African Diaspora Literary and Cultural Studies

CULTURAL MOBILITIES BETWEEN AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Edited by
Birgit Englert, Barbara Gföllner, and
Sigrid Thomsen

Cultural Mobilities Between Africa and the Caribbean

This book investigates the cultural connections between Africa and the Caribbean, using the lens of Mobility Studies to tease out the shared experiences between these highly diverse parts of the world.

Despite their heterogeneity in terms of cultures, languages, and political and economic histories, the connections between the African continent and the Caribbean are manifold, stretching back to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The authors in this book look to the past as well as to the present, focusing on the manifold mobile connections between the regions' subjects, objects, ideas, texts, images, sounds, and beliefs. In doing so, the book demonstrates that mobility extends beyond just the movement of people, and that we can also see mobility in objects and ideas, travelling either in a material sense or in imaginary terms, in physical as well as in virtual spaces.

Bringing the transdisciplinary fields of African Studies, Caribbean Studies, and Mobility Studies into dialogue, this book will be of interest to students and scholars across the humanities and social sciences.

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Foreword

Forging a new approach to African-Caribbean mobilities

Mimi Sheller

The Caribbean has long been understood as a region constituted by many mobilities, including connections with Africa. The first 15,000 enslaved Africans arrived in Ayiti (a.k.a. Hispaniola) in 1517, with the second and third voyages by Christopher Columbus and his sons' efforts to transplant sugar plantations to these newly 'discovered' islands. This violent act initiated the ongoing relationship between Africa and the Caribbean more than 500 years ago. But beyond the pain of the Middle Passage, which haunts this relationship, there is so much more cultural mobility and creativity connecting these hemispheres, and this valuable set of studies brought together in this volume helps bring these into focus.

Caribbean spiritual practitioners, bush doctors, and "organic intellectuals" were of course always already carrying African cultural mobilities into their everyday practices, languages, dance, music, and thought across all dimensions. Starting in the 19th century, Caribbean intellectuals began more formally to explore their relationship with Africa. This relationship begins with the Haitian Revolution's founding of a free Black Republic embodied in a constitutional declaration that all Black people (*noirs*) and all Africans would be welcome as citizens there. This cultural connection continued into the period of experiments in which emancipated people migrated back to Africa and settled "free colonies" in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Overlooked Caribbean writers in the 19th century were the first to theorise cultural connections between Africa and the Caribbean, such as Haitian writer Antenor Firmin's famous *Essay on the Equality of the Human Race*.

In the early 20th century, cultural anthropologists began to search for continuities of African cultures in Caribbean societies, and the négritude movement emerged to reclaim this Afro-Caribbean cultural heritage. By the late 20th century, Caribbean thinkers such as Kamau Brathwaite and Édouard Glissant emerged as crucial and influential theorists of mobilities, creolisation, relationality, and dynamic culture formation. By the 1990s, anthropologists such as Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, in their famous text *The Birth of African-American Culture*, argued that there were not just African holdovers from the past, but dynamic processes of creolisation of African cultures into something new in New World societies. Caribbean mobilities were central

to the initial theorisations of mobile diasporas and transnationality (Gilroy, 1993; Basch et al., 1994; Clifford, 1997); debates concerning creolisation and relationality (Benítez-Rojo, 1996; Glissant, 1989, 1997; Shepherd and Richards, 2002); as well as empirical studies of phenomena such as 'transnational families' (Bauer and Thompson, 2006) and 'longdistance nationalism' (Schiller and Fouran, 2001). Thus, Caribbean theorists and the field of Caribbean Studies have been foundational to thinking about generative and complex transatlantic and circum-Atlantic negotiations of mobilities, immobilities, and moorings.

Subsequent analysts of Caribbean mobilities have encompassed scholars working in the humanities, including literary studies of intra-Caribbean migration such as Shalini Puri's *Marginal Migrations*; performance studies such as Joseph Roach's *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996), and May Joseph's *Nomadic Identities* (1994), written by someone who was born in Dar-es-salaam, Tanzania; and ethnomusicological studies of the mobilities of Caribbean musical and dance forms such as Timothy Rommen and Daniel Neely's edited collection *Sun, Sea, and Sound: Music and Tourism in the Circum-Caribbean* (2014). A good way to think about these African-Caribbean mobilities is in terms of 'tidalectics' as described by Elizabeth DeLoughrey in her interpretation of the concept first developed by Caribbean poet and theorist Kamau Brathwaite. In her book *Routes and Roots*, DeLoughrey points out that "While western scholars are increasingly turning to the Atlantic as a paradigm of transnational crossings and flows, the conceptual implications of this oceanic model have been deeply explored in the Caribbean, where tidalectics reconceptualizes diaspora historiography" (DeLoughrey, 2007, p. 51).

However, outside of the Caribbean, much of the early 21st-century interdisciplinary field of Mobility Studies has focused on the Global North, or at best movement between the Global South and the Global North, while there has been much less attention given to South-South relations of mobilities, despite rich histories of such. My own book *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (2003) was published at the very moment when the New Mobilities Paradigm was being conceptualised. It was one of the first texts to examine the Caribbean through what might be considered a 'mobilities paradigm' perspective (Sheller and Urry, 2006). I argued that the modern Caribbean region was initially formed out of the global mobilities of the colonial era, including the flows of plants, people, ships, foodstuffs, technologies, travel narratives, visual images, and venture capital (Sheller, 2003), creating a transatlantic world. Yet this kind of mobilities approach remains an outlier, taken up more within Caribbean Studies than within the field of Mobility Studies as practiced in the Global North.

By simply turning the map, this collection's focus on cultural mobilities poses a whole series of interesting new investigations of mobilities linking Africa and the Caribbean. Some of these connections involve the mobilities of particular scholars. Immanuel R. Harisch's important chapter explores the thought of Walter Rodney as he moved between Africa and the Caribbean,

reminding us that he was a "mobile scholar" spanning various political geographies and ideas in motion. His influential study of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Rodney, 1972) remains a crucial touchstone. Marcus Garvey was also a significant mobile scholar, who moved across the Caribbean, Central America, and North America, carrying ideas of establishing economic relations with Africa through the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which seeded pan-African movements across the hemisphere. Here it becomes noticeable that Mobility Studies in the Global North have had little to say about socialist, Black Marxist, and pan-Africanist histories of mobilities, and in general there are lacunae in addressing such South-South intellectual and political travel, including complex connections across what used to be called the Non-Aligned Movement or Tricontinental alliances.

Garvey's thought also influenced Rastafarianism, which emerged in the early 20th century as an imagined community linking African and the Caribbean. Dominik Frühwirth draws on Mobility Studies to examine the question of "repatriation" (both physical and symbolic) within Jamaican Rastafarian movements, suggesting new ways to think about mobility as both movement and as claim for reparations. Similarly, Shelene Gomes's chapter on Shashamane picks up on this theme, as she turns our focus to Caribbean migrants in Ethiopia, opening up a new space to think about the identity formations of Rastafarians who returned to Ethiopia, as well as their second-generation children. Both chapters raise fascinating questions about the entanglement of (im)mobilities within practices of 'Back to Africa' migration and ideas about repatriation.

Anna-Leena Toivanen picks up on similar themes in a fascinating reading of novels concerned with the experience of African clandestine migrant journeys symbolised through the Middle Passage and the figure of the zombie. This chapter also offers important contributions to the study of maritime mobilities, an area of growing interest in the mobilities literature. Kevin Potter also offers a fascinating look at Patel's concept of "migritude" and relates it to the theoretical idea of "regimes of motility". This is an innovative contribution to understanding what he calls "the poetics of motility and migritude", which again opens new avenues of inquiry by relating these concepts to the earlier philosophy of *négritude* as an anti-colonial identity. These accounts of migrant journeys and migritude add to the literature extending from Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* to other recent compelling stories in the North American context, which also involve "reverse migrations" of African-American peoples back to Africa.

In her book *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (2019), Tiffany Lethabo King uses the metaphor of the offshore shoal to theorise the encounter between Black Studies and Native Studies, and the instabilities of identities between the land and the sea, the human and the non-human, and the migrant and the indigenous. A similar metaphor is picked up by Rebecca Schneider in her article for the *Island Studies Journal*, "This Shoal Which Is Not One: Island Studies, Performance Studies, and

Africans Who Fly", which concerns the famous story of Igbo Landing on St. Simons Island, Georgia, where a slave ship ran aground and the enslaved people aboard are said in some stories to have walked together into the sea to drown themselves, but in others to have 'flown' back to Africa. This tale of unexpected journeys and unresolved endings reminds me of the history of the Black Loyalists, many of whom were Gullah-Geechee people from the Sea Coast Isles of Georgia, who self-liberated during the American Revolution by joining British forces who promised them freedom. When the British were forced to retreat to Canada, about 3,000 Loyalists were transported to Nova Scotia where many remained, but due to the poor living conditions others chose to leave for Sierra Leone, where they helped found a free colony, a story imaginatively re-told in historian Simon Schama's *Rough Crossings*. As with the chapters offered here, such stories complicate our understanding of the directionality and the desire-lines that shaped African-Caribbean and African-American mobilities and migrations in multiple directions with complex lines of flight.

Also crucial is the connection this volume draws between the humanities and social sciences, which is a growing meeting point within Mobility Studies. Paola Ravasio's chapter on the routes of soundpoems reminds us of the significance of the circum-Atlantic as a multilingual space, a space of re-mixing and collage of languages. Likewise, Doris Posch's chapter on artistic creativity highlights regional cultures of technology that are engaged by experimental filmmaking, audiovisual podcasts, and other modes of artistic production that resist the disconnectedness of objectifying commodity cultures, and asserts a counter-narrative that re-imagines African cultural heritage through Glissant's idea of Relation. These chapters open up new ways of thinking about cultural mobilities, where and how we find them and follow them, and what technologies of communication they rely on. Similar to David Chandler and Jonathan Pugh's recent work on "Anthropocene Islands" (2020 and forthcoming), they remind us of the importance of both relationality and 'storiation' as a mode of narrative and creative relation to the world. These are all crucial aspects of the emerging 'Mobilities Humanities' perspective which is taking root in a number of new research centres around the world, including the Research Platform *Mobile Cultures and Societies* at the University of Vienna, the *Centre for Advanced Studies in Mobility and the Humanities* at the University of Padova in Italy, and the *Academy for Mobility Humanities* at Konkuk University in Seoul, as well as the *Centre for Mobilities Research* at Lancaster University.

And finally, Ana Nenadovic offers an important chapter on what we might call spiritual mobilities, which ethereally connect African and Caribbean places through supernatural exchanges as much as material exchanges. This taps into the ongoing resurgence of Yoruba religions across the African-Caribbean diaspora. Related to this is N. Fadeke Castor's groundbreaking book *Spiritual Citizenship* (2017), which portrays the mobilities of ritual practices and international conferences that built the relationship between the

1970s Trinidad black power movement, the contemporary Orisa movement in Trinidad, and the emerging transnational Ifá/Orisha religious communities that carry this relationship back to Africa. Building on similar shimmering trajectories of African-Caribbean Yoruba spiritual mobilities, Àníké Bello here offers a beautiful reflection on the concept of home, through the twin geographies of Abeokuta in the Yoruba homeland and as recreated by enslaved Yoruba people in Jamaica. In traveling with the spirits, and embodying the spirits who travelled from Africa, African-Caribbean spiritual diasporas challenge Western notions of individuality, subjectivity, and bounded geography with new mobile formations of inter-spatial and trans-local locations.

In sum, this collection forges ahead with compelling studies that advance agendas within African Studies, Caribbean Studies, and Mobility Studies, pushing at their margins and drawing new connections between them. There is still more work to be done, and I hope this volume will be an invitation to other scholars to join this mobile enterprise.

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We are grateful to everyone who participated in our workshop "Approaching Mobilities: Focus on Africa and the Caribbean" at the University of Vienna in October 2018, which is where we first had the idea for this book. In November 2019, this was followed up by a Writers' Workshop at the University of Vienna, which almost all contributors were able to attend and where we further developed this book in dialogue with one another. For that workshop and beyond, we are indebted to our contributors, working with whom has been a rewarding intellectual challenge and a personal joy throughout this process.

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1 Cultural mobilities between Africa and the Caribbean

Introduction

Sigrid Thomsen, Barbara Gföllner, and Birgit Englert[1]

In his essay "Timehri", the Barbadian poet and scholar Edward Kamau Brathwaite meditates on his time in Ghana, where he spent eight years as an education officer, and writes about the indissoluble ties between the Caribbean and Africa:

> I was a West Indian, rootless man of the world. I could go, belong, everywhere on the world-wide globe. I ended up in a village in Ghana. It was my beginning. [...] And I came home to find that I had not really left. That it was still Africa; Africa in the Caribbean.
>
> (Brathwaite, 1996 [1970], pp. 276–277)

As Brathwaite, and many others before and after, has shown, contemporary Caribbean culture is inextricably intertwined with ever-evolving traditions in cultural domains such as food, music, fashion, and religions transported across the Atlantic. While the primordial link between Africa and the Caribbean is marked by enforced and violent mobilities, mobilities are never unidirectional. For Brathwaite, his return back to Africa constitutes a transformative journey, one which makes visible the cultural links between the Caribbean and Africa. Not only have African-Caribbean people tried to re-establish their connection to their African roots, but Ghana's *Year of Return*, which President Nana Akufo-Addo declared in 2019 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the first Africans arriving in North America, stands as a very recent example of an African country reaching out to its diaspora.[2] Resonating with Brathwaite's return to Ghana, which he called his "beginning", the Ghanaian initiative describes its diaspora's return as a "landmark spiritual and birth-right journey" ("Year of Return", 2019). This journey serves as a continuation, or rewriting, of when the first cargo of enslaved Africans reached Hispaniola in 1517 before the Spanish established their plantation system in the island through slavery. The Caribbean thus became a colonial laboratory for Spanish economic production; the Spanish were soon followed by the British, French, Dutch, and Danish.[3]

Endeavours to invite the diaspora to trace their heritage and to thereby build awareness of historical, cultural, and social mobilities between Africa

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and the Caribbean can also be found in the Caribbean. In a similar vein to Ghana's *Year of Return*, Barbados launched a year-long campaign dubbed *We Gatherin'* in 2020, a "Bajan homecoming" ("We Gatherin' Barbados", 2020). Interestingly, this proposed homecoming not only addresses Bajans born in Barbados or of Bajan descent, but also includes "Bajans by choice" and "those who love Barbados". By widening the definition of "Bajan" beyond national frameworks, *We Gatherin'* opens up a dialogue around belonging, questions of "home", and what constitutes a potential "diaspora". Apart from that, it also aims at boosting tourism.[4] On a similar note, when the Zimbabwean government announced its plans to erect a statue of Bob Marley in Harare in 2018, the responsible minister celebrated the decision as a great achievement for the country, as the statue would attract tourists (see Mbamalu, 2018). While it might be doubtful whether Marley fans would actually travel to Zimbabwe in order to see the statue, it is notable that the strong connection that existed between the Jamaican icon of Reggae music and the Southern African country during the 1970s is again remembered publicly at this point in history. Throughout the Zimbabwean war for independence, Marley's music was listened to extensively by the independence fighters and served to uplift and motivate them. Bob Marley was thus the logical choice for the key act at the independence celebrations held on 17 April 1980 at the Rufaro Stadium where the statue is planned to stand.[5] Music, a highly mobile form of cultural practice, was the tool through which Marley expressed the solidarity many Jamaicans felt with Zimbabweans fighting against white supremacy, thereby raising awareness among his fans worldwide.

Analysed through perspectives from Mobility Studies, these examples, which have recently made the news, remind us of the manifold ways in which the Caribbean and Africa are tied up in an entanglement of mobile bodies, objects, and ideas which shaped the past – both distant and more recent – and of how they impact on the present. Both the African continent and the Caribbean are, within themselves, highly heterogeneous, and thus it is clear that any attempt to theorise cultural connections between the two on a more abstract level has its limitations. In this volume, we therefore chose to zoom in on very concrete contexts and to examine the cultural mobilities made visible. The chapters in our volume specifically focus on expressions of human and cultural mobilities between Africa and the Caribbean. Our aim is to explore the processes by which ideas, texts, images, sounds, and beliefs move between Africa and the Caribbean from an interdisciplinary perspective. This volume is situated both at the intersection of the humanities and the social sciences and at the intersection of African, Caribbean, and Mobility Studies, thus widening the scope of Mobility Studies while contributing to the interdisciplinary aim that lies at the field's centre.

We, the editors of this volume, are situated in the Global North. We are aware of how our own positionality places us in a fraught, historically determined relationship to what we study. We hope to contribute to a decentering of the Global North by highlighting South-South mobilities and by drawing

on the knowledges and practices of writers and scholars from the Caribbean and Africa that inspire much of the work in this volume.

Mobility Studies: a brief introduction

Since the "new mobilities paradigm" was proclaimed by sociologists John Urry and Mimi Sheller in the mid-2000s (see Sheller & Urry, 2006), scholarly work on im/mobilities has expanded enormously in numerous disciplines. As a response to sedentarist theories that treat stability and rootedness as well as contained places or nations as the norm, and to nomadic theories that romanticise and overemphasise smooth and liquid movement, the mobilities paradigm aims at destabilising such binaries and at showing the nuances, interdependency, and power relations connected to im/mobilities. The paradigm puts an emphasis on the relations between different forms of im/mobility, and their agents and places, as "all places are tied into at least thin networks of connections that stretch beyond each such place and mean that nowhere can be an 'island'" (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 209).

A key advantage of a mobility perspective is that it allows for an analysis of human mobility together with other forms of mobility, notably of objects and immaterial things such as ideas, thereby illustrating how these are intertwined. Ideas and objects can be transported to other places while their originator stays put. They continue to move as they are passed on, included in discussions, or listened to in new settings. An emphasis on human mobility alone might also wrongly suggest a dichotomy between those who move (between national borders) and those who stay and who are (usually) construed as static. However, even when people physically stay in one place, their lives are often nonetheless characterised by the mobility of objects, such as letters, money transfers, and online communication, and might also include imaginative travels to elsewhere. As Beverley Skeggs (2004) puts it, "[o]ne can be highly mobile from a fixed location" (p. 49).

Beyond the advantage of bringing different forms of mobilities into one analytical framework, thereby allowing us to question neat distinctions between "mobile" and "immobile" actors and practices, Mobility Studies has the potential for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work. However, the field has become very broad, and thus, Peter Merriman (2018, p. v) is certainly right to observe, in a recent editorial of the Mobility Studies journal *Transfers*, that certain sub-fields within Mobility Studies exist next to each other without interacting to their full potential.

Another point of criticism which was raised, especially with regard to earlier work done within the Mobilities Paradigm, was its tendency to unduly celebrate mobility. This led scholars to argue that there was a need to pay more attention to the power relations shaping mobilities, the so-called "regimes of mobility", as Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) put it in their influential paper "Regimes of Mobility across the Globe", informing the approach to mobilities taken in this volume. Their theorisation of "regimes

of mobility" describes "the relationship between the privileged movements of some and the codependent but stigmatised and forbidden movement, migration, and interconnection between the poor, powerless, and exploited" (p. 188). The questions of who is able to move, at whose expense, and who is forced to move depend on a given society's power differentials, described by Doreen Massey (1994) as "power geometries" (p. 149).

Focusing on mobilities in the Global North without considering the concomitant forced immobilities and mobilities related to colonisation, migration, and capitalism, however, necessarily creates a blind spot. As Sheller (2018) explains,

> the foundational freedom of mobility of capital through which the modern capitalist world system was built was secured through limiting the mobilities of racialized others, and especially those who were enslaved in the service of plantation capitalism and its domestic reproduction.
>
> (p. 57)

Sheller's extensive research on the Caribbean stands as one example that weaves together Mobility Studies and Caribbean Studies and thereby illustrates how a Caribbean theorisation of historical, economic, and political im/mobilities contributes to a more encompassing understanding of global im/mobilities (see Sheller, 2004, 2014, 2018, 2020).

Overlooked mobilities

Often, mobilities in the South catch the interest of researchers only when directed towards the Global North, leaving mobilities within the Global South out of the picture. This has changed in the last few years (see, for example, the special section on African Mobilities in *Transfers,* edited by Mavhunga et al., 2016; Röschenthaler & Jedlowski, 2017). The celebration of mobility has never applied to all mobile subjects in the same way. As Francis Nyamnjoh (2013) puts it: "Africans are not expected to be mobile, even as mobility is celebrated. […] When their mobility is reluctantly tolerated or recognised, this is hardly on their own terms. Those who permit African mobility do so *selectively*" (p. 659; emphasis in the original).

In order for the "West" to claim its own mobility as key to its success and its modernity, Africa by necessity has had to be depicted as static – while at the same time the mobility of some parts of the population, most notably pastoralist people, was taken as proof of their lack of history, thus seemingly confirming the overall image of Africa as the "immobile continent" (see Greenblatt, 2010, p. 3; Salazar, 2010, pp. 54–55). A similar point can be made for the Caribbean or other colonised islands, as scholars of Archipelagic Studies such as Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Stephens (2013, 2017) and Elaine Stratford et al. (2011) have pointed out the entrenched epistemic violence of reducing non-European islands to their geoformal attributes as

contained and immobile, which served to legitimise Euro-American domination of these islands. As a result, mobilities between Africa and the Caribbean often either go unacknowledged or are studied from other theoretical angles such as "diaspora" or "transnationalism/translocality", which, while relevant for Mobility Studies, often lack connection to its debates (see Englert, 2018).

While African and Caribbean cases and perspectives should undoubtedly be further integrated into theorising within Mobility Studies, we are sceptical about approaches which are based on rather dichotomous notions of "African modes of thought" and "European thought" (see Matereke, 2016, p. 112), as these seem to go against the very idea behind the field of Mobility Studies, which aims to provide a framework for analysing places as always in movement and as constituted through movement rather than viewing states, regions, or whole continents as containers and relying on methodological nationalism (see Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013). Therefore, it is not our aim to advertise subfields such as "African Mobilities" or "Caribbean Mobilities", but rather to use these categories in order to draw awareness to mobilities existing in and between these regions and to argue for bringing more studies from African and Caribbean contexts into the debates of Mobility Studies.

Local scholars have often theorised the Caribbean as a highly mobile place, such as in the foundational theories put forward by Brathwaite and Cuban writer Antonio Benítez-Rojo. Brathwaite's concept of *tidalectics*, which takes its inspiration from the ocean's continual cyclical movement, provides an "alter/native" (1983, as cited in DeLoughrey, 2007, p. 2) to Hegel's dialectics by foregrounding the shifting and unpredictable ties not only between land and sea but also between cultures and people. Benítez-Rojo (1997) speaks of the "island that 'repeats' itself, unfolding and bifurcating until it reaches all the seas and lands of the earth" (p. 3). Both Brathwaite and Benítez-Rojo's theories, among many other theories which have emerged from the Caribbean, have at their core an understanding of the Caribbean archipelago as a place both mobile within itself and pulsating outward, as a place in which nothing is fixed and static, but instead is mobile and in a process of becoming. What still needs to be done, and what some contributions to this book undertake, is to consider these Caribbean notions of mobility in conjunction with the New Mobilities Paradigm.

Mobility Studies and Caribbean Studies share some of the same preoccupations and premises: both fields are focused on interconnections and relatedness; both fields see space as not fixed but as created through movement; and both fields cross a multitude of disciplines in themselves. Thinking through these fields together is therefore a highly worthwhile endeavour: by including Caribbean Studies into Mobility Studies, we can draw attention to both tangible movement (like journeys by boat) and intangible, philosophical movement (*tidalectics*), thereby bridging metaphor and praxis. And in taking into consideration Mobility Studies, Caribbean Studies finds itself confronted with a rich field, one which includes conceptual tools to grasp

how movement can be rendered possible or impossible, such as the concept of "network capital" (Urry, 2002) (e.g. the passports and documents needed for travel) and Jens Bærenholdt's (2013) concept of "governmobility", through which he describes regimes of mobility.

So far, however, one of the few sustained efforts to bridge Caribbean Studies and Mobility Studies is Mimi Sheller's 2003 book *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies*, in which she approaches the Caribbean by looking at the way it has been shaped by the (often forced) mobility, and consumption, of its people living and dead, of its fruit and crops, and of its art. While the Caribbean informs much of Sheller's work in Mobility Studies, she has also placed it at the very centre of her analysis in works such as *Aluminum Dreams: The Making of Light Modernity* (2014) and *Island Futures: Caribbean Survival in the Anthropocene* (2020). Moreover, Shalini Puri, in her wide-ranging work in Caribbean Studies, has carved out circulation as a constitutive cultural factor in the Caribbean, thereby highlighting the role of cultural mobilities, even if she does not use that term (see Puri, 2003, 2004).[6]

In other recent scholarship, mobilities take a central role even if the authors do not explicitly situate themselves in the field of Mobility Studies. In her book *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures*, which is particularly informed by Brathwaite's theory of *tidalectics*, Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2007) proposes a reading of Caribbean and Pacific literatures that goes beyond limiting national frameworks by evoking the continual movement of the ocean. Another recent example is Giselle Liza Anatol's 2015 book *The Things that Fly in the Night: Female Vampires in Literature of the Circum-Caribbean and African Diaspora*, in which she explores the figure of the female vampire, or *soucouyant*, putting emphasis on how the flight performed by these female figures corresponds to other ways women might have had the power for flight and mobility. Her focus on women's mobility as navigated through female figures of folklore makes this a valuable contribution to scholarship on mobilities while not inscribing her research into the field as such. The same holds true for the volume *Moving Spaces: Creolisation and Mobility in Africa, the Atlantic, and Indian Ocean* (2019) by Marina Berthet, Fernando Rosa, and Shaun Viljoen, which addresses issues of the mobility and the creolisation of ideas, stories, people, and plants in the context of the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. For them, the idea of 'places-in-movement' or moving spaces is central, viewing place not in terms of fixed locations, but emphasising the continuous movement of people and cultural goods.

Dimensions of cultural mobilities

Historically and up to today, the Caribbean and Africa have many mobile connections that have both drawn them together and apart. With the forced mobility of humans across the Atlantic, enslaved Africans transferred parts of their cultures to the Caribbean, creating dynamic creolised cultural processes, as seen in Caribbean languages, literatures, music, and religions today.

This creative amalgamation of different cultures has long been theorised by Caribbean thinkers as well. Édouard Glissant's prolific work explores the unpredictable and "chaotic" relations forming Caribbean cultures. Using the concept of "creolisation", he describes "the encounter, the interference, the clash, the harmonies and disharmonies between cultures, in the accomplished totality of the earth-world" (1997, p. 194). In *Poetics of Relation* (1997), Glissant writes about the inherently mobile characteristics of culture, which outlive established "States" and transcend their fixed borders:

> A culture is what remains after States have passed away or what precedes them of necessity. Cultures can be shared when States have been in confrontation. The limits – the frontiers – of a State can be grasped, but a culture's cannot.
>
> (p. 164)

Another example of a mobile, Caribbean approach to culture is Brathwaite's book *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770–1820* (1971), which explores the idea of a "creole society" based on case studies in Jamaica; that is, it explores a society in which institutions and customs, embedded in the context of the wider Americas, are based on the interrelations of Europe and Africa. The premise of cultures as static has been challenged by various other scholars from different fields. In their book *Cultures in Motion* (2014), Rodgers et al. put discourses surrounding culture into a historical perspective and suggest new vocabularies for speaking about cultures, ones that do not necessarily see space as bounded, as had long been the case in historical theorising of cultures. Instances of cultural mobility within the "circum-Atlantic world" – the wider "oceanic interculture" (Roach, 1996, p. 5) connecting Africa, Europe, and the Americas – have been studied by Joseph Roach in his book *Cities of the Dead* (1996).

In the field of Mobility Studies, scholars like Stephen Greenblatt in *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto* (2009) have drawn attention to the fact that cultures have always been mobile but are often apprehended as local and static (p. 252). The notion of cultures as fixed and rooted, firmly established within a bounded nation-state or ethnic community and needing to be preserved in their supposed purity, bears dangerous epistemological implications, which become apparent when we look at colonialism. The workings of coloniality illustrate the mobile and global qualities of cultures, and the harmful ramifications when such discourses are used to create an 'Other'. As Stephen Greenblatt argues,

> [w]e need to understand colonization, exile, emigration, wandering, contamination, and unintended consequences, along with the fierce compulsions of greed, longing, and restlessness, for it is these disruptive forces that principally shape the history and diffusion of identity and language, not a rooted sense of cultural legitimacy.
>
> (p. 2)

In his usage of the term of "cultural mobility", he therefore refers to the ways cultures are always, necessarily, in flux. Much of Greenblatt's book is concerned with how specific forms and pieces of cultural production, such as particular Early Modern plays, have travelled, adapted, and changed locations over time. "Cultural mobilities" can point both to the large-scale process of cultures being *constituted through* mobility and to individual instances where this is particularly visible. Our volume speaks to both.

On the one hand, the term "cultural mobilities" refers here to the actual transfer of cultural practices such as food, fashion, music, dance, and religion which have taken place in different ways, ranging from human mobilities starting with the slave trade to virtual mobilities in contemporary days. On the other hand, the term "cultural mobilities" allows us to also include artistic expressions in a more concrete sense, such as poems, novels, and film, through which artists reflect on the manifold mobilities which connect certain geographic spaces within those broader regions, showing how complex and ever-shifting these relations are, thereby unsettling fixed ideas of a single origin or unadulterated tradition. We further conceive of these artistic expressions as mobile objects in themselves. Multiple mobile relations between Africa and the Caribbean – including ones in the past, ones in the present, and ones projecting diasporic connections into the future – are involved in the creolisation of cultures.

Cultures, as these examples illustrate, are always in a dynamic process of exchange and intermingling, resisting and amalgamating, and always on the move. Coming back to Brathwaite's considerations on the links between Ghana and Barbados in "Timehri" (1996 [1970]), it is through his recognition of the shared cultural elements which have been uprooted in Africa and regrounded in the Caribbean (see Ahmed et al., 2003) that he comes to see deeper connections to his ancestors and thereby finds a renewed appreciation for African-Caribbean culture: "I came to connect my history with theirs, the bridge of my mind now linking Atlantic and ancestor, homeland and heartland" (p. 277).

Expressions of cultural mobilities between Africa and the Caribbean in this volume

There has been much scholarly literature on the manifold connections between the African continent and the Caribbean, dating back to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which constitutes the root of black diasporas in the Caribbean. A study of the mobility of plants, animals, foods, and diseases and its ecological ramifications since Christopher Columbus' landing in the Americas in 1492 was done by Alfred Crosby in his book *The Colombian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (1972). Arguably the most influential theory on human mobility and the African diaspora is Paul Gilroy's concept of the "Black Atlantic" (1993), a term he coined over a quarter of a century ago in order to point to the existence of a Black Atlantic culture which transcends

ethnicity and nationality. Gilroy's work has been criticised for its narrow conception of the Black Atlantic as an Anglophone space, disregarding the complex influences and exchange processes triggered by Lusophone, Hispanophone, and Yoruba- and Kru-speaking actors. Gilroy's notion of the Black Atlantic has been supplemented, and oversights challenged, by concepts like the "circum-Atlantic" (Roach, 1996), the "Radical African Atlantic" (Weiss, 2014), and the "Red Atlantic" (Dorsch, 2011), concepts on which historian of Africa **Immanuel Harisch** draws in his chapter, in which he revisits the trajectories formative for Black Guyanese scholar Walter Rodney. Harisch demonstrates how Rodney, who led a very mobile life as he studied, taught, and wrote in many different places in the Caribbean, continental North America, Africa, and Europa, acted as a crucial intellectual nexus between Africa and the Caribbean in the 1960s and 1970s. A public intellectual *par excellence*, Rodney's intellectual work focused on the Atlantic slave trade and its legacy, colonial domination, and the exploitation of Africa and the Caribbean, as well as on the myriad manifestations of colonialism and its afterlife in the form of neo-colonialism.

Scholarship on the Triangle Trade more widely, including the Middle Passage and the circulation of commodities (see Mintz, 1986), which has focused on the relationship between Africa and the Caribbean, itself has a long history without which the studies in this volume could not be written. They differ from earlier works by employing a more explicit Mobility Studies perspective. Further, while mobilities of the past always bear on the present, the specific moments of cultural mobilities tackled in the chapters of this book focus on the 20th and 21st centuries. Given its history of colonial domination by different European imperial states, African-Caribbean mobilities are a complex web of different relations. While our volume is only able to focus on some aspects of this web, and while it necessarily leaves out entanglements with some other nations and places (such as the Dutch influence on the Caribbean), it aims to elucidate how mobilities have played out in the 20th and 21st centuries by focusing in on very specific instances of such cultural mobility. Although the contributions vary in theme – ranging from zombie narratives to the Rastafari longing for return – these themes come together to create a rich tapestry of mobilities between these two parts of the world. Our approach therefore has the potential to shed light on some aspects which have received insufficient attention. In our understanding, a perspective focused on Africa and/or the Caribbean is built both on an awareness of the importance of the history of specific places, the geographical location, the linguistic situation, and the current political context, and on movement and exchange within and beyond African and Caribbean locales. With the in-depth case studies compiled in this volume focusing on the manifold mobile connections between subjects, objects, and ideas in the Caribbean and Africa, we aim to contribute to a theorisation of mobilities more generally, beyond the confines of what could be termed "African Mobilities" or "Caribbean Mobilities".

All contributions examine one or more of the different forms in which mobilities occur: humans, objects, and ideas might be mobile, either in a material sense or in imaginary terms, in physical as well as in virtual spaces. The volume bridges debates in the humanities and the social sciences, with the contributing scholars having their background in Social and Cultural Anthropology, History, Literary Studies, Film Studies, as well as African and/or Caribbean Studies more generally.

We also aim to gesture towards the linguistic variety of the regions under consideration. While multilingualism is a given in many places in both the Caribbean and in Africa, a fact of life that need hardly be remarked upon, scholarship often stays within one given linguistic field. The literary-studies contributions in our book analyse texts and films written and produced in English, French, Spanish, and Haitian Kreyòl. Though all except Kreyòl are colonial European languages, many of the writers and artists under consideration here draw on the tradition of people in these places making these languages their very own. Central American Caribbean scholar **Paola Ravasio** focuses on an experimental use of multilingualism in poetry from Limón, Costa Rica, while the film and media scholar **Doris Posch's** article sheds light on how Kreyòl is entwined with a thoroughly original, experimental cinematographic form in Haitian artistic practice.

Another focus has been placed on the literary movement of *négritude*, which was developed by Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Léon Damas in the 1930s and which, in forging cultural and literary ties between Africa and the Caribbean, both placed the Caribbean within the context of a history and tradition begun in Africa and aimed to foster pride in the African origin of Caribbean people themselves. In *négritude*, then, an emphasis on the continuing legacy of mobility between Africa and the Caribbean goes hand in hand with a decentring of colonial perspectives, leading to a celebration both of what has been and of what could be. It is *négritude*, along with other literary movements, that the Anglophone Literature scholar **Kevin Potter** draws on in his chapter on *migritude*. Literary scholar **Anna-Leena Toivanen** has a different approach to migrant mobilities when she draws a connection between clandestine migrant mobilities and zombie travel narratives, thereby showing not just how mobility shapes physical and imaginative realms, but how they can be studied together in order to make sense of a state of mobility. This is related to the chapter by **Ana Nenadović**, also from Literary Studies, in which she shows how, in three contemporary novels, Africa and the Caribbean meet through bodily shifts. Spiritual mobilities in these works shape the close connections between Africa and the Caribbean. Spiritual and imaginative mobilities, as well as physical mobilities which are a response to forced immobilisation, are central to **Dominik Frühwirth's** chapter, in which the historian of Africa examines the discourses underlying the longing for Africa among Rastafarians. The chapter by social and cultural anthropologist **Shelene Gomes** then further explores the movement of Rastafarians from the Caribbean (as well as North America and Europe)

to Africa by taking an in-depth look at the Rastafarian settlement Shashamane in Ethiopia, built on land granted by Ethiopian Emperor, Haile Selassie I, to Africans abroad in the 1940s–1950s. Gomes' extensive fieldwork reveals how youth lay claim to Rastafari, Ethiopian, and Jamaican identities at one and the same time.

And, finally, **Àníké Bello's** personal essay, reflecting on Abẹ̀òkuta, a Nigerian site which finds its mirror-image, and namesake, in Jamaica, once more makes the point that Africa is to be found in the Caribbean, just like the Caribbean is to be found in Africa. The author and activist writes about what it means to make a home and rebuild a place on another continent, a continent to which one has been forcibly transported.

With this volume, we hope to contribute to knowledge production about the ways different forms of mobilities have shaped the connections between two highly diverse parts of the world, which – despite their differences in terms of cultures, languages, and political and economic histories – share many experiences in the past as well as in the present. In her foreword, Mimi Sheller has not only introduced all these chapters individually, but has teased out how they each contribute to such a project. By placing the mobilities which have connected Africa and the Caribbean in the past, and which connect them still, at the centre of these chapters and of this volume, we hope not only to contribute to the theorisation of mobilities and to the fields of African Studies and Caribbean Studies, but also to point out how they have, for a long time, been embedded in one another to a larger extent than has been recognised.

Notes

1 We would like to express our sincere thanks to Immanuel Harisch and Jana Donat, two of our colleagues at the research platform whose helpful comments contributed to this introduction.
2 As 2019 marked the 400th anniversary of the first enslaved Africans arriving in North America, in Jamestown, Virginia, Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo declared 2019 as the *Year of Return*, launching several initiatives and projects to raise awareness of slavery and the entangled histories of Africa, Europe, and the Americas, and to encourage the African diaspora to return to the country from which many of their ancestors were forcibly taken to the Americas.
3 For more background on the history of slavery in the Caribbean see, for example, Curtin (1969), Williams (1944), Palmié and Scarano (2011), Fradera and Schmidt-Nowara (2013), Devine (2015).
4 For instance, the *Year of Return* describes the positioning of Ghana as a "key travel destination for African Americans and the African Diaspora" and a "boost in tourism for Ghana" as two of its main goals ("Year of Return", 2019). Having tourism and profit as the foremost purposes, this raises the question as to who has the financial means to participate.
5 He not only rejected to be paid a fee but he also covered his own travel expenses, thereby actually acting against the will of his manager (see Mumbere, 2018).
6 Nina Glick Schiller's early work on "Haitian transnational social field" (Glick Schiller & Fouron, 1999) can be seen as prefiguring her later work in Mobility Studies.

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2 A mobile scholar across the Atlantic

The Guyanese historian-activist Walter Rodney (1942–1980) as an intellectual nexus between the Caribbean and Africa[1]

Immanuel R. Harisch

Introduction

The year 2020 marked the fortieth anniversary of Rodney's assassination, which has sparked renewed interest in Rodney's ideas amid recent (re-)publication of some of his works.[2] In June 1980, the historian and activist Walter Rodney died in Georgetown, Guyana, when a walkie-talkie filled with explosives detonated in his car. Critical observers at the time suspected Rodney's death to be an assassination carried out under supervision of Guyana's Prime Minister Forbes Burnham, especially given that Burnham's government had reacted with repressive measures to Rodney's engagement with Guyanese politics since the mid-1970s (Lewis, 1998a). The allegations, which only decades later were officially investigated and ultimately proven as correct (Walter Rodney Commission of Inquiry, 2016), immediately sparked a wave of indignation, which swept over the intellectual and political landscape of both the Caribbean and Africa. At the University of Dar es Salaam in East Africa's Tanzania, where Rodney was a lecturer in African history from 1966 to 1967 and 1969 to 1974, Rodney's legacy was celebrated in a memorial symposium named *Walter Rodney's Contribution to the Revolution*, which was organised at the university only a few weeks after Rodney's assassination. The university's Arts Lecture Theater was filled to the brim with not only students but the general public attending. One Tanzanian student expressed Rodney's importance for the audience:

> [T]he majority [of the audience] had never met him, except through the medium of the written word, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, which remains his legacy and inspiration to us, our link with this great son of the oppressed masses of Africa and the West Indies.
>
> (Muganda et al., 1980, p. 2 quoted in Harisch, 2020, p. 12)

Rodney had written his magnum opus *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972) during his time at Dar es Salaam University. The book offers a panoramic

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view on the African continent, its history, and civilisations before and during slavery and colonial onslaught. With *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* Rodney aimed to mobilise people of colour to re-assert their pride and dignity. Drawing on a wide range of historical examples from the African continent, the then 30-year-old historian advanced the main argument that capitalist relations with Europe (and later the US) into which Africa had entered from the 15th century onward led to a dialectical process of European development through African under-development. This encompassed the fields of politics, culture, religion, and technology (see Lewis, 1998a, pp. 69–78; Hirji, 2017; Harisch, 2018, pp. 90–110; Adeleke, 2017, p. 124). As had been highlighted at the memorial symposium quoted above, the Black Guyanese scholar Rodney was perceived by many East Africans as a link between African and Caribbean people.

Admittedly, this argument is not new; Kurt B. Young (2008), for example, mapped "Rodney's thinking on the political and economic advancement of Africa, African people in the Diaspora, and indeed on all exploited people" (p. 488). Rupert Lewis has similarly argued in his outstanding intellectual biography of Rodney that the Guyanese scholar aimed to rewrite the history of the regions affected by the Slave trade, emphasising the perspective of those who have been silenced in (colonial) African historiography (Lewis, 1998a, p. 47). The slave trade in this perception acted as a shared experience of the descendants of Africans on both shores of the Atlantic. C. L. R. James, the Trinidad-born Marxist whose treatment of the Haitian revolution in *Black Jacobins* (1938) had a huge impact on the black world and beyond, was one of Rodney's mentors while the young scholar was studying for his PhD at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. In 1982, the almost 80-year-old James mourned the loss of Rodney:

> We in the Caribbean have played an important role in the development of the African Revolution. I know nobody, no one more suitable for that position than Walter Rodney. That's what we have lost. Furthermore, all over the United States, Walter Rodney is known. I have been in Tanzania three times and I always ask about him, and they have always spoken in the highest terms of him. *That communication between the Caribbean and Africa and the United States to bind the people together, that we have lost*. That's what we have lost in Walter Rodney.
>
> (as cited in Hill, 2015, p. 136, emphasis mine)

This chapter aims to examine in depth what James described above as "the communication between the Caribbean and Africa and the United States to bind the people together". To achieve this, I will map the specific physical mobility and intellectual transfers between Africa and the Caribbean – and vice versa – which were foundational for the life and work of the Guyanese historian Walter Rodney. More specifically, I will argue here that Rodney's high degree of physical mobility throughout the 1960s and early

1970s crucially shaped his intellectual understanding and activism in multiple locations and formed the basis to facilitate intellectual transfers from one region to another. As former compatriot at the History Department at Dar es Salaam, Edward Alpers has argued: wherever Rodney was – Jamaica, Tanzania, Guyana – he tried to get in touch with the local population, especially workers and peasants. In Jamaica he "grounded"[3] himself with Rastafaris in Kingston, in Tanzania he visited peasants in *ujamaa*[4] villages in the countryside, and in Guyana he gave public classes to workers (Alpers, 1982, p. 4). Yet many accounts have overlooked specific limitations mobile scholar-activists like Walter Rodney had to deal with: the status of a non-national and the complexity of the host society's cultural webs of significance.

Given the limited scope of this contribution, I will not set out to map the myriad influences on Rodney's intellectual thought in detail but will rather apply a biographical approach to trace some of Rodney's physical mobilities from the Caribbean to Africa and vice versa and will carefully contextualise them historically. I argue that, as a mobile, internationalist Marxist and Pan-African historian, Rodney acted as an integrative figure for globally circulating and overlapping discourses such as Black Power, Tanzania's *ujamaa* and Pan-Africanism. In this way, Rodney's skills to synthesise intellectual streams made him a crucial nexus between the Caribbean, Africa, North America, and Europe.

This contribution is divided into four sections. The introductory note prepares the conceptual ground for the physical and intellectual mobilities and transfers highlighted in the subsequent sections. I will also address what I feel is a rather narrow understanding of history in part of Mobility Studies' scholarship, including the absence of socialist, Black Marxist, and pan-Africanist histories of mobility and rather little attention to South-South connections more generally. The remaining three parts roughly follow a chronological order. Section 2 traces early influences on Rodney as he not only moved to Jamaica to pursue his bachelor's degree but had the opportunity to travel to post-revolutionary Cuba and the Soviet Union during his undergraduate years. The third section will focus on Rodney as an intellectual nexus in both the Jamaican and Tanzanian contexts. I will examine Rodney's "groundings" with Rastafarians and show how he acted as an educator on African history and culture in the Caribbean. At the same time, Rodney brought his own discourses of Black Power to Tanzania and institutionalised the history of black people in the Americas as a course at the University of Dar es Salaam.

The fourth and last section outlines issues of citizenship, belonging, and culture pertaining to Rodney living in Jamaica and Tanzania as a non-national, and analyses them from a comparative perspective. It argues that although Rodney took great pains to get in touch with the local population – especially the workers, peasants, and marginalised – his socialisation in the English-speaking Caribbean made it much easier to "ground" there than in East Africa.

I The *Black* Atlantic, history, and Mobility Studies

Published in the early post-Cold War 1990s, Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993) provided an anti-nationalist theoretical and ideological framework to focus on the Black Diaspora on both shores of the Atlantic. At the time of its publication, *The Black Atlantic* resonated "with the anti-foundationalist parade of the 'posts' (postmodernism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism) [...] and the perpetual search for new analytical brands in the [US-]American academy with its channel-surfing intellectualism" (Zeleza, 2005, p. 36). In his thoughtful critique, Malawian historian, literary critic, and novelist Paul Tiyambe Zeleza faults *The Black Atlantic:*

> [1] [for] oversimplifying the African American experience and the role of Africa and African connections in its collective memory, imagination and thought; for [2] universalizing the racialized 'minority' experience of African Americans (in most Caribbean islands African-descended people constitute the majority); for [3] its postmodernist phobias against essentialism, real and imaginary, strategic or slight, while at the same time desperately seeking a 'black', not a 'white', or 'multicultural' Atlantic; for [4] its exclusionary epistemic cultural politics in its Eurocentric excision and disdain for Africa; and for [5] mystifying modernity as the primary object of black Atlantic critique barring questions of imperialism and capitalism.
> (Zeleza, 2005, p. 37)

A number of (global) historians, ethnographers, and literary scholars have since expanded Gilroy's notion to encompass a "Radical African Atlantic" (Weiss, 2014) or a "Red Atlantic" (Dorsch, 2011), illuminating movements and transfers between the Lusophone and Hispanophone parts of Africa and the Caribbean, such as those between Mozambique, Angola, and Cuba during the Cold War and beyond (see also Dorsch, 2008; Hatzky, 2015). Looking at these "margins of the Black Atlantic", Monica Popescu (2014), for example, skilfully combines historical scholarship and literary studies.

Now what about the perception of historical mobilities, captured in the Black/Radical/Red Atlantic – and historical perspectives more broadly – in Mobility Studies?

The field of Mobility Studies was crucially shaped by Mimi Sheller and John Urry who coined the term "new mobilities paradigm" (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Though mainly grounded in the social sciences such as sociology and Transport Studies, it must be said that Sheller's work, e.g. *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (2003), draws much on Caribbean histories of slavery, emancipation, and post-emancipation movements as well as cultural mobilities at large. Employing a multidisciplinary perspective and mobility lens, Sheller looks at how Europe and North America "have been relentlessly consuming the Caribbean and its assets [sugar, tobacco, reggae music] for the past five hundred years" (Sheller, 2003).

Yet, Mobility Studies' perception of history is more often than not a rather narrow one.[5] For some representatives of the Mobility Studies paradigm "history" usually embodies the "anti-foundationalist parade" Zeleza captured so aptly above (Clarsen, 2015, p. 116; Merriman & Pearce, 2017, p. 496). As African historian Frederick Cooper (1996) has argued, the "posts" (post-modernist, post-Marxist, post-structuralist, etc.) do not always acknowledge "how much of what they argue has been a part of the debates within the school they claim to transcend" (p. 476). When it comes to movement across the Atlantic Ocean, the "posts" tend to omit the rich historical literature on movements, transfers, and connections between Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, and North America (see Clarsen, 2015, p. 116). The wider problem here is that certain strands of Mobility Studies seldom acknowledge that historiography includes more intellectual strands than just the "posts". A postcolonial historical perspective is not the only available historical approach to inquire into transoceanic worlds as we are sometimes made to believe. There is a rich body of literature beyond "the posts" which can be explored and to some of which Zeleza probably refers when he claims that they have thoroughly examined the political, social, cultural, and economic relations among the triangular systems of Africa, the Americas, and Europe: C. L. R. James' *Black Jacobins* (1938), Eric William's *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944), Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Afric*a (1972), or Sidney Mintz's *Sweetness and Power* (1985), among others. These empirical historical studies are not only worthwhile to re-read through a global history lens (Marquese & Pimenta, 2018, pp. 69–71) but should be freshly examined as to what they have to say about physical, material, and intellectual mobilities and transfers from a mobility scholar's perspective as well. That these thinkers receive comparatively little attention is surprising given that Sheller's early scholarship explicitly draws on historians like James, Williams, and Rodney, as well as on cultural anthropologists like Mintz, which in turn influenced the emergence of the New Mobilities Paradigm. Last but not least, "transoceanic connectivities" that "bridge the material, the representational, and the experimental dimensions of mobility" (Clarsen, 2015, p. 116) are not a new thing as some might think or consciously frame it; on the contrary, these reflections were constitutional for Caribbean scholar-activists who strove for black emancipation and unity throughout the 20th century under the banner of Pan-Africanism,[6] for example. Caribbean Pan-African scholars such as Walter Rodney – alongside others like James, Aimé Césaire (see Kevin Potter's contribution on *négritude* in this volume), and Padmore – were long involved in human, material, and imaginative mobilities and were also prolific writers. In most cases, these protagonists did not only engage in intellectual transfers across the Atlantic but had spun and maintained far-reaching networks across the Atlantic themselves, as I will show with my biographical approach on Rodney in this contribution.

My broader aim with the trajectory of the Marxist and Pan-African historian Walter Rodney is to inscribe Rodney's historical mobilities between

Africa and the Caribbean into broader perspectives of both global history and Mobility Studies. I aim to expand what I find in most current debates within Mobility Studies a rather narrow focus on historical perspectives which are rooted in a North Atlantic, Western capitalist experience. This Western/ Northern bias is implicit in the umbrella term "globalisation", which homogenises diverse and complex processes that unfolded and unfold unevenly and asymmetrically in different parts of the world (Matereke, 2016, p. 114; for an important intervention on the concept of "globalisation" see also Cooper, 2001). Considerable blind spots exist with regard to "Eastern" (and "Southern") connections even though the expansion of the socialist world system opened up new avenues of physical, social, and intellectual mobility for Africans and, to a lesser extent, Caribbean people to Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, or China (Schenck, 2016; Burton, 2018, 2020). Key concepts of Mobility Studies – mobilities, transfers, and movements – to examine relations between "East" and "South" or "South"-"South" are currently heavily used by global historians. I am sure that a dialogue with Mobility Studies on the basis of a nuanced conceptualisation of human, material, and imaginative mobilities as well as a consideration of immobilities and moorings (Hannam Sheller & Urry, 2006) could yield some interesting results (for one attempt, see Schenck et al., 2021).

Rodney's trajectory oscillates between the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, and the USA but it also brings the "East" – respectively, the socialist world – into the picture. The young Walter Rodney was deeply impressed by his visits to the Soviet Union and Cuba during the revolutionary 1960s – mobilities which were highly political as they were connected to radical anti-imperialist geographies and Cold War ideology and politics. It is these early influences on Rodney that we now turn to.

II Early influences on the mobile scholar-activist Rodney

In 1969, aged 27, Rodney (1996 [1969]) used the following markers to express his social situation: "a Guyanese, a black man, and an African" (p. 60). These overlapping identities were shaped by Rodney's engagement with politics, scholarly literature, and a high degree of physical mobility as I will argue in the following. Each of his stays will be briefly contextualised historically to highlight important intellectual and political influences such as the Cuban revolution, *Black Power,* Tanzania's African socialism *ujamaa* as well as Rodney's "groundings" with the Rastafarian brethren on the Caribbean island of Jamaica.

From a strictly geographical viewpoint, Walter Anthony Rodney was born in 1942 on the Northern mainland of South America in 1942 in what was then British Guiana. Yet, by building on earlier work by James (1938) and Williams (1944), scholars extended the boundaries of what constitutes the Caribbean during the 1960s. Due to its strong cultural and historical links with the islands of the Caribbean, which were characterised by the legacy of slavery and the plantation complex, Guyana was now considered part of the

Caribbean – especially from a Caribbean liberationist and Pan-African perspective (Girvan, 2001, p. 5). Rodney's conception of the Caribbean, often expressed with the term "West Indies", was similarly shaped by the legacy of slavery and indentured labour and encompassed both of the Guyanas, Suriname, the Greater and Lesser Antilles, and the Lucayan archipelago (Rodney, 1996 [1969], pp. 24–34).

Rodney's father was an independent tailor, his mother worked as a housewife and part-time seamstress, and Rodney's grandparents on both sides were farmers (Institute of the Black World, 1990, pp. 1–2). Granted one of the first scholarships available to working-class youth, Rodney went first to study at Queen's College, a renowned secondary school in Georgetown. In 1960, Rodney won an open scholarship to study at the University of the West Indies (UWI) in Jamaica from 1960 to 1963 – at that time the only university in the Caribbean (Lewis, 1998a, p. 13). On campus, Rodney was involved in student politics and in the editorial team of a student paper (Wong, 2016, pp. 5–6). In 1960, Rodney reported on two short stays in Cuba where he resided with Cuban students shortly after the successful Cuban revolution of 1959:

> [T]he Cubans were up and about, talking and bustling and running and jumping and really living the revolution in a way that was completely outside of anything that one could read anywhere or listen to or conceptualize in an island such as Jamaica, which is where I was still.
>
> (Institute of the Black World, 1990, p. 18)

Rodney's quote emphasises the strong dynamism of the Cuban situation where a revolution was in the making in front of Rodney's eyes. The "bustling and running and jumping and really living the revolution" further points to an intense rhythm as portrayed by the 18-year-old student. From 1959 onward, after the guerrilla fighters under commander-in-chief Fidel Castro successfully toppled the regime of general Fulgencio Batista, Castro and his aides restructured the Cuban state, economy, and society along Marxist-Leninist ideas (Zeuske, 2017). On his second trip, in 1962, Rodney visited the University of Havana. The Jamaican intelligence service was already monitoring the young student Rodney and believed that Rodney and his fellow student companions were received in Cuba by Castro himself (Wong, 2016, p. 5). Be that as it may, Castro's Cuba again left a strong impression on Rodney. He took with him socialist-revolutionary literature, e.g. a book by Che Guevara which was temporarily confiscated by the custom authorities (Wong, 2016, p. 6).

Some six years later, in 1968, Rodney was scheduled as a speaker at the *Congress of Black Writers and Artists* in Montreal. Performing among other scholar-activists such as Richard B. Moore, Richard Small, Robert A. Hill, Stokely Carmichael, Burnley "Rocky" Jones, and the elder C. L. R. James, David Austin (2018, p. 21) has argued that the Montreal Congress made Rodney internationally known as a specialist in African history and as an emerging political voice. In his speech to the congress, entitled *African History*

in the Service of the Black Liberation, Rodney upheld Cuba as the only Caribbean country which had achieved black power through a struggle against white imperialism as embodied by the 1959 Cuban revolution. Addressing an audience consisting mostly of Caribbean, North American, and other scholar-activists of African descent, he stated that:

> Now, in Cuba today [1968], barriers to entering certain buildings, certain eating houses, and that sort of thing completely disappeared [...] And the position of the black people is such, not only socially and politically emancipated, but moving in a direction of reasserting their culture (the Afro-Cuban culture), of getting social encouragement to assert that culture. So that we find in Cuba today more genuine interest in the African Revolution, more interest in the African plastic arts and in African drama than there exists in Jamaica, which is a place 95 percent black, because the black people of Jamaica are still involved [in,] and are dominated under, imperialist relations. So that is Cuba and that is Jamaica.
>
> (Rodney, 2001 [1969], pp. 68–69)

A dimension of socialist Cuba which intrigued Rodney was what he perceived to be Cuba's quest to re-assert African history and culture as a foundation for its socialist society. Another lasting effect of his Cuban liaison was the founding of the "Students Democratic Party" at the University of the West Indies (UWI) which aimed to spread Marxism throughout the Caribbean islands (Wong, 2016, p. 6). Rodney therein did not only engage with Marxist thought, but, together with a group of similarly committed comrades-students, aimed to act as a multiplier for socialist thought on Jamaica during his student days.

At UWI it was not common to engage with Marxist and Black radical thought spilling over from the United States or with revolutionary literature spilling over from Cuba – both of which were banned by the Jamaican government (Rodney, 1996 [1969], p. 13). Rather, the upcoming ruling and bureaucratic elite trained at the university engaged in what Rupert Lewis characterised as "conventional West Indian middle-class values – the striving for status, the distancing from one's social background, the imitation of an English accent, the marrying of an English wife or marrying what was considered the next best, a light-skinned women" (Lewis, 1998a, p. 3).

In August 1962, aged 20, Rodney set out to a journey to the Soviet Union where he attended a congress of the International Union of Students in Leningrad (Lewis, 1998a, pp. 18–20). Rodney's stay in the Soviet Union left a deep impression on the young student, as he later testified in an interview with fellow scholars and activists of the Institute of the Black World in 1974:

> When I travelled to the Soviet Union, I was struck on arrival at the airport by the physical demeanor and the social aspect of the people in the airport. They were workers and peasants, as far as I could see, who were

> flying on those TU-104's [Tupolev Tu-104, a Soviet airliner] to Moscow, to Leningrad, etc. *as though they were using a bus*. And my understanding of an airport was that it was a very bourgeois institution.
>
> (Institute of the Black World, 1990, p. 17, emphasis mine)

Mobility scholars and geographers, among others, have produced a plethora of research on the airport as a spatial formation, as a crucial infrastructural hub and as a fine-tuned temple of consumption (Cwerner, Kesselring & Urry 2008; Adey 2010). From today's point of view, it is true that airports and aircrafts have become synonymous with our contemporary mobile world (Adey, 2010, p. 13). Writing in the early 1960s, however, Rodney's quote focuses on the class character of an airport at the time. While Rodney grew up with the understanding of an airport as an elitist hub, as a very bourgeois institution, the Soviet airport appeared to him as an institution of relative equality which opened up long-distance movement to the working classes – workers and peasants – "as though as they were using a bus".

The intersection between class perceptions and mobility have been re-emphasised by anthropologists Nina Glick Schiller and Noel B. Salazar (2013) in their important call to reflect on power relations in scholarship on mobility. Glick Schiller and Salazar claim that their "regimes-of-mobility approach" can add to conventional understandings of class – based on a different access to resources – by arguing that the "ability and legal right to travel become one of the criteria by which class is defined and class privilege upheld" (p. 196). In this vein, Rodney's statement as it is guided by his Marxist thinking reflects on *who* – precisely which classes – were to enjoy mobility from and to an airport.

During his undergraduate years at UWI, Rodney engaged with the history of forced movement and displacement of the Atlantic Slave Trade. At the forefront was his desire to understand slavery and the cultural background of Africa – a desire which grew as the progressive faculty of history and social science revised and adapted its curricula. In 1963, Rodney received his bachelor's degree with honours from UWI and, again on a scholarship, went to pursue his PhD in African History at SOAS in London. According to a number of contemporaries, friends, and Rodney himself, his London years (1963–1966) were crucial to Rodney's further development. He joined a study group of younger West Indians like Richard Small, who frequently met with C. L. R. James and Selma James who, as a scholar-activist, was interested in the labour movement and the Black movement, especially in the condition of women (Worcester, 1996; Lewis, 1998b, p. 5; Rodney, 2015 [1972]). The study group met over a period of roughly three years. According to Rodney, the study group's meetings helped him "to acquire a knowledge of Marxism, a more precise understanding of the Russian Revolution, and of historical formulation" (Institute of the Black World, 1990, p. 29). Selma James had an influence on Rodney through the habit of "taking a foolish position and really indicating why that position was foolish" (Institute of the Black World, 1990, p. 29) – an approach that can be found in many of Rodney's later writings.

At SOAS itself, Rodney found it very difficult to engage with Marxist thought as he perceived the university, and the political climate in Britain more generally, as unconducive to the development of independent materialist thought (Institute of the Black World, 1990, p. 28). Notwithstanding his perception of SOAS as a bourgeois institution, Rodney continued his path of academic excellence and obtained a doctorate in African History with first class honours. For his dissertation – published as *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast 1545 to 1800* in 1970 – Rodney did research in archives in Lisbon, Seville, Rome, and London. He developed a reading proficiency in Portuguese and Italian and was reasonably well versed in Spanish (Lewis, 1998a, p. 42).

As outlined above, Rodney's temporary migrations and travels from 1960 to 1966 – spanning Jamaica, Cuba, the Soviet Union and his doctoral studies in the United Kingdom – shaped his understanding of (African) History, which he aimed to deepen through a teaching position at an African university. When Rodney accepted the lectureship at Tanzania's University of Dar es Salaam in 1966, he came to live on the African continent for the first time. At that time, the anti-imperialist foreign policy and political commitment expounded by Tanzania's president Julius Nyerere drew scholars from different fields and with different origins to the growing East African port city of Dar es Salaam. International socialists, social-democrats, Marxists, Leninists, and Maoists as representatives of the heterogeneous political left came to lecture at the University of Dar es Salaam, alongside liberals and conservatives who also found their way to the university (Bourbonniere, 2007, p. 4; Burton, 2017, pp. 401–456; Harisch, 2018, 2020). The Kenyan political scientist Ali Mazrui (1967), who was teaching at neighbouring Uganda's Makerere University and entered into heated debates with Rodney in the late 1960s and early 1970s, coined the term Tanzaphilia: "the romantic spell which Tanzania casts on so many of those who have been closely associated with her" (pp. 24–25). No doubt Tanzaphilia contributed to the influx of foreign scholars like Rodney, which created a cosmopolitan, highly politicised atmosphere with heated debates on the Dar es Salaam campus.

III An intellectual nexus between Africa and the Caribbean

Arriving in Tanzania in the fall of 1966, Rodney encountered a tense atmosphere at the University of Dar es Salaam. More than four hundred university students had protested against a National Service scheme the government had announced earlier. The National Service was made compulsory for all university graduates and required them first to go through basic paramilitary training and to then work for five months on rural nation-building projects such as road-building or farm work. For the remaining 15 months, they had to take up a well-suited job in teaching or civil service but with a reduced salary (Ivaska, 2011, p. 136). Thus, the young, ambitious graduates were required to postpone climbing up the career ladder for some time, and instead repay the state which had provided them with a free university education. Tanzania's president Nyerere "urged the students to discard their selfish outlook and serve

the people" (Hirji, 2010, p. 7) – pointing to the fact that the mass of peasants had paid for their free university education through their taxes.

The student demonstrations against the scheme – dubbed "elitist" by most of the staff and socialist-oriented students – left a considerable mark on the university for the upcoming months. Tanzania's ruling party TANU proclaimed the Arusha Declaration, which officially set the country on a socialist path, in February 1967 and a few weeks later Tanzania's president Julius Nyerere presented the country's educational blueprint in the policy paper *Education for Self-Reliance*. In March 1967 a major conference was held at the university, entitled *Conference on the Role of the University College Dar es Salaam in a Socialist Tanzania*, to discuss the lessons of the National Service crisis (University College of Dar es Salaam, 1967; Bourbonniere, 2007; Harisch, 2020).

The National Service crisis also sparked an interdisciplinary publication of Dar es Salaam scholars. Printed in 1968, the volume *Tanzania: Revolution by Education*, edited by economist Idrian R. Resnick, was a direct reaction to the October 1966 demonstrations. The leftist scholars contributing to this volume – besides the historian Walter Rodney, this included the economist and world-system theorist Giovanni Arrighi and the political scientist John Saul, among others – called for radical change in Tanzania's education system. Rodney's chapter in the book, *Education and Tanzanian Socialism,* examined how race and class have been affecting the provision of colonial education and what educational challenges the ruling party of Tanzania faced in the period following independence (Rodney, 1968).

Another publication realised during Rodney's time teaching at Dar es Salaam was his contribution to the pamphlet series of the Historical Association of Tanzania (HAT). The HAT's pamphlet series had the aim to produce small books of around 50 pages each written in a clear style and with few footnotes to disseminate historical knowledge among a broader audience (Lonsdale, 1969; Harisch, 2017, pp. 133–134). Rodney's 1967 *West Africa and the Atlantic Slave Trade* was the second volume of the series.

After having spent one academic year in Tanzania, Rodney was appointed by the University of the West Indies and returned to the Caribbean. He had had plans to return there before he went to East Africa, as is apparent from his application letter to Dar es Salaam in 1965:

> My main committment [sic!] is to the University of the West Indies, to which I will return in October 1967 to help start a programme in West African studies. My interest, therefore, is in a temporary post at the University College [Dar es Salaam], for which I would be available after completion of my thesis in June 1966.
>
> (as cited in Lewis, 1998a, p. 44)

During his stay at the UDSM, Rodney was impressed by Tanzania's educational policies. Under president Julius Nyerere, the ruling party, TANU, announced a policy of "education for self-reliance". A foundational pillar of

TANU's policies was to further promote the use of the national language *Kiswahili*, an African Bantu language with around one-fifth of the vocabulary deriving from Arabic (and, to a lesser extent, Persian, Hindustani, and Portuguese) as a result of the trading contacts of the *Kiswahili* empires of the 15th and 16th centuries on the East African coastline ("Swahili" literally meaning "of coasts"). It is interesting that in the quote above, from 1965 – before Rodney's first visit to Tanzania – he had planned to institutionalise "West African studies", which was the field of his dissertational research (Rodney, 1970). At the time of his return to the Caribbean three years later, however, Rodney had drawn his inspiration from both Tanzania's decision to make the African language *Kiswahili* the national language and from African history as a powerful tool of emancipation and accordingly adapted his plans.

After his arrival at UWI in January 1968, Rodney's attempts to set up teaching African history in Jamaica did not materialise. In October 1968, shortly before his expulsion from Jamaica, Rodney (2001 [1968]) voiced his disappointment on this failed intellectual cross-fertilisation:

> You can't say that 'African history will proceed as normal. We'll just teach it in the curriculum and that will be fine. Let imperialism proceed.' In any event, the system doesn't even want you to do a simple thing like teaching African history. The prime minister of Jamaica, a black man (you know he looks black anyway), was approached with a request to let African history and an African language, Swahili, be taught in the schools, and he said, 'No, we can't have any of that.' […] Very curious. I mean, 95 percent of the people are black but he can't teach an African language. They teach Latin, French, Spanish, and everything else.
>
> (p. 69.)

Unfortunately for Rodney, the government and the university administration did not support his plans. Meanwhile, off campus, Rodney "grounded" with the marginalised Rastafarian brethren. Rastafarians, despite never accounting for more than 3% of the whole Jamaican population, had a strong impact on black consciousness and black power discourses and movements in Jamaica (Bedasse, 2017, p. 17; see also Frühwirth in this volume). Rodney's revolutionary agitation and Black Power discourses, which swept over from the USA and were adapted by Jamaican radicals to the local situation, made the Jamaican government under Hugh Shearer (Jamaican Labour Party, JLP) uneasy. When Rodney was attending the *Congress of Black Writers and Artists* in Montreal in October 1968, he was banned from re-entering Jamaica. Reasons given by Shearer were Rodney's sympathies for Cuba and the Soviet Union, his black radicalism, as well as his propagation of a revolution in Jamaica through his public lectures and teach-ins with the Rastafarians and other radical groups. Thus, Shearer's regime curtailed Rodney's ability to move by referring to his earlier socialist mobilities to Cuba and the Soviet Union. Though Shearer's government enjoyed considerable support among

the working class for some time, Rodney's expulsion from Jamaica led to demonstrations and riots of tens of thousands of people on the island, the so-called Rodney Riots. Over the course of these riots, property worth one million pounds was destroyed. The protests further made clear that a discourse centred on the dire conditions of the masses of the poor as well as on black power and dignity had mobilised an alliance of students, workers, and unemployed youth (Lewis, 1998a; Bradford, 2012, pp. 146–148).

As a comparative perspective reveals, Rodney took on different roles depending on which side of the Atlantic he spoke. At the 1968 *Congress of Black Writers and Artists* in Montreal, Rodney was presented – and presented himself – as an expert on African history (Austin, 2018). In his lecture at the congress titled "African History in the Service of Black Liberation", Rodney (2001 [1969]) depicted the African historian per se as an activist:

> The African historian, to me, is essentially involved in a process of mobilization, just like any other individual within the society who says, "I'm for Black Power. I'm going to talk about the way the blacks live down in the South," etc. That's a facet of mobilization. The African historian is also involved in that mobilization.
>
> (p. 67.)

As discussed earlier, during his stay in Jamaica Rodney was committed to politically mobilising Rastafarians and black marginalised youth through the teaching of African history. Rodney gave speeches on African history at a number of locations such as beer-joints, backyards, or the Wembley Sports Ground in East Kingston, sometimes to crowds of 200 or 300 people. Selected speeches were later published in *The Groundings with my Brothers* (Small, 1969, p. 11; Lewis, 1998b, p. 20as cited in Rodney, 1996 [1969]). When Rodney was banned from re-entering Jamaica in October 1968, he had to figure out alternatives. Subsequently he accepted another appointment at the University of Dar es Salaam to teach from the year 1969 onward. On his way to Tanzania, he met with a group of fellow black scholars and activists in London who he had known since his doctoral studies at SOAS. Rodney's comrades in London had organised a committee to publicise Rodney's ban from Jamaica (Huntley & Huntley, 1996 [1983]; Publishers Note in Rodney, 1996 [1969]).

The aim of *The Groundings* was to raise and strengthen black consciousness among the Jamaican Rastafarians and among the oppressed black masses in the Caribbean and North America more broadly. As Rodney's friend and fellow activist Richard Small proclaimed, while Jamaica became politically independent in 1962 and

> got a flag, a national motto, a national anthem, flower, fruit, and even a national bird [...] what has been most lacking has been a national consciousness, a sense of where Jamaicans came from, what we have done, and to what we should look forward.
>
> (Small, 1969, p. 7, as cited in Rodney, 1996 [1969])

The Black Consciousness movement in Jamaica during the 1960s was disparate and marginalised by the political elite (Lewis, 1998b, pp. 7–8). According to Rodney (1996 [1969]), the Rastafarians "have rejected this philistine white West Indian society. They have sought their cultural and spiritual roots in Ethiopia and Africa" (p. 61). In Jamaica, Rodney identified the Rastafarians as the major force for mobilising and freeing black minds (Campbell, 2007 [1985], p. 129). Yet, it is important to note that the Rastafarian movement was itself heterogeneous and consisted of a multitude of groups with varying emphases on religious and on cultural and political trends (Lewis, 1998b, p. 22). As Horace Campbell (2007 [1985], p. 129) has argued, Rodney's attempts to create – through African history and historical materialism – a common consciousness among the poor black population in Jamaica were of a magnitude that had not been achieved since the mass movement of Marcus Garvey. Garvey, who was born in Jamaica in 1887, established the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) there in 1914 but moved to the United States in 1916. By 1919, there existed around 30 UNIA branches in cities all over the country – famously in New York – and its estimated membership of over two million make it the largest African American organisation in history (Adi, 2018, pp. 28–31; Campbell, 2007 [1985], p. 54). Rodney described Garvey as "one of the first advocates of Black Power, and […] still today [1969] one of the greatest spokesman [sic!] ever to have been produced by the movement of black consciousness" (Rodney, 1996 [1969], p. 20). The US-American civil rights and Black Power movement, which was in turn considerably influenced by UNIA, had a profound impact on the youths in the Caribbean during the 1960s. High school pupils and university students engaged with the writings of Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael, which were soon banned by the postcolonial Jamaican government (Rodney, 1996 [1969], p. 62; Lewis, 1998b, p. 7). For Rodney (1996 [1969]), to "ground" (or, when speaking of social gatherings, "groundings") was connected to Black Power:

> I lectured at the University, outside of the classroom that is. I had public lectures, I talked about Black Power and then I left there, went from the campus. I was prepared to go anywhere that any group of Black people were prepared to sit down to talk and listen. Because, that is Black Power, that is one of the elements, a sitting down together to reason, to 'ground' as the Brothers say. We have to 'ground together'.
>
> (pp. 63–64)

"Black" in Rodney's understanding of "Black Power" is a concept that is neither fixed to a skin colour nor to a geographic region. It is a marker of those who suffered (and suffer) racial and economic oppression under colonialism and imperialism. In that sense, "Black" is a shared experience of colonised people all over the globe – on the African continent, in the Caribbean, and in North America and Asia as well. Rodney re-conceptualised the notion of Black Power to also include other oppressed ethnic groups such as Indigenous peoples in Guyana, Trinidad, and Suriname (Lewis, 1998b, p. 35).

The groundings were emphasised by Rodney not as a one-way street but rather as a process of reciprocal intellectual exchange, "a two-way counter-hegemonic, knowledge-creation process" (Adeleke, 2017, p. 133). Rodney (1996 [1969]) was convinced that "*the black intellectual, the black academic must attach himself to the activity of the black masses*" (p. 63, emphasis original). When it comes to his contributions to the discussions with the Rastafarians, Rodney (1996 [1969]) highlighted his experience of travelling, his reading, and his specific materialist analysis of history (p. 64).

Rodney's language in *The Groundings* is that of an educator, of a cultural broker between the two shores of the Atlantic with the aim to share his knowledge on Africa with Jamaican Rastafarians: "If we want to call ourselves conscious Africans, then we must know the map of Africa, we must remember the names of these great African states, and we must find out as much as possible about them" (p. 36). Rodney was convinced that confidence was the key,

> so that as blacks and Africans we can be conscious, united, independent and creative. Knowledge of African achievements in art, education, religion, politics, agriculture and the mining of metals can help us gain the necessary confidence which has been removed by slavery and colonialism. (p. 37)

In this vein, African history has a revolutionary mission to counter the myths about the African past "which linger in the minds of black people everywhere" (p. 58). This should be done by bringing into mind the ancient African civilisations and their achievements in art, state-keeping, mathematics, religion, and so forth.

To illustrate how current African governments undertake such policies, Rodney (1996 [1969]) refers to Nyerere's policy document *Socialism and Rural Development*, which sets out the *ujamaa* village as a reflection of traditional African socialism – "an exploration of the present as a recovery of the past" (p. 59). The specific historical context of Tanzania, where Rodney returned for his second teaching appointment from 1969 to 1974 after being banned from Jamaica, of course varied considerably from the context of Jamaica.

Whereas Rodney's attempts to "Africanize" the University of the West Indies had failed, the Africanisation of academia on the African continent was, in the meantime, in full bloom – indeed the 1960s and early 1970s were the "Golden Age" of African historiography (Cooper, 2000, p. 304). African history as an academic subject was flourishing during the 1960s, and African history departments were expanding in many places all over Africa. Everywhere from Ibadan to Dakar, from Brazzaville to Kampala and Dar es Salaam, African historians eagerly took up the writing of African history to counter the paradigms and views on Africa established by colonial scholarship in preceding decades (Falola, 2004, pp. 251–260; Sonderegger, 2011b). At the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzanian and fellow African intellectuals, as well as the vibrant expat scholar community from North America, Europe,

and Asia, aimed to produce a "usable past" (Ranger, 1976) for the country's nation-building task, supported by the TANU government.

Rodney's historical approach aimed to combine the methodological advances of African history as an academic field and as a powerful tool to emancipate Black people on the African continent and the Americas. Rodney saw himself as a product of the Atlantic slave trade and of a dehumanising experience that was connected to capitalism, that "barbarous and dehumanising system which snatched me from Africa in chains and deposited me in far off lands to be a slave beast, then a subhuman colonial subject, and finally an outlaw in those lands" (Muganda et al., 1980, p. 1, as cited in Harisch, 2018, p. 76). The Guyanese scholar was striving to find ways of mastering knowledge from a different perspective, which to him meant using the specific tools of Marxist analysis. According to Rodney, it would be necessary to transform the institutions from within and to interfere against the prevailing petite bourgeoisie class which controls and manages the ideas and administration of institutions (Institute of the Black World, 1990, p. 114).

At the Dar es Salaam campus, Rodney aimed to set into dialogue the strands of anti-imperialist socialist thought of Amílcar Cabral, Kwame Nkrumah, and Frantz Fanon with Black Power and Black internationalism of a Caribbean and North American orientation. In this case, Dar es Salaam acted as an intellectual hub where a great diversity of overlapping Marxist-Leninist, pan-African, internationalist, Black Power, Maoist, Fanonist, and other ideological perspectives came into contact (Bourbonniere, 2007; Burton, 2017, pp. 401–456; Harisch, 2018). The UDSM as a radical intellectual hub connected Black radical and African socialist thought. African American civil rights activist Stokely Carmichael visited Tanzania several times, as did Black Power icon Angela Davis (Asheeke, 2019; Davis, 2018). Due to Rodney's presence and Tanzania's reputation among black people in the Caribbean, Dar es Salaam also became a crucial meeting point of Caribbean scholar-activists (Bedasse, 2017, pp. 67–69).

Scholars who wrote from a Black Studies perspective have argued that Rodney's "most significant contribution to the University's offerings was the introduction of a course entitled *The History of Blacks in America*" (Bly, 1985, p. 119, emphasis original). Indeed, when I looked into the archived curricula of the University of Dar es Salaam, Rodney's course appeared. Importantly, however, the course in the 1973/1974 syllabus taught by Rodney was called "History of the Black Peoples in the Americas" (University of Dar es Salaam, 1975). Rodney's course therefore expanded the history of black people to include South America while the version above exposed the Anglophone – African American and black British – tendency to exclude the whole South American continent from the transatlantic map. In a similar vein, Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* was attacked for its full-scale omission of the Lusophone and Hispanophone Atlantic – regardless of the fact that the black population in Brazil, for example, outnumbers the black population in the United States (Zeleza, 2005; Strickrodt, 2010).

Rodney's intellectual engagement with the history of black people in the Americas was put to paper in his essay "Africa in Europe and the Americas" (1975) for the *Cambridge History of Africa*. There Rodney analysed the African diaspora and the evolution of modern racism. As Rupert Lewis has argued, the inspiration for this piece came from teaching the course at the University of Dar es Salaam (Lewis, 1998a, p. 55).

A look into the academic prospects at the University Library of Dar es Salaam allows us further to trace the development of curricula during and after Rodney's stay. His course on the history of the black people in the Americas was kept at least until the late 1970s when Rodney had already returned to his homeland Guyana (University of Dar es Salaam, 1975).

IV Rodney in Jamaica and in Tanzania – issues of citizenship, belonging, and culture

> I have had a rare privilege of traveling around and living and working with black people in a lot of contexts. This has sensitized me to ways in which we need to understand the specificity of different situations. To talk about Pan-Africanism, to talk about international solidarity within the black world, whichever sector of the black world we live in, we have a series of responsibilities. One of the most important of our responsibilities is to define our own situation.
>
> (Institute of the Black World, 1990, p. 81)

The above quote shows how Rodney put emphasis on the specific contexts in which he lived and worked with black people. In a commemorative publication of Dar es Salaam scholars on the death of Rodney in 1980, the Congolese historian Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba brought forward an interesting argument with regard to Rodney's intellectual foundations that again emphasises the need to reflect on one's own situation or, in Wamba-dia-Wamba's (1980) words, one's national/social base:

> Let me say that Rodney, like all the people he reminds me of, was an internationalist by stand, viewpoint, method and practice. But sooner or later all of them realized that real internationalism must be rooted in a real national/social base, without which its efficacy becomes problematic. A genuine revolutionary activity must be internationalist; but, a genuine internationalism is only practised from a specific social base and national base.
>
> (p. 52)

Rodney was aware that his national/social base was in the Caribbean rather than Africa. After only one year in Tanzania, Rodney took an appointment to UWI in Jamaica in 1968 but was banned from re-entry during his first year of teaching. During his second time teaching at the University of Dar

es Salaam from 1969 to 1974, Rodney maintained close bonds with, and occasionally travelled to, the Caribbean and the United States as he attended conferences and delivered guest lectures. In Atlanta, he stood in close contact with black scholars and activists from the Institute of the Black World in Atlanta (Campbell, 1981, p. 57; Institute of the Black World, 1990). At the same time, African Americans and black Caribbean people continued to flock into Tanzania to support the country's version of African socialism.

Even in 1967, in the year of Tanzania's proclamation of Arusha, members of the International Affairs Commission of the *Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee* (SNCC) in the United States had met with Tanzania's president Julius Nyerere to discuss sending skilled Black Americans to Tanzania. In 1970, the African Skills Project (PASP) was set up in Dar es Salaam and soon also attracted Caribbean radicals who were each affiliated with the networks of PASP (Bedasse, 2017, p. 69). Walter Rodney was a frequent visitor at the PASP. He delivered the lecture series "Walter Rodney and Friends" to inform the participants of PASP on the politics and political economy of Tanzania and how they would best support the country's *ujamaa* policy. Because of these activities, Bedasse describes Rodney as a "facilitator of pan-Africanism" while he was teaching at Dar (Bedasse, 2017, p. 69).

Yet, despite these important attempts to institutionalise Pan-Africanism, in the following section I am going to ask how "an internationalist by stand, viewpoint, method and practice" like Rodney perceived questions of belonging in both Jamaica and Tanzania. Where was Rodney's national/social base and what role did citizenship and language play?

The trajectories behind Rodney's multiple changes of location between the early 1960s and the mid-1970s – London, Dar es Salaam, Kingston, Dar es Salaam with a number of conferences and lectureships in between such as Montreal and Atlanta – reveal a complex story of intellectual appropriation and adaption. Was Rodney able to reconcile his mobility with a rootedness in a national/social base which Wamba-dia-Wamba perceived as crucial for "real internationalism"? Rodney's decidedly internationalist, Pan-African stance makes an inquiry into this even more interesting, as they allow us to compare ideological and theoretical convictions with personal experiences on the ground. The groundings in Jamaica were described by scholars as a two-way intellectual and emotional fertilisation (Campbell, 1981; Alpers, 1982; Lewis, 1998a, 1998b, Young, 2008; Adeleke, 2017). Rodney delivered teach-ins on aspects of African history to the Rastafarians who in turn enlightened Rodney on dimensions of their blackness and spiritual beliefs. With regard to the issue of language, Rodney did not specify which linguistic and cultural barriers he had to cross during his interaction with Jamaicans. At this point it should be mentioned that most Jamaicans speak a "nation language" (Brathwaite, 1984) referred to locally as Patwa. Often called Jamaican Creole by linguists, Patwa is an English-based Creole language with a large number of loanwords from West African languages like Akan. There exist a great number of variations of Patwa. Rastafarians in Jamaica further developed their

own nation language and shaped distinctive cultures (Bedasse, 2017, pp. 16, 27, 66, 84, 128, 178) which meant there was a cultural and linguistic gulf for Rodney to cross. However, due to English being used as a *lingua franca* in Jamaica, and due to a certain cultural familiarity given Rodney's socialisation in the Caribbean, Rodney was able to "ground" with the Rastafarians in the "gullies" of Kingston in a way that he could not with Kiswahili-speaking peasants in the countryside during his stay in Tanzania (Harisch, 2020).

This does not mean that there were no frictions at all in Rodney's encounters with Rastafarians. As Monique Bedasse has emphasised, Rodney was a contributor to the Rasta publications *Black Man Speaks* and *Our Own*. With his Marxist-Leninist orientation Rodney disagreed with what he perceived to be Rasta conservatism in some of the articles contained in these publications. Some Rastafarians, on the other hand, were not satisfied with what they believed were "socialist articles". One issue edited by Rodney, for example, coupled a portrait of Tanzania's President Julius Nyerere with the caption "President Nyerere, President of Socialist Tanzania" (Bedasse, 2017, p. 46). From an African historian's perspective, there was arguably nothing wrong with framing Nyerere as "President of Socialist Tanzania", given the fact that the country's Arusha Declaration of 1967 aimed to set the country on a socialist path of development coined *ujamaa* (Kiswahili for familyhood) (Lal, 2015; Burton, 2017).

The objection to "Socialist Tanzania" by the Rastafarian community seems to stem from a more principled aversion of some groups of Rastafarians – and, according to Rodney, a majority of Caribbean people – towards socialist ideas (Institute of the Black World, 1990, pp. 81–122). Thus, in the Caribbean case, even though the "groundings" of Rodney were facilitated by a certain familiarity with Caribbean culture and even though it was easier to reach mutual intelligibility, frictions arose over different ideological perceptions.

Obviously, Tanzania was a different political, linguistic, and cultural context than Jamaica. As a non-national in an African postcolonial country – with its historical experience of interference by outsiders – Rodney was aware of the complex interplay between citizenship, belonging, and culture. In an interview Rodney gave in summer 1974 after his stay in East Africa, he emphasised the "limits of culture" and the "limits of one's legal status" – issues which complicate a supposedly homogeneous "black experience" spanning the Caribbean and Africa:

> One must recognize certain limits in any given political situation: limits of culture, limits of one's legal status, limits that come from the fact that we were speaking in the university one language, which is English, and the people of Tanzania were speaking Swahili. And one must take all of those things into account, along with the historical record—the Tanzanian people, like other African people, had constantly been subjected to harangues from outside as part of cultural imperialism.
>
> (Institute of the Black World, 1990, p. 39)

In the Jamaican context, Rodney accomplished his "groundings" with the Rastafarians in the poor neighbourhoods of Kingston (Rodney, 1996 [1969]) and beyond:

> I would speak on television if they allowed me. I spoke at the Extra-Mural Centre. Now these are all highly respectable and I would go further down into West Kingston and I would speak wherever there was a possibility of getting together. It might be a sports club, it might be in a schoolroom, it might be in a church, it might be in a gully.
>
> (p. 64)

Language and mutual understanding, it seems, were not too much of a barrier in these endeavours in Jamaica. In Tanzania, however, it was a more difficult task to immerse oneself in the fabric of society, notwithstanding Rodney's black skin colour, his Pan-African stance, and his preference for African cloth (Harisch, 2020, p. 122). Rodney himself had pointed to the difficulty of achieving a sophisticated cultural understanding of a given host society:

> [O]ne must know that society, that environment. One must have a series of responses and reflexes that come from having lived a given experience. One must be able to share a joke because of a nuance in language and pronunciation. One must be able to go to the marketplace in the case of Tanzania, and bargain in the Swahili manner without being perceived as an outsider. Now, when one thinks of all of these factors it's virtually a lifetime task to master a language and then to master the higher level of perception which normally goes into a culture. And I didn't believe that I could afford that. I believed that there is another culture from which I derived into which I could project myself with greater ease.
>
> (Institute of the Black World, 1990, p. 42)

Rodney's status as a non-national came with serious limitations for his political involvement, which compromised Rodney's role as a scholar-activist engaged in a socialist transformation of society. While Rodney stated that the comrades and friends he maintained contact with in Tanzania were welcoming and did not show signs of chauvinism or hostile nationalism, as a scholar-activist he was convinced that a revolution can only be made by people who are sufficiently grounded in a certain socio-political context (Institute of the Black World, 1990, p. 44). Rodney went on to explain:

> As long as I remained in Tanzania as a non-Tanzanian, as a marginal participant in the political culture, then it followed that I couldn't change my role. I would just have to remain at the university. I was in a fixed political role and my own feeling was that to break beyond those boundaries it was necessary to return once more to the Caribbean. That is the

> background that explains where I'm at in the Caribbean and in Guyana today.
>
> (Institute of the Black World, 1990, p. 43)

Here Rodney emphasises his Caribbean cultural background, which ultimately led him back to his homeland of Guyana in 1974, where he was promised a professorship at Georgetown University. Due to a last-minute intervention by the Guyanese government under prime minister Forbes Burnham, however, Rodney was denied the position. Following this intervention, Rodney was invited to the United States where he accepted a guest lectureship at the Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell University (Institute of the Black World, 1990, p. ix) which would last from January to May 1975. In the following years, from 1975 until his death in 1980, Rodney was a leading member of the Working People's Alliance (WPA), a Marxist political party of the Guyanese opposition. Through oppositional political work, the WPA attempted to transform Guyanese society along socialist lines, but in the end Rodney's political involvement cost him his life.

Conclusion

With this contribution on the Guyanese historian-activist Walter Rodney as a highly mobile scholar and an intellectual nexus between the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, and North America, I aimed to expand on Zeleza's (and other scholars') valuable criticism of *The Black Atlantic* as well as on the lack of socialist, Black Marxist, and pan-Africanist histories of mobility, and South-South connections more generally, in much Mobility Studies scholarship. At the same time, with my focus on the male, English-socialised Rodney, I am aware that I cannot evade the just criticism of a narrow focus on male-centred, mostly Anglophone experience (Zeleza, 2005, p. 37; Bedasse, 2017, p. 182). Despite these limitations, I have attempted to draw a complex picture of the myriad mobilities, transfers and connections between Rodney and his Jamaican and Tanzanian hosts, including frictions and cultural blockages.

Rodney's life as a scholar-activist during the 1960s and 1970s was incredibly mobile in the sense of physical mobility; a physical mobility that exposed Rodney to a great many different cultural and intellectual settings, which consequently shaped his thought. Given this incredible physical mobility and frequent temporary migrations within less than two decades, I have argued that Rodney acted as a crucial intellectual-activist nexus between the Caribbean, Africa, North America, and Europe. A specialist in African History, Rodney's exposure to multiple settings made him embrace – and critically engage with – concepts such as international socialism, Pan-Africanism, *Black Power* in Jamaica, the Caribbean and North America more generally, Tanzania's *ujamaa* socialism, and Third World struggles for emancipation from neo-colonialism. Rodney acted as an intellectual bridge, as a cultural broker between the multi-faceted knowledgescapes of Africa, the Caribbean, and

black people in North America. As I have shown, the transfer of knowledge out of Rodney's pen was reciprocal depending on whether he was in the Caribbean or in Africa: while he "grounded" with the Rastafarians in Jamaica and educated them about African history and cultures, he institutionalised a course with the title "History of the Black Peoples in the Americas" at the University of Dar es Salaam to expand the intellectual horizon and Pan-African understandings of his Tanzanian students.

By drawing on a broad variety of sources, including Rodney's own works, secondary literature, and some archival documents from the University Library in Dar es Salaam, I have aimed to trace multiple mobilities and intellectual transfers in connection to Walter Rodney. On a broader canvas, this contribution has aimed to initiate a dialogue between a "Black/Red/Radical African Atlantic" as a stimulus for not only global history, where they are often located, but for Mobility Studies as well. I am convinced that carefully contextualised historical scholarship – which does not necessarily have to be done by historians – has much to offer to Mobility Studies.

Notes

1 I am grateful to the editorial team for their encouragement to conceptualise Rodney as a nexus between the Caribbean and Africa, their careful reading of the text and their helpful criticism, comments, and suggestions. I would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive criticism, especially regarding the portrayal of Jamaica written by an African historian. This contribution partly draws on research for my Master's thesis written under the supervision of Arno Sonderegger at the University of Vienna. Discussions with Arno Sonderegger and my colleague Eric Burton (now University of Innsbruck) on Rodney made me more aware of the global dimension of Rodney's work. I am thankful to both of them for their support and friendship.

2 The year 2018 saw the first publication of Rodney's posthumous book *The Russian Revolution: A View from the Third World*, which was compiled from lectures Rodney held at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) in 1970/1971 as well as a brand-new edition of his well-known piece *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972) with a foreword by one iconic leader of the Black Power movement, Angela Davis. This was followed by a reprint of his *The Groundings with My Brothers* (1969) in 2019. All three books were published by Verso.

3 In Rastafari language, "to ground" gained a layered meaning:

> Not only did it mean sociality—an equal meeting that breaks socially constructed barriers of race, class, and education—but the nature of such an encounter was marked by 'reasonings'—a form of discussion in which each person contributed equally to the discourse without any prior hierarchical claims of knowledge.
>
> (Bogues, 2016, p. 129)

4 *Ujamaa* (Kiswahili for familyhood) symbolises Tanzania's socialist path of development which was publicly announced with the Arusha Declaration of 1967 and pursued by Tanzania's ruling party TANU/CCM until the mid-1980s (Lal, 2015; Burton, 2017).

5 To be fair, it must be said that some scholarship in Mobility Studies explicitly mentions historical precedents such as Braudel's work on the Mediterranean and

that the journal *Transfers*, for example, has sections on the history of ideas and the circulation of scientific knowledge from a historical perspective.

6 Since at least the mid-19th century, physical movements and intellectual transfers connected, for example, to Pan-African visions, have crisscrossed the Atlantic; the myriad strands of thought connected to Pan-Africanism have, since their emergence, escaped – as a *conditio sine qua non* – the spectre of methodological nationalism as they looked for broader definitions and ways to overcome geographical, political and racial boundaries. During the 20th century, the visions and ideas of Caribbean Pan-African thinkers travelled even more widely, as did the protagonists themselves (Geiss, 1968; Eckert, 2007; Sonderegger, 2011a; Adi, 2018; Hoppel, 2019).

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3 "REPATRIATION: YES! MIGRATION: NO!"[1]

Back-to-Africa in Rastafarian thought and practice

Dominik Frühwirth

"Our foreparents did not ask to come down here in the West!"[2]

When in the early 16th century the first enslaved Africans were robbed, sold, and shipped[3] across the Atlantic (Fyfe, 1976, p. 59), it was not migration in any ordinary (i.e. voluntary) sense but the beginning of the transatlantic slave trade. As Valeria Ottonelli and Tiziana Torresi (2013) have pointed out, the "notion of voluntariness is central to the study of migration, being implicitly or explicitly assumed by the definition of what counts as 'forced' migration" (p. 783). Thus, migration has an implicitly voluntary connotation, which can only be avoided by explicitly specifying it as "forced". Therefore, slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, is often subsumed under forced migration (The Center for Migration Studies of New York, 1964, p. 69[4]; see also more recently Elliott & Hughes, 2019).

But even when speaking of forced migration, Ottonelli and Torresi (2013) further emphasise that "the focus on voluntariness is [still] important because it looks at migration from the point of view of the migrants themselves and takes them into account as agents" (p. 789). The implication is, therefore, that even where migration is forced by war, famine, or persecution, migrants still have basic agency over their choices, however limited. But transatlantic chattel slavery was out to deny *any* agency or choices on the part of the enslaved; they were considered and treated as property (i.e. chattel) at the mercy of their owners (Fyfe, 1976, p. 71; see also Toivanen's discussion of "zombified mobilities" and the lack of agency in this volume).

Rastafarians therefore contest that the transatlantic slave trade should be conceptualised in terms of migration at all, even in terms of forced migration. And if the transatlantic slave trade did not constitute migration in any sense, as it tried to deny any agency to the enslaved, it therefore becomes understandable when Rastafarians refuse to see why migration, in terms of self-organised and self-financed movement, should play any role in their return back to Africa when it did not play any role in their dispersal from Africa: "Rastafari really want repatriation, we don't want migration. We didn't spend any money to come to the West, so most naturally we shouldn't be

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responsible for going back to Africa, where money is concerned" (Rastafari Elder Ras Dago interviewed in Ishmahil, 2002). The position that enslaved Africans did not come to the West voluntarily and that, therefore, their descendants should not be responsible for financing their return themselves, only constitutes one reason why Rastafarians reject the idea of migration as a vehicle for their return back to Africa. In order to further comprehend Rastafarian contempt for the notion of migration and to better understand why, therefore, "Rastafari saw repatriation as a type of mobility distinct from migration, especially owing to their spiritual interpretation" (Bonacci, 2015a, p. 188), this chapter will be guided by some important insights from the field of Mobility Studies.

First, as the "new mobility paradigm argues against this ontology of distinct 'places' and 'people'" and more in favour of "a complex relationality of places and persons connected through performances" (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 214), such as those of Rastafari, the Rastafarian self-identification as African "people" is made intelligible although they have long been removed from the "place" of the African continent itself. This self-identification as Africans leads them to further reject the idea of migration as a movement *away* from one's origins, while instead demanding repatriation as a movement *back* to their origins, i.e. back home.

Second, these cultural and spiritual "performances", which connect "places and persons" and have thereby allowed enslaved Africans and their descendants to maintain certain connections to their African origins so that Rastafarians still identify as Africans while rejecting Jamaican identity, have enabled "imaginative travel effected through talk, but also [through] images of places and peoples appearing on and moving across multiple print and visual media" (Büscher & Urry, 2009, p. 101). This is why much of the history of the continuous longing for Africa among descendants of enslaved Africans in Jamaica is about physical immobility and imaginative and spiritual mobility. In this sense, enslaved Africans and their descendants have always extensively travelled back and forth to the continent of their origins through their memories, religious philosophies and cultural practices, while being condemned to physical immobility in "an open prison surrounded by water" (Grant, 2012, p. 128), i.e. Jamaica. The history of African-derived spiritual traditions in Jamaica, as a culmination of which Rastafari can be understood, will illustrate this point.

Third, in "the new mobilities paradigm, places themselves are seen as travelling, slow or fast, greater or shorter distances, within networks of human and nonhuman agents" (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 214). The maintenance of African identities, through "imaginative travel" as well as physical "networks of human and nonhuman agents" through the ongoing slave trade and indentured labourers from Africa after slavery, has therefore led many Rastafarians to view Jamaica, a majority-black country, as "an African outpost in the West".[5] This is in line with the "mobilities paradigm [which] indeed emphasises that all places are tied into at least thin networks of connections

that stretch beyond each such place and mean that nowhere can be an 'island'" (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 209), not even a literal island like Jamaica, especially not in Rastafarian understanding. This has led to an ambivalence between a continuous longing for physical repatriation back to Africa on the one hand, and a sense of Jamaica already being African, thereby sometimes relativising the urgency of physical repatriation, on the other hand. This ambivalence, although often suspected to be a modern side-effect of Reggae music (where, for example, Chronixx, the current superstar of Reggae, sings that he is "pleased to be chilling in the West Indies"[6]), actually goes back to the earliest Rastafarians who "intended to remain in Jamaica, where [they] would work to make the island a part of the global diaspora of the Kingdom of God in Ethiopia" (Dunkley, 2018, p. 1), and therefore plays a role throughout the history of Back-to-Africa in Rastafarian thought and practice.

Rastafarian self-identification as already/still being African has therefore led Rastafarians to reject the idea of migration on the following grounds: ideologically, as Africans, they do not want to migrate anywhere *else* but want to repatriate *home*; and practically, since they did not voluntarily migrate to the West, they do not see why they should be required to migrate back to Africa on their own; as migration implies not only a self-determined but also a self-financed movement. But since enslaved Africans did not come to the West in any ordinary sense of self-determined migration, Rastafarians like Prince Emmanuel, founder of one of the three main organisations, or houses, within the Rastafari movement, were therefore

> denouncing migration as another form of slavery, by which he meant using one's own money to buy a passage to Africa, and declared that the only way to get to Ethiopia was to await salvation, that is to say, repatriation.
>
> (Chevannes, 1994, p. 180)

It is, therefore, the attempt of this chapter to further understand Rastafarian approaches towards migration and repatriation by analysing the long history of the continuous longing for Africa among enslaved Africans and their descendants in Jamaica, in general, and Rastafarians, in particular, through these insights from Mobility Studies.

An African outpost in the West[7]

Even at conservative rates, it is estimated that about ten million Africans were dispersed through the transatlantic slave trade and enslaved in the Western Hemisphere (Fyfe, 1976, p. 62). Human beings were declared property and stripped off any agency over their destinies except for occasional rebellions. And "Jamaica, the small Caribbean island [...] where the Rastafari movement began, is credited with one of the highest rates of slave revolts and conspiracies in the history of any slave society" (Chevannes,

1998a, p. 1). Thus, enslaved Africans in Jamaica fought fiercely to regain some agency over their destinies of which they were robbed, and the "most central institution to the tradition of resistance in Jamaica has been religion" (Chevannes, 1998a, p. 1).

But the different regional African religions which the enslaved brought with them over the Atlantic were soon obscured in the cultural alienation of slavery, and what Simpson (1976) called "syncretistic cults of the Caribbean have evolved because persons of African ancestry in the diaspora were cut off from contact with Africa and could not preserve intact their traditional religions" (p. 291). The first and most important syncretistic religion that emerged because of this, and that thereby allowed enslaved Africans to maintain some forms of African identities through cultural and spiritual performances and frequent "imaginative travel" to their African origins, was the new pan-African religion called Myal, which probably had Central African roots (Chevannes, 1998a, p. 6). It is considered pan-African because it united many of the different disconnected religious strands from Africa. As such, Myal first came to the attention of Europeans in the Taki Rebellion of 1760 where it therefore "enabled a rebellion to be organised on pan-African instead of strictly ethnic lines for the first time in the history of the Africans in Jamaica" (Chevannes, 1994, p. 17) and thus nurtured imaginations of, and consequent longings for, the African continent as a whole, beyond regional distinctions.

This pan-African spiritual tradition developed in the mid-18th century on the Jamaican slave plantations where enslaved Africans remained unaffected by Christianity until the late 18th century (Besson, 1998, p. 56), because "[u]nlike Haiti, where the slaves were commanded if not forced to be members of the Catholic faith, the English planters in Jamaica adamantly refused to share their religion with the slave population" (Barrett, 1997, p. 17). It was therefore not until the formerly enslaved Baptist preacher George Liele arrived from North America in 1783 that Christianity became widely accessible to enslaved Africans in Jamaica. Liele, who founded the first Baptist church in Jamaica, which he named the Ethiopian Baptist Church (Erskine, 2007, p. 9), introduced a subversive[8] Ethiopianist claim to Christianity in contrast to the dominant colonial interpretation that sought to justify slavery. As such, Ethiopianism[9] placed special emphasis on the liberatory messages of the Bible, like the Exodus (9:11) story urging slave-holders to "let my people go", and on positive mentions of Africa and Africans under the ancient Greek terminology of Ethiopia with which enslaved Africans soon started to identify as Liele's sermons "began with the call, 'Arise ye sons of Ethiopia'" (Edmonds, 2003, pp. 34–35).

This subversive Ethiopianist interpretation fell on fertile ground among enslaved Africans because "the 'Native' or 'Black' Baptist variant [was] incorporating and controlled by Myalism" (Besson, 1998, p. 58), so much that "the name 'Native Baptist' was being widely used to refer to the more christianized forms of Myal" (Chevannes, 1994, p. 19). This is important because when, then, in "late 1860, a Christian revival that began in the Anglophone north Atlantic spread through Jamaica, [it was therefore] providing Myal

with a new platform of evangelism under a new name, Revival" (Chevannes, 2001, p. 283). Since then, the Christianised Myalism known as Revivalism has been Jamaica's most widespread religion and has thereby maintained identifications with Africa among Jamaicans (Chevannes, 2001, p. 282). The "African-derived religion, Myal" (Stewart, 2001, p. 166), throughout all of its Christian reincarnations, has therefore established those performances among enslaved Africans and their descendants that have facilitated their "imaginative travel" to their African origins through which they were able to develop and maintain an African identity as such, beyond ethnic distinctions, due to its pan-African outlook. But, although sustaining African identities, these Myalist Native Baptist developments, as they have "culminated in the Revival worldview of today" (Besson, 1998, p. 74), have not put much emphasis on an actual return to Africa (Erskine, 2007, p. 86).

Rastafari: "Africa we want to go!"[10]

This lack of emphasis has changed with Rastafari.[11] Like "the Revival worldview, the roots of Rastafari can be traced in part to [this Myalist Native Baptist] eighteenth century Jamaican slave religion, with the emergence of the ideology of Ethiopianism among the plantation slaves" (Besson, 1998, p. 63). But since, unlike Revivalism, Rastafari is not only derived from African religious roots but also aspires to an actual return to Africa, "[r]epatriation, as the return to Africa is known, thus became the first important departure from Revival" (Chevannes, 1998b, p. 26) for Rastafari and therefore constituted an important turning point in the history of the continuous longing for Africa among enslaved Africans and their descendants in Jamaica.

Yet initially, when Rastafari emerged out of Jamaica's early 1930s, the whole first generation of Rastafarians around Leonard Howell, who is usually regarded as "The First Rasta" (Lee, 2003), was still entrenched in its Revivalist background (Chevannes, 1998b, p. 39). Therefore, apart from promoting allegiance to Ras Tafari,[12] the newly crowned Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, instead of "that Vagabond George Stewart of England" (Howell, as cited in Robertson, 2015, p. 88), early Rastafarians were not yet much distinguished from other Jamaican Revivalists. As such, they also shared, at least in part, Revivalism's approach to Africa (as a past that should be honoured, but not an actual future destination) and therefore, as Dunkley (2018) argued, only promoted "psychological repatriation as opposed to physical repatriation to facilitate a Rastafari black nationalist agenda for Jamaica" (p. 1). So while "it is indisputable that he paid homage to Ethiopia, […] Howell intended to remain in Jamaica, where he would work to make the island a part of a global diaspora of the Kingdom of God in Ethiopia" (Dunkley, 2018, p. 1).[13] Barry Chevannes (as cited in Jackson and Thomas, 2011), on the other hand, thinks that

> the reason why they didn't agitate on it [repatriation] at that time, that first decade, was simply because they had a bigger task, namely to convince

> people that Haile Selassie was God. Because if you convince people that Haile Selassie was in fact the Son of God, or God himself, then the whole question of repatriation, of returning to Zion, the seat of His Majesty's power, would follow, I think, logically.

Although Dunkley (2018) also acknowledges that when Howell was sentenced for sedition in 1934, the accusations included telling the people that 'after the 1st of August, 1934,' they 'would know when they were going to Ethiopia, because the King of England and King Ras Tafari were going to hold a consultation over that matter, and the King of England would take them over in ships to Ethiopia and hand them over to their king' (p. 12), this was more an ideological assertion than an actual proposition. Howell therefore insisted on trial that he never told his followers to seek repatriation by themselves ("Have you ever advised them to go to Abyssinia? – No; never".) and maintained that he simply informed them that the long-awaited messianic King was finally establishing his righteous rule in the world, as part of which he would "redeem them home to their Motherland, Africa", "and when he came, the Crowned Head of England would turn them over to their King" (as cited in the Jamaica Daily Gleaner, 15 March 1934, p. 20). As the Daily Gleaner (ibid.) summarised Howell's defence, "He had only been counselling them to be satisfied with conditions now, for happiness and prosperity were near". This account therefore reconciles both the argument that the main purpose of the early Rastafarians was first and foremost to spread the good news of the newly crowned messianic King, and the argument that Revivalist remnants still motivated a certain acceptance of European institutions which would eventually sort out their repatriation for them so that they did not have to agitate for it themselves. Howell's proclamation of the coming messianic King therefore amounted to divine intervention and thus included wonderful promises of Africa as a heavenly place where the repatriated would not have to work for anybody or pay taxes as they would be free from all the oppression that Jamaica represented to them (Robertson, 2015, p. 87). Orlando Patterson (2012), in his famous 1964 novel with the telling title "The Children of Sisyphus", vividly portrayed these early days of the Rastafari movement up into the 1950s, when such divine intervention provided the only hope to escape the misery of the oppressed, before the 1960s brought about the first tangible initiatives towards actual, physical repatriation. As Patterson (2012) described this time, "Unless you were a Rastafarian there was nothing to look forward to except poverty" (p. 108).

But instead of passively waiting for heavenly deliverance, Howell harnessed this longing for a better place to materialise it right then and there in Jamaica itself. In 1940, he established his mountain commune of several thousand followers, called Pinnacle, in the hills of St. Catherine near Spanish Town (Barnett, 2015, p. 61). This was therefore either an attempt at finding the "promised land" in Jamaica itself (according to Dunkley's analysis), or at bridging the gap until the expected repatriation was finally implemented by

the King of Ethiopia in cooperation with the King of England. Whatever the case may be, it effectively relieved the urgency of physical repatriation back to Africa for some time. However, after the destruction of this prosperous commune at the hands of the colonial authorities in 1954–1958, hundreds of Rastafarians had to take refuge in the desperate slums of West Kingston, where they now, again, had nothing else left than to look to the sea-shore for their deliverance (Besson, 1998, p. 65), as Patterson later described.

There they joined a next generation of young Rastafarians who were both inspired by frequent visits to Pinnacle but also critical of its Revival outlook (Yawney & Homiak, 2001, p. 260). Since they had not been permanently living at Pinnacle, and had therefore not directly benefitted from its prosperity while facing the harsh realities of poverty and degradation in the Kingston ghettos, they were already putting more emphasis on physical repatriation as their only hope for deliverance. The destruction of Pinnacle only confirmed to them what they already knew: that there was no freedom and prosperity for them in Jamaica. Consequently, they took the Africa-rhetoric of their predecessors to its logical conclusion, demanded actual repatriation and developed the now iconic Dreadlocks *livity*[14] as a clear break with the colonial worldview that Revivalism partly shared. In a sense, therefore, the second generation of Rastafari started to actually "walk the talk" of the first generation. These developments that have mainly given us the Rastafari movement as we know it today slowly took shape within an organisation called the "Youth Black Faith, founded by young activists in 1949, [which] 'represented a reform trend of younger converts bent on purging the movement of Revivalist practices'" (Besson, 1998, p. 44 quoting Chevannes). Therefore, purging Rastafari of its Revival background finally brought about the turn towards actual repatriation back to Africa that Revivalism did not share due to "Revivalist nonengagement with Africa in terms of repatriation" (Erskine, 2007, p. 86).

"Ethiopia, the land of our fathers"[15] vs. England, the so-called "mother country"

However, the "historical scope of the desire to return from Jamaica to Africa extends beyond the Rastafari movement itself" and involved both descendants of enslaved Africans as well as indentured labourers imported by the British from Africa after slavery, "many of whom wanted to return to their country of origin at the end of the period of indenture", but "[b]etween 1843 and 1845, less than three hundred persons made the return journey by boat" so that "[t]housands of immigrants were forced to remain in Jamaica, nurturing a collective imaginary of Africa and return" (Bonacci, 2015a, pp. 134–135).

The first petitions of descendants of enslaved Africans go back to the 1930s when Rastafari was emerging but had not yet put much emphasis on actual repatriation due to its Revival background. Whether they were indentured labourers or descendants of enslaved Africans, none of them, enslaved or

indentured, came as regular migrants on their own, and therefore the "financing of this return was regarded as a responsibility of the British and was requested from them" (Bonacci, 2015a, p. 134). The first to request this were WWI veterans in 1933.

> The governor, Sir Alexander R. Slater, [although admitting that] 'theoretically the argument of the petitioners is not without force and it commands my sympathy', declined on reasons that 'if Government recognized it [the right to return] we should logically have to repatriate all the descendants of African slaves who claimed that right'.
>
> (Bonacci, 2015a, p. 138)

This official response shows that there was a mutual understanding from early on that repatriation, in contrast to migration, referred to a responsibility on the part of the former slave-trading governments and is therefore intrinsically linked to reparations.

The next petition came from Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) after the British had supported the liberation of Ethiopia from fascist aggression in 1941 (and Garvey had already passed), warning the British Governor of Jamaica in vintage Ethiopianist fashion that

> if the British government should make the grave mistake of not keeping to her word of giving justice to Ethiopia, which must include justice to all her children those at home and abroad [i.e. in Ethiopia/Africa and its diaspora], [it] will cause the entire [black] race to lose the confidence they had in the words of the British Government.
>
> (Bonacci, 2015a, p. 140)

Although Rastafarians never had much confidence in the British government to begin with, as their conflicts with British authorities have shown from early on, some of them also began to request their right to return already around that time so that "[b]etween 1943 and 1949, at least thirty-five letters, most of them hand-written, pleading the cause of return, were received by the colonial secretariat", "their authors were Rastafari" (Bonacci, 2015a, p. 155).

At that time of increasing interest in repatriation back to Africa among not only Rastafarians, the "British Nationality Act of 1948 extended citizenship to the subjects of the empire in the colonies and provided a legal framework for giving them the same rights as those living in the metropole" (Bedasse, 2017, p. 109). The same year, the British cruiser Empire Windrush brought the first 350 Jamaican migrants to England, who became the so-called Windrush Generation (BBC, 2019), and by "the 1950s thousands of West Indians, including many Jamaicans, sought to escape crushing poverty by migrating to the 'mother country'" (Bedasse, 2017, p. 109). This enthusiasm for Britain as the "mother country" was widely instilled through a Jamaican upbringing,

as Connie Mark (in Upshal, 1998) from the Windrush Generation explained: "We were brought up that we were British, and we were brought up that England is our mother country". Noel Brown (in Upshal, 1998) added, thereby illustrating the Rastafarian emphasis on the connection between allegiance to an African king and their African identity: "The [British] king was our king, the [British] flag was our flag. How more British could we get?"

But while

> thousands of persons were leaving for England, the desire to return to Africa surfaced powerfully and was captured in slogans such as these, to be heard in the streets of Kingston: 'Africa Yes, England No' or 'Repatriation Yes, Migration No'.
>
> (Bonacci, 2015a, p. 164)

Repatriation was therefore associated with returning home to Africa as a responsibility of the British government, while migration was associated with self-financed and -organised movement to (cold, colonial) Britain and was therefore rejected. Significantly, the British far-right had also adopted the slogan "Immigration, no! Repatriation, yes!" *against* Caribbean immigrants, underlining Rastafarian suspicions that England was in fact not a welcoming "mother country" at all (Upshal, 1998): "We always thought it was a land of paradise when we coming, to live in your 'mother country', but now your 'mother' getting very wicked and start to flog out the children out of the house".[16] The recent "Windrush Scandal" since 2014, in which the British government has questioned the citizenship of all immigrants from the Windrush Generation who had not renewed their papers since their arrival in Britain, even deporting some as illegals after they had contributed lifetimes of blood, sweat and tears to the British economy and society (BBC, 2019), shows, in hindsight, that these suspicions against migration to the so-called "mother country" were indeed justified. It therefore stresses the frustration which has been widespread among the Windrush Generation (The Guardian, 2019), that instead of a caring and loving "mother country", which it has never really been, in actual fact "Inglan Is A Bitch", as the popular Jamaican Dub Poet Linton Kwesi Johnson[17] from the Windrush Generation famously put it.

From a whirlwind to Africa to a Windrush to England

When Marcus Garvey (1986, p. 237) was incarcerated in 1925 and his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was at the beginning of its downfall, concluding his "First Message to the Negroes of the World from Atlanta Prison", he urged his followers to:

> Look for me in the whirlwind or the storm, look for me all around you, for, with God's grace, I shall come and bring with me countless millions of black slaves who have died in America and the West Indies

> and the millions in Africa to aid you in the fight for Liberty, Freedom and Life.

However, by the late 1940s and 1950s Jamaica was looking towards England as its "mother country" and destination for migration where the Windrush Generation was establishing itself.

And yet, in the midst of the euphoria of migration to England, when only Garveyites like the Rastafarians were still looking for Marcus Garvey's African vision in the whirlwind, Africa suddenly replied to their hopes. In 1937, during Italy's fascist invasion of Ethiopia, when Ethiopia was in the spotlight of world sympathy and "the first grand pan-African international mobilization took shape" (Bonacci, 2015b, p. 150), Haile Selassie had sent his envoy Melaku Beyen to New York to found the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) in order to pool and supervise diasporic support for the Ethiopian cause. According to the preamble of its constitution, the EWF understood Ethiopians in traditional Ethiopianist fashion as "We the Black Peoples of the World" and thereby validated the centuries-old diasporic Ethiopianist claim to "Ethiopia, which is our heritage" (Barrett, 1997, p. 227), through the authority of the Ethiopian government itself.

After Haile Selassie had victoriously re-entered his country in 1941, following Ethiopian tradition, he showed his appreciation to different groups that had supported Ethiopia's struggle by granting them land possessions, the only resource that was still abundantly at the disposal of the government in the war-torn country (Frühwirth, 2019, p. 138). In this context, Haile Selassie also gave land to "The Black Peoples of the World" through the EWF, who had supported Ethiopia during the invasion, maybe as early as 1948 (MacLeod, 2014, p. 10), and by "1955 […] the news of the donation was publicly announced in Kingston" (Bonacci, 2015a, p. 111). Finally, it seemed, "Zion gates were open wide".[18] Therefore, Africa, the only real "mother country" for the descendants of enslaved Africans as far as Rastafarians were concerned, and Great Britain, the colonial so-called "mother country", were now vying for the imagination of black Jamaicans. But it was not only England vs. Africa, it was also migration vs. repatriation. As one of the Rastafarian pioneers who settled on the land-grant near Shashemene[19] in Southern Ethiopia, "Harold Reid illustrates this tension between migration and repatriation" since he already

> had even put aside money to pay for the trip to England, but really 'It nah make nah sense […].' Thanks to an imagination nurtured by numerous sessions spent among the Rastafari, he had something else in his mind: Africa.
>
> (Bonacci, 2015a, p. 196)

This was shared by many others too as Rastafarians were keeping alive a tradition from Myalism to Garveyism of continuous imaginative travels through

cultural and spiritual performances back and forth to their African origins. This urge for Africa among Rastafarians, now backed by support from the Ethiopian government itself, which had effectively turned mythical Ethiopianist hopes into concrete prospects, even forced the Jamaican government into action: "A 1960 study of the Rastafarian movement by a group of university scholars" recommended "that the government investigate the possibility of repatriation to Africa" (Edmonds, 2003, pp. 84–85). One of these scholars, Rex Nettleford,

> argues that because the government was pursuing a policy of migration, as a result of which thousands of Jamaicans moved to the United Kingdom and the United States, it felt constrained to deal with the Rastafarian call for repatriation to Africa as well.
>
> (Edmonds, 2003, p. 86).

Therefore, in 1961, the Jamaican government sponsored a fact-finding mission to Africa on the possibility of repatriation, including representatives from the UNIA, the EWF, the Afro-Caribbean Council, the Afro-West Indian Welfare League, and three Rastafarian representatives, to five African countries: Ethiopia, Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. One of the three Rastafarian representatives, Douglas Mack (1999), remembered that in an audience with Haile Selassie, "the Emperor said that he knew the black people of the west, particularly Jamaica, were blood brothers to the Ethiopians" and that "Ethiopia was large enough to accommodate all the people of African descent living in the Caribbean with the desire to return. He told us that Ethiopia would always be open to those who wanted to return home" (p. 100). The delegation also visited the pioneer settlers in Shashemene and received similar assurances of welcome from the other African governments they visited as well.

Being the first official contact between the Rastafari movement and the African continent, the 1961 Mission to Africa, as it is usually known, was a pivotal point in the history of the continuous longing for Africa among Rastafarians. Although this first mission was followed by another government-sponsored Technical Mission to Africa in 1962, in which no Rastafarians but only government officials took part to actually facilitate the bureaucracy of repatriation, both mission reports "were shelved and ignored after the change in government [i.e. independence], effectively stalling the momentum for repatriation that the Rastafari movement had garnered" (Barnett, 2018, p. 37). Rastafarians had therefore now to organise and finance their repatriation themselves (which makes it, at least in practical terms, migration), and especially the EWF and the largest Rastafarian organisation, known as the Twelve Tribes of Israel, which started out as a local of the EWF, were able to send settlers to Shashemene and sustain them. This change from government-sponsored to Rastafarian self-organisation was illustrated in the self-financed follow-up mission by two of the three Rastafarian representatives

from the first mission in 1964–1965 to Nigeria, Kenya and Ethiopia, where they again had an audience with the Emperor (Mack, 1999, p. 124).

But although Rastafarians were opposed to the idea of migration as a vehicle for their return home, even the government-organised mission impressed on them the fact that there was no getting around migratory requirements such as passports and visas. Therefore, in reality there was no clear dichotomy, neither between migration and repatriation nor between England and Africa, as Rastafarians now had to finance their repatriation themselves and England soon became a possible gateway for repatriation to Africa. Noel Dyer, for example, migrated to England in 1960 as part of the Windrush Generation before he hitchhiked from London in 1964, reaching Ethiopia in 1965, to settle as the first Jamaican Rastafarian in Shashemene (Bonacci, 2015a, pp. 164–165; Dollar, 1993). Besides Noel Dyer, many other Rastafarians took the opportunity of migrating to England in order to be one step closer to Africa, where they were joined by a whole generation of uprooted children from the Windrush Generation who now found in Rastafari and its focus on Africa much needed identity and purpose. Rastafarian activists successfully campaigned for the establishment of EWF locals and Ethiopian Orthodox Church branches in various English cities and established "the first official contact between members of the Rastafarian community and the Imperial Ethiopian Government" (Adams, 2002, p. 35) through the Ethiopian Embassy in London even before the 1961 Mission to Africa, so that England became one of the international hubs of Rastafari.

"The whole continent one time was Ethiopia"[20]

One of those Jamaican children from the Windrush Generation who later identified with Rastafari and Africa, born in England in 1952, was Ras Bupe Karudi. He was another pioneer on the repatriation trail from the United Kingdom to various African countries. Although also raised in Jamaica, he later returned to England and from there, "Karudi was denied entry by several African countries, including Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe" in 1977 (Bedasse, 2017, p. 113). He was finally allowed into Kenya and Uganda on tourist visas, from where "he was deported to England in 1978" (Bedasse, 2017, p. 113). He tried it again in Zimbabwe and Zambia together with his Jamaican wife Kisembo Karudi and their son in 1983. After both countries declined them, they were able to finally settle in Tanzania later that same year with the help of Joshua Mkhululi, a Jamaican Rastafarian educated at the University of the West Indies, who had been a lecturer at the University of Dar-es-Salaam since 1976. Through their mutual agitation for repatriation, President Nyerere finally "agreed with the principle of black Africans returning to Africa" in a 1985 letter entitled "Africans in the West" (Bedasse, 2017, p. 119). Thereby England now also became a gateway to Tanzania as Mkhululi and Karudi began heavy recruitment among Rastafarian communities there in 1986.

In this sense, England represents the ambivalence between the continuous longing for Africa on the one hand and trying to get along in the West, England or Jamaica, on the other hand: On the one hand those who saw England as a gateway to Africa (theoretically, at least), and on the other hand, those who saw in the supposed "mother country" itself their final destination and who would, half a century later, become so bitterly betrayed (and some even deported) in the so-called Windrush Scandal (The Guardian, 2019).

The new focus on other African countries besides the Rastafarians' "promised land" of Ethiopia was due to the military coup and subsequent overthrow of the Ethiopian monarchy in 1974. Although part of the original land-grant was reinstated by the new military administration called *Derg*, for the Rastafarians this meant years of hardship under constant scrutiny and obstacles from the anti-monarchist government: "They experienced integration at the lowest rung of the Ethiopian social ladder, and their standard of living, which was already low in Jamaica, declined even further in Ethiopia" (Bonacci, 2015a, p. 317). The fact that Haile Selassie was no longer in power and the subsequent deterioration of the situation of the settlers made many Rastafarians look for greener pastures elsewhere, while many others continued to repatriate to Ethiopia (see Christian 2018 and Gomes' contribution in this volume for more recent developments in Shashemene). President Nyerere's pan-African policies and understanding for the desire to return home among many Africans in the West made Tanzania a feasible alternative to Ethiopia as Rastafarians received their official right of entry in 1985, about six years after Mkhululi had first presented their case to Nyerere, and a land-grant in 1989 (Bedasse, 2017, p. 134). Since then, "Rastafari has taken Tanzania by storm with many youths embracing the Faith and striving towards living up to the principles of Rastafari", as Kisembo Karudi (1999, p. 35) summarised their achievement.

When, therefore, Ras Bupe Karudi went to Jamaica in 1986 to recruit Rastafarians for repatriation to Tanzania, many refused to give up on Ethiopia. Especially the Twelve Tribes of Israel Organisation, of which both Karudi and Mkhululi were members, and the EWF, as its name already signifies, continued to organise repatriation to Ethiopia. Therefore, only a handful followed the call, as financing allowed. The most prominent among them was the famous Rastafarian visual artist Ras Daniel Heartman, and it took Ras Bupe Karudi about two years to raise the necessary funds among Rastafarian communities in England to purchase airline tickets for him and his son (Bedasse, 2017, p. 123).

"We are Africans!"[21]

The case of Ras Daniel Heartman "underscores the fact that many Rastafarians were yet to ponder the actualities of repatriation" in terms of migration, as "Heartman was 'totally conflicted' about having to apply for a Jamaican

passport in order to travel. This was consistent with the Rastafarian rejection of Jamaican nationality and identity" (Bedasse, 2017, p. 123):

> In an attempt to live his life in a way that was consistent with his philosophies, and in honor of the identity he consciously embraced, Heartman even pleaded with the Jamaican authorities to allow him to board the aircraft without passport, explaining that he was going home to Africa.
> (Bedasse, 2017, p. 123)

Although this was of course to no avail and it was only by following international immigration requirements that Ras Daniel Heartman and his son reached Tanzania in 1988, the case illustrates how closely tied together identity and repatriation are to Rastafarians as they "define themselves as the 'true Ethiopians' and claim to have 'repatriated' to Ethiopia[/Africa], to 'have returned home'" (Bonacci, 2015a, p. 1). Kisembo Karudi (1999) was still recruiting potential home-comers in the late 1990s with the Rastafarian conviction that "Rastafari and Afrika is part and parcel of the same thing, so be courageous and re-claim what is yours" (p. 35).
This Rastafarian self-identification as already/still being Africans who simply want to return home does therefore not only lead to the rejection of the idea of migration (both ideologically and practically/financially), but also means that

> Rastafari are not simply a group of immigrants coming to a country, bringing their culture and experience to bear on their new home; they are a group of people who bring their own powerful story of home and origins to the country they believe to be their home and Promised Land.
> (MacLeod, 2014, p. 242; see also Bello's discussion on "home" in this volume)

This has sometimes caused conflicts between Rastafarian repatriates and local host communities, especially in Shashemene/Ethiopia, where, in contrast to other African countries,[22] virtually all Rastafarians are repatriates without a substantial local Rastafarian community to bridge the gap (see Frühwirth, 2019, p. 140 and Gomes' contribution in this volume). As Ijahnya Christian (2018), a Rastafari Elder from Anguilla in Shashemene, summarised this complexity,

> Rastafari on the land continue to assert that they are not refugees, people living in exile, internally displaced persons, the type of investors being attracted or any of the existing legal statuses. They represent a category that does not officially exist – returning Africans.
> (p. 328)

On the other hand, the notion of Rastafarians already/still being Africans wherever they are has also led to the idea of Jamaica being an "African outpost

in the West", thereby relativising the urgency of repatriation, a tendency we have seen throughout Rastafarian history. As described, this tendency goes back to the earliest Rastafarians even before there was any actual physical repatriation of Rastafarians back to Africa and continued after the first serious attempt at repatriation during the 1961 Mission to Africa. Roy Augier (as cited in Bonacci, 2015a, p. 174), one of the scholars who had prepared the 1960 University Report on Rastafari, for example, reported that he heard Ras Mortimo Planno after returning from the 1961 Mission to Africa giving a speech in Kingston's then Coronation Market. In it he allegedly

> wanted to convey to that crowd – and it was a very large crowd – that Africa was not what it had been trumped up to be. But those words never left his mouth, he just circled it, approached it, retreated, but gradually hinting. …I think they got the message, but he never said, let's abandon repatriation and let's stay here, we are better off over here: Jamaican society is better organized. He never said anything like that.

And neither have any other Rastafari elders ever said anything like that, as physical repatriation back to Africa remains one of the (at least, ideological) core tenets of the movement. But the hardships that actual repatriation initiatives have encountered in different parts of Africa, coupled with the material development that has reached even poorer sections of the Jamaican society in the meantime, has definitely led to a re-evaluation of Jamaica as illustrated in many Reggae songs up to now.

This ambivalence has led some observers of the Rastafarian movement to conclude that "the return to Africa occupies a merely theological, millenarian function. This purportedly explains why return is regularly emphasized by the Rastafari with no actual realization" (Bonacci, 2015a, p. 8). Although this can hardly be true, as the "actual realization" of numerous repatriation initiatives on the African continent shows, it nevertheless points to the fact that Africa to Rastafarians is not only a "land far away"[23] to which to return to but also their own inherent identity to which they have already returned through their Rastafarian consciousness. As Rastafari Elder Congo Rocky (1992) pointed out while addressing the Rastafari International Theocracy Assembly (RITA) in Jamaica in 1983, over ten years before he himself repatriated and became one of the leading elders in Shashemene's Rastafarian community during the 1990s and 2000s: "We repatriate long time [already], we only a wait 'pon transport" (p. 57).

Conclusion

To conclude, it can therefore be summarised that Rastafarian rejection of migration as a vehicle for their return back to Africa, and their preference for repatriation instead, can be traced to their ideological insistence that they are already/still Africans who simply want to return home on the one hand, and

on the other hand to their practical insistence that, as they did not migrate to the West on their own, their return home should therefore be the responsibility of former colonial or post-colonial governments, at least in terms of support "where money is concerned", as Ras Dago (in Ishmail, 2002) put it: "The Jews got reparations, and we should have gotten it also!" Because, as Congo Rocky (1995) further emphasised, "Repatriation work with the money. Whey [what] it name again? Reparation!" (p. 30).

For Rastafarians, repatriation is therefore part and parcel of reparations and thus fundamentally a claim to justice, not only for themselves but, through their spiritual convictions, ultimately for the entire world, as the entire world is suffering from the consequences of this injustice until it is rectified. And it is their African identity, which they have preserved through spiritual and cultural movements to and from their African origins despite the atrocities of the transatlantic trade in human beings, that emphasises this nexus between slavery, justice, reparations, and repatriation, and therefore makes this claim so persisting:

> While a few are willing and able to find their own way forward to Africa through migration, the majority among Ian'I [us] will continue to demand true Repatriation for Africans, in particular, which is redemption for the whole world in general.
>
> (Gayle, 1992, p. 17)

Notes

1 The title is taken from an anonymous Rastafarian poem collected by Leonard Barrett (1997, p. 274) during his field research in Jamaica in the 1970s, expressing widespread Rastafarian sentiments analysed in this chapter:

> Repatriation not migration / Set the people free [...] / Repatriation not migration / A difference you will see / One stands for all the people's freedom / The other not for me / Repatriation not migration / Then shall [all] captives [be] free / From savage and oppressive rule / To justice and equality [...] / Repatriation not migration / Our homes we long to see [...] / REPATRIATION: YES! / MIGRATION: NO!"

2 As Priest Shimron from the Bobo Shanti House of Rastafari explained:

> We are not Jamaican, and although we might hold a Jamaican passport, we don't consider ourselves as Jamaican. Because our foreparents did not ask to come down here in the West! They were beaten, murdered, and raped, and robbed, and all these things, and taken in ships and brought down here in the West. So, if someone takes your father and murders him and your mother, and then brought you on a different land and says you are West Indian and says you are Jamaican, how can you accept that from the white man?
>
> (https://youtu.be/7G8EPdJuJsk [30.11.2020])

3 As Bob Marley expressed the experience of the transatlantic slave trade in his famous 1980 "Redemption Song": "Old pirates, yes, they rob I / sold I to the merchant ships...". The first person "I" emphasises the immediacy with which Rastafarians identify with their ancestors who were "robbed, sold and shipped" from Africa.

4 It is, however, problematic that the Center for Migration Studies of New York arrived at this subsumption by conflating different types of slavery going "back to the dawn of time" under the simplified category of "*the* slave trade" (emphasis mine). Especially for the analysis of agency it is important to point out that transatlantic chattel slavery worked with a dehumanising racism that tried to deny any human agency to the enslaved which has not necessarily been the case in other types of slavery or servitude from antiquity to the present (Fyfe, 1976, p. 71).
5 As Rastafarian artist Ras Talent sang on his 1981 "African Minister" record: "Jamaica, Jamaica, it is an African outpost in the West!"
6 Featured on Protoje's 2015 "Who Knows" record.
7 As Rastafarian artist Ras Talent sang on his 1981 "African Minister" record: "Jamaica, Jamaica, it is an African outpost in the West!"
8 How subversive the Native Baptists' Ethiopianist claim to Christianity actually was became evident in the so-called Baptist War of 1831, which Stewart (2001) called "a Myal uprising" (p. 166), and which led to the official abolishment of slavery "in any such British colony" (Lord Stanley, as cited in Erskine, 2007, p. 16) since 1934.
9 For more details on Ethiopianism, see my article "'Ethiopia, Thou Land of Our Fathers!' – From Ethiopianism to Pan-Africanism" in the Vienna Journal of African Studies (Frühwirth, 2020).
10 As a traditional Rastafarian chant proclaims which has been worked into popular Reggae versions by Rastafarian icons such as Count Ossie and Dennis Brown.
11 Rastafarians refer to both themselves and their movement as Rastafari, while the terms Rastafarians and Rasta are also used to refer to themselves. The term Rastafarianism is usually shunned by Rastafarians themselves, as Rastafari Elder Ras Sam Brown explained, "we do not address this philosophy as Rastafarianism, isms bring schisms. So, we say Rastafari, or Rastafarian" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovAhSWRV4mI&frags=pl%2Cwn [29/04/2019]).
12 Although Tafari Makonnen had been Negus (King) since 1928 before he was crowned Emperor (Negusa Nagast, literally King of Kings) as Haile Selassie I, he was still widely known in the diaspora as Ras (often translated as Duke, literally Head) Tafari at the time of his coronation in 1930 and beyond (Asfa-Wossen Asserate, 2016, pp. 101–102; Lockot, 2001, p. 29).
13 Already Fitz Balintine Pettersburg (2007, p. 24), a Jamaican forerunner of Rastafari in the late 1920s, had called Jamaica "Mt. Africa, The World's Capital, the New Bible land" in his influential "Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy", a passage, like many others, that Leonard Howell (2007, p. 14) later adopted into his own 1935 "The Promised Key".
14 Usually understood as a "way of life" mainly derived from the Nazarite requirements in the biblical book of Numbers, Chapter 6, which did not only inspire the Dreadlocks themselves but also their plant-based, non-alcoholic (*Ital*) diet and other features now typical of Rastafarian conduct.
15 The opening-line of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association's Universal Ethiopian Anthem expresses the Ethiopianist conviction that Ethiopia/Africa is the only real "mother-country" of African descendants, which Rastafarians as Garveyites share and still chant today.
16 As one Windrush resident had already put it in the 1980s, long before the recent Windrush Scandal (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjBwDcv9P0Y [19.12.2019]).
17 On his 1980 "Inglan Is A Bitch" record.
18 As a traditional Rastafarian chant proclaims (Nyahbinghi Order 1993: Chant Nr. 80). Zion refers to the Rastafarian/Ethiopianist identification of Ethiopia with biblical notions of the "promised land".
19 Although usually pronounced and often even written "Shashamane", the official Amharic transliteration is "Shashemene".

20 Rastafari Elder Bongo Tawney (in Black, 2008) expressing the key Ethiopianist/Rastafarian sentiment that, since the Greeks had originally called all of sub-Saharan Africa "Ethiopia" (literally: "the land of burnt faces", i.e. black people) (Sonderegger, 2010, p. 174), the whole continent therefore constitutes their rightful home as "true Ethiopians" (Bonacci, 2015a, p. 1).

21 As Bob Marley explained on CCTV Atlanta in 1979: "We was taken from Africa as slaves, we are Africans. Now you come to Jamaica, them take you to Jamaica, and today you must be Jamaicans or Americans. No, we refuse to be that. We are Africans!" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65xm7l8bMyU [30.11.2020]). Like his colleague Peter Tosh famously put it on his 1977 "African" record: "No matter where you come from, as long as you are a black man, you are an African!" The enduring influence of this Rastafarian philosophy on the return to Africa was recently highlighted when Ghanaian President Akufo-Addo quoted this famous line from Peter Tosh's song upon conferring Ghanaian citizenship on 126 returnees from the diaspora as part of Ghana's 2019 Year of Return festivities and the original was played as the culmination of the ceremony (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1jhH4xILIr4&frags=pl%2Cwn [20.12.2019]).

22 This is, for example, the case in Kenya, where local Rastafarians are the majority and can therefore more easily absorb Rastafarian repatriates into the local society. Interestingly enough, repatriation is such a central concept to Rastafari, in general, that even African Rastafarians like those in Kenya, where I did some of my research, maintain the centrality of repatriation by reinterpreting it as a movement back to the as pre-colonial conceived countryside, with its more natural living, as opposed to the cities, which are perceived as Babylon.

23 As the Rastafarian band The Abyssinians sang on their 1976 "Satta Massagana" record. Both the names of the band as well as the record (a now-iconic attempt to say "give thanks and praise" in Amharic) illustrate Rastafarian identification with Ethiopia/Africa.

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4 Being *Shashamane Sew*

Second-generation Caribbean Rastafari in multicultural Ethiopia

Shelene Gomes

Introduction

In this chapter, I focus on the everyday acts of identity-making among second-generation Rastafari youth in the multicultural locale of *Jamaica Safar*, or Jamaica neighbourhood, in Shashamane in southern Ethiopia.[1] When I did fieldwork in urban Shashamane, which began more than a decade ago, the more common descriptors for youth in Shashamane were *Shashamane sew*, *yenya sew*, and *faranj* or *faranji*. Translated from Amharic to English, these words meant "Shashamane people", "our people", and "foreigner", respectively, among multi-ethnic and multicultural groups of young people.

I explore youth agency and structural conditions within a voluntary, spiritually motivated international migration – that of their Rastafari parents from the Caribbean to Ethiopia. In so doing, I examine one contemporary case of human and cultural mobilities between Africa and the Caribbean, as well as intermediary migration destinations in the Global North. I situate Rastafari migratory and imaginative trajectories within a history of Caribbean internal and external migration to the Global North – to former imperial centres and neo-imperialist states – as an individual and collective strategy towards short-term and long-term spiritual as well as social improvement (Chamberlain, 2006; Fog Olwig, 2007; Foner, 2001; Henry, 1994; Philpott, 1973).[2]

The mobilities approach conceptualised by Mimi Sheller and John Urry is central to this case theoretically and empirically:

> There was a strong emphasis…upon crossing spatial scales, blurring disciplinary boundaries, exploring materialities and temporalities, moving beyond national or societal frameworks and exploring whether 'mobilities' could provide a frame for a different kind of social science.
>
> (Sheller, 2017, p. 4)

Within the historical context of the Caribbean, movements of different types to, from, and within the region became normative. With the systematic extermination of indigenous groups following the European colonisation of the Caribbean and the introduction of large-scale plantations, culturally diverse peoples were brought forcibly and arrived voluntarily from Africa, Europe,

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and Asia. Over five centuries, the labour of all these groups sustained plantation production well into the 20th century, with the longest duration from African enslaved labour in many colonies. Notable periods of migration include colonial post-emancipation labour migration from the British West Indies to American-owned fruit plantations in Central America and for construction of the Panama Canal, service within the British Royal Air Force (Glass, 1960, p. 7 cited in Peach, 1991, p. 8) and post-World War II emigration to the United Kingdom as well as post-independence 20th-century migration to North America. Migration as both a collective and individual effort towards social and spiritual improvement continues into the 21st century. At present there is also the circular migration of retirees and older adults (Plaza & Henry, 2006; Small, 2006) as well as second- and third-generation diasporic Caribbeans in the Global North 'returning' to their parents' and grandparents' country of origin (Reynolds, 2006). This history of colonial immigration and postcolonial emigration from the Caribbean in search of work and opportunities for improvement therefore has had enduring effects on the societies and cultures of Caribbean peoples.

In contrast to stasis as a norm, presented as such in much social science research, migration was highly valued even to the extent of being expected by Caribbean peoples, before recent globalising processes (Chamberlain, 2006; Foner, 2001; Glick Schiller & Fouron, 2001; Hall, 1990; Kasinitz, 1992; Mintz, 1996). As Sheller and Urry (2006) have noted, "tracking the power of discourses and practices of mobility in creating both movement and stasis" (p. 211) is integral in studying mobility. I therefore track this attitude towards migration as well as the limitations of physical movement for Rastafari youth in Shashamane.

The imaginative element of movement emerges in Rastafari worldview at the beginning of the 20th century, particularly following the 1930 coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie I or Ras Tafari Mekonnen in Ethiopia. Freeing themselves of the scientific racism of modern European imperialism and colonisation of the West Indies, African-descended Rastafari men and women in Jamaica embraced Africanness and blackness. The black colonial subject was reconceived as a descendant of Ethiopian and Abyssinian royalty. This Rastafari shift from a Eurocentric worldview to a world with Ethiopia-Africa as its axis positioned Ethiopia as the promised land or *zion* and the West, including the Caribbean, as *babylon*.[3]

In Rastafari worldview, this migration to Ethiopia was a *repatriation*, a return to the home and homeland of Ethiopia. The actual 'return' followed the granting of five *gashas* or 200 hectares of land in the mid-20th century from the personal lands of His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I to "black people of the world" in appreciation for their opposition to the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in 1935–1941 (Bonacci, 2015, pp. 270–271; see Frühwirth in this volume).

The crux of this chapter explores youth microcultures in everyday social interactions as observed in behaviours, speech and language – notably music –

as well as the reproduction of Caribbean values as identified in gender roles, expectations, and to a lesser extent in family and household organisation. The concept of youth microculture draws attention to

> flows of meaning which are managed by people in small groups that meet on an everyday basis. Much of our social life is in fact enacted in such small groups between three or four people up to about a hundred individuals…They choose cultural concerns that relate to their specific situation and reformulate them in their own terms as far as it is possible […] the particular combination of personalities, the localities where they meet, and certain momentous events that they experience together, are three elements in every microculture.
>
> (Wulff, 1995, p. 65)

In this multicultural neighbourhood in Shashamane, how do locally born youth define, understand and express belonging in terms of the oppositional and fluid categories of Rastafari and Ethiopian? I argue that this social reproduction occurs with the production of new youth identities in Shashamane. A gendered approach to everyday behaviours and categorical identity-making elucidates how gender expectations steeped within patriarchy in Ethiopia and the Caribbean, and, in particular, within Caribbean-derived expectations of ideal masculinity and femininity, are reproduced in Shashamane. If Shashamane sew emerges as a new multicultural identity marker, it is a male-centred one. One of the traits of being a Shashamane person is that of toughness, which is associated with masculinity in both Ethiopian and Caribbean patriarchal systems. Therefore, in addition to new hybrid identities, patriarchally derived ideal behaviours are also reproduced among Rastafari youth.

Central to this discussion is the fluidity of youth identities and a theoretical concern with demonstrating "how young people are active agents – in different ways and with varying force – in the construction of the meanings and symbolic forms which make up their cultures" (Wulff, 1995, p. 1). This discussion will add to an expanding body of research into youth in Shashamane as the destination for Rastafari immigration and in urban Ethiopia, where Rastafari youth experiences have so far only been extensively examined within a framework of ethnomusicology (Tomei, 2015).

In the next section, I outline my ethnographic fieldwork in the Jamaica Safar and provide a concise description of this neighbourhood and its Rastafari residents as well as Shashamane town where it is located.

Methodology and the fieldwork site of the *Jamaica Safar*[4]

Jamaica Safar is a multicultural and multi-ethnic neighbourhood in the city of Shashamane, 250 km south of Addis Ababa, located in historic Oromo territory. Oromo are the largest ethnic group in present-day Ethiopia. The colloquially named "Jamaica Safar" is a combination of the Caribbean country

of Jamaica with the word "safar" from the Amharic language, which roughly translates to "neighbourhood". It covers an area between Shashamane and the town of Melka Oda with residents regularly crossing this border. Residents of Jamaica Safar are documented in the national census based on the *kebele* or local district in which they live, however, demographic data for Rastafari as a group do not appear in the Ethiopian census.

Residents include local Ethiopian internal migrants and sedentary local Ethiopians of Oromo, Gurage, Wollaita, Amhara, and Sidama ethnicity, as examples, and Rastafari repatriates from the Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean islands. I met repatriates from Barbados, Bermuda, Dominica, Jamaica, Martinique, St. Vincent, and the Grenadines, as well as Trinidad and Tobago. These repatriates themselves have resided in popular migration destinations of North America, the United Kingdom, and Europe.[5] There are, of course, locally born and/or raised children of Rastafari who also live in the Jamaica Safar. Regular visitors from the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and Europe, as well as occasional visitors from the Caribbean, constantly move in and out of the area. Estimates of the total Rastafari population in Shashamane range from 250 to 800 (MacLeod, 2014, p. 4). In Mahlet Ayele Beyecha's master's thesis, completed in 2018, she states that the number of Rastafari is "up to 1000" (2018, p. 85). At present, the repatriate population consists mostly of Rastafari from the four organisations of the Ethiopian World Federation, Twelve Tribes, Theocratic Order of Nyahbinghi, known informally as Nyahbinghi, and the Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress or Bobo Ashanti. There are also Rastafari unaffiliated to any Mansion. "Mansion", or "House", is a semi-formal grouping of Rastafari or "quasi-organization" (Chevannes, 1998, p. 32).

In 2008–2009, I lived in Shashamane for one year doing ethnographic fieldwork, primarily through participation-observation. I stayed in the house of a Rastafari family of repatriated parents from Jamaica who belonged to the Twelve Tribes Mansion, Ethiopian-born children who self-identified as Rastafari and young grandchildren. I conducted unstructured and semi-structured interviews, basic household surveys, and collected life histories from Rastafari women and men who refer to themselves as "repatriates", "returnees", or "Ethiopians". These were mostly Rastafari who arrived from the 1970s onward as well as their local Ethiopian spouses. In 2012–2015, I then visited Shashamane regularly while working in neighbouring of Hawassa, a town 25km south of Shashamane.

In the 73 households that formed my final purposive sample, 33 households contained children born in Ethiopia from the late 1970s and into the 21st century. For instance, in one household, children ranged in age from six years of age to their early 20s. These children are known as the "generation born on the land grant" by Rastafari globally and locally. They are a high-status group among Rastafari given their birth in the sacred land of Ethiopia, whether they are born of Rastafari parent or two. In 26 of these 33 households, Ethiopian-born children 18 years of age and older self-identified as

Rastafari. This included Ethiopian-Rastafari households as well as those with only Rastafari repatriate parents. It is noteworthy that the term "Jamaican" (pronounced "Jah-mike-kan" by local Ethiopians and "Jah-make-kan" by Rastafari and their children) is locally synonymous with "Rastafari". As such, Ethiopian-born and bred children who self-identify as Jamaican or Rastafari may not adhere solely to Rastafari worldview and rituals. For instance, youth with parents from the Twelve Tribes Mansion may call themselves Rastafari and attend services of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church or a Pentecostal church. In this chapter, I draw directly on data collected in Shashamane during participant-observation in 2008–2009 and semi-structured interviews with four Ethiopian-born youth – Matthew, Malcolm, Marcia and Candace. They all identified as Rastafari and Jamaican, with Marcia and Candace also referring to themselves as Pentecostal Christians.

Of this generation born on the land grant, persons who may not identify as Rastafari but as Christians may still call themselves Jamaican, as in the case of youth with parents from Jamaica who practice Jamaican cultural forms. These practices include speaking Patois, cooking and eating Jamaican foods, and/or typical family organisation such as extra-residential relationships in which young mothers and their children live with their parents, and young fathers visit their children. Local Ethiopians also categorise these youths as "Jamaican" or "Rasta". I focus on the fluidity of these identifications mainly among Ethiopian-born and/or raised persons of Rastafari migrant parents; youth who also variously self-identify and refer to themselves daily and categorically as Rastafari or "Rasta" as well as "Jamaican" and "Ethiopian". In this sense, identity is constantly made and re-made, or "produced", to cite Stuart Hall (1990), in terms of the contextual positioning of groups and individuals within changing social structures and histories.

The use of the word "Jamaica" in Jamaica Safar indicates the numbers of Rastafari from Jamaica who mostly arrived in the 1970s, especially from the Twelve Tribes, and its use reflects the Ethiopian metonym of Jamaica for "Rastafari". When local Ethiopians in Shashamane say "Jamaican", they indicate all Rastafari, of any nationality or place. When multicultural Rastafari of diverse nationality say "Jamaican", it means persons from the country of Jamaica.

While for analytical purposes I distinguish between two groups of youth, Rastafari and local Ethiopian, sentiments and practices of group belonging overlap as in the previous examples cited of religious affiliation, multi-ethnic families and language abilities. By this distinction between Rastafari and Ethiopian, I mean to signal the cultural differences between youths with Rastafari repatriated parents and youths descended from persons born in modern-day Ethiopia. Both Rastafari and local Ethiopians are multicultural. *Rastafari* and *Ethiopian* also serve as oppositional and fluid categories for Ethiopian-born youth of Rastafari parents. The local Ethiopian perceptions and stereotypes of Rastafari centre on the worldview, the habits and practices that are seen as antithetical to an Ethiopian identity. These perceptions

include that of Rastafari as wrong in worshipping Haile Selassie I as a false god of sorts, consuming marijuana which is classified as a drug in Ethiopia, and an unkempt appearance of deadlocks and beards that suggests barbarism.[6] While I concur with Erin MacLeod's position (2014) that these are oppositional identity categories, I also argue that these are lived identities which need to be understood as fluid. I expand on this point when citing from my conversations and interviews with youths.

Rastafari-Ethiopian inter-marriage and child bearing have not led to legal citizenship. Most Ethiopian-born children in the Jamaica Safar have been denied citizenship and residence rights in the state of Ethiopia, thereby increasing their vulnerability, and are contested national subjects. This denial of rights also excludes Rastafari and Ethiopian-born children from access to resources such as land and capital through commercial or state loans that could potentially secure their livelihoods. For example, one Rastafari repatriate who owned a modest restaurant explained that he could not apply for a commercial loan to expand his business as he was not a citizen or resident of Ethiopia. Only his wife could apply as an Ethiopian citizen.

This status has changed recently for some first- and second-generation Rastafari, but not all. Based on information from Rastafari, following years of multilateral discussions, in 2017 there was an official pronouncement by the Ethiopian government that Rastafari would be eligible to apply for national identification (ID) cards of the same type given to other locals. Any fees attached to tourist or business visas that Rastafari had not renewed would be waived by the state as well as fines for residing in Ethiopia without permission. However, applicants had to hold a valid passport. For many Rastafari whose passports had expired, this was an insurmountable challenge. One repatriate woman who had arrived in Shashamane in her 20s almost 15 years ago and settled in Shashamane, overstaying her tourist visa, explained to me that she had never renewed her passport. Since then, machine-readable passports were being issued but each applicant had to appear in person. Her country of citizenship, Trinidad and Tobago, did not have an embassy in Ethiopia. She was unable to leave Ethiopia to apply for the passport and therefore unable to apply for a local identification card. For Rastafari who can afford to apply for passports, however, this ID card comes with the benefits of Ethiopian residence. The first such identification card was issued in 2018 (Beyecha, 2018, p. 93). While in principle Rastafari can now travel internationally – exiting and entering Ethiopia legally – in reality many Rastafari cannot afford the cost. The infrastructure for international mobility remains incomplete.

Regarding the land, the historic grant is not recognised by the Ethiopian state at present. Successive land reform initiatives following the 1974 revolution decreased the available land on which repatriates could freely settle. Although Rastafari continued to arrive in Shashamane they did not receive ownership deeds to houses built or bought. More recent repatriates from the 1990s, however, tend to have the financial means to legally buy a house. Despite this dispossession, the land grant continues to symbolise dignity,

recognition of black African and Ethiopian identities, and equality for Rastafari around the world. It is still referred to as "the land grant" in daily conversation among Rastafari.[7]

Embodied masculinities

In discussing the development of manhood in contemporary urban Ethiopia, Daniel Mains (2011) suggests that "youth" is a new age group with the economic and demographic changes following the 1991 coup. In particular, high rates of urban unemployment and underemployment (almost 50% from the mid-1990s for urban youth, according to Mains) have constricted the ability of young men to fulfil the breadwinner ideal of manhood. As such, having a wedding, a heterosexual marriage, setting up an independent household, and raising children, as key markers of manhood, are now delayed or out of reach for many urban-based young men.

While Rastafari youth share this patriarchal ideal of the male breadwinner, there is a Caribbean-derived matrifocal norm that is reproduced at the household level in the Jamaica Safar, and entails alternative criteria for assessing masculinity (Safa, 1995; Smith, 1956; Wilson, 1973). Assessment entails physical strength, verbal aggression and/or wit, and heterosexual virility. Siring children is evidence of the last criterion. Carrying, rearing, and nurturing of children are regarded as mothers' roles. I suggest that these qualities of masculinity are valued also among the Ethiopian-born generation.

Although local Ethiopian youths situationally call Rastafari youths faranji, or foreigner, as repatriates were initially called, at other times local youths of Ethiopian-born parents refer to Jamaican and Rastafari Ethiopian-born youths as yenya sew ("one of us" or "our people") in Amharic. I heard these terms in multicultural and multi-ethnic groups both in the Jamaica Safar and in *ketema*, or town. The reputation for being aggressive, defensive and not easily taken advantage of is one basis for this fraternity between Jamaican and Ethiopian young men as yenya sew and Shashamane sew. While one Rastafari interpretation of the same qualities is that local Ethiopians are "thiefing" people, the same reputation, especially for young men, often becomes a laudatory characteristic of manhood for Rastafari raised in Shashamane. In response to my enquiry about how local Ethiopians generally tend to interact with him, Malcolm, a Rastafari youth born and bred in Shashamane of repatriated parents from Jamaica, said, "people them 'fraid Shashamane youths, even in Addis them know' bout us". This reputation is one point of commonality between young Rastafari and Ethiopian men that enables them to build relations around a categorical identification of "Shashamane youths" or yenya sew, the latter of which also means Ethiopian contextually. This collective identity exists simultaneously with the categorical distinction between "soft" Ethiopians and "tough" Jamaicans, reinforcing the importance of the male peer group in a boy's socialisation into manhood (Chevannes, 2001). "Soft" has negative connotations in Jamaican Patois.

The few scholarly studies of the Rastafari population in Ethiopia have also noted this development of hyper-masculinisation among young Ethiopian men, attributing it to the dissemination of the Jamaican "rude bwoy" persona in Ethiopia among first- and second-generation Rastafari (Bonacci, 2015; Tomei, 2015). This facet of virility and strength is also connected to a specifically Rastafari form of manhood and is reinforced by the comments of young Ethiopian-born women of Rastafari parents. Marcia and Candace, for example, expressed this expectation of masculinity most clearly when they stated that "Ethiopian" men are too "soft" for them in contrast to the "Jamaican" (in this case meaning Rastafari) men with whom they grew up in Shashamane, as well as the frequent Rastafari visitors. The common use of the word "soft" to generally describe "Ethiopian" men captures the implicit contrast to tougher Jamaican men with its sexual connotation. In Jamaica, Sobo (1993) notes that "'soft' is used as a phallic metaphor referring to an 'overripe, inedible banana' [...]… 'Softness' and 'uselessness' connote poverty, passivity, a lack of virility, and the inability to satisfy women" (p. 214). This meaning travels with second-generation Jamaicans in Shashamane. Virility and strength are juxtaposed with a categorical Ethiopian masculinity that is found lacking. However, this perception of Ethiopian masculinity is made more nuanced by Ethiopian men's behaviour and roles. For example, local Ethiopian men work as *zebeniya* or watchmen/guards in repatriate houses since "watching the yard" is a male-oriented activity fulfilling the masculine role of protector.[8] Such seemingly contradictory perceptions cohere with the analytical position of the continuous production of group identity and the paradoxes of everyday life.

Dialectically opposed to toughness and masculinity is the "softness and warmth which her nurturing roles is supposed to bestow on the character of a woman" (Chevannes, 2001, p. 209). This expectation

> directly contrasts with the tough personality the young African Caribbean boy is socialised to take on, to avoid a show of tears on every occasion of inward hurt, to learn to suffer deprivation with a self-sacrificing nobility of spirit…The softness-toughness dichotomy is translated into a biological script to become a guideline for bringing up females and males.
>
> (Chevannes, 2001, p. 209)

From an interactionist perspective, "aspects of men's behavior…fluctuate from time to time" situationally, dependent on the sets of interactions among persons and groups (Reddock, 2004, xxiii). Within patriarchal social systems, conceptualising masculinity as a set of qualities that men enact on an everyday basis means that "as a concept [masculinity] only exists in relation to femininity" (Chevannes, 2001, p. 209).

In her ethnography of children who work and/or live on the streets of the Ethiopian capital city of Addis Ababa, Paula Heinonen (2011) presents boys'

socialisation within those groups. Heinonen argues that the significance of "yilunta" or "shame, honour or family pride" keeps boys and girls in line, conforming to gender and age expectations. Boys enact masculine ideals of being brave and showing courage, while girls are expected to be modest and show submission to males and adults. Physical violence among boys is one way of reinforcing "yilunta" within the peer group, thereby reproducing violence as a norm. This analysis reverberates with the toughness that both local Ethiopian and Rastafari youths perform.

There are other aspects to masculinity in the Jamaica Safar which resonate with Caribbean themes. Based on ethnographic research in urban Jamaica, Barry Chevannes nuances this picture. He argues that although virility and physical strength are the dominant features of working-class Caribbean masculinity that is reproduced through socialisation, he also found

> a majority of [fathers] spending nurturing time with their children on a regular basis. But what was also instructive was the existential meaning they attached to being fathers. When asked how they would feel if they had no children, the men waxed eloquent, using metaphors like birds without wings, trees without leaves, frustration and death.
>
> (2001, p. 225)

Strength, resilience, and financially or materially providing for families are expected of men by both Rastafari and local Ethiopians. Whether by doing manual work that either provides for a family in the wage economy or through subsistence farming (although the latter is dismissed by urban-based youth), supporting the family by generating income or food is integral for cross-cultural understandings of masculinity. "Hustling", for example, is another set of activities that poor men as well as women engage in. In Shashamane, land and materials for subsistence farming are difficult to acquire. Because the urban economy is a waged one, money is needed for basic needs such as food. Rural to urban migration and peri-urban to urban migration also means greater integration into the wage economy (Mains, 2011). Based on my observations, youths' inclination to get into farming as an honest living is also dwindling as well as their commitment to this lifestyle. Everyday hustling entails legal and illegal activities to earn this money, inclusive of sourcing goods from scarce food items to services such as transportation, for example.

What young local Ethiopians and young Rastafari also share is a common challenge in finding work, or suitable work, given the high youth unemployment and underemployment rate in Ethiopia. The situation that Daniel Mains (2011) refers to, whereby young men in the town of Jimma in southern Ethiopia face a lack of regular employment and are therefore unable to fulfil the material and life expectations of adulthood such as renting a room or a house, or supporting a wife and children, cannot be done by many youths in Shashamane. Consequently, most young people live in their parents' homes,

even after having children. In Rastafari or Rastafari-Ethiopian families where second-generation parents may not be legally married, children usually stay with the mother and the mother's family while the father and the father's family are involved in child-caring and -rearing to different degrees, depending on personal and domestic circumstances. Having discussed the expectations of masculinity shared by Ethiopian and Rastafari youth and the behaviours common to Shashamane sew, I now turn to the integral role language plays in Shashamane sew identity.

Language, speech, and music: multicultural identities

> Jamaicans are well known in Ethiopia…especially through Bob's [Marley] music. With the increase in technology…more people get exposed to outside things, like music.
>
> (Malcolm, 17th April 2009)

With the globalisation of reggae and its increasing popularity among youth in urban Ethiopia over the past 20 years, based on anecdotal information, this genre also facilitates cross-cultural interaction and exchange among youth in Shashamane and internationally. The latter is reinforced with an example from a repatriated white Rastawoman, whom I reference below. This cross-cultural connection is notable between groups of Rastafari and local Ethiopian youth, fostering a commonality among them.

For Rastafari generally, and youth in Shashamane especially, music is one popular medium through which Rastafari thought is disseminated. Reggae is an integral component of self-identifying as Rastafari, according to younger and older people alike in Shashamane. As Horace Campbell notes (2007), for Rastafari "song – reggae – was the highest form of self-expression, an expression which was simultaneously an act of social commentary and a manifestation of deep racial memory" (p. 6).

The method of "chanting down babylon" is connected to the words, their rhythms, and the meanings expressed through lyrics. When I arrived in Shashamane, I ignorantly dismissed references to music since members of the public and scholarly communities with whom I interacted in the Global North, who are not Rastafari, associated the Caribbean with Bob Marley's music, along with stereotypes of unencumbered sex and marijuana use. These are images that I continue to be confronted with, and which reflect the hyper-sexualisation of black and brown women and men in the Caribbean, as Kamala Kempadoo (1999) notes. From my casual observations, the songs that are less overtly political such as "Lively Up Yourself" (1978) or "Could You Be Loved" (1980), are usually heard more on airwaves in the West, and on Hollywood film soundtracks. Less often heard are songs with a clear political message, such as "Zimbabwe" or "Jah Live". While music also establishes a comforting ethnocentric, neo-colonial image of the Caribbean in the West,

for Rastafari it aims at ideological struggle, and disseminates this Rastafari politics globally.

After some time, I recognised that this wide distribution of Rastafari-inspired reggae music also fosters a Rastafari consciousness, and not merely aesthetic elements of Rastafari such as dreadlocks, outside Jamaica. As a young white Sister[9] from Germany who repatriated to Shashamane explained to me, "I came to consciousness by listening to the music of Alpha Blondy, Peter Tosh and Bob Marley". John Homiak points out that there is a recent generation of multi-ethnic and multinational Rastafari outside of the Caribbean who have gained knowledge of Rastafari almost exclusively through the songs of Rastafari artists.

> The tours of musicians such as Marley, Burning Spear, and others were critical to the spread of the message, along with travel by traditional Elders…[for Rasta to] 'burst' [this is a reference to bursting or loosing the seals in Revelation] the confines of its Jamaican Babylon via reggae.
> (Homiak, 1999, p. 105)

Songs such as Bob Marley's "Africa Unite" (1980), composed for the political independence of Zimbabwe from British colonialism, Dennis Brown's "The Promised Land" (circa 1977) and Peter Tosh's "Wanted Dread or Alive" (circa 1981) are examples of songs which stimulate Rastafari consciousness. Reggae singers have long been known to "protest about food shortages, inadequate housing, crime, police brutality, illiteracy, homelessness and oppression" (King, 2002, p. xiii). Rastafari chanting of this sort with political lyrics has been foundational for Rastafari thought worldwide.[10]

Giulia Bonacci (2015) reinforces this point with reference to "repatriation reggae" and its impact on European Rastafari repatriates in the Jamaica Safar where they connected with messages of freedom and autonomy from the oppressive systems of babylon; systems that were found the world over outside of colonial and postcolonial Jamaica. Bonacci emphasises that music had the "capacity to convey, around the Atlantic and beyond, these imaginaries of Ethiopia and of return. They include the hymns of the 1920s which are still sung today, Rastafari ritual music, the nyabinghi, and, of course, reggae" (p. 9).

In another example in Africa, Werner Zips (2006) discusses the role of music in influencing the attitude towards "(re)migration" to West Africa, and as a potential foundation for positive social relations between re-migrants and local residents. He argues that this genre is able to "create a positive sentiment towards national (African) policies to close the historical gap between Africa and her Diaspora. It is therefore no coincidence that reggae is considered as a local 'true' African music by many Ghanaians" (p. 134).

In Shashamane, as Renato Tomei (2015) demonstrates with reference to the making of Rastafari youth identity, everyday speech acts in hybrid

languages are significant in inter-ethnic collaborations among the male amateur musicians in his sample. Everyday inter-cultural communication also popularises Jamaican Patois and Rastafari beliefs. As Sheller (2017) has noted, one of the distinctive contributions of the new Mobility Studies paradigm is

> rather than simply emphasising the relational production of space as a macro-level process driven by capital and its shifting spatio-temporal fixes, mobilities research has delved into the dynamic, ongoing, day-to-day production of space in everyday lives as they become entangled with material objects.
>
> (p. 9)

The space of the music studio, the equipment or lack thereof, and the public space of the road are significant for youth socialisation. These musicians include youths of local Ethiopian parentage who have grown up in the Jamaica Safar with Rastafari neighbours and speak in "Ethiopenglish" or a variety of English commonly spoken by Ethiopians (Tomei 2015, p. 156), as well as create "Ethiopian reggae" (Tomei 2015, p. 78). Both these language forms combine the words of Patois and rhythms of reggae with Amharic lyrics. As Allison James (1995) notes with reference to contemporary British youth, language and speech establish the boundaries of the group, which delineate inclusion and exclusion:

> Through the active shaping and reshaping of the English language the young people created a distinctive 'youthful' language whose terminology, rhythm and cadence styled their 'talk.' In doing so it therefore signified not only their membership of a local group of children or young people, marked by neighbourhood or class, but also their participation in the wider generational culture of the young.
>
> (p. 52)

The vernacular development of new speech forms, coupled with the fluidity of languages by these multilingual speakers in Shashamane, emerges in Tomei's assessment.[11] As he explains, socialising between Rastafari and local Ethiopian youth leads to the mixing of speech as well as, paradoxically, ideas of "authenticity" when local Ethiopians in Shashamane speak Rastafari-influenced English, "as it is spontaneously acquitted through contact with the 'real speakers' within this unique community" (2015, p. 156). Youths then decide which language to use situationally. Speech and language indicate intergenerational culture change and the development of a microculture.

The Ethiopenglish and varieties of speech combining Patois, standard English, Amharic, and Wolaita spoken by multicultural youth exemplify these elements.[12] The global dissemination of music also allows youth across ethnicity and culture to connect around rap and the accompanying symbols of resistance to domination and consumerism, thereby exerting their agency.

From my observations, "gangsta" imagery inclusive of clothing like the 'du-rag' as well as idiomatic speech demonstrate how Rastafari youth perform a gangsta persona. This is another basis on which local Ethiopian and Rastafari youths in the Jamaica Safar identify. Visitors, most of whom are West Indians or black British of Caribbean background residing in the UK and Europe, frequently bring new music with them. As Linda Matthei and David Smith (2004) note with reference to Afro-Belizean young men who identify as Garifuna or Creole, "among young males, in particular, identities are profoundly affected by a complex array of transnational linkages created through migration, markets and the global media" (p. 269).

Singing is one source of income that is popular with Rastafari youths, predominantly boys. It allows them to "spread the message" of Rastafari, work for themselves, thereby maintaining their autonomy, and "make a good living", as one young person remarked.[13] Payment is usually higher in Addis Ababa as compared to Shashamane, but the latter retains its symbolism and artists maintain a commitment to working in Shashamane. Even if not a consistent source of income, another youth, Matthew, who repatriated to Shashamane in his twenties, sustains his interest in music through occasional performances on the land grant during Rastafari celebrations. One example of such a celebration is Haile Selassie's birth on July 23 each year.

While self-identified musicians of varying degrees of income and fame are aware of their goal to promote music as a popular medium through which they could spread the truth of Rastafari, they were cognisant that the music had to be popular for it to be heard. According to a professional Rastafari musician in Shashamane, most musicians whom he knew in the Global South and North accepted changes to lyrics or performance locations demanded by producers or promoters, without believing that these changes in any way diminished their role as message-bearers – one that they explicitly embraced. Reggae music is a kind of chanting that has become commercialised and well known to non-Rastafari locally and globally. In my conversations with Rastafari, they highlighted asymmetries in the production and consumption of music, underscoring the interplay of power and capital in this industry. For instance, music that is produced and recorded in the West, usually in English-speaking North America or the UK (whether or not in collaboration with artistes in the Global South), is usually brought to Shashamane by Rastafari visitors. These musicians reside in the Global North, chant about repatriation, and occasionally visit Ethiopia and, in particular, Shashamane, to perform. The contradiction of advocating for repatriation to Ethiopia and Africa, but living in babylon was highlighted by the remarks of a young Rastawoman, Simona. On an average day I noticed the signed poster of reggae artiste Luciano on the wall of a repatriate-owned business and casually asked if he had visited Shashamane, and about Simona's opinion of his music. Simona replied that when Luciano performed in Shashamane he gave the poster to the community in commemoration of the concert. Then she bluntly added that these musicians like to sing "about repatriation, but which part

them live? Inna de west".[14] Despite deterritorialised processes and the "hypermobility" of capital, resources are still located in geographical places such as global cities and export processing zones (Sassen, 1996).

Musicians who are not as regionally or internationally well-known as Luciano, but who live permanently or seasonally in Shashamane and who travel frequently, such as Brother Lester, a repatriate from Jamaica via New York, often record their music in cities such as Los Angeles, New York or London. Fewer artistes produce records in Ethiopia. If they do, this mainly takes place in Addis Ababa. Those produced outside Ethiopia circulate more widely and sell in greater numbers abroad than they do in Ethiopia or East Africa. Record sales are important if music is a primary source of income. These message-bearers use different means of adhering to Rasta ideals while following their own creative initiatives to generate income. As Sheller (2014) explains, "musical mobilities are crucially mixed with human, material and cultural mobilities of various kinds [...] that have together generated a distinctive form of Caribbean modernity" (p. 74). Simona's criticism of well-known Caribbean Rastafari musicians entails her recognising that it is their fame "in the West" which brings them to Ethiopia frequently, to perform and visit this sacred place – of Ethiopia and of Shashamane, in particular – generating income that may then be put into a local Rastafari community organisation or in giving a free concert in Shashamane. One problem, however, appears when Rastafari-born or raised aspiring professional musicians in Ethiopia do not benefit from this transnational Rastafari community of musicians to access these international markets for production and consumption.

In the case of local Ethiopian reggae artistes, Erin MacLeod (2014) distinguishes between the political and cultural ambitions of Ethiopian reggae. While recognising that these purposes clearly overlap, MacLeod compares two singers, Teddy Afro (Tewodros Kassahun) and Haile Roots (Hailemichael Getnet). Teddy Afro's lyrics metaphorically and literally criticise politicians and governance in Ethiopia, such as the government manipulation of the 2005 elections. Haile Roots draws on characteristic images of Rastafari such as Bob Marley, the Lion of Judah, and the iconic colours of red, gold and green (also present in the Ethiopian flag) to reinforce messages of global love, peace and solidarity, while also taking on the Rastafari characteristics of dreadlocks.

Having developed a distinct sound known as "chiggae" – mixing the Ethiopian rhythm of *chikchika* with reggae (MacLeod, 2014, pp. 176–177) – working with globally recognised reggae singers such as Luciano and Mikey General, and filming music videos in Shashamane featuring Rastafari, Haile Roots cultivates a Rastafari-inspired Ethiopian young male persona in multicultural Ethiopia. MacLeod suggests that this framing challenges Amhara-dominated Ethiopian nationhood by taking on Rastafari characteristics, but she argues that it is largely symbolic, as no singer or artist whom MacLeod interviewed shared the belief in Haile Selassie's divinity. Echoing

Tomei's point, these hybrid expressions demonstrate the cultural impact of Rastafari, not only within the local space of Shashamane but also in Ethiopia more generally.

In examining agency among the Ethiopian-born generation, a comparison of literature on second-generation Caribbean populations in the Global North is useful to discuss the ambivalence of being Rastafari, Ethiopian, and Jamaican at the same time. Ambivalence is a consistent theme in this literature on second generations in the Global North (Fog Olwig, 2007; Foner, 2001; Glick Schiller & Fouron, 2001; Waters, 1999). Sociologist Mary Waters (1999), for instance, theorises additional dimensions to immigrant subjectivities, critiquing the framework of immigrant assimilation into American society. Instead, Waters argues that cultural affiliation to parents' "West Indian values" is a means for children of African-Caribbean migrants in the United States to favourably distinguish themselves from structurally marginalised African-Americans subject to institutional racism and everyday microaggressions. In aspiring to upward mobility, references to "hardworking", morally upstanding and conservative West Indians contrasts to unfavourable tropes of violence and laziness of African-Americans as another minority group, albeit with a much longer history in the mainland United States. For Anglophone Caribbean peoples, such immigrant responses to state policy have yet to be well-researched in regions of the Global South. How does this response compare for the children of Caribbean Rastafari repatriates born in Ethiopia in different political periods of the 1980s, 1990s, and onward who also grapple with societal and institutional exclusion as well as inclusion?

Tracey Reynolds (2006, p. 15) adds that "identity search" is evidenced in second- and third-generation Caribbeans in the United Kingdom who choose to return to their parents' countries of origin. Referring to Barbados, Reynolds writes,

> 'Young returnees', are usually in their early 20s, and born outside of the Caribbean. The nature of their return involves an 'identity search', whereby young people actively seek relationships with family members in the Caribbean as a way of understanding their family and cultural roots. Often this quest for understanding is underpinned by feelings of dislocation and marginalisation from the society they are born into.
>
> (p. 15)

The responses of youths in Shashamane regarding their feelings and experiences of belonging, and therefore of inclusion and exclusion at different levels, present some similarities to second-generation Caribbean youths in the United Kingdom and the United States. One major difference is that there is an overwhelming commitment by Rastafari youths in Shashamane to remain in Ethiopia rather than to move to their parents' Caribbean countries of birth. Rastafari youth Malcolm, who was in his early 30s at the time of this interview, explained that people still call him "faranji" as an adult. In other areas of

Ethiopia, outside of Shashamane, when people hear his "foreign-sounding" name, they praise him for speaking Amharic fluently because they assume that he is a foreigner. As Malcolm explained,

> When I was working…I had braids which was uncommon for Ethiopian youths, but I spoke the language [Amharic] like a native so some people weren't sure if I was a foreigner or Ethiopian. But I had a different kind of attitude when I communicated with people on the bus. I'm not sure how to explain it [because] it wasn't my Amharic, it was my attitude. So then people knew that I wasn't Ethiopian…My classmates were a mixed bunch: Gurage, Tigray, Amhara…They saw me as a foreigner. In Ethiopia people don't look at you as Ethiopian if you were born here and if you lived here for a long time, there's no such thing. They look at your background and if you have a foreign connection and foreign blood then you're not Ethiopian.

In Mahlet Ayele Beyecha's master's thesis (2018), 13-year-old Rastafari youth, Issac, whose repatriate parents brought him to Ethiopia as a baby, expresses similar feelings of displacement and experiences of being labelled foreign. Issac laments that as a black youth, like other African-descended persons, he would also be considered a foreigner if he was in the United Kingdom or United States (p. 85).

Returning to Malcolm, despite this constant questioning of his position within Ethiopian society and culture, and by extension his belonging, Malcolm clarified that he is confident that Ethiopia is where he wants to spend the rest of his life. Referring to himself as Jamaican and Rasta, Malcolm said he is "comfortable" in Shashamane. At the same time, Jamaican youths distinguish themselves characteristically from local Ethiopians, as Malcolm does when he refers to his different "attitude". As well as his uncommon hairstyle, for Malcolm it was his attitude (here referring to his demeanour) that signified his difference from typical and expected behaviours of an "Ethiopian" young man, notwithstanding his fluency in Amharic, birth and residence in Ethiopia, to passengers on the bus. Importantly, Malcolm himself believes that this distinctive attitude must manifest itself in some manner to be visible to strangers. Malcolm's reference to his attitude is not primarily about ostensible Rastafari markers such as dreads or clothing or even about his pronunciation of Amharic words; rather, it is a way of claiming his affiliation as both Ethiopian and Jamaican.

Other Jamaican youths such as Marcia and Candace likewise pointed out their "difference" from "Ethiopians". Marcia and Candance belong to a Pentecostal church and call themselves "Jamaicans". When they spoke of their childhood in Shashamane in this interview, their remarks highlighted feelings and experiences of both exclusion and inclusion from Rastafari and Ethiopian categories. Their responses to my questions about their experiences growing up in Shashamane with Rastafari parents were varied. As Jamaican children raised in Shashamane, some children would "pick on you and others

didn't care; some were friendly and others made fun", Marcia and Candace explained. Candace remembers how she "wanted to fit in so badly, but never seemed to be able to" accomplish this socially. Marcia said that she grew up "knowing that I was Jamaican and they were Ethiopian but this did not make me feel out of place". But Marcia distinctly remembered when she initially moved from Shashamane to Addis Ababa to attend a public school, because then she began "to feel weird and out of place". Candace explained that she has "good friends" who are Ethiopian, and she "feels an attachment" to various groups in Shashamane, from classmates to other Rastafari and local Ethiopian neighbours with whom she grew up.

Both Candace and Marcia concurred that while they can and do profess to be Ethiopian, this claim remains a socially and legally contested one. In certain situations, for example, during an engagement party in Shashamane that Candace attended with friends, they referred to her as "faranji". Although they attended the same schools, their families know each other, they eat the same food (injera) and speak the same language (Amharic), Candace remains *faranji*. As she concisely phrased it, "they never allow you to feel like you're Ethiopian and that you're proud of it". From the perspective of the local Ethiopian wife of a Rastafari man in Shashamane, Bonacci (2015, p. 331) cites similar comments regarding the inverse – Rastafari attitudes towards local Ethiopian affines or in-laws and neighbours.[15] Both perspectives highlight the constant surveillance of group identities that occur in everyday and ritual instances. Returning to Marcia and Candace, they both agreed that they have a "bond" with the place and its people, with their cliques of close Rastafari and Ethiopian neighbours and friends with whom they comfortably "vibe", and, on an abstract level, with the land. In a phenomenological sense the land grant also carries meaning in the form of childhood memories (see Feld & Basso, 1996).

Concluding remarks

This chapter has presented the case of Rastafari spiritually inflected migration as one present-day example of the human and cultural mobilities between Africa and the Caribbean. As noted, in contrast to stasis as a norm in the social sciences, Caribbeanists have demonstrated that migration and mobility are highly valued among Caribbean peoples. As such, the mobilities paradigm is useful for analysing this migration as well as situating it within open Caribbean attitudes towards migration. Within a trajectory of colonial regimes of movement and plantation production in the modern Caribbean, I have positioned Rastafari migration from the Caribbean to the zion of Ethiopia within a worldview shaped by diasporic African imaginative belonging to Ethiopia. These ideas have been contrasted to the changing limitations on physical movement for repatriates and second-generation Rastafari in the multicultural Jamaica Safar at present.

In particular, by drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork and semi-structured interviews with Ethiopian-born youth, this chapter has explored

how second-generation Rastafari youth define, understand and express belonging to various socio-cultural categories in terms of the oppositional identities of *Rastafari* and *Ethiopian*. The convergence of mobilities and microcultures has provided a rich conceptual basis for this discussion of acts of identity-making. Youth claim themselves as Rastafari, Jamaican and Ethiopian at one and the same time, in everyday interactions and through statements reifying identity. I have suggested that these are lived identities which are most accurately understood as fluid, and not only as oppositional.

The category Shashamane sew indicates the hybridity of youth identities and the development of a microculture in this locale. Gender roles and expectations are reproduced through processes of socialisation, not only in the household and through family and kinship ties but through peer groups in the Jamaica Safar. A focus on speech, music and expectations of masculinity have helped to contextualise wider processes of cultural change and the reproduction of values among diasporic Caribbeans in this migration locale as well as expressions of youth agency. Attention to gender expectations show that Caribbean patriarchally derived ideal behaviours are reproduced among Rastafari youth, in addition to new hybrid identities. Specifically, the "tough Shashamane youth" has emerged as a point of commonality between male Rastafari and Ethiopian youths, as the characteristic demeanour of Shashamane sew or "Shashamane people". Yet what of female youth? Is there a similar commonality that emerges among young women identifying as Rastafari or Ethiopian? Do girls live a Shashamane sew identity? If so, in what ways? This group needs further examination of the intersections of age and gender with the political-economic changes in Ethiopia since the 1990s to explore broader issues of agency and structure. I hope also that this discussion has added to expanding body of research into youth as a group themselves, and not simply youth as a transitional stage in between childhood and adulthood. While researchers have been attentive to the changes for young men, there is work to be done regarding young women's opportunities and expectations within a framework of mobilities.

Notes

1 A more accurate transliteration from Amharic to English of "safar" is "sefer" and "Shashemene" rather than "Shashamane". However, to emphasise Rastafari cultural impact and transculturation as actively shaping the place and cultures, I consistently use the terms "Jamaica Safar" and "Shashamane".
2 In addition to Africa-Caribbean migrations, South-South circulations of people, ideas, money, and goods in the 20th century within the Caribbean, for example, due to work in the Trinidadian oil or Jamaican bauxite industries, as well as between the Caribbean and Central America, are also noteworthy (see Giovannetti, 2006; Putnam, 2002).
3 I use "zion" and "babylon" in lower case letters to indicate both the influence of Christianity in the shaping of Rastafari worldview and the distinct Rastafari concept. For an elaboration of this approach, see Gomes (2019).
4 This section appears in the open-access paper Gomes (2019).
5 There may have also been Rastafari citizens of other countries.

6 It is also noteworthy that in the past, Ethiopian Orthodox priests and monks carried matted hair in a similar style to dreadlocks. This hairstyle is also common among the Hamar ethnic group and young Oromo boys, as anthropologists Gemetchu Mergerssa and Aneesa Kassam explained to me in-person (Lydall & Strecker, 1979).

7 I focus on repatriation to Shashamane since it is the location of the land grant, but repatriates also live in other areas of Ethiopia such as the capital Addis Ababa, and in northern Ethiopia. Rastafari and non-Rastafari from the Caribbean as well as African-Americans have also repatriated to West Africa, notably Ghana, according to Rastafari in Shashamane (see Mutabaruka, 2006; White, 2007; Zips, 2006). In this study, "repatriate" indicates a Rastafari person since all repatriates whom I met and lived with in Shashamane self-identified as Rastafari. Out of respect for the confidentiality of our discussions, I adhered to informants' preferences about recording our interviews and I have used pseudonyms for each person in this chapter.

8 See Gomes (2011) for further discussion.

9 "Brother" and "Sister" are commonly used by Rastafari to signal a shared worldview and kinship. I maintain this nomenclature in this chapter.

10 It is noteworthy also that reggae has been co-opted by politicians. An oft-cited example is the 1976 national elections in Jamaica when Michael Manley and Edward Seaga were famously united on stage by Bob Marley during his Peace concert, during a particularly vicious election campaign (King, 2002).

11 In terms of practical uses, Rasta speech in the Caribbean "soon became a concerted effort to conceal the meaning of their conversations from the uninitiated, particularly from Babylon's agents and informers" (Edmonds, 2003, p. 62). In Shashamane as well, local Ethiopians outside the Jamaica Safar cannot comprehend Rasta talk or Jamaican Patois since it is distinct from English. This lack of familiarity and comprehension can be used advantageously. For instance, when I travelled on a public minibus with young Rastafari who were fluent in Amharic, we could speak in Patois if we wished to converse about private matters in the crowded vehicle.

12 Another researcher, Ababu Minda, states that the children of Rastafari repatriates do not speak English or Jamaican Patois. However, I communicated primarily with them in English and Jamaican Patois given my limited knowledge of Ethiopian languages. While there are children of inter-cultural marriages, particularly those with Ethiopian mothers, who do not speak or understand Patois and speak some standard English learnt in school, one of whom I also met, Minda's position that Rastafari beliefs are not transmitted inter-generationally is not accurate (see also Bonacci, 2015, p. 378).

13 Although I venture that the last comment was heavily optimistic given the limited income that amateurs earn.

14 Werner Zips (2006) indirectly addresses one aspect of Simona's criticism by noting that Rastafari musicians have agreed to donate a percentage of their record profits to certain Houses:

> Sizzla, Capleton, Anthony B, and Junior Reid, as well as other Bobo Ashanti performers, are expected to donate at least one tenth of their revenues gained in the (comparatively still) rich Western music industry to the EABIC [Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress]. These monies are used for preparatory steps towards mass repatriation and the building of EABIC branches in Africa.
>
> (p. 157)

15 In anthropological kinship terminology, "affine" refers to a relative through marriage or an "in-law".

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5 "I'm hungry for connection"

Artistic collectivity and ceremonial encounters in African-Caribbean relations

Doris Posch

Introduction

> "I'm hungry for connection, for community, for shared inspiration, for contact with the ancestors, with the inner voices, with the Human Being. It's my hope to invite us all to re-connect with the original functions of the arts […]".
>
> Michelange Quay, *The Black Box* (2017)

In this chapter, I draw attention to the artistic process, aesthetics, and narration of filmmakers and artists from the Caribbean and its diasporas in the audiovisual works *The Black Box* (2017, ongoing) and *AYITI yon poem san bout* [*Haiti an endless poetry*] (2016). Michelange Quay's initial quote refers to the multiple reasons and motivations of artists' engagement in collective, shared spaces. The statement "I am hungry for connection" expresses the desire for performing artistic practices within a collective space in order to share artistic inspirations, on the one hand, and to reconnect with the genealogy of history, the "ancestors", on the other hand. The analysis draws on the visual podcast series *The Black Box*, in which Haitian-US-American filmmaker, performance artist, Electrovaudou-musician, and hypnotist Michelange Quay engages with the notion of sharing (invisible) artistic work as a ceremonial healing process that goes beyond a connection to cultural values of sharing artistic visions. This is connected with the eponymous audio and video podcast series that deals with narrative encounters with other African and Caribbean artists and its diasporas, including filmmakers and musicians such as Atissou Loko, Pascale Obolo, Newton Aduaka, Myriam Mihindou, Jepthe Carmil, and Alain Gomis (2017). In his second feature-length film project, metaphorically entitled *Haïti Ground Zero* (currently in production), he also refers to the (shared) historical past in African-Caribbean relations and its present-day values in post-disaster Haiti.

The work *AYITI yon poem san bout* by Haitian poet, spoken-word artist, couturier, and filmmaker Hermane Desorme is both an audiovisual meditation on the spoken word performances of poets Duperois Dieubon and

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Vladimyr François (also known as Pop's and DJ No Stress) and a conversation with the filmmaker on challenges the poets are facing in the current everyday reality in a ghetto in Haiti's city Jacmel. The precarious nature of an artistic performance in this particular setting is not only made visible through the filmmaker's engagement with the project itself. Furthermore, the aesthetical means of the video – shot with a laptop camera in low image resolution and black and white aesthetics – draws on two aspects: the tool for accessing regional cultures of technology in a local setting cut off from steady electrical access for one, and the decolonial artistic value of Pop's and DJ No Stress' performances highlighting African-(American-)Caribbean relations in their everyday practices for the other.

The point of departure of the analysis is the construction of, and reflection on, Haiti and Haiti's imaginary in the image production of the filmmakers that contribute to reshaping the conceptual notion of mobility. Desorme's and Quay's recent audiovisual works build their conceptual frame around a mobility lens as they demonstrate that their visual and audio narratives go beyond a mere understanding of the local and the global when it comes to (a) the use of technological means, (b) the (auto-)biographical reflections of Haiti's everyday realities, and (c) the collective encounters of sharing artistic visions from the point of view of African-(American-)Caribbean relations.

One central question drives the audiovisual work of both filmmakers: how does the decolonisation of personal and collective bodies, archives, and histories influence the artistic, intellectual, conceptual, and technical practices and imaginaries? This chapter draws on the artists' exploration of motivations, hopes, and outcomes in their artistic processes and illustrates how they connect with the transformative power of audiovisual media. They do so by performing encounters with other artists, their respective works, and their experience of intertwining history and present, as well as tales, narratives, and imaginaries from Africa. It highlights the potential of their transformed use in the Caribbean today in a specific given moment of the present where, as Quay (2017) notes, "[…] we have never experienced the past. we have never experienced the future […] there's no place else but this, nothing else but this […]". Quay's statement relates to the ongoing lack of visibility of Haiti's filmmaking practices on a global scale. It further illustrates the attempt of placing Haiti's visual narratives on a global agenda of media reception, one that confronts lesser informed audiences with realities and imaginaries of Haiti sparsely covered by the international media.

Reflecting on the various perspectives of image- and narrative creation in the two audiovisual works inevitably requires the inclusion of the multiple aspects of mobility research. Taking into account mobility aspects enables one not only to unveil the entanglements of a perspective from within (Desorme) and a diaspora aesthetics (Quay) but also to point out how the artists contribute to a sense of belonging inherent in their works. The analysis will be carried out with a conceptual frame of Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* (2010 [1990]),[1] Ahmed, Castañeda, Fortier, and Sheller's writings on the concept

of *uprootings* and *regroundings* (2003), as well as Grewal and Kaplan's notion of *scattered hegemonies* (2006 [1994]), and will be grounded in the mobility research perspective that Sheller foregrounded in selected works on the Caribbean, some with a special focus on Haiti (Sheller, 2012, 2018).

Haiti's imaginary construction beyond the local and the diasporic

The analysis of *The Black Box* and *AYITI yon poem san bout* addresses the mobility of artistic forms and contents through the reading of autobiographical filmic accounts of two filmmakers who both underwent various experiences of mobility. They relate to the "richness and complexity of home and migration" (Ahmed et al., 2003, p. 10): first, in their configuration of being a filmmaker, second, in their creation of visual narratives, and third, in their questioning of what "Haiti" itself might signify in terms of staying, leaving, and coming back to Haiti in various phases of the artistic process. The mobility of thoughts and ideas is at the core of Desorme's and Quay's video and audio work, wherein they address Haiti's cultural heritage through the lens of historical references to Haiti's past. This approach deals with the question of whose perspective we are being confronted with, as it is about a trans-generational knowledge transmission in art production. Foregrounding the positionality of those who speak is relevant for mobility narratives since the artists define relations between a diaspora perspective (Quay) and a speaking-from-within perspective (Desorme). Their artistic approach shows that binary opposites of a local and global point of view cannot be attached to their use of narratives since the mobility of narratives goes beyond this oppositional understanding. Furthermore, it shows that the artists "provide varied political engagements while deconstructing monolithic categories and mythic binaries", as Grewal and Kaplan (2006 [1994], p. 29) define their aim in the introduction to *Scattered Hegemonies*. In exploring the different modes and means of artistic practice that all aim at resisting an increasingly separating, objectifying, and commodifying society (Quay, 2017) for artistic creators, Desorme's and Quay's work presents a current counter-narrative to modernity (Gilroy, 1993) since it highlights the "multiple subjectivities that replace the European unitary subject" (Grewal & Kaplan, 2006 [1994], p. 7). Making visible an individual approach of the hybrid and transnational cultures of the Black Atlantic, both works also address the question of *who* can claim the meaning of modernity and the keystones for making past struggles and immobilised voices visible (Fischer, 2004, p. xi).

The Black Box

After his acclaimed short film *L'Évangile du Cochon Créole* (2004) and his feature-length fiction film *Mange, ceci est mon corps* [*Eat, For This Is My Body*] (2007), in his recent artistic trajectory, Michelange Quay explores the

transformative power of audiovisual media by engaging with other artists and their work. Throughout this engagement, he intertwines history and present, narratives and imaginaries from Africa and their transformed use in the Caribbean. During the production process of his second feature-length film, *Haïti Ground Zero* (currently in production), Quay worked on a series of episodes made accessible to a larger audience via the audio and visual podcast series *The Black Box* (2017, ongoing). As a synopsis for *Haïti Ground Zero*, the website of the production company notes: "A bursting of life, which raises from chaos" (Cinéma Defacto, 2019). In both the audio and the visual podcast, Quay attempts to reach for the entanglements of what constitutes this "chaos" in reference to Haiti's post-disaster state after the 2010 earthquake and the search for a collective heritage. At the same time, he addresses the question of what constitutes his personal motivation for filmmaking, artistic, and healing practices:

> I am Haitian by […] biology and by culture and by diaspora, my parents are Haitians born in the United States in this inquiry of identity and what identity could be or mean. Identity is really to stereotype myself the inquiry that I have been making in my films.
>
> (Quay & Posch, 2015)

With this in mind, Quay initiates a collective encounter with further (African-)Caribbean artists in the audio podcast series and thereby engages with the notion of sharing (invisible) artistic work as a ceremonial healing process, since: "I'm hungry for connection" (Quay, 2017). Through guided hypnotherapy sessions with each protagonist, the filmmaker draws on the individual confrontations with a set of cultural, historical, heritage, and artistic values via a multiple set of realities and identities experienced in the Caribbean and African spaces.

AYITI yon poem san bout

Hermane Desorme is a graduate of the film school Ciné Institute in Jacmel with a background in theatre and performing arts, as well as poetry and spoken word performance. Thematically, his artistic work always relates to his lived experience: after realising his first feature-length documentary *Gade!* [Look!] (2017), which deals with a "crossing of gazes" (Posch, 2018b, pp. 122–123) within and beyond Haiti, Desorme's second feature-length experimental documentary (in development) traces the (personal) heritage of Vaudou with regards to its controversial societal reception. His recent work in various media can be regarded as a continuity of his former work, as he builds on Haiti's lack of image production, or else Haiti's distorted representation in films produced by the Global North, where Haiti and the Caribbean have been used as a tourist location or as an exoticised setting to create, as Cham (1992) noted in the early 1990s, "images of the Caribbean radically at odds

with the reality of the people of the Caribbean" (p. 2). Cham's statement still holds true today, since image production by the current group of Haitian filmmakers can also be interpreted as counter measures to the dominant, largely distorted narrative of Haiti in Hollywood cinema that bears witness to a deeply racist depiction of Haiti's people in order to consolidate white supremacist hierarchisation. This is the result of Desorme's understanding of "cinema as a support"[2] that is linked to the claim of the Third Cinema movement in the early 1970s to express "our culture, our films, and our sense of beauty" (Getino & Solanas, 2011 [1970], p. 118). Whereas his focus lies on staging and performing Haiti's cultural relevance on screen in his new project entitled *Haïti – Pays Théâtre Sans Théâtre* [*Haiti – Theatre Country Without Theatre*] (in development), his video work *AYITI yon poem san bout* makes accessible visual narratives of two Haitian artists living in a Jacmel ghetto. In it, he builds on the lack both of image production in Haiti and of circulation due to limited technological resources.[3] In *AYITI yon poem san bout*, Desorme engages with emerging film cultures by demonstrating their great potential for evoking and criticising the lack of culturally, politically, historically, and socially grounded image production. Desorme's emerging visual narratives can also be considered a means of exploring the transformative power of the image by audio-visually engaging with Haiti as a relational point of reference.

Everyday realities in post-disaster imageries

Although Haiti's filmmaking landscape is scarcely covered and scholarly studies on Haiti's film historiography since the 1930s are almost nonexistent, and although its place within Caribbean cinemas has not been studied extensively (Cham, 1992; Hambuch, 2015; Robinson, 2010), – with the exception of Raoul Peck's filmography (Pressley-Sanon & Saint-Just, 2015) – Caribbean cultures and identities are inspirational products of a complex and multiple set of local historical circumstances, as Glissant proved in his influential *Poetics of Relation* (2010 [1990]). Not only did current filmmakers establish a nourishing ground for audiovisual narratives to be told; they further aim at challenging the "increasingly global historical consciousness" in a landscape of global, yet dis-continued expansion by telling the "lived circumstances of this daily reality" (Glissant, 1989 [1981], p. 61).

Caribbean cinemas – unlike African cinemas – and, in particular, filmmaking *in* Haiti, cannot, however, be conflated with a history of Haiti's cinema. Historically, images made *on* Haiti have been most prevalent. Haiti has only recently known a temporary increase in film production from a local point of view, as, for instance, through the *Jollywood* initiative established in the 2000s (Posch, 2015). Despite Haiti's emerging low-budget films, in terms of structures and facilities, its production is very much influenced by, and dependent on, a humanitarian model (Sheller, 2012, 2018, p. 31), internationally grounded and sponsored largely by the United States, Canada, and France. Film distribution to date is almost entirely absent, whereas other cultural and

artistic expressions such as music, poetry, painting, and plastic arts (such as Kanaval, for instance) have been much more present. Emerging filmmaking practices such as Desorme's or Quay's can in fact be referred to as a minor transnational, polycentric movement (Lionnet & Shih, 2005; Shohat & Stam, 2014) on the global agenda of postcolonial cinemas. This has the inherent potential to question the referential paradigms at stake in transnational cinema debates. Furthermore, these visual narratives lack an analytical framework in film and media studies when it comes to the application of theoretical and critical models regarding film. With regards to Caribbean film criticism, Ricardo Arribas suggested capturing the region's emancipatory potential in light of a relational film aesthetics (Arribas, 2015) in a Glissantian reading.

This proves true in the case of *The Black Box* and *AYITI yon poem san bout* since they demonstrate a great potential for evoking the culturally, politically, historically, and socially grounded elements at stake in filmmaking practices. At the same time, they make visible the many aspects challenging Haiti's condition for filmmaking, such as the state's lacking legislation for film production, neither the state's interest in film production, nor the offer of grant opportunities for film funding, the lack of public film archives, and Haiti's only film school being put on hold in 2016, merely a decade after its existence. The audiovisual works are also a means of exploring the transformative power of Haiti's images as a contribution to a broader visual frame of globally interpellant issues. It is notable that the construction and relevance of Haiti plays an important role and, by way of visual storytelling, both filmmakers address Haiti's current situation with a reflection on its cultural heritage and historical past. Both Desorme and Quay react to the asymmetric visual and cultural presence of Haiti on screen by creating image production from an insider's perspective (Desorme) or in close connection with African-Caribbean artists (Quay); their work can be seen as a counter-voice to immobility-related aspects of Haiti's visual narratives, as the following analysis demonstrates.

Both works (Desorme, 2016, and Quay, 2017, ongoing) were produced in post-2010, a moment in Haiti that was known as having significant consequences for the economic sector amongst others, since the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake was linked to a temporary abrogation of mobility in terms of a highly limited access to technological means required for film production. Haiti's engagement with transnational encounters has been largely dependent on an international agenda of political regulations and humanitarian policies. In post-disaster Haiti, international humanitarian logistics produced unevenly distributed network capital, thus limiting the capacities for mobility, and increasingly reproduced subjects with limited mobility. This led to what Sheller (2012) theorised shortly after the devastating earthquake as "the islanding effect" on the people affected by the earthquake, as they were subjected to being temporarily disconnected; a fact that unfortunately for many continues up to the present day. At the same time, the earthquake and

its aftermath were presented by mainstream media coverage as a "mediated spectacle" (Balaji, 2011, p. 62) to an international audience. In return, this raised questions related to the audiovisual practice with regards to the (politically articulated) power of the image and a claim to exclusivity by way of sensationalist, exceptional, minoritising representations of Haiti. Michael Dash attributes this derogatory image creation on Haiti to neocolonial dependency structures taking ground within this seismic shift (Dash, 2010). Therefore, emerging artists responded to Haiti's misrepresentation by focusing particularly on making visible everyday experiences in post-disaster Haiti (Posch, 2018a, p. 10).

The everyday against established landscapes

The aspect of mobility within Desorme's and Quay's audiovisual cultures translates as a deliberately blurred aspect, since the accessibility and shaping of their work go beyond a mere understanding of the local and global. A focus on the entanglements from both a conceptual frame and from the perspective of the artistic process can be foregrounded "including commodities, cultures, texts, data, and images – in all of their complex relational dynamics" (Sheller, 2018, p. 31). The first aspect relates to the Caribbean often understood as a regional or local field of research, in contrast to the field of "mobilities research" that is per se understood to be global (Sheller, 2018, p. 31). The focus here lies on the interconnectedness of fields that attempts to conceptualise *together* what is often regarded as disconnected, for instance, binary opposites such as the local and global divide or the distinction of mobility and immobility. Over the past decades, a steady increase in experiences of migration, exile, and diaspora as well as dynamics of multiculturalism from a postmodern standpoint can be seen in dominant cinemas of the Global North, where the relation of a sociopolitical and cultural influence on the present can be located in references to the colonial heritage of the imperial nations' past. These postcolonial film cultures deal with the "modalities of representation and politics of encounter" (Ponzanesi & Berger, 2016, p. 111), where the location, postcolonialism, and filmmaking are interconnected, thus being a generating factor for a "plurality of nuances" (Ponzanesi & Berger, 2016, p. 111).

Of particular interest in terms of Desorme's and Quay's work is the transposition of invisible thoughts and ideas into audiovisual production and how this relates to the artistic perspectives of the artists in post-disaster Haiti. By addressing invisible and silenced voices, the artists inscribe themselves into a post-disaster narrative which makes visible a particular link to several layers of Haiti's history going back to the African context in uprooted conditions (Ahmed et al., 2003), including the traumas of the middle passage and the colonisers' subordination and exploitation of enslaved people, the process of becoming a republic and the struggle against imperialism as well as the complicated relationship with international humanitarian aid programs.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1990) already dismantled the notion of Haiti's silenced past as a fiction in canonic debates (p. 11), since the exclusion of Haiti's revolutionary history (1791–1804) as the only successful revolt of enslaved resulting in the abolition of enslavement, and Haiti's Independence as the first "Black Republic" thereafter, was especially dominant in modernity discourses. Haiti and its cultural production have often been subsumed under its supposed singularity[4] and exceptionalism that several scholars such as Dash (2008), Fischer (2006), and more recently Clitandre (2011), and Munro (2015), amongst others, called into question.

Desorme's approach is to critically investigate the very study of "mapping the everyday" (Giannachi, 2016), or, to put it in Trouillot's term (1990), the "ordinary". As the on-screen artistic encounter makes visible, the artist's take on his subject is interwoven with the utterance of asking "whose everyday" (Prentice & Devadas, 2008, p. 13). Here, Desorme claims a positionality both as an artist and as a protagonist in his video, which is often disregarded in scholarly debates. US-based Ethiopian filmmaker Haile Gerima (1989) describes the filmmaker as being responsible for the "triangular interaction" between her/him and enabling the relationship between storyteller, audience, and activism (p. 69), whereby the activism part involves political and social activism, which is an essential statement in the light of Desorme's positionality. This positionality involves the politics underlying the connection between visual narratives, film aesthetics, and the control of film production and the possibility of distribution, since the process of obtaining funding is a crucial site of power mechanisms at play, regarding what constitutes acceptable aesthetics from a global point of view. *AYITI yon poem san bout* shows the balancing act of filming the everyday with the belief in cinema as a support and in view of the outside consequences of filmmaking in a highly challenging landscape lacking both a film historiography and an established film industry.

The characters in the video stand in for a generation of former political émigrés who returned home: Pop's aimed at pursuing his artistic career in the United States but was deported since he did not have a valid residence status. DJ No Stress, who used to be a renowned artist in Port-au-Prince, meanwhile, was pushed back to Jacmel due to being overtly resistant towards the political regime of the time. Their trajectory points to the effects of being driven out of the homeland in search of personal and political stability and economic possibility, yet it is only through the audiovisual encounter that their ideas, concepts, and theories unfold. Accordingly, they visualise what Caren Kaplan (2003) rhetorically puts to the fore: "Which bodies? Under what conditions?" (p. 211) with regards to mobilities and the location of subjects in the era of globalisation.

Desorme intended to highlight the political engagement of both artist-musicians in their current environment (Desorme, 2018). The video depicts both characters in seemingly endless spoken word performances (Figure 5.1) accompanied by local percussion instruments.

Figure 5.1 Still AYITI yon poem san bout (2016)

The performances, which are vocal hybrids of English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole [Kreyòl Ayisien], quote slogans of the South African anti-apartheid and US civil rights movements, as well as extracts from Pan-African extracts and re-framings of writers such as Cheikh Anta Diop, Frantz Fanon et al. in the Haitian context of Rap Creole. At times, these multilingual voices overlap, and there is a repetition of terms such as "revolution, revolution, […]" (Desorme, 2016). At times, this spoken word meditation is interrupted by phone calls with verbal claims such as: "I got no money now, I'm broke, I haven't eaten yet" (Desorme, 2016); the exclamation then transforms into a talk with the filmmaker on questions relating to daily life with references to the *real* problems of the country, while we hear the hammering sound of a construction site. Desorme brings to the fore a form of revolution many Haitians are engaged in on a daily basis as they lack certainty on how to face the next day (Desorme, 2015, lines 627–640). Here, the video work refers to Keya Ganguly's (2002) attentive assertion that the everyday can also be "routinely catastrophic" (p. 2). Consequently, *AYITI yon poem san bout* gives way to a reflection on the access to mobility and questions the immobilising nature of the artistic process under these circumstances. In this regard, Desorme's vision of filmmaking comes from a very down-to-earth perspective that includes a highly pragmatic approach, which is also, however, mobilising, since he intends, by way of filmmaking, to build futures from the bottom-up and to create new filmmakers and audiences in sectors

of society that are not necessarily familiar with audiovisual production. This understanding testifies to Desorme's vision of the role of cinema, that is, as Solanas and Getino (2011 [1970]) put it, "at the service of life itself" (p. 118). The notion of "beauty" re-addresses the attempt of decolonising cinema that was so distinctively put forward in their 1969 manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema* [*Hacia un Tercer Cine*] (2011 [1970/1969]).

Ceremonial encounters relating the past and the present

Similarly, Quay engages in connectivity of (African) Caribbean spatialities (Sheller, 2007) via hypnotherapy as ceremonial encounters with other artists, since their audiovisual interaction emphasises the potential of collective artwork. Accordingly, the choice of an audio and visual podcast series employs the medium of film as one that shares visions on the role and the place of art.[5] Thereby, the notion and practice of a collective encounter plays a significant role, as Quay initiates ceremonial encounters with further artists as a mode of artistic expression and as a sharing practice of precisely that African-Caribbean heritage which has been disregarded in terms of connecting histories and cultural references. Quay carries out this interaction through hypnotherapy sessions, involving healing practices. Further, he reflects on the potential of artistic practice in approaching themes such as historical trauma, violence, and exploitation due to (settler) colonialism and imperialism. Most important to Quay's work is the focus on the conscious watching experience of the audience in terms of offering a live set of experience in addition to the screened event. In order to integrate the viewer into this visual experience, *Chapter 2* of *The Black Box* was presented at *Nuit Blanche de Port au Prince* in 2019; this first public screening was accompanied by an artistic creation and installation entitled *Seeing is Seeing*, designed by François Gasner and based on a concept by Quay which was intended to "augment" the viewing experience through elements such as mirrors and windows in front of an altar in order to make visible in a live set what remained unseen in history, which, in the end "allows us to at last see / the screen of the spirit / and the spirit of the screen". Thereby, Quay expands on the understanding of "transhistorical" (Stam et al., 2015, p. 217) connectedness from a present-day perspective in a setting that goes beyond a cinematic gaze.

Each episode of *The Black Box* – provided with a sub-header saying "ceremonial encounters, artists of the invisible" (Quay, 2017, ongoing) – invites the viewer to an intentional engagement with the audiovisual work and its effects – inserted by the techniques of the filmmaker's training as a hypnotherapist: "before watching this video before listening to this video prepare your space prepare your intentions and while having this experience notice your inner response" (Quay, 2017). It is interesting to note that the directions of the protagonists' look in the episode make visible the gaze "as a site of resistance for colonised black people globally" (hooks, 1992, p. 116).

These established looking relations between protagonists and viewers create the moment and place where future perspectives are in close relation with the past, where the diasporic and the local, the lived, merge.

This search for connectedness with the cultural heritage of the past translates into the aesthetics of the audiovisual segments such as the editing of the seemingly fragmented realities that merge into one another by addressing a collective "we": "we do things creatively when we create. we do things profoundly when we dig deep" (Quay, 2017). This artistic montage is in line with what Stuart Hall (2000 [1991]) wrote in the early 1990s:

> There is a past to be learned about, but the past is now seen, and it has to be grasped as a history, as something that has to be told. It is narrated. It is grasped through desire. It is grasped through reconstruction. It is not just a fact that has been waiting to ground our identities.
>
> (p. 38)

The montage makes visible the lived experience of the visual artwork in various modes of being in or out of focus, and Quay's voice-over as a hypnotherapist underlines its multisensory experience: "[…] this experience, beyond history, beyond understanding, this experience […]". While a woman closes her eyes, the voice-over emphasises with a whisper: "[…] right now, you can see it". This composition of the invisible versus the visible is a hint to the multiple layers of the past and to the reconnection with the spirits of the past, since the woman's face looks like a mask due to a faded and blurred image transcending the cinematic space (Figures 5.2 and 5.3.) before slowly focusing on a (clear) image with the stark outlines of her face (Figures 5.4 and 5.5).

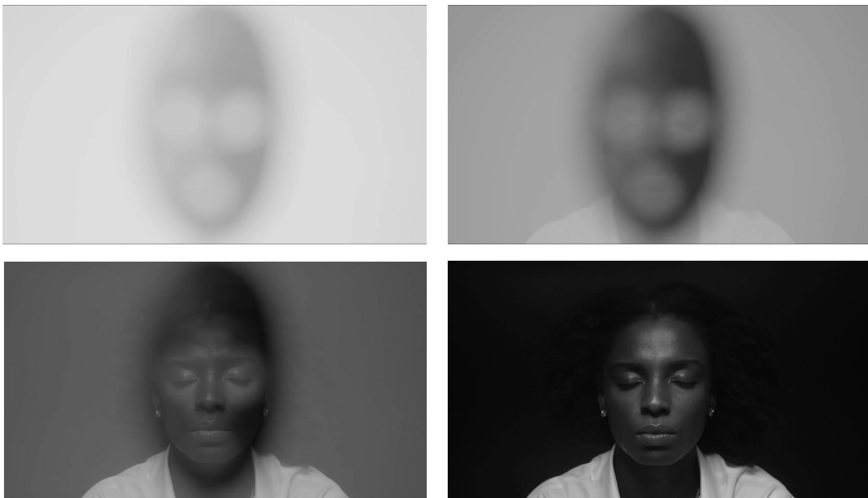

Fig. 5.2., Fig. 5.3., Fig. 5.4., Fig. 5.5 Still The Black Box (2017)

This guided experience aims to speak to the invisible notions of the experienced, the past. Especially in the context of increasing diasporic movements (Marks, 2000, p. 241), uncovering the silenced and invisible past by way of "acknowledg[ing] the other ways of knowing, including the knowledge of the senses", becomes more widespread, as Laura Marks thoroughly examined in her writings on *The Memory of the Senses* (p. 194).

The visual composition of the podcast episode *Chapter 1 (Opening)* (2017) features an intersection of archival footage from Haiti's past in black and white cinematography that refers back to the most crucial aspects of colonial history, such as the middle passage. Several shots of technological achievements coincide with military invasion, modes of public surveillance and post-earthquake stills. In the first chapter, the contrast of the black and white aesthetics dominates. The visual content shifts in accelerated speed and in vertical movements: it begins with a Christmas tree, followed by artificial lights on a ceiling (Figure 5.6), the roots of an old tree that grows on the wall of a house (Figure 5.7), windows with bars, goes to the architecture of urban housing (Figure 5.8), further to a crowd of people, to meeples, and pans to operating systems of sound, or surveillance technology (Figure 5.9), and further shows underground shafts with homeless persons, to name but a few.

This montage is a multiple contextualisation of the current everyday realities in a globally connected world, which also creates ideal conditions for confronting the viewer with the past that seemingly lingers in these images of the present. In this stream of images that constantly contrasts between darkness and light, Quay at times inserts archival material of specific historical events, such as a painting of a slave-trade scenery (Figure 5.10) with enslaved

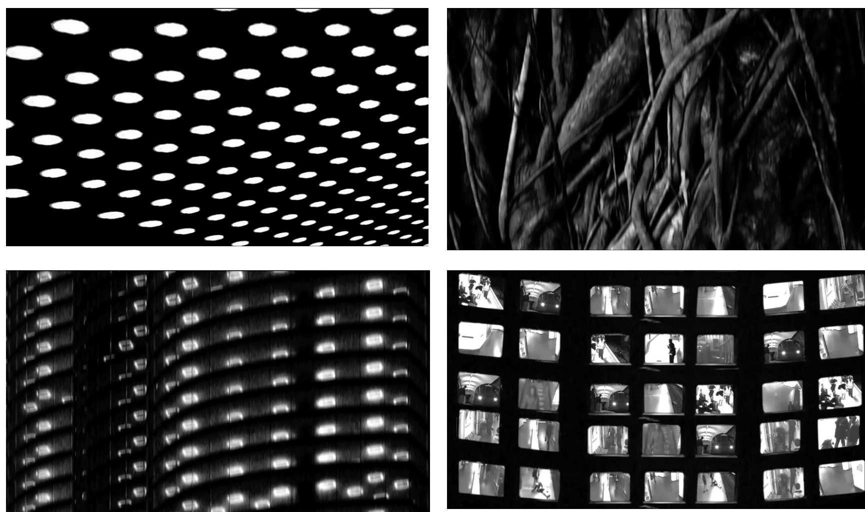

Fig. 5.6., Fig. 5.7., Fig. 5.8, Fig. 5.9 Still The Black Box (2017)

Fig. 5.10 Still The Black Box (2017)

Fig. 5.11. Fig. 5.12. Still The Black Box (2017)

persons almost naked on the right, divided by white male slaveholders visibly in charge of the scene. Due to its accelerated insertion, the painting remains blurry. Or else, we can see the historical motif of cane plantation workers (Figure 5.11) rolling by, before the same image composition transforms to a set of cables in a contemporary setting (Figure 5.12).

The repetition of multiple light effects is memorable and builds the connecting element of the sequence: here, the architecture connects with culturally and at times religiously coded artefacts (such as the Christmas tree as a prominent symbol of Christianity), and, in consequence, a surveillance technology setup rotates along with the architectural setting. It is interesting to note that the image composition alternates between inhabited elements and people on transportation (such as the final sequence of *Chapter 2* "*The Mirror*", which is entirely dedicated to the crowded streets of an urban setting), although its connection remains fragmented and the two divergent elements

are only linked in the editing process. This technique can be seen as one reference point to "chaos", yet it could also illustrate – in view of Glissant's image of the creole garden – the heritage of Caribbean creolisation that has gradually given way to a broader articulation of global intersectionality. The *creolité* aspect can be understood as inspirational products of a complex and multiple set of local and historical circumstances in Caribbean cultures and identities. This groundbreaking work builds upon Glissant's earlier *Caribbean Discourse* [*Le discours antillais*] (1989 [1981]), which invites the reader to perceive the Caribbean not as a response to fixed, univocal meaning imposed by the past, but to conceive of it as an infinitely varied, inexhaustible concept both for the individual narrative and for a collective entity. This concept addresses a collective "we" spanning over various times and generations and is interwoven with the present "I", in as much as individuals engage in the making of history "both as actors and as narrators" (Trouillot, 2015 [1995], p. 2), as Trouillot points out the ambivalent meaning of the term history (in relation to the *power in the story*). This view correlates with a Glissantian view of the thought of territory and the self being in relation with one another (Glissant, 1997, p. 144). Glissant foregrounds a relation identity[6] that thinks land as a "place where one gives-on-and-with rather than grasps" (p. 144).

Most footage, largely assembled in vertical movement, is accompanied by a soundtrack that features Electrovaudou segments (inspired by Rara music) and voice-over sections of "I am hungry, I am cold" (Quay, 2017) ["J'ai faim, j'ai froid"]. This references the spectres of the international media coverage and humanitarian aid that haunt and dictate the speed of the country's reconstruction. In that sense, all assembled audiovisual footage accounts for what Desorme (2015) calls: "As for Haiti, people only see the bad".

Movement and belonging through a mobility lens

In the introduction to *Uprootings/Regroundings*, the editors emphasise one phrase: "*Being grounded is not necessarily about being fixed; being mobile is not necessarily about being detached*" (Ahmed et al., 2003, p. 1; emphasis in the original). What the authors term *uprootings/regroundings* connects to an understanding of movement and mobility that transgresses an essentialist definition of home as origins (mapped as "homing") and mobility as travel and transformation (mapped as "migrating"), such as presence versus absence. Rather, *uprootings* and *regroundings* reflect on modes of mobility *and* placement as being interdependent (p. 1), understanding "moving into and out of 'homes' as forms of relatedness" (p. 10). Taking this reflection as a point of departure, I opt for the authors' term of a "rootless mobility" (p. 3), which is a relevant feature of current modes of experience that stand against any form of "rooted belonging" (p. 3). However, I do not intend to over-emphasise the generalising nature of "the global" that foregrounds the increasing mobility of people across national borders without referring to the effective (minor) percentage of the world's migration population (Puri, 2004, p. 7). Rather, I agree with postcolonial feminist theories (such as Ifekwunigwe, 1999) who have made

us aware that the greatest movements often occur within the self, which is also the case when it comes to Desorme's and Quay's work, which I would resume as a "mobility within".

In both artworks, the autobiographic filmmakers' first-person narrator takes multiple positions and voices and thereby foregrounds Haiti's lived experience in relation to several aspects of mobility. The manifold nature of mobilities relates to several stages of production. For both, the point of departure was a narrative – to a certain extent one that was autobiographical – that implied taking into account trajectories of mobility in order to carry out the project.

First, for Desorme and Quay, as for many other (emerging) filmmakers, filmmaking in Haiti implies an ambivalent starting point, since films *on* Haiti had a huge influence on what kind of mediated images had been created and disseminated nationally as well as internationally. A great majority of films, reportages, literature, and artistic creation, as well as Haiti's history, had been written and made from the outside ("*par l'extérieur*"), while Haiti's own literature and art have rarely seen a widespread international circulation, with few exceptions. According to Desorme, Haiti was largely mispresented in films, which not only confirms the ambiguous and distorted depiction of Haiti's past throughout the present, but also results in a challenging situation for filmmakers currently based in Haiti (Desorme, 2015, lines 73–79) and aiming at re-imagining Haiti's realities by way of audiovisual narratives. All questions related to (global and local) inequalities inscribed in the "racism/ethnicism complex"[7] – such as the global division of the Global South / Global North or in the case of Haiti, the power of capital – are a motor for the current generation of filmmakers to make films in order to counter these controversial film and media debates.

Second, due to the lack of means of production and lack of distribution nodes, or in Desorme's (2015) words, due to the "complexities of Haiti", the filmmakers have to come up with creative strategies of producing visual narratives and of making them accessible to an audience. It is through Desorme's and Quay's artistic expression that mobility becomes both a prerequisite for and a narrative thread in their films. Mobility here is "embodied and imagined" (Ahmed et al., 2003, p. 5) in relation to socioeconomic inequalities, prejudice, and borders.

Third, both filmmakers intended their audiovisual work to be screened both locally and internationally in order to relate emotionally and intellectually to both Haitian and global audiences. This represents an additional challenge, as Lindiwe Dovey (2015) notes:

> The major difference relates to economic value and the related issues of class, education, and mobility. [M]any filmmakers from Africa [and the Caribbean] whose work is regularly featured in festivals come from middle class or upwardly mobile social environments, have had access to professional film training, and have traveled widely.
>
> (p. 6)

These contextual factors reveal the downside of mobility, since access to it is a crucial factor when it comes to not only the artistic authority, which includes distributing under-represented narratives, but also when it comes to negotiating questions of cultural heritage, class affiliation, religious supremacy, and racial domination. As a consequence, home and migration cannot be adequately theorised outside of these spatialised relations of power. Drawing on selected works, I will now illustrate several aspects of the interrelatedness of the creation of Haiti's visual narratives with mobility.

Mobility within vertical and horizontal movement

In *The Black Box*, the horizontal and vertical image composition (Figures 5.13 and 5.14) frames the connectedness of history and addresses the dialogical nature of African-Caribbean relations. This "reconfiguration of space" (Ahmed et al., 2013, p. 5) generates a new vision on uprootings and regroundings. In both chapters, two different directions of movement dominate *The Black Box*: the vertical movement as well as the simultaneous zooming into, and brief freezing, of a selected image showing the realities the protagonists appear to be facing.

Various modes of movement align with the visual footage: an overflow of vertical movements in accelerated speed and, at times, a fixed cinematography on selected images such as a hand jammed into the bricks of a building as a reference to the devastating effects of the earthquake that hit Haiti in 2010, as is the case in the first chapter, entitled *The Opening* (2017), where ground zero – in reference to the notion of Haiti in fragments, "Ayiti kraze" (Fischer, 2010) – is to be located. The selection and composition of images also highlight the current ecological conditions visible in shots of the dry earth overlapping with traces of human blood – in red as the only colour in

Fig. 5.13., Fig 5.14. Still The Black Box (2017)

the otherwise black and white shots. Subsequently, a shot of a red sun – as a reference to sunsets – appears, since time for implementing change seems to be limited, which can be read as a metaphor for the time that has passed since 2010 and the little change that has happened since in terms of reconstructing the country. Quay demonstrates this thematic thread in *Chapter 2* "*The Mirror*" (2019), which starts in the indoor setting of a brick building, before a panning shot of the roofless building, where the natural growth continues regardless of the unavailable resources for renovation.

The visual composition carefully connects the past and present, whereby various horizontal and vertical camera movements refer to a crossroad mode which is also used in Vaudou practices. As in Vaudou practice, they point out the multilayered relationship between space and time, where diverse histories and contexts overlap, including the reverberations of the past in the present. The freezing of the camera movement on veve[8] on the ground also manifests this *croisement* [crossroad], since the veve painting is a symbol of rituals of memory that Joan Dayan (1995) links with "deposits of history", where "[s]hreds of bodies come back, remembered in ritual, and seeking vengeance" (p. 36), before the vertical camera movement continues while people gather for a Vaudou ceremony and start dancing. In doing so, the state of the collective and the individual – made visible by shots of nature and of the human body – overlap: a shot of fissures and cracks in the ground caused by the earthquake (Figure 5.15) overlaps with a close-up of a hand clinging to a piece of earth (Figure 5.16), all of which is surrounded by clouds and a smoke screen, thereby suggesting a floating in space, whereas these still images alternate between moving images of destroyed houses' bricks and people being buried.

Quay's recurring move to stage historically incisive scenes while at the same time imposing a different content within a similar motif (such as a hand buried in the bricks of a building), connects history as the rudiments of the past that literally breathes in the current landscape. Contrasting the same image composition is a visually strong reference to the devastating effects of the 2010 earthquake, despite referencing the alive versus the constructed element as well as the alive and the almost dead which is still breathing under the surface. Formally, *The Black Box* is a hybrid assemblage of a great variety of images that figure as allusions to elements of dreams, fantasy, history, and the

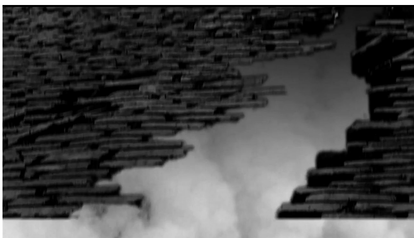

Fig. 5.15., Fig 5.16. Still The Black Box (2017)

present. The effects of the recent earthquake are traced back to past wounds caused by the middle passage and thereby make visible the coloniality of power coinciding with the present-day.

Glissant's idea of imagining the infinite interaction of cultures resonates in Quay's work regarding the disconcerting features of the artistic process as such, which includes the (dis-)connectedness of image/mind/body, the implications of objectifying and commodifying the creative spirit, the (futures of) the *unthought*, the disordered and the destroyed in a post-disaster cultural and political environment, and the resulting re-considerations of possible *becomings* in a world in Relation. In his audio podcast series, French-Senegalese filmmaker Alain Gomis (in Quay, 2017) states in a voice-over: "We all deal with our words and culture: trying to be connected [...] it is not about finding solutions", the statement of Haitian artist and scholar Jephthe Carmil (in Quay, 2017) is: "[T]he lack of means [...] becomes itself the artistic question [...]", whereas one central declarations of French-Gabonese artist Myriam Mihindou (in Quay, 2017) is the following: "[T]he only knowledge is lived knowledge".

The analysis shows that the understanding of postcolonial film cultures can be widened to include the specifics of the Caribbean. In doing so, the potential of moving beyond a problematic understanding of a New World order would be facilitated. With reference to Sylvia Wynter's (2003) compelling theory of the "Overrepresentation of Man", Sheller (2018, p. 31) addresses the problematic discourse regarding the "New" World order as laying the fundaments for binary discourses on the local versus the global and migration versus territoriality. Wynter's (2000) concept of the capitalised "Man" lays out the fundamental creation of the white superior self as the prerequisite of the conception of the human (p. 25). The "Man" not only conceives himself as the supreme of all beings – and therefore overrepresents himself – but also in the eye of the Other, who in turn, can only be defined as a projection of the Man in its subjugated existence and created dependence from the "Man", which is most useful in explaining the coloniality of power in Haiti.

Additionally, this debate, which establishes two oppositional and unbalanced forces – the dominated (the Caribbean) and the dominant (the West) – "still shape[s] our problematic understandings of mobility and belonging, the native and nonnative" (Sharma, 2015, p. 167). A plurality of nuances thus includes – besides a contextual frame and a personal worldview – the elements of the haptic, the sensorial, and the emotional. This speaks to Glissant's (2010 [1997, 1990]) notion of "the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (p. 11). Glissant's understanding of Relation – with a capital "R" – draws on the various ways, cultures encounter one another in contingent historical and contemporary circumstances, and anticipates a potential for transformation on all sides, including their unforeseeable entities and new formations (p. 53). At this point, Glissant's view also refers to the notion of belonging, that is, belonging as a simultaneously local and global condition. This comes into

effect especially in regard to historical references to African spaces (histories, dynamics, heritage) within current audiovisual production of the Caribbean, as Desorme's and Quay's works point out.

Accessing technical means, connecting everyday realities

In *AYITI yon poem san bout*, the presence and performance of Duperois Dieubon and Vladimyr François visualise a redefinition of belonging that can be framed as a manifested history of "rootless mobility" in Haiti's post-disaster conditions that points to its unstable future:

> While recognizing that the transnational movements of bodies, objects and images have transformed concepts and experiences of home and belonging (defined as locality and community as well as nation), we question the presumptions that rootless mobility is the defining feature of contemporary experience and that it stands against any form of 'rooted belonging'.
>
> (Ahmed et al., 2003, pp. 2–3)

The protagonists' performance here connects with Shalini Puri's (2004) notion of "marginal migrations". Since the artists make visible their marginal migrations, their performances invite being studied as a "new configuration of inquiry" (p. 17) in diaspora studies. As both characters express the historically relevant transmission of cultural knowledge spanning the African and Caribbean contexts in their spoken word performance, they embody a *mobility within*, whereby uprooting and regrounding emerge as "simultaneously affective, embodied, cultural and political processes whose effects are not simply given" (Ahmed et al., 2003, p. 2). Via the mode of direct address, the poetic encounter invites the viewer to reflect on how relevant it is to conceive of mobility and placement as interdependent (p. 1) at this point in history, which in turn makes fluid the notion of im/mobility, since Pop's and DJ No Stress's regrounding of identity construction, experienced cultures, nations, and diasporas exemplifies that all of them "resist and reproduce hegemonic forms of home and belonging" (Ahmed et al., 2003, p. 2).

From a formal perspective, the video was made with a built-in laptop camera due to the lack of available technological equipment and the lack of on-site electricity at the shooting location. At the beginning of the video, in a mode of conscious self-positioning, Desorme explains the poor image construction by referring to the low quality of the video as well as the low resolution in voice-over, thus making transparent the aesthetic conditions. Also, the first shot draws on a digitally shot analogue film strip with digitally written letters in the title of the video which can be read as another direct reference to the lack of access both to film material on a technical and resource-based level and to an almost lacking archival history of Haitian cinema on a conceptual level. The relatively limited hand-held use of the built-in laptop camera here

becomes the audiovisual extension of Desorme's presence which, for one, refers to the precarious nature of the lived reality. For the other, it is the possible reason the encounter happened in the first place. Subjective camera shots continue this self-reflexive mode (Posch, 2018b, p. 124) as they trace the director's gaze encountering the camera (Figure 5.17). Also, the gaze of the two protagonists meets Desorme's as they directly face the camera.

For Desorme, making use of his scarce technological means – via a video shot by a laptop camera as the only available means of lowest-budget production in the remote shooting location – is, first of all, an invitation to make visible the precarious everyday realities of many based in Haiti. Making the video accessible online allows for a mobilisation of the audiovisual content towards a global context. The video's streaming possibility is necessary in order to effectuate an exchange with a virtual audience. Eventually, due to the difficult access to film production in Haiti, the video could not only come into existence through a mobile device in the digital era, but also inscribes itself in a specific node of possible dissemination due to its low-tech mode.

Furthermore, the fact that Desorme is only able to portray his protagonists via the low quality of a laptop makes visible the porous process of audiovisual production, which foregrounds multiple axes of economic, political, cultural, mental, emotional, aesthetic, and experimental differentiation intersecting with a specific context in history (Brah & Phoenix, 2004, p. 76). Desorme's aesthetic approach thus points to the realities of those societies lacking virtual network access and therefore adds a layer of necessary inquiry to the question of im/material mobility, since borders and boundaries move while their mobility profoundly affects cultures (Fortunati & Taipale, 2016, p. 566); however, the lesser studied aspect of immobility also plays a huge role in

Fig. 5.17. Still AYITI yon poem san bout (2016)

affecting everyday realities and cultures. This method recalls Hito Steyerl's (2009) first-hand approach[9] "in defense of the poor image", related here to the re-usage as poor images that can further be read as a consciously arranged constellation of making visible specific social forces, as already pointed out by Espinosa. Desorme's video exemplifies a contemporary "militant" approach during the *process of making* (and further circulating of) images in Kodwo Eshun's and Ros Gray's terminology (2011, p. 1).

Whose perspective?

AYITI yon poem san bout is a conscious overlap of insider/outsider perspectives and thereby makes clear a Glissantian view, that is to say that relation in all senses of the word – connecting, telling, listening, looking, and so forth, and the parallel awareness of the self and surroundings – is key to transforming realities and reshaping societies. Desorme's filmmaking practice can be aligned with the rethinking of Third Cinema aesthetics (Guneratne & Dissanayake, 2000), since it brings into critical spotlight the phenomenon of filmmaking in what was formerly called "Third World", and mobilises the idea of rethinking film cultures in a world where audiovisual equipment is not limited to exclusive, high-quality material. By way of his low-tech video that accesses and portrays less acknowledged realities and makes these everyday realities accessible online thereafter, Desorme aims to build a bridge between art and education. He also reaches out towards sectors less or not at all affiliated with cinema, since he seeks a larger impact on a societal level. Thus, *AYITI yon poem san bout* points out the idea of cinema as a support, which responds to the *Imperfect Cinema* manifesto's last phrase: "Art will not disappear into nothingness; it will disappear into everything" (Espinosa, 1979 [1970], p. 26). The experimental video with two internationally little-known artists counts as one such bridge-building encounter.

As mentioned earlier, Desorme's vision of a "politicized" cultural manifestation precisely deals with cinema, art, and beauty as "an integral part of the national processes of decolonization", as Solanas and Getino (2011 [1970]) claim:

> [to] dissolve aesthetics in the life of society: only in this way, as Fanon reminded us, can decolonization become possible and culture, cinema, and beauty – at least, what is of greatest importance to us – become our culture, our films, and our sense of beauty.
>
> (p. 118)

By getting down to the remote setting of the interiors of Jacmel's ghetto ("Haitien e ghetto", Pop's in Desorme, 2016), showing the structure of the building that is hidden behind the curtain, the camera discloses the brick structure of the house in its unfinished state and thus references the eternally temporary. In this regard, Desorme's audio-visual work, making accessible

the non-accessed, can be considered – in Achille Mbembe's (2001) term – to be making visible a form of "living in the concrete world" (p. 17). This reading also includes, amongst various other elements, the contestation of underlying assumptions of the negative image production in international media of a place such as Haiti. Though Mbembe's analysis focuses on "Africa", his assumption of delivering a narrative that does not draw on the fictional, but on "the harshness of its destiny, its power, and its eccentricities" (Mbembe, 2001, p. 17) can also be applied in this context. A reading of Mbembe's proposition further mobilises a counter-imaginary on the politics of place, where "[i]t's all about mental peace […], peace and love" (Pop's in Desorme, 2016).

Both artist-musicians emphasise the desire of their politically engaged message to circulate – "Il faut vivre en paix, respect!" ("We must live in peace, respect!) (Desorme, 2016) – and to be shared, since they both directly face the camera while they perform (Figure 5.1) as they move between claims of "honesty" ("honnêteté") and "ignorance" (Desorme, 2016). These messages, which go back to an African-Caribbean cultural heritage, open up reflection on the "recomposition as well as a redistribution of cultural capital" (Afzal-Khan, 2000, p. 29), in a non-highlighted context that sheds light on the downsides of "the transnational story of upward mobility" (p. 29). They are also a marker of current trends in transcultural filmmaking practices, where multilingual and multinational references dominate in order to trace the protagonists' trajectories. These address the nuances between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the understandable and its opposite between the actor and the viewer who belong to a multitude of imagined communities:

> Stories cover territories that the spectator and the characters are not expected to recognize but to discover and chart at the same time. The issue is verisimilitude is thus redefined. Both audience and characters are involved in inventing different scales and different sets of symbols, rather than in simply relying on previously established maps or landscapes.
>
> (Ponzanesi & Waller, 2012, p. 87)

Desorme's approach is in line with Hall's (2000, [1991]) understanding of "[t]he homeland is not [being] waiting back there for the new ethnics to rediscover it" (p. 38). The view through a "local" lens, however, does not mystify a more truthful version of the perceived than a "global" perspective. Rather, Desorme's interaction with the artists via the poor image affords the performers agency, and enables the audience to see the non-featured and listen to the non-heard as an emerging audiovisual articulation. Close-up shots of the thin fabric of a curtain (Figure 5.18) frame the video and build the bridge between the outside environment and the inside setting of the two artists, as the camera pans across the curtain. This movement uncovers the lived realities and makes visible the inaccessibility of the venue in a decentered location, whereby the focus lies on making possible an access to, and "understanding [of,] cultures" rather than on a sensationalist perception and on "discovering

new lands" (speaking with Glissant, 2010 [1997, 1990], p. 26). Desorme's perspective on making cultures understandable takes into account Hall's (1989) initial questions formulated in the late 1980s, rephrasing a "new 'Caribbean cinema'" regarding its cinematographic implementation:

> Who is this emergent, new subject of the cinema? From where does it speak? […] though we speak, so to say 'in our own name', of ourselves and from our own experience, nevertheless who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never exactly in the same place.
>
> (p. 68)

The chosen location of the "ordinary" (Trouillot, 1990) everyday indoor environment of the two artists interacts with an aesthetic focus on "[a] poetic encounter with the artists Pop's and No Stress where the words paint a country of a dream that is lost in its imaginary" ("Une rencontre poétique entre les artistes Pop's et No Stress où les mots peignent un pays de rêve perdu dans son imaginaire") (Desorme, 2017, English translation by the author), as the description of the audiovisual poem states. Therefore, Desorme's personal approach from a local point of view might be considered relevant in order to enable a subversive reading of international audiovisual production *on* Haiti, and to further decenter the imagery on Haiti by way of its filmed imaginary. Desorme constructs narratives on Haiti through the respective settings and perception. He thereby contributes to decentering and de-constructing "the burden of the concept of cultural hybridity in the postmodern academy [that] has been to correct purist, essentialist, and organicist conceptions of culture"

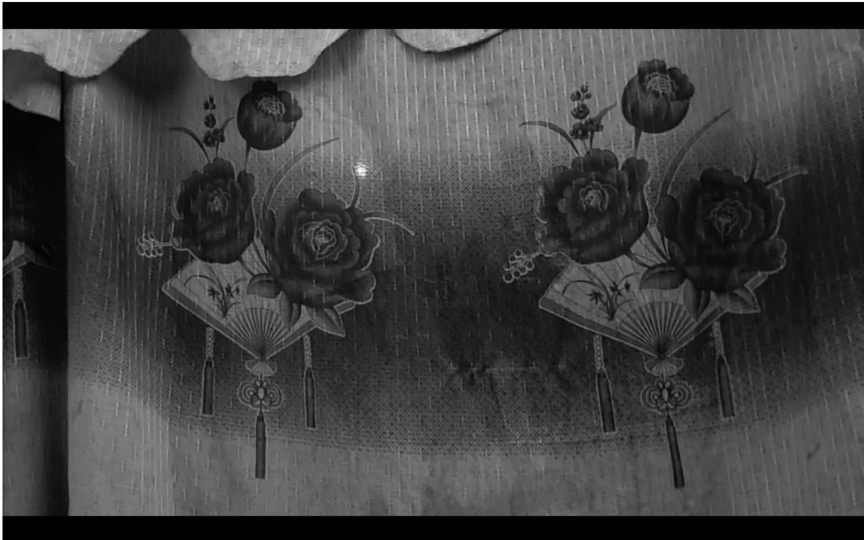

Fig. 5.18 Still AY*ITI yon poem san bout* (2016)

(Puri, 2004, p. 19). In doing so, he criticises pre-established understandings of a "stable unitary subject" (p. 19) which are grounded in concepts of a nation-state and modernity. The analysis foregrounds Desorme's "working model" of filmmaking featuring his view on the unstable internal relationship of Haiti by superimposing his various positions throughout the video, since, in Glissant's (2010 [1997, 1990]) understanding, an internal relationship is never-ending, rather "[…] it is a working model. It allows us to imagine" (p. 169).

Through the audiovisual production of *The Black Box* and *AYITI yon poem san bout*, a re-scaling of the accessibility of the moving image takes place: in the case of Quay's podcast series as a filmic narration, and in the case of Desorme's video through the mode of production. In both cases, their work on the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake can be seen as a mobilising mode of the immobility the country has been undergoing. The audiovisual work undertakes a visual re-framing of individual narratives. Thereby a new meaning of belongings, of experiencing a place, and of understanding history is made possible.

Concluding aspects of mobility

By way of engaging in a transcultural encounter with other artists and their respective work, the artists Desorme and Quay not only re-address the question of these artists' agency by asking to what degree the complexity of these transcultural encounters – that are culturally, socio-politically, historically, and personally interwoven – might have a transformative and performative potential for the artists themselves. They also put into question (their own) personal and artistic processes and their respective imagery and imagined realities (in Hall's term) as well as their lived knowledge in and on Haiti. Moreover, as Haiti's complex historical and socio-cultural entanglements played an essential part in each of the filmmakers' production processes, this resulted in the need to further focus on the aesthetics of film production and what they engender in emerging film cultures, as well as their linkages to the lived experience of the filmmakers themselves.

The Black Box and *AYITI yon poem san bout* (including the filmmakers' backgrounds) have shown that the meaning of mobility is multiple and responds to a complex set of debates that define postcolonial mobility. These different accounts of mobility reveal how the fragmented cultures generated by international mobility erode, as they have always done, colonial and modern accounts of national cultures (Loingsigh, 2003, p. 165). Both works are therefore linked to a set of core themes around scattered hegemonies that the authors highlight, such as theories of travel, and the intersection of colonial and postcolonial discourses, modernism, and postmodern hybridity. They remind us of the circulation of key terms, notions, and concepts when addressing the artists' "political and narrative strategies" (Grewal & Kaplan, 2006 [1994], p. 29), as well as the political take on narrative strategies that are interwoven with their use of technological means.

Superimposing different narratives of images, sounds, movements, and haptic moments of the human (as an artist) as a point of reference (Fortunati & Taipale, 2016), of "being human as praxis" (McKittrick, 2015), demonstrates the composition of an imaginary set of lived realities by way of seemingly spontaneous, poetic spoken word performances and ceremonial encounters with other artists. This again makes possible an "infinite interaction of cultures", since what we catch sight of is an aesthetic approach which can be considered a celebration of the rhizomatic nature of Caribbean identities: "The thing that makes the understanding of every culture limitless is precisely the thing that allows us to imagine, without approaching it, the infinite interaction of cultures" (Glissant, 2010 [1997, 1990]), pp. 172–173). The analysis has shown that *The Black Box* and *AYITI yon poem san bout* call for establishing a dialogue with other Caribbean peoples in order to re-address the misrepresentations and distortions of facts propagated and promulgated by colonial powers – both narrativise its current "hybrid" and "unstable" nature (in reference to Dash and Glissant).

The focus on the specific use of technological means in Desorme's work has shown the relevance of the specificities of the audiovisual medium with regards to its potential audience outreach after the 2010 earthquake from the perspective of a seemingly dis-/connected, im-/mobile world. Throughout diverse fields of the arts and in reference to various historical moments of encounters with other actors in the artistic field, both artists established African-Caribbean relations as a mode of cultural expression of the very mobility of ideas, concepts, and art.

Issues related to mobility and the concept of mobility as a whole expose the at times contradictory visions of Haiti from an inside and outside perspective. These works of art demonstrate the vital necessity of mobility for both the process of filmmaking and the themes addressed in the films, which then results in a further level of reception, and therefore, the filmmakers' redrawing generates new processes of uprooting and regrounding. Without prioritising moving over staying, my aim was to draw attention to the processes involved in mobility and reflect on *what* mobility engenders both for the filmmakers and the films *in relation* to staying (or coming back) (and what it implies for staying *after* leaving) when taking into consideration different dimensions of global and local "power-geometries" (Massey, 1991). As my analysis showed, this can both take place out of necessity and as a "choice" and thus depend on specific enabling and hindering power relations and distribution mechanisms. The artistic expression of the imagined realities on Haiti resonates unmistakably within a tradition of regional self-creation, which dovetails productively with Glissant's theory of Relation as well as further concepts on making visible Caribbean and diasporic arts and aesthetics.[10] Or, to refer to the filmmakers' works in relation to Haiti's silenced past: "Any presence – even though it is ignored – of a particular culture, even a silent one, is an active relay in Relation" (Glissant, 2010 [1997, 1990], p. 177).

As the analysis has foregrounded, both Desorme's and Quay's filmmaking practice relates to an artistic product that "turns into an amalgam of cultural continuum" (Ponzanesi & Berger, 2016, p. 112) between current filming landscapes (in this case Haiti) and their former empires and dominating nations. This step aims to rethink a global media perspective by putting emerging filmmaking with a scarce landscape of film historiography and from less featured regions such as Haiti on its agenda. It gives way to an outlook on possible future perspectives of Haiti's visual narratives entangled with the postcolonial (Mbembe, 2001, p. 16). Here, it underlines the prospect of allowing for Haiti's emerging filmmaking practices to become visible in the landscape of transnational cinemas and, moreover, to contribute to the to date little explored field of audiovisual production that inscribes itself in the current premise of a global, virtually unbound media landscape. Thinking im/mobilities in the work of Desorme and Quay is therefore not only grounded in Caribbean studies but can also be considered as a contribution to African diaspora studies.

Notes

1 Glissant used this term in post-1990 to express a conception of the world as an infinitely related and relating space of unpredictable and constant association, which is a positively charged spin on phenomena of globalisation.
2 "Cinema as a support" in Desorme's understanding is comparable to what Mauritanian filmmaker Med Hondo (who passed away in 2019) stated in an interview with Françoise Pfaff: "I make films to show people the problems they face everyday and to help them fight those problems" (Hondo as cited in Pfaff, 1986, p. 84).
3 One of Desorme's main preoccupations during his artistic residence in Vienna (2018–2019) was: "What is the place of technology in our artistic creations today? [Quelle est la place de la téchnologie dans nos créations aujourd'hui?]" (Desorme, 2018).
4 Historically, this dates back to the Haitian Revolution and Jean-Jacques Dessalines' declaration of Independence of Saint Domingues in 1804.
5 In addition to the six ceremonial encounters with various African-Caribbean artists, the visual podcast series *The Black Box* comprises two chapters to date, entitled *Chapter 1* "*Opening*" (2017) and *Chapter 2* "*The Mirror*" (2019); the audio podcast comprises sessions with the following artists: Newton Aduaka, Atissa Loko, Pascale Obolo, whereas an audiovisual version also exists with Jepthe Carmil, Alain Gomis, and Myriam Mihindou. The present analysis foregrounds the visual narratives in the first and second episode; however, it also takes into account the contextualisation of the entire podcast series that allows for the sharing of artistic experience.
6 Glissant defines his concept of *Relation identity* as opposed to root identity where territory and self are separate entities, and therefore strengthen an othering process (Glissant, 1997, p. 144).
7 In the analysis, Aníbal Quijano draws on a critical perspective on the evolution of globalisation rooted in the constitution the US and the colonial Eurocentric model of capitalism presented as the new global order that puts into practice social, racial, gender and mental subordination (Quijano & Ennis, 2000).

8 The veve as written and drawn sign calls for the *lwa* (deities) during Vaudou rituals. Therefore, the veve implies a performative function since it figures as a speech element that enables a collective, communal identification between the one speaking and the one spoken of (Laroche, 2000, p. 106).

9 This notion becomes even more pertinent in Haiti's post-disaster conditions, and for the reconstruction after the 2010 earthquake. In reference to Fanon's terminology, Hito Steyerl defines poor images as such: "Poor images are the contemporary Wretched of the Screen, the debris of audiovisual production, the trash that washes up on the digital economies' shores. [...]" (Steyerl, 2009). Here, the historically deeply rooted traumas raising to the surface in post-disaster conditions, coincide with Fanon's originally French term of his book, the "damnés de la terre" (Fanon, 2002 [1961]), who are, in fact, the *tortured* (rather than the *wretched*, as the English translation suggests).

10 Herein, Benítez-Rojo's repeating island and Derek Walcott's interrogation of historical narrative in the Caribbean can be added as a major contribution to re-shaping Caribbean artistic creation.

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6 The routes of soundpoems

Nation language in Central America

Paola Ravasio

Introduction

My intention here is to explore 20th-century poetic multilingualism in Afro-Costa Rican cultural production. 'Poetic multilingualism' is understood as the contiguous presence of the official state language alongside a foreign or vernacular one in a single text or across a compilation, the latter termed 'creole', 'patois', or 'dialect' because it lies outside the legal realm of the state. Focusing on the relation between language and diaspora, I will trace human and cultural mobilities between Africa and Central America in the late 19th to 20th centuries by way of the Caribbean archipelago. Itself an example of a *double diaspora* (i.e. a "diaspora of a diaspora"; Cohen, 1992), the movement of an insular Black proletarian workforce from Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, and other Caribbean islands to the Central American isthmus at the turn of the century redefined the sociocultural cartographies of the region. It defined above all Black circum[1]-Atlantic *routes* traced and crystallised into 'Afro-Central American' *roots*. My focus on multilingualism in two Afra[2]-Costa Rican poets, Eulalia Bernard (*1935, Limón, Costa Rica) and contemporary spoken word poet Queen Nzinga Maxwell (San José, Costa Rica), aims to underscore these *route/roots* by way of their poetic tongues. My focus is not limited solely to their cultural production since their particularities are placed in relation with Caribbean intellectual thought, particularly with Edward K. Brathwaite's discussion of *nation language* (1979/1984). The article's main contention sustains that multilingualism represents the archive *par excellence* where mobility is framed, acting both as an archive of mobility and as a mobile archive, stor(y)ing paths of diasporic displacement.

Barbara Lalla and Jean D'Acosta's title *Language in Exile* (1990) makes an explicit point in this regard. It alludes in a direct, literal manner to the inherent relationship between *exile* and *language* in "Three Hundred Years of Jamaican Creole".[3] Particularly interesting is the fact that the words selected by the authors overtly highlight the experience of uprooting by directing attention to the linguistic phenomenon and by labelling language – a non-human entity – as possessing the quality of forced displacement. Afro-Creole languages become traces themselves of 'being scattered abroad', as evoked by

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the etymology of *dia-speirein. "Language in exile"*, therefore, echoes the rhizomatic experience of de-territorialisation from Africa and re-territorialisation in the circum-Caribbean region by accentuating the transformations that language/s underwent due to colonial mobilities and moorings. Hence, the title draws a palpable parallel, rather creatively for that matter, between historical im/mobilities between Africa and the Caribbean, and the linguistic traces thereof. Expanding on this argument, I will approach Afra-Costa Rican poetic multilingualism as a system of mobility mirroring human, historical, and cultural mobilities.

In the theoretical underpinnings of the New Mobilities Paradigm (Sheller and Urry, 2006), *language* has not appeared explicitly as one of the foci of research. *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities* (2014), for example, does not portray "Language" among its titles. Likewise, John Urry's book (*Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*, 2000) does not place language in relation to "mobilities of peoples, objects, images, information and wastes" (2000, p. 1). The compilation on *Mobile and Entangled America(s)* (Graham and Raussert, 2016) falls behind as well in including linguistic studies relevant to the field of Mobility Studies in the Americas, even if Miriam Brandel's article does refer to linguistic identity in David Chariandy's *Soucouyant* (2007) – though not extensively (cf. Brandel, 2016, pp. 73–89). Given that the term 'mobilities' is used "in a broad-ranging generic sense" (Sheller and Urry, 2006, p. 212) which encompasses movements like dancing, walking, or running; as well as displacement by train, car, or ships; and virtual and informational networks such as the Internet, GPS systems, and governmental surveillance (Hanam, Sheller, and Urry, 2006), the following article proposes to study multilingualism as yet another mobility system. Therefore, I propose here an innovative approach to poetic multilingualism – used interchangeably throughout these pages with *tongues* – as a *mobile infrastructure mirroring historical paths of mobility and moorings between Africa, the Caribbean archipelago, and Central America*. In line with the new Mobility Studies paradigm, which understands the world system as complex intersecting networks of multiple spatiotemporal connections where no single culture, community, place nor identity exist as a single, autonomous island (Sheller and Urry, 2006), I am interested here in demonstrating how and why Afro-Central American poetic multilingualism – specifically Bernard's vinyl *Negritud* (1976) and Queen Nzinga's (from here on also referred to as Queen) transmedial edition *Afrokon* (2012) – can be apprehended as a mobility system transporting, withholding, and thus manifesting *pluricentrical belonging* (Ravasio, 2020a).

Flows of languages in time

Despite the fact that almost 40 years separate *Negritud* and *Afrokon*, both works share the common element of flowing from one language to the next unapologetically, as well as creating cultural and historical links with both the Caribbean and Africa as *Afro-Costa Ricans*. "Afro-Costa Rican" (and, by

extension, "Afro-Central American") refers here not to black people directly born out of colonial *mestizaje* and slavery in the region. Instead, the term is used to refer exclusively to the descendants of the insular Afro-Caribbean proletarian workforce that emigrated to Central America as emancipated wage workers at the turn of the century. These workers would build the transisthmian railroad and Canal in Panama, as well as the railroad to the Atlantic in Costa Rica, later stayed to work at the region's United Fruit Company's banana enclaves, and lastly resettled across the isthmus in the 20th century as Central Americans of insular Caribbean origin (Olien n.d., cited in Herzfeld, 1978, p. 17).

A daughter of Jamaican immigrants, Eulalia Bernard Little was born in Limón, the Caribbean province of Costa Rica, in 1935. Bernard is the first black female poet to publish not only in Costa Rica, but, most importantly, in Central America. Her first poetry compilation was entitled *Ritmohéroe* (1982), whose poems appeared only in Spanish. This monolingual publication was followed by the trilingual compilations *My Black King* (1991) and later *Ciénaga/Marsh* (2001), containing poems in Spanish, English, and "Limon Creole" (Herzfeld, 1977) – the border language that developed in the Costa Rican Caribbean province during the first half of the 20th century. In between these two compilations came *Griot* (1997), which celebrates her as the only Latin American to receive the "Griot Award" (1996) "for imparting African wisdom and vision to the world community and for perpetuating the memory of the African ancestral knowledge" (1997, n.p.). It is worth underscoring here that before any of these poetic anthologies were published, Bernard presented a vinyl as her first cultural object, entitled *Negritud* (1976).

Choosing an aural format rather than a published edition, *Negritud* plays musical insertions from various Black artists as a backstory to her poems, deploying a transmedial intertextuality between the music selected by Bernard and the content of her poems (see Muñoz-Muñoz, 2019 and Ravasio, 2020b). Several tracks from the album *Soul Makossa* (1972) from Cameroonian Manu Dibango can be heard, as well as single tracks like "Pata Pata" (1967) by Miriam "Mama Africa" Makeba, "Angelitos Negros" by African-American soul musician Roberta Flack (*First Take*, 1969), and the 1974 disco piece from The Love Unlimited Orchestra, "Love's Theme". A Costa Rican folkloric song ("Pasión" by Roberto Arce/Pasión Acevedo, 1934) and "Pueblo Habla" – a track echoing Limonese rhythms and spoken word – also make up the musical background of *Negritud*, which intertwines smoothly with her poetry in English (11 texts), in Spanish (16x), and in Limón Creole (1x).

Following the pioneering sound routes laid by Bernard, artivist Queen Nzinga (b. Wendy Patricia Maxwell Edwards in San José) self-financed the publication of *Afrokon. WombVoliushan Poetry* (2012). Like *Negritud*, *Afrokon* is a multilingual compilation alternating texts in English, Spanish, and Limón Creole,[4] adding "Spanglish" (Queen, 2012, p. xiii) to the list of her linguistic repertoire. Like Bernard in *Negritud*, Queen, too, assumes orality as a fundamental element to her poiesis, which is why *tongues* are central to her

creative process given that distinct sounds bring into being diverse meanings. Of a total of 26 poems, only four are in Spanish, while nine poems are in Standard English, the enclave language of the Jamaican and North American workforce that resettled in Limón at the turn of the 20th century. Two poems are in Spanglish, while the majority of *Afrokon*'s texts (11x) is written to be performed in Limón Creole. Her spoken word texts are moreover complemented with pictures of her menstrual art collection entitled "Art from my Womb", as well as with a CD which plays back Queen's spoken word performance (seven of the 26 printed texts).

Emphasis on these women's multilingualism is here fundamental, since both *Negritud* and *Afrokon* represent multidimensional archives that allow us to trace the routes of languages, themselves evidence of cultural and historical mobilities between Africa, the insular Caribbean, and Central America. Anglophone Creole tongues developed across the Central American Caribbean during the first decades of the 20th century among Afro-Caribbean migrant workers due to their routes of emigration and immigration, corroborated by the edited volume *Central American English* (Holm, 1983). These tongues reveal how the Central American region is tied to Africa beyond colonial slavery by way of Caribbean human, cultural, and intellectual flows of the last century.

Declared as "the Griot of the Americas" (Jackson, 2003 p. 122), Bernard identifies herself as "a preacher, who express[es] the power of words" (ibid., p. 123). Along similar lines, dub poet Afua Cooper defines Queen Nzinga too as a "griot, a word and mystic warrior" (Queen, 2012, foreword by Cooper, p. xxxv). It is not gratuitous that the third menstrual painting we encounter in Queen's *Afrokon* is a portrait entitled "Griot" (Queen, 2012, p. xiv). As defined by Habekost, griots are musicians, storytellers, singers, poets that in their verbal histories assembled the oral tradition of African cultures through *words, with rhythm and music* ("Worte, mit Rhythmus und Musik"; Habekost, 1986, p. 32). In this sense, *Negritud* and *Afrokon* are unique pieces of work in Central American *literary* historiography because they archive oral cultural production by Afro-Central American griots. Just as particular, however, is their poetic multilingualism, which challenges Costa Rican official monolingualism by making visible the diasporic origins of Afro-Costa Ricans. This, in turn, explains why no extensive work has been previously published on *Negritud*, whose existence has been nonetheless acknowledged by literary scholars (see McKinney, 1996; Mosby, 2003; Meza, 2015). Nor on *Afrokon*, for that matter, because, as stated by Cooper in her foreword to *Afrokon* (2012), Queen's "dread talk" – and, before her, Bernard's multilingual orature likewise – "complicates the discourses of Latin American studies or Hispanic studies" (p. xxxviii) because it incorporates tongues that extend beyond a monolingual cultural or national identity.

A landmark publication regarding scholarly work done on literature written by Indigenous and Afro-descendant women in Central America, *Mujeres en las literaturas indígenas y afrodescendientes en América Central* (Meza Márquez

and Zavala González, 2015) does not approach multilingualism in Central America explicitly, though they do cite and refer to texts in languages other than Spanish. One reason might be the volume's over-arching (yet necessary) approach to a vast array of authors. The volume does not include Queen Nzinga, nor does it elaborate on Bernard's vinyl. Because of this, the present study on *sound/poems* (Brathwaite, 2011, p. 45) represents an important contribution to studies on Afro-Central American cultural production. The ensuing pages focus specifically on the combination of orality and literacy in *Negritud* and *Afrokon*, referred to here as *orature*.[5] The term draws from the Latin word for 'voice' (*os, oris*), while its ending alludes graphically to how the oral and the scribal combine, producing sound/poems.

Language as a mobility system expressing pluricentrical belonging

Approached by a Mobility Studies gaze, tongues evoke complex movements of crisscrossing. For if "movement is the verb of diaspora",[6] then language necessarily moves with its speakers while they are themselves on the move, carrying signifiers alongside their proper significant counterparts and together with their distinctive pronunciation, style, and syntax. Languages (oral and written) transform themselves with time because they appropriate new forms, structures, and semantics while in diasporic mobilisation (deterritorialisation), and especially when relocated later to new sites of moorings (reterritorialisation). Caribbean Creole languages born out of (neo)colonialism make this evident. Underneath their surface lie elements that when approached hermeneutically can reveal the paths of mobility that those languages (and their speakers) undertook. According to this frame of thought, language/s exist as mobile archives stor(y)ing diasporic paths and thus make evident human, intellectual, and cultural mobilities in the form of *pluricentrical belonging*.[7]

Pluricentrical belonging emphasises connectedness between Africa, the Caribbean archipelago, and the Central American Atlantic territories in the interlocking of multiple cultural and historical foci (*roots*) that have developed on account of movement (*routes*). The concept necessarily draws on Antonio Benítez-Rojo's claim that the Caribbean is *acentric*, i.e. "without center and without limits", and expands on the author's idea that there is no *one* centre dictating a homogeneous cultural code (Benítez-Rojo, 2006, p. 9). Instead, there are *numerous* (hence *pluri*centrical) references along which subjectivities of belonging to more than one imagined community (Anderson, 1996) are drafted. Like Gilroy's definition of "diaspora", pluricentrical belonging specifies pluralisation and differentiation due to mobility across time (Gilroy, 1995, p. 26). It is hence a conceptual metaphor comprising the dynamic alliance between the *local* (roots) and the *global* (routes) as mutually inclusive elements (the *glocal*), without privileging either term over the other. Mainly because, as Paula Prescod keenly notes, "[r]oots and routes do not form a

dichotomy" (Prescod, 2016, p. 21). They rather form a *continuum*. This is best grasped in Afro-circum-Caribbean multilingual poetry. Its hybrid forms supply evidence of mutation and adaptation due to human and cultural mobilities, thus reproducing pluricentrical subjectivities of belonging – *linguistically*.

Take, for example, Indo-Guyanese writer David Dabydeen's book *Slave Song* (1984), winner of the 1984 Commonwealth Poetry Prize. The book addresses the reader through anglophone Creole texts and inserted images of slaves and of sugar cane, of the rebel negro and of the white planter. Additionally, he makes the text accessible to those not fluent in Creole by incorporating an English translation of the text as an appendix. Furthermore, Dabydeen indicates in the preface that it is necessary to juxtapose the oral component with the content of the written text so that meaning can be grasped and constructed by the reader through the articulated tone (given by the Creole component) as well as the literary content. In his words, the "pieces are meant to be spoken aloud, not read silently, for the tone of them to come through, not merely the abstracted meaning" (1989, p. 13). In so doing, the author recreates the experience of his contemporary Guyanese Creole by way of its historical origin – the Plantation site – both *orally* and *content-wise*. This coupling of sound and content evokes in a rather subtle manner the historical weight that the text performs. Most importantly, it brings mobility to the fore by drawing the diasporic story of routes and roots across tongues. Dabydeen's *Slave Song* sketches out human mobilities between Africa, the Caribbean, and Britain both linguistically and thematically, arraying pluricentrical references of belonging. His poetic multilingualism, and likewise that of other Caribbean poets, deploys hence a *mobile story* (see Adey, Bissell, Hannam, and Sheller, 2014, p. 1).

Even though sounds and meanings of such mobile stories are found on the surface of what we may hear or read, paths of their mobilities, nonetheless, lie *underground*. For – extending on Brathwaite's metaphor of subterranean convergence of Caribbean plurality ("the unity is submarine"; 1975, p. 1) – the archipelagic fragments born out of a mobile history are whole in the *deep* structure that languages suppress. To extract this story, i.e. "to study the fragments/whole" (idem.), it is necessary to carry out a hermeneutic of form and content so as to make explicit the implicit routes/roots underlying them. In order to accomplish this, *Negritud*'s and *Afrokon*'s tongues will be approached as mobility systems that are both informational and infrastructural. As an archive of mobility, the *informational* aspect of tongues carries cultural meanings and historical references in the form of *content* on the one hand, as, for example, Dabydeen's "Slavewoman's Song" (1989, p. 38), which poetically reconstructs a credible experience of gendered violence as lived by the slave woman. The *infrastructural* aspect of language, on the other hand, has to do with vowels, consonants, verbs, nouns, adjectives, and *sound*. That is, it has to do with the (oral) *form* that is dependent on linguistic aspects of individual tongues. In the case of *Slave Song*, this *infrastructural* component is perceivable most clearly through the author's choice to write, as mentioned above, in

Creole and in standard English. Manifested in open or short vowel sounds ("halla" for "holler"; "mek" for "make") or in syntactic constructions that break down English sentence structure, Dabydeen's "Slavewoman's Song", for example, is spoken in its proper code: "Is husban mek yu halla gal?" (1989, p. 38). The text is then translated (*traduttore, traditore*) in order to be grasped by non-Creole speakers, altering the infrastructure of the phrase significantly ("Or is it your husband you're crying for girl?" [1989, p. 67]).

Like Dabydeen, Bernard and Queen also express themselves in more than one tongue and, in so doing, reveal pluricentrical belonging, sketching thereby the routes and roots of late 19th-century Afro-Caribbean im/mobility in Central America. *Negritud* and *Afrokon* thus represent mobile archives stor(y)ing the paths of Afro-descendant diasporic mobility – both *infrastructurally* (i.e. via form) and *informationally* (i.e. via content). Moreover, both show intellectual links with postcolonial Caribbean aesthetics because of their oral and scribal multilingualism, serving as evidence of nation language in Central America.

Nation language in Central America

In 1979, E. K. Brathwaite held his groundbreaking lecture on the development of "nation language" in anglophone Caribbean literature at Harvard University, which he defined as "the process of using English in a different way from the 'norm'" (Brathwaite, 2011, p. 5). His pioneering discussion closely examined dub poetry and other oral cultural production so as to elaborate on the tradition of Caribbean oral poetics as part of a "caribocentric criticism" (Habekost, 1993, p. 7). In the opening statements of his discussion, he refers to the Amerindian, West African, Asian, and imperial languages as the components that have taken part in the conformation of the region's linguistic fragmentation/plurality ever since Columbus stumbled on the region, (dis)covering it. In "Concerning Transversality" (*Caribbean Discourse*, 1989), Édouard Glissant applies this metaphor of *subterranean convergence* to the "non-history" of the Caribbean in order to assert that Caribbean people represent the roots of a cross-cultural relationship which simultaneously extends in all directions throughout a network of branches (1999, p. 66). Tongues, in this sense, are unmistakable evidence of such rhizomatic branches, which in turn reveal the complex cultural history of the region (see Taylor, 1977, foreword by Mintz and Hymes, p. xv).

Forced by the European Other to embody involuntary movement, the lack of communication and of a common tongue between slaves in the Americas put in motion pidgins that became Creole mother tongues with time, birthing *la parole de nuit* (Ludwig, 1994). Due to oppression, forced uprooting, and blocked movement within the Plantation site, Creole tongues emerged, on the one hand, as "naturally tragic language[s]" (Dabydeen, 1989, p. 13). On the other hand, these tongues existed opposite the *written* word, which represents the knowledge-building cornerstone of *enlightened* Western thought

(hence Ludwig's metaphor of *darkness*[8]). Colonial heritage, furthermore, was crystallised by way of education in the imperial tongue, as Jamaican reggae musician Johnny Clarke (*1955) sings in "African People" (*Dreader Dread*, 1976–1978): "They took away our native tongue/ And taught their English to our young and old".

Brathwaite transcends the dim origin of Creole tongues and instead refers to Glissant ("Free and Forced Poetics", 1976) in order to expand on his own definition of nation language (see Brathwaite, 2011, p. 16). In his article, Glissant asserts that Creole tongues go beyond the master-slave relation within the Plantation world and instead represent "an original creation by the uprooted African, who, faced with the linguistic impediments imposed on him, chose to limit it further, to warp it, to untune it, in order to make it into an idiom of his own" (Glissant, 1976, p. 95). Because of this, nation language is not "dialect", states Brathwaite, but rather an aesthetic "strategy" in the form of a *specifically Caribbean* emerging language. Nation language stands opposite the idea of "dialect" and differentiates itself from Creole as well, the latter representing an adaptation of imperial languages in the Caribbean plantation systems. The author instead defines nation language by referring to it as the submerged cultural and linguistic heritage brought to the Caribbean by slaves and laborers. For Brathwaite, "[n]ation language is the language which is influenced very strongly by the African model" (Brathwaite, 2011, p. 13). Its submerged linguistic component is thus "allied to the African aspect of experience in the Caribbean" (idem.). This is a consideration that Bernard agrees with as well: "We have not lost our intonation, which is very African" (conversation with Jackson, 2003, p. 125).

Unlike Ian Smart's conceptualisation of a literary bilingualism in the works of black Central American (male) writers as "an artistic 'West Indian' Spanish" (1984, p. 50), *Negritud* and *Afrokon* go beyond the individual lexical terms and isolated expressions that Smart underscores as markers of Afro-Caribbean cultural heritage (1984, pp. 31–50).[9] An important factor of this is that Bernard and Queen carry out a much more complex creative process in the form of nation language, swaying between languages, orality, and literacy, thus making audible what Dorothy Mosby (2012) has pointed out: "[f]rom Belize to Panama, there exists an Afro-West Indian or Afro-Creole cultural continuum" (2012, p. 5).

Informationally, the titles of their work – one evoking in Spanish the *négritude* movement of Césaire and Senghor, the other the imagined community of Afro-descendants (via *Afrokon* and the pseudonym 'Queen Nzinga'[10]) – link symbolically Central American production to Africa. Infrastructurally, they perform linguistic *routes* that stretch between the anglophone insular Caribbean and the Central America region. English outlines the routes that their Jamaican (grand)parents undertook as subjects of the British crown, while Limón Creole and Spanish indicate the diasporic child rooted in Central America. Therefore, plural tongues reveal the *rooted* linguistic product of proletarian transareal mobilities at the turn of the century. For, just like

languages in the Antilles developed as exiled tongues of the African diaspora by way of language contact between West African codes and European lexica (Taylor, 1977), Limón Creole developed in Costa Rica due to intense language contact between standard English and Jamaican Creole in the first half of the 20th century – this time within the United Fruit's Plantation system (Zimmer, 2011, p. 32). Therefore, the tongues that compose both Bernard's *Negritud* vinyl and Queen's *Afrokon* edition act as archives of black circum-Atlantic mobilities, while Spanish diversifies the literary scene by adding a Latino component. Linguistic mobilities can be extended further on to Africa because of the *submerged* element inherent in Caribbean Creole languages, since the Caribbean labour diaspora inevitably brought Africa to Central America in its language/s. In fact, Limón Creole manifests West African linguistic heritage linked to groups such as the Akan of Ghana (Winkler and Obeng, 2000). Hence, the paths of movement are united in the deep layers of multiple languages coexisting together. It is in these tongues – Limón Creole, English, *and* Spanish – that pluricentrical belonging is actualised.

Bernard's and Queen's multilingual poetry, however, goes beyond a *realist* use of their tongues. By writing and performing in nation language, these women instead create soundpoems based on a written system of aural aesthetics, representing exemplarily Afro-Central American *oraliture* (Chamoiseau, 1994). This concept differs from *orature* in that the latter emphasises the literacy process in response to an aural aesthetics, while the former refers to an oral production that distinguishes itself from the ordinary word because of its aesthetic-musical dimension.[11] Brathwaite in fact insisted upon this aspect in 1979: "One characteristic of nation language is its orality. It is from the oral tradition" (Brathwaite, 2011, p. 17). It goes back to the songs and sounds of the embodied experience of slavery. For Brathwaite, the aural aesthetics of anglophone Caribbean nation language deserved a closer look, which is why he brought a tape recorder to his presentation in order to allow the audience "to get the sound of it, rather than the sight of it" (ibid., p. 17). By playing the oral versions of the texts he analysed, he demonstrated how sound is a fundamental component of meaning. By focusing on sound and noise, Brathwaite exemplifies why nation language "is not English" due to its "contours, its rhythm and timbre, [and] its sound explosions" (ibid., p. 13). He stresses the "riddimic aspect" as the "software" of nation language (ibid., p. 9) and lists aural elements like sonority, tempo, rhythmic patterns, silence and pauses, ironic tones, stutters and whispers, pitch emphasis, blues, and hoarse voices as the infrastructure of this submerged/emerging language (ibid., p. 43).

This is a quality that Bernard also acknowledges in her conversations with Jackson: "Creole language, which is the oldest and the newest thing we have, is rich, rhythmical, and fascinating" (Jackson, 2003, p. 125). In fact, the poems performed in *Negritud* anticipate Brathwaite's soon-to-be-revealed nation language aesthetics. In "Intangible Love", the only poem performed in Limón Creole, Bernard incorporates rhythmical breaks, carries out atypical voice spreads, and installs repetitions in order to efficiently transmit the

subtleties of the poetic message – i.e. *the love of a mother* – through an aural dimension (see Ravasio, 2020b, pp. 362–364). The effect is the performance of a poem that does not resemble conversational language (though it re-enacts it) but rather an oral aesthetic that places utterance before literacy (see Thiong'o, 2007, p. 4). This aural dimension is perceptible not only in "Intangible Love", but also in other recitations in English and in Spanish. This corroborates how the "riddimic aspect" of Bernard's poetics is intrinsic to her creative process.

Her avant-garde aesthetics in Central America go beyond Brathwaite's not-yet-disclosed precepts by also incorporating a code-switching poem in Spanglish, "Bilingual Campesinos Speak Out" (track 17; printed in *My Black King*, 1991, n.p.). In it, Bernard performs what Gloria Anzaldúa would explain and perform herself as a "forked-tongue" a decade later in *Borderlands* (1987). In the book, Anzaldúa defines her Chicano Spanish as "a border tongue which developed naturally", corresponding furthermore to "a language with terms that are neither español ni inglés, but both" (1999, p. 77). This she defines as "a patois, a forked-tongue, a variation of two languages" (idem.). In "Bilingual Campesinos", Bernard creates precisely her defiant poetic meaning across a forked tongue, that is, *bilingually*, as, for example, with the closing lines "'Ah no' end up I am not/ In no aula de mierda to get/ A damn doctorado in …/ 'Hombre desocupado'" (1991, n.p.). Her performance of the poem in *Negritud* places emphasis on the consciously drafted code-switches, thus transmitting a tone beyond what the printed version could ever evoke. Informationally, it transmits a *fed-up* attitude regarding monolingual education reforms in Limón, understood here as "linguistic terrorism" (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 80).[12] Infrastructurally, her forked-tongue recreates the linguistic borderlands that were consolidated by the Afro-Caribbean diaspora in Central America, representing a more-encompassing linguistic performativity of Brathwaite's definition of nation language. Going beyond an anglophone-centred production, her nation language spans all of her tongues.

Recorded three years before Brathwaite's talk at Harvard and eight years before the publication of *History of the Voice*, it must not go without saying that Bernard represents undeniably the forerunner of nation language in Central America, *anticipating Brathwaite's coining of the term*, while Queen Nzinga is currently its most solid proponent.

The shape of sound

Bernard published more than what she recorded, *Negritud* being exceptional. Almost all of the vinyl's tracks later appear either in *My Black King* (1991) or in *Ciénaga/Marsh* (2001), except for four tracks which remain unpublished to this day. Queen's *Afrokon* instead proves to function primarily as an oral aesthetic. This means that, as a spoken word poet, she composes her texts by subordinating literacy to sound. For Queen, poetry is meant to be experienced before an audience that *hears* and *sees* her, rather than for silent, individual reading (see Morris, 1993, p. 78). Very much like Jean Binta Breeze,

Michael Smith, or Miss Lou herself – whom Queen thanks in *Afrokon* for her "unwittingly intrinsical [sic!] guidance" (2012, p. xv) – the creation of soundpoems is subordinated to their actual performance. This installs the "total expression" that Brathwaite lists as another one of nation language's aural particularities that goes back to the African griot. That is, the continuum between the audience and the speaker, "where the meaning truly resides" (Brathwaite, 2011, p. 19).

Here, another aspect concerning the subject of nation language comes to the fore, which concerns the dynamic dialectic between orality and literacy. So far, it has been argued that tongues represent the archive par excellence where mobility is framed. Nonetheless, tongues are also themselves *mobile* archives. They are in constant flux given that language has a predominantly vibrant nature in its oral form: "What is oral [...] cannot be separated from body motion" (Glissant, 1976, p. 96). Its infrastructure is sustained across "micro-mobilities of the body" (Sheller, 2014, p. 802), such as those performed by the tongue, the vocal cords, the lips, and the lungs, all of which move together to produce *sound*. Furthermore, sound vanishes with the wind that the lungs expel when expression is spoken outwards, making it transient until it is fixed upon the printed page or recorded on an album. Accordingly, written texts capture orality in order to set and frame its ephemeral nature. The printed medium of what was originally performed orally constitutes in this sense an 'archive of mobility', preserving sites of cultural, historical, and intellectual nature in its tangible materiality. This makes it possible to approach written language as a motionless entity, even if the act of reading evokes the micro-mobilities of the body as well, such as the movement of the eyes, the silent movement of the lips, or the hand that turns the page. Nonetheless, the oral archive is intrinsically mobile since it is able to re-actualise the effects of the micro-mobilities of the body. When these texts are performed or played back, the mobile archive is again reenacted, bringing to the fore the dialectic between oral and written language. Which is why it is deemed necessary for the present discussion to carry out a complementary analysis of the oral and scribal versions of the multilingual poems. Put differently, how do we see what we hear?[13]

Even though Queen strives to frame her oraliture accordingly in the transcriptions – as Michael Smith's title on the cover of the 1982 LP so ingeniously does: "M*i* C-Y*aaN* beL*iē*Ve *i*T" – it is in the *performance* of her texts, like "Dem A Susu", where/when the 'abstract meaning' of madness is best perceived. Here, she plays with intonation and low pitch sounds against a slow blues voice that tells how "dem a seh mi mad" (2012, p. 149). It is by seeing Queen's facial and corporeal gestures and by hearing her voice go up and down the sound scale that feelings of psychosis, hunger, and distress can be perceived.[14] In her spoken word demo *WombVoliushan* (2012) – which contains other texts along with the seven from *Afrokon*[15] – and in her live performance of "Dem A Susu" (Queen, 2019), Queen accentuates these elements while performing the spoken word poem to Lester Bowie's soft tempo

track "I Only Have Eyes for You". While the soundtrack plays in the background, Queen builds upon her voice with the trumpet sound and against a smooth tempo. Here, "[t]he verbal performance communicates with the musical beat" (Habekost, 1993, p. 122). Together, these elements construct an aural aesthetics in order to portray a mad woman crushed by the weight of the *shitstem* – similar to what Jamaican poet Jean Binta Breeze does in "Riddym Ravings" (1988).

Queen's written version of her oral aesthetics (orature) proves how the aesthetic impulse first sounds, then tries to become written, mimicking the utterance itself, as in "Ma'Fa – A message to di Diaspora". An amplified scream in a low tone is heard as the opening sound. What we hear is the movement of Queen's vocal cords straining from a lower keynote to a higher one, as well as the clinching of her throat and voice against a voluminous amplification of her own echo. In the demo version (track 12), a piercing and over-excited saxophone plays in the background, adding tension to the piece. The 18-minute audiovisual version of the poem filmed in Cuba (Queen Nzinga Maxwell, 2018) plays with a revolving camera to portray amplification as well.[16] This amplification creates the feeling of falling into a bottomless pit, which the audience re-creates in their own sensuous perception. This effect is made visible on the printed page with a long series of vowels ranging in size. Intonation is consciously represented by the switch from a smaller to a gradually bigger font, as well as by the length of the word extended through the reduplication of the vowels: "MaaaaaaaaaaaaaFfaaaaaaa" (Queen, 2012, p. 85).

Bernard's nation language in *Negritud* is necessarily also subordinated to sound, given that the vinyl was recorded before *Ritmohéroe* came out (1982). But unlike Queen, Bernard's oraliture is transcribed rather differently into orature. This can be studied in detail by comparing and contrasting Bernard's recordings with their corresponding printed versions. In the *Negritud* version of "School Mosaic", published in *My Black King* (1991), Bernard plays with rhythm and tempo, with tone, and with the counterpoint of voice and music. The text echoes childhood nursery rhymes like "Little Bo Peep (has lost her sheep)" and "One, Two, Buckle My Shoe", transforming their content – not their rhythm – significantly, which explains the title: *School Mosaic*. By keeping the infrastructure (rhythm, rhymes, intonations, tempo), but altering the information, the text becomes *postcolonial*. After singing "Little Bo Peep has lost its sheep", Bernard replaces "sheep" with "ship" in the following stanza and thus creates a rhyme about slave ships: "Ship sail, sail fast/ How many slaves on board?/ No more! Forever, Amen" (1991, n.p.). Also, she modifies the lyrics of the latter nursery rhyme: "Three, four… Damn it!/ Knock down the front door", instead of "Three… Four… Shut the door". We hear her voice as though it were that of a playful child, mischievously altering the content, but strong and empowered as she exhorts her listeners to "Seven, eight…/ Fight on!… don't wait!" (1991, n.p.). Like Bernard, Jamaican dub poet Mutabaruka (1984) plays with "Nursery Rhyme Lament",

as does Michael Smith (1982) in several lines of "Me Cyaan Believe it" (see Habekost, 1986). Both turn around the content of institutionalised rhymes like "Humpty Dumpty" to decry injustice, poverty, and oppression. Bernard, Mutabaruka, and Smith alike echo, however, what Trinidadian calypso singer Mighty Sparrow first carried out in his song "Dan is the Man in the Van" (1963). A piece of social commentary, Sparrow makes fun of English school texts they "had to learn at school by heart" by focusing on how such traditional tales from the Motherland "ha[ve] really made us idiots" (Brathwaite, 2011, p. 24).

The oral elements we hear in track number 27 of *Negritud* are, however, hard to catch or even imagine by solely reading the text printed in *My Black King*. The transcription of "School Mosaic" is devoid of accurate punctuation and graphic elements able to reproduce this aural dimension. A picture is said to be worth a thousand words. Sound, too (see Laroche, 1991, p. 21) – *if not many more*. The silences and pauses, the intonations and exclamations, but, most importantly, the *rhythm* of Bernard's oraliture reveal the poetic foundation of "School Mosaic", which are lost to the reader by way of the printed, soundless page. It is, however, noticeable that Bernard does incorporate graphic marks with the attempt to frame the meaning she gave *through sound*. For example, she appropriates the musical structure of the nursery rhyme "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" in the last stanza, but changes the content altogether:

> There is a "Sparrow" in the ring,
> Tra la la la la;
> There is a "sparrow" in the ring
> Ta ta ta ta…________.
> Peace to his soul.
>
> (Bernard, 1991, n.p.)

The scribal version is able to frame the oral particularities by capitalising *sparrow*, written with quotation marks. These graphic marks denote a reference to *someone* else – most probably Mighty Sparrow, given the nursery rhyme model – and captures Bernard's oral emphasis of the word on the record. In this stanza we also denote her literacy process, that is, her attempt to shape sound on the page (orature) by representing silence with an ellipsis and a long line. Nonetheless, the soundpoem remains, by necessity, muted on the page. Performed by Bernard, "tra la la la la" is sung according to the nursery rhyme melody "*gently down the stream*", and *ta ta ta ta* is actually "tà tà tà", a thrice staccato. Yet how would "tra la la la la" sound in individual, silently reading minds, oblivious of the recording? How could the reader imagine the plosive "t" sounds of the thrice staccato by herself? How, then, would it have been possible to grasp the postcolonial tone of "School Mosaic", if we had not heard Bernard herself? The answers to these questions corroborate

exemplarily what Brathwaite emphasised in his discussion: "if you lose part of the noise [...] then you lose part of the meaning" (2011, p. 17).

Reflecting on how Caribbean oral tradition can no longer be *ante-scriptum* but rather exists nowadays in a dialectical relationship with writing, Glissant ("Le Chaos-Monde, l'oral et l'écrit", 1994) considers it necessary to remove in a single stroke the demands of the written word as imposed by the West in order to recuperate and understand orality as an inherent part of Caribbean cultural production and thus, in a return movement, incorporate it in literature (see Glissant, 1994, pp. 114–117). In this process, and as it has become clear through an analysis of the preceding texts, a dialectic between orality and literacy emerges from within the process of writing itself, where literacy is affected by the aural dimension of utterance. As a consequence, orality becomes *oraliture*, while the literacy of utterance becomes *orature*. This is what Glissant refers to as the Afro-Caribbean *irruption into modernity* (ibid., p. 117).[17] Themselves writing in nation language and thus subordinating literacy to orality, Bernard and Queen carry out Glissant's claim exemplarily, thus making evident the reach of Caribbean postcolonial intellectual thought and aesthetics in Central America.

Conclusion

The preceding pages have strived to contribute to the study of mobilities between Africa and the Caribbean by placing emphasis on Afro-Costa Rican poetic multilingualism, drawing attention to the function of tongues as lively indicators of the *routes/roots* dialectic intrinsic to the Black circum-Atlantic. By focusing on *Negritud* and *Afrokon*'s nation language, orature, and oraliture, the discussion of Bernard's and Queen's soundpoems has sketched mobilities that connect Central America with Africa thematically, intellectually, and performatively by way of the Caribbean archipelago. Above all, the dynamic interaction between these women's oral and written multilingualism has demonstrated that language can be approached as a mobility system whose infrastructural and informational traces reflect the flows of people, ideas, and cultural features between places and across time. Bernard's and Queen's broad linguistic repertoire, as well as an aesthetic use of it as griots of Afro-Central American historical imagination, perform pluricentrical belonging by drawing out linguistic and cultural links which have resulted from human mobilities to the Central American Caribbean in modern times. In this sense, diasporic historical imaginations pertaining to the peoples of the circum-Caribbean region do not exist in isolation from one another. Rather, they can be sutured together across linguistic traces so as to undergo the path towards language/s in exile. For, to quote South African orature artist Pitika Ntuli, if "[t]o be an exile is to be nurtured outside the womb of your culture" (1988, p. 214), then multilingualism becomes home for the diasporic child.

Notes

1 In order to include regions that Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* (1993) has not made visible, I opt for the term "circum-Caribbean" (taken from Roach, 1996) so as to open up the concept and thus include regions like the Central American Caribbean in the discussion. For, as noted by Clifford, "black South America and the hybrid Hispanic/black cultures of the Caribbean and Latin America are not [...] included in Gilroy's projection. He writes from a North Atlantic/European location" (1997, p. 267). (See Ravasio, 2020a, p. 37.)

2 Regarding the gendered use of *Afra*-Costa Rican, see DeCosta-Willis (1993) and Ravasio (2020a, p. 3).

3 Lalla and D'Acosta's study focuses on written data regarding the Jamaican speech community as found in documents ranging from the 15th century up to the end of the 19th century (1990, p. xiii).

4 In the book, Queen Nzinga refers to Limón Creole as "Mekatelyu", which translates to "let me tell you something" in standard English (Herzfeld, 2002, p. xvii). This nomenclature has been discarded, as I once heard Afro-Costa Rican writer Quince Duncan reject it during the international symposium "Convergencias Transculturales en el Caribe: Literatura, arte, cultura, historia, comunicación" (18–21 November 2015 in San José/Limón, Costa Rica). Afro-Costa Ricans refer to it as "patois".

5 For a discussion of the concept of "orature", see Thiong'o (2007). My appropriation of the concept draws, too, on Laroche (1991): "En fait, oralité et littéralité, loin de s'éxclure, se combinent" (p. 21; see pp. 19–21).

6 I quote Dr. Jasmine Elizabeth Johnson, Assistant Professor of Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, as expressed in her talk "African Dance Constituting the Diaspora in the US and Guinea" (2019), which I personally attended.

7 The concept of "pluricentrical belonging" was developed by me in *Black Costa Rica: Pluricentrical Belonging in Afra-Costa Rican Poetry* (2020a). The corpus selected for the present article was, however, not treated in the book.

8 "Depuis le siècle de Voltaire et de Diderot, la lumière incarne la métaphore clé de la pensée analytique vehiculée par l'écriture. L'Europe a voulu 'éclairer' l'Afrique 'noire' et les Antilles par la colonisation et l'alphabetisation. La lumière du jour était réservée au travail, à la culture et à la langue officielle. [...] La nuit, au contraire, a toujours été le lieu de la parole créole" (Ludwig, 1994, p. 18).

9 Smart's study focuses on Afro-Panamanians Carlos Guillermo Wilson ("Cubena" *1941) and Gerardo Maloney (*1945), and on Afro-Costa Ricans Quince Duncan (*1940, San José, Costa Rica) and Eulalia Bernard, who represents the only female writer in Smart's corpus.

10 For a discussion of the African queen Nzinga Mbandi Kia Ngola, see Amoussou-Moderan (2015).

11 Chamoiseau defines "l'oraliture" as "une production orale qui se distinguerait de la parole ordinaire par sa dimensión esthétique" (Chamoiseau, 1994, p. 153).

12 A detailed analysis of the poem against this historical backdrop can be read in Ravasio (2020a, pp. 205–218). For monolingual education reforms in Limón, see Olien (1977), and Harpelle (2001).

13 My thanks to Prof. Cheryl Finley (Cornell University, USA), who posed this question during the discussion following my talk on "The Dialectics of the Body in Queen Nzinga's *Afrokon*" (2019).

14 I witnessed Queen's performance of "Dem a Susu" at the International Symposium "In/Visibility and Opacity: Cultural Productions by African and African Diasporic Women" (2019). I have also attended other spoken word presentations by her in Berlin and in Costa Rica.

15 Hear [https://www.reverbnation.com/queennzingamaxwell/album/20332-wombvoliushan-demo-cd].

16 See [https://www.facebook.com/QueenNzingaMaxwell/videos/837632239741023/].

17 "L'oralité d'aujourd'hui intègre tout ce que l'écriture a si extraordinairement dévéloppé [...]. Ce que je crois intéressant pour des littératures comme les nôtres [...] c'est de placer la dialectique de cette oralité et de cette écriture à l'intérieur même de l'écriture. [...] [I]l faut que nous en passions par là pour nous débarrasser d'un seul coup des exigences de l'écriture que l'Occident a mis des siècles, et peut-être même des millénaires, à régler. [...] C'est ce que j'appelle notre irruption dans la modernité" (Glissant, 1994, pp. 114–117).

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7 Moving spirits, shifting bodies

Connecting Africa and the Caribbean in literature

Ana Nenadović

Literary bridges between Africa and the Caribbean

The foundation of the contemporary Caribbean is the mobility of people, materials, and imaginaries. Individuals from many places have been moving there on different terms, either voluntarily or by force. They have moved there through various means of transportation, and under changing global and local conditions. It is, as Ineke Phaf-Rheinberger suggests, a "region that always seems to be in flux" (2018, p. 94). Terms associated with the studies of the Caribbean are, thus, creolisation, transculturation, multiculturalism, and syncretism, among others. The Caribbean may also, as Cuervo Hewitt suggests, be thought of as a "complex space of cultural mediation [which] offers a repetitive and self-referential discourse of mediation by reinventing local memories perceived as African" (2009, p. 19). Caribbean authors writing in English, French, Dutch, and Spanish have reflected upon the hybridity and performativity of their identities, histories, and cultures in their works. Edward Kamau Brathwaite affirms that the African presence in Caribbean literatures has a long history, which has led to a remarkable corpus of prose and poetry, both oral and written (see 1974, p. 78).

But what about the "other side", what about the consciousness of the Caribbean diaspora and the historical, linguistic, religious, and artistic connections between Africa and the Caribbean on the African continent and in African literatures? On this "other" side of the Atlantic, the 20th century, too, brings change. The *négritude* movement established close connections between the Caribbean, France, and Africa. Later on, from the 1950s, it was the new revolutionary and ideological movements – fights for independence and the tricontinental and Non-Allied movements – in the Caribbean, mainly in Cuba and on the African continent (and here especially in Algeria and Egypt), that influenced and shaped not only politics but also artistic production. These movements thereby raised awareness both of widespread struggles against (neo-)imperialism and of heritage, and in doing so crossed linguistic borders (see Lomas López, 2013; Abdel Nasser, 2020).

This chapter, however, moves away from the fruitful 20th century to focus instead on contemporary 21st-century literature and to show bridges

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spanning the Caribbean and Africa in the selected novels. Helen Oyeyemi's *The Opposite House* (2007), Akwaeke Emezi's *Freshwater* (2018), and Rita Indiana's *La mucama de Omicunlé* (2015; published in English as *Tentacle* in 2018) shed new light on the links between the two geographical regions. They expand the notion of hybrid diasporic identities, look beyond the category of race, and participate in current discourses on gender construction and identity. These novels connect Nigeria, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic in multiple, complex forms through their female, non-binary, and transgender protagonists. In these novels, deities and spirits, which move between continents, shift between bodies and take the protagonists on spiritual as well as physical journeys, create the main connection between the Caribbean and Africa. Regardless of their engagement with contemporary discourses, the novels do not neglect the past; the transatlantic slave trade and slavery are remembered by the protagonists. They are not forgotten, and neither is their relevance diminished, but they no longer constitute the foremost reference for the protagonists' negotiations of identity. However, they still represent a powerful connection between Africa and the Caribbean. In *The Opposite House*, *Freshwater* and *Tentacle*, the links between the regions are established by the protagonists, among them spirits and deities. *Orishas* and *ogbanje*[1] do not simply constitute part of the protagonists' religions and spirituality; instead, they become independent characters with their own particular qualities, stories, voices, and spaces in the novels. They assume agency, interact with the 'realistic' protagonists and interfere in their lives and destinies. The spirits and deities move through space and time on their own, they shift their appearance and assist or initiate the bodily shifting of the 'realistic' characters. The ties between Africa and the Caribbean are revealed only after the novels' protagonists move. Mobility, thus, connects the past and the present as well as the two geographical regions. The 'realistic' and the spirit characters meet only after they leave the borders of their native countries. While moving, they start to experience shifts in their identities, and they begin to engage with them.

Shifting of bodies: the continuity of mobility

I am that Black A-Rican bruja
Straight out from the Yoruba
And my people come from Africa
Diaspora Cuba
And you mix that Arawak
That original people

Princess Nokia

As mentioned above, the current Caribbean has been shaped by mobilities across the Atlantic. Those mobilities were characterised by unequal power

relations, motivations, and perspectives. Whereas enslaved people and indentured labourers were deprived of their freedom, rights, and human agency, settlers arrived in the Caribbean seeking freedom, power, and wealth. The hybridisation of cultures in the Caribbean has often been referred to as cosmopolitanism, as Mimi Sheller points out. She stresses that, while mobility constitutes the essence of cosmopolitanism and the creolised cultures of the Caribbean have frequently been described as cosmopolitan, a critical reflection on the connotations and uses of this term is indispensable, as it "only thinly veils a *frisson* of exotic allure in the possibilities of racial and sexual miscegenation suggested by the term" (Sheller, 2011, p. 349; emphasis in the original). Furthermore, various theories on cosmopolitanism describe the contemporary world as more mobile than in the past (see Sheller, 2011, p. 352). Among these, Ulrich Beck's and John Urry's figure prominently. Their notions of cosmopolitanism, however, are deeply rooted in a modern (from the mid-19th century to the 21st century) and Western setting, whereby they dismiss notions of earlier cosmopolitanisms and of cosmopolitanisms beyond Europe, as Sheller points out (see Sheller, 2011, p. 350). In their article *Cultures of Cosmopolitanism* (2002), Bronislaw Szerszynski and John Urry explore an emergent cosmopolitan culture, but this cosmopolitanism's beginning is set in late 19th-century Europe, rooted in the thoughts of three Western white men (H. Thoreau, Martin Heidegger, E. M. Forster), and explained on the basis of data collected in present-day United Kingdom. The article implicitly suggests that mobility, too, has only started in the 19th century. Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider call for a cosmopolitan turn in the social sciences in their article *Unpacking Cosmopolitanism for the Social Sciences: A Research Agenda* (2006). Their focus is on the 20th and 21st centuries, and they explicitly name 1989 a decisive year for shifts for the current "age of cosmopolitanism". When the two authors briefly mention other historical moments of cosmopolitanism, they only refer to *European* moments (Ancient Greece, the Alexandrian Empire, the Enlightenment). By not highlighting the fact that these moments are, primarily, European experiences, they universalise them and, implicitly, deny other geographical and cultural regions claims to cosmopolitanism in any given moment of their histories (see Beck, Sznaider, 2006, p. 3). Sheller, referring to Beck and Urry and their respective works on cosmopolitanism and in Mobility Studies, points out that:

> [t]here is [an] unexpected resemblance between the two theoretical approaches in that critics have framed both as being specifically *European* social theories that ignore gendered, racial, and colonial power relations by re-centering the European masculine subject. This is despite the fact that both Beck and Urry are often at pains *not* to do this. Yet, undeniably, their work does at times marginalize the scholarship within the fields of postcolonial and feminist theory that has directly contributed to the very cosmopolitanization of the world that is at stake.
>
> (Sheller, 2011, p. 352; emphases in the original)

Such claims, as posed by Beck and Urry, clearly pose a problematic contradiction when studying the Caribbean and its history. Diaspora studies, postcolonial studies, and Mobility Studies all focus on the relevance of mobility for both the Caribbean and Africa, thus proving that mobility is neither new nor a predominantly European experience. On the contrary, they highlight precisely that "dislocation, displacement, disjuncture, and dialogism—the sine qua non of cosmopolitanism—as widespread conditions of migrant subjectivity in the world today *and in the past* for many colonial subjects" (Sheller, 2011, p. 353; emphasis in the original). Mobility, which constitutes the foundation of the hybrid creole Caribbean peoples and cultures and has unquestionably transformed the African continent, continues to shape the region and its diaspora and, consequently, is also a frequent motif in literatures from the Caribbean and Africa. Mobility is, furthermore, an important tie between these two geographical regions. The middle passage is, as Jenny Sharpe points out, "a particularly charged signifier within a black literary imagination" (Sharpe, 2009, p. 97). In the selected novels, however, the middle passage is remembered, but it does not comprise the route of mobility nor does the transgenerational trauma of the passage determine the mobilities of the present.

Oyeyemi, Emezi, and Indiana employ the image of the middle passage and the remembrance of the slave trade and slavery to stress the ties between the Caribbean and Africa. These ties are decisive aspects of the characters' identities, especially after the protagonists leave their native countries or change their bodies so that they conform with their gender identities. The novels' characters question their roots, their belonging to one country, nation, or gender, and are accompanied by spirits during these reflections. The spirits, be they *orishas* or *ogbanje*, do not remain static but are mobile themselves – the experience of the middle passage has changed them as well. Religious beliefs and practices of African heritage, among them obeah, santería, and voudou, reflect the mobility and creolisation of the Caribbean itself and have crossed not only the Atlantic but also racial borders within the Caribbean, as Tim Watson affirms in his article *Mobile Obeah: A Response to "Obeah: Knowledge, Power and Writing in the Early Atlantic World"* (2015).

The novels by the Nigerian-British author Helen Oyeyemi and the Nigerian Akwaeke Emezi present a reconsideration of the connections between Africa and the Caribbean, specifically, between Cuba and the Dominican Republic, which can only be imagined after moving to a 'neutral' place in the United Kingdom and the United States.

The Opposite House by Oyeyemi centres around Maja, a young Cuban woman brought up in Germany and England, and Yemaya Saramagua[2] (Aya), an *orisha* living in the "somewherehouse", as her home is called in the novel, who is able to choose between different doors in the house, which lead her to Havana, Lagos or London, respectively. Aya's and Maja's stories unfold in alternating sections; each chapter is dedicated to the storyline of either one of them. Their storylines are never brought together but develop separately.

Still, as readers we may perceive the motifs that connect the two characters and their stories: the quest for understanding their own changing identities, the need for simultaneously holding onto their past and accepting their changed identities in the present. While Aya is allowed to leave her sections and to intervene in Maja's life, Maja, as a mortal, cannot glide into the narration of Aya's life.

Maja is a hybrid character: she is Afro-Cuban, but identifies as British, as she grew up in London: "In my blood is a bright chain of transfusion; Spaniards, West Africans, indigenous Cubans, even the Turkos – the Cuban Lebanese" (Oyeyemi, 2007/2008, p. 98). Her identity as Afro-Cuban is based on only one memory, to which she holds on desperately. It is the memory of her family's farewell party before leaving Havana, which she cherishes and shares with no one.

> I remember a tiny, veiled woman appeared beneath the palm trees at the bottom of the garden of a house in Vedado. Our going-away party. It was full moon, white paper moon; the glass lantern on the tables cast shadowed orange crescents onto the grass. I peered out from beneath the high table, an earthy hinterland where I and another girl with a soft, ruddy face were sitting and eating papaya in the centre of a polished starfish of adult feet. There was a stir as someone else noticed that woman at the end of the garden, the woman who was not one of us. People began asking who she was. And then she began to sing to us out of the falling night. We couldn't understand her words – she mixed Spanish with another language that no one there knew – but the first notes felled me the way lightening brings down trees without explanation or permission.
>
> The girl who was under the table with me began to suffer a fit [...].
>
> (2008, p. 45)

The unknown singer is Aya and the language Maja cannot understand is Yoruba. As the readers find out later, this is the precise moment Aya's powers suffuse Maja (see Cooper, 2009, p. 115). Thus, the latter takes Yemaya's spirit with her, first to Hamburg and then to London. In that human body, the *orisha* shares the gift of singing with Maja, which she discovers unexpectedly. Eventually, Maja becomes a singer in nightclubs (see Oyeyemi, 2007/2008, p. 103). Regardless of the presence of Spanish and Cuban traditions, Cuban food, and conversations about Cuba, Maja does not identify as easily as her parents with the Caribbean island, which to her feels like a distant and unknown place. Instead, she seeks a place for her heterogeneous background in a multi-ethnic Britain at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries (see Cousins, 2012, p. 3). As a consequence of colonialism and globalisation, the United Kingdom, and particularly London, has become home to immigrants and refugees from all over the world. Processes of colonisation and migration create, as Homi Bhabha (1994) explains, hybrid cultures in both centre and periphery, but the British society portrayed in *The*

Opposite House does not acknowledge and value this form of hybridity. Instead, a multiculturalism dominated by 'unspoilt' British people is described or, as Cousins states: "[…] multiculturalism demands cultural compromises from immigrant communities and continues to hold up the culture of the indigenous white population of Britain as the norm" (2012, p. 2). Cousins illustrates the divisional character of such a notion of multiculturalism not only in terms of Black/White populations and natives/immigrants, but within Black communities as well: "The discourse of blackness, as Oyeyemi deploys it here, is interested in the differences created by slavery, not in common origins" (2012, p. 5). As an adolescent, Maja experiences this division at school when her Black schoolmates bring up her 'other' form of being Black: not directly of African but of slave heritage. She is not Black in the same way her schoolmates of direct Nigerian, Ghanaian, or Ugandan descent are, as she is even more hybrid than they are:

> Dominique was at home sick the day Lucy came up to me at registration, peeped at me through heavy lashes and said, 'You know, a lot of the others have been saying that out of you and Dominique, we like you better. You're all right. You're roots.'
>
> I must have seemed stupid to her. I said, 'Huh?' I thought a black girl was a black girl. Why did it come down to a choice between me and Dominique, and not any of the other girls? Then I got it; we were both black without coming directly from the right place. We were the slave girls from Trinidad and Cuba; not supposed to speak Spanish, not supposed to speak English either. I wanted to curse Lucy Cuban-style, but I was afraid she'd understand; she was predicted an A star for GCSE Spanish.
>
> (Oyeyemi, 2007/2008, pp. 96–97)

The Caribbean "cosmopolitanism" and mobility are, thus, not given space either in the dominant white British society nor in the African communities on the margins of that British society; the hierarchisation of races, heritages, and positions Maja experiences during her youth is tightly connected to mobility (see Hannam et al., 2006, p. 3). Her ancestors' forced movement from what was most likely West Africa to the Caribbean constitutes the base for Maja being perceived as 'differently black' by her schoolmates, and her Hispanic Caribbean heritage and immigration, in general, constitutes an interruption to the British norm, as Cousins explains. Maja's cosmopolitanism and mobility seem to fall out of the range of the imaginable in contemporary British society: she is black, but not of direct African descent, she is Caribbean, but not from one of the former British colonies. Her ancestors' and family's movement has led to a double crossing of the Atlantic and a double crossing of linguistic borders. Consequently, Maja struggles to re-negotiate her own cultural and racial identity throughout her adolescence and early adulthood.

Grasping the processes of othering and differentiation, her "Cuban memory" becomes essential to Maja's notion of her own identity, both in a racial and in a cultural sense. It constitutes her only bond to Cuba and her own Cubanness, which is independent of her parents and their memories. Thus, she keeps coming back to it throughout the narration, impressed by the voice of the unknown woman and the secret of having witnessed the other girl's "fit". In the novel, it is not specified what kind of "fit" Maja refers to. She is the only one who observes it, and as the occurrences of that night remain a mystery to her throughout the narration, it falls to us readers to interpret the "fit". Unexpectedly, her Cuban identity is shattered, when Magalys, the other girl from under the table, appears in London and imposes her memory of that evening on Maja: there had been no singing woman and the one with the "fit" had been Maja, not her (Oyeyemi, 2007/2008, p. 168). At this point, it becomes clear that the "fit" is the moment Aya possesses – or mounts – Maja. With the loss of her "Cuban memory" comes the loss of her (singing) voice. Yemaya's presence in Maja's body and soul also manifests itself in less subtle ways. During her childhood years in Hamburg, Maja starts to sleepwalk. When doing so, she is usually accompanied by two girls only she can see – her guiding spirits from the waters ("Often the girls were wet, their clothes soaked through even when the weather outside was dry" (Oyeyemi, 2007/2008, p. 7).[3] Although this scene occupies only a small part of the novel, it is an important hint to Yemaya's presence in Maja's body and soul for the readers, and a relevant memory for Maja, even though she does not link it explicitly to either Cuba or her "Cuban memory". Instead, she associates the two girls with her mother Chabella, with whom she has a close but nevertheless conflicted relationship. The conflicts between mother and daughter are rooted in their mutual misunderstanding of the other's struggle with identity.

Chabella constructs her own Afro-Cuban identity based on her memories of Cuban life, her connection to her family, especially to her grandmother and father, and Afro-Cuban spiritual and religious beliefs. Whereas for Maja, London constitutes the zone of contact with Africa, Chabella perceives Africa as part of herself, a fact also perceived by her daughter: "When she [Chabella] prays to the saints for intercession, her Spanish is damaged and slow because she is moving her thoughts from Africa to Cuba and back again" (Oyeyemi, 2007/2008, p. 12). The transgenerational memory of slavery, which is lost to Maja, remains an undeniable reality to her parents:

> The Word 'slave' is a big deal to Chabella and Papi; neither of them can get out from under it. It is blackness in Cuba. It is sometimes bittersweet, for such is the song of the *morena*; it is two fingers placed on the wrist when a white Cuban is trying to describe you. Papi tries to systematise it and talk about the destruction of identity and the fragility of personality, but he is scared of the Word. Mami hides inside the Word, finds reveries in it, tries to locate a power that she is owed.
>
> (Oyeyemi, 2007/2008, p. 24; emphasis in the original)

Whereas Chabella embraces her African roots through spirituality, Juan, Maja's father, rejects this spirituality; he does not define his heritage as African but stresses its hybridity and Caribeanness. He does not perceive himself as African in any way. He vehemently affirms that he is only Cuban, more specifically Afro-Cuban, but does not show the need to hold onto the transgenerational memory of the forced crossing of the Atlantic. He does, however, emphasise the importance of the transgenerational memory of slavery in Cuba and the repressions Afro-Cubans suffered during the past centuries. The mobility that has shaped the Caribbean has lost its importance to Juan; paradoxically, he perceives its hybrid and cosmopolitan form as more or less static.

Interestingly, while Chabella's thoughts move back and forth from England to Cuba, from Africa to Cuba, her body remains static. Mobility creates both movement and stasis (see Hannam et al., 2006, p. 4) and both aspects play a significant role in *The Opposite House*. Throughout the novel, the readers find Chabella either in her and Juan's home in Peckham or in Maja's house; Maja and Aya, on the contrary, are constantly moving. This difference between the characters accentuates the ongoing mother-daughter conflict in the novel. Chabella is firm in her beliefs and does not question her roots or her Afro-Cubanness. She is aware she does not belong in England, but she cannot go back to Cuba. Therefore, it is only in her thoughts that she can move to her roots, the island where she was born and the continent her ancestors were forced to leave. Maja and Aya are portrayed in these moments of transformation in their identities, of questioning their roots and their belonging. The process of change is symbolised by their constant walks through cities – they are two *flanêuses* who simultaneously explore cities and their own identities:

> Yemaya, in love with Cuba, went walking in La Regla, repeating after the Columbus in her mind's eye, 'This is the most beautiful land I have ever seen.'
>
> (Oyeyemi, 2007/2008, p. 89)

> All the way to Papi and Chabella's I watch my shadow, try to step on it, feed it in every hungry, unlucky crack in the pavement. Nobody looks at me strangely. In Mami and Papi's part of Peckham, jerk chicken, Obalende *suya* and shops stocking Supermalt and Maggi sauce are seconds away.
>
> (2007/2008, p. 139; italics in the original)

Although mother and daughter share their spirituality, attend Catholic mass on a regular basis and spend weekends in a convent near London, Maja cannot make sense of Chabella's Afro-Cuban religion, *santería*. Regardless of her having been surrounded by *orishas*, altars, stories, and rituals throughout her life, *santería* opens up a chasm between the two generations. The first-person narrator, Maja, tells the history of slavery and syncretism from the perspective

of the orishas, and even emphasises the syncretic links between *santería* and Catholicism (Oyeyemi, 2007/2008, pp. 24–25), but she remains distant and does not adopt *santería* the way her mother has. Her distance from Cuba and her rootedness in the hybrid space of London impede her from feeling as protected by the *orishas* as Chabella does:

> My heart bounces on the end of a string whenever I hear the names of *Chabella's Orishas*. Those gods who trip us up, then haul us up, then string us up, who understand that it hurts, but also understand that it needs to. They're deadly friends from stories, their names braided into explanations for the heavy nights edged with uncertain light like dull pearls, the nights when Chabella would wake me up at hourly intervals, pleading with me to sip a little, just a little, of one herbal tincture or another. Nights when I protested with all my soul to be allowed to sleep instead.
>
> (Oyeyemi, 2007/2008, pp. 35–36; emphasis mine)

Maja usually refers to the deities as "Chabella's Orishas", marking even linguistically a frontier between her and Afro-Cuban syncretic religion. Her scepticism, however, is characterised by respect and a certain degree of confidence. Her father, a scholar and a 'rational' man, is vehemently opposed to practicing this religion (or any religion, for that matter), and breaks the bridge between Africa and the Caribbean that his wife has internalised: "They [the orishas] make Papi impatient. 'Those are Yoruba gods', he tells Mami. 'And you are not Yoruba. You are a black Cuban. There is a difference. […] To us, these gods are historical artefacts'" (Oyeyemi, 2007/2008, p. 36). For Chabella, a *santera*,[4] the difference between Afro-Cubans and Yoruba people is almost non-existent, at least in a religious context,[5] whereas for Juan, Yoruba culture is only one aspect of his Caribbean heritage. His identity is clearly centred around Cuba and Caribbean hybridity, whereas Chabella incessantly highlights her Yoruba heritage. She shares her rituals with Maja, thus expecting to pass on to the next generation what she has learnt from her grandmother, but ultimately fails in her attempt to do so. Chabella's and Juan's identities were shaped in Cuba, and to them it is clear beyond a doubt that they are Afro-Cubans. Their children's identities, however, are shaped far away from that Caribbean island. For Maja, Cuba consists of only one memory, and for her brother Tomás', who was born in London, it is just a country he has been told of. Therefore, the loss of her only "Cuban memory" is highly destructive to Maja.

These struggles, represented in the realistic part of the novel, which is the part revolving around Maja and her family, pervade the more surreal and magical part of *The Opposite House*: Aya's story. She lives in an imagined home, the somewherehouse, and is able to move between Lagos, Havana, and London. Together with her family, Olorun (the supreme God), and the other *orishas*, she has accompanied the people who worshipped them on the slave

boats, and who were taken from West Africa and brought to the Caribbean, where they have started to forget their old selves and to change. Aya is one of the many aspects of the Yoruba *orisha* Yemaya, who, like many other *orishas*, constitutes a part of the cultural imaginaries the enslaved people took from West Africa to the Caribbean. Just like the human beings, the *orishas* have changed throughout the generations and have creolised. The creolised Yemaya occupies a prominent role in *The Opposite House* and in *Tentacle*, thus, a brief introduction to Yemaya, her stories, qualities, and powers is considered indispensable for a profound understanding of Oyeyemi's and Indiana's novels.

Yemaya's fluid movements

Yemaya[6] has many names: Yemoja in Nigerian Yoruba religion, Yemayá in Cuba, Yemanjá, Iemanjá, and Janaína in Brazil (see Otero, Falola, 2013, p. xix). She is the mother of both salt water and sweet water and is the Universal Queen (see Cabrera, 1980, p. 20); thus, being its mother, the water's fluidity is considered to be characteristic of Yemaya; Yemaya is also associated with women, motherhood, family, and the arts. Her name has various translations, one of which is 'mother of fish'. Furthermore, she has been linked to the Gelede masks and the spirit children embodied by those masks, connecting Yemaya to the powers of the *aje*, female spiritual forces (see Otero, Falola, 2013, p. xix). Otero and Falola stress her importance for explorations of gender performativity: "Since Yemoja is noted as a primordial female *orisa*, she is central to how Yoruba religious discourses enact the power of performing gender as a reflexive critique and satire of these roles in society and culture" (Otero, Falola, 2013, p. xix; emphasis in the original). Additionally, Yemaya is said to have healing powers (see Otero, Falola, 2013, p. xxiv). In Cuban *santería*, the Virgin of Regla, always portrayed as a black Madonna, is her Catholic counterpart. Yemaya is, though, not a unique and exceptional case of a water deity to gain popularity in the African diaspora. Yemaya joins a number of sea and river goddesses, one of whom is Idemili from the Igbo cosmology. This goddess is far better known as Mami Wata, "a general name for the hybridized river and sea goddesses popularized across Africa and the African diaspora in the nineteenth century" (Krishnan, 2012, p. 2). Yemaya's fluidity, which we will see is also characteristic of Aya in *The Opposite House*, is a trait Madhu Krishnan points out in her study of Nigerian first- and third-generation authors:

> [The] water goddess thus serves as an allegory for the shifts in representation in the Nigerian novel, as writers move from seeking to legitimize their cultural identifications to an outside audience historically dismissive, to a sense of reclamation of tradition that strives, instead, towards emergent and heterogeneous collectivities that surpass the binaries of male/female, Africa/Europe, and colonizer/colonized […].
>
> (2012, p. 15)

While the conclusion that the water goddess serves as an allegory for shifts that surpass the binaries of Africa/Europe, or rather the binary Caribbean/Europe, is valid for *The Opposite House*, Oyeyemi's novel does not contest the male/female binary. Gender remains a firm, unshifting category, whereas the spirits' gender fluidity becomes a characteristic trait for Ada and Acilde in *Freshwater* and *Tentacle*.

The hybridisation of the deities in Africa and the diaspora is reflected through the splitting into "aspects" of the *orishas* in *The Opposite House*. Aya's family grows considerably after they leave Nigeria, since each of its members, including Aya, is split and doubled into what the novel refers to as "aspects" once they arrive in the diaspora. Her aspects are "Yemaya Ataramagwa", "Yemaya Achabba", "Yemaya Oqquette", and "Yemaya Saramagua". The latter is Aya, the novel's protagonist, whose story we read. After the African Yemaya splits into these aspects, most of them depart from the somewherehouse, spread around many countries, and Aya never gets to meet them again (see Oyeyemi, 2007/2008, p. 111). Just like Aya, they also change and become unrecognisable:

> On arrival [to Cuba], communications arrived from others; word from Haiti, from Brazil, from Jamaica, from America. Even from England there were some whispers, and then all the talk stopped. The conversations had become too strange. The family's aspects abroad had changed. It was hard to know what the difference was, but it was there.
>
> (2007/2008, pp. 111–112)

The discussions between Chabella and Juan resonate in Aya's story. In the diaspora, the *orishas* change so much that they no longer recognise each other when they meet again. The somewherehouse is where these changes and shifts take place: "The house is a crucible, which condenses history and enacts the process whereby African deities live and syncretize with foreign gods and myths, in Cuba and in London, or die in their failure to do so" (Cooper, 2009, p. 112). In her article, Cooper explains how in the novel, the somewherehouse is a symbol of the Caribbean and of the processes of creolisation or transculturation. It is in the somewherehouse that African *orishas* and European mythology meet, or rather clash, once Proserpine enters and aims to change Aya. The *orisha* resists for a long time and seeks refuge in Lagos before she realises that even Africa has changed, and that Lagos is not the same it was before. Soon enough, Proserpine becomes aware she has to change, too, in order to survive (see Cooper, 2009, p. 112). Cooper assures here:

> The fusion has to be in two directions, between Africa and Europe and Europe and Africa, for the survival of both. European myths and legends have to metamorphose such that they are able to find the nourishment that will sustain the Yoruba travelers. [...] For their own part, the African

> gods, who have been taken with the slaves, must survive by adopting Christian incarnations and amalgams.
>
> (2009, p. 112)

Those who do not readjust, who do not mix and become hybrid, have to die, like the Kayodes who share the somewherehouse with Aya. The novel thus suggests that it is only after the *orishas* and spirits move away from their native territories that Africa and the Caribbean meet and that it is precisely in this very place that a new, hybrid identity, one which unites the cultures, traditions, languages, and beliefs of both regions, is created.

As in Oyeyemi's novel, in Akwaeke Emezi's *Freshwater* the encounter between Africa and the Caribbean only takes place after the characters move away from both Africa and the Caribbean. Ada, one of the text's protagonists and narrators, comes to the United States as a university student and meets Malena, a young woman from the Dominican Republic. *Freshwater* is an autobiographical debut novel by the Igbo and Tamil author Emezi. Movements, migration, and hybridity are as decisive for Ada's family as they are for Maja's. The daughter of a Nigerian father and a Malaysian mother, she is raised in a multicultural family, which does not remain in one place but moves between England and Nigeria during Ada's childhood. Saachi, Ada's mother, spends a few years working in Saudi Arabia supporting the family financially and, therefore, has to leave her two daughters with their father in Nigeria. Later in Ada's life, her mother moves to the United States, but this time her daughters follow. It is not for political reasons – as in *The Opposite House* – that the family leaves; instead, they choose to move abroad for educational and professional reasons.

Fluidity and queerness are dominant characteristics of Emezi's novel, both on the level of content and of form. Like Oyeyemi, they[7] choose fragmentation and multiple perspectives as narrative strategies, but, unlike Oyeyemi, they give the spirits, the *ogbanje* and Asụghara, the opportunity to speak in the first person: in the case of the former spirit in the first-person plural and in the case of the latter in the first-person singular. In fact, the 'realistic' person Ada is the narrator of only two out of the novel's 22 chapters.

Whereas Aya's presence in Maja's body and mind is only insinuated, the various spirits sharing Ada's mind have names, particular qualities – good and bad – and stories of their own. The spirits are the two *ogbanje*, who have formed part of Ada since her birth, Asụghara, who is born only after Ada is raped by her boyfriend, and Saint Vincent, the last of the spirits to grow inside Ada. The spirits each obtain a voice and power as they struggle against each other as well as against Ada; struggles which do not remain hidden inside the human body and mind they all share, as they influence Ada's behaviour and are noticed by the people around her. Ada's family, friends and fellow students, and occasionally even Ada herself, interpret these struggles as signs of mental illness, but as the *ogbanje* let us readers know, there are other characters who can see them for what they are and who doubt the adequacy

of a Western medical approach. In this context, they narrate the story of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery from the perspective of the gods, evoking Aya's story in *The Opposite House*:

> We have told you about some of them [the gods] –Yshwa, for example. Ala, the controller of minor gods, our mother. But there are others, and anyone who knows anything knows this, knows about the godly stowaways that came along when the corrupters stole our people, what the swollen hulls carried over the bellied seas, the masks the skin on the inside of the drum, the words under the words, the water in the water. The stories that survived, the new names they took, the temper of the old gods sweeping through new land, the music taken that is the same as the music left behind. And, of course, the humans who survived, [...]. Those humans recognized us easily; it was as if they could smell us under the Ada's skin or feel us in the air that heaved around her.
>
> (Emezi, 2018, pp. 87–88)

Less straightforward than in *The Opposite House*, the story is still the same, though *Freshwater* does not explicitly refer to the Caribbean but to the diaspora, in general. Still, it is striking that the only character able to "recognise", "smell", and "feel" the *ogbanje* should be an Afro-Dominican woman, Malena, and that they should meet in the United States, a long way from both Africa and the Caribbean.

Ada and Malena do not perceive themselves to be part of a multicultural, cosmopolitan, or hybrid US-American society. They are, rather, positioned at the margins of what is portrayed as a predominantly white and Anglo-Saxon society; they are othered not only because of their skin colour but because of their unusual cosmopolitanism and their history of mobility. The foundation of their friendship is, however, not made up of shared experiences as foreign students in Virginia; instead, it is the transgenerational memory of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade that performs this function. The cultural imaginaries the enslaved people from West Africa brought with them, and their development in the Caribbean, are what bind the two female protagonists together. Ada recognises Malena's cosmopolitanism and her spirituality as related to her own cultural context and, reciprocally, Malena encounters her heritage in Ada.

On one occasion, Malena is "mounted" by a spirit in Ada's, and, therefore, the *ogbanje's* presence. The novel specifically uses this unusual word to describe Malena being possessed by a spirit. It is a direct translation of the Spanish term "montar" used by mediums. By adopting the verb "montar"/ "mount" into English, the text implicitly stresses the experience's rootedness in Hispanophone Caribbean beliefs. Simultaneously, the ties between Africa and the Caribbean are expressed on a linguistic level as well as on the level of content. The spirits seize the opportunity to communicate with that other spirit, thus fortifying the bond between Africa and the Caribbean as well

as between Ada and Malena. The *ogbanje* acknowledge the similarities and differences between themselves, the African spirits, and the Caribbean spirit who mounts Malena: "We loved Malena because she smelled like us" (Emezi, 2018, p. 89). Malena herself reiterates this act of recognition:

> "There's a claim on your head, Ada," she told us. "Back home. Something wants you back home."
>
> "Who?" The Ada didn't know the things we did. None of this sounded like anything to her.
>
> "I don't know." Malena pushed her black hair off her face and poured a glass of Johnnie Walker. "These are West African gods, not mine, so I can't speak to them like that, you know?" [...] The problem is that when you have saints, old-school saints, trying to communicate with you, they don't understand. It's like talking to your grand-grand-granddaddy about the Internet."
>
> (2018, pp. 89–91)

Malena, a spiritual and religious person, is deeply rooted in her African heritage and thus shares a similar epistemology to Ada. Her efforts to talk to the "old-school saints" resemble the attempt to connect more deeply to her ancestors who were brought to the Dominican Republic as slaves and who might have spoken a similar language to the spirits claiming Ada.

Malena, contrary to other characters, does not doubt Ada's sanity; for her, self-harm and atypical behaviour do not necessarily indicate mental illness, as she thinks there might be a different reason for their presence. So, without Ada's knowledge, she performs rituals to save her friend from self-harm and suicide. Her workings, though different to what they know, are acknowledged and appreciated by the *ogbanje*:

> It is like we said, we loved her [Malena], from back when we all lived in the mountains, for the way she loved us, all of us, and never made the Ada feel insane. For the way she was a witness. She worked for the other gods, yes, but she loved us and perhaps she did help save the Ada; perhaps what she worked was part of the veil-tearing that brought Asụghara here, the third birth. We do not know these other gods, so we cannot verify the impact of what their workers wrought.
>
> (Emezi, 2018, p. 92)

Similar to *The Opposite House*, an encounter between Africa and the Caribbean, the acknowledgement of a shared heritage, and its different developments seem to be imaginable only after the characters move to a different, neutral place.

Malena recognises that Ada's changing personality and her queer identity are tightly connected to the spirits that live inside Ada. As a practitioner of Afro-Dominican religion, Malena is familiar with the qualities and powers

of spirits and deities. She knows that many of them have the power to transform into other aspects of themselves and that some are even characterised by constant fluidity, like Yemaya, for instance. Furthermore, Malena is convinced that the spirits and deities are capable of sharing their powers of transformation and fluidity with human beings. Saint Vincent, the fourth spirit apart from Asụghara and the *ogbanje* inhibiting Ada, is the one to share his need for bodily transformation with her and to push her towards a shift of the body:

> And with Saint Vincent, our [the ogbanje's] little grace, taking the front more than he used to, the body, as it was, was becoming unsatisfactory, too feminine, too reproductive. That form had worked for Asụghara – those breasts with the large, dark areolae and nipples she could lift to her mouth – but we were more than her and we were more than the saint. […]
>
> When Ewan left and Asụghara allowed Saint Vincent to take the Ada's body and start binding her chest – all of these things were in preparation for a shedding, the skin splitting in long seams. The first time the Ada wore the binder, she turned sideways in a mirror and Saint Vincent laughed out loud in relief, in joy, in the rightness of the absence.
>
> (Emezi, 2018, pp. 187–188)

Ada decides to have a mastectomy to adapt her body to her non-binary gender identity. During the process of bodily transformation, Saint Vincent is the most powerful spirit inside her and he gives Ada strength throughout that entire period.

Like Saint Vincent, in *The Opposite House* and *Tentacle*, the orisha Yemaya accompanies the protagonists during processes of bodily transformation, be it pregnancy or transition from one sex to another.

Shifting of bodies: of pregnancy and queerness

> Mother I need
> mother I need
> mother I need your blackness now
> as the august earth needs rain.
>
> Audre Lorde, From the House of Yemanjá

"Indeed, though often depicted as the eternal mother, Yemoja can perform different kinds of gender roles, and *she has the power to shift*, change and display an ambiguous sexuality in mythology and ritual" (Otero, Fayola, 2013, p. xxi; emphasis mine). Yemaya, the mother of all waters, is also the patron of mothers and motherhood. In her poem *From the House of Yemanjá*, Audre Lorde implores Yemanjá/Yemaya to come to her and be with her because

she needs her, the mother. In *The Opposite House*, Yemaya comes to mothers regardless of whether they are calling her.

It seems useful to stress that after her relocation to the Americas, "a dramatic shift in the understanding of Yemoja's nature, and in particular, the perception of her as a woman [took place]. [...] Therefore, female *òrìsá* [...] came to embody several classic Western female archetypes" (Sellers, 2013, p. 141; emphasis in the original). These archetypes are the mother, the wife, the temptress, and the 'fallen woman' – once pure but now corrupted. In the Americas, as Sellers points out, the *orisha* cedes her independence to male domination. Colonialism and slavery forced Western gender norms even on deities and spirits (see Sellers, 2013, p. 141).

The realistic section of *The Opposite House* starts with Maja's discovery of her unexpected pregnancy. In this moment when her body starts to change, turns against her and becomes home to another human being, and when she struggles with her pregnancy, unsure whether this is the right moment to become a mother, her story moves back and forth between the present and the past, between her life and Yemaya's presence in it. The pregnancy triggers memories of her childhood in Hamburg, London, and Cuba. It leads us readers back to the moment she met Aya, and Aya left a piece of her in Maja; it evokes Maja's struggles with her identity and her "hysteric", as she calls her anxiety and depression from which she has been suffering since her adolescence. It also reminds Maja of the time when Chabella was pregnant with Tomás. On one occasion, Chabella decides to dance *apataki* and is possessed by Aya:

> One morning Mami came downstairs wrapped in nothing but a cloth of preternatural white, with strands of her hair swimming around her face, strands of her hair tied with little flags of white cloth. [...] Because she was pregnant with Tomás, Tomás became part of the outfit too: it was he that made the cloth coast out in front of her and around her; it was he that made the white flow. [...] A drumbeat jumped up, collided with another one, and the two chased each other around and around – rhythm. [...] The drum talk was threaded through with fast, loud *bembe* singing, Yoruba patched with Spanish. I couldn't understand a word, but I understood that it was a story, and that the way Mami began to dance, she knew which story. [...] Mami became Yemaya Saramagua, a sure, slow swell in her arms and her hips like water after a long thirst, her arms calling down rain, her hands making secret signs, snatching hearts.
>
> (Oyeyemi, 2007/2008, pp. 106–109)

Chabella dresses for a *santería* ritual, listens and dances to a song for Yemaya, which tells the story of her unreciprocated love for Ogun Arere and, as it may happen in any ritual, is possessed by Yemaya. Even the outsiders, Maja and Juan, notice the changes in Chabella, and recognise the *orisha*. This being the only instance of Chabella dancing *apataki* after having left Cuba, Maja

concludes: "[…] it must have been some kind of Tomás-related thing, like a craving" (Oyeyemi, 2007/2008, p. 110). Chabella turns to Yemaya during her pregnancy; she feels the urge to call her through the drums and the *apataki*. The *orisha* responds to her calls, and as the great mother she protects the other, human mother by possessing her and leaving a piece of herself inside Chabella as well as inside the unborn baby. The novel thus suggests that Aya constitutes an integral part of Maja's family, as almost every member, except Juan, carries her within their bodies and souls.

In contrast to the predominantly heterosexual, and in the case of Maja's parents even heteronormative, characters in *The Opposite House* – Maja's closest friend, Amy Eleni, a lesbian, constitutes the only exception – gender fluidity and queerness predominate in *Freshwater* and in *Tentacle* by the Dominican author Rita Indiana. Unlike *Freshwater* and *The Opposite House*, *Tentacle* is not set in a space apart from Africa and the Caribbean but in the latter region itself, namely in the Dominican Republic. As with *Freshwater*, fluidity and queerness determine both the novel's content and form.

The dystopian novel is set in a not too distant future and shifts in a fragmented and overlapping manner between various temporal and physical spaces (Santo Domingo in 2027 and 2037; Sosúa Project in 2001; Sosúa in the 17th century; Playa Bo in 1991). None of the narrative threads follows a linear chronology; the narrative is rather shaped by the protagonists' consciousness, their feelings and emotions (see Herrero-Martín, 2019, p. 58). Spirits and *orishas* are not protagonists as such, they do not have either a proper voice or a story; instead, they merge with the mortal characters, and their powers fuse with the mortals' desires and transform – shift – the mortal bodies. In *Tentacle*, the *orishas* and their *caminos* (avatars) still occupy a prominent role despite their lack of a voice and their own storyline comparable to *The Opposite House* and *Freshwater*. A clear example of their importance is the first chapter's title, "Olokun", which immediately emphasises the *orisha's* relevance to the narration. Olokun is tightly connected to Yemayá, the other *orisha* in *Tentacle*.

Sellers explains the relationship between Yemayá and Olokun as follows:

> For instance, in Cuban mythology, Yemayá is often said to be hermaphroditic. This is not terribly surprising. In Yorúbà tradition, many *òrìsà* are depicted with ambiguous sexualities. While Yemoja is most often referred to as female, she is no exception to this tendency. In Santería, she has a *camino* called Olocun or Olókun. Generally recognized among the Yorùbá outside Cuba as a separate deity and the god of the sea, Olocun in this case is essentially an alternative, male personality of Yemayá.
>
> (Sellers, 2013, p. 137; emphasis in the original)

The power to shift between genders is the essential trait which the main mortal character in *Tentacle*, Alcilde, needs, seeks, and uses to save the Dominican Republic from a natural disaster. Acilde Figueroa, an androgynous young woman who desires a sex change, is the housemaid to Esther Escudero,

whose consecrated name as a daughter of Yemayá is Omicunlé.[8] Esther, herself a Dominican like Acilde, was initiated into *santería* as an adult in Cuba:

> In Matanzas [a Cuban city] I met my padrino [godfather], Belarminio Brito, Omidina, child of Yemayá, and he was so bad, as noxious as gas. But he consecrated me and returned me to life. [...] In the prophecy delivered at my initiation ceremony, it was revealed I had been cursed since I was in my mother's womb. [...] Omidina named me Omicunlé, after the cloak that covers the sea, because it was also prophesied that *my followers would protect the house of Yemayá*.
>
> (Indiana, 2018, pp. 17–18; emphasis mine)

Acilde, destined to become one of those followers, is still sceptical and curious at the beginning of the novel. She accepts the readings of the cowrie shells by Esther, a ritual in santería which permits the santeros, santeras, or babalawos to "read" the destiny of those who seek their advice, and though she enjoys them, she loses faith in them as soon as Esther leaves. One night, Acilde gives in to her curiosity and enters the shrine to Esther's *orishas*:

> Acilde heard a hum coming from the room where they kept the altar to Yemayá, the goddess of the sea to whom Omicunlé was devoted. Esther was sleeping. Acilde dared to go in. It smelled of incense and flower-scented water, of old fabric and the perfume of the sea held within conch shells. She approached the altar, whose centrepiece was a replica of a Greek jar some three feet tall. [...] All over the jar were offerings and the attributes of the goddess: an old oar, a ship's wheel, a feathered fan. [...] But inside, perfectly illuminated and oxygenated by a mechanism adapted to the jar, Acilde saw a live sea anemone.
>
> (Indiana, 2018, pp. 19–20)

Yemayá and her male *camino* (or avatar) Olokun both represent the sea, which has been devasted after the catastrophic tsunami of 2024. Yemayá, who has already recognised Acilde as one of her daughters, calls her, and wants to share her secret with the mortal: the fact that she possesses an anemone, to which the English title refers, and which has become an animal of immeasurable worth at that point of climate change and destruction of the environment.

It is Acilde's prophecy, though still unknown to her, to rescue the sea and the Dominican Republic as a daughter/son of the *orishas* of the sea:

> The orcacle had told Esther Escudero, Omicunlé, that she would receive the Chosen One in her own home, and that she would meet death at his hands. She'd accepted that future calamity with equanimity. She trusted Eric to carry out her plan to have him initiate Omo Olokun when she was no longer here.
>
> (Indiana, 2018, p. 50)

Acilde's initiation as Omo Olokun is not achieved through the traditional ritual. Instead, Eric injects her with the Rainbow Drug, which transforms Acilde's female body into a male one (see Indiana, 2018, pp. 50–52). The painful metamorphosis from female to male resonates with Yemayá's own fluidity and her transformation into Olokun. Fluidity and transformation do not end at this point: Acilde separates into two more avatars – or aspects, like Aya in *The Opposite House* – Giorgio (born out of this initiation in combination with a Taíno ritual) and Roque. They act on the novel's different levels of time and plot, gaining consciousness of their ability to shift between space and time and, in the end, choose to lose this consciousness in order to fulfil the prophecy and save the ocean, the realm of Yemayá and Olokun. The legacy of European neoliberalism destroys the ocean, whereas West African and indigenous (Taíno) epistemologies offer the solution to the problem. The (possible) salvation of humanity and the environment can, thus, be achieved through spirituality, but only a spirituality derived from the Caribbean's Yoruba and Taíno heritage (see Herrero-Martín, 2019, p. 58).

The protagonists in *Tentacle* are in constant movement. Their mobility is not limited to movements of bodies in geographic spaces but expands to the possibility of moving through time. After her initiation as Omo Olokun, Alcilde becomes Giorgio, an Italian patron of the arts and protector of the environment, who lives in the Dominican Republic in 2001, before the climatic catastrophes destroy the country and the surrounding ocean. Eric's body dies after the ritual of initiation but he himself does not disappear entirely. In the past, he is Iván, Giorgio's close friend. The shift in body and the movement through time are not portrayed as unconscious processes; on the contrary, at the end of the novel Giorgio reflects on whether to save the country and the environment or his changed body:

> Everything with Argenis had been an accident. Giorgio hadn't imagined another human could replicate himself in the past the way he did. [...] Quickly and overwhelmingly, he [Giorgio] had before him the real goal of his mission: to give Said Bona a message – as president, to avoid accepting biological weapons from Venezuela. To tell him that, in the future, when he was elected president, he needed to reject them: Giorgio had to convince him. Giorgio had to convince him. But just as quickly, he began to think about the other consequences of that decision: if Said Bona followed his advice and there was no chemical spill after the tsunami, would Esther Escudero go looking for him? Would Eric Vitier find him among the hustlers of El Mirador? Would he be crowned in that shanty in Villa Mella and allowed the life he'd come to appreciate? Would Giorgio disappear?
>
> (Indiana, 2018, pp. 127–129)

Thus, mobility becomes fundamental to the progress of the narration in *Tentacle* on various levels. Through the movements between the Dominican

Republic and Cuba, Esther becomes a *santera* and meets Erick. Their shared knowledge and mission facilitate Alcilde's bodily transformation and her movement into the past and into Giorgio's life. This journey to the past is indispensable to save the future of the Dominican Republic. The knowledge and the powers for the mobilities between geographical and temporal spaces are rooted in mobilities of the distant past: the transatlantic slave trade and the arrival of Yoruba religion in the Caribbean.

Rita Indiana's *Tentacle* suggests that the heritage and the epistemology which originated in the traditions of those who colonialism either killed to extinction (Taíno) or enslaved is indispensable for an understanding of the Caribbean, its past and its future. Africa is ubiquitous in the Caribbean – in the novel, *santería* even becomes the state religion. Climate change and the approaching collapse of the seas are, in this novel, inherently connected to humans' loss of spirituality and connection to their legacy. It is only the re-connection with spirituality and those legacies that might save the Caribbean.

Conclusion

A comparative analysis of *The Opposite House* by Helen Oyeyemi, *Freshwater* by Akwaeke Emezi, and *Tentacle* (*La mucama de Omicunlé* in Spanish) by Rita Indiana reveals contemporary representations and reflections of the strong links between Africa and the Caribbean, specifically West Africa and the Hispanophone Caribbean countries of Cuba and the Dominican Republic; links which are, primarily, rooted in mobilities. The three novels suggest that the transatlantic slave trade, slavery, and the epistemology, traditions, and religions which enslaved people took from Africa to the Caribbean are still of great relevance. The focus shifts, though. The young protagonists no longer struggle with the legacy of slavery, the memory of their enslaved ancestors, or the loss of the 'mother' continent of Africa. Instead, they reflect on, and negotiate, their hybrid identities, while still moving between countries and continents. These movements are not forced but voluntary. The protagonists come to the new countries as educated professionals or students; thus, there is a notable shift in power compared to colonial times. Nevertheless, the protagonists remain at the margins of the societies in the centre and seek connections which tie them to their heritage.

Spirits and deities occupy prominent positions in these three novels. They become the 'personification' of the ties between Africa and the Caribbean, and with their shifts in space and corporality, the mortal bodies of the 'realistic' protagonists also move and shift.

The two Nigerian-born (though still hybrid) authors, Helen Oyeyemi and Akwaeke Emezi, only seem able to imagine the encounter between Africa and the Caribbean and the discovery of their mutual, though transformed, heritage after moving away from their native countries in the periphery to others in the centre (the United Kingdom and the United States). There, Caribbean cosmopolitanism cannot be understood by those who belong to

the dominant culture. The novels, thus, reinforce Mimi Sheller's critique of theories that analyse cosmopolitanism from a Eurocentric perspective and neglect to include postcolonial and feminist analyses of the term and its history.

The Dominican author, Rita Indiana, who has grown up in the Caribbean, surrounded by the presence of the Caribbean's African heritage, represents the encounter with Africa in the Caribbean itself. Mobility between the Dominican Republic and Cuba as well as between different time periods is essential to the narration and the development of the characters in her novel. Their bodily transformations are possible only because they consciously move through time and space.

Movements and transformations constitute the shared quality of the 'realistic', that is to say, human protagonists and the spirits and deities. Spirits, *orishas* and *ogbanje* become more than just images or distant deities the characters pray to or ask for guidance in these novels. They narrate their own stories of movement – shifting between continents – and of transformation – shifting between genders and identities. As their stories and voices develop in *The Opposite House*, *Freshwater*, and *Tentacle*, they merge with the mortal protagonists, interfere in their stories and leave bits of themselves in those other characters.

Migration, political oppression and dissidence, pregnancy, gender identities, and climate catastrophes are the main topics these three novels engage with, and through the agency of spirits and deities, these issues are linked to the connections between Africa and the Caribbean, while reflections on the differences and transformations of epistemologies, languages, and religious rites are also given space in these novels. The spirits and deities serve as allegories for those transformations, those shifts, and it is them who help the mortals to understand how these changes first came about.

The analysis of the selected contemporary novels constitutes an important contribution to Mobility Studies on various levels. First of all, it highlights the possibilities the concept of cosmopolitanism offers for the studies of contemporary Caribbean and African literary texts and of reclaiming cosmopolitanism as a truly cosmopolitan term, that is, of not perceiving it merely as a Western experience rooted in determined moments of European history and movement. Second, the novels show how cultural and religious imaginaries adapt to new contexts after individuals or entire peoples transfer them from one geographical and cultural space to another. Furthermore, the novels emphasise the fact that both mobilities and adaptations of imaginaries are ongoing processes. They are not limited to a specific historical moment or one particular movement but keep transforming according to new circumstances and discourses. Lastly, the works by Oyeyemi, Emezi, and Indiana demonstrate that the connections between Africa and the Caribbean, which derive from the forced mobility from one region to the other, continue to be relevant factors for both African and Caribbean identities, especially once they meet in countries of the centre.

Notes

1 *Orishas* (also spelled *orichas* in the Hispanophone Caribbean or *orixás* in Brazil) are deities in Yoruba religion and syncretic religions in the Americas, which derive from Yoruba religion. In Igbo religion, *ogbanje* are believed to be evil spirits which plague families. Usually, they are imagined as children.
2 Saramagua is Yemaya's praise name in Cuban santería (see Sellers 2013, p. 142).
3 In her debut novel *The Icarus Girl* (2005), Oyeyemi explores such a friendship between a 'real' girl and her spirit friend in more depth.
4 Oyeyemi refers to Chabella as a *santero* throughout the novel; in Spanish, that is the male form, so *santera* would be more correct.
5 As Wande Abimbọla argues, the similarities between *santería* and African Yoruba religion are unmistakable, despite the fact that in the Americas syncretism provoked changes in traditions and rituals which do not exist in historical or contemporary African Yoruba religion. There are also substantial differences in their respective rituals (see 2003, pp. 106–108).
6 The spelling of the *orisha's* name varies. In this article, it correspondingly varies, too, as the spelling of each of the referenced texts shall be used.
7 Emezi identifies as genderfluid and Emezi's preferred pronoun is 'they', which shall be respected and used in this article whenever referring to the author.
8 In the original Spanish title, the references to Acilde and Omicunlé are explicit: *La mucama de Omicunlé* (*The Housemaid to Omicunlé*).

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8 Zombie travels

Middle Passage journeys and clandestine migrant mobilities in contemporary Francophone African and Afrodiasporic fiction

Anna-Leena Toivanen

While African and Afrodiasporic literatures are inspired and shaped by different forms of mobility, literary portrayals of concrete mobility practices – such as pedestrianism, motor/cycling, automobility, travel in public transports, maritime travel, aeromobility, and so on – have not received that much critical attention.[1] One reason for this could be that mobility is such an integral part of modern life that it easily goes unnoticed as a literary theme in the postcolonial literary scholarship. A more substantive reason for the lack of critical engagement with representations of concrete forms of mobility, however, is that in postcolonial studies, the term 'mobility' is often reductively used as a synonym for global migratory movements, or as an intangible metaphor for the displacement that informs the 'migrant condition' (Toivanen, 2019a, p. 60). The lack of critical interest in representations of *concrete* mobility practices that characterises postcolonial scholarship is somewhat surprising, because, at the same time, the field has paradigmatised the figure of the migrant, and because, in theory, migration does entail the notion of mobility, as Cetta Mainwaring and Noelle Bridgen (2016, p. 247; see also Schapendonk, 2012) highlight. While one can observe increasing use of the term 'mobility' in the field of postcolonial studies, this is certainly not a question of a paradigm shift. 'Mobility' in postcolonial studies is used as a substitute to such previously popular concepts as migration, displacement, diaspora, and exile. This change in terminology, then, is simply cosmetic: literary representations of *concrete* forms of human physical travel (e.g. automobility, aeromobility, pedestrianism, maritime travel, travel in public transport)[2] and the aesthetics of mobility that such representations produce remain the blind spot of postcolonial literary studies. In effect, as arts and humanities-oriented Mobility Studies scholars summarise it, postcolonial studies has been more interested in the "outcome of movement" than in movement itself (Aguiar, Mathieson & Pearce, 2019, p. 19).

In order to move beyond the migration studies-oriented approach that has shaped postcolonial studies since its inception, and to promote a wider understanding of postcolonial mobilities that takes "the actual fact of movement seriously" (Cresswell, 2010, p. 18), I adopt a Mobility Studies

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perspective (see, e.g. Cresswell, 2006; Urry, 2007) for analysing representations of two very specific, yet interrelated forms of mobility in contemporary Francophone African and Afrodiasporic[3] fiction: Middle Passage journeys and contemporary clandestine migrant mobilities[4] from Africa to Europe. By adopting a Mobility Studies approach, I place the texts' portrayals of maritime travel at the centre of analysis in order to highlight the role that mobility plays in the production of subjectivity (see Jensen, 2009, p. 146; Cresswell & Merriman, 2013, p. 9) – in this case, enslaved and vulnerable subjects in the contexts of the transatlantic slave trade and Afroeuropean clandestine migration, respectively. While the link between Middle Passage journeys and contemporary clandestine migrants' maritime mobilities may not seem that obvious at first glance, a closer look reveals parallels that invite comparison. The connecting link between these mobilities is the figure of the zombie.

As Cristina Lombardi-Diop (2008) argues, "the circulation across the Mediterranean of African migrants [...] activates a parallel circulation of images and memories of the Atlantic Middle Passage" (p. 163). In a similar vein, Alessandra Di Maio (2013), drawing on Paul Gilroy's theory of the Black Atlantic, posits that as a consequence of migrant mobilities from Africa to Europe, "black is the color of the contemporary Mediterranean" (p. 42). Both Middle Passage journeys and migrants' clandestine travels from Africa towards Europe are characterised by dehumanisation, racialised abjection, the deferral of arrival, and death. Such elements evoke a further parallel with the figure of the zombie. The zombie, which travelled on slave ships from Sub-Saharan Africa to sugarcane plantations in the Caribbean, is condemned to perpetual slavery: not entirely human, it oscillates between life and death, and has lost its identity and will. For the zombie, there is no past or future, just the present predicament of unending exploitation and abjection (Glover, 2005, p. 107). The Haitian zombie is a victim, and the horror it generates "is the result of alienation rather than the essence of otherness" (Chassot, 2015, p. 93). It should be underlined that the Haitian zombie, which is closely linked to slavery, does not seem to have much in common with the contemporary popcultural conceptions of the zombie as a "crazed, bloodthirsty monster" (Glover, 2005, p. 107) – a creation of Hollywood films (see also Swanson, 2014, p. 178). For the purposes of my analysis, I resort to these two different conceptualisations of the zombie: the Caribbean zombie as a victim of unending slavery and the popcultural zombie as a perpetrator of violence. The latter is useful in contextualising and understanding the way in which undocumented migrants from Africa are perceived as a threat to Europe in contemporary anti-migration discourse.

As my reading shows, the zombie is not only a pertinent metaphor for analysing the travelling conditions of the victims of the slave trade, as Joanne Chassot (2015) has demonstrated, but also relevant in the current context of the 'migrant crisis' where clandestine migrants engage in life-threatening pursuits of mobility in order to reach Europe and are frequently represented as

threatening hordes wanting to 'devour' the continent (Papastergiadis, 2009, p. 162). The recent upsurge of the zombie figure in popcultural products – for example, TV series such as *The Walking Dead*, *I Survived a Zombie Apocalypse, Z Nation*, and zombie novels such as David Wellington's *Monster Island* (2006), Mira Grant's *Feed* (2010), and Colson Whitehead's *Zone One* (2011), only to name a few – is not a coincidence. As several scholars have argued, the current popularity of the zombie is closely connected to Western/white anxieties about migration and racialised Others (Stratton, 2011, p. 266; Fischer-Hornung & Mueller, 2016, p. 9; Pokornowski, 2016, p. 6; Glover, 2017, p. 253). As Dorothea Fischer-Hornung and Monika Mueller (2016) put it, "every age and *culture* creates the [...] *zombie* it needs" (p. 8; emphasis in the original). It is also noteworthy that the zombie, itself a global traveller (Lauro, 2015; Rath, 2018), has in this way come full circle as it now symbolises African clandestine mobilities in the context of the 'migrant crisis' (Toivanen, 2018, p. 121). In effect, the fact that Middle Passage journeys continue to inspire contemporary African and Caribbean authors is symptomatic of how the abject conditions of underprivileged Africans' mobilities have persisted throughout time (see Glover, 2017, p. 215).

I start my analysis by focusing on the representation of Middle Passage journeys through the zombie metaphor in Fabienne Kanor's *Humus* (2009), Kangni Alem's *Esclaves* (2009), and Wilfried N'Sondé's *Un océan, deux mers, trois continents* (2018). The timeframe of the events of these novels ranges from the 17th century to the early 19th century. Then I make the zombie metaphor travel to the contemporary context of clandestine migrant mobilities between Africa and Europe by demonstrating how the zombie figure can be used to analyse the representations of mobility in Abasse Ndione's *Mbëkë Mi: À l'assaut des vagues de l'Atlantique* (2008), Fabienne Kanor's *Faire l'aventure* (2014), and Mohamed Mbougar Sarr's *Silence du chœur* (2017). What I want to underline here is that I adopt the figure of the zombie as a lens through which I read representations of mobility in the abovementioned literary texts. In other words, the texts are not zombie novels in the sense that they do not feature zombies, although some of them may occasionally allude to the figure in their portrayals of the passengers of slave ships or contemporary clandestine travellers. In this sense, by using the zombie as a *reading method* to reveal the similarities between the abject conditions of historical and contemporary African maritime journeys, my approach diverges from studies of the zombie figure in Haitian fiction (see, e.g. Glover 2005; Swanson, 2014) or in Afrofuturist texts (see, e.g. Romdhani, 2015; Olutola, 2018) that deal with 'actual' zombies. In my analysis, I am interested in the texts' ways of representing maritime mobility through the notions of abjection, darkness, lack of identity and agency, death, and the limbo of non-arrival, which are elements that constitute what I refer to as the *poetics of zombified mobilities* (see also Toivanen, 2018). By stressing the parallels between literary representations of historical and contemporary coerced journeys through the zombie metaphor, this chapter addresses both

the *human* and *cultural* dimensions of Afro-Caribbean mobilities and elucidates their links with today's Europe.

Middle Passage and the living dead

Compared to African American and Caribbean literatures, transatlantic slavery has not been a very popular topic in African literature. In an article published in 2000, Madeleine Borgomano (p. 100) posits that, with a few exceptions, written African literature remains silent about the memory of slavery. Since Borgomano's article, the situation has evolved with novels such as Léonora Miano's *La Saison de l'ombre* (2013) or with Yaa Gyasi's bestselling *Homegoing* (2016).[5] Less direct engagements with the theme of slavery in recent Francophone fiction also include Emmanuel Dongala's *La Sonate à Bridgetower* (2017), which narrates the story of the black prodigy violinist George Bridgetower against the backdrop of the operations of the abolition movement. It seems, however, that not that many African literary texts address slavery – especially the Middle Passage – directly: it is a topic that resists narrativisation (Chassot, 2015, p. 91) and tends to articulate itself indirectly through metaphors (Murphy, 2012). Kangni Alem's *Esclaves* and Wilfried N'Sondé's *Un océan, deux mers, trois continents* can be seen as rare examples of African/African diasporic literary texts addressing slavery *and* the Middle Passage explicitly. In Caribbean literature, the tradition of slave narratives is much stronger, as work by such prominent authors as Maryse Condé, Édouard Glissant, and Patrick Chamoiseau suggests. Contemporary Francophone Caribbean texts featuring representations of the Middle Passage journey itself, however, are rare (see Chassot, 2015, p. 91); in this sense, the Franco-Caribbean author Fabienne Kanor's *Humus* can be seen to fill a certain gap. Alem's *Esclaves* is about the enslavement of a dethroned Danhomean king's ritual master in the early 19th century, while Kanor's novel narrates the story of 14 female captives who threw themselves overboard a slave ship in 1774. The protagonist of N'Sondé's novel is a historical figure called Nsaku Ne Vunda. He was the ambassador of the Kingdom of Kongo to the Vatican, travelling on a slave ship from Africa to South America and to Europe in the early 17th century. In N'Sondé's text, the Middle Passage journey is not narrated from a captive's perspective, but from that of a privileged African traveller.

What should also be underlined is that literary representations of modern slavery and the 'new slave narrative' or 'neo-slave narrative' have started to receive attention in recent years (see, e.g. Murphy, 2014, 2019; Mami, 2017; Bekers, 2018; Goyal, 2019). This body of research attests to existence of slavery in the global era and exposes the links between current forms of forced labour and historical human-trafficking. These continuities are also present in contemporary fiction addressing clandestine African migrant mobilities, as attested by novels such as Fatou Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* (2003), Marie NDiaye's *Trois femmes puissantes* (2009), Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters'*

Street (2009), and Fabienne Kanor's *Faire l'aventure* (2014) (see also Toivanen, 2016, 2019b; Phaf-Rheinberger, 2017).

While the genealogy of the zombie figure cannot be entirely retrieved because of lost oral registers, its roots date back to 17th-century Central West African folk beliefs (Lauro, 2015, p. 8, 15). For my analysis, more important than the genealogy of the zombie per se is the fact that the living dead is itself a traveller, as Sarah Juliet Lauro (2015) demonstrates in her book *The Transatlantic Zombie: Slavery, Rebellion, and Living Death*. Indeed, while zombies are not usually "taken as an example for cultural multiplicity", the figure of the zombie is "an utterly mobile example for the circulation of concepts and narratives" in the transatlantic context and beyond, as Gudrun Rath (2018, p. 385) argues. For the purposes of my analysis, a simplified description of the zombie's historical trajectory would be that the zombie myth journeyed on slave ships from Africa to sugarcane plantations in the Caribbean (Haiti, in particular).[6] Therefore, the zombie is not only the "ultimate embodiment of liminal, exploited Caribbean life" (Pokornowski, 2016, p. 7), but also symbolises the violent history of Afro-Caribbean mobilities.[7] The zombie's Afro-Caribbean mobility can be understood in two ways: first, there is the symbolic aspect which relates to the mobility of ideas (see Urry, 2007, p. 47) in the sense that the African zombie myth travelled to the Caribbean with captured slaves. Second – and, from the perspective of the present analysis, more importantly – the zombie's mobility can also be seen as a metaphor for the travelling conditions of the enslaved Africans and the role these conditions played in the captives' becoming servile subjects (see Smallwood, 2007, p. 122; Chassot, 2015, p. 92). The sea crossing turned enslaved Africans into zombie-like characters who oscillated between life and death during what seemed to be an unending journey. As zombified subjects, they were reduced to embodied abjection and deprived of agency and hope, and the only possible way for them to manifest agency and revolt was to attempt suicide.

My formulation of poetics of zombified mobilities entails imagery related to the lack of identity and agency, abjection, darkness, death, and the idea of an unending journey or non-arrival. While these elements characterise the portrayals of the maritime journeys, in particular, the novels analysed here also depict events prior to the central characters' departure. Alem's and Kanor's novels also represent the lives of the enslaved Africans in their new environments. The novels give articulation to the reign of fear that the transatlantic slave trade established in African communities and highlight the randomness of being captured, reduced to a commodity, and, eventually, turned into a zombie. The process of becoming a slave – and, symbolically, a zombie – entails objectification, and loss of identity and agency. The zombie is reduced to the materiality of its body. Lacking humanity, identity, and emotions, the zombie is nothing but a shell "emptied of its former self" (Lauro, 2015, p. 15). These characteristics, as Ann Kordas (2011) notes, make zombies "perfect labourers" (p. 19) – the zombie's close association with slavery is explicit here. Becoming reduced to the materiality of one's body – and hence a

commodity – is a key feature of the poetics of zombified mobilities in Kanor's, Alem's, and N'Sondé's novels. Objectification can be seen as the starting point of zombification, as conveyed in the following quotation from *Esclaves*:

> Avant son rachat par le négociant, les employés de celui-ci tinrent à s'assurer que le nouvel esclave n'avait pas de défauts, qu'il n'était pas malade ou qu'il ne lui manquait pas de dents. On lui renifla la bouche, le tâta sur tout le corps; un des hommes lui lécha même le contour du menton avant de crier, « il n'a pas de barbe », puis on l'obligea à rire, à chanter et faire des cabrioles, comme un enfant sans volonté chargé de divertir des adultes pervers.
>
> (*Esclaves*, p. 123)

> Before he was bought by the merchant, the latter's employees insisted on ensuring that the new slave did not have any defects, that he was not ill or that he had all his teeth. His mouth was sniffed, his body was touched everywhere; one of the men even licked the outline of his chin before shouting, "he does not have a beard", then he was forced to laugh, to sing and to do somersaults like a child with no will made to entertain perverted adults.[8]

Similar scenes of embodied humiliation and dehumanisation feature throughout the texts, and they function as a prelude to the journey on the slave ship, which represents an important step in the process of zombification. When it comes to the captives' physical mobility itself, it is noteworthy that their walk on the trails leading to slave ports evokes the stumbling walk of the living dead who have lost their own will and agency: Kanor's novel describes "un troupeau de nègres qui n'allaient ni ne marchaient, mais sous les gifles d'un fouet se traînaient, rampaient sans gêne et sans âme, dépossédés du souffle qui fait la vie" (*Humus*, p. 86) ("a herd of Negroes who did not walk, but who under the slaps of the whip dragged themselves, crawled without embarrassment or soul, dispossessed of the breath that is life"). As conveyed by the word '*troupeau*' (herd), the captured victims are perceived as anonymous, faceless masses who have lost their individuality, and, as the allusion to animals suggests, their humanity. This deprivation of identity as part of the process of zombification is also highlighted in N'Sondé's novel, in which the captives travelling on the slave ship are represented by the narrator as "vagues formes humaines" ("vague human forms"), "contours" (p. 55) ("outlines"), and "silhouettes cassées" (p. 56) ("broken silhouettes"). In short, they lack identifiable, individual features. This narrative means has two aims: first of all, it captures the idea of how captured Africans are perceived in slave trade discourses as not entirely human, but as objects to be sold and used. Second, refusing to see only vague outlines of human beings articulates the sheer unbearableness of witnessing slave trade in practice. On a metanarrative level, this strategy conveys the unrepresentability of slavery and the Middle

Passage. As such, 'not seeing' the captives' faces can be read as a strategy of mental survival on the narrator's part – himself the only free African traveller on the slave ship.

Another aspect of zombified mobility is the abjection pertaining to the entanglement of life and death. Living captives are made to travel amongst corpses that are in a state of decomposition. Therefore, the slave ship itself becomes a symbol for the living dead body of the zombie. In Alem's novel, the protagonist lies next to a cadaver for two days before the decomposing corpse is removed. By then, the protagonist has been subjected to the abject proximity of the dead captive: "[L]es humeurs pourries de la dépouille, l'écoulement de ses liquides morbides avaient déjà infesté le voisin du mort qui y avait baigné dedans avec lui" (*Esclaves*, p. 132) ("The rotten humours of the corps, the flow of his morbid liquids had already infested the neighbour of the dead person who had bathed in them with him"). This horrifying proximity of dead and living captives in the hold is beyond imagination as one of Kanor's narrators, who works on the ship, states: "Je me demande bien comment ils faisaient pour vivre en bas, dans la cale, tous dedans, les uns par-dessus les autres, jusqu'à ce que les morts cèdent leur place aux vivants" (*Humus*, p. 143) ("I wonder how they managed to live down there, in the hold, all in there, the ones lying on the others until the dead made some room for the living"). N'Sondé's novel captures the "horrible promiscuité" (*Océan*, p. 87) ("horrible intimacy") of the journey in the most powerful way. In order to represent the horror that tends to escape representation, the text resorts less to imagining the visual than the olfactory and aural elements of the sea crossing. In the narrator's mind, the journey is "un cauchemar sonore" ("an aural nightmare"), consisting of "des plaintes, des râles de douleur et de désespoir" (*Océan*, p. 62) ("moans, groans of pain and despair"), punctuated by "[le] fracas de chaînes" (*Océan*, p. 53) ("the rattle of chains"). The olfactory aspects of abjection and horror are conveyed in the smell of burning human flesh prior to boarding, and on the slave ship, in the smell of bodily secretions and that of the decomposing corpses.

The horrifying, abject travelling conditions turn the captives into living dead. Indeed, the slave ship is "une boîte noire où les corps entassés survivaient" (*Humus*, p. 164) ("a black box where the piled up bodies survived"), as one of Kanor's narrators puts it, or where, in the words of N'Sondé's protagonist, the captives "survivaient en état de décomposition avancée" (*Océan*, p. 126) ("survived in a state of advanced decomposition"). These quotations evoke the zombie figure with the word '*survivre*', which points at the ambivalent positioning of the zombie in "a state that as closely resembles the movement of life as it does the immobility of death" (see Glover, 2005, p. 108). Slave vessels are referred to as ghost ships "sans aucune âme vivante à son bord" (*Océan*, p. 106) ("with no living soul on board"), or where not-entirely alive passengers are doomed to "naviguer dans un tombeau" (*Océan*, p. 127) ("navigate in a tomb"). The idea of the slave ship hold as a tomb or a

floating coffin (see Smallwood, 2007, p. 137; Chassot, 2015, p. 90) is further underlined in the texts with their allusions to darkness and lack of space. On a spatio-temporal level, the ambivalence inherent in the zombie figure is manifest in the idea of being on an unending journey to an unknown destination, which reflects the conception of the zombie as a figure for whom only the present exists (see Glover, 2005, p. 107). This temporal ambivalence is embodied in the notion of non-arrival, which also entails the idea of non-return. Just like the zombie caught in the perpetual present of an unliveable life, the captives travelling on slave ships are stuck in the limbo of a never-ending journey (see Smallwood, 2007, p. 135). The captives lose track of time; in the darkness of the hold, they do not even know whether it is night or day, as days end up resembling each other. In Kanor's novel, the unending journey of "le bateau qui marche" (*Humus*, p. 90) ("the walking boat") is conveyed in the narrative structure with different narrators' portrayals of the maritime journey: with each account, the horrifying journey starts over again. The zombified travellers are captives of time, unable to reach their destination.

By describing the horrifying particulars of the maritime journey, the narratives suggest that the sea crossing plays a key role in the production of the Caribbean zombie. Abjection, dehumanisation, the loss of a sense of time and of orientation, together with the constant presence of death, contribute to the creation of servile subjects who have lost their hope and who are ideal for labour (see Smallwood, 2007, p. 122; Lauro, 2015, p. 15). N'Sondé's novel describes the captured travellers as "[d]es reflets d'êtres humains qui ne possédaient plus que la capacité de travailler, le reste avait été brisé après des mois de séquestration dans l'obscurité" (*Océans*, p. 136) ("Reflections of human beings who no longer owned nothing except their ability to work; the rest had been broken with several months of sequestration in the dark"). They have been stripped of their will and agency, and those who still nurture hopes of being free dream of dying because "vivre c'est accepter de mourir" (*Humus*, p. 161) ("to live is to accept to die"). While some of them succeed in their attempt to take their own life to escape slavery and the zombification it entails, many become "apathique, à force de désespérer" (*Esclaves*, p. 136) ("apathetic because of despair"), or lose their minds, lying "raides sur leurs planches" (*Océans*, p. 114) ("rigid on their planks") like corpses, sunken in a "sommeil débile" (*Humus*, p. 191) ("idiotic sleep"). The captured passengers' lethargy gives the impression that "toute pensée les avait abandonné[...]s" (*Océans*, p. 115) ("all thought had abandoned them") so that all there is left is their "moi défunt" (*Humus*, p. 231) ("dead self"). Arriving at the port, the creatures that come out of the hold have turned into "des pantins hagards" ("tormented puppets") whose "bras lourds pendaient près des corps décharnés" ("heavy arms hung near their gaunt bodies"), and whose "yeux ne distinguaient plus rien et roulaient indéfiniment à l'interieur des orbites" (*Océans*, p. 131) ("eyes did not distinguish anything and rolled indefinitely in their orbits"). Allusions to the zombie's empty gaze[9] and lack of will could not be clearer.

As already pointed out, the zombie is a border figure. Besides its constant vacillation between life and death, the zombie's ambivalence springs from the fact that it embodies simultaneously the notions of victimhood and rebellion. As Lauro (2015) posits, the zombie's historical links with Haiti and the Haitian slave rebellion have made it a symbol of revolution (p. 7).[10] The zombie figure, then, "symbolize[s] both the disempowered slave-in-chains and the powerful slave-in-revolt" (Lauro, 2015, p. 12; see also Glover, 2005, p. 108). This revolutionary potential that the ambivalent figure of the zombie embodies has also made it an apt literary metaphor for criticising the political and social ills of postcolonial Haiti, as Kaiama L. Glover (2005) and Lucy Swanson (2014) have demonstrated.

The aspect of rebellion is addressed in varied degrees throughout the text corpus. Alem's novel is the most optimistic in this respect: slave rebellion and a successful return to Africa drive the plot. During his Middle Passage journey, Alem's protagonist, a master of rituals, raises a storm and casts a spell on the vessel so that it is haunted by the cries of the captives until it eventually sinks some years later. While the key motif of Kanor's novel – female captives throwing themselves overboard – is the dialectics between enslavement and revolt, compared to *Esclaves,* the novel remains more ambivalent vis-à-vis the success of the rebellion. Some of the women succeed in their attempt to commit suicide instead of being "condamné à survivre" (*Humus*, p. 87) ("condemned to survive") a zombiesque existence. Many are 'saved' from the sea by seamen and are unable to escape enslavement: one of them is portrayed as "[une] morte qui ne veut pas mourir" (*Humus*, p. 21) ("a dead person who does not want to die"). Nevertheless, even the act of taking one's own life by drowning remains ambiguous in terms of success. As Stephanie E. Smallwood (2007) explains, the Middle Passage was itself an ambivalent "time-space regime in which [the captives] were unable to fully die" since the sea, for them, was a new environment where proper burial rites could not be carried out to secure the deceased's journey to the realm of the ancestors (p. 153, 140). This challenges the captives' conviction that "c'est morts que nous serons libres" (*Humus*, p. 20) ("it is in death that we will be free") and suggests that they suffered an "unfulfilled death" instead (Chassot, 2015, p. 97). Obviously, the ambivalence inherent in the zombie rebellion works the other way around as well: it shows that a creature that seems to have lost its mind and will may suddenly become 'alive'. This ambivalence is illustrated in a passage of N'Sondé's novel where the captives are taken to the deck to get some fresh air and wash themselves. The feel of fresh sea water on their skin resurrects the lethargic, faceless mass that suddenly enters a "hystérie collective" ("collective hysteria") that gives them the force to jump overboard, "libres pour leur dernier voyage" (*Océan*, p. 115) ("free for their last journey").

As the above analysis of Alem's, Kanor's, and N'Sondé's novels demonstrates, the zombie metaphor is a useful analytical tool for reading the maritime mobilities of enslaved Africans travelling in slave ships. Tropes of dehumanisation, abjection, darkness, death, and non-arrival recur throughout the texts.

These inhuman travelling conditions of captured Africans played a central role in the production of servile subjects.

Afroeuropean zombie travels

I will now turn to demonstrating how the zombie metaphor elucidates literary representations of contemporary clandestine migrant mobilities. Here, the zombie undertakes its journey from Africa via the Caribbean back to Africa and Europe, and finds a new home for itself in the context of the so-called migrant crisis. In this part of the analysis, I also make the zombie travel through contemporary (predominantly American) popular culture in order to widen the understanding of zombies as enslaved victims to "flesh-eating, brainless, and insatiably out-of-control devouring monsters" (Fischer-Hornung & Mueller, 2016, p. 4). This transition from the zombie-as-a-victim to the zombie-as-an-aggressor elucidates different aspects of clandestine migrant mobilities. Contemporary European anti-migration discourse is based on an "invasion complex" whereby uncontrollable 'flows' of migrants are seen to invade Europe and destroy its cultural, social, political, and economic integrity (Papastergiadis, 2006, p. 429). According to this discourse, aggressive masses of zombies are heading to Europe to 'contaminate' it so that eventually, the continent will turn into the failed postcolonial nation-states that the migrant-zombies are fleeing from (Papastergiadis, 2009, p. 162; Zembylas, 2010, p. 33). To save the continent from African zombie-migrants' "contagious blackness" (Glover, 2017, p. 255), the zombie-migrants must be "kept quarantined, if not actively eradicated and destroyed" (Canavan, 2010, p. 433). The urgency to destroy the zombie before it destroys 'us' shows how the zombies' vulnerability as abject Others is used "as a justification to do violence to them and maintain their vulnerable status" (Pokornowski, 2016, p. 3). It is, indeed, this aspect of vulnerability that reveals the link of the zombie of popular culture to the Haitian "apathetic nonperson" (Glover, 2017, p. 215). Moreover, while the popcultural zombie has been unraced (Hurley, 2015, pp. 312–313; Pokornowski, 2016, p. 2; Glover, 2017, p. 251), race-related anxieties continue to motivate contemporary conceptualisations of the zombie. According to Kaiama L. Glover (2017), the popcultural zombie "is an inherently racialized assemblage that functions generatively vis-à-vis the phenomenon of Afro-alterity, and, in particular, twentieth- and twenty-first-century refugeeism" (p. 251). My reading of Ndione's, Kanor's, and Sarr's representations of contemporary zombified mobilities draws both on the contemporary popcultural zombie *and* on its Haitian predecessor. While the popcultural zombie is useful in framing the context of the "invasion complex" (Papastergiadis, 2006) and the way in which clandestine migrants are represented within that framework, the Haitian zombie highlights the migrant travellers' own perspective and establishes a parallel between Middle Passage journeys and contemporary clandestine Mediterranean crossings.

The novels under analysis explore the topical phenomenon of clandestine migration from Africa to Europe from diverse perspectives and in different contexts. What characterises them is that the travellers' initial destinations are islands situated on Europe's maritime borders. The insular, peripheral destinations of contemporary Afroeuropean clandestine mobilities not only evoke an interesting parallel with earlier Afro-Caribbean mobilities, but also attest to the trend whereby traditional postcolonial metropolitan centres (Paris, London) and Western and Central Europe, in general, have become increasingly unreachable for underprivileged African migrants (Toivanen, 2019b, p. 128).

Ndione's novel can be divided into two parts: the first half, set in Senegal, explains the factors that drive Africans to take the risk of crossing the sea and describes their preparations for the journey. The latter half narrates the sea crossing. As Christopher Hogarth (2018) argues, "the tale itself is neither action-packed nor lyrical and is therefore hardly in the style of the epic tale of maritime adventure" (p. 30). The lack of events can be read as a narrative strategy that serves as a counterpoint to the spectacularisation of clandestine sea crossings in Western media (see Musarò, 2017). What is specific to the novel is that the story ends with the travellers' arrival at the shores of the Canary Islands, which suggests that their journey as migrants has only begun. Sarr's *Silence du chœur* discusses how the arrival of a group of clandestine African migrant men generates conflict (but also transcultural encounters) in a small Sicilian town. Unlike Ndione's novel, Sarr's story is excessively dramatic, although the journey itself is addressed only in passing as short 'travelogues' or diary entries scattered throughout the novel. Besides the tensions that the migrants' presence causes in the peripheral town, the key motif of the novel is the state of stagnation and immobility to which the migrants are condemned as they wait for their residence permits. Finally, Kanor's *Faire l'aventure* narrates the clandestine travels of a young Senegalese man between Africa and such insular European peripheries as the Canary Islands and Lampedusa. Here, as in Sarr's novel, the maritime journey is evoked mostly in the form of short flashbacks, which is an effective narrative means for underlining its traumatising effect on the 'adventurers'.[11]

Faire l'aventure establishes explicit links between the Middle Passage and contemporary clandestine migrant mobilities. The first chapter features the protagonist on a beach in his native Mbour in Senegal, dreaming of life in Europe beyond the watery horizon and naively imagining it as an Eldorado where his life will change for the better. In the next paragraph, the reader's attention turns to a nearby slave house which, after three centuries, remains on the beach, "persistante et sauvage" (*L'aventure*, p. 13) ("persistent and savage"). Another allusion to slavery comes into play later when the protagonist, now living in Tenerife, imaginatively travels back to Senegal, flying over sugar plantations in the former colonial town of Richard Toll. Besides the allusion to sugar plantations, transatlantic slavery is evoked by referring to a time two centuries ago when "les nègres marchaient à la cravache" (*L'aventure*, p. 205) ("negroes used to walk to the rhythm of the whip"). When the

protagonist opens his eyes after his imaginative journey, he witnesses the arrival of clandestine African travellers at a port in Tenerife. Tourists, spending their holidays on the island, are also observing the event and photographing the arriving paperless migrants. For the tourists, the scene is a spectacle and an occasion to lament how "l'Europe n'avait plus de place et plus d'argent pour les accueillir" ("Europe no longer had room nor money to welcome them") and that it is "dingue […] de quitter un pays quand il y avait tout à construire" (*L'aventure*, pp. 206–207) ("crazy to leave a country when everything is to be rebuild"). This passage is particularly powerful because it is juxtaposed with previous allusions to slavery, and because it gives voice to the two sides of the 'migrant crisis' through the zombie figure. On the one hand, there is the discourse of the zombie attack according to which Europe is faced with "ces étrangers introduits dans sa forteresse" (*L'aventure*, pp. 208–209) ("these foreigners introduced in its fortress"), and, on the other hand, the idea of the zombie as a victimised, living dead: the arriving migrants are described as "momies" ("mummies") who are "plus vraiment noirs mais gris" (*L'aventure*, p. 208) ("no longer really black but grey").

Similarly, the two sides of the zombie figure are equally present in Sarr's novel. With the increasing number of migrants in the provincial town, anti-migration sentiment increases, and some of the inhabitants feel that due to the presence of the migrants, their "terre [est devenue] envahie et méconnaissable" (*Silence*, p. 65) ("land [has become] invaded and unrecognisable"). The novel features violent clashes between the locals and the migrants. These conflicts resonate with the imagery of the zombie apocalypse in which angry mobs resort to violence to fight the zombie invasion. The novel's graphic portrayal of violence draws attention to the question of victimhood and to the ways in which violence is used to maintain zombies in a state of vulnerability (Pokornowski, 2016, p. 3). From the perspective of the clandestine travellers, the small town of Altino represents a dead end of stagnation from where they cannot move while trying to obtain a residency permit. The recurring allusions to stagnation and immobility in Sarr's novel convey the idea of non-arrival and give articulation to the way in which the zombie is a prisoner of the present with no horizon for the future in sight.

The key elements of the poetics of zombified mobilities that characterise Middle Passage journeys are echoed in the texts on clandestine migrant travel. One parallel between the two is the loss of identity and agency and the dehumanisation they entail. Migrant travellers often get rid of their identity documents in order to complicate potential attempts at deportation (see, e.g. Abderrezak, 2009, p. 463), but the texts also convey the idea of loss of identity in a more metaphorical sense. In Sarr's novel, the diary entries' narrator attests to the clandestine travellers' transformation into faceless masses as he questions, "Je me demande à quoi nous ressemblions. À un troupeau de bêtes? Un troupeau humain?" (*Silence*, p. 71) ("I wonder what we looked like. A herd of animals? A human herd?"). Alluding to the migrants as a herd conveys both the dehumanising and the anonymising effect that clandestine mobility

has on them. Anonymity defines clandestine travels also in that the aspiring migrants do not necessarily know whom they are travelling with. Kanor's protagonist refers to his travelling companions laconically as "Tunisie, Algérie et Éthiopie" (*L'aventure*, p. 282) ("Tunisia, Algeria, and Ethiopia"), and in so doing, reduces them to mere representatives of specific African nations. This anonymity results in a situation in which the travellers who die during the journey cannot be properly mourned. Kanor's protagonist walks amongst nameless tombstones on a cemetery in Tenerife: "J'ai su que c'était là-dedans qu'on fourrait les cadavres d'aventuriers lorsqu'on ignorait comment ils s'appelaient" (*L'aventure*, p. 221) ("I had learned that it was there that they stuffed the corpses of the adventurers whose names we were ignorant of"). The travellers without a known identity are condemned to anonymity even in death.

Another feature that links historical and contemporary coerced African sea crossings is the idea of non-arrival; that of being on a never-ending journey whereby the destination seems to have become unreachable. This idea of non-arrival is particularly pronounced in Ndione's novel, the second half of which consists of the representation of the maritime journey. The turning point in the otherwise eventless journey is a storm that destroys the boat's motor so that the *pirogue* (a wooden canoe) of the aspiring migrants is left drifting at the mercy of the sea. After the storm, despair sets in, and the travellers can only observe how days follow each other in monotony, "identique[s] au précédent" (*Mbëkë mi*, p. 77) ("identical to the previous ones"), which echoes the endless, identical journeys in the hold of a slave ship. The unreachability of Europe is conveyed in how the travellers desperately expect to see lights on the horizon to confirm their arrival. But there are no such lights, and the continuing movement without any certainty of ever reaching their destination has destructive effects on the travellers. They are affected by "l'apathie et la prostration" (*Silence*, pp. 106–107) ("apathy and exhaustion"), or fall in a state of "délire ou de mutisme" (*Mbëkë mi*, p. 78) ("delirium or muteness"). In their mental breakdown, some of the travellers "mordent les autres pour savoir s'ils sont encore vivants" (*L'aventure*, p. 108) ("bite the others to know whether they are still alive"). The harsh travelling conditions turn the travellers into zombies who never reach their destination and who lose their minds during what seems to be an unending journey.

In Middle Passage zombie travels, darkness embodies the lack of light in the slave hold, and while the travellers are not confined to such spaces in the stories of clandestine migrant journeys analysed here, darkness remains a trope whose repeated use marks the text corpus. Darkness serves as a symbol of secrecy, loss of hope, and death. It is also closely related to the idea of non-arrival, as the travellers lose their coordinates and drift in the darkness. The journeys in the novels start during the night to decrease the risk of arrest. The fact that the travellers leave in the dark and desperately wait to see lights that would signal their arrival in Europe is illustrative of how the aspiring migrants associate their home countries with darkness and conceive of "Europe as a place capable of transforming their unliveable lives into an existence

worth living" (Toivanen, 2018, p. 127). As the destination remains beyond the horizon, the travellers sink into despair: all they see is "épaisses ténèbres" ("thick obscurity") as they pursue their journey in "la nuit interminable" ("an unending night") so that at one point, they stop expecting any lights, "hormis celles de la mort" (*Silence*, pp. 105, 107) ("except those of death"). The sea itself is nothing but "une grande tache noire" (*Silence*, p. 45) ("a big dark stain"), an environment where they travel in "l'obscurité totale" (*Mbëkë mi*, p. 50) ("total obscurity"). Further, the texts associate darkness with the sea and the sea with death: the sea is "le lieu de [la] mort" ("the place of death"), a hostile element that "désirait nous tuer" (*Silence*, pp. 70, 44) ("wanted to kill us") and which is "que l'on bourrait de cadavres" (*L'aventure*, p. 151) ("stuffed with corpses"). It is not only the harsh conditions that kill the travellers; some are intentionally thrown overboard, such as the navigator in Sarr's novel once it turns out that he does not know the direction. This incident, together with the allusions to drowned passengers throughout the text corpus, attests to the dehumanising effect of the journey whereby human beings become reduced to body weight which can be disposed of if needed.

By engaging in the perilous mobile pursuit of Europe, the travellers have to accept that the journey is a potentially deadly one: "On devait penser à l'Europe et pas à la mort, même si le chemin vers l'une passait par l'autre, même si le chemin de l'une était l'autre" (*Silence*, p. 232) ("We had to think about Europe and not about death, although the route towards one went through the other, even if the route to one was the route to the other"). This idea of the journey to Europe as a deadly passage is manifest metaphorically in Kanor's novel with its explicit allusions to the zombie figure as a symbol for the lethargy from which clandestine migrants suffer while surviving in the shadowy margins of European societies. Kanor's protagonist believes that "l'Europe mangeait les hommes [et] les transformait en bâtards et en pantins" (*L'aventure*, p. 146) ("Europe ate men and transformed them into bastards and puppets"), and that he is in the process of turning into a zombie himself. This is telling of how the Europe that the clandestine travellers have reached is not the Eldorado they have been seeking and for which they have been striving.

Clandestine migrants remain prisoners of an ambivalent, zombiesque state of non-arrival *even when* they have reached the destination physically. Given the way in which clandestine migrants tend to end up in vulnerable and marginalised positions in Europe, it can be argued that the process of zombification that the migrants enter during their journeys towards Europe also persists once they are in the alleged Eldorado. Sarr's and Kanor's novels draw attention to this with their portrayals of migrants' stagnation and their work in the informal sector. In this way, the zombifying travelling conditions of migrants contribute to their becoming unwanted, abject, and exploitable irregular migrant subjects in Europe.

A feature which differentiates Middle Passage zombie travels from their contemporary counterparts is that while all Middle Passage narratives analysed here entail acts of revolt – however ambivalent or fragile – in the

narratives of clandestine migrant mobilities there does not seem to be room for revolt. Throwing a navigator overboard could be read as an expression of revolt, but the way in which this event is represented in *Silence du chœur*, it comes across more as an act of unnecessary cruelty that turns the migrants into perpetrators. The relative lack of revolt in these narratives draws attention to the fact that while the zombified captives of the Middle Passage journeys had an identifiable structure, namely slavery, against which to revolt, for clandestine migrants, there is no such explicit party that their resistance could directly harm the way a slave's suicide harms the slave traders' business. Nobody forces them to leave in the strictest sense of the word; they take the risk of the deadly sea crossing because of structural factors pushing them to leave – they do not see any other way to survive. They do, however, claim some agency as they finance their journeys and make the decision of leaving. The aspect of agency is also highlighted in Kanor's novel, which refers to the clandestine travellers as adventurers. The aspiring migrants have become obsessed with the idea of Europe as their only salvation in a world of colonial aftermath and global inequality (see Gikandi, 2001, p. 631). The tragedy of this symbolic enslavement is embodied in Kanor's protagonist's perpetual limbo between Africa and Europe: it has made him a prisoner of ambivalence and a citizen of nowhere (*L'aventure*, p. 284). The Eldorado that is supposed to save the travellers from further zombification does not exist: it is nothing more than a production of colonial discourses.

Conclusion: poetics of zombified mobilities

In this chapter, I have read Francophone African and Afrodiasporic literary texts' representation of Middle Passage journeys and contemporary clandestine migrants' maritime mobilities through the metaphor of the zombie. The zombie figure is a particularly pertinent metaphor for this sort of a reading because the zombie is itself a global traveller and an embodiment of cultural mobilities between Africa and the Caribbean. The zombie figure offers a lens that elucidates the dehumanising, deadly journeys on slave ships and in clandestine migrants' rickety *pirogues*. Studying representations of mobility in postcolonial fiction is not merely a question of demonstrating how literary texts 'capture' or 'reflect' real-life mobilities, but acknowledging how representations actively produce mobilities through aesthetic strategies (see Murray & Upstone, 2014, pp. 3, 5). Literary representations of mobility contribute to a deeper understanding of real-life mobilities and make them more tangible, as my analysis focusing on the violently abject dimensions of Middle Passage mobilities and clandestine migrant travel suggests. The poetics of zombified mobilities consist of abjection, darkness, a lack of agency and of identity, non-arrival, and death. By placing representations of maritime mobility at the centre of analysis, my reading shows that the zombifying travelling conditions of captured Africans forced into slavery and those of undocumented migrants play an important role in the process in which they are

made into exploitable, powerless, and abject Others. Understanding the role that concrete forms of mobility play in the production of racialised subjects is the reason why postcolonial studies would benefit from a dialogue with Mobility Studies so as to take representations of concrete mobility practices seriously instead of focusing only on the *consequences* of mobility. Travelling from Africa to the Caribbean and now between Africa and Europe, the zombie refuses to die, and draws attention to the interlinked histories and presents of racialised, abject Afromobilities.

Notes

1 For studies engaging with the analysis of concrete mobility practices in African/Afrodiasporic literatures, see, e.g., (Ní Loingsigh 2009; Steiner 2014; Upstone 2014; Savonick 2015; Forsdick 2016; Mazauric 2016; Green-Simms 2017; Neigh 2018; Toivanen 2018, 2019a; Aatkar 2020).

2 Mobilities, obviously, are not limited to "modern", Western technology-enhanced forms of transportation. When discussing African mobilities, it is also urgent to acknowledge forms of mobility that fall beyond the scope of the colonial encounter (Mavhunga, 2012, p. 73).

3 By "Afrodiasporic" I refer to both contemporary diasporas generated by migration as well as historical diasporas generated by transatlantic slavery. Among the authors discussed here, Fabienne Kanor is a French author of Martinican origin.

4 While clandestine migrant mobility obviously involves migration, my focus is on the texts' representations of concrete forms of mobility. I am interested in the mobile aspects of the migratory pursuit, not in migration in terms of integration, questions of belonging or identity, or as a metaphor for displacement.

5 For representations of slavery in texts from Equatorial Guinea, see Phaf-Rheinberger (2017).

6 Besides the Africa-Caribbean connection, Gudrun Rath (2018) argues that the zombie figure is also based on European narratives of magic.

7 With contemporary popular culture, the zombie has kept on travelling around the world so that it has become detached from any specific cultural or historical context (Lauro, 2015, p. 15; see also Rath, 2018). Indeed, the zombie's "protean […] metaphorical potential" (Glover, 2017, p. 251) make it a figure that can be easily adopted to analyse a wide variety of cultural contexts and phenomena.

8 All translations by the author.

9 On the functions of the zombie's blank gaze in Francophone fiction, see Swanson (2014).

10 The equation of slaves with zombies in contemporary discourses on the Haitian revolution has been criticised by Raphael Hoermann (2017, p. 166), who argues that the zombie is "a deeply anti-revolutionary trope": unlike enslaved persons who have a consciousness and their own will, the figure of the zombie has been deprived thereof. Without consciousness and will, Hoermann (2017, p. 164) maintains, there can be no resistance.

11 Clandestine migrant journeys are often referred to as adventures in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa (Mazauric, 2016, p. 50).

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9 "Don't get too comfortable"

Regimes of motility in Shailja Patel's *Migritude*

Kevin Potter

Introduction

In October 2018, the United States government began sounding the alarm on the arrival of the "migrant caravan" from Honduras. A large group of people, with estimated numbers above 7,000, undertook an arduous journey towards the US-Mexico border, in an attempt to request asylum once they arrive. In response, the president deployed approximately 15,000 military troops to the border, in order to barricade the arriving refugees and to use any force necessary to divert or deter the caravan. Furthermore, as one would expect, the press took strides to stir public outrage and panic. Throughout the US's 24-hour news cycle, a *tableau vivant* of analysts and experts on both sides of the political spectrum attempted to comprehend this situation. Does this caravan constitute an "invasion"? – a term deployed by and large from the right-wing media. Are they merely "asylum seekers", utilising the juridical apparatus that brings them to safety? Is it a refugee 'crisis', similar to one which began in Europe around the summer of 2015?

The answer is that neither of these categories adequately captures the complexity and potential that compel people towards migration. Even among the well-meaning efforts to describe a population that is "in crisis", composed of those eager to find a home and safety, this manner of framing the issue still commits an epistemic mistake that limits our focus, causing us to accept a simplistic image of migrant movement. As the editors of *Viewpoint Magazine* (2018) explain in their editorial statement in November 2018:

> The point is not to romanticize migration – migration, we know, is often anything but beautiful – or to impute immediate revolutionary motives to all who take on such journeys. Instead, it's to take some distance from a detached sociology which would make migrants mere objects of market forces being passively 'pushed' from one country, the so-called sending country, and 'pulled' to another, the so-called receiving country…A political response would thus have to recognize the caravan as both a *concrete act of refusal* and a movement of politicization.
>
> (Viewpoint Magazine 2018; emphasis mine)

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Marking this 'concrete act of refusal', the editors of *Viewpoint* encourage us to understand and concede the 'autonomy of migration' – not merely as a confluence of institutional and economic forces, but as a potential embedded within the desires of the migrants themselves. Although this editorial statement was situated as a response to the 2018 caravan, it reaches a transnational resonance when we consider the manufactured public outrage and myopic discourse generated within "receiving countries" all over the world.

This focus on desire and disposition is not limited to migrant subjectivity, but can rather extend to the broader Mobility Studies field, or what has been called the New Mobilities Paradigm. The New Mobilities Paradigm produces an interdisciplinary approach towards mobility, "argu[ing] for the ubiquity of mobility as a structuring principle in every aspect of human and non-human life" (Merriman & Pearce, 2017, p. 503). In other words, this particular field instantiates a broad scope of research to factor in human and non-human movement; it involves "interlinking migration, transport and tourism studies" in order to address "emerging challenges and discourses concerning environmental, development, justice and security issues at local and global levels" (D'Andrea et al., 2011, p. 150). In terms of the development of affective and relational modes of subjectivity and power, the New Mobilities Paradigm can address the desires activated through mobile, globally transmitted media images and (im)mobilising transportation infrastructures – qualitative features of our globalising world. Indeed, such ideas are inseparable from the study of migration, which primarily focuses upon patterns of human movement across regional and national boundaries, and highlights the impacts of racism, criminalisation, expulsion, and assimilationism upon migrancy. Indeed, these adjacent fields intervene and overlap with each other in important and crucial ways; and, as Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller, and John Urry argue in their inaugural issue of *Mobilities* from 2006, the relation "between migration, return migration, tourism, transnationalism and diaspora is crucial to mobilities research" (Hannam et al., 2006, p. 10). Addressing the concerns noted above, regarding "concrete act[s] of refusal" (Viewpoint Magazine, 2018), along with the complex desires and relational potential of migrancy, we can arrive at a *nexus* of migration and Mobility Studies.

Within the New Mobilities Paradigm and the study of migration, this potential has its own name: motility. According to Hege Høyer Leivestad (2016), in her entry for *Keywords of Mobility,* the concept of motility "indicates a pinning down of one of mobility's missing elements; namely potential" (p. 133). Moreover, says Leivestad, "aspirations – as referring to strong desires and hopes or ambitions to achieve something – should be key factors in understanding and framing motility" (p. 140). Leivestad here marks motility as a uniquely important keyword for im/mobility, and one which is still so often left out of the studies and analyses of mobility as well as migration. In a sense, motility offers the ability to tell the full story – to see not only the material and structural factors that precipitate movement, but also those internal and subjective aspects that arise at the individual, bodily level, thereby completing

the picture of how and why movement occurs. Crucially, Leivestad (2016) suggests, we are at a point in which a satisfactory analysis of, and investigation into, mobility must include an account of motility. Motility, broadly speaking, refers to the "potential to move" (p. 133). Finding its origin in biology and the natural sciences, the concept of motility delineates the possibility of being mobile and also the conditions under which an object, or body, is sent into motion. Expanding into the sociological and anthropological domain, motility accounts for a person's internal desire to move and what compels her into motion.

One of the methodological challenges of motility, as exemplified in Leivestad's entry, exists in our ability to locate it. Since it appears to occur *prior* to movement, and exists in the subjective feelings of the potentially mobilised individual, motility is something which we cannot necessarily quantify or account for with the limited tools at our disposal. Only through a personal reflection or narrative, it seems, can we really observe the aspirations, hopes, and ambitions that exist in the subject who aspires to mobility. Although a study of these internal and affective aspects can be generated utilising several interdisciplinary tools within the New Mobilities Paradigm, the scope of this chapter will be limited to migrancy as such, and derive insights from the long-standing tradition of migrant and diasporic literature. Texts of migration and diaspora reveal a meaningful index of flight and mobility, demonstrating how and under what conditions someone finds the potential for escape. Not always joy-filled travel narratives, and not often conceived as a 'choice' to move, several novelists and poets underscore the crises and instabilities, but also the desires and aims, of migrants and refugees.

Though several examples could be surveyed throughout the migrant literary canon in order to dramatise motility, I turn to a recent example that places a strong emphasis on affirming migrancy as a valid state of subjective existence. Shailja Patel's 2010 collection, *Migritude*, is a collection of poetic fragments originally showcased on stage as performance art in 2006. The text itself brings together small vignettes, reflecting upon the speaker's refugee movement – her family's displacement from Kenya, and her eventual relocation to the United Kingdom and the United States. Throughout the collection, Patel not only illustrates the movement of people, but also the crucial cultural importance of what the migrants bring with them – the jewellery and the saris that are packed – all of which embody what Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani (2013) call "the affective economy of diaspora" (p. 2). This paper will thus offer an analysis of motility as it is reflected in and articulated throughout Patel's collection. I will start by connecting the idea of motility to the concept of 'migritude' as such, suggesting why Patel's use of this word in her title reinforces and establishes the concept of motility. This starting-off point will expound upon the intellectual exchange and inspiration coalescing within the concept of migritude, establishing Patel's intellectual alliance with transnational and trans-historical struggles and theoretical

paradigms. Within such a discursive framework, Patel situates herself right in the midst of an Afro-Caribbean exchange. She inherits critical tools and a sense of historicity that embeds her within an increasingly globalising struggle – a struggle emerging from conditions of colonisation, slavery, and global capitalist subjugation. I will then show instances in which motility is articulated within *Migritude*, and conclude by arguing why an examination of mobility demands that we take into account the regimes of motility that migrant literary texts offer.

Migritude and the intellectual encounter

Many readers who see the term 'migritude' will no doubt recognise a connection to the concept of 'négritude', associated with Martinican theorists Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Léon Damas. This conceptual paradigm arose in the 1930s as an effort to reclaim Pan-African identity as something which need not be measured according to the hegemony of assimilationist standards, but rather retains its own power and force. Embracing this anti-colonial paradigm, which resonates within the French-Caribbean and Martinican diasporic context, Patel affirms her own background – as a Kenyan-born immigrant to the United States – as one vitally in contact with, reinforced through, and challenged by the lasting legacy of anti-imperial struggles. Because of her own transnational location and deep anti-colonial sensibilities, she is equipped to enter the conceptual space that has been opened up within this already-existing, Pan-African context – reinforcing the mobility and widespread circulation of the négritude paradigm. "Négritude", according to Césaire (1972), is "a resistance to the politics of assimilation" (p. 72); and, above all, it is "a concrete rather than abstract coming to consciousness" (p. 76). What this sentiment reveals in itself is a desire – a desire *not to* assimilate, and a refusal to embrace the "civilising" and hegemonic violence of colonisation. One can think, as many have (Deleuze, 1997, p. 86; Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 203; Žižek, 2006, p. 342), of Herman Melville's Bartleby with his famous "I would prefer not to" (Melville, 1948, p. 24) declaration against his employer, demonstrating his desire *not to*, or his refusal, to work in the conditions he has been forced into. Frantz Fanon, by comparison, articulates his "own refusal to be bound by and imprisoned within the white narrative" (Nielsen, 2013, p. 343):

> I find myself suddenly in the world and I recognize that I have one right alone: That of demanding human behavior from the other. One duty alone: That of not renouncing my freedom through my choices… I am not a prisoner of history. I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny. I should constantly remind myself that the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence. In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself.
>
> (Fanon, 1986, p. 229)

Arriving at the consciousness of his own identity, Fanon (1986) accepts his "metaphysics…were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilisation that he did not know and that imposed itself upon him" (p. 83). But, Fanon's approach to négritude is distinct from the orthodoxies of Césaire and Senghor. Namely, as Cynthia Nielsen (2013) explains, Fanon took cues from Jean-Paul Sartre in insisting that négritude "was in essence reactionary, a weak stage (*le temps faible*) in the dialectic march toward liberation" (p. 349). What results here is a staunch departure from Césaire and Senghor, whereby Fanon insists that négritude is merely a temporary stage through which one passes on the way to liberation, rather than constituting liberation itself.

Nevertheless, from the way that Patel appropriates this concept for *migritude*, it seems clear that she distils its meaning from Césaire and Senghor. Négritude – understood in the Césairean vein as a recalcitrant refusal to assimilate, or a desire *not* to embrace the hegemony of European identity – itself demonstrates the internal aspirations for, and the affirmation of, racial consciousness, thereby providing the ideological and discursive space of liberation. It is, as Senghor (2013) asserts, "a certain active presence in the world, or better, in the universe" (p. 28). As Neelofer Qadir (2018) points out,

> Patel not only grafts an ideological connection between [négritude and migritude], but opens up temporal and spatial dimensions of interconnectedness between a period of anti-colonial independence movements and the neo-colonial/imperial structures in which we continue to be embedded.
>
> (p. 222)

Patel is sensitive to the residual traumas and memories that migrants inherit as they continually work against, and attempt to circumvent, the stratifying structures of modernity and global capitalism. Her intellectual encounter with an already-existing paradigm (négritude) bespeaks a rich global connection and solidarity demanded of those who wish to overcome the violence of assimilationism. Such ideas then lend an ethics of self-affirmation, exemplified in the words of négritude poet Léon Damas (2017): "I have recovered/ my courage/ and my audacity /and become myself once more".

In the Foreword to *Migritude,* Vijay Preshad (2010) clarifies the connection of Patel's work to the tradition of négritude:

> *Migritude* draws from this heritage [of négritude] to suggest that there is a 'compass of suffering' shared by migrants of color into the heartlands of power. It shows how this compass binds them in unexpected ways. The term migritude suggests the *horizontal assimilation* engineered by migrants as they smile at each other, knowing quite well what is carried on each other's backs.
>
> (p. iv)

In other words, Patel's book "is not a cultural anthropology of migrant lives, but rather a philosophical meditation on what it means to live within the concept of Migrant" (Preshad, p. iv). Using this concept, then, Patel not only brings the voices in her poems into relation with migrants who exist throughout the world (and throughout history), but she also inherits, expands, and modifies the traditions that attach her to anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles – shedding light on "the generations of migrants who speak unapologetically, fiercely, lyrically, for themselves" (Monegato, 2010, p. 143). The representations of migritude that operate throughout the text instantiate alliances with anti-capitalist and anti-colonial struggles, rather than deference to the Anglo-European hegemony.

In an interview, Patel stresses the overt connection with négritude. She notes that, on the one hand, the idea of migritude contains within it a play on the idea of "migrant attitude, or migrants with attitude" (S. Patel, 2014). Patel continues, though, showing how the conceptual framework of négritude supplied her with the necessary intellectual tools for migritude:

> I was asserting the same thing for migrants and for migrant movements, saying there is a voice, a worldview, a space that migrants inhabit that is unique and powerful and defined by itself…not by how close they've come to assimilation, not even by where they came from, but by the state of being a migrant.
>
> (S. Patel, 2014)

Already the idea of migritude itself presents us with a regime of motility. The aspirational ideal that undergirds migritude presents us with a political value-system that prioritises and emphasises the singularity of migrant consciousness. Migritude is itself a desire to move, to be mobile, and to remain a migrant. The text itself, therefore, operates by way of expressing this internal, subjective desire for mobility, enunciating the conditions and the potential to move (motility). As a 'regime' – not to be understood here merely as a "system of governmental regulation" (Baker, 2016, p. 152), but rather as a discursive system of values and ideas – Patel's text presents a renewed poetic space that affirms and makes legible the motility of migritude. Connecting back to the *Viewpoint Magazine* editorial statement, this confirms the necessity to recognise a "concrete act of refusal" (Viewpoint Magazine, 2018). In this case, the regime of motility that migritude enacts is committed to resisting the assimilationist logic of liberal-national organs of power – institutions that provide the securitising mechanisms for population control regulation and control and, in turn, the disempowerment of migrant movement.

Poetics of migritude

Typically, when considering the ideas of motility, one wants to turn to the moments *before* the mobile figure (i.e. the traveller, the migrant, the vagabond,

etc.) becomes mobile. For in this instance, we have more of a sense for the *potential*, the causal linkages between previous immobility and the emergent mobility. In the poem titled "1. Idi Amin", which takes place in Nairobi, we hear first about the narrator's status in Nairobi: "In 1972, Idi Amin, military dictator of Uganda, expelled the country's entire Asian population. I was born and raised in Kenya. The country bordering Uganda. Third-generation East African Asian" (S. Patel, 2010, p. 10). Immediately, readers get a sense for the political tensions that arose in Uganda along with the anticipation and expectation of changing circumstances in adjacent areas like Kenya, Tanganyika, and Zanzibar through the post-Independence era of the 1960s. Declaring what he deemed an 'economic war' against the Asian population, Amin expelled 80,000 Ugandan-Asians in 1972 with the purpose of expropriating their property and businesses (Patel H. H., 1972, p. 18). Giving a deadline of three months, several Asian ethnic groups were forced to depart under stressful conditions, with many ending up in neighbouring countries and in the UK. The poem's speaker lives in the neighbouring country, Kenya, where antipathy towards Asian (particularly Indian and Pakistani) ethnic groups provided a template for Uganda's policies to follow in the years leading up to and during the Amin regime (Jones, 2005, p. 52).[1] After Kenya achieved independence in 1963, the "official rhetoric surrounding the Asian communities of East Africa changed" (Jones, 2005, p. 52), and African governments (and Jomo Kenyatta's administration particularly) began portraying them as "exploiters who lacked commitment to the new nations" (Jones, 2005, p. 52). As a result, in 1968, the BBC reported on a "growing exodus of Kenyan Asians fleeing from laws which prevent them making a living" (BBC, 1968). This was a time in which immigration laws in Kenya became "increasingly draconian" (BBC, 1968), and a campaign of disenfranchisement was becoming embedded within official national policy.

The volatile circumstances in Kenya combined with the foreboding sense that Idi Amin's brutal expulsion in Uganda were signs of an uncertain future. What made Idi Amin's rise to power unique, according to the poem's speaker, was the backing and support from the British and US governments: "Secret documents, declassified in 2001, show that Britain, Israel and the US instigated and backed Idi Amin's military coup…British foreign documents describe Idi Amin as *a man we can work with*" (S. Patel, 2010, p. 11; emphasis in the original). Such transnational support – and the consolidation of world power for the US and UK – bespeaks a renewed and expanded neo-imperial order within which the speaker views her subject-position alongside others engaged in similar global struggle. The speaker reflects on the "proverb" she "grew up on": "Don't put down roots. Don't get too comfortable. By dawn, we may be on the move, forced to reinvent ourselves in order to survive. Invest only in what we can carry. Passports. Education. Jewelry" (S. Patel, 2010, p. 10). The insistence that she not "put down roots" or "get too comfortable" was a tacit belief that cast a shadow over her adolescence, knowing full well the impermanence and transience of her stability in Kenya

as a Third-Generation East African Indian. As a result, she says, they were "forced to reinvent [them]selves in order to survive"; and as a result, this instance gives us the first signal of her motility. The intrinsic desire to survive and the need for safety compels her to, and establishes the potential towards, movement and mobility. In this instance, we are able to locate one regime of motility. The shared expression that permeates her lived experience, and the discourse that they abide by, creates an almost moralistic prohibition. "Don't get too comfortable" and "don't put down roots" reveal, poetically, the conscriptions for survival and the constraints on her thoughts and actions. With these thoughts in the mind of the subject, we are then brought into close connection with her motility, with that which sends her into motion. As we learn in the poem's concluding lines, the external factors of US- and British-backed coups devastated Ugandans, resulting in "eight years of terror" (S. Patel, 2010, p. 11). Yet, for the Kenyans, the "proverb" she grew up on – "don't get too comfortable" – became part of her identity long before the imperialist destruction; and it is, therefore, in *those* moments where we locate her motility and migritude.

Yet, in *Migritude*, the regimes of motility do not end with the moments *prior* to movement. Rather, the potential for mobility is also re-articulated throughout the entire collection. For what makes 'migritude' unique as a concept is its strategic desire to not only *become* a migrant, but to *remain* a migrant – to sustain the conditions of migrancy, and to refuse assimilation into any one nation. In the poem titled "7. The Making (Migrant Song)", the narrator displays an almost defiant tone, embracing her cultural heritage and non-assimilation to the US (where she has now moved). First, we get a detailed account of how migrants perform their migrancy, according to the narrator:

> We overdress, we migrants. We care too much how we look to you…We absorb information without asking questions […] We try to please […] We don't contradict so we don't show you up. You mistake this for a lack of intellectual confidence.
>
> (S. Patel, 2010, p. 34)

Here the speaker introduces the crux of migritude: the refusal to assimilate. This is the manner in which one's migrancy and motility coalesce as a "concrete acts of refusal" – a desire to embrace and embody one's displaced and displacing identity. Marking her separation from the Americans, she then moves towards expressing the outrage and anger that this forced veneer of diffidence engenders:

> So I make this work from rage/for every smug, idiotic face I've ever wanted to smash into the carnage of war/every encounter that's left my throat choked/with what I dared not say/ I excavate the words that hid in my churning stomach through visa controls/ words I swallowed down

> until over the border/they are still there/ they knew I would come back for them.
>
> (S. Patel, 2010, p. 35)

She continues, noting that "This is for the hands/hacked off the Arawaks by Columbus and his men…I make this work/ because I still have hands" (S. Patel, 2010, p. 35). First, we see right away an explicit link to the Caribbean and, particularly, the indigenous Arawak groups that the conquistadors massacred during their settlement of what was later known Hispaniola. Stating that "this is for" the Arawaks suggests not only a solidarity with and a deep historical-political connection to the plight of the enslaved and colonised; this also suggests a sense of responsibility to them. Patel makes her work because of the intellectual and historical conversation she engages across time and across space, offering a space for the Arawaks and indigenous populations – whom history has relegated and silenced – to now re-emerge and achieve representation.

Shifting from first defining the characteristics of "we migrants", towards then expressing her motivations and desire to create this work of poetry and performances, showcases her own concrete "coming to consciousness" as Césaire would put it. After a prolonged period of self-restraint, the narrator has reached a boiling point of resentment and humiliation at the oppressors' "smug, idiotic face[s]" (S. Patel, 2010, p. 35). Such encounters, then, fuel her internal ruminations on her migrant existence and the connections felt among migrants more generally. What is then conveyed through this poem's ending, with the switching voice and tone, is the conviction to maintain her migrant identity, and to proffer instead the desires and motivations that permeate her inner subjective, conscious experience. Declaring her migritude, this poetic regime of motility and migrant desire discloses the moral and political impulses that pervade her existence, establishing her relation to anti-colonial and migrant struggles throughout history. In this case, though, the regime of motility is not one instance prior to and before movement. Rather, migritude, as a regime of motility, is an ongoing, perennial struggle that one maintains throughout many stages and moments of migratory and mobile life.

It is also worth noting the unique formal character of "The Making". The first part of the poem ("We overdress, we migrants") is written as a prose poem, utilising full stops and repetitions on the word "we" to demonstrate line breaks, despite conforming visually to a linear prose form. Such a formal device enables the poem itself to instantiate its own migritude, leaving readers unable to discern a clean generic categorisation. "The Making" is, therefore, an in-between poem/vignette – both prose and poetry – existing not within the specific bounds of one specific genre. Much like the migrant, who resists being measured according to how well they adjust and assimilate to the arriving nation, this piece as such cannot be measured according to any specified written form. The form therefore embraces its undefinable

characteristic and refuses categorisation within any particular form. This is a manner by which "The Making" is a meta-poem (or meta-prose-poem) – presenting, formally, its own attitude and arguing for its own existence and resistance. Similarly, when the form of the poem changes later ("So I make this work from rage/for every smug idiotic face…") we have it also demonstrating an in-between form in a different manner. The use of back-slashes (which we generally use to mark line breaks when a poem is quoted within a piece of prose) demonstrates artificial line breaks. This suggests another metapoetic device. In this sense, the ability to label this part a "poem" stems from an imitation of a poem – yet remaining uncommitted to that form. The migrant subject attempts to adopt the social decorum of the arrival country, they do so in ways that are merely imitating those aspects so as to avoid suspicion or ridicule. Similarly, the poem uses artificial line breaks to imitate a poem, asking that we accept it as a poem, knowing full well that it is doing so artificially merely to satisfy our expectations.

Finally, in the poem titled "16. Born to a Law", she addresses her mother, insisting that she "will never live /the cocoon of safety" that her mother "dreamed of" for her daughters (S. Patel, 2010, p. 61). She insists, then, on what her life's purpose demands: "Do you see? I will always be called to stride across danger zones, to shout forbidden words to other fugitives" (S. Patel, 2010, p. 61). She continues, proclaiming what she sees as her purpose, uniting her inner motility with the world she inhabits: "This work that filigrees and inlays/all your legacies/that snakes across borders/dodges visa controls/this/is my intention./Declaration./Lifelong execution" (S. Patel, 2010, p. 62). This poem – the last one in the collection – presents the narrator's feeling of responsibility and her inner purpose. Noting it as a "lifelong execution", she finds it her responsibility to remain among those "fugitives" who dodge visa controls and snake across borders. To the speaker, this is the responsibility and close kinship she feels to migrants, refugees, exiles, and colonial subjects throughout history. This re-establishes what Vijay Preshad in the Foreword called the "horizontal assimilation" – the need to affirm her intimate connection to the legacy of migrant struggle and anti-imperialism. This compulsion to affirm this identity reinforces the regime of motility, the desire to stay in motion, rather than conform to settler-colonial logic that demands the migrant's *stasis* and conformity.

We have in these moments several occasions in which *Migritude* delineates motility, and the manners by which such a regime recurs throughout the text. These are the instances in which the internal desires and motives are clearly expressed, qualified through the poetic expression of the migrant subject. Gaining, then, a fuller understanding of the conditions of sustained mobility and migrancy, the motility in these poems allows us a better grasp of the potential for mobility and, with it, the desire to move. In these poems, they present different *regimes* of motility, showing us where her moral and political limitations lie, and what her system of values compels her to do. Often we discover the poetic voice feels an acute need to maintain her

migritude, and upholds a desire that refuses to assimilate vertically (with colonial and imperial power), and instead aspires to assimilate horizontally (with those who undergo anti-colonial and feminist struggles). In the concluding section, I will underscore the value of integrating motility and desire into an analysis of mobility – aspects which are prominent in literature and other art forms.

Conclusion

In a 2017 article for the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Francis Collins (2017) insists upon the "potential of desire as a useful conceptual vocabulary to enliven scholarly understandings of migrant mobilities" (p. 1). "Desire", Collins says, "differs from other concepts…because it draws attention to the embodied and emotional generators of migration" (p. 3). This idea of 'desire' as Collins uses it is also consistent with the concept of motility – both offer a framework and vocabulary for understanding the aspirations that "shape the form and processes of movement" (p. 5). Motility and desire provide a strong departure from previous ethnographic and anthropological accounts of mobility which reduce it to merely structural, practical, or rational considerations (Leivestad, 2016, p. 143; Collins, 2017, p. 1). So, as an analytical tool and concept, motility gives a unique understanding of emotional, internal, psychological, and embodied forces that inform someone's migrant mobility. This aspect gives us a better understanding of the confluence of affective and embodied encounters that make someone a mobile subject.

Discourse is a powerful tool of social and political control; and we learn from Michel Foucault quite easily how language (and representation through language) gives institutions of power their ability to create docile subjects. Yet, it is also crucial that we concede the ways in which it can still have the effect of reinforcing a narrow regime of political value, even when the "intention" of establishing a type of discourse is a positive one. As Alex Sager (2021) points out,

> many abuses that arise from representing migration as a crisis are epistemic: the language of crisis can negatively affect our ability to understand the causes and effects of migration. The study of migration is subject to a number of cognitive biases, including the methodological nationalism and sedentarism.

Simply put, the language that we use can direct our focus in some ways, while restrict us in others, towards the dimensions of migration and mobility that are hidden outside of our discourse. Even outside of our awareness, we may not realise how much or in what way we are reproducing a discourse that stifles political action and reinforces biases and nationalistic affects. Furthermore, 'poetics' in this regard can be understood in its broad sense (a system of meaning-making, formed through formal, linguistic, and affective

manoeuvres) and its narrow sense (concerned with poetry). In both cases, poetics provides us a unique connection with discourse; that is, it is vitally embedded within, but also a constitutive part of, political and social discourse. Patel's *Migritude* participates within its own discursive regime, supplying for us a meaningful language through which migrant subjectivity and motility become legible.

What is clear is that motility and desire are not easily gleaned from broad-based theorising about economic and structural forces of mobility. Rather, these are better extracted from first-hand encounters and narratives that construct stories from the migrant subject's own perspective – the memories, the emotions, and the inner conscious experiences that shape one's potential to move. The aspirations, then, that define motility – the aspiration towards movement, or to remain a mobile figure – are better understood through literary and aesthetic sources. Poetry, literature, film, visual art, dance, and music each in their own way offer entry points into motility and desire. Various forms of art construct *regimes* of motility, producing for us the discursive system of moral impulses and values towards mobility and migrancy that are aspired to. As with Patel's *Migritude*, several migrant literary texts and art forms provide a meaningful and wide-ranging view into mobility's "missing element; namely potential" (Leivestad, 2016, p. 133). As Qadir (2018) says, "the text underscores the necessity of multiple artistic and storytelling traditions required to bring silenced narratives to the fore" (p. 226). Investigations, then, into migrant art forms and other expressions of motility would give a more concrete view of the unquantifiable and affective aspects that shape mobility. Discovering the various regimes of motility that we can find throughout the migrant literatures canon can enrich not only the scholarly understanding of mobile cultures, but also the existence of those whose motility and desire ought to be recognised.

Note

1 It should be noted, moreover, that the hostility toward Asian groups in Uganda did not start with Idi Amin, but rather began when Milton Obote began passing restrictive laws in 1969. At first, once Amin overthrew Obote's regime "in a military coup" in January 1971, "many Asians…were relieved". However, as Stephanie Jones explains, "in December 1971 Amin called a conference of Asian leaders at which he blamed their communities for failing to integrate", thus beginning the mass expulsion of "non-citizen Asians from Uganda" (Jones, 2005, p. 52).

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10 Homegoing

A personal reflection on shared experiences within Yoruba and Jamaican heritage

Àníké Bello

Introduction

As a London-raised Yoruba woman, I am one of over 100 million people of African descent in the diaspora, living outside of the African continent (Migiro, 2018). The maternal side of my family hails from Abẹ́òkuta, Nigeria. It is a place that I have been intrigued by for many years after hearing brief accounts of my familial home from my mother. As a child she provided me with just enough information to tantalise my interest in this faraway place called Abẹ́òkuta. Upon reflection, I see that my intrigue was my way of trying to piece together an understanding of the places from my ancestry that form a part of my story.

As I write this I have yet to make a trip to Abẹ́òkuta. My visits to Nigeria have mostly consisted of me being situated in Lagos, given that most of my extended family are currently based there. Little did I know that a three-week solo holiday to Jamaica, a country that I have no immediate connection to in terms of family or friends, in early 2018 would present me with an opportunity to feel closer to my mother's home town, a place that I have felt drawn to without stepping foot in. It was a trip which was birthed out of a desire to escape the British winter and embrace solitude and adventure in a warm climate. My holiday included a visit to Negril where I made a trip to Abẹ́òkuta Paradise Nature Park, a place that I had never heard of until a week before my trip. It was an experience that shifted my perceptions of home and presented me with a chance to connect to my ancestry in a way that I was not expecting to when I first embarked on my holiday. This echoes a point made by Birkeland (2008) regarding ways of seeing parts of yourself in the places that you encounter in the process of travel. It reflects a kind of mobility which embraces physical and metaphysical elements of what it means to move – by physically making the trip to Jamaica, I also subconsciously made another trip by engaging with the story behind the establishment of Abẹ́òkuta Paradise Nature Park, which brought me full circle to connect with my Yoruba heritage.

This essay draws from my experience visiting Abẹ́òkuta Paradise Nature Park to reflect on the similarities shared within Yoruba and Jamaican heritage

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to present home as a process which can be experienced in many forms. Given that my intention is to share personal reflections, I have drawn from a wide pool of resources to support the arguments presented in this essay. Such resources include primary and secondary literature such as academic texts, documentaries, articles as well as excerpts from speeches and songs. I also refer to some of the informal discussions that I had with members of the community based in the area of Abẹ́òkuta, to offer insight into the historical and cultural importance of the site. The intention of using a broad range of sources is to highlight the various ways that I have been able to explore and shape my perceptions of home, which go beyond solely using academic literature and reflect my curiosity to explore other ways of learning and forming an opinion.

What does it mean to be (im)mobile?

In his attempt to theorize about the concept of mobility, Noel Salazar concludes that

> it [mobility] depends on what makes people mobile, their relations with the places they come from and those to which or through which they move as well as the reasons that they move. Mobility gains meaning through its embeddedness within societies, culture, politics, and histories. (2018, p. 162)

It is a point that accurately notes the importance of context in developing an understanding of mobility. Applying context creates space to engage with the wider impacts that derive from the process, which then presents an opportunity to further examine the significance of movement between spaces. What customs and belief systems are carried in the process of mobility? In what conditions are cultural mobilities established in new spaces? Such questions facilitate opportunities to develop a broad understanding of the social, political, and economic factors at play in answering the question of what it means to be (im)mobile. I aim to reflect on such questions by highlighting how Abẹ́òkuta, as an immobile place within Nigeria and Jamaica, holds stories from pre-colonial African history and represents shared similarities between Jamaican and Yoruba heritage. This points to a form of mobility, in the physical and cultural sense.

In the context of historical African-Caribbean encounters around mobility, Matereke presents the case for engaging with "African modes of thought about mobility drawn from 'stories' about Africa and things African" (2016, p. 118). Such stories can be found in different aspects of culture which highlight the various modes of storytelling present in African history. Whether this relates to phenomena like rituals, monuments, clothing, folklore and proverbs (Arnoldi, 2000; Bessire, 1998; Park, 1954; Rattray, 1930; Smith, 1975; Taieb, 2014), all are elements of culture that facilitate opportunities to engage with stories in the context of pre-colonial African history, thus

creating space to embrace an Afro-centred perspective with regards to understanding mobility.

Bearing in mind shared experiences between Africa and the Caribbean, notably as a result of the transatlantic slave trade, engaging with culture presents an opportunity to identify stories that have developed to facilitate mobility and forge connections between the two spaces. As noted by Adey, "mobility appears to be both simultaneously representational and non-representational" (2017, 192), emphasising the important roles that feeling, seeing, and thinking play in shaping the experience of mobility. This captures the unseen and seen elements of life at play – the movement of bodies (the seen) in parallel with the movement of belief systems (the unseen), which are then expressed through customs (the seen).

The often-violent conditions in which Africans were taken to the Caribbean to work on plantations revealed a form of mobility shaped around exploitation. The cultural mobility that took place after their arrival indicates a form of resistance, in part, against European imperialism. Despite the situation of being, in most cases, forcibly taken from a place to work in another, the ability to establish customs and norms that carry stories from the place of origin points to a defiant type of mobility.

Exploring perceptions of home

What does home mean? As I ask myself this question I reflect on the feeling of belonging, familiarity as well as a sense of safety that take centre stage in shaping my perceptions of it. Home is an experience that has emerged in various spaces that I have occupied, encounters that I have had with others or even as a result of carrying out certain tasks. Be it when I am eating my way through pounded yam with okra and vegetable stew, laughing with loved ones, dancing to music or revisiting old photos from childhood – these life experiences have contributed to broadening my perspective with regards to defining the concept of home. Moreover, they have drawn attention to the importance of applying a holistic approach to gauge the "unseen" elements, in the form of feeling, that play an important part in contributing to the physical, "seen" experience of home. Such an approach creates space to move past rigidly framed notions of home as an entity that is an exclusively "seen construct", be it as an entity that exists within the confines of man-made walls[1] or man-made borders, which aid xenophobia and the "racialization of immigration control" (Bloch & Schuster, 2005).

Understanding home as a seen and unseen experience emphasises the difficulty in pinning it down to certain fixed ideas. It is a concept that has the ability to expand, transcend, and situate itself in different life experiences. Put by musician Lánre in her song entitled "Home", "home is where I belong" (2014). It is a statement which points to a holistic approach to perceiving home as an entity that is not prescribed or limited to a fixed space. Rather, it is a constantly evolving process that can emerge at any moment as you

stay present and in tune with how you engage with your surroundings. This points to the importance of nurturing the feeling (the unseen) as opposed to solely focusing on the physical (seen) aspect when framing perceptions of home, which supports an argument made by Pico Iyer that, "home is less to do with a piece of soil, [and more to do] with a piece of soul" (2013). This emphasises the importance of feeling in shaping an understanding of lived experiences.

The term "heritage" can be described as "a broad concept [that] includes the natural as well as the cultural environment. It encompasses landscapes, historic places, sites and built environments, as well as biodiversity, collections, past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge and living experiences", as noted in the 1999 *International Cultural Tourism Charter Managing Tourism* at places of heritage significance that was adopted by the International Council on Monuments and Sites.[2] This is a definition that appreciates the many ways that culture is expressed and carried on through generations. With this in mind, it is important to perceive culture not only as an entity that relates to objects but also with regards to perception. When Sophie Oluwole was asked about the meaning of culture in the context of Yoruba people and the broader African context, she noted that "it is not the dress they [Yorubas] wear. It is not the music they sing. It is the way they think and understand reality" (2014). By viewing culture as an entity that promotes and instils a way of seeing life, she points to its educational function. An example from Yoruba culture can be seen in the *Egungun* (masquerade) festival which pays homage to ancestry. Masquerades take a central role in the ceremony as intermediaries between members of a community and their ancestors (Baudin, 1885). By invoking ancestral spirits and transmitting messages to members of a community, this alludes to a way of seeing the world that is promoted through the presence of the *Egungun*. Namely, one that includes metaphysical and physical elements and a high regard for spirituality in shaping an understanding of one's life experiences. In terms of relating this to perceptions of home, it indicates how the experience of home can manifest in the process of engaging with culture, which also facilitates opportunities to connect to belief-systems and stories that promote a sense of community.

In terms of the "seen" elements of home within the discourse of heritage, they offer a renewed appreciation for the plethora of stories that exist within artefacts, landscapes, clothing etc. which are used, in part, to connect to and learn from the past. As noted by John Berger in his work *Ways of Seeing*, "history always constitutes the relation between a present and its past. [...] The past is not for living in; it is a well of conclusions from which we draw in order to act. [...] When we 'see' a landscape, we situate ourselves in it" (Berger, 1972, p. 11). His comment accurately notes the difference between learning from the past and living in it. Engaging with heritage offers a chance to connect and learn from stories of the past as well as an opportunity for an individual to expand on such stories in their lifetime. This points to a

mobility of ideas which transcends time, that is derived from the process of learning from and contributing to a culture.

Historically, Abẹ̀òkuta is a place that presented an opportunity to nurture the experience of home. This was the case for the Egba people, a subgroup of the wider Yoruba tribe, fleeing conflict following the demise of the Oyo Empire, and for Yorubas who were transported to the Americas as slaves and indentured workers during and after the transatlantic slave trade (Olabunmi, 2012). Bearing these two instances in mind, Abẹ̀òkuta can be seen as a site of memory as well as a mechanism to facilitate dialogue between Africa and the Caribbean regarding their shared heritage. It is a site which points to the cultural mobility that has taken place, which has enabled an extension of home to emerge in a different setting.

Seeking refuge: the emergence of Abẹ̀òkuta in Yorubaland

Abẹ̀òkuta, the capital of Ogun state in present-day Nigeria, was birthed as a place of refuge for the Egba people following a violent period in Yorubaland at the turn of the 19th century. Saburi Biobaku provides context to develop a holistic understanding of the impact of this period on the Egba people as well as in wider Yorubaland when he writes that, "the destruction of the Egba towns must be viewed in the demand for slaves on the coast and of the advancing tide of Moslem conquest" (1952, p. 42). From his statement, one is able to note the multiple factors that fuelled the fragmentation of Yorubaland; the high demand for human labour on plantations overseas as well as the advancement of the Fulani/Hausa-led interests following the conquest of Ilorin (JoJo, 2018) in Yorubaland. The violent internal and external pressures taking place resulted in the fracturing of Egba communities, thus increasing the presence of refugees (Johnson-Odim & Mba, 1997) within Yorubaland, as people fled conflict.

Olumo rock was discovered as a site of refuge for the Egba people seeking safety and a space to re-establish a sense of community. Bearing in mind the imminent threat from Ibadan towards the north part of Egbaland,[3] combined with continued threats from Fulani/Hausa advances and inter/intra-tribal slave raiding, this helps to develop a deeper appreciation for the presence of Olumo rock as a site that provided a much-needed safe space for the Egbas seeking refuge. In fulfilling the basic need for protection, the space around Olumo rock presented a chance for communities to settle and grow.

Olumo rock became home to Egba refugees as well as to Owu people, neighbours to the Egba, whose town also experienced destruction due to frequent slave raids at the turn of the 19th century (Biobaku, 1957). In addition, it become home to formerly enslaved peoples of Yoruba descent that journeyed from Sierra Leone, where they were first brought upon their return to the African continent from the Americas. The presence of different dispersed groups contributed to the expansion and urbanisation of the space "of at least

150 separate townships, each governing itself with its own chiefs and elders" (Phillips, 1969, p. 118). It was a site which now brought different groups that co-existed together within a larger communal framework. Panashe Chigumadzi echoes this when she writes that the "very same landscape bears marks of many other complex settlements and displacements, conquests and defeats" (2019). Her argument reveals the ways in which immobile landmarks can evoke shared memories, which enable a mobility of memory to take place. In the case of Abẹ́òkuta, this is a "seen" physical space that unearths "unseen" stories from pre-colonial Yoruba society as well as stories associated with the transatlantic slave trade.

The importance of the physical structure of the landscape is indicated in the travel memoir of Sir Richard F. Burton, a British explorer, where he notes that

> against the attacks of Africans, with their instinctive horror of walls, it is safe; and the granite eminences, holes, caves and forest clumps of the interior would render it more dangerous to assault in from, if defended by resolute men, than any barricade upon the Boulevard. It is doubtless the latter consideration that concentrated the Egbas around the Rock Olumo.
> (Burton, 1863, p. 70)

Burton's travels around Egbaland, and later to areas in present-day Cameroon, were conducted with the main aim of strengthening British colonial influence in these areas. Abẹ́òkuta was a land of key interest for the British given its relatively close proximity to Lagos, which at the time of his writing was already under British colonial rule.

Abẹ́òkuta represented a space that was perceived as having a "necessary influence on adjacent countries" (Burton, 1863, p. vii). The Kingdom of Dahomey was one of the adjacent countries; it was a place of particular interest for the British following the death of King Ghezo, the infamous slave raider (Olusoga, 2016). Given Burton's stance against slave exportation, which he believed would "save our country [Britain] a considerable portion of the million sterling annually expended upon the West African 'coffin-squadron'", (Burton, 1863, p. vii), this helps to gauge the wider political and economic significance of Abẹ́òkuta as a place that could advance European colonial interests. Moreover, it points to the economic argument which played a key role in fuelling the end of the Transatlantic slave trade, which is often overlooked when investigating its cause. Slave owners and plantation enterprises did not suddenly awaken to their deeply immoral ventures: Burton's statement shows that, put simply, the business of purchasing and transporting African labourers across the Atlantic was no longer economically viable for countries that were heavily involved in the slave trade. Bearing this in mind in the context of Abẹ́òkuta, it can be seen as a site that also tells the story of European mobility within the interiors of West Africa, shaped around geo-political and economic interests.

Abẹ́òkuta is a space that presented an opportunity for people from different nearby regions in Yorubaland to come together and nurture a shared sense of identity as a result of the establishment and steady growth of their new home. This context mirrors the experience of the Yoruba people, who in most cases were forcefully taken to Jamaica, and were able to forge a new sense of home by evoking memories and experiences of their past to extend their heritage to a new physical space. The remainder of this essay will focus on the emergence of Abẹ́òkuta as a home, this time situated across the Atlantic on the island of Jamaica, where I will recount my experience visiting a space that mirrors the home of part of my maternal ancestry.

A space of memory: Abẹ́òkuta, Jamaica

I arrived at Dean's Valley Waterworks in the parish of Westmoreland and was welcomed by a few members of the local community based in an area that locals refer to as "bekuta". I was informed by my guide, Owen Banhan, the current owner of Abẹ́òkuta Paradise Nature Park, which he acquired in 1980,[4] that a large part of the community are direct descendants of the Yoruba people. I also later found out that many prominent Nigerians including writer Wole Soyinka (also from Abeokuta, Nigeria) and former president Olusegun Obasanjo have visited the space before.[5] It was a surreal experience to be amongst people who are connected to my Yoruba ancestry in a space that was named after the home of my ancestors in Yorubaland but located in the Caribbean. I was experiencing a shared sense of familiarity with these people combined with a curiosity to unearth more links between our heritage.

The emergence of Abẹ́òkuta as a site in Jamaica shares a similar story to its counterpart in Yorubaland. The violent period of African bodies being transported in their millions across the Atlantic to work on plantation fields was made possible, in part, by the violent periods of intertribal conflicts that marred many regions of sub-Saharan Africa (Hochschild, 1998), which in turn fed the desire for human capital for labour purposes at immense levels. The Egba people were part of those impacted by such conflicts in Yorubaland. Those that were captured by neighbouring kingdoms such as the Dahomey and Igbo were imprisoned, sold, and transported to the Americas to work on plantations. Despite the volatile context in which such a physical mobility transpired, the cultural mobility which followed points to an attempt to establish home in spite of capture. The remainder of this chapter will focus on highlighting shared cultural practices that emerged as a result of the extension of Abẹ́òkuta.

The work of social anthropologist Olive Lewin in archiving the musical heritage of Jamaica provides an opportunity to appreciate and spot the direct cultural similarities between Nigeria and Jamaica. In her book, *Rock it Come Over: The Folk Music of Jamaica* (2000), Lewin notes the presence of a group referred to as the Nago, who have inhabited the area of Abẹ́òkuta for

a number of generations and are direct descendants of their Yoruba ancestors brought to the area centuries before. Lewin notes the important holistic role of music for communities such as the Nago, in acting as a mechanism to facilitate "communication between departed ancestors, spirits, gods, the supreme God and the living for guidance and direction, and being in tune with one's spirituality [is] crucial to achieving and maintaining this balance" (2000, p. 147). Her depiction highlights a deep appreciation for spirituality which the people inherited from their Yoruba ancestry. They perceive music as a mechanism to facilitate growth at a spiritual, mental, and physical level, and as a tool to foster a sense of community. This echoes the sentiments made by musician Fela Kuti who noted the importance of music as a "weapon to inform people",[6] emphasising the educational aspects of culture.

In the history of Yorubaland, music served a variety of functions. For example, the use of the *Gangan* drums (talking drums) acted as an equivalent of a media outlet in pre-colonial Yoruba society, whereby special announcements from the *Oba* (King) were carried out through drumming to reach the wider community (Bello, 2019). This similarity within Yoruba and Jamaican heritage points to an appreciation of a holistic approach to cultural practices whereby the "seen" elements of life (the drums) acted as a mechanism to forge community and connect to ancestral spirits (the unseen).

The strong connection to ancestry expressed by the Nago people and noted in the work of Olive Lewin also highlights shared beliefs. She writes that "ancestral help is also required to ensure rest for spirits of the departed. Because of this, the ancestors must be entertained and appeased from time to time and respected at all times" (Lewin, 2000, p. 181). Similarly, Michael Anda (1996) reflects on the importance of funerals in Yoruba society as a way to celebrate the life of the departed and their transition to the spiritual realm. He writes, "it is the duty of the heirs to perform the funeral properly so that the ancestor will be reborn, and his soul not trouble his descendants" (1996, p. 46). Both examples imply an appreciation of the metaphysical and physical elements of life, which inform particular cultural practices such as drumming.

The importance of the phrase *Nago* was referenced in the accounts of Jean-Baptiste Chausse, a French priest who travelled through parts of Yorubaland, including Abẹ́òkuta, towards the end of the 19th century. The surrounding area of Abẹ́òkuta was earmarked by Europeans as one that proved to be relatively successful in terms of conversion rates to Christianity (Burton, 1863), which resulted in a number of missionaries embarking on visits to this part of Yorubaland in hopes of increasing the number of indigenous converts. In his account, he remarks, "and we did not forget to say (it always pleases people), 'if we know *Nago* it is because our mother was born in Yorubaland', which in the idiom of the country means that we love them" (Schiltz, 2014, p. 127). Nago was also used as a term by Europeans to identify Africans loosely connected to the regions of Onim-Lagos, Porto Novo, Whydah, Badagry, and Pogo (Zinna, 2012), areas that form part of Yorubaland and the former

Kingdom of Dahomey (present-day Benin Republic). These examples indicate the word "Nago" having a close association to the Yoruba people. This is echoed in the video archive entitled *Deep Roots* by the National Library of Jamaica, where the Nago people of the Abẹ̀òkuta community are filmed sitting together to drum and sing songs commemorating their ancestry. They can be heard saying the words *Ile baba mi/ Ile mama mi*, which translates to English as "my father's home /my mother's home". By utilising the language of their ancestors, this form of cultural practice is an example which points to the ways in which the experience of home is evoked within language. As noted by Gunew, "language remains the most portable of accessories, one which has carved out a corporeal space" (2003, p. 41). The Yoruba phrase is an example which highlights the mobility of language which has transcended places (Yorubaland to Jamaica) and generations (Egba people to their Nago descendants) to facilitate an experience of home.

The appreciation of the cultural links between Nigeria and Jamaica was also recognised by a Nigerian musical composer, Chief Fela Sowande. Upon his visit to Abẹ̀òkuta in Jamaica, he remarked,

> I am an Egba of the Yoruba, my hometown being Abẹ̀òkuta in Western Nigeria. By no stretch of the imagination could I have foreseen that I would travel thousands of miles to Jamaica to visit another Abẹ̀òkuta at Waterworks in Westmoreland, to meet with a ninety-six-year-old lady with a head-tie and a face that brought my late Egba mother vividly before my eyes, and possessing a stock of Yoruba words in surroundings which looked in places like a transplantation of areas of the Abẹ̀òkuta in the Nigeria of my youth.
>
> (Lewin, 2000, p. 185)

His depiction honours the cultural mobility that has taken place between Nigeria and Jamaica. Moreover, it conveys an experience of familiarity that exists as a result of memory and feeling and the importance of viewing home as an experience that is an open process, capable of emerging in different moments of life – at times it can lead you to a space thousands of miles from your original home where you encounter familiar surroundings, people, food, music, or ideas.

An appreciation for the various ways that culture travels and adapts as people move between spaces points to a strong connection between past and present. Something that was also conveyed in the work of Fela Sowande, who noted the importance of "honouring tradition but also honouring the new", a concept which is reflected in the Singing Cultures project, a product of Chief Sowande's efforts to promote and highlight the contribution of African sounds in popular music from North America and the Caribbean. The aim of the project is to "provide opportunities to learn about, perform, and debate the cultural legacy of Nigerian and other African Classical Music which dates

back 200+ years",[7] drawing attention to music as a bridge between Africa and the Caribbean.

The Ettu are another group that originate from the regions of Westmoreland and Hannover Parish in Jamaica, close to Abẹ̀òkuta. They also regard themselves as descendants of Yoruba slaves brought to the island between the 16th and 19th centuries (Lewin, 2000). Upon her meeting with the Ettu, Lewin referenced some of the cultural similarities that point to a strong connection to their Yoruba ancestry. For example, through food,

> they drummed, sang, danced and introduced me to the ritual use of bizzy (the Jamaican name for cola nut which grows in that area) for purification, and tum Ettus or fufu, breadfruit or yam pounded into a smooth mass, pinched off and using fingers only, dipped into a dish of stew and swallowed without chewing by the cultists and their guests. This is a sign of friendship, especially as everyone eats from one dish of tum Ettus and dips into a single bowl of stew.
>
> (Lewin, 2000, p. 180)

The significance of foods such as yam and cola nut can also be seen in Yoruba heritage, for example, the use of *obi* (Kola nut), a food which was historically presented at naming ceremonies of new born children – "it was chewed and then spat out as a sign to repel the evil in life",[8] similar to its purification symbolisms among the Ettu. The use of yam, as a symbol for community, particularly within traditional Yoruba wedding ceremonies, also reveals a cultural similarity between the two spaces. Yam is presented as a gift to the family of the bride by her future in-laws, in part as a way of celebrating the new union of a bride and groom, and two sets of families coming together.

The examples highlighted above regarding the Nago and Ettu from the work of Olive Lewin reveal the various ways that culture provides opportunities to connect to ancestry and facilitate the experience of home as a result of knowledge being passed down through generations. The mobility of knowledge has played a crucial role in the continuation of cultural practices, which link both Abẹ̀òkutas (in Yorubaland and Jamaica) as places that help to forge a sense of identity, belonging and familiarity – enabling the experience of home to be seen and felt.

It is estimated that over 90% of Jamaica's inhabitants are of African descent (Lewin, 2000) pointing to the many opportunities that have enabled culture to expand, merge, and continue in different settings, despite the violent conditions that brought millions of Africans to the Caribbean. Abẹ̀òkuta is a landscape that represents the deep connection between Africa and the Caribbean, highlighting shared experiences as a result of human and cultural mobility. By identifying the various elements that point to said connection, this presents a chance to explore the mobility of stories and belief systems as a result of the physical movement of bodies between spaces.

Conclusion

During one of our conversations, Owen informed me of his strong desire to retain the land in order to offer a chance for people to relax and engage with an aspect of Jamaican history. This accurately sums up my experience visiting Abẹ̀òkuta Paradise Nature Park. It is a space that tells a story of human connection, perseverance, and the importance of broadening perspectives to appreciate the various ways that home can be experienced and transplanted. Moreover, its presence points to an embrace of a kind of cosmopolitanism accurately described by Minna Salami regarding "curiosity about our shared humanity" (2019). Yoruba people and their descendants both succeeded in forging a sense of community, despite the violent context which marred the emergence of both Abẹ̀òkutas – reflecting a shared experience that connects the two places.

Abẹ̀òkuta is a reflection of the ways in which landscapes facilitate opportunities to connect to heritage and explore shared experiences, thus facilitating an experience of home. Culture is a vehicle that conveys the ways through which human connection is made possible. It travels and adapts, which points to the many opportunities that offer a sense of belonging, connection, and familiarity; a homegoing (Gyasi, 2016) that is never-ending and far-reaching.

Notes

1 This definition of home is cited in the Cambridge Dictionary: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/home

2 A full text of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). International Cultural Tourism Charter managing tourism at places of heritage significance can be found via this link: https://www.icomos.org/charters/tourism_e.pdf

3 The Egbas joined in the Ibadan-Ijaye war in 1861, in an attempt to prevent Ibadan from becoming the successor to the old Oyo empire, as the political head of Yorubaland. More information can be found via this link: https://www.ibadaninsider.com/lifestyle/history-and-culture/ibadan-insider-history-ibadan-ijaye-war/

4 Ownership of the Abẹ̀òkuta has changed multiple times since the turn of the 19th century. A full transcript of the interview with the current owner of Abẹ̀òkuta Paradise Nature Park can be found via this link: https://insidejourneys.com/abeokuta-paradise-nature-park/

5 A reference to Abẹ̀òkuta by well-known Nigerian figures that have visited Abẹ̀òkuta Paradise Nature Park was made in an article in *Asiri* Magazine entitled "Diaspora Buzz: The beauty of Abeokuta in Jamaica". The full article can be found via this link: http://asirimagazine.com/en/diasporabuzzthe-beauty-of-the-abeokuta-in-jamaica/

6 Fela Kuti was interviewed by the Dutch radio production company "Reelin' in the years" on the importance of music. The full audio-visual clip of the interview can be found via this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtiAnjtYdwo

7 This is a quote is taken directly from the "About Us" section on the *Transcultural Visions* website; more information about the project can be found via this link: https://transculturalvisions.com/singing-cultures-home/the-journey/fela-sowande-past-present-future/

8 The naming ceremony involves family and close relations coming together to celebrate all of the names given to a newborn. Such an experience offers a chance to give thanks and pray for a child's future. Collectively, everybody prays, sings, and dances to commemorate ancestors and connect to the divine and welcome the new addition to the family. Gifts are also provided to honour the new life. Historically, eight items were presented in the ceremony, representing the amount of days that a child has been alive. More information about the symbolisms of gifts can be found via this link: https://www.ileoduduwa.com/naming-ceremony-yoruba-culture/

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