of its powerful tides, a fear of being engulfed by an indefinable and massive otherness. Upon arriving in Yitaanda, I felt overtaken by some sort

of fascination that makes you desperate for an encounter with such a high tide that gently submerges you only if you give yourself over to it while sitting by the beach.

Of course, without being invited, still muttering the local language and unaware of the host people's genuine sensibilities and interests, an anthropologist arriving in a local community or a given network has no option but to give him- or herself up to the most hospitable family within the group, in a collusive and mutual exchange for good wishes and attractive promises. Your hosts make you feel completely harmless through welcoming you and, for instance, after some time granting you a status akin to an ancestral figure –that makes you into a classifiable and partially controllable member. The fate of my little story entails that upon my arrival in Yitaanda I found the head of the Yitaanda grouping of villages in death agony. He was an ailing octogenarian known as Chief Taanda Kapata. I was there only since three weeks when he had passed away. A delegate of the regional Chief N-saka, as usual of Lunda descent, arrived in Yitaanda following one month of mourning, in order to start the holding of palavers for succession. He publicly called me Taanda N-leengi –a name that -associated me with the disappearance and re-appearance of a former Head of the grouping. Indeed, that name entrusted me with the authority to undo the fate of Chief Taanda N-leengi. As a matter of fact, N-leengi was Kapata's predecessor in title and had been exiled in 1938 by the colonial authorities to Oschwe in the Lake Region of northeast of Bandundu province. His alleged crime was to have participated in the mid-1930s in the anti-colonial prophetic movement known as *Bamvungi*. And in this mythical construction engineered by the envoy of the hierarchically superior Lunda chief, I came down as the reborn Taanda N-leengi re-appearing in the white colour of death after Kapata's rule that began in 1938. (Needless to say, the fact that my name René literally means 'the reborn' was completely unknown to my hosts.)

For Yitaanda community hosting me, I flatly contradicted the stereotypical image of the white man because of my quite modest means, unimposing and lasting presence in the same village. I sought to fully enter the group's hospitality through avoiding any pretentiousness, but more importantly by refusing to line up with

the clichéd dualist stereotypes. These oppose the school educated against the so-called non-evolved local, or the wealthy anthropologist against the local indigenous world of jealousy or inability to overcome selfish use of cash or witchcraft. I moreover tried to break with the stereotypes through the help I offered in the building of my own hut, or through my participation in communal celebrations and rejoicing. My occasional long journeys to visit healers or diviners were certainly at odds with any as yet seen conduct of a European missionary or colonist. I deliberately tried to acquire the status of a friendly, mild and caring 'person of respect' (*n-kwa luzitu*) in lines with Yaka elders who would respectively listen to others and acknowledge their perspective, hence engage as much as feasible in the others' intention and discourse. In other words, I was aiming at the status of someone to whom people could entrust the treasure of their language, their sense of origin, or even the spirit of their social sense and the heart of their culture. My hope was to be trusted as someone with whom my hosts could intersubjectively 'com-pose' their vulnerability, longing and uniqueness in a kind of ethical resonance.

For any anthropologist of my generation who loyally partakes in a subaltern host community or network, there is an ensuing feeling of mutual adoption and some re-origination from that in-between space of encounter. The borderspace between the host community and the participant anthropologist first develops doing fieldwork. It further extends in the writing of the dissertation, articles or books. In fact, it is above all moved by an exploratively transitional stance between stranger and guest, a visible conduct and an unfathomable intention. On the one hand, the host community projects on an anthropologist, whether autochthonous or allochthonous, the imaginary of Eurocentric emancipation, material prosperity and comfort as well as individualism and social unboundedness triggered by his or her appearance, queries, and financial means however limited. The more the reciprocal adoption intensifies into co-implication, the more it frees the anthropologist from the moral burden for social activism or development initiatives. But the anthropologist, then, may come to realise the extent to which his or her interactional conventions, gaze and listening are distorted by the colonial imaginary. May have a biassing influence, his or her

objectifying habitus or academic theories, methods and techniques for, among others, analysing kinship, domestic economy, residential patterns, rites of passage, religion, rhetorical and figurative art. On the other hand, given that we anthropologists strive for an intersubjective encounter within an intercultural borderspace that affects us, a shadow zone unwittingly springs from inside ourselves: it is a zone unavoidably inhabited by our unspeakable preferences, refusals, denials and hardly conscious desire and traumas. Furthermore, it is a zone that may encompass some unsaid, hence an elusive or unexplained intergenerational preoccupation with lack and death, or with hopes, fates and moral debts. These may deeply, or subconsciously inform, hamper or afflict us. This shadowy zone, within ourselves and tying in with our Eurocentric education –and possibly (post-)Christian or (post-)patriarchal horizons–, goes on steering our listening, receptiveness and our unceasing decoding of both our co-implication and co-resonance with the host group and what it mirrors of us in their eyes.

Because Professor Lapika –the promoter of this honarary doctorate– has already expertly painted the research undertaken in the Kwango, let me then move one step further. Let me clarify that the Yitaanda society bestowed upon me the status of *mbuta* or elder. Henceforth it was a status inviting me to no more speak out my innermost, but to learn to know things and commit them to memory through amiable listening and clear-sightedness of heart. My wife, Maria, joined me during the last three months in Yitaanda. The day before we were bound to leave, Chief Taanda came to offer us some palm wine and asked then for our glasses saying: 'When Maama Maria gives birth, the first-born will be named after me; and in these glasses we shall continue to drink to that child's health'. That explains no doubt why our elder son, Oswald-Taanda, became an architect specialising in the redevelopment of a city's or region's borderspaces which, for residents, mark both a fold and a place to outreach. And as Maama Maria can confirm, the two and a half years' intense learning at Yitaanda took me twenty-five years for its unpacking and decoding.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as already stated, there is another story following my first anthropological experience. And so I invite you to:

Journey 2: Decolonising the Gaze

Whenever I return from the Congo to resettle in Flanders, I admittedly feel terribly upset at finding myself wrestling with an all-too-technocratic and modernist masculine public discourse. Such a discourse continually and self-confidently gives priority to an ideological phrasing under the banner of the Enlightenment rationality, exact sciences and masculine perspective –and to such ideas as the autonomous self, the individual human rights of a modern Western signature. It goes without saying that such ideas entail an unclarified ethnocentric and evolutionist unthought-in-thought in their catchphrases heralded as a universal project likely to lead towards the emancipation and progress of all nations. In this perspective, Western mass media and public forums as well as various academic debates continue to direct in an ethnocentric fashion those projective fantasies on to people living in Africa South of the Sahara.

   Aware of what remains concealed in the intercivilisational borderspace, I cannot help wondering whether the North is not trying, without admitting it, to metabolise the shadow zone or the unthought and unsaid of our technocratic, rationalistic and secularised civilisation –viz. the individual and collective *angst* for death, finitude, the hybrid or unpredictable and the more-than-human, or call it the otherworldly or interworldly. It is likely that such fear of death or, more vaguely, this disturbing strangeness in the North Atlantic consciousness, finds its early sublimation in a double self-satisfaction. As a matter of fact, the media constantly remind us about the level of satisfaction that our technocratic environment is supposed to generate along with the influx of 'beautiful products', the transfer of our perfect technocracy and nice goods to the disadvantaged regions in the so-called South or periphery. I wonder whether, at the same time and paradoxically, in its discourses and programmes for public healthcare, birth control and development intended for the South, the North –without having a lucid or reflective consciousness of its own motives– is not

determined to try and spread more than ever its own death phantasms. In other words, are the media not contributing to repressing these phantasms by shifting them to an adversary otherness, that Europe relentlessly merges with its phantasms of the 'Black Continent' and now the so-called 'document-less immigrants'?

Besides, through my anthropological research among the people of Kwango and Kinshasa's shantytowns, I became acutely aware of my own Flemish cultural identity. Between 1980 and 1986, I collaborated in some research programmes with a number of medical doctors –namely general practitioners and psychiatrists– in Brussels and Antwerp. I began to apply insights gained from the study of Yaka corporeal symbolism to my phenomenologically-oriented (cf. Merleau-Ponty) research in family medicine in multicultural Flanders on the culture-specific moulding of chronic epigastric complaints. We were seeking to understand on the basis of which specific experience or culturally determined body image did Belgo-Sicilian male patients –aged between 35 and 45– complain to their family doctors, five times more than their autochthonous peers, about an epigastric condition? Was a Moroccan patient with a rather frequently mentioned right knee complaint not conveying an unspeakable problem of standing upright, virility or patriarchal authority? Do one's culinary habits and conduct in the kitchen and at dinner table offer a template of an epigastric patient's unsaid body image and imaginary relation to his or her stomach and the maternal figure?

In essence, the issues boiled down to stating how the Yaka seek, on behalf of their own subjects, to valorise attention for a meaningful consonance in beauty, or 'cosm-etics', between the body, the group and the lifeworld. Hence, by developing this Yaka gaze within my original culture, I reversed or helped decolonise 'Orientalism' (as unmasked by Edward Said) –namely, the exoticisation or alterisation of the African or the Asiatic created by the colonising European gaze. An even greater challenge was posed by the constant shuttling between, on the one hand, my Flemish culture of origin, or professional university horizon, and my (applied medical-)anthropological experience with healers and community biomedicine in Kinshasa's shantytowns.

This kind of mutual anthropology is something that can only be achieved through gaze 'from there' to 'here' and vice versa. I developed this mirroring approach in a course entitled 'Anthropology of the Body' –which I taught for some 30 years at the Anthropology Department of the University of Leuven. Adopting a bifocal perspective, the course explored from the Yaka standpoint the culturally repressed, encrusted in people's living, display and depicting of the body, its borders and sensoriality within some Flemish environment. The course also dealt with the subjects' weaving into, or interconnecting with, the family novel and networks like also the lifeworld. In the main, it tackled that interweaving in Flanders' past and present, pertaining to expressive arts, the opening up and visualisation of the inner body (with Henri de Mondeville, Andreas Vesalius and William Harvey), and the witch craze in the transition towards the Renaissance, as well as in arts and the multimedia since 1970. This no doubt explains why the majority of core perspectives in the doctoral theses written under my aegis have arisen from insights generated by this course on Anthropology of the Body.

For my part, the intention to understand the comings and goings between cultures, as well as their clash and flights, has never stopped. For instance, the modern French language of Voltaire –a major emblematic figure of Enlightenment *ratio* and progress– that you and I adopt to state the distance between this language and our culture of origin and mother-tongue, is also the language which both 'here' and 'over there' has amalgamated our parents at school to learn about '*our ancestors, the Gauls*'. It is also the same language that is daily creolised, 'cadaverised' –according to the expression of a well-known Kinois singer– and thus domesticated in the streets of Kinshasa. The ironic laughter by the 'cadavéristes' is doubtless a wholesome vaccine that needs to be exported to the West where life has, for the vast majority, become too dull as a result of intense mechanisation, computerisation, and commoditisation.

Journey 3: Witness to the Clash of Civilisations

If the clash of civilisations is as hard as stones colliding in the tornado of capitalist globalisation, the more we welcome networks for intercultural encounter or interuniversity cooperation, the more

we allow the borderspace to reveal itself in its fragile and compassionate reality –a reality that appears as rich, flexible and 'response-able' as the human heart is.

From 1986 till 2003, I resumed ties with Africa in view of annual research stays. These stays lasted between three to six weeks among residents of Kinshasa's shantytowns. During the 1990s I was privileged to moreover undertake a few months of research in Tunis and Southern Ethiopia, and to visit every single PhD student for some weeks within their chosen urban networks or rural community of origin or adoption. It is in their company that I was welcomed in communities and networks in Western Congo and Kinshasa, Northern Ghana, Southeastern Nigeria, Southern Ethiopia, Southwestern Kenya, Northwestern Tanzania, KwaZulu Natal in South Africa, Northwestern Namibia, like also in Cairo, and in Druze communities in Northern Israel. These fieldwork trips have increasingly provided strong evidence that from the 1990s onwards Africa is more than ever caught up in the clash of a very diversified and paradoxical set of civilisation scenarios. This period is marked by huge debates triggered in countries emerging from apartheid, dictatorship or totalitarianism. Public International Law was mobilising the international support for the recognition of crimes against humanity, such as slavery, genocide, apartheid, torture, large-scale sexual abuse. *Subaltern and Postcolonial Studies*, Afro-American feminism and certain eco-feminist movements started to de-westernise social sciences and deconstruct their phallo-logo-centric biassing. In the same period, a big part of Africa became fatigued and strained under the terror of so-called warlords and HIV pandemics. The same Africa brought together by people fighting for their own survival thanks to neighbourhood associations and tontines. It created its networks around burials or therapeutic collection, family, religious and metaphysical concerns and traditions. It is the late Jean-Marc Ela, the honorary doctor I promoted at our Leuven University in 1999, who is a most renown long-term champion of these 'people from below'.

The supervision of the doctoral theses that I was able to provide in various aforementioned countries pointed me towards a multiple dynamics underlying the reconstruction of a promising future, and from which I here would like to raise two points. Let me mention at

first the parody as ironic mimicry through which countless communities, neighbourhoods or networks seek to turn intrusive violence or haunting terror against itself in a self-destructive way. On the other hand, it is through its spirit of humour and ceaseless creolisation that plural Africa confronts the life hazards in the city or in the poor savannah or deteriorated mining regions. It is the power of charismatic communes of faith, and the 'immunising power' –an expression I owe to Koen Stroeken, in this volume– of the widespread youth cultures that inspire the mushrooming local networks and associations for mutual support. However, Africa also challenges its life hazards through its ecological inventiveness in the breeding and farming enterprises, in the crafty repairing of broken-down cars, alike through the huge and prosperous interregional markets such as, at Kumasi or Onitsha. Hence not only has this plural Africa managed to domesticate the languages and imperial religions brought in by colonisation, but it has also locally adapted a number of globalisation trends of knowledge, information technology and governance.

In an endogenous way or from inside, these local networks – creators of professional or ethnocultural identification– relentlessly mobilise, adopt or reinvent their knowledge forms, their social and cultural, ethical and metaphysical values, in part holding to ancestral traditions. These multiple basic networks require that per region or professional association, they should be entitled to their proper history and development, and this all the more in as much as such networks may also rest on contributions made by more fortunate nationals in the Diaspora. Should true development in the North and South not be concerned over and above all with a shared quest for a better and multiform living together? Is it not one according to various and largely shared modalities of exchange and mutual aid, springing not only from the technological or economic order, but also from deep cultural and spiritual input?

It was thanks to the endless support from home by Maama Maria, my wife, and those who generously welcomed me during my stays, that I was able to experience such transhumance between Leuven, Kinshasa and other African networks. In this respect, I would like to gratefully mention first of all CERDAS (the Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences in South-Saharan Africa),

which is based here at Unikin. I would particularly thank you, dear Professor Lapika, the director of this Centre. You and your colleagues have continued, since the late 1980s, to offer me within the centre a platform for amiable and fruitful exchanges. I thank you very much indeed. My thanks also go to Servico in Gombe for allowing me to benefit from their logistics. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the Rectors of Scopenko at Mont Amba – Father Ngoma Bodi and his predecessors– for their hospitality since we had to abandon our anthropologists' house in Kingabwa during the September 1991 looting.

I am most indebted for the very many warm receptions I have continually enjoyed in the Congo. Such receptions, along with the sense of dignity as their hallmark, did not shirk the task of restraining my discreet and reserved writing so as to avoid some exoticisation –a writing that undoubtedly appears, at times, as too aestheticising. While a few of my writings discuss the so-called 'Africa that has gone off to a bad start' –either bringing out the destructive forces internal to the inherited colonial institutions, or hinting at the parody through which many Kinshasa residents seek to metabolise the shock and hybridisation between civilisation horizons– I have never been blind towards the injustice, self-serving viciousness or exploitation and violence inflicted and acted in the public space of Kinshasa and elsewhere in the country.

Nevertheless, the more the affinity and the feelings of affectionate complicity grow between an anthropologist and his or her networks or hosts, the more the anthropological encounter becomes transferential. And such transference is better understood in terms of the literal meaning of *diaphorein* –which means to transport, carry through, move beyond and to be open to one another. Besides, the barely conscious meaning production or *signifiance* and mutual strengthening –emerging in the conflux, if not clashes, of affects, emotion, imaginary and interlocution– so generated continue to disclose in the face-to-face encounter between subjects. Such encounter that underpins human subjects reaches beyond what words can articulate or translate. That encounter, both interpersonal and intercultural, can become an authentic interhuman undertaking involving several and mutually enriching and enforcing voices.

In fact, for about three weeks each year since 1986 and until 2003, I worked among the Yaka and Kongo population in the towns and shantytowns of Kindele, Selembao, Yolo, Luka-Ngaliema, Masina, Ndjili III and Kimbanseke. As fate would have it, these regular stays in Kinshasa allowed me to witness the massive uprisings, which one could only describe as Jacqueries, in September 1991 and January–February 1993. I was, I must admit, even more badly shaken by the devastating side of these uprisings than I was when again and again experiencing the endless deterioration of suburban infrastructure and most appalling living conditions in Kinshasa. Are this environmental deterioration and this devastation a result of externalisation of violence inflicted on things rather than on fellow citizens? Is this the sort of violence that one experiences within oneself a result of the clash of civilisations? The more the impoverished urban areas reflect the shattered memories of the so-called Eurocentric civilising mission, the more such enduring poverty and disillusionment –especially among immigrants from the hinterland– discloses what appears to me to be the paradoxical impossibility for reconciling solidarity and disparity in survival income.

In partial collaboration with CERDAS, including our late colleague Matula Atul, my work in Kinshasa also dealt with the Mpeve ya Nlongo healing churches of the sacred spirit, or with the consultations that patients seek from healers in addition to using medical services. I have recorded living narratives coming from the word of mouth of some twenty university undergraduates originating from the Kwango, and also numerous other narratives relating, among others, to night-dreams and their exegesis sought from a wise person in the vicinity.

My interest, throughout, has been to understand exogenous and endogenous cultural matrices and horizons: what domain of imagination –whether persecuting or salvationist– was at stake? What values or modernisation ideologies were being conveyed either through the media or street-based churches? I wanted to grasp the underlying reasons behind the desire for Kinshasa's residents to opt for healthcare or therapeutic consultation with a healer or medical practitioner –whenever they are felt haunted, frightened, made to feel guilty, bewitched, saddened or seduced by ostentatious consumption.

The CERDAS team welcomed many of my Leuven colleagues. I would mention a few: thanks to the support of Professor Kahang'a, my colleague Filip De Boeck in 1986 was setting off for his research among the Lunda inhabiting Southern Bandundu. Besides, De Boeck extended his investigations to the *baana luunda* phenomenon in Kikwit of entrepreneurial youngsters in the 'diamond hunt' from Angola. More recently, he has carried out further research into street children and the sociocultural imaginary in Kinshasa. In the early 1990s in Kinshasa with CERDAS, Dr Peter Persyn, Mrs Pascaline Creten and Dr Jaak Le Roy joined Dr N-situ for medical anthropological research regarding the quest for health parallel to biomedical treatment of Kwango population in faith-healing communes or with folk healers. Later in this address, I will mention the research stay that Stefan Bekaert made among Sakata people, thanks also to Monsignor Nzala and late Barrister Mr Mbu.

Peter Crossman's 1997 surveys, under my supervision, in six different African universities (from Tamale, Dakar, Addis Ababa, Kampala and Harare to Western Cape) squarely walked in the footsteps of intellectuals and so-called postcolonial scholars from Asia, the Middle East, South America and Africa (I would mention, among others, Appiah, Ela, Ki-Zerbo, Kwasi Wiredu, Mazrui, Mudimbe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Okot p'Bitek). These surveys echo UNESCO's appeal to 'durably reconstruct scientific capabilities' from diverse parts of the world. These capabilities constitute a vital and highly diversified humanity legacy in the same way as does biodiversity or ecological diversity. A commonsense proverb in Igboland of Southern Nigeria goes that any practical or scientific knowledge is, at first or in its germ, a local knowledge mainly invented and practised in a regional language and in a local or professional setting. Thus, such a proverb consolidates the call that different corners of Africa have heeded about reanchoring or endogenising university education on African soil. In other words, it is a call about valuing –within the lyceum and the university curriculum and research programmes– more of those African local or endogenous knowledges that colonisation and its legacy had obliterated. Let me mention, among others, the pioneering scholarly work by Paulus Gerdes (International Society of Ethnomathematics; African Mathematical Union) on mathematics, geometry or logic

that since long are practised –without being formally theorised– in productive and decorative activities, mat and basket weaving, ceramics and sculptures, riddles and story telling often illustrated by design patterns that elders draw on the ground. Wim van Binsbergen (www.shikanda.net) analyses the historical roots and large interregional ramification of *mancala* probability games, in particular in the millenary geomancy throughout South Asia and Africa. In addition, there exists a wealth of mathematical knowledge that is practised in the infinitely complex and varied art of dance steps, drum rhythms and melodies. The same applies to the notions of time and calendars, ecological knowledges, craft, ancient and new farming and pastoral techniques. Let us also think about local taxonomic knowledges in fauna and flora, pharmacopoeias and medical aetiologies, or diverse traditions of healthcare. And there are also the local arts of story-telling, legal or therapeutic palavers, and contemporary novels, drama and visual arts.

Having had the privilege, as anthropologist, of being shaped both by this Africa consisting of multiple networks of local knowledge, and by postcolonial university exchanges, I can only tell you, if you allow it, my intercultural concern and interuniversity commitment. I express this commitment, in cooperation with Dean Shomba, Professor Mwene-Batende, the CERDAS members and in echo of African thinkers I have just mentioned, but also in echo of a recent book on *Higher Education in Postcolonial Africa* edited by the Nigeria-born Professor Afolayan.

The first question to be asked is this: in order that the academic encounter of sharing and receiving 'glocal' (global and local) forms of knowledge become fully established, is it not the case that everyone, both in the North and in Africa, should more than ever devote themselves to reassuming more clearly the presuppositions, perceptions, forms of communication and ethical foundations of the plural universe of knowledges at stake? There exist, on one side, modalities and topics of specialist knowledge transmitted uniformly and hegemonically worldwide through 'uni-versity' education programmes and high-tech, and on the other side, the 'di-versity' of locally shared knowledge practices and cultural productions that are professionally, historically and socioculturally anchored.

The second question I wish to raise is this: is it not the role of the University to also promote itself, at certain levels and in a well-balanced mode, into 'multi-versity'? In so doing, it could carry out its mission by producing interassociations and debating on creative platforms between colleagues, researchers, experts and artists from the surrounding communities and through a plural partnership involving North–South and South–South networking. Let us imagine interassociations trying to integrate into curricula the local systems of know-how. Indeed, as Franz Fanon remarked in his own time, we do not expect a Freudian-trained psychotherapist to successfully and straightforwardly apply some standard methods to a Bamileke or Sukuma hysteric. Nor can we see a British judge settling a divorce case in the city of Mbandaka. The complexity of human sciences demands that we learn more from, and listen to, the plurality of the current multi-world –a world where the human being, under its various versions and layers offers to us an unsuspected wealth that awaits deciphering through epistemological and metaphysical horizons.

Ladies and Gentlemen: at this juncture, I cannot help addressing the following question:

Journey 4: How do I See Tomorrow's Anthropologist?

Is an anthropologist not someone who –on the level of academic, educational, professional or social co-implication with social networks, or in collaboration with public institutions and services– critically and effectively articulates multiple voices of both the memory and the cultural inventiveness and resistance through mimicry? Is it not his or her task to recall, in the professional context, the wounds and aspiration of 'people from below' in the city or the village? It is anthropology that, for 25 years now, has been fighting to decolonise human sciences in as much as the latter opposed cities against villages, modernity against tradition, science against folk traditions. Anthropology is a science standing close to the living experience of subjects in context. It is incumbent upon an anthropologist to report on what has affected him or her – intellectually, intersubjectively, intercorporeally– in the respectful and engaging encounter. It is his or her task to undertake an inventory

of local, plural and complex, ancient and modern, inherited and crafted forms of knowledge and arts, such as for appeasing and healing, production and sharing, building and irrigating. S/he may moreover enquire on the practices seeking to improve the material, social, legal and hygienic conditions of existence for some networks or society as a whole. Do these arts and local forms of sensibility and knowledge practices make theoretical and practical suggestions that would allow us to provide some answers to the basic concerns of the majority of the population on the planet? Among such concerns, which are also the anthropologists' concerns, we can mention hunger, exploitation and social exclusions, wars, pollution, deforestation, the plundering of resources, epidemics and the danger that many local languages in urban areas simply vanish.

Anthropologists, in the near future could offer themselves as intercultural borderspaces and as an inter-memory space between past and present societies, between North and South or between South and South. Accordingly, such anthropologists may become not only interculturalists but also intergenerational diplomats. As such they ought to challenge the excessive Eurocentric modes of the social sciences and their adopted perspective. Regardless of whether they are acting professionally either in their group of origin or their adoptive environment –and whether collaborating with social networks or public institutions– anthropologists should particularly prove amenable to tying in with the social and cultural genius. Can they also direct their minds beyond what the predominant scientific credo tends to obliterate? I particularly have in mind here what –in those areas relating to bare life, the otherworldly and people's core aspirations and commitments or regrets– stands apart from either a secularised modern and postmodern worldview or typically Eurocentric, logocentric and patriarchal modes of transmission and production canonised by academic knowledge. I also refer to what stands out from European bourgeois vision of subjecthood, identity, freedom, health development, education, public administration, comfort and so on.

The type of 'de-westernised' and postcolonial anthropological attitude I advocate is radically at variance with some deconstructivist positions in postmodern thought of some Anglo-American kind, more particularly in its extreme defeatist relativism

and impossibility at some compassionate trans-sensibility and self-relativising understanding of the cultural other from within the latter's perspective. Quite paradoxically, these positions describe what is under scrutiny in terms of processes of hybridisation, creolisation, collage or plural cultural interbreeding under the aegis of globalisation brought about by neoliberal businesses, nation-state and international politics and the (trans)national mass media, and transnational youth cultures and music. Such extreme relativism runs the danger of restoring a form of universalism that makes us inept to think about the cultural other in his or her originality and manifold layers as these appear in interpersonal and intercultural encounters. It is a discounting universalism claiming that globalisation and interbreeding processes in particular in the megacities will eventually erase the local: think of the original syntax of local languages, cultures and healing arts, as well as the endogenous reinvention or emancipation of some epistemological, ethical, architectural, therapeutic or artful local traditions.

Returning to the more modest and concrete level of 'people from below' –to whom countless anthropologists ally themselves– I would contend that the borderspace of encounter and potential anthropological experience can develop into a form of complicity. It is a complicity constituted by humour, cheerfulness and mimicry (which is so widespread in Kinshasa), or by mutual aid through networking and genuine hospitality, or also in palavers and production, healing and mourning. Such complicity can even become an intersubjective framework leading one another to unearth some of the ultimate issues unfolding in life. And in such a mutually enriching encounter that fully welcomes human dignity, hope and openness, an anthropologist and his or her host-community become co-implicated in a form of intersubjectivity that is increasingly co-constitutive of interlaced worlds.

Stating, without grandiloquence, that my academic work was enriched by a prodigious variety of local forms of knowledge from different parts of Africa, and by the wounds and the wisdom of my host communities, amounts to saying how I am blessed with a plenitude of experience summoning me to pondering. I wish to mark this gratitude by making a donation to the Faculty of my publications and additional specialist books.

Mr Rector and you, Ladies and Gentlemen, please allow me to close this short address with *a double wish*.

At this juncture, allow me to recall to memory two of my doctoral students in anthropology and whom we keep all in our hearts, namely the late Matula Atul and the late Stefan Bekaert. Matula Atul's doctoral research was financed by European Commission funds. Most sadly, Dr Atul passed away in 2005, in his early 40s, at the doorsteps of a hospital in Johannesburg, as his fate was lacking the dollars to pay the specialised cardial treatment. Dr Stefan Bekaert died tragically in a cable lift crushed in the Alps by an American military plane flying back from a raid into Bosnia on 3 February 1998: thus 8 years and 2 months prior to this academic address. Having lived intensely as a generous and subtle anthropologist for two years among the Sakata of Ntolo in Northern Bandundu along Lake Ntumba –where I visited him in 1994– Stefan defended his most mature PhD thesis in late 1997. A few months later we agreed that, upon his return from the Alps, he would come to the University of Kinshasa in March 1998 to take over my research networking here. My wish is that, in line with Sakata tradition, the prodigious number of eight years may urge us to mark a closure of such a mourning period and replenish this past which nevertheless does not pass by. Let this honorary doctorate degree allow us to lift the period for our mourning of both Stefan and Matula Atul. Let me launch an appeal to young successors, who are as talented as our departed colleagues, to carry out our mission so that soon Congolese, African and africanist anthropology can ultimately have its real academic centre here at Unikin and other African universities: that is my first wish.

Thanks to you, the honorary doctorate confirms, quite conveniently, our complex interlacing, co-constitutive of what we are. On behalf of my wife, Maria, our family and on behalf of my colleagues of the Leuven Institute for Anthropological Research in Africa, like also my fellow-feeling colleagues at the Belgian Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences and at the Owerri Whelan Research Academy in Southeastern Nigeria, and on my own behalf, I would like to express my very sincere thanks. I address them to you, Rector, Mr Dean, Promoter Lapika, Co-promoter Mwene Batende, dear Colleagues, and to all of you, Ladies and Gentlemen, who have

attended this celebration. In particular, I would like to register my thanks to the Honourable Deputies and Senators who turned up today as well as to Your Excellencies the Ambassador of Belgium and Monsignor Nzala. Thanking you all for listening, I would like to finish with my last good wish: 'may this celebration be and bring felicity': *kyeesi.*

Notes

1. Translated from the French by Paul Komba.

2. My research among the Yaka in Kwango (1971–74) and in Kinshasa (about three weeks annually from 1986 till 2003) was conducted in association with the Institute for Anthropological Research in Africa, IARA, at the University of Leuven. I acknowledge with thanks the financial support from IRSAC (Institute for Scientific Research in Central Africa), NFWO (the Belgian National Fund for Scientific Research), FWO (Fund for Scientific Research – Flanders), the European Commission General Directorate XII, and the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation in New York. The research was also carried out in conjunction with the IMNC (the Institute of National Museums of Congo) and the CERDAS (Centre for the Coordination of Research and Documentation in Social Sciences in South-Saharan Africa) based at the University of Kinshasa. The bibliography of publications for my research is hosted at https:// perswww.kuleuven.be/~u0012668/ ; see also http://www.iara.be/ ; https://lirias.kuleuven.be/handle/123456789/6999//browse date

Existential Dilemmas of a North Atlantic Anthropologist in the Production of Relevant Africanist Knowledge

Wim M.J. van Binsbergen

Introduction

When, nearly half a century after the end of colonial rule, an African university grants an honorary degree to a prominent researcher from the former colonising country, this is a significant step in the global liberation of African difference (to paraphrase Mudimbe's 1997 expression). The African specialist knowledge institution declares itself to be no longer on the receiving and subaltern side, but takes the initiative to assert its independent scholarly authority, and thus redefines the flow of North-South intellectual dependence into one of intercontinental equality. Even more is at stake in the present case. Having studied and researched at the predecessor of the University of Kinshasa in the beginning of his academic career, and having returned there numerous times for research and teaching, the honorary doctor could be classified among the conferring institution's own students and research associates, and his work has ranked prominently in Congo studies during the last several decades. At the same time the conferment honours a discipline that ever since the decolonisation of Africa has (because of allegations of its colonial connotation) formed contested ground in that continent: *anthropology*; and in this case even an anthropology away from the popular topics of power, social organisation and globalising development – but rather, one of symbols, corporality, and insistence on the continuity, vitality and viability of historic, local cultural forms. Aware of the peculiarities of his case, René Devisch has devoted his extensive and celebrative word of thanks to the topic

'What is an anthropologist', and it is the highly original and widely-ranging nature of this text that has prompted CODESRIA to invite a number of African and Africanist scholars to comment on it.

This puts me in an awkward position. Ever since 1979 my intellectual and institutional collaboration with René Devisch has been so intensive, and so saturated with admiration and friendship, that I find it difficult to summon the distancing, objectifying tone, or the concise formulations, habitually associated with such comments. The honour done to him by the principal university in the country to which he has pledged his work and his heart (and which is also the birth country of my wife, the country of origin of my adoptive royal ancestors, and the focus of some of my recent research), is in the first place a source of great joy to me, and scarcely invites the critical cleverness expected from me here. However, the personal dilemma thus posed is typically Devischean in that it is analogous to the central dilemma dominating his ethnographic writing and teaching as founder and driving force of the Louvain School of Anthropology (cf. van Binsbergen 1992): *how to create a position from where to speak, and a mode of speaking (and of silence), that does not betray the existential closeness and continuity between speaker and those about whom is spoken.* In other words, how to avoid the modernist pitfall of assuming a privileged point of view as speaker; how to adopt a stance that does not impose firm boundaries and alien categories but seeks to understand and employ the categories that have informed the earlier closeness; how to turn text into a dialogic encounter between equals, instead of an appropriative and subordinating monologue? This is to be the spirit of the following remarks, even though my piece is still too short, and my personal tendency to hypercriticism too strong, to entirely live up to this ideal. As has always been my strategy of personal mental survival, I will bluntly articulate – from my own perspective, which is inevitably one-sided and prejudiced – what I consider to be home-truths, but none other (I hope) than those that René Devisch and I have already considered, and sought to thresh out, in a productive, outspoken and trustful friendship that has spanned half our lives.

Anthropology as Intercultural Loyalty

For reasons that will gradually become clear in the course of my argument, I prefer to go over the four parts of Devisch's piece in the reversed order, from end to beginning. In his final, most inspiring and least controversial, section he sketches a vision of 'Tomorrow's anthropologist' as one who renders audible the many different voices of remembrance, particularly on behalf of the least privileged classes and groups in the world system today:

> 'Is an anthropologist not someone who – on the level of academic, educational, professional or social co-implication with social networks, or in collaboration with public institutions and services – critically and effectively articulates multiple voices of the memory? Is it not his or her task to recall, in the professional context, the wounds and aspiration of 'people from below' in the city or the village? It is anthropology that, for 25 years now, has been fighting to decolonise human sciences in as much as the latter opposed cities against villages, modernity against tradition. Anthropology is a science standing close to the living experience of subjects in context. (...) Accordingly, such anthropologists may become not only interculturalists but also intergenerational diplomats. As such they ought to challenge the excessive Eurocentric modes of the social sciences as well as their adopted perspective. Regardless of whether they are acting professionally or in their group of origin or their adoptive environment – and whether collaborating with social networks or public institutions – anthropologists should particularly prove amenable to the social and cultural genius'. (This volume p. 119).

Yet such a position, however gratifying to the Africanist anthropologist, and however much in line with the positions of other anthropologists, historians and philosophers,[1] brings up questions which, of course, Devisch could not discuss in his short and festive presentation, but which need to be answered before his vision can be more than a source of self-congratulation for anthropologists and for Africans.

The first question is that of *method*. By what specific methods is the future anthropologist going to realise this vision? Reiterating a basic tenet of the Louvain School – that it is the anthropologist's task, and prerogative, to speak as a local – Devisch implies that here the local meanings and modes of enunciation should take precedence over whatever established models and concepts of the global anthropological discipline; and his argument soon develops into a diatribe on universalism, postmodern relativism, and globalisation. However, the matter is more complicated than such a binary opposition suggests. The scientific representation of the cultural other remains highly problematic even if the problem of access has been solved. All science is predicated on the possibility of generalisation – of raising the local to a level of narration, conceptualisation, abstraction – in short *representation* – where it turns out to reveal themes that, whilst continuing to be local, are also – by virtue of an intersubjective methodology managed by the global disciplinary community of anthropologists – indicative, in space and time, of more universal conditions. Such management need not be an entrenched clinging to obsolescent paradigms – on the contrary, it may be dynamic, ,transitory, and innovative, as Devisch's argument and his entire oeuvre clearly show. Yet necessarily, every anthropologist will find herself in a field of tension between local inspirations and commitments, on the one hand, and globalising expectations of method and professional discipline, on the other. The methodological hence universalising implications of science are among the uninvited guests of Devisch's inspiring and festive banquet (we will meet a few others below), and one wonders what would happen to his vision if they were yet given pride of place. I fear that, if they continue to be kept out of doors, they will turn (like high-ranking uninvited guests in myths and fairy tales) into vindictive forces spoiling the party and bringing its protagonists to misfortune.

The next question concerns the qualified mix of universalism and localism that we find in today's context of globalisation, also in Africa. Here again, recognition of an *inevitable and highly productive, situationally shifting field of tension* (instead of the hope of opting, once for all, for either pole of the opposition informing such tension) would have quickened Devisch's now rather too dismissive

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pronouncements on 'postmodernist deconstructivist relativism' (essentially addressed against the *métissage* of cultural and social forms which many students of African cultural, identitary and social forms have stressed in the context of globalisation).[2] My point is not so much that, like Devisch himself, globalisation studies[3] have almost invariably criticised the *MacDonald's-and-Coca Cola* model of African globalisation as too facile and too superficial. Devisch points at a genuine danger when he warns against an

> '… extreme relativism [which] runs the danger of restoring a form of universalism that makes us inept to think about the *Other* in *his or her originality, manifold layers as they appear in encounters*. It is a discounting universalism claiming that globalisation and interbreeding processes in particular in the megacities will eventually erase the original syntax of local languages and cultures as well as the endogenous reinvention or emancipation of some epistemological, ethical, architectural, therapeutic local traditions.' (Ibid. 113)

All the same we should not overlook the fact that these multiple layers and this originality are far from constant. Globalising Africa displays the creative proliferation of new practices and new identities, and the resourceful adaptation of new objects and new technologies to time-honoured practices which then inevitably change in the process – rather than the unadulterated preservation of historic practices as such. So on the African scene of today and tomorrow, we may expect much that is old, but even more that is excitingly new and full of bricolage, in the very contexts (humour, merry-making, mutual aid, hospitality, healing and mourning) which Devisch rightly identifies as growth-points for anthropological encounter and understanding, any

> '… borderspace [which] stands as a form of complicity constituted by humour and cheerfulness (which is so widespread in Kinshasa), or by mutual aid through networking and genuine hospitality, healing and mourning sessions and by the encounter between an anthropologist and his or her host community or between anthropologists of the North and the South.' (Ibid. 113).

To which we can add: *much that will disappear forever, to be supplanted by commoditised global trash*, also in Africa, given the unexpected ways in which the – apparently so much less defenceless – North Atlantic region has, within two or three decades, been overtaken by ever increasing commoditisation (van Binsbergen & Geschiere 2005), electronic media, the aggressive market model, and a reduction of much of popular culture to commoditised emulations of routinised clichés.

The question is perhaps at which level, and with what degree of specificity, we are looking for universals in the anthropological encounter. That question also transpires in Devisch's own words which conclude this passage:

> 'Such complicity can even become an intersubjective framework leading one another to unearth the ultimate issues unfolding in life. And in such a mutually enriching encounter of human dignity and hope an anthropologist and his or her host-community become established in each other in a form of intersubjectivity that is increasingly co-constitutive of interlaced worlds.' (Ibid. 113)

Witnessing 'the Clash of Civilisations'?

We proceed to our author's third section, where in beautiful passages the juxtaposition between globalism and localism, exogenous and endogenous cultural forces, is articulated in a way that avoids the above pitfalls, explicitly admitting that both are working simultaneously, even though Devisch's preference is on the side of what has been anciently local – something we can understand and must respect:

> 'Let me mention, at first, the parody and more or less ritualised or ensorcelling aggressiveness and/or mimicry through which countless communities turn intrusive violence or terror against itself in such a self-destructive way. On the other hand, it is through its spirit of humour, practical joke and creolisation that plural Africa confronts the life hazards in the city or in the desert or mining regions. It is the Africa of kinship and disenchanted young people and where (charismatic) communes of faith or local networks mushroom aside

associations for mutual support. However, Africa also challenges its life hazards through its ecological inventiveness in the breeding and farming, or the repairing broken-down cars, alike through the huge and prosperous interregional markets (such as, at Kumasi or Onitsha).' (Ibid. 106)

Having identified with Congolese, more specifically Kinshasa, society for decades, Devisch is not a distant observer when the clash becomes, from psychological and symbolic, dramatically *physical*, notably in the destructive evens of September 1991 and January-February 1993, about which he has written incisively (Devisch 1995). And, identifying as more or less a local, he realises that, even regardless of the constraints of his professional disciplinary forum, his hands are tied by local commitments – he cannot just write as he pleases:

> 'I am most indebted for the very many warm receptions I have continually enjoyed in the Congo. Such receptions, along with the sense of dignity as their hallmark, did not shirk the task of restraining my discreet and reserved writing so as to avoid some exoticisation – a writing that undoubtedly appears, at times, as too aestheticising. While a few of my writings discuss the so-called 'Africa that has gone off to a bad start' – either bringing out the destructive forces internal to the inherited colonial institutions or hinting at the parody through which many Kinshasa residents seek to metabolise the shock and hybridisation between civilisation horizons – I have never been blind towards the injustice, exploitation and violence inflicted and acted in the public space of Kinshasa and elsewhere in the country. Nevertheless, the more the affinity and the feelings of affectionate complicity grow between an anthropologist and his or her networks or hosts, *the more the anthropological encounter becomes transferential.*" (Ibid. 107; italics added)

An anthropologist like Devisch, whose theoretical baggage and reference have been psychoanalytical as much as social-organisational, can hardly be expected to use the word *transferential* without acknowledging its usual specialist implications. The obvious reading of the italicised phrase would be that the anthropologist's

text gets charged with subconscious conflict from the personal (especially early) life history of the anthropologist himself,[4] and by the end of my argument we will come back to this. Surprisingly, however, Devisch takes transferential in the literal sense of *transfer*, notably the transfer of cultural content from the ethnographic hosts to the ethnographer – admitting that (like in any interpersonal encounter)

> '… the meaning production or *signifiance* and mutual strenghtening so generated continue to emerge in the face-to-face encounter between subjects. Such encounter that underpins human subjects reaches beyond what words can articulate or translate. This encounter, both interpersonal and intercultural, can become an authentic interhuman undertaking involving several and mutually enriching and enforcing voices.' (Ibid. 107-108)

As my book *Intercultural encounters* (2003) brings out, I am rather in agreement with Devisch's observation on this point, but the devastating implication is once again methodological (cf. van Binsbergen 2003: 19f and *passim*). If in an interpersonal encounter the ethnographer opens up to host's cultural experience, absorbing and emulating the latter, then ethnography may become a form of *deferred introspection* on the part of the ethnographer. However, if in the process the ethnographer's own personal transference towards the reception, appreciation and explanation of that cultural experience remains out of sight; and if part of what the ethnographer has learned admittedly cannot (as being 'beyond words') be communicated to, especially, a scientific forum; then the process of ethnography becomes largely uncontrollable and risks to be relegated to a genre not of scientific writing but of *belles lettres*. Claims to this effect were already made, but on different grounds, by Clifford & Marcus in their influential post-modern statement *Writing culture* (1986; cf. James *et al.* 1997). It is as if anthropology, despite being paraded in Devisch's text as the key to intercultural loyal representation, is facing a devastating dilemma: the choice between *irrelevant but methodologically grounded superficiality, and profoundly existential but un-methodological relevance*. It is this sort of dilemma that, a decade ago, made me give up ethnography and

instead concentrate on theorising about the philosophical bases for interculturality. But probably one need not go so far.[5] For whatever our methodological *desiderata*, Devisch's qualitative insight in Congolese and especially Kinshasa cultural dynamics retains compelling qualities – apparently, our hearts, and our minds, even as scientists, are moved by other forces than method alone.

But there is something else that makes me uneasy. I cannot dissociate the phrase 'clash of civilisations' from Huntington's (1996) unfortunately influential analysis of today's world conflicts in terms of religion-driven essentialisation, which seeks to derive total explanation from a reified domain of ideology whilst ignoring the political economy of globalisation, North Atlantic and specifically USA global hegemony, and the aftermath of the colonial experience. Devisch is only too well aware of the need for decolonisation, but his self-admitted, mild tendency to estheticising and idealising cultural processes, in combination with an awareness that for reasons of sociability his hands are tied, make him, I fear, stress symbolism over political economy, and underplay the complexity of the Congolese post-colony in the early 1990s. Were the Jacqueries primarily a response, as he suggests, to the failure in the *oeuvre civilisatrice eurocentrée* ('the Eurocentric civilising mission') in the eyes of the urban proletariat, a radical casting off of an alien cultural model that could only seduce but not deliver, and that specifically did not provide wholesale, new existential *meaning* in a situation where old meanings had been reduced to *anomie* and ineffectiveness? There is much in the religious and ideological history of the Democratic Republic of Congo in the course of the twentieth century (also, for instance, in the healing churches of which Devisch made a special study; also cf. Ndaya 2008 and Mudimbe 1997) to suggest that – before, during, and after Mobutu's *authenticité* movement – European cultural contents were eagerly and massively adopted to the extent, and in those social classes, that the political economy allowed at least minimum chances of survival, dignity, and participation. It has proved to be a widely applicable empirical generalisation[6] that people resort to collective violence and mass protest, not so much when they totally reject the apparent focus of their aggression, but when they are subject to *relative deprivation* – when, Tantalus-fashion, the desired prize, ever so near, yet remains out of reach. Why not read these Jacqueries as barely disguised

class conflict, as uprisings not against European culture as such, but against a thoroughly corrupt state and its elite, that have reduced the citizens of one of the richest countries in Africa to inconceivable poverty and powerlessness, in the very face of great (largely European-shaped) riches and uncontrolled power?

To this rhetorical question, Devisch may answer 'because the people of the Kinshasa suburbs where I did my fieldwork then, did not consciously conceptualise their violent actions in terms of such class conflict'. Which only reminds us that, however close the ethnographer chooses to remain to the participants' world-view, there must remain room for explanations in more abstract, theoretical, structural terms. Such terms necessarily elude the participants' consciousness because the primary function of local collective representations is to make people unaware and uncritical of the violence, exploitation and powerlessness to which they are subjected in their society. Before a festive audience of university prominents whose middle-class commitment to the post-colony is no secret, in other words with tied hands, how does the anthropologist begin to reveal home-truths that reach beyond the local society's *estheticising apparatus of acquiscence?*[7] Or is the problem merely that of applying village research strategies in an urban mass society?[8]

One major condition to allow the anthropologist to adopt greater freedom in the face of the mystifying local collective representations is the following: the *utopian* illusion inherent in Devisch's text must be critically recognised. Globalisation has created a context in which *locality* could acquire a different meaning (from a self-evident *sui-generis* dimension of social phenomena – imposed by ancient technologies of locomotion – , to active *construction* of locality as something that can no longer be taken for granted in a globalised world where usual boundaries have faded with the reduction of the costs of movement through geographical space; cf. Appadurai 1995). Here the emergence of interstitial spaces that are at the same time nowhere and everywhere (e.g. the Internet, English as global *lingua franca*, the world of global electronic media) is lending a new meaning[9] to the word *utopia* ('The Land of Nowhere'). For, with their promise of boundary effacing interculturality these spaces take on connotations of an ideal future society – somewhat like in More's famous book *Utopia* (1516), and contrary to a critical orientation

of modern thought[10] which sees utopia primarily as an ideological perversion of reality. Devisch's vision of future anthropology inspires because it promises to create, to constitute in itself even, such an utopian space:

> 'Anthropologists, in the near future could offer themselves as intercultural border*spaces* as well as an intermemory *space* between past and present societies, between North and South or even between South and South.' (Ibid. 112; my italics).

Yet such a vision is predicated on the tacit assumption that the anthropologist is fully available for the unadulterated absorption and subsequent representation of local cultural content, because she has no compelling cultural belonging of her own to begin with – she is nowhere, not in the sense of being homeless by an excessive dedication to the meta-local universalism of global scholarship (like I argued elsewhere to be the case for Mudimbe; van Binsbergen 2005), but because she pretends to *fully* adopt a new home in fieldwork. This is not just Devisch's personal delusion but the collective (though far from universal) delusion of our generation of anthropologists – whose fieldwork rhetoric (including my very own, cf. van Binsbergen 2003 and even the present paper) is replete with *adoption*. Yet the *raison-d'être* of fieldwork, and of the subsequent professional textual representation of other people's social and cultural life, can only be the emphatic admission of two *prior* cultural homes: (1) in all cases that of the anthropological discipline, to which continued and all-overriding allegiance is pledged and renewed with every interview and every publication; and (2) in most cases also the anthropologist's society of origin, if different from the host society of fieldwork. The point boils down to a simple home-truth which anthropologists of our generation have been slow to learn: in order to have a genuine encounter, it is imperative that both parties insist on who they are and tolerate the other without giving up their own identity – in a way which Devisch with his recent writing on *border-linking* (2006) understands, at the theoretical level, much better than I do myself. But despite pioneering this theoretical solution, the utopia of Devisch's future anthropology, while playing with the promise of post-modern utopias' boundary-effacing, yet

resides in self-inflicted violence: in the dissimulation, perhaps even the flagrant denial, of the fact that the anthropologist is inextricably localised *outside* the host society, because that anthropologist cultivates an ulterior home in global universalising science (and also has been indelibly programmed to continued allegiance to her society of birth). We are back at the tragedy of fieldwork: that in the field the ethnographer lives a committed *communitas* which she is subsequently compelled to instrumentally take distance from, in her professional and social life outside the field (van Binsbergen 2003).

The Thrice-born Anthropologist

Following the lead of anthropologists such as Lloyd Warner, Margaret Mead and Vic Turner,[11] René Devisch has sought to apply whatever he has learned in the field in Congo among the rural Yaka people and in the slums of Kinshasa, to his native Flemish society – thus becoming a *thrice-born anthropologist*, in Turner's (1978) apt phrase inspired by the South Asian belief in reincarnation. The idea that the North Atlantic region can fundamentally and radically learn from other cultures has been at the very heart of anthropology since its inception, and has always sought to counterbalance such instrumental, colonial and hegemonic overtones as anthropology has also inevitably had as an exponent of its times and region of origin. The project of the anthropologist who, by virtue of an African apprenticeship, sees his society of origin with new eyes, is sympathetic and, from an African perspective, inspiring and gratifying. Yet again a number of questions remain.

To begin with, the apparently place-less anthropologist of the fieldwork encounter in Africa turns out to have a native culture after all – so why could this native culture not have been considered as the inevitable and filtering, even distorting, backdrop to whatever meaning, whatever *rapport*, the anthropologists could have achieved in the field in the first place?

Secondly, the fusion between subjects, one of them being the anthropologist, which dominates Devisch's image of the African fieldwork encounter, gives way to alienating alterisation when it comes to Western Europe, as if the anthropologist, back from the field, finds himself ('benevolent Yaka notable' that he aspired to

be, in his own words) reborn as a lower life-form in a murky North Atlantic underworld that can no longer be home and apparently never was:

> 'Whenever I return from the Congo to resettle in Flanders, I admittedly feel terribly upset at finding myself wrestling with an all-too-technocratic and modern male public discourse. Such a discourse continually and self-confidently gives priority to an ideological phrasing under the banner of the Enlightenment rationality and exact sciences – and to such ideas as the autonomous self and the individual human rights of modern Western society. It goes without saying that such ideas are no more than ethnocentric catchphrases being heralded as a universal project likely to lead towards the progress of all nations. (...) Aware of what remains concealed in the intercivilisational borderspace, I cannot help wondering whether the North is not trying, without admitting it, to metabolise the shadow zone or the unthought and unsaid of our technocratic, rationalistic and secularised civilisation – viz. the individual and collective *angst* for death, finitude, the hybrid, unpredictable and the more-than-human.' (Ibid. 102).

It is a familiar experience among fieldworkers from the North Atlantic region: having adopted an African culture, we feel we are no longer at home in our own culture of origin – our *sense of the self-evident* (whose production is the principal function of culture) is destroyed as a result of what could be considered a professional hazard. On closer scrutiny, not all of what Devisch tries to let pass for Flemish culture fits the bill: that complex social composition includes 'belgo-siciliens', as well as Turkish immigrants (Devisch 1985); but that is not the point. The point is that Devisch once more falls into the trap of thinking in absolute, non-overlapping binary oppositions (where he seeks to side with the preferred pole), rather than in broadly positioned, and situationally and perspectivally shifting, fields of tension of situationally varying intensity (where meaning, relevance and life are generated not despite, but by virtue of, that tension; and where only the introduction of a scientific stance, and scientific textuality, make the tension rise sky-high, and the poles worlds apart).

Of course, North Atlantic cultural forms of today seek to come to terms with individual and collective fears of death, of finitude, of the unforeseen and of the confusion of categories, – with all these perennial but inevitable nightmares of the human condition. It is true that in this endeavour 'the West' has often conjured up phantasms of alterity, filling its nightmarish imaginary space (for instance, in the construction of a commoditised popular media culture) with somatic and cultural features referring to other continents, especially Africa. But, as an inspection of the work of principal Western thinkers on these existential threats in the last two centuries could bring out (Kierkegaard, Dilthey, Heidegger, Sartre, Plessner, Horkheimer & Adorno, Buber, Levinas, to mention but a few), the recourse to exotic images was never the *main* vehicle for such existential reflection in North Atlantic thought. Nor would existential familiarity with African life (such as anthropological fieldwork has certainly afforded Devisch), or a mere look at clinical figures concerning individual and collective violence, murder and mental illness in Africa, suggest that south of the Sahara people and cultures have been, in every respect, so very much more successful in allaying these nightmares. They are nightmares, indeed, not so much of the modern or postmodern North Atlantic, but of the human condition *tout court* – they are the price to be paid for the language-based self-reflexivity that makes us all, humans living today, into Anatomically Modern Humans. Like myself, Devisch has in the context of his fieldwork been peripherally enmeshed in the web of witchcraft and witchcraft accusations (he has written some of the most incisive treatises on witchcraft ever: Devisch 2001, 2003); has seen how the absence of a culturally supported notion of natural death plunges entire African families and communities in paroxysms of witchcraft suspicion totally destroying the ever-so-thin fabric of solidarity; has seen how in recent decades the AIDS pandemic in Africa has reduced people's sensitivity for suffering others to levels previously only recorded for aberrant ethnographic cases like the Ik people under exceptional ecological pressure (Turnbull 1972); and his decades of frequenting Congo at the heights of corruption, terror and civil war cannot have left him with too many illusions as to any narrower range or shallower depth of the human predicament in that part of the world, as compared to Western Europe.

Without a doubt, African societies have made great and lasting contributions to the range of human strategies of coping with the tragic human condition. It is the anthropologist's privilege to describe these strategies in a globally accessible format, and thus to facilitate their wider global circulation (even though all such representation is inevitably distortive to a greater or lesser degree). But the discharge of this privilege need not go at the expense of cultural *Selbsthass* – 'self hatred'. Especially not since state-of-the-art comparative genetic, linguistic, mythological and ethnographic research has brought out the fact of very considerable cultural continuity[12] between sub-Saharan Africa and Eurasia, which in part goes back to the common African cultural background of all Anatomically Modern Humans (originating in sub-Saharan Africa 200,000 Before Present, and trickling out to other continents from 80,000 BP),[13] but mainly is due to the much more recent 'Back-into-Africa' migration,[14] which started from Central Asia c. 15,000 BP and in the process also had a considerable impact upon Europe. Although geopolitical factors of the last few centuries have led to extreme ideological alterisation, in fact North Atlantic and sub-Saharan cultures are to a very considerable extent continuous, which makes for considerable implicit understanding in the field despite the mask of alterisation.

But even if such continuity were not the case, the stark contrast Devisch makes between African cultures on the one hand, and Enlightenment rationality, the exact sciences, the autonomous Ego and (between parentheses, as if we should know better?) human rights, is amazing. Less than three centuries old, these achievements of modernity have admittedly constituted a North Atlantic departure from the historical cultural continuity that in many other respects unites the North Atlantic region with the rest of the world.[15] Yet it is a departure that is not in the least *owned* by the inhabitants of the North Atlantic region but, on the contrary, like all cultural achievements of humankind (and I am not suggesting that modernity should rank among the *greatest* achievements) it constitutes *an inalienable part of the inheritance of all of humankind*; it has rapidly though patchily been appropriated, in creative and innovative ways, as well as contested, all over the globe.[16] Africans or Indonesians or Native Americans applying these achievements

are, in doing so, operating in a culturally alien space, but not any more so than are inhabitants of the North Atlantic – they all may effectively learn these themes of modernity as an innovative, globalising departure from the culture of their childhood, they all will experience strongs tensions between these cultural modes in their adult lives, and they all will also discover the severe limitations of modernity in the process. Yet it is these pillars of modernity that have allowed Devisch to become an anthropologist and to take a critical view of his own native society. It is here that the truly amazing practice is situated of seeking to understand the other through the medium of written specialist text, in such a way that the well-formedness, consistency and persuasiveness of that text (as a result of the writer's solitary and monologic struggle through the distancing and virtualising medium of the written word, and these days usually through a high-tech artefact, the computer) has become the principal indication of the degree of intercultural understanding and truth that has been attained in the process. However sympathetic, convincing and striving towards integrity Devisch's mode of being an anthropologist is (and there is no doubt about that), it is in all respects a product, not of any historic African inspiration (where such a reliance on monologue, text and machine would be unthinkable), but of globalised modernity and (in Devisch's attempt at placelessness) its post-modern aftermath. Not as an intellectual producer, nor as a citizen, would Devisch (despite all his well-taken criticism of modernity) be prepared to give up these achievements – in fact, he tell us that Mobutu's forcefully incorporating Devisch's fellow-students into the army made him decide that he would not stay in Congo for the rest of his life. So much for '[so-called] human rights' – one must not make light of significant human achievements in the very place where they have been so much trampled upon.

It should be possible to champion the global circulation of the many genuine contributions Africa has made to the global heritage of humankind (ranging from mathematical[17] games and divination systems to therapy, music, dance, and conflict regulation – all to be found in Devisch's text) without at the same time cutting in one's own flesh, in what seems almost a compulsive sacrifice to undomesticated and destructive alterisation.

The Anthropologist as Hero

One of the popularised and obsolescent notions of psychoanalysis is that of the *Primal Scene*: a key childhood episode (e.g. the infant's witnessing the parents' sexual intercourse) creates a subconscious conflict that destructively breaks through in adult life in various symbolic disguises (Freud 1918). In the global mythico-symbolic repertoire, the hero figure looms large, not only because it provides a plausible idiom to recast the relation between the infant son and his mother (Jung 1991), but also because it is an apt expression of the process of individual maturation and fulfilment every human being is likely to go through. Bruce Kapferer (1988) once coined the phrase 'the anthropologist as hero' to focus on the transformation of the image of the anthropologist under post-modernism. As a psychoanalysing anthropologist, René Devisch is far more familiar with these themes than I am, and I therefore take it that the mythologising format of the first section of his piece is deliberate.

The mythologising element is unmistakable, and profoundly puzzling. Instead of presenting himself as just a particular kind of anthropologist situated in a collective professional genealogy and a collective mode of intellectual production, Devisch reverses the burden of proof and under the overall heading 'What is an anthropologist' presents the narrative of his own professional life; and under the sub-heading 'What did I come to do in Congo from 1965-1974' presents a personal myth. Like all heroes, his birth is miraculous: he is congenitally 'a person of the boundary', born on a farm between France and Flanders and close to where the land gives way to the sea, hence apparently destined to placelessness and to dexterity in the handling of boundaries. One is reminded of the fairy-tale 'The clever farmer's daughter' (Aarne & Thompson (1973) no. 0875 – underneath of which lurks a trickster figure also known from many South Asian sacred narratives) who – superhumanly skilful in the handling of irreconcilable opposites – is told to come to the king's court

> 'not on the road and not beside the road, not mounted and not afoot, not dressed and not naked'.

The myth continues when our young Fleming is reported to go to Africa, of all places (the year is 1965), for what is suggested to be primarily an academic study of philosophy, and there, from what yet, but only vaguely, materialises as the context of clerical life as a young member of the Jesuit congregation studying from the priesthood, with all its subtle implications of obedience and harmless rebellion,[18] we see the miraculous birth of an anthropologist, fully equipped (not unlike the Greek goddess Athena springing forth from her father's head) with today's discourse of interculturality, alterity and professional anthropology, – but without any professional teachers, supervisors, or teaching institutions being named (again, Devisch's locatedness in North Atlantic institutional and professional frames is dissimulated); and without any manifest institutional or existential struggle concerning his celibate clerical vocation – only to be miraculously provided with a spouse at the end of his first fieldwork, when their marriage is blessed by the local chief, whose mystical predecessor by spiritual adoption our fieldworker has turned out to be. Is it just that Devisch is speaking for people who have known him all his adult life, so that he can afford, tongue in cheek, to let an edifying personal myth adorn the facts already known to the audience? One simply cannot understand why a juvenile clerical calling, in time traded for a brilliantly productive and innovating secular career as one of Europe's most prominent and most profound anthropologists who has moreover excelled in loyally facilitating Africanist knowledge production by Africans, should be so utterly embarrassing as to be turned into an unspeakable Primal Scene – especially at the moment when that career receives the highest official recognition from the African side. Other anthropologists of recent generations, like Schoffeleers, Fabian, van der Geest, went very much the same road (but without the accolade in the end), as did Congo's highest ranking intellectual son, Mudimbe, and numerous others. The anthropologist is his own greatest enigma; but he should not be, for the very reasons of self-reflexivity I have stressed in the present argument.

But do not forget who is talking here: the adoptive Nkoya prince Tatashikanda Kahare, the illegitimate child from an Amsterdam slum turned into the Botswana spirit-medium Johannes Sibanda, Bu Lahiya who since his first fieldwork in Tunisia forty years ago has

kept up the home cult of the local saint Sidi Mhammad and has never renounced his steps in the Qadîrî ecstatic cult, but now officiating as if for him the self-renewing adoption of African cultures has been smooth and sunny sailing throughout.

Or as if he had been able to articulate any of the home-truths contained in the present argument, but for the life-long example, the constant and profound intellectual feedback, and the unconditional friendship of Taanda N-leengi / René Devisch, intercultural hero who has managed to go where angels fear to tread. The Primal Scene masked in René's festive and deliberately vulnerable self-account is the pain of self-annihilation without which however no intercultural rebirth could ever be achieved. His honorary doctorate marks, and rightly celebrates, his spiritual arrival in the land of the ancestors – many years, hopefully, before his body is taken there, too.

Notes

1. From a vast literature I cite: Ricoeur 2004; Foucault 1977; Nuttall 1998; de Boeck 1995; Kapferer 2000; Greene 2002; Irwin-Zarecka 1994; van Binsbergen 1988 / 2003; Chrétien & Triaud 1999; Jewsiewiecki 1991; Fischer 1986; cf. Koepping 1984

2. Our author is sparing with specific bibliographic references, but one detects here the emphasis on the recent and constructed nature of ethnic identities (Amselle & Mbokolo 1985; Amselle 1990; Kandé 1999), which has become the standard paradigm in ethnic studies (van Binsbergen 1997), and in the course of the 1990s has become very influential also in the study of cultural globalisation in other domains than ethnicity.

3. E.g. Meyer & Geschiere 1998; Fardon *et al.* 1999; van Binsbergen & van Dijk 2003.

4. Cf. Crapanzano 1981; Ewing 1992; Devisch 2006.

5. Cf. Roth 1989 for a philosophical defence of fieldwork in the face of the 'Writing culture' school; Jackson 1989 for a form of existentialist ethnography that avowedly owes a lot to Devisch's feedback.

6. Aberle 1972; Runciman 1972.

7. Cf. Schoffeleers 1991; van Binsbergen 1993.

8. Cf. van Binsbergen 1997: 41-47, 'The virtual village in town (b): "Villagisation" and ethical renewal in Kinshasa and Lusaka'.

9. Cf. Rodowick 1999; Magnat 2005; Ainsa 2006.

10. Cf. Mannheim 1929/1936; Popper 1945/1966; Dahrendorf 1965; Rorty 1997.

11. Cf. Warner 1953, 1961; Warner & Lunt 1946; Mead 1942; and Turner & Turner 1978.

12. Cf. van Binsbergen 2006, 2008.

13. Underhill *et al.* 2001; Oppenheimer 2004; Manica et al. 2007.

14. Cf. Hammer *et al.* 1998; Cruciani 2002; Coia 2005.

15. This is the old thesis of the 'General Human Model', advanced by the great Dutch historian Romein (1954).

16. For an analogous argument specifically on Information and Communication Technology including the computer, see van Binsbergen 2004.

17. Highly developed in Africa is the *mankala* family of games, where players move their tokens along two or more parallel series of holes, while complex rules allow them to capture certain tokens (cf. Culin 1896). Devisch, while acknowledging the mathematical significance of these games, calls them 'probabilistic', but in fact they are the very opposite, notably an application of *finite* mathematics.

18. Cf: 'In 1967 Johan Allary and I bravely undertook to set up a small Africanist library at Canisius Institute of Philosophy, quite ostentatiously close to the Rector's room.' (This volume p. 93)

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*Kata Nomon**: Letter to René Devisch

Valentin Y. Mudimbe
(Durham, North Carolina March 10, 2008)

- *nomos, place of pasturage, herbage, habitation.*

- *nomos, what is a habitual practice, custom, of the laws of Gods, law.*

- *Kata nomon, according to custom, or law.*

What a paradox is this discourse of the honorary degree which you received from the University of Kinshasa. It identifies with and comments on an interrogation about the future of a discipline from its external conditions. These, while contributing to a definition of anthropology, mark also the relevance of a space that allows a healthy exercise that the discourse seems to disqualify. Supported by an orthodox academic career and a commanding authority in social sciences, does not this discourse confuse domains in annexing

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the plausibility of a plea between North-South radical politics of solidarity and the demands of a scientific practice? At the least, these problems should be distinguished, as they muddle competing duties and privileges of dissimilar fellowships. But, should we suppose and admit the pertinence of an ethical generosity, and possibly its efficient administration, does it matter whether the discourse is validated by the degree of credibility of the scholar, of the humanitarian, or both? Let me continue with the supposition. If we accept this as perhaps a legitimate way of engaging the apparently divergent responsibilities of the same person, can the valuation of interacting credibilities ignore the pillars that support them? These are two almost incomparable powers: on one side, the authority of a scientific practice issued forth from the empirical verifiability of its explanation; and, on the other side, the authority of a moral commitment that is warranted by a spirit of finality.

In its own right, you say, the discourse manifests a language which you inhabit. Translating its disconnecting past, it would signify its own purpose for tomorrow's anthropology. In the awareness and the act of speaking, it anticipates something in your claim for instituting a 'beyond' of histories and geographies, cultures and their idioms. On that account, depending on viewpoints, its expression would be, through and through, a metaphor and a metonymy. Within such an order, you are right, fascination may well be the other name of anthropology; and, on the matter of vision, nothing, absolutely nothing, would prevent anyone who masters its etiquette from interchanging the designation of "Kwango Yitaanda villages" with your concept of an "*espace-de-bord- intercivilisationnel.*" From an ordinary understanding of figures, this system will be allowing a word to be used for something it does not denote. In the same manner, the signifier of one word could apply, without consequence, to another thing in virtue of their association. How could such a language correspond to the task of being an "'inter-memory space' between yesterday and tomorrow's societies" without being constraining as are those it would bypass? In all, and for sure, a well-defended argument can, in principle, provide for the best of outcomes; but it cannot ever guarantee its truth, since each one of its premises might be problematic.

Let us "walk" together while reflecting on the common idioms we use in order to clarify both what brings us together, and what may explain divergences on ways of interpreting crucial issues in ethics for intercultural cooperation. Here is a metaphor. A postulant to the Benedictine life begins the formation period by re-learning how to walk and, progressively, how to make the body a site of *The Rule*. The requisite of such a conversion does not erase dissimilarities of individual steps. Yet, and assuredly, the poetics of an individual's effort, in according one's singularity to the horizon of an ideal, testifies to diverse procedures, somehow conflictual. As in the case of any discipleship, the effort means a double inscription for any difference in kind: vertically, to become a process of engraving oneself in the spirit aimed at by the letter; horizontally, to identify with the process through which one can invent a self from a common vernacular issued forth by this very letter. In this ascetic train, the basic idea of diversity coincides with the notion of a limit to be surpassed. An elsewhere of harmonization echoes this perpetually recommended inscription, in negotiations about the truth of an imperative letter and its symbolic figurations in time, and in the patience of the indefinite exegesis it weaves.

Inspired by his Catholic background, Louis Althusser adapted this very course into a Marxist grid in order to get the drift of the overtaxing tension between the requisition of a language, the petitioning of an ideology, and the construction of a history – in sum, the transformation of social totalities. Attentive students of Jacques Lacan would agree that it is in and from a deviation that, after de Saussure's lesson, one qualifies the procedures of a *parole* actuating a *langue*; precisely, the *parole* as the concrete actualization of the abstraction which is the *langue*. By the same mode, one describes the structuring of a subject in the intersubjective space of a language; in fact, in an ever-changing abstract, a conventional social institution.

Now, René, allow me to read your "walk," your Kinshasa discourse, from the particularity of my own steps, but within the cultural language we are supposed to share. My steps are my own steps, as yours are yours, but within a conventional system we are supposed to share. It is ours without being totally ours. It is possibly still marked by demands of a cloister, whatever it may be, and the

genealogy of its requirements regarding how, in the diversity of our personal differences, to disentangle the inside and the outside of anthropology, the word and the concept.

Legĕre

- *Practice: to read.*
    - (a) to bring together, observe, survey, catch up.
    - (b) to pick out, extract, elect, select, to find.
    - (c) recite.

- *Signs: the letter.*

- *Activity: to perceive (lectio)*

- *Function: reading and understanding the given.*

I am biased in favor of the fundamental spirit of your discourse. Its testimony sustains its drive from a personal whole unfolding a personal sense of duty to human solidarity, while maintaining faith in the primacy of a scientific inquiry. But I am equally partial in my surmise of the superiority of scientific explanation over unscientific constructions, especially those decided in politics of desire.

For more than three months, your affirmations have accompanied me over three continents. Counter-text and pretext, at the same time, they served as an argument, as a series of reasons for attentive skepticism in a number of public stations, which I was transforming into obligations for meditation.

Three entries, three lines of questions. Your address implicates them. Seeing them from other angles, they clearly represent the ambiguity of interculturality by the way they have been, for me, competing meanings of the lowest, and of the highest, degree in "believing."

1. a. How to face questions on thinking globally from cultural hypotheses that intend to revisit foundational concepts in today's practice of social sciences.

   b. Early October 2007—"Re-contextualizing Self/Other Issues. Toward a "Humanics" in Africa," a Joint Symposium: Makerere University (Uganda), Kyoto University, and Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

2. a. How to test, evaluate and apply explanations (scientific and unscientific) in conjunction with socio-political arguments of "desire."

   b. Early December 2007—Bogota (Colombia), an academic conversation for "Una Propuesta de Maestria en Interculturidad." Conceived by a group of professors, the colloquium's objective was to debate on interculturality in the education of teachers; in sum, to define a pedagogy.

3. a. How to appraise intercultural agendas from a good usage of ethical and scientific agreements and disagreements.

   b. Mid-December, 2007, Durban (South Africa), CODESRIA Annual Social Sciences Campus, on Contemporary African Cultural Productions. Confirming individual research to CODESRIA's principles, the seminar's aim was to authenticate perspectives within scientifically valid boundaries.

   c. Early, February 2008, Vancouver (Canada), Africa Awareness Conference on Hope, Innovation, Vision: The Past, Present and Future of Agency in Africa. Here, one faces a classical attitude in politics against prejudiced representations of Africa; a student organization opposes a one week celebration.

Consequently, three posts, three different engagements, three types of directions. They are exemplary by their explicit purpose. They are significant by the way they make interculturality one with extended academic or scientific institutions, objects of desire and intended possession. In such a command, as you seem to suggest in your intervention, does interculturality correspond to an extrinsic call in cultural differentiation, and could it be said to relate primarily to an intrinsic structure of its reality?

A role (expert, convener, keynote speaker) has determined a function that is a question: how to walk with "seers," to be a companion of the road, and to remain a voice which, within the liberty of a critical indifference, can rate the improbability, or the perils of what may not have a precedent in the politics of knowledge, vis-à-vis the respectability of the politics of cultural rights? How, at the same time, to inhabit the very quest as it formulates a desire for a more ethical order?

Within specific frameworks profiling rules that would promote "interculturality," I came to focus on propositions, and a few precautions in handling them. Between empirical and allegorical lines, in order to reconceive the "interculturality" concept, it was easy to suggest, in and against plays of perspectives, questions on how to grasp your word, formulate its volume and its connections to other standpoints in theories of difference. A first precaution was, a point of personal integrity, the usefulness of a detachment from Aquinas' principle, according to which "the primary object of faith is not a proposition but the reality it designates." A reflection testing itself from a culturally religious background can accommodate several sorts of interacting lines. In my disposition, there is no disapproval and no rejection of the definition of faith as a belief in doctrines of religion and the observance of obligations it entails. On the other hand, faith has been assented for what conveys trust, in confidence and reliance. In this sense, faith analogizes Herbert Feigl's 'what is not always perceptible,' what can be valued from a *justificatio cognitionis*, the coherence of propositions; or, easier to handle, from the *justificatio actionis*, through commonsense criteria of efficiency and morality. The cause of a scientist would belong to the same order of faith as a sound discourse of political allegiance within a democratic tradition.

A second methodological precaution concerned a deliberate prudence, about the very process of conceiving an intercultural discourse as a matter of faith. In a first approximation, I have been acknowledging it from an equation that integrates a subject and a statement about transactions, marked by the value of two prefixes, *inter-* and *trans-*. The first actualizes two types of ideas, that of incorporation, or integration (*inter-* as "amid," "between" or "among"); and that of mutuality, or reciprocity (*inter-* as "correlation"

or "cooperation"). This prefix, of a Latin origin, fully specifies its value when situated vis-à-vis proximates such as *trans-*, whose semantic field is dominated by the idea of motion, from one place to another. Its denotation, from Latin to today's usages, include significations of "over," "across," "through and through," "beyond."

Finally, here I am now reading a silence as something, and this would indicate meanings such as "between," "betwixt," and, indeed, "over." From this angle, one can guess some of the reasons of excitement in "inventing," with the support of J. Allary, your Africanist library within the Kimwenza Scholasticate. In fact, you would like a challenge to the normative Colonial Library. For the Canisius linguistic minority you were, to access the African experience through empirical studies of ethnographers, Lilyan Kesteloot's thematization of the Négritude literature, and appraise the 1960s' speculative debate on African philosophy, meant, also and possibly to front a startling "ethnic vindication": "*Flandria nostra*," strange, is it not? I am borrowing the expression, and its value in cultural shock, from Jan Vansina's *Living with Africa* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994). Vansina uses it in introducing his return to Leuven, precisely to your Faculty. And, here, I am diverting the design, and imagining the moment you discovered the overwhelming Flemish contribution to the Central African knowledge. Since the mid-1960s, the successive bibliographies of "African" philosophy by the indefatigable Alfons J. Smet have made this fact even more visible.

In 1982, with the accent of bad faith that always masks all good intentions, I decided to correct a bit the excessive Flemish-Germanic presence and counterbalance its scale by publishing in Paris a "*Répertoire chronologique des oeuvres de langue française*" (*Recherche, Pédagogie et Culture*, 56, IX). Twenty years later, reflecting on the question of periodizing themes in philosophy, I felt the need for a concept that could signify the configuration within which to think and rethink new conditions of possibility for an African practice of philosophy. The effect of such a viewpoint may or may not correspond to what could be expected in teaching the history of ideas, but would surely make a difference in the perspective that my friend Lucien Braun, the Strasbourg philosopher, had opened during this period with his massive treatise on a history of histories of philosophy. Thus, a question of genealogy, and a question about the idea of "a German crisis of African philosophy," came out in a personal testimony. My

confession was released simultaneously by *Quest* (XIX, 1-2) in Leiden, Holland; and *Africa e Mediterraneo* (2005) in Rome, Italy. The expression was inspired by a book of Claude Digeon on "*La Crise allemande de la pensée française*" that analyzed a fin-de-siècle cultural phenomenon in Franco-German relations.

"A German crisis of African philosophy." Why German? Back to your initiative. Solid and omnipresent, the Flemish and Germanic presence was there in your library. You had the references to Frobenius, the successful *Muntu* of Janheinz Jahn. The original German was issued in 1958; the English version translated in 1960 had ten reprintings in the same year. Its sources and scope test a refusal of the anthropological task for exoticism.

There is, also in the picture, Senghor's curious intervention on "Négritude and Germanity." In time, you came to understand, I guess, that the history of Central African anthropology is not detachable from an Herderian conception of philosophy. First, ethnographic programs for explanation through questionnaires (art, custom, language, law, religion etc.) have been transcribing faithfully an Herderian grid. Secondly, despite a Freemason intervention in the Congo at the beginning of the XXth century, the colonial cultural "impression" is constructed by two extreme but complementary axes: to accommodate assimilation (the French), or to adjust separation (the British) and, in between, the Belgians. Missionizing and ethnographic mapping articulate the same basic principles in social engineering determined by a convergence idea. Thirdly, by the 1920s, diffusionist hypotheses from the Vienna school of W. Schmidt, with *Anthropos* for scholarly debates, inform ethnographic research everywhere in the world. A man of the cloth, moreover, Schmidt is directing one of the most ambitious projects to date on "*Ursprung der Gottesidee.*"

In brief, and in clear, your interrogations are of a perspective. Is it excessive to frame them within the configuration that devises your cultural identity, your vocation, and the duty you are conceiving for yourself?

- Between British and French imperial theories is the Germanic-style practicality in Flemish publications of the "colonial sciences," from what became the Koninklijke Academie voor Overzeese Wetenschappen.

- Within and over trendy schools, historicist versus functionalist, you can observe the leadership in social sciences and in comparative linguistics, and notice the Tervuren team's role in the reconstruction of the proto-Bantu.
- Finally, you cannot miss the unmistakable charisma of some individuals in the field of your new cultural "devotion": a Hulstaert, a Tempels, a Van Bulck, and a Van Wing, for instance.

Anyway, the Congolese popular imagination has turned the term "Flemish" into an onomastic generality: Flemish incorporates Belgian.

Complexity of a silence: there is the recognition of your ethnicity and, at the same time, extreme prudence in avoiding the unscientific notion of "race" so well-manipulated by cultural militants and theorists of essentialist doctrines.

To the essentially integrative consideration of *inter-*, the amid and the betwixt, *trans-* adds or opposes, depending on one's reading, the idea of a going beyond, what expresses a transcendence. At this level, again from the original Latin meaning, the English prefixes, prepositions in Latin, initiate a dynamic that translates and reflects the challenging and basically perverse ideal of our concrete relations with other people. In the practice of our ordinary language, the *inter-* and the *trans-* plus *culturality* echo each other. Fundamentally, that is the theme of the Kinshasa address. To any inter-cultural argument (convenience and correlation between words, or between statements) corresponds another one, always latent and always problematic: that of a position for going beyond, affirming the motion, or negating it, a trans-cultural argument. Referring to Jean Wahl in *Being and Nothingness* (Washington Square Press, 1956), in order to designate the original sin (what is signified in our always antagonistic human relations—any *ego* facing its *alter* as a subject, or that other perceived object, faces her or him in a perpetually reversible tension), Jean-Paul Sartre could elicit its character by cracking the very concept of transcendence.

> …we are—in relation to the Other—sometimes in a state of *trans-descendence* (when we apprehend him as an object and integrate him with the world), and sometimes in a state of *trans-ascendence* (when we experience him as a transcendence which transcends us). But

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> neither of these two states is sufficient in itself, and we shall never place ourselves concretely on a plane of equality; that is on the plane where the recognition of the Other's freedom would involve the Other's recognition of our freedom. (op. cit.: 529).

Now, let me add a third precaution, a reference to my agreement with points from Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. To the acknowledgement of an inapprehensibility of the *alter*, there is, at least, one necessity, contraposing the instability of any ego-identity as what induces its transcendence through the forces of permanence and change. One of the forces is a major "extasis": any consciousness, in affirming itself, cannot negate the evidence of its being-for-others. In this manner, we agree to conceive the intersubjective space of correlations between *ego* and *alter* as a locus in which *inter-* and *trans*-culturality structure their quivering *being-with,* within a paradoxical context: the we subject or object of any discourse of cooperation, or of antagonism, being, fundamentally, a sociologization of an ego's awareness. In other words, we must give thought to notions of "doing" and "having"; that means to desire, since as Sartre puts it well, "desire is the being of human reality." This is a question of method and a question of ethics: how does one face this issue without "racializing" the interrogation? Operating by implication, do we promote a parenthesis prone to fallacies within the discourse on the intersubjective space? Two perspectives to consider from choices I would make— circumventing, or opening clear the parenthesis: on the one hand, to consider an argument on whose "desire" is being alienated or recognized, and according to which principles; on the other, implication being by definition a weak procedure, to estimate if we mind the content of the parenthesis in the manner we handle the functions of language, in relation to laws of evidence?

Concurring, one can contemplate the claim about an "*espace-bordure partageable*" from the prudence of the three noted precautions. Is not this learned expression the equivalent of Husserl's *Lebenswelt*? In any case, a fabulous concept in what it allows, a fantastic concept by what it displays. In *The Prose of the World* (Northwestern University Press, 1973), Maurice Merleau-Ponty, one of the reflectors you invoke, makes the following declaration in a chapter on the principle

of "dialogue and the perception of the Other." The reference has served my reading, in both an overestimation and underestimation, of your *"espace-bordure."*

Right, at the beginning, the fact of a meeting, and a concern, Merleau-Ponty writes. First step, the discovery of:

> A singular existence, *between* I who think and that body, or rather near me, by my side. The other's body is a kind of replica of myself, a wandering double which haunts my surroundings more than it appears in them. The other's body is the unexpected response I get from elsewhere, as if by a miracle things began to tell my thoughts, or as though they would be thinking and speaking always for me, since they are things and I am myself. (op. cit.: 134).

After this quotation, a number of things could be used to sanction my use of the adjectives "fabulous" and "fantastic." They signify a bending into legends. One imagines an extension of the usual into the unbelievable, in lexical terms. But it is the basic ordinary that stands there, visible, qualifiable by what it reveals. Three remarks: there is, first, the evidence of a body in its unexpectedness, the senses; second, there is the fact of an elsewhereness that is a locus of one's revelation, that of being in a context; finally, there is the oddity of a process affirming shifts and reversals which leads to a metaphor about the thinking activity: *one invents what invents her, him.* And, a second step, the text continues:

> The other, in my eyes, is thus always on the margin of what I see and hear, he is this side of me, he is beside or behind me, but he is not in that place which my look flattens and empties of any "interior." Every other is a self like myself. He is like that double which the sick man feels always at his side, who resembles him like a brother, upon whom he could never fix without making him disappear, and who is visibly only the outside prolongation of himself, since a little attention suffices to extinguish him." (op. cit.: idem).

Three further remarks, essential for what inter-culturality represents. First, the power of the thinking subject, a thinking machine, identified in the singularity of a perception. Thus, from Jean-Paul

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Sartre's diaries, "I think with my eyes." Indeed, an excellent rendering of Descartes' *videre videor* in *Meditation Two*. The *Cogito* is a machine, quasi-literally, that is very Cartesian. Second, marginality is issued from the limits of one's self-apprehension; and, thematized, it would state the visibility of the other's otherness. Thirdly, perception as an acting *Verstehen* (to know, and understand) actualizes the Husserlian *Lebenswelt*, by what it brings about, the gift of life. This third step synthesizes wonderfully a quasi mystical spirit. One thinks of David Hume's declaration that the pretenses of any essentially permanent self-identity are a fiction; and one accesses this fiction with a definite, sweeping belief about how real such a reason is, in derivation.

> Myself and the other are like two *nearly* concentric circles which can be distinguished only by a slight and mysterious slippage. This alliance is perhaps what will enable us to understand the relation to the other that is inconceivable if I try to approach him directly, like a sheer cliff.
>
> Nevertheless, the other is not I and on that account differences must arise. I make the other in my own image, but how *can there be for me an image of myself*? (op. cit.: idem).

Is this the emigration of the *Cogito* into the other's otherness? In an exalting procedure, the madness of solipsism has been erased. As a matter of fact, a number of things are declared by this implicated motion. And your Kinshasa discourse assumes them: the negation of the verifiability criterion, the work on the self-affirmation of *Verstehen*, as in Heidegger's perspective, should now proceed from an interaction of ontology and hermeneutics. In addition, your Kinshasa discourse assumes an epistemology activating its process in the Acteon complex (alimentary, or military metaphors and metonymies of wars and conquests, violation and destruction), against this poetics of force, and after Gaston Bachelard, Merleau-Ponty advances figures which, in Romance languages, are charged by verbs (e.g. Italian, *cognoscere*; French, *connaître*; Spanish, *conocer*, etc.), expressing the knowing process as a coming together to life. You substantiate this line in the chapter on the Khita fertility cult

in your *Weaving the Threads of Life* (The University of Chicago Press, 1993). Your sentiments echo those of Merleau-Ponty, such as this one:

> …Am I not, by myself, coextensive with everything I can see, hear, understand, or feign? How could there be an outside view upon this totality which I am? From where could it be had? Yet that is just what happens when the other appears to me. To the infinity that was me something else still adds itself; a sprout shoots forth, I grow; I give birth, this other is made from my flesh, and blood and yet is no longer me. How is that possible? How can the *cogito* emigrate beyond me, since it is me? (op. cit.: idem).

The time of this brief passage in the life of Merleau-Ponty—the late 1940s and early 1950s, Claude Lefort tells us in his preface to *The Prose of the World*—corresponds to that of a step in your intelligence of the world around you. In the mid-1960s, in Kinshasa, at Canisius Institute, you can ascribe principles to a real confusion, your galaxy and its prose. Did you really distinguish that clearly what, now, you can name so distinctly?

a. the world of a political generation was exploring the idea of sovereignty, in theory and in practice, with a Mabika Kalanda's "mental decolonization," Fanon's politics, Camara Laye and Sembene Ousmane, the "Black Orpheus" effect;

b. the world of concepts, with its buzzing interrogations, was opening quarrels with the idea of regional ontology (Bachelard), Bantu ontology (Tempels, Kagame, etc.), conversing in rapports with militant symbols of theories of alterity (Négritude, Black personality, etc.);

c. the world of systems, around an emblem (Claude Lévi-Strauss' *The Savage Mind*, dedicated to Maurice Merleau-Ponty), in an exponential dialogue between phenomenology and structuralism, was raising and explaining new challenges about the credibility of Natural Law, the meaning of history, the validity of a dialectical reason.

For sure, you knew about the explosion of the notion of literature. Like most of us, you could not measure the full impact of its happening. The epoch was also being marked by an apparently minor exercise in words. The sacred proclamation, *In principio erat verbum*, had been expanded in new demands. Did the analogous expression, *in the beginning was incorporation*, desacralize an approach to the problem signified by the correlation between three symbolic notions (— arche, *principium*, "genesis"; logos, *verbum*, "the word"; theos, *Deus*, "God"—), and the Absolute they represent?

Disciplines were to focus on the issue. Psychoanalytical practice, in time (as a matter of fact, your time, today), has proved, pragmatically, the precise signification of the "incorporation" phrase. In any context, interpersonal, intercultural, even when an alienation is highly visible, convincing work has been demonstrating that incorporation, more prevalent than separation, is a marker in the process that comprises identification, integration, occasional fallings out.

In actuality, the passage from Merleau-Ponty qualifies the question, and significantly. It may explain also the way I am trying to treat your text. We are speaking about an ordinary way of relating to anyone, and anything, in their capacity of having an infinite number of appearances. In the abstract, three positions, three propositions from what you were reading in the early 1960s. (a) We do not reduce being to phenomenon, (b) we believe that the being of consciousness is not identical with the object it perceives, and (c) from the preceding, we affirm also that the being of the perceived is not identical with its appearances.

Back to your speech and its echoes. A focus you insist upon: interpersonal relation, sensoriality, a living body. Thus, on April 4, 2007, addressing your Kinshasa audience, the relation of your incorporation into a discipline was an account of constructed physical maps. Each, a narrative in its own right, was reflecting or deflecting other diagrams that you could date, their lines transcribing your stories. Kimwenza, not far away from the place where you were making your speech, did let you, you say, invent new outlines. More than simple added dots, in 1968, creating a library of Africanist literature in a Scholasticate was an event. Possibly, more so for you than for anyone else. Basking in it while learning Kikongo, studying

Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre and Franz Fanon, was to magnify its signification, and could not but transform it into the experience of a consciousness vis-à-vis the massivity of the Colonial Library.

And now, back to Merleau-Ponty's passage on interconnection. This is a puzzlingly complex passage in three tempos. The first, an expressive interrogation, recites in the positive an ancient line that situates the subject in a sphere of belonging, depicted from the negative exteriority of the plurality of other people. The succession of verbs repeats the intellectual sequence of Psalm 113: … *oculos habent et non vident*; *aures habent, et non audiunt*, etc. The second movement, against the reef of solipsism, posits the subject's reality *in the world* as *being with* another person, with other persons. Finally, the concluding two questions are there to ground the subject, its fragmented self in its relation to others, to the world. To give birth, a gift of life and a gift of knowing.

This quotation asserts the priority of life over the *ego* of the *Cogito*, pointing to what the condition is, or, more exactly that "gesture which makes the universal out of singulars and meaning out of our life." In fact, a unique genesis germinates when anyone who is "the world to himself," and "the world to the social," that you refer to by the concept of a "universal human," this is an uncertain one for a dynamics. The measure you brought to your listener, and then to your reader, magnified throughout the confession of symbols and of a fidelity assuming ruptures, illumines the complexity of a love story through a definition of interest. In the "*Espace-bordure*," you write: "we are here to bring about a new social reality." The history of a life can be thematized from discontinuities that stipulate a continuous search in meaning, you show: emotional co-implication, mutual education, marriage or therapy.

The explicit dwells also on the unsaid. Stations of silence, and indirect hints, serve well your way of appreciation in the *Yaka land a nation*, real and imaginary. You have become a master translator and etymologist. "*Thunaha muyidika maambu*" equals the French "*connaissance*," you note. And you insist that *popular etymology* means "to be born together." It is Gaston Bachelard's favorite, and acquiescingly your Latin *cum-nasci*.

Indeed, *popular* is to be understood as *unscientific*. Yet, we can state that the conceptual value is a highly sensible derivation from the homonymy of the roots of the two verbs. Etymologists of Indo-

European languages posit the reconstructed *g'enY* as the origin of both (1) *nôscô* (ancient ***gnôscô***) "I begin to learn," and (2) *nâscor* (ancient ***gnâscor***) "I am born." This is to say that the value we are contemplating witnesses to a very consequential and skilled extrapolation. It calls to mind—shall we suggest?—a definition of the semantic inference.

From dictionaries:
> extrapolate (îk-străp'Y-lât') *v.* –lated, -lating, -lates.

> –*tr.* **1.** To infer or estimate by extending or projecting known information. **2.** *Mathematics.* To estimate (a value of a variable outside a known range) from values within a known range by assuming that the estimated value follows logically from the known values. –*intr.* To engage in the process of extrapolating.

You are right. "*Popular*" is the technical term for the type of etymology to which you are referring. It is *unscientific*, they say. *Nascientia*, from the homonymia, means "what comes to life, and is known as such."

What you say, and often imply, are neutral and softening events and reinstitute the past in a moderate context. Indeed, the idea of a missionary vocation does not necessarily belong to colonial motivations; the anthropologist's manner of identifying with a culture might likewise be a manner of atoning for the unspeakable mistakes of his predecessors; and, equally, the planetary vision in solidarity must also have its conditions of probability elsewhere than in the generosity of a farmer's well-educated boy. The stories presume successive challenges in the measure of a man. They construct hypotheses for interpreting passages. Thus, from a Franco-Belgian frontier to the Canisius Institute of Kimwenza in the Congo; from an initiation into anthropology to its practice in Yitaanda, Kwango; and, then a career at the University of Leuven, now accompanied by a psychoanalytical practice. A self affects discontinuities, legitimates ways of becoming, of reflecting maneuvers relating to others, and so on. Exemplarity of R.D. Laing's concept of a divided-self that you frame rigorously: a self in, and out of, its own processes for temporalizing itself; in, and out of, its modalities of reflecting on its reflected being and apprehending its

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existence as what its own stories reveal, a being for other people. Each one of these marks a rite, instituting itself in its own procedures, thus instructing them. As a matter of fact, they are statements of an ontological insecurity, as well as an appropriation of something, a way of investing spaces in the time of the world you project from a conceptuality. Possibly, interculturality. The obvious seems that they are given to us in a path of voices erupting from a series of genitives, in attachment, or in deviation. *Ainsi, amor patris, amor patriae*. And, then, you say: "one is not born an anthropologist, but…" A conjunction problematizes the entry to an existentialist tenet entailing a possible doubt on its completion: "…one becomes one."

In the process, I may annotate the unexpected in the manner in which you fuse the logic of scientific practice with that of the political, that of a belief; and in the way of doing so, interrogate the moral signification of the vocation you are invoking by erasing the Pascalian distinction between the *esprit de géométrie* and the *esprit de finesse*. But do you really efface it?

Reading your "Qu'est-ce qu'un anthropologue?" has been like reading a lesson from a witness.

Three tasks imposed themselves upon me, three ways for accessing your testimony. First, to consider the "making of an anthropologist," to refer to Claude Lévi-Strauss' canonical chapter of *Tristes Tropiques*: that is a narrative disclosing step-by-step the practice of a discipline, its origin and its meaning. In the ordinariness of the Greek etymology, thus a genitive, what is given tests itself against what it formalizes. Secondly, to design what is in presence: two values are intimately linked. Subjective, the discourse of a subject qualifying himself and justifying the qualification throughout an acting out represented in a statement about a commitment. There is also an objective value, a *logos*, word and meaning, that expresses an abstraction, the discourse that contains the speaker. The awkwardness of any approximation of the genitive is there, in the form, sign and proof of the genitive as its grounds. Does its rendering qualify an agreement with a classical model that it in Latin, with all its possible variations? Thirdly, to observe the celebration of the Yaka poetics of life asserting its will to an essence, which strikes me as the ability "to admit others into (a) deepest singularity," to use Merleau-Ponty. One sees a horizon, he insists, the horizon of

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humanity, a style of being human that makes *Einfühlung* possible; and, indeed, this horizon, he adds, is humanity, *Mitmenscheit*, as an extensional concept and as an historic reality.

Meditari

- *Practice: to ruminate.*
  (a) to act, reflect upon, muse, consider, meditate upon
  (b) to design, intend, purpose
  (c) transf: to meditate, study, exercise

- *Sign: the source.*

- *Activity: to remember.*

- *Function: approaching and framing orders of significations.*

Reprendre your discourse as if it were someone else, situate myself in its own movement in order to approximate a possible meaning of what could be the visage of tomorrow's anthropologist. It is a meditation on your meditation, your covenant with a mandate.

Reflecting on a vocation, Devisch summons up the conditions of its possibility. To locate traces and paths in the very act of remembering what could bring to light, and contextualize, both their origin and explanation. The process reactualizes another one, foundational, Descartes' "*at certe videre videor*," of the *Second Meditation* in which the passive charges its own active form, and brings to light the best signs of a reflection meditating on itself: and it seems that I perceive, I see that I perceive, I see that I am seeing. The habitual translation "I think that I see" justifies Jean-Paul Sartre's often quoted "I think with my eyes." Sartre's formula somehow ruins Descartes' expression in which *videor* exposes the *cogito*, and *videre* stands for the Husserlian *cogitatum*. In the economy of arranging a reconvened space, Devisch's perception of himself brings together what, on April 4, 2007, in an explanatory way, he intended to suggest to the audience. What conflux to expect from exerting silent

arguments about cultural paradoxes in the postcolonial history of a Belgian Congo? The demarcation that would singularize a 'this' against a 'that' serves the efficiency of disjunctions and conjunctions in real life. They should be apprehended in the polysemic value of their function. An overemphasis of a disjunction often serves the cause of the discourse, as an invitation to a transcendence of opposites. As in the most accented binarisms, in the opposition Africa or the West, the disjunction can be, as an intellectual exercise, turned into a hypothetical conjunction that also tests implications for a logical task. Did Devisch mean such a freewheeling game a propos of his discourse? In the second part of his intervention, and quite convincingly in its conclusive remarks, he emphatically charges the two logical operations with the meaning of his own life and its cultural symbols. As markers, they cannot be detached from the puff of gratuitous, and not so gratuitous, intellectual games. The meditation signifies an order which emerges out of the ordinary intersection it represents: speech within its own language, speech on its own form and meaning, it is a *parole* commenting on its own performance within a discipline. To use an expression from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Devisch's meditation stylizes a perception of his own act.

Let me use the Latin *meditari*, and designate an activity that witnesses to a distance between this reflection and underlayers of Devisch's meditation. The etymological organization of *meditari* would clarify the "question," the idea of Devisch's intervention. A question, in its own vicissitude—it sets out "a request" addressed to someone, to oneself, an interrogation pressing out an exigency, "a recognition of a lack," the fact of "a partial knowledge" seeking "a resolution"— and enduring its own indecisiveness. *Meditari*, a deponent, has a passive form with an active meaning. It expresses a relation between a 'me' and a 'me–in-a-context,' acting and acted upon subject; a Devisch structuring himself as "the question" of the meditation I am recomposing from its plural backgrounds.

Taken for granted, the complexity of the conceptual field of *meditari* and its semantic transferences in translation rely on subtle irregularities of Latin deponents. The economy of forms does not exist really any longer in our language; that of meanings still does and is, basically, accorded to the etymological value of the word.

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From a Latin Grammar, the rules of exception are:

(a) deponents have a present participle (*meditans*) which actualizes an active value in *form* and *meaning*;

(b) deponents have a perfect *active* participle (*meditatus*), whereas other verbs have only a perfect *passive* participle;

(c) deponents have *both*, a future *active* and a future *passive* participle, in *form* and in meaning (*meditaturus*).

Let us focus on the verb, then assent its function, and contextualize what it allows in Devisch's meditation.

One, *meditor*, formally an iterative of another verb, *medeor* which translates the idea of "exercising," and "healing"; and from the stem *med-*, there is the derived *medicus*, "doctor"; and also related: *medicari*, *medicamentum*. The series "exercise" signifies an acting on one's mind and body. It affirms also in its own signified an effect, "to heal." Thus, to meditate as a healing procedure.

Dynamics of two values since the classical period, in Cicero's language for instance: (a) *meditari*, used in the physical sense, is the synonym of *exercre*, "to exercise physically"; it indicates a correlation between medical practice and gymnastics; (b) *meditari*, used in the domain of spiritual and intellectual activities, attestations in Cicero's texts, is the synonym of *cogitare*, "to think."

Two, Emile Benveniste insists, in *Indo-European Language and Society* (University of Miami Press, 1973), on translating the Greek equivalent, *medomai,* as "to take care of," noting that "the present active is hardly attested."

This angle of the conceptual field summarizes the essence of a *lectio divina* in which the subject submits to an inspiration and the inspiration to the subject. It signals also the main articulation of *The Spiritual Exercises* of Iñigo of Loyola, including the points of meditation structuring the manual. A glaring example of its visibility in Devisch's argumentation could be the coherence of the seminar on the body he has been directing at Leuven Universiteit.

Three, *Meditor*, "to consider and to think," "to reflect and design," attests to transferred values that essentially engage one's mind. The spiritual activity does not detach itself from the senses, thus an exercise in contemplation, even in these days of ours, suggests the two ancient lines: in the active, "to have an intention, a purpose, an object of study"; in the passive, "to access a spiritual axis of communion."

In reflecting on Devisch's intervention, and meditating on his mode of reflecting on his object, one may choose to valorize competing keys to master the conflicts of interpretation: the fluidity of cultural borders, or the rigor of logical analysis. Emphasizing the first in the name of surpassing confrontations, and opposing it in supposing the latter as strictly proper to a scientific practice, any option seems to weaken what Devisch advances a propos interconnections between three areas: first, anthropology and interculturality; second, regional practices; and, third, the intercultural "poly-logos." An overestimation of logical operations may confuse demands and criteria for evaluating explanations. A propos social sciences, the main entries to the issue constitute a basic code for any inquiry. First, a question of a critical attitude: an estimation scientific or unscientific? Second, a question about an explanation: relevant or prejudice? Third, a fact: the scientific is social. And this means something simple: a critical attitude is not the preserve of the scientist since, in theory, anyone can observe phenomena and construct a reasonable explanation from the observation; that is, in principle, infer a hypothesis which is relevant, testable and exploitable. It is also a fact, and Devisch's critique of privileges of rationality correctly notes, that a relevant hypothesis may not be testable, and another hypothesis could lack a capacity for applicability. At any rate, who could assure that, despite their relevance, most arguments on interculturality are not *ad hoc* hypotheses?

Would a focus on the genitive that signifies anthropology be an underestimation of the word anthropology as a statement and a paradigm? Let me sum up the case, rephrase my bias about Devisch's vision, and substantiate a perception.

Thus, the genitive:

- In words (substantives and adjectives) that express attitudes (physical or spiritual, sentiment and engagement), one faces generally a verbal ideation. The substantive which is the object of this ideation, is known as an *objective genitive*. E.g., René Devisch's love of *Belgium,* compared to his celebration of the *Yaka culture*, is X.
  Belgium and the Yaka culture are the objects of the verbal ideation present in love, an objective genitive.

- The substantive which is the subject of the ideation is known as a *subjective genitive*.
  E.g., according to Devisch, the interest of the *Catholic Church* in the case of the anti-colonial prophetic movement of Bamwungi seems Y.
  The Catholic Church is the subject of the ideation present in the interest, subjective genitive.

- A noun is called a *predicate genitive*, when it is in the genitive with or without an adjective, and denotes a socially commonsensical attribute.
  E.g., an *Anthropologist's fieldwork* of several weeks every year for a decade sounds like Z.

Biased, and not prejudiced, I would tend to favor, beside the functional efficacy of the genitive in cooling clashes, well-defined and highly limited privileges as instrumental tools in conversations on interculturality. There is, first of all, the necessity of meta-codes from which lines of agreements and disagreements can be engaged. Two major meta-codes, propaedeutic to preliminaries, are (a) an ethical position, that would accord itself to a common grid of principles, the table of commandments in Abrahamic traditions as an *exemplum*; and, another, though controversial, (b) an epistemological position, the practicality of the ancient Greek's conceptual grids being another one, although often controverted; which, discussed or rejected in its own terms, paradoxically, ends up substantiating its usefulness this way.

The genitive to be encouraged in propositions is not a panacea. Of a highly limited efficiency, it may prove to be an effective instrument in conflictual exchanges. A well-perceived difference between a subjective and an objective genitive can clarify a situation, and contribute to the conversation. The genitive is among the less known of technical facilitations that can be of good use in coordinating group discussions.

Ethical pronouncements in intercultural contexts are ambiguous in essence, and almost always potentially divisive. They can be restrained in the name of the very reason that justifies them. They could also be constrained by instrumentalizing simple distinctions between subjective and objective statements.

More concretely, my bias is an effect of the already mentioned three precautions. In the dialogic rapport between the ethics of the Kinshasa discourse and the "principles" of my own ongoing engagements in interculturality, I came to recognize three basic references from the preceding lines, and the genitive in anthropology, a good case in point. My three references are delineated in Devisch's meditation.

- A *verb* coincides with an *attitude*, it signifies a meaning, and determines the logic of the discourse: to be fond, to prize something.

- An *adjective*, a moral one, it contributes to a substantiation of the attitude, which is a *burden*; and this adjective belongs in ethics, especially the grid-field of what is "just" and "virtuous."

- A *substantive* designates what is the concern of the activity, and one possible way of expressing it; by thinking about a *relation*, thus the idea of what is familiar, a fellowship; and then, comprehension, knowledge.

These keys—a verb (defines), an adjective (qualifies), a substantive (grounds)—are conceptualities in Greek philosophy. They perfectly correspond to the following terms. For the verb: and "to show affection, prefer, love"; for the adjective, "observant of the rule, observant of duty, righteous, just"; for the substantive, ä ï îá (doksa) "opinion, judgment," and Ýðéóôçìç (epistêmê) "acquaintance, understanding, knowledge."

Central in the Abrahamic traditions, these keys—an attitude of closeness and love, the burden of duty, and a knowing process— are at the heart of their êïéíùíéá (koinonia), or fellowship; with Üãáðç (agapê) "love" being the all encompassing virtue transcending all precepts. Exegesis says, in èåïõ Üãáðç (Theou agapê) — its Latin equivalent is the genitive *amor Dei* — and in this genitive, a judicial statement manifests its full declarative power. By the declaration, a redemption would reflect divine righteousness meeting human un-righteousness.

Anthropology and ethics are mobilized in the transitivity of äéêáéïù (dikaiow) "to hold guiltless." The genealogy of this justification is a story in ethics. Its interference with ancient Greek assumptions on justice and (in-) equality is another fact whose history haunts any discourse on human rights. Our contemporary debates on interculturality are effects, in the patience of an infinite exegesis on the semantics of few Greek classes of concepts that, almost by necessity, include *agape* and *dikaios*, *doxa* and *epistêmê*. That is the real thing in the Kinshasa discourse. *L'espace-bordure partageable* clarifies its aspects.

The post-colonial anthropologist is a person who assumes a transcultural identity – symbolic or real, it does not really matter. He is Flemish, Belgian and something else. He comments on manners of identifying with a Congolese culture. The *lectio magistralis* unsettles the irreality of an identity; in sum, the idea of an essentialist identity. Of the order of symbols, Devisch's conversions reflect possible forms by combining adjectives and substantives as to signify what is being sought. There is, on the one hand, a diagram: the subjective is to the relative what the objective is to an absolute. On the other hand, an intellectual exercise in mental agility can multiply avenues for interpreting equations that can be constructed from the following statements.

    a. The Flemish-Belgian is to the Yaka-Congolese…

    b. The Congolese-Yaka is to the Belgian-Flemish…

    c. The Yaka-Congolese is to the Flemish-Belgian…

    d. The Belgian-Flemish is to the Congolese-Yaka…

These four lines create situations, and can speak to any imagination. They can also serve for a rational game on the identity of Devisch, and introduce fallacies. Simply, (a) arrange an argument using one term as essential, and make it appear at least twice; (b) qualify the term with an everyday adjective that would fit the situation—e.g. "eccentric," "good," "normal" etc.— (c) and we shall be on our way to promoting fallacies on Devisch's identity from the instructions of the *lectio*.

Indeed, the challenge of the *lectio* was to witness to a dynamic manner of presenting oneself in accordance with truthful statements about the complexity of one's commitment. Did the *lectio* really support such a reason?

Devisch is a modern whose practice is motivated by a Greek notion: *diaphorein*, which, he remarks, he dubs a transferential sign. (I shall come back to this Greek intervention, a propos its conceptual ambivalence). Figure may be a better designation for what he considers the norm of an overreaching and overrunning animation. In sum, in clearer words, it would represent the perfect, interpersonal, and intercultural mediation that can exceed verbalization and overdo translation, being in any one-to-one encounter, what is beyond what can be said and what can be conquered. These are, just about all of them, Devisch's words. The redisposition, my responsibility, underlines the obvious: in the acclaimed, a Greek verb construes an intense mystical accord within the framework of an intercultural representation.

Now, in my imagination, indistinct forms are lining up as if they could symbolize an active role, contributing to an understanding of what all this is about. Two old ghosts, someone called the Giver and its double, are steering at each other. On the straight line, in my imagery, a moment in time, one of the two is facing the *ad vallem*; and the other, the *ad montem*. The problem is that, in the space they occupy, there is not a point from which to decide where the valley, or the mountain, might be; and thus, the arbitrariness of linking a cardinal or temporal point to the two characters. The Giver may well be an ancestor, or a descendant of the other. A "thinking eye," I can envision the area to be a moving sphere and, in this sense, gain a sense of reality by observing any tension that would rely on firm opposites. However, in this illusory construct, variations might well be just extrapolations of my perception. I do not doubt the

shifting elements that constitute the Giver and his friend. They are of my mind. Above all, they are feeding real spectacles; running the show by arranging sceneries, regulating a formless order, correcting its excesses. In brief, they are recording and setting up a climate, sometimes disfiguring the ghosts but, let us hope, they will never erase them. These are, in effect, the question and an explanation of both the struggle of lines and the truth of my perception.

One of the ghosts is in fact an image from a book, *The Giver* (Houghton Mifflin, 1993), a children's story by Lois Lowry. The Giver is part of a course in predictability, which has come to an end in the life of a young boy, Jonas. A rupture made in another universe, another time. Selected and elected, Jonas has been inhabiting new memories, and he has just discovered a reality he is trying to comprehend: what "elsewhere" is called a family, the puzzling existence of old people, etc. He asks the Giver: what is an old person? Call them grandparents, says the Giver.

"Grand parents?"

"Grandparents. It meant parents-of-the-parents, long ago."

"Back and back and back?" Jonas began to laugh. "So actually, there could be parents-of-the-parents-of-the-parents-of-the-parents?"

"The Giver laughed, too. "That's right. It's a little like looking at yourself in a mirror looking at yourself looking in a mirror." (op. cit.: 124)

This is an exemplary experience of a cultural border-limit that is pregnant with the three disciplinary varieties that, in *Aporias* (Stanford University Press, 1993), Jacques Derrida separates à propos Heidegger's approach to death, the crossing of borders: one, languages, object of politico-anthropological disciplines; two, discourse and knowledge which are the object of research-disciplines, or discourses on discourses; and, three, the zone of demarcation between one and two. These types, disciplinary systems, define themselves within two symbolic extreme limits, a beginning or birth and an end or death, their own and those of the objects. They are symbolic in the sense that, being passages, they state the

continuity of what they represent: in the positive, through birth; and, in the negative, through death. Both, in actuality, affirm the unique anticipation of life. Here comes in now the generality of the Giver and Jonas. A currency, the Giver can decode passages, thematize them from a mirror-image, instruct an innocent; and by teaching, the Giver can initiate a new way in a will to truth. A master, he introduces Jonas into a different culture in which to exist is to make oneself both finite and mortal; finite, as a singularity and a project of existing; mortal, as a being now knowledgeable in the genealogy of beings of death. Jonas' education by the Giver is a gift of life and a gift of fear. On the one hand, Jonas has been exposed to the object of politico-anthropological disciplinary passages, all of them symbols of mortality. On the other hand, doubling the first line of initiation, the lesson on mirrors has exposed to the boy another object, that of disciplines on and about discourses, and its relation to his finiteness. As looking at himself in a mirror, his consciousness will be, from now on, aware of its own wrenching away from itself, the intrinsic division of its reflection; and, that it has a self-for-other-people, the dead and the living.

And "the Giver is laughing…" A conversion happened, body and mind have been marked, an "exoticization or alterization," actualized by what Devisch calls an "inversion" in his *anthroplogie réciproque*. Here are two designations, *conversion* and *inversion*. At the root, the Latin *cum* plus *uerto* (-is, -ti, -sum, -ere) for conversion; *in* plus *uerto*, for inversion. From A. Ernout and A. Meillet *Dictionnaire Etymologique de la langue latine* (Klincksieck, 1932), their conceptual field is a picture dominated by two ideas: creation and re-constitution, on the one hand; composition, moderation, and legislation, on the other hand. In both, the proper and figurative significations, stands the idea of shaping the physical and the moral. In the practice of everyday language, one observes a conceptual tension within the signifieds. *Convertìre* "to turn around, in any direction"; and when transferred: "to alter, to modify." *Invertìre*, "to turn about, over"; transferred: "to alter, to pervert, to transpose."

From what the conceptual field delivers, one can imagine what Jonas' transcultural conversion would represent in a conversation. Interculturally, the capacity for a correct reasoning (method and principles), along with an investment in multiplying the usage of

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genitives in fundamental functions of intercommunication (expressive, informative, directive), generally, prove efficient in constraining excessive subjective statements. On the other hand, from the conceptual atmosphere of a *con-* or *in-version*, reformulating Maurice Merleau-Ponty's lesson in a reading of Husserl's *Stiftung*, one conceives the richness of every moment, any individuality, all communities in the call for the possibility of re-commencements. Why not admit what we have learned from Husserl, the necessity for all of us, individually and collectively, to accept "*the power to forget origins* and to give to the past not a survival (*une survie*), which is the hypocritical form of forgetfulness, but a new life, which is the noble form of memory."

There is more. The whole process of Devisch's meditation testifies to something else that may problematize these preceding lines. In effect, from the swaggering symbolic background unclasped by a Greek verb, a vague figure slowly rises, every now and then, from Devisch's circumlocutions. It could resemble Devisch himself, his twin perhaps. After all, he is well the first person pronoun of the texts. The Westerner's blurred features in the visage of Taanda N-leengi's ghost may be, simply, reconfiguring the reflection of one of its transcultural conditions of possibility, a Greek phantom for example. Transcending time and geographies, intransitivity and transitivity, a Tiresias would be a sound exponent. Blind, he could see; man, he has been a woman; human, he is consulted by Gods; including the highest ones, Zeus and Hera, and even on a most intimate question that puzzles the divine couple. A prophet, and a visionary of all-seasons in the Theban charter (compared to Alcmene and Amphitryon, Oedipus and Jocasta etc.), this personage is also an ill-known, shadowy man.

One easily imagines an African Tiresias and a Greek Taanda-N-leengi. From James George Frazer to Claude Lévi-Strauss in the field of comparative mythology, as well as in the African ethnology of Marcel Griaule and Luc de Heusch, prophets and seers parallel sorcerers and wizards. They are of all times and cultures. Of the day and of the night, by the negative and the positive, in the ambiguity of their very nature (-not being only this or that, but instead "and this and that"—), and the ambivalence of proprieties that bring them together and, at the same time, distinguish them,

according to the privilege they stress and account for, they are, all of them, of the same transcultural "race."

One may introduce here the reality of a terror, a classificatory attitude inherited from the Greeks, which we still conceptualize in Aristotelian categories, the obliteration of difference: *aphanisis* — one must be this or that, one or the other, Lacan says. It is the supreme male terror — and it would represent the erasure of "an identity." Cultures are individualities. And anthropology, scientific anthropology, and a fortiori African Studies have been the sciences par excellence of classification. The approach to human and cultural varieties reflect structurations organized from the operativity of the *vel*, from symbolic logic, that is a systematic usage of alternations reproducing a disjunctive rapport between a *same* and its *others*.

Devisch's Kinshasa discourse, and its sequel on "*l'espace-bordure partageable*," seem to project a Tiresias in the figuration of tomorrow's anthropologist. A symbol, it signifies a need represented by other levels of both the reality of everyday life and the fables about genesis. Eccentric, Tiresias is the very meaning of a burden, that of compensating for limits, their constraints within the tradition, and the laws they have been erecting. Master of connotations and denotations, Tiresias incarnates a quest that relies on symbols, a divine capacity for perceiving, and designing the world as another world.

Does Tiresias need an ethics? Actuating breaks, he represents a perpetual and self-contradictory impulse within shifting instants and equivocations. Speaking of the anthropologist's image in *Tristes Tropiques*, Lévi-Strauss underlines this ambiguity. Specifying a moral unsteadiness, he remarks that, by vocation, the anthropologist is a trouble-maker at home, and a conservative in the culture and time of an elsewhere. In the transcultural economy that this "manner of being" circumnavigates, this student and scholar in human variations lives a science by the anguish that comes forth, from contrasts substantiated in two verbs: the Greek *emein* (to vomit) and *antropophagein* (to eat human flesh, physically or spiritually). That is an importunate terror. How can a science modify what its practice allegorizes? One, to reject, or the duty to alterization; two, to incorporate, or the duty to assimilation? The anguish consecrates a fear about one's normative ethics, and the grid to invoke in order to

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respond to a "what is good and bad." Implied demands of the question, transform it into an exacting interrogation on the meaning of the words "good and bad," what they carry, what they relate to. And, indeed, the issue emerges of the relation between moral judgment and action, and the question, "is there a universal moral value of acts?" Burden and duty, the questions transform the anthropologist into a philosopher. In effect, the ethics of any anthropological practice cannot but refer to the meta-ethical. The guidelines for inquiry in textbooks tend to ignore that they belong to a conceptual field, and no longer to a scientific domain. Moreover, a new space of desire has been projected from the intersection of the anthropologist's "elsewhereness" and a real "elsewhere."

By a sheer accident of thematic ordering, *The Giver* of Lois Lowry stands on a shelf in my study next to René Devisch and Claude Brodeur's *The Law of the Lifegivers. The Domestication of Desire* (Hardwood, 1999). Quasi identical title and very similar interrogation, they call for a need to understand the intelligence of "desire" in the articulation of interculturality, and through its symbolic trust.

Devisch's texts index a personal itinerary to the conditions of their definition. This is the position I am looking at, and which claims to reveal a law signified in the canon of the Giver, symbolized by Tiresias, the seer and the knower. Why and how to read Devisch's questions within the mythical universe of a youth estranged from the memory of a past? On what kind of scale does one evaluate the hypothesis of a science, and appraise its effectiveness in a culture by what is being willed in naming a feature like—what is a grandparent? A discourse able to do the job correctly must be of the order of explanation. Notwithstanding the precariousness of such an outlook, Devisch faces his personal commentary and its precepts, and consciously names conversions, how they have been and are still leading him. He collects scientific feats and feeds the flux of his statements of solidarity, in their materiality. Describing himself in the image of a master of explanation, he would combine the virtues of the Giver with those of the good old Tiresias.

Indicative and implicative, Devisch's proficient code constructs a universe by deconstructing two worlds in a prophetic vision. Looking at ruptures that explicate conversions, can one gauge this intellectual maneuver by simply marking off its most visible sign,

the inclination to overvalue weak systems and undervalue stronger ones? The preference induces a judgment that sets an impression and surely an ethical activity. They can be appraised. Independently from a valuation of criteria for a valid comparability of systems, the reason moves the very notion of explanation, scientific and unscientific, to another, a too often ignored problem: to be scientific, an explanation must not be a function of a scientific discipline in the restricted sense of usual definitions. Devisch makes a good point in invoking the dynamics of a Greek verb that he singles out, and attaches to it a practice and its reconditioning. The inspiration, he thinks, could accommodate features of tomorrow's anthropologists; in sum, the mythical body of the Giver, or a lifegiver, who, incorporating his Greek double, would transcend the conflicting versions of Tiresias' story.

A last sign of terror comes in. An explanation, Tiresias corresponds to accounts, from which what should be explicated could be inferred rationally, but that is not to say logically. After all, prophets may have, as it is often the case, a terrifying spirit of consequences. Generally, however, most of them, as if it were a necessity, would rather problematize any correct reasoning. Any possible inference from the symbolics of the Giver, in Lois Lowry's novel, may be very closely related to the explanation of the book, in the sense that, contingent upon the information procured, the conclusion estimated in a subjective reading, can improve itself in terms of probability, instead of deductively. This is to say, bracketing its impeccable ethics in politics of solidarity, from propositions of Devisch's Kinshasa meditation and its extension, "*l'espace bordure partageable*," in the clarity of their affirmation about the future of a practice—an attitude in relation to an explanation, and the grounds for agreeing with it—one reads the exigency of balancing two full measures against each other: on the one hand, that of the routine criteria for rating hypotheses supporting an explanation (relevance and testability, explanatory capacity and compatibility with other theories); and, on the other hand, that of creative impulses influencing hypotheses, the part of political engagement which, for better and worse, has sometimes conditioned the rules and mechanics of the sciences in general, and the social sciences in particular.

Notwithstanding, perplexed and wondering, one comes to respect a spirit and its ability in articulating axes for action at the intersection of slippery presuppositions surrounding two conceivably conflicting explanations: that of a science to be invested, and that of an ethics. From the stability of such a perspective, one sometimes dreads over just how real the enemy Devisch that is combating may be.

Orare

- *Practice: To celebrate.*
  (a) to argue, plead, treat.
   (b) to beg, beseech, entreat, to request, ask assistance.
  (c) to supplicate.

- *Sign: an absolute*

- *Activity: to comprehend.*

- *Function: actualizing meaning.*

An *orant*, from the Latin *orare*, by its etymological meaning, is an envoy and a spokesperson engaging another person, a community, a cause. Male or female, he is an advocate, an intercessor pleading for or on behalf of another. The feminine *oratrix*, accenting the dimension of a respectful petition, that of a humble prayer, has tended to designate specifically a female supplicant. In the unmarked *orator*, as well as in *oratrix*, one finds the values they share with the semantic field of *oro* (-*aui*, --*atum*, -*are*): that is, on the one hand, with strong juridical connotations, "to appeal, to petition, pledge, urge"; on the other hand, with an essentially religious value, words related to the conceptual field that includes "to ask, implore, request, pray, supplicate." If, already in Latin, the two semantic orientations are equally manifest in words derived from *oro* (e.g. *oratio*, *adoratio*, *exoratio*, *peroratio*, and the verbs actualizing them), the religious one is, according to all lexicographic and etymological sources consulted, the most dominant throughout the Latin history. It is also the one

that is still testified to in Romance languages. *Orant*, from Latin *orans* (present active participle of *orare*), is a word attested today almost uniquely in lexicons of religious affairs and their historical dimensions in disciplines.

If I am introducing this part of my meditation in this way, and progressively extending it, from a Latin background to a classical Greek, it is for a number of reasons. There is, first, a set of methodological motives. First of all, the *oratio*, an integral part of the *lectio divina* whose articulation includes four phases—*lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, *contemplatio*—, constitutes a normal step in a reading inspired by this plan. Secondly, since the constitution of universities in the Middle Ages, the word *oratio* which has always maintained its two Latin systems of values, juridical and religious, corresponds to "discourse," and is, in the general intellectual culture, the correct Latin term for your lecture, whose technical designation is *lectio magistralis*, a public lesson by a university professor. The definition is an academic transfer of the monastic *lectio* which historically initiated it. Thirdly, in a classroom or an amphitheater, the *lectio magistralis*, contested during the 1960's student uprisings, but still a prestigious institution, is an opportunity for a scholar to address a special topic in a programmatic manner that may include, as you did, a personal statement with ethical considerations.

There is a second set of reasons, more culturally determined. First, one may consider the titular of a *lectio magistralis*, within the context of a celebratory function, a person transcending the medieval particularization of charismas which differentiates a *lector* from an *auctor*, a distinction that Pierre Bourdieu reactualized in his sociological research of the French intellectual life. Succinctly, the *lector* analogizes a "priestly" function. A teacher, whose expected role is to transmit a knowledge and a *savoir-faire*, would be its best representation. The *auctor* (and its proximate *auctoritas* that gave our "authority")—and I am referring to Emile Benveniste's *Indo-European Language and Society* (op. cit.)—represents a status meant to increase the power of an institution or a rank, to make bigger and more important what existed before. Technically, one has to refer to the ideology of the Latin Church in order to decode the two functions. A *lector*—a step (a minor order) towards the priesthood—is habilitated to read, comment, and interpret in public the Scriptures;

and, in so doing, transmit the orthodoxy of a tradition. The *auctor*, on the other hand, has the power and responsibility of managing the tradition, and guiding it into the future.

In contemporary secularized terms, from this ancient specialization, Pierre Bourdieu suggested two functional classes of intellectuals: a first one of those who, like any regular teacher, through a social habilitation, are expected to serve the culture according to its exclusive directives, in fidelity to truth, a "sacerdotal" function; and a second class, that of those who, well- or ill-inspired, take upon themselves the daring task of exploring the margins of a culture and the unimaginable, a "prophetic function." A professional elected to deliver a *lectio magistralis*, in accord with the *in medio virtus* principle, would generally tend to situate the pronouncement between a *lector*'s prudently innovative argument and an *auctor*'s judiciously deliberate exploration. By the type of interest it has induced internationally, your *oratio* seems to have been an exemplar of such a measure.

One needs the Latin background of an *orant*—a word sometimes seen as a synonym for *orator*—in order to appraise correctly the symbolism of your *lectio magistralis* at the University of Kinshasa. Your *oratio*, dignified, has the double axis of *oro*, semantically and conceptually. On the one hand, the *orant* speaks as an ambassador, a juridical axis. He argues and pleads a cause (*si causa oranda esset*; of Livius 39, 40, 12), and speaks to equals, to friends. On the other hand, the *orant* speaks as a client, addressing an authority, asking assistance, beseeching, praying. In the two angles, the Master of the day speaks with conviction, *kata nomon*, following the custom and the law; and, request or prayer, his address is made according to regulations and expectations; but, also, according to a conventional institution, and its practice. Accordingly, for an *oratio*, the *orant* follows rules and directives from a probable *ars orandi* (art) and *ars scientiae* (science).

At the intersection of Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian representations, thematically opposed to the *orant* who makes his *oratio* standing, sitting or on his knees, there is another face, that of the *gisant*.

Thus, a logos, the word of an *orant*, in its double functions and movements, subjective and objective. Singling the caesura in the plurality of possible genitives, qualifying your message (love or

desire, action or faith etc.), can we assess what it ratifies apropos the deflections of meanings it construes and diffuses in the speech? Yours was about a "discipline" and its "politics."

Invisible, the interstice between the subjective and the objective is itself a letter. A break and a quiet internal period within an expression (form, locution, verse), it joins two unequally accented elements that it consummates and might dissociate. To read it, that is to detect the way it relates to the making of an anthropologist, means a task: to reformulate the creative process of an idiosyncratic topography by modulating some of the axes that articulate it. Here are, at least, three possible keys. One, an observation of the activity of the caesura, by surveying and connecting some of the rings it allows; two, a tracking of symbols that it involves by skirting and finding signs that, one and at the same time, it implies and masks, suggests and disguises; three, assessing some of your questions about an anthropologist's vocation, by reinterpreting what the caesura in the word *anthropou-logos* testifies to, in a manner of recovering the path of the *oratio*, in sum the configuration of its meaning.

In praising your attitude and its testimony, one perceives a paradox as well as a psychological dilemma. I read the text as a riddle on justification. The narration of a progressive education in manners on how to relate to other people, the recording of how a vocation came to be inscribed on a body, your statement supplies additional information, in relation to how its own impetus and momentum, which have been discontinuous, by no means certain, may or may not explicate the style of celebrating the Yaka culture. At any rate, traces are there. In an honest caution, rather than a full disclosure, your critique of the excesses of globalization could not ignore the Yaka desire in modernization. To celebrate the Yaka tradition with or without restrictions, apropos its internal counterpoints, engages your individual credibility and moral standing, as well as those of the scholar who is also a Yaka elder. As to the effects of the discourse, it will certainly have this outcome: with restrictions, any declaration may divide your own class of Yaka elders, and cast doubts about your integration in the culture; without restrictions, any declaration might inconvenience your deontological integrity. Moreover, the "post-colonial" person you are knows pretty well that the anthropology of Yaka-land in the Colonial Library includes an

exemplarily immense work by militant missionaries. To question their methods would not necessarily signify charging their good faith, as it would not apropos contending views of fellow anthropologists born Yaka. But is it absolutely unavoidable?

The explicit in the anthropologist's achievement (what has been done and said), states above all what has been lost. Ruptures in human journeys, the reorientations they govern, always comprise a measure of breakaway and renewal. Ephemeral or not, the disaffection or the loss of walls inform, as for instance, from the life on a familial farm to a Jesuit training, from philosophy to anthropology, from Belgium to the Congo. And of course, the constraints of an academic discourse also are to be considered. They comment on slips and lapses in one's intellectual confession. The explicitness of a reason in a disciplinary practice makes the best of itself by necessity; not only from crises and habitual professional trials, but equally from what conscience and memory can choose to weaken, ruin, or simply erase and forget.

Certainly, the declarative memory of a *parole* circumscribes its own density. A case in point could be your rendering of a transformation: one day, Devisch becomes Taanda-N-leengi. Does the symbolic metamorphosis merit a significant attention in the anthropologist's consciousness? The text circles it in "*le hasard de la petite histoire.*" The adjective *petite* mismatches an event. In the name of privileges unknown to the audience, the *orant* has chosen to misplay what founds his *lectio*. In intent, as well as in its reception, it is a sort of stylistic drama.

Unfortunate, this adjective "petite," for what it half-opens and closes instantly. In actuality, it also invests a memory with its secret. Really charming is this adjective, by the interrogation it summons forth: "petite?" It can be exhorted in variations that could include implications like these: one, "Am I not a situation that the character may not grasp?" Or, two, an emulating banality in the act of remembering, "I mean a 'play' for the audience, for I am simply a figure of a new immanence." Here, with you, an adjective; elsewhere, in my recent experiences, a declaration that inevitably shields something like an evidence. Many would agree that anthropologists undergo an initiation that bestows upon them some kind of esoteric knowledge; and, with it, a power linking them to local spiritual masters.

This opinion nurtures a doctrine. Does the anthropologist believe in what often smacks of mystification? If not by conviction, at least as a mode of protecting a good professional standing, the choice of a style of engagement, backed by a solid reasoning can, in principle, safeguard the anthropologist's moral integrity. The entailment thesis would exonerate the necessary ambiguity of a satisfactory reason. After all, consider the frequent issue of paranormal activities. If in a field for example, people claim that they are certain that such and such is what qualifies an instance, and is the citation; surely, they have a belief, and possibly the conviction, that such and such qualifies an instance, and is the citation. The reasoning is not bulletproof. Yet, nothing prevents the anthropologist from using it, from describing a paranormal construct that may, or may not, incorporate morally controversial statements. From the outset, an anthropologist must have been a believer. I must not. And, one day, with or without an explicit consent your authority could support a controversial puberty ritual as a possible entry to a textbook for a high school intercultural history class.

Concerning *la petite histoire*, if it were essential to address the naming from what is called a reproductive memory, you could have mobilized it differently, *n'est-ce pas*? In fact, remembering one's life, autobiographical memory, defines its own boundaries, since the act sets useful and objective restrictions on it; and subjective too, by and in the manner to interpret. At the same time, such a problem can be managed by its common sense specification, and should not restrain us from using the concept of memory without concern. It means what any dictionary plainly defines as the mental capacity of recalling or recognizing previous experiences, real or imaginary. Arthur S. Reber and Emily S. Reber in *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology* (2001) dub it a "virtual blizzard of specialized terms."

The precaution is expedient. In effect, the chasm between your *oratio* assumed as a discourse *pro domo* which exposes urgencies, and the ambient air of the anthropological "nation" reflects other courts. A carefully constructed miniature mirror, the *oratio* and its sequel summon up paths unwinding classes of particulars about the Yaka in relation to your inscriptions in a number of intellectual streams; and this, in relation to the history of a discipline. Indeed, invoking only the "caesuras" in genitives and the contextual signification of

their statements (e.g., anthropologists' valuation of strange things, the Africanist's sentiment for moderation, the why of the Yaka's distinction in hunting the best interpreter's friendship etc.), it is easy to characterize how they are engrossed in other conceptual grids. Among a number of references, I think of *The Law of the Lifegivers. The Domestication of Desire* (Harwood, 1999), cosigned with Claude Brodeur, to which I referred in the process of collapsing two myths—the Giver and Tiresias—onto a third one, tomorrow's anthropologist.

In your dialogue between anthropology and psychoanalysis, as a matter of fact between two psychoanalysts, the empirical information relied all but uniquely on your research and questions; thus on the Yaka as a foundational argument. This means—to use the mathematical definition of "argument"—that the Yaka culture stands as the parameter on which the value of all universal functions depend. First, reaction: really? Then, an afterthought: why not? You are there in good company, with a number of distinguished savants, including Victor Turner to whom you have been compared by Jean Comaroff, of the University of Chicago, and Bruce Kapferer of the University College London. At present, I have also in mind something else, a bit strange. In December 1987, Claude Lévi-Strauss, of the Académie Française, speaking about himself to the American journalist James M. Markham, says this: "one does not try to be a giant, one tries to be a good artisan." And, later on in the conversation, he warns: "All over world, one is seeking more than one is finding." The report of the meeting was published in *The New York Times* of December 21, 1987. Are you concerned with this exercise in modesty? There is a counter-measure to this. Back in time, in 1955, *Tristes Tropiques* is published by Plon. Claude Lévi-Strauss compares the anthropologist to "an astronomer." Only a metaphor? The figure is used again in the Finale of *L'Homme nu*, twenty-six years later. This time it is a comparison: the self, he writes, "is a point in space and a moment in time, relative to each other." (*The Naked Man*, Harper, 1981: 625).

In any case, your conversation with Brodeur *begins where it ends*, with a question of mediation. And which one? In which code does one translate "the shock of a profound awareness that a people's culture, including its unconscious dimensions, is what both deeply

links and differentiates human beings." And, here, I am connecting pre-meditated lines on the body of the "discourse," and an apperception, constructing another space from a body of "letters," which is this book of yours. As a matter of fact, *à livre ouvert*, Devisch's liturgy at the University of Kinshasa—"What is an anthropologist?"— and its ethical extension stand in an intercommunication effect, intermingling graphic signs and their histories. You are an "astronomer," in your own manner.

The signs of your *oratio* seem to be variations of a thought, always the same, and a propos the idea of a body. I should be willing to let two models unmask a hunt and its risks. There is, on the one hand, omnipresent and somehow mute, but overflowing, an obsession with the idea of a *homo faber*. On the other hand, loquacious, the Yaka argument, as it has been constructed by years of anthropological studies that have deconstructed a reality, a phenomenon in its details. For hours, I looked at the photos reproduced in *The Law of the Lifegivers* (op. cit.). In a first approach, well, one thinks about regrouping presentations of objects, of things in one group, and those of people in another. On one side, worked objects and on the other, reified humans. It should be easy, and it is not. Things? The *Khosi* figurine (plate 1), the *Binwaanunu* (plate 2), or the *Mbwoolu* statuary (plate 9)?

An intention, a practice fuses with its own meaning and becomes an act of faith. In other words, two horizons face each other: one, life remembers, the activity of the letter and the signs of an origin; two, life does work, comments on a will to truth. The horizons can be approached and have been, from a series of concepts issued by disciplines (anthropology, history, religion, etc.), individual voices (native or foreign, colonial or missionary, etc.), the intrinsic or extrinsic operators (e.g. schools, churches, social institutions etc.). Whatever angle one takes, the most influential agents in the history of the Yaka-land are the Christian missionaries who, in tandem with the Belgian colonial administration, have been evangelizing the region since the XIXth century; possibly a wave over an order marked since the XVIth century. Such is the Yaka domain from which one may test your *terra firma* against points of dissent, points of orthodoxy in a normative trans-disciplinary practice.

Did everyone perceive Devisch saying something like, "I may

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know one of my knots, it is a situation vis-à-vis these horizons? How could I say that you must know how I think you see me thinking about the Yaka?" The style, Laing's, is recognizable. And Claude Brodeur upholds Devisch's quest in discipline and faith. But, in which field to perceive the "more" of a guiding practice, the anthropological or the psychoanalytical? Let me insist on two limits. The first, a question in the European practice of philosophy, most clearly since the Renaissance, structures the Brodeur and Devisch dialogue. It concerns the will to truth itself, the conditions of its normative functions, in concordance with thematics that came to oblige hypotheses about a line which, transcending cultural dissimilarities, would validate a convergence theory. In this perspective, your model, Claude Lévi-Strauss' anthropology, is emblematic. Paul Ricoeur termed it "a Kantism without a transcendental subject"—and, in the overture to *The Raw and the Cooked* (The University of Chicago Press, 1983; Harper and Row, 1969), Lévi-Strauss accepted the label. In this celebration of your outlook, to know whether you would agree with the implications of such a concept, is here of no importance. You still share something like a principle that submits a method to the primacy of human solidarity. It infixes the invisibility of a culture in what is settled as a prerogative from which to apprehend any alterity in its strangeness – that is, its visibility. Oddly, opposite to such an awareness that you tend to express in a Rousseauist vision sometimes, you think your stances in essentially political terms. I read your memoir on Lévi-Strauss at Lovanium, thirty seven years ago. It was an inscription in a persuasiveness that linked you to what could be termed an ethics of structuralism. Is what you are teaching us today a deepening, or by the force of circumstances, a going beyond, another one of your conversions? In any case, you may be less pessimistic than Lévi-Strauss. He horrified the American James M. Markham. I referred to their conversation. Here is how it ends, Lévi-Strauss saying: "History is whimsical and unpredictable, 'progress' is uneven at best and certainly relative (…) I try to understand, I am not a moralist at all."

The anti-Cartesian *I is an Other*, from Rousseau to Lévi-Strauss, can allegorize—why not?—the marginality of a Rimbaud. Exactly, Rimbaud as a metaphor of marginality, a striking one, allows flawless conceptual equations. Sure enough, existentially, the following

platitudes will do: marginality is to the visibility of the *alter* (the exotic, the marked) what normativity is to the invisibility of the *ego*, (the referent, the unmarked). No more entries that favor anyone. Everyone being the *alter* of someone else, the problem seems settled. You have magnified the truism in an *oratio* demonstrating that, for sure, the truism works in the abstract, not in the actuality of our shared human condition.

A tradition and a reason still house their own constructs. Is it wrong to hypothesize that their triumph could be indicative of your alertness to casualties, to consequences? The austerity of your terrifying secret, of Devisch's position on alterity. Its unsaid hunts anthropological systems for approximating an old interrogation on the body: the body, whose body? In the negative or in the positive, the body, any body, as the singularity that can equate the immediacy of a consciousness and the visibility of an object. You refer to two telling stories: at the University of Antwerpen, under "therapeutic cults of Kwango," the sessions directed for physicians on "the body and the world." At Leuven, for decades—correct?—a popular seminar on "anthropology of the body," the "exotic Yaka culture" and its "unusual way of perceiving." Any student of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (Washington Square Press, 1956), after a careful examination of the section under the heading "being-for-others," could connect the success of the seminars, at least partially, to the phenomenon of fascination. The reality of fascination, Sartre was convinced, is possibly the measure for identifying with a permanently emerging alterity, that body I can relate to, and which is me without being mine. Thus, always in the same movement, fascination, that other name for the corporeal capacity of horror.

The brief reference to your seminars imposed itself upon me, at a moment I was involved in the work of a Chinese scholar on the "doctor's body" in the traditional Chinese healing system. To conceptualize the difference between the Western medical practice that reads the patient's signs from the abstract constituted by a taxonomic table of symptoms and, on the other hand, the Chinese that moves the other way around (about impulse sensing for instance, the doctor's body, in its contact with the patient's, initiates both reading and analysis), Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre's phenomenology of the body granted us a basic code for a dialogic

semiology. In three ways, three successive steps, to stamp the body.

First, to apprehend *the body as what we exist in*, through senses; that is, the frame of our individual history. And, reflecting on it, we make it more than the contingent thing it is, we turn it into this psychological machine which is aware of its limits and of its transcendence. Secondly, close to the Chinese pulse reading, we face an apprehension of the body as what it is in any social context, a body for other people; in clear, the body *as something we assume in the revelation of others' existence*; in fact, the reality of others' bodies. Finally, we come to see and understand our body as a frame, as *a very concrete locus* from which we think, sense and organize all our relations with others; absolutely, all our connections with other people, and with things, our language, as well as our feelings.

The Kinshasa lecture has been an opportunity to revisit your work, and appreciate your phenomenological bent. Despite the technicality of the "relational body," in publications before the mid-1990s, due to your sense of details, what one gets (e.g. on listening, questions of adults to children, speech etc.) does not disconnect the perception from the three ways of conversation in a dialogic semiology. However, the concordance raises at least two issues: the first, on the measure of a cultural loss which is pivotal in intercultural explorations; and, the second, on the mismeasurement of scientific loss in intercultural narratives.

To acknowledge what is presupposed in your *oratio*, about this, there are, one might suggest, two main lines of objections in the Western discourse on the human body. One in English, represented by a classic, Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971). Her treatise analyzes the prescientific representations of human families, focusing on the discourse which, through internal transformations, specialized into biological and cultural anthropology. There is another classic, by Anthony Padgen, *The Fall of Natural Man. The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*. (Cambridge University Press, 1982). Specifically sequencing narratives on Africa, more militant also in its purpose, is the book by Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow, *The Myth of Africa* (The Library of Social Sciences, 1977). On the other line, two excellent contributions in philosophical anthropology: Bernard

Groethuysen, *Anthropologie philosophique* (Gallimard, 1950) and Michèle Duchet's deconstruction of the Enlightenment's anthropology in *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des lumières* (Maspero, 1971). Paduans' old maxim, *I am* human, I *am a borderer,* is not detachable from today's essentialist and anti-essentialist debates on the body in its socio-cultural generations. The simple divergent chronology of "race thinking" and "racism" in Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt, 1968) and Michel Foucault's "*Il faut défendre la société*" (Seuil, 1997) addresses what, with circumlocutions, you work painfully: race may not be a scientific problem, it is a cultural one. The problem, if it is one, might even be elsewhere, in the unsuspected question of racism as a philosophical conceptuality entailed in classificatory grids. Such an angle may probably permit a much more healthy reading of Kant's *Anthropology,* for instance.

From the texts of the late 1970s and early 1980s on bodily space-time, death, marginality and liminality to this discourse of your honorary doctorate, one is stricken by a quaint feature. As to offset an annoying poverty of strong reflectors in today's philosophical anthropology, the awareness you promote privileges a hardy critique of taxonomic economies against the background of ambiguous strategies for encounters. Sometimes, with the faith of an interculturalist, you go so far as to identify with processes that would transcend usual distinctions, as in the following passage from your letter of November 20, 1994 to Brodeur.

> After so much simplification and ethnocentric disfigurement has already occurred in the discourse developed by the North about the South, and in a context of massive asymmetry in terms of the balance of powers, undoubtedly only friendship and very lucid and self-critical expertise might be able to offer "the foreigner," in the postcolonial world, a legitimate forum for a critical study of cultural and communitarian practices and ideals.
>
> Would you not agree that the formation of a collective unconscious, ever renewing itself at the ancestral foundations, is far more complex than the development of the individual's psychic life? It appears to me that only a profound anthropological knowledge of other

cultures, when examined from the inside, that is, from the point of view of the structuring logic, and founding axioms and values which undergird a culture's practices and institutions, might provide an adequate basis for intercultural dialogues or even for the development of a critical regard towards ourselves. Anthropology is not a neutral form of scientific knowledge: it arises from the situated experience both of cultural creativity and the lucid encounter between cultures. Your continued interest has inspired me to dig even more deeply in the analysis of Yaka culture (…)

My ethnographic passion resonates with the theme of "homecoming" or the "oiko-logical" turn that many minority groups are making back to themselves and their cultures. (op. cit.: 232)

This advocacy of *Einfühlung*, more than it, and rather on the side of not only a disposition in solidarity, but also a disciplinary practice, accumulates elements for a programmatic vision. First, a cause: the psychological note in the quotation has been preceded by an invocation of a transcultural psychoanalytic approach. Listening to the other, precisely the "Yaka unconscious," would shun "the negativity of difference and hierarchization." In your parlance, four figures—the sorcerer, the diviner, the chief, and the healer—, each one, an ambivalent entity, would be an adequate key to the Yaka unconscious. Secondly, there is the style of your intervention. Borne upon an intercultural motivation, the principle of a North-South solidarity coincides with that of an alliance determined by a situational discipline. Their conjunction, depending on deontological angles, might raise questions of method for any discourse that would submit its precepts unconditionally to psychoanalytical instructions. At any rate, to soften your precisionist grids, Claude Brodeur, in a letter of December 12, 1992, had already insisted on an "indubitable": "As soon as we pose the question of the possibility of this culture (the Yaka) evolving in a new direction, it will be useful to refer to models of different societies in order to understand these historic transformations." (op. cit. 230) And the titanic oeuvre of Claude Lévi-Strauss comes to mind, especially the volumes of "*mythologiques*." Thirdly, one can remark on the singularity of your voice in the quotation from the letter of November 20, 1994 (op.

cit. 231 sq.). This voice is articulating itself simultaneously with a "priestly" and "prophetic" accent. Does it not expect its credibility to be validated within a scientific community and, at the same time, connote an interaction aimed at modifying the very space that made it credible?

The ambition of your commitment seems tempered in the *lectio,* which essentially states a matter of faith at heart. The intervention, at the end, of companions of the road, those who departed and those who are still alive, gives to the arbitration a symbolic and existential importance, that of being a *speculum*. This reflector functions in a manner of cohering two aspects of a practical philosophy. On one side, a looking glass (the good old approach of Varro: *quod in eo specimus imaginem*); and, on the other, a banner (again, an ancient approximation: *opus speculum formatum est*). This key, the entries to dictionaries (Freund, Gaffiot, etc.), is not original. Its usage helps to "speculate" on the coherence of your conversions as moments in a dynamics.

From your exchange with Claude Brodeur, three lessons in the capacity of a *speculum* – to look and to behold, to gaze and to test; and about (1) an anthropological position, (2) the oiko-logical milieu, (3) the activity of a Greek verb.

1. The anthropological position, in a reflection submitted to the psychoanalytical, presents a strategy. It sounds militaristic, is scary, and combines in the same will to knowledge and power most of the Sartrean images against representations of an epistemology of force.

   Here are three lines you enumerate (I am using phrases from your text), (1) The first strategy: "analyze the relations of force," "demonstrate the process of 'assimilation-accommodation,'" "be like a scientist in chemistry or physics." (2) The second: "participate in a cultural practice"; two tactics: one, "create and define a role in interlocution," espousing "a discursive strategy for those for whom 'to speak is to make the world'"; two, be attending "to the daily practices of the family or household." (3) The third, "be attentive to the manifestations of meaning that emerge from both encounter and confrontation."

One would like to be convinced, on good faith, that this sort of prescription is well intentioned. To inscribe them in the symbolics of the activity of a *cum* plus *nasci* might be an illusion. And, good heavens, what is the business of a projected book facing: "… All this, as well as the contumacy and violence of Kinois in the public realm and in the informal economy, aims to set an end to the postcolony, and reverse the "whitening" of the African" (op. cit.: 255).

Finally, a last interrogation. It might be an important one, but the least appropriate; significant and, at the same time, uncertain. Why would the collaboration between anthropology and psychoanalysis now appear that imperious to you? Is it due to the supposition of "what" exactly is a science? This problem was summed up well by George Johnson, a *New York Times* science journalist, in his intellectual biography of Murray Gell-Mann, Nobel Prize of physics (—*Strange Beauty. Murray Gell-Mann and the Revolution in Twentieth-Century Physics.*, Random, 1999):

> The issue that interested (Gell-Mann) was not how to bring psychoanalysis into the domain of science, but just the opposite: how to explain psychoanalytically why scientists are driven to understand the world through the formulation and testing of hypotheses. (op. cit.: 228)

2. And, here, how not to acknowledge your sense of grace and its risks? The *gyn-eco-logical* milieu you reclaim in the quotation just referred to —and which is the object of your acclaimed *Weaving the Threads of Life* (The University of Chicago Press, 1993) — is, not only from Yaka-land, but speaks also to a Greek imaginary. By its etymology, of course it is feminine, and doubly so in the values it states semantically, and denotes conceptually. In effect, *gune* means woman. By definition, the *eco-* from *oikos-* designates that which, opposite to the *politikon* (the *ager publicus* of Romans), indicates a dwelling place and infers ideas of generation, domesticity, and inheritance. You knew what you were unleashing by constructing a hyphenated *gune-oiko-logical*; and, with the composition, advancing a declaration, a logos on domesticity. It calls up feminine and maternal thematics prompted by other symbolic exercises. Might Tiresias come in? Not good enough,

too much on the side of a universe regulated by a grand dichotomy principle. Why, then, not imagine a going beyond, say, of themes opposing "a good mother" to "a bad mother?" The terminology raises difficulties. This is what you say to Brodeur about a model.

> (…) breakup or subordination of the universe of the Mother? Instead of situating the investiture of the chief within the order of the Father, as you do, I demonstrate, with considerable ethnographic data in my support, how the (Yaka) chief concurrently emerges in both his (re)generative function (as the supreme provider of life) and in his political function (as sovereign ruler of order). (op. cit.: 242)

The ethnographic data might prove one interpretation correct. In comparative studies, it could correspond to a variation in concordance with others, attested to in neighboring cultures and past the Congolese basin. Certainly, the data permits a debate that transcends cultural areas and disciplines. Does it not presume a tradition marked by lessons from giants—a James Georges Frazer, a Georges Dumézil, a Claude Lévi-Straus, a Victor Turner—who explored new ways of reading and interpreting transculturally the very practice of anthropology? Only experimentalism? There is, from 1984, *Se recréer femme* (Berlin: Reimer); 1993, the just mentioned *Weaving the Threads of Life*, whose subtitle is *the Khita gyn-eco-logical healing cult* (University of Chicago Press); 1985, in collaboration with A. Gailly, a study on a self-help group of Turkish women; and, released in 1986, a video on a Yaka female diviner you made with D. Dumon.

Your reference to the international feminist inspiration, and its insistence on the contribution of a "Black feminism," grasps a real world. Thus, to your authority, here is a question of principles: it should be possible, using every opportunity, to oblige at least matters of concern related to the *oiko*-interest. Since the *gune-oiko-logical* space is, and principally, about and for women, why not raise our conscience about urgent issues? Here are recent examples which deserve reflection.
One, according to the World Bank 2006, development indicators,

in 2000, the maternal mortality rates per 100,000 live births, was: 10, in Europe; 194, in Latin America; 921, in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Two, Mary Kimani, a writer for *African Renewal*, a division of the UN Department of Information, has distressing observations in its last number (vol. 21 4, 2008). From the chart, she highlights what is at stake. The World Bank's injunctions on cost-sharing in public services, for example, have indefensible effects morally. To get treatment at maternity clinics, women must make a deposit, a symbolic amount, but high for, say, a Kenyan patient living on $2 a day. No money, no service. Dr. Shadrack Ojwang, a gynecologist at Kenya Pumwani Maternity Hospital, in Nairobi, says: "we are asking people to die because they can't (afford to) be treated."

Three, putting priorities (which ones? and defined by whom?) in perspective, should an anthropologist be concerned by all this? In other words: can the author of publications on the body in African contexts ignore the controverted ethics of the World Bank, and its consequences on human bodies? Does it not make sense to recognize that assessing the perverse by-products of today's intersecting universes should not derail attention from pricing concurrently the highest standards for the gift of life?

3. One recognizes in your texts the clarity of an intention and its politics, but in the complexity of a voice. Its sovereignty claims an ordinary right, its own. Is it not one of the measures in building an intersubjective locality? In any case, it can hardly be detached from the discourse speaking in, and from, the experience of an identification. Lines that support such a journey have been assumed in what a Greek genitive expresses, the indefinite work of anthropology, in its etymological exigency. Does it translate what you tell Claude Brodeur to be an "intercultural sensitivity typified in bifocal thinking and reciprocal exchange?"

    In the Kinshasa *lectio*, we are invited to understand your activity, from a figure, what a Greek verb allegorizes. I touched on this already, briefly. Let me now clarify the point.

In the paper circulated after your intervention, and now corrected, you write *diaphorein*, instead of *diapherein*, as translating literally "to transport," "carry through," "open to one another." Indeed, *diaphorein* is possibly the word one would think of, in any approach to concrete relations. Here is what you say, and its central phrase underlined.

> (…) plus l'affinité et les sentiments de complicité affectueuse grandissent entre l'anthropologue et les réseaux-hôtes, plus la rencontre anthropologique est transférentielle. Et un tel transfert est mieux compris dans le sens littéral de *diaphorein*, transporter, porter à travers, au-delà, transmettre, s'ouvrir l'un à l'autre. En outre, la signifiance et les forces qui sont nées et continuent à naître dans la rencontre de sujet à sujet dépassent ce que l'on peut dire ou maîtriser ; elles excèdent la verbalisation ou la traduction. Cette rencontre, interpersonnelle et interculturelle, peut devenir une authentique entreprise humaine de co-implication à plusieurs voix, demeurant mutuellement enrichissante. (English version, see this volume pp. 107-108)

Diaphorein, effectively, belongs to the lexical field of words that refer to social interchanges such as *diaphoria* and *diaphoron*. They imply the idea of difference. *The Oxford Greek-English Lexicon* (1985), indicates *diaphoreô = diaphereô* (419a). The entry is distinct (structuration and semantic ordering) from that of *diapherein* (417b), the one you intended. Here is a summary of the two entries

- *Diaphorein* (variant, *diapherein*) has two main semantic lines. The first attests (1) "to disperse," (2) "carry away"; but also (3) "to plunder," (4) "tear in pieces," (5) "break up." The second line: *diapherô*. (1) to carry across from one place to another. There is a third line, with medical applications, of no interest here.

- *Diapherein* is the reference that fits your philosophy. Here are the semantic values you were referring to. A first area,

attesting intersecting lines: (1) "to carry over, through"; "to carry from one to another"; (2) of time; (3) "to move," "to bear to the end"; (4) "to go through with, endure, support." And, indeed, as expected, the passive attests to the idea of separation and distraction: "to be drawn apart, separated, disrupted." In fact, the passive of *diapherein* meaning "to disjoin" and "distract" translates a disjunction. For instance, in Aristotle (e.g. *Politica* 1451a34). This second line includes "to carry different ways." And then the just mentioned passive.

To repeat myself, *Diaphorein* reads as "to dispense," "carry away," "tear in pieces," "break up" etc., the contrary of your attitude. Basically, its meanings actualize acts of distinction, everything that goes against your principle of "sympathy," *Einfühlung*. This explicit question of meanings, my interpretative reading, is also an acknowledgement of a remarkable Greek *homonymia*. A similarity of the letter explains the entry *diaphoreô = diapherein* in its quasi identical spelling. This equivalence translates a conjunction to which one can relate the ambiguous disjunctive value present in the meanings of the two words. The letter exposes its own alteration.

Amazing that a *lapsus calami* would synthesize so well a question of attitude. The verb *diaphorein* "to separate" instead of *diapherein* "to go through with," the difference between an omicron (-o-) and an epsilon (-e-), might symbolically coalesce so dramatically the dilemmas of tomorrow's anthropologist.

One, it is possible for an anthropologist speaking in the voice of a Yaka elder to debate his Africa-discipline in Greek terms, in any idiom, and still be relevant in tomorrow's intercultural space.

Two, one of the challenges may still be in an old question of method: are there, concerning this very practice, ways of thinking of it outside of the negative socio-historical contingencies that have been determining it, and that are symbolized in controversial usages of subjective and objective genitives, the two intrinsic dimensions of the discipline?

Three, slip of the pen or slip of memory, in the fluctuation of variants, the words testify to the story of the two vowels, and the impact they might have more on symbolic than real tasks.

An anthropological encounter is transferential, you say. You are right. My emphasis on a possibly punctilious small problem, but in the very activity of verbs, can be superseded in what semantic interferences induce. A zone of partial inclusion of signifieds can be accessed. In effect, *diaphorein* and *diapherein* can be approached as two manifestations of the essential predicament of any discourse on what can be said on being human, that is to say any anthropological project. Occasionally, *diaphorein* means: "to go backwards and forwards," "to distinguish by dislocation," "exhaust oneself by dissipation." And, on the other hand, one can read in texts *diapherein* with close significations: "to bear through, to the end," "carry different ways," "put in motion." Finally, I should emphasize that in the passive, ideas of "disjoining and drawing apart" are attested frequently, and they animate an axis of synonymous areas (separation, disruption, distinction). They mark zones of conceptual interferences (between the two verbs). The best reference may be Aristotle's usage. In a number of texts, *diapherein*, in the passive (e.g. *Politica*, 1451a34), attests values of what is sectioned. *Diaphorein*, along with its kin (e.g. *diaphoria* "unlike" and *diaphoron* "difference") functions in the semantic proximity of *diaphora*, the technical equivalent of *differentia* for the designation of any alterity in kind, as in *Politica* (e.g. 1285a and 1289a20). That is one of the best entries to the Aristotelian notion of difference in *Metaphysics*.

In sum, we may say that within the genitive *anthropou-logos*, the *diaphora* is in the dislocation between the subject and the object of the logos. It corresponds to Plato's notion of variance and disagreement. And one could bring in the Aristotelian *differentia* of species in logic; recommence the conversation about the Kinshasa discourse, and accent the other dimension of the idea you intended: to face each other, *diapherein*, and affirm our diversity in "to be a different person" (e.g. Plato, *Apologia*: 35b), and "it makes a difference" to me, as in Plato's *Gorgias* (517b).

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Coda

Despite everything, recollecting is a negation of the meaning it claims to contextualize. In the same motion, it sanctions it as a future-oriented affirmation. There is no incongruity in the arrogance of the opening statement: "on ne devient pas anthropologue par naissance…*mais tout de même*." The underlined words canalize everything. Staging the sense of a *how* and a *why*, it holds their impulses. It prefaces an *oratio* that has the form of a dissertation. Should one hypothesize on its undisclosed pillars? They state a humanist manner of elaborating the ambiguous dynamics of a *Mitgefül*. Is it not an attitude that inspires exhortations, reiterations, repetitions, of what is fundamentally a love story entailing a justification?

Let me celebrate three steps on a scale of metaphors, or of metonyms.

First, a recognition. Conversion accommodates a temperament, and comes to be the sign expressing itself as an activity. To convert is the verb that animates an attitude in its complexity, "to be fond of" and face the price of inflections. Such a verb would invest the mind of the reader who goes along with the legitimacy of its quest for an intersubjective and intercultural dialogue. The presuppositions do not necessitate demonstration. The Cartesian observation linking reason and human condition extends itself pretty well to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* and Yaka elders: to study oneself is the best bridge with others. One's mental activity can be correlated to others' attitudes and expectations. Reading Devisch, one concurs with a process aimed at a "mieux vivre ensemble." To be fond, in this sense, renews the patience of existentialist phenomenology. We can reread, otherwise, R.D. Laing's anticipation at the beginning of *The Politics of Experience* (Vintage, 1967): "my behavior is an experience of the other. The task of social phenomenology is *to relate my experience of the other's behavior to the other's experience of my behavior*. Its study is the relation between experience and experience: its true field is *inter*-experience." (op. cit.: 17). That is the attitude of a verb.

Secondly, a reckoning. We have a challenging *lectio magistralis* which unfolds other stories as if they were adjectives. It qualifies beings and things, attributes virtues and duties. A metaphor from physics, its structuration, shows also an unaccustomed feature as

if to demonstrate that what it narrates, the punctual scattering of codings within a construction regulated by internal and external requirements, could be consistent with a highly emotional testimony strictly framed in an austere grid. The techniques analogize clearly the way a beam of particles or a wave can be diffused when interacting with other particles within the same surrounding. One thinks of references in George Johnson's *Strange Beauty. Murray Gell-Mann and the Revolution in Twentieth-Century Physics*. An accident? Not sure at all. At any rate, Devisch's narrative can be read, at least, according to three straight lines, each with its own chronological order, having neat tempos, marked by a symbolic light neatly delineated or implied from the fluctuation of a flash in the negative and positive. Here is, a first axis, the most visible one, chronicling the life of Devisch. To what is represented here—a childhood, an education, the maturity age— correspond, almost term by term and step after step, three courses: first, the story of a talented boy on a farm; second, layers are assumed in a number of successive communities (Kimwenza, Lovanium, a return); three, the calling, the invention of a Yaka elder and a Leuven intellectual. Parallel to these sequences, one can bring together two other axes, similar (structurally) and divergent (thematically), and connect them in what cannot be any longer a sheer accident: a personal psychological story followed by the intellectual line that one might, easy temptation, entitle "the making of an anthropologist on his way to becoming a psychoanalyst." Three headings, three steps, and the maturity: one, the family's novel, and the alliance with war traumas; two, the Jesuit Institute of Kimwenza, the post-colonial imperatives; and, three, the "initiated" as ambassador (fieldwork, marriage, career), researcher and teacher, election and effects, in the Congo and in Belgium.

The description pictures a life. It addresses its own organization as a question of method and a question about a vocation. A scholar, Devisch declares using a knowledge borne on a practical knowledge of intercultural frontiers, and motivated by a question about his discipline, today and tomorrow. From interpersonal to intercultural face-to-face, experiential authority may tend to obscure the privilege of its own being as a lack. Devisch shows that the challenge of any commitment states its own activity by subordinating its lack to what it can unveil and affirm about itself.

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Finally, a celebration. From what is given in this manner, there is, for sure, a good reason to believe in what it justifies. Throughout Devisch's texts, there seems to be something like a silent rhetoric supporting an enactment. Along with my biases, I came to accept a preconception I had from the beginning. One can always confirm anything expected. In this case, the structuration of axes, from what I can now name, does assert what supports it, a subterranean work. What we are given to meditate on authenticates an ascetic reflection which, in a proven tradition, under the guidance of reason, can deploy itself through exercises on thematics such as the topography of meanings, the obsession and indeterminacy of ways of desire, our responsibility in this world's affairs; and, in our time, the North-South agendas within a problematic political economy.

The rendition of a wrenching away from, paradoxically, an experiential authority, gives to Devisch's texts a shifty fluctuation of what is remembered in a transitive activity. But, it is to be spoken about in an intransitive recollection. In what the axes stipulate, a silent source doubles all possible interpretations. An avowed rupture in one axis proves to be a foundational rock for highly rational choices, and vice-versa. Ambiguity of the memory in what it activates.

Does not the main preoccupation of Devisch, discerning the grounds of principles, pertain to ethics, more exactly to meta-ethics, and not science?

The Shared Borderspace, a Rejoinder[1]

René Devisch

I am very grateful for the great tribute extended me by distinguished colleagues who have offered a wealth of comments and questions on my stance as a postcolonial anthropologist. In order to clarify such a stance, I may venture to place those comments and, indeed, questions within the context of a 'borderspace' –an expression coined by Bracha Ettinger (2006a)– that seeks to interconnect the plurality of worlds, thoughts and disciplines that involve, if not overwhelm us. I would also like to examine how some relations between the unconscious in subjects and their society are culturally shaped. Leaving aside the incidental epic, anecdotal and aesthetisising style that has set the tone of my festive Academic Lecture, I now wish tightly to articulate in four stages my response to the queries put by colleagues. My argument is particularly prompted by the thoughtful comments, figuring in this chapter, from Mudimbe and van Binsbergen.

First, I would like to address the question of the anthropologist's implication in intercultural polylogue -and the 'Ethic of Desire' (a Lacanian notion). The latter qualifies in culture-specific ways the subject's suggestible and greatly unconscious, open-ended and unreflecting stance towards situations of indeterminacy or appeal, and in particular towards the unnameable allowing Desire to emerge. It is a stance in life that also grounds ritually effected homoeopathic reversal or redress in contexts of fright, ill health, misfortune, evil, or even cultural ambiguation. *Second*, I see anthropology as a co-affecting, co-implicating and 'response-able' encounter with the 'other', in the double sense of the sociocultural originality in the host group, –that is variously otherised by some public opinion as

exemplary or adversarial–, and of the researcher's own 'Extimacy'[2] or Otherness in him- or herself. This bifocal perspective urges one to go beyond a representational account so as to include the unthought-in-thought, the unnameable or unknowingly said, or the untellable in each becoming. Hence, this bifocal perspective urges to address the unconscious with its indescribable shadowy side or holes at play in the passionate, simulating, or self-censuring subjects in the encounter. *Third*, an attempt will be made to approach the issue of local knowledge forms and practices. *Fourth*, I will examine the contribution that anthropology could make toward intercultural co-implication and 'response-ability', in line with an espousal of culture-sensitive learning and understanding, self-reflective comprehending and sharing of insight.

To put my response in context, let me confess how much my co-affecting co-implication and reflective stance remains haunted by the postcolonial unconscious, and this is a concern that gripped me –persistently from the 1980s on– prior to my acute awareness of the gender gap. Arriving as a young man in DR Congo in the early 1960s, in the aftermath of that country's independence, I was offered hospitality by people whom my compatriots had colonised for the half-century ending only five years previous. I hereby became a witness to the colonial trauma, and to the responses of a colonised people that alternated between overt rejection and melancholic resignation. For me, the trauma of my Congolese hosts acted as a silent call to empathy and duty that was so challenging that I could not help feeling an obligation to shoulder my part of the heavy moral debt. And the dawn of the African continent then appeared to us, through a contract of united confidence in social and cultural resilience and inventiveness, to be resting on each and everyone's shoulders. From January 1971 until October 1974, I was offered hospitality for participant observation in the household-centric Yaka society of southwestern Congo, followed from 1996 till 2003 by annual research sojourns of some three weeks each among Yaka and Kongo people in the capital city of Kinshasa's shantytowns.

To further situate the anthropological position from which I intend to respond, we should acknowledge how much the anthropological endeavour in Africa –by both African and non-African researchers– has actually evolved through the successive

generations following Black Africa's political independence around 1960. Let us remind ourselves that anthropology is an *intercultural* scientific enterprise that urges us, in each society and generation, to readjust and redefine the disposition, procedures, perspectives, concepts and epistemology of our discipline, and to assure the production of valid information and research data, and their objective rendering. However, given its property of interhuman engagement in the complex field of unequal power relations, *postcolonial* anthropology is particularly concerned with questions of the pluri-perspectival and truthful comprehension of historical North-South or centre-periphery, colonial-postcolonial, and host-guest relationships. Such comprehension develops through confident participant observation which is negotiated in face-to-face encounters of intersubjective co-affecting involvement, that takes place in a welcoming ambience in local communities and networks of practice. My aim in the field –one that later mobilised my doctoral students– was to engage with my host group regarding the daily realities that burdened or bore promise for them. Anthropological research is a reciprocal engagement to attend to what really matters in the group's site-specific predicament. This engagement raises some basic questions, namely, how does one clear the fundamental drive that steers life in the host group and the anthropologist, like also the mimetic impulses that beset the intercultural encounter, steering the latter into reciprocity? In other words, how can one lay bare and unfold the group's concern about its fate, something which is almost beyond the utterable or nameable? Consequently, the anthropologist feels moved to share his or her experience in mobilising this interpersonal search for some measure of comprehension, mutuality and fulfilment amid life's baffling fate and distresses. And –as Maurice Godelier (2007) powerfully states– this exchange develops in the name of a mutual empathy or trust, alongside some unavoidable estrangement on both sides in the intercultural encounter. From there, the anthropologist is also committed to contribute self-critically to the larger anthropological project regarding the scientific understanding, at grass roots level, of the immense plurality of local civilisational worlds and their sociocultural creativity or resistance in the face of innovation.

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The position on the international anthropological scene I wholeheartedly embrace is one '*at the borderspace*'. I choose to align myself with those who –possibly inspired by scholars in the human sciences such as Dipesh Chakrabarty, Valentin Mudimbe, Ashis Nandy or Edward Said– seek to 'unconceal' the colonial unconscious. The masculine colonisers' and missionaries' desire, and increasingly obsessive paranoia, was infused with attraction, but also fear and anxiety, in their confrontation with the inscrutability and intractability –derived from the largely unspeakable Imaginary– of the colonised other and his or her lifeworld. In this vein, I critically seek to distance myself from the phallogocentric civilisational and academic imperialism, favoured in particular by a few international languages and corporations, that dominates the 'centre-stage' on the globalising scenes of consumerism, information flows and Academia. The type of experiential-phenomenological and matrixial anthropology 'at the borderspace' that I favour is, however, receptive to a genuine *polylogue* between Western-derived globalising science and *local knowledge* forms. In this perspective, I wish to scrutinise the extent to which the experiential and culture-sensitive phenomenological rendering of anthropological research can be a valid translation of the object of people's knowledge and socioculture's genius. As a scholar engaged in a daily and studious participation in local knowledge practices, the participant anthropologist may indeed claim gradually to acquire local sensibility and knowledge, and actually begin practising some of their modes. Does, one might ask, such participant comprehension then validly enable a disclosure from within, that is in the terms and/or perspective of the given practices? The latter may range from the ritual making of value to the politics of truth brought forth contextually by the particular local epistemology and some orchestration –blessing or cursing and mediumistic divination included. The process of disclosure may also focus on the bodiliness of sensibility and perception, intersubjectivity and transworld resonance.

Intercultural Polylogue and its Ethic of Desire

The main plank in the argument goes to the very heart of my intercultural anthropological endeavour. It gradually led me to formulate the question as follows: how does one mobilise, in a *polylogue*, those various *culture-specific* metaphysical and intersubjective intentionalities, aims and models that inspire a people's fundamental willing or shared Desire for co-implication in making their lifeworld? How can the researcher fairly and plainly uncover and understand, in dialogue with his or her hosts, the processes of intersubjective and interworld co-determination, the epistemology and categories of thought, as well as the models of action and production? How does one bring into the picture the *sites* and *modi* of *cultural ambiguation* or bivalence that pattern people's increasingly paradoxical world in both its vibrant vitality and destructive dynamics –and one thinks here in particular of the shantytowns? Which are the particularities of the host group compared to neighbouring sociocultures, or to those more distant African ones? In which way is the ethic of modernist Eurocentric liberal emancipation at odds with the type of 'afro-modernity' already in place (Hanchard 1999)? How much is the fundamentally bivalent socio- and cosmocentric stance of many African sociocultures unreceptive to the Eurocentric technological rationale and liberal politics of progress?

Many an Africanist anthropologist has felt captured by his or her host group's concern with the *thisworldly* and *interworldly* as well as with the *work of the negative*. S/he has been particularly shaken by the group's struggle for survival and preoccupation with reproduction. In response, s/he may concentrate on people's body-related modelling and appropriation of space (such as in the search for a dwelling place or in the manual labour of food production and house-building or repair), and time (in the daily work timetable and seasonal calendar, generation-bound memory and reminiscences or intergenerational cycles). The anthropologist's attention may also be directed to the group's politics of reproduction that shape family networks and gender, or it may seek to unravel their Ethic of a shared Desire in their quotidian engagement with life and death, the thinkable and undefinable, the widely shared and the banned. S/he may, moreover, focus on the investigation of the topographies

or the mythical and ritual practices within which the subjects concerned interrelate, domesticate, socialise or harness the visible and invisible or the propitious and harmful forces in their lifeworld. One thinks here of the forces that people recognise as vitalising or deflating -the thisworldly realms of plants, animals, things, and the human; but this awareness also extends to interworldly –or interspecies and inter-realm– agencies, such as the life-flow within the family and in the realm of the deceased, ancestors, spirits and, for Christian converts, that of the Holy Ghost and the satanic. Given the Yaka sense of compliance with their given status in the world, and guided by their acquiescence vis-à-vis the largely invisible and unthought propensity of things as well as the intergenerational moral debts and ancestral prefiguration of destiny, the notion of world-to-world contact or '*interworldly*' echoing and co-determination would seem more appropriate than 'otherworldly'. A major question here regards how the group deals in particular with the surreptitious 'work of the negative' (cf. Green 1993) that the members detect in the irruptive climatic or ecological forces, or in 'the realm of the darkish night' haunted by witchcraft and sorcery. In the people's understanding, the work of the negative that manifests itself in the intergenerational moral debts and the colonial or family trauma, but also on local experiences of state-related injustice or abuse.

Let us recapitulate in a broader perspective the anthropological project that I am backing, one that is moulded by the local group's core concern and in particular by its two-edged Ethic of Desire. The *culture-specific* models for the shaping and interconnecting of the thisworldly, interworldly realms have much to do with the views shared by the group on the bivalent, and hence fatal, forces governing the life-flow and the quality of being, as well as the rotation of the life and death of animate being and things. These models, moreover, concern the corporeal and intersubjective processes of deflating and resourcing the human being in the fabric of the uterine and agnatic kin along various generations, as well as in the lifeworld with its value-laden topography and manifold agencies. They steer the largely unnoticed transmission of the given socioculture, in particular its latent assumptions and embodied knowledge, through the obstacles of the colonial and postcolonial clash of civilisations. To portray the fate of the ceaselessly-renewed interanimation of

worlds from the perspective of the human subject as embodied co-agency, the anthropological research may focus on the Ethic of a shared Desire. The Ethic draws on the vigilant, if not suspicious, experience of unnameable absence, impossible lack, or basic indeterminacy in the life situation –an experience that in subtle ways transpires in the genius of the mother tongue, the paternal and maternal function's fallible grip on the hardly thought-out forms of the desirable, the licit and the illicit. The *Ethic of Desire* informs, in a largely unconscious way, the local group's zealous if not anxious concern with the transmission of life, in the face of the ambient greed, self-serving passion and destructiveness in the family and larger society. Yet that anxiety is countered by the culture's particular views and practices whose dynamics resemble homeopathic treatment: the subject and in particular the healer seeking primarily to outwit the evil and the ailment through the latter's own reciprocity, ensnaring evil self-destructively (-*kaya*) by turning it back against itself (Devisch 1993: 267 ff.) The Ethic of Desire is not to be confused with the ethic of intersubjectivity –as defined below in the paragraph on sociocultural othering. Furthermore, the anthropological project may also concentrate on the site-specific interpenetration of local and exogenous cultural models. In the confrontation of civilisations, the cultural models steer the subjects, informing their relations to their shifting identities, amidst the disparate pulls of the hegemonic globalisation of information, consumerism and identity models, but also with regard to their originary concern for the Beautiful, Good, Just and True.

I favour an anthropology of intercultural *polylogue*. By this I refer to the culture-sensitive, multisited and elucidating interlocution between anthropologist and both the host group and occasional representatives of diverse cultural groups or networks. Such interlocution seeks as much as possible to respect, comprehend and communicate one another's culture-specific epistemological and ethical assumptions as well as modes of intersubjectivity and expression. In other words, I seek for means to deepen such a polylogue with regard, for example, to that which holds us together notwithstanding political, linguistic or civilisational divides. How can one genuinely encounter fellow-human beings, particularly in their most vital activities of interworld 'response-ability' and

cautious inter-animation of self, group and the social maze? How does the host group relate to the Western-derived discourse of human 'progress' that the mass media easily associate with the much vaunted globalising access to alluring style or consumerism. Or how does it relate to the overbearing technological, infrastructural, state organisational and educational innovations or achievements in the country? At the risk of henceforth being perceived as someone who is difficult to classify, or even as someone who underrates the liberal ideological horizon and the strict rationalist cognitive perspective proper to mainstream schools of thought in social sciences, I wish to make clear that I do indeed attempt critically to overcome such a narrow liberating view or cognitive approach.

I see myself, rather, as an *intermediary* persistently bringing to scholarly attention culture-sensitive anthropological accounts of other barely known lifeworlds, local modes of thought and baffling expressions of barely conscious yet shared affects and Desire. I do not see myself as a political actor or an agent for economic development. Nor do I present myself as an historian of civilisations or a philosopher moved by a Western-style project striving for truthful knowledge, democratic values, liberal education, gender-sensitive personhood, human rights and freedom. As a citizen of the former colonising state in the Congo, I felt particularly battered by the alienating and lasting effect that such colonisation has had on the heirs of both colonised and coloniser. However, this gave me no cause to abandon efforts to inscribe my anthropological project into the postcolonial, and hence neo-colonial, clash of civilisations. Moreover, my primary concern in my work in the Congo since 1965 has all along been to understand how the cultural matrices of Congolese communities and networks, with which I am fairly familiar, sought to overcome colonial and neocolonial hegemonic models. The polylogue in which I became involved in DR Congo dealt with some major –innovating, hence self-defeating– voices and tribunes that in the postcolony have arisen with the aim of reweaving and revivifying a regional tapestry of cultures. My research in Kinshasa also led me to sense people's basic concern with the resonance between the various realms of existence, a resonance which may variously be figured as a rhythmical consonance or dissonance, an enhancing or weakening of the life-force and its manifestation or flow in the kingroup and its reproductive resources.

Mental Decolonisation and Reorigination

In the early post-Independence era of the 1960s, Mabika Kalanda launched a radical call to 'mental decolonisation' in a short book titled *La Remise en Question* (1965). He addressed that call primarily to Congolese intellectuals who fought for political independence, begging them to exercise great lucidity in facing the dramatic conflict between African metaphysical universes (based on fundamentally bivalent relatedness and co-resonance of life-forms, autochthony and communal ownership) and Western ones (centred on the individual and liberal emancipation, motion and order, as well as *Ratio* and restoration or salvation). Inspired by the perspectives of Simon Kimbangu and Patrice Lumumba, he invited African intellectuals to anchor their belonging to several cultural universes, both local and those inherited from colonial presence, in a project of social liberation and reappropriation. In the light of this message, it appeared to me that the dawn of the new era for the Black African Continent could possibly come through a sustained rally for an interdependent confidence in social and cultural collective liberation and resourcing.

In the 1960s and '70s, a number of militant marxian intellectuals in the Congo –including Jacques Depelchin, Antoine Gizenga, Laurent Kabila, Patrice Lumumba, Pierre Mulele and Ernest Wamba dia Wamba– sought to address the fracture between society's originary local horizon, one that stifles innovation, and allochthonous revolutionary trajectories geared towards social liberation and emancipating progress. They opted for political commitment to liberation, an option that, in the (inter)national political arena of shockingly unequal power, naturally carried a risk of bitter disappointment. From the 1970s on, other critical and engaged intellectuals –among them those at the University of Kinshasa who were associated with the *Présence universitaire*, the *Institut de recherches en sciences économiques et sociales* (IRES) and the *Centre d'Etudes des Religions Africaines* (CERA)– committed themselves to rediscovering genuine local African modes of knowing and being, if only to subject such modes to the test of postcolonial afro-modernity. In this confrontation of civilisational horizons on the academic and political scenes, the barely thought-out ambiguity of 'practices and gesticulations' –to take Eboussi Boulaga's insightful phrase– has

appeared most puzzling since the successor to the Western academician or political master was henceforth a brother by blood. But that successor was too often mimetic and deficient when pitted against the proponents of sociocultural reappropriation or a marxian liberation project.

In Kinshasa's popular suburbs in the 1970s and early 1980s, the overall ambience on public display or on TV was that of euphoria and frenzy. The hedonistic and effervescent mood of a fashionable ostentation of ideal types of youthful and libidinal masculinity and femininity reverberated through the numerous bars and nightclubs (Yoka 1991). Hedonist consumerism and sexually-tinted mannerisms became a mark of potency and enfranchisement for those aiming to outwit the stereotypical opposition contrasting the images of the colonial era of 'Work, Discipline and Progress' with the 'frugal village life and elderhood' that was equally suspect in connoting backwardness and greedy thievery (Devisch 1995).

The notion of 'mental decolonisation' preyed on my mind throughout my later years of training: graduate studies in philosophy at Kimwenza-Kinshasa (1965-68) and undergraduate courses in social, political and economic sciences at Louvain University (1968-69), followed by a graduate in sociology and anthropology at Lovanium University (1969-71). My last year, 1970-71, of studies at Lovanium University –by then renamed the *Université Nationale du Zaïre*, or UNaZa (hereafter referred to by the later name of *Université de Kinshasa* or Unikin for short), exposed me to the foundation and mobilisation of the 'Popular Movement of the Revolution' (Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution, MPR) and the so-called 'return to authenticity' movement which was to embrace all of Zaire's citizens. These formed President Mobutu's platform for the foundation of the party-state and the promotion of the country to the African vanguard in the enterprise of modernisation and nation building. His aim was to break the colonial mirror of identification and thereby overcome the contradictions of an alienating colonial past. By this time national television began the daily news broadcast with a depiction of the president-founder as the 'Supreme Guide of the nation' descending through the clouds from the heavens. In the 1980s, however, the Zairean national media concocted a Manichean parody in an attempt to conceal the party-

state's ruinous self-serving habits and the sheer hollowness of its nationalist rhetoric: they relentlessly diabolised the former colonial power while apparently whitewashing the much-vaunted messianic programme of the national government.

The central government machinery in Kinshasa proved woefully inadequate to live up to the unprecedented aspirations of the people of this young nation. President Mobutu had himself awakened these aspirations in the 1970s through his *Objectif [19]80* campaign. This programme envisaged achieving, by the end of the decade, spectacular and comprehensive national development affording Zaire the leading economic position in Africa. Instead, the ever-deepening gulf between the privileged few and the poor led to a tension-filled period of popular protest in the early 1990s. By the middle of 1997, unrest led to the overthrowing of President Mobutu's republic by Laurent-Désiré Kabila's rebel forces. Upon becoming president, Kabila rechristened the country, giving it back its earlier name of Democratic Republic of Congo.

From 1986 until 2003 I annually undertook participant research stays of some three to six weeks in Yaka and Kongo shantytowns of Kinshasa, adopting as my own the discouragement and deception voiced by the subaltern people. Having massively lost their meagre earnings in ponzi-like money schemes in late 1990 and 1991, the people of the major Zairean cities were seeking, along the lines of a homeopathic Imaginary, to turn money's fraudulence against itself self-destructively. The widespread looting and Luddite disturbances of September 1991 and January 1993 appeared at least in part to draw on a collective Imaginary of cleansing the local lifeworld following the death of an abusive chief (Devisch 1995). But technology did not comply with this Imaginary of homeopathic reversal. In Kinshasa, one third or more of the then-estimated 350,000 jobs were lost. In the mid-1990s less than 5 percent of the 7 or more million inhabitants of Kinshasa were earning a regular salary, studies showed. Indeed, the uprisings deliberately attacked and damaged major Western-derived industrial plants, transport enterprises, shopping malls and luxury stores with the aim of exorcising the alleged root causes of rampant monetary inflation and failing state institutions. Consequently, the divide between the wealthy few and the poverty-stricken majority continued to widen

–with an annual inflation rate of 8,000 per cent– in the early 1990s. Some of the emotional excess of the 1970s and 1980s was dislodged from the public domain and replaced by a depressive and muted weariness, leaving it to the popular religious movements to further address, if not mobilise, the profusion of an ephemeral collective frenzy of sensuality entrenched in paradoxical, hence dispossessing *Jouissance*³ or Enjoyment.

In Kinshasa's shantytowns, the independent neo-Pentecostal churches and the matricentric prophetic communes of the sacred spirit (called *Mpeve ya Nlongo*, literally, the [ancestral-cum-sacred] spirit of the other world –Devisch 1996) sought to address, in moralising terms and through extensive exorcism, the derailment of both the bureaucratic state and its political messianism, the highly un-assimilative and estranging strangeness of missionary Christianity, and people's discontent. The communes of the sacred spirit thus witnessed to adepts' basic confrontation with a *bipolar* other-worldly otherness, seen as both divine and occult, epiphanic and uncanny.

On the one hand, the neo-Pentecostal churches and the charismatic communes of the sacred spirit developed a Manichean-like and opaque Imaginary of the *versatile* and seemingly *paranoid Janusian sacred spirit/satan agency* in the communes and each of the members. Their gatherings addressed and cleansed their interworldly realms, haunted by a pre-Christian 'magico-religious' habitus, all the while seeking to produce, or rather uncover and embody, signs of the prodigious and wonderful, and this as a homeopathic effect of the unmasking and exorcising of an invisible evil. That evil comprises deceptive self-serving consumerism, satanic ruse and deceit, sorcerous machinations and malevolence (Ndaywell è Nziem 1993). Through their double-edged habitus, pastors and adepts investigated experiential fields –such as dreams, imagination and affect, in all their particularities– with the aim of disclosing both divine grace and auspicious counsel. The gatherings or assemblies normally developed through the very alternation between the adepts' ecstatically rejoicing or 'speaking in tongues' –called 'dancing in the spirit'–, and the delirious casting out of 'evil' –adversity, bad luck, anxiety, worry– as a means of healing.

On the other hand, the neo-Pentecostal churches and the communes of the sacred spirit incited people's dreams of reconnecting with some benign autochthonous origin or regenerative source of life and faith-healing. Numbering then already perhaps one-fifth the total population of Kinshasa, and today more than half, the adepts of these groups were associated with a category of persons 'born-again in the holy/sacred spirit'. Sermons qualified such reorigination of the local lifeworld through the indwelling of the holy/sacred spirit in the born-again individual as an antidote to the traumatic memory of the former colonial master's intrusive and burdening presence and of the experience of discontinuity. Under ecstatic inspiration in Christian prayer and the citation of Bible verses, singing of hymns, 'dancing in the holy/sacred spirit', and offering processions, their gatherings developed theatralised, passionate, intercorporeal and intersubjective modes of co-constituting and co-affecting themselves as 'brethren and sisters in the spirit'. Moreover, the meetings were explicitly designed to counter the overall mood of persistent crisis, and to gnerate a myth of holism and communal filiation. In the early 1990s, the churches adopted the term 'dollarisation' that popular culture had first coined to designate the catastrophic consequences of economic imperialism and sense of exclusion from the world scene. This term gave expression to popular suspicions that the multinational enterprises of the former colonial power were continuing their exploitation of the nation's mineral resources, now by virtue of having struck a deal, deemed satanic, with contemporary wealthy Zaireans.

Our *medical anthropological research programme*, beginning in 1988 as a longstanding cooperative effort between the Louvain team and the CERDAS research centre at the University of Kinshasa, did not remain unaffected by this manic-depressive and scape-goating ambience dominating Kinshasa's public domain. The looting of September 1991 in particular put an end to one major EC-funded research project we had embarked upon. During this period I joined CERDAS bi-annually for medical anthropological research carried out among Yaka and Kongo networks in Kinshasa's shantytowns. The research focussed on some particular categories of health-seeking strategies in biomedical community health centres and DIY

pharmacies. These latter were drugstores run by untrained personnel who were responding to their clients' demands for self-medication. The research concentrated on a sample of some thirty patients, following their parallel consultation of biomedical health centres and of diviners and healers, or their further quest for support in healing communes (Devisch, Lapika, Le Roy, Crossman 2001).

Transferential Relationship in the Postcolonial Research on Cultural Ambiguation

The sociopolitical and economic crises in the Zaire of the 1990s raised serious questions with regard to my *research focus and vein of writing*. I was forced to conclude that I hitherto had somewhat aestheticised my anthropological portrayal of Yaka socioculture (such as in Devisch 1993, Devisch & Brodeur 1999) out of a sense of guilt for the treatment meted out to local societies by the Belgian colonial administration and the missionary endeavour. The colonial and missionary intrusion meant the unsettling of the people in their village life, self-image and worldview. It belittled, and hence sidelined, their cosmocentric system of multiform reproduction, healing arts and rites of passage or initiatory possession, as well as their local knowledge systems and political institutions. Conversely, I had considered my aestheticising writing as an expression of solidarity with the regained self-pride of Zairean friends and colleagues. But the shock of the looting in September 1991 and January 1993, and the apparent overall lawlessness in Kinshasa's public space –colloquially called *Article 15,* a euphemism for the generalised predatory economy of the street that also depicts the state-related services– forced me to reassess the transferential relationship qualifying my research endeavour. It was at that point that I began profoundly to question what could stand as a still unprejudiced but more lucid and increasingly self-critical research approach. How was one genuinely to understand the self-serving bureaucratic state, or the informal economy and impoverishment of the shantytowns (Devisch 1995)?

The ongoing dialogue that I organised in the 1990s with thoughtful and prominent Yaka men and women in Kinshasa struck me by the testimony of many –randomly contacted– who felt

entrapped in cultural ambiguation. It is this element that has profoundly inspired me to focus my research on the fuzzy notion of postcolonial identity. In this context I conducted a series of interviews with poverty-stricken school teachers, civil servants, medical doctors and catholic priests including both individuals who, following some short successful career, had become poor and disillusioned or, in contrast, persons were had become high profile parliamentarians or government officials. These interviews were largely biographical and related primarily to the interviewees' period of schooling in rural Yakaland and its promise of the kind of white-collar job in the city one could only dream of. The interviews also raised questions as to the fantasies and expectations that had incited their emigration from the natal village to the Capital City. Some of my interviewees had already been unemployed for a number of years and forced to retreat to the shantytowns and the harsh conditions of necessity and debasement to be found there. These people felt stranded, condemned to ponder the bad luck which seemed to have blocked their family project of emancipation and forced them to endure the harsh degradation of the living environment and public services. The biographical accounts expressed both commitment and disappointment, expectation and anxiety, in ways that were very revelatory, in that context, of sites of *cultural ambiguation*. This concept, which I owe to Debbora Battaglia (1997, 1999), refers in this particular case to a situation of being simultaneously exposed to opposite –local and Western-style, village and urban– values and prospects in both the domestic and public, or the intersubjective and interworld realms.

Gradually it became evident to me that the overall mood of cultural ambiguation in Kinshasa's shantytowns confronts the researcher with fundamental questions. It is an ambiguation that puts the Eurocentric research methodologies to the test. Many an anthropologist of my generation and profile, gripped by both the reformist emancipation ideals of the Golden Sixties as well as by the local ethos, comprehended in its own terms, is at first likely to obnubilate the dynamic of local enmeshment in ambivalence and affectation, tinkering and hybrid bricolage (Devisch 1995). I too easily assumed that the 'local' would finally, by way of parody, 'cannibalise' –to use Achille Mbembe's expression (1992)– the

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colonising alien. The alienating totalitarian discourse of the party-state, like the nightly evasion by many a Kinois (as Kinshasa's residents are known) into the oneiric and unthought-out Imaginary realm of the disco bars, appeared to be cunningly celebrated and short-circuited by an extraordinary verbal creativity and alluring conduct replete with derision, a capacity displayed in particular by the Sapeurs. From the late 1960s on, the latter formed a pioneering new generation in Kinshasa and other major Congolese cities that gave expression to a new style of urban membership, under the impetus of *La Sape* –an abbreviation for *La Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Élégantes* (the Society of Thrill-seekers and Elegant Persons). Breaking with the naïve and alienating tactic of miming colonial ideals regarding subservient work, parsimony and discipline, the *Sapeur* or social cynosure cultivates an ostentatious appearance, affected elegance and the appearance of a dandy. *Sape* defines itself as a play beyond profit and exploitation, even if it is doomed to be only a short-lived fantasy. Until the late 1980s, discos and bars in all parts of the city were able to provide the ultimate time-space setting for the *economy of pleasure* practised by the Sapeur and for its fervent pursuit of conspicuous consumption, which, according to a well-known advertisement for a popular beer, 'gives life its effervescence' (*qui fait mousser la vie*, literally, what causes life to froth). Papa Wemba, a famous singer was called the king of the Sapeurs.

In their subtle twists of French idiom, Kinois playfully and persistently focussed attention on the rapidly deteriorating conditions of life in the city, the chaotic state of public institutions and the misery of the peripheral slums. They described the hunger, insanitary housing and the erosion of solidarity as *conjuncturée* (in a state of permanent recession), or *cadavérée* (littered with cadavers). In displays of extraordinary creativity, people relentlessly 'cannibalised' and reappropriated the French language, the medium of prescribed cosmopolitan conduct in public inherited from the colonists through the school and state administration. As Mbembe (1992) demonstrates, this verbal creativity offered an Imaginary form of counteracting the state's sources of power to some extent, namely through publicly perverting the state rhetoric through a very scotophylic kind of humour and mimicry.

Another form of cultural ambiguation concerns that the practice of parody in Kinshasa's charismatic communes of the sacred spirit. It allowed for the development a very distinct ability to explore genuine ways of displaying and interweaving various sociocultural backgrounds. This was also an ability to take into account as well as critique new circumstances and forms of modernity. As I will explain in detail below –in chapter 5, in my contribution on Christian Moderns–, the prophets and pastors were perhaps even more aware of bridging the gap between the ancestral and Christian belief systems –between present-day rural village and slum or proper urban life and thought– than were former generations of migrants or Christian 'converts'. Celebrations in the healing communes strived to encompass various worlds, and to be whole making. These messianic healing communes sought to outwit the alien, in particular the missionary and Christian notions of lack and loss, sin and restoration –while at the same time aesthetically perpetuating, if not merely miming, the modernising project. They also tempered the allure of consumerist goods and technology by embracing, through ironic mimicry, this realm as a new but bivalent source of potency and power. As members witnessed: 'We explore the worldwide universe and tame it through prayer and the sacred spirit; we no longer need to rely on deceptive TV images'. Contact with the –ancestral-cum-sacred– spirit is likened to the way a cell phone or television imperceptibly captures invisible voices or images; the entranced individual repeatedly yells 'hallo, hallo ...'. Adepts in one group place dozens of water cans along the centre aisle of their meeting place to make present the sacred River of Zion. In line with Kongo cosmology, this passageway figures as the *axis mundi* that connects the living with the ancestral subterranean river or white ancestral world. At the start of communal celebrations, the sacred spirit is called upon to arise from the earth where the ancestors live and those in need can seek contact with the spirit by stamping and rolling on the ground along the aisle or by digging their feet into the soil while dancing in this area.

The more I came to focus on the forms of cultural ambiguation, the more I came to consider self-critically the extent to which the anthropologist's challenge is very much one of avoiding the hierarchical and evolutionist trap that so easily subjugates the seemingly hybrid local reality to the normative and Western-born

global mindset. But, one might ask, why would the local in its full dynamics of nest(l)ing and reorigination not win out over the alien and allegedly global? With time, would the local not able to absorb and master the bivalence of the momentarily hybrid? On the one hand, my anthropological writings steer clear of the colonial phallogocentric gaze and its drive to impose *Ratio* and geometrical order on an allegedly untamed and disorderly local reality by means of the massive colonial bureaucratic and educational endeavours. I persistently seek to avoid drawing a Eurocentric comparative scale that would take as its ultimate grounding the economic order driven by Enlightened reason and neoliberalism with progress as its aim, under the pretension of clearing the way for individual autonomy and human rights. On the other hand, the Yaka people are in no way haunted by the Adamic myth of man's fall, which, through the Book of Genesis, has continued to model Judaeo-Christian and Western civilisation. I refer here to the Hebraic and Christian myth of an original patriarchal order of plenitude and innocence that Adam and Eve, because of greed and envy, lost in primordial times at the 'origin of mankind'. The myth gives proponents a vision of the human condition determined by a punishment for a fault humans must have committed in their body and vis-à-vis the otherworldly. Hence, in this vision, humans are perpetually gripped by a scopic drive and a mission to restore. This fall, it is argued, transformed Adam and Eve's descendants into beings of lack and shame as well as subject to finitude and a thisworldly contingency. According to such an Adamic myth, the body-soul divide can only be overcome by way of suffering, hard labour, a sense of shame and the order of virtue in a divine salvationist alliance facing the *Eschaton*. Yaka culture, however, has never felt the influence of this salvationist teleology nor by the Enlightenment prospect that redefines the Adamic myth in terms of an overall rational design driven by the all-embracing aims of Progress and the emancipation of the self-crafted monadic individual.

I contend that many modern and postmodern social sciences' scopic, if not intrusive, stances simply replicate the aims of the Western patriarchal and bureaucratic state. This state quite unabashedly aims at a world order that is totally administered and controlled by the rule of instrumental reason, technology and

biopolitics. However, that aim is blocked by the inherent contradiction between the neocapitalist search for ever-increasing mass production and consumerism, on the one hand, and, on the other, the profitable production of ever more individualistic capitalist members and particular tastes. It seems to me that the social sciences –born out of the same cultural matrices as the sciences propagated during the European colonial expansion and now those of economic and information globalisation– are quite unable to proffer a comparative gaze that is neither ethnocentric nor ensorcelling. I wish to reiterate this suspicion by referring back to, among other things, the criticisms levelled against Enlightenment modernism by postcolonial and subaltern scholars and the ways of thinking put forward by the latter concerning their civilisation or universe, deriving from categories that are meaningful within their intellectual tradition. The question confronting any Africanist anthropologist operating in this multifaceted world marked by 'the end of the grand narratives on modernity' (Lyotard 1979) is this: how can Africanist anthropology sharpen its ambition to translate analogous civilisation-specific, possibly competing, experiences of worldmaking into a horizontal mosaic marked by borderlinking co-implication? Is Africanist anthropology not facing the need for an epistemological refoundation of its own conditions of possibility, following the collapse of the modernistic obsession[4] with a universal pointed skyward like the Tower of Babel?

Experiential-phenomenology and Intercultural Co-implcation

Following the lines of the postcolonial challenge that is the search for an unprejudiced, insofar as possible, approach to the untractable heterogenous modes of worldmaking, my answer implies various tracks of thinking and a reorientation of anthropological research. The development of these tracks may contribute to the epistemological refoundation of Africanist anthropology's possibility conditions.

First, let me repeat the core of my anthropological experience – an experience that has never ceased to instil in me the ideal of an unprejudiced *intersubjective and intercultural encounter* freed from the patriarchal colonial gaze. That ideal has inspired me gradually to

endorse an experiential-phenomenological perspective drawing on Merleau-Ponty's approach to perception, the body-subject, and intersubjectivity. When I perceive a person or a thing, my perceptual experience comprises a plurality of co-existing profiles: I experience the person from his or her various sides or profiles. The same occurs when the lifeworld is spontaneously perceived by me from the point of view of its significant inter-animating features, that is, primarily from the axes of each of the various 'subjects' (people, spirits, forces, animals and things or implements) as they are involved in webs of 'immediacy'. Starting from the pre-reflective intercorporeal experience of being-in-the-world, this perspectival-phenomenological approach gradually develops from the concrete bodily experience of the other to a consciousness intersubjectively opened from the outside, that is, from the experience of another embodied subject. Here one finds implied the tacit awareness of the otherness of the other, namely that of a situated grasp of each of the common activities with their various intentions and difference of perspective, intention or experience.

Such an awareness helps us to understand the tacit association of my lived body with the lived body of the other (subject, being): it is a sensory and imaginative awareness on the level of 'flesh' (*la chair*) as a tissue of sensible, desirous and imaginative being-in-the-world. Working along these lines, the later Merleau-Ponty (1964) described perception as the perceiving subject being him- or herself a part of the world and being another for the other, but feeling the latter's sensation. The researcher and fellow-subjects involved in an encounter appear as the 'flesh' of both body and world: my hand feels the sensations of the others, my sensations may tune in with the other's sensations. In other words, a sensual co-implication turns each of us into an outreaching hand, eye or ear, exploring the tangible, visible and audible and at the same time touching, seeing and speaking in the way the one or the other reciprocally wish to be touched, seen or comprehended. This perspective helps to disclose the level of one's participation in feelings of life (i.e. health, sickness, vitality) such as embarrassment, emotions, agency, the sense of space or self-identity, and hence, to enhance the mutual awareness of one another's shadowy side as well. When one subject's more

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powerful experience and perspective overwhelms the other subjects, the group may develop a tendency to adopt that individual's perspective (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 472). The intersubjective and interworld relationships thereby turn into some turn into a *perspectival encounter*. Similarly the intercorporeal and interworld relationships with the spirit or the ritual implements may turn into some *flowing interworld relatedness*, locally framed in terms of either beneficial or malefic invisible forces.

In line with this perspectival-phenomenological approach, moreover, I think here of the anthropologist's possible captivation by co-implication of the type that may develop between a lineage head and the lineage ancestors when addressed and offered sacrifices at the ancestral shrine, between a mediumistic diviner and his or her inquirers, or between a healer and a patient engaging in an initiatory treatment. Beyond this, each of those involved appear to act in tune with their innermost and socially shared sensitivity toward, and resonance with, their lifeworld's unceasing reorigination and becoming. The anthropologist may likewise delve into the various ways in which the host group's lifeworld opens up, either to ever emerging interworld borderlinking possibilities such as in trance-possession, mourning and enthronement, or, conversely, to bordercrossing ensorcelment (Devisch 1993, Devisch & Brodeur 1996, 1999, Devisch & de Mahieu 1979). Each of these borderlinking acts performs a largely sensuous drama of co-emergent intercorporeal, intersubjective or interhuman and interworld resonance and co-implication. Yaka culture contrasts this borderlinking and life-enforcing disposition (*mbote*) with the bordercrossing intent towards separation, violation, strife, envy and malevolence (*mbi*).

Entering as an anthropologist into such a resonance or echo between persons and worlds engages our way of being in the space of presence and encounter. Such resonance or echo steers one's presence in the direction of an other, which, in my view, is most often a plural subject or object. The space and modalities of the encounter are neither spread out or confined in advance. The encounter takes place only where the opening up to one another engenders an opening towards being and *significance*, or the emerging

production of signifiers. The popular etymology of *connaissance* suggests a comprehending (*co-naissance*, literally co-birth) or a form of being 'born with' the other. The notion of *connaissance*, which colloquially refers to experiential knowing and shared insight, offers an insightful linguistic rendition of the sensual, intercorporeal, dialogical and non-appropriative comprehending and co-implication of subjects and their lifeworld. It is the mode of reception and encounter in which the anthropologist is engaged by virtue of the sensory, emotional and thus corporeal or 'fleshy' sensing of, and co-implication in, the significant inter-animating features of lifeworld and subjects. The concerted action of comprehending develops as a *co-naissance*, for example, within the context of an apprenticeship or an initiation, a palaver, a marriage or a healing. Spirit possession acts as a very powerful dispensation of energy and potentiality from the interworldly to the human. It empowers in particular the intercorporeality of the initiates and very much 'feeds' their Imaginary and Symbolic insertion.

Second, anthropology's *borderlinking aim* locally engages in a *transferential and matrixial* endeavour. The transferential space from which I as an anthropologist speak constitutes an experience in the encounter, that is, a presence in the other and in their world or a way of opening a world by opening myself to it. It is not in doing science that an anthropologist feels implicated; rather, what mobilises me in the anthropological encounter is an all-inclusive appeal carried by the *signifiance* that emerges in the largely unconscious production of signifiers that occurs beyond a fully disclosable and consistent order of meaningfulness. Such *signifiance* gropingly elaborates a captivating process of production of loosely related signifiers, in particular in life-bearing encounters and ritual drama. In its maximal intensity, the experiential and shared mode of intersubjective and intercultural comprehending spells out a trans-subjective borderlinking and co-implication with others and the world that has been so insightfully described by Bracha Ettinger (2006a,b, 2009). Such borderlinking is most intensely developed in the *matrixial* stratum, by way of strings and bonds between mother and child, in the gift of life and com-passionate wit(h)nessing. The matrixial borderlinking and borderspace thus develop from the very dawn of intersubjective existence in the maternal womb and of a bodily

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experience of the other in the postnatal phase. This capacity is captured both sensually and sensorially as well as by way of feel-thinking and co-implication.

Ettinger's post-Lacanian psychoanalytical matrixial theory proves heuristic for dealing with the inter-generational and intersubjective '*response-ability*' to the unthought-in-thought (*l'impensé du discours*, according to the phrase of the late Gérard Buakasa, 1973), such as the latent intergenerational memory traces in a family. Ultimately, the interweave of the complementary phenomenological and matrixial perspectives provides us with the means to more properly grasp agency, feel-thinking and subsymbolic *signifiance*. It is basically an intercorporeal and intersubjective perceptiveness that emerges in the matrixial ambience of divination or of the healing cults and other rites of passage. It fosters a 'com-passionate' co-implication and 'co-response-ability' which exceeds the mere representation that subjects may construct of events, things and one another during the encounter. It also opens the anthropological attention beneath and beyond the rigidity and systematicity of mere verbal information solicited and reported on along the lines of scientific criteria regarding objective evidence, factual and rational knowledge and reflective practices. *Phenomenological and matrixial sensibility* in the field in turn opens up to the human disclosing itself and to intersubjectivity echoing people's sense of interworld resonance. One might point here to the experience of bereavement in the context of burial and mourning, the lucid awakening of the initiate from entranced spirit possesion or dreamwork, or the blissfulness or discordance expressed in poetry, artful figuration or drama. Such ambience sustains the acute interworld perceptiveness peculiar to the mediumistic divinatory oracle, and to other states, whether initiatory or not, of wonderment and sheer virtuality which open up to the yet-to-come or to the yet-to-disclose. In contrast, parody and sorcery corrupt such a formation by deceiving it or turning it into dissent and paranoia, or possibly into sheer anxiety.

My gradual initiation into Yaka culture offered me a similarly matrixial experience of porosity and sharing-in-difference: it thus led me to comprehend –in the terms of the host community– the art of sensitive borderlinking of the familiar and the strange, self

and other, the living and the dead, the speakable and unspeakable, the visible and invisible. Over the years, it inspired in me a constant retroflection from 'here' to 'over there' and vice versa.

The Split Self and Otherness, 'here' and 'over there'

The crux or knot of intercultural understanding lies in an epistemological revisiting of the nature of shared experience, intersubjectivity and otherness, in an attempt at reaching beyond merely seeing the other in the mirror of self. For a long time, in my case, that understanding was very much a question of simply obtaining fresh ideas and concepts that I would attempt to comprehend from within my ongoing intercultural polylogue and co-implication. In all these years of generous adoption by and exchange in host communities and popular networks displaying a great diversity of identities (in nine African countries but in the Congo in particular), my constant aim was that of attaining a comprehension in the terms of my hosts' sociocultural practices. Gradually, my research in Congo, as well as my supervision of several doctoral studies in southeastern Nigeria and one in southwestern Kenya, led me to devote more attention to the plural definition of self. It turned my attention to the subjects' phantasmatic world ('this is what we are'), in particular to the split within the self between the (self-)conscious and the unconscious, the speakable and the Real. And the Real nests in the irreducible Extimacy in the self.

Thinking here of converts to Christianity and first or second generation immigrants to the shantytowns of the capital city, one might well ask: How do these converts and slumdwellers come to terms with the Eurocentric mirror –so forcibly put to them at school, in the churches and mass media– in which they self-deceptively frame themselves, their actions and aims over and again. That mirror, moreover, frames their original identity and that of the village inhabitants or other ethnocultural groups in line with an alienating Imaginary of adversarial otherness, deemed pagan and backward, as I will examine below. Witnessing the estrangement of Congolese people of my generation or older has left me with a bitter sense of guilt due to our colonialist history and in particular its exoticising paranoid, and thus persecuting, Imaginary. My acknowledgement,

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in the early postcolonial era, of the shocking effect of the domineering Eurocentric mirror, one that had over the years been erected by the coloniser or missionary and many a development expert, saddled me with a moral debt. It weighed all the heavier since that same estranging strangeness, now in reverse, affected the autochthonous and allochthonous anthropologist alike as they came to be seen as fervent disciples of a Western-type research, whatever the stance or perspective they took. Inasmuch as subaltern people –without exception– are held to long for increased consumption of the technological products from the North, the same Western-based and estranging development discourse continues to be (re)produced to this very day. Here I think of much scientific writing and the discussions in the transnational media regarding the state, education and economic development as well as the debates on global democracy and international (armed) peacekeeping missions.

In spite of so much illusion, deception and disappointment, I have never relented in feeling a sense of interpersonal loyalty towards, and on behalf of, my Yaka host community. I have deepened my understanding of how the Yaka view themselves, and that, conversely, for the sake of enquiring, from the context of their mirror and by means of their own tools for self-understanding, into my native Flemish culture and its life forms and world grammars. Being awarded an honorary doctorate by Unikin has added a sense of consecutive reciprocity, providing my African and European colleagues with an opportunity to assess the sense, scope and validity of anthropological knowledge that aspires to rendering the subjects' reality in line with their own codes and rationale. And here, moreover, I seek a reflective self-understanding moved by the pretence to self-critical transparency.

As a European anthropologist committed to neutralising as much as possible any ethnocentric bias, it has been my lasting attempt to understand the Yaka and neighbouring subaltern groups in their own terms. I think here in particular of the adaptive and resilient capacity of their strong intercorporeality and sociability, as well as of their knowledge practices and worldview in the context of the clash of civilisations. Most of my anthropological experience has been gained in the context of observing and neatly documenting Yaka men's and women's primary activities and concerns. These

concerns, moreover, have been investigated in relation to the colonial and postcolonial economic and political mutations at work both in the Yaka natal region in Southwestern DR Congo and in Kinshasa's shantytowns. My understanding of the bivalence in the local Congolese lifeworlds has uprooted many of my earlier Christian ideals regarding emancipation. Conversely, it has inspired my enquiry into some much-overlooked dimensions, both alienating and unthought, in my native Flanders in Belgium. It has also led me to question much of the modernist doxa and episteme of the Western social science traditions in which I have been trained.

I thus have come to develop a *bifocal anthropological lens* through which to look at local practices and knowledge forms 'here' and 'over there' from one another's perspective. Further, I began selectively to integrate, into my perspective and my theorising of 'here' and 'over there', both the Western scientific rationality and the innovating force of African knowledge practices and concepts of the world, the invisible and the work of the negative. Such a bifocal perspective seeks to acknowledge the possible unconscious transference at play while aiming at an encounter with the 'other' – in the double sense of the socioculturally otherised persons and worlds as exemplary or adversarial, and of the psychic enigmatic Other in ourselves.

Sociocultural Othering, Singular Psychic Otherness, and the Other

Otherness is at the heart of any encounter with both an other or oneself. Anthropological work in an '*other' socioculture* –in particular among people who have been 'otherised' by colonial and Western-derived modernising programmes set up by the state, churches or NGOs– compels a thorough self-questioning on the part of both the allochthonous and autochthonous anthropologist. It interrogates the unconscious drives, Desire and fantasies at play in the various participants in the anthropological encounter. Indeed, many an anthropological endeavour that has been undertaken in recent decades in Africa south of the Sahara as well as in Western academia has seen the need to drastically rethink itself. It moreover may have paid attention to the local knowledge practices particularly where

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the reserach has not from the start been formulated in one of the imperial world languages. That self-examination became inevitable in the aftermath of the accession to independence of most African countries in the late 1950s or early 1960s.

The concept of sociocultural other(ness) refers primarily to that interpersonal and intergroup indicator of a particular sociocultural identity. It is one evidenced in the given subjects' particular intergroup and intercultural relations reported on from the perspectives of the state, their community, mothertongue, gender, religion or cultural particularities. By *otherness* –in the adopted sociocultural perspective, I mean a marked diversity of subjects, genders, age categories, groups, breeds of activities, capacities or spaces of provenance. In other words, the encountered sociocultural other may appear as rather *exemplary* or *adversarial*, that is, as someone resembling and worth imitating or, in contrast, as a threatening outsider. (For the notion of adversarial cultural otherness, I am indebted to Jeddi & Harzallah 1985.) Indeed, a shadow side lingers over the speaking subject's stance of more or less conscious attraction and cooperation, versus that of disengagement or indifference, vis-à-vis the other. Unclarified dimensions in the subject's shadow side may unknowingly impel the latter to search for some self-healing in his or her networking or professional work.

Professors Archie Mafeje and Jimi Odesina, in their contributions in chapter two, argue how much anthropology, particularly in its racist apartheid craze, has shockingly essentialised forms of otherness into inferiority and adversity. Contrary to their rejection in anthropology of the notion of otherness in all its facets, however, I take anthropology also to be a self-questioning encounter with some unconscious psychic 'Otherness' in both the researcher and his or her partners in the intercultural encounter. And here classical anthropology may be at a loss for concepts to properly understand its own intellectual fate. It was George Devereux (1978, 1980) [5] and Jeanne Favret-Saada (1977) who clarified the significant theoretical and practical research implications of the complementary psychoanalytic and anthropological approaches in the field of culture. In the anthropological encounter, such as Devereux and Favret-Saada see it, the biassing effect of transference at play should spur the researcher to self-critically turn back on him- or herself. It

regards the place of the question (for help, information, insight, respect, intercultural recognition) gradually understood and reciprocally addressed between the researcher and the host group. Which affects and Imaginary does this transaction stir up?

That is to say that our interest in the sociocultural other echoes the *Extimacy* or shadowy zone within ourselves. In the mirroring of self in the sociocultural other who grants us hospitality, we may feel enticed to give ourselves over to whatever grasps us as exciting or deceiving, estranging or frightening. Such mirroring sets the stage for a kind of sympathising or near-fusion of the type as may happen in a frenzied meeting or when we are enjoying banter with friends. However, the paranoid Imaginary mirror in whose terms we otherise the socioculturally other largely reflects but also feeds the Extimacy or intimate Otherness in ourselves. This *Extimacy* (a term coined by Lacan) acts very much as an unspeakable, and at times engulfing, force of the Real (again a Lacanian notion) inside the self. The Extimate is the 'excentric Other-myself': it is the intimate shadowy side or irreducible Otherness inside the self. The 'signifiers' of the Otherness inside ourselves generate some effect of paradoxical *Jouissance* or Enjoyment, namely some *Jouis-sens* (literally a *Jouissance* of meaning). This is unconsciously instigated by *Lalangue* –as Lacan ironically defines the subjective 'idiolect': think of childish babble, glossolalia or sensuous evocations of pain and pleasure, where signifiers are turned into mere embodied *Jouissance*. It entails a speaking body beyond representation, materialising Desire into letters for the purpose of enjoying the Real. This *Jouis-sens* in the Extimate may unconsciously capture and split the self. Moreover, it may connect with or feed vaguely discerned but overpowering fantasies, impulses of irritation, agitation or lustful attraction. It may also enfold memory traces and shadowy representations of significant others around which an Extimate fold of our identity constructs itself. That Extimacy may inspire in us some spontaneous and barely speakable sensing out of, and valuation regarding, particular situations and places, sounds, smells and colours, in terms of one or another experience we have had or been witness to.

The Extimacy in us, as *Jouis-sens*, may be elicited by some startling difference we encounter in others 'out there', such as their sense of honour or disrepute or their perverse views on gender and individual

identity, orderliness and fateful indeterminacy, fortune and misfortune, good or ill health, or death and afterlife. Variously it may be stimulated by the divergence of habitus and religious and cosmological beliefs at play in the fields of mother tongue, class and ethnocultural belonging. That Extimacy inhabiting us, moreover, mobilises and feeds our barely conscious preferences or refusals and our unfathomable Desire or barely nameable traumas and denials. It may trigger memory images and traces in one's personal or family history, such as recollections of highly positive emotions (great delight or excitement, frenzy or thrill) or profoundly negative ones (suffering or grief, anxiety or deprivation, fear or rage, such as might be experienced in war and other life-threatening violence). Extimacy is a shadowy zone of the self that, ready to draw a veil over the unspeakable traumatic holes in the family memory or collective history, may feed some passionate intergenerational preoccupation. One thinks here of the subject's unreflected concern with order and restoration, plenty and lack, or tempering and assuaging, as well as with hopes, fates and moral debts.

Our appraisal of the sociocultural other is unconsciously prejudiced or biassed by the *Imaginary Other* –taken in the Lacanian sense– in us as a major facet of that Extimacy. The Imaginary Other basically refers to the m/Other, originally the mother, then the absent father and similar instances that mould the perceptive, – such as, the Symbolic or Imaginary– field. The Imaginary Other is like an envelope of some unsaid or unspeakable reality, a mixture of a particular propensity and some elusive lack or opaque death drive: this acts as one's shadow side or psychic space of remembering, resistance and transference that quite imperceptibly haunts or even unbinds the self (Corin 2007: 300 ff.). Intersubjectively, the Imaginary Other solicits and installs a transference vis-à-vis a 'subject supposed to know' (Lacan), one who is the pivot of transference. The transference relation in an exchange process, such as between healer or diviner and client, is at work prior to the self becoming able to explicitly and consciously articulate or enunciate his or her own longings or inner and site-specific experience. The shifting between the diviner's and inquirer's perspectives, or between those of healer and patient, is a process replete with seduction and negotiation, trickery and mimicry.

Now and then the subject may experience, more encompassingly but most often unreflectively, some form of Symbolic Otherness in the demands or ideals, recognition or call of duty emerging in him- or herself. That is to say that a subject is always somehow becoming-Other in as much as s/he is acted by the Other (in the sense of the classical Lacan, in his middle or structuralist period inspired by Lévi-Strauss' structuralism, holding to the chain of signifiers; Lacan 2004/ 1962-1963). In the perspective of the classical Lacan, the *Symbolic Other or Otherness* is a central structuring position –not a person, but basically the ready-made world of language or discourse– in the Symbolic order or pregiven chains of signifiers figuring over and above the others who may be concrete incarnations of that Other. In other words, resonating in the self, the/that Symbolic Otherness in us deals with our inner being undergoing the structure of language and the semantic encoding of the perceptual field. That Symbolic Otherness as the order of exchange includes the order of *ethic of intersubjectivity*, namely the sanctioned modes of relating to others along communally handed-down norms, ideals, expectations and relations. That Otherness thus also entails the Symbolic order comprising the structuring forces of culture, -kinship and other social institutions.

A Rejoinder to van Binsbergen and Mudimbe

That three decades after my initial anthropological fieldwork I became a (post)Lacanian psychoanalyst and practising clinician reflects part of my unremitting search for insight into the human being and his or her great plurality of being, longings and concerns. I am asked by van Binsbergen, in his reaction to my academic address in this chapter, whether my *psychoanalytic experience* is a promising and valid key to my *intercultural scientific endeavour* facing sociocultural and psychic otherness. Let me say, first, that my clinical psychoanalytical practice is recent and for the time being confined to patients from my cultural extraction. I approach the matter as follows. Methodologically I use a number of psychoanalytical concepts as heuristic openers in the clinical practice as well as in my anthropological screening of data and tools. The other question I have been asked is this: Do I in fact revisit my anthropological

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experience with both the theoretical and clinical eye that my most experienced psychoanalyst colleague, Claude Brodeur, had adopted when writing me letters following each chapter of our joint book (Devisch & Brodeur 1996, 1999)?

Contrary to van Binsbergen's suggestion, I do not subscribe to a 'psychoanalytical anthropology'; one cannot put a socioculture on the couch. However, inasmuch as my phenomenological-anthropological comprehension is by definition not elicited in a clinical encounter with subjects and is therefore unfit to transferentially mobilise and cogently express some repressed unconscious dimensions, I expressly avoid advancing encompassing psychoanalytic hypotheses in my essay. This objection notwithstanding, the journey I have embarked upon involves a quest for those psychoanalytical concepts whose heuristic value can assist in clarifying the pitfalls of my complex phenomenological intercultural analysis. Rather than relying on the notion of unconscious, for example, I use terms such as the unthought-in-thought, the unspeakable or unfathomable, the inexpressible or undefinable, or the unknowingly said. But the refinement of a culture-sensitive gaze and listening, in African contexts, is certainly not a capacity that is proffered by American ego-psychoanalysis in search of the self-conscious and narcissistic ego. Nor is it generated by the structuralist preoccupation, in many Francophone psychoanalytical circles, with the symbolic function that would be at work within the unconscious –language-like– processes of human becoming, interlocution, the paternal function or the death drive.

More specifically, as an anthropologist I have recourse to those psychoanalytical concepts (whether they spring from Freud's, Lacan's or Ettinger's theories) which allow me to refine my attuning to mere subverbal and unthought dimensions of psychic or sociocultural otherness. Allow me to recast the problem in the light of van Binsbergen's question: Do these psychoanalytical concepts contribute to some epistemological and intercultural refoundation of anthropology? In answer to this query, I contend that the recourse to these borderlinking concepts, by colleagues of diverse cultural or methodological horizons, can indeed deepen our mutual involvement in the intercultural polylogue[6]. Mobilising these concepts aims to make an emancipating contribution to both

anthropology and psychoanalysis in their respective understanding of the work of culture, in or alongside the various *modi* of affect, the Imaginary, the Real and the work of the negative. I maintain throughout the hope that in the process these disciplines may at least loosen their ties with Eurocentric precedents.

Van Binsbergen further interrogates the anthropologist's psychic makeup. He seeks to clarify the risk of alienation that the researcher's originary fantasies may impose on his or her intercultural enterprise. He points to a pleasure-pain nucleus in the anthropologist's 'voluntary' submissiveness in the anthropological encounter –which in my case was one marked by a debt relating to our Belgian colonial past. As a psychoanalyst, I would say that such a hypothesis, though quite postulable, can only be materialised within a clinical setting of a long and painful transference relationship that analytically 'works through' the *Jouissance* and Desire that the participant anthropologist would have experienced. And such may happen in a process that develops much more unconsciously than van Binsbergen is assuming.

I dare to say in a more generalising perspective that anthropological writing increasingly proves ill-suited to fully cast light on the organising or original phantasms that contribute towards the mobilisation and moulding of the individual and collective Imaginary at work in the intercultural encounter. In a bid to lay bare the dynamics of regression and transference in the encounter, the anthropologist would need to associatively reenact strands of his or her anthropological field experience by speaking-out, associatively, in a transference relation with a critically listening third. To be sure, the anthropological encounter in the field is pervaded by both captivation and the ambition to know, but also by constant caution, self-critique and anxiety. However, setting up a clinical reenactment and psychoanalytic working through of the very singular intercultural encounter seems to me quite improbable.

I trust my colleagues van Binsbergen and also Mudimbe will not take offense if I do not further unravel my concern –in large part unconsciously steered no doubt– for paying my debt towards subaltern populations with whom I feel profoundly and enduringly associated. For want, in this essay, of an appropriate transferential framework likely to assist me in emerging more as the subject of

my own multisited history, it is impossible for me to put into an objectifying and transparent narrative everything that led me to becoming an anthropologist. What I can say here is that my quest for adoption by the Yaka community of Yitaanda and its Kinshasa networks, and the choices I have made regarding research topics, entail a radical questioning of self. I have in fact no other means to unravel this but the personal myth evoking the family and internal drama –or chains of signifiers– regarding my own name, René/Taanda N-leengi[7]. It is indeed an affective drama that is related to my initially coming to the Congo for the purpose of pursuing philosophical studies in the intellectual and ascetic environment of the Jesuit institute at Kimwenza-Kinshasa. That period in my life formally came to a close in early 1971 in favour of my turning to what was to be a life-long commitment to social anthropology and, three decades later, my becoming a psychoanalyst-clinician as well. In view of the fact that all my Congolese/Zairean professors at the University of Kinshasa ultimately opted for the discipline of sociology, then reputed to be the science of modernisation, the 'school of anthropology' that shaped my outlook was initially that of my juvenile responsiveness to the sociocultural aspirations of my fellow African students in philosophy and anthropology. But the very dynamic of the formative influences I experienced are owed above all to the co-implication and 'co-response-ability' (Ettinger 2009) that I developed in the multisited in-depth encounter with my Yaka interlocutors and other African communities or networks. And yet one might detect, recurrent throughout my various institutional commitments, the same unspeakable and unfathomable Real (which is impossible to symbolise) and *'Jouis-sens'* at work. The latter entails particular signifiers and affects feeding a Desire and some 'unsymbolisable' affect for *Jouissance* or painful Enjoyment that I shared, for example, with the host group or with analysands as well colleagues anthropologists or psychoanalysts.

I am grateful to professor Valentin Mudimbe for offering us in *Kata Nomon* the benefit of his captivating contribution to intercultural polylogue. I find it difficult, at this point of my reflection on multisited intercultural dialogue, to do justice to his extremely rich and largely corroborative analysis. However, I would like briefly to outline how the issues he raises go to the very heart of the

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contribution that current postmodern anthropology –at least that privileging the crisis in the grand narratives– makes to an intercultural dialogue today. Only recently did I come to realise how much my being unsettled by the predicament characterising the colonised or subaltern people in DR Congo echoed in me the trauma of World War I & II. These wars had uprooted and deeply grieved my parents' families and devastated my region of origin, situated as it was in the battle zone of World War I in that part of West Flanders bordering with France and extending towards the North Sea (Devisch 2009, forthcoming). It now appears to me that the postcolonial guilt marking my generation and type of provenance had already been kindled when I came to settle in the Congo shortly after independence. In my generation, this colonial and postcolonial fate resonated with the massive trauma from the wars that my forebears had unspokenly handed down for us to metabolise. This traumatic heritage formed a shadow-side of existence, and acted as a silent call of duty. It served as a catalyst to us urging a more profound *'co-naissance'* of trauma, and constituted an appeal for 'co-response-able' co-implication in a process of redress.

A certain psychoanalytic sensitivity causes me to identify my paradoxical preoccupation –spotted by Professor Mudimbe at the opening of *Kata Nomon*– as the particularly distinctive mark of my co-implicating and 'response-able', self-questioning and scientific anthropological involvement with the particular historical, cultural and interactional textures of my host groups in Southwestern Congo and Kinshasa. In his conclusion, Mudimbe reissues the same characterisation of my approach, defining it within the space of my festive but contextually very constrained academic lecture. He thus qualifies it as a preoccupation pertaining 'to ethics, more precisely to meta-ethics'. Due to the fact that my intercultural preoccupation in the Congo involves two very different orientations of ethical implication, as I will work out in this section, I would situate Mudimbe's definition of my (meta-)ethical preoccupation as one pertaining to an ethic of intersubjectivity. This is to be understood in line with a phenomenological definition of the subject's ethically-ruled relation of openness to the other. Seen in this perspective, I have indeed felt particularly engaged –as I outlined in Section 1– by a moral debt that I had intersubjectively contracted as a Belgian

vis-à-vis my Congolese hosts. Yet, and exceeding Mudimbe's perspective, my primary intent as a participant anthropologist was to engage with the subjects' Ethics of Desire –a notion of the later Lacan.

The twofold ethical implication –namely, in the fields of intersubjectivity and of Desire– finds an echo in the Yaka view of the Human as marked by two major inclinations of desire. To clarify this point, let me turn to Yaka socioculture. There one first finds the commonsense notion of *luzolu* or self-conscious willful desire, motive or intention, this being a driving force for an ethic of intersubjectivity. The other notion of desire pertains largely to the subcultural phenomena of attraction or allurement (*ndzala*) and of envy (*yiphala*). Both attraction and envy are seen to spring from the subject's barely conscious facing, very much a corporeal event, the magnetising indeterminacy or holes of being. Reference to the views of the later Lacan on the Ethic of Desire help to clarify these attracting and luring forces at play on the intercorporeal level. My reflective look back at my involvement with this Ethic of Desire – close to the perspective that professor Mudimbe characterises in terms of the *orant*– has indeed qualified my anthropological approach.

First, allow me briefly to examine the extent to which the preoccupation with an *ethic of intersubjectivity* actually corresponds to the Yaka ethically-ruled concern with and openness to the other. *Willful, intentional desire* (*luzolu*) originally develops around the nodes of longings, intentions and demands into which the body of the infant is woven by the primary group and local society. As signified in language, particularly the mother tongue and the currency of the Symbolic, desire –in its commonsense notion of intentional longing– transpires from the dynamics of demand on the part of, and in response to, the Other. In a widely-accepted understanding of the term in Yaka culture, desire (*luzolu, -zola*) denotes an essential yearning, will or want arising from within the body-self, while being expressed in language and thus submitted to its regulation and the Other's assent. This yearning or demand is addressed, in the presupposition of common values and preferences, to a fellow-subject who may be of the other gender or of another generation or group. It is through such desirous demand or will that youngsters

may solicit cheerful recognition or mutual sympathy (*-zolakana*), most often among those of their own gender and age-group. It is this desirous will which makes conduct and things appear to each of the subjects as they do. An adult man should express his desire in his vigorous, purposeful or willful appearance, and through words and deeds that, like the gravity (*zitu*) befitting a senior male, solicit admiration (*-zolana*). 'Having heart' (*kena ye mbuundu*) is the quintessential attribute of a desirable woman, one who is admired (*-zolana*) for her control over her impulses, wants and envy, and for her generous care for housemates. As she becomes more aged, that woman will be admired for her good words in the home. On its behalf, love turns the desirous will into a reciprocal demand or mere desirability. It is addressed to the other's desire: *-zolasana*, literally, reciprocally kindling the other's desire whilst being solicited by it. This dynamic witnesses to the Extimacy at the very core of self; Desire decentres the subject, from her or his mere state of physical needs into a longing for admiration or confirmation from other people, or into a self-reflective response to the wishes, demands, constraints or interests of others.

The ethical preoccupation in my work that Mudimbe addresses parallels, in Yaka cultural terms, the maternal uncle's engagement in the ethic of intersubjectivity. Indeed, my Yaka hosts spontaneously associated my status as a Belgian guest-anthropologist with the position of maternal uncle. Let me clarify that position. In my persistent attempts to include my hosts in my never-ending inner scrutiny, I dare say that I have lived my anthropological field experience as a process of learning from, and in the terms of, those who welcomed me. The original and socially-marked shaping of wilful Desire or Desire-request in Yaka society is paradigmatically the concern of the maternal uncle. His role is to articulate in discourse what animates life transmission and how the family wishes the child in his sister's family to develop as far as longings, aspirations or wants –regarding his or her sense of sharing, cleanliness, temperance and related virtues– are concerned (Devisch 1993: 121-122). The maternal uncle personifies the socioculture's ethic of intersubjectivity, namely the fundamental expectation that the uterine descendants above all cheerish to transmit life, steer it into reciprocity, and thus articulate it within the larger society. In

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others words, the uncle is the one who urges a conduct of self and modalities of exchange, in particular between life-givers and life-takers, that seek to sustain and structure the uterine life-flow within the vital life-threads of society. This life-enhancing conduct of self and the relationships that ensue develop in particular through childbirth, the daily care for the domestic family, commensality and the manifold modes of sharing in the home, as well as the rule of avoidance, restraint or shame.

Second, and alongside the ethic of intersubjectivity, the Yaka celebrate an *Ethic of Desire* in the desire's double-edged common longing for the good (*mbote, kyambote*) and for strenghtening life (-*kolasana*) and blissfulness (*kyeesi*) or, in contrast, for the destructive death drive (*kyoosi*, literally the drive to close up, make rigid). The Ethic of Desire, moreover, seeks for a balance between desire's expected sensual and intersubjective longing and its tendency to slip away from the web of sociality and society's present demands. This is to say that, in the Yaka cultural view, the Ethic of Desire, like the avuncular function, positions itself firmly on the edge of Desire's promising intention and liability and its potentially self-serving, hence destructive envy. Desire may self-destructively compose with death drive, which is ever-susceptible of deconstructing the Ethical base of society. Indeed, the Ethic of Desire is articulated on a precarious ridge of tension between, on the one hand, the promise of satiation of individual cravings and of self-control in one's outgoing to the other. On the other hand, the Ethic of Desire warns the subject away from actions and attitudes that may undo sociality and alienate him- or herself in unsatisfiable greed, rivalry, destructiveness and unnameable or unknowable longings. Desire's unsatisfiable nature, that is, may possibly exhibit itself as sucking the individual into a fascination for whatever negates life, be it sheer darkness, chaos or an unthinkable void. As Yaka culture conceives it, the social subject is to a large extent formed outside the self. The self is moulded by the demands and possibly threatening evaluation or gaze of others, by the frustrations caused by another's superior qualities or possessions, or by one's own attraction by coveted things.

Physical appetite or allurement, termed *ndzala*, that can overcome the subject, focusses on a somewhat disturbing awareness of some

momentary physical lack and the attraction to satisfy that need or want so as to attain a mere pleasurable state of satisfaction. Such an understanding entwines the enticing aroma of food that stirs one's 'hunger for food' with its unconscious urge for satiation, or merges one's tiredness into a 'hunger for sleep'. It tangles one's material needfulness with a 'hunger for money', or the alluring appeal that a woman may have on a man –and vice versa– by way of one's sexual appetence or –literally– 'hunger for woman'. Here, Yaka culture does not so much privilege human intersubjectivity but the mere intercorporeality that senses out *ndzala* where it has been trapped by some lack and its satiation.

In the Yaka collective imaginary a barely culturalisable impulse or attraction, termed *ndzala*, may selfishly turn into a largely hallucinatory, but socially blameworthy, ingression into the other when this craving (*ndzala*) palpably develops into *jealousy* or *envy* (*yiphala*), *lust* or *passion* (*luhweetu*), *greed* or *rapacity* (*kheni*). In the cultural view, such overwhelming or intrusive desire occurs especially when a person enviously or resentfully pursues a type of things or power that s/he normally would deny to others, and such behaviour is usually linked with bewitchment. This kind of craving contrasts with Yaka socioculture's emphasis –in its many regulations regarding proper speech, conduct or food– on attuning oneself to the propensity of and co-resonance between life-forms. Such craving thereby gives way to a frugal mode of living without subduing the subject's desire wilfully to lead an aesthetic life. Collective representations, moreover, very much focus on desire's bivalence – its state of being in the grip of *Jouissance* at the core of one's Extimacy. Compared to the alternation of day and night, the seasons and the lunar cycle, desire alternates between moments of willfulness and those of overwhelming impulses from selfish and obscure forces. Desire springs from the Desire of the Other, and moulds and orients the subject's sociocultural openness to the enigma of the Other's Desire, that is, to intercorporeal and interworldly, i.e. interconnecting reality as ever emerging or unfinished and enigmatic, auratic or haunting.

Yaka expressive culture seeks to come to terms with the deeply bivalent Desire for either enhancing or destroying life, whose dual nature very much evokes that of the lunar and menstrual cycle,

ecology's rotation, or *Jouissance*'s alluring and toxic urges. This concern is very much in the forefront of celebrations or ritual acts that seek to reempower, rebalance, reweave or protect the sociocultural web. Such is the case with communal feasting and bereavement, divinatory oracles, sacrifices and atonement rituals, trance-possession and rituals serving to protect someone from or against sorcerous aggression (Devisch 1993, Devisch & Brodeur 1999). In other words, these dimensions are very much in the forefront of acts that elicit trust, bliss, enthusiasm or social adherence and that are meant to counter debilitating feelings of anxiety, morbidity or ambivalence. They are, moreover, at play in the *double entendre* in humour or parody.

Echoing Desire's bivalence, the maternal uncle in his avuncular function wields the power of life and of death over his nephews and nieces: he is the guarantor of their belonging to the matrilineage and of their well-being. He is nonetheless feared as an ambivalent and potentially persecutional figure. Coming from the same womb as the mother of his uterine nephews and nieces, it is in his capacity to resort to a dual, life-sustaining and life-taking, even incestuous or sorcerous relation, in their regard. The functions of maternal uncle, granduncle and great-granduncle mediate between the visible and invisible or diurnal and nocturnal worlds. They may vacillate between ethical diligence and ironic, if not perverse, disregard 'in the nocturnal realm' for the Ethical law. Indeed, the maternal uncle impersonates the border function between alliance and communal filiation or social contract and consanguinity. He acknowledges and allows for the forceful expression and social make-up of the desires and strivings of his sister, her husband and their children in the co-existing generations (Devisch 1993: 92-131).

Turning now to my anthropological approach in particular, I must acknowledge the extent to which my perspective echoes the double-edged intercorporeal and intersubjective awareness at play among Yaka people. My reflective stance interrogates the subject –both anthropologist and host– who is gripped by, on the one hand, both desirousness and the fissure between the evident or the chains of signifiers –the master signifier, the Other who speaks through the subject, the Other's Desire– and, on the other hand, the unrecognisable or unspeakable, unthought-in-thought or

unknowingly said. Such intersubjective reflection on my transferential involvement with the host group's largely unconscious concern with the fate and resilience of its members by definition includes an 'Ethical dimension'. And it it is this dimension that lies at the heart of my scientific endeavour. Yet it properly concerns the *Ethic of Desire*, in the sense of the later Lacan, namely in that it entails taking responsibility for my hosts' and my own not appropriating stance with regard to the unthought-in-thought and the suspension between sheer impossibility and disruption versus pressing potentialities articulated through society's Symbolic and Imaginary evidences. The Ethic of Desire summons the anthropologist and fellow-subjects to come in contact with one another's embodied desirousness. This contact is traversed by phantasms of Otherness and *Jouissance*, and also by language and the Symbolic order. The anthropologist sensitive to the hosts' Ethic of Desire thus keeps him- or herself free from any presupposed signifiying chain in order to allow the host group to set the relation in motion at least at the borders of indeterminacy, that is, the engulfing void of *Das Ding* as the trace of the Real within representation (Lacan 2004/1962-1963). At moments of intense encounter, the anthropologist, led to give up the Symbolic effect of the signifier, feels summoned to open up to a non-symbolic effect of the signifier, one that touches on the Real –and it is precisely here that intercorporeal Desire might emerge, affect and steer the intercultural encounter. The paradox of such encounter is that it accompanies –almost physically or very sensorially– with a reciprocally disillusioning stance, one without a hero, master discourse or revealer of the disembodied truth. This absence appears in the gap or split between the conscious and the unconscious – indicating truth or deceit, luck or basic lack– which is as yet veiled by the signifier. Desire cannot be conceived except as expression of the sacrifice that the subject unconsciously makes of his or her controlled gratification and intelligibility. Desire thus departs from the discourse of meaning and truth, and of subjective knowing. The more the subjects in the encounter suspend their Desire to produce some meaning for the anthropologist's satisfaction, the more Desire may emerge as that which exceeds both demand and need, or lack of being.

Let me further define some aspects of the evolving Lacanian views: that of the classical Lacan on language, Otherness and Desire as well as on the split subject, and that of the later Lacan on the Ethic of a shared Desire. The split subject or self in excess of structure is split between two forms of Otherness: the ego of ideal mirror images, and the unconsciousness caused by the Other's Desire. Desire is the reality of the unconscious; for the classical Lacan, the unconscious is the language of the Other. The classical Lacanian view addresses the speaking subject as split between the speaking/grammatical subject (enunciator, captured self) and the language spoken (the enunciated, the spoken subject thrown-in-the-world of pre-existing socio-symbolic relations, namely the Other of language). This split induces the Desire to fill the gap; the structural gap, however, renders the satiation of Desire impossible. The enunciating subject is the conscious one: moulded by the Symbolic formations, s/he is speaking in lines with his or her sense of self and –in the terms of the classical Lacan– the Desire-demand and want of being or encounter with his or her phantasmatic world –socialised through discourse. Yet the enunciator is paradoxically bound up and torn asunder by language. In the accession of the Desire which is ours, according to the classical Lacan, the Ethical entails the unveiling of Desire constituted in the Symbolic register as that which cannot be satiated, inasmuch as it refers to a drive for unification with the m/Other which can never be realised or satisfied. As such, the accession of Desire comprises a process of the recovery of a way of becoming the subject of my Desire.

The rethinking devoted by the later Lacan to the (inter)subjective beyond language resulted in his formulation of an Ethic of Desire. As the later Lacan incisively works out, the encounter is permeated by what has an unconscious –Imaginary, Real– hold on the self yet lacks in truth, stability or speakability. Some unthought-in-thought, unconscious thought or memory-traces in the self and family involve forgetting or repressing. The latter unfold in the unconscious in an interplay of 'floating signifiers' (hollow, for they have been emptied of their meaning), pulsionality and the economy of *Jouissance* along and beyond the signifying chain. The subject is barred by language and hides behind the signifiers. It is in this light that Lacan is able to refashion Descartes' maxim 'I think, therefore I am' into 'I think where I am not, therefore I am where I think not'.

For the later Lacan, the Ethic of Desire concerns neither our well-being nor our striving to achieve it. The Ethic is based on the unbearable truth of the experience of absence and our perpetual state of non-fulfilment, that is, our undisclosed Extimacy or our being a split self. Desire, in its largely unconscious and subcultural dimension, has no arbiter other than its own doing and ardour, possibly bivalent and toxic. Desire is essentially a hole or indeterminacy at whose borders the Imaginary and Symbolic registers, shared by fellow-subjects in the encounter, linger on. The Ethic of Desire entices us to accept that there is a limit to returning to unified being and meaningfulness, or to fully bringing to light the unthought, repressed or unspeakable in the intercultural encounter. The Ethic, moreover, incites us to accept that our Desire or demand –for recognition or love addressed to the other– remains insatiable. There is always an unsymbolisable remainder that stays with the subject as the *Object (little) 'a'* in the lost memory of the m/Other-child unity and completeness.

Expressed in Lacanian terms, the physically-experienced desirous longing for satisfaction (*ndzala*) may get sucked into the Imaginary lure of ambivalent *Jouissance* or *Enjoyment* (Devisch 2009: 249-250). The latter entraps the subject into reaching out to a veiled and ultimately unattainable object, and becoming locked in the unquenchable pursuit-negation dialectic of the Real or sheer void. The Lacanian term of *Jouissance* perhaps comes close to the Yaka term of *luhweetu*, referring to envious or greedy Desire's hallucinatory pursuit: it is a collapse into a duplicitous passion that obnubilates one's thinking and arbitration and is experienced in both the physical body and the Imaginary. It holds the subject's fascination and hallucinatory pursuit on the knife-edge between life- and death-giving, eversion and reversion, exfoliation and infoliation, giving and taking, or the thinkable and unthinkable. As a matter of fact, the Yaka concept of the Human develops beyond any monotheistic view in terms of hierarchy of being, divine commandments and salvation. This concept of the Human entails the subject's polar capacity and possible parallel pursuit –physically, symbolically and phantasmatically as well as in oneiric or hallucinatory perceptions– of some willful enhancement of life and its delirious destruction, of social integration and disintegration, as is exhibited in the bewitching power connatural to the elder.

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To conclude my discussion with Mudimbe regarding the intercultural, hence anthropological, encounter, I would like to summarise as follows my argument on the Ethic of Desire at play in the split subject of both the host group and the anthropologist. On the one hand, the human subject –being constituted– in the encounter appears to consciously express or execute himself or herself in a very deliberate way. On the other hand, s/he is expressed or acted by the Symbolic Other, reflecting the structuring force of language or the Symbolic order, but also the ethic of intersubjectivity and the Imaginary Other (namely, the transference space of opaque or elusive need and want). This insistence of the (Symbolic and Imaginary) Other in the subject's consciousness interferes with any attempt by him or her to fully or explicitly and consciously articulate or enunciate his or her own experience. But Desire unfolds in the intercorporeal at the unsymbolisable remainder or Real (the void, *das Ding*, which cannot be represented by something else). This is why I, as an anthropologist attempting to overcome the relativistic postmodern stance, cannot avoid bringing into my reflexivity a very contextualised and basic intercorporeal -co-implication with a number of protagonists in the host group. Some have become my privileged interlocutors. Since I address the split self and the ways of the Desire, the economy of *Jouissance* and the lack or the *aporias* in being between interdependent or co-affecting individuals, I clearly seek to trace the group's interaction with the Real. In the Yaka lifeworld, these ways of Desire are com-passionately addressed particularly in the contexts of communal feasting or bereavement, divinatory oracle or charismatic communes of the sacred spirit, sacrifice or expiation rites, trance-possession or aggression, bewitchment and unbewitchment (Devisch 2003), reliable sympathy or anxiety, joyfulness or guilt.

People's Reappropriation of Local Knowledge

Throughout all my journeys to the Congo and through my own bifocal mirror gaze on, and comparative regard between, various African communities or networks and my native Flemish culture, the ethical concern with developing on this intercultural stage culture-genuine modalities of nonappropriative intersubjective co-implication, sets

the context of an 'ethics of intersubjectivity' (not to be confounded with the Ethics of Desire). This has to do with the co-affecting, interhuman and deeply comprehensive quality of the research in and through co-responsive encounters. By and large, such an ethic seeks to secure an understanding of men's and women's concerns and experiences in the terms, affects and rationale of their own socioculture. Entering a space of intercorporeality and intersubjectivity, the participant anthropologist is called to accept his or her openness to the other, or dependence on otherness, and symbolic debt.

Intentionally questioning my own scientific anthropological or intercultural endeavour has led me to resist the dominant stance of Western-born Academia and the assumed 'universal' relevance of the modern conception of science (Devisch 2005). My comprehensive and self-questioning stance –not only on the level of form but at the level of meaning and content of scientific interpretation– responds to the sense of the ever-inadequate intercultural encounter with its hesitant and de-systematic intertextual production. The modern Western-born science of analytical and categorical thinking might consider my stance as a form of 'failure'. Indeed, Western-born Enlightenment science is dominated respectively by the Hebraic legacy (with its patriarchal and demiurgic concepts of order, lack and restoration), as it is qualified by the Hellenic legacy (directed towards separation, taxonomy, reason and Promethean self-emancipation). And modern science's perspective and objectives have been streamlined, moreover, by the modern Western ethos. In line with Hegelian metaphysics and Kantian cognitive morality, this modern ethos seeks to shape a common rationalisation or discursive norm-alising discourse and progress as the predominant means for the self-crafting individual to emerge in the flow of history and emancipate his or her own self, as the author of his or her cognitively composed self-identity and autonomy. Qualitatively, this ethos gives priority to culture over nature, science over local forms of knowledge, man over woman, reason over emotion, psychic over somatic, and objectivity over subjectivity, as well as defining science as totally separate from ethic.

In his warm and fully empathic reflection professor André Yoka (2008) reviews the anthropological project that my colleague Filip De Boeck and I have continued to shape under the various impulses of the decolonisation of Kinshasa's inhabitants and their reappropriation of their cultural genius. Starting from the terrible clash of civilisations and the stirring of passions in Kinshasa and Congo during times of crisis that broke down Western-born hierarchies of high and low, race and gender, Yoka could well expect more audacity on the part of the social sciences. He asks the social scientists to exhibit an even more cunning form of genius, in particular in the way they might open up to endogenous or local forms of knowledge. As a playwright and academic, Yoka stands as one of those seers who rehearse and produce local forms of ingenuity at the hands of the harsh survivalist law of the streets, alongside Congolese musicians who seek, in their songs, to constrain the cleptocratic *dinosaurs* and arrest the blurring of norms and styles, and to give, rather, voice to plurality, mixity, sensuality, simulation and the Ethic of Desire. As for Professor Lapika (2008), the promoter of my honorary doctorate, he outlines a similar decolonising vision and reconquest of power, origin and authorship in the uncovering of local forms of expression and practices of knowledge. It is a vision that he describes as being an urgent project whose aim is the redomestication, reappropriation or 'bringing home', by local cultures, of their own genius. Only by opening ourselves to the infinite creativity and originality as well as the social critique of host communities or networks can we achieve a decolonising anthropological understanding of what surfaces whenever a true encounter takes place.

Professor Lapika of the University of Kinshasa has for many decades been my privileged interlocutor throughout our involvement in interuniversity projects and the vast amount of applied medical anthropological research (Devisch, Lapika, Le Roy, Crossman 2001). In the 1990s, at the time of a joint research endeavour in Kinshasa, with its estimated seven million or more inhabitants, patients were observed to circulate between three different health care systems or networks: the biomedical health care establishment and pharmacies, the folk healers (including initiated cult healers, self-promoted healers, and herbalists), and the faith or spiritualist healers

of the neo-Pentecostal churches and the somewhat kindred independent charismatic healing communes of the sacred spirit. Our research revealed the great extent to which these three systems operate according to different transactional practices and are embedded in diverse understandings of the human body and the aetiology of health and disease, sickness and illness. To date, cooperation between the various fields of therapy choice has been sadly lacking, more likely than not hindered by the modernist development ideologies propagated by the public institutions that continue to oppose technoscientific and liberal economic development to local sociocultural dynamics that are deemed to be irrational and ignorant. Our medical anthropological research demonstrated that the sociocultural dynamics which inform therapy choice decisions largely depend on the particular etiology of an illness offered by family and neighbourhood elders or significant others. The social stigmatisation of particular health problems or injuries and the client's expectations, like the economic and family situation, may influence therapy choice as well.

These modernist discourses prejudicially and continually oppose the 'North' to the 'South', as they do 'centre' to 'periphery', literate to illiterate, biomedicine to 'tradiitonal healing'.[8] In the light of a growing number of peripheries or subalterns in the neoliberal globalisation era, postcolonial anthropology must recognise the extent to which the modernist assumption of a dominant Western civilisation is shifting to one of a pluricentric world. That shift from the colonial reification of the 'uni-verse' to a postcolonial view on the interweaving of worlds opens up to the possibility of an unending weave of genuine sociocultures with their plural and partially rhizomatic civilisational trajectories. There is, moreover, growing awareness of the essential linkage of modernity's imperialism, both politically and ideologically, to rampant violence.

Postcolonial Politics of Local Knowledge Production

On the one hand, a number of senior African scholars such as Samir Amin, Eboussi Boulaga, Jean-Marc Ela, Paulin Hountondji, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Ali Mazrui, Valentin Mudimbe and Kwasi Wiredu have, from the 1960s on, contributed immensely to the anchoring of Western

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intellectual traditions in African languages and cultures. By the same token, these scholars have been advocating authoritatively for the dignity and multivalent originality of the intellectual, artistic and social skills of their peoples in today's world. On the other hand, much of the Western-born science that is propagated in African 'uni-versities' continues to put forward bodies of evidence that would corroborate the negative cultural othering foisted upon popular or local forms of knowledge. In this manner science has never ceased to proclaim that it constitutes, on a par with technocracy, the sovereign way allowing the periphery to become a co-author of History and gradually reach the centre's level of technological development promoted from the centre as the Value of values.

In the name of the particularly extensive technological influence that this science has indirectly exerted on tangible reality, universities have entrusted their alumni –especially those operating in institutions in the periphery– with the task of furthering their Western-born emancipating mission. This mission also entails unmasking the socalled reactionary cultural claims and forms of local authority –whether customary or state-based– that are so easily, if perversely, depicted as abusive or erroneous. Deeply unsettled by these exceedingly antagonistic and recolonising positions, I have concertedly attempted to examine some less explored aspects of possible borderlinks between Eurocentric sciences and the culture-specific knowledge forms and practices in local sociocultures (Devisch 2005, Devisch & Crossman 2002). Within groups (of common identity) and networks (of common practice), these forms of knowledge develop themselves on a daily basis in their vernacular languages and locally anchored practices, along the lines of their ontological aims and epistemological traditions. This decolonised and plural position, which all contributors to this book would strongly advocate, ties in with the awareness of the infinite local ways of being and knowing that have been so well documented for example, in the seven volumes published by Roland Waast (1996). It is a position that resists the homogenisation or uniformisation of cultural plurality –through commodification, tourism, or hybridisation in globalising youth cultures and spectatorial performance arts. It advocates for furthering the development of context-specific afro-modernity and true cosmopolitanism in Africa.

As an anthropologist with over fourty years of association with African host communities and local networks, I am profoundly shocked by the hierarchical and oppositional, if not adversarial thinking behind much of the modernist and postmodern rhetoric on cultural interbreeding, and by the technocratic and mediatised liberal-economic development in the wake of the *Aufklärung* and ideologies of Progress. Such rhetoric relentlessly opposes economic and media globalisation to local cultures, which it regards as adversarial otherness. In pursuit of the ostentatious novelty marketed from day to day through the technocratic globalisation of an increasingly intersecting universe, the same rhetoric runs the risk of overlooking the authentic originality that is based in the hardly considered layers of symbolisation and ethic of intersubjectivity at play within their own vital networks and discourse. The multimedia, furthermore, appear to summon our attention towards a technocratic future where the factual and simulacrum reign supreme. While disseminating hedonist advertising images amongst 'people of lesser means' (and especially their youngsters, as I have witnessed in a most shocking way in South Africa), the accompanying rhetoric conversely conveys them a sense of exclusion or even failure. The perverse effect is that such a mass-media rhetoric –that is normalising through its globalising oratory– undermines creativity among these people in a strangely worrying fashion. Indeed, the imaginary of the mass media tends to homogenise or level the dense singular 'word' of the subject, network, people or specific symbolic site. By specific symbolic site I mean traces and echoes of a particular people's distinctive aspirations, longings or anger, as well as their preoccupation with, for example, the fragile, the exceptional, the invisible or the uncanny. Indeed, these aspirations, originality, creativeness and discontent continually weave the intersubjective and intergenerational networks together when transmitting life or coping with affliction.

The interdisciplinary and intercultural Special Master's degree in 'Cultures and development studies' that I launched in 1999 at the University of Leuven (see www.cades.be) deals critically and contextually with a hitherto unexplored relationship. On the one hand, the programme considers the development of Western-born sciences as vehicles for the spread of the modernistic credo and telos of Western culture and modernisation. On the other hand, the

programme is also devoted to local forms of knowledge and practice that are specific or endogenous to (inter)regional networks. These are anchored locally within professional associations or solidarity networks and serve to develop genuinely contextual views, for example, on parenthood and responsibility, reproduction and health management, better forms of living-together and means of keeping evil at bay. This exploration is, moreover, conducted against the backdrop of diverse peoples' metaphysical concerns and epistemological traditions. These include culture-specific concepts of gender and fertility, kinship and leadership, individual and collective identities and status, patronage and ethic of intersubjectivity, and politics and justice. Social and economic development is also mediated by the given community's barely reflective metaphysical axioms, common-sense knowledge and pragmatic motives.

I am perplexed at the suspicion Lansana Keita (2008), unlike Yoka, casts upon contemporary Africanist anthropology. He considers this anthropology to be largely colonising and reactionary on account of its continued attempt to study widespread cultures characterised by oralcy. But does this suspicion not originate from the modernistic option that allies philosophy, as a universally oriented academic discipline, with the culture of literacy? Such a philosophy –while subordinating oralcy to literacy and experiential and intersubjective *connaissance* to experimentally and epistemologically certifiable knowledge– is in fact not predisposed to an unprejudiced understanding of cultures of oralcy from within themselves. Keita (2008), furthermore, appears to make reference only to alphabetical writing, which, in Black Africa's history, is largely a by-product of interregional trade, colonisation and/or missionary Christianity. He does not mention the highly coded systems of signs and graphic patterns –namely ideograms or pictograms– that scholars like Clémentine Nzuji Madiya have investigated in the context of Africa's cultures of oralcy (Ngandu 2007). If Keita (2004) briefly acknowledges philosophical texts in Amharic and Arabic, respectively in ancient Axum and Timbuktu, in his reply to my academic lecture (2008) he does not, however, refer to other writing modes employed in West Africa, whether *N'ko* or Mande. Surely each of these forms of writing offers a different way of capturing and storing particular relationships between 'facts', word, signifier, consciousness and action.

Cultures of Oralcy and of Linear Writing

Let us revisit the cognitive differences between oral and written cultures. It seems, at first, that in Central Africa cultures of oralcy have continuously exchanged their forms of knowledge through their long-lived interregional or professional networks and communities of mutual assistance. This occurs, in some form or another, in rural and suburban areas and in the presence of authorised experts, by means of multisensory, aesthetic, initiatory and/or practical transactions. Oralcy develops its own cultural genius, one to which van Binsbergen (2003) dedicated an original anthropological and philosophical analysis. More specifically, through its multiple performance modes and sites, oralcy brings into play a wide variety of bodily dispositions on the part of the participants that are culturally shaped and differentiated. While oralcy does not always escape from the dramatic pathos to which palavers or mythical rite make recourse, it is not primarily geared towards an empirical assessment on the order of the 'facts', nor is it directed towards a quest for self-critical truth that would assert itself in the face of heterodoxy. As I have witnessed in the Yaka household-centric society, in the context of palaver oralcy articulates an emotional and conceptual sense of an enfranchising participation arising within the group event. Such a meaning is captured through the notion of *co-naissance*. This notion also evokes a type of dialogical discourse that transfuses a desiring participation by way of the choices and losses, issues and plural responses that emerge there.

Oral styles of communication seek to provoke a density of sensorial and corporeal meanings and strings of responsiveness in the meeting, such as a palaver, moved by an Ethic of Desire. Such meanings aim to revive, for example, the status of key personalities and the field of their intersubjective and invisible strengths or forces. Oralcy grounds and revises the memory of rhythms, emotions and forms of highly coded –whether ritually or not– instilment within bodies, particularly inside a person's heart as the seat of secrets that enhance a shared Desire for co-implication. Oralcy implies an intercorporeality which serves as a store of original social institutions that domesticate vital ancestral resources. Oralcy stocks memory traces such as those regarding the originary household, the founding ancestor or the mythical origin of core institutions. Intercorporeality

drives the continually remade existential, contextual and intercultural interpretation that elders make of significant events in their palaver. Oralcy, in other words, facilitates representation and recognition of 'events' and realities in both their corporeal enactment and polysemic dimension. Since the modalities and contexts of palavers are not immutable, plurality and lavishness pervade oralcy's intercorporeal and intersubjective exchanges.

In the Yaka culture of oralcy, senior men's speaking in formal judicial encounters is tantamount to shaping events or bringing reality about. At the outset of these formal gatherings, it is customary for family patriarchs to reassert the art of encounter in such words as *Thuna ha muyidika maambu* –which can roughly be translated as 'We stand here today to devise or enact a new [social or lifewordly] reality with words'. Such words, in some play-acting of memories and Desire, express the full meaning of the intersubjective and interworld encounter which invariably takes the form of palaver or common actions that co-responsible subjects attempt to achieve and whose task consists in fully acceding to the speakers' inspiration and the emerging interworldly *omina* or signs of propitious or harmful forces, which are largely unspeakable or untellable.

By contrast, a literacy-based culture –at least one with an alphabetical or linear form of writing– implies a *techné* capable of anchoring knowledge. It allows a meticulous rereading of texts and is endlessly open to the scopic drive, notably to a searching gaze in quest for objective knowledge as perceived in its visible evidence or its historic embodiment. The written word also produces a type of representation of the ideas that keeps them at a distance within the political or judicial framework of a more individual and critical interaction with the text and with the authority to which it refers. One thinks here of the paradigmatic example of the scrutinising and thus distancing relationship that the heroic subject of Calvinistic predestination doctrine elicits with regard to the biblical text and the divine message regarding the threat of loss or lack (of virtuousness and consequently of entrepreneurial success). In sum, the Christian sacred text, the Holy Bible, has contributed towards moulding the self-centred and introspective subject in his or her way of relating to others and to the Fatherly God, particularly in Anglo-Saxon and Calvinistic modernity. It has promoted an

essentialist dynamics within which knowledge is tantamount to a mirror reflection or representation of reality. This is a phallic order of the One or singular system of regulation of exchange with the other, and of masterful unity. Through the *habitus* of the written word, the anxiety that we feel in our personal experience when brought face to face with the unpredictable can give way to an approach to reality seen as a fixed and established order, one that envisions the other as threatening the masterful unity. Moreover, by his or her alphabetical transcription of concrete reality or text-based living, an author can experience a paradoxical sense of control. The phallogocentric system enchants him or her. The written word can also disenchant and instrumentalise that same reality, reducing it to mere terms of cost and profit.

Stemming from literate Arabic civilisation, linear writing, mathematics and the exact sciences became instruments that the West later developed in its universities, technologies and industries, thereby fostering its male-driven modern imperialism. Now linked to the Western Christian worldview of lack, restoration and reification of the One –Truth, God, Divine Salvation and protection against Satan's or Evil's threats–, these sciences have doubtless contributed to the transformation of European agricultural and crafts-based regional civilisations into industrial mercantilist ones. They have nurtured the imperialist ambition of these empires, as much as their greed and pathos of technocratic development, colonial conquest and the civilising endeavour. And now this One Truth drives the Western-born movement of economic and information globalisation.

Towards a Just Appreciation of Intercultural Knowledge

Having opted to calibrate my understanding of local knowledge as much as possible in the terms and *modi* of that local –host– culture, I of course aim at presenting a just and lucid appreciation of that culture. More than any of the commentators, Professor van Binsbergen forcefully reminds me, in this chapter, of how an anthropologist –one who is captivated by local reality understood in its own terms and in lines with the author's co-implication– is likely to obnubilate social and cultural opportunities for, or

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conversely, impediments to emancipation that co-exist along with, or even due to, the violence inflicted by new nation-states and the prevalent neoliberal and military world order. This important reminder faces me with an essential ambiguity underlying any cultural study conducted along an intersubjective encounter within a subaltern environment. And this is a sort of ambiguity from which I find it difficult to escape. On the one hand I should equate the fate of the Yaka of rural Kwango and those in Kinshasa's shantytowns with that of colonised and exploited peoples –I will return to this point in the last section. On the other hand, I myself become gripped by the fragility and misery, benevolence and creativity, and even with the gifts, pains and angers of 'people of lesser means' –to use and expression coined by Pierre Sansot 1992– or 'people from below' –as Jean-Marc Ela 1982 has put it. And here I by no means seek to take a heroic posture, but aim only to set the stage for a just, more rightful and equitable, intersubjective and intercultural appreciation of legitimate knowledge. By the latter, I refer to a valid and endogenously lucid rendering of given knowledge practices in a balanced and circumstantial way yet sensitive to both the potentialities and the latent flaws in that knowledge.

Indeed, I feel profoundly ashamed at the powerlessness of Western-centric science in the face of the macroeconomic dynamics –as often as not marked by greed, power, self-serving contact and voyeurism– which, at the intercultural and international level, continue to replicate themselves in a never-ending spiral of imperialism that reproduces itself by violent means across the centuries. It is for this reason that I chose to honour my anthropological alliance with the host-society by bestowing upon it a well-deserved, affectionate and borderlinking attention to the capabilities of its members, beyond an ethnocentric focus on order, taxonomy, Reason or need fulfilment. There is no condescending connotation in my describing the host society 'from below' or as of being of 'lesser means'. These depictions are in no manner indicative of belittlement or inferiority. Rather, they symbolise the very greatness of the Yaka people, in this case, in their effort to be creative and excel in life, from the order of scarcity in means and needs that is theirs. They combine simplicity and inquisitiveness, vitality and frailty, and dignity and distress, cunningness and passion by employing plural means and options as modes of empowerment.

Today, one might well observe –in the light of Charles Melman's *L'homme sans gravité* 2002– that Europe is enraptured by ultra-liberalism and techoscientific ideology, that aim at defining its future. In that techoscientific world, the Discourse of the Father or the one Master-truth no longer holds sway, nor does the Discourse of monotheist Religion or that of Capitalism's relentless acquisitiveness in overcoming lack. Rather, people living in that world appear now to model themselves on the luxury 'nice goods' of mass consumption and satisfaction that a globalising liberal market economy offers. The ever-widening shift to coded electronic communications, according to customers' digital needs (e.g. SMS, electronic mail, Facebook, blogs, twitter), may well be globalising and foster 'imaginary cosmopolitans'. However, the system of e-communications creates a *sui generis* culture of a mediatised vernacular (whose rationale has taken over from that of the user) that is incapable of singularly metaphorising Desires and worries of the subject and is unable to offer any reference to a script that is foundational to human existence, ethic of intersubjectivity or communal ecological concern.

As for the well-read circles of the North and in the South where subjects and institutions continue to organise themselves at least partially in reference to text (whether informational, religious, literary or scholarly), I would like to address the following appeal to them. I call namely for a differentiated articulation between oralcy and literacy in a way similar to the articulation between non-appropriative *co-naissance* and objectifying knowledge, between transitive *com-passio* and liberal economic transaction's insurmountable duality, or between participatory co-resonance and objectifying representation. Let the academic not forget that s/he learnt the mother tongue by bathing in the sounds and speech of his or her mother, father, brothers and sisters. In a nutshell, the academic needs to realise that s/he came to speak the mother tongue through the intimate and welcoming intercorporeal ambience of the family since the dawn of his or her life. This affectionate mother tongue is represented through narratives and an unremitting call of duty; it is handed down from one generation to another along with its full heritage of pains and joys. And it is in this way that a child acquires a lasting sense of self and belonging to 'co-response-able' others and to the thisworldly and the interworldly. Following on my

experience in the multicultural circles of Kinshasa, it appears to me that people rely primarily on their mother tongue to express – within a strong intersubjective, intercorporeal and interworld resonance– their ethical commitment and attempt to shake themselves from any form of dominion. I particularly have in mind here thoughtful people at the level of neighbourhood or professional networks, such as healers, elders, matrons, storekeepers, craftsmen, intellectuals or political and religious leaders, then possibly in a silent resonance with the interworldly. By contrast, languages inherited from the coloniser do not appear to be particularly engaging to such people, especially when it comes to addressing ethical issues of intersubjectivity in the public domain.

Eco-feminists argue, much as poets do, about the importance of reconnecting the Western intellectual to his or her mothertongue, to sensorial intercorporeality and to ways of expressing and acting upon daily life as well as to the Desire implied or conveyed through such a language. This amounts to saying that the intellectual should be open to the plurality of the culturally specific bodies of knowledge and practices while overcoming his or her technological, bureaucratic and phallo-centric alienation. That is a perspective that critics of postcolonial reason cherish[9]. It is in this vein that I place my effort to highlight the epistemic and gnostic originality of divination and healing cults. It is also in this context that I direct my attention to trans- or interworld life transmission in Yaka society, tuning in with the assumptions of a cosmo-vision and millenary medical traditions that are widespread in Black Africa.

Towards an Intercultural Emancipation

On my way of becoming permeated with the anthropocentric social and cultural genius so pervasive in African societies, it is in the 1960s in Kimwenza-Kinshasa that I labouriously undertook to calibrate my initial emancipating ambition that was still marked by its Euro-Christian hallmarks. No sooner had I embarked upon this process than I realised that such an ambition was vitiated at its core by the relentless Western-born reproduction of the trauma which colonisation triggered through its intrusive and paternalistic programmes. Such programmes, while being devised in the North

along its reformist modernity, were tantamount to truth-bearing conversion. They took the guise of technical, medical and educational assistance, and ironically contributed to the widening social, economic and technocratic gap between North and South.

A postcolonial Anthropological Encounter and Polylogue

Certainly, I have always refused to settle down in the comfort of someone who is satisfied with mere denunciation of history. Quite the contrary. I have made strenuous efforts to deepen the encounter with cultural otherness in its sociocultural and postcolonial pulsations. The contact I have made with host communities in nine African countries is no doubt of an uneven intensity. However, it has connected me with the lucid genius of survivalist tenacity and social ingenuity in manifold rural and urban poor but culturally robust circles, and has sharpened my plural cultural sensibility and bifocal gaze. Professor Mudimbe has depicted this by reference to the mythological and liminal figure of Tiresias –whose liberating art of piercing into the unspeakable is characterised by Sophocles, Euripides, Apollodorus of Athens, Ovid. Hence, while remaining moreover lucid as to my own origins, I have for my reflection (Devisch 2008) perched on the shoulders of a number of postcolonial African and European scholars such as Eboussi Boulaga, Ela, Mbonyinkebe, Mudimbe, Nzongola-Ntalaya and van Binsbergen. The significance of such perching was to reevaluate what I was aiming at by installing, within my confronting research in Kinshasa, an intermediary space to allow the encounter with cultural otherness and its forms of being and meaning to take place.

The encounter that the anthropologist pursues calls upon the subjects to disclose themselves in their true social and cultural originality or identity as it is embedded in its original legacy and metaphysics. Adopting Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological perspective, I would argue that the anthropological encounter summons an intersubjective sensitivity within which each of us can, incidentally, express and deepen our own sense of pride for an infinite variety of views on life, identities, proper places for speech and meaning production. It is a sensitivity and encounter whereby

the subjects can investigate the possibilities of signifying and expressing what they feel challenged by. Since undertaking research in very many different places in Flanders and Africa, I have realised that my quest has proved contextually confined to a number of communities and networks in the Congo and Flanders, while remaining bifocal or even plurifocal. It is a quest well beyond a globalising and all-embracing One as represented on economic and information levels.

And it is precisely this relentlessly adaptive and receptive position of polylogue that renders me unable to join in the albeit very important political and liberating project of professor Jacques Depelchin (2008). Besides, as an anthropologist who is wedded to co-implicating listening to the non-literate who constitute the vast majority of the suburban population in Kinshasa's huge shantytowns, I would like to invite professor Lansana Keita (2008) also to include these people in his philosophical cause for development. It appears to me that it is not the fact of oralcy that leads to economic underdevelopment and social and cultural 'misery'. Rather, it is greediness and other drives durably unleashed by multiparty wars that today side with the sorry state of African states and infrastructure. Furthermore, the 'the misery of the world' –as defined by Pierre Bourdieu (1993)– is very much a spell cast on shantytowns and refugee camps rather than on illiterate people.

It is, doubtless, Marxism that for the first time sought to chase away the North Atlantic ideological and socioeconomic roots of the One-world hegemony. I do stress the merit that Depelchin deserves for having contributed, in a real countercurrent of lucid thought and commitment in the political arena, to revealing the long-lasting pathology from which Western bourgeois circles suffer, in particular in my and his father's country of origin, Belgium (Depelchin 2004). It is about the addiction towards the control, hegemony, greediness and misunderstanding that has still not stopped until today in contaminating these countries in their maritime, colonial, scientific and geopolitical imperialism. The contemporary rhetoric of globalisation and Human Rights prolongs the inability for a certain West to recognise its extremely violent connections with fantasised Otherness as adversary. It endlessly rehearses its inability to fathom the repressed in the way it thinks

of the Otherness and fails to see the genuine capacities in the cultural other so as to engage in complementary or even egalitarian relationships. We should acknowledge that indeed Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire –in their négritude of political and social contest, which radicalised itself into a négritude of attestation, i.e. of disclosure and militant testimony– were the thinkers to have uncovered the perverse psychological *habitus* internalised on both sides by partners in colonial, neocolonial and racist exploitation.

For sure, it was not possible to me to associate myself physically 'as a Crusader for justice' with the important political cause and ethic of sociopolitical liberation of the Congolese people. I do admire the spectacular feat of professor Depelchin in Eastern Congo. I am impressed by the fact that he made himself one of the main architects to have brought Mzee Laurent-Désiré Kabila to presidential power in May 1997. For nearly two decades, Depelchin joined forces with professor Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, then President of the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD Kisangani) and negotiated the end to the civil war. It is, only then, that Wamba was called to prepare the Congo's peace process, leading his people to the 2006 national elections as well as implementing a democratic constitutional regime. However, how can we appreciate, without inner repression, the muddle for such a cause in as much as it is tied in with a most murderous violence perpetrated by the armed factions who, for more than a decade, do not stop ravaging Eastern Congo?

Regarding my own fate, it is in the borderspace between Flanders and France, bruised by two world wars, that I am taken in a debt on the maternal tree of life urging me to pick up fruits hidden amid crushed branches. Although I, as an anthropologist, am hardly a social and political revolutionary in the wake of Karl Marx, Frantz Fanon, Alain Badiou or Sylvain Lazarus, I aspire to become what Lapika, van Binsbergen and Mudimbe have termed an 'intercultural revolutionary' who through a bifocal questioning has adopted a Yaka gaze on my society of origin as well as in the university enterprise that I am part of. But the comings and goings between the confronting other's gaze and my experience with my own native environment carry cultural otherness forward in the clash of civilisations. That experience has prompted me to challenge the

'alienating' discourse of the master. I have asked myself about how such a discourse was fostered by the coloniser and colonised as well as by their descendants. I was moved by the Desire to unearth how such a discourse plays out within the project of 'becoming a cultural other' by 'whitening mind and soul'. The perspective of my discourse, teachings and publications reveals that I unambiguously join in into the anti-colonial and anti-hegemonic criticism. In other words, I have proved relentless in distancing myself from the all too Eurocentric gaze born out of liberalism and Enlightenment rationality. I would particularly refer to my papers that excoriate the socalled civilising mission of colonisers and missionaries (Devisch 1998b, forthcoming). I have examined the persecuting nature and paranoid imaginary of such a mission by adopting the gaze of my Yaka hosts. I have here in mind a number of my publications dealing with my experience in Kinshasa between 1980 and 1990 (Devisch 1995, 1996, 1998a, 2007b). These publications, it must be stated, look both at the side of alienation and that of unsuspected creativity. If 30 June 1960 leading to Congo's political Independence left a lasting impression on Depelchin, who was then a young man completing his school curriculum at the Jesuit lyceum of Bukavu (east Congo), I was at that time just beginning my lyceum education in Flanders. There, I only received a paternalistic and widely fantasised image of the Tropics. It was an image centred on the educational and evangelisation mission in Africa. Let us remind ourselves that in these late 1950s the television began to enter only little by little into Flemish homes.

I am acutely aware that a Marxist perspective demands in principle that we shelve indefinitely any interest in cultural specificity or dynamics, and that it disregards this for a phenomenological approach and psychoanalytical sensibility. Such an interest is often dismissed out of hand when pitted against the attraction that the militant Marxist develops to bringing out the dialectics of the inescapable by unmasking conflicting forces at play and short-circuiting the nefarious effects of various existing forms of power, exploitation and alienation. However, it is not, it seems to me, the lack of the anthropologist's militant commitment to the political emancipation struggle that may have aggravated the injustice

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inflicted upon the host society. As far as I am concerned, I have trained African and European anthropologists so that they can critically and lucidly reflect on the interaction within contextual networks. I have also instilled in my students a sense of mounting a social critique that favours liberating justice. I have devoted numerous papers and lectures to unearthing the problem of blind spots and ignorance maintained by partially unconscious passionate forces at play in the relationship between colonisers and colonised or their descendants. In this perspective, I have never relented in reporting the devastating effects that local sociocultures undergo as a result of virtually impersonal macroeconomic mechanisms. And I refused to subscribe to the economists' arguments stating that these mechanisms and their effects go on reproducing themselves because of the local informal dynamics at work, and also because of the morals and shared beliefs in the group, the ignorance, incompetence and inertness of the gerontocratic monopolies and ethnic passions...

Unlike only a few of my Mulelist classmates at the University of Kinshasa, the Mulelist and Gizengist offensive in the land of Mbuun-Pende (Kwilu-Kasai) in 1963–64 was not regarded by the Yaka I worked with as part of their collective memory. The Yaka territory –which has, by the way, remained without oil refineries and colonial plantations– is within only a week's walking distance from the Mbuun district, yet that district remains largely unknown to the Kwango population. The fact that I have reported the official labelling of the students' protest on 4 June 1971, publicised as an act of high treason against the President of the Republic, and which led to the students enlisting in the army, by no means conveys my confusion and reservations on the development of Mobutism. During the years 1971–72, and because of the imminent risk that any manifestly critical expatriate ran of abruptly getting exiled from the country, the rampant militant zeal that Mobutism mobilised caused my inability to publicly show how heartbroken I was to have experienced with my colleagues such a brutal, excited and repressive experience of zaireanisation seeking to wildly replace any – allochthonous and autochthonous– frame of reference.

Emancipation: In whose mirror?

In the early 1970s as a student at Kinshasa's Lovanium university, witness to the recourse to authenticity movement, and aspiring to become an anthropologist, to what Janus was I subjected? Should I have –because of my Belgian origin but unlike my numerous Congolese friends– identified myself with the ones who were singled out as the Congolese people's enemy and seen as exploiters and alienators? Did I overtly not distance myself from the often unacknowledged colonising Desires of the many Westerners in the Congo at that point in time, which of no doubt repelled me? Did I have the right or ability to take up my share in the work of making known the true soul of the Yaka people, who were very marginalised on the national stage, on which exogenous attentions and passions had focused? What remains certain, however, is that a number of Congolese and European friends helped me beyond measure to keep the veil lifted on Janus. I do still hear friends say: 'Go to it, put yourself with passion in the school of our people in the village and Kinshasa's shantytowns; contribute forcefully to the Yaka people's regaining of dignity, nationally and internationally.'

And now the postcolonial anthropologists, of the style I am identifying with, find themselves in much less comfortable physical and emotional circumstances than those scholars affecting a university and urban infrastructure. Anthropologists remain in that very unsettling position because they want to question all their intellectual experience by launching themselves into research at the risk of having to leave their position of subject: by putting themselves in their hosts' school and submitting to their standpoints, they are constantly surprised and taken in, and being rarely an eye-opener for their hosts. Because they did not commit themselves into a political or emancipating drama, nor accuse themselves as the ones by whom the -ill wind arrives, anthropologists are neither liberators nor missionaries; neither of a depressed nor melancholic conduct. Anthropologists do not settle down in the pretension of those who decipher the enigma, the misfortune, or the beauty of the other. They are called upon to move their locus of investigation, not only starting from their interlocutors' gaze, but especially also by following the working or playing out of displaced or mobilising,

passionate or afflicted s*ignifiance*, all the while disclosing what holds the attention or distracts, invigorates or saddens the subjects. And the more the meeting with prominent subjects of the host-community deepens into co-implication and co-affection, the more it confers a disclosing power upon the mutual exchanges.

Although I exercised caution, I have by no means perceived the award of an honorary doctorate as likely to reiterate or aggravate the discriminatory societal relations cast at the time by the colonial master who established Lovanium university –the precusor of the University of Kinshasa– within the melting pot of intercontinental hegemonic interests. This honour appeared to me to be a huge wink of eye and lucid loyalty on behalf of Congolese colleagues who have wit(h)nessed and acknowledged so many years of my honest and collegial intellectual quest. As professor Lututala, then Rector of the University of Kinshasa, stressed while awarding the honorary doctorate, it was the mark of the long-lived interuniversity fellowship existing beyond the contradictions affecting, by definition, every single public institution and university relations. It was a symbolic gesture that was made regardless of the depressing and shameful crisis affecting both the University of Kinshasa and North–South interuniversity solidarity. I could say that my contribution tries to dig up systematically local forms of knowledge that sustain a group's existence. Such a contribution joins the reflective effort of those local societies or networks managing such forms of knowledge. Among other things, the contribution targets those forms of knowledge that promote synergy and partnership, and that are as much as possible devoid of exploitation or alienation and capable of encouraging a real platform for intercultural exchanges. Such an interest, therefore, involves an emancipating aim that is also dear to a Marxist ethical vision for a contextualising social economy.

Emancipation Resources and Impediments

Unlike the perceptions that Depelchin (2008) and Keita (2008) imagine of my stance, it should be stressed that my intention runs, by any means, counter to depicting a form of imaginary romantic Africa of the village. Rereading professor Keita's comments leaves

me with the feeling that he appears to have picked and summarised only a few of my themes into a suspicion of essentialism that would have been seeking to reduce village life, oralcy and local knowledge forms to primitivity. I would join other commentators to say how much, for fourthly years, in my writing, lectures and interuniversity cooperation I have fought hard to see the end of such exogenous and exoticising anthropology, which Keita seeks to resist with all good reason, but perhaps not without a pinch of uncontrollable bitterness. And, my writing were, if it needs repeating, recognised at many scientific African stages as offering a fresh potential to rethink specific modes of making a livelihood in a contextualising fashion and in accordance with the subjects' very perspective and cultural genius.

Furthermore, basing myself on a long and wide experience of very diverse African contexts, whether urban or rural –which were tremendously challenging– my plea as anthropologist in DR Congo today concerns the social networks. I address their capacity to contextually manage their social and cultural economy, while favouring a social criticism of exploitative mechanisms phased in by the state and the globalised fetishism of imported consumerist goods. This social criticism also concerns any of the developmentalist headlong rush in complete disregard for the resources as well as the impediments that play out in local communities or networks. I here refer, among others, to the resources that local knowledge forms constitute, as examined above. Besides, such a developmentalist view takes its root from ideologies of instrumental rationality and progress. These ideologies are, in turn, fuelled by the *Aufklärung* and Christianity projects. It is of such projects brought together in Africa in their allegedly liberating but imperialist ambitions, that I am witnessing the paranoid impasse experienced by numerous people in Kinshasa. These people have now internalised their parents' humiliation, if not alienation. Having been mobilised for progress in the name of conversion to literacy and the Bible, the heirs of this (post)colonial civilising endeavour now find themselves in the shantytowns gripped by abject poverty owing to hyper-inflation and bankruptcy of the state and the employment market. In addition, the school and market economy, in particular, call for individual competition. It encourages individuals to sever links with family

obligations as well as with moralising appeals launched by churches, exploitative eldern and the ruling class.

As an anthropologist, I am committed to the principle that each local network or community needs to voice its own emancipation models in order to escape the alienation caused by exogenous approaches. And so I would not join professor Keita when he seeks to legitimise his plea for developing a future Africa in lines with the paradigmatic example of post-Mao China. A growing number of recent studies have established how the erosion of feudal structures by Mao's communist and cultural revolution –violent and barely able to mobilise people from within their sociocultures– did not radically change, among the majority Han population at least, the conceptions of world ordering and the very ancient and sexist family *habitus*. The writings of Kuan-Hsing Chen, a social science lecturer at Taiwan National Tsing University and editor of the authoritative journal *Inter/Asia Cultural Studies*, show how China today, in its headlong macroeconomic rush, is integrating technological know-how and economic management stemming from Western modernity. Professor Chen also points to the fact that numerous Han Chinese intellectuals today are simultaneously going back to their roots, unearthing professional cultures and specialised forms of knowledge as transmitted by the *literati* of very ancient tradition in the empire's history. We must not forget that the pre-Mao Chinese civilisation had a science, an army and a state bureaucracy that proved to be more developed than those of the West which was only making the transition to the industrial revolution in late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. My visits to Beijing and Shanghai, and my exchanges with sinologist colleagues and our Chinese students in Leuven, alongside my limited knowledge of learned literature on contemporary China, revealed how the intersubjective societal dynamics and China's imperial vision of the world seem to offer little that can possibly compare with the great diversity of African realities experienced on the level of communities and local networks, at least in the nine African countries I have visited. Yet, African and Chinese civilisations display world views that mirror interworldly life that is ceaselessly emerging and driven along the propensity of things without their being a transcendent telos that confers ultimate meaning on life (Jullien 1999).

While resisting undue attempts to generalise, we must furthermore raise questions about a number of the recent Chinese initiatives for development cooperation with regard to Congo's subsoil – undertakings that were by and large abandoned during the stock market crash of 2008-2009. Such initiatives repeat, in a more intrusive way, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' precolonial trading economy of counters seeking to connect to the Atlantic sea port through railway and river networks. Ironically, local approval for the lease of lands for the extraction of mineral resources confirms a very ancient practice of self-serving accommodation of the local dynasties with alien powers. One might well ask who, among the Congolese people, would benefit from such arrangements? Let me add that professor Keita is welcome to accompany me on my visits among the Yaka population in Kinshasa and get a glimpse of the informal economy that is cherished, for example, by breeders of poultry, small entrepreneurs and petty traders.

Such critical gaze would assist us in understanding the project put forward by Chinua Achebe (1958), Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992) or Valentin Mudimbe (1988). This is a project that proclaims the right of African people to reanchor themselves in their own metaphysics, to rearticulate their premises for an ethic of intersubjectivity to the world today, and in this way question the future of African thought both on their own soil and in the Diaspora. It is for this very reason that I, having completed my philosophy studies in Kinshasa (1965–68) where a dialogue had been spawned between a Eurocentric liberating mission and 'Bantu philosophy', made the desperate choice to study anthropology at university and undertake participant fieldwork in order to learn from the daily and long-term experience of a particular society living in rural and urban areas of the Congo. Along with the sacrifice of my reassuring grounding in my Flemish culture of origin, as well as of the notion of a unique truth, what attracted my attention to the rich interweaving and encoding *signifiance* of the physical, social and cosmological body was the opportunity to enter into people's corporeal and passionate concern with the resonance between the various realms of existence and the thisworldly and interworldly life-forms. In such an endeavour, word, gestures and actions are carried by people and exchanged by subjects acting from within

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their context. This endeavour also led me to the unthought-in-thought that in turn takes us back to the interpretation of *signifiance*. While drawing inspiration from Michel Foucault's examination of bio-politics (Foucault 1976, 2004), I have reviewed his perspective in detail against the background of life and health management practices that are variously operated by healers, public health services and healing cults and churches. Moreover, through the supervision *in situ* of doctoral theses in various African countries, I had the privilege of witnessing at close hand the various manifestations of intercivisilational branchings (*branchements*, in the 2001 term of Jean-Loup Amselle).

The epistemological mutation my own research underwent in Africa at first suggested to me the need to question the global relevance and applicability of the universalist civilising claim of rationalist and phallogocentric modernity and its postmodern narcissistic withdrawal. Further, that mutation implicated me firmly and contextually in the pathos of the intercivilisational project of 'give and take' requiring the exploration of innovative avenues leading to a sustainable, integrative and more equitable development or emancipation. With this experience behind me, I have experienced the honorary doctorate and the present exchange as an assurance of the relevance and need for a lucid and bifocal gaze as well as a particularly attentive listening. I will, therefore, not hesitate to continue to refine such borderlinking listening and the lucid gaze over wonderment, baffling uncanniness and deception, as Tiresias would. So, in the shared borderspace between the recontextualising initiatives developed by Black-African and Euro-American sociocultures in the management of the living and the propensity of things in the confrontation with the work of the negative, unknown, invisible or estranging, I will refine my discernment into a contextual commitment to intersubjective and culture-specific exchange that lucidly faces the clash of civilisations and state-derived injustice. Discernment and criticism will not ignore but rather acknowledge illusion, alienation and the feeling of powerlessness. They will, at the same time, focus on points of openness and opportunity –despite rejection or estranging strangeness– in the palimpsestuous, intersubjective and 'glocal' quest for health, lucid consciousness and a better co-habitation amid multiple and

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confronting networks, as well as life's uncanny strangeness and people's discontent.

Should I dare to believe that such a perspective can reunite us more? Should I hope that it can bind together Africanist anthropologists, societies or networks into a ceaseless polylogue, a reciprocity of gaze and an intercultural conversation? Nevertheless, are not the latter also grounded in the presupposition of our respective civilisational originality as well as situated at the intracultural and intercultural limits of the manageable and qualifiable, the sayable and translatable?

Notes

1 Translated, in first draft and for large parts, from the French by Paul Komba, Fellow of Wolfson College at Cambridge. Peter Crossman assisted in finalising the text.

2 The initial capital letter of core terms such as Other(ness), Ethic of Desire, *Jouissance* or Enjoyment, Lalangue, Object (little) *'a'*, Sinthome, Imaginary, Symbolic and Real indicates their use in their proper Lacanian sense.

3 The socalled 'classical Lacan', in the period up until 1970, develops his phallogocentric focus on the Oedipal dynamic and paternal metaphor (namely, the paternal instance that installs loss –that is, castration– as the foundation of the Symbolic order or ultimate signifier without a signified). Influenced by Levi-Straussian structuralism, Lacan here places the focus on the order of exchange of goods, persons or speech, that is, on the speaking subject brought forth by the structure of language and embroiled in the mechanisms of (ideological) representation. From 1970 on then, the so-called 'later Lacan' moves from structural linguistic models to the Borromean rings as a model for a topology of human subjectivity. He henceforth deals primarily with the Names-of-the-Father function (which he refashions into Father-of-the-Name-giving) as well as with the place of the Real and of *Jouissance* in the circular dynamic relationships, on equal footing between RSI: the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary. (These topics were all posthumously published due to the work of Jean-Alain Miller: Lacan, 2001/1970; 2005/1975-1976.)

The unthinkable and unsymbolisable *Real* or originary void –which returns in the Imaginary form of need, hunger, displeasure or loss– is, according to Lacan, outside of language or of the process of signification, in an identification with the *Object (little) 'a'* (*Objet petit a[utre]*) that causes Desire. The Real is the unnameable and impossible to imagine or integrate into the Symbolic order. It entices the unending story of *radical* –or irreducible– *Otherness*, and concerns the unspeakable sublime, the uncannily engulfing or ensorcelling void, or *das Ding* (the radical nature of the hole or loss that keeps us from being one with ourselves or our words). The Real unconceals itself through lapses, dreams, bungled actions. It is an Otherness that disarticulates meaning, thereby abandoning the body to downright toxic *Jouissance*, such as in bewitchment, utter disillusionment or despair.

For the 'early Lacan' (of the 1950s-early 1960s), the *Symbolic* is essentially based on the order of discourse (or exchange of speech, goods or persons) and implies a logocentric perspective. It is through the Symbolic that the void of the originating subject, namely of the *infans*, is filled by granting the latter a self-identity in the order of discourse. The Symbolic dimension of language was originally understood by Lacan as that of a set of differentiated signifiers, constituted –in line with the structural view of de Saussure and Lévi-Strauss– by virtue of their differential character articulated as contrastive pairs. There are no fixed relations between signifier and signified. Expressed in the terms of Charles Peirce's pragmatism, it is through otherness that signifiers carry meaning in line with convention founded on consensus. The self thus constitutes itself –through attachment to forms of narcissism, subjection and paranoia– in the order of symbolic exchange or discourse incited by virtue of the *'specular Other'*. The repressed unconscious is the discourse of the Other in as much as it is the scene of the Symbolic articulation of the split between discourse and *Jouissance*.

The *Imaginary*, in the Lacanian perspective, is the subject's concern with identification with his specular image along the chain of fantasmatic and signified images that conceal the object that promises *Jouissance*. This unconscious Imaginary order of images is a highly deceptive space or drama of transference of the unknowingly said, unfathomable, or ambivalent images of identification, fantasies, beliefs, suppositions or traumas. According to Lacan, it is the realm of deceptive appearances and illusions, remembering, resistance and transference that is based on a mirroring binary opposition or paranoid posture.

Similarly, the later Lacan's focus is on *Lalangue* and the signifier's indeterminate attachment to and substitution by *Jouissance*. In other words, the post-1970's Lacan's radically new focus is on the *Sinthome* (Lacan, 2005/1975-1976) –a neologism depicting the open-ended enactment of Symbolic and Imaginary *significance*; the Sinthome is precisely not a call to the Other inasmuch as it is guided by pure *Jouissance* addressed to no one. Around an empty centre or vacuole, at the very edge of the sayable, the Sinthome supports a structural or operatory relationship among subjects and between subjects and the 'object' world. Religious and political leaders, institutions, artists and writers (one thinks of James Joyce) develop Sinthomes in the form of deconstructed ('per-verse' [*père-version* in French] or per-versely oriented) motifs, puzzles and enigmas. The Sinthome may effectively foster the audience's attention while aligning them to 'empty' centres of *signifiance*. The Sinthome remains beyond analysis or interpretation yet triggers unconscious Enjoyment, all the while mobilising and organising crucial orientation, desirous commitment and sensuous and multi-sensory embodiment.

4 Postmodernism has delivered a primarily negative assessment of the Enlightenment 'subject'. Postmodern analyses have regarded the subject as merely an effect of discourse or as a 'position within language'. For my part I focus on the subject's gendered and ethnoculturally moulded embodiment. This focus is a means of getting at the realities of the subject's culture-specific as well as unutterable unconscious particularity amidst the mass-religious or fashionable mediatised display of subjectivities –a topic privilleged by postmodernism.

5 My introductory note unfortunately cannot deal with Devereux's fundamental contributions to complementary psychoanalytical and anthropological perspectives on human experience (Devereux 1978), and on the inextricable interrelationship between culture (including religion) and psyche, like that between cultural values and unconscious symptom formation. These perspectives are too important to be dealt with in a sketchy manner. Inasmuch as I have opted to take Lacan's work as a reference, however, I am at a loss as to how make the leap from there to Devereux's major contribution on the intercultural scientist's self-deceptive countertransference of desires and resistances or of his or her own biasses and blindness. Devereux also brilliantly illustrates the extent to which a disturbed person may witness to culturally induced anxiety, repression and the like. In chapter X of his major work (1980), Devereux lists the characteristics of Occidental

civilisation that tie in with, and hence produce, schizophrenic symptoms. This analysis leads him to assert that schizophrenia is the privileged 'ethnic psychosis' of modern Western industrial society.

6   I gratefully acknowledge the inspiration for this essay from the monthly seminar meetings held since September 2002 with colleague psychoanalysts of the Belgian School of Psychoanalysis, of a Freudian-Lacanian orientation.

7   In January 1974, on my arrival at Yitaanda in Northern Kwango and while seeking hospitality for my anthropological fieldwork, I found the ailing octogenerian Chief Taanda Kapata, the Head of the local group of thirteen villages, in the throes of death. I was soon invited to offer some pharmaceutical drugs to alleviate Taanda Kapata's coarse breathing, fever and sharp pain in the chest that made me suspect a case of pneumonia. He passed away three weeks later. A delegate of the regional Chief N-saka, of Lunda descent and vassal to the paramount *Kyambvu Kasongwa Luunda*, arrived in Yitaanda following the prescribed month of mourning in order to open the palavers regarding succession (Devisch & de Mahieu 1979: 69 ff., Devisch & Brodeur 1999: 167-195). He publicly called me Taanda N-leengi, a name which associated me with the disappearance and reappearance of a former Head of the Taanda grouping. Indeed, that name entrusted me with the authority to undo the fate of Chief Taanda N-leengi. The latter was in fact Kapata's predecessor in title and was exiled in 1938 by the colonial power to Oschwe in the Lake Region in the northeast of Bandundu province. His alleged crime was to have participated, around 1937, in the anti-colonial prophetic movement known as *Bamvungi*. And in this mythical construction engineered by the envoy of the hierarchically superior Lunda chief, I emerged as the reborn Taanda N-leengi reappearing in the white colour of the deceased following Kapata's rule beginning in 1939.

In 1937 my uncle René, whose name I had inherited as my birth-name, died an untimely death. The common fate of inauspicious deaths evoked by my doubly ascribed name of René and N-leengi triggers for me an enigma of some unconscious transfusion of memory traces. Needless to say, my Yaka hosts were completely oblivious to the fact that my name René literally means 'the reborn'. My maternal uncle René (°October 1905) was the reborn following Bertha's death at the age of one in August 1905; and he thus preceded my mother's birth in January 1908 with the recycled name of Bertha. I inherited the name

of my maternal uncle for whom my mother had cared until his early death, a few years before her marriage in 1939.

8   In this Euro-centric prose, 'centre' refers to the multiple centres of world power, be they of the political, financial, military and/or mediatic orders, whereas 'periphery' refers to the so-called developing countries inasmuch as they are assumed to be in dire need of technological means.

9   These criticisms are formulated departing from African (Mudimbe 1988), South American (Mignolo 2000) and Indian realities (Chakrabarty 2000, Nandy 1988, Prakash 1999, Spivak 1999).

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Part 3

Cross-pollination in African Academe
between Cosmopolitan Sciences and Local
Knowledge

All Knowledge is first of all Local Knowledge

Theophilus Okere, Chukwudi Anthony Njoku and René Devisch

Political, Epistemological and Sociocultural Dimensions

All knowledge is first of all local knowledge. This simple statement regarding the humble roots of knowledge production and sharing is for us critical in addressing the vital issues of rehabilitating in today's increasingly interactive and polycentric world the corpus of what has variously been labelled as *ethnoscience* and *indigenous, endogenous* or *local* knowledge. On their side, the glitter and efficiency of the cosmopolitan science and technology mediated and propagated by the West (or the North) in the last few centuries as the one-and-only valid about the one-and-only universe, may sometimes unduly veil the local roots, cultural origins, history, and limited epistemological assumptions of that very science production. By 'local roots of knowledge' we refer to any given culture's unique genius, and distinctive creativity which put a most characteristic stamp on what its members in their singular context and history meaningfully develop as knowledge, epistemology, metaphysics, worldview. This particularity in the nodes and mode of knowledge is often a result of that mutual push and pull between the people and the potential in their history and life-world, their task-related networks and living communities. 'Local' therefore refers, not so much to a geographic location, but to any given people's singular set of organising principles (be they linguistic, sociocultural, economic, ecological, technocratic, historical, religious) which run

through them like a weave that is constantly being adapted, linking them up in a unique way with their forebears, fellow-people and life-world in an interaction with neighbouring sociocultures and more encompassing, visible and invisible, environments. The local is therefore not referring to some exotic traits, but to a given people's particular, self-organising, transgenerational cultural weave. The particular local indeed indicates the active creative originality of vital contexts and networks, the originary well-springs of that given people's endogenous ability to shape and manage their world, generation after generation, in lines with their own genius. An Igbo proverb, *Mba na-asu n'olu n'olu, ma akwaa ukwara, oburu ofu* (*Different peoples speak different languages, but the sound of their coughing is the same*) captures this local heart of creativity and self-organisation. The local is not a passive substratum, but indeed an endogenous force or active set of principles and forces both moulded by and inspiring a given people's unique trajectories and aspirations to knowledge, sovereignty and dignity, as well as their unique mode of inhabiting their life-world.

In this essay, we shall illustrate our argument mainly by referring to the rich knowledge sources and practices of the Igbo of Southeast Nigeria. The following Igbo proverb indeed aptly captures the local source of experiential and practical knowledge: *Nku di na mba na-eghere mba nri, The firewood in a particular context is good enough for the cooking in that environment.* The proverb acknowledges the endowment of each ecosystem and life-world as well as its members' giftedness for finding genuine ways of meaningfully putting to full use the resources at hand. Another proverb, *Uche bu akpa, onye obula nya nke ya, Knowledge (experiential and thoughtful) is like a handbag, everyone carries his or her own),* acknowledges the quotidian and indeed singular nature of such skillfull knowledge. The proverb moreover suggests how much knowledge is never someone's monopoly, but shared in a respect of fellow-people's insights. We could say that the heart of this proverb is a step ahead of Aristotle's dictum that *All men by nature desire to know.* While Aristotle gives primacy to *the quest* for knowledge, Igbo elders and experts basically assume possession of knowledge as their starting point and aim at sharing and applying one another's modes of knowledge and ways of understanding and doing as their starting point. Such knowledge acquisition or

transmission never occurs from scratch. Or as the Brazilian educationist Paulo Freire would say, learning is not happening to an empty vessel or a *tabula rasa*. Indeed, knowledge proficiency happens, in the Igbo view, via the giving and receiving or the conversation-like intertwining of the forces and insights at hand, namely as a transactional meeting of minds, skills and experiences. When stated in a council dealing with conflicts or other critical issues in the community, the same proverb moreover stresses the need not only to share insights but also to open up to ever new, possibly external, inputs.

A number of Igbo rhetorical questions forcefully stress how much knowledge should never stop developing along unforeseeable tracks proper to any meeting and sharing: *E si be gi eje be onye? O gi na achara m moto? I na enye m nri? (Does the pathway to other people's house begin from your own house? Are you the one who helps me avoid the on-coming traffic? Do you feed me?)*. In other words, *Do you have any monopoly of knowledge? Do you control my affairs for me? Are you the one guiding my every step? Do I really depend on you for my survival and sustenance?* These questions call for humility and the realisation that knowing, comprehension, grasp and mastery are really, at heart, local in their (epistemological and phenomenological, hence metaphysical) origins. Knowledge has a many-sided face that ought to be gathered in for a richer integral development of its thrust. restating that all knowledge is basically local knowledge undermines the Reformist Modernity's pretence at monolithic knowledge trajectories for mankind. This pretence moreover tended to universalise science, which was in origin a local, historically determined, contingent ethnoscience. It tended to suffocate the voice, vision, and unique perspectives and contributions of the great variety of other and genuine knowledge systems and epistemologies from the many cultures of the world. Because of its particular civilisational roots, cosmopolitan science and its modern institutionalisation are more of a global than universal nature. Yet a pluralistic, non-patronising poly-logue between the great variety of local knowledge practices is still in need of criteria for horizontal borderlinking without encroachment upon one another, that is a non-colonising cross-fertilising and thus reciprocally reempowering of adjacent culture-specific knowledge fields at their very borderzones.

But African societies have since colonisation and till today been marked by 'othering' from the North. Its great civilisational traditions (in particular, political, medical, biological, commercial, and religious ones -cf. Janzen 1989, p'Bitek 1971) have been inferiorised and subdued in particular during the 19th and 20th centuries' colonial and missionary enterprise. That jaundiced *civilising mission* assumed that all 'traditional' knowledge in Africa, where their very presence were acknowledged at all, were obsolete. In the colonial era, western *Enlightened* knowledge and expertise were a priori proclaimed superior probably because of its roots in Classical Greek Antiquity and western monotheistic metaphysics, as well as its literacy and technocracy. Ostensibly propagated for 'the good of the colonised peoples', this western civilisational *version* of knowledge was being imposed on several levels, in particular through the colonial and Christian missionary schools. Religious conversion and education joined forces to help African communities to *catch up* with the West. Of course, the colonial school education did not remain without positive effects. It indeed initiated young Africans into a groping dialogue with the West, its literature and technological development, by making the western texts, histories, world views and technical skills accessible to them primarily by the breaking down of the linguistic barrier. This entooling was, however, carried out in a lopsided manner as it imposed its own definitions and hegemonic dichotomy of subject (the one who knows) versus object (the known, the measurable), 'developed or modern' versus 'not-yet-developed or traditional' (van Rinsum 2002), meanwhile obnubilating the basic realities and originary local African knowledge vectors (Hountondji 1995, p'Bitek 1971). In this othering, rather than genuinely being an enriching centre for the dialogue of civilisations, the colonial school turned out to be a rigid institutional setting for entrenching monologue if not an *Invention of Africa* (Mudimbe 1988), whilst excluding the voice of subordinated civilisations.

Through these schools, entire generations of young Africans were redirected away from their originary cultural knowledge roots and sources. They were made to despise and abandon their so-called *native* linguistic tools for learning purposes. In most colonial schools, the use of vernacular language was punished. The young Africans

were relentlessly exposed to western-style education and inserted into the language and discourses of the colonial master, whether this language was Afrikaans, English, Flemish, French, German, Italian or Portuguese. Nothing more fundamentally completed the rupturing of the generational link in the knowledge production and transmission. The voice of the elders and experts in Africa was literally cut off and silenced by that very strategic linguistic and literary rerouting. The young generation of Africans were severed from ongoing critical dialogue with their elders, Africa's 'informal intellectuals'. The tragic nature of this rupture was moreover rubbed in by the oralcy in the older generations.

The alien language, content and style of colonial and missionary education intimately affected the students' learning ability and enthusiasm, and indeed contributed in narrowing their interests in various subjects on account of the difficulties posed by the linguistic and cultural barrier. The students' attention to mathematics and the exact sciences in particular declined. More than the social sciences, the exact sciences required extra-sophistication in the imaginative and representational capacities of students. The school idiom of mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology is indeed replete with cultural assumptions and models stemming from an overall scopic culture of dualistic space-time di-vision and arborescent (taxonomic) categorisation. In the Western paradigmatic model of knowledge ithe universe is considered to be a text that can be decoded (...) Seen as regularly patterned and therefore knowable [by means of rational investigation], but at the same time contingent (van Rinsum 2002: 30). The curricula and the texts used in the colonial and mission schools were densely foreign in particular in their latent worldview and the lavish use of illustrations and applications from the West, that obviously were far-removed from the lived reality and sensibilities of the students, their cultural parameters and values, their ecology and life-world. All this contributed immensely in making the school education culturally alienating, enhancing the severance of the students from their cultural roots, values and mores. The books and education style offered virtually no positive, theoretical or even practical, relations to the life-context and existing familiar knowledge nodes to which that school knowledge could have been socketed, contrasted with,

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dialogued with, or separated from. At school, the local was never called upon as triggers of thought and reflection. This grand redirection of the students' mental energy and imaginative powers was reenforced each step of the educational *ladder* as the students graduated from primary to secondary and then to tertiary or university education. The more these young Africans advanced into 'the very core' of this educational – though alienating– journey *upwards*, the more they were led to subordinate their originary culture to their new and admittedly more *evolved* knowledge and worldview. The uprooting thrust of this education moreover fostered in the minds of the impressionable students the mistaken view that no valuable education had been taking place at home *prior* to the coming of European missionaries, colonial education officers and administrators to Africa. Christianity was proselytising the heathen, and the school figured as the privileged site to enter the true and universal knowledge ifor the sake of domesticating nature and making it eligiblei (van Rinsum 2002: 31).The deliberately imposed clear break between this imported version of education and the indigenous one *prior* to the arrival of the *white* man to the shores of *black* Africa, made it seem as if there were no teachers in these indigenous contexts, no education worth the name in Africa.

Numerous scholars have noted this derailment of indigenous knowledge in Africa, and the mimicry of the West which it fostered: think of Ajayi *et al.* (1996), Appiah (1992), Ashby (1964), Ashcroft *et al.* (1989), Assaba (2000), Bates *et al.* (1993), Bernal (1991), Bhengu (1996), Crossman (1999), Ela (1994), Eze (1997), Guyer (1996), Gyekye (1997), Hountondji (1994), Ki-Zerbo (1990), Masolo (1994), Mazrui (1978, 1992), Mudimbe (1988), Ndaw (1997), Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986), Ramose (1999), Van Rinsum (2002), Wiredu (1996), Yesefu (1973). It was a realisation of this dissonance in colonial and missionary education in Africa which fired and powered the *Négritude movement* and featured prominently in the writings of its most outspoken champions as well as dominated the discourse of its principal voice, namely *Présence Africaine.* The passion to correct this misleading trend in exogenous education of Africans prompted and sustained the work of major African novelists, poets, musical artists and statesmen, such as Chinua Achebe, Anthony Kwame Appiah, Aimé Césaire, Francis

Fanon, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Ezekiel Mphalele, Julius Nyerere, Okot p'Bitek, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Léopold Sedar Senghor. Some of the visionary African nationalists who spent their energies engaging in the struggle for Africa's independence, such as Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, took up their pen to name this dissonance and as much as was within their powers strove to correct it. Eminent African historians, philosophers and theologians, such as Cheikh Anta Diop, F.Eboussi-Boulaga, Jean-Marc Ela, Kenneth Dike, Meinrad Hebga, Paulin Hountondji, Alexis Kagame, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Issiaka Prosper Lalèyê, Ali Mazrui, Achille Mbembe, John Mbiti, Vincent Mudimbe, Vincent Mulago, Theophilus Okere, Tshiamalenga Ntumba, Kwasi Wiredu, and numerous others have in their various ways put a finger on this derailment of African knowledge and called for a realignment or recoupling of Africa's dislocated and obnubilated knowledge resources and practices.

In spite of the realisation that *Things Have Fallen Apart,* to paraphrase the telling title of Chinua Achebe's first novel (of 1958), the local knowledge systems in postcolonial Africa still continue to be marginalised. Both the African governments as well as the hegemonic arena of cosmopolitan science and universities, alike the international donors, go on aligning 'modern' knowledge with management, power, technical efficiency, whilst giving any local knowledge the inferior status it got from the European colonial and missionary teachers and administrators. Today, Africa severely suffers from an overall crisis of self-critical intellectual leadership. The dazzling crisis of many post-colonial African nation-states is essentially due, side to side to the structure of their historical determination, to their basic mimetic artificiality and alienness, the basic absence of informed and bottom-up consent in the amalgamated units, and the lack of sociocultural embeddedness of the Constitution, civil code and bureaucratic machinery in any form of deep-rooted endogenous socioculture and ethics. At independence, African governments were facing the unenviable task of uniting into a nation-state many previously self-ruling peoples, abruptly amalgamated and reigned as they were into jumbo territories by colonial rule. The task then at hand of blending their languages, cultures, and indeed varying political traditions and agendas, seems to have hit the rocks. The attempt to keep some political unity out

of formerly loosely related societies, whose division was sharpened by their recent conversion to imperial world-religions and their world-strategic riches, has led the new governments to inimical compromises, moreover directly incapacitating the qualitative transformation of the inherited educational enterprise. Often the choice was made of the former colonial language as *lingua franca,* seen as a way of maintaining unity of the colonially amalgamated linguistic and cultural groups. Since independence, the question of determining the language, content and form of school education in most newly independent African states has moreover hinged on extraneous circumstances. Some governments do masquerade interest in the educational programmes and infrastructure designed by international donors so as to mark their 'political correctness', whilst overriding for example any consideration of the fundamental role of the mother-tongue instrument and the local cultural forms of decision-making and management in the educational process.

At independence, most African countries merely adopted the borders of the states as created in the late 19th century by the scramble for Africa and sustained by colonial rule. At independence, there was virtually no room to critically reappraise these national borders on account of the history of how they had been drawn in the first place, for what reasons they were constituted the way they were. Cracks in the very foundations of a number of such loosely amalgamated nation-states in Africa started showing from the first years of political independence and have had to be held together by force or dictatorship. A critical revisiting of the basic foundations of the state borders and of the bureaucratic rationale in Africa ought to dig deep into the pre-colonial era. Post-colonial independence assumed that borders created by the colonial regimes. This was perhaps in the hope that unity of the various cultural and political units amalgamated by the colonial powers into one country would be realised. Unfortunately post colonial independence realities seem to argue that the embedded frictions and differences in the constituting groups seems to be in the way of progressive development of the various African countries. Different agendas seem to be corrupting the central administration of the various African countries and endangering political accountability. Perhaps it has become necessary that this earlier independence ought to

give way to the more authentic and liberating independence and self-determination of the constituting groups, which would enhance responsibility and commitment in the progress of the units that would eventually emerge by consent of the various groups. Integral rethinking of the state borders and the election of the nation's governors in Africa is called for if Africa is to actively participate in the march of progress in the increasing globalised environment. At the moment, in most African states there is an urgent need to revisit and reenergise the institutions dedicated to nurturing and building up the moral and human capital base, without which no nation-state can really develop for the benefit of the citizens. Most military dictators aimed at eroding the prestige and even self-esteem of African intellectuals, for example, by co-opting them as counsellors for programmes that have ended by undermining the school education and side-lining the University itself. In some cases there have been direct violent attacks on prominent critical members of the educational and scientific community, forcing a number of them into exile. The resulting South-to-North brain drain is as much a function of the economic pull as well as the response to *real* threats to the lives and survival of 'the fleeing brains'. This interference of some African governments in the educational sector has moreover adversely affected the image of the teaching profession, bringing it down drastically from its elevated mode from the 1950s throughout the 1980s, to something of scorn today, thus scaring away from a very important profession the best minds who now branch out into seemingly more respectable, stable and lucrative professions.

With a mere handful of exceptions, there has been the wholesale failure of the educational institutions and legacies left behind by the colonial agents and missionaries. Its agenda and ethos have been carried on almost by incredibly faithful proxy by local successors who mostly have bought into the basic assumptions and institutionalisation of the Western-style education vis-à-vis the indigenous knowledge systems. Regrettably these heirs of the Western mentors have retained the scorn with which African knowledge systems have been treated in the past.

A Reversionary Path of Self-empowering Borderlinking: The Appeal of *Aku Ruo Ulo, Making Acquired Wealth/Knowledge Have Impact on the Home Front.*

The African colonial and missionary educational story is not in the final analysis a failure. Education indeed seeks to basically develop a scrutinising tool and a conceptualising equipment, namely a means for sharpening the intellect and providing avenues of agency for the dispossessed. Education aims at attuning the trainees to both critical enquiry, enthusiasm and commitment as a compass for developing other compasses, for creating other maps, for discovering new routes and educational plans and for understanding the world. In its very core, irrespective of the initial ideological thrusts and windows, education may develop horizons and trajectories of hope, reinvention, discovery, restoration and healing of oneself and one's root culture. There is indeed a subversive heart in the educational transaction, namely in the questioning and answering, the seeking and finding, the wooing and cooing, the varied exercising of the reflective faculty of the mind, which finally contains the seeds of freedom for the student or apprentice. Seeds and sharing of knowledge which have the capacity to make the apprentice to eventually become a master in charge of the art, theory and practice, able to practically and in a rhizome-like manner adopt and adapt new technologies in contemporary social, economic and political life, outside any imperialising grand narrative (Garuba 2003, Odhiambo 2002).

For example, a number of Igbo scholars, admittedly fewer than one would have hoped for, have been able to intermarry their Western education and their mastery of genuine Igbo knowledge. In the field of history, for example, already in the 1950s, Professor Kenneth Onwuka Dike had the vision to realign African historiography: his seminal *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta* played a key role decolonising of African historiography. Professor Dike himself was one of the founders of what is now known as iIbadan school of History.i The great achievements by Chinua Achebe point to the subversive hermeneutical promise of even colonial and missionary education. In Igboland, the growing harvest of the *Ahiajoku Lecture Series* witnesses to the capacities of a few local scholars formed in the moulds of the Western institutions to fruitfully turn their skills, aspirations, critical gaze and knowledge capacities into uncovering from within, and enfleshing, Igbo local reality. Such a reorientation, resolutely beyond nativistic discourse and Afro-radical claims of

selfhood (Mbembe 2002a, b), has the promise of enhancing the qualitative transformation of the students' capacities and enabling them to achieve context-relevant insight in their chosen disciplines. The aim is to swing the pendulum towards an optimal realisation of the latent capacities and creative genius of the vast majority of students in touch with their intersubjective networks and culture of origin, whose resonance for history and belonging breaches the local/global divides. The critical consideration in our opinion is the reversionary path ensuring a robust line of communication, interaction and forward-looking contribution to the home front, even from the diaspora or the so-called brain-drain from Africa: tying one's knowledge up with the originary – the very core of the 'local' – is opening it up to life-sources ahead. All too numerous diasporic Igbo and other African intellectuals are presently anchored in various corners of Europe and America sustained in their arts, laboratory or other academic work, alike in their personal stamina, by the stable environment, enabling infrastructures, and availability of kindred spirits and sharpened interlocutors in their adopted institutions, communities and homes.

Some 'returnees' have come home from the diaspora with irichesi (*aku*), above all knowledge that they have acquired in other knowledge traditions. These riches include new skills, methodologies, tools and perspectives, alike new eyes, ears, sensibilities and tastes, artistic or otherwise. Some are coming back with a sharper appreciation of the knowledge practices in their parents home. Able to take a perspicacious and critical view on both their originary culture and the foreign one in their diaspora, they are therefore, in many ways, a *borderlinking* people, well placed to effect and bring home a cross-pollination of ideas, skills, techniques, methods, in the very spirit of *aku ruo ulo* [imaking the wealth and knowledge they have acquired have an impact on their homesi]. The classical injunctions or admonitions of the Igbo elders to their sons and daughters offer such borderlinking reversionary path, as is expressed in the following proverbs: *Nwata ukwu njenje ka okenye isi awo ihe ama* (*The child who travels a lot often is wiser than the grey hair old man sitting in the village*); *Adighi ano ofu ebe ekili mmanwu* (*Deeper appreciation of the beauty of the masquerade can only be achieved by seeing the masquerade from several vantage positions*); and *Njepu amaka* (*Travelling*

is enlightening). Yet, for Igbo elders, one's journey is only completed when one is back home: *E je alo, bu isi ije* (*Going and coming back; Going in order to come back*), is the very *raison d'être* and fulfilment of the journey. It is a coming home to tell the story of the journey, share the insights gathered from far distant lands, and make the impact of the new knowledge or wealth acquired. It hints at an important feedback loop into the endogenous educational process. This de-briefing of the journey has the capacity to change a community's knowledge status quo. Indeed Igbo knowledge culture genuinely fosters such qualitative transformation through its eagerness to integrate new insights and perspectives, technologies and practices which have proved their richness, superiority, and greater functionality. The proverbs *Ahu ihe ka ubi eree oba* (*If what is more important than farming appears on the horizon then the barn needs to be sold*), and *Egwu dagharia, atugharia ukwu egwu* (*If the melody changes, then the dance steps must also change*) underline the need to change with the changing circumstances, values, techniques and approaches. Indeed, Igbo culture is a knowledge culture with open ears.

Speaking metaphorically, the Western-style education and its products need to show up for de-briefing to the local cultures in Africa (Odora-Hoppers 2002). The project of domesticating, bringing home Western-style knowledge in Africa concerns earthing this knowledge in the African soil and tuning in with African spirituality, thereby healing the alienating and destructive division between mind and body, literates and non-literates, town and gown. It entails the cross-fertilisation *in situ* between the academic and the local context-bound knowledge practices and living arts (Gerdes 1999, Odhiambo 2002). The classroom should interconnect concretely and creatively with the life, memory and ethics in the homes and homesteads. This de-briefing of the journey so far and its critical dialogue with the local cultural modes of knowledge production and modes of being in the world is the task awaiting any programme of fostering an endogenous knowledge economy complying with sovereignty and dignity. It is not our intention to further detail, as has been done (Crossman & Devisch 2002, Devisch 2001), instances of reappropriation in the complex terrain of shifting African identities and subjectivities. Yet such effort to redress the imbalance ought to avoid the danger of insulating Africa's educational pedagogy and infrastructure, a self-bottling or

impoverishing inbreeding and clannishness. An education that aligns with the endogenous knowledge might break out of the place exogenously assigned to Africa within the (post)colonial structure of determinations and alienations. Education in Africa must foster gifted members of African communities or networks to also play an active part in this emerging globalised and intricately networked world. Another Igbo proverb, *E ji eshi ulo mara mma fuo ama* (*Becoming beautiful in the public eye starts at home*), horns in on the need to have a strong home base. From the mother-tongue and inetrsubjective base, the process of borderlinking education that connects those concerned intimately to other knowledge cultures, begins and returns in a dialectical way, in the spirit of *aku ruo ulo.*

In contrast, the colonial and missionary education developed an intrusive if not uprooting *bordercrossing*, leaping over not just the contextual realities and knowledge nodes of the particular students, hence in most education programmes it overlooked the plurality of the mother-tongues and life-worlds of those concerned. Such bordercrossing education created the bizarre situation where Igbo students, for example, knew European history, geography and cultural realities better than they ever came to know about their Efik, Idoma or Yoruba neighbours. This leap was partly responsible for the students' and the new elites' extroversion of interests and tastes, to which we have earlier alluded. The colonial bordercrossing overlooked its heavy orientation towards relating on the vertical South-North civilisational hierarchy, while hardly paying any serious positive attention to a boarder-linking of creative and empowering energies on the horizontal (i.e. South-South) axis. The wisdom of *E ji eshi n'ulo mara mma fuo ama* (*Becoming beautiful in the public eye starts at home*) was being side-stepped in the school education, with disastrous consequences on the educational, economic and political fronts. Witness for example, the alienating borrowing of political models from alien contexts, the mimetic cultivation and mimicking of Western tastes or fashion with its heavy consequences for the very survival of local crafts and markets. Or conversely witness the perverse preying, by the new elites in state functions or in control of economic power, of local people's so-called animist unconscious ifor spurious cultural instruments to bolster their authority and legitimacyi (Garuba 2003: 255).

An innovative borderlinking education could expand its focus in concentric circles or outflowing ripples engaging in a knowledge of realities, cultures, values, histories and languages of one's neighbouring cultures. Indeed self-understanding and cultural rerooting include a thoroughgoing understanding of one's neighbours and the other groups with which one has very frequent interaction and significant knowledge exchange. In their respective borderzones, such as interregional markets and seasonal festivals, neighbouring peoples make effort to understand one another but none of them has the ambition to supersede the other linguistically or culturally. In such zones of poly-logue and borderlinking, there is a 'live and let live' in the tolerant co-existence of languages, spiritualities, skills and techniques.

While more disciplines may have important roles to play in the enterprise of reappropriating and revalorising local knowledge practices on the formal state institutional scenes, anthropology and philosophy may help those in charge for deepening self-understanding of, and borderlinking between, local life-worlds and more global scenes. However, acutely aware how much Western philosophers and anthropologists may formerly have misrepresented local people, realities and histories, particularly during the colonial period, the disciplines of philosophy and anthropology can in contemporary times henceforth contribute to unravel the knowledge riches of local worlds and foster intercultural exchange and empowerment of selves in their borderzones with interrelated worlds. This can be achieved especially through decolonising their scope and mental toolkit. Africans must become anthropologists to themselves by unveiling *their* cultural patrimony, memory and diversity of experiences, and giving fuller account to themselves and their interacting neighbours of who they really are, what they really have to offer themselves and the world. There is need to put African cultural riches into texts or better perhaps in multimedia documents that moreover report on, analyse and theorise from within their weave both the local cultures' genius and limitations. To the extent that anthropology as an internal hermeneutics of local cultures abandons its Eurocentric, patriarchal and logocentric biases, it may have an emancipatory effect on the examined culture's prominent and outgoing actors. Anthropology done in a receptive

borderlinking may foster local knowledge in the matrix of councils, rituals and local scripts being shared among *co-responsible* members. In the empathetic encounter which anthropology aims at, attention moreover should go to exploring and deepening cultural relationality with its emphasis on solidarity. Attention can also be given to the bodily and sensory ways of perceiving and experiencing enchanted being-in-the-world, performatively and contextually elaborated. An intimacy of affinity and co-affectivity then develops on the level of the borderzones between the student and the bearers of the culture. In the participant observation and the co-subjectivity-as-encounter at shared borderspaces (Ettinger 2004), the co-subjects are incorporating and appropriating a trans-subjective *connaissance* (experiential comprehending; literally, be born with the Other) that precedes them, or is co-emerging in the moment of jointness. Such anthropological encounter weaves a texture of vibrating, intersubjective and intercultural, threads.

The project of bringing local knowledge practices into the formal educational endeavours in Africa will follow a number of critical lines if it is to be viable in the long run. We have already indicated the critical importance of promoting the mother tongues of Africa as a major language of education not only in the primary schools but all the way till the university level. We do acknowledge that such a plea is somehow a visionary one and replete with dilemmas, as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1998) has warned us. Indeed implementing these criteria practically poses challenges on various fronts, from mobilising political support to generating texts to support this linguistic turn. These will in turn underline the necessity to have schools of translation in context as an important branch of the educational infrastructure in Africa.

In view of the long history of neglect of local knowledge practices two interrelated and complemetary lines of action are critical. The first aims at opening up local knowledge practices in the sphere of the formal institutions (state, economy, education) by creating new courses and discussion forums that elicit the neglected fields of local knowledge. It is a process of unfolding new knowledge routes, new trajectories of thought, digging and dredging new canals as outlets and inlets of ideas, knowledge models and means. It moreover entails a process of inaugurating naming,

ikpo aha, as Igbo would put it, is literally, *calling into being, giving recognition, summoning forth*, thereby carefully outlining artful, practical and aetiological knowledge that the co-subjects themselves deem important. Naming new areas of knowledge allows for *ihughari ji n'oku* (*Turning over the yam so that the other side too can be roasted in the fire*), turning over other dimensions of reality for auspicious and critical encounter. It is a process of redirecting the attentive eye, the receptive ear, around certain themes and subjects, so that they can be 'seen *again*' with fresh eyes, 'heard *again*' with new ears, and so that they thereby can *reveal a little bit more* of themselves than had been the case.

The second line of action will basically concern itself with healing the breach between local knowledge practices and other civilisational systems of knowledge, such as West- or East-African, Bantu, Islamo-Arabic, Berber knowledge systems, and beyond. This second line of action would concern itself with building bridges to start overcoming seeming faultlines in the cultural productivity and knowledge trajectories of African knowledge systems and practical arts (such as, of agriculture, architecture, medicine and marketing). It is about borderlinking the local knowledge and practical arts with the ones developing in other continents, as has been the case since centuries of the pre-colonial political institutions throughout Africa and southern Asia (van Binsbergen 2003: 235-316). This process prioritises the role of history in unravelling connections.

The Role of Whelan Research Academy

The Whelan Research Academy (WRAC) was founded in 1999, at Owerri, Nigeria. The Whelan Research Academy's general objective is to foster advanced research in the entire field of the humanities and social and behavioural sciences, as well as stimulate scholarly interaction in an interdisciplinary and international setting. The uniqueness of the Academy above all lies in its particular aim which is to enhance a cross-pollination between the afore-mentioned cosmopolitan sciences and the local African knowledge practices and living arts. For this, the Academy endeavours to bring out the best of intellectual and artful creativity of the scholars, as well as

the 'informal intellectuals' and artists of local societies, meeting at the Academy to lift their research and (inter)cultural borderlinking at a higher level.

Two conditions are vital for inter-disciplinary and intercultural advanced research of a borderlinking type. First, it is the Academy's role to offer a stimulating forum for the establishment of an intellectual community of scholars, informal intellectuals (such as, elders or experts in local knowledge practices) and artists (think of experts in the living arts, such as festivals, rituals, local community councils, as well as the expressive arts). Indeed, WRAC offers a forum for the regular meeting of this intellectual community from within the region and beyond, irrespective of religious affiliations, to engage in stimulating exchange of knowledge, ideas and skills. Secondly, the academic freedom promoted by the WRAC lies at the core of explorative borderlinking in as yet unknown territory and its broadening effect on intellectual and artistic minds.

The Academy's mission is also to contribute to recover Africa's rich but presently dispersed intellectual capital in the Diaspora, by enabling some of this vast network of scholarly and technical expertise to have a healthy impact on the African continent.

The Academy offers opportunities for meeting and reflecting on research questions with a view to helping to create context relevant research agenda. It aims above all at improving the quality of African related research, fundamental reflection and creativity and to widen the intellectual and cultural horizons of its intellectual community and their respective societies. This orientation hopes to have a lasting impact for rerooting the local cultures' well-springs, not only in the short, but also particularly in the long run.

The objectives of WRAC to create an interdisciplinary, international community of highly talented African and Africana-related scholars, intellectuals and artists, on a mission to conduct advanced borderlinking research, are reached as follows:

1. Through the invitation at regular WRAC lectures, local workshops and international symposia of scholars, intellectuals, artists of high repute whose performance has been evaluated on originality, research ability, ability to exchange ideas, and productive promise.

2. Through a physical setting, in Owerri, which provides an infrastructure for these activities (including moreover archival documentation with particular attention to preserving oral heritage, art exhibitions and festivals), a library, and possibly electronic access to libraries, universities and research centres.

3. Through editorial service for publications, such as the Academy's Annual Conference Proceedings, a Quarterly Bulletin of WRAC, and Book Publications of the findings of the Academy.

4. Through research incentives fostering focussed attention to specific, promising areas of local knowledge and the living arts.

5. Through collaboration with other, regional and international, research institutions and agencies in creating and realising applied scientific and artistic projects.

The Whelan Research Academy is not defending science for the sake of science, nor the living arts for the sake of art alone. Nor is it defending science or artful creativity only in utilitarian terms. Yet the Academy offers an interdisciplinary environment that is competitive, performance oriented and international. Here, scholars, intellectuals and artists from diverse disciplines and interests are in a position to meet for concentrated exchange, to become acquainted with new subjects and different approaches and so inspire each other to take a fresh look at their own research, and responsibility in sociocultural matters. This type of free, interdisciplinary and international community is rare and much needed to inspire one another and explore new paths down the garden of scholarly ideas.

The Whelan Research Academy for Religion, Culture and Society is also an opportunity structure to expand horizons of all sorts of religious, cultural, social and community health, political, economic, agricultural, architectural and communicational factors. The Academy's task is like that of a gardener or farmer, who waters and nourishes the soil, so that the plants in the garden or on the farm will grow and flourish.

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Is there one Science, Western Science?*

Theophilus Okere

Over thirty years ago, while I was writing my doctoral thesis at the Catholic University of Leuven, a thesis incidentally titled, 'Can there be an African Philosophy? A Hermeneutical inquiry into the conditions of its possibility,' I was concurrently taking lessons in social and cultural anthropology. That course helped to shape the first part of my thesis which was a study of African culture, the Igbo culture, and was written under the supervision of Professor E. Roosens. The second and more specifically philosophical part of the work explored how the application of hermeneutics or the radical interpretation of culture was actually what philosophers did. This gave me the clue to a possible way of the creation of philosophies or the doing of philosophy in Africa or elsewhere: interpreting rather than merely giving ethnographic narrating. My guides for this part of my work were Jean Ladrière and Paul Ricoeur and my conclusions can be summarised this way: philosophy is nothing more than first, the assumption and then the questioning and critical interpretation of one's culture at the level of ultimacy and finality and of being. Or, put in a different way, it is trying to find answers to the deep questions of meaning and existence posed by and within one's environing culture. And if some people can do it for and from their culture as did Plato and Aristotle for Greek culture or Augustine and Aquinas for mediaeval Christianity or Kant and Hegel for Enlightenment Europe, so should others be able to do the same for African or other cultures. It is clear that all philosophy

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is local and even individual before it can be universal; and nothing can be genuinely universally valid unless it was first authentically personal and inserted within a given culture. If this is the case for philosophy, it is likely to be the case for human knowledge, since every form of human knowledge must be situated or generated from within a culture or bounded by presuppositions, prejudgments, interests etc. (Habermas 1971). This is the frame of mind that I bring to bear on the question before us: whether there is only one science and whether this is Western science.

Explanation of Terms – Science

To begin with, we shall need to define some of our major concepts, in order to clarify the ambiguities involved in their usage and perhaps, more convincingly present our answer to the double question. Let us take a look at the two operative words: science and Western. These are ambiguous and emotionally charged words invoking intense feelings of partisanship and, for some, even resentment. The etymology of the word 'science' takes us to the Latin *scientia*. *Scientia* has been rendered into the next generation of European languages as knowledge, *savoir* and *Wissen*. Even without these terms having precisely one univocal use, even with their dictionary meanings bristling with nuances and synonyms and with a limitless ability for metaphor that makes their connotation all the more elastic and elusive, we can still say in general what *scientia* or knowledge is: a special activity or mode of being of man by which man relates to reality from the perspective of the truth, truth here meaning somehow getting at reality as it is. But 'science' has acquired a history and is no longer an innocent dictionary word generally and vaguely translating the Latin *scientia*. It surely retains this primary meaning coinciding with the activity of the human mind in relation to reality whereby its natural curiosity for the truth is satisfied.

When Aristotle, in the first book of the Metaphysics wrote that 'all men by nature desire to know', he was using the term 'know' in the general, commonsensical understanding of the term, common to the people of his day and culture, to people of our day and apparently to all human beings. This knowledge or science includes acquaintance with, getting into the deep and true meaning of, having familiarity with and getting the real truth about something. But

science has also often been restricted to the building of bodies or systems of truth about specified regions of reality, following certain well defined methods of inquiry. But the early Greeks who reflected much on the matter distinguished various forms and levels of knowledge, depending on the type of object known and the aspect under which it was known. Mainly using the phenomenon of *change* as criterion, Plato was convinced the only fit object of true knowledge (*episteme*) was the unchanging form or idea, while any consideration of the particular material object of our sense experience could only qualify as opinion (*doxa*). But it was Aristotle who worked out a systematic and comprehensive range of varieties of knowledge, a variety of the objects of knowledge and a variety of the ways of knowing. After distinguishing sensation which is common to man and animals, from knowledge which is man's peculiar activity, he established a list of the many levels of being which would also form the object of knowledge – the non-living, the living, the vegetable world, the animal world, human beings and God. And for each of these levels in the chain of being, he also mapped out the various aspects or headings under which it could be known. In this way that he was able to divide the whole area of knowledge into disciplines, some of which he was the first to establish and develop as sciences or systems of knowledge. By the time these two ancient Greek masters were done, we were left with the idea of science or true knowledge as the knowledge of any level of being in a way that accounts for it. And knowledge accounts fully for its object by knowing all its four causes. This would truly qualify knowledge as science in the higher sense of a system or body of truths, the *scientia rerum per causas*, the knowledge of things through their causes. So far for the second level of the meaning of science.

A third and even more specialised meaning of science was to erupt with the work of Copernicus, Kepler and especially Galileo in the seventeenth century. This is modern science, science in its most restricted sense. It is very narrowly limited both in its subject area and its method of approach. This science, essentially astronomy, physics and chemistry, considers only inanimate matter, bodies or anything with mathematical properties. It considers only quantity and totally discounts the quality of bodies. Galileo himself

sets out the basic presuppositions of this science by disregarding non quantifiable entities as merely subjective. He regards them as mere names, citing the famous example of tickling which, however real it is felt to be, cannot have a faculty of tickling because it is non-real, subjective and even illusory. Only elements that yield to measurements and give information on the quantitative aspects of material phenomena are concerned with the real world. Only they relate to the objective world and only they can yield science. This science, without doubt, has been spectacularly successful, especially when applied as technology to bring material well being and to construct useful tools for man's comfort. But by its self-imposed limitations and restrictions, which also mostly explain its huge success, it excludes vast areas of reality, vast areas of possible true knowledge including their corresponding methodologies and it excludes other forms of knowledge.

The 'West' and the 'Western'

At this juncture we should say a few words on the other operative term in the title, the West, a word which has become notoriously ambiguous. The simple points of the compass, East and West, have been shifting meaning for ages, perhaps from as early as the decisive battles of Marathon, Thermopylae and Salamis, when the Greek forces repulsed those of the Persian Empire. Perhaps, even earlier, when Europeans first heard of China and India. But when Emperor Constantine established Constantinople as the Eastern Capital of the Roman Empire, he created East versus West as an administrative and political category. Christendom was to divide along the same fault lines, following the bitter fight for papal supremacy and culminating in the Great Schism, with the East speaking Greek and the West speaking Latin. This ironically left Greece to the East though it had been 'the West' at Marathon. It also gave a brand new meaning and a religious twist to East and West. As Islam spread from the Middle East (as did Christianity), reaching as far West as Spain and as far East as China and India, somehow, it came to be identified along with Buddhism, Hinduism and Mithraism as Eastern and, once again East and West became yet another level of religious division and polarisation. The discovery of the New World, the

colonial conquests and missionary expansion even further confused geography, culture and religion. Today, places as far away from Europe and as far apart geographically from each other as North America and Australia are referred to as Western, though this hardly ever applies to the Navajo of North America or the Aborigines of Australia. Then again, the rise of Marxism in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China added ideological, political and economic dimensions to the East/West polarisation.

So then which West? With so many dimensions to the term, there is bound to be some overlapping. But it would be fairly correct to say that the West today as it is likely meant to be taken in our title, designates a culture first and then a culture area. This would mean roughly the culture or cultures whose core is the old European, Western Christendom, but stretching backwards historically and spiritually to appropriate Greco-Roman civilisation and continuing to the present day into whatever regions of the earth these peoples and cultures have migrated to.

Although we have long been used to such culturally divisive slogans as: East is East and West is West and they shall never meet, recently the use of the term West has tended to become more triumphalistic, jingoistic and exclusionary, conferring bragging rights on some people and buttressing claims of superiority vis-à-vis the others. Being Western and above all feeling Western seems to have become a way of counting oneself among the 'chosen people', if not the 'master race' itself. Being Western has become a new nationalism, even a new fascism and it may contain all the pitfalls of the old, not excluding intellectual xenophobia. This seems now to apply to science. Starting from the Enlightenment, when the first stories about other, different and stranger peoples and places reached Europe, the new context of contrast and comparison soon portrayed Europeans in better light than their new objects of curiosity. Very soon, this acquired a racist dimension. The West became 'civilised Europe' and the rest of the world, those exotic others discovered by European travellers, became heathens and savages fit only to be conquered and enslaved, colonised and christianised to become civilised. Civilisation was now defined in Western terms and by Western standards. The contribution of the rest of the world to the common pursuit of humanity could be conveniently ignored or

quietly co-opted with little or no acknowledgment. Reason which ultimately would mean humanity itself, virtually became Western. Success soon to be defined as military and industrial power and conquest over others only boosted the vaulting hubris and the world was readied for the boastful claims of the Greek miracle in philosophy and now the sole and exclusive possession by the West of the one, unique science in the world.

'Western Science': Which Level of Science?

But what science is this? It certainly can not be what we named earlier as first level science, that is, science as knowledge in general. At this first level one may say that science is one and also many. It is one in the sense that all men by nature desire to know. To claim such a prerogative exclusively for one people or culture or to deny it to others would be to disqualify those others from the class of human. All human beings as a matter of fact, somehow do have some knowledge. However, science is also many in the sense that, since such basic knowledge is human activity per excellence, it is also supremely historical in a supremely pluralist world. That is why, as in every human activity, there must be more than one way, in fact many ways of doing it, each human group/culture structuring and colouring its own knowledge according to the specificities of its own environment.

We come now to the next level of knowledge or science. This is science as a systematic or organised knowledge. We are talking now of the age-old and ever growing creation of bodies of truth that for centuries has constituted the matter of formal education. Today it is these bodies of knowledge that constitute the disciplines and curricula taught at all levels of learning, primary, secondary and tertiary. To call them bodies of knowledge is the same thing as to say that there is not just one science as insinuated in the title. The very name university says as much. The *universitas studiorum*, the institution for all knowledge, the institution where the matter of business and science is most directly carried on, negates the claim of one unique science. The concept of the *universitas studiorum* has been predicated on the need to cater for a plurality of sciences serving the promotion, preservation and enhancement of human

knowledge. The *scientiae* which together formed the *universitas* were understood to be different in their subject matter and often also in their methodology. In his *Kritik der Wissenschaften* given in Hamburg in the winter semester of 1968-1969, Carl Friedrich Freiherr von Weizsäcker gave an overview of every subject or discipline taught at the university. He arranged the sciences in five main groups. The first are mathematics and the abstract sciences of structure. Second, the sciences of inorganic nature, that is, physics, chemistry, astronomy and the technology deriving from them. Third, the sciences of living beings, zoology, botany and biology. Fourth are the sciences of man, medicine, psychology, social sciences and law as well as history, philology and language studies. Fifth, the sciences, if they can be so called he says, that treat of the ultimate ground of all these sciences, philosophy and theology.

Western Contribution to Science

This is the impressive, though by no means the exhaustive roll call of the sciences, a rich but incomplete harvest of human knowledge. It is still growing, as systematic knowledge is being accumulated around an ever increasing portion of the infinite variety that is reality. In assessing this panorama, and contemplating the density of input by square kilometer of the world map, the enormous contribution of the Western tradition can not be overestimated. It actually remains unrivalled. From the schools of Athens through the monastic schools of St Benedict, from the Cathedral schools of Charlemagne to the first of the mediaeval universities and those of today, a tradition of learning and science has been nurtured and bequeathed to the world, a tradition that constitutes one of the finest achievements of the human spirit. But this acknowledgement is a far cry from reducing all sciences to one or attributing all of it to the West.

Science: Mankind's Collective Achievement

No one can deny the overwhelming contribution of the West to science so understood. But it would be absurd to suggest that such overwhelming dominance amounted to a monopoly or to discount the contribution of other civilisations or other branches of the

human family to science. At least one should remember China and India. At least one should remember ancient Egypt and Babylonia, where, not only early beginnings, but also crucial advances had been made in the sciences and in technology. To remember these cultures, to be aware of their contributions to the beginnings of astronomy, mathematics and medicine as we now know them, should be enough rebuttal of those wild 'we versus them' and 'we alone-know-it-all' claims made in the name of the West. A mathematics, for instance, that has its roots and rudiments in virtually every known human culture, that has been on written record in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia for millennia, that develops immensely in ancient Greece, gets re-invigorated by mediaeval, Islamic culture and wins prestige and appreciation from its successful use in the seventeenth and eighteenth century physics, attaining its present 'maturity' in nineteenth century Europe – such a science cannot legitimately be claimed for one culture, Western or otherwise. As with mathematics, the story of the rest of the major branches of science has been a continuum. Granted the history and extent of culture borrowings, it can be presumed that every scientific revolution has been a revolution on an existing state of science, an addition to an already existing and growing legacy of humanity. What humanity knows has been the outcome of all the contributions of all times and cultures. Exclusive claims can only be qualified as usurpation.

Western Science as Natural Science: Strengths and Weaknesses

We now return to the narrowest meaning of science for which no doubt claims of sole and total ownership are being made on behalf of the West. Is it the only science and is it essentially and wholly Western? One need not dispute its mainly Western origin from Galileo through Newton and Descartes. Neither would any one doubt the successful application of this science in spectacular ways to lighten the drudgery of life. What characterises it however is its narrow focus, a restrictive definition of both its object and its method, restricting itself essentially to a fraction of the vast subject matter of knowledge as well as to a fraction of the many ways of human knowing. This exclusive concentration of focus has contributed to the great success of modern science, but this success

has been ambiguous at best and, for some, it has been a human tragedy. 'Science' in the form of technology has been extremely successful. It has made possible a revolution in man's living environment, liberating him from drudgery and saving time and energy for leisure and comfort. By unleashing the enormous potential of man as tool maker, it is realising the ambitions of mythologies from Icarus to Faust, the dreams of fairy tales and the marvels of magicians and alchemists through history. In making dreams reality, science has proven to be the most effective means to procure the most effective tools and toys for improving the material condition of man. But in the process it has become more a science for the materially useful and less the science in quest of the true, a know-how rather than a knowledge. Thus in so restricting itself, it has become less than itself.

Moreover, when science fashions such dreadful efficiency to serve an agenda of power (consider Hiroshima or the depleted ozone layer, or the scientific-military-industrial complex), the avowed purpose of dominating nature easily turns into the domination of fellow men and ethical problems of enormous proportions may arise, problems to which science has no clue, much less an answer, since quantity, not man or society or values have formed its alpha and omega. Such science becomes a failure if it cannot master its own ambiguities or control its own home-made Frankensteins. In that way, the very future of mankind could be and may have been irreversibly compromised. Further more in pursuing this successful experiment, science has one-sidedly privileged a form of knowing, at the same time devaluing other complementary and necessary forms of knowledge. It is well known that a certain 'physics envy' has affected many sciences, including those like the human sciences, with not the remotest affinity to physics, as they ape its warped methodology in other to attain something of its success.

In all this, the looser is man the knower himself, as the 'know thyself' of Socrates, the 'what shall I do?' and the 'what may I hope for' of Kant remain unheeded as advice and irrelevant as questions in science. In short, science has been most impressive in dealing with inanimate matter, less satisfactory in handling life, but totally and woefully incapable of explaining purpose or values or spirit or mind or beauty or good and evil, those very realities it refuses as

reality but which most deeply concern and really define man as man. Science has rather too successfully pushed the empiricist/materialist agenda and, on the wings of its brilliant success, is helping to globalise a less than global view of the world and reality.

Such success has empowered science or rather promoted the merger of knowledge and power (Ravetz 1970). It has enabled Western science not only to impose and maintain the power of the West over other peoples, but to threaten the knowledge of other peoples with extinction. The marginalisation of other people and the inferiorisation and devaluation of their dignity and humanity has gone hand in hand with the disqualification of their knowledge systems and are in turn cited as proof of the supremacy of Western science and as guarantee of Western domination. It was with the disqualification of other knowledge systems that the ground was cleared for the claims of the West being the sole possessors of the solely valid knowledge of all time, for all men of all cultures. This sounds too much like being and acting as the only remaining knowledge super power in the world.

Critique of Science

Thomas Kuhn (1970) has done the world a great service in helping to demythologise Western science and to debunk some of the arrogant claims made on its behalf. By objectively delineating the route to normal science and the nature of modern science, he has drawn attention to the roads not traveled. He has highlighted the role of paradigms in directing the process of scientific work and in foreclosing and modifying the results of science. He has deflated the idea of linear progress in science and has painted a realistic picture of the march of science as something more limited, more tentative, more ambiguous. To be able to make such claims one is likely to have forgotten the roots, the routes and the rootedness of science, thinking to have a science that is the result of pure reason, timeless and placeless and without any baggage of cultural prejudice, a pure science in quest of pure truth, pursued without any interest, without any presuppositions, *sine ira et studio*. Such a history-less science could only be an absolute science of which none would be capable but God himself.

A critical history of modern science would need to point out that:

1. It is fatally flawed or at least insufficiently equipped as the one form of knowledge that is valid for all mankind and adequate for all of reality.

2. This incompleteness and inadequacy suggest that science must have to accommodate 'other sciences' or forms of knowledge and other knowledge traditions. It is high time that those other traditions and forms of knowledge cease being marginalised so that the defaults of modern science may be corrected and important lacunae filled.

3. The knowledge hegemony of Western science, in so far as it claims universal validity, has been punctured even from within. If neither physics, which is the modern science par excellence, nor mathematics, the perfect and basic science, can now speak with one authoritative voice, since they are known to harbour their own internal contradictions and have shed their earlier aura of exactness, infallibility, universality and necessity, then the ground should be clear for a healthy and much needed pluralism in science.

4. The knowledge traditions of other cultures, long driven underground by the powerful Western behemoth should be revived and an effort should be made to let the world's knowledge systems bloom together, to enrich, correct, cross-pollinate and complement each other for the good of mankind.

Other Knowledge Traditions

In this connection we have mentioned the ancient civilisations of Egypt and Mesopotamia, and of India and China as cradles of science. Many other contemporary, non-Western cultures have written records of their knowledge traditions. But what of the many, cultural traditions that have preserved no written records? What of the poor, illiterates in Africa South of the Sahara? Should their knowledge traditions, if they exist at all, be taken seriously? We know what a barrier mass illiteracy has created for these civilisations.

But if we grant that written records help immensely in preserving and handing over knowledge, we know also that, of themselves, they do not create knowledge. Formal education is also a great advantage, but living traditions of informal education have their own advantage. If we grant also that the degree of 'scientificness' will always be debatable and, even when settled, will still be variable, there is no doubt that these peoples do have their own science or bodies of knowledge. For one thing, a science like medicine will have to be taken for granted as a genuine science native to every culture in history.

Since disease has been universal throughout history, so also has been the science of curing and healing, involving diagnosis and the knowledge of herbs, potions, lotions and their potency. Any group of humans that has so far survived as a group could have done so only thanks to a science of medicine. The science of agriculture must also be as universal. The complex process of coordinating the knowledge of soils, of weather and climate, of crop types and seasons of planting, tending and harvesting can not demand of anything less than a sure grasp of systematic knowledge of these matters. Other sciences have flourished in one area or time or the other, often circulating within a secret society. Some people developed knowledge and expertise in metallurgy, others in mathematics; some have specialised in rain-making, others in astronomy. In many African cultures the greatest emphasis was laid not on the sciences of nature or on those of inanimate matter but on the sciences of man, especially as chronicled in philosophical wisdom and more especially in ethics. Instead of paying so much attention to nature, the Igbo knowledge tradition has been rather heavily anthropocentric, man-concerned and man-oriented.

The Validity of Igbo Medicine

Igbo local knowledge as in medicine, avoids the analytic abstraction which is the hallmark of Western-based science and epistemology. In this medical science, the sum of the parts is not necessarily equal to the whole. The human being is not just equal to all his component atoms or molecules or even his anatomy and physiology. This is why the inadequacies of Western medicine as practiced in Igbo land

stem not only from its exorbitant costs or its totally foreign theoretical basis, but especially from its 'body-parts' approach to healing. An Igbo man jokingly remarked of a fellow ailing Nigerian octogenarian who frequently traveled overseas for treatment, that he seemed to have a specialist doctor for every single part of his body. The criticism of the old man implied a criticism of Western medical science which fails to see the patient as integer and tries to cure him in fractions. Due to its inherent materialist and reductionist philosophy, Western medicine sees man as simply his material body and a sick man as merely a sick body; it totally ignores or fails to view together as a complex whole, the psychological, social, spiritual and even moral dimensions of the one to be made whole (healed). The so-called quacks of African medicine may have their faults, but it is not that of failing to see the wood for the trees. It may consist in their inability to reduce a complexity to a single-name disease, but part of their own success is their power to see in a given illness many more forces at work in the patient than germs or microbes. Or it may be simply due to their reliance on a cosmology populated with a multitude of micro and macro forces, visible and invisible, natural, preter-natural and super-natural, creating a disease and illness aetiology more credible and effective because more comprehensive than Western medical practice. The difference is clearly a difference of world views, each of which supports a certain science of medicine.

The example of medicine is typical, but it was not just local medicine that was devalued by the knowledge arrogance that came with colonisation. Local arts and technology were criminalised into extinction. The local brewing technology was outlawed for producing what was officially labelled 'illicit gin'. Local languages were ashamed of themselves as they were banned from the schools and attracted sanctions if they were ever used in school. This colonial policy had the effect of producing local educated speakers learned and fluent in English but who were illiterate in their own languages, languages which they had been brought up to despise. These were considered inherently unsuited for 'scientific' work and a drag on progress and modernisation.

In the last decade or so, Nigeria on which English was imposed as a lingua franca, has also undertaken the programme of decimalisation of numbers and measurements. Already the earlier

imposition of the British weights and measures had caused great confusion in the study of mathematics and engineering and for ordinary folk, a nightmare in transacting a bizarre currency system. But all of this imposition totally ignored a prior existing, indigenous, pre-colonial system of numeracy long in use throughout Igbo land. This system with 20 as base, was capable of dealing with any level of high numbers and could have formed the basis of an indigenous arithmetical system. But its use has been banned by official fiat and its gradual loss of relevance among the ordinary folk may lead eventually to some form of extinction. Such cultural imperialism has led to that colonisation of the mind so often complained about, which is still at work today, contributing to a certain scientific underdevelopment.

There is Only One Science, Western Science

The notion that there is only one science, Western science is pure dogma, a dogmatic belief supported by purely ideological positions, some stated, others not. Some such positions are 'we are Westerners and we have it while non-Westerners do not', although we have seen that being Western has not been a consistent tag of identity. 'The whole of nature is only matter and it is fully rational, that is to say, mathematisable. Science can mean only one thing: the study of matter and its quantity, operating with exact measurements', though we know that science should in principle, exclude no part of reality (cf. the Renaissance book title: *De omni re, scitu et scibili et de quibusdam aliis*). 'Science is always true, its results exact, necessary and universal' – though if this is so, only God would have such science or else one would have to deny the bounded, situated and perspectivist nature of human knowledge. 'Science is always progressive, advancing irreversibly in linear fashion from a less perfect to a more perfect status', though this would contradict its avowed quality of being always true and infallible, with nothing to correct or improve.

Luckily today, after decades of self analysis and criticism, modern science is renouncing some of its wild claims and has become more humble. After Thomas Kuhn 1970) there is hardly any more belief in the linear crescendo of progress in science. After Riemann and

Gauss, Lobachevsky and Bolyai, science no more believes in one unique geometry but rather in a number of geometries. After Heisenberg, rigid, doctrinaire determinism has been replaced by indeterminacy and there are no more claims of a science of exact certainties valid for all reality. After Karl Popper we now acknowledge the possibility of error in science. After a decade of a hermeneutics of natural science, a consensus is building up that: a) Scientific knowledge is socially constructed, constructed by cultures, world views, locations, problems, dreams, resources, instruments and representations (Barth 2002, Fujimura 1998). b) Science should be aware that it is necessarily partial in the representation of its objects and a full account of reality would include every perspective. It should be wary of flaunting credentials of objectivity, neutrality, transparency and universality (Franklin 1995). Nor should science c) see itself as superior to alternative epistemologies or scoff at indigenous knowledge systems as nonsensical, superstitious, irrational or mythical. And with the self criticism now part of science (Anderson 2002) and especially of anthropology (Devisch 2001, Nader 1996). has come an admission that other cultures and other peoples may have credible knowledge systems.

Towards a Pluralistic and Complementary World Science

After the demise of these discredited ideological positions, one needs only to consider a few facts to invoke the possibilities for science suggested by the world around us which is the object of all human knowledge. Consider the richness of the world's knowledge traditions based not only on the world's human riches but also on the variety which reflects the diversity of man's environment and his ways of adapting to it. Consider the richness of the subject matter of knowing dictated and suggested by the infinite wealth of beings and things and facts in the universe, the different flora and fauna, affecting all human situations and needs, bodily, emotional and spiritual. Consider all the why and how questions arising from both nature and culture and the infinite variety and permutations of possibilities that human creativity could think up. All this not only suggests, but actually has elicited already a variety of knowledge forms and traditions.

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So is There Only One Science and is it Only Western Science?

Perhaps a good answer would be found by trying to ask and honestly answer similar questions, such as: Is there one music and is it Western music? Is there one philosophy and is it Western philosophy? And one could formulate the same question with regard to theology, mythology, history, architecture, medicine and religion. The only answer that would not be absurd has to be in the negative.

What can be done to be true both to knowledge/science and to humanity? The first step to take, especially if one wants to generalise about humanity, is to acquaint oneself with humanity in all its plural manifestations as cultures around the globe. Knowledge of other cultures can only impress a bona fide student of man and imbue him with respect for the variety of ways man has modified, adapted to or otherwise used his environment. Respect for this rather than a self-centred reading of history, respect for man and for pluralism in a many sided world and reality, that is the key to saving our world from the type of dangerous ignorance our title seems to portray. A dialogue or a debate, an interaction or even a mere peaceful, non-threatening juxtaposition of cultures and knowledge systems has been advocated. If for instance some of the knowledge traditions of non-Western societies could be given more exposure either by getting recorded and published or by being exposed to university level research and teaching, they might get the needed boost. Any of this should be possible and probably some of it is already at work. Incidentally, many of us are already living out such a dialogue in our personal lives. Many an African, Asian or Third World scholar or elite has been, in their person, the unwitting theatre of moral and cultural battles, the confluence of several cultural, ideological and spiritual currents flowing notably from Western culture and their own traditional culture. They have therefore been learning to blend at least two knowledge traditions, now threading gingerly between them, now opting to follow one path rather the other. The often uneasy co-existence of heterogeneous and conflicting currents, systems or ideas in one individual is marked by the powerful pull of the Western element, amply validated by the undeniable material benefits and marvels of Western technoscience. But there also remains a powerful pull to the other side, often just a suspicion that

all is not right 'on the Western front' and a sense of incompleteness or even hollowness in its impressive and glittering artificiality. Then again one sees something valid and compelling in the indigenous knowledge system, an insight, a value 'that never was met elsewhere'. If we can personally marry or reconcile these tensions within us, and some of us do, some lessons might yet be learned for science and for mankind and for the integration of the sciences of mankind.

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Ethnomathematics, Geometry and Educational Experiences in Africa

Paulus Gerdes

Ethnomathematics is the relatively young field of research that started to emerge in the 1970s and 1980s among mathematics educators and researchers worried about the mathematical marginalisation of the peoples, in particular the poor, of the Third World and of people of African descent and other minorities in the First World (for an overview, see Gerdes, 1996). The Brazilian Ubiratan D'Ambrosio, who also worked for UNESCO in Mali, and who visited Mozambique in 1978, is often called the 'father of ethnomathematics.' He proposed his ethnomathematical programme as a "methodology to track and analyse the processes of generation, transmission, diffusion and institutionalisation of (mathematical) knowledge in diverse cultural systems" (D'Ambrosio, 1990). In the context of the African continent several concepts had been proposed to underline the existence of mathematical ideas and practices in African cultures before and simultaneously with the transplantation of schooling and mathematics curricula from the so-called West to the continent:

- '*Indigenous* mathematics' [Cf. Gay & Cole, 1967]. Criticizing education of Kpelle children (Liberia) in 'western-oriented' schools — they "are taught things that have no point or meaning within their culture" — Gay and Cole proposed a creative mathematical education that uses the indigenous mathematics as starting point;

- *Sociomathematics* of Africa [Zaslavsky, 1973]: "the applications of mathematics in the lives of African people, and, conversely, the influence that African institutions had upon the evolution of their mathematics";

- *Informal* mathematics [Posner, 1978, 1982]: mathematics that is transmitted and that one learns outside the formal system of education (referring to Côte d'Ivoire / Ivory Coast);

- *Mathematics in the socio-cultural environment* [S. Doumbia, S. Touré (Côte d'Ivoire), 1984]: integration of the mathematics of African games and craftwork that belongs to the social-cultural environment of the child into the mathematics curriculum;

- *Oral* mathematics [Kane, 1987]: in all human societies there exists mathematical knowledge that is transmitted orally from one generation to the next (Kane's doctoral dissertation studied numeration systems in West Africa);

- *Oppressed* mathematics [Gerdes, 1982]: in African countries there exist mathematical elements in the daily life of the populations, that have not been recognized as mathematics by the dominant (colonial and neo-colonial) ideologies;

- *Non-standard* mathematics [Gerdes, 1982, 1985a]: beyond the dominant standard forms of 'academic' and 'school' mathematics there has developed in all cultures mathematical forms that are distinct;

- *Hidden* or *frozen* mathematics [Gerdes, 1982, 1985a, b]: although, probably, most of mathematical knowledge of the formerly colonized peoples has been lost for ever, it is possible to reconstruct or 'unfreeze' some of the mathematical thinking, that is 'hidden' or 'frozen' in old techniques, like, e.g., that of basket making;

- *People's* mathematics as a component of people's education in the context of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa [Julie, 1989];

- *Implicit* mathematics [Zaslavsky, 1994].

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These concept proposals were provisional. Some of them emerged also in cultural contexts outside Africa. The various aspects illuminated by the aforementioned concepts have been gradually united under the more general 'common denominator' of D'Ambrosio's ethnomathematics. This process has been accelerated by the creation of the *International Study Group on Ethnomathematics* [ISGEm] in 1985.

An early forerunner of reflections about mathematics education and African indigenous cultures was Otto Raum. He published in 1938 the book *"Arithmetic in Africa"*, based on his experiences in South Africa and Tanganyika.

Ethnomathematical Research in Mozambique

As soon as the first mathematics teacher education programme started in Mozambique in 1977, soon after Independence, it became clear that most students really did not like mathematics. They thought of mathematics as an alien, white-mans and useless subject from abroad only introduced by the colonialists to block Mozambicans to advance in school. This situation obliged the lecturers to reflect on the program. As an immediate result, the subject "Applications of mathematics in daily life" was given more time in the programme. Remained the question, what to do about the strangeness of mathematics? Does mathematical activity not take place in Mozambican society? Does mathematics have roots in African cultures?

Stimulated by these crucial questions, I elaborated in 1978 a first research project proposal on the "traditional empirical mathematical knowledge of the Bantu populations in Mozambique", that later would become the Mozambique Ethnomathematics Research Project (MERP).

In 1985 I concluded a study on culture and the awakening of geometrical thinking. The study reveals mathematical activity in diverse cultural practices. As most 'mathematical' traditions that survived colonisation and most 'mathematical' activities in daily life are not explicitly mathematical, i.e. the mathematics is partially 'hidden', the first aim of this research was to 'uncover' the 'hidden' mathematics. The first results of this 'uncovering' are included in

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book *"On the awakening of geometrical thinking"* (Gerdes, 1985b, cf. Gerdes, 2003) and slightly extended in *"Ethnogeometry: cultural-anthropological contributions to the genesis and didactics of geometry"* (Gerdes, 1991a).

At the end of the 1980s it turned out to be possible to integrate into MERP some young, well-motivated Mozambicans. They had earned their M.Ed. in mathematics abroad, like Abdulcarimo Ismael, Marcos Cherinda and Daniel Soares, who after initial teacher education in Mozambique had continued their education in the Germany. Later they concluded doctoral theses in the field of ethnomathematics. Abdulcarimo Ismael's dissertation is entitled *"An ethnomathematical study of Tchadji – about a Mancala type board game played in Mozambique and possibilities for its use in Mathematics Education"* (Ismael, 2002). Marcos Cherinda's thesis (2002) deals with the mathematical-educational exploration of mat weaving patterns. Daniel Soares' thesis (2004) deals with the geometrical knowledge of house builders, in particular in the provinces of Sofala and Zambezia in the centre of Mozambique. Before they had participated in several collective studies, like the one on numeration and counting systems in Mozambique (Gerdes, 1993). For instance, the following papers were published: *"The origin of the concepts of 'even' and 'odd' in Makhuwa culture (Northern Mozambique)"* (Ismael), *"Popular counting practices in Mozambique"* (Ismael & Soares), *"A children's 'circle of interest in ethnomathematics"* (Cherinda). A third generation of Mozambicans who became interested to take part in ethnomathematical research is composed of some of our students. For instance, Salimo Saide did field work among Yao women in the north of the country, analysing the geometry of their pottery decorations (Saide, 1998). Evaristo Uaile analysed some aspects of basket weaving among the Changana in the south. Gildo Bulafo did field work among Tonga women in the south-eastern province of Inhambane in order to understand better their geometrical ideas and arithmetical know-how in weaving the beautiful hand bags. Abílio Mapapá started to study the geometrical thinking of children who produce miniature wire cars. The booklet "Explorations in ethnomathematics and ethnoscience in Mozambique" (Gerdes, 1994a) presents an introduction to the work of the younger generation, including in the fields of culture and biology, physics and chemistry.

In the book *"African Pythagoras. A study in culture and mathematics education"* (Gerdes, 1994b) it is shown how diverse African ornaments and artefacts may be used to create a rich context for the discovery and the demonstration of the so-called Pythagorean Theorem and of related ideas and propositions. A series of earlier papers are included in the books *"Ethnomathematics: Culture, Mathematics, Education"* (Gerdes, 1991b) and *"Ethnomathematics and education in Africa"* (Gerdes, 1995a).

One of the principal lines in my own research since the end of the 1980s has been on the historical reconstruction, analysis, and educational and mathematical exploration of mathematical elements of the pictograms drawn by story tellers from the Cokwe in Eastern Angola. The book *"SONA Geometry: reflections on the tradition of sand drawings in Africa south of the Equator"* (Gerdes 1993-4, 1994c, 1995c, 1997a) reconstructs mathematical components of the Cokwe drawing-illustration-tradition (Angola) and explores their educational, artistic and scientific potential. In the book *"Lusona: Geometrical recreations of Africa"* (Gerdes, 1991c, 1997b) mathematical amusements are presented that are inspired by the geometry of the sand drawing tradition. For children (age 10-15) the booklet *"Living mathematics: drawings of Africa"* (Gerdes, 1990) has been elaborated. The last part of the book *"Geometry from Africa"* (Gerdes, 1999) presents an introduction to Sona and Lunda geometry. The mathematical potential of Lunda designs is further explored in the book "*The beautiful Geometry and Linear Algebra of Lunda Designs*" (concluded).

Another research line is the one on mathematical aspects of twill weaving in diverse cultural contexts, as attested by the comparative study "*The circle and the square: Geometric, artistic and symbolic creativity of basket weavers from Africa, the Americas, Asia and Oceania*" (Gerdes, 2000) and by the book "*Geometry, Symmetry and Basketry in various African and American Cultures*" (Gerdes, 2004).

Gerdes and Bulafo (1994) published a book on the geometrical knowledge of the mostly female weavers of the *sipatsi* handbags (expanded edition Gerdes, 2003). This investigation of mathematical knowledge of women has been continued in the study by Gerdes (1995b, 1996a, 1998a) on women and geometry in Southern Africa, where suggestions for further research are presented.

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Geometry / Mathematics in African History and Cultures

The books "*Women, Art and Geometry in Southern Africa*" (Gerdes, 1998a), "*Geometry from Africa*" (Gerdes, 1999) and "*African Fractals: Modern Computing and Indigenous Design*" (Eglash, 1999) present overviews of geometrical ideas in African cultures. The African Mathematical Union (AMU) created in 1986 the AMU Commission on the History of Mathematics in Africa [AMUCHMA]. AMUCHMA has the following main objectives:

    a. To improve communication among those interested in the history of mathematics in Africa;

    b. To promote active co-operation between historians, mathematicians, archaeologists, ethnographers, sociologists, etc., doing research in, or related to, the history of mathematics in Africa;

    c. To promote research in the history of mathematics in Africa, and the publication of its results, in order to contribute to the demystification of the still-dominant Eurocentric bias in the historiography of mathematics,

The AMUCHMA newsletter, published in English, French and Arabic, informs about sources on mathematical ideas in African cultures. So far, twenty-nine issues of the AMUCHMA Newsletter have been published. The English language edition of the AMUCHMA-Newsletter is available on-line (www.math.buffalo.edu/mad/AMU/amuchma_online.html). At the 6th Pan-African Congress of Mathematicians held in Tunis (September 2004) the AMU launched the annotated bibliography "*Mathematics in African History and Cultures*" (Gerdes & Djebbar, 2004), with over a thousand references to studies on mathematical ideas in Africa's history from immortal times to the present, including references on the integration of indigenous / endogenous mathematical knowledge into mathematics education.

# Integration of Ethnomathematics into Teacher Education in Nigeria

In this contribution to "All knowledge is first of all local knowledge", I would like to include some of my personal experiences with bringing African knowledge and wisdom into the university mathematics classroom. I will summarise some examples presented earlier in the paper "Developing social- and cultural-mathematical awareness in mathematics teacher education in a multicultural African context (Mozambique)" (Gerdes, 1998b). The first example of a dialogue between a teacher educator and his students dates back from one of the first quick one-year mathematics teacher education programmes, early after Mozambique's Independence in 1975, at the Eduardo Mondlane University at the end of the 1970s.

First Example

Basket weavers from the North of Mozambique produce a pyramidal funnel (see Figure 1), called 'eheleo' in the Makhuwa language. To do so, they start with weaving a square mat, completing it unto the middle and then interweaving the two halves of outstanding strand parts. As a result, the funnel's mouth has the form of an equilateral triangle. In the "Geometry" course I taught at the time I displayed an 'eheleo' to my students and posed them the following questions: "What can we learn from the artisans, from their production technique?" "May it suggest us a method to construct equilateral triangles?"....

Students reacted rather sceptically: "It seems a very clumsy method to do so ...". But the objective of the artisan was to produce a funnel, and not to construct an equilateral triangle. Can we adapt the artisans' method to serve our purpose? For instance, how can we transform a square of cardboard paper into a pyramidal funnel? The students found a way to fold the cardboard square in such a way that it transforms into a pyramid. Then we organised a little competition. One group of students had to construct equilateral triangles with ruler and compass, while another group by folding a square. Some students were quicker using the first method, others using the second. The point was made. We all could learn from

Figure 1: Makhuwa woven funnel ('eheleo')
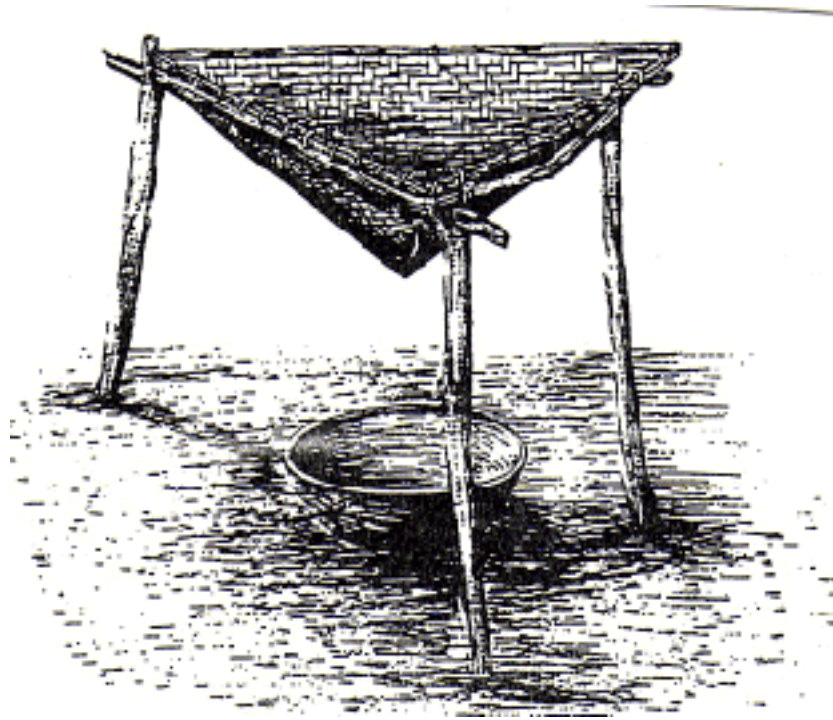
those Makhuwa basket weavers from the North. Then we advanced, posing another question: Is it possible to generalise the 'eheleo' method. Indeed this is possible, and the students found out that by folding a regular octagon in the same way as the square, that then a regular heptagon could be constructed. By folding once more, a regular hexagon appears. More, in principle all regular polygons may be constructed in a similar way by starting with (easy to fold) regular 8-, 16-, 32-, 64-, 128-gons (etc.). General surprise emerged among the students. Had not the German Gauss proven that many regular polygons, including regular heptagons, are impossible to construct with ruler and compass? The students arrived at the conclusion that what is possible to construct depends on which are the means that are available and that are admitted. They understood that admission implies a choice that is culture-dependent. They

understood that it is possible to discover new (strong) construction methods by reflecting on cultural elements of the country. All students felt proud of the 'eheleo' method four constructing regular polygons. And as one of them observed "Not all mathematical ideas come from the 'West'!" In order words, their cultural-mathematical self-confidence had risen.

The following examples are from experiences at the Universidade Pedagógica (UP), founded in 1986. This university prepares teachers and other educational specialists, like educational planners and educational psychologists, in 4 to 5 year 'licenciatura' programmes. It started in Maputo and established branches in Beira (centre of the country, 1989), Nampula (north of the country; 1995), and Quelimane (central north-east, 2003). One of the objectives of the obligatory course "*Mathematics in History*" for the students in Mathematics Education programme is to contribute to a broader historical, social and cultural perspective on and understanding of mathematics. The first theme "*Counting and Numeration Systems*" gives a good start, as the students can begin with analysing and comparing together the various ways of counting and numeration they learned in their life, discovering the rich variety at the national level. Thereafter, they are brought into contact with systems both from other parts of Africa and the world, and from other historical periods. The introduction of optional courses in 1993 gave my colleagues and me, the chance to introduce courses like "*Culture, Symmetry and Geometry*" and "*Ethnomathematics and the Teaching of Mathematics in Secondary and High Schools*" with a strong cultural component. Before the introduction of optional courses (for which the students receive credits), we experienced with "circles of interest" or clubs, in which students (and interested lecturers) take voluntary part, focussed on a general theme of "*Ethnomathematics*" or on more specific themes like "*Mathematical and educational exploration of basket weaving techniques*", "*Geometry of African sand drawings*", and "*Lusona – African Geometrical Recreations*". For taking part in these "circles of interest" the students receive "diplomas of participation". Those students who showed particular interest in the themes analysed in the optional courses or "circles of interest" have been invited to accompany "children's clubs" (e.g. on the theme "*Thousand and one beautiful weaving designs*", directed by Marcos Cherinda) and / or to do

fieldwork in their home regions. All participants have been stimulated to develop specific (sub) themes for experimentation in secondary or high schools. The realisation of the optional courses, "circles of interest" and fieldwork constitutes both part of the research integrated in our Ethnomathematics Research Project and a possibility to develop (and reflect on this development) social- and cultural-mathematical awareness, as the following examples may illustrate.

Second Example

One theme in an optional course I gave on "*Culture, Symmetry and Geometry*" (1994) for fourth year students was the geometry of the weaving of the 'sipatsi' bags among the Gitonga speaking population in Inhambane province. The making of 'sipatsi' with their band decorations (see the examples in Figure 2) is traditionally a female domain, although more recently also some men learned to weave them.

Figure 2: Examples of decorative bands on 'sipatsi' bags
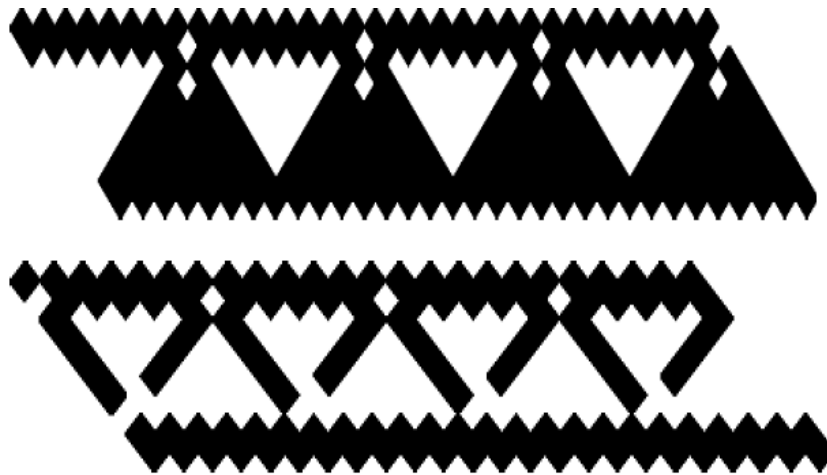
In the course, there were only two female students. When the theme of the 'sipatsi' came up, they appeared more sceptical than their male colleagues did: "Those basket weavers do not apply mathematics", suggesting to advance with some more 'modern' topic. After analysing together how important it is, before starting to weave, to take into account the periods[*] in order to get good quality 'sipatsi', where on the cylindrical wall each decorative motif appears exactly a whole number of times, the female student who had been more reluctant to accept the 'sipatsi' theme, remarked that she did not believe that the basket weavers were capable of doing the necessary mental calculations; it was only 'good luck' or 'intuition'. Her ideas began to change, when she started to analyse herself some beautifully decorated 'sipatsi': in the case of the combination of decorative bands in Figure 3, the total number of plant strands in each of the two weaving directions has to be a common multiple of the two periods (3 and 10), that is of 30, and this number has to be known before starting the weaving, as it is impossible to increase or decrease later on the number of plant strands; now she realised that starting with 'good luck' or 'intuition' really did not 'do the job'.

Once increased her interest in the geometry of the 'sipatsi', she started the work with enthusiasm and fervour on enumeration and generation problems I proposed to the students: How many possible band patterns (of the 'sipatsi' type) of given dimensions p and d do exist, whereby p denotes the period of the respective decorative motif and d its 'diagonal height'? She was the first of the class to find several solutions and she explained proudly to her colleagues her results and the reasoning that led to them. Coming from another region of the country, grown up in the capital, her appreciation of the craft and knowledge of the female basket weavers had changed radically, and she showed more confidence in her own capacities to obtain new results.

The next two examples consist of the testimonies of two graduates of the 'Universidade Pedagógica', both from the north of the country.

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[*]   Period = the number of plant strands in one direction to generate a copy of the decorative motif. In the examples in **Figure 7, they are 6, 8 and 8 respectively.**

Figure 3: Combination of two different bands on the same 'sipatsi' bag

Third Example: Testimony of Salimo Saide

"I was born June 20, 1965 in Lichinga, capital of the northern Niassa Province. There I went to primary and secondary school. From 1985 to 1987 I took part in a teacher education program. From 1987 to 1991 I taught Mathematics and Physics at the secondary school of Pemba, capital of the Cabo Delgado Province. In that province I co-ordinated the local Mathematics Olympiads. In 1991 I came to the capital Maputo in the south to continue my studies and in 1996 I concluded my 'Licenciatura' in Mathematics and Physics at the 'Universidade Pedagógica'.

In 1977 I had the opportunity to read a book written by the priest Yohana, entitled "Wa'yaowe", that means "We the Yao people". It opened a whole new horizon for me. I was lucky to be able to read and write Yao – in school only Portuguese is taught. During my whole youth I loved to read more in Yao, but there did not exist any opportunity. When I came to the national capital Maputo to continue my studies, I thought my dream had died. However, when I took part first in a voluntary "circle of interest" on mathematical elements in African cultures and then in the optional

course "Ethnomathematics and Education" my dream started to live again. I found a strong link between mathematics and the art of my grandparents. My participation let me feel returning to my land, let me remember my grandmother, her decorated mats and baskets, and her beautiful "nembo" – tattoos and pot decorations (see Figure 4). The idea "caught" me and during my holidays I made three field trips to Niassa to study the geometry of ceramic pot ornamentation. Now after having finished my university program, I hope to return definitively to my land, to continue my research and to teach mathematics integrating the "nembo" of the Yao people into it" (cf. Saide, 1998).

Figure 4: Examples of "nembo" strip decorations on pots
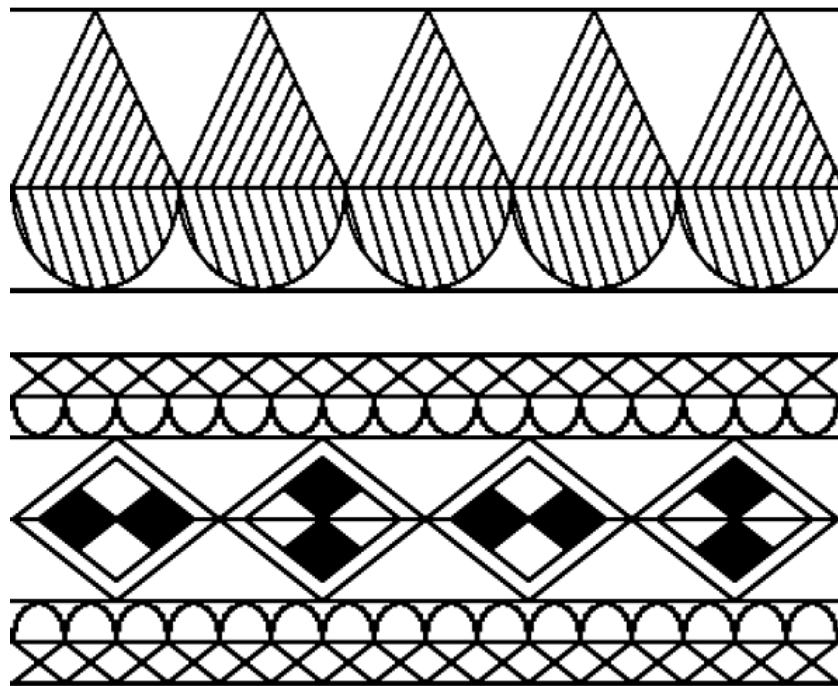
It was not easy for Salimo to realise his fieldwork. Sometimes it took him various encounters on several successive days to win the confidence of the old female pot makers, as they did not understood easily why a young man, speaking with the accent of someone educated in the cities, could be interested in their nowadays downgraded and disappearing female art and craft of pot decoration; why would he be interested to see their tattoos when the churches, both Christian and Islamic, have been combating tattooing so strongly? However, once he won their confidence, they were happy to speak about their craft and art, and about how they learned it, to discuss with the student alternative ways of reviving, of valuing their symbolic language, their knowledge, wisdom, and creativity. For instance, it was suggested to decorate 'capulanas' – square woven cloths worn by the women around their middle – with ceramic "nembo" and T-shirts with tattoo "nembo".

Fourth Example: Testimony by Abel Tomo

"I was born June 26, 1970 in Cuamba in the Makhuwa speaking part of the Niassa Province. My father and mother are peasants. In their leisure time, my father weaves colourful baskets, and my mother makes decorated pots. When going to primary school, I began to ask myself how could my parents be able to make such beautiful objects without having been to school; they even did not know mathematics. I felt a strong contradiction between school and home, particularly in the mathematics lesson. For secondary school I had to go to the Nampula province. There I took part in my leisure time in a "circle of interest" organised by an archaeologist. Helping him I started to understand better the history and culture of the Makhuwa, but still did not understand the relationship with mathematics. I could not solve the contradiction. Five years ago I came to the capital to study Mathematics and Physics at the 'Universidade Pedagógica'. Through the course "Mathematics in History" I got some ideas to reflect about, but the optional course "Ethnomathematics and the teaching of mathematics" opened really my eyes. I wanted to do field work among my people, and in December 1995 – January 1996 I went to Niassa and Nampula, and learned a lot from older peasants about the ways they use to fabricate beautiful objects. I learned from boys and girls in the villages

how to make several toys. And so I began little by little to understand the geometry of my parents. Having now finished my university program I will return to my people, trying to value its knowledge in my teaching."

Teachers like Salimo and Abel – who as students voluntarily took part in 'clubs' and optional courses related to culture and mathematics education – return, well motivated, to their home provinces, determined to work as mathematics teachers in such a way that it is both useful for their people and dignifying to its cultural heritage.

Fifth Example

Marcos Cherinda is a native Ronga speaker from the south of Mozambique. During several years he lived with his sister, a nurse, in Nampula in the north, becoming fluently in Makhuwa. At secondary school he took part in various clubs related to the culture of Nampula, and exploring his drawing talents he elaborated a band strip on Nampula's history. In 1980 he came to Maputo to take part in an accelerated two-year teacher education program at the Eduardo Mondlane University. As one of my students he showed much interest in cultural aspects of mathematics (education), and I invited him to write a paper on circles in Makhuwa culture for "*Tlanu*", the Mozambican Journal on Mathematics Education. He contributed with a paper on the use of the circle concept among fishermen from Nampula province (see one of his illustrations, reproduced in Figure 5). After two years of teaching in a secondary school, he was sent to Europe to do M.Ed. in mathematics education. Upon returning in 1989, he was recruited as an assistant lecturer at the 'Universidade Pedagógica', teaching geometry and integrating himself into the Ethnomathematics Research Project, and he did fieldwork in the Maputo and Inhambane provinces. He took part in various "circles of interest" and co-operated in the optional courses given. Since a few years he organises "children's clubs", integrating students, exploring, in particular, possibilities to use a weaving board to develop geometrical knowledge - the theme of his Ph.D. thesis "*The use of a cultural activity in the teaching and learning of mathematics: The exploration of twill weaving in Mozambican classrooms*" (Cherinda, 2002).

Figure 5: Drying fish in a circle on Mozambique's Island (Nampula Province)

Experimentation with ideas from ethnomathematics in education

Ethnomathematical and historical research clearly shows that mathematical education did start in Africa with the arrival of the "white man" to the shores of Africa. Ethnomathematical research findings urge to reflect about fundamental mathematical-educational questions: Why teach mathematics?, What and whose mathematics should be taught, by whom and for whom?, Who participates in curriculum development?, etc.

In the final section of this paper three examples of (complementary and partially overlapping) trends in using ideas from ethnomathematics in education in Africa, will be briefly presented.

The first example illustrates an experience with the incorporation into the curriculum of elements belonging to the socio-cultural environment of the pupils and teachers, as a starting point for mathematical activities in the classroom, increasing the motivation of both pupils and teachers.

Example: Cowry Games in Côte d'Ivoire

In 1980 a research-seminar on *"Mathematics in the African socio-cultural environment"* was introduced at the Mathematical Research Institute of Abidjan (IRMA, Côte d'Ivoire). Salimata Doumbia directs the seminar. One of the interesting themes analysed by her and her colleagues is the mathematics of traditional West-African games. Their work deals with classification of the games, solution of mathematical problems of the games and exploring the possibilities of using these games (e.g. Nigbé Alladian) in the mathematics classroom.

One plays Nigbé Alladian with four cowry shells. On their turn, each of the two players casts the cowry shells. When all four land in the same position, i.e. all "up" or all "down", or when two land in the "up" position and the other two in the "down" position, the player gets points. In the other cases, one "up" and three "down", or, three "up" and one "down", a participant does not get points. As the researchers of IRMA found experimentally that the chance of a cowry shell to fall in the "up" position is 2/5, it came out that the rules of the game had been chosen in such a way that the chance to win points is (almost) the same as to get no points. Doumbia concluded "without any knowledge of calculation of probability, the players have managed ...to adopt a clever counting system, in order to balance their chances. (Doumbia, 1989). This and other games are embedded into the secondary school curriculum as an introduction to probability theory and computer simulation. Interesting examples are given in the book by Doumbia & Pil (1992).

The next example presents an experience with the conscientialisation of future mathematics teachers and teacher educators of the existence of mathematical ideas similar to or different from those in the textbooks among people with little or no formal education; learning to respect and to learn from other human beings, possibly belonging to other social/cultural (sub)groups.

Example: Market Women in Mozambique

Lecturers and students of the 'licenciatura' Programme in Mathematics Education for Primary Schools at the Beira Branch of Mozambique's Universidade Pedagógica have been analysing arithmetic in and outside school. On interviewing illiterate women

to know how they determine sums and differences, it was found that the women "solved easily nearly all the problems, using essentially methods of oral/mental computation, i.e., computation based on the spoken numerals. The methods used were very similar to those suggested by the present day mathematics syllabus for primary education, but including some interesting alternatives" (Draisma, 1992). For instance, 59% of the interviewed women calculated mentally 62-5 = ..? by first subtracting 2 and then 3, i.e. they used the same method as is emphasised in the schoolbook. Another 29% of the women subtracted first 5 from 60 and then added 2, and 12% subtracted first 10 from 62, and added the difference between 10 and 5, i.e. 5.

Did these women *(re)invent* their method ? Did they *learn* them? From whom and how?

When multiplying, most of the interviewed women solve the problems by doubling. An example illustrates the process 6 x 13 = ..? Schematically the solution is the following: 2 x 13 = 26; 4 x 13 = 2 x 26; 2 x 26 = 52; 6 x 13 = 26 + 52; 26 + 52 = 78. Does each of these women (re)invent the doubling method spontaneously? Or does there exist a tradition? If so, how is the method taught and learnt?

The last example illustrates the preparation of future mathematics teachers to investigate mathematical ideas and practices of their own cultural, ethnic, linguistic communities and to look for ways how to build upon them in their teaching.

Example: Peasants in Nigeria

Shirley (1988) and his students at the Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria conducted oral interviews with unschooled, illiterate members of the students' home communities. They found that "although some of the (arithmetical) algorithms used by the informants are similar to those taught in schools, some interesting non-standard techniques were also found." Shirley gives the advise to assign teacher-student to find (ethno) algorithms in their communities — literate or illiterate, rural or urban, as "Too often, school lessons leave the impression that there is only one way to do a given task."

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Part 4

Toward the Local Domestication of the Ruling Modern Logic: The 'Clash of Civilisations' Revisited

Immunizing Strategies: Hip-hop and Critique in Tanzania

Koen Stroeken

Hip-hop stands for the fashion and the music genre of rap that originated some thirty years ago from African American inner-city culture. The raw accounts of life at the periphery of society raised political awareness, just as the civil rights movement had done before. Today hip-hop permeates popular culture. Rap music tops the charts world-wide. Mainstream pop music has adopted its vocal style and streetwise attitude. These exhibit what Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) famously called the 'realistic dissidence' the culture industry thrives on. Such dissidence keeping the status quo intact has recently come to include 'gangsta rap'. The lyrics and videos of this relatively new hip-hop style from the USA glorify inner-city crime and extravagant consumption, stripping capitalism to its bare essence while leaving all irony behind. The political ideals that initially characterised US hip-hop music are replaced by a show of predatory sexuality and of power for its own sake. In a surprising analogy, a similar cynicism, or pragmatic of predation, has been observed by Mbembe (1992) and Bayart (1993) among the postcolonial elite in Africa. Their analyses, I argue, belong to a type of social critique that has been perfected in Tanzania's vibrant hip-hop scene, known as Bongo Flava, literally 'flavour of the brains'.

Bongo, 'the brains', is our main lead to discern the close affinity between Tanzanian political history and hip-hop. The word originally referred to the cunning needed to live in a city like Dar es Salaam and to cope with the cynicism of wages so low they presuppose additional income from illicit schemes, informal economy (Tripp 1997) or farming at the periphery of town (Flynn

2001). Bongo, by which name Dar es Salaam used to be known, has by now come to stand for the whole country, at times black Africa. The term also figures in the Swahili credo of the streets: *chemsha bongo*, 'boil' or activate 'the brains'. The affinity with rap's ghetto discourse of survival is striking. We recognise the harsh law of the streets under a failing state, famously expressed in Kinshasa's article 15 (*Débrouillez-vous*). The pioneering hit by Hard Blasters, with the same title *Chemsha bongo*, graphically details the survival prostitution of *kaka poa* ('cool brothers', male prostitutes) and *machangu doa* (female prostitutes) who populate the inner city. The life of street children or *toto za kona*, kids of the corner, is contrasted with that of the city's happy few or *toto za geti*, kids of the gate. A recurring figure in the songs to describe urban competition and dissipating public service is the young bus-tout or *konda*, 'the meagre one'. Taking up as little valuable space as possible, the *konda* suspends all rules of respect, stuffing passengers into an overcrowded bus to keep up with the merciless race for cash. Anyone who has travelled in Africa will remember those touts showing off with their money-bills while holding on to the lurching van in contempt of death.

However, through such archetypes illustrating the harsh law of the streets, Bongo Flava questions that law. Contrary to the infamous article 15, 'to boil the brains' also means to know where the limits are, 'to keep it real'. That version of the law revives the political exploration by former President Nyerere, known as *Mwalimu* or 'the teacher'. One of his preoccupations was the acquisitiveness of politicians, which he believed could be constrained by freedom of speech. The contrast is not far-fetched with neighbouring Congo, where Mobutu ruled in the full sense of a 'chief' (versus Nyerere making his name in the villages by abolishing chieftaincy) and where the music scene still predominantly serves escapism (hip-hop being virtually absent). According to this logic, it is no coincidence either that the one African country with a track record in hip-hop comparable to that of Tanzania is Senegal. It had Léopold Senghor, another founding president belonging to the grandparental past of visionary socialism.[1] A positive model of leadership, we will discover, provides the rapper with a powerful ancestral spirit to haunt the ruling elite.

Emerging in the early 1990s and booming in the last five years, Bongo Flava has become the primary informal channel to publicly ventilate social discontent. The lyrics critically assess the post-socialist generation presently in charge and suggest the rise of a 'new generation' (*kizazi kipya*) that would be the rightful heir to the legacy of Nyerere and other African leaders who fought for independence. The latter have their equivalent in the hip-hop world: the first African American rap bands such as Public Enemy, who promoted the utopia of a 'Nation of Islam' representing all black Americans. Public Enemy spoke for a 'revolutionary generation', sensing that 'There is something changing in the kind of consciousness on this planet today' (from their album *Fear of a Black Planet* 1990). They knew rap's potential to give voice to a movement (Eure and Spady 1991), an *élan* (Virolle 1996: 126). Today their music is respected as 'old school', meaning that its style and content are seminal but outdated. Nyerere's idealism likewise lacks the sophistication of the politics that succeeded it. The shift to predatory pragmatics has a streetwise quality hard to outwit, as it responds to social inequality with personal enrichment. Of particular relevance to political scientists is how the logic of popular culture (of what is 'in' and what is 'out') has compelled Tanzanian hip-hop to consider the merit of both gangsta rapper and postcolonial elite in overcoming the naïve ideals of predecessors. Any critique that does not at least have this merit will prove futile, that is, fail to be taken seriously by the population at large. Africanists here discover an issue which African American studies knows from debating gangsta rap's damage to the cause of African Americans (Boyd 2003; Kitwana 2003; Neal 2002): how to engage in social critique without committing the error of claiming moral superiority? This article discusses the relevance of that question in the complex Tanzanian context. The cogency of moral indifference has compelled local artists to be cunning and develop rhetorical counter-strategies that may well be of global relevance.

Tanzanian rappers, I argue, immunise themselves against the suspicion of moralism (and thus keep their streetwise status) by attributing the criticised practices to survival needs they share too. The lyrics' overall picture is one of pessimism, which paradoxically reinforces the listener's decision power. The discursively complex

position of invoking the impasse is preferred over projecting the causes of poverty, corruption and epidemic on a singular other. The artists' profoundly multicultural background may have contributed to that. Not unlike the rest of the continent. Tanzania has more than 120 linguistic groups cohabiting. They populate old trading routes from Congo to the Indian Ocean. A German as well as British colonisation has been combined with a long-standing Arab and Indian presence. With independence came the socialist party's experiments in national awareness, followed in the mid-1980s by a 'near-180-degree change of ideological direction' (Dashwood and Pratt 1999: 239). We should not be surprised if the resulting art (mostly oral in the East African tradition) is multi-layered, original, and germane to other parts of the world. In Bongo Flava, colonial power appears as but one historical agent. Whereas scholars choose to speak for the subaltern and expose 'the colonial difference' in the worldview of Eurocentric others (for instance in the Latin American context; Mignolo 2000), Tanzanian rappers observe the multiplication of oppositions and lay bare the resulting *postcolonial indifference* that has affected all layers of society. In the African context, the composite post-colonial in-difference refers not to a lack but to an excess of differences. What rappers combat is to have this inflation evacuate the meaning of difference. Rather than building hybrid identities of 'afro-modernity' (Hanchard 1999), they register the heterogeneity within their society, including antagonisms with ruling elites, with wealthier cultural groups and with emigrating peers. Rather than outlining a black counterculture against neo-colonial empires (Gilroy 1994), they see cultural affinities cutting across the African diaspora, for instance in the judgement on gangsta hip-hop. Adding to the complexity, former colonisers have become desirable. Tanzanian artists are aware of these ambivalent feelings precluding a singular, clear opposition. As the recent hit song of Gangwe Mobb goes, Tanzanians live with 'the outside inside' (*nje ndani*). The desire to emigrate is not attributed to the country's poor business or farming prospects but to the chimera that 'outside', in Europe or the USA, lies the short cut to gaining respect. Thanks to school and media, the outside literally stays 'in the womb' (*ndani*) of the postcolony's inhabitants, as a difference too resilient to

hybridise.[2] In short, these African artists expect more benefit from acknowledging the impasse, the political indifference and damaged self-image, than from offering yet another utopia.

Bongo Flava refers to every Tanzanian as *mbongo*, a 'cunning' person. The social context described is that of corruption and HIV infection steadily proliferating. As if treating a widely spread virus, the rap lyrics spare nobody in the analysis, not even the rapper him- or herself. This approach will remind of Achille Mbembe's (1992, 2001) portrayal of the African power holism which unites the rulers and the ruled, and which surpasses Western oppositionality such as that between dominance and resistance. His analysis has been called Afro-pessimist. According to Jules-Rosette (2002) and Weate (2003) it failed to point out the creativity of local intellectuals, artists, entrepreneurs and leaders of civil society. Karlström (2003) found that Mbembe's dystopia ignored the potential of traditional gift ceremonies and back-stage palaver to render politicians beholden. It is striking that these authors screened Mbembe's diagnosis for its political position and not for its sensitising effect on the audience (on themselves, for a start). A shift in focus from discursive content to its experiential effect would be in keeping with African traditions of lore where the author's position comes second. It would be in keeping with anywhere in the world where a show of correctness is known not to serve the cause. A rapper listing possibly valid reasons for being hopeful amidst surrounding misery may earn credit from the academic world. To hip-hop fans (popular culture being more demanding than academics) his or her list will more probably sound pathetic, if not sarcastic. Compare the many NGO adverts in Africa on condom use meant to show the good example. Tanzanian rappers instead describe in graphic detail the fate of those who do not use condoms. In the local Bantu language of Kisukuma, Bob Haisa sings that condom-free sex is not like tea or porridge, from which he could easily abstain, but is desire mutually reinforced by lovers finding themselves 'at an intersection where both sides are salivating for it in their own liquid' (*alaho ha nzilamaka buli ng'wene akuswilaga lusona*). The bare facts are stated. The choice is left to the listener.

The first section of this article explores whether Bongo Flava besides reflecting public discourse also determines it. Impact of music on society is hard to measure, but a few observations can be

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made on how artists have strengthened the country's freedom of speech, while being unhindered by the factors that typically mitigate political messages in Western popular culture. A key-moment has been the hit song of Professor Jay on how the masses playfully grant their consent to dubious leadership. Could their complicity be affected simply by representing it in a song? Historically unique for Tanzania, a group of authors recognisable by age and musical interest think it can, and have carved out a critical position with nation-wide reputation. Introducing some of their most successful work,[3] I hope to demonstrate that this far from evident position has been possible thanks to the lyrics touching the right chord for an extraordinarily diverse audience ranging from peers and street kids to elders and politicians. That chord consists in mastering the immunising strategy of postcolonial survivors while 'boiling the brains'; that is preventing this strategy from 'eating' their future.

Local Impact and Global Relevance

Tanzanian hip-hop has across a diversity of themes made maximum use of the freedom of expression sparked by the first multi-party elections of 1995. Not that this freedom had been explicitly denied. Since independence, the single party had organised democratic elections to select members of parliament, and until the mid-1970s high emphasis was placed on their accountability to civilians (which would partly explain the country's political stability; Dashwood and Pratt 1999: 243). But, as anywhere in the world, free expression dies out if not regularly applied. Bongo Flava has contributed to expanding it for society at large, and this by capitalising on the national language of Swahili and on the fairly democratic reach of radio in Africa.

Bongo Flava's success and credibility in voicing something as unfathomable as the population's sentiments gave newspaper journalists a chance to experiment with opinion pieces. By quoting two major hits of Wagosi Wa Kaya, journalist Eric Toroka (2003) could present the population's exasperation over institutionally rooted corruption as a fact and thus proceed with his analysis. The song 'Nurses' (*Wauguzi*) from 2002 dealt with the lack of care and respect in hospitals; with the bribes expected at every step of the

cure, which leave 'pregnant women to die at the doorstep'. The seemingly more trivial song on the poor results of the national football squad topped the charts in 2003, because it told about the misappropriation of funds by the national football association and players' resignation to this. Another song by Wagosi Wa Kaya caused controversy in their home town. *Tanga kunani* laments in close to 1,000 words of extremely varied text, slit into four minutes, the downfall of a once illustrious coastal town: 'Tanga, what's there? Why has everything died there?' Aeroplanes, trains and boats now avoid the place, while Islamic rosaries and black veils are on the increase, the rapper observes. 'Some take boys against the wall, others pretend to be Swahili, but eat pork. We keep quiet, fearing the stick'. In the meanwhile, the rap provocatively continues, 'Boer' (*makaburu*) entrepreneurs take what they can in a five-year slot, with the local mine's airstrip pointing to South Africa. Significantly expanding the freedom of expression, their portrayal of Tanga further includes traders of Indian descent spitting from their two-storey houses on the underpaid road workers, who are told to use 'a silent hammer'. Free speech is a civil peacemaker that can become an instrument of civil war, Nyerere believed, and thus he introduced limitations, the main one being ethnic labels. The taboo is firmly entrenched. The country made its international reputation in fighting a neighbouring dictator, Idi Amin, who had stigmatised and expelled traders of foreign descent. Deliberately flirting with that taboo, Wagosi Wa Kaya intend to prove their passion for 'the real situation' (*hali halisi*) over and above any apologetic inclination that would sooner leave internal problems of racism and sexual aggression unmentioned or (like outsiders do) speak of creative deflections of funds when meaning corruption.

Although Bongo Flava combines hip-hop's main ingredients, such as the popular culture of urban youth, the use of slang and engaged lyrics without restriction of speech, it has followed a course fairly independent from the US scene. Bongo lyrics address not just urban youth but society as a whole. Piracy of audiotapes runs rampant and dramatically reduces profits in the sector but has raised access. As a growing number of young rappers find their way to recording studios, their songs are aired on the many privately owned radio stations that reach herders and farmers in the village. Sometimes

tracks are introduced on tape with a staged interview or a play explaining the message to the uninitiated. The interest is not in *double entendre* or tongue-in-cheek. The voice mixed to the front, in a language, Kiswahili, that capitalises on former President Nyerere's effort to reach the whole population, rappers recount concrete issues which listeners of all ages and strands can relate to. In the process they familiarise the nation with street slang, highly allegorical and versatile. They thus continue a long-standing Swahili tradition of borrowing and inventing words that travel fast. As in the above-mentioned concept of *bongo*, meaning 'cunning' and 'Tanzanian', we have over the last five years observed public discourse increasingly converge with hip-hop idiom. The main difference between Bongo Flava and US hip-hop is the possible impact on the general population. This became tangible to me in the area where I worked when the tarmac road from Mwanza to Dar es Salaam was completed. Since 2000, small commuter vans (*daladala*) began to connect, in their agile, unruly style, every village along the road as well as neighbouring communities at bikeable distance. Thus the gap was physically bridged with Mwanza's urban reality. From the very first note, the soundtrack to that journey has been Tanzania's home-grown rap blasting from the van's overheated speakers. Not long before that, national radio stations were either playing the national party's choir music for uplifting the masses, or provided light entertainment to accompany the nocturnal escapades of the elite (Askew 2002). By chance, hip-hop's fury coincided in 1995 with an emerging culture of unmasking, which the first multi-party elections unleashed in newspapers, in radio interviews and, as I witnessed at the time, in street-corner debates spontaneously arising in response to suspicions of vote-rigging. That discursive arena benefited from a wave against censorship, as the government strained to prove its democratic vigour to the various international organisations that basically sponsored it (Gibbon 1995). But censorship is not the only factor that could have prevented impact.

Radio waves do not as a rule discriminate between the words of a political speech and those of a rapper's protest. The exchange between rap and everyday discourse reminds us not to take for granted the Western divisions that commonly mitigate the reach of hip-hop's message across society. In Africa, rap music is not normally

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gauged through the unspoken categories of low (versus high) culture, of layman (versus expert) on societal matters, or of black (versus white) music. In the West, African hip-hop carries a label such as 'world music' stashing an entire continent. Probably the most effective way to trivialise Tanzanian rap is indeed to label it as a subculture. This essay too must cope with the expectation, perfectly understandable in the tradition of urban and youth studies, of describing 'the local scene' of hip-hop, with its colourful personalities, fashions and fanzine-like sensations. Urban sites transpiring some of that youth culture exist (Remes 1999; Gesthuizen and Haas 2000). But the fans form a heterogeneous scene, among others crosscut by the popular barbershops where imported music is preferred over Bongo rap (Weiss 2002). I therefore subsume the scene under the phenomenon itself which is represented by the Swahili lyrics and the totality of listeners, most of whom do not care about the fashion side of the genre. The meaning of Bongo Flava does not coincide with a palpable culture waiting to be ethnographically delimited, like Juju music in West Africa (Waterman 1990), labour migrant songs in South Africa (Coplan 1994), or a situated urban youth culture. Despite its appearance as a particular African identity in the making, Tanzanian rap patently claims to deal with events constituting 'the times' rather than 'a place'. This claim of global relevance when rhyming about 'the world', 'people' and 'life' countermands the outsider's automatism of localising Africans' use of such concepts. As the global dimension of modernity decomposes into specific cultural outcomes or 'modernities' (Gaonkar 2001), how to train the eye for the inverse, the local phenomenon of global significance? That question goes for all local forms of rap that have the politically assertive and multi-ethnic intentions lacking in the music genres anthropologists usually deal with (Gross et al. 1996, on the comparison to North Africa's Raï). The question concerns Tanzanian artists in particular, as the rest of this paper seeks to demonstrate, because their streetwise approach tries to outwit the ruling logic of self-seeking predation, which to my knowledge no Western philosophy has been able to defeat.

Breaking Through the *Mzee* Code: 'The New Generation'

When exploring the impact on public discourse, we have to consider the one song that established for many Tanzanians, young and old, the link between Bongo Flava and protest. To pay respect to the elderly, Kiswahili speakers use the greeting *shikamoo* and may continue the conversation with the approving interjections *Ndiyo mzee* (Yes, elder). In the area of Mwanza, the custom has always been inextricably bound up with the language. Hence my surprise in 2003 when my approving interjections to a government officer were met with unease. What could have affected this set formula, this rare bastion of national culture? As it turned out, the culprit was a rap song with the same title, *Ndiyo mzee*, released a year earlier by Professor Jay. It associates corruption with middle-aged elders, situated in the parental generation. The grandparents eking out a living in the village are cherished as of Nyerere's generation. Not them but an urban elite has misappropriated the code of *mzee* (elder) to obtain immunity reminiscent of chiefly status. The song *Ndiyo mzee* breaks through this hermetic code. To something as rhizomatic in Tanzanian society as bribery and the elder's impunity, the song exemplifies the fit counter-strategy, of weaving an equally broad web of metaphors lodging unease about certain formulas. Urban slang has meanwhile invented another term for the elderly, *Dingi*, which has permitted Wachuja Nafaka to write the song *Dingi* about the elder's nocturnal escapades, leaving wife and children with a bit of money and expecting roast meat at his return.

Ndiyo mzee is conceived as a humorous theatre play staging a rally in which a politician promises the impossible to become elected. He praises the civil servants and police ('To each a helicopter!'), describes the massive highway system he will build and guarantees the farmers an income they will stare at 'open-mouthed as if caught in the act of adultery' (*midomo wazi kama wamekamatwa ugoni*). His promises are backed by the 'Yes, elder' cheers of the audience, until he is exposed by a rap singer, who – not unimportantly – can subsequently count on the same blind support of the masses. The song received much airplay and became a big hit in the national charts, probably because of its long awaited mockery of the political caste.

As an enchanting tune fades in and a female choir in the background sings 'Yes, elder, I accept' (*Ndiyo mzee, nimekubali*), we hear the submissive voice of the master of ceremonies acclaiming the honourable host called on stage. To loud applause, the rap takes off:

Oke oke naitwa Joseph Haule Mwana Msolopogani.	Okay, okay, my name is Joseph Haule, child of Msolopogani.
Nadhani nimeletwa niokoe hiki kizazi.	I believe I was brought to save this generation.
Mimi ni mwanasiasa niliyebarikiwa na Mungu.	I am a politician blessed by God.
Nimeletwa kwenu ili niwapunguzie machungu.	I was brought to you to soothe your frustration

As Costello and Wallace point out, the rapper combines the figures of street kid and prophet, cutting the trickster or troubadour (1990: 115). In the good tradition of the court fool, the singer Professor Jay gives his own name, Joseph Haule, to the politician. After all, 'saving this generation' is not an unfamiliar concept to the rapper either, who does not mind the irony. Then the politician sums up his credentials, of 'old school' so to speak, and not without humour: besides divine support, a special certificate in ruling countries, 'more wisdom than king Salomon', and a keen eye for the global. As he receives the cheers he calls for, the setting acquires the allure of a small-town bar where men plot and women are paid to admire them. Haule continues in a more personal tone: 'Every barmaid will own a Mercedes. Aren't you happy then, my sisters? Yes, elder! Then continue to praise me with songs and choirs'.

The song mocks 'veranda politics' (Kelsall 2002) but not with the intention of promoting the formal system of parliament. The corrective value of informal politics (Pels 2002; Kelsall 2003) is not the song's concern either. Its intention, not unlike that of Mbembe's essay, is to consider society in its entirety and mock the ludic relationship and deeply rooted pretence that unites rulers and ruled (1992: 26).

Nipeni hii nafasi, hamwoni hali ni mbaya.	Give me this opportunity. You don't see how bad the situation is.
Nataka kuigeuza Tanzania iwe kama Ulaya.	I want to change Tanzania to become like Europe.
Cha kwanza nitakachofanya nitafuta umaskini.	The first thing I will do is to eradicate poverty
Wanafunzi mkafanyie practical mwezini.	Pupils should do a practical on the moon.
Kwenye mahospitali nitamwaga dawa kama mchanga,	At the hospitals I will dispense medicine like sand.
na nitafungua account kwa kila mtoto mchanga.	And I will open an account for every new-born.

The mimicry of becoming like Europeans is in the same league as pupils having a practical on the moon. The chorus follows: 'Isn't it true that I bless you, my friends? Yes, elder! . . . And the situation will change? Yes, elder! And you will hold on to the muzzle, okay? Yes, elder!' The audience strikes as painfully indifferent. Anyone familiar with Tanzanian society knows that they are not portrayed as credulous. On the contrary, as the main East African newspaper stated about this 'protest song': 'The people say "Yes sir" during the rallies so as to avoid trouble, but privately say such politicians are liars and therefore unfit'.[4] In clear contrast, the young rapper incarnates the upcoming generation, which emerges from hiding and speaks up to confront people with what they are doing: 'I open the gates for the new generation. There's still a chance for those who were in hiding' (from the song *Jina langu* on the same album). Having learned that Nyerere's idealism did not pay off, people more likely chose to be 'muzzled' and accept the bribes. To return to the atmosphere at the bar, corruption presents no threat as long as one coincides with it. The listener has been let in on an instance of postcolonial survival.

On the one hand, the epithet 'new generation' (*kizazi kipya*) helps the composers in questioning the generation in charge. In addition, 'new' indirectly signals the possibility of human agency, thus countering resignation to macro-social processes of ongoing decline. On the other hand, the 'new generation' seeks no return to Nyerere's days when music choirs were to stimulate a national culture

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accorded to official policy (as Haule requested from the barmaids). Moreover, Professor – notice the superlative of 'the teacher' – Jay has been ironical enough to avert accusations of moralism by using the strategy he combats. He has avoided the comfortable position the sociologist Niklas Luhmann defined as the moral: 'Preferring a comfortable middle position, one settles down with the moral so as to obtain a position of tranquillity that is itself good and permits to distinguish all other things as good or bad' (1993: 996). At the finale of the song, guest rapper Juma Nature comes on stage to do two things. First he associates the ruling class with occult practices by uncovering the politician's use of magic to gain popularity. Then he lets the audience respond to his critical revelations with a mere variation on the chorus of 'Yes elders' the campaigning demagogue received earlier. To explicitly copy the person previously criticised is a rhetorical technique (which surfaces too in the interview with 50 Cent in the next section). The speaker makes a sacrifice that appears almost suicidal yet in the Tanzanian case is well-taken, as it conjures the anti-social pretension of superiority implied by anyone claiming to expose the truth in defiance of the masses. The sacrifice immunises, as we will see next. Is it because sacrifice lifts the speaker out of a diurnal role and endows his opinions with something more than rationality? That magical basis sought by demagogues is precisely what *Ndiyo mzee* discredits. Then, may we be witnessing here the modern concept of social critique in which a disenchanted individual opposes the irrational collective? That collective irrationality, I have argued, applies not to the complicity in *Ndiyo mzee*. A more appropriate model, more complex than that of high priest or modern critic, to interpret the work of some African artists and scholars may be that of therapeutic divination. The diviner is allowed to transcend the collective if speaking in the uncompromised terms of the ancestor and if stirring up extreme feelings of crisis the listeners can identify with and can use to motivate change for themselves (Stroeken 2004). The following part attempts to clarify this experiential transformation envisaged by rap music.

Survival Strategies: Pessimism and Immunisation

In 2002 Professor Jay completed his highly acclaimed album 'Tears, sweat and blood' (*Machozi, jasho na damu*).[5] In the spoken intro of the title song, he explains the significance of these bodily fluids in Africa's pandemic times. 'Sweat' stands for street vendors and porters masking much effort for little gain. 'Tears' refer to the growing contingent of orphans roaming the streets. 'Blood' are the victims of war and epidemic. The song describes how these bodily fluids are spilled because 'we' do not care about the future. 'We are living like eating tomorrow' evokes an illusion of immunity shared by the general population. Politically, economically and sexually, 'we' are killing each other. 'Wrongdoing to the point of shamelessness' marks the grotesque of postcolonial power (Mbembe 1991: 14). As there exists no moral imperative any more that would lead us to hide our crimes, the rapper concludes that the world must be coming to an end.

Maisha ya wabongo yamekuwa kama wanayama.	The life of Tanzanians has become like that of animals.
Hiki ninachosema kila jicho linaona	What I am saying, every eye is seeing.
Machozi ya mnyonge, kilio cha kila kona	Tears of the helpless, death in every corner.
Damu ya Mtanzania naona sasa na hali ya hatari na kasi nayo […]	Blood of the Tanzanian I now see in an intense state of danger […]
Utu unatutoka; inapotokea ajali majeruhi wanauawa na watu waibe mali	Humanity is deserting us; when an accident occurs the wounded are killed for their money.
Nafuta jasho la mlalahoi, chozi la mnyonge	I dry off the sweat of the street porter, the tear of the extorted. I cry over the blood of Zanzibar, all pray.
Nalilia damu ya Zanzibar wote tuombe	
Jasho limeshamili kwenye uso wa malalahoi	Sweat sticks to the face of the street porter.
Sauti inakauka kwenye koo la tan-boy	The voice dries up in the throat of the bus-tout.
	[Chorus:]
Tunaishi kama kula kesho	We are living like eating tomorrow
Ni amani kwa yatima, kina mama, watoto wenye mateso	It's peace for the orphans, dear mothers, children in pain.
Machozi, jasho na damu kwa Watanzania	Tears, sweat and blood for the Tanzanians.
Na wote tuwe pamoja tusali kwa nia	Let us stick together and pray hard.
Tunauana kama kula kesho	We are killing each other like eating tomorrow.
[…]	[…]

Mkutano wa Beijing ungefanyika kijijini *labda na bibi yangu naye angekuwemo kundini* *misaada haipati inaishia mitini* *Tajiri anaongezewa inakuwa vipi kwa masikini* *[...]*	If only the Beijing meeting had taken place in the village, perhaps with my grandmother in the group. Help does not arrive, gets stuck up the trees. The rich gets more, how about the poor. […]
Siasa ya kibongo imeanza kunuka damu *ndugu watanzania wanauana kwa zamu* *nani atakayezoa damu inayomwagika?* *Nyerere alitabiri kwamba tutaadhirika* *Siasa sio mchezo kama karata tatu* *Jaziba inapopanda inang'oa mioyo ya watu* *Mishale na mikuki imetawala Kilosa,* *Askari na wananchi wanauawa bila makosa* *[...]*	Tanzanian politics have begun to smell like blood. Tanzanian brothers killing each other in turns. Who will collect the blood spilled? Nyerere foretold that we would put him to shame. Politics is no game like market gambling. As passions run high, people lose their minds. Arrows and spears have ruled Kilosa, police and civilians are killed without reason. […]
Watu wanapofanya maovu bila vificho *Ndio unagundua dunia yafika mwisho* *Jasho la mlalahoi linazidi kuchuruzika* *Na upande wa pili vigogo wanainuka rushwa* *Nakuta kundi la watoto kwenye mitaa* *Waniulize wanadai wanaganga njaa* *Tufumbe macho tusadiki tumwombe Alah* *Serikali imelala na haya si masihara* *Wengi wanaacha shule, wengi wanakuwa* *malaya.Wengi wanakuwa wezi na wengi* *wanafuata mabaya* *Ni nani atakayelisha yatima kwenye mitaa?* *Nani atazuia ukimwi unaozagaa?* *Nani atazuia vita na baa la njaa?* *Ee Mwenyezi Mungu epusha hili balaa.*	When people do harm without hiding, then you know the world has come to an end. The sweat of the porter continues to trickle down. On the other side the powerful raise the bribes. I encounter gangs of children in the street. They charge me, they're fighting hunger. Let's close our eyes, believe and beg to Allah. The government has dozed off and that's no joke. Many leave school, many become prostitutes. Many become thieves, many do wrong. Who will feed the orphans in the streets? Who will prevent AIDS from spreading? Who will prevent war and the disaster of famine? Oh God Almighty end the tragedy.

Facing the impasse means to not transfer responsibility to a singular other. Concrete references are made to the government's role, for example in the clash between cattle-herders in Kilosa and in the killing of unarmed demonstrators in Zanzibar in January 2001. The nation's wealthy stay in the dark of the treetops and out of the limelight. But this is not possible without the consent of the rest of the population: the 'we' in the chorus suggests general complicity. The local hip-hop scene does not escape either. According to the songs 'Clap your hands' and 'Warning' from the same album, bands increasingly choose to entertain and 'sing without point' (*kuimba*

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bila point). It is explicitly stated that they are giving in to the commercial concerns one finds in Western mainstream music. Many rappers situate the epitome of commodification in the African city itself, where clever instincts (*bongo*) are complemented with schemes of deceit (*ujanja*). The duped are often Europeans unfamiliar with this advanced level of commodified relations. They are pitied with cynical interjections about one's compatriots and oneself: 'What has become of us?' or 'And that's Africa' (*Na hii ni Afrika*, from Juma Nature's *Nini chanzo*). The Europeans come from *majuu*, 'high up', in the socio-geographic sense, which also implies 'distant' from real life. Singing without point is close to real life in the 'culture of indifference' reproduced by the African city's restless buying and selling (Mbembe 2004). According to the culture of indifference, no contamination is destructive. Capitalism does not combat but markets any external alternative that is presented to it (Baudrillard 1999: 32). All over the world, that is how it became immune to destruction. Western critiques apply concepts sur as the 'hybrid' and 'fluid' that obscure the materiality of the identities combined (Mbembe 2001: 5). They thus reinforce the illusion of immunity.

The prayer above to a directly intervening god pushes pessimism about humanity to the limit so that the listener can no longer stay indifferent. Following the example of rituals without author, the lyrics are composed to effect a transformation on the audience, rather than to bespeak an author's moral stance. What African artists such as Professor Jay are weary of, I contend, is to offer yet another utopia on top of the many prospects of liberation that have made up local modernities, such as the ideals derived from town and village life, school and tradition, nation and clan, office and patron, North and South, Christianity and ancestral beliefs. What causes indifference, I believe, is precisely the multiplication of differences that results in any political indignation inspired by one utopia being neutralised by another. (The reversal of terms can happen fast, as Mwanafalsafa's account of the West illustrates in the next section). The Swahili word for rapping is *ku-kata*, to cut, referring to the staccato style of singing. The verb is also used in the expression for decision-making, *kukata shauri*, literally 'to cut advice' or drastically reduce the plurality of views in a meeting. The reason that much of Tanzanian hip-hop exhibits no hope is that the artists are weary of

presenting a signifier that captures the listener (who identifies with the speaker) in positive terms. If signifiers are 'cuts in the real' (Lacan 1973: 54), an excess of these will leave nothing of the 'real' of human experience, *in casu* the blood, sweat and tears the song referred to. A radical pessimism that dams the flood of signifiers has the effect of placing the listener in the position of making the first 'cut' that matters.

Who should be the subject of critique: government, capital, the West? The backdrop of Bongo Flava's pessimism is the history of African nationalism and its search for the real structures of oppression. The expanding search has culminated in this introjection of blame. Nationalist struggles for independence focussed on the colonial administration, before discovering the role of metropolitan capital (Walraven and Abbink 2003: 4). In the 1970s, the newly founded states desperately tried to 'capture' the rural areas through educational and economic programmes, as exemplified in Tanzania by Ujamaa villagisation (Hyden 1980). The subsequent decades were marked by growing disenchantment with the government. Under the structural adjustment programmes of the World Bank, the government became an increasingly opaque entity. Rap songs voice the perception in Tanzania that corruption spread widely after the present post-socialist generation took over from Nyerere, who voluntarily retired in 1985. The songs basically picture a nominal democracy of politicians keeping up personal allegiances, 'who use parliament to discuss their allowances instead of the nation's problems', as Juma Nature remarks in the song *Nini Chanzo?* (What's the cause?). The rhizomatic networks these politicians form with civil servants and privileged entrepreneurs, and even development experts as suggested in the reference to the Beijing world summit on women's rights, remain impervious to official campaigns against corruption. The network is sustained by moral sophistication. Chambua (2002) describes the power shift in the 1980s from elected representatives, obeying a socialist code, to capital investors who would eventually defend milti-party democracy at the expense of worker's participation. Tanzanian civil servants did not restore the balance. On the contrary, they became part of the problem. The state's resources dwindling, their obscure position in the bureaucratic chain became their main source of income. Following the leaders

they 'instrumentalised disorder' (Chabal and Dalloz 1999). In fact, not much effort in instrumentalising was needed. The disorder resulting from contradictory ideological 'orders' quite plainly legitimised a relativism that turned self-seeking pragmatic into a bullet-proof philosophy of survival.

The indifference of the post-socialist generation to the normative project of visionary founding fathers tallies remarkably well with the position US gangsta acts such as 50 Cent nowadays take in relation to the founding fathers of hip-hop such as Public Enemy. The neo-liberal pragmatic, as magnified in 50 Cent's album 'Get Rich or Die Tryin' has displaced the idealism of the first wave of rap bands. 50 Cent's motive is survival too – courtesy of the bullet-marks his body generously displays in video clips. Here, my previous analysis reaches its pivotal point. The gangsta rapper in New York and the postcolonial politician in Tanzania apply strategies of survival that are very much alike. I conclude that both *immunise* themselves against the threat of capitalist practices by embracing these. Better still, they seek contamination by capitalism to such extent that the original (white) version looks harmless. Pursuing this parallel further between African American music and Tanzanian political history, I find their immunising strategy to revive two traditions. The extremely coarse gangsta style is nothing less than the continuation of the hip-hop philosophy of appropriating a slur. The classic example is of rappers adopting 'nigga' as the term for friend, thus immunising themselves to its offensive content and drawing extra power from the contamination.[6] As for the postcolonial ruler, he inadvertently revives the tradition of the chief. The Sukuma chief had to prove his control over the witches of his chiefdom not by excelling in morality but on the contrary by going through the contamination of becoming a witch himself. In today's 'world coming to an end', these practices have become ordinary and universal, the rap above claims.

Bongo Flava artists do not shun this strategy either, of empowering the critique by appropriating its very opposite. Think of the irony in *Ndiyo mzee* or of the negative formulation in the other songs we discussed: by sacrificing claims of morality, they keep their streetwise status. That status easily escalates into an illusion of complete immunity. The next section checks whether

this is the case for gangsta rapper and predatory ruler, and argues that Bongo rap counters the danger by means of two principles freed from any moralising that could jeopardise streetwise status: the duel and the credo of keeping it real.

Duels and Brains: Streetwise Philosophy

Abbas Maunda, founding member of the first Tanzanian rap crew, contrasted the aggressive and ego-centred discourse of the US gangsta style with what he called the Tanzanian way, which is to keep the songs' accounts close to real life.[7] The hip-hop credo of 'keeping it real' was introduced by the first wave of US bands and later adopted by local pioneer Mr. II to insist on *hali halisi*, 'the real situation' (Gesthuizen 2000). The underlying critical spirit appears from the later version of the expression, 'boil the brains' (*chemsha bongo*). Both positive imperatives should be read negatively, as their purpose is to warn against the counterproductive illusion of immunity that underlies gangster escapism. 'Keep it real' found one of its earliest applications in the 1970s when black film-reviewers condemned the now legendary Blaxploitation movies for their light entertainment, their tribute to hedonism and especially their anti-heroes, the pimps and pushers of the hood. In Tanzania today, 'boiling the brains' confronts immunising strategies in the field of AIDS that coincided with the neo-liberal shift. I expect future research on the wealth of local rap to offer more evidence that Bongo Flava really is the work of the first generation that grew up with a virus objectively undermining the belief in immunising oneself.[8]

Equally effective as the hip-hop credo, in deserting the pretence of immunity, is the public duel between rappers willing to put their reputation on the line. Mwanafalsafa's *Ingekuwa vipi* (*What if*) for that purpose celebrates what he calls the *ngoma draw*, the duel. Opponents rapidly 'draw' rhymes at each other. The public chooses the winner. *Ngoma* refers to drum and dance competitions, famed by Sukuma groups. Dancing out conflict through collective participation has marked East African popular culture for at least a century. The Beni *ngoma* opposed Marini to Aranoti, representing the respectively 'posh' and 'ordinary' sections of coastal Swahili

towns (Ranger 1975). A continuation can be found in the rivalry between the two football teams of Dar es Salaam, Yanga and Simba, which divide football fans across the nation. The Sukuma *mbina* likewise opposes dance groups of two medicinal traditions, Galu and Gika. Although sworn enemies, calling each other 'voracious' and 'devious' respectively, their identities are interdependent.

This sacrifice of immunity, of rivals challenging each other to come on stage and compete in rhyming, has marked hip-hop since its early beginnings. I argue that its attraction lies in curbing the intrinsic tendency discussed above. In Tanzania, the live duels are mostly attended by an in-crowd having the means to enter these special venues. Their significance pales before the popularity of recorded rivalry, as in the chain of songs and counter-songs by female hip-hop stars Sister P and Zay B. Mwanafalsafa's *What if* points to both the opposition and the interdependence: 'What would Sister P have sung if there had not been Zay B?' The prompt reply came from Sister P in a track released to drag him into the women's duel: 'What would Mwanafalsafa have sung without real artists such as myself?'. Nobody escapes. What we observe here is not a competition to leave all competition behind, like the gangsta rising above all duels: 'Now it's clear I'm here for a real reason, 'cause he got hit like I got hit, but he ain't fucking breathing' (from 50 Cent's *Many men*) - Weber's predestined capitalist shining through. On the contrary, Bongo rappers do not seek to transcend the opposition and become immune to critique. The duel must go on.

What if seamlessly progresses from the concept of the duel to the claim that nobody occupies an ultimate vantage point. As rap poets Costello and Wallace (1990: 62) put it: 'Every travelogue is somebody else's home movie'. That claim can become a weapon deadening all further discussion.[9] Here it boosts the discussion: 'What if Osama ruled the world? Not Americans but Arabs would be the vigilantes [Sungusungu]... Arabs would be the ones enlightened and come out of the darkness'. Just as the listener discerns a protest against Western vigilantism during the build-up of the Iraq war, the song reverses the terms: 'What if the whites had not entered Africa? I think progress would have been late to arrive. Cars, planes, clothes, who would have brought these? And without the slave trade there would have been no black Americans', and thus no hip-hop. This

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complex stance is what I understand by postcolonial indifference. Any attempt to rate the author on a moral scale has been masterly foiled. At the same time, the elusive negation of judgement leaves the last word to the listener. The author avoids the tranquillity we cited earlier from Luhmann's definition. Mwanafalsafa, literally 'the philosopher', opts not for a new difference (added to the flood of 'cuts') but for a saturation of differences (the cuts polishing the surface, as it were) through reversal among others. This empowers the audience. The sheer number of those viscerally attracted to one side decides who wins the duel. We have no other basis to judge, *What if* indicates. Bongo Flava's acceptance of this unpredictable outcome attests to a realistic and streetwise status which challenges both the idealistic and subsequent pragmatic generation of rulers.

As anthropologists, we have little experience with critiques such as Bongo Flava's that are explicit and aim at transforming a mentality. Unspoken social discontent abounds in the literature, especially since Taussig's (1977) study on the transgression that plantation workers considered necessary to participate in the capitalist mode of production. The secret contract with the devil, to enter the realm of self-breeding capital and consumption, was a choice for excess; for mimicking sheer alterity in order to obtain its power (Taussig 1993; 1995) —similar to what I am suggesting of immunising stereotypes. Tanzanians also develop an implicit critique on such neo-liberal strategies gone awry, for example through the concept of witchcraft to label excessive accumulation (Weiss 1998), or through alarming stories of people skinned and exported to Zambia as ingredients of magic (Sanders 2001). But in these cases desires of excess are equally implied; consolidating the capitalist mode of production. Bongo Flava artists such as Professor Jay break with the ambiguity. His latest album is entitled 'Real revolution' (*Mapinduzi halisi*). The political tenor cannot be doubted. The title paraphrases Chama Cha Mapinduzi or the 'Party of the Revolution', which has ruled the country since independence. The album features the sequel to *Ndiyo mzee* called *Siyo mzee* (No, elder). It further illustrates that rappers do not wallow in the margins but seek centre stage in public debate. The song recounts how the MP after his election deals with questions about his earlier promises. His answers

are no longer hyperbolic. The lyrics quite plainly copy and discredit in the same breath the rhetoric of politicians that can be read daily in the newspapers.

Conclusions

To diagnose social ills and confront the establishment takes a lot of nerve, especially in Tanzanian society where the potential impact appears to be greater than in Europe or the USA. Some of that rapper's nerve we have seen to stem from a positive model of past leadership. Mzee Nyanduso, as Nyerere is known in street slang, had the soul (*moyo*, also 'heart') and the calling (*mwito*) of the artist; Professor Jay rhymes in *Yataka moyo*. Afanda Sele coined a seminal expression when contemplating the future: 'I see far through my sharp telescope' (*Naona mbali kwa darubini kali*). Does divinatory vision ground hip-hop philosophy? Going back to the Jamaican reggae disk-jockey in the 1950s, who intuitively interjected remarks that showed the dancing crowd his grasp of their vibe (Toop 1991: 17), rap originated as an articulated form of speaking-in-tongues. Could such mediumistic grasp trump the sophisticated rationality that keeps neo-liberalism in place?

This article has illustrated the rhetorical strategy more frequently used by Bongo Flava. Rappers get the message across and combat postcolonial indifference by invoking the impasse. They criticise concrete practices and get away with it by including themselves in the critique, thus making their critique resistant by analogy with the biological process of becoming immune after contagion. This strategy sums up the streetwise philosophy, the school of life as it were, which survivors of the postcolony have in common. The strategy produces an illusion of immunity, however, which Tanzanian rappers show to control by public duel (on stage and on tape) as well as by the credo of keeping it real, locally known as 'boiling the brains'.

The local rap scene will undoubtedly change, as music promoters find the lyrics too harsh. Try to produce videos for or dance to the bloodshed in Zanzibar. Kiswahili tabloids increasingly promote the more sexually oriented and non-engaged type of hip-hop called *kujigamba* (boasting). They present it as an advance following the

Western commercial model.[10] A host of development agencies, at the other extreme, have been selectively attracted by hip-hop themes (Afande Sele recently toured the country for a malaria prevention campaign). Hence, more tracks will be produced that are respectively danceable or positively formulated. With the music further diversifying and marketed to subdivisions of the population, the factors mitigating the message can only increase. But in the recent past, my suggestion is, this music heard on the radio, on the *daladala* and in the streets has been particularly beneficial to Tanzanian society. This has been overlooked by studies on informal correctives to the ailing democratic system. When listening to Bongo Flava, we are witnessing a move towards explicit and encompassing social critique, which in part will have shaped the coming generation of Tanzanian politicians. That Bongo Flava has not yet earned the academic attention it deserves may be due to the Africanist's inexperience with trends warranting optimism. Negative portrayals moreover immunise themselves better against critique.

Notes

1 In August 2003, radio station Live365 broadcast a series of duels between Senegalese and Tanzanian crews to honour the originality of these two hip-hop scenes.

2 This postcolonial layer was lacking in the discussion of Ferguson (2002) and in the comments by Fabian and Gable, on two Guinean schoolboys who died in the landing gear of a plane bound for Brussels. Their letter requesting to mimic Europeans, 'to become like you in Africa', was more than a plea for membership in the 'New World society' (indeed reminding anthropologists that attractive explanations in terms of local custom or anti-colonial parody actually obscure the economic issue of inequality; Ferguson 2002: 552). It was a suicide note expressive of the postcolonial impasse: since colonisation the West possesses things and knowledge that Africans need in order to make it in their own society.

3 The selection is based on four Swahili tabloids issued weekly (*Ijumaa, Risasi, Maisha and Amani),* as well as radio programmes on Mwanza's Radio Free Africa and on Clouds FM. This paper offers a snapshot in

time, yet with the advantage of a clear picture emerging. The exercise begins around the year 2000 when Bongo Flava acquired a broad base of listeners and when any preference Tanzanian radio-makers may have had for English over Swahili rap had clearly diminished (cf. Fenn and Perullo 2000).

4   Michael Okema in 'To protest, you only need some torn clothes', *The East African* 24 December 2001, p. 19.

5   He is a founding member of Hard Blasters, was formerly known as Nigga J, and was voted rapper of the year 2002 and 2004 in the Bongo Explosions poll organised by the weekly *Ijumaa.*

6   In an interview with Pierre Slankowski (*Humo*, 22 April 2003, p. 181), American star 50 Cent similarly transcended any fixed position that could lose him street credibility. About police inquiries into his past, 50 Cent replied that the real gangsters are George Bush and his posse waging a war against a country for the oil reserves it has. But in the same breath he concludes: 'When I grow up, I want to be Bush'.

7   The interview with Abbas Maunda dates from the late 1990s and was read on 26 July 2003 at <http://stockholm.music.museum/mmm/africa/highclas.html>.

8   Since the early 1990s an AIDS remedy myth could be heard among civil servants in highly affected Mwanza. It prescribed to either excessive contagion or having sex with the opposite of one's infected self, the proverbially innocent village girl. It may recently have found its match in the Internet phenomenon of so-called bare-backers seeking unprotected sex with HIV-positive partners.

9   Since the late 1980s, an immunising tendency seems to have dominated the social sciences: the critique that questioned their truth-claims has become part of the discipline. But what looks like a postmodern dance (Gergen 1994: 76) may be the search for a position beyond challenge, as in the case of the gangsta rapper.

10 The Swahili weekly *Amani* praised Cool James's love songs under the heading 'Tanzanian stars do it Western (*kimtoni*) style' (12-18 September 2002), meaning: without political concerns.

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Christian moderns: Parody in matricentric Christian healing communnes of the sacred spirit in Kinshasa

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Matricentric healing communes described below concern those whose activities are associated with the independent church movement in the Congolese Capital Kinshasa, known as *Mpeve Ya Nlongo*. This name can be loosely rendered as 'of the [ancestral-cum-sacred] spirit of the other world'. As will be detailed below, these communes are generally, but not invariably, the preserve of mothers. Within the healing communes, women participate freely in common prayer and healing sessions, as well as organise themselves for mutual support at the neighbourhood level. It is probably this double dimension of spiritual and material healing that distinguishes the faith-healing communes of the sacred spirit from other, rather male dominated, independent Christian churches or neo-Pentecostal ones. The healing communes will be understood in connection with people's estrangement vis-à-vis European modernity and the Roman Catholic and Protestant missionary churches. I will show that, notwithstanding their historical and cultural association with many other faith-healing communes of the neo-Pentecostal movements, these matricentric communes of Mpeve Ya Nlongo have particular critical devices, including the gift of 'speaking in tongues' (glossolalia) and parody.

The theme of parody depicting these healing communes is meant to express the way in which members make excessive use of liturgical texts and ritual to mock the shattered dream for Western modernity. In the Democratic Republic Congo –named Zaire from 1972 to 1997–, the state of disillusionment with social, cultural

and economic modernisation is well grasped through the fact that people have for so long been denied that dream. Since the postcolonial era, the collective longing to assume Western identity has been underscored by, and has led to, attending formal school and university education, undergoing Christian conversion, setting up bureaucratic state administration and embracing capitalist economic development (Devisch 1995). Since the late 1980s, however, growing doubts have settled in the face of increasing misery and squalid living conditions in the suburbs. Hardest hit are mothers with dependent children. Indeed, women take on the burden of most households today, and manage to eke out a meagre existence on the slim profit margins of street-vending activities. From their subaltern position, they chiefly resist and mock the globalising and individualist models of civility and consumerism, which are deemed Eurocentric. Some of these women drum up mutual support in the contexts of their matricentric Christian healing communes –naturally seen as forms of sisterhood and brotherhood–, which cut across kinship and educational or economic divisions.

In this study, I attempt to capture and interpret the way how these healing communes act as a crucible of hope in building up trust and mutual support at neighbourhood level for the resolution of such problems as delivering care at childbirth and funerals, driving thieves away from homes and streets, and keeping up of minimal hygienic standards. Those women who come together in fellowship and prayer operate as grassroots social movements, parallel to the neighbourhood councils of elders and local and informal rotating credit associations known as *moziki*. They parody the Christian liturgy style and its soul saving mission. I take it for granted that, through parody, the healing communes conjure up and emend or retort the highly moralised views cast on them by the coloniser, missionaries, and experts in development.[1] I assume that, marginalised by reformist modernisation, liberating Christianisation and economic development, members of healing communes seek to recast their erstwhile communitarian commitments and their religious values and spiritual search. My argument is that Western-style modernity has, in the special case of women in Kinshasa,[2] decisively relocated tradition- and community-bound localisms in the specific context of faith-healing communes. The spontaneously local character of these communes grants women the privilege to

assertively share in the activities of their association and neighbourhood. An argument of this sort, seeking to identify spiritual healing concerns with economic survival, must draw for support on a rather wide range of anthropological evidence, both from field research and the literature.

The discussion will focus on six sets of problems or issues. The first is specific: it presents some data, methods as well as the context within which research for this study was conducted. The second is the examination of the master scenarios of Westernising modernisation and citizenship among the dwellers of Kinshasa. The third set of problems concerns an examination of healing communes as a deconstruction of divisional postcolonial power and split identity. The fourth problem deals with the liturgy performance. The fifth issue discussed is about the parody understood as ironic mimesis. The sixth point concerns the critical encounter with alterity.

Data and Methods

The data used here derive from anthropological research conducted in Kinshasa from 1987 onward, on an average of three weeks annually. It covers Kinshasa's mimicking of Western-style modernity during the ruthless regimes of Presidents Mobutu Sese Seko and Laurent Kabila followed by Joseph Kabila. These data represent randomly selected samples of matricentric communes of the sacred spirit as a blend of localisms and parodied elements of modernity. To provide a comprehensive picture of the parody within these communes, the investigation proceeded in stages. First, the aims of these healing communes were clearly investigated. Next to be examined was the extent to which the predominantly female members grappled with the reality or challenges of modernity in Kinshasa's shantytowns. The analysis is thus not simply reported attitudes within identified faith-healing groups, but also an evaluation of where these communes generally leave people's dream for emancipation.

At first sight, Kinshasa stands as a vast and bustling city that –in the late 1990s– counts some seven or more millions of inhabitants. Numbering less than half a million in 1960, Kinshasa's population expanded rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s at an annual rate of approximately 10 percent. Massive immigration and high rates of

childbirth among a young population, for whom having many children constitutes a mark of wealth and a social security strategy, deepened the division that the Belgian settlers initially established between the European sections of the city (*la ville*) and the ever expanding town and slums (*la cité*) growing around it. The city includes the downtown areas, with government offices, business premises, shopping malls, and residences for the privileged few. The town covers more than three-quarters of the total area of the Capital, where most inhabitants known as Kinois live in conditions of intolerable poverty. The town consists of the older, somewhat planned suburbs and the newer, obviously much poorer zones or shantytowns where successive waves of immigration have inscribed themselves onto the urban terrain. Many of the shantytowns in the expansion zone are inhabited by members of the same ethnocultural group sharing a common language, thus making Kinshasa a microcosm of Congo. In the 1970-1990s, there has been such stress on every aspect of the city's infrastructure, along with a lack of maintenance and mismanagement, that public schools, medical and administrative services, transport, roads, and telephone communications have deteriorated considerably, if not broken down altogether. The fact that the suburban dwellers have not tapped into the benefits of the privileged has turned their earlier expectation of the good life of the city into a forlorn hope, and they have sought some compensation through prayer activities and survival initiatives.

The healing communes described here are located in two densely populated and large districts of Kinshasa, namely Kimbanseke and the slum-like Mbanza Lemba. The living conditions of Mbanza Lemba have led many observers to describe the people there as among the most disadvantaged of Kinshasa. Many residents of these two districts hail from the neighbouring provinces of Bandundu and Lower Congo, and people interconnect through kinship, mutual help, and neighbourhood associations. The history of people of these provinces is well documented (Devisch 1993, chap. 1). In the special case of the people of Lower Congo and of their lifestyles, studies have been published to include the Kongo ethnocultural group both in the present territory of DR Congo and the neighbouring Angola and Congo Brazzaville (Bockie 1993, Jacobson-Widding 1979, Janzen 1978, MacGaffey 1993, 1996).

Master scenarios of modernisation, acculturation, and citizenship

The Kinois are generally thought to have followed some overall migration trends in the city, where they appear to be fascinated by modern, Western civilisation based tropes. These tropes relate to the Western diploma as well as instrumental rationality as the key to individual entrepreneurial success and materialist/consumerism development. Where this key has failed to deliver, people realise that Western-style modern life in the city is an uphill struggle. They find themselves caught between their new aspirations and the imaginary of the village ethos of kinship solidarity and vindictive sorcery. Through social movements and prophetic healing communes, suburban dwellers seek to reproduce this fascination for the West alongside their endogenous values and ideals of communitarian solidarity, elderhood, and belonging. Meanwhile, they mirror themselves in the imageries of transnational television programmes, and engage in diverse horizons provided by the postcolonial education system, the plethora of church movements and nationalist political discourses. They try to cope with everyday economic hardships bitterly evidenced by scarce public health and other vital services. Their daily struggle is also one about overpopulation, the scourge of HIV, and harassment by the army and police. In this situation, numerous inhabitants of Kinshasa have joined the many charismatic movements which mushroom across the Capital. In the particular case of members of healing communes, the response has been to adjust and make a mockery of the global forces of secularism and the free market capitalism. In the midst of a contest where the struggle to survive is primordial, these matricentric social movements are versions of 'afro modernity' (Hanchard 1999), a genuine nurturing or life enhancing and epistemological link between 'oiko logy' and cultural reorigination.

Afro modernity is centred on the local communities' quest for homecoming (cf. *oikos*, in Greek) in the suburbs. In January 1993, Kinois invented the phrase *villagisation de la ville* (villagisation of the city) to designate the fact that the towns and slums, which were in utter shambles following repeated wide-spread looting and rioting (Devisch 1995). The villagisation of Kinshasa is obvious in that

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people have adopted aspects of peasant life, farming and raising animals in the towns and slums as a means of survival. Understandably, this is their social and cultural appropriation of the 'suburban' space. The process of domestication (literally, homemaking) of the towns and slums is in particular the work of mothers and their dependents. Mothers develop manifold forms of mutual trust and empowerment, tapping from their dynamic culture's innermost forces and moral values, in a conscientious but humble engagement with the otherworld and its unfathomable fate.

During the colonial period, the models offered as mirrors to the school-educated people for evaluating their status, rested on optimistic theories of development inspired by Western evolutionist visions of high or reformist modernity. These visions were expected to be tailored by the political economy and bureaucratic colonial state or the independent nation state. Through these models, the modernising Congolese in the colonial settlements or so-called 'extra-customary townships' (*centres extra-coutumiers*) and the suburban ghettoes first assimilated new ideals of education, health care, mobility, civility, employment, and consumption habits. Beginning in the late 1940s, during the postwar colonisation era, reformist modernisation discourse described the village as a negative space that was to be converted or abandoned. The battle was largely focussed on the dismantling of such practices as paganism, polygyny, magical healing, sorcery, and the conservative authoritarianism of the elderly.

Development rhetoric has given way to the denunciation of precarious living conditions, inadequate food, unclean water, poor hygiene, and inferior shelter, which left villagers defenceless in the face of natural disasters and diseases. The first evidence that accompanied this development discourse included mortality, fertility, and vaccination statistics. Colonial administration reports presented hygiene, obstetrics, and medical actions, as if these actions added new frontiers to high modernity's monopoly of progress. In this modernistic vision of reality, village life was reduced to the imaginary[3] realm of untamed and unsafe nature. Life 'in the bush', as colonial discourse did define it, was considered to have little social or cultural value. It was crudely viewed as devoid of any civilising function, monopolised by literacy, capitalist economy, and conversion to universal Christian religion.

In the context of the extracustomary townships in the rural and suburban areas, scenarios of so-called acculturation depicted the passage towards civilisation as an upward movement leading to a higher space that promised new access to instruction, information, and civil belonging. The acculturated suburban dweller has moved from the peasantry to urban lifestyle, and from tradition to modernity, which offered an alternative to debasing living conditions. The move to the city offered the benefits of modern hygiene and medicine. It also meant quitting the routine of barter economy for efficient productivity and commodities created by modern technology. In this respect, moving from township to the proper urban space (from *la cité* to *la ville*) was understood to be a vertical progression: the more one's life involved 'going up to the city' (*monter en ville*), the closer one would get to the best schools, business offices, or central hospital. Following the route to well urbanised areas was to climbing further up the civilisational ladder. One's uprooting from the rural areas for converting to Christianity and attending school, or engaging in an urban profession and gaining access to specialist biomedical care, was a precondition for social climbing in terms of access to the higher civilisational space of the city. Conversely, many Kinois would not admit to 'going down to the village' (*descendre au village*) except for business or funeral arrangements for close kin. In the collective imaginary, one of the most notorious legacies of the colonial era was the rise of the so called *évolués* or new petty bourgeoisie. This class included white collar workers, clerks, and teachers who behaved or dressed like their 'whiteman' counterparts and were allowed limited access to areas inhabited by colonial settlers. They depended entirely on a capitalist economy for their salaries and wages. The Congolese *évolués* espoused the assumption that migrant families should renounce the old lifestyles of the village if they wanted to fit into urban society. Congolese migrants to the urban areas should decide whether to return to the village and continue to indulge in outmoded 'village customs', or embrace modern urban life. Thus, it appeared most difficult to be both a tradition-oriented and Western-style Congolese.

During his heyday, that is between 1965 and the 1990s, President Mobutu undertook to subvert or discredit the Eurocentric rhetoric and imagining of modernisation in order to lead back to authenticity. Through his policy of authenticity, no Congolese could be at the

same time Christian, whiteman like, and Zairean. Politically speaking, the battle against Western modernisation and for the 'return to authenticity' was fought within the party-state made synonymous to the MPR (people's movement of the revolution). The battle was presented as a way of regaining lost roots and advancing the nationalist cause. This rhetoric reached its climax when President Mobutu proclaimed his faith in the primacy of the state and ordered the abrupt 'zaireanisation', that is the nationalisation of private property and enterprise owned by foreigners. Lack of adaptation to the new nationalist scene through a return to authenticity was considered a failing on the part of 'villagers' or an alienating submission to the West.

Under President Mobutu's rule, the underprivileged villager (*villageois*) who settled in a township or the urban space was now being defined as a *citoyen* (a citizen), a typical member of the new nation state. The new characterisation, however, continued to be trapped in antithetic relationships, contrasting the *citoyen* with the *villageois*. The latter evoked the colonial imageries of 'indigenous' person, bound to a farming family life and parochial traditional worldview. Until the 1980s, public discourse condemned village lifestyles as evocative of chiefly authority, initiatory rites, credulous submission to divination and ancestral cults. For an urban dweller, such practices meant witchcraft and sorcery, but one must realise that, from the vantage point of most Kinois adults, it was and still is important to maintain –surreptitiously, if needed– the link with one's ancestral lineage origin and thereby secure a sense of ethnocultural identity. In fact, adaptation to the ideals of the authenticity project consisted in merely recycling the Westernisation endeavour that in the 1990s has proved to be a dead end. This bivalence is forcefully rendered by a song made popular in 1994 by pop star Pepe Kale: *Bakendeki na Poto, bakweyi na desert* –roughly meaning 'Those who went to *Poto* [i.e. the outside developed world] have stranded in a desert' (De Boeck 1996).

In the 1990s, people have become increasingly aware that their faith in liberating Western-centric modernity has quite paradoxically led to proletarianisation and beggary.[4] It seems almost obvious that, with extensive pillaging and uncontrollable rioting in the early 1990s, many Kinois have stifled the mirroring process and false hopes

generated by the (post)colonial legacy of 'modern' social state institutions. The mirrors of progress and improvement helped the state to conceal the extent to which it did contribute to the decline. Many Kinois find themselves in the thick of the struggle for survival, human dignity, and decent housing. As living standards continue to decline, the formal labour market shrinks. In the early 1990s, the average daily salary for a civil servant has dwindled to cover but one fifth of a family's basic daily necessities. Above all, people understand that life in the township amounts to an experience of some form of imperialism, one that exacerbates class differences in the everyday consumption under the appeal of the capitalist economic competition on the world scene of the neoliberal global market. People have coined the term *dollarisation* to designate this economic imperialism. Hyperinflation, the breakdown of political leadership, and of civil and health services as well as the school system have inevitably imposed an ambience of persistent crisis (De Herdt & Marysse 1997). Half of the estimated 350,000 regular jobs in the formal sector (de Maximy 1994: 208 ff., Pain 1984: 105 ff.) are thought to have been lost because of the looting and rioting that occurred in September 1991 and January 1993. In the late 1990s, it is estimated that less than 5 percent of the Kinois earn a regular salary.

For a growing number of youngsters living in the Kinshasa, 'street economy' has become the only expedient for survival. The whole situation has a fictitious legal analogy, called Article 15, which in the popular imagination stipulates that in the face of crisis 'you will just have to manage for yourself'. The popular view is that the state has failed its own people who then have no choice but to take the notorious Article 15 very seriously. This means, ironically, breaking the laws against theft, robbery, and unjust enrichment. The predatory 'street economy' is an urban version of the rural subsistence economy based on bartering, hunting, and gathering. As in the subsistence economy, people in urban areas adopt a crafty sort of predatory behaviour, which need not be violent. For the oppressed, 'petty crimes' are a mode of survival. Men and boys refer to this Article 15 with a great sense of pride and irony, especially when confronting an external observer. With the collapse of formal job opportunities, Article 15 generates and supports virile honour and benefits comparable to regular employment.

Such, then, are the master scenarios of modernisation and its effects on the people of Kinshasa. Against this background I will discuss how the faith-healing communes have become new frameworks for deconstructing oppressing power dichotomies and alienating identity.

Deconstructing (post)colonial identity and power dichotomies in the light of healing communes

The present study does not seek to provide a comprehensive history of Christianity in Congo, or of political, judicial, economic and social progress toward the achievement of the colonial and postcolonial nation state. Rather, it attempts to deal with a popular form of deconstructing cultural colonialism in which the colonial administrative, educational and various missionary structures have ignored and denigrated the centuries old civilisation in place (Mudimbe 1988). A key element in this ideological marginalisation of the endogenous was the colonising construct of the primitive and pagan colonial subject and of black people in relation to the whiteman. My intention is to tentatively understand this period of sociocultural intrusion and rupture from the perspective of the colonised and the Christian movements they spawned.

The healing communes originate in the context of the missionary and colonial incursion into the Congo.[5] From the 1990s, prophets such as Simon Kimbangu mobilised faith-healing communes in the Lower Congo context of a rapidly spreading and vastly influential independent Christian movement. Kimbanguism emerged in reaction to the white mission's conquest of Kongoland. In the same vein, the healing communes of the sacred spirit developed from the onset parallel to the more centrally organised Kimbanguist church. In stern response to colonial expedients, independent prophetic healing communes have, since the 1920s, spread throughout the towns and hinterland of the Lower Congo, Bandundu, and Kasai regions. These communes appeared, or reemerged at critical phases of colonial state building and missionary intrusion. In the late 1950s, an upsurge of charismatic Christian movements occurred during the struggle for, and in anticipation of, the country's attainment of political independence in 1960. The dream of the communes was and is to

take seriously the sacred spirit so as to reconcile Congolese people in every way they could and to transcend the dichotomies between traditional localisms and Western modernity that have for so long characterised their society. The communes are each headed by charismatic leaders whose duties are discharged according to the biblical mandate of divine will (1 Cor. 12:4 10, 28 31). The communes hope to be a witness, a living sign of Christian faith-healing for the society around them. They call themselves a sacred spirit commune and are constituted to a longstanding mission. So far in their community, they experience both the privileges and the discomfort of learning to get along with one another. Their membership consists of mostly women from the predominately Kongo matrilineal society. Some members consider these communes as their only church and know of no other way of being a Christian. Their goal and vision is to be a healing commune that welcomes those who experience the work of the sacred spirit. The healing communes of the sacred spirit seek to resist the temptation to passively stand by and watch the society's predicaments deteriorate.

Today, many members of the healing communes originate as people who feel stranded in the no man's land of the shantytowns, in particular those of Kinshasa, paralysed by political misrule and the ruthless economic world order whose devastating effects can be sensed amid the anomie of the public domain, the ceaseless inflation of the currency, and the intricate traffic of diamonds, narcotics, and dollars across central Africa (De Boeck 1999). In Kinshasa a number of thoughtful people –such as cult healers, prophets, family elders and matrons– sense that the marginalisation of the population of the Congolese state, as well as their estrangement from their age old sociocultural identities and resources, stem from the Westernisation of their imagination, their ways of seeing the world and relating to others.

In response to the decline of the authenticity movement launched by President Mobutu in the early 1970s, hundreds of independent church movements of the Holy Ghost, which I will further label as communes of the sacred spirit, sprung up in the 1980s in Kinshasa, like throughout most other Zairean cities. According to rough estimates, the healing communes and other independent church movements in 1990 may well account for one-fifth of the Capital

city's population, in particular of matrilineal descent, such as the Kongo; the independent and neo-Pentecostal churches are steadily growing in the 1990s and the early 2000s, today comprising the majority of Christians. These communes want to convey at least three sets of messages. The first is that they are in part a response to the galling effect of the modern public institutions and capitalist consumerism. My hypothesis is that the healing communes denounce the excesses of the liberal capitalist economy. The irony in the capitalist modernisation programmes resides in the claim that Westernising modernity is salvation and the key to world progress, yet it tends to exclude the very population it wants to save. Through parody (defined below) and their utopian space time perspective, the charismatic communes aim to subvert the foreign models of emancipation. Furthermore, they seek to heal the psychosocial wounds inflicted by the (post)colonial occupation and the so called whitening of identity and basic institutions (such as family, religion, professional duty). This 'whitening' was channelled by Christian conversion, the (missionary) school, new settlements, and capitalist consumerism, founded on a nineteenth century Western, reformist concept of sanitary, sociopolitical, and economic modernisation. Colonial rule developed as a prescriptive, administrative and judicial regulation. Other forms of social engineering, comprising public hygiene, housing, land use, production, the creation of demands, that is of 'needs' for cash good and thus of commerce were outpaced by migration. These various actions became the cornerstone for the colonising and modernising project in itself and a vehicle for more general public and visual control.

The second message the healing communes convey is that they intend to call into question the regulatory and split world of the colonial situation (Balandier 1953). They are also critical of the dichotomies introduced between ruler and ruled, Christian and pagan, *élite* and villager, modern and traditional. The prophets of these communes are thus trying to advance a fundamentally plural and creative or regenerative world order. The most important concern for them is to tie the adepts' mundane life in with the otherworld or interworldly agencies, which is thought to be a sacred communal source of interconnection between people and vital (spiritual, ancestral) worlds, between their spiritual, emotional and physical reenergising. The communes are not so much denying modernity as

such, but are seeking to redirect postcolonial modernity by making themselves active partners on their own terms. In so doing, the healing communes elaborate their own versions of afro modernity. This afro modernity seeks to resist excessive secularisation brought about by the technorational strands of Western-derived science, its dichotomies, pigeonholing, and hedonistic consumerism models, all of which appear to be enmeshed in the neoliberal global economy and transnational mass media. The healing communes counter the void left by the urban discrediting of moral authority traditionally bestowed on family elders, as well as exacerbated by the bankrupt party state and the abusive tribunals, army, and police. The healing communes are thus an attempt to subvert the foreign models of high modernity, its criteria of degradation and progress and its techniques of salvation and reform. They seek to heal the psychosocial wounds derived from the occupation and the whitening results of the Western-style schools and Christian church.

To dispel the strangeness of the bureaucratic nation state and imported consumerism models, the healing communes first demonise official documents, cash, and ostentatious consumption. They purify or 'domesticate' consumerism items to make humble and self-effacing use of them. They recast and encourage collective memory, which now lies far beyond the redemptive heroic promise of Enlightenment modernity and very near to a self rehabilitation strategy. In this way, they seek to gain a new citizenship and sense of hope and sharing well beyond the frustrating modernistic ideals of development and selfishness.

A third aim of the charismatic Christian movements is to develop a very distinct ability to explore genuine ways of organising various cultural backgrounds to take into account new circumstances of modernity. The contemporary leaders of the charismatic movements in the Congo are perhaps even more aware of bridging the gap between the ancestral and Christian belief systems –between present-day rural village based and urban modern reformist ways of life and thought–, than were the former generations. Celebrations in the healing communes encompass various worlds; they are whole making. As members say, 'We explore the worldwide universe and tame it through prayer and the holy/sacred spirit. We no longer need to rely on deceptive TV images'.

Liturgy as a whole making performative site

The liturgies that run in the healing communes offer a whole-making site. They consist consist in acts of praise as well as of blame and deep sorrow for members seeking spiritual and physical healing. The charismatic affiliation is described as *dibuundu*, or community, that runs on very egalitarian lines at neighbourhood level. The prophet healing communes consist mostly of a sizeable number of adepts, called *bilaandi* (literally, followers) or *minkwuikisi* (literally, believers), ranging from a fews dozens to a thousand or more. They emerge around a prophetic figure, known as *ngunza* or *ntuwa*: prophet(ess)-messenger or spiritual leader. As a spiritual head of the movement, the prophet(ess) puts his or her compound at the disposal of the adepts. The compound becomes a receptive familial space, especially for those adherents who live in the vicinity. However, these religious communes represent a rupture with the social logic prevalent in the extended family milieu and kinship-based village or settlement. They are also different from the patriarchal homestead structured around blood ties and a rigid masculine gerontocracy. These movements were originally composed primarily of mainly single mothers, unmarried adults, middle class or white collar workers, and homeless youth. The first generations of adherents seemed to disregard kinship relationships and form new ties drawing on the resources that the sacred spirit impart within the newly found commune.

The discussion here is confined to a specific movement, known as Mpeve Ya Nlongo (the communes of the sacred spirit) and I limit myself to those in Kinshasa. The term 'Holy Ghost/Spirit' does not fully convey the reality behind this movement. I therefore designate the communes of this group as animated by the sacred spirit, rather than by the conventional Christian –namely, the exemplary Pentecostal– experience of the Holy Ghost. 'Sacred spirit' encompasses the Christian-oriented Holy Ghost. But the healing communes unspokenly combine the forces of the Holy Ghost in the Christian missionary sense with those of the ancestral spirit. The movement is known to have arisen in the early 20th century among the Kongo people in the Lower Congo province. It must be remembered that this province is known in history to have been the

birthplace of the well known prophetic movements such as Kimbanguism, Antonism, and Ngunzism. All of these movements took up the sacred mission to free their people from colonial chains and the colonisation of consciousness through mistrust and contempt, subordination, misapprehension and estrangement. The premise of the healing communes is credence and trust, hope and belief, admission and consenting. The liturgy aims at whole-making, including the surreptitious blending of the major attributes of Mpeve Ya Nlongo, the *esprit saint* (holy ghost or spirit), and the ancestral spirit. The Mpeve Ya Nlongo healing communes practice collective communion with the otherworld, including the ancestors, through trances. This whole-making engulfs the assembly when a member of the commune is possessed by the spirit and speaks in 'celestial tongues', proclaiming the greatness of the sacred, thus intertwining this world and the other.

The major aim is to turn the commune into a receptacle of the sacred forces of a Christian blend. This 'new world or Christian era to come' is imagined with solutions to the social problems of immigrants to the shanty towns (underdeveloped infrastructure, unemployment and poverty, drug or alcohol abuse) and family tensions (in a context of hunger and deprivation, infidelity and divorce, conflict and sorcery). The sacred spirit is premised to inspire insights, healing potential and vital force. And spirit healing involves idiosyncratic, sensuous and spiritual contact with, and surrender to, the sacred spirit. Communal celebrations voice and enact the subaltern people's unsettling and ambivalent search for identity in response to the missionary and (post)colonial institutions. As effervescent charismatic movements, the faith-healing communes are strongly oriented toward the body, feeling, emotion, and a salvation or rather empowerment that comes from the otherworld or more precisely the interworldly –or interspecies and inter-realm– agencies, such as the life-flow in the family and the realm of the deceased, ancestors, spirits, and for the Christian converts, the Holy Ghost and the satanic. This empowerment allows adherents to explore individually or as a group the points of rupture and the means of mediation between the local and the more global worlds. The community's celebrations aim at equalising relations between members through unpredictable forms of visionary and sensuous contact with the very – interworldly, intersubjective and

intercorporeal – sources of collective empowering. Such contact is effected through communal prayer, hymns, seizure, trance, and communications from the sacred spirit through dreams and gifts of speaking 'celestial tongues' (glossolalia), as well as through the spirit's gift of passing on blessings and propitious messages entrenched in the Bible or the 'whiteman's book'. Such experiences in the healing communes and churches allow middle- and lower-class urban or town dwellers to deconstruct their dependence on the political and bureaucratic hierarchy and on the very discriminatory effects of records and written documents such as diplomas and permits related to cash labour, trade, and travel. Individuals may –regardless of educational, professional or family background– become the abode and voice of the sacred spirit; the sole criterion for trance possession is that a follower unconditionally surrenders to the divine grace or otherworldly healing power.

One similarity between the Mpeve Ya Nlongo healing communes and other prophetic communities is that they all use the same songbooks and biblical translations of the Protestant churches. Moreover, the Mpeve Ya Nlongo has its own specificity and ritualistic aims that differ greatly from all other churches. The plural or idiosyncratic ecstatic speech, like also the emphasis on the individual's imagination and enchantment in these rather anarchic and uncentred healing communes contrasts with the purported use of speaking in tongues as a form of praise and worship in the neo-Pentecostal settings. In these churches, a clearly focussed revelatory message or prayer, witnessing to the authentic indwelling of the Holy Ghost, is welcomed by the members as a message of salvation or a 'dancing and singing in the spirit'. These internationally hierarchical neo-Pentecostal congregations preach a gospel of revealed truth, and the exegesis and preaching of the gospel very much outweigh any emphasis on healing. These congregations seem to adhere to essentialised and simplified dualities such as divine/human, male/female, pure/impure, good/evil, African/Western, Holy Ghost/satanic deceit, culture/nature. In general, they engage in frantic reification and ostracisation of evil, sin, witchcraft, and other demonic influences. Their incisive moralisation, rendered during very ostentatious and effervescent collective celebrations, produces new imaginary forms of submission to an otherworldly authority and a gerontocratic mode of leadership (Ndaywell 1993).

The adherents of the sacred spirit healing communes tend to doubt the redemptive mission of the established Christian churches –including Kimbanguism and neo-Pentecostal churches. Through the affective and spiritual benefits of dancing and singing in the spirit, faith-healing communes insist on the thwarting off of Satan's attacks and alluring temptations of the flesh, and on the healing, as the best way to come to terms with the adepts' existential uneasiness. But they remain sceptic about a fully 'new order' of the Christian-born Holy Ghost to come, as called for by the Jehovah witnesses or the Adventists. Their doubt is expressed through their ironic relation to missionary and other Western ideals and pretence at a new world order. Ludicrous display of the liturgical roles, the trance and teachings are meant to tackle liberal individualism and its claim to progress through literacy and the mass media. For most members of these communes, liberal capitalism and hedonist consumerism remain a chimera.

The healing communes associate the Western ideals and influences of modern consumerism with the work of *sataani*, namely the Satanic deceitful ruse or subduing machinations in life. The term *sataani*, albeit evocative of the Christian name, does not correspond to the missionaries concept of Satan blinding the 'heathen individual' for the divine truth and personal salvation. But the healing communes bestow subduing or persecution-like agency onto the local culture-specific fantasies related to evildoing through envy, cursing, witchcraft, sorcery, fetishes. The latter are understood as the nocturnal apparition or polar opposite of life's diurnal display (Devisch & Brodeur 1999: 57-91).The communes of the sacred spirit thus witness to the adepts' basic confrontation with a bipolar invisible world, divine and occult, epiphanous and uncanny. This is the Manichean-like imaginary in the communes regarding existence's bivalence: life is waged -by a versatile Janusian fold of the sacred spirit/satanic. In addressing a realm haunted by a pre-Christian 'magico-religious' ethos, the communes seek to rather uncover and embody signs of the prodigious and wonderful, and this as a homeopathic effect of the unmasking and exorcising of the ominous and ensorcelment. Through parody, the healing communes homeopathically address in moralising terms the derailment of the bureaucratic state, the greatly un-assimilative estranging strangeness

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of missionary Christianity, and people's discontent with Western-style consumerism. Through the double-edged habitus, pastors and adepts investigate experiential fields –such as dreams, imagination and affect, in all their particularities– with the aim of disclosing both divine grace and auspicious counsel. Such disclosure normally occurs through the very alternation between the adepts 'rejoicing, speaking in tongues and ecstatic dancing in the spirit', on the one hand, and the parody in the highly dramatised chasing out of the concealed evil from beyond the realm of human comprehension – entailing 'self deception and cunning darkness, ruse and deceit, machination and ill causing'– as a way to healing, on the other.

The healing communes are crafting new and expressive modes of imagination, healing and empowerment, labelled as 'personal salvation and inner sanctification'. The adepts are largely in search of an ostentatious personal dignity, inasmuch as they are understanding and shaping the self –both inward-turned and other-directed or sociocentric– through aesthetic and 'modern' display. Their assembly under ecstatic inspiration in Christian prayer and citation of Bible verses, singing of hymns, 'dancing in the sacred spirit', and processions, all develop theatralised, passionate, intercorporeal and intersubjective modes of co-constituting and co-affecting themselves as 'brethren and sisters in the sacred spirit'.

In the intimate and euphoric ambience of the commune, adepts acquire surreptitious 'symbolic or communal-moral capital' to counteract their lack of grip on 'economic capital'. Through irony and mimicking, the communes cannibalise the authority of Western models and Westernising discourse. They mock and counter the inability of public institutions to respond vigorously to Western-style challenges. Members try to radicalise the perspective characteristic of the return to authenticity movement as a way to reject colonial conceptions of society and person. Through displaying the gift of speaking several tongues, members integrate and subvert many major instruments of Western colonisation, such as the French language, the Bible, and other treasured books in support of the popular belief that there is a call all over the world for redemption and social liberation. The healing communes are thus able to break away from the dividing policy implemented by the (post)colonial state. That policy confined illiterate and rural

persons to the village, and the school-educated and converted modern middle class to the city and true citizenship. Members of the communes also take steps to reverse the authoritarian voice and gaze typical of the (post)colonial state but also of the patronising missionary church. The basic point is that these imports of the Western-styled state and church are perceived as vain attempts to counter the current 'politics of the belly' (a term coined by Jean-François Bayart) and promote efficient governance and modern developments. Most important, the roles performed by the commune leaders help create a variety of activities, anticipations, and identifications for their followers. Within the space time confines of the liturgical meeting, the prophet(ess) is assisted by his or her assistants, revelators, and healers.

The self imposed task of the prophet(ess) is to lead the commune to a new form of existence by showing members the way to the light (*mwiinda*) and salvation (li. *bomoi; bobiki; boyebi ya solo*).[6] The prophet(ess) is thus expected to transform the lives of his or her members in such a way as to take them closer to Jesus or the sacred spirit. The connection with the sacred spirit is understood in the imagery of a mystical marriage. The prophet(ess) is the impersonation of bravery or resistance (*kikesa*), virility and assertiveness (*kibakala*), and lively beauty (*kitoko*). As a core figure of the healing commune, the prophet(ess) is widely regarded as the standard bearer of sacred spirit. S/he channels the divine gift of life (*mooyi*), invigoration (*kikesa*) and is a symbol of pride (*luleendo*) for his or her commune. S/he is not seen as a representative of Christ/God –indeed a function that in Christianity implies historical time and some kind of hierarchical delegation.

Impersonation of the sacred spirit by the prophet(ess) is reminiscent of the relation between ancestral spirit and family head in the Kongo society. The relation between ancestor and family head reminds Kongo people of the link between the river's flow and the riverbed. Much as a clan head acts like both the clan founder and the primal ceaseless source of life, so does the acting prophet(ess) impersonate both the founder of the independent prophetic movement and the sacred spirit. In this way, s/he is breaking away from the missionary's sociohistorical or delegated and hierarchical relation to Jesus Christ. Legally speaking, healing

communes have gained recognition from the political authority. They have a legal representative who is a reasonably affluent and educated person (albeit not necessarily in theology) so that, when interacting with government officials, the healing communes have a spokesperson. With the help of the regional presidents and secretaries (*mintwadisi*), it is the duty of such a spokesperson to coordinate the regional committee.

In order to 'feed the soul' or 'sanctify time', liturgical sessions are held in the form of blessings (li. *mapamboli*), prayer, preaching, revelation, and/or healing. These sessions are meant to make the sacred spirit manifest and link it to the faithful. Liturgical sessions take place at the house of the prophet(ess). At such meetings, there is a place festooned with palm leaves. Followers do not normally enter the celebration site unattended. Before joining the assembly they are made to kneel down in awe and silence to reflect deeply on their inner disposition for a while near a refuse heap. This is meant to anticipate the celebration's homeopathic healing. Much like Moses, who was told not to tread on holy ground until he removed his footwear (Exodus 3:5), members are invited not to enter the liturgical celebration site until they have abandoned whatever consumerism artefacts they might have with them. These objects may include jewellery, necklaces, neckties, wristwatches, handbags, or money. These objects must be taken away before pacification (*minlembvo*) from the sacred spirit can be solicited.

The Sunday celebration is sometimes called 'mass'. The most elaborate and festive event of the week, it takes place from nine o'clock in the morning until about three o'clock in the afternoon. Its liturgical programme is at times typewritten, but only for the benefit of a few literate adepts. The event reunites the various aspects of those celebrations that happened in small communes on weekdays that may vary length from one commune to another. Quite apart from Sundays, Wednesdays become the most crucial periods of prayers for members, starting from dawn to dusk. Undergirding these Wednesdays are short moments of prayer and cleansing scheduled for the prophet(ess) and the community of patients who live in the place of prayer. Communal sessions involving revelation (*mbikudulu; mundimi; mvutu*), fasting (*maneenga*) or both of these, are organised on Mondays and Tuesdays at dawn. Many séances are

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held inside the proper place of prayer when the sacred spirit is believed to manifest itself to the doting members. Exorcising sessions (li. *losambo*) occur on Thursdays or Fridays at dusk. During important seasonal periods, the healing communes celebrate Easter in remembrance of the prophets who died for their faith, while Whitsuntide inaugurates a new alliance between the sacred spirit and the followers. A three- to seven-day –or even a thirty day– retreat, which involves a fasting period, may be organised to thank God/the sacred spirit, express sorrow, or atone for sins and reunite with God.

Most communes celebrate baptism through immersion. They practice revelation, promote monogamy, and organise the blessing of marriage, or bless the newborn (a boy after thirty three days, but for a girl after sixty six days, in line with Luke 9:47). The prophetic movements warn and preach against adultery, theft, physical violence, and sorcery. Any member who indulges in such practices is excluded from the community for as long as six months. In reference to St Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (5:19 21), pork, tobacco, and alcohol are prohibited, so too is dancing in bars. In some cases, watching TV and using fetishes can be sanctioned.

On Sundays, the prophet(ess) and his or her accompanying assistants (called deacons- or deaconesses revelators or -seers: *mbikudi; m moni*) dress in white before they join the assembly. In a solemn procession, they go around the assembly as if to subdue the spirits. Most female members wear white scarves. Male members do likewise or wear clothes of their own choice. After songs of welcome (called hymns or canticles) and opening prayers, an atonement ceremony is held, during which members are granted the opportunity to give themselves over to God and beseech his mercy in regard to such problems as illnesses, witchcraft, impotence, unemployment, and misfortune. Alternate moments of singing canticles and reading prayer books are followed by a sermon for 'spiritual education'. In the second half of the liturgy, the séances literally spoken of as *bascules* (jerks), take place. Members suddenly fall into ecstatic movements of the body and speak in tongues. In the course of these jerks and trances, members confer with a senior member of the commune who translates the message revealed by the sacred spirit entailing some prophesying contrary to self-serving

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and hedonist lifestyles. A prayer conductor (*n twadisi*) then takes charge of hymns and biblical readings. Then comes the presentation of new pregnancies, the newborn, newcomers, and visitors from other communes. Final announcements and farewells wind up the meeting.

The prophet(esse)s of the communes do not aim to transmit the gospel or impose salvation through some religious doctrine or church institution. They seek to help and heal afflicted members of the communes who come forward for special attention and care. In their celebrations, the healing communes aim to subject the social problems that affect their followers to a metamorphosis under the illumination and/or empowering of the sacred spirit. Some people have testified that the sacred spirit would often come upon them in the form of revelations, trances and jerks. The point of attending the celebrations is to obtain healing, blessing, and exorcism. Some adepts explain that they attend to obtain a much-needed boost for confronting real life issues. Others attend to interact with fellow-adepts and find a trustworthy marriage partner. Because the healing process can sometimes appear to be long, some members in search of healing are encouraged to join the compound of the prophet(ess) turned into a prayer place where they may assist in liturgical healing efforts for some months at least. In this way they are able to draw on revelations or messages that the prophet(ess) and/or the revelators uncover in dreams.

Speaking in tongues, exorcism, and healing in most celebrations alternate with the highly coded moments of Bible reading, singing and the sermon. The frequent transitions are punctuated by the clapping of hands as well as slogans such as *Inga* (Yes); *Dibuundu* (assembly) *halelu* (refrain) *haleluya*, and *Betu mu mpeve bien* (We are well in the Mpeve Ya Nlongo). Communitarian rituals are consistent with the common-sense established order, with the prophet(ess) and celebrant playing central roles, but also with free or unscheduled eruptions in which parody and the ecstatic quest for strength and vitality become intertwined. Healing starts with a diagnostic moment through ecstatic speaking in tongues: this is defined as disclosing or confusing one's sins (*bikula*; *fuunguna*; *mayembo*). This is also called 'revelation or prophetic confession'. An entranced revelator may open up the revelatory session through deciphering a dream or vision which a member may have had from the sacred spirit as 'a

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premonitory message or guidance' (*nzayisilu; ndwengisa*). Such a vision may even bring to the fore the biblical texts and hymns for the meeting. Diagnostic revelations then follow through speaking in tongues that resembles a shattered and yet imperative text 'read from the body' of the faithful in need. Some revelators may spontaneously address to a member. The revelation is a direct contact with the sacred spirit, whose message is unveiled, it is said, using the analogy of a dream that bears witness to events through their shadowy side. The dream is compared to the underside of a leaf unconcealing the physiognomy of the whole which is erased by the flat surface of its more visible upper side. A vision is both an irresistible diagnosis (*-baangula*) that stems from the sacred spirit at the start of a cure, and the overflowing of the spirit's power. Contact with the sacred spirit is also comparable to the way a telephone or the television would capture voices or images; entranced persons would repeatedly utter words or phrases like *hallo, hallo*. At the start, the sacred spirit is called upon to rise up from the earth where the ancestors live so that those in need take possession of it by stamping on the ground where they dance and bounce. They may also roll over the ground.

Ecstatic revelations, mostly carried out by women, begin with a series of rhetorical questions followed by yes or no answers. These revelations are intended to disclose the patient's predicament or affliction (*mayeela*) and its root causes. The problem may range from mere migraines to serious illnesses like persistent headaches, menstrual irregularity, infertility, impotence, or relate to other worries like unyielding hard labour, unmanageable misfortune, and frightening loss. All of these impediments lead to blockage and persistent anguish. An interpreter may be needed to construe the ecstatic messages to the patient, kneeling before the revelator. The patient is never asked what s/he has done to deserve an affliction. The response to any worrisome problem offers a holistic and etiological grasp of the moral fabric of an illness or an affliction. In this respect no neat historical, contextual or medical-diagnostic description is needed that could dictate the solution to the patient's predicament. Within the framework of the faith community itself, illnesses and problems are explained in relation go –intercorporeal, intersubjective and interworld– forces such as ancestral wrath, divine

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anger, or evil spirit, or an attack of sorcery or fetishes. All of these forces are negatively represented as the work of *sataani* that operates in the realm of the night, jealousies, envy, ruse, deceit. Animosities have repercussions on neighbours, kin, and colleagues at work and at market places. Ultimately, affliction may be attributed to the frantic but unviable search for the lustful or extravagant life, that the Kinois variously depict –in liNgala– as *posa ya nzoto* (envy of the body or sexual desire), *bisengo ya mokili* (the [surprising] fervour of shakers). Here, lust and extravagance are thought to lead to greed and fatal bewitchment. A man or woman who pursues such style of living as devoid of 'true life', which alone the –revelatory, enlightening, vitalising– 'Word' or message of the sacred spirit can procure. The revelatory session may conclude with some advice about how future liturgical programmes should be organised. At this time some announcements are made about visiting and assisting the sick or fixing some problems that have arisen within some families.

In addition to pursuing these rather routine activities, some members can request extra consultation sessions. These members who confront particular problems are allowed to approach with a variety of pleas: 'Explain this dream I had last night'; 'I cannot explain the cause of my daughter's death'; 'How is it that medical care has failed to do any good to my son?'; 'I applied for this job but still don't know what the outcome would be'. Sometimes the revelator can spell out the request even before the client has spoken and some explanation is expected.

The celebrations channel life enhancing forces from the sacred-cum-ancestral spirits. These fervent meetings are meant to induce and sustain the ecstatic states and phases of revelation, the exorcism and the healing. The African oblong dance drums are prohibited or replaced by Western-type cylindrical drums, the gong, bell, rattle, and triangle. Revelation and healing are the work of the sacred spirit that dwells in the abode of ancestors –which members locate somewhere in the ancestral subterranean river–, also associated with the downstream Congo River and the ocean. The celebrations make extensive use of water to transfer power to the body. Water drawn from the river Congo or an affluent is sprinkled on the head, chest, belly, hind joints, and legs of members. In the site of communal prayer, at 'the central river-like passageway' (*kisielu kya nlaangu*),

members place dozens of water cans named, after Zion or Jerusalem, the sacred River of Jordan (*Nlaangu Zioni*). This passageway and the water make manifest the *axis mundi* that connects the living with the ancestral subterranean river (*kaluunga*) or white ancestral world (*mpeemba*). At the top of this passageway revelators begin their trancing and ecstatic revelations. The glossolalia performed or interpreted by revelators is *mpeemba*, uttered by the sacred spirit and the ancestors. In fact, *mpeemba* is also the white colour that acts as the life-bearing source of solution to personal and social problems (Janzen 1979). When several trances evoke the heaviness of possession by *sataani*, propitiatory spirit healers (in this capacity, called *nsambudi*) repeatedly transmit placatory blessings (*nsambu*) to the congregation. They splash water from the cans over the assembly to drive away the *sataani*'s ruining deceit, troubling ruse and teasing tricks in daily life.

Parody and the potentialities of an intertopos

The ludicrous liturgical celebration and glossolalia in the healing communes can be regarded as a resort to parody as ironic mimicry or mimesis. Unlike most Bantu healing cults, the sacred spirit healing communes do not rely on group psychodynamics of the sacrifice to arouse activism or revolt against the exploitative or abusive forces in society. Rather, through its double edged expressions or double layered gestures, the parody seeks to relocate and invert one message into another (Crapanzano 1992, Rose 1993). Very much like a chameleon that makes its chromatic adaptability unnoticed, parody transforms, mixes, or substitutes meanings without explicitly showing its subversive aim. The parody allows the less-privileged Kinois to surreptitiously empty out, cannibalise, or reframe the (post)colonial and Christian master narratives and models of emancipation and higher civilisation. At the same time, it allows them to reinstall their own meaning into those very fields or discourses that were meant to promote them. In the popular culture, parody allows the subaltern to somehow level down centre/periphery dichotomies into a virtual communal equality. Parody may act here as an insurgent trope that castigates development agendas that indirectly take unfair advantage of the people.

To some extent, the fickle dual figure of sacred spirit/*sataani* – where one pole stands as the reverse side of the other during celebrations– is one of farce, a mockery. Experienced members of the healing communes reenact and dwell on the traumatic memory of their shadowy identity defined by the coloniser as backward. In the figure of *sataani*, experienced adepts reject the 'whiteman's burden', the negative identities plugged in by the West through missionaries as well as development experts and the transnational mass media in matters of work, land, housing, comfort, food, health, family planning, safe sex, education, emancipation, democracy, and human rights. They do refer, instead, to the sacred spirit, whose shifty power is all the more effective by virtue of its capacity to recapture and reenergise the local. In the effervescent and plural space time of the trance and the community of brothers and sisters, the sacred spirit reenergises the entire corporeality, identity and lived world of the entranced adepts, not just their –whitened– soul. The sacred spirit thus sets the scene for adepts to encompass reenchantment of their world through their own tropes of the new –millenarian– world order to come. In ways that convey specific autobiographical inflection, these tropes reawaken in adepts an unremitting expectation of wonder and epiphanies. The words of the prophet(ess) and the ecstatic glossolalia evoke a flux of the sacred and arouse an empathy with its vibrant flow of community bearing forces, unencumbered with any duty bearing function. In contrast with the missionary Christian personalism, the prophet(ess) demonises and alienates non-communitarian lifestyles as anti Christian. In these exciting moments of parody, the entranced prophet(ess) may strike the body of some adepts with the Bible to suggest that *sataani* must be chased out so as to redeem those who have come under the deceptive missionary efforts towards Christian conversion.

Glossolalia is a travesty of verbal and written meaning that evokes familiarity and rupture with knowable codes and the authoritarian speaking subject. By turning the Bible as book into a mere device for exorcism, the celebrants and the assembly subvert 'the truth bearing word' and the illiteracy/literacy dichotomies left behind by the missionary and coloniser. During the celebrations, a 'secretary' transcribes (in a trance-like, automatic writing) the flow

of ecstatic utterances proffered by the prophets and the commune at large. S/he even records their pulsating beat and spontaneous hallelujahs. (The secretary's task goes on quite unnoticed, very much in contrast to his or her domineering counterpart in the colonial administration and juridiction.) Glossolalia, literally celestial tongues (*ndiinga zi zulu*), is of the following genre: *tindanda, sapertitince, allo, ditence, seigneur, Elia, Kimbangu, yes, hallo, ingeta, sesese, Jésus, hallo*. It entails a simulacrum of plural idioms and a sham message bearing. It is as if, in an ecstatic paroxysm, someone else or something else is speaking in a barely encoded way through the entranced body, thereby going beyond the existing social and gender code (Le Roy 1994).

In common parlance, glossolalia or the gift of speaking in tongues, is compared to untraceable voices coming from afar through some multichanneled and multidirectional cellular telecommunication. While members speak in tongues, they repeatedly yell *hallo, hallo*, and there is a rapid and incomprehensible recapitulation of inchoate sounds reverberating across the assembly. The content of the message expressed through tongues is accessible only when it is deciphered appropriately by a skilful translator acting with the assistance of the sacred spirit. S/he need not be literate or hold a 'whiteman's diploma'. Success depends solely on being able to capture the intervening power of the sacred spirit. Parody brings about a rupture in the experience of determinism imposed by dysfunctional state institutions. In the collective imagination, parody deconstructs reality and produces a detachment with respect to the predicaments of the society. It thus offers protection against any negative consequences the urban context might have.

The shouts and sounds of praise that come from all sides in the assembly can be seen as an attempt to subvert the type of political and economic discourses developed by state run media. Where these media clearly eulogise the very individual personhood of the head of state and its supposed achievements, members of the communes, by the speaking in tongues, do not appear to communicate anything at all that would correspond to the established social-life world as portryaed by the media. In other words, speaking in tongues is illocutionary in the strict sense of the term. It carries no clear message of its own. What is uttered is subsumed in the act of speaking itself, and the content of the speech is to express a sense

of joy and freedom to the congregation. As an act of praise to the sacred spirit, speaking in tongues is spontaneously expressed through aesthetic emotion and sentiment. It is not intended to achieve any particular concrete formal goal comparable to the discourse of state media. The discourse of communes becomes practical when it is deployed to secure blessings and healing for the benefit of individual members. This divine healing inflames the heart and the imagination of members to the point where the inner person is transformed: healing takes away the individual's sense of powerlessness caused by, say, attraction to alcohol, sensualist pleasure, or greedy attachment to money. It helps the patient overcome the propensity toward greed or dependency. It is said that the gift of the spirit fortifies the subject, rather than commanding it.

The more this change of heart is translated into the ecstatic discourse, the more it takes on the character of rebutting the unacceptable aspects of life in the suburbs and shanty towns. But all these attempts are cast in the form of parody. More than the frenzied character of the meetings, parody challenges the appearance of authority claimed by any official order and system of law. In the eyes of members of healing communes, then, parody creates a perspective above and beyond the established hierarchies and institutions. It indicates how much of what is enacted rests on sheer appearances, rhetoric, and conventional rules. In this way parody serves to deprive the state of its blustering claim to govern. It exorcises the established state order as well as its permissiveness. The downtrodden people are at a loss for how to grasp the arbitrary order of things in the state, and in the economic and public realms. What they are requested to do in this case is tame such an order by the delirious word and ludicrous liturgical drama. The detached and innocuous speaking in tongues indirectly denounces the state's irresponsibility for the order of things in society and makes participants laugh as if only by complicity. Parody turns hyperbolic and ephemeral immoderation into its own instrument for undoing abnormality, usurpation, cruelty, frenzy, ignorance, and egotism in the public order. It thus falls within the realm of homeopathy, a way of calling down evil spirits in members who then are subjected to incantations and profuse splashing of water that turn the evil possession against itself self-destructively.

During the ceremony, when alms are offered to the prophet(ess) and assistant leaders of the assembly, followers may circle around the assembly dancing and singing for one full hour. This looks as if they are reenchanting one of modernity's most striking forms of secularisation, namely the anonymous exchange value of cash. They celebrate and mock their participation in a new monetary economy, now subject to a salvationist order of brother- and sisterhood, and the utopian ideals of equality, equity, and solidarity. The offering is also meant to transform the condition of less-privileged members into what is defined as divine grace or healing. Celebrating a communitarian monetary economic order is sending strong signals to global capitalism. At the same time, such offering and receiving is a way for members of communes to celebrate their own participation in the new global monetary order.

It is thus understandable why the healing communes provide escape or deliverance for uprooted and cheated migrants. Two sets of dynamics are obvious here. First is the effect created by the communes for the welfare of people, and second is the revalorisation of the urban space that the nation state has failed to consider. As a religious platform that welcomes people whatever their socioeconomic background, the charismatic communes establish a community that has its own identity on the societal scene. These dynamics represent a challenge to the state and the government. In a way the prophet(ess) defines him- or herself in opposition to the state or other religious officials directing the commune in which religion becomes a 'war machine' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 383-384).

It may be argued that, where the state becomes dysfunctional, the war machine of the many healing communes undermines both the power base of the authoritarian state and the civilising mission that the postcolonial state purported to defend. The colonial and postcolonial world has emerged out of a series of dichotomies that very much function like war-mongering threats. These dichotomies consist in tension filled poles such as Christianity/paganism, the West/other civilisations, modernity/tradition, political *élite*/citizenry at large, urban/rural, and literacy/illiteracy. The outcome has been to impose a schizophrenic self conception on the colonised people. The response from healing communes is one that provides a space of meaning wherein their members are able to explore new avenues

for sorting out the ambiguities of the postcolonial discourse, and to heal the shattered images of themselves and the society at large. They instigate a more positive, though somewhat utopian, ambience in the face of a predominant urban depression. These communes also provide an alternative for social criticism precisely because they vigorously pursue the task of profoundly renewing the lifeworld around them.

Their celebrations level any hierarchy based in the modern realm on professional status and individualist and ostentatious consumption. The healing communes include everyone from the most indigent and illiterate to the unskilled and children. Everyone has the potential to receive the gift of tongues and to be irradiated with hope. Everyone can contribute to the emotional and ostensible resourcefulness of the community through celebrations and the countering of the evil spirit. And more particularly, these charismatic communes hide a strategy that aims to erode the foundations of false or alien claims to coercive power over others.

Parody and critical encounter with the otherness

As noted earlier, the healing communes are locked within a circular logic of parody in which one thing is affirmed if only to subject it to its opposite. At the same time, they reaffirm both elements in a ludicrous play of ambivalence. Yet, in the course of attacking the basis of (post)colonial discourse, the communes cast doubt on the promise of modern emancipation that such a discourse carries forward. Hence, they have no alternative but unspokenly encourage liberation of each individual member from the burden imposed by the postcolonial state machinery, which exacerbates the antinomies described above in terms of Western-style modernity or missionary values.

This aspect of concern is more perceptible when, instead of talking about the Holy Ghost or Jesus Christ, the members of the communes prefer the sacred spirit that for them is all inclusive. In other words, in the term 'sacred spirit' everything from the ancestral spirit to the Holy Ghost concurs with the aim of healing in these communes. In the consciousness of members, the major struggle must be directed against materialist beliefs and self-serving hedonist consumerism that stand at odds with ancestral and healing cults.

Indeed, the sacred spirit appears as goodness and anti evil. It is antithetic to *sataani*. The prophet(ess) can become vulnerable to the spirit's power much as s/he can be its outspoken denunciator. In other respects, conversion situates the follower squarely in the middle of an unending bodily battle between good and evil. This means that existence imposes itself as an antinomy in which evil constantly seeks to root out good. In this context, the chances of suffering misfortune are equal to those for good fortune. Moreover, through homeopathic influence, the good itself originates in evil turned against itself self-destructively. Strong reaffirmation of identity shows how much of a burden the fate of each member becomes for the rest of the community. It explicates the reason why people's local and new lifeworlds share interdependent forces. The communes reshape the adepts into agents who share otherworldly grace beyond the globalising systems of domination and exclusion. The charismatic agents act in unison to arouse and share the pleasures and practical know how of a mild utopia: for them the sacred spirit is tangible in the liberating inspiration of brethren and sisters in the everyday life, in a shared enterprise for the entire neighbourhood, inspiring their thoughts, gestures, emotions, perceptions, and (inter)actions.

In the healing communes, the prophet(ess) depicts a dual perspective. S/he is the embodiment of otherness because s/he channels the sacred spirit's illumination and acts as the critical conscience to stigmatise the world of *sataani*. In case ecstatic behaviour crops up, the prophet(ess) acts as an accomplice of the ambience of disorder as much as s/he would be critical of such an ambience. In mirroring their own fate in ironic parody, believers celebrate the instability of their position as they move back and forth between the roles of subject or author and obedient adept, or between a generic and an individual identity. They appear to espouse the modern civilising perspective, coloured as it is by emancipatory aspirations and the quest for orthodoxy. They endorse this hegemonic view, if only very critically.

The experience of the warmth of conviviality in an intimate space leads participants to a point of fusion with the generic self. Although such an experience normally weakens the authority of one member over others, it also produces a surprising alchemy

between universes. *Sataani*, as the sacred spirit's Janus-like eversion is but another name that members of the communes use to portray the spinoffs of the global economy and modern life as a whole. The communes celebrate the difference between the villagisation of suburban neighbourhood and the order of urban life, between the sublimation of the ancestral order and the anguish of modern urban dwellers. This intermediate space serves as the breeding ground for parody. Within the intimacy of these confraternities, those who know more about the ways of the elders and the complexities of the modern world explore the possibilities of a new order.

What emerges from this understanding of the parody as irony is that, through it, the faith-healing communes seek to explore the potentialities of a field of intersection or *intertopos* and create a critically lucid junction between different cultural horizons from the village to the urban society in the throes of globalisation. Accordingly, they help create a field of play against the bureaucratic mode of (post)colonial government and against the established missionary churches, especially Catholicism and Protestantism. The reason for such opposition is that the state has, as much as the missionary churches, erected a system of authority that lacks foundations and legitimacy in the cosmologies proper to the local cultures. Because state and church authority have circumvented local roots, the healing communes intend to counter their hegemonic pretense and construct another space of meaning and play. They announce and prepare the emergence of a new social pattern in which those who have no status or riches may be given rightful recognition. The communes create possibilities for expressing conflicting knowledge systems while largely rejecting the chimerical liberating discourse resulting from colonisation and missionary activity. The sacred spirit is at liberty to descend upon adepts without taking account of their merits, origins, or intellectual levels. The benefits of gifts it distributes to members rest strictly on their ability to accept and celebrate the divine grace. This implies confessing any addiction to money and lust. It also demands commitment to the community of brethern and sisters.

In contrast to traditional ritual, the healing communes explore the possibilities of a representation of the subject before the gaze of the Other; they offer a theatric depiction in which one gains an

identity by becoming a 'reborn' individual in the face of others. While expressing a whole range of wayward impressions, the adept can create new rules of behaviour by joining the game of parody. Here, s/he can allow individual inspiration to hold sway and thus escape the authority of custom or the kin group. Such scenarios, when parodied, point to a lack of correlation between one's familial identity and that of lived experience tied in with the core personality identity. Or they may point to a disconnection between lineage affiliation and the functional (if not civic) identity one acquires in the city, like between the customary logic of a persecuting evil and the individualistic demands or obligations of a capitalist economy.

Conclusion

The faith-healing communes of the sacred spirit have liturgies that invoke various shades of meaning, disenchantment, and mutual empowerment, through which the parody of Western-style modernity is laid bare. It is only through the existential frameworks of local, as well as more global, presuppositions that these liturgies can be grasped as a way for members to come to terms with the challenges of Westernising modernity. By and large, the Mpeve Ya Nlongo healing communes are matricentric in that they appear to be an archetypically maternal preserve. This is not related to stereotypes that link the feminine with hyperreligiosity. Instead, at the peak of social disillusionment with the shattered modern patterns of life in the suburbs, mothers go on positioning themselves at the centre of the processes of sustaining life and caring. But parody in the healing communes allows the adepts to go on living with paradoxes and the irreconcilable. It also offers them a communal and exalting scene to enact a very body-centred ambiguation and basic indeterminacy in their life situation where selfcritical insight and responsible encounter with otherness in the postcolonial clash of civilisations are unavailable to consciousness and practice. Parody provides the local networks and neighbourhood associations with sharpness of mind and fervent bodies to meet the irremediably heavy burden and paradoxical models imposed on them in shattered worlds.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1 Throughout this essay I use terms like 'the West', 'missionary', 'the whites', as ideological notions used in common parlance among the Kinois or Kinshasa's inhabitants. 'Whiteman' (*mundele*) is a term for the coloniser, the expatriate development expert, and those who today in politics, liberal professions, and Christianity arrogantly display Western-style conduct and consumerism values. Colonial terms, such as *'élite'*, 'extracustomary', 'indigenous', 'paganism', have been banished by President Mobutu's return to authenticity movement. Yet they still haunt people's representations of self and identity.

2 In depicting the Kinois context, I keep in mind other African contexts I came to know, alone or in collaboration with doctoral students, in places as diverse as Cairo, Tunis, western Congo, northern Ghana,

southern Burkina Faso, southern Nigeria, southern Ethiopia, southwestern Kenya, northwestern Tanzania, South-Africa (in particular KwaZulu Natal), and northwestern Namibia.

3   My use of the term imaginary is not to the primary connotation of fictitious, but indebted to Jacques Lacan. The *Imaginary*, in the Lacanian perspective, is the subject's concern with identification with his specular image, along the chain of signified images —signifiers and representations of an individual, group, society— that conceal the object that promises *Jouissance*. The imaginary is a mode of unconscious feeling and specular perception of one's body image and the structure of one's desire. The imaginary is thus shaped by the partial projection of the subject's own affects of the body and psychic forces in the form of unconscious imagos (a notion evocative of Freud's *Sachvorstellung*). The imagos are transformed into the symbolic order in as much as they come to interpenetrate, in a shadowy in between zone, with the register of language (cf. Freud's notion of *Wortvorstellung*), and the paternal function, dialogical intersubjectivity, social exchange, social space and time. This unconscious Imaginary order is moreover a highly deceptive space or drama of transference of the unknowingly said, unfathomable, ambivalent images of identification, fantasies, beliefs, suppositions or traumas. According to Lacan, it is the realm of deceptive illusions, remembering, resistance and transference, very much on the basis of a mirroring binary opposition or paranoid posture.

4   It is from the perspective of the mutational process in the 1990s that I look back at former periods, sharing the regrets or negative feelings of the Kinois themselves, who feel cheated by the predatory state during recent decades. I have personally become increasingly sensitive to the sufferings of people in Kinshasa, in particular the Yaka, exposed to the hardships and misery of their townships, as well as exasperated by the runaway inflation and disintegrating public services and institutions.

5   It is estimated that in the first decades of the 20th century more than 180 independent charismatic movements of the holy/sacred spirit were founded by prophets (more than thirty of them female) in the Kongo area surrounding Manianga. Numerous other independent churches, of some neo-Pentecostal or Christian millenarian offshoot, refer to the Holy Ghost often in a blend with some spiritist, scientological, or oriental religious tradition. Public opinion has stayed critical of some of their leaders for being abusively self serving. From the 1920s to the dawn of independence, the Lower Congo was the theatre of successive independent prophetic movements, such as

Ngunzism, *Bola Manianga, Matonsi, Lusambulu lwa Bougie, Munkukusa, Maza ma lusambulu, Mayangi* (Andersson 1958, Asch 1983, Devisch 1996, Diangienda 1984, Hagenbucher-Sacripanti 1989, MacGaffey 1983, Mackay 1987, Martin 1975, Sinda 1972).

6   The language used in the healing communes of the sacred spirit is kiKongo, but liNgala and French are employed as well. In the idiomatic expressions of these prophetic movements rendered in kiKongo, the prefix *ku , wu* of the infinitives is replaced by the hyphen; terms in liNgala are preceded by *li*.

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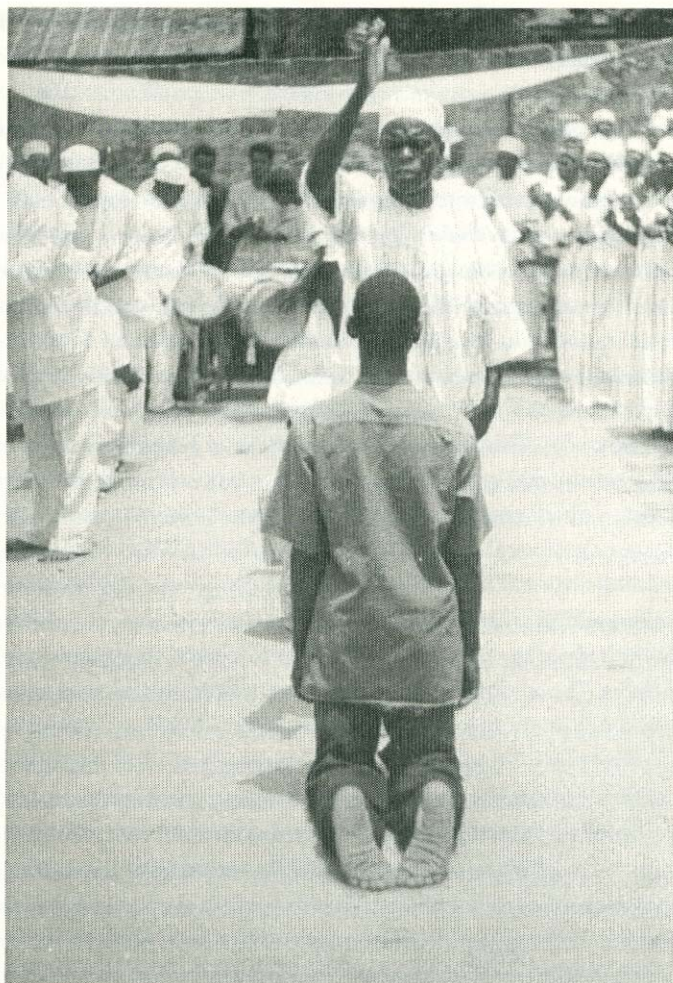
Mpeve ya Nlongo healing commune of Pastor Nseke Ndomble Ntima Zulu, in Kimbanseke Kinshasa. Photo by Dr. Matula Atul Entur, May 1993.

Responding to Rooted Cosmopolitanism: Patriots, Ethnics and the Public Good in Botswana

Richard Werbner

Introduction

Kwame Anthony Appiah ends his brilliantly insightful essays on postcolonial Africa and culture with his moving story of his father's funeral in Kumasi (1992: 181-192). It is, *surprisingly*, a story of conflict, of putting the ties that bind to severe and very public test, to the point of damage, perhaps beyond repair. Appiah's father, Joe, was a rooted cosmopolitan and a man of high social rank, who apparently saw no conflict between his multiple somewhat overlapping loyalties – to his matriclan, which he headed, to his church, to the Ashanti people whose king was his brother-in-law, to Ghana, which he served as opposition leader and later government minister – and his final message of *noblesse oblige* to his family was, 'Remember that you are citizens of the world' (Appiah 2005: 213). Cosmopolitan patriotism is the phrase which the son Kwame uses for his father Joe's exemplary practice. Joe Appiah had, also, the maverick's capacity for being his own master; he was admired, his son Kwame recalls, for being fiercely tenacious in a matter of right but resolute, no less, in pursuit of the good reconciliation. Widely regarded as a founding father of his country, he led fearlessly first in the anti-colonial struggle then, even in prison at the risk of his own life, in resistance to postcolonial tyranny under President Nkrumah. Later in a gesture of personal reconciliation and national homage to his former good friend and comrade-in-arms, he brought Nkrumah's body home from exile.

What was surprising, even to those close to Joe Appiah, and remarkable for a *rooted* cosmopolitan is that the one who chose to make the test of conflict inevitable was Joe Appiah himself. He did so by adding a codicil to his will, virtually on his death-bed, against the matrilineal tradition of Asante and with his son's help. The unorthodox codicil removed control of his funeral from his matriclan and gave it to his church and his immediate family, and thus pitted both against his matriclan and even the Asante king, tested his son's determination under great moral pressure, and eventually embroiled Ghana's head of state, who made an explicit rebuke during the funeral, calling the king's dignity, his respect for his stool, into question at his own capital. Kwame Appiah himself wonders and does not know how much his father 'would have foreseen, whether he knew his funeral would provide the occasion for conflict between monarch and head of state, between Asante and Ghana' (1992: 192). Perhaps the answer reflects as much proud confidence –in a maverick tradition, the son following in the father's footsteps – as it does the chosen self-development of the individual. Kwame Appiah, a distinguished philosopher of Western liberalism, often leaves us thoughtful with Asante proverbial wisdom, and it may be that in his English mother's remarkable collection of Asante proverbs, there is one that suggests that it is a wise father who knows his own son.

Rooted Public Cosmopolitans: From Ghana to Botswana

Following Kwame Appiah's example – and I return later to Appiah's insights into cosmopolitan patriotism – I want to approach the life of another rooted cosmopolitan, Richard Ngwabe Mannathoko, and his funeral's postcolonial significance.[1] My approach is through biography and ethnography for a first-hand account of stories and responses, including my own, at his funeral in Botswana. Richard Ngwabe Mannathoko died aged seventy-nine, and was buried early in December 2005 in his home city, Francistown. Mannathoko, like Joe Appiah, exemplifies the rooted public cosmopolitan who was something of a maverick. Such cosmopolitans are rooted, because they are proud and assertive of their ethnic or other origins and

home identities, while recognizing the cultural good of being engaged with a variety of others; and public, because they deliberately bring cosmopolitanism to bear in their engagement with the state and in their creative impact on the public sphere. They are also mavericks, being hard to pen in and given to striking out on their own, ahead of any popular herd, sometimes following them, sometimes not. Popularity as such is not their great driver. Their public cosmopolitanism is about justice, no less than about culture and the self.

In my present biographical and ethnographic account, I take a stage further the argument I put about cosmopolitan ethnicity in *Reasonable Radicals and Citizenship in Botswana* (2004a). There I suggest cosmopolitan ethnicity has a characteristic tension, because it is

> urban yet rural, at once inward- and outward-looking, it builds interethnic alliances from intra-ethnic ones, and it constructs difference while transcending it. Being a cosmopolitan does not mean turning one's back on the countryside, abandoning rural allies, or rejecting ethnic bonds (2004a: 63).

I am not about to argue that Appiah's approach to 'cosmopolitan patriotism' is wrong, the better to defend my own term of art, 'cosmopolitan ethnicity'. On the contrary, I agree with Appiah's conclusion:

> …you can be cosmopolitan –celebrating the variety of human cultures; rooted – loyal to one local society (or a few) that you count as home; liberal –convinced of the value of the individual; and patriotic –celebrating the institutions of the state (or states) within which you live (1998[1997]: 106.)

Against this background of agreement, I do see a significant difference in approach, signalled by the two terms. As Appiah himself takes care to explain, his approach was intended to be – and indeed was – a turning point in the 1990s debate about multiculturalism in American democracy. Having chosen to become a naturalized citizen of the United States, Appiah contributes deliberately as a patriotic advocate of cosmopolitanism. A liberal in politics and philosophy,

he continues to write forcefully in defence of the freedom of choice, the autonomy of the individual and the right of self-invention or the right one has to rework and recombine, to play up or play down, for oneself the many identities one derives from society (Appiah 2005, 2006, see especially his *tour de force* on John Stuart Mill and the ethics of individuality, 2005: 1-35). Belonging counts – the tribe is not a hateful throwback – and we cannot be moral beings without owing and meeting special obligations. Appiah is pragmatic, explicitly aware of the need for working compromise, but he has a deep concern, suspicious of the tyranny of the community, of the group's claim to command the 'authentic' script for a life way. On his agenda for a currently relevant philosophy of liberalism is, as a priority, autonomy and with that, self-development. Being a gifted philosopher, Appiah integrates; he presents the theoretical consistency and satisfying harmony between the ideas he holds, following his father's example, as liberal, patriot, and cosmopolitan. His long-term intellectual project has its agenda for reconciling troublesome, possibly contradictory priorities in the theory of liberalism.

Ideas all of one piece: that in, my view, is tempting and yet analytically blinding, because it minimizes their actual tension, in practice, which people find problematic in public life, which often becomes a passionate concern, and which drives forward one predicament after another.

Cosmopolitanism appears impoverished, when it is made out to be all of one piece, actual and not ever 'about-to-be', and when it seems to lack any creative tension between disparate, unstable, possibly contradictory elements. Worse still, contrary to Appiah's holistic optimism, that impoverishment may open the way to the very subversion of cosmopolitanism, against which Appiah pitches his argument. We must keep in mind the demonising of cosmopolitanism in the twentieth century under totalitarian regimes. For Stalin's regime, 'rootless cosmopolitan' was a hateful euphemism legitimizing the persecution on unpatriotic grounds of prominent Jewish intellectuals and professionals. Perhaps for any cosmopolitan, but certainly for the public cosmopolitan – the cosmopolitan who engages actively with the state and contributes to the public sphere, this question is sensitive and pressing: How to be patriotic and

cosmopolitan at the same time? Never a merely academic question, it is inescapable for the scholarly understanding of the changeable force that public cosmopolitanism has in civic culture and civil life in postcolonial Africa, no less than post-imperial Europe.

Richard Mannathoko: Family, Ethnic Group, Inner Circle

I consider such changeable force ethnographically in my study of Kalanga elites, including very prominently Richard Mannathoko himself (see Figure 2, captioned, 'The author with Richard Mannathoko, wearing VIP rosettes, at the installation of a village headman in the North East District' Werbner 2004a: 66). A cosmopolitan in more than the familiar sense of being worldly and widely traveled, Mannathoko came from a long stigmatized though now powerful ethnic minority, the Kalanga, and was a leading member of the first postcolonial generation to be senior civil servants in the highest decision-making echelon. He was also a founding and leading member of the civil servants' association (the precursor of a union), an NGO head, ambassador and multi-national director, real estate investor, lawyer and large scale farmer.

Mannathoko's cosmopolitanism continues to be known and effectively carried forward by the women closest to him, his wife, the former mayor of Botswana's capital now a leading philanthropist, and his daughters. One daughter was, at the time of his funeral, Regional Director of a UNICEF programme for Eastern and Southern Africa; a second, the Assistant Director General of the World Health Organisation in Geneva (she is now in Washington D.C., a Vice-President for Development in the World Bank); and a third daughter, a senior economist formerly with USAID, now also with the World Bank. These women are in the forefront of Botswana's new generation of international public servants, a significantly growing number. True to a public cosmopolitan ethic, they take upon themselves a more inclusive responsibility for bettering the quality of life, not merely for people in their own country but reaching well beyond that to a wider, shared world. Elegant women in black, they came, living proof of the realisation of their father's public cosmopolitan vision, from across the world to mourn at his funeral.

Richard Mannathoko himself belonged to an inner circle, mainly Kalanga and drawn from the first postcolonial generation of top echelon civil servants who built up Botswana's interlocking big-business directorates. The establishment of Botswana's postcolonial technocrat-directorate complex is, in good measure, their accomplishment, though not exclusively theirs, of course (Werbner 2004). Members of this inner circle have also been influential in making public cosmopolitanism meaningful in Botswana by both constructing difference and transcending it. In assertion of minority rights and ethnic dignity, they founded cultural associations, for example, the Society for the Promotion and Advancement of the Ikalanga Language (SPIL). But they also took leading roles in the growth of public forums and other racially and ethnically integrated institutions concerned with good governance or critical of current public policy (Werbner 2004: 187). Not that they ignored the hot arenas of party politics – and Mannathoko himself was identified with a faction, at least in the media – but it was in these forums and institutions, above all, that Mannathoko and other public cosmopolitans sought, recognized, and sustained allies in the realization of their cosmopolitan potential. Their attention to their changing problem of alliance contributed significantly to the remarkable growth of voluntary associations as NGOs in Botswana, admittedly, in Botswana as elsewhere across Africa, a growth at its peak much driven by foreign donor funding. Where to create alliances was the open question from one postcolonial moment to another, a question, of course, relative to the life course and repositioning of the public cosmopolitans themselves. In Mannathoko's case, the move in responsive alliance was from one extreme of founding leadership to another, from his service in the 1960s as Secretary General of the Botswana Civil Servants' Association to his establishment of the umbrella council, the Botswana Confederation of Commerce, Industry and Manpower (BOCCIM), which for a decade under his presidency in the nineties brought together state officials and business executives and had a major impact on public policy (on BOCCIM, see Maundeni 2004: 77). Mannathoko's contribution as a bridge-builder was acknowledged by BOCCIM's Representative, speaking before me at the funeral.

Hope and Three Aspects of Public Cosmopolitanism

From the very start, I want to anticipate likely criticism: that here I merely celebrate, perhaps glorify, public accomplishment. After all, as Mannathoko's funeral programme registers, I speak as Family Friend. But, even to do that, faithfully, I must still pursue the cosmopolitan interest in hope beyond accomplishment. For important as accomplishment is, it pales before the importance of three aspects of public cosmopolitanism which Mannathoko's life exemplified, in the large: first, the restless quest for the further horizon, second, the imperative of moral re-centering, and third, the construction and transcending of difference.

As for the first aspect – the restless quest for the further horizon – in public cosmopolitanism, such as Mannathoko's, that exceeds mere curiosity. Nor is the horizon quest primarily about the stranger's entry into Ali Baba's cave: seeking consumption, or the desire to taste the unfamiliar and sample the strange, or even the aesthetic pleasure in wonder and revelation, given the delights of alien things and unexpected experiences. Sometimes explosive, sometimes merely volatile or not quite tamed and wholly domesticated, the horizon quest of the public cosmopolitan makes for a somewhat risky, even uncertain reach in public life, rather than solely the safe grasp in accomplishment. In saying that, I do not intend to yield too much to Britain's trusted 'Man on the Spot', or any empire's Old Guard, and their feel for 'the safe pair of hands' (not those of a maverick like Mannathoko, my account shows). But perhaps most important in public cosmopolitanism is daring. In public cosmopolitanism, frontiers represent not limits but temptations, open zones calling to be crossed, all the more so because the ways to do so are not yet routine or even hardly tried.

Second, the imperative of moral re-centering: my cue comes from the debate on patriotism and cosmopolitanism in *The Boston Review* (1994). In it, Martha Nussbaum rehearses the cosmopolitanism of Stoic philosophers in imperial Rome. Aware of great human diversity, Stoics reflected upon the origins and development of consciousness in living beings according to their peculiarity. Stoics' ethics embraced the whole of mankind (Zeller 1957 [1931]).[2]

For their recognisably diverse world, the Stoics' socio-logic was concentric from the self in the innermost circle, to the extended family, to neighbours, other city-dwellers, fellow countrymen and so on. Outermost, and all encompassing, was the largest circle, that of humanity as a whole.

Taken as static, the concentric idea might appear an ancestral ghost, haunting the Diamond Jubilee Conference of the Association of Social Anthropologists. For the idea calls up the celebrated, but otherwise untitled, Diagram 1 of British Social Anthropology (Fortes & Evans-Pritchard 1940: 277). Changeless still, of course, Diagram 1 shows the view of social distance from the hut outwards through the outer circles of Nuerland, Dinkaland and Other Foreign Countries to the outermost circle of The Government Operating From Various Centres. Looking backward, and with tongue in cheek, we might be cynical, not stoical, and dismiss our venerable Diagram 1 as if it were merely imperial, for it does locate the British at the outer limits, rather than our encompassing humanity as a whole.

But my point is that for the Stoics, the socio-logic had to be dynamic to be civic and truly moral. Stoics demanded active, deliberate change of a certain kind in the light of moral reason and perceived virtue. As the second century Stoic philosopher Heracles put it, the essential task is to 'draw the circles in somehow toward the center' (Nussbaum 1994). The far has to be brought morally near, but without obliterating the many circles of difference; that is the dynamic aspect of cosmopolitanism which I call the imperative of moral recentering.

Perhaps the most influential response to Nussbaum's essay is Kwame Appiah's 'Cosmopolitan Patriots' (1998 [1997]), which David Hollinger rightly labels 'perhaps the closest thing to a classic text yet generated by the new cosmopolitanism' (Hollinger 2002: 230). Before commenting on what the new cosmopolitanism is as an intellectual movement, it is worth positioning its 'classic text'. This appreciation might appear to be something of an aside, but in fact, it takes us forward in our main argument about cosmopolitanism and postcolonial Africa. For the classic text is written by one of Africa's foremost diasporic intellectuals, it is a product of a diasporic imagination, it is very much in the mainstream

of postcolonial studies, and it makes the vanguard of the new cosmopolitanism distinctively postcolonial and diasporic (on Africa, the diasporic and the postcolonial, see Werbner 1996: 7). Perhaps most importantly, and largely neglected in debate about the movement, it makes the new cosmopolitanism intellectually indebted to theoretical reflection on cultural and political struggles in Africa.[3] Carrying forward that reflection is our present aim.

By the new cosmopolitanism, Hollinger identifies a cross-disciplinary movement of intellectuals, mainly liberals, who since the mid 1990s, seek a mid-way between extreme doctrinal positions. Of these, one is overcommitted, Hollinger argues, to universalism and its appeal to identification with humanity as a whole, to moral obligation without borders and the same treatment for all – Nussbaum's approach, for Hollinger, is the leading example, although he gives short shrift to her concern for the cosmopolitan dynamic of recentering which works with and through circles of difference. At the other extreme, again emerging within liberal philosophy, is a communitarian form of pluralism which disregards multiple, overlapping identities, 'is likely to ascribe to each individual a primary identity within a single community of descent….[and is] more concerned to protect and preserve the cultures of groups that are already well established…' (Hollinger 2002: 231). For Hollinger, the leading exponent of such pluralism is the Canadian philosopher Will Kymlicka (on Kymlicka's ideas, see also Werbner 2004a: 34, 2004b: 261, 267), although, especially for postcolonial Africa, it is in my view Charles Taylor who has contributed even more to what I call 'the new dialogue with post-liberalism' (Werbner 2004b: 261-273) in work on the politics of recognition, multiculturalism, and citizenship. Appiah's argument, striking a liberal middle way, between the universalist and the pluralist, illuminates a third aspect of public cosmopolitanism, the construction, reconstruction and transcending of difference. This is the aspect that I, too, focus upon in my conceptualization of 'cosmopolitan ethnicity' (Werbner 2002b; 2004a).[4]

Cosmopolitanism as Socially Viable: Inclusion and Alliance

The liberal stress in Appiah's approach is on the individual, and what that does not lead him to do is to ask, in any depth, what makes cosmopolitanism *socially viable*.[5] It is because I have to explore that, specifically in a postcolonial context of debate about the rights of collectivities, pluralism and tribalism, that I find it useful start from a circle of inclusion: it is that circle which attracts an emerging set of significant insiders who, as collectivities and individuals, make the dialogue of cosmopolitanism meaningful and viable. It is a contended circle, and its membership amounts to a controversial cosmopolitan Who is Who. The problem is: How are allies sought, mutually recognized, and sustained in the realization of the cosmopolitan potential? And how on a great civic occasion, such as the funeral of a public cosmopolitan is that potential seen and documented as more or less realized?

Civic Culture: Biography and Documentary Practice

Hundreds of mourners, people from all walks of life, including many of the great and the good in the country, came to Richard Mannathoko's funeral. This very public event was hosted, in between a requiem mass and the other solemn last rites, with a generous excess of feasting on much loved local foods from juicy, fresh killed goat meat to thick porridge and rich stews, with abundant greens and other tasty relishes. Grand and lavish as Mannathoko's funeral was, it was nevertheless a moment common and true to the civic culture, now widely shared throughout much of Botswana, in remote villages no less than in the towns and cities (for a very illuminating account of funerals, civil discourse and the public space of sentiment in Botswana, see Durham & Klaits 2002):

This civic culture fosters very careful regard for social biography. The individuation of the subject matters a great deal. Not individualism or the cult of the heroic individual, I stress, but that individuation which strains to do justice to the problem of the member as a special and vital part of a greater whole. Careful individuation calls, at death and faithful to life, for a highly ceremonious relating of

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the subject to significant others. First, it is through their recognized presence and solemn procession in last rites, normally wearing their respectful best, second through illuminating biography in oratory, and third through the reading of personal, written messages, along with the display of their floral wreaths.

Funerals proceed, accordingly, with an announced, meticulously detailed programme. It is often printed to list the schedule of times and places, the main participants, their immediate roles and usually their relationships to the deceased. The deceased's personal profile, briefly given on the programme, usually with a characteristic photograph, is always rehearsed in the round. From their distinct perspectives, significant others trace the special moments of a life course, individual and highly specific, through to the fine particulars of death. The details matter; an honest, or at least credible, account is expected; the life, at death, must be put on the public record as a meaningful chain of events for a known and now memorable character. No one, not even a young woman or teenage boy, dies with a bare trace and without some public oratory of personal dignity. There is a cherishing in memory of the life that was, including quirks, jokes, and moments comic enough to make everyone laugh, unchecked by the solemn presence of the casket and its corpse, before whose exposed face, composed in death, mourners bend their heads in reflection – that is the carefully observed and respected truth of this civic culture in Botswana.

Civic Culture: The Predicament of Public Cosmopolitanism

Endemic in all this is a predicament of civic culture which can be highly problematic for the public cosmopolitan in particular. In Botswana people value highly the smooth surface of social life, indeed, civility itself. Yet the documentary practice in funerals puts that value at risk, making it precarious and vulnerable to tensions, even open quarrels and the exposure of personal grievances. Even beyond that, the predicament takes on a special sensitivity when the occasion responds to the life of a public cosmopolitan well-known to be a controversial maverick, never branded someone else's own or fully domesticated.

It hardly needs saying that such a maverick is not likely merely to serve social life's smooth surface, even when his time comes to rest in peace. But what does need saying for the public cosmopolitan, more generally, goes to the horizon above the surface. The force of public cosmopolitanism is uncontained and uncontainable, for it comes from looking beyond, seeing a horizon as open, perhaps barely glimpsed yet with potential somehow to be realized in the public sphere. If restless in life, and given to seeking beyond the horizon, the public cosmopolitan makes an uneasy subject for the documentary practice of funerals to command.

The Partial Measure of the Public Man: Funeral Programmes

So too in Mannathoko's funeral: a partial measure of the public man was made visible in each of two programmes, one for the requiem mass on 9th December at St. James Parish Church, ending with the 'Profile of a Gifted Son of Botswana', and the other programme, for the 10th December, the day of his burial.

This second programme, folio size with computer-generated personal graphics on each of its twelve pages, is a remarkable representation of public distinction in an exemplary life. The first page reprints the Profile on the requiem programme. Next appears the Mannathoko Family Tree, with the couple's 1962 photograph from Leeds and law student days above a diagram spread across the whole page. It is as if to remind all, including the social anthropologist, that genealogy lives on, it is not passé.

The third and fourth pages are devoted to the Funeral Programme: Order of Service. Listed, among others, and in English and Kalanga, but not Tswana, are the two Masters of Ceremonies, the three Traffic Masters, the thirty two Pall Bearers (turn-takers along the way from house to grave), the ten Speakers at the Hall (each identified by relationship, i.e. In-law, BOCCIM Representative, BP Representative), the thirteen Readers of Messages, the Wreath Bearers and the several Speakers, including Members of Parliament, at the Graveside. The whole list registers the richness of personal and public association over a lifetime. Considerable as the list is, nearly seventy participants in all, it conveys but a bare hint of the funeral's substantial logistics in mobilizing so many kin, friends and the general public, very quickly, from across the country and beyond.

Pages five to eight portray Mannathoko's Professional Life, illustrated by his photographs with the country's first president, with his colleagues at the Ministry of Local Government, with fellow trainees for the foreign service in 1966, with fellow ambassadors at the O.A.U. in Addis, 1968, as High Commissioner with the Zambian Vice-President in 1967, and with other Barclays Bank of Botswana Board Members. The narrative of Family Life on page 10 follows him from birth to marriage, to his own and his wife Rosinah's early education and practice as teachers both in Botswana and the then Southern Rhodesia, to the birth and up-bringing of the surviving four of his six children and eight grandchildren, to his retirement and active advisory role as senior uncle to the current Chief Masunga, sometime Head of Botswana's House of Chiefs. (Among all his public distinctions, Mannathoko much prized his claim to chiefly descent. 'I am always a Headman, wherever I go,' he would boast to me, with a characteristic chuckle.) The accompanying illustrations are brim-full of family, children and grandchildren, and their glowing smiles, around Mannathoko and his wife. 'Dick', the physical giant, the champion athlete, football and tennis player, emerges in the account and photos for Social Life on page eleven; all this is above the final section for the proudest of his life long passions, for breeding and accumulating cattle. He was President of the Nata Farmers Association at the time of his death, and this section's illustration, 'Breeding at the Farm', shows stock from his prize, highly valuable herd, some from his remarkable accomplishment in cross-breeding Brahman, Charolais and Simmertals. Finally comes his full page portrait, with the caption Rest in Peace, and in Kalanga, Ezelani Nge Dothodzo Ntombo.

If not *Cosmopolitan,* Worldly Cosmopolitan?

If not a candidate for the slick magazine cover of *Cosmopolitan,* Mannathoko could easily have passed for the most familiar appearance of the worldly cosmopolitan. Widely travelled as an ambassador on behalf of his country, he had shaken the hands of the Shaikhs of this world, taken their oil and his seat on the international board of BP, the first ever for an African, yielded hugely increased corporate profit, and drunk copiously from the best of

the British Empire's legacy in Scotch and from the rest of the world's good red wines. A trained lawyer, who helped write his country's constitution, he had the advocate's skill in making the best of a case, of getting sharply to the rights and principles in conflict. It was a skill he brought to bear in the civil service, diplomacy, corporate enterprise, in the designing and leading of NGO's and on Presidential Commissions, but not in legal practice as such. Of the worldly cosmopolitan's competence in languages, he again had a broad grasp, being fluent in at least three African languages and two European. He made close and strong friendships across national, racial and ethnic difference. As a host, he had the rare gift for putting his guest at welcome ease. A charming *bon vivant,* he apparently never felt himself a stranger however strange the place he was in – or at least, his stream of jokes and spontaneous banter made people laugh, whether they were San herders on his huge farm or 1960s with-it Oxford dons (when I saw him at Oxford on his diplomatic training).

That said, I must add a significant qualification to the word 'never'. There came a time of retirement, when he felt he had enough of life in the capital, Gaborone, a city of which he was not very fond, and he and his southern-born wife moved their home back north to Francistown, the city near the chiefdom of his birth. It was to be, as he told me, 'near my roots'.

Rooted Public Cosmopolitanism: Biography and Ethnography

The story of Mannathoko's Professional Life in the larger programme represents him as 'a free thinker', 'never constrained by tradition, rules or conformist approaches'. He was regarded as a charismatic, strong leader already as a Head Boy at St. Joseph's College. At the time, the Protectorate's leading southern boarding school, St. Joseph's became a major crucible for postcolonial elite formation, its powerful old boy and old girl network including at least one vice-president of Botswana and numerous other politicians, very senior civil servants and big entrepreneurs in the country's interlocking directorates. Mannathoko wrote and spoke fearlessly, even recklessly at a high moment of deference to alien rule. Among

other things, ahead of revisionist postcolonial historians, he dismissed the founding myth of the Protectorate: that Queen Victoria gave her protection as grace and favour to Tswana chiefs petitioning her with missionaries in the Christian civilising mission.

The point is that his debunking was not taken lightly by the authorities as mere schoolboy posturing. At heavy personal cost, he gained a life-long reputation for daring to stand his ground against the powers that be. 'His scholarship at college was withdrawn when he insisted that British Colonial Rule had been imposed on the country,' the programme reports, 'when what our Botswana Chiefs had sought was an alliance. This led to him being perceived as a threat and troublemaker, and he was forced to teach in Southern Rhodesia rather than Bechuanaland.' The programme goes on to tell of his 'sentencing a white man to imprisonment while he was a [Protectorate] District Officer, because it was the right thing to do: an act which was considered unthinkable at the time.' In explaining this daring to think the unthinkable and act upon it, the programme does not use the word cosmopolitan, but it represents his motivation in cosmopolitan terms, in terms of moral principles, rights and universals of humanity, beyond race or nation, 'He respected all men and believed in equality before the law'.

This representation catches the nub of the legend that surrounded Mannathoko in his life-time, for being anti-imperialist and anti-racist. When, before Independence neared in 1966, he studied to become one of the country's first handful of university graduates, he was the only one whose radical politics ruled him out of the Protectorate government's largesse for overseas courses. Nor did his legend, and tactically sharp tongue, endear him to the Old Guard of senior former Protectorate officials who at first dominated the President's Office and most of the ministries, in the very early years of the postcolony (on the opposition between the Old Guard and the Young Turks, see Werbner 2004: 174-76). He was watched with more than suspicion. As a radical activist, he was a founding member of the Bechuanaland African Civil Service Association and later Secretary General of the Botswana Civil Servants Association. He helped draft and present the Protectorate Association's thoroughgoing critique of the colonial government's discrimination in favour of expatriates at the expense of locals (see the *Report on*

Localisation and Training, 1966 cited in Werbner 2004: 161). This is still regarded as an opening salvo in a continuing controversy over localisation.

The Old Guard consensus was that Mannathoko was a dangerous tribalist; that his talk of rights, justice, principle was no more than a cover for self-interest; that he was always on the make to look after his own Kalanga people, above all. In the cocktail parties of the small world of the capital in those days, his wife told me, one or another senior expatriate official would come up to him and say, whatever the merits of the case, 'I see you got another job for one of your people.' Or, 'Not yours this time, eh!' If not deliberate divide and rule, after the celebrated caricature of Perfidius Albion's imperial policy, it was nevertheless more than a casual response to the expanding horizons of local elites, to their rooted cosmopolitanism in the making. There was a late imperial mind-set, with a long self-congratulatory wisdom of its own, that reserved the moral high ground for the Old Guard themselves. They left, among the likes of Mannathoko, little or no room for, what the British call, 'a safe pair of hands'.

It is worth saying that the vicissitudes of his career never made Mannathoko bitter against the British, or for that matter, bitter at all. After all, human beings would get up to their antics, and that for him was a source of endless jokes and shared humour. Of course, as an American, I am myself perhaps a poor judge of the anti-British, although I am told by a Fellow of the British Academy, 'You have become truly English'. But, characteristically, in 1964, when Mannathoko and I first sat drinking together in a Francistown bar, then usually segregated by race, on an informal basis, he warned me that being seen with him would cause me trouble with some people and then laughed heartily. Or, rather, we both laughed heartily.

Not surprisingly, the programme passes silently over a consequence for Mannathoko of being such a maverick: conspiracy theories, defamation and rumour, even about plotting a coup d'etat with other top Kalanga civil servants. 'Guns under the Bed' ran the headline in a 1969 pre-election issue of the Bulawayo Chronicle, then the main source of gossip and news in the absence of any local newspaper in Botswana. The story had leading Kalanga,

including Mannathoko and a future cabinet minister, plotting for a take-over and arming themselves at night, in the capital. At the time, however, they were actually President Khama's guests for Easter in his Serowe home. The President traced the rumour to expatriate police officers in the CID and sacked them. But the rumour never quite died; it has become one of those 'truths', often whispered in the capital, about the 'hidden agenda' of Kalanga elites as a minority about to take over from the majority (see Werbner 2004: 71-74). A Tswana cabinet minister told me frankly, but only on the basis of anonymity, that in his view Mannathoko, who was regarded as a potential head of the civil service, never attained his potential in the civil service, nor became a minister, in part because the accusation of being a tribalist plotter gave him a reputation that stuck.

Family Friend: Richard Werbner

I took up some of these issues in my own speech at the funeral, which follows in italics. Speaking first in Kalanga, I made the customary opening address to the funeral, announced I would speak in English, and then took the liberty of asking the interpreter to rest. Otherwise, he offered a clean but hurried translation in Tswana between each Kalanga or English speaker's sentence or two. And rest he did, after translating my request into Tswana. I felt I had to concentrate, myself, and be aided in that by a close, moved hearing from my fellow mourners. If a liberty, then perhaps a wise one, or so the interpreter himself conveyed later, when he somewhat jokingly told me, after the speeches, that he would have been bound to edit some of my remarks,

> *The passing of a great man leaves lasting inspiration for generation after generation. Some great men get riches for themselves, their families, even their country. Other great men give public service of the highest value. Still other great men build the institutions and the organizations upon which daily life depends. But the true mark of the great man is always powerful vision. To see beyond, to open out the horizon of hope, of trust and of promise, to dare to be ahead of the times, all that marks out the great man.*

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Richard Ngwabe Mannathoko was such a great man. Here we can only begin to tell of his remarkable life. He did not have to wait for us to eulogise him in endless stories and in his fund of jokes. He was already a legend living in our midst. But I have a confession to make to put the record straight. We carried on our conversation over more than forty years, from the time when he was a young law student and I, a novice anthropologist. During that time, I sometimes referred to him and his ideas in my published work; the references are a dozen in my latest book. What I want to confess is – and I know he forgave me for this – I ought to have made dozens and dozens more acknowledgements to his contributions. He was such a good talker, so cogent, so sharp and persuasive in his analysis of the issues that I often came away thinking I had got the point by myself even before he had driven it home.

This confession takes me to the heart of the matter, which in this country cannot be distant from diamonds and the public good. Every Motswana now knows the answer to the question: Who owns Botswana's diamonds? The people of Botswana, of course. Obvious and to be taken for granted? Perhaps! But the fact is for it to be effectively true took, and still does take, much deliberate effort by this country's leading decision-makers. Here Richard was in the vanguard. Early on, he saw that the many tribes of the Bechuanaland Protectorate had to give way to the one nation-state in the Republic of Botswana, when it came to mineral rights. To realise his republican vision, he set about as Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and as Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Lands and Local Government, campaigning very successfully to get the chiefs on board. No longer, as a result, did tribes claim mineral rights. Of course, I am not saying that Richard was single-handed in the founding of this basis for a stable, viable Republic. Obviously, Sir Seretse Khama took the lead. But I am saying that Richard's republican contribution was outstanding.

Richard had a well-deserved reputation for being bold, outspoken, fearless and ready to speak truth to power. I will say more about that, shortly. But first I want you to have in mind his virtue as a gentle giant, the diplomatic virtue which made his republican contribution possible. In this, Richard brought to bear his skill as a consummate negotiator; he did so much to convince chiefs, men proud of their dignity and honour, that they would be respected all the more by agreeing to put the national interest first, before the tribal.

Many of you may immediately wonder whether Richard the republican was also Richard the tribalist. For you will well recall Richard's much publicised blast at the height of the recent Balopi Commission. Then he called the late Ngwato regent Tshekedi Khama 'a terrorist'. It was for Tshekedi's part during the 1940's in unleashing violent regiments leading to the imprisonment and exile of the prominent Kalanga chief Nswazi and his subjects. Many were Richard's relatives. As a youth, he visited them doing hard labour in prison. The injustice rankled with Richard. It made him determined to fight for what he saw as oppression of the many by the few. The immediate lesson he drew was about wrongs against Kalanga, his own people, and it led him to be a proud founding member of the first Kalanga student cultural association. But he also looked beyond that immediate lesson to the wider moral horizon in his vision of public respect and dignity for all minorities on an equal basis with the majority. Richard was a strong advocate of the universal rights of the citizen, every citizen without discrimination.

Let me quote from one of those places in my most recent book where I did acknowledge his ideas. This quotation, explaining the remarkable importance of Kalanga as lawyers, is actually about a perception Richard had from his own experience:

> *Mannathoko notices that facing stigma and inequality often makes minorities great supporters of universal rights. Minorities turn to law as a profession, he suggests, because the experience of discrimination by a majority gives them a passion for justice, and even more the determination to know how to get it.' (2004a: 108)*

A passion for justice, yes, Richard was moved by that. While serving on a highly sensitive Presidential Commission of Enquiry, he felt he had to expose a trail of scandal and corruption no matter where or to whom it led. If this made him unforgiving enemies, well, so be it and, indeed, so it was. He had taken an oath as a Commissioner and could not go back on that, he told me.

Richard was a passionate, determined man who enjoyed being a politically controversial figure. A good number of leading civil servants felt he had the potential to be the head of the civil service or, at least, a minister. In his prime, some talked of a glass ceiling against Kalanga, especially to keep them from

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certain sensitive areas of public security. I had the gall to ask Richard why that potential of his was never fully realised. He was philosophical about it. With a twinkle in his eye and a characteristic grin, he told me he was by nature better suited to being a general. As I have said, he was ahead of his time – nowadays in Botswana, a Kalanga can be Minister of State in the President's Office and not merely Attorney General or Chief Justice, and like anyone else, a general, too, can hold high office, perhaps the highest.

If something of a general, Richard was at his very best in crisis, when, so to speak, the war was on. Take the oil crisis, for example. In the 1970's when sanctions were hitting apartheid South Africa, and thus the refineries for Botswana's oil, the cabinet and permanent secretaries, including Richard, suddenly faced the emergency of oil supplies running out almost immediately. So critical and outspoken was Richard on the folly of those responsible, I am told, that by general consensus, he was given the brief to get the oil somehow, somewhere, and very quickly. But where?

You will appreciate that at that time to give the answer, Botswana had no central intelligence agency of its own. Or rather, the agency was so undercover in a library that only Richard knew that the one who could come to the rescue was the librarian, the beautiful woman he loved from his youth at their boarding school, his wife Rosinah. Rosinah did the library research; she identified the oil sources, and off Richard went on his successful, if hair-raising, hunt, eventually finding an old friend from his student days who turned out to be a most highly placed Saudi, eager to help a poor country like Botswana.

The rest of the story is familiar history to many of you who will recall often seeing Richard's face in the Botswana Telephone Directory ad for BP. Having reached his peak in the civil service and as a top diplomat and ambassador, Richard became, of course, the first African to be a member of the international board of BP. Not that this was his only achievement in the world of corporate capital and wise investment. It is enough to say here that he managed often to beat the manager of Barclays at his own game, tennis.

My last memory of Richard brings to mind the biblical verse from Exodus (13: 21) about the Israelites on their trek in the Wilderness. What the Israelites followed by the day was a pillar of cloud sent by God. So too did my wife and I follow a great pillar of dust, just a few months ago, when enjoying the freedom to

speed at the wheel of his old yet still fast-moving van, Richard led us like an angel to his Nata farm, to his promised land. I savour still the liver he roasted so skillfully, on an open fire outside, from the goat he slaughtered in our honour. And very nearby, I recall too, was the sound of the prize bull, eager to be on the job, a bellow which was always music to Richard's ears. Richard's farm was a Spartan place, without luxuries, and with hardly any creature comforts from the city. It spoke of a highly productive man, caring for his capital investment in his herd, but who rather disdained the world of consumer goods, a brave old man who was determined, above all, to die as he lived, rooted and still nourished by the countryside.

Finally, in Richard Mannathoko's honour, I recited the praises of his clan, which are partly in Pedi and partly in Kalanga:

Bo Mannathoko, Zwitetembo zwenyu zwiapo zwinodha mo ludzi gwa ba Pedi. Ndoti Ntombo, Mperi, Bamagwasa, Bamagadagadang majwana, matlhari aana magwasa. Bantswi la tswiritswiri. Bari tjindigwi kiya. Hakilagwi nyama mbisi, kiya ndambala. Bari Mannathoko tiya. Baka sebona atama, atsena semokopela. Moswazi o tlhabile pologolo. Boelela motlhaba tlou, osekare maabane ke tlhabile. Nswazvi gogola kwano, shango haina bathu. Ezelani nde dothodzo, Ntombo.

The Senior Statesman's Speech

The next to speak was the most honoured mourner, Sir Ketumile Masire, Botswana's second president. For our understanding of Mannathoko's public cosmopolitanism, we need to appreciate a remarkable divide, both in sensibility and in cultural politics, because that divide set Mannathoko and Masire apart. Patriotism united them, of course, but patriotism also divided them. If apparently a paradox, it is important, because it is revealing for patriotism and public cosmopolitanism more generally, and because it reaches the respect for constitutional order, which citizens of a republic, like Botswana or the United States for that matter, must owe (on the general issues, see Appiah 1998: 101). I want to unpack the paradox and then say more about the divide in sensibility and cultural politics.

At the heart of the matter is the debate about difference and variety. This debate we know, in Botswana as elsewhere, is about that many splendid chameleon, multi-culturalism (for an insightful analysis on Botswana, see Solway 2002; and also, Werbner 2002a, 2002b, 2004a; Nyamnjoh 2006). As Appiah, above all, has made us recognize, one can be a patriot of some sort without valuing difference and variety highly, but not a cosmopolitan patriot (Appiah 1998 [1997]). I have to rehearse the point for the multiculturalism debate, even at the risk of labouring over the now perhaps all too familiar. The point is this: public cosmopolitans, finding discrimination in their country's laws or constitution, have to press for legal reform and constitutional change because they are patriots who respect constitutional order and because they are also cosmopolitans who value difference. Not being cosmopolitans, opponents of such change can still take their stance as patriots. On both sides of the divide lies actual or claimed motivation by patriotism.

In Botswana, and for Mannathoko and Masire in particular, the opposition between the sides came to a head at the height of the recent Presidential Commission on tribal and other discrimination in Botswana's constitution. Earlier, in nationalist speeches about the danger of 'letting The Tiger loose', the spectre of ethnic violence on the horizon, Sir Ketumile, while president, repeatedly gave dire warnings. In 2000, during a Presidential Commission hearing at the capital, in a moment I, too, felt to be electric, the former president raised the full weight of his reputation as a founding father and one of the authors of the Constitution, and he brought that weight to bear forcefully in defence of the *status quo*. He spoke very movingly of his fears for the danger to unity and public order, if minority cultural and language politics went unchecked (see Werbner 2004: 44). Against that view, Mannathoko, himself also responsible for the drafting of the Constitution, fought for change; the time had come to end tribal clauses. Speaking before the Commission in his home city but capturing much publicity in the national media, Mannathoko made his battle cry heard before the Commission, by calling the late Ngwato regent Tshekedi Khama 'a terrorist', as I recalled at his funeral. The two national leaders' thus stood, with outspoken passion, on opposite sides of what is still a great and sensitive debate about minorities and multiculturalism in Botswana.

That said, I turn to illuminate more of the contrast in sensibility as it relates to cultural politics and cosmopolitanism. Of the two men, only Mannathoko spoke the other's home language, Masire being renowned in his prime as one of the most gifted, popular orators in Setswana, the national language, the official one being English. Where Mannathoko was a pluralist6 – the cosmopolitan who celebrated the variety of culture and the patriot who insisted on public recognition and support for his language along with others – Masire was more the unitarian, the one-nation advocate of homogeneity. Masire's government carried forward an assimilationist policy, a policy that virtually reserved the public cultural space for a perceived majority, the Tswana, including Masire himself, In Botswana's first postcolonial period, building one state was building one nation – the Tswana nation (on the One Nation Consensus and its fate from the first to the second postcolonial period, see Werbner 2004a: 38-39, 79-83).

In the funeral, former President Masire came to praise Mannathoko, and not merely to bury him along with the still simmering factional disputes of the ruling party, the B.D.P. Mannathoko had been a founding B.D.P. member, one of the most prominent, and of unwavering party loyalty. Being myself something of a relic of fieldwork B.D.B.P. – Before Diamonds in the Bechuanaland Protectorate – I was nevertheless bemused to hear the octogenarian Sir Ketumile apologise in his eulogy for not being an anthropologist. Unlike the anthropologist who spoke immediately before him, this surviving father of his country could not recite Mannathoko's clan praises in Mannathoko's own languages – Kalanga and Pedi. He also joked about the way two of the speakers before him (Colleague and Friend, Gobe Matenge and Family Friend, Richard Werbner) appeared to have got together to talk up Kalanga issues, which left other things for him. Significantly, even if no one had addressed Mannathoko's sense of outrage at Tswana cultural dominance over Kalanga, that would still have been documented at the funeral, because the programme records, 'Throughout his adult life he [Mannathoko] promoted the use and development of the Ikalanga language, because he considered it a *crime* to let part of Botswana's rich, diverse culture and tradition die' (my italics). Later gossip with well-informed others, off the record, confirmed my

feeling that the former president was defusing a politically charged moment very deftly, for his concern might well have been that he had come to be regarded, even by some Kalanga once close to him, as being too suspicious of minorities like Kalanga, and perhaps an enemy or at least somewhat hostile to their advancement (on perceived discrimination in his Office of the President and the Leno Affair, see Werbner 2004a: 74, 79-80).

Sir Ketumile rose gracefully to the occasion, at the funeral. His eulogy, given spontaneously with much personal affection, was a seamless fusion of languages. It resounded with a richness of Tswana drawn from the common poetry of the people. But it was a richness commanded in the service of Development-speak, that official rhetoric without which no great civic occasion in Botswana can proceed.

In the government's own newspaper, the Daily News, Sir Ketumile was later quoted as saying, Richard Mannathoko was a man whose development ideology was rooted in his confidence in the ability of Batswana. Mannathoko was driven by an urgent desire to see Botswana recognised as a valuable global player because of the capacity of its citizens. He used every window of opportunity to enable the full realisation of Batswanas' potential (December 2005).

In fact, this is a quotation from the last paragraph of the Profile of a Gifted Son of Botswana, on both funeral programmes. Sir Ketumile spoke without notes, and did not say that. I was too overcome by my own participation, sitting among the other speakers, and too long preoccupied later, to make even mental notes of my own. Nevertheless, I believe The Botswana Daily News rightly reported what Sir Ketumile should have said and what, at least in sentiment and sensibility, he actually did express.

'Botswana recognised as a valuable global player, because of the potential of its citizens', the vision is unmistakeably patriotic. And the former President's presence in itself spoke in honour of Mannathoko's patriotism; after all, they came together in the state-building vanguard, creating Botswana as a new nation-state. But how plain was or is it, for all the words 'valuable *global* player' (my italics), that equally this public vision is cosmopolitan?

The Quest for the Horizon: The Promise in the People

That it is an optimistic vision, no one at the funeral could have doubted, of course. After all, well known in the background, the unspoken stereotype, against which Mannathoko himself fought tenaciously, was this: The country, as the Bechuanaland Protectorate, was held to be a remote, relatively unimportant outpost of Empire. It was, overwhelmingly, more a backward, custodial burden – in a word, a desert – than anything else in imperial eyes, which for long saw rather little potential in most of the people themselves – tribesmen at home with cattle, when not mine workers. 'The British were poor', remarked Mannathoko, 'when it came to investing in our human capital'.

But the cosmopolitan optimism may have seemed less bold in this present, second postcolonial era than it was in the first, when Mannathoko, as a young diplomat at the O.A.U. and elsewhere, began his quest for wider recognition for Botswana and its citizens. For, now, more to the foreground rings the acclaim for 'Botswana, the Cinderella of Africa', 'An African Miracle', even in the face of the AIDS pandemic, rising unemployment and dire poverty for far too many Batswana. Admittedly, the acclaim for accomplishment pleased Mannathoko, given his rightful, patriotic pride in his own national contributions. But the stress, in the programme as in the sometimes explosive assertions of Mannathoko's will to change, is on his trust in human potential. Not diamonds, not more yet to be discovered natural resources for international exploitation, but here it is the world reaching promise in the people themselves that opens the horizon, as befits a distinctively public cosmopolitan vision.

Who could have expected, at the end of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, that one man's wife would become the mayor of Botswana's booming capital and that three of their daughters would be 'global players' in our *cosmopoliticum,* in the United Nations and international agencies? But this, as I record earlier, came to be true for Mannathoko and his wife and daughters.

These daughters were the last to speak in the hall. They gave me an immediate sense of *déjà vu,* responding to their fun in the memory of their father's own playful humour. I saw them once again as the mischievous children they were, when I first knew their father as a

young law student, and he was given to teasing their interest in the wonders of English. *H I P P O P O T A M U S*, they chanted gleefully for the assembled mourners, spells hippopotamus. 'The rhinoceros', the programme records him reading them from wildlife books 'is found in Africa comma but comma is not as common as the elephant full stop!'

After Thought

It is striking in African postcolonies, such as Botswana and Ghana, how dramatically revealing a rooted public cosmopolitan's funeral becomes. There are several reasons for this. Most importantly, for our purposes, we are made aware of the cultivated appeals for moral passion – tolerance, patience, reconciliation, compassion – and yet, also, the changing tensions which characterise rooted cosmopolitanism. The second reason is historic: we see how people respond to rooted cosmopolitanism, when a great civic occasion remarkably carries forward a perceived transition from one postcolonial moment to the next. In Joe Appiah's case for Ghana, it is after the time of the founding tyrant; but in his case, as in Richard Ngwabe Mannathoko's for Botswana, it is forward to Africa's emerging second liberation struggle, this time an emancipatory moment perceived, hopefully, to promise good governance and deliberative democracy and, hopefully also, development. A third reason is that the occasion, like so many postcolonial funerals in Africa, calls for richly significant biography; not a monologue, but a number of characteristic stories in a dialogue as various as the speakers themselves. For public cosmopolitanism, such occasions give us what Victor Turner called, 'a limited area of transparency on the otherwise opaque surface of regular, uneventful social life' (Turner 1957: 93).

Here some might say I should stick to the surer ground around my late friend Richard Mannathoko, and only address the immediate postcolonial horizon I study in the safety of informed biography and ethnography. Admittedly, much remains to be said about that, spelling out the distinctively postcolonial significance of the creative force a maverick has as a rooted public cosmopolitan. But the more I reflect on that, the more I am convinced that by its very unsettling

nature, such force leads to reflection at the most open horizons of the patriotic, the imperial, and the cosmopolitan; that is, for us, too, about powerfully uncertain issues of our changing world order.

If compelling over centuries of world history, the imperial question looked curiously dated, even antiquarian, when the Twentieth Century gave a moment's notice: The End of Empire. But now we wonder anew about empire: is it about us again, though in a fresh guise? The world's dominant and, currently, its only global power, my native USA, denies officially that it wants its own American empire. The old self-proclaiming empires reached for sovereignty and subjects to the possible limits of territorial expansion. America as an empire in denial actively avoids that; it is not a return of the Romans, the Turks or the British. But it does adhere to the proposition that all men, being created equal, are entitled to be treated, for the sake of democracy, of world peace and security, to a pre-emptive strike, when their country, or rather its atrocious regime, deserves it. And in applying this proposition arrogantly and not subject to the judgement of the United Nations or any other major body of world opinion, America has already turned out to be the judge and executioner in its own devastating case against atrocity. The darkness on the horizon threatens to be vast, and it may now be in vain to try to learn lessons to go beyond that darkness. But if cosmopolitanism has any deeper value for us, it must be in opening out the urge to think the unthinkable, about in Levi-Strauss's phrase for totemism, 'humanity without frontiers'. Our focus in this paper has, of course, been more specific, but perhaps for that very reason, it has meant a more critical understanding of the political struggles and culturally creative tensions in and around cosmopolitanism. We have seen how through such struggles and tensions, rooted public cosmopolitanism continues to be socially viable in postcolonial Africa.

Notes

* From: Werbner Pnina (ed.) 2008 *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism.* Oxford, Berg.

1   For an illuminating analysis of an elite postcolonial funeral in Namibia, see Fumanti in press.

2   See also Zeller's argument that their 'metaphysics and ethics have left ineffable traces in modern times in the philosophy of Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant and Fichte' (1957 [1931]: 293).

3   See footnote 5 for Appiah's view of the problematic relation between the postcolonial continent and its diaspora.

4   See also my view of 'permeable ethnicity', which continues in overlapping, multiple loyalties from pre-colonial to postcolonial times in contexts of migration, mixing and interchange between variable ethnic groups (Werbner 2004a: 68-69; see also Werbner 1996).

5   I am aware that Appiah does comment insightfully on alliance as a problematic, when he interrogates Pan-Africanism in the light of his view of the relativity of identities. But he does not theorise the problematic as a central interest in his own intellectual project. He remarks, '...in constructing alliances across states – and especially in the Third World – A Pan-African identity, which allows African-Americans, Afro-Caribbeans, and Afro-Latins to ally with continental Africans, drawing on the cultural resources of the black Atlantic world, may serve useful purposes' (1992: 180). He goes on, however, to stipulate the right terms – terms of independence between the diaspora and the continent – for such alliance, 'If there is… hope, too, for the Pan-Africanism of an African Diaspora once it, too, is released from bondage to racial ideologies (alongside the many bases of alliance available to Africa's peoples in their political and cultural struggles), it is crucial that we recognize the independence, once "Negro" nationalism is gone, of the Pan-Africanism of the diaspora and the Pan-Africanism of the continent' (ibid.).

6   I differ from Hollinger in my usage of cultural pluralist in order to convey an ongoing shift in postcolonial politics, rather than in the liberal or post-liberal theory of intellectuals. My usage here builds on the one in my study of postcolonial elites where I write of 'political pluralism' and mean 'the expansion of diverse pressure groups – professional, civic, and cultural – as organized lobbies for public yet distinctive and differentiated interests' (2004a: 200). My usage also allows for permeable ethnicity, and for a pluralist to have multiple, shifting and overlapping loyalties, rather than the over-determined ethnic ties and culturalism which Hollinger attributes to the pluralist position.

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Epilogue
Opening up the Research Design in and on Africa: *'To Souls Forgotten'*

Francis Nyamnjoh

1.

Peaphweng Ndyu's divination was long and exciting. It was also his most elaborate as far as the notables could recollect, which made him all the more credible. He used the sophisticated technique of combining cowries with the stiff sharp quills of the porcupine to unmask hidden causes and effects. This was a clear sign of the maturity he had attained in his field. Perhaps the day might come when he would be able to shake hands in public with Wabuah of Kakakum as a professional equal. Becoming a good diviner was like planting an avocado seedling and watching it grow. It thrived on patience, attention, and constant practice. There was no need for hurry, because hurrying usually makes the child break a calabash of water, and earn maternal smacks in place of thanks. His vocation was one that called for reflection and precaution before every step. No child runs who has not learnt first to walk. Though he looked forward to that day when his name would be mentioned together with Wabuah's, Peaphweng Ndyu was careful not to spoil the soup with too much salt.

Meanwhile, the notables watched Peaphweng Ndyu manipulate his divination kit with great anxiety. They were thirsty for knowledge of the facts surrounding Ardo Buba's strange death.

The room fell silent when Peaphweng Ndyu indicated he was ready to tell them his findings. The atmosphere was tense. The only thing that reminded him of his audience being alive was their

breathing, which filtered through from the other side of the room where they sat with expectant stiffness. He raised his head and sent a brief and searching look through the group of notables in front of him. His eyes alighted on Peaphweng Mukong's face and were greeted with a warm smile. Peaphweng Mukong understood the message, so he stood up and assured the diviner that everyone was ready to hear him.

Peaphweng Ndyu thanked Peaphweng Mukong and saluted the notables. He said he was glad to be of service to his village and promised to say nothing but what his divination was able to reveal. For he, as they knew already, wasn't the type who divined for fame or material benefit. It was his humble duty to say what he saw, and not what he wanted or was expected to see. This important clarification made, he plunged into his divination ritual. The notables followed with keen interest.

A preliminary shaking, pouring, listening and at times conversing with his divination paraphernalia gave Peaphweng Ndyu something to say to the tense notables.

"My dear notables," he began, caressing his baldness with one hand, and manipulating his kit with the other. "What my divination has revealed is shocking and bizarre. It is something bound to fill you with consternation, just as it has done to me. My instruments are by no means mistaken about who killed Ardo Buba. They have told me everything concerning this sad issue. It is your place to know every detail of it."

He paused to fetch a dark little bag made of human hair, which he shook and pressed as he recounted his divination results. The bag made a hissing sound from time to time, and Peaphweng Ndyu listened very keenly before he said anything.

"A pot too hot suffers a broken mouth," he began with a popular proverb.

The notables sat up, all ears.

"My quills and cowries all point to one thing: that Chief Ngain coveted Ardo Buba's cattle. He wanted to have them for himself, in order to sell them and become a rich leader like his counterparts elsewhere. So he thought of how best he could do this, without compromising his dignity or risking his position and prestige. He knew Ardo Buba wasn't the type of person he could easily pocket. In the language of my profession, he found Ardo Buba to be *well*

cooked. Therefore, in order to succeed, he devised a highly sophisticated scheme into which he hoped to drag Ardo Buba. He succeeded. This scheme didn't include death by any means. My quills and cowries are firm on that. Chief Ngain never intended to kill Ardo Buba. What interested him was to impregnate Ardo Buba with fear and anxiety. For, he thought, once he had succeeded in doing this, having his way with Ardo Buba would be just a matter of course."

Peaphweng Ndyu paused to read the questions in the air.

"What was this scheme of his? You are all asking. I can see you're curious and anxious to know. Rest assured, for my quills and cowries have found everything out for you. Just let me consult my prompter."

Again he paused to shake and press his dark human-hair bag, which made the hissing sound over and over again. Every time this happened, he brought the bag closer to his ear and kept shaking and pressing. At last he spoke again, using another popular proverb to introduce what he had to say.

"It was by sucking more blood than it needed that the mosquito got crushed. Three days before Ardo Buba was found floating on the lake, Chief Ngain had sent Princess Tem to deliver a little package of kola-nuts to him. These weren't ordinary kola-nuts by any means. All fifteen in the package were smeared with some medicine. Whoever ate them would do as the chief willed. Ardo Buba fell headlong into the trap, for he very much loved to eat kola-nuts, as did his subjects, in accordance with their culture. As soon as he ate a lobe, he began to say and do things beyond his control. Chief Ngain had taken control of his mind and body."

Peaphweng Mukong was thankful his ancestors had prevented him from being victimized as well. He wondered what would have become of him and Abehema had Chief Ngain succeeded in making him eat the treated kola-nuts as well. He shuddered as his mind wandered back to the recent dramatic confrontation between himself and Chief Ngain. "It's true that no medicine, no matter how strong, can be stronger than the blessings of the ancestors," he reminded himself. What of last night? Wasn't it possible that Chief Ngain had succeeded after all? Why had he lost his senses to the extent that he had become totally unaware of what actually happened to him? He heaved a heavy sigh and listened to the diviner.

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"The very first thing Chief Ngain did was to make Ardo Buba wander out of his home far away in the Hiseng hills, towards our mysterious lake very late at night. Ardo Buba wandered around the lake like a forsaken calf or a somnambulist, quite oblivious of the risks he ran by being out alone by the lake in the heart of the night, a time when only spirits and fortified men are free to move about or venture around a lake which none of us has mastered. It was cold and there was a heavy storm. Though he knew where he was, Ardo Buba didn't know what had brought him there. His heart beat faster as the storm intensified. There was thunder and lightning as well. In fact, it was a time of night when no ordinary person with only two eyes would venture out just like that. Ardo Buba could hear strange noises coming from the lake. Overcome by fear, he climbed up one of the trees that surrounded the lake, hoping that the noises would soon subside. He was mistaken. The noises only grew in intensity and the lake became stranger than we have ever known it.

"Ardo Buba couldn't believe his eyes. He saw someone climb out of the lake on what appeared to be the longest bamboo ladder in existence. This strange person, who was extremely tall and covered from head to toe in white calico, held a little calabash in his left hand and an ox-horn cup in his right hand. Once on the bank of the lake, he flashed his eyes around suspiciously. Convinced perhaps that no one was watching, he began to carry the water of the lake with the cup and to fill the calabash. Ardo Buba was stunned to see that though so small, the calabash wouldn't fill. It continued to gulp, until all the water of the lake had been drained into it. The strange person then corked the calabash and hid it somewhere in the grass. Then he climbed down the ladder into a village that mysteriously sprang up like a group of mushrooms, where a while before there had been nothing but lake.

"For a while Ardo Buba didn't know what to do. Then an idea struck him. He came down from the tree and took a timid look into the strange village. It was bustling with life. People moved up and down in what looked like a marketplace. Perhaps it was their market day. Ardo Buba wondered why these strange people should prefer a nocturnal market under moonlight. What if he found the frightful stranger's little calabash, uncorked it, and poured the water into the village down below? Without hesitating, but with the absent-

mindedness that is typical of those under a spell, he rushed for the calabash and did just that. The lake re-emerged, but the result was catastrophic. Chief Ngain's charm must have gone to sleep. Or rather, the ancestors must have said enough is enough. They weren't prepared to have as chief someone who behaved irresponsibly, and made mockery of a sacred place. In a wink, a fierce swarm of honey bees emerged from the lake and stung Ardo Buba to death. His swollen dead body fell into the water, from which it was eventually retrieved by Chief Ngain's palace guards and hidden away.

"That's the end of my divination," he concluded rather abruptly. "We all know what has happened since then, don't we?" He asked as he began to assemble his paraphernalia. His smile was triumphant, and rightly so. He had just proven that he was capable of the greatness that only men determined and endowed with a high sense of mission and achievement could attain.

Peaphweng Mukong was the first to recover from the spell the strange story had cast on everyone. He rubbed his eyes vigorously as if to chase away sleep, and stretched out his body. Every notable felt sorry for Peaphweng Mukong anyway. For almost a week he had worked like a donkey to hold the village together under the current crisis, defying hunger and fatigue. The sooner the ordeal was over, the better for him. Not only would the village reward him handsomely, but even more importantly, he would regain the pleasure that derives from a life of peace, quiet and domestic harmony. Meanwhile he thanked Peaphweng Ndyu the diviner for his patriotism and excellent piece of divination. Then he reminded Peaphweng Ndyu of the saying that the obedient child, unlike the headstrong child who stands to lose his fortune to the faithful servant, would always inherit what his parents had willed for him. He also thanked the diviner who was sharing his expertise with Abehema's neighbours who wanted his services, for, "one person's child is only in the womb".

Peaphweng Ndyu went home a satisfied man, to contemplate his trip to Tchang, where many patients were waiting anxiously to be cured of their misfortunes or retrieved from *Msa* , the world beyond of the devil, with luring attractions and risky offers. The divination hadn't taken as long as he had thought it might, leaving him with ample time to reach Tchang and satisfy his clients there as

well. His was the life of the typical diviner who seldom slept in peace or at his own home. Society was sick and needed constant attention, and he was pleased to know his services were appreciated wherever he visited. It didn't surprise many that Peaphweng Ndyu had opted to stay celibate all his life, for as he said whenever the question was raised, "Mine would be the freest woman in the neighbourhood, a passion fruit for every man's pleasure but mine." He was too busy to be of conjugal use to any woman however placid.

As Peaphweng Ndyu went home, the notables stayed behind to agree on the next steps to follow. Peaphweng Mukong told them to wait until they had heard Wabuah's version of divination as well. Then, and only then, would they be in a position to assess the situation, and decide how best to go about appeasing their incensed ancestors. He also told them he had personally seen to it that Phwe, the young man who was aspiring to the national army, started his marathon early enough to deliver their message to Wabuah in time. Hopefully, Wabuah would be around tomorrow morning at the latest. So the next divination session was set for the evening of the following day. The notables dispersed for home, shocked but convinced by Peaphweng Ndyu's revelation. Would Wabuah of Kakakum confirm or differ? That was the question in every mind as the notables left for home.

2.

If someone mischievous had suggested that Peaphweng Ndyu and Wabuah of Kakakum had met and decided upon what to say before being invited to divine, not one notable would have doubted him. Wabuah's version of what had happened was word for word what Peaphweng Ndyu had said. The only difference was that Peaphweng Ndyu had used Abehema as his language of divination, while Wabuah had divined in Kakakum. The notables commanded perfect knowledge of both languages. On second thought, however, there was really no reason to suspect the two diviners had met, because the notables knew that Wabuah had come directly from Yenseh earlier that same day, and that Peaphweng Ndyu had left straight for Tchang the day before. Since Yenseh and Tchang were to the

left and right of Abehema, the notables reasoned, there was no way the paths of the two diviners could have crossed. Thus the only conclusion they drew was that things had happened in exactly the way both men had divined.

The most spectacular and almost magical aspect of his divination was when Wabuah invited the notables to take turns looking into his divination earthenware bowl, or the little magic pot as they called it thereafter.

This bowl contained very clean and clear spring water, capable of projecting the reflection of whoever stood to look into it. That wasn't what happened, or so the notables alleged. Instead of reflections of themselves, they claimed they saw Ardo Buba from the time he started to wander about to when he was violently stung to death by the swarm of honeybees. The bowl of water also showed Chief Ngain giving orders to his retainers on what to do with Ardo Buba's corpse. No wonder Wabuah of Kakakum was known all over the territory. His divination wasn't the type to leave anyone in doubt, not even Chief Ngain, had he been present. It was the type of divination to silence all those who claimed that diviners and healers were all liars and swindlers whose only interest was to try to earn a living off others' hard work and sweat through deception and opportunism.

The notables had prepared a reward for him, but by the time he had finished divining, they regretted they hadn't thought of something more than just a goat and two cocks. Wabuah was happy with what he got. As long as it was nothing but a free gift, he was satisfied. His grandfather had warned him against divining for payment, cash or kind. If he had so far remained successful, it was largely because he had heeded the warning. The power to divine cannot be bought or sold. Though Wabuah wondered if Toubegh, his second son, whose current interest in divination was considerable, would continue in the same vein or opt to follow the disturbing wind of change blowing in from the cities. He had learnt of a new breed of charlatans. They were going around the cities, claiming to cure every ailment including madness, and to be capable of divining the past, the present and the future. The quest for money would make people claim the impossible, which worried him deeply. If Toubegh chose to falter in the same manner, he, Wabuah, would

not be there to weep with him over the disastrous consequences of the betrayal of a noble profession.

Before Wabuah left Abehema for Yenseh, he asked to have a word in private with Peaphweng Mukong. So both men excused themselves from the notables and went out for a tête-à-tête.

"I've asked to speak to you alone because there are certain things that are best discussed in private," Wabuah told Peaphweng Mukong, once they were safely out of earshot. "I've chosen to talk to you because you appear to be the eye, ear and mind which Abehema badly needs at this uncertain moment of darkness. I can smell danger in the air like a rotten egg, and unless you perform extraordinary feats and fast, it might be too late to avert an eruption of evil beyond the powers of your village and people. The rest of the world might just have to tell a different story, should nothing happen to forestall what I see brewing. As a diviner, what my eyes can't see during the day, they can't miss at night. For the past five nights or so, I've slept in my bed in Yenseh to see all that has happened here in Abehema. This village of yours is moving in turbulent and worrying ways. You need to see the way it stirs at night, rife with witches who seem bent on bringing Abehema untold suffering and destruction. They've shaken hands with the devils of sa and have been rewarded with death wrapped in fresh banana leaves like kola-nuts of peace!" He heaved a sigh of profound sadness and shook his head disappointedly.

"As for Chief Ngain," Wabuah clicked his tongue to show dismay, getting even closer to Peaphweng Mukong, as if to make amply sure no one else was listening. "As for Chief Ngain, it is no lie that he is a most wicked man. His evil way whistles. Two nights ago I watched his evil spirit fly all the way from faraway Kaizerbosch where he is detained to torment you at night. The ring you were wearing had just signalled me that something was about to happen to the person I had asked it to protect. Immediately, I got out of bed and started to burn lavender and make incantations. When I had assured myself you were going to come out of his trickery unhurt, I lay back and watched him waste his time. He transformed himself into a rock, thunder, lightning, storm and rain, but to no avail. You were lucky you had my protection because you didn't forget to put on your

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ring. Also, your hands were empty and free of guilt. Like I say, if nothing is done to appease the ancestors in time, a rotten egg is going to explode with a stench that Abehema has never known before. My advice to you is this: Do not let the witches untie the bundle they are bringing back from *Msa*. It bears not life but death. Beware! That is it now. We may go back in, so I may salute the others and leave for home," he said and started to move in, but was held back by Peaphweng Mukong, who looked more worried than ever.

"Please don't go away just yet," Peaphweng Mukong pleaded in a childlike manner. "We are desperate for your clairvoyance and assistance, so stay here and protect us. What you say leaves me convinced that nothing is impossible with you. You can read the future of Abehema for us. Elaborate on what misfortunes you say await us, and tell us how we can act to avert them." He was almost in tears.

"I wouldn't tell you a lie, my dear friend. My divination has its limits. There are things I can do and things I can't. I'm not like the new generation of charlatans in the cities great and small, who claim to cure, heal, divine, tell fortunes, prevent misfortunes, invite riches and kill death, all at once. If Toubegh, my son who has shown quite an early interest in this calling which I inherited from my grandfather, chooses to tell falsehoods in order to earn money as they do in the cities, that will be his funeral. For I wouldn't be there when my forefathers in the land beyond began to query him for killing a noble vocation. Isn't it amazing the unethical extremes to which certain people may descend just to earn a hot Mim dollar! In any case, modesty is my watchword, just as it was my grandfather's who preceded me in this great profession." He suddenly realised he had let himself be carried away by the strong, almost possessive emotions he felt for his métier.

"To cut a long story short," he said, blowing his nostrils after sneezing from snuffing, "all I can attempt to do is predict from a study of past and present happenings, what the future might hold. I can't say for sure. To the best of my knowledge, dreams can foretell the future with far more precision than any diviner can pretend to. I don't know how my counterparts in the cities manage, but what I

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tell you is the truth. Fortunately I'm not one of those who claim omniscience of any kind. I'm very sorry I can't be of further help." He was resolute.

They both went in again. Wabuah saluted the notables and took his leave. Peaphweng Mukong did his best to avoid looking dejected. It was a dangerous sign of weakness for a leader to betray muddle-headedness at crucial moments such as this. So he mustered courage and coordinated the evening's discussions on what steps had to be taken to appease the ancestors and repair the land.

By midnight the notables had come to a consensus. They had decided to take two goats, a dark one and a spotted one, a white cock, and two large calabashes of raffia wine and a block of camwood to the lake to perform the purification sacrifice to the ancestors. The time was also agreed upon. Since the desecration had taken place at night, they would offer their sacrifice at night as well. This was to be done the following day, which was known as *Tu-éviene* in Abehema, and which was also the market day –exactly a week after what had happened. Those who argued for more time to make elaborate preparations were defeated. Time was fast running out, and the sooner they acted, the better for the people. They were reminded of the fact that the harvest season was nearly over. August, the Moon-of-Wetness, was in its twentieth day already, and Abehema was anxious to restore oneness with the world of the forefathers and mothers before the feast of Harvest Thanksgiving scheduled for September 1st. With this sense of urgency, the notables agreed on how and when to purify the desecrated land. Hopefully by Friday morning, Abehema would be a peaceful, sacred and harmonious land once again.

The day's meeting had been unusually but understandably long. Some anxious wives and children had come to fetch their husbands and fathers. They were forced to stay out in the market square while the notables rounded off the deliberations. Among them was Ngonsu, Peaphweng Mukong's senior wife and proud mother to Kwanga, the pride of Abehema at university in the Great City. She carried an old, topless, Kaizerland-made hurricane lamp in one hand, and a bamboo umbrella in the other. It was her week to cook for and sleep with her husband, which was why she had come to take him home. The night was bitterly cold, and the women shivered as the

cold penetrated their bare bosoms. They gathered round Ngonsu to chat and keep warm by her lamp. The wind threatened to extinguish the flame, which they were trying so hard to keep alive.

For their part, the children in rags and nakedness defied the cold as often they did, to play hide-and-seek in the marketplace and keep their blood warm and healthy. They sang and danced with innocent joy, and filled their watching mothers with maternal pride and fantasies. The children were young and bustling with energy. Their mothers could see them succeeding where they had failed, or remembered where they had been forgotten. Looking into the future through their children, the mothers could visualise themselves as grandparents enjoying the material benefits they didn't have now. Their diligent and committed progeny were sure to make them available with time. In their children they had planted their grains of hope, which they were determined to guard just as they guarded their farms against witches and wild animals. Because this made them hopeful, they were happy, and because they were happy, they refused to be hurt by the biting cold, mothers and children alike. So they waited on, the children singing with vibrant voices, stamping the ground with innocent determination and persistence, and the mothers did not let the embittered thoughts of the overburdened peasant women that they were interfere with their dreams of a brighter tomorrow.

When the notables finally came out of Peaphweng Mukong's market-house, they looked exhausted. Those who found their wives or children waiting for them felt proud, and those who found no one waiting to take them home felt angry and hurt, even though some of them lived so far away that it was demanding too much for their wives and children to travel all that distance in the cold, at night to find out what had gone wrong. Everyone knew that at night Abehema was dominated by sorcery and evil, and only the very *cooked* or fortified could venture out without jeopardy. Peaphweng Mukong thanked Ngonsu for her care and concern, and followed her home, even though they groped most of the way because the wind eventually overpowered the flame of her topless lamp.

Peaphweng Mukong was pleased to find that the fufu corn and njama-njama (huckleberry) his wife served him was still warm. Ngonsu had stored it in a hot pot of water to keep it warm. He had

always admired her foresightedness and initiative. Even though his was a society where men believed that having a wife was like standing on soldier ants, Peaphweng Mukong had not found Ngonsu a difficult woman at all, but for the fact that she tended to gossip. He was intrigued why some men never ceased generalising about how it was impossible to live peaceably with women. He could boast, though very few men believed him, that for two decades and more he had not had a serious quarrel with the mother of the son who had brought him pride, and who was soon to be the first big modern personality that Abehema had ever produced. He was sure that only a woman like Ngonsu could have given him a son like Kwanga. She deserved her place as senior wife, and he was quite pleased to know that, as such, she was well respected by his other wives and the women folk of Abehema.

He ate fast and went to bed, but he couldn't sleep.

His mind was full of thoughts, strange and normal, wild and tamed. How he envied Ngonsu who slept so imperturbably beside him! He wondered why the world was such a strange and complex place. Why were experiences so different even between people who shared the same worlds, the same culture, the same house, the same bed, and even the same breath at times? Just why did some people suffer more than others? He didn't appear to find ready answers to his puzzles, so he simply sighed in heavy resignation.

"Perhaps these differences are what make the world what it is, an empty experience even at the best of times." He wondered if the world would still be one without its contradictions and complexities, without the profound emptiness at the heart of its celebrated achievements, without the deaths of the lives it inspired, and without the lives of the deaths it induced.

Peaphweng Mukong tried hard to stop thinking and start sleeping. Each time he made an effort to close his eyes, a thought came forcing its way through like a bulldozer on the Ring Road that linked Abehema strategically with the villages of Tchang and Yenseh of Kakakum, and with the world beyond.

"That's the way with thoughts," he muttered. "Impossible to tame or direct. So obstinate, thoughts!"

Just when he had almost succeeded in falling asleep, another thought invaded. This time about his son Kwanga. The activities of the past three days had made him think less about him. The idea of finding a wife for Kwanga had been superceded by the need to be patriotic to his home village and people. He didn't regret it, though he wondered what his son could be doing at the moment. He knew all must be well with Kwanga though he hadn't seen or heard from him for a very long time. He could read his son like a book. He knew for instance that Kwanga would seldom write home unless in serious financial difficulties, needing the urgent auctioning of several bags of coffee to back-door dealers.

"I wonder if all school children bother their parents about money the way Kwanga has done me through the years. He has eaten through my pockets like a rat! And for seventeen years I've lived like the divine pauper, cursed from birth by the gods of *Kwang* ," he yawned, bringing his hand to his mouth. "For seventeen years, every drop of sweat I've sweated and every muscle I've pulled has been for Kwanga. How parasitical students are! My only consolation is the fact that he is doing well –that we haven't sweated and toiled for nothing."

Peaphweng Mukong wished he could advise Kwanga to stay away from Abehema until the current tensions had eased. To come home now when things were so uncertain would be risky. What he wanted least of all was to have Kwanga dragged into a brawl that could perhaps disturb the last few months of his university studies. He wanted to start serving the coco-yams he had cooked patiently for seventeen years. Thinking of which, Peaphweng Mukong nearly exclaimed at the awfully long time it took to start harvesting the white man's system of education.

Just how was he going to let Kwanga know that this wasn't the right time for him to come home to Abehema, should Kwanga have plans of coming? He thought for long.

Then he remembered what his father once told him as a young man. Once, when his father was going on a long journey, he told him to keep in touch through his dreams. "Should anyone fall ill," his father had told him, "ensure that you make me dream of it by

thinking concurrently of the ill person, his illness and the need for me to know about it. You should avoid all interfering thoughts until you are overtaken by sleep." Peaphweng Mukong could recollect practising this technique once. And when his father returned home, he declared that his sudden return had been prompted by a dream about his daughter bitten by a snake. This for sure was true! And indeed, a viper had bitten Peaphweng Mukong's younger sister, at the age of nine, when their father had been away, and he had wished their father were around to take care of matters.

So Peaphweng Mukong decided to use the same technique to prevent Kwanga from coming home, if he had intentions of doing so. He had some reservations though. As far as he could recollect, this technique had only been used to make people return home for an emergency. He wasn't sure it would work in his case –to prevent Kwanga from coming home. It was worth a try, as it was by means of trial and error that people came by new knowledge. On that positive note, he thought of the turmoil Abehema was going through, of Kwanga and of his intention to keep Kwanga away from the scene until normalcy returned, and also of the fact that he wanted Kwanga to concentrate on his studies in order to top his class as he had always done. He succeeded in making these thoughts preoccupy his mind until he finally fell asleep.