

*“On se Débrouille”*: Congolese Migrants’ Search for  
Survival and Success in Muizenberg, Cape Town

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## Abstract

Situated in a Congolese transnational 'community' in Muizenberg, a suburb of Cape Town, South Africa, the thesis focuses on the lives of three middle class Congolese male informants. Their contingent acquaintance with a South African white Christian man gave them access to valuable social capital; social capital that positioned them advantageously to date and eventually marry European white women and thereby further their culturally-defined economic/material career goals.

To demonstrate the socio-economic trajectory of the three, I compare their social positioning with other Congolese men and women resident in Muizenberg. I show how these men and women, like my three main informants, activate their Congolese 'habitus' to secure access to social networks and the social capital therein. The difference between these Congolese men and women and my three main informants, however, is their strategic use of contingency, and the instrumental capitalisation of their cultural capital through the creation of a client-patron relationship with a South African in order to further their life goals.

The thesis reorientates the migration literature on African migration from a focus on the implications of migrant remittances to the home country, to a focus on individual migrants' agency in the host country and the cultural influence of the society of origin. While I acknowledge that my research participants are part of a transnational social field, the focus on one locality and the relatively longitudinal approach of the study grounds the analysis both in the day-to-day lives of these migrants and in their migrant careers in and beyond Muizenberg and South Africa. With this orientation, the thesis is able to reveal that some Congolese migrants are comfortable to create a holding place for themselves in South Africa, while others – ever aware of the Congolese ambition to travel overseas – migrate beyond South African borders. For these Congolese migrants, South Africa is then a transit space. Fundamentally, all of my research participants give expression to Mobutu's edict of *on se débrouille* (literally, 'one fends for oneself'), but some are more able to achieve the ultimate aspiration of settling in the First World – *lola*.

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## Preface

Intended initially as a study on African migrants, my work in Muizenberg mutated into a closer examination of Congolese ways of being in a foreign space as expressed through particularly, gender, class, personality, religious denomination and worship and love relationships. The study favoured the particular over the general but the approach was relatively longitudinal: fieldwork ensued with fairly frequent visits of varying length from mid-2004 to the beginning of 2009.

From its early stages, despite the diversity inherent in the Congolese cohort of immigrants in Muizenberg, my research inclined towards the study of three male individuals – all of whom were being assisted by a white South African Christian patron. Although my research would encompass the experiences of a number of other Congolese nationals, I spent a considerable amount of my time ‘returning’ to these three participants, in part due to the constant friendship we shared, but also because as the years unfolded their migrant careers shifted as these were shaped by decisions they made to further their careers and enhance their lives. In some cases, their plans succeeded in terms of their aspirations; in other cases they did not.

Muizenberg, unlike many other South African locales, has long had a multicultural, cosmopolitan and transitory population. In the 1990s it lost some of its appeal as it became derelict in atmosphere and architecture. This derelict space offered the first Congolese residents in the area cheap accommodation, easy access to transport, a supermarket and the company of similar others. Muizenberg was a liminal space and thus easily converted to a ‘little Congo’ in the 1990s as it became home to mostly Kinois and some Lushois from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

As late-comers in South Africa’s migrant scene, the flamboyant strut, and the lilting and accented English of the Congolese caught my attention. Migrants from Southern Africa, particularly Mozambique and Lesotho, were predominant regulars in the hot, dark and dangerous voids of South Africa’s gold mines, a long way from Cape Town. The Congolese, like others from beyond southern Africa who were not part of any labour recruitment programmes, were different in style, work habits, mannerisms and ambitions. They also arrived at the dawn of the ‘new’ South Africa, where opportunities and migrant experiences would surely be different? Or so they thought.

The central task of this dissertation is to hold a lens to the most recent chapter in South Africa’s immigration history by studying narratives of the migrant experiences of three Congolese men over nearly five years. These narratives highlight their journeys to self-hood in the contexts of their *circuits personnelles* (personal networks) which latterly included the researcher. I (re)construct

their lives, giving the reader glimpses into the lifeways and options of Congolese men, who are not new arrivals, but rather part of a larger group on their way to realizing their migrant goals. I follow them in their progress, which entails knitting together various expressions of being Congolese as expressed in churches, private moments, at work, and in relationships – whether intimate or based on friendship. I consider how representative these experiences might be of other Congolese, and indeed other African migrants, whether in Muizenberg, other parts of Cape Town, or South Africa as a whole.

In this reflexive attempt at a group portrait, my brush strokes are hesitant, as I am conscious of the partiality of my perspective. I can't hope to speak of 'truths' here. I can only relate my interpretation of events, places and people as I have experienced them. Fortunately, the 'revolution' in anthropology has made such experimentation not only permissible but almost mandatory (Geertz, 1973; Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Stoller, 2007). The dissertation becomes an experiment in interpretation expressed through the literary form of narrative and guided by appropriate theory. I, as the author am acknowledged as an intrinsic part of the field work process. Ultimately the interpretation is mine and mine only, but it is aided and abetted by my research participants, friends, intimate strangers, my supervisor, my acquaintances, and my position in and experience of my country – South Africa.

## Acknowledgements

The writing of a doctoral dissertation although ultimately a solitary endeavour is the outcome of a long process of fieldwork and supervision – processes that involve the kindness, time, sacrifice and faith of others. I am of the belief that I stand not only on the shoulders of scholarly giants, but also on the shoulders of family, friends and colleagues. I therefore ask your indulgence as I take the time to thank the many light beings who have travelled this journey with me.

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To my supervisor, Professor Robin Palmer. What a difficult student I have been! ☺ Thank you for being that one human constant throughout the process. For being a father, a mentor, a teacher and my guide. You have assisted me to find the voice I had 'lost', and that I wasn't always sure I could retrieve.

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To Opal



## Introduction

“... a key term for us is temporality. Partially we mean, of course, that an experience is temporal. But we also mean that experiences taken collectively are temporal. We are therefore not only concerned with life as it is experienced in the here and now, but also with life as it is experienced on a continuum – people’s lives, institutional lives, lives of things. ... Our social science knowledge is, like the things we study, something in “passing” (Clandinin and Connelly, 1999:19).

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An obvious lacuna in the international migration literature has been the study of voluntary and involuntary African migrants on the African continent. While a number of studies consider refugees on the African continent and beyond, the relevance of *migration studies* has not been perceived in *refugee studies*, nor vice versa. Thus in the ambit of refugee studies, given its focus on legal and human rights’ concerns, African refugees are constructed as disempowered and reactive, while economic migrants are characterised as responsive, and agentive.

Further local studies of migrants and refugees in South Africa have mirrored this distinction between social categories. In earlier migration studies in South Africa, anthropologists like Spiegel (1981) focused on economic migrants from Lesotho, who toiled in the mines of South Africa. Coplan (1991) also working with Basotho migrants in the 1990s, focused on their politically and socially inspired musical narratives. South Africa’s shift from apartheid to democracy in the latter 1980s and 1990s made South Africa a viable destination for migrants and refugees beyond southern African borders.

Since 1994, there has been an influx of African refugees and documented migrants from African countries as far afield as Congo-Brazzaville, Congo-Kinshasa, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia and Nigeria into South Africa. According to Statistics South Africa, African immigrants to South Africa totalled 38% (2 472) of the immigrant population in 2002. However, while there are official statistics with regard to documented African migrants<sup>1</sup>, the number of African refugees or undocumented migrants remains indeterminate<sup>2</sup>. Despite this lack of status, the increased visibility of these migrants in the urban and rural areas of South Africa suggests that the phenomenon of African migration to South Africa has increased over the past ten to fifteen years. The possibility of continued movement into South Africa is strengthened by continued outbreaks

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<sup>1</sup> The term “African migrants” refers to those migrants who come from Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Initial discussions with officials at Home Affairs held in March 2004, revealed that the actual number of refugees in Cape Town remains unknown.



of violence, outright war and economic deprivation in countries like the DRC, Senegal and Somalia.

Research in the early twenty-first century on refugees and migrants in South Africa was conducted under the auspices of research units like the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP), located in Canada, and the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS), formerly the Forced Migration Studies Programme (FMSP), located in Johannesburg. Most of the research conducted was survey and questionnaire driven. As SAMP researchers became involved in the construction of a new immigration policy for South Africa, statistics were deemed important, as a quick snapshot of the refugee 'problem' in South Africa was needed. FMSP on the other hand focused on African refugees' dismal reception in South Africa, asserting refugees' human rights as paramount. As these two research centres came to understand the expanded nature of migration to South Africa – to include both involuntary and voluntary migration – FMSP changed its name to ACMS, and more ethnographic research was undertaken. Yet, research was still limited within anthropology, bar Sichone's work on African migrants in Cape Town (2003; 2008).

Given the above observations, my work was directly responsive to the lack of contemporary ethnographic data on specific migrant groupings, supported by longitudinal field observations and participation. I was impressed by individual migrants' narratives, and thus sought to prioritise the individuality of migrant voices. I was therefore motivated to understand migration from the migrant actors' frame of reference, rather than from a legal, administrative or statistical perspective. This particular motivation demanded a specific form of investigation – one that would apprehend contemporary discussions in the international migration literature on transnationalism and diaspora. However, given the African context, and more specifically that of the South African context, my research compelled a search for concepts that could explain my observations.

Bourdieu's notion of habitus, and his and others' conceptualisation of social capital (Coleman, Putnam) proved useful in my analyses, as I focused on social networks in situ, rather than transnationally. My uni-focus delineated the applicability of an earlier concept that earlier anthropologists of complex societies found useful: patron-clientage. My particular study of the mainly Congolese men and women asylum seekers and migrants in South Africa, resident in the coastal suburb of Muizenberg, is therefore an attempt to fill a qualitative gap in the South African migration literature, whilst also speaking to the lacuna on 'African' internal migration in the international literature.

Divided into three parts, Part I of the thesis, titled Preliminaries, positions my ethnographic work within the broader fields of transnationalism, diaspora and migration in Africa. Chapter one grapples with the two key concepts underpinning later twentieth century and early twenty-first century migration studies – transnationalism and diaspora. The chapter highlights how social science theorists have been compelled to shift migration studies from an emphasis on one locality to a focus on the multi-sited positioning of actors, as they interact with similar others across parallel societies thereby creating a transnational social space. This specific shift in the literature and theorising of migration has led to many social scientists doing work in both the sending and receiving countries, demonstrating how migrant actors remain connected to home, whilst sojourning in the host country. The work on transnationalism is not a mere reproduction of scholarly work on diasporas as there is an intellectual difference between the two concepts; a difference demonstrated in chapter one.

While I note the trajectory of international migration studies in the past two decades, I do however caution a wholesale transfer of these concepts onto migration and refugee studies in, and of, Africa. My work fundamentally demonstrates that Congolese migration, as a rather ‘new’ form of migration to South Africa, shares characteristics with earlier migration studies done in the 1960s in Britain and Europe, rather than contemporary discussions of transnational migrants. It is therefore imperative to remember the micro-context of the study – Muizenberg, South Africa – the geographical positioning of the study on the African continent, and the temporal positioning of this study.

In chapter two I locate my work within migration studies in Africa, focussing on pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial migrations. Migration in Africa is different to the migration experience in the west. While there are a number of overlapping themes such as religious worship, the fight for economic survival, and attempts at social integration Africa’s various polities, as former British, Dutch, French and Portuguese colonies experience globalisation differently to Europe. Not only are African countries dealing with the consequences of colonisation, but they are also trying to participate in a global economy that is similar to the imperialism instituted by the colonising countries (Owusu, 2003). Their diverse experiences of, and responses to, colonisation and decolonisation compel a more rigorous discussion, focusing on *African countries’* individual migration experiences, rather than over-generalising the situation as *Africa’s* migration experience. Thus a simplistic construction of Africa as part of the disempowered global South (Omotoso, 1994) must be questioned as migration occurring in Africa is not necessarily from disempowered to empowered, or disempowered to disempowered. The socio-political and economic dynamics within Africa are far too variable to categorise the entire continent of Africa as disempowered, or to imply that Africans are always moving to the

Americas or to Europe. There are more refugees on the African continent, moving in the African continent, than externally. It is therefore imperative, given the nature of migration on the continent, that African peoples' migration in Africa assume its place on the global academic stage as an important form of global migration streams.

This chapter demonstrates that movement on the African continent is an ancient phenomenon and one not likely to cease in the near future, despite contemporary xenophobic attitudes and attacks in South Africa and on the continent. Since South Africa's re-creation as a democratic state in the 1990s migrants from as far afield as Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Senegal, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC/Congo-Kinshasa) have entered the country as migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and/or immigrants. Newly democratised and struggling with the legacy of apartheid, South Africa faces the challenge of integrating non-South Africans into the socio-political and economic environment of South Africa. However, media reports and refugees' personal stories indicate that socio-political and economic integration is problematic, as many 'foreigners' negatively referred to as *amakwerekwere*, have been on the receiving end of xenophobic attitudes or xenophobic attacks at the hands of South Africans across race and class (Crush, 2001; Harris, 2002). Despite this unsafe political and economic environment, African migrants are intent on creating a sustainable environment conducive to their welfare in the urban and surrounding areas of South Africa. At this time though, no full length monograph exists with regard to their survival strategies in these urban environments, or their interactions with South Africans.

In the interests of transnationalism and holism, I locate the push factors for Congolese migration in the economic history of the country, and note the various waves of migration to South Africa since the early 1980s. In essence chapter two provides a considered discussion of migration on the African continent, and in South Africa particularly. Like chapter one, chapter two provides a macro conceptual framework upon which to pin the fuller ethnographic picture of Parts II and III. Read together chapters one and two provide an intriguing comparison of the migration literature developed in the West, and that originating from or written about Africa.

The final chapter in part I, chapter three, entitled 'Fieldwork and Methodology' offers the reader insight into the 'how' of the research project, and my experience of the research process in Muizenberg – my fieldsite. I detail the nuts and bolts of fieldwork praxis noting the problems I experienced as a single woman researcher in the predominantly male migrant space of Muizenberg, and the emotional impact this had on the doing of fieldwork. I also take the opportunity to introduce the reader to Muizenberg, the physical setting of my study.

Briefly, in this chapter I provide a reflexive (and reflective) account of two intimate relationships I had with Congolese men – one a research participant, and the other a Congolese man who I met *outside* of the fieldwork context. Chapter three thus includes a personal account of how I came to know what I know. It positions me as a thinking, feeling and sensing – embodied – human being in a time and place in which I was not only witness to the lives of others, but also to my own life as it unfolded amidst the lives of research ‘others’. While these relationships were not anticipated nor entered into with any deliberate agenda, they have been invaluable in providing me with insights into the motivations of contemporary Congolese migrants and the socio-cultural influences on their lives in Muizenberg and their migrant careers.

With the preliminaries dealt with Part II covers “Settling in and Coping”. Following a brief introduction, chapters four and five are concerned with the livelihoods and religious experiences of Congolese men and women resident in Muizenberg. In both these chapters I discuss the forms of social capital, such as information on employment opportunities, a sense of belonging, or emotional and religious succour in Congolese religious networks (amongst dense ties), or within a multicultural, multiethnic and multi-national church (amongst weak ties). Obliquely I posit (in reference to my discussion of a Congolese economic habitus in chapter two) that Congolese migrants perceive successful migration within the context of their broader Congolese transnational community which includes South Africa and the DRC as home. Using Bourdieu’s work on habitus I reiterate that Congolese migrants have access to a repertoire of behaviours that can be applied to various social and geographic contexts. Habitus as discussed by Bourdieu is a rather static concept. However, my reading of habitus is that it is compatible with the concepts of acculturation and the agency of an individual. Therefore I use habitus to indicate Congolese citizens’ acculturation in their home country and imply that the knowledge and skills acquired during this process are pertinent to survival and progress in a host country. These skills, knowledge forms, dispositions and behaviours although learned and tested elsewhere, are transferable and open to various ways of application in a different socio-cultural, economic and political environment. In fact, an alien environment demands flexible forms of being.

The economic environment of deprivation in the DRC created generations of Congolese who are socialised to the task of survival by learning, through observation and participation, to initiate, build and cultivate personal networks so as to access the social capital within these networks. A successful Congolese migrant would thus use his economic habitus to create personal networks that extend beyond co-nationals and with any luck create personal relations with non-nationals that proceed to assist the migrant in meeting his<sup>3</sup> goals. It would be beneficial to have many

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<sup>3</sup> As my primary research informants were all men, I will refer to migrants in the masculine form throughout the thesis, until I refer directly to a female migrant.

weak ties (ties with non-nationals). However as chapters four and five demonstrate even one weak tie, referred to here as a patron-client relationship, proves beneficial to the welfare of a closed Congolese network.

Chapter four pays particular attention to the economic narratives of four research participants that I considered to be more marginal in the research area, but more typical of Congolese and 'African' experiences in general in the cities of South Africa. Their stories highlight the ways in which three Congolese women and a man make connections with South Africans in their attempts to facilitate economic progress. These connections are not always strategically made, but rather haphazardly attempted. Chance is therefore an important factor in the construction of social connections and networks. The chapter also demonstrates the importance of religious networks, and their potential to increase a congregant's social capital. The forms of social capital accessed here do not always lead to the fulfilment of employment needs. Rather, the forms of social capital that network participants access are child minding assistance, religious belonging, national forms of religious worship, religious and emotional succour, a confirmation of self and access to one of the primary languages in South Africa, English.

Chapter five, following on from the themes raised in chapter four, considers the patron-client relationship created between a white South African and my three primary Congolese research informants. In stark contrast to chapter four, chapter five demonstrates how a chance encounter, and the willingness of a non-Congolese man, furthers the economic and educational achievements of these three men. Based on reciprocal, yet differentiated, forms of exchange the content of the relationship with their patron shifts, as Guy, Serge and Lyon<sup>4</sup> move from social childhood to social adulthood.

Primarily chapters four and five demonstrate the diversity of the Congolese population in Muizenberg, and their diverse migratory experiences. These chapters highlight the differences between men and women's experiences during migration, and they show how integral cultural capital, or more simply class, can be in securing temporary assistance from 'strangers', and more long-term assistance in the form of a patron-client relationship.

The third and final part of the thesis entitled "Onward and Upward: The Romance Factor" is divided into three chapters. I provide an overall introduction to this section, and then I detail the dynamics of the love relationship between Congolese men and their partners, whether European<sup>5</sup> or South African in the subsequent chapters. Given the dearth of anthropological literature on

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<sup>4</sup> Lyon is a pseudonym.

<sup>5</sup> I employ the term in its literal sense, not in the way white South Africans used to style themselves as 'Europeans.'

romantic relationships, I use the literature on the sexual economy of intimacy to think through and analyse my data. In these three chapters, the notion of social capital is implicated more subtly. While I detail the expression of love, dominant in some relationships more than others, I hint at the complexity of assessing the veracity/authenticity of love relationships. Given the previous chapters, it is particularly hard to ignore the social capital derived from the connections made with non-Congolese women, particularly European women. Using material on the sexual economy in South Africa, I suggest that my male research participants' socio-economic circumstances position them in such a way that romantic relationships *are* transactional. This particular statement might be cause for discomfort, as romantic love in the West, it is often suggested, is without transactional taint. However, research shows that romantic relationships are intimate spaces replete with negotiations as regards the division of labour and reproduction of the unit. The idea of love merely provides an acceptable veneer and/or cement for the work of the relationship.

More specifically, chapter six tells the story of my initial foray into research, and my initial luck in meeting a pair of individuals – a Scottish woman and a Congolese man – who were about to 'tie the knot'. Their experience of love, and the daily struggles that involved, provides an alternate story to the ones that received major coverage in the daily local South African newspapers at the time – fake marriages between 'other' African men and local South African women. While Linda is not South African, her relationship with Gianni depicts the agency of women in relationships; women are therefore not easy targets, or necessarily victims, of hustling and beguiling African men.

Chapter seven focuses on the relationship between Noel and Sam<sup>6</sup>; a Congolese man and a South African coloured woman. The ethnographic narrative places them firmly within the Congolese lived space of Muizenberg. Observing their interactions, and participation in events, like a soccer match played between local Congolese teams, it strikes one that the merging of families is not easy, especially when the partners are of different national, ethnic and racial backgrounds. While Sam and Noel are the focus of chapter seven, the activities and events that occur around them detail the untold lives of Congolese migrants in Muizenberg and its surrounds. Here Congolese migrants' lives and deaths are on display; as are the workings of their social networks and the accumulation of social capital.

Chapter eight, the final ethnographic chapter of the thesis, returns to the theme expressed in chapter six – the love relationship between Congolese men and European women. Here I place

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<sup>6</sup> Pseudonyms.

these relationships within the global political economy of race and othering, Guy's marriage to Michelle<sup>7</sup>, a Swiss-German woman, and Serge's marriage to Hannah – a German woman. Given that the relationships are constructed across race, nationality and ethnic divides, I posit that these relationships provide my research participants with prestige and status within the Congolese local space of Muizenberg and the wider Congolese transnational social space. Unlike Fleischer (2009) I recognise that their wives are agents in their intimate relationships and not 'ready' victims of calculating African men. As the sexual economy literature on the beach boys in Gambia suggests, African men are sexualised and cast as working class. However in the case of the guys their middle-class positioning cast them as similar to their wives. While race and nationality disempowers them on the world stage, class and more importantly their cultural capital situates them favourably within the multinational and multicultural environment of the church they worshipped in. Further, Robert<sup>8</sup>, fulfilling the expectations of his role as patron, is the 'bridging capital' for his clients – had he not expected their active participation in church activities, and were they not clear about their obligation to reciprocate, the guys might never have met their betrothed. Through him they meet their future wives, and also access the social capital of their wives – their wives' European citizenship, and thus visas to Europe, and a 'ready-made' kinship network in Europe.

This chapter finds that authentic love does not negate the reality of a love relationship's transactional value and may, indeed, enhance it. Arguments like Fleischer's (2009) that present German women as victims of hoodwinking Cameroonian men, offer too simplistic a view of a complex relationship that entails negotiation by its very nature. The chapter confirms that *all* relationships matter in the lives of Congolese migrants.

The conclusion weaves the varied and multi-coloured strands of the thesis together. Here I reiterate the main conclusions drawn in each chapter, and I distinguish my work from that which has gone before. I highlight the complexity of Congolese migrants' lived experiences in Muizenberg, and note further that a search for complexity, rather than simplicity re-orientates our contemporary understanding of migrants' lives. While we should focus on transnational activities, identifying the global linkages between people stretched across vast distances – the importance of transnationalism and diaspora – it remains important to follow the narratives in the data, rather than impose a set of concepts, or theories beforehand – the classical inductive approach of the anthropologist. My willingness to let go of prescribed forms of thinking about migration also admits the addition of social capital to our theoretical toolkit, and revives that stalwart of the anthropology of complex society, the patron-clientage concept, making it fit-for-

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<sup>7</sup> Michelle is a pseudonym.

<sup>8</sup> Robert is a pseudonym.

use in migration studies. In essence, social capital and patron-clientage offers us a means to contextualise and apprehend the individual processes of migrants' lives.

**Technical note:** In the thesis I distinguish between ethnographic narrative and formal analysis by using different fonts. Analysis is written in Calisto MT, whilst ethnography is written in Calibri. I distinguish the two in this way, rather than using indentation, so as to emphasise the importance of both narrative and analysis in this monograph. Thus, I underline the importance of using both one's head – rational mind – and one's heart – emotions – to write an ethnographic dissertation. Further, my thoughts as they occur during fieldwork are also written in Calibri, but they are presented in font size 10, rather than 11.



## Chapter 1

### Locating the Field of Study: Macro and Micro Concepts

“If anthropology continues to be based in ethnography it will have to focus on people in transition, who are uneasy about themselves in a world that ignores their desire and need for continuity” (Colson, 2003:3).

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Paralleling the exponential increase in the movement of people in the latter part of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, migration has become a more widely and intensively studied social phenomenon than ever before (Castles and Miller, 1998; Vertovec, 1999). According to the United Nations (UN), there are 1 billion people living outside of their country of origin (United Nations Human Development Report, 2009). Given these large scale flows of people, some as a result of wars, hunger, or poor economic and social opportunities within their countries of origin, governments of receiving countries have the unenviable task of managing these flows of people with or without the assistance of international organisations such as the UN.

It could be argued that the mass movement of people across international borders as evidenced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is really no different to the contemporary population movements that we are witnessing now. But that was largely a Europe-outward movement. The mass movement of Africans through the slave trade had already ceased. Such migration as continued in the colonies was largely internal; though indentured labourers were still transferred great distances within the British Empire, giving rise to the Indian and Chinese minorities in South Africa, to take only two examples (Harris, 2010). After the rapid political decolonisation of Africa, a different kind of international African migrant emerged. African men and women now part of the mobile masses, and impacted by globalisation create ‘new’ hybridised ‘African’ identities that refer to both the home (colonised) and host (coloniser) countries (Friedman, 1994; Thomas, 2007). These various identities speak of the potential creativity that can be derived from the movement of people.

Using globalisation as a backdrop I consider concepts such as diaspora and transnationalism, and qualifiers incorporated in such phrases as ‘African diaspora’ and ‘refugee diaspora’ in this chapter. Situating my work within the field of voluntary and involuntary migration I highlight the many ways in which contemporary migration theorists have expanded the field of migration studies to include a consideration of global political, economic, social and cultural factors. These

theorists have pushed the boundaries of the field of migration to encompass a more definite consideration of two or more countries as part of a transnational social field (Basch, Glick-Schiller and Blanc, 1994). In short, they have confirmed, and compelled, a closer examination of the complex formations of 'communities', noting the varied ways in which ethnic or national groups (themselves internally differentiated) create transnational communities, or diasporas across time and space.

Even as I laud these innovations in migration studies, I do note that social anthropologists have not given due consideration to case studies of African migrants and/or refugees in Africa. As I argue in this chapter, African movements although themselves ancient, do not fulfil social scientists' criteria for diaspora formation. These movements are, however, exemplary of the creation of transnational national or ethnic groupings and/or communities, in part supported by social media sites such as Facebook or Myspace. As a response to fast paced economic and socio-cultural globalisation, transnationalism offers a way to consider migrants' constructions of contemporary social networks or globally dispersed communities. However, global disparities exist in peoples' access to continuous and stable access to internet facilities, cellphone technology and air or road travel. This reality impacts Africa more severely and confirms that the creation of transnational communities, inclusive of migrants is not easily configured in a differentially globalised world. Thus as my research unfolded it was apparent that my population was more indicative of migrant populations prior to mass technological advancement, rather than contemporary transnational communities or diasporas resident in the States and Europe. While African immigrants to South Africa do maintain contact with home, and are part of a transnational social field, their contacts with home are largely restricted due to financial constraints, migrants' focus on securing survival in a host country and variable and intermittent access to global technologies.

Given the particularity of my research population and their 'definite' placement within Muizenberg, South Africa, I needed concepts that I could use to theorise the daily activities, and experiences of my research informants. Transnationalism and diaspora offered macro conceptualisations of migrant experiences, but failed to capture my observations. Social capital, a concept in political and sociological circulation since the early twentieth century (Farr, 2004), and patron-clientage, an anthropological concept in circulation since the 1960s, proved to be useful in my contemplations. Therefore in this chapter I move from the macro or global concepts of transnationalism and diaspora, to the micro and locale driven concepts of social capital and patron-clientage. By focussing on migrants *in situ*, I argue for a considered focus on one locality – the host country – especially in the initial comprehension of African migrants' and refugees' positioning in a receiving country. As my work demonstrates, a focus on transnational activities,

to the exclusion of localised activities, would have concealed attempts at brokering advantageous relationships in South Africa with non-Congolese nationals. Thus, even whilst looking for transnational activities, and accounting for them, we cannot ignore migrants' lived realities in their contemporary place of residence, the host country, where they may be 'stuck' for many years without the possibility of either frequent communication with those back home, or home visits.

The concepts of social capital and patron-clientage thus provide conceptual lenses with which to observe and analyse the ways such migrants make the best of or simply reconcile themselves to their circumstances. With luck and shrewd management, the accumulation of social capital and specifically patron-clientage can yield upward socio-economic mobility as well as a degree of consolation in the host country and perhaps a way out of refugee status and the South African informal sector into the global mainstream.

### **A short survey of academic categorisation of migrant communities**

#### *Defining diaspora – theorising the construction of a transnational community*

Although migration has been a phenomenon of study since the early twentieth century, the wider applicability of the concept diaspora only found favour in the 1990s. The first to provide a considered definition of diaspora, Safran (1991:83-4), argued that a diaspora is an:

“Expatriate minority communit[y] whose members share several of the following characteristics: 1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original 'centre' to two or more 'peripheral', or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return – when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship”.

Wahlbeck (2002) contends that Safran's (1991) definition is an ideal type that is abstracted from reality. The ideal type provides for precision and more nuanced comparisons, making it "possible to study the causes and consequences of diaspora formation, *rather* than only to develop descriptive typologies of different diasporas" (Wahlbeck, 2002:231). In this one statement Wahlbeck determines that arguments as to the merits of what constitutes a diasporic community, or the typologies thereof (Cohen, 1997; van Hear, 1998) are arcane, as we as social scientists should be more interested in the diverse ways that migrants act and are acted upon by social forces. Clifford (1996) argues that there is a danger in conceptualising an ideal type diaspora, as this makes the variegated nature of diaspora communities invisible. He states,

"... we should be wary of constructing our working definition of a term like *diaspora* by recourse to an 'ideal type', with the consequence that groups become identified as more or less diasporic, having only two or three, or four of the basic six features. Even the 'pure' forms ... are ambivalent, even embattled, over basic features. Moreover at different times in their history, societies may wax and wane in diasporism, depending on changing possibilities – obstacles, openings, antagonisms, and connections – in their host countries and transnationally" (Clifford, 1996:306 italics in original).

Clifford (1996:306) then expands the conceptualisation of the term by noting that

"the transnational connections linking diasporas need not be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland...Decentered, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return. And a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin".

In the same vein, Cohen (1996), another prolific theorist of diaspora, furthers Safran's (1991) delineation of diaspora, by adding a further four aspects thereto. These are:

- 1) "... the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
- 2) A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate;
- 3) A sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement and

- 4) The possibility of a distinctive yet creative and enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism” (Cohen, 1996:515).

In common with Clifford (1996) and Wahlbeck (2002), Cohen (1996:515) warns that “no one diaspora will manifest all features”. The historicity, timing, structural features and determinants of each diaspora are varied. Each experience of diasporic consciousness is also impacted and experienced differently within particular host countries. Despite this variation in expression Safran’s definition of diaspora, and Cohen’s (1997) and Clifford’s (1996) further theorisations thereof, depict the underlying notion of community, however created and maintained, dispersed across *states*, rather than nations.

Arguing for a more politically savvy and nuanced discussion of diaspora Anthias (1998) posits that Cohen’s (1997a) typology closes off particular kinds of questioning, in particular as regards the “intersectionalities of class and gender” (Anthias, 1998:562). Thus the particular diasporic types do not allow for variation and diversity of experience, as the diasporic community is fashioned on

“[t]he assumption ... that there is a natural and unproblematic ‘organic’ community of people without division or difference, dedicated to the same political project(s)” (Anthias, 2004:563).

Anthias (1998) also takes Clifford to task, although she credits him with recognising diaspora as a *social condition*, and/or *process*. Primarily, Anthias avers that diasporic communities are not only hybrid constructions, and thus reorientations of ethnicity/ies<sup>9</sup>, but that they do at times recreate and spur “...ghettoisation, ethnicisation or forms of ethnic and other fundamentalism on all sides (within the dominant group as well)” (Anthias, 1998:568). Anthias thus highlights the diversity and complexity inherent within diasporic and host communities, reminding researchers and social scientists alike that a diaspora is a contested construction.

Her expanded version of diaspora includes an emphasis on the emplacement of migrants<sup>10</sup> within the host country and a recognition of the complex identity formations that are created within the

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<sup>9</sup> Anthias’ (1998) use of ethnicity, rather than nationality, as a diasporic community’s identity is constructed around her sense of the multiple and complex imaginings of diasporic communities within the receiving country. However, I would argue that diasporic communities are not only constituted by the same ethnic group but are also constituted according to nationality (encompassing of Anthias’ notion of trans-ethnic identities), as the reference to a Congolese diaspora and a Nigerian diaspora demonstrates.

<sup>10</sup> In her 2008 paper, Anthias refers to this emplacement of the migrant within the home and host country as ‘translocational positionality’. This particular concept, different to that of transnationalism, re-emphasises the importance of place/s within the understanding of migration. In this way, Anthias recognises that locations (places) continue to be important within the study of various migrations – the ideas of deterritorialisation and

diasporic community, as these identities are mediated through "... class, gender, trans-ethnic alliances and power relations" (Anthias, 1998:568) in relation to both the home and host countries.

Although Tsagarousianou (2004) does not cite Anthias as a reference, she critiques earlier formulations of diaspora in much the same vein:

"... diasporas should better be seen as depending not so much on displacement but on connectivity, or on the complex nexus of linkages that contemporary transnational dynamics make possible and sustain"

and

"I suggest that diasporas should be seen not as given communities, a logical albeit deterritorialized extension of an ethnic or national group, but as imagined communities, continuously reconstructed and reinvented" (Tsagarousianou, 2004:52).

Anthias's (1998) and Tsagarousianou's (2004) formulations recognise the centrality of migrants' agency within the construction of diasporic communities. They further Vertovec's (1999) recognition that the concept of diaspora delineates a triadic relationship – home-migrant-host. Thus, we move from merely describing a diasporic community according to Wahlbeck's ideal type, Cohen's (1997) diaspora typology and/or Clifford's 'diaspora as social condition' to identifying, studying and theorising the complex and diverse iterations of diasporic communities – diasporas – as they respond to the effects of postmodernity and globalisation.

For the purposes of my thesis then, the concept of diaspora denotes an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983; Tsagarousianou, 2004), identified as such by the people themselves, as well as 'outsiders', that has through forced, or voluntary migration, moved to various parts of the world, so as to further their lives 'here' (host country) while socially and symbolically tied to 'there' (home country) (Faist, 2000). Diasporic communities are in continuous flux, as they experience uncertain acceptance by residents/citizens within host countries, or host states across time, whilst adapting to the social, religious, political and economic aspects of the host society. Therefore their emplacement within a particular locale is not without tension and negotiation. As argued by Clifford (1996:311), "Diaspora cultures ... mediate, in a lived

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reterritorialisation are therefore equally employed in understanding the deconstruction and situated reconstruction of identities and belonging.

tension, the experiences of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place". Diasporans are Janus-faced, as they peer into the historic distance to a 'form' of home, while experiencing and envisioning the present and the future in relation to home *and* host countries. Ultimately, "[i]n many respects, diasporas are not actual but imaginary and symbolic communities and political constructs: it is we who often call them into being" (Palmer, 2000:29).

*Transnational migration – emphasising emplacement in home and receiving countries*

Despite the history and conceptual strength of diaspora as a migration concept, another and related concept, transnationalism, gathered ground during the 1990s. Leading proponents of transnationalism, Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc (1994), recognised the importance of network theory and chain migration as expounded by Mitchell (1969) and Eades (1987) respectively. They noted, however, that these theorisations of migration did not go far enough in detailing the socio-economic and political emplacement of immigrants in *both* the home and receiving countries. Thus in trying to understand and conceptualise their research data, Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc (1994:48) defined transnationalism as "the *process* by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement (my emphasis)".

Their conceptualisation and explication of the term is based on four theoretical premises. These are:

- 1) the construction of a transnational understanding is 'inextricably linked' to the global penetration of capital
- 2) the transnational process creates 'social fields that cross national boundaries'
- 3) the notions of place, culture and identity need to be reconfigured within the social sciences as notions that are not necessarily constitutive of each other
- 4) transmigrants are implicated<sup>11</sup> within the historical, social, political and national aspects of 'two or more nation-states' (Basch et al, 1994:22).

Their premises and theorising of the concept transnationalism were directly responsive to the qualitative shifts occurring in the global political economy. They note that

"[t]he development of transnationalism within the past several decades is part of a long-term process of global capitalist penetration. The development of

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<sup>11</sup> Implicated yes, but not necessarily active participants therein.

an international division of labour and the integration of the world by transnational corporations that develop worldwide systems of production, distribution, and marketing affect both the flow of immigrants and the manner in which they come to understand who they are and what they are doing” (Basch et al, 1994:12).

As many migrants moved from the global south to the global north, they followed tenuous links previously created through international economic relations, or previous colonial relations. Whilst sojourning within the receiving country, these migrants maintained links with those back home – friends, kin and neighbours – often remitting money to bolster the development of the familial home. Given that most of these migrants were *first-generation* economic migrants, the diaspora concept was inapplicable. However, the relations that migrants maintained with similar others and with those back home, spanned two or more states.

Relations of reciprocity, exchange and solidarity (Faist, 2000) confirmed the creation of transnational social fields that linked kinship or friendship groups, exchange circuits and transnational communities. More and more social scientists became interested in the *content* and maintenance of these social ties *across* two or more states (Guarnizo and Diaz, 1999; Kearney, 1995; Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2007), and how these social ties translated into the experience of mobility. Social scientists highlighted the economic, cultural and political aspects of the social ties, and in so doing questioned the earlier sociological work on assimilation (Basch et al, 1994). Basch et al (1994) argue that social scientists in the States were drawn into a hegemonic construction that uses race as a signifier of difference, and hence a means to exclude and include certain ‘others’. In this frame of reference – assimilation theory – white immigrants were incorporated into the ‘American dream’, whilst black immigrants were disempowered as ‘others’. Further assimilationist theorists focused on the integration of immigrants into the host country, without theorising the relationships maintained with those back home, or in parallel societies.

Transnationalism, unlike diaspora, has also allowed for a more embrative view of social and political identities. Although the notion of a transnational community can subsume the many differences found therein – dimensions of class, race, gender and age spring to mind – the idea of transnationalisation (transnationalism) (Faist, 2000) implies continuous movement. Faist (2000:200) states that

“... international migration is not a discrete event constituted by a permanent move from one nation-state to another. Rather it is a multi-dimensional economic, political, cultural and demographic process that encapsulates



various links between two or more settings and manifold ties of movers and stayers between them. Transnational social spaces emerge”.

In short, the transnationalism concept offered theorists a means to investigate processes without being constrained by a focus on the receiving country. In this way, social theorists could speak of creolised or hybridised identities, as political and social identities became disentangled and ‘uprooted’ from an emphasis on one locale – either the sending country, or the receiving country. Migrant identities were deterritorialised, as the notion of culture lost its anchor within the nation-state. In a world of migration, people and culture were on the move.

The migration historian might ask why the need for a new discourse on migration? Surely previous work on international migration and diaspora could have sufficed, as ‘new’ migrations present theorists with ‘old’ questions? Basch et al. (1994) argue that the processes observed within the new migrations are *not* new. Many earlier migration scholars (Watson, 1977) noted immigrants’ propensity to maintain transnational connections with those at home through letter writing, remitting money to the homeland to secure education for children, to assist siblings and spouses to migrate, or returning home to land secured “through labour abroad” (Basch et al, 1994:51). Yet, as they state “[t]hese ties were discounted and obscured by the narratives of nation that were prevalent until the current period of globalization” (Basch et al, 1994:51).

Despite, the historic existence of transnational activities and processes “the current connections of immigrants are of a different order than past immigrant linkages to home societies” (Basch et al, 1994:52). The differences can be accorded to increased connectivity, the creation of the modern state and the ongoing processes of economic and cultural globalisation. During the early and mid-twentieth century, communication across large distances was limited to post (referred to more currently as ‘snail mail’), land line telephones and telex whose rates were prohibitively expensive. In the latter half of the twentieth century the technological explosion, in particular the internet, created vast potentials to connect with people across long distances and across time zones almost instantaneously (Lewellen, 2002; Faist, 2000), at a much cheaper rate than before (phone-cards, skype). More recent social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook have added a new dimension to ‘keeping in touch’, as participants upload personal photographs or videos to share with family and friends. In a sense, the globalisation concept, and the possibility for increased migration, necessitated the introduction of a new way of speaking about cross-border, global activities.

Transnationalism thus describes activities and processes within the course of migration and potential ‘settlement’ within the host country that occur *across* states. Essentially the

transnational understanding of migration emphasises both the host country and the homeland, whereas earlier work, particularly in sociology, considered the adaptation of immigrants to the host country, prioritising the concepts of assimilation and integration<sup>12</sup>. The transnational understanding of migration therefore shifts the understanding of static cultural identities, or the loss thereof, to a more nuanced understanding of constructed identities that are particular to time and *places*. It also depicts diaspora as an example of a *transnational community* (Faist, 2000; Wahlbeck, 2002; Yeoh, Willis, and Fakhri, 2003) and not the only form thereof<sup>13</sup>. Transnationalism is thus a reference to activities and processes that constitute and maintain a diaspora and other transnational communities, such as transnational elites.

In summation then, even though diaspora refers to a social condition, and process, the increasing use of transnationalism within migration literature demonstrates certain changes in the field of migration studies:

- 1) As an integral aspect of diaspora is the reality of longitudinal time, the contemporary realities of time-space compression and the collectivities created thus, needed to be 'named'.
- 2) As migration theorists consolidated the diaspora concept, it was apparent that certain activities *across* national borders were being ignored in discussions. In response, the concept of transnationalism (a denotation of processes occurring across national borders) provided a means to discuss transnational activities.
- 3) Given the nature of technological advancements, and the attendant creation of the 'globalisation' concept, transnationalism provides a means to include global processes, and not merely processes that occur between the sending and receiving countries.

Transnationalism has provided a further means of discussing the formation of a diaspora. Whereas previously diasporic studies focused on the cultural and identity aspects of particular diasporas pundits of transnationalism focused more robustly on remittances, the creation of political organisations and religion within transnational communities and diasporas (Basch et al, 1994; Levitt, 1998 and 2001; Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2007). Thus the concept of transnationalism does not invalidate the applicability of the diaspora concept, as it refers more importantly to *processes* of 'becoming', rather than the *condition* of becoming. Yet not in any timeless sense: transnationalism analyses today's nascent or potential diasporas as they are being forged under conditions of globalisation, to which the concept is inextricably linked.

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<sup>12</sup> Anthropologists working in the field of migration have a history of working both within the receiving country and the host country (see Watson, 1977) or of implicating home within the experiences of those 'left' back home (Brettell, 1983; Gardner, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> See Vertovec (2003:651) for a short discussion of other transnational communities/organisations that he refers to as 'transnational social formations'.

When Congolese movement is considered in light of the above discussions on diaspora and transnationalism, these movements and the activities therein are indicative of a transnational community, rather than a diaspora. While Congolese men and women share a history of out-migration, the length of time associated with this out-migration, and the fact that second and third generations have not established routes and/or links to the DRC as yet, confirm their status as a transnational community and counters their designation as a diaspora. As Congolese reproduce themselves in their host countries, or more pertinently their 'adopted' countries, materially and physically, their children, and their children's children are likely to create the further generations of a diasporic community. This reproduction and the creation of a diasporic consciousness will however depend on their experiences within their adopted countries, and their relationship with 'home' – the DRC – and those they've left behind. If the children are assimilated into the respective receiving countries, it is likely that their psychological and emotional links will be to the receiving country, as home, rather than to their parents' homeland. These ties will be entrenched, especially if reception in the host country is fairly amiable. A negative reception could very well create a diasporic consciousness. But these two possibilities are currently mere conjecture. The passage of time will delineate the realities that exist for the Congolese transnational community/ies.

#### *Positioning the refugee in involuntary migration*

“Nations have treated (and been allowed to treat) citizens of other countries in a manner that would violate their own domestic standards. This, in turn, has helped lead to much of the human carnage that marks the world today”  
(Gibney, 1991:87 in Chimni, 1998:361).

While diaspora and transnationalism are often applied to situations of voluntary migrants (bar the reference to the Jewish diaspora), these concepts can be useful in refugee studies. As my participants self-identified as asylum seekers and/or refugees, I critically discuss the concept and its experiential aspects here.

#### Defining the refugee – a different sort of migrant?

In 1992 Harrell-Bond and Voutira (1992:6) reported that “[i]t has been estimated that up to 140 million people have been forcibly uprooted in [the twentieth] century”. By 1999, Crisp argued that “... roughly one in three of the 100 to 120 million people currently living outside their country of birth can be considered as refugees” (Crisp, 1999:2). Given the increasing numbers of

refugees and the articulation of the concept, the lived reality of the refugee has come to represent a humanitarian crisis of alarming proportions<sup>14</sup> over the past fifty years. Refugee numbers have waxed and waned since the 1950s, as have the particular demographics of this legal category, but this has not affected the accumulated result. Colson (2003) and Chimni (1998) are indeed correct in naming the twentieth century the ‘century of the refugee’. Whether the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will exceed its record remains to be seen.

In response to these demographic and numerical shifts, as well as the reactions of affected states, the ‘refugee’ has been reconceptualised. Originally refugees were perceived as a military problem rather than a humanitarian problem (Malkki, 1995). Whilst many people were displaced during the modernisation of Europe (Harrell-Bond and Voutira, 1992), refugees received wider attention towards the end of World War II as European governments’ tried to orchestrate spatial and legal control over moving bodies. As Malkki (1995a:497) states, “... certain key techniques for managing mass displacements of people first became standardized and then globalized” in the aftermath of World War II. In 1951, with the creation of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), the perception of refugees shifted conclusively from the military definition to a humanitarian one.

The United Nations Geneva Convention of 1951, defined ‘the refugee’ as someone living outside of his or her place of origin as a result of a “well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (Black, 2001:63). This particular conceptualisation of the refugee – one in need of refuge and assistance – created a vast humanitarian aid network that included the United Nations as the UNHCR, other aid or religious organisations, non-governmental organisations and states. However, in the latter part of the twentieth century, the concept was reconceptualised institutionally as the ‘onslaught’ of refugees from third world countries (and the effects of globalisation) effected a more nuanced construction of ‘refugeeness’, refugee assistance and conceptualisations of homeland, exile, sovereignty, nationhood and citizenship (Chimni, 1998; Zetter, 1991 and 2007).

In 1992, Harrell-Bond and Voutira (1992:7) stated that refugees are defined as

“people who have undergone a violent ‘rite’ of separation and unless or until they are ‘incorporated’ as citizens into their host state (or returned to their state of origin) find themselves in ‘transition’, or in a state of ‘liminality’.

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<sup>14</sup> This increasing visibility of refugees, led to the sub-field of refugee studies in migration studies.

This 'betwixt and between' (Turner, 1969) status may not only be legal and psychological, but social and economic as well".

This particular delineation of the term hints at much more than the 1951 Geneva Convention's expression of the label. It continues to highlight the need for assistance, and the inalienable right to remain attached to one's homeland. However, it also refers to an expectation with regard to the particular assistance – either incorporation into the host society, or repatriation.

The response from European and African states to refugees has been lukewarm to put it mildly. Despite the reality that 97% of the refugee population *remains* in Africa and that '[Africa] is also a place of refuge' (Malkki, 1995:503), European countries like Spain and Germany have become more militaristic in the patrol of their borders. As recently as October 2010, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel asserted that multiculturalism in Germany had not worked, and thus urged especially Turkish immigrants to integrate by learning German and assuming Christian beliefs (Kauffmann, 2010). As commented by Chimni (1998:367), "A central feature of the post-Cold war era is that refugees are no longer welcome in the North". While "nearly 50 million Europeans sought refuge abroad and all of them were resettled" (Marrus, 1990:54 quoted in Chimni, 1998:364) relief agencies and governments considered integration as only one of three types of 'durable solutions' for Third World refugees. The other solutions, undoubtedly preferred were: refugee repatriation and resettlement to a country of second or third asylum (Malkki, 1995a).

Chimni (1998) positions the regime of non-entrée in Europe within the global economy. Previously African states were colonised, so as to extract 'productivity'. Since decolonisation European states have continued to penetrate Southern countries' economies through the various policies posited by transnational aid organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Chossudovsky, 1997). Thus, capital penetration has continued unabated. European states have ignored their responsibility for the repercussions of this capital penetration – increased impoverishment and disempowerment of Third World countries' citizens, particularly women and children, and endemic genocidal wars, like those in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, that led to millions dead and massive displacements (Lemarchand, 2009) – and have thus contained the resulting problems within the African continent. Their tough immigration laws and, in the case of refugees, an emphasis on repatriation, rather than settlement means that they attempt to take no responsibility for the burden of African refugees.

Chimni (1998), although emphasising international refugee law and its application, presents a political economy reading of the current refugee realities in certain European states. However, he doesn't disentangle the many complexities inherent within a framing of European states as 'the north'. Rather he furthers the binary opposition of 'North:South'. This binary, easily replaced by another, First World: Third World, hides the discontinuities that exist within and between these very states; the incongruities that do not fit easily within his neo-Marxist framing. For example, not all European states are 'First World' territories. Countries such as Serbia and Croatia, recent victims of civil war and bombing by NATO forces, themselves had massive refugee populations seeking refuge within border countries. And not all Third World countries are necessarily impoverished. For example, South Africa is a mixed bag of first world, second world, and third world settlements, towns and cities. At times, all three of these realities are present within a single geographic space. How do these realities speak to Chimni's arguments?

Unfortunately the presence of incongruities does not derail the binary opposition of North:South or First World:Third World as these realities are not widespread. Thus the sheer lack of numbers perpetuates the use of these binaries, and it doesn't compel a rethinking thereof. However, it is important to note the 'anomalies' to the accepted binaries, for within the anomalies one finds new forms of being and new areas of research. So, whilst many European states are far wealthier than African states, and therefore 'closed' to African refugees, it is true that wealthier African states like South Africa refuse assistance to, or provide inadequate assistance to, asylum seekers and refugees (Landau, 2006). Thus, countries in the global North are not the only perpetrators of suspect behaviour towards asylum seekers and refugees.

Governments of the global south, burdened by their own rural and urban poor, are often at a loss when it comes to the provision of appropriate aid/assistance to refugees (Grabska, 2006). By creating a category of 'otherness', whether in reference to refugees or other migrants (they are not citizens of the host country) "symbolic boundaries" are further strengthened within "structural boundaries" that facilitate access to citizens' rights and humanitarian assistance (Fanjoy, 2008). Consider the case of Sudanese refugees in Egypt. "[B]etween 1997 and March 2004, over 67 000 Sudanese refugees claimed refugee status from the UNHCR office. Over 20 700 were recognized with another 7 300 awaiting a decision" (Grabska, 2006:294). What happened to the other 39 000 applications? As Grabska (2006:304) states, "By marginalizing the refugee population the Egyptian state is creating long-lasting negative consequences for its own population, with increasing xenophobic and racial problems". In short, as more and more people are compelled to move as a result of persecution – not just the fear thereof – in African states, the "protective label 'refugee' is no longer a basic Convention right, but a highly privileged prize which few deserve and most claim illegally" (Zetter, 2007:184).

Given the tenuous political and economic climates in many African states, settlement in the country of first asylum is usually the least acceptable for these African governments. Many African states, particularly in the north and eastern part of Africa have refugee camps situated along their borders with conflict ridden countries (Tanzania, Uganda, Egypt, Mozambique). These refugee camps are administered in large part by the UNHCR. Receiving states lack political will to assist these refugees, especially when these refugees threaten their relationships with the states of origin (Grabska, 2006).

In response to governmental inaction and limited UNHCR support and assistance in these camps, a number of asylum seekers and refugees forsake them so as to create thriving livelihoods among native populations (Grabska, 2006; Malkki, 1992). Yet these attempts to fashion a life in the African country of first asylum are beset by administrative inefficiencies in the provision of refugee status which negatively impact refugees' adaptation to the host country (Grabska, 2006; Landau, 2006; Vigneswaran, 2008). Similarly local populations themselves deprived by the state, attack these 'newcomers' in fits of rage and anger. In short, the behaviour exhibited by both the state and its people are prejudicial at best, and xenophobic at worst – an indictment that is applicable to African and European states alike (Crush and Pendleton, 2004; Dodson and Oelofse, 2000; Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders, 2002; Stolcke, 1995; Wallace, 2002).

In Europe, an added dimension to national consciousness is the racial and racist dimension. Third world refugees particularly from Africa are represented as a homogenous black mass of bodies; not as victims, but as pariahs in European states (Malkki, 1996). Chimni (1998) argues that the turn to "voluntary repatriation" and the reliance on law and bureaucratic procedures frames and sanitises European prejudice against refugees from the South. Through the creation of a "myth of difference"<sup>15</sup> which posits that European refugee flows are different to African refugee flows, "... an image of a 'normal' refugee was constructed – white, male and anti-communist – which clashed sharply with the individuals fleeing the Third World" (Chimni, 1998:351). European states, not keen to admit their bias and xenophobia as there would be political and economic repercussions, rationalise their non-entrée regime as an attempt to weed out abuse of their assistance (Chimni, 1998). As Chimni (1998:352) reports, "Western states ... merely seek to check abuse of refugee status by individuals seeking a better life in the affluent North"<sup>16</sup>. Thus the morality and ethics of asylum seekers are questioned, and their humanitarian

<sup>15</sup> See Chimni (1998:356 – 360) for a discussion on the manner in which the myth of difference was constructed.

<sup>16</sup> This representation of the affluent North, embellished by the North and consumers 'pseudo-experiences' thereof through media and music, is false. As many scholars can attest to, the North, despite being defined monolithically, has 'native' communities and/or ethnics that are assisted through welfare. The difference, however, is that provision made by Northern states is qualitatively better than the provision made by Southern states. This difference relates to the

need ignored. In essence Chimni's (1998) arguments engender a consideration of *power* and politics on national and international stages and within aid organisations. His argument, in particular its reference to international refugee law, provides insight to the macro level politics of refugee status.

Zetter (2007), like Chimni, (1998) also questions the disempowering nature of refugee classification, but through a close examination of bureaucratic labelling. He argues that the contemporary reconceptualisation of 'the refugee' as a label, rather than a category, imposes a bureaucratic frame of reference onto a humanitarian concern. For Zetter (2007:173) the refugee label

"recognizes both a process of identification and a mark of identity; implies something independently applied, but also something which can be chosen and amended; has a tangible and real world meaning, but is also metaphorical and symbolic".

As such, the identification of someone as a refugee is a political act, defining the body of a person more widely socially, economically and nationally. The imposed 'refugee identity' identifies who belongs and who does not; who is welcome and who is not. Thus "... state action mobilizes bureaucratic labelling to legitimize the *exclusion* and marginalization of refugees" (Zetter, 2007:189, emphasis in original), rendering the refugee powerless in his construction of self at a meso level. The refugee label objectifies the bodies and personae of individuals, casting them as cases to be heard and verified, rather than as human beings, who have experienced trauma and flight in response to horrendous circumstances in their countries of origin (Fanjoy, 2008; Malkki, 1992 and 1995; Zetter, 2007).

Increasingly the power of identification, of labelling, falls within the hands of receiving countries' governments, the governments of countries of resettlement and the UNHCR (Fanjoy, 2008; Grabska, 2006; Zetter, 2007). Refugee status has to be applied for, and conferred by the state. This bureaucracy, or lack thereof, threatens the refugee's humanity. Thus more and more the bureaucratic instrumentality of the term ignores or belies the experiential nature of non-classification as a refugee. As Grabska (2006) and Fanjoy (2008) note, the bureaucratic construction of one's self as a refugee provides access to citizenship rights that include access to employment, educational and medical opportunities. The denotation as a refugee posits one as a

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manner in which various states are engaged within the neo-liberal global economy, and the history of colonisation and imperialism, and whether the country was the coloniser or the colonised.



pseudo-citizen in the host country. Thus the inability to be labelled as such creates a non-entity, or as Malkki (1992:34) states,

“Refugees, liminal in the categorical order of nation-states ... fit Turner’s famous characterization of liminal personae as ‘naked unaccommodated man’ or ‘undifferentiated raw material’ (1967: 98 – 99)... The term ‘refugees’ denotes an objectified, undifferentiated mass that is meaningful primarily as an aberration of categories and an object of ‘therapeutic interventions’ (cf Foucault, 1979).”

To even attempt classification as a refugee, both in European and African states, is highly problematic for the applicant, as the asylum seeker is treated with suspicion. It is the label that assumes importance – not the life or lives it is meant to protect. As Malkki (1992), Zetter (1991) and Chimni (1998) describe, marginalisation is an innate aspect of refugeeness, as refugees are continuously constructed as other to both the society they have left and the one(s) in which they seek temporary or permanent shelter. As noted above and confirmed by Grabska (2006) marginalisation, as a process, includes legal marginality as captured in national rules, xenophobia and self-exclusion by the asylum seeker. In short, the refugee label and/or term is not wholly legalistic, nor entirely socially constructed. It attempts to describe a process, a social position, a bureaucratic label, a group or category of persons, a person. Yet ultimately the construct is meaningless without the context of the person – country of origin, race, class, gender, familial networks and receiving country. Whether in Africa, or Europe, the African refugee is constructed as a burden on state resources. Therefore, originally disempowered through forced movement from the place of origin, refugees are further marginalised within receiving countries through legislation and national and international inaction. In toto, African states’ inadequate administrative systems, lack of political will, and dire economies, combined with Europe’s ‘closed border policies’ have doomed asylum seekers to liminal positions – unable to return home and unable to integrate efficiently into the country of first asylum. The inadequate processing of refugee status and the consequences thereof lead to the further traumatising of individuals, families and communities.

Despite the above theorisation as to the ‘singularity’ of the refugee category, contemporary analyses of refugee adaptation in receiving countries (Crisp, 1999; Koser and van Hear, 2003) highlight that it is more difficult to maintain conceptual exclusion as “[t]oday more than ever, refugees are part of a complex migratory phenomenon, in which political, ethnic, economic, environmental and human rights factors combine and lead to population movements” (Crisp,

1999:4). As noted by JC<sup>17</sup> in a conversation during 2005, Congolese refugees have not only migrated as a result of the war in the Eastern DRC, but also because their “stomachs were empty”. Whether one argues for conceptual singularity of the term ‘refugees’, or for an inclusion of refugees within the more general rubric of migration, lived experiences of African refugees, particularly within South Africa, are not easily extricated from the larger African economic migrant population<sup>18</sup>.

### The Refugee Diaspora?

If we accept that, globally, the distinction between refugees and other involuntary migrants or economic migrants has blurred, and “increasingly complex social transformations have generated more complex forms of persecution and means of exile” (Zetter, 2007:188), then it follows that the more blurred the naming conventions become, the more uncertain will be the lives of all migrants within host countries, whether documented or not (Grabska, 2006; Fanjoy, 2008; Malkki, 1992). In an attempt to maintain a focus on refugees in a more mobile world, authors like Koser (2003) have attempted to conceptualise an intersectional social scientific field that encompasses diasporic studies and refugee studies. Thus, in more recent years, the concept of a ‘refugee diaspora’ has received greater attention for “[j]ust like everyone else, if not more so, the refugee is mobile, uprooted, dislocated and lonely” (Shami, 1996:7).

The attempt to position ‘the refugee’ within the field of migration and particularly diaspora is commendable. However, I have a number of concerns with the initial conceptualisation of the refugee diaspora. Firstly, the diaspora concept, as elaborated upon above, connotes exile, as does the concept of ‘refugee’. Thus, marrying refugee to diaspora is tautological. Secondly, the concept diaspora positions migrants within a long time frame that implies the propagation of second and third generations in the host country/ies. However, refugees, especially in the United Nations Geneva Convention 1951 understanding are not migrants or displaced persons of long duration. Their sojourn within refugee camps is to be minimised, and if this is not possible, they are assisted to migrate to countries of second asylum. During the process of this movement, ‘refugees’ lose the legal status of a refugee, as they are conceptualised<sup>19</sup> and categorised differently. In essence they become transmigrants, crossing national borders, rather than refugees.

<sup>17</sup> A Congolese friend, and at the time refugee in South Africa.

<sup>18</sup> I make specific reference to the ‘African refugee’ or ‘African migrant’ here, as ‘other’ Africans are conceptualised differently to white, European migrants. South Africa’s immigration policy is widely touted as one of the best globally. However, the application, or in many cases non-application thereof, positions African migrants on the receiving end of a bureaucratic nightmare (Sunday Independent, 2009; Johns, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> This hasn’t been in the case of Greek Cypriots though (Black, 2001).

Thirdly, the contemporary conceptualisation of a refugee and the attendant humanitarian activities and agencies (governmental and non-governmental) that are created in response to this conceptualisation are fraught with political difficulties (Black, 2001; Chimni, 2009). As Chimni (2009) argues, the refugee is constructed within a powerful and global political arena that constructs “imperial humanitarianism”. As such many potential refugees are not granted their status, or they choose to deny the label. Thus, when we refer to refugee diasporas as social scientists, would we only refer to those people who have been categorised as such? Or would we include those who *might* be referred to as such?

Fourthly, and more damning for me, diasporas have always been defined ethnically or nationally. Thus, in much the same way that the ‘African’ diaspora doesn’t recognise the movement from *individual* African states, the ‘refugee diaspora’ lumps all refugees together. It doesn’t sufficiently disentangle the various moments of movement. Although Koser (2003) and others present national refugee diasporas, such as the Congolese refugee diaspora and the Sudanese refugee diaspora, this categorisation limits the diverse realities of refugees to the initial moment of identification as such. Malkki (1995a:510) states,

“... although many refugees have survived violence and loss that are literally beyond the imagination of most people, we mustn’t assume that refugee status in and of itself constitutes a recognizable, generalizable psychological condition”.

As I argue above, since a diaspora is of long duree, a reference to the *initial* point of movement – refugee diaspora – continues to frame refugees “... beyond or above politics, and beyond or above history – a world in which they are simply ‘victims’” (Malkki, 1995:518). Theorists who posit the idea of a refugee diaspora ignore the changing dynamics of people’s lives, and the immense failure of ‘legal’ categorisation to speak to or about lived reality. In trying to conceptualise an intersecting field of study, we ultimately run the risk of dehumanising and colonising the ‘African’ refugee yet again. Thus, I would caution the wholesale and uncritical acceptance of the concept of the ‘refugee diapora’.

In sum, given the continuing turmoil and consequences thereof, in countries as diverse as East Timor, DRC and Bosnia, Georgia and Herzegovina, and the effects of the global recession from which recovery could take another few years, the global refugee population is not set to decrease in the near future. If we accept that the various refugee populations, especially those categorised as part of a ‘wider diaspora’ (Koser and van Hear, 2003), are not easily disentangled from the broader migrant populations, whether voluntary or involuntary (Crisp, 1999; Koser and van

Hear, 2003), then the problem is complex indeed. Despite this practical conundrum, certain social scientists and a number of policy makers continue to differentiate asylum seekers and refugees as categories distinct from other categories such as economic migrants, transnational migrants and immigrants (Black, 2001; Crisp, 1999; Colson, 2003; Harrell-Bond and Voutira, 1992; Koser and van Hear, 2003). There may be heuristic and other advantages in maintaining the distinction but it must be noted that the category of 'refugee' is not static: refugees, especially those who settle elsewhere voluntarily, can and do shift their legal and social status from that of refugee, to that of migrant and eventually citizen, if the host country makes legal provision therefor.

### *Questioning 'the African diaspora'*

The above theorisations, explanations and presentations of migration phenomena have largely been created within western discourse, in response to the presence of migrants in Europe and America. The large-scale movement of African peoples *within* the African continent across national borders as a result of civil wars, famine and ethnic persecution has been ignored by western academics, although not by international non-governmental organisations such as *Medecins sans Frontieres*, MONUC and Oxfam. Similarly, not much is being done within the South African domain on migration, especially given South Africa's status and reputation as one of the more stable economies and polities on the African continent<sup>20</sup>.

For many African migrants, the colonising metropolises found in Europe are paradisiacal constructions of beauty, non-suffering and abundance (Thomas, 2007; Winter, 2004). The poverty in these countries of paradise is not recognised or acknowledged by migrants prior to their departure. Migrants' blindness to the decay of the metropole is due to the intoxicating experience of 'civilisation' at the hands of British and French people (during colonisation), who extolled the virtues of their home and civilisation through the 'civilising mission' of Catholic and Protestant missionaries, and provided living proof of its advantages with their clothing, vehicles, buildings and consumer goods. The oppression and racism that African men and women experienced at the hands of many white missionaries and government officials did not seem to affect the mythic creation of the metropole (Fanon, 2001; Thomas, 2007). Therefore many 'civilised natives', like Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon and Léopold Senghor, were horrified at their treatment at the hands of white men and women in the metropolises. Raised to believe that their education set them apart from other black men – thus the importance of class – they aspired to the upper echelons of society. However, they were not welcomed into the fold. Rather they

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<sup>20</sup> The African Centre for Migration Studies, formerly the Forced Migration Studies Programme, situated in Johannesburg, South Africa and the Southern African Migration Project situated in Canada, are exceptions.

were denigrated and ostracised as a result of their race; a basis for discrimination that over-rides all other considerations and that African migrants continue to suffer, whether in Africa (South Africa) Europe (Belgium, England, France and Spain), America or Australia.

In recent years, academics have turned their attention to the plight of the African diaspora, dissecting the varied experiences of slavery in Caribbean countries, Asia and to a much larger extent in America and Britain (Cohen, 1997; Hall, 1993). Originally used by Shepperson in 1965 the phrase – the African diaspora – denoted the parallels he saw between ‘the African diaspora’ and the Jewish diaspora (Alpers, 2001). Despite the initial recognition that Africans were mobile agents prior to, and after, the slave trade Shepperson emphasised the slave trade as the “heart of the African diaspora” (Alpers, 2001:5). Thus, the primary emphasis in studying and delineating ‘the African diaspora’ was the forced movement of Africans *prior* to colonisation in the late nineteenth century. This particular usage of the phrase and its focus was later encouraged by the writings of African intellectuals within the diaspora such as Hall and Gilroy. Zeleza contends that

“... our understanding of the African diaspora remains limited by ... the analytical tendency to privilege the Atlantic, or rather the Anglophone, indeed the American branch of the African diaspora, as is so clear in Gilroy’s seminal text” (2005:36)

Recently Shepperson’s categorisation of the African diaspora was extended by a number of theorists, particularly historians (Alpers 2001; Palmer, 2000; Patterson and Kelley, 2000; Zeleza, 2005) and cultural studies intellectuals (Hall, 1993; Gilroy, 1993). Palmer (2000) argues that the African diaspora could refer to five or more particular moments in history, the first recorded as early as 100 000 years ago – the first movement of homo sapiens within and without Africa. However, in contemporary use, the African diaspora is often shorthand for the period between the fifteenth century – the start of the Atlantic slave trade – and the nineteenth century – the ‘official’ end of slavery (Palmer, 2000). Palmer (2000:28) speculates that “... as many as 200 000 Africans [may have been taken] to various European societies and eleven to twelve million to the Americas [during the Atlantic slave trade]”. The cultural and religious aspects of this slave diaspora have been studied at length and differentiated from other diasporas such as the Jewish diaspora – a victim diaspora – and the Chinese diaspora – a trade diaspora – by Cohen (1997)<sup>21</sup>, a leading theorist of diaspora and its permutations.

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<sup>21</sup> See Patterson and Kelley (2000) for further citations on the African diaspora.

Zezeza (2005) states that Palmer's (2000) delineation of potential African diasporas "[stretch] the notion of diaspora too far beyond analytical recognition to be very useful" (2005:43). Bakewell (2008:13) concurs, arguing that Palmer's "first two streams" have not "resulted in a group which shares a common ethnic consciousness". Despite their disagreement as to the timing and conceptual understanding of African *diasporas* (plural), Bakewell (2008), Palmer (2000) and Zezeza (2005) agree that 'the African diaspora' is not representative of the complex and varied expressions of contemporary African diasporas. Palmer (2000:28) argues that the newer migrations from Africa are different to the African slave diaspora as a result of "racial oppression and resistance to it".

Zezeza (2005:44) organises more recent streams of migrations from Africa according to the receiving regions: "intra-Africa, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, and Atlantic diasporas". He further posits that 'contemporary African diasporas' have been formed since the late nineteenth century, and are easily categorised into time periods that denote the effects of global politics and economics on or in Africa. These three time periods are:

- 1) colonisation (late 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1950s/1960s,
- 2) decolonisation (1960s) and
- 3) structural adjustment programmes (since the 1980s).

In essence Zezeza (2005) privileges the push forces of migration from the continent, rather than the pull forces to migrate.

Unlike Palmer (2000) and Zezeza (2005), Bakewell (2008) situates contemporary African migrations *within* Africa as well, questioning the persistent emphasis on migration from Africa to *overseas* destinations in the literature. I agree with Bakewell's (2008) thesis, as previous research on migration from Africa has privileged a continued focus on the north, as negatively impacted by African migrants. However, more recent attempts to make European borders less porous, has meant that African migrants are stuck in transit in other African countries (Grabska, 2006).

A feature of African migrants' experiences is their severely limited capital resources – inclusive of monetary and social capital – especially if their network is also under-capitalised; their mobility is severely restricted thereby (van Hear, 2004). Also, due to intermittent or regular civil wars – depending on who you speak to – refugees are a common phenomenon along African borders such as those of: Sudan/Uganda, Uganda/Rwanda, Rwanda/DRC and Ethiopia/Eritrea. While aid relief agencies provide reports on these various displacements (Haver, 2008; UNHCR, 2007), referring to internally displaced peoples, or refugees, contemporary social scientists, and in

particular anthropologists, are yet to give forced or voluntary migration *within* Africa the attention it deserves<sup>22</sup>.

Collectively, Palmer (2000), Zeleza (2005) and Bakewell (2008) reposition and foreground African diasporas, decentering the discussion of 'the African diaspora' from a focus on African-Americans. Their theses provide insight into the changing dynamics of relationships that African peoples have with their home and host countries, as well as with each other. Rather than construct a diaspora created solely on victimisation, such as the Atlantic slave trade, contemporary theorists of African diasporas prioritise the agency of African migrants' in their migration.

Lest we forget, however, the construction of 'the African diaspora' by African intellectuals within the diaspora, was politically motivated. As Gordon and Anderson (1999: 285), state:

"Even if the body of work on the African diaspora has been characterized as "objective" and "apolitical"..., it has emerged from and sustained a tradition of oppositional scholarship (Jackson 1986) and provided the foundations for a cultural politics of identity among peoples of African descent in the Americas".

This political agenda has foregrounded the experiences of African slave descendants in the Americas, the Caribbean and Britain and it has prompted discussion of racial classification, domination and oppression. Zeleza (2005), however, dismisses Gilroy's racialisation of the Atlantic Slave trade while Gordon and Anderson (1999:289) posit the use of 'black diaspora', in line with Gilroy's thesis, arguing that:

"If diasporic identity is created and re-created through routes, it is also imagined in roots. Africa serves as the key symbol for the particularity of Black identities, not just for a set of Afrocentric intellectuals but a wide variety of peoples who identify as Black".

Bakewell (2008) seems to concur with Zeleza (2005) however when he recognises that the essentialisation of blackness as part of the African identity effectively excludes those who are not phenotypically black from any form of Africanity. Thus white South Africans although born in

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<sup>22</sup> In South African anthropology, the exceptions are: Owen Sichone, who considered refugee adaptation in Cape Town, South Africa and a recent MA graduate, Silvana Barbali, who considered Senegalese migration in Port Elizabeth, South Africa; Liisa Malkki is the other known international exception – she studied Hutu refugees in Tanzania.

South Africa, and thus on the African continent, would not be able to claim Africanity, as their whiteness effectively excludes them from this. A reading of Zeleza's (2005) and Bakewell's (2008) articles raises an interesting question: if we had to consider the migration of white South African farmers to the DRC and Congo-Brazzaville, could we argue that they constitute part of the contemporary African migrations within Africa?

The implication of 'African' – whether it connotes blackness or not – compels a closer understanding of the use of 'African' in the 'African diaspora'. As noted by Zeleza (2005:44): "The questions of what is Africa and who are Africans are absolutely critical to analyses of African diasporas". However, while he argues that Africa is a geographic space that contains 54 states, inclusive of its islands, Zanzibar, Seychelles, Mauritius et al., his paper does not do justice to the multivariate ways in which people construct Africa, and African-ness. Nor does he pay attention, as so rightly identified by Bakewell (2008), to the contemporary African diasporas *within* Africa. Rather dismissive of Gilroy's foregrounding of racial consciousness, in particular black consciousness, Zeleza insists that 'the African diaspora' was a political means for African-Americans to situate themselves locally and globally (in alignment with Gordon and Anderson's position). Thus Africa is constructed and 'used' within the service of the African-American political agenda in the United States.

Zeleza's (2005) attention to contemporary African diasporas conceptualises the multi-dimensional subjectivities and identities within the African continent. However, he does not erode the notion of 'African' diasporas sufficiently. The act of not signifying the country/state of origin within Africa, so as to argue for the reality of a Congolese diaspora, a Nigerian diaspora, or even a Yoruba diaspora, *rather* than African diasporas, fails to recognise the diversity of the African continent. Thus, even though Zeleza argues *against* the monolithic construction of African diasporas as 'black' (his 'attack' on Gilroy's racial thesis) and Africa as the continent that spurned 'the African diaspora', his continued use of 'African' continues to reify and homogenise the descriptor and its implications. Similarly, he doesn't provide sufficient discussion as to the movement of African men, women and children within Africa.

The contemporary experiences of migration within, and out of, Africa are empirically a multiplicity of contextualised and complex movements that both initiate and respond to various processes and conditions on the macro, meso and micro levels. While my thesis pays attention to these three levels, I focus more pertinently on the agency and individual experiences of *Congolese* migrants in *South Africa*. I note their individual responses to global and local forces, as they situate themselves within their 'home country' and their receiving countries – for their journey does not necessarily end in South Africa. While I do note the mobile nature of my



research subjects, I argue that their emplacement within a particular country such as South Africa (and later Switzerland, Germany and Holland) constructs individuals who transgress geographic spaces as they inhabit a particular place. Their mobility is important, but their place-living is also revealing of their choices and the challenges they face within a particular space, with a particular history, economy, political situation and society. I argue therefore that the migrant is not necessarily deterritorialised on all levels. The inscription of space that occurs within the receiving country/ies is peculiar to migrants' histories; and that makes for interesting glocalisations (Lewellen, 2002), multiple and/or hybrid identities (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Appadurai, 2003) and 'ways of being African' within and without Africa.

Thus far I have paid particular attention to the macro-level conceptualisation of migration and refugee displacement. The question that begs answering though is how do we conceptualise the daily realities of migrants and/or refugees? As noted earlier, Levitt and Glick Schiller (2007) use the concepts of network and chain migration to operationalise the idea of transnationalism. Yet in the framing of a transnational social space, and the focus on transnational activities that occur between two or more parallel countries, much of the content of migrants' relationships within the host country is glossed over. Since my work was micro focused and inductive, the data spoke of realities embedded within a locality – the host country. My research focus on individual migrants brought to light their failed and successful attempts at creating relationships with similar others, or dissimilar others. Embroiled in their daily, localised experiences, my familiarity with their South African based networks grew and yet I did not conduct an orthodox study of Congolese social networks. Rather I focussed on their first order relationships; relationships that exemplified the creation of relationships out of need – a characteristic of the Congolese habitus. As I pursued this particular line of inquiry the aptness of concepts like social capital and patron-clientage was apparent. These concepts offered my anthropological analysis the much needed shift from a focus on transnational activities (transnationalism) to localised actions and activities (acculturation and familiarisation with the receiving country's environment and its people).

### **Social Capital and Patronage**

Over the past three decades the concept of social capital has been theorised and expanded upon in disciplines as diverse as economics, political studies, sociology, anthropology, management studies and education. While the concept has achieved trans-disciplinary success to varying degrees, the conceptualisation of the concept and its applicability as a panacea for social ills have been questioned by social scientists (Field, 2008; Portes, 1998). The complexity of the term is captured by Adam and Rončević (2003), who state that the concept has a particular "genotype" whilst presenting various "phenotypes". In their review of the prevalence of social capital in the

social sciences, they argue that social capital's leading proponents – Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam – and their adherents have articulated a concept that confuses the source, forms and consequences of social capital with each other (Adam and Rončević, 2003).

Attempting to articulate the social reproduction of classes and inequality within society, Bourdieu defined social capital as, “the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1999:119 quoted in Field, 2008:17). Implicating social capital within a field of class relations, Bourdieu argued that social capital and cultural capital were used by the elite to curtail the social mobility of the proletariat. Thus the use of social capital could have exclusionary effects.

Coleman, like Bourdieu, situated his theorisation within the field of education. Using empirical data, originally gathered for different purposes, Coleman posited that the social capital inherent within a family and a community could positively influence students' progress in school. He defined social capital as,

“the norms, the social networks, and the relationships between adults and children that are of value for the child's growing up. Social capital exists within the family, but also outside the family, in the community” (Coleman (1990:334) in Field (2008:27).

Thus the access to and possession of social capital provided *positive* results for students, despite their class or racial backgrounds. Using rational action theory as a means to think through social capital, Coleman argued that social actors employ rational choice to deliberate on their investment within a social network. Noting that the benefits of participation in a social network frequently accrued to other individuals, Coleman (1988:S118) argued that it isn't in the interests of an individual to “bring social capital into being”.

However, by highlighting the rational choice of actors, Coleman loses sight of the many ways in which relationships are created without forethought or the strategic measurement of benefits. As he himself notes, “social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors” (Coleman, 1988:S98). Social capital thus arises from participation in a social network. Therefore, unless individuals are aware of the potential forms of social capital another individual might have access to, or possess, decisions to relate to another occur in a vacuum of information. Individuals will either befriend another without awareness of the person's social resources, or acquaint themselves with another based on their limited knowledge of that person's prospective

social capital. In the latter instance, the individual strategically chooses to make the connection based on the possible benefits to be derived from such an association; the point made by Coleman (1988). But the former also exists, where social connections are made without strategic forethought.

The third proponent of social capital, Putnam extended the applicability of the concept beyond individuals, and communities, to include voluntary associations. In the 1990s he averred that 'civicness', and thus participation in the democratic state, was declining in the United States due to citizens' declining stock of social capital (Field, 2008). Putnam defined social capital as "features of social life – networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (Putnam, 1996:156 in Field, 2008:35). Like Coleman, Putnam perceives networks as a form of social capital. Thus, his definition hones in on the collective, however defined.

Despite broadening the applicability of the concept to include collectives, the idea that a network is social capital is problematic. Both Coleman and Putnam confuse form with source. Thus, what is a means for the existence of social capital – networks – is seen as an end in itself – social capital. To simplify, a social actor's participation in a network does not give him access to social capital. Rather, as implied by Field (2008) active relating creates *connections* from which social capital arises. For e.g. while I may be part of the wider network of the university, my passive presence within it, does not guarantee access to social capital. Rather, by participating in certain events like seminars, faculty meetings and committee meetings I become better acquainted with the members of the network, and possibly through further, more face-to-face interaction off-campus I will become aware of the social capital – information, norms and values – that exists in the network. In essence, the content of social capital cannot be surmised, or divined, until one participates in a network.

While the concept of social capital, and its theorisation by Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam have been critiqued (Portes, 1998; Siisiäinen, 2000)<sup>23</sup>, social capital remains an important conceptual tool that has been under-utilised within migration studies.<sup>3</sup> In the ethnographic chapters of Parts II and III, I use the concept to delineate the ways in which my research participants attempted to acquire a means to survive and to progress within an alien environment (South Africa) and hopefully beyond it (Europe). Combining the three theorists' conceptualisations, and yet stripping it to its basic ingredients, I posit that social capital refers to the potential and actual resources that arise from and within relationships or social connections. Therefore social capital

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<sup>23</sup> See Field, 2008 for a synopsis of this critique.

exists where relationships exist. By focusing on relationships, rather than specific forms of social capital, I am able to assert that even a dyadic relationship such as the one created between a patron and client contains and can lead to the acquisition of social capital, for that is its only point. In short, I agree with Field (2008:1) when he states that, “The theory of social capital is, at heart, most straightforward. Its central thesis can be summed up in two words: relationships matter”.

In reference to migration, access to particular forms of social capital inherent within homogenous or heterogeneous networks has the potential to further, or delimit, one’s social mobility in an alien environment. Migrants as social actors are therefore able to acquire social capital and reap the benefits of accessing *particular* forms of social capital (for e.g. information with regard to employment opportunities) despite their non-citizenship in the host country. The forms of social capital accessed are dependent on the social characteristics of the individuals they connect with, as well as their own social characteristics (or cultural capital). As a migrant if one were to access a similar individual thus creating a dense tie, one restricts one’s access to potential resources. Acquainting oneself with a *dissimilar* other, thus creating a weak tie, expands the potential forms of social capital available (Granovetter, 2005; Lin, 2008) and may anyway become a less weak tie over time.

A particular source of social capital, vigorously discussed in the 1960s and early 1970s, is the patron-client relationship, also referred to by its constituent words patronage or clientelism, depending on which element is being emphasized. Boissevain (1966:18) defines patronage as, “the complex of relations between those who use their influence, social position or some other attributes to assist and protect others and those whom they so help and protect”. The patron-client relationship has often been described as a dyadic, personal, face-to-face relationship that exists between a powerful and a disempowered person or persons (Boissevain, 1966; Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1980; Silverman, 1965; Stein, 1984). Work in the Mediterranean highlighted the existence of these relationships between peasants and landlords or landowners (Boissevain, 1966 and 1968; Kenny, 1960). Thus, patron-client relationships are asymmetrical in nature.

In this dyad, the patron, defined as “a person who uses his influence to assist and protect some other person” (Boissevain, 1966:18), is recognised as the holder of social, economic and cultural capitals. By virtue of Boissevain’s (1966) and others’ (Galt, 1974; Kenny, 1960; Stein, 1984) definitions of patronage and patron, the client, logically, is the weaker of the two individuals as regards the various capitals. As Stein (1984:30) intimates, patronage is an “adaptive response to hostility and inequality”.

In spite of the power asymmetry, the literature on clientelism recognises that the relationship is *mutually* beneficial to the social actors, as the relationship, built on reciprocity and mutual exchange (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1980; Foster, 1963; Galt, 1974; Kenny, 1960), provides social gains for both individuals. Recognising the advantages to the patron, Eisenstadt and Roniger (1980:71) state that “patrons ... always try to secure the best possible terms for themselves”. Given their power relative to the client, this is easily achieved; but then there are forms of capital that the patron cannot access without the help of his clients, such as grassroots political support. In essence then, the patron-client relationship is an asymmetrical relationship that is constructed over time, through the exchange of mutually beneficial resources between the participants. It is recognised that the resources exchanged are not necessarily of equal value, given the class and power differentials in the relationship; yet that which is exchanged is of value to the recipients. In the frame of social capital theory, patrons and their clients enter a mutually beneficial relationship, aware of the social capital that could be accrued to all participants.

While patronage was widely discussed between the 1960s and 1980s, it has been largely ignored over the past three decades. Yet, like social capital, the concept has potential for application in migration studies, as patronage is not only a referent to a dyadic relationship, but can also refer to larger networks and/or organisations (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1980). Thus, clientelism, offers a way of comprehending and analysing relationships between transmigrants, within transnational organisations and communities and within transnational space. By focusing on the micro details of migrants’ relationships here, I reclaim the importance of lived experience in a place. Transnational activities are important to consider within a globalised world. Yet we should not forget the value of early migration scholars’ work on migrants’ survival/livelihood strategies in the host country. We need to maintain a scholarly focus on the ‘here’ in transnational migration, even as it is implicated in the ‘there’, so as to further contextualise the lives of migrants in one, two or more spaces. While migrants might participate in transnational activities, many ‘African’ migrants, especially in the early stages of migration, are grappling with the social, economic, and political dimensions of the host country, as they try to situate themselves therein; a scenario observed, catalogued and analysed by anthropologists in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (Brettell, 1983; Watson, 1977).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the diaspora and transnationalism concepts implicate home/s, host/s and other countries. Transmigrants are therefore embedded within “parallel civil societies” (Cheran, 2006). Transmigrants’ narratives are of interest to social scientists precisely as they *are* situated within these parallel and concurrent universes of meaning, social relationships, political formations and

alliances, psychologically traumatic experiences and movement. Migrants embody globalising and glocalising worlds (Lewellen, 2002), creating transnational social fields that transcend and undermine the strictly patrolled borders of specific countries. In short migrants of any ilk threaten the modern yet delusionary creation of nation-states.

However migrants are labelled, whether as immigrants or refugees, mobile bodies provide creative, intellectual and practical spaces within which to question notions of belonging – citizenship – and *universal* human rights. They also present new ways of looking at, and organising, the global political economy. As theorists continue to posit the North/South divide, individuals and families in the South are reaping the benefits of remittances (Guarnizo and Diaz, 1999). They invest in home improvements, schooling, “sumptuary consumption” (ibid) and medical/health care. Contemporary international migration and the concomitant rise of globalisation and westernisation are heralding surprising global changes. For example, the Asian tigers are becoming global leaders in economic expansion, assisted in part by multinational entrepreneurs, or ‘astronauts’<sup>24</sup> (Faist, 2000). And countries such as India, once known only for its massive population and atrocious living conditions, are responding to the technological advancements in telecommunications, offering their labour and their ‘Indian’ English on the global telecommunications market (Wilson, 2003).

The various changes in immigration regulations in countries in the European Union have effectively created impermeable borders for many migrants and refugees seeking opportunities to improve their living conditions in the past decade. The recent economic downturn to hit Europe and America, will curtail the movement and access to employment of African migrants. Thus, it can be predicted that the global recession will impact the African continent variably. For instance, those countries that depend on Chinese investment will fare better than those who have closer relations with the EU and US, because China has been less detrimentally affected by the recession than any other country. It is therefore highly likely that we will have *more* movement on the African continent itself, as inter-continental movement is curtailed in a bid to protect European and American workers.

If this is the case, it will have huge consequences for ‘Africa’s America’, South Africa, with its long and porous borders. South Africa’s role on the African continent as an economically and politically stable and viable country will continue to attract migrants and refugees, especially as the economic and political situations in African countries such as the DRC, Senegal, Somalia and Zimbabwe either fail to stabilise or further deteriorate in the future. South Africa’s

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<sup>24</sup> See Ong (1993).

immigration policies and the application thereof should ideally be flexible and responsive, rather than reactive, because of those porous borders. However as the majority of South Africans themselves remain mired in poverty, with high unemployment, there are limits on the country's capacity to absorb migration and the preparedness of citizens to accept foreigners without protest.

In spite of, but also because of, these alienating realities migrants create spaces of belonging. An integral part of this creation is the use of social capital, as it arises within migrants' social networks. The value of social capital is of course dependent on the characteristics of the actors in the network. Therefore survival and economic success compel the creation of relationships with dissimilar others, so as to increase the possibility of accessing 'valuable' social capital. The value of another's social capital, especially to migrants, is not easily recognisable or accessible, as social capital arises within relationships; thus relationships have to be cultivated and nurtured through reciprocation. Reciprocation isn't always of the same value as is evidenced within patron-client relationships. In short, as demonstrated in Part II, the social capital inherent within one's networks, and even a dyadic relationship like the patron-client relationship, can either facilitate survival and further social mobility, or limit one's opportunities for success. Thus despite the change in empirical focus over the past 15 years or so in migration studies, wrought in large measure through the concepts of transnationalism and diaspora I argue that we cannot lose sight of the local relationships that are initiated as a means of survival, and further social progress. The concepts of social capital and patron-clientage therefore offer migration specialists a means to situate migration success within locally constructed relationships.

## Chapter 2

### ‘African’ Migration? Contextualising the Congolese

“... [W]ith migration as with other social processes we are dealing with a complex, multi-faceted interaction and inter-connection of structure, agency and consciousness” (Aina, 1995:43 – 44).

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In the previous chapter I suggested that ‘African migration’ as a notion is problematic. The adjective ‘African’ is of no interpretive value as it denies the African continent’s geographical and cultural diversity. Yet even Africanist scholars write Africa as a homogeneous monolith. In the following chapter, while I provide sweeping brush strokes that contextualise my research in Cape Town, I am careful not to speak too glibly about *African* migration. I provide a broad overview of migration during pre-colonial times, during colonisation and post-colonisation, highlighting some of the similarities and dissimilarities across the various countries and regions of the continent, while maintaining a focus on the DRC.

By so doing the inter-relatedness of migration in Africa, and the many reasons that spur migration on the continent are emphasised. The chapter testifies to the longitudinal reality of migration in Africa and it speaks volumes as to the manner in which host countries and their citizens have responded to foreigners in their midst. It also highlights the way in which Africanist scholars have theorised migration on the continent – as migrations of woe, desperation and catalysts for potential development. Their theorising is firmly placed within a Marxist global political-economy rhetoric, highlighting the dependency of the South on the North, and the position of migration on the African continent therein.

Within this broad frame, I provide the reader with a more detailed consideration of migration in South Africa, and more specifically migration from the DRC to South Africa from the 1980s onwards. Migration to South Africa from neighbouring southern African countries like Lesotho and Mozambique was previously encouraged by the apartheid state, in so much as these migrants provided much needed cheap foreign labour for South African mines. In its rebirth as a contemporary democracy however, the African National Congress (ANC-led) government has been confronted with the contraction of the mining industry and a massive increase in would-be immigrants from neighbouring states and beyond; and it has failed to make adequate provision for continental African asylum seekers and refugees. The combination of the influx of foreigners and continuing poverty and unemployment has led to intermittent xenophobic attacks on the



‘foreigners’ whom the South African urban masses are most likely to resent – black African others.

The African continent and in this case South Africa offer interesting loci for migration research, as history, contemporary situations, and possibilities for the future create relationships that span geographic borders, temporal spaces, regional politics and global mores and memories. This particular cluster of factors creates socio-political environments on the continent in which expressions and experiences of nationhood, citizenship and cosmopolitanism exist in the interface of ‘us and them’.

### **The Ages of migration in Africa – focusing on the DRC as an example**

#### *Pre-colonial migration*

Pre-colonial migration in Africa was diverse and responsive to many centripetal and centrifugal forces and demands, not least the most basic migrations of foragers in search of subsistence and herders in their quest for good grazing (Herbst, 1990). The construction of the ‘African diaspora’ as a slave diaspora shortens the historical length of African peoples migration. Historians like Vansina (1963) and Rodney (1966) have noted the movement of African peoples in central and west Africa prior to full-scale European exploration and colonisation in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Vansina (1963) details central Africans’ voluntary economic movement, as part of trade routes between the interior and coastal areas of central Africa. He traces variable movement of African traders across short and longer distances between local villages, and eventually between different states or kingdoms. He notes that more direct trade across further distances was introduced with the arrival of Europeans in the fifteenth century in *Central Africa*.

Vansina’s (1962 and 1963) work captures the fluid movement of African peoples between the central African interior and coast and its domination and even regulation by various chiefdoms, kingdoms and empires. Trade in slaves from the hinterland to littoral areas, ivory, beeswax, raffia cloth from Angola, copper from mines in Katanga and rubber and red rubber from Angola and the Kasai region occurred apace (Rodney, 1966; Vansina, 1962). Thus an early network of economically driven migration initiated the movement of culturally dissimilar people between the interior and coastal areas of Africa. Local chiefs and kings took advantage of this movement, providing rest-stops and food for traders and eliciting the payment of taxes for services rendered (Vansina, 1962).

Movement also occurred between local villages through virilocal exogamous marriages that created political alliances, sometimes between warring groups, or between neighbouring polities. Some African villagers also moved their political allegiance from one chief to another, by uprooting themselves and migrating to the preferred chief's settlement (Zlotnik, 2003). Prior to colonial expansion, domestic/indigenous slavery was also a form of involuntary movement. Rodney (1966) notes the presence of domestic slavery in western Sudan and the exportation of slaves across the Sahara. As a number of caravans carrying European trade goods like "cloth, copper, cowries, beads, fire-arms, powder [and] wine" (Vansina, 1962:376), moved from the harbours to the "staples" (particularly in central Africa), and then back again with local trade goods (copper, salt and ivory), slaves were obtained along the route as porters (Vansina, 1962) and then sold at the final destination.

The Kongo kingdom under the leadership of the ManiKongo, the king, was well organised and run. He collected taxes, and his people tilled the soil and cultivated various fruits and vegetables, whilst also practising animal husbandry. The Kongo Kingdom also had slavery. Hochschild (1998) argues that the existence of slavery, although qualitatively different to that of later European slavery, paved the way for a booming trade in human beings from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century to its eventual abolition in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. People became commodities to be traded for cloth or trinkets. During 1526, the then ManiKongo, baptised as Affonso I on his conversion to Christianity, wrote an impassioned plea to King João III of Portugal in learned Portuguese. He states,

"These goods exert such a great attraction over simple and ignorant people that they believe in them and forget their belief in God ... My Lord, a monstrous greed pushes our subjects, even Christians, to seize members of their own families, and of ours, to do business by selling them as captives" (quoted by Hochschild, 1998:14).

Affonso I recognised the dire impact of nascent capitalism on his Kingdom, and rather than treat him and his request with the respect it deserved, his concerns were negated. King João III replied,

"You ... tell me that you want no slave-trading in your domains, because this trade is depopulating your country .... The Portuguese there, on the contrary, tell me how vast the Congo is, and how it is so thickly populated that it seems as if no slave has ever left" (ibid).

Thus from the beginning of European exploration, and the very first interactions between Europeans and Africans, Africa's bounty was appropriated *ad nauseum*. The Kongo Kingdom's reach over its populus and prosperity declined in the centuries following until its many provinces were carved into colonial territories by the late 1800s.

As noted above, parts of Africa experienced the in-migration of European Catholic missionaries who were intent on bringing 'the word of God' to the African natives (Broadhead, 1979). This in-migration, combined with African peoples movement in response to internecine wars, slavery, dissatisfaction with local leaders and/or to avoid unfavourable agricultural and climatic conditions resulting in famine and drought" (ECA, 1981 quoted in Adepoju, 1995: 89-90) created interesting migrations that were a mix of structured and haphazard movement. During the precolonial period there was therefore no limitation on the free movement of people as 'hard' geographical borders that confirmed sovereignty and 'nationhood' had not yet been created.

### *Colonial migration*

The colonial period provided further impetus for internal movement in the colonies, and from the African continent to lands overseas. As noted by Adepoju (1995),

"[t]he different patterns, directions, and motivations of migration have been severely affected by the colonial experience which, in turn, influenced economic, sociocultural, political, and demographic development" (Prothero, 1968; ECA, 1981 quoted in Adepoju, 1995:87).

As European powers like Portugal and Holland furthered their explorations of the various coastlines under the guise of transnational companies like the Dutch East India Company the African coastline became littered with European settlements. These particular settlements did not augur well for African progress, as Africans were pulled into a mercantilist economy – a forerunner of the global political economy. As part of the mercantilist economy the fertile soils and cattle of Africa provided agricultural sustenance and much needed fresh meat for seafarers whilst "... the coloniser [was] set[ting] up a structure for the large scale production of tropical agricultural products for export" (Amin, 1995:33).

As the coastline became more populated, and various foreign governments annexed large tracts of land from the African autochthons (Adepoju, 1995), some Dutch, French, and British settlers moved into the interior of Africa with the expanding administrative arm of the colonies. Yet other settlers tried to escape the rule of the colonial administration. At the southern tip of Africa,

Dutch settlers trekked into the South African hinterland in an attempt to escape British rule at the Cape. Migration on the African continent was thus not only an African affair, but also an externally sourced one, as white (European) settlers immigrated to various parts of the African continent during colonial expansion.

Mercantilism and the early industrialisation of the colonial powers and America necessitated access to manual labour that could tolerate the tropical settings of most of the plantations. Thus early, involuntary, and forced out-migration from the continent was structured and regulated according to the needs of these dominant nations. By the late 1600s western and central African areas such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and Ghana, were feeder countries for much-needed slave labour on plantations in the United States and the Caribbean. A number of industrious Swahili speaking east Africans sold slaves to European slavers. It is estimated that over 9 million African people were exported from Africa as slaves between 1666 and the early nineteenth century<sup>25</sup>. A total of 11 million Africans, possibly more, were effectively enslaved (Fage, 1969).

Alienated from their kin, their land, and their languages African slaves were compelled to create sustainable survival strategies for themselves and their offspring, whilst those left behind were forced to adapt to the loss of kin. This first involuntary mass movement of Africans is the origin and reference for much contemporary writing about the 'African Diaspora' (see Gilroy, 1993; Zeleza, 2005).

During the slave trade, much of Africa's vastness lay uncharted, and for many explorers unearthing the diverse and exotic cultures on the African continent offered a sure means to fame. As Hochschild (1998:27) comments, "African explorers became some of the first international celebrity figures, their fame crossing national boundaries like that of today's champion athletes and movie stars". For one such explorer, Henry Morton Stanley, the initial desire to trek across the African continent was realised when he went in search of, and found, David Livingstone in 1871. A journalist by trade Stanley had documented his search for Livingstone to the fascination of local readers of the New York Herald, and Leopold-II, the second monarch of Belgium, who was desirous of a colony of his own. Stanley's second expedition into the continent saw him move from east to west going from Zanzibar to Boma the north shore of the Congo river, in two years. Financed by two media giants, the New York Herald and the Daily Telegraph, Stanley published regular dispatches from the 'Dark Continent' about his travels and adventures. King Leopold, who followed Stanley's expedition avidly hastened to make Stanley's acquaintance at

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<sup>25</sup> See [www.academic.udayton.edu/race/02rights/slave04.htm](http://www.academic.udayton.edu/race/02rights/slave04.htm).

the end of his expedition. Leopold convinced Stanley in 1878 to return yet again to the Congo. With Leopold II as his benefactor, Stanley, referring to himself as '*bula matari*'<sup>26</sup> (the breaker of rocks) boarded a steamer in 1879 for the Congo. For the next five years he would acquire the signatures of 450 Congolese chiefs to treaties that gave the Belgian monarch, Leopold II, a monopoly on trade in the region and ownership of the land (Hochschild, 1998). Hochschild (1998:72) states,

“The very word *treaty* is a euphemism, for many chiefs had no idea what they were signing. Few had seen the written word before, and they were being asked to mark their X's to documents in a foreign language and in legalese. The idea of a treaty of friendship between two clans or villages was familiar; the idea of signing over one's land to someone on the other side of the ocean was inconceivable” (his emphasis).

In the years leading up to the Berlin conference in 1884, Leopold positioned himself on the world stage as a humanitarian fighting against slavery in Africa. As Hochschild (1998:42) notes,

“As king of a small country with no public interest in colonies [Leopold] recognised that a colonial push of his own would require a strong humanitarian veneer. Curbing the slave trade, moral uplift, and the advancement of science were the aims he would talk about, not profits”.

Wining and dining key figures in various colonial administrations and in America over the next few years, Leopold laid the foundation for his claim to part of the African continent.

In 1884, with all of the colonial powers represented at the Berlin Conference, decisions were made as to the territorial pickings of colonisation. Stanley represented Leopold's requests under the auspices of his “International Association for the Congo”. As central Africa remained unchartered territory, and with interest primarily in the coastal<sup>27</sup> areas of Africa the other colonial administrations agreed to Leopold's wishes.

Thus, with a few strokes of the colonial pen, the myth of Africa's vacant land was confirmed, and Leopold gained ownership of his colony. In complete disregard of the people resident on the continent, the colonial masters agreed on their lots of land, carving Africa into spaces that were

<sup>26</sup> As Stanley's fame grew through his own pen-manship, he further marketed his prowess in moving across rough terrain by referencing himself as such (Hochschild, 1998).

<sup>27</sup> Amin (1995:35) argues that the focus of mercantilism on the coastal areas, led to the impoverishment of the interior, despite “the great river axes of the interior”.

not coterminous with specific ethnic groupings. This desecration provided Europeans with a means to extract Africa's wealth. As argued by Amin (1995:33)

"The carving up of the continent ... gave the colonisers the means of achieving the main objective of capitalism for the region. This objective [was] the same everywhere: to obtain cheap export goods".

For Leopold the Berlin conference bestowed on him a country 76 times the size of his own country. The Congo Free State (CFS), later referred to as the Belgian Congo, then Zaire, and now the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), is the third largest country in Africa. Leopold's reign in the Congo, however short, was not a welcome experience for the indigenous population. Categorised as one group of people over 350 known ethnic groups fell under the administration of a distant monarch. Treated like his personal fiefdom, Leopold II plundered the resources of the CFS to finance grand buildings in Belgium and to pay the debts incurred by Stanley's exploration (Hochschild, 1998). Here, as in other colonial territories, borders were meaningless to the natives. Ethnic groups hugged the imaginary dividing state line "consider[ing] most parts of the region as a free zone within which .. [to move] freely" (Adepoju, 1995:90).

Initially colonisation within the Belgian colony was based purely on indirect rule. Prior to Leopold's colonisation of the Congo, a number of Catholic priests had taken the word of God to the 'uncivilised' natives. Learning the local languages, and at times translating the bible rather dutifully into the local language, Catholic priests penetrated the far flung regions of the African continent with their cassocks, their European ways and the idea of civilisation (Fabian, 1983). In a "moment of brilliance" Leopold, and later the Belgian government, enlisted the assistance of the Catholic priests in the administration of the colony and the furthering of his colonial project of primitive accumulation (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). Thus the triumvirate of State, Commerce and Church in the Congo Free State was created.

During this particular period of colonisation a number of predominantly Congolese men migrated from their rural villages to the modernising urban areas of Leopoldville (Kinshasa) and Elizabethville (Lubumbashi). Exploiting the labour of the native population, government taxes were levied on households, which compelled native participation in the currency market and ultimately rural-urban migration. As natives formed a taste for manufactured European products such as machetes, candles, matches, clothes and leather shoes, they were compelled to hasten their participation in the market economy as labourers (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). Thus "[i]nitial forced migration through forced labour, taxes and compulsory cropping became institutionalized into regular migration in various African countries" (Adepoju, 1995:90).

As in other African countries such as Nigeria, rural-urban migration fed male manual labour to the ever expanding urban economies (Adepoju, 1995) of the CFS and later the Belgian Congo (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). Women on the other hand were left to tend the agricultural fields and varied livestock of the household and sometimes those of their extended kin. Without the presence of male labour to clear the land and till the African soil, previously productive allotments of land decreased their yield. As production decreased so did the benefits of subsistence effectively creating a rural population that was reliant on migrant remittances. Thus rural-urban migration became cyclical. Cyclical migration engendered the growth of the urban metropolis and furthered the impoverishment of the rural areas. As posited by Aina (1995:44) "... the primate cities [were] the most favoured in terms of the concentration of economic, political and cultural activities and advantages, basic services and infrastructures".

The asymmetrical modernisation of Africa led to sprawling urban areas and declining rural areas. As most colonial investment went into the urban centres, rather than the rural areas much of Africa's population, particularly those people resident in the rural areas, suffered unequal economic and social development. While urban centres like Lagos, Kinshasa and Dar-es-Salaam became thriving African centres (Adepoju, 1995), development of the rural areas slowed; subsistence agriculture declined due to the burden of 'lost' labour and colonial cash cropping (Vallianatos, 2001), and the colonial governments' investment in the construction of urban infrastructure to service the sprawling African cities. "[T]he primate cities [thus] represented a point of local domination in a global hierarchy which encompassed metropolitan areas at the centre of the world system, and the metropolises of the peripheral formations themselves" (Aina, 1995:44).

In 1908, after the rubber scandal in the CFS, the Belgian government appropriated the CFS from Leopold, named it the Belgian Congo and adopted a colonial institution. With a Catholic party in power, and major companies represented within the colonial policy process, it was very clear that the Belgian colonial system would be based upon three pillars – the church, the state, and commerce. Effectively this model colonial system would "continue the triple mission of economic exploitation, political repression and cultural oppression in Central Africa" (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002:27).

International economic interest in the Congo was ignited when it supplied the uranium used in the first atomic bomb by the United States. This initial introduction to the Congo's mineral wealth would extend to interest in its industrial diamonds, copper and cobalt. In order to facilitate extraction a number of companies were created – transport companies and further

subsidiaries of the mining companies. This provided the much needed globalization of capital, providing “an entry to the vast riches of the country for the bourgeoisie of other imperialist countries” (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002:32).

As commented in 1930 by Wauters, the Congo and Belgium were perceived as *one* territory. Thus, Belgium

“... [was] in the Congo, on the one hand, to civilise the black races, increase their well-being, and lead them gradually to become the white man’s equals in the human community [and] to cause the Congo’s boundless mineral and agricultural wealth to circulate freely” (Wauters, 1930:61).

Wauters’ (1930) statement clarifies the ideological underpinnings of Belgian colonisation. The first objective denotes the paternalism inherent within colonial ideology, and the seemingly humane notion of assimilation for ‘the black races’. The second objective is indicative of imperialism and capitalist penetration and extraction – the objective that assumed primacy. In the one indivisible territory that was Belgium and Congo, Belgium as the superior power – the coloniser – would assist the “black races” to become equal to the white man *gradually*, whilst extracting the resources of the Congo through the labour of its people. In effect the coloniser enriched itself on the backs of the colonised, “favour[ing] the establishment of giant industrial/mining companies at the expense of subsistence food production and local trade based on agricultural production” (Lumumba-Kasongo, 1992:28).

In short, Leopold’s reign, and further colonisation by the Belgian state, created a colony or satellite that fed the metropole. While vast buildings had been built during Leopold’s regime in Brussels the Congolese population was decimated<sup>28</sup>, and forced into the global market economy. During Belgian rule, Congolese men and women were instrumental in the building of urban centres, yet remained marginalised from the wealth of their country. As noted by Lumumba-Kasongo (1992) Congolese wealth was in the hands of 1% of the population – the Belgians. Workers’ camps created by Europeans accommodated mostly Congolese men on the outskirts of the urban cities, settling them close to mines or industrial plants. What Macquet (1949) refers to as “proletarians” were unskilled Congolese labourers who sold their labour in the formal market. He states that their lifestyle was a

“mixture of the old cultural traits of different tribes, which have lost their original meaning and are often corrupted by new European elements, such as the very keen appreciation of the value of money” (Macquet, 1949:267).

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<sup>28</sup> Hochschild (1998) asserts that approximately 10 million Congolese people lost their lives during this early period of colonisation.



For some Congolese the way out of servitude was through education. Educated mainly by Catholic and Protestant missionaries, literate and numerate Congolese were able to circumvent the manual labour system, accessing positions as clerks, medical assistants, teachers, accountants and shopkeepers (MacGaffey, 1983; Maquet, 1949). These Congolese were referred to as *évolués*. In explaining who they were, Maquet (1949:268) states,

“The *évolués* are the natives, who not trusting, any more in what we may call the Bantu order rejected their forbears’ *Weltanschauung*, attempt to regain their balance by assimilating our Western culture. They do not see any other alternative but to become as thoroughly Europeanized as they can”.

Belgian officials however were uncertain of the ‘evolution’ of the Congolese African. As Maquet (1949:268) reports,

“Lord Hailey noted in 1938, ‘Belgian policy assigns to the African a different cultural future from that envisaged by the French; it looks less to his association with European civilization than to his fuller development within the range of his own economic and social environment’”.

It is therefore clear that the assimilation of Congolese was never an objective of the Belgian government.

However the *évolués* would be cause for concern to the Belgian elite as well as the colonial power. Educated within the Belgian system, they wanted “opportunities for higher education” (Maquet, 1949:269), as they “embraced the vision of a Belgo-Congolese community in which they would become partners with the colonialists in ruling over the ‘ignorant masses’” (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002:79)<sup>29</sup>.

In an attempt to undermine the potential problems caused by the *évolués*, the Belgian government issued the *carte de merite civique*, a card that confirmed the holder’s ‘civilisation’ according to Belgian mores (Maquet, 1949; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). However, it was soon apparent to the *évolués* that the Belgians had no intent to assimilate them fully into the political economy of the country. As a result, the *évolués* in collaboration with the proletariat pushed for independence. In the 1950s as pan-Africanism spread on the continent and many African countries sought independence from their colonial masters, the *évolués* became more strident in their push for economic and political freedom from Belgium.

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<sup>29</sup> Interestingly one could argue that the *évolués* were attempting to create and affirm a transnational social space that drew coloniser and colonised into one space, if not territory, thereby supporting the Belgian authorities’ wishes.

On the 4 January 1959 the proletariat, demonstrably angry at the cancellation of a political rally,

“[threw] rocks at the police and attack[ed] passing white motorists, European-owned shops, and all other symbols of white privilege and authority. The entire African section of Kinshasa joined the rebellion, which lasted three days” (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002:85).

Further unplanned and spontaneous civil disobedience eruptions occurred in various regions in the Congo, with protesters declining to pay taxes, and disobeying administrative regulations (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). As civil disobedience increased, in conjunction with the war between the Lulua and the Baluba in October 1959, the colonial state started to unravel. On 30 June 1960, the then King of Belgium, King Baudouin, declared the Belgian Congo independent of Belgium. Unapologetic the King defended his father’s colonisation of the Congo, and the administration thereof by the Belgian state since annexation. He declared,

“For eighty years Belgium has sent your land the best of her sons, first to deliver the Congo basin from the odious slave trade which was decimating its population. Later to bring together the different tribes which, through former enemies, are now preparing to form the greatest of the Independent states of Africa” (Guardian, 1960).

With much vehemence, Patrice Lumumba, the Prime Minister of the Independent Congo, replied:

“Our wounds are too fresh and too smarting for us to be able to have known ironies, insults, and blows which we had to undergo morning, noon and night, because we were Negroes. We have seen our lands spoiled in the name of laws which only recognised the right of the strongest. We have known laws which differed according to whether it dealt with a black man or white” (ibid).

Five years later, by 1965, Lumumba had been assassinated, the political situation had destabilised and a ‘new king’ took power – Mobutu Sese Seko claimed political power through a ‘peaceful’ *coup d’etat* (De Witte, 2001).

Meanwhile, over most of Africa, rural-urban migration during the colonial period had supported European economies, as African countries suffered slow and variable development. Amin (1995: 35) states that,

“[t]he exclusive allocation of resources in the [coastal and urban areas], a policy planned in accordance with the mercantile economy, accentuate[d] the regional imbalance. The massive emigration from the interior towards the coast form[ed] part of the logic of the system: it [put] (cheap) labour to the use of capital where the capital require[d] it”.

Beyond rural-urban migration, *intra-continental* labour movement also benefited colonial industries. Adepoju (1995:90) explains that there were

“attractive alternatives on the cocoa farms of [the] Gold Coast (now Ghana), the plantations and forest industries of Ivory Coast (Côte d’Ivoire), the groundnut fields of Senegal and landlocked countries – Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), Mali, Niger, Chad [that pulled African migrants] towards these countries”.

Fundamentally most, if not all, migration during the period of colonisation was set up to cater to the needs of imperial industries. The onset of globalisation in Africa, wrought by colonisation and partial development, changed the conditions of migration on the continent.

“By opening up large tracts of land, they reduced the physical efforts hitherto necessary for long-distance travel, accelerated the pace of existing migration, provided employment and quick transmission of messages and information about the range of opportunities in the different areas, and thus intensified migration” (Adepoju, 1995:91).

*Post-independence/post-colonial migration*

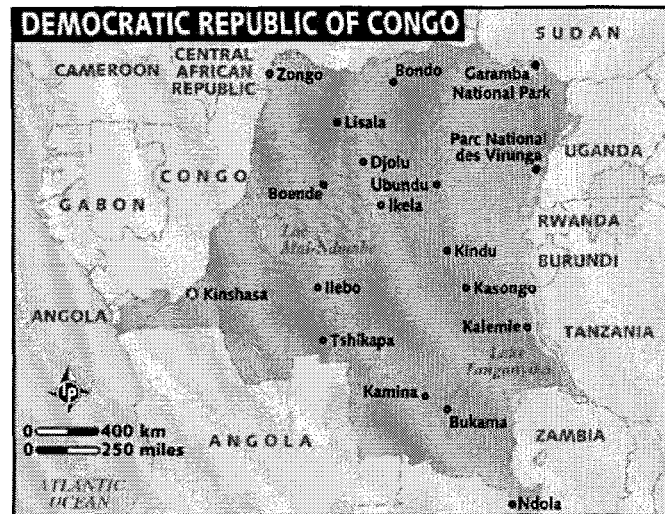


Image 1: Democratic Republic of Congo (Source: [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com))

African peoples waged struggles for their political independence succeeding from the 1950s onwards. South Africa's own 'independence' from apartheid came rather late in 1994, heralded by the election of the first black president, Nelson Mandela. The asymmetrical development of African countries during the colonial period, and in the aftermath of decolonisation, created political and economic instability on the continent (Memmi, 2006). Aina (1995:45) comments that "the decade of the 1980s has been seen as a decade of stagnation and crisis rather than that of development". In a bid to secure survival, some African migrants such as Ghanaians were pulled to booming oil-producing countries such as Nigeria. Still other migrants found their way to their respective former European metropolises of Belgium, France, Britain and Portugal (Adepoju, 1995), while educational migrants sought tertiary education at African institutions such as Makerere University in Uganda (Mafukidze, 2006).

For the Belgian Congo rapid decolonisation "ushered in an era of political instability and misrule" (Mafukidze, 2006). The assassination of Patrice Lumumba the first democratically elected president of the Congo during his first year of office, threw the Congo into a political and economic abyss that it has yet to exit.

### The Mobutu Years: Zaire 1965 – 1997

“By and large, the majority of the Belgian elite and Mobutu have had common economic interests. This elite tried to maintain the status quo. The losers in these complex relations have been the Zairian people” (Lumumba-Kasongo, 1992:47).

When Mobutu wrested control of the fledgling Congo state in 1965 through a coup d'état supported by the American and Belgian governments, the political and economic havoc that would be created during his 32 year rule could not have been foreseen. As the head of a kleptocratic state, Mobutu as patron and government officials as clients would pillage and plunder the Congolese state's coffers and the Congolese citizenry (MacGaffey, 1983; Reno, 1997) adding to the vast debt incurred by the colonial state.

During Mobutu's early presidency, the economy remained robust, in large measure due to the strong price of copper internationally (MacGaffey, 1983). Schools, clinics and infrastructure built by the Belgians were still functional and still appropriately subsidised by the state. In 1972 28% of government expenditure was appropriated by the president, 29.3% was spent on agriculture, and 17.5% was spent on social services (Reno, 1997:43). By 1992 however as Mobutu and his cabinet furthered their accumulation of wealth, expenditure on social services petered out to nil, whilst Mobutu appropriated 95% of the government's budget (Reno, 1997:44).

In the 1970s a host of policies, inclusive of Zairianization and radicalisation, furthered the downward spiral of the Congolese economy. The nationalisation process of 1973 stripped foreigners of their “agricultural and commercial” business ventures in Zaire, “converting them to political resources for the president to distribute to loyal associates” (Reno, 1997:42). Schatzberg (1980:242) refers to this appropriation of wealth as “indigenization” as “the state confiscated the property of Greek, Portuguese, Belgian, Pakistani, and other foreign owners [and] then redistributed these enterprises to individual Zairian citizens”. “Acquirers” were identified based on their “active membership” of Mobutu's political party the *Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution* (MPR) (Lumumba-Kasongo, 1992; Schatzberg, 1980). The indigenization of businesses had long lasting and damaging effects on the economy and the populus. The haphazard and confusing nature of the policy's implementation created “an almost complete disruption of the commercial supply and distribution networks” (ibid). Former employees were dismissed, and family members or co-ethnics replaced them (Reno, 1997 (check); Schatzberg, 1980). Lumumba-Kasongo (1992) states that the logic used to underpin Zairianization was that of the “extended

family”, and so it was implied that “social redistribution of wealth [would be] easier” through Zairianization (Lumumba-Kasongo, 1992:41).

By 1974, as Zaire’s worsening economic decline became evident<sup>30</sup>, Mobutu’s “radicalisation of the revolution” denoted “ten scourges” that had to be eliminated from Zairian society (Schatzberg, 1980:240). Supposedly declaring war on the elite, Mobutu ordered that “large units of production and distribution would have to be given to the state” (Schatzberg, 1980:245), in effect nationalising large companies’ assets (Lumumba-Kasongo, 1992). Whilst accumulating large businesses for profit the state removed its fiscal support from “expensive clinics, schools and public works that served citizens” (Reno, 1997:42) leaving ordinary citizens to provide much needed services for themselves.

The many and varied expressions of radicalisation proved to be ineffectual. Thus, in 1975, aware of the decrease in agricultural output and revenue and the non-payment of taxes, Mobutu issued a decree that returned “Zairianized retail trade, farms and agricultural activities ... to elderly European owners who had spent several years in Zaire” (Schatzberg, 1980:248). Mobutu’s turn-around was selfishly motivated as he needed state revenue to further his accumulation of wealth, and to continue his reign as President of Zaire. Without the necessary monetary means to control the political elite, his presidency would be threatened. Mobutu’s excesses, and that of the economic elite, were further capitalised through

- “direct bribes from foreign investments and security agencies;
- payments and takings from foreign investors;
- diversions from the Zairian government budget;
- embezzlement of export earnings;
- diversions of foreign aid and foreign loans” (Askin and Collins, 1993:75)

Mobutu had thus diversified his means of wealth accumulation, and in essence brought the country to its knees, as the government reneged on the payment of IMF and World Bank loans. A country blessed with inordinate mineral wealth and thus extractive potential was reduced to a begging bowl. In 1991 “Zaire’s accumulated foreign debt totalled \$10.7billion” (Askin and Collins, 1993:79); a debt of no value to the Congolese populus as “almost none of it ar[ose] from anything that much benefited the Zairian people who [were] being slowly starved to pay it off”

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<sup>30</sup> Schatzberg (1980:244) states “The economic results could not have been pleasing to a regime beset by falling copper prices, rising oil prices and a growing national debt”.

(Kwitny, 1984:19 quoted in Askin and Collins, 1993:75). Effectively Mobutu's political control was "centered on domination of an archipelago of resources that could be used to generate income and attract powerful allies" (Reno, 1997:39), whilst short-changing the ordinary Congolese citizen.

One might wonder why the dominant powers tolerated Mobutu for so long. The answer is that he was regarded as an important ally of the West during the period of the Cold War when other African States fell within the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union and its allies such as Cuba (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002).

### Creation of the second economy: *circuits personnelles*

In the face of an overwhelmingly kleptocratic state Mobutu's injunction to fend for yourself – '*on se débrouille*' – spurred a flexible society, willing to counter social norms and mores in order to survive. Congolese thus created survival strategies external to the state's purview. *On se débrouille* also known as Article 15, originally initiated by Albert Kalonji in response to the refugee problem in his 'empire' of South Kasai' in the 1960s (Wrong, 2001), became entrenched within the Congolese population. As Wrong (2001:4) comments, "By the early 1990s, Article 15 was the thread that held Zairian society together" as Mobutu Sese Seko encouraged the population "to steal a little", so long as the theft remained within limits".

The depth of the economic crisis, in effect Zaire's "economic regress" (De Herdt and Marysse, 1997) was obvious as employment in the formal sector decreased from 40% in 1955 (five years before independence) to five percent in the 1990s (Wrong, 2001). Thus at the end of the twentieth century, even though formally employed, government employees remained insecure as available posts declined and salary payments were intermittent. Indeed this situation still obtained in 2007. On my visit to Kinshasa with Serge's fiancée, Hannah, I was encouraged by a government minister to work as an academic in Kinshasa, with the understanding that I might not get paid for six months. This was not as silly an offer as it seems: those in formal employment were positioned more strategically within the kleptocracy and thus stood to gain benefits beyond any salary that might or might not be forthcoming (Schatzberg, 1980), for as Mobutu stated "Everything is for sale and everything can be bought in this country. And in this trade *the slightest access to power* constitutes a veritable instrument of exchange" (Wrong, 2001b:6; my emphasis). Their government positions not only provided access to state money, international investments and social and monetary gifts from the president, but also to money made in the informal economy through their personal networks.

For example, writing in 1983 MacGaffey (1983:360) reports that “a local divisional chief” bought “a Peugeot with air conditioning and all other luxury accessories, flown in from France at a cost of Z.80-90 000 (about \$15,000). This official’s base monthly salary was Z.443 (\$90)”. Fourteen years later, the participation of the dominant class in the informal economy had not dissipated. De Herdt and Marysse (1997) provide an example of a state official. “Officially he works in an administrative office in the interior of the country. This job accounts for 12 percent of his household’s total income, whilst 55 per cent is derived from the [illegal] diamond trade” (De Herdt and Marysse, 1997:225). Employees in the formal economy were compelled to supplement their low formal incomes with income derived from the second economy.

Since the early 1980s participation in the second economy has facilitated the creation of a second tier to the dominant class – that of “an emergent commercial middle-class of nationals” (MacGaffey, 1983:362). This commercial middle-class was set apart from the dominant political-administrative class, as they generated money exclusively through the second economy, beyond the control of the state. Access to the second economy was initiated through one’s *circuits personnelles*, or “person-to-person networks” (MacGaffey, 1983; Trefon, 2004). Cutting across class lines, ethnic lines, and neighbourhood lines these networks formed part of Congolese survival strategies, and were responsible for the production and reproduction of a middle class (MacGaffey, 1983).

The state’s failure to provide for its citizenry compelled citizens to act autonomously. For example, in 1990 the city of Mbuji-Maye in eastern Kasai established its own university “with funds from local operations of MIBA, the state-run mining company” (Reno, 1997:59) in partnership with the Catholic church. Further examples abound: from the creation of commercial networks that included members of the politico-administrative elite, to the privatisation of transport. In 1997 “the private sector controlled almost 96 percent of the transportation system in the capital city” (Emizet, 1998:117).

Further, households accessed ‘regular’ income through diversifying their positions in the market. De Herdt and Marysse (1997) report that women engaged in Kinshasa’s informal economy as men maintained their positions in the formal economy. Lucrative business ventures were created out of necessity. In Kinshasa men and women were involved in the smuggling of food and diamonds across the Zaire river to Brazzaville, and in the import of pharmaceuticals, “clothing and plastic products to Kinshasa” (Emizet, 1998:122). In Kinshasa, single, widowed and divorced women created a niche for themselves within the money exchange market. State predation of national banks coupled with rising inflation forced Zairians to seek alternative means to access foreign currencies. Initiating their activities in 1971/2, *cambistes* initially linked to



smuggling networks, created a niche market for the exchange of Zaire into foreign currencies, particularly American dollars (Bilakila, 2004; De Herdt and Marysse, 1999). *Cambisme*<sup>31</sup> expanded across geographic spaces in Kinshasa, as more men and women entered the trade, despite its low social status. By the end of Mobutu's reign, women *cambistes*, who had started out in the 1970s had created and were managing businesses in the second economy. Thus the second economy had supplanted the formal economy as the 'real economy' (Emizet, 1998; De Herdt and Marysse, 1997; MacGaffey, 1983).

Due to the state's flagrant disregard of ordinary citizens' needs, increasing foreign debt, international pressure, the disappearance of the 'communist threat', and civil<sup>32</sup> and military disobedience (Emizet, 1998) in the late 1980s to early 1990s, Mobutu was compelled to "[announce] that a full multiparty political system would be established" (Emizet, 1998:107). Elected as the transitional government's Prime Minister, Etienne Tshisekedi, was opposed by Mobutu at every turn.

"From 1992 to mid-1994, Congo was characterized by chaos, inconsistent economic policies, and ethnic conflict as pro-Mobutists and the opposition tried to outmaneuver each other. Mobutu used every available means – from corruption to violence – to shore up his declining power, and the opposition appeared too weak and divided to offer a credible alternative (Emizet, 1998:109)".

With Etienne Tshisekedi ousted by Mobutu the political situation in Zaire deteriorated quickly in 1994. The interim Prime Minister Kengo wa Dondo was unable to deal with the mass influx of Tutsi and Hutu refugees in eastern Zaire escaping the *genocidaires* in Rwanda. By 1997, as the rebel army headed by Laurent Kabila marched into Kinshasa, a demoralised and disorganised Congolese army offered no resistance (Emizet, 1998; Lemarchand, 2009; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002).

### Post-Mobutu

The coup d'état and presidency of Laurent Kabila effected no change in the economic regress of the Congo. As Englebert so cynically states, "'Liberation' from the Mobutu regime only

<sup>31</sup> In 2007, I was amazed to see women *cambistes* on the streets of Kinshasa. Sitting in front of simple desks, the women displayed new Congolese francs in *briques* on the desks, whilst masses of people moved past in every direction. Transactions were promptly completed.

<sup>32</sup> In 1990 students at the University of Lubumbashi protested against the Mobutu regime. They were severely dealt with, causing an international outcry.

compounded the existing arbitrariness and poverty with renewed armed conflict, the collapse of the central administrative apparatus and the marginalization of civil society” (2003:2). In the same vein as his predecessors, Kabila Senior treated the Congo like his personal fiefdom, maintaining the ghost structures of the government in order to facilitate predation. Lumumba-Kasongo’s words uttered in 1992 thus ring true in the late twentieth century and in the early twenty-first century.

“Whether [Mobutu] remains in power or not, if the system that he has established survives it will continue to function to satisfy the interests of the few, unless the people’s quest for democracy becomes a powerful social movement capable of threatening the economic and political interests of the current elite” (Lumumba-Kasongo, 1992:47).

As in previous years, the Congolese citizenry was compelled to rely on itself. In Kinshasa, the capital city, “the precariousness of life [initiated] the Kinshasa bargain” (Bilakila, 2004). Discounting social rules and mores, Kinshasans attempt to get more for less. Bilakila (2004:23) states, “[t]hroughout Kinshasa, from university to marketplace, individual interests have supplanted collective ones. The means – corruption, theft, extortion, collusion, embezzlement, fraud, counterfeiting or prostitution – justify the ends (survival)”. And yet individual interests are only met through networking. To be a truly self-sufficient individual, in the sense of western understanding, would lead to social death and physical annihilation for without a contact survival is not guaranteed.

Ingenuity and business acumen are of paramount importance. Petrol, an important resource, yet intermittently available, is often sold in jugs of one to five litre capacity by men, women and children referred to as *khadafis* (Bilakila, 2004). They are known to increase petrol prices and to “mix petrol with cheaper fuels such as kerosene” (Bilakila, 2004:29). Thus through necessity morals are circumvented and the disruption of ‘order’ accepted; in the process work is created for other individuals – mechanics and suppliers of spares – as engines are damaged.

Men, women and children are engaged in and with the informal economy. Iyenda notes that whilst the informal economy in Kinshasa provides a means of survival it could never be a means to develop Kinshasa, or extract people from ‘chronic poverty’ (2005:65). As such, given the enormous economic deprivation in Kinshasa and elsewhere in the DRC, Congolese men and women migrate as far as their social capital will take them to secure qualitatively different futures. In Kenya, Congolese choose to live in urban spaces rather than reside in the UNHCR refugee camps (Campbell, Kakusu and Musyemi, 2006). While social integration is near

impossible, given working class Kenyans' xenophobia, Congolese eke out a living as musicians, *kitenge* cloth traders and tailors, and as owners of barbershops or salons. They supply that which is in demand. In short their acquired economic habitus creates survival strategists. Depending on other social skills, inclusive of learning the local language, Congolese are able to navigate their way in an alien political economy.

Given this history and the long term effects thereof, it is within reason to argue that my research informants were compelled to migrate due to mainly economic reasons, especially as all informants came from areas in the DRC – Kinshasa and Lubumbashi – that were not directly impacted by the unmitigated violence of the civil war in the eastern Congo. As noted by one of my respondents, “I studied Marketing at home for two years of a four year degree. But the government send soldiers to take the people to go fighting to Bukavu. Lot, a lot of my friends have no arm, no leg. Now my brother say “you can’t stay”. Kabila was dead, now the son president. I ran away from university. My mother told me “You must move, you must run away”. If it’s quiet in my country I will go home. I will be big boss maybe working for Vodacom” (Eric, August 2004).

When one considers the historical socio-political trajectory of the Democratic Republic of Congo and the contemporary crisis situation that continues unabated there, Congolese immigrants in South Africa and elsewhere can be recognised or considered as political and economic refugees. Their migration to other parts of Africa, including Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa, and other international countries like Belgium, Canada and France is therefore not without reason. However, their reception and concomitant living conditions in the host countries are often abysmal, given the diverse nature of countries' foreign policy as regards refugees, illegal immigrants, undocumented migrants and immigrants from Africa.

Peeman's words in 1975 proved prophetic.

“One could hope for instance, that the Zaire ruling elite make a clean break from its ‘jet-set complex’ – associated with the ‘copper-belt complex’ – that is lavishly spending the revenues of the mines to buy prestige goods like jumbo jets. Such wishful thinking would be accompanied by advice like ‘go to the masses’, and a list of appropriate commandments; stop spending the existing economic surplus on prestige consumption; clamp down upon other leakages, such as external money transfers and imports of luxury consumption goods (which together represent 50 per cent of the gross annual formation of capital in the country); increase wages and peasant incomes; devote State resources

only to productive investments and welfare spending. This is, however, pie in the sky. In Zaire today there are simply no organized movements to support such a change of policy. Any that did exist have been crushed or have been subsumed by the regime” (Peemans, 1975:172 – 173).

### **Contemporary Migration in Africa**

Many other African countries have similar narratives of woe, hunger, deprivation, civil wars and incapacitating poverty. ‘Democratic’ elections in African countries as diverse as Angola and Sierra Leone, provoked sections of the citizenry to take to the streets in protest at election results. Some of the populus went further, creating rebel militias to contest the results, throwing countries like Rwanda and Sierra Leone into social disarray (Dowden, 2008a; Mamdani, 2003). Vast sections of the population fled as rebels moved through areas, looting homesteads, raping and murdering women and forcing young male children to become child soldiers. As the population fled the human locusts, parts of Africa were to hold the dual position of places of refuge and sources of refugees – most notably those on the borders of countries experiencing internal destabilisation. Ugandans fled to Rwanda and Sudan; Rwandans to Uganda and Zaire (DRC); Zairians to Uganda, Angola and Zambia (Adepoju, 1995).

As noted by Malkki (1995a), Adepoju (1995) and Zlotnik (2003), the vast majority of refugees are found within Africa. “By the end of 1992, there were about 6 million refugees in Africa up from 5.5 million in 1990, 4.5 million in 1989 and 4.1 million in 1988” (Adepoju, 1995:103). More recently the UNHCR counts 10 million people at risk in Africa. Of these 2.1 million are refugees, 305 000 asylum seekers, 6.3 million internally displaced persons and 100 000 “stateless people”<sup>33</sup>. Thus, contemporary Africa, inclusive of all its sub-regions is a continent filled with mobile people.

More recent involuntary migrations on the continent have seen an increase in the movement of women and children. The feminisation of migration on the continent has included independent migration by women, as well as human trafficking in women. Mafukidze (2006) reports that human trafficking is rampant in Nigeria, Mozambique and Malawi. Although a clandestine activity, it was estimated that “more than 45 000 of its people [have been] trafficked to Europe [from Nigeria] every year” (Olori, 2003 in Mafukidze, 2006:120). These, mostly women and children, are abducted to South Africa, “the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and Italy where they are sold to people who put them to work in clubs and brothels as sex workers” (Martens et

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<sup>33</sup> See [www.UNHCR.org/pages/4a02d7fd6.htm](http://www.UNHCR.org/pages/4a02d7fd6.htm).

al, 2003 cited in Mafukidze, 2006:125). Child migrants are also involuntary migrants finding employment on farms in west Africa – “Malian children are trafficked to Cote d’Ivoire where they work in the cotton, cocoa and coffee fields while those from Burkina Faso, some as young as six, are taken to Benin, Gabon, Nigeria and Cote d’Ivoire” (Mafukidze, 2006:124).

It is clear from the above, that contemporary migration in Africa is varied and dependent primarily on context – whether it be political, social, economic, independent, familial, regional or country specific. Thus, to describe migration on the continent as ‘African’ rather than detail the specifics of each country obscures the interesting permutations of internal and international migration in the continent and its sub-regions. As noted by Mafukidze (2006:126)

“Even a brief review of migration in Africa shows a widening scope of human movement as the region has become more integrated into the world economy and colonial restrictions have ended. The main flows are driven by poverty on the one hand, and by war and conflict on the other: the scale of refugee flows reported by Oucho and others remain daunting even as many of the continent’s conflicts appear to be winding down”.

*South Africa’s immigration and refugee policies – legislating otherness*

### Early migration in South Africa

“Migration patterns, both internal and trans-national, shifted when the last countries of the South joined the rest of Africa in independence” (Mafukidze, 2006:116). Mafukidze (2006), Oucho and Crush (2001) and Bouillon (2001a) note that countries in southern Africa, like Botswana and South Africa, have become destination countries in the last 15 years. In particular, South Africa’s normative in-migration patterns have shifted, as labour migrants from Zimbabwe, entrepreneurial migrants from Pakistan, Senegal, DRC and Somalia, and continental African refugees have sought greener pastures in the country.

South Africa has a long history of internal rural to urban migration (Mayer, 1980; Bank, 2002), and labour migration into South Africa from southern African countries like Mozambique and Lesotho as noted (Crush and McDonald, 2001). The more recent movements into the country, from as far afield as Nigeria, Congo-Brazzaville, Senegal, the Democratic Republic of Congo and

Somalia herald a new era in migration into South Africa. As reported by the UNHCR, in 2008 South Africa was “by far the leading recipient of new asylum claims in the world”<sup>34</sup>.

For the most part these newcomers arrived at the borders of the country with the advent of the new South Africa. However, far from being welcoming, the South African state and its citizens have had mixed responses to them. Unlike earlier labour migration from Lesotho and Mozambique, new immigrants into the country comprise a variety of migrant forms – asylum seekers, refugees, and labour (economic) migrants. In response to these new waves of migration, the South African state has been in a protracted process of improving its legislation, and the implementation thereof.

In the early 1960s migrants from Lesotho and Mozambique were employed predominantly within the mining industry in South Africa. They usually held contracts of 11 months, after which they were expected to return to their countries of origin (Morris, 2001a). In this way the apartheid state and national mining houses used migrant labour to further their economic agenda, whilst bearing no responsibility for their workers<sup>35</sup>. These workers, despite their continuing contracts, were not granted permanent residence in South Africa and were thus never a burden on state resources; moreover, they tended to live in hostels, segregated from the rest of the black population in the area.

In response to the various segregationist Acts that were promulgated since the early twentieth century, local South Africans were forced to join ‘foreigners’ in the mining trenches as they sought economic advancement within the urbanising areas of the country. Unable to secure sustainable sustenance from the land in the “Bantustans” (former black African ‘homelands’) primarily male migrants migrated to the urban areas to sell their labour (Wilson and Ramphele, 1989). The later feminisation of internal migration occurred as women sought their husbands in the urban areas, or were compelled to generate additional incomes, as their men absconded from their ‘duties’ as provider and husband, failing to send remittances to the homelands.

Finding that the urban areas were legally and geographically inhospitable to their arrival and residence – pass laws, forced into domestic labour, and Acts such as the Coloured Labour Preference policy in Cape Town and Influx Control – some women created their own employment opportunities. Some dabbled in the brewing and selling of beer – earlier

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<sup>34</sup> See [www.unhcr.org/pages/4a02d7fd6.htm](http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a02d7fd6.htm).

<sup>35</sup> As noted earlier a similar pattern obtained during the colonisation of the rest of the Africa by Britain, France, Belgium and Portugal.

manifestations of the ubiquitous *shebeen* – while others attached themselves to one of the many male migrants housed in the hostels when Influx Control was no longer enforced and later repealed (Ramphela, 1993). Still others sold their labour working as domestic servants in the houses of white men and women.

While the apartheid government attempted to restrict access to the urban areas through the promulgation and draconian implementation of segregationist laws migration from the rural areas of South Africa to the urbanising areas continued unabated. In much the same vein as the restrictions of earlier years, contemporary attempts to stem ‘the tide’ of foreigners have been patchy, ineffective, and at times particularly sinister.

### Post-apartheid immigration legislation

Crush and McDonald (2001:1) argue that the Aliens Control Act of 1991, “one of the final pieces of legislation to emerge from the crumbling ruins of apartheid” was used in the late twentieth century and the early twenty first century to curtail movement into South Africa from the rest of Africa. As part of its racialised immigration policies, the state encouraged the in-migration of white immigrants, whilst African immigrants from the rest of the African continent were deterred during the twentieth century (Morris, 2001; Crush and McDonald, 2001). However, as the effects of colonisation were further deconstructed and African states fell into political and economic disarray, professional “continental Africans” (Morris and Bouillon, 2001; Kadima, 2001) arrived in South Africa from the 1980s. These continental African professionals were deployed within the Bantustan areas as medical doctors, university lecturers and dentists. As South Africa’s people advanced to democracy, and legislation such as the Group Areas Act was repealed, these professionals moved into urban centres seeking better employment.

Apartheid South Africa was hearing its funeral dirge; however, the Aliens Control Act would hold sway from 1991 to 2002, when the Immigration Act no 13 of 2002 was promulgated. In the final few years of the applicability of the Aliens Control Act, attempts were increased to deport those categorised as aliens under the act. “In 1991, some 47 000 Mozambicans were arrested and deported, a figure that continued to rise through the early 1990s” (Minnaar and Hough, 1996 quoted in Crush and McDonald, 2001). Further to increased policing of unauthorised migration, the apartheid state “rejected both the United Nations (UN) and OAU refugee conventions” (Crush and McDonald, 2001). Thus asylum seekers and refugees were not offered protection or assistance by the National Party government. Rather they were constructed as pariahs of the state.

By the end of legislated apartheid the new ANC government recognised and signed the UN and African Union refugee conventions, explicitly involving it in the care of asylum seekers and refugees. Work on the Refugee Act occurred apace, and with its promulgation in 1998 South Africa had its first comprehensive refugee policy. However, as many asylum seekers, refugees, academics, human rights' organisations and non-governmental organisations can attest, the existence of the Act has not advanced impartial refugee treatment from the South African state (Landau, 2006).

The recent March 2011 amendments to the Immigration Act demonstrate the South African government's hard-line approach. Commentators have argued that the new amendments are unconstitutional, fuelled by xenophobic elements in the department, and most likely to impact African asylum seekers more adversely than other applicants (Rawoot, 2011; Watters, 2011). The legislation provides for incompetent and under-skilled Home Affairs officials to decline 'potential' refugees the right of entry into South Africa at the border (Rawoot, 2011). Given the Department of Home Affairs' track record of corruption and inefficiency, tasking officials at the border with rights to confer access to South Africa, opens an already failing (failed) system to further corruption. By categorising all migrants, at the very least black migrants implicitly as unwanted the South African government, like Fortress Europe, has dehumanised a key migration policy document. This dehumanisation is rationalised by pitting categories of people against each other – South African vs other, citizen vs non-citizen; as the Minister of Home Affairs, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma states “immigration policy has to be in line with our national priorities, of which job creation is one of the most important” (SabinetLaw, 2011).

The amendments to the Act are particularly ill-conceived as they ignore research that confirms African migrants' contributions to the South African economy (Dodson, 1998; Vawda, 2009 and 2010). Not only do migrants in South Africa pay tax on consumables, but of entrepreneurial spirit, African, Chinese and Pakistani migrants employ South African citizens, mostly women. The amendments also demonstrate the South African government's myopia in relation to regional politics. As part of the southern African region, and a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), South Africa is part of a regional community that states as its vision

“that of a common future, a future within a regional community that will ensure economic well-being, improvement of the standards of living and quality of life, freedom and social justice and peace and security for the people of Southern Africa. This shared vision is anchored on the common



values and principles and the historical and cultural affinities that exist between the people of Southern Africa”<sup>36</sup>.

This vision does not prioritise one country’s needs over another, but rather prioritises the *region*. Presently there are 15 member states, one of which is the DRC – a ‘sender’ of migrants and asylum seekers to South Africa. South Africa is therefore bound by regional politics to encourage ease of movement of ‘capital and labour’ across the region for the macro-economic benefit of all<sup>37</sup>. By attempting to police entry at the border, the government effectively problematises the notion of regional inter-dependence, and complicates its political relationship with countries like the DRC and Zimbabwe (another signatory). While the government might envisage itself as the economic engine within the region, South Africa’s failed negotiations with the DRC regarding the possibility of transporting electricity from the DRC’s planned Inga III hydro-electric power station (Mundy, 2010) confirms South Africa’s inter-dependence on countries in the region. While the plans for the plant were thwarted by what seems to be the Congolese government’s mal-administration and greed, it would remain politically prudent for South Africa to maintain cordial relations with the DRC. One of the ways in which South Africa can further the political relationship between the two is through the creation of fair, transparent, humane and equitable immigration policies and the implementation thereof, as these impact Congolese migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the country.

The amendments to the Act are fundamentally reminiscent of Fortress Europe’s closure and militaristic policing of its borders. In effect the categorisation and distinction between deserving and non-deserving others, between citizens and non-citizens create false polarisations that antagonise xenophobic attitudes and xenophobic violence – an all too pervasive reality in South Africa and elsewhere<sup>38</sup>. Moreover, rather than build inter-dependence and facilitate the exchange of knowledge, skills, entrepreneurship, business acumen and cosmopolitanism, the rich diversity that African migrants bring to South Africa is negated and they are vilified by the South African government, and its citizens. In a globalising world, South Africa cannot afford to tarnish its good reputation as a stable economy and polity. Mechanisms that are constitutional and based on human rights’ conventions need to be put in place to secure an appropriate and efficient permitting system in South Africa. Rather than see asylum seekers and/or refugees as pariahs,

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<sup>36</sup> See <http://www.sadc.int>.

<sup>37</sup> See Memorandum of Understanding on Macro-economic Convergence – <http://www.sadc.int/index/browse/page/166>

<sup>38</sup> Cynically, one could argue that since government knows the incendiary nature of its utterances regarding particularly African immigrants, in a year in which local government elections are to be held (18 May 2011 to be exact), the amendments to the Act are a means to garner support for the African National Congress.

the State needs to see them as clients, and so provide an equitable service. I agree that a number of asylum seekers are indeed economic migrants. However, the government needs to repair its reputation, and provide every applicant the right to proper administration of his application. The effective administration of migrants will lead to greater advantages for the South African government – migrants' business ventures can be taxed, they will not become invisible in the system and therefore they will be counted as part of the national census, and they can contribute to the skills base in South Africa, particularly at the entrepreneurial level.

The neglect of asylum seekers or refugees is indicative of a broader governmental and civic response to continental Africans. Media reports have documented brutal and inhumane treatment of 'foreigners', known as *amakwerekwere* in local jargon. Recent flare-ups of anti-foreigner sentiment have targeted black Africans, distinguished as other through language and their darker phenotypes. In the xenophobic attacks of May 2008 Shangaans an ethnic group in South Africa were also attacked and some seriously injured in the brutalisation of 'foreigners'. This anti-foreigner sentiment has various reasons, and various manifestations at the meso (government) and micro (individual) levels.

#### *Exclusionary Politics – Xenophobia*

#### Xenophobia in South Africa – root causes and contemporary manifestations

The spate of xenophobic attacks over the past decade, aimed particularly at continental Africans, initiated the study of the phenomenon in South Africa. The xenophobic attacks of May 2008 heralded an outcry from a number of ordinary citizens who offered various forms of assistance – clothing drives, soup kitchens and accommodation in churches (Evans, 2008). Glaringly obvious during the height of these attacks, and the immediate aftermath was the South African government's silence. In the initial aftermath Jacob Zuma (before he was elected to the presidency) complained about the protesters' (xenophobes) use of his song '*umshini wam*' (Bring me my machine gun), but that was all.

Anti-foreigner sentiment and more specifically xenophobic attacks have thus become a feature of the 'new' South Africa. The South African Migration Project (SAMP) and the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) have theorised and documented this phenomenon since the 1990s. Harris (2002) writing for the CSVR unpacks the nature of the beast, referring to xenophobia as a new pathology; a disparaging attitude towards foreigners that is concretised and articulated in acts of violence, sometimes leading to the death of the target/s.

Harris (2002) rightly places xenophobic attacks within the historical socio-political context of the country. Xenophobia is thus a function of a discourse of otherness; a discourse initiated during apartheid, yet maintained within contemporary South Africa so as to bolster the creation of a new nationalism. In theorising xenophobia Harris (2002) groups a number of explanations into three central hypotheses. These are the scapegoating hypothesis, the isolation hypothesis and the biocultural hypothesis.

These hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. Rather when taken together they provide a compelling explanation of xenophobia in South Africa, and in the rest of Africa too. However, particular to the South African political landscape is the racially constructed history of the country. The longitudinal effects of political and social dehumanisation (a process inclusive of all South Africans) lie behind the extreme violence of the outbursts of xenophobia – Harris' (2000) "culture of violence". However, the underlying cause of these conflagrations is surely the exclusion of the majority of citizens from the prosperity that attracts so many migrants in the first place? South Africa poses a very different set of circumstances to that of other migrant magnets – North America, Europe, Australasia – where the majority of citizens are relatively prosperous.

South Africa's transition to a new democracy was forged in the fires of apartheid, particularly during the 1980s. The culture of violence was not only manifested overtly, but also subtly. The process and legislation of apartheid initiated and endorsed socio-cultural and political upheaval for the majority of South Africans. Structural and physical violence were regular features of South African life. The apartheid government's strategies precipitated the construction of an Afrikaner identity in contradistinction to all other identities in the country. Afrikaner nationalism was built on structural violence; a nationalism that could only take root through violence.

In a similar vein, the expression and experience of xenophobia in contemporary South Africa and other African countries has been linked to the creation of a nation-state – the process of nationalism (Gray, 1998; Harris, 2000; Whitaker, 2005). As Billig (1995:28 quoted in Harris, 2000:182) asserts:

"It should be remembered that violence is seldom far from the surface of nationalism's history. The struggle to create the nation-state is a struggle for the monopoly of the means of violence. What is being created – a nation-state – is itself a means of violence. The triumph of a particular nationalism is seldom achieved without the defeat of alternative nationalisms and other ways of imagining peoplehood".

In the rainbow nation, a nation not yet fully formed, the ideals of racial harmony, transformation and wealth-sharing, cannot be fully actualised in a severely divided society still ruled by a form of nationalism – albeit African nationalism. Government is thus beholden to its majority population to provide reasons for its continued failure to provide for basic survival needs. In an attempt to explain the lack of viable social progress the African foreigner becomes a convenient scapegoat for government's failures. As commented by Harris (2002:169) “[e]mergent alongside a new nation discourse, The Foreigner [the other, however constructed] stands at a site where identity, racism and violent practice are reproduced”.

### Xenophobia in South African Media

Print media and television reports are not even-handed in their reportage on refugee issues or the African other in South Africa. The stereotyping of the African other in the local media assumes alarming proportions with news' headlines reporting “An invasion to be halted; Illegal aliens cost taxpayers billions” and “Africa floods Cape Town” (noted in Danso and McDonald, 2001). In the late 1990s the then minister of Home Affairs, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, spewed xenophobic sentiments that were sanctioned by government. The media broadcast his comments without further analysis or deconstruction. Thus, media reports give voice to anti-foreigner sentiments within government, skewing the representation of African migrants resident in the country. The local population follows suit as most citizens have not had meaningful interactions with foreigners. As stated by Danso and McDonald (2001:123) “... news readers in South Africa will find it very difficult to arrive at an informed position on issues of cross-border migration and the role of (im)migrants in the country”.

The lack of interaction with continental Africans, and suspect reporting that ties African others, like Nigerians and/or Congolese to drug trafficking, money laundering and cash-in-transit heists, belie the overwhelming complicity of South Africans in violent crime and their criminal activities in the country. Danso and McDonald (2001:126) argue that “... black Africans [are] being portrayed either as perpetual criminals or more prone to commit serious crime than immigrants from non-African countries”. Further, irresponsible reporting on the *actual* numbers of migrants in the country skews the numerical reality of African immigration to the country (Danso and McDonald, 2001).

It is clear from the studies that have been completed thus far – whether quantitative or qualitative – that xenophobia is not merely reducible to an individual's aberrant attitudes or behaviour. Rather xenophobia “... operates through the social, for the social, serving to disguise relations of

power and discursive contradictions” (Harris, 2000:182). Xenophobia is functional at the micro, meso and macro levels of society. And each of these sectors adds to an environment in which xenophobia thrives. Xenophobia is thus a complex dialectical process that includes a country’s citizens, the country’s political economy and its history, the media, government representatives, ‘foreigners’ themselves, and the global political arena. Attitudes, behaviours, and relationships are woven in webs of such close interconnectedness, that they become mutually constitutive of the other.

In summation then, studies on xenophobia cast light on the daily experiences of ‘foreigners’ within South Africa – experiences that create embittered foreign individuals. However, what all of these reports on xenophobia fail to recognise is the agency and resilience of African migrants. Whilst they have to live within an alienating environment, at times drawing closer to their own ilk, they *do* secure accommodation, they *do* find employment and they *do* create viable livelihoods. The Congolese in Muizenberg are assisted in these endeavours by congenial South Africans, mainly those involved in forms of Christian outreach. I discuss this nexus and its ramifications in detail in Part II. The further chapters in Part III also show that the opposite of xenophobia – xenophilia also exists.

#### *The new immigrants to South Africa*

#### Focusing on Congolese migration to South Africa

“In some parts of Africa, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Somalia or the Sudan, states have disintegrated into patches of territory controlled by competing armed factions” (Zlotnik, 2003:18).

As a *new* national category of migrants into *South Africa* Congolese migrants have had short residency in South Africa in comparison to earlier labour migrants from Mozambique and Lesotho in the 1960s. Kadima (2001) suggests that the first wave of Congolese migration to South Africa occurred between 1990 and 1992. However, Bouillon (2001) notes that Zairians (Congolese) were migrating to South Africa from 1986. In my estimation, the first trickle of Congolese migration to South Africa occurred in the early 1980s, as President Mobutu entrenched his one-party state in the DRC. Despite Mobutu’s continued backing by the United States and other powers like France and Belgium as part of Cold War geopolitics, Congolese people were feeling the effects of a pariah state, a devalued currency, a failing educational system, and Mobutu’s encouragement of *on se débrouille*. As characterised by MacGaffey (1983:365) in 1983:

“The state is no longer crucial as a source of material benefits and is incapable of providing essential services, education, health-care, judicial functions and a social welfare system. By 1982, the state apparatus, formerly the means by which the dominant class attained its position, had ceased to be an important source of social stratification”.

During this particular period, parliamentarians and others linked with ‘big business’ purchased ‘holiday homes’ and other properties in South Africa, facilitated by Mobutu’s relationship with South African multinational companies (Kadima, 2001). Further, professionals such as dentists, engineers, doctors and university staff migrated to South Africa as active agents in securing a better economic and political future for themselves and their families. As JC noted in 2005 his aunt, a respected dentist in a local hospital in one of the black townships in Johannesburg, has been working in South Africa since the early 1980s.

The period from 1990 to 1996/1997 I would argue can be considered as the second wave of migration into South Africa from the DRC. Kadima (2001:93) states that migration into South Africa between 1990 and 1992 was undertaken mostly by middle-class Congolese “seeking work and better remuneration”, and younger people in search of tertiary education. While the 1980s and the 1990s in the DRC saw a steady decline in the formal economy, in part as a result of Mobutu’s nationalisation of the currency and his kleptocracy, the informal economy became more active. All classes in the DRC were forced to access a living through the many personal networks that they cultivated in their neighbourhood, within their ethnic groups, with peers, with non-governmental organisations and within their church (Trefon, 2004). However, the money made informally still remained far below the required amount to sustain a family in the Congo.

As the DRC deteriorated economically and politically, South Africa was favoured internationally, given its peaceful transition to a democratically elected government. In this climate, South Africa became a viable ‘host’ country, due to its economic development and its open-door policy to Congolese – Congolese nationals were not required to present visas at points of entry into the country (Kadima, 2001). In 1993 however this policy changed, as the South African government’s measures to curb continental African flows into the country were bolstered by the Aliens Control Act. Congolese nationals were compelled to apply for visas *prior* to their arrival in South Africa. For some die-hards the coup d’état in May 1997 was the much needed impetus to flee – an impetus that resulted in the third wave of Congolese movement into South Africa.

After a period of approximately seven months and a military trek stretching from the east of the DRC, Laurent Kabila marched into Kinshasa in May 1997 with the aid of his allies – the Rwandan Patriotic Front's leader, Paul Kagame and Ugandan President Museveni. Mobutu's army offered no resistance, in part as a result of the state's increased failure, and Mobutu's ill-health. In a short time once Kabila was imposed as the new President of the DRC and Mobutu exiled, Kabila enraged Kagame and Museveni with his request that they leave Kinshasa (Lemarchand, 2009). Since their departure they have intermittently waged war along the eastern borders of the DRC in northern Kivu in an attempt to gain control of the Great Lakes region and its vast mineral wealth. Kagame has repeatedly argued that his army's forays into eastern Congo have always been to root out Hutu rebels responsible for the 1994 Rwandan genocide. However many Congolese in the global transnational community are suspicious of his intentions, giving voice to the antipathy that has existed between Rwandese and Congolese along the eastern border since the arrival of Rwandan Tutsis in the eastern Congo in the mid and late 1950s – a result of the first Hutu-led genocide of Tutsis (Lemarchand, 2009).

Thousands of Congolese, including the BaMbuti pygmies in the Ituri region, have been adversely impacted by the politics and intermittent civil wars in the region. It was averred in international newspapers that pygmies were used as trackers, or even eaten, as they were deemed sub-human by marauding rebels (O'Brien, 2003). The war that wages along the eastern borders of the DRC is complex, as Congolese 'tribes', mercenaries, the UN and international countries such as the United States, Britain and Israel are implicated within the ongoing instability in the region (Madsen, 2009). As at November 2009, a local satellite of the UN, MONUC was staffed by a total of approximately 22 016 military personnel, observers and police personnel<sup>42</sup>. The UN Peacekeeping force includes a South African contingent. Some commentators argue that the war continues, fuelled by the covert motivations of many mining conglomerates and leading countries that are operating illegally with the assistance of various rebel leaders in the area (Erlinder, 2008; Madsen, 2008).

The ongoing civil war<sup>43</sup> has also impacted Congolese civilians far removed from the fighting. Many international (transnational) corporations consider the DRC as volatile and remain hesitant to invest in the country<sup>44</sup>. The currency has continued to be devalued, whilst many Congolese citizens are unable to secure regular and formal paid employment. Even the Congolese military have suffered regular non-payment of salaries for months on end. The death

<sup>42</sup> See <http://monuc.unmissions.org>.

<sup>43</sup> The skirmishes on the eastern front, in part a result of Rwandan Patriotic Front militias' incursions into the area, have been defined in the international media as a 'civil war'.

<sup>44</sup> Over the past five years China has however increased its direct investment within the DRC, but not always to the advantage of the local populations. Similarly South Africa has increased its reach over the past decade into the northern parts of Africa. De Beers continues to maintain its presence within the DRC.

toll of mostly Congolese civilians from the many skirmishes in the DRC has exceeded the 5 million mark, with over 1.5 million people internally displaced since the war began. Some of Kinshasa's buildings are testament to the violent consequences of political in-fighting. The most recent skirmish between political opponent, Jean-Pierre Bemba, and President Joseph Kabila's army left major buildings in Rue Juin 30, pockmarked like a teenager with a bad case of acne.

My trip to Kinshasa in September 2007 with one of my research participants' fiancée revealed a hint of the struggle that is daily life in Kinshasa. Our hosts made every effort to show us the best side of the city. They drove us to restaurants in air-conditioned vehicles where we were spoiled with live entertainment, simple yet good food and swimming in the pool at the Grande Hotel. However, my eyes could not lie. The streets were filled to capacity with hawkers selling fruit and vegetables along the street, craftsmen manufacturing and selling furniture, small shops selling a select group of items, tailoring shops, hair salons, women selling bread from a bucket carried atop their heads, school children walking long distances to and from school, women, sitting on the pavement, exchanging dollars for Congolese francs and photocopier operators sitting out on the street rather incongruously behind their machines waiting for business. These observations and the general neglect of the buildings, the sultry weather, the greyness of the days and the vibrant night life spoke of a country that is just ticking over. Life happens because one was blessed to wake up. People move on the streets, making contacts here and there, speaking to similarly classed others in restaurants, hotels, on the pavements or in passing in the street. Everyone has to eke out a living. Everyone has to eat. And government is *still* not able to provide for its citizenry. Electricity and water provision cannot be relied on. Nor can one be assured of appropriate health care in the clinics.

It is no surprise to me then, given the combination of push factors – economic decline, political unrest and uncertainty, and continued fighting in the east of the DRC – and pull factors – a functioning democracy, a generally strong economy, a health system that boasts world-class medical care in South Africa – that Congolese have continued to migrate to South Africa. This particular wave is much more differentiated than the initial waves, as many more migrants are accessing assistance from those who came first. JLM often spoke of the many times that he had assisted extended family, neighbours and neighbourhood friends with accommodation, employment and information during the first few months of their residence in South Africa. Despite these attractants, South Africa for these third wave migrants is more inhospitable than before and even downright dangerous (as noted above). For many Congolese, South Africa is thus a place of transit, rather than a place of permanent residence, especially for those who have not journeyed to Europe or the United States before, and believe that their prospects and personal safety would be secure there. Bouillon (2001:47) reports that South Africa is perceived



as a temporary place of residence; “a temporary substitution for Europe, North America or Australia”.

The constitution of the third wave includes middle-class professionals, students, entrepreneurs, less well-educated individuals and more asylum seekers and refugees. Given the tightening of immigration controls in the country, and the more stringent detention and deportation of undocumented migrants, many more Congolese nationals have sought entry and residence in South Africa through the asylum process. The promulgation of the Refugee Act in 1998 provided a legal means to enter and stay in South Africa and to secure ‘travel documents’. Kadima (2001:94) comments:

“Up until late 1992, there were very few Congolese in South Africa who had fled Zaire [DRC] for political reasons and who had subsequently applied for political asylum. Interestingly, this category appears only after the South African government started to consider applications for the status of refugees”.

For many however, seeking asylum (refugee status) has been a bane rather than a blessing. Potential refugees have experienced serious delays in the processing of their applications, and they’ve had to contend with human rights abuses and corruption as meted out by the Department of Home Affairs (Landau, 2006). Similarly they have been unfairly treated by prospective employers, especially those who do not recognise the validity of the *ngunda*<sup>45</sup> they carry verifying their legal status in the country *and* their right to employment or further study in the country. Prospective employers are consistent in their request for identity documents – documents that no asylum seeker holds until his or her confirmation as a refugee. Almost thirty years on since the initial arrival of Congolese migrants, South Africa has become profoundly inhospitable to their transitory residence, despite its liberal immigration and refugee policies. Yet despite the many obstacles to living and surviving in South Africa, Congolese men and women have survived and some have prospered. I provide instances of their strategies for survival and success in Part II.

## Conclusion

Migration in Africa, it has emerged, is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon and process that is directly related to the context within which it occurs. The regional and country-specific permutations of migration are diverse and make for interesting research sites. Africa’s history

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<sup>45</sup> Congolese refer to the asylum seeker permit as an A4 or the *ngunda*.

has been one of movement, with early Bantu tribes moving south in the early history of the continent, and then further economic and refugee migration over the centuries. As before, contemporary migration crosses territorial boundaries formally sanctioned and recognised as sovereign in global politics. This recognition however was not extended during the colonial period, and it could be argued that this situation obtains today. The DRC has had to contend with international interference since the late nineteenth century. Its vast mineral wealth and human capital has been its curse. In a world controlled through competition, the “Dark Continent’s” people have not had any competitive advantage and so a long list of push factors exist for African migrants, and Congolese in particular. As noted, *circuits personnelles* are a necessary feature of Congolese experience and an important aspect of a Congolese economic habitus. The inhospitable welcome Congolese receive further emphasises and entrenches the need to create personal networks – networks that offer a sense of belonging and an economic safety net during periods of adjustment in South Africa and elsewhere.

As options for survival decline, migration becomes a viable means to offset the lack of resources locally. The nature of the global economy is such, however, that immigrants, even in the incarnation of refugees, are not welcomed. A culture of scarcity, perceived as well as actual, prevails worldwide. This is the reality that African migrants move in, and South Africa as a local expression of the global is simply a more extreme version of the response of the rest of the world to the needs and aspirations of African others.

## Chapter Three

### Fieldwork and Research Reflections

“Perhaps the most difficult feat of all is to insert our participating and observing selves into the story so that we are as embodied as our subjects, while not appearing to compete with our subjects for the limelight” (Behar, 2007:150).

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The time and emotional space of fieldwork are a series of moments that reflect the interlocked nature of the fieldworker's life and the lives of her research participants. Akin to a spiritual process, ethnographic fieldwork tests the researcher's physical limitations, emotional and religious boundaries, the sensual limits of her being, and her tolerance for mutual scrutiny. While earlier ethnographers have distinguished between fieldwork and writing-up as two separate processes, my experience of fieldwork has confirmed my understanding that they are inextricable from each other. Writing fieldnotes in the field one analyses superficial impressions, identifying themes inductively as the process unfolds. When writing the dissertation, or research articles, one refers to these notes and the audio-visual data captured during fieldwork. These two processes thus interpenetrate each other physically across different locations, and different temporal slices. The one is always implied within the other, if not firmly situated in the other.

The substantive ethnography you will encounter in Parts II and III will reflect these conjoined and interpenetrative processes. Yet in order for you, the reader, to understand my ethnographic narratives, it is imperative that I situate the research within my biography and the circumstances of my fieldwork.

I was drawn to research Congolese migrants in South Africa, and the research site for specific reasons connected to my biography. I also conducted the research in an idiosyncratic way because of my peculiar anthropological training, my persona and my research participants' responses to my presence in the field. The process, ultimately my journey to knowing, was not static or a replication of 'how to do anthropology'. Rather, it was a varied, convoluted, and hugely frustrating experience that has been personally enriching, daunting, challenging, vexing, awkward and dangerously inextricable from my life. Anthropology has not merely become a lens to view my research data; it has become a particular life path that interrogates the 'other' while I interrogate my 'self' as an anthropologist and human being in the common humanity I share with my research subjects.

The chapter that follows externalises my thoughts about my research project and the many ways in which I am implicated in it. Here I take the liberty to speak for myself as honestly and as humbly as I can.

### **Rooting the research in my biography**

Okely (1996:28) argues that “In the study of a human being by another human being, the specificity and individuality of the observer are ever present and must therefore be acknowledged, explored and put to creative use”. How then did a South African woman of colour, raised in a coloured suburb of Cape Town come to study an African other with a foreign tongue? This is not usual in South African anthropology. As Palmer (2007) posits historically in South Africa white anthropologists usually studied the racial ‘other’ while the ‘native anthropologist’ opted for auto-anthropology. It probably started with my family’s forced removal from District Six, a multi-cultural place of diversity, humanity, struggle and community formation. Without romanticising the place, the possibilities for cross cultural understanding that were inherent within the District Six community were imploded by a segregationist British, and later Dutch regime, that wanted to clear Cape Town’s urban spaces of “kaffir-spots”<sup>46</sup> in the early twentieth century (Bickford-Smith, 1999).

My roots in the heart of Cape Town were eroded when my maternal grandmother and her children were evicted under duress from District Six to Kewtown, a small suburb in Athlone, which is part of the Cape Flats. Discussions with my mother as to the history of my maternal family highlighted a number of interesting realisations: my maternal great-grandfather was of German origin and my maternal great-grandmother was from St Helena. My maternal grandfather’s heritage, of which my mother knows little, originates in Java, an Indonesian island. Thus, in relation to my maternal roots, my origins are not native to South Africa – rather I have a history of immigration by choice and a history of forced internal migration in my family. This realisation surprised me as two generations later I would be studying African immigrants, referred to as asylum seekers and refugees in Muizenberg, Cape Town – a peculiar coincidence.

I grew up in a coloured middle class suburb called Retreat, situated parallel to the working class coloured area of Steenberg. My mother, forced to enter the job market at age 14, was unable to complete her secondary school education. Yet, despite her employment in factories – a packer at Bauman’s biscuit factory; a number of shoe and clothing factories thereafter, and then eventually

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<sup>46</sup> Literal translation – ‘unbeliever spots’, but also referred to as ‘black-spots’.

a saleslady and eventual manageress of a clothing store in Wynberg, Cape Town – she was determined to leave her impoverished yet happy childhood behind her. She gave her children what she so sorely desired – a better living environment *and* an education. Determined to achieve social mobility, she married and eventually moved to Retreat into what she calls ‘ownership houses’. These were free standing houses that had been built in the 1970s to accommodate more upwardly mobile coloured people. The rooms were spacious and the grounds were ample too.

For close on 30 years we lived a stone’s throw away from the predominantly white suburb of Muizenberg (Lemanski, 2006b) – my fieldsite for the PhD research. My childhood memories include visits to the beach adjacent to Muizenberg – Sunrise Beach, also known in previous decades as Christian Beach. In adolescence my memories are more immediate of Muizenberg’s sunshine, surfers, laughter, ice-cream cones from Majestic café and our forays, as a family of three, onto the Muizenberg walkway and Muizenberg beach.

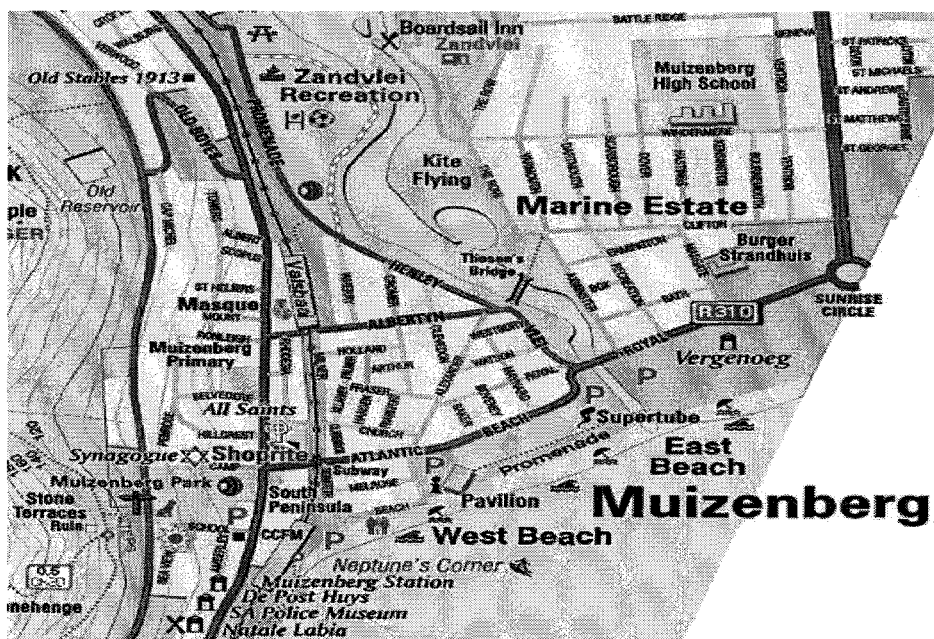


Image 2: Map of Muizenberg (Source unknown)

My memories speak of brightly coloured dilapidated boxes of unknown function on the beach. As a child I thought that these were little holiday homes for white people as they frequently used the boxes during hot summer days. In the 1990s, these boxes became changing spaces for coloured and African families – as well as little homes away from home, as people ‘occupied’ these spaces for the entire day, spreading blankets, pillows and a huge array of kitchen paraphernalia and food over 1m by 1m square patches of white sand in front of, and under, these houses-on-stilts.



Photograph 1: Muizenberg changing huts (Source Unknown)

Muizenberg was also a place we drove through in search of other waters along the False Bay coast as an extended family, and in later years as my brother matured, as part of a circuitous Sunday drive to Simon's Town and back to Southfield (a formerly white suburb that my brother and mother moved to in the late 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century respectively). These memories and the intermittent photographs are vastly different to the Muizenberg memories of Mike Nicol, who as a white man lived in Muizenberg for approximately 13 years in the 1990s and the early twenty-first century. While he has fond memories of Muizenberg, his cause for consternation and his eventual retreat to Glencairn Heights was the continuing dilapidation of Muizenberg; dilapidation encouraged by slumlords who rented their houses to legal and illegal African foreigners from Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mozambique and Congo-Brazzaville, as well as impoverished and uncouth coloured and white people (Nicol, 2001). Nicol's (2001) account of life in Muizenberg is also filled with the howling south-easter as are mine, but his memories include the entrée of the African other into the area as a result of cheap accommodation. A memory I do not share.

## **First introductions**

### *Initiating interest*

Enthralled by salsa dancing I took dance lessons at Bijou, a night club situated in Observatory every Thursday evening to move my feet faster than I thought possible to the rhythms of salsa

beats. As the dance floor heated up with our rotating and sensuous bodies, I would walk to the bar to drink my standard highball glass of water with lots of ice. I always smiled at the large, robust man who sat at the counter, stylishly dressed and grinning sheepishly at me. Through the smoke that curled up from his lit cigarette he observed me week after week, until one uneventful Thursday Ghislain, the bar manager and my regular dance partner introduced me to the bouncer, Jean-Claude (JC), his older brother.

Over the next few months, before my departure from Cape Town, JC and I met and chatted amiably. The friendship we built gave me access to a parallel universe that was situated within the borders of South Africa – that of African transmigrants. I came to know vaguely of the struggles of Congolese men and women to survive in a hostile environment; the close and cramped quarters that they (usually kin-related) were forced to live in and the insults that a large man of substance was forced to endure because he dared to join unemployed working class black South African men on the highways of the city, waiting for employment from builders or contractors driving by. On a good day JC's large mass and strength secured a dismal amount of R60.00<sup>47</sup>.

On the recommendation of his brother to the owner of Bijou, JC secured a more reliable and better paying position as the bouncer/doorman at the club. Our initial acquaintance developed into an endearing friendship over the months that followed, as JC confided his experiences in Cape Town and more particularly his journey to South Africa from the DRC.

Having completed two years of a law degree, JC left the DRC for South Africa. Walking most of the way from DRC, the journey at times broken by rides on trucks for a price, JC met similar migrants mostly young men from Zimbabwe attempting to cross the river into South Africa. Having been warned of its velocity and thus danger JC hoisted a little girl onto his broad shoulders encouraging the mother to follow closely. With the little girl perched atop his shoulders, JC navigated the roiling water with one arm holding the girl and the other holding onto the suitcase filled with his meagre belongings and money. They were making good headway across the river, when mid-way the water seemed to be more turbulent. Tentatively JC moved forward only to find himself plunged into the water up to his chest. The mother of the little girl sitting on his shoulders screamed in fear of her little girl's perch being lost. Trying to balance himself the little girl slid from his shoulders and in an instant the water took her and his suitcase downstream. Panicked, yet strangely calm, JC followed and reached out for the little girl, heaving his way across the rest of the river. On the other side, wet, but still breathing he put the little girl safely into her grateful mother's arms. Having lost

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<sup>47</sup> 8.81 dollars on 13 January 2010.

everything he had so carefully brought with him on the long journey through Zambia, Botswana and Zimbabwe JC looked ahead and resolutely kept walking.

Sitting in Divas, a small cafeteria in Observatory, that Sunday afternoon, listening to the sound of soft rain hitting the windows of the restaurant, I cannot match the present, smiling, smoking, 'larger-than-life' man with the man that had crossed the river illegally into South Africa some years earlier. And yet there he was, cigarette in hand, looking distraught as he conveyed the angst that was so much a part of his life in Cape Town. In that moment, as sadness flicked across JC's face, it was hard to imagine that I would research Congolese men and women as part of my doctoral studies. Yet just over a year later I returned to Cape Town to begin a study of African refugees. A few months before my return JC relocated to Johannesburg as the manager of the sister establishment of Bijou, the Colour Bar, in Melville. From all accounts he was doing better in Johannesburg, especially as he was living on his own. Craving his own space, JC had made the radical decision to leave Cape Town, a city he enjoyed, and his younger brother and two sisters, in order to situate himself more fully and independently in the South African job market.

### *Introducing Muizenberg*

JC's story spurred my interest in African migration to South Africa, and aware of a number of African migrant populations' presence in Cape Town, I returned thereto to commence fieldwork in 2004. Before fieldwork started I had to decide between two potential fieldsites, one being Muizenberg and the other Sea Point. Both were seaside 'urban villages' in Cape Town. However there was a visible class difference between Muizenberg and Sea Point. Sea Point's accommodation, situated close to the upmarket suburbs of Clifton and Camps Bay was rather costly, whereas Muizenberg, having lost its charm and upmarket pretensions in the 1990s offered cheaper accommodation. Besides the class difference, Sea Point played host to mostly Nigerian migrants, whereas Muizenberg provided a 'home' to predominantly Congolese asylum seekers. I decided to assess the merits of both sites by residing in each for three days.

Upon arrival in Muizenberg in July 2004, it was clear that the urban space I had known in childhood had gradually deteriorated. This urban degradation was readily apparent on site, as many buildings were in dire need of renovation. The old Empire Cinema along the beachfront, which had been a majestic old building, lay in ruins eroded by the wind and constant spray of sea-water from the nearby ocean. Grimy in its neglect, the once popular beachfront that had offered holiday accommodation to British tourists in the early twentieth century, and local travellers in the latter half of the twentieth century, had lost its grandeur.





Photograph 2: The façade of the Empire building prior to its restoration

I spent three days in Muizenberg walking the many streets of the village, “a transient mix of predominantly working and lower middle-class white, coloured, black African and immigrant families and individuals ... sometimes known as the ‘ghetto’ with its rundown terraced housing and cramped streets” (Lemanski, 2006:568). Based on superficial observations and local estimates of the existence of up to 3 000 Congolese residents in the area, I chose Muizenberg village as my research site. Although my French was limited to an introductory university course in it, I was further encouraged to choose Muizenberg as my fieldsite because of my childhood familiarity with the area, and my sense and awareness of Congolese migrants’ struggles.

I was, and remained, hesitant during fieldwork to do a door-to-door survey of the households in the village, and along the beachfront area. However, this research gap is remedied in part by the research conducted by a geographer, and a non-governmental organisation, the Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC)<sup>48</sup> during 2004 and 2005 respectively. Lemanski (2006:570) quoting Baumann (2002:3) notes that “16% of village tenants were immigrants, predominantly from the Democratic Republic of Congo (64%) and Angola (16%)”. In 2003 Muizenberg had a total population of 11 418 of which 26.6% were black African, 36% coloured, 1.4% Indian and 36% white (ibid).

The unemployment rate in Muizenberg set between 5% and 6.6% (CORC Report, 2004/5 and Lemanski, 2006) is rather low, given an unemployment rate of 18.4% in the Western Cape as a

<sup>48</sup> See <http://www.courc.co.za/aboutus.html> (Accessed 13 January 2011).

whole. But the average rate obscures the fact that the predominant group in the “no income” bracket is black African, which is inclusive of African immigrants. Lemanski (2006:572) argues that, “Although Muizenberg’s immigrant population are not accurately captured by the census, anecdotal evidence indicates that they are mostly employed in the informal economy (e.g. parking attendants) and thus would feature in the bottom range of income and occupation status”.

### *Congolese in Muizenberg*

At the start of fieldwork, the local city council initiated a plan that would revitalise the spatial and infrastructural dynamics of the area (City of Cape Town, 2004). But this plan was not implemented during the fieldwork period. The decay of the area defined Muizenberg as a suburb that would provide cheap accommodation compared to the high cost of accommodation in other suburbs of Cape Town (Lemanski, 2006). This was a crucial factor in the decision to reside here for asylum seekers and refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo-Brazzaville, Rwanda and Angola. Further factors included the relative safety of the area, despite the presence of numerous homeless people – all of whom were classified as coloured. Policing in the area was provided by the local police station and the neighbourhood watch’s security personnel – the Mountain Men. It was also situated rather close to the affordable, yet at times unreliable, rail service and young children and adolescents had access to a primary and high school in the area. The area also provided particularly Congolese men and women access to charismatic Pentecostal churches that celebrated Congolese forms of worship.

In the 1990s, when Muizenberg was often referred to as ‘Little Congo’ a Congolese woman opened a restaurant in a block of flats called Don Pepe that catered to the culinary tastes of Congolese men and women in the area. As more Congolese nationals moved up-the-line to better accommodation in the suburbs, spurred on by more secure employment, the restaurant was forced to close its doors. Since then, Don Pepe, also known as Yellow Rose, has hosted a number of destitute Congolese families (Dolley, 2009).

### Sketches of Congolese lives in Muizenberg

The following ‘sketches’ provide my impressions of Congolese’s daily lives’ in Muizenberg.

The narrow streets of Muizenberg force social intimacy between locals and African nationals. The high walls of native residents defy communal viewing. Yet, the houses occupied by African nationals, although dilapidated and in serious disrepair, are open to public scrutiny. The structure of the homes does not offer a large enough space between the Congolese occupants and the ‘street’

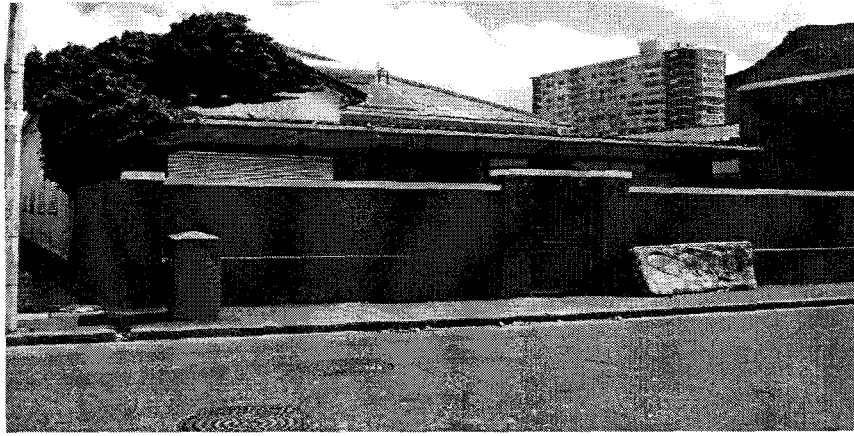
ambling by. Rather, with doors wide open, Congolese men take their arguments with each other into the street; violently loud, the words echo in the narrow streets of Muizenberg village, offering a spectacle for anyone willing to watch and listen. Coloured and Xhosa women participate in the cacophony of voices, encouraging their Congolese men to “Beat the bastard” who dares to call them bitches. Despite these violent verbal exchanges, the exchanges led to nothing more than pushing and shoving. There are also days when Muizenberg residents’ engagement with each other is a peaceful, yet rowdy, celebration of their country of origin. Christmas day is spent outside on the street, talking and laughing with neighbours. Memories become a part of the swirling wind that is synonymous with Muizenberg; memories of one’s parents, neighbourhoods back home and the women left behind.

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A stench floats above the Blue House – the landlord has switched off the water and electricity as he tries to dissuade further occupation of the house, a former backpackers. This reality doesn’t alter the continuous trade in *dagga*<sup>49</sup> that occurs in the street. I’m not always sure that I can trust my eyes, as many cars and bicycles move almost imperceptibly through the narrow street. An external signifier of the trade, is the vehicle purchased by one of the residents of the house. Onlookers laugh loudly as the owner tries to drive – without a licence. A few weeks later the car is incapacitated. Like an omen of things to come, the resistance of Blue House residents is broken soon thereafter. Without much fanfare they are evicted. The tell tale signs of an eviction in progress is the mattress unceremoniously placed on Patrice’s head. Large framed, lithe and muscular, his ambling gait is transformed into a resolute march down the street. He shows no interest in the stares from neighbours. Locked up and barricaded the Blue House is emptied of its feisty inhabitants. No sign of occupation remains. A discarded mattress hugs the wall. Rather eerily, cigarette butts defy the white plaque which states ‘no smoking’.

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<sup>49</sup> A local South African name for cannabis.



Photograph 3: The Blue House

In the months to come the quiet house fails to bear witness to the Congolese bodies that loudly proclaimed their presence in the street. A ghostly silence falls on the street and the village, as the residents of the Blue House have found accommodation elsewhere in Muizenberg or other suburbs in Cape Town with friends and family.

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On most Sundays, when it is not raining, local Congolese soccer teams pit their prowess against that of other Congolese or multi-national teams. Living in Muizenberg, or surrounding areas like Westlake, Congolese men of varying soccer talent meet to play soccer either in Westlake or at Zandvlei (areas close to Muizenberg). Formally kitted out, excellent players are not easily discernible from the more mediocre soccer players. The matches are always hotly contested, with onlookers very vocal about their dismay or excitement as regards the play on the field. Banter between players and onlookers is not uncommon. Neither is it uncommon for Congolese men to videotape the game, with the expressed purpose of sending the 'game' back home.

On one such occasion, after a brawl on the soccer field, that includes some of the onlookers, Gwynneth<sup>50</sup> and I joined some of the players and their girlfriends or wives at a house situated in Frankfort road. Occupied by a Congolese family, the back room on the plot is decorated simply, providing just enough space for the Congolese men present to sit squashed against each other or 'their women'.

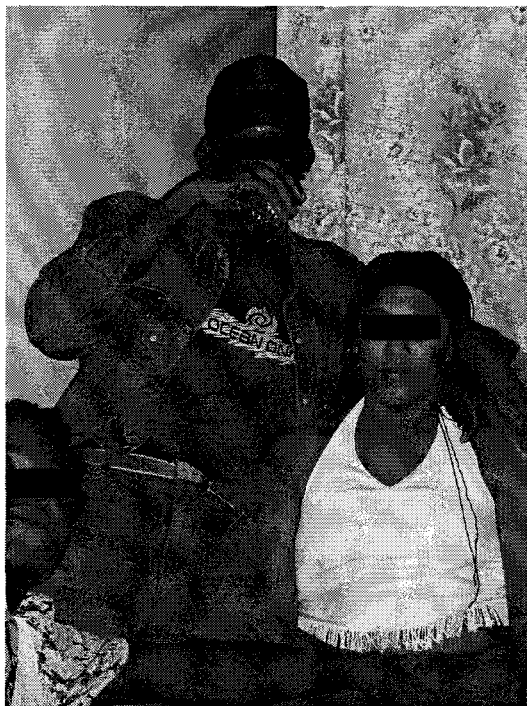
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<sup>50</sup> Gwynneth is one of my oldest friends, and confidantes. During the early stages of fieldwork in 2004 she provided valuable research and emotional support as my acquaintance increased with my research informants.



Photograph 4: Congolese men in the local Congolese tavern

They enjoy a wrestling match screened on the television<sup>51</sup>, commentating loudly as to the strength and antics of the various wrestlers. Match viewing is interspersed with Congolese music, the eating of Congolese fare – *fufu* (what South Africans know as pap), peanut sauce and deep fried fish – provided by the hostess, and the consumption of large 500ml bottles of Castle beer – a local South African favourite.



Photograph 5: A Congolese man and his 'coloured' girlfriend in the local Congolese tavern

The above behaviour is observed by local South African residents in the area. Conservative in outlook (Nicol, 2001) a number of these residents are disgusted by the behaviours exhibited, and

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<sup>51</sup> During my stay in Kinshasa in September 2007, I was intrigued to observe that American wrestling was broadcast on Congolese television. The male children of my hosts mimicked many of the wrestlers' moves and mannerisms in their play with each other.

eager to see Congolese evicted from the area. An expression of this perspective in 2004 is provided by the then Chairperson of the local Improvement District Committee, Mariette<sup>52</sup>.

*Observing and 'judging' the African other*

During our interview with the local pharmacist, Mr Muzikanth, he suggests that Gwynneth and I speak to Mariette, the chairperson of the local Improvement District Committee for further information on the interaction between locals and African immigrants. Setting up the interview with her telephonically proved to be educational. Direct and articulate, Mariette informs me of the negativity surrounding Congolese residents in Muizenberg. Her words in that conversation are reflected in our formal interview with her. As we walk to her house, I inform Gwynneth that Mariette seems rather bold and bolshy. Standing in front of her house, we are unable to see over the high yellow walls. We ring the buzzer, and a woman's voice comes across the intercom 'Yes?'. Gwynneth and I look at each other, and I put my mouth close to the intercom and speak, "Hi, we are here to see Mariette?"

The voice sounding metallic drones back, "Do you have an appointment?"

"Yes" I respond.

A buzzer buzzes, and the wooden gate swings open. As we move through the gate, a Xhosa woman welcomes us at the door. She escorts us into the reception room, just off the kitchen. In the kitchen, Mariette, a beautiful white Afrikaner woman, with long tawny hair, switches on the kettle, and says, "Welcome. Wil julle sit? (Would you like to sit?)"

We exchange pleasantries, and she joins us in the reception room. The house seems large, and rambling. Through initial questioning, Mariette notes that she had lived in the States, returning to South Africa in the 1990s. Her early years back in the country were not much different to the life she had had before her self-imposed exile to the States.

Gwynneth asks, "So what um ... how did you end up living in Muizenberg, as opposed to somewhere else?"

"Well, I had socialised here [before] many years prior to leaving. I had socialised in Kalk Bay, but I couldn't afford Kalk Bay. I could afford here. That's what brought me here plus this side of the world, I prefer it to that side of the world, it's a nice environment."

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<sup>52</sup> A pseudonym.

"But for the Congolese."

"Well it's been horrific, I will be quite honest with you. I mean, it started after I came. I bought this house at the end of 1997, the beginning of 1998 and I want to say that approximately around 99, oh when I moved in there was one house which was belonging to these famous slumlords called [...] who owned 18 and 20 Hansen. And there were refugees in the one and their numbers kept increasing until I think rumour had it, there were up to 40 men living there in something like a three or four bedroomed house. And then what they do to make up the rent is that they sleep in shifts. So you can get three eight hour shifts sleeping scenarios into one 24 hour cycle. So you can imagine the amount of feet going through there. And it's like serious overcrowding. And that's the pattern that emerged here is that, that particular landlord sold to another unscrupulous landlord who was an elder in the Jehovah's witness church, who bought up 10 properties here. Did them quite nicely and then promptly went and let them to refugees."

"Um ..."

"So, I just have to assume that one of the reasons was like religious because these are vulnerable people so you could proselytize them. You know you could turn them all into Jehovah's witness whatevers. So, and on top of that he was scoring seriously double the market rate of the rental. So he was scoring 2 to 3 years ago something like four and a half thousand cash out of each building, when the max you could have rented it for at the time was two thousand a month. So he was lekker profiteering. You know. So, the two went sort of hand in hand initially. Because then it got so bad eventually because of the refugee presence that no-one wanted to live here. So if you had an investment, nobody wanted to rent it. I mean nobody."

"Ja .."

"Because of what went down in the end, with this massive numbers of refugees, many of whom obeyed, did not obey the law and behaved absolutely abysmally. There's an incredible arrogance I have observed over the years. Absolute disregard of what's legal or lawful. You may not say anything. They've got no respect for the police. They've got no respect for the locals. People who go there to say listen the music's [too loud], it's four in the morning now my family can't sleep. They're sworn at, they get death-threatened. Um .. you don't dare to speak to them. There's always so

many of them that it's a mob. Our police have gone in on repeated occasions and have had to literally flee in an undignified fashion for their life."

"Ja, has there ever been any kind of interaction between you and them, you know?"

"Yes, there was. In the beginning days we had a big group who tried to be more inclusive so that it's fair and properly constituted. So all the formally constituted organisations of Muizenberg which at that time, head count was 23 or 26 had two reps on a group which was informally constituted. We didn't have a constitution for it's too much of a schlepp which was called the vision group. And that was probably ... when's that now ... that was probably about somewhere around 2001, 2002. Um and there were two chaps on that particular board, was JL and IM. I think their names were. And they came to talk on behalf of refugees. Very nice guys. Um ... it seems from events that transpired afterwards that that community itself is hugely schismed out. I mean they don't really have consensus. It's a whole jumble of people. Some from Brazzaville, some from Kinshasa. And that already creates problems so we've had a lot of gang fighting here along political lines about what's going down there. And they are not being very nice, cause we are talking masses of 10, 15 extremely violent men busy trying to assassinate somebody else in the street on another say like Thursday afternoon. It's been disgusting. Repeated street fights. Very violent. Very intimidating to locals. And the trouble is it erupts very quickly. Then there's a mass of extremely angry men blaring at the top of their lungs in the street. By the time you call the police, if they ever arrive, which is still another problem, there isn't a trace left. But I mean it's been highly intimidating. They have weapons some times. And that was a repeated feature also of the refugee presence here. It was actually dead scary. Then we had a very well publicised breakout which was probably now what, about a year and a half ago or something there, where there was a full scale war. It started apparently wherever a couple did something to another couple. And it actually spread right through Cape Town. There were riots in Maitland, there were like blow ups in other suburbs. What happened here and I mean it's really scary for residents and tenants alike, or owners and tenants alike. We had gangs of 20 men running through the street with pangas, lead iron pipes, smashing cars that belonged to the other refugees. They burnt out two cars. A car was burnt out in Atlantic Road. A car was burnt out here in Church Road which was belonging to the opposition. You know they threatened to kill each other. Now that is a complete and utter violation of the Refugee Act just right there."

"Right."



"And I still want to know with these people with their drug dealing, shebeening, prostitution and the other, theft and the other illegal stuff, is how is it that they are not violating their refugee status. I mean I know that there's the principle of which they call *non refoulment*, which is the French of non-returning. Apparently the refugee act says that even though they are doing really bad stuff."

"They can't return them."

"They can't return them to a place which is ostensibly dangerous. But I want to know how come with our completely stressed policing, and judiciary system, how come refugees can just proliferate crime here without any sort of consequences? That's what I would like to know. I am quite sure the refugee act says that you have to obey the laws of the host country. I think there's a level at which they understand they are non-citizens. They are supposed to be obeying the laws, but they can still get away doing their rubbish because they are not citizens. Um and as long as the turmoil carries on in Congo, you can't send them back. And if you don't know where else to send them, then you go well fold our hands and hope for better days. And I think the way the government is working at the moment, they're just ... they're concerned about doing anything which gets anyone upset at South Africa. They're just ..."

"Pussyfooting around."

"All the time, all the time. Hell one gets the impression when we had the threatening session here in Frankfort Road. The other lady, when she said I am calling the police they said: [change voice again] oh you call the police. We have been in war. In other words we're above the law. We're so strong. We're so super, we can do as we please. Bigger your laws, that's what it felt like."

"Every time you walk past there, it looks as if there are even more people."

"It's disgusting what's going on there. Look the fact is that there's been, that this is a refugee tactic probably survival, but still there's an incredible impunity about it. They tap other people's phone wires and then they run up bills to Kinshasa and then like this little old guy who barely survives, white chap up the road here was suddenly sitting with bills in excess of R2000 and he lives off like a R1000 a month. So he had that repeatedly. So now people are putting special blocks on their phones in case the refugees in this area tap them. You see the lines running everywhere. It happened all over Muizenberg. Refugees tapping lines, running up lekker phone accounts and then just laughing. This lot here, tapped the Council electric wires, a highly dangerous thing to do. Been

running off electric from there for years. They owe thousands electric to the point of where the Council has shut down their electricity supply, which is technically not legal, but they've just lost thousands. These people squatting in these houses have run up water bills which you cannot believe. And I don't believe it's just because of overcrowding. I think they sort of leave taps running the whole day. This woman who has just bought the blue house started getting bills of thousands for water use. Now what on earth are you doing to create such a water bill? I mean my bill here is maybe what, R25 a month, R50 a month. So what are you doing? Or how many people are using this place to warrant a bill of two and a half thousand rand a month? There's no garden there. So these landlords are sitting with these extra costs, electric and water costs on top of the abuse that they are getting now."

Gwynneth: "It would be different if there was some kind of assimilation, if there was more integration, into as you would call law abiding. Like if they were working and able to afford and if they were going to school and then just staying away from that behaviour."

"But they extort and exploit every single thing they can lay their hands on. You must know how the school is moaning here. The refugees living in this environment have to go to MZB junior school, because it's like their area. Now the school is subsidising several refugee families, who lie and steal and cheat. One woman who lives across the vlei had something like, I don't know, 9 children or 6 children or so. She left them in the care of an underaged minor who is about 15 or 16. Bugged off to where she comes from. She never came back again. So those children are at this Muizenberg school. They owe I don't know how many thousands in unpaid fees. The school can't dump them, because they are not allowed to. The school has to turn away other South Africans who would willingly and politely pay their school fees. And they are saddled with something like a R20 000 bill which they have to swallow at the expense of all the other children because now they can't buy chalkboard dusters whatever. Um oh but tough luck. And this mother, the migrant mother comes back, rocks up once a year and then the house there is slowly being trashed and then disappears again. So that's the school scenario. So if they are not tapping phone lines, they are tapping electricity, they are tapping the free school system."

In 2004, a far cry from its heyday as a premier holiday resort for the British elite Muizenberg, inclusive of the village, *prior* to its regeneration has become a slum; a derelict reminder of its previous grandeur, and yet home to many who prefer anonymity (CORC Report, 2004). These anonymous ones are however living among South African locals, many of whom share Mariette's sense of indignation (Nicol, 2001). The tone of Mariette's words, and the words

themselves – They’ve got no respect for locals/There’s always so many of them that it’s a mob – are sensationalist and rather scary. As noted by Harris (2002) xenophobic attitudes in South Africa are often only attributed to working class black persons. However white South Africans are also xenophobic, although their attitudes are not as salient within the public sphere. Our conversation with Mariette occurs in her private home.

While Mariette’s interview reveals the distaste with which Congolese men and women are viewed in Muizenberg – she distinguishes between refugees and locals<sup>53</sup> – her observations are also indicative of the reality that was the life of many Congolese asylum seekers and refugees in Muizenberg at the time of my research. The decline and urban decay in the area had occurred *prior* to the arrival of African immigrants. Thus a number of African immigrants moved into Muizenberg to take advantage of the low cost of accommodation. However, despite the low cost of accommodation, they were unable to afford the cost thereof *individually*. Through necessity they combined individual resources so as to secure a residence, even if that meant sleeping-on-rotation. Creating social networks out of necessity Congolese migrants attempt to support each other. While they accept exploitation by landlords they in turn ignore the ‘rules of conservative decorum’ so as to survive. A further indication of their will to survive is Mariette’s proclamation of their criminal activities, inclusive of ‘drug dealing’ and ‘shebeening’.

In the above, Mariette also notes that one of the landlords provided accommodation to the refugees, so as to ‘proselytize’ them. Mariette’s suggestion is confirmed by Hirschman (2004), who notes that American churches often acquired new congregants through the provision of material resources. Mariette also comments on the nature of the exchange between asylum seekers and landlords – one of exploitation. She notes that the most rent one could charge for a house was R2 000.00 in 2001/2. However, landlords were renting their homes out to asylum seekers for R4 500.00. She implies that while landlords were ‘rewarded’ handsomely for the rental of their homes the local residents in the area suffered. Mariette exemplifies Nicol’s (2001) concerns. Writing in 2001, Nicol almost word-for-word supports Mariette’s sense of desperation as regards the ‘refugee problem’.

“Most of the new inhabitants were refugees, young men who’d fled the warring, hopeless regions of Africa. They rented mattress space from the slumlords and crowded twenty into unfurnished houses with one toilet, one bath, one basin between them. They took possession of the streets because

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<sup>53</sup> I found Mariette’s distinction intriguing. While it noted that Congolese were not socially integrated and accepted by local South Africans, it also pointed to the distinct ‘otherness’ associated with refugees. While many of them had been living in Muizenberg for longer than 2 years at the time of my conversation with Mariette, she still referred to them as other, rather than locals.

there wasn't enough room in the houses. They spat, pissed, defecated, had sex before my eyes...Muizenberg no longer had anything to offer me" (Nicol, 2001:43).

Mariette's words and those of Nicol (2001) are damning of African refugees, and particularly Congolese migrants living there. However their perception of Congolese despite its observational merit does not contextualise Congolese men and women *historically*, nor does it place them within a contemporary context that considers the status of, and assistance provided to, refugees in South Africa. Yes, Mariette is aware of the war in Congo-Kinshasa, and its possible ramifications. Yet she is unable to trace a historical narrative that offers a partial explanation for the behaviour of Congolese resident in Muizenberg given her limited purview. Neither she nor Nicol (2001) are aware of the unemployment rate among refugees, and are thus profoundly ignorant of the sheer will needed to negotiate survival in an alien and unfriendly host country. However, as noted by Harris (2002), xenophobes do not speak from knowledge grounded in facts or awareness of 'the other's' circumstances. Further, as Lemanski (2006:573) posits,

"Given that the vast majority of whites moved to Muizenberg *before* it underwent radical demographic change and also that most are attracted by Muizenberg's attributes (rather than individual concerns), such a radical change in some of these attributes (e.g. population composition) is likely to decrease enthusiasm for the area" (italics in original).

Chapters in Parts II and III, provide a counterpoint to Mariette's narrative of alienation, crime and woe. The partial narratives of ordinary Congolese, presented therein, speak of the struggle to survive, and succeed in an inhospitable environment such as Muizenberg in particular and South Africa more generally.

### **Fieldwork**

I conducted fieldwork, off and on, over a period of roughly 15 months between July 2004 and January 2009. Relying predominantly on participant observation, I observed and participated in weddings, funerals, bible study classes and church services in two churches (one primarily Congolese and the other multinational). I attended birthday celebrations, women's evenings, Christmas gatherings, and often escorted my primary research informants to the local Congolese hair salon, on visits to family/friends, and to their educational facilities. Given that I had a car, I was also asked to provide transport for Congolese women's outings to local markets during the week, or on a Sunday.

During the 15 months of fieldwork I came into contact with close to a 100 Congolese men, women and children living in Muizenberg and also resident elsewhere in Cape Town. Early on during fieldwork, I was introduced to three Congolese men all resident in the same house. Through sheer ease of access and a genuine affinity to them, they became my research focus as the months wore on. While they were not representative of the larger Congolese population in Muizenberg, I felt a strong need to document the minutiae of their lived experiences as refugees and migrants in South Africa as earlier and more contemporary work on refugees and African migrants in South Africa provided quantitative data, rather than qualitative data<sup>54</sup> (see [www.queensu.ca/samp](http://www.queensu.ca/samp) and [www.migration.org.za](http://www.migration.org.za), two leading research organisations on African migrations). Or if the data presented were qualitative, theses and research publications were based on short stints of fieldwork. Also, contemporary discussions of African refugees have enumerated refugee concerns or problems en masse without detailing migrants' successes or presenting their stories. Therefore a focus on these three individuals provided an opportunity to fill these gaps.

That said however, while I focused on Guy, Serge and Lyon, I also maintained contact with individuals I had met in the local Assembly of God (AOG) church, or on the streets throughout fieldwork. Initially convinced that I needed to have verbatim data to corroborate my observations, I conducted two in-depth interviews with local residents, three interviews with local women married to African migrants, and two formal interviews with Congolese refugees. I also conducted four focus group discussions of approximately two hours in length each with African transnational students studying at the African Institute for Mathematical Studies in Muizenberg.

My primary method of data collection however remained participant observation. During fieldwork I maintained a field diary detailing days, events, conversations, impressions and emotions. I also wrote numerous emails to my supervisor to record events and my initial thoughts or impressions thereof. In short, my emphasis on participant observation to the near exclusion of other research methods expressed my belief that the anthropologist has to become a part of the research setting, to the point of where his or her presence can be totally disregarded. While participant observation can be intrusive during the initial stages of fieldwork it becomes less so as research progresses. While I couldn't divest myself of my non-nativeness, my race, my gender or my class, my presence was accepted in the field. For example: when I left the field for the first time in March 2005, the bible study group that I had been attending held a surprise going away celebration. While I didn't share the same belief system many research participants were

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<sup>54</sup> Although this fact has been changing in the past year or so.

unaware of this due to my 'religious' attendance at bible study; 'I' as a subject, had therefore disappeared. During the course of fieldwork the visibility of my embodied self waxed and waned according to events and/or observations made by my research informants.



Photograph 6: Surprise 'going away' cake

### **The Not so Native Anthropologist**

The experience of fieldwork was both exhilarating and hair-raising. My nativeness and my strangeness, my insider/outsider experiences created tensions that are different to the field experiences of non-native anthropologists researching the 'exotic other' away from the researcher's natal home. My research was not only conducted in my backyard, but also very near my familial homes – my mother and brother live a short 20 minute drive away. To add to the complexity of the field situation, I, a 'marginal' local, was studying the non-native, the alien refugee in my home space. As commented by Hume and Mulcock (2004:xv),

“ ... I was moving between the strange and the familiar on a daily basis. Unlike those ethnographers who say farewell to their own cultural settings to temporarily immerse themselves in other ways of being, I was trying to maintain my balance across two, not always distinct but frequently competing cultural domains”.

While Narayan (1993) argues for the dissolution of the native/non-native nexus, arguing that it only muddies fieldwork discussions, I contend that one's particularities in the field, especially within a study of immigration, is of immense import at the time of the study. One's nationality and residential location impinges on the research dynamic. One therefore has to interrogate how

one's subject positions affect the research given that the native<sup>55</sup> researcher is studying the 'migrant other'.

### *The Female Body doing Fieldwork*

During the first few weeks of fieldwork I tried to map the area with my feet attempting to locate 'spots' of interest and 'Congolese' hangouts. In the process I was often observed by the many Congolese men who inhabited the public spaces such as the roads within Muizenberg village, or the space in front of the local Congolese hair salon. They were easily identifiable as they had a rather proud demeanour. They were often tall, lithe and well-groomed.

Soon Congolese men transformed the observations of my gendered identity as a woman into actual approaches. I found it peculiar and intriguing to be 'sought out' when walking in the surrounds of Muizenberg. In trying to rationalise the reason for these approaches I worried about the perception that I was creating. In being friendly was I creating the impression that I was available? Was I contravening an unknown Congolese rule of engagement between men and women? These particular approaches, and my initial experiences with a Congolese man, who worked as a car-guard at the local supermarket emphasised my insider/outsider status on a number of levels. Nationally and racially I was obviously different. Although a South African studying in South Africa, I was an outsider to the refugee population in the area. I didn't share linguistic or cultural similarity with them, nor a lived conceptualisation of what it meant to be a refugee in Cape Town. Further, my phenotype and the resultant categorisation in apartheid South Africa as 'coloured' and Congolese classification of my race as *maillot jaune* (yellow kit)<sup>56</sup>, I was racially different to their classification as black Africans. On a local residential level, I was clearly a new arrival in the area, and therefore an outsider. Similarly my presence in the streets of Muizenberg demonstrated and confirmed my outsider status, particularly to Congolese men, as I traversed the public space in full view of the persons that made use of this space – men rather than women. While I observed Congolese women in the local supermarket their forays to the supermarket offered short rather than extended periods of public visibility; Congolese women

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<sup>55</sup> I assume that Narayan takes issue with the dichotomy created between native/non-native anthropologist, given the historical connotations attached to the concept 'native' which implies that native is primitive, savage and inferior to the researching other. These connotations also imply that the native anthropologist is not as rigorous as the 'alien' anthropologist.

<sup>56</sup> This particular phrase is a Congolese qualification of coloured people resident in Cape Town. French for yellow kit, this phrase has a number of interesting connotations and implications. Firstly the phrase implies that coloured identity can be worn and by implication removed. This particularity further implies that identity is constructed, shifting and negotiated. The reference to 'kit' further connotes that coloured identity is a group identity. Ultimately it represents and demonstrates belonging which is almost ethnic, separate from the national identity of South African. This particular ascription of identity is not a superficial rendering of colouredness, especially as Congolese men and women relate to each other on a material level. As noted by Friedman (1994), clothes are signifiers of position and more importantly embodiment.

occupied private spaces, whereas the men occupied public spaces. Thus, despite my South African citizenship and hence insider status in reference to the South African public, I was predominantly other to my potential research population.

Aware of the many subject positions that I held within the fieldsite, I was at pains to construct a neutral research persona during the first few weeks of fieldwork, *rather* than a feminine persona. However, my intention was not obvious to potential research participants. In hindsight my experience with Danny, a 28 year old Congolese man working as a car guard in the local supermarket parking area hinted at the confusion, miscommunication and misunderstandings so abundant during fieldwork.

### Danny

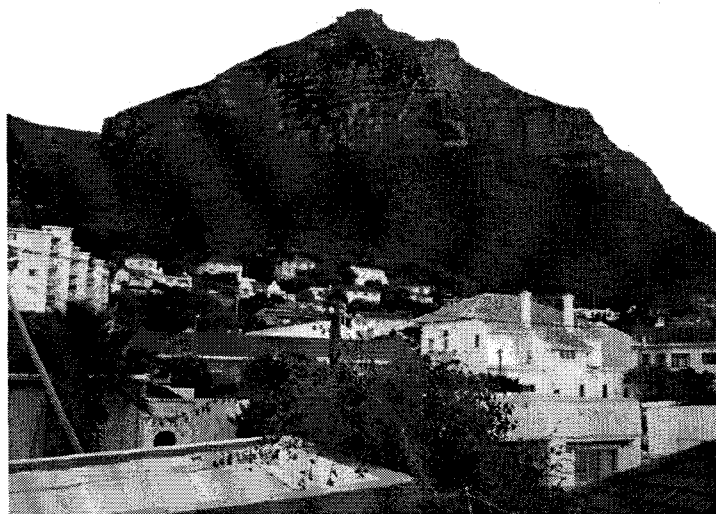
Searching for 'the other', I went on the hunt for possible research participants, trying to ascertain the appropriateness of Muizenberg as a research site. I wasn't disappointed. Besides locating a beachfront property that seemed to house a number of African migrants – women, men and children – I became acquainted with an African car guard at the local supermarket. Assisting me with my groceries, he walked me to my car, and loaded them. In halting English he introduced himself to me as Danny and asked for my name and telephone number. I laughed and retorted that I would see him soon. While following up advertisements offering accommodation in the area, or its surrounds, I moved into a local backpackers situated rather close to the heart of Muizenberg – Muizenberg village.

Moving in on a wet winter's day, I was happy to be safely ensconced with Opal<sup>57</sup> in a single upstairs bedroom painted a calming light blue with minimal furniture. From the wrap-around balcony on the west I could see the ocean approximately 100 metres away. And from the communal kitchen on the east, Muizenberg Mountain was an imposing landmark that seemed to fill the relatively large kitchen with its presence. 'Blue oceans' was situated diagonally across from a local supermarket chain, and so on my arrival I went in search of provisions. Unlike fieldwork conducted in an exotic African village, my research participants inhabited an urban space that would yield its secrets in the months to come.

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<sup>57</sup> Opal was my constant companion in the field. A dog of mixed origins, but similar to a maltese poodle, she and then later my cat, Mac, were a source of comfort when I needed 'time out' from my research participants.





Photograph 7: Muizenberg mountain from the backpacker's kitchen window

In the month or so that Opal and I continued to live in the backpackers, I was often woken during the early hours of the morning, by the screech of the early morning train and the incessant honking of the many delivery vehicles, whose drivers needed to offload their goods. Woken early, I often made breakfast and went for a quick walk along the beachfront, stopping at the supermarket to replenish my provisions and to observe the inhabitants of the area. On one such blustery morning, I met with the African car guard again. At this our second meeting, I ascertained that he was from the Democratic Republic of Congo and that he had been living in South Africa for approximately four months.

On two occasions thereafter he made every effort to greet me as I either entered or exited the store. By this time, Danny and I were on a first name basis and his attempts to elicit my residential address and my cellphone number became more insistent. Slightly wary of his advances and rather critical as to whether he understood my research motivations, I was loath to provide this information. However, as we became better acquainted over my successive visits to Shoprite, I acquiesced when Danny asked me to have lunch with him two weeks into our acquaintance. Arriving at 1pm sharp, Danny handed his car guard bib to one of his friends, and we walked down to one of the local cafeterias to purchase lunch. While waiting for our order, a friend of his, identified later as one of the Congolese barbers in the hair salon, approached us. I had been trying to explain to Danny my reasons for being in Muizenberg and thus logically my interest in establishing a further acquaintance with him. Danny's vehement nods and intermittent cocking of the head displayed hesitation, and slight confusion. I was thus relieved when Costas joined us in the fish shop, hoping to elicit his assistance in translating my research intentions to Danny. Costas listened attentively, smiling and nodding patiently as if he understood. However my relief soon turned to dismay, as he took his

leave from us with a wave of the hand and said “See you later”, without explaining anything to Danny.

My angst at starting the fieldwork process ‘correctly’ was a direct response to post-modern and post colonial concerns that highlighted a dominant shadow in anthropological fieldwork – the power dynamic inherent within the research relationship (Kulick and Wilson, 1995; Smith, 1999). I was keenly aware of our subject positions as framed within a South African migrant discourse; we were not merely a man and a woman. I was a *South African national* interacting with a *Congolese national*, of uncertain residence status within his host country, South Africa. In research terms, I was the researcher, and thus in a position of ‘power’ because I ‘knew’ my intentions in nurturing a relationship between Danny and myself. This ‘power’ enforced a responsibility to my potential research participants – full disclosure of my research intentions and the pivotal roles that they would assume in the research, if they gave me their consent.

Continuing my monologue, evermore aware of Danny’s limited understanding of English, I tried to simplify my explanation – speaking slower and checking more regularly to see whether he understood what I was saying. As Danny nodded profusely throughout my monologue, I assumed rather sceptically that he understood the reason for my interest. However his follow up questions connoted otherwise. He wanted to know how old I was, whether I intended to live in Muizenberg indefinitely, where I worked, where my family was and whether I had a boyfriend or not. We ended our conversation as we returned to Shoprite with an agreement to see each other the following day. I remained perplexed as to his understanding of my presence in Muizenberg, but hoped that through the haze of verbal and non-verbal miscommunication we would reach a clearer understanding of each other’s intentions.

As our acquaintance increased Danny’s motivation for seeking my company became clear. Despite my incessant attempts to explain my interest in him and his life story, Danny’s intentions were revealed on a visit to his place of residence. Danny had invited me to see his accommodation in Kenilworth, a local suburb, which he shared with two friends. The 20 minute drive to Kenilworth, although awkward was without incident. Parking outside the apartment block, I was surprised at the positioning of the apartment. An upmarket suburb in Cape Town, Kenilworth catered to a more discerning home-owner population. I wondered how he could afford to live here, given his limited length of stay in the country. As we walked through the security gate and up the stairs, the apartment block was quiet. No movement or sound emanated from the doors to individual apartments – so dissimilar to the noise in Don Pepe, a block of flats in Muizenberg.

Entering Danny's apartment I encountered a Congolese man in his early thirties. Danny introduced me to him in Lingala. I smiled, shook his hand and took a seat on one of the sofas as per Danny's suggestion. A quick survey of the room emphasised the prominent display of a sound system, a blaring 72cm television and a DVD player. The lounge was simply decorated and the beige sofa was comfortable – comfort as a result of expense. Noting my unease Danny says, "I am sharing with my friend. Would you like a cooldrink?" "No, I am fine thank you" I responded, as I tried to decipher the expectations that Danny seemed to have of me on this occasion. Slightly nervous, Danny exited the apartment in search of what he referred to as 'coca' which I assumed was the soft-drink coca-cola. Left with a stranger who seemed engaged in sms conversation on his cellphone I turned my awkward attention to the blaring television set. Mariah Carey was singing in full voice. After an interminable five minutes, Danny returned, coke in hand. He placed the bottle of coke and two glasses on the glass table top in front of me. Sitting next to me, he poured the cooldrink and offered it to me. Despite declining a beverage earlier, I thought it best to accept his offer. Sipping on the coke, watching Mariah Carey's youthful form on the television, I questioned myself "What am I doing here?"

When Danny pronounced that our sitting next to each other offered a photo opportunity, all my self-delusions faded. Amidst the arrival of more male acquaintances, Danny's room-mate took a number of photographs, encouraging us to smile. "Remember these photographs are going back home". Danny smiled broadly in response, noting: "My mom will like these photos". I was caught in a farce. Clearly Danny had not understood my intentions or chosen to ignore them. Caught between two very opposite emotions – to stay and go – I smiled, surrendered to the moment, and then smoothly noted that I had to leave as I had a previous engagement with my mother.

This particular interaction and subsequent interactions with Congolese men led to my incessant questioning of self, research ethics and more importantly the full comprehension of research as a gendered and embodied space (see Becker, Boonzaier and Owen, 2007). While in the field, and even now as I write, I cannot remove myself from the field; my research body was the one I presented to my village on successive occasions. I was the primary research tool. My research participants wouldn't allow me to forget my gender, nor my classification as coloured, as Congolese men and women invariably treated me in a manner specific to their perception of my gendered and racialised being. Men flirted with me, while questioning me about the distinctions between white, coloured and black South African women. Women, on the other hand, asked me

for innocuous information regarding employment opportunities, places to acquire spices and/or showed interest in the culinary habits of South Africans.

The gender of the anthropologist is often taken for granted in methodological discussions. However a very rare text such as Golde's (1970) edited volume on women anthropologists in the field highlights the gendered nature of field experiences. At the end of my research as I reflect on the research that was, and continues to be, my field relationships with mainly male informants makes sense. Not only was I more present within the public space of Muizenberg – a space, especially street corners, predominantly inhabited by men – but men communicated with me more freely than Congolese women. Congolese women in general were reticent and seemingly morose individuals; even more so since I was unable to communicate appropriately in KiSwahili, Lingala or French. Often, as with the men, their level of spoken English depended on their length of stay in the country, and their access to employment. If they were predominantly stay-at-home wives or girlfriends, they were unlikely to strike up a friendship or relationship with a non-Congolese woman. Thus, my habitus in the field was very different to the habitus or embodied presence of the Congolese *femme*<sup>58</sup>; a reality that didn't make for easy communication between myself and Congolese women.

On the other hand, my presentation of self was similar to that of the Congolese men, for despite my gender, I inhabited the public space more regularly as a result of my assumed nativeness. I was in my home space and my research demanded that I enter the public space more purposively. In some way research had transformed my gendered body into a locus of masculinity and unfamiliarity to many Congolese migrant women. Because they inhabited the private space of their homes, my emplacement within the public space of Muizenberg cut me off from their experiences, as inadvertently to the Congolese eye I was behaving the way a man does. Whilst the independent Congolese woman is not a rarity either within the confines of Muizenberg, my behaviour was similar to that of a man.

### **The Professional becomes Personal: Sexuality in the Field**

As I noted in an article on citizen anthropology, the problem of appropriate classification of one's research participants persists within anthropology, especially in light of developments within the discipline in the 1970s and 1980s. In trying to give our research subjects considered and respectful acknowledgement, we have moved along a continuum from 'the aloof observer' to

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<sup>58</sup> Woman.

'kinship', as we try to name who they are and what they have come to mean to us during fieldwork.

My research participants and I developed a deep and abiding affection for each other as the research process unfolded. Sharing our day-to-day struggles with each other, our research relationships were transformed into intimate spaces of common humanity, misunderstandings, dislike, irritation, appreciation and respect. "I was moving from a specific experience defined by class, gender, race and education into a stigmatised minority about whom I knew almost nothing" Okely (1996:22).

Despite the many ways in which I was an outsider to their lived experience, as indeed they were to mine, I was *not* conducting a top-down study. My many subject positions provided for a more complex rendering of self in the field life; and while their statuses as asylum seekers and/or refugees categorised them as other to my South African-ness, my particular marginality within my own country as a coloured woman provided a commonality – negative stereotyping by South African others<sup>59</sup>. In ways particular to my personal context, the anthropological field and the country's context, I could not easily assume a position of power (see Becker, Boonzaier and Owen, 2006).

In earlier anthropological studies conducted by white male anthropologists, the assumption of power was more direct, especially in light of the political climate. Europeans were riding high on Darwin's theory of evolution in the early twentieth century and many social scientists applied his thesis of progress to 'unlocking' the diversity within human experiences. In short, Europeans were more civilised and advanced in comparison to the native savages that they were studying (Reed-Danahay, 1997). The emphasis on the 'exotic other' led to an indirect exploration of self and a confirmation of Europeans' 'advanced' intellect and material culture (Kulick and Wilson, 1995; Motzafi-Haller, 1997; Narayan, 1993). Distinctly different from earlier anthropologists, I could not assume a position of power within the field, and thus never tried. My research participants were not a means to an end. Rather they became entwined in the research and personal life that I was creating, as I became embroiled in the lives that they were constructing. We were thus co-travellers, destination unknown, with lots of time to talk, eat, worship and love.

In acknowledgement and respect of these relationships, I imply friendship and kinship in my use of informants or research participants. My categorisation indicates an internal psychic and emotional shift that was confirmed during a presentation I made to an academic audience at

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<sup>59</sup> A furore in March 2011 over a press article written by Kuli Roberts on 'coloureds' supports this assertion.

Wits University in November 2007. While contextualising 'the Congolese', I noted that 'we' had had an election in July 2006. Early anthropologists might argue that I had gone native, and therefore lost my objectivity. However, in that moment I realised that I had come to appreciate the humanity of my research informants and that I had immersed myself in the field and my research. I didn't recognise the differences between myself and my research friends according to nationality, race, gender, or culture. Rather I appreciated our many similarities, and also Congolese men and women's efforts to have a working democracy; a democracy that I hoped would bring them closer to lasting stability and peace in the country and specifically the Ituri region. Thus, I was part of that moment, as I had witnessed the human impact of civil war on DRC citizens – the embodiment that was a Congolese asylum seeker/refugee.

My Freudian slip also highlighted the many ways in which my life was embedded in the culturally constructed space of others – the physical space of Muizenberg and Kinshasa, DRC<sup>60</sup>. In these constructed spaces I fell in love with the DRC, and with one of my research friends. I had not planned to have a relationship in the field, or one that promised marriage. However, love blossomed during the many moments that we shared eating lunch or supper, talking about each other's lives, attending church services and discussing Congolese behaviours. After emotional self-flagellation, a direct response to the unwritten rule of anthropology that states 'do not have sex with your informants', I recognised my personhood, rather than merely my role as the researcher (Ashkenazi and Malkowitz, 1999; Kulick and Wilson, 1995; McLean and Leibing, 2007).

In an email to my supervisor, months after my entry into fieldwork I hinted at the possibility of a change in relationship status from 'professional' to intimate and personal. What I was unable to fully comprehend then, was that fieldwork's experiential nature made the fieldwork process an intimate and personal one. To be an anthropologist, was to be alive; to be human. There was a need thus to recognise that the dichotomy between 'the field life' and one's normal out-of-the-field life was suspect, heathen and a falsehood. In my particular experience, my life was an intimate construction and presence within the lives of my three primary research informants. As a result of the intimacy of fieldwork a mutually constitutive space was created that encouraged a shift in the dynamics of the relationship from 'work' to 'love'. That experience and others also shifted the direction of my research, including 'love' as a variable I might not otherwise have considered, yet one that for some of my key informants, helped to bring the world beyond South Africa to them and them to the world.

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<sup>60</sup> Not only was I researching Congolese migrants, but I had also taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses on the DRC since 2005.

## *Lyon*

During the initial stages of fieldwork I was keen to keep a respectful distance between myself and my research participants, especially as I was embroiled in an on-again, off-again relationship with a South African man who was resident in Cape Town. Matters became confusing however, as our relationship lost its consistency and dependability and as my initial attraction to one of my research participants blossomed under his rapt attention. At odds with the conscious awareness of my sensual and sexual self as present in the field, I wrote a dialogue in which all my confusion, angst and mental turmoil found expression. Feeling the need to share, I wrote about my feelings to my supervisors at the time, both of whom seemed dismissive of the unfolding event. A further need to find solace led to my sharing the dialogue with the research participant, Lyon. Alone in the lounge he sat on the couch, reading the dialogue, while I stood wringing my hands, not daring to look at him. My nervousness raced through my head screaming – “Is he going to understand? What if he tells you that he doesn’t want to work with you any longer? What does that look mean? Oh for heaven’s sake will you tell me what you are thinking!”

After what seemed forever, Lyon looked up at me and calmly said “It’s normal that this would happen”. He shifted his posture, gestured that I close the computer, and quietly encouraged me to take my leave of him. Disturbed and confused by his response, I left into the night, more uncertain of what the future held. The next few weeks were emotionally and spiritually draining as I tried to reason through my vacillation between two decisions: to become involved emotionally and perhaps sexually with a research participant, or to envision myself as *the* anthropologist, a focussed, dedicated, work-horse who understood the assumed power dynamics that existed between researcher and researched and would therefore reign in my feelings.

After much debate between myself and my closest friends I accepted the flourishing of a romantic relationship in November 2004, four months after my arrival in the field. Six months shy of a two year anniversary Lyon terminated the relationship in May 2006. I was particularly devastated, for despite our national and cultural differences I had invested myself emotionally and psychologically. My angst and anxiety around this relationship has never waned, especially as we had created it during the research process. I felt that I had been unethical. However, in retrospect, I am aware that our negotiations during our relationship occurred between equals who had consciously agreed to become more than just the ‘researcher and the researched’. From the initial phases of research and my early introduction to the guys, Lyon had been aware of my interests and motivation for being in Muizenberg. Thus, on rare occasions, when we spoke as lovers do about personal narratives, he would often distinguish lovers’ discussions from that of research conversations by saying ‘this is off the record’. Often he pushed me to ask more directed

questions, or would specifically comment in a way that he knew would be of assistance to my research.

Our relationship's inevitable ups and downs also became an integral part of the research dynamic. When we were upset with each other, Guy, Serge and even Robert (his patron), were informed of it. And often when we fought and a break-up was imminent I became very sensitive to the information that I had had access to during our relationship. Thus, often in retrospect and quite panicked, I would ask Lyon if I could still use our conversations as research data. I was rather taken aback when he responded once that I could not use the information. After hours of anxious thinking and my acceptance of his position, he called to say that I could use the information. I was relieved, but have remained anxious.

In hindsight, I am cognisant of the discomfort, anxiety and pain that could have been avoided had I decided against an emotional involvement with a research participant. However, the rite of passage that is fieldwork is not emotionally easy, nor is it intended to be. My relationship added another layer to an already complicated mix of emotions, questions and ways of being in the field. It raised uncomfortable questions as regards inter-cultural relationships in post-apartheid South Africa, the nuanced creation of field relationships, the delicacy of participants' emotions, the application of research ethics, the co-construction of knowledge and the implosion of binary opposites such as self/other, insider/outsider and subjective/objective. This particular experience highlighted the variegated, yet particularly personal, nature of anthropological fieldwork, and it underscored the recognition that research is not only impacted by one's gender, class, race and sexuality – but it is also impacted by one's personality and the particularities of the fieldworker's life circumstance.

*JLM*

In 2009, as I initiated the write-up of this dissertation I was involved in a second long term relationship with a Congolese man, JLM. A year later, after two years and four months of co-habitation, we ended the relationship. I mention this second relationship here as it too complicated the processing of, presentation and analyses of field data.

I met JLM on an online dating site in June 2007. Aware that he might mistake my interest in him as a furthering of my research I informed him of my work. He responded courteously and encouraged an open discussion of my work with him. In the months to come, I actively refrained from discussing my work, given my earlier experience with Lyon, and the need to



separate my private life from my work life. I still believed that I could maintain the false dichotomy between research/fieldwork and out-of-field/personal life.

However, my introduction of JLM to my research participants in December 2008, our numerous visits to the fieldsite over the next year and a half and my efforts to write this ethnography, compelled the discussion of my work, an intimate aspect of self, with him as my life partner. Trying to avoid a discussion of the DRC and Congolese society was awkward and provoked enormous anxiety for both him and me as my daily experiences and knowledge of JLM were situated within his origins in the DRC. Initial conversations were affirming of self and confirmed my data, as JLM smilingly said that my research participants would clasp their heads in their hands in desperation, if they knew that they had given me so much information; information that I wasn't supposed to have.

Intermittently, I continued to steer away from my work as a form of discussion, but this furthered a farce, as my knowledge of Congolese ways of being was deepened by my ongoing relationship with JLM. While JLM's Congolese habitus was subtly and tonally different to my experiences of Congolese research informants, our relationship gave me insight into a number of problems experienced by Congolese refugees – inappropriate processing of asylum applications, problems with finding and keeping secure employment in the formal economy, and the distrust and disappointments experienced within their social networks. My relationships with JLM and Lyon have added a depth of humility and humanity to the writing of this dissertation. I am no longer writing about the distant other, if I ever was. I am writing indirectly about those I was blessed to call my beloved.

I have included myself within this chapter in many ways. While some of my revelations about the impact of my phenotypical embodiment on the research might not have raised an eyebrow, I am still convinced that my direct acknowledgement of having had a serious and loving relationship with a research informant might be cause for concern. As noted by Jones (1999:25)

“Anthropologists have inherited a discourse that not only relegates sex and sexuality to the confessional but also demands that a strict distance be maintained between their sex and sexuality and the sex and sexuality of those they study”.

Jones (1999) situates this particular ‘omission’ in a number of historic disciplinary and socio-cultural moments. She argues that anthropologists’ reticence and denial of sexuality within peer-reviewed journals stems from fore-fathers such as Lewis Henry Morgan who equated control of

sexual conduct with more advanced and progressive societies. Thus, as civilised anthropologists from the west, sexual decorum had to be maintained (Jones, 1999:38). Further she states that anthropologists' inhibited discussions of sex in the field were (are?) a response to the societal mores within which anthropologists' found themselves in. And lastly, and probably more saliently, anthropologists are encouraged to refrain from open disclosure of sexual encounters in the field as these revelations could damage careers in their infancy.

I believe that the latter reason is particularly virulent within the South African academy, as a number of anthropologists of varying ages, anthropological socialisation, ethnic and national backgrounds living and working in South Africa have strongly recommended my silence rather than 'confession'. One jokingly noted that sexual relationships with informants are common, but that these should be disclosed in a memoirs in later life, not in a dissertation. Others argued that my fledgling academic career could be damaged. However, despite the advice, I decided to write my sexuality into the thesis, in part as a result of my focus on cross-cultural relationships (see Part III) and because I fear that non-disclosure belittles my experiences of love, loving and being loved in and out of the field. As Lunsing (1999:195) profoundly states, "I ... feel compelled to take a strong attitude in order to present my findings. Doing so may make me seem vulnerable, but there precisely is where I find strength".

Markowitz and Ashkenazi (1999) argue that the practical implications of sexual intimacy in the field are intricately linked with the creation of theoretical explanations and ways of knowing. Thus, to deny the sexual body, in favour of the rational mind, is to ignore the anthropological canon of holism. Despite holism's earlier use as a reference to the holistic study of a society/culture, I contend that the idea of holism has excluded the positioning of the anthropologist's body herein. Thus, as so well argued by many anthropologists, the dualism of the mind/body was constructed to underline the objectivity of the discipline, and thus its scientific nature (Ashkenazi and Markowitz, 2007; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Salamone, 1999). In the process of creating a discipline, we excluded our bodies – sexual, sensual, emotional bodies – from the pristine halls of academia and our journals. As a means to further the contemporary and local discussion of 'sex and love in the field' I offer my own experiences as food for thought and consideration, not as a means to provoke ridicule, outrage or disgust, but to provoke insight and knowledge of how I came to know what I know.

In summation, the following quote appropriately and elegantly summarises my compulsion to write confessionally and honestly.

“...[C]onventional anthropological wisdom that dictates a genderless stance in ethnographic research is not only untenable but also impossible to sustain. We argue, therefore, that the issues of gendered research must always be addressed; as Foucault (1980) has taught, gender and sex in both the ethnographers’ and the natives’ life worlds are ideologically immersed social constructs constituted “so that we can never know in advance what will ‘count’ as sexual in another culture” (Kulick, 1995:7). That suggests the importance of ethnographies as well as theories; sexuality must always be a part of the contextualizing process by which ethnographers place themselves in a defined and visible position concerning the two “significant others” in anthropology: natives and readers. For natives, an anthropologist is, willy-nilly, a sexual person, and both anthropologists and natives ought to recognize that fact overtly and negotiate their positions consciously from the start. For readers, the process of recognition and negotiation must be visible so the empirical and theoretical outcomes will be clear and integrated into the published results of the process. By doing so, anthropologists continue the trend started by Geertz (1973) of “thickening” ethnographies and making them valid representations of real activities of real people in which the anthropologist, whether an outsider, a marginal native, a halfie, or a member of the community, is embedded” (Ashkenazi and Markowitz, 1999:13-14).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the story that is made up of the myriad coincidences that pointed to foreigners, immigrants and refugees and my relationship with them culminates in the writing of this thesis. So while a thesis, by expected standards remains rather aloof, providing important details and analyses, my life story is intricately woven throughout the pages of this dissertation, making it less so. Not only was I an observer of the life ways of Congolese refugees/asylum seekers/migrants<sup>61</sup> but I was a participant within the frame by frame photographs and narrative snapshots that I took of their lives. This thesis is the culmination of 15 months of fieldwork that ran over six years, relationships built and maintained across national and international distances and research that started with an honest interest in the life of an acquaintance: an ‘other.’

To put it mildly, this particular fieldwork has demonstrated that

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<sup>61</sup> While other social scientists and myself refer to Congolese ‘foreigners’ as refugees or asylum seekers, Congolese nationals refer to themselves as migrants.

“[the] contradiction between real and ideal, between what really happened to me in fieldwork, and what is supposed to happen, has profound methodological and theoretical consequences. A good deal of the poststructural, postmodernist movement was anticipated in the writings of those who noted an inherent contradiction between the objective pose of the ideal and idealized fieldworker and the ambiguity and subjectivity inherent in the fieldwork process itself. It was never quite what fieldworkers expected, and eventually some learned that to know that fact was truly the beginning of wisdom” (Salamone, 1999:58).

And therefore I hope that, in my case too, “[my] personal exposure may ... be seen not as professional disaster but intellectual growth” (Okely, 1996:29). The test of that is in the analysis of the substantive chapters that follow.

## Part II: Settling in and Coping

### Introduction

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From the discussion of global diasporas and transnational communities in Part I, it has emerged that movement is initiated through the experience of 'lack', or deprivation – whether that lack be attributed to lack of employment, lack of educational opportunities, the lack of political stability or the lack of social capital within the home country. Migration is thus a means to acquire security in the face of adversity.

The decision to migrate is not an easy one, as the journey to another country, and the lived experiences during the process of migration are arduous. Yet the possibility of achieving a 'successful' life 'overseas' over-rides the uncertainty of migration. In a globalised world, where consumption patterns are influenced by urban fashion and capital, the lived experience of success is increasingly dependent on local constructions of success and the possibilities for success within the global market (Rouch, 1967; Stoller, 2002b). During the four years that I moved between Grahamstown and Muizenberg (becoming an internal migrant myself), my understanding of Congolese success was shaped through my interactions with the embodied-ness of research participants as *migrants* and as Congolese men and women. For them as for other migrants the experience of lack is a matter of individual/personal experience. Yet success (its expression and its embodiment) and the individual and social meaning of its absence are constructed within the family, as well as the neighbourhood, the community and the nation that one is socialised within – one's transnational community. Constructed thus, successful men and women are discussed, venerated and celebrated. And so the successful person acquires a status above his or her *historical* biography. In the case of Africans, and more particularly for Congolese men and women, their initial biographies are transformed, indeed transcended.

Success is thus a dialogical construct that is mediated by the person and the community and through the implications of the local within the global. Success is ultimately expressed through the individual at the micro level. However the attainment of success, and the recognition that you are successful, always occurs in communion with others. Success is therefore an intimately social phenomenon – an observable and replicable phenomenon. In the case of the DRC, a country experiencing untold economic hardship, success is translated into the observable phenomenon of material wealth – status. In a country where one's survival is dependent on assistance from others, whether family, friends, neighbourhood associations or non-

governmental organisations material wealth lifts one above the masses – above the ordinary. One becomes a big man.

In earlier works, Gondola (1999) and Friedman (1994), relate that the *mikiliste* from the DRC – Congolese migrants – employ various means to migrate to Europe. Here they live meagerly trying to fulfill the dream of living large, or becoming big men. Their status and their stature increase through the purchase of expensive clothing, identified as such by the couture labels that are sown on the outside of the garments. Some *sapeurs* have been known to retain the cardboard label on a jacket or trousers. To the untrained eye and the unsocialised being, these particular forms of consumption and performance either have no cultural value, or social meaning, or are viewed negatively; for example, as display of the most vulgar kind from the perspective of Western elites who are the more usual market for such items. However in the social worlds of Congolese men and women, *forme*, distinguishes an ordinary, impoverished person from one who has ‘life-force’ – social significance and the ability to transform one’s self and one’s life circumstances (Friedman, 1994). Success as lived experience is expressed within the social milieu of one’s birth, one’s country. For Congolese migrants then, one’s increase in social significance, fundamentally an improvement in your field of relations is what distinguishes one from another; one’s success from another’s observable lack thereof.

For all migrants, success is experienced in parallel societies within a transnational social field so created by connections and relationships that exist in and across these parallel societies. In terms of Turner’s (Deflem, 1991) understanding the migrant experiences a crisis, when she migrates from her country of origin. Leaving behind the known, what Turner refers to as ‘structure’, the migrant’s life cycle becomes a series of ‘liminal experiences’ created within and during the ‘anti-structure’ – the time spent in the host country. As the migrant is socialised or becomes better acquainted with the host country through participation in her social networks, her liminal experiences become meaningful and meaning-filled. These experiences are often recounted as her story or narrative. Employing ways of understanding that integrate home and host conceptualisations the migrant moves into a newly created structure, making success, as understood in both the home and the host countries, possible and potentially realisable. In the electronic age of social media migrants use social networking sites like Facebook to communicate their success to those back home. They are able to share photographs and words here, creating a visual and written narrative of their prestige and achievements. No longer are they compelled to return home physically (although this is still deemed necessary) to parade their success – the global network of communication makes the voyeuristic and ‘distanced’ viewing of their prestige possible.

In the two chapters that follow I provide the reader with an orientation to the lives of Congolese men and women resident in Muizenberg, as they strive for the elusive success of a Congolese migrant – success that is realised through regular employment, stable accommodation, accessing social capital of value and ‘belonging’ to a church organisation. I demonstrate how Mobutu’s edict to ‘fend for oneself’ finds expression in ‘hustling’, ‘making ends meet by whatever means necessary’, one-upmanship and ingenuity in an unfamiliar space. These characteristics or strategies are not only the preserve of the lower economic classes, but also the politico-administrative elite. Through the creation and maintenance of personal networks that span across class, neighbourhood, and ethnic divisions, most Congolese men, women and children have secured their survival, while some have achieved social mobility. In essence the two chapters show how various classes aspire to economic survival and social mobility, and how individual agency and contingency impact the achievement of success; chapter four is more concerned with working class migrants and women’s experiences of migration while chapter five focuses on my main informants – three young men of middle-class backgrounds

An instrumental aspect of network building and survival is religion. As chapter four and chapter five demonstrate, religious worship and religious belonging provides both bonding and bridging capital. However, the effectiveness of the congregation’s collective bridging capital depends on the individual members’ social capital. As demonstrated in chapter four members’ limited social capital impinges on the social mobility of its individuals. Further chapter five shows in comparison that securing a connection through the church with an individual that ‘owns’ valuable social capital, secures one’s social mobility. In short a church like the Sonrise Assembly of God church discussed in chapter four plays an integral role in the maintenance of national boundaries. However, the opposite also occurs. In a multicultural and multinational church like the Muizenberg Community Church (MCC) congregants share a common understanding of the Christian message, and so their faith identities, rather than their national identities, are what bond them together. The opportunities for social mobility within MCC far outweigh that which is present in the Congolese congregation of Sonrise. When read together chapters four and five present a commentary on the lived experiences of Congolese migrants with specific emphases on religion and economic livelihoods.

## Chapter Four

### Living on the Margins: Social Networks, Contingency and Religion

“It is evident that African migrants arrive in the city with hardly a clear idea of what it is they are going to do to make a living, except that somehow it must be better than what they left behind” (Vawda, 2010).

“In the process of negotiating their livelihoods in host communities, forced migrants – especially those staying in urban areas – have recourse to a wide range of survival strategies, including small business, employment, studies, and use of local assistance channels and remittances from abroad. Alongside these common coping schemes, another form of coping strategy is increasingly taking shape within refugee communities, especially in Africa. That is religion” (Nzayabino, 2005:8).

“Divine order and power [are] particularly important in a social situation of disorder, whether that be disruption as the result of migration or the fear and unease of living in a disordered state” (Wild-Wood, 2010:13).

If we follow Bourdieu’s (2000) thoughts in his paper entitled, *Making the Economic Habitus*, then Congolese men, women and children, born and acculturated within the DRC, have created an economic habitus that prepares them for a life of economic struggle. As discussed in chapter two, the importance of social networks, or *circuits personnelles*, cannot be underestimated in the struggle for survival. In earlier work on economic survival in the DRC, Trefon (2004) and MacGaffey (1983), pay attention to the flexibility of Congolese survival strategies in Congo-Kinshasa. Their discussions however do not consider the import of religion as a coping strategy or as a means to access social networks.

An important form of daily survival and building social networks is a migrant’s active participation in religion – recognised in earlier work on migrants in America (Hagan, 2008; Hagan and Ebaugh, 2003; Levitt, 2003; Spickard, 2006) and more recently by migration specialists working in Africa or studying African migrants (Chitando, 2004). Wuthnow (2002:669) suggests that religious adherence “is associated with having influential friends and acquaintances”. However “religious involvement may be more conducive to interacting with one’s own kind than to bridging into higher status circles and thus may in a sense insulate people



from networks of power and influence” (ibid). This chapter demonstrates this to be the case for the Sonrise Assembly of God church – a church attended by mostly Congolese men and women in the neighbourhood.

In South Africa Congolese and other migrants have to contend with a number of obstacles and barriers to their employment in both the formal and informal economies. Whilst confirmed refugees are allowed to work in South Africa, the conferring of refugee status is a long and drawn out process<sup>59</sup>. Similarly despite the ability to work and study as an asylum seeker, many Congolese are not employed by formal institutions as the official papers that they are issued with do not inspire trust. The A4 paper, referred to as the *ngunda* in Lingala, holds a photograph of the asylum seeker, denotes his reference number and states that he can work and study in South Africa. However, despite the *ngunda* bearing the official Home Affairs stamp, many employers question the authenticity of the document, frequently stating that the documentation is easily falsifiable. In spite of this administrative liminality migrants are compelled to secure livelihoods in South Africa however limited these may be.

An important form of survival is the initiation of and building of social networks across race, class, gender and nationality. For Congolese migrants this is a ‘way of life’. They are therefore prepared for the vicissitudes of the migration process. However, their economic habitus is expressed within an alien and oftentimes non-responsive environment. In this space, status is difficult to attain. Congolese migrants are thus forced to actively pursue social connections, so as to further their economic and personal survival and success. The failure to connect with others and more importantly the ‘right others’ could be detrimental to self and family at the intimate and transnational levels. Fundamentally a Congolese migrant without social connections of value is not fully acknowledged within the Congolese transnational community; she experiences a social death of sorts, as she has no social capital to bargain with.

This chapter details mostly Congolese women’s attempts to secure stable livelihoods through the creation of social connections. It emphasises the haphazard and contingent nature of building social networks and ultimately accessing social capital especially for those who have limited cultural capital.

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<sup>59</sup> In 2010, JLM had been resident in South Africa just shy of nine years. However, although he had applied for refugee status on his arrival, a response to his application had been delayed for a number of years. Eventually in 2009 his application for refuge in South Africa was denied.

## Survival in Muizenberg

In the Western Cape the unemployment rate is at 18.4%<sup>60</sup> generally and at five percent<sup>61</sup> for Muizenberg in particular. I would caution against a wholesale acceptance of these statistics especially as a select sample of residents were surveyed. The statistics do however hint at a possible reason for Congolese migrants' migration to Cape Town – the *possibility* of finding employment, or creating self-employment.

Unlike South Africans, Congolese men and women feel they are not assured of employment by virtue of their *citizenship*. Many businesses are averse to employing refugees given their temporary documentation. Thus most Congolese find temporary rather than long term employment as security guards, pastors, waitrons, waitresses, computer technicians, cleaners in local businesses, cashiers in local supermarkets, petrol attendants, work in the Congolese barber shop, or child-minders. Others create self-employment through working as curio, malachite or *kitenge* cloth sellers. Still others are compelled to resort to criminal activities such as drug dealing to survive, while others are destitute, unable to find employment, and yet able to survive however badly. As noted in chapter three, my primary informants were three Congolese men. However, during the course of research I met a number of women, and while none of them became primary informants, our discussions and interactions with each other hinted at the qualitatively different migratory experience of Congolese women as compared to Congolese men. The chapter therefore foregrounds women's experiences of survival. So as to provide an immediate counterpoint to the cases of Toni<sup>62</sup>, Mama Fifi<sup>63</sup> and Mama Erin<sup>64</sup> – the women discussed in this chapter – I present the case of Eric, a Congolese parking attendant guard working locally in Muizenberg, whilst resident elsewhere.

### *Eric Madondo – single male*

Over the next few weeks as I become better acquainted with 'my village' I start to recognise regulars on the street. One of these is Eric, a locally based Congolese car guard. I met Eric on an overcast

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<sup>60</sup> See [http://www.capegateway.gov.za/eng/your\\_gov/3576](http://www.capegateway.gov.za/eng/your_gov/3576).

<sup>61</sup> See 2003/4 COURC report, page 24.

<sup>62</sup> A pseudonym.

<sup>63</sup> A pseudonym.

<sup>64</sup> A pseudonym.

winter's day. Danny<sup>66</sup> was hassling me again, and Eric tried to dissuade him from that. As I became better acquainted with Muizenberg I often did my grocery shopping at the local Shoprite shopping complex. On the occasions I did so, Eric and I exchanged smiles and pleasantries. Eventually I ask him for a formal interview, which he agrees to. We meet at the parking lot – his place of work. He hands his yellow car guard bib to Danny and we walk together to Gottfried's coffee shoppe. The woman behind the counter considers us questioningly, as Eric and I take a seat at the front of the establishment. She brings us a menu, and we order coffee and cake. I have prepared an interview schedule, and we whip through the questions rather quickly. Eric is slightly reticent, as he synchronises his responses to my typing thereof onto the computer. I sense that by taking electronic notes, I'm slowing our conversation.

29<sup>67</sup> years of age, and single<sup>68</sup>, Eric has three sisters and four brothers. His mother is a medical doctor, and his father, now deceased was a Minister in Mobutu's government. Born in Kinshasa he was schooled at a Catholic school some distance away. Eric arrived in Johannesburg, South Africa September 2002. He first stayed with a friend in Rosettenville for a month, and then decided to come to Cape Town. He arrived in Muizenberg, and stayed with his brother's friend for eight to nine months. Thereafter he moved a further three times in Muizenberg, until his final move to Wittebome, a 'coloured' residential area, approximately 12 minutes drive from Muizenberg. Eric is forthcoming in the interview.

"Do you plan to stay in South Africa?"

Eric: "No, I want to go to England. I like to travel to all the countries, like the white people travel and move. To England, America, Australia, Paris."

"Where do you work?"

"At Shoprite centre's car park. I have been there since I arrived here, in Muizenberg. I was looking for a job, because I can't stay like this, without a job. I studied Marketing at home for two years of a four year degree. But the government send soldiers to take the people to go fighting to Bukavu. Lot, a lot of my friends have no arm, no leg. Now my brother say "You can't stay". Kabila was dead, now

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<sup>66</sup> I had met Danny on my very first foray into the fieldsite. What I perceived as an amiable number of chats, was misconstrued by Danny as the flowering of an intimate relationship, rather than a friendship (see chapter three).

<sup>67</sup> At the time of the interview in 2004.

<sup>68</sup> At the time of writing, Eric is married and has a daughter. He lives in Wittebome with his wife and child, and he still works in Muizenberg as a car guard, despite vast improvement in his financial situation.

the son president. I ran away from university. My mother told me "You must move, you must run away". If it's quiet in my country I will go home. I will be big boss maybe working for Vodacom. I can never go like this, without studying further. I see Mbeki<sup>69</sup> is trying to make peace in DRC. So I must study for 6 months, take that paper and go home and be a big boss".

"Why are you car guarding, if you have a partial degree?"

"There are only two jobs here in South Africa for foreigner. I am refugee. Car guard and security<sup>70</sup>. I see my friend he does car guarding, and I see there is no-one standing at Shoprite. So I spoke to the manager of the car park, a white man. He tells me to bring my papers. He give me the job. I was the first one to start at the car park and then I bring my friend and so on. Now the country not good; crime with people robbing you and killing you. In Congo if you kill someone, you are killed. Someone watching that on tv thinks I can't kill someone, I will be killed, but in South Africa the people not good. In Johannesburg, you talk on your phone it's taken from you. If someone has to come to me and say give your cellphone, I would give it. If they wanted my shoes (because they are Nike) I would give it. One can always buy another one. Here the South Africans are not prepared to be security guards, so they look at the foreigner and say you have money. But the foreigner work, even when it is raining. The South African stays at home. South Africans expect to get help from the government. The government is bad, here you kill someone and you go to jail, then you out on bail. Nothing really happens to you."

"So how many days do you work here at Shoprite? I see you regularly."

"I work six days out of seven. And on a Tuesday I work at a restaurant in Lakeside. The yachtclub. A white man, my friend, gave me a torch and everything. When I am done, I go into the restaurant and they give me food."

"When do you rest Eric?"

"You know in Congo rent is cheap. 150 dollar for a big house, with four bedrooms, garage, about R900. In South Africa accommodation is expensive, and that's why you work. To pay your rent, to buy food, to buy nice clothes. There are too many Congolese men in South Africa because the soldiers will take you from the street to fight, and you are not a soldier. So you run away. Not a lot

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<sup>69</sup> A reference to the then President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki.

<sup>70</sup> These are mostly positions held by men, rather than women. However, it has been noted that women have been known to do car guarding in Johannesburg.

of women here. But there are some good people here. That day you saw me, when I drive past you in the bakkie? It's a white woman who helped me. She stays in Marina da Gama, and she gave me the bakkie without asking me for any money. So I bought her flowers, but said it's from my brother. I was asking if people could help me, but they wanted R1000 and R600 to take my stuff to my new place. So I think, I'll tell this woman. I know her from Shoprite. And she gives me the bakkie, and doesn't even know where I stay. She gave it to me full of petrol, too much petrol. I drive up and down four times."

As we talk Eric greets another Congolese man walking by. I ask him, "Do you refer to yourself as a foreigner?"

"I am a foreigner in this country. You are a citizen. Besides peoples in this country refer to me as a foreigner, so I am a foreigner."

In the above interview Eric confirms what many Congolese men experience as a reality – the world of car guarding, and security work. Of my three primary research informants<sup>71</sup>, two were security guards and one a car guard prior to their assistance from Robert. Although a number of male Congolese migrants are highly educated, some with degrees in Engineering (Dodson, 1998; Mattes, Crush and Richmond, 2000; McDonald, Mashike and Golden, 1999; Peter, 2010) their qualifications are not easily recognised in South Africa, especially if they have no formal record of their education. Further South African tertiary institutions are not geared towards African international applicants often expressing incomprehension of their academic results.

By noting that South Africans are not really keen to work as security guards, or are derelict in their duties, Eric highlights one of the reasons why security companies employ Congolese men – their reliability. Eric's statement diminishes South African xenophobes' arguments that "foreigners steal their jobs" (Harris, 2002). Rather Congolese men are filling positions, out of necessity, left vacant by South African men. His assertion that "South Africans expect to get help from the government" denotes the position Congolese find themselves in in the DRC and confirms the historical narrative of the economy presented in chapter two – they could never and can never rely on their government to assist them; hence their migration.

When asked when he rests Eric responds vaguely for he never rests; he works six days out of seven. Enumerating the many costs attached to living in South Africa Eric denies the reality of my middle-class notion of much needed rest. Eric's biography, and socio-economic history – his

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<sup>71</sup> Discussed in chapter five.

economic habitus (Bourdieu, 2000) – are represented by his determination to provide for his needs, and to succeed – “I will be big boss maybe working for Vodacom.” His disposition hints at his alignment with Mobutu’s edict – *on se débrouille*. Thus, intent on fending for himself, Eric makes his own luck. Eric mentions that his father was a minister in Mobutu’s government. While scholars might question this, given Eric’s socio-economic situation in 2004, and his employment as a car guard, Eric’s father’s position as a Minister is not beyond the realm of possibility, especially since *all classes* in the DRC participated in the informal economy (see chapter two).

Although Eric refers to the low rent paid in the DRC<sup>72</sup> the embattled Congolese have to bargain, negotiate, and fight daily to secure an income, most of which is spent on food (Peter, 2010; Trefon, 2004). Peter (2010) also notes that Congolese decry their poverty in South Africa, stating that it was easier to live in the DRC. However, whilst this may be true, the insecurity and uncertainty of the economic and political situation in the Congo cannot be compared to their vulnerability in South Africa. Yet Eric’s final statement is telling. In 2004, two years after his arrival in South Africa, he does not feel socially integrated.

Importantly, Eric’s interview also speaks to the importance of personal networks that contain one’s nationals and non-nationals. He confirms the ‘obligation’ to assist one’s co-nationals and the possibility and reality of getting assistance from beyond a limited co-national network. His interaction with the woman who provides him with transport assistance demonstrates a certain freedom in approaching a relative stranger for assistance. Clearly Eric’s behaviour shows the importance of ‘taking-a-chance’, as there is ‘nothing-to-lose’. This experience and the one with his co-national comment on the importance of personal networks in Eric’s life. In the first instance, Eric’s information secures employment for his friend. Initially the broker, he loses this position (in fact, ‘releases’ the position) when direct interaction occurs between his friend and his boss. As social networks are built on reciprocity, Eric’s friend is obligated to return the ‘gift’, whether immediately, or in the near or distant future. This social obligation therefore negates the need to maintain the position as a broker.

Eric’s interaction with the South African woman is not framed in the same manner as his relationship with his friend. The exchange value of the relationship is emphasised when Eric reciprocates her kindness by buying her flowers as a token of appreciation; an ephemeral rather than lasting, show of gratitude. His response assumes cultural specificity. If the woman was Congolese, an immediate reciprocation would not be expected, nor would it take the form of

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<sup>72</sup> Iyenda (2005:66) states that the “average rent in poor areas is US\$55 per month”.

flowers. Rather it would be recognised that a relationship had been initiated; a reciprocal relationship that would extend for a lengthy period of time. Here, Eric epitomises the importance of bridging capital (Wuthnow, 2002). His job provides opportunities to access 'similar' others and to risk engagement with these others. Thus Eric's education (cultural capital), his amiable disposition and his economic habitus compel risk taking behaviour – a request for assistance from a stranger.

Essentially Eric's case highlights some of the social factors inherent to the construction of social networks:

- The importance of contingency in securing immediate assistance
- The qualitative and behavioural differentiation Congolese make between a "weak tie" and a "strong tie" (Granovetter, 2005).
- The personal characteristics of the individual and
- That Congolese migrants are empowered by their economic circumstances to take social 'risks' – an indication of the instrumental value of prior socialisation (the economic habitus)

*Toni – single female*



Photograph 8: Toni on the escalator in Cape Town

Gwynneth and I arrive at the Assembly of God church at 10 am. Nene is supposed to braid my hair again. I am hoping to have a more open conversation with her, since my previous 'sitting' was long, but relatively non-communicative, despite Lydia's presence. Upon arrival Lydia informs us that Nene

has not been informed of our meeting time. We speak to Sister Ntombi for a while, and then say our goodbyes. Toni, who has been sitting in Sister Ntombi's office tells me, "I'll do your hair".

"How much?", I ask.

Toni gives me the once over and then says boldly, "R200.00"

"Huh uh, that's too much", I reply and greet Sister Ntombi.

Toni grabs my arm lightly as I turn and asks, "How much were you going to give to Nene?"

"R100.00"

"Ok. I'll do it for that".

Gwynneth and I both know that this is going to be a marathon session. So she leaves, promising to see me later. As Toni brushes out my stubborn curls, she asks me what I want.

"Can you do singles?"

She says, "yes" and starts to divide my hair into sections. The day is warm, and bright; a typical summer's day in Cape Town. Toni is more forthcoming than Nene – possibly because she's been learning to speak English. I had seen her previously in the internet café, working as a general cleaner. Toni tells me that I met her sister, Tina, the first time I had supper with Emmanuel and Lydia.

"Oh?"

Toni continues, "I'm the oldest, then Tina. She is 28. And then my brother who is 26. I'm from Lubumbashi."

"That's in the east?"

"Yes. I did some trading in Lubumbashi. And I worked as a ... how'd you say?" I am not sure what she is referring to, so I wait.

She stops plaiting and gesticulates with the comb in her hand, "When you look after old people?"

"Oh, like a home carer?"

"Yes."



"Ok."

"Are you married?"

"No I'm not married, and I have no children. I'm 34 years old. I am waiting for God to give me the right man".

"And your parents?" It's rather awkward trying to have a conversation, whilst my head is bent forward. She has started plaiting from the nape of my head. I struggle to get the words out.

"My mother is sixty years old. I miss her a lot."

"How did you travel to South Africa?"

"I came by bus. Three days journey. We drive through Zambia, Zimbabwe and then Johannesburg. I spent a day in Johannesburg, but I had heard about it. So I didn't leave the bus place."

"You came directly to Cape Town?"

"Yes to join my sister here. She and my brother already here."

"Are you living together?"

"Yes, I live with other people, and my sister."

"It must be hard to live with other people."

"It is hard to survive here (in South Africa), so it doesn't matter sharing with others. What's important is to get a job, so that you can pay your rent and put food in your stomach. I was trying to find work even this morning. I only work at the Internet place there two days a week. It's not enough. So I heard about this short time job, for 4 weeks. A short time. But when I went for the interview hey?, they tell me I come too late. Another woman was hired."

"You sound disappointed."

"What's that?"

"Sad that you didn't get the job."

"Yes, I can't survive in South Africa without money. I must pay for accommodation, food and clothes. I can't do this without making money. But it's hard to find a job"

Jacqueline's plea for assistance a few Saturdays ago echoes in my head. She was desperate to give me her new number, as she asked if I didn't know of any jobs in the area, or even further afield. I look at Toni and see the worry etched on her face. For a moment she reminds me of Jacqueline, harried, hair 'unmade'. A sure sign that particularly women have fallen on hard times, is when they are unable to have their hair dressed or styled. Congolese women are known for their not too timid hairstyles.

Toni's voice interrupts my thoughts: "I am learning English. Maybe it will help with finding work."

Toni's comment compels thinking about the fieldwork process: the 'field' itself is not static. Initially I thought that women wouldn't be able to speak English, but my perception has changed during the research. Their acquisition of English is processual. When I started with fieldwork, Lydia's English was 'minimal' and she wasn't too responsive. Now however she is more open to conversation and her English has definitely improved. Thus, the field site is changing in situ, as the women's English improves. This doesn't remove the remaining concern with regard to the level of communication – use of language, jokes, words etc – but it does provide evidence of 'being present in the local environment' rather than holed up in one's personal space. The women are extending themselves beyond the private space, through their acquisition of English.

"Your English is good", I respond.

"Thank you. I am trying. You know Xhosa women?"

"You mean South African women?"

"Yes, Xhosa women? They are hostile that women. Coloured women, like you, you are more open and how can I say, accept us. I took the train once to find work, and I tried to sit next to a Xhosa woman. She just looked at me so, and didn't make a place for me."

"That happens a lot, even to me." I am not certain how to respond to Toni's comment. So I change the topic. "You better than Nene at plaiting."

"Plaiting?"

"Braiding my hair", I respond, mimicking hand movements of plaiting.

"Oh, yes. Why?"

"You are not pulling my hair as much as she did."

We both laugh, and Lydia joins us, intrigued by our laughter. Toni conveys what I've just said in KiSwahili, and we all laugh.

At the end of the sitting, approximately six hours later, Toni and I exchange cellphone numbers.

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A few weeks later, Toni sends me a 'please call me'<sup>73</sup>. When I make the call she asks to meet me that morning. Intrigued, I agree.

We meet in front of Breaker's Internet café, situated a mere 150 metres from the roar of the ocean. We take a seat outside on the garden chairs. In halting English Toni explains that she wants someone to adopt her. I am stunned by her statement, and the seriousness thereof.

"Why do you want to do that? You have a mother."

"Yes, but she's in Congo-Kinshasa, and she can't take care of me. I am struggling here. I can't find a job without papers. So if I have a South African parent, a South African surname ...." her voice trails off.

"Toni, do you know how adoption works?"

"Yes."

"Then you know that people only adopt small children, babies. They don't adopt adults."

She looks at me slightly confused. "I already asked a white lady, but she said she can't. Can't you adopt me?"

Her comment leaves me dazed. For the first time I am face-to-face with the desperation that Congolese men *and* women must feel living in South Africa; a country that makes no provision for asylum seekers and/or refugees beyond the minimal and standard provision of 'documents'. Aware that Toni must be desperate, I try to console her.

"You will find a job. You must persist. Keep on. You don't need someone else to help you. I won't be able to help you."

"Why?"

"It won't be allowed. The administration will ask why I would want to adopt you. You're much older than me."

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<sup>73</sup> On South African cellphone networks one is able to send a text message that reads 'Please call me' without any cost to the sender.

For a few minutes we sit in silence. Toni is lost in thought, and I am still trying to fathom why she asked me. The sun is really hot so I ask, “Do you want something to drink?”

“Yes. Coca.”

I buy two cokes, and we continue sitting outside. Without warning, Toni says,

“Ok. I understand. But if you hear of a job, please tell me. You have my number. You know I work here Tuesday and Thursday. Anything. Even cleaning someone’s house, I’ll do.”

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In June 2006, after an acquaintance of close onto two years, I visit Toni at the flat that she shares with her brother, sister and other Congolese in Richmond Flats. Walking to her flat, I meet up with Godelina, a large, single mother of four children. I know her by sight, and intermittent conversations in Robert’s house. I kiss her three times on alternate cheeks. She laughs and says, “Oh like in my country!”. I ask her about their living situation in Richmond, and she says “I am worried. My children. But I am going to Johannesburg tomorrow. I will come back Monday”.

“Oh ok. Why?”

“To do some business. I want to buy some Congolese things to sell”.

“I spoke to Mama Erin the other day, and she says that all of you in Richmond should try to find accommodation at Cape Sands or Don Pepe”. Godelina nods her head.



Photograph 9: Congolese man collecting water opposite Richmond once the water was disconnected

"Toni also said that some people wanted to see a lawyer?"

"Yes, but it's like a job no? Some people want to go, others don't want to go. So no-one goes. Now it's only one and a half weeks left."

As we take our leave of each other Godelina says "Pray for me. Pray for God to keep me safe".

I nod and wave. I walk up the stairs of Richmond in thought. The situation seems turbulent, as there are rumours that the Richmond residents face imminent eviction. It seems that the owner is eager to sell the building. I walk up the dark stairs and find flat number 12. I knock on the brown door, and Toni opens it. She greets me, "Hullo my friend", and ushers me into the flat. The lounge is simply furnished with a television standing in one corner, and two non-descript two-seater couches. Peering into the two bedrooms just off the lounge I can see mattresses on the floor in both, and a music system sits on the floor in one. Toni asks me to sit, and she offers me a cold drink, which I accept.

I take out my notepad, and pen. The large glass doors open to a view of the ocean. There's not much of a balcony. The little I know of this building is that it offered holiday accommodation for visitors to Muizenberg in the 1980s. It is definitely prime property situated so closely to the ocean. As I watch the waves tumbling, Toni returns with two glasses of juice. Uncharacteristically she seems unconcerned about the impending eviction.

"What are you planning to do? Have you found a place yet?"

"It's not easy to find a place within one month. You have to search for a place. People here, they hear your voice, they don't give you a place. They say, no it's taken already. You have to put money together for an advance .. a deposit".

"Are you still working at the Internet Café?"

"Yes. But I'm working for two days. I want to do a computer training course. I've already done a home carer's course, with other coloured people. But still there's no job. How's your mother?"

"She's still not doing too good."

"Oh. Sorry to hear. Your brother? Does he take good care of her?"

"He lives around the corner from her, but he isn't always as helpful. At least that's what my mom says".

"It's not like that in our tradition. The mother stays with the daughter."

There's a knock on the door, and a Congolese woman walks in. We all greet and then Toni says to her, "You can speak to her in French and even some Lingala".

The woman responds in French, "*Elle est mariée à un homme Congolais*" [Is she married to a Congolese man?]

Toni responds, "*Non, elle est l'apprentissage du Français*" [No, she's learning French.]

The woman asks for Tina, Toni's sister. Toni responds that she is not there, so the woman leaves a message and leaves.

"Toni, are you going to stay in South Africa?"

"No, why? Here accommodation and work is hard to find. I keep trying and nothing. Even Axel he promised he would teach me computers. But nothing. I went to the shop at the time he told me to come. But he said he was busy. He wants me to work with a new place he has in the Waterfront, but I said no. You say nothing about my English?"

"It has improved a lot." I respond.

"I could learn quicker if you were here."

I smile and say, "I will buy you a novel and a magazine. If you read it you will get better with English".

"Ok, but I'm not going to speak to you in French today. I'm going to speak English, and you must help me. Say when I make a mistake, no?"

"You're not making mistakes now." We laugh. As she takes the glasses from the table, I tell her, "Are you ready".

"Yes, let me just put the glasses in the kitchen".

We had agreed the day before that I would take her to Kalky's, a famous fish shop situated on the harbour in Kalk bay.



Photograph 10: Kalky's fish and chip shop in Kalk Bay harbour<sup>74</sup>

As we arrive at the harbour, we are shown a parking area by a Congolese parking attendant. Toni quips, "See, that's all we do!" I just nod my head, as we descend the concrete pathway to the fish shop. Simply decorated, with wooden table-and-bench combos inside and outside, Kalky's is a well known Portuguese owned fish and chip shop in Cape Town. It has been a local favourite for years, and serves a multicultural and multinational clientele throughout the year.

Toni is not too certain about what to order, so she orders snoek<sup>75</sup> and chips. I order hake and chips, ask for two cokes, and pay for the entire order. We take a seat outside. Interested in Toni's religiosity I ask her, "Toni, what is your religion? You are Christian right? Catholic?"

"Yes I am Christian. I was Catholic, but now, how you say, I am Protestant. When I was a Catholic I only went to church on a Christmas day. Then for a time I stayed with my older sister, her husband and her children. My sister is Protestant. She was the one who encouraged me to go to church. We went to church Monday, Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday"

"That's a lot of church going!"

"Yes [she laughs]. But in Congo, church is important. Hours are different for church during the day so everyone can come when they can. What are you?"

For a moment I hesitate. I'm still not sure what I should say, for even though I attend church services while in the field, I have been rebellious with reference to church dogma for a while now. I choose

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<sup>74</sup> <http://www.food-e-matters.com/drizzleanddip/2010/02/kalkys-and-kalk-bay-harbour/>

<sup>75</sup> A local fish variety caught specifically in the fishing waters of Cape Town and its surrounds.

to take the easy route though, given, what I assume to be Toni's limited understanding of English. How would I tell her that I'm not really Christian? And that I am spiritual rather than religious? So I say, "I am Anglican. It is a sister church of the Catholic church. It allows women to preach."

She comments, "And it also allows a man to marry a man."

I am taken aback, and heeding her tone say, "Unfortunately, yes".

"But I thought that Sonrise was your church."

"No, I was at the church because of the research."

"So what do you think of the church?"

"The music is too loud. And women are not allowed to preach."

"Yes they can."

"Only if they ask permission."

"But in Congo women can get up and speak. So you want to hear women preach here?"

"Yes."

"Ok".

Our food arrives at just the right time. Toni takes a look at my platter, and declares, 'Oh I know that fish. They sell it a lot in Shoprite'. As we eat she asks about would, could and should.

Oh this is going to be harder than I thought. As I try to explain she responds, "So it implies conditions?"

"Yes".

"You're a good teacher". She finishes scribbling on a serviette and reiterates, "If you were here I'd learn English faster".

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Upon my third return to the field for the year of 2006, I stay at St Claire's, a well appointed guesthouse in the middle of Muizenberg village. The proprietor and I have a casual chat about the building, the difficulty experienced in maintaining it, and her regular sojourn as a home carer in



England, half of the year. She notes that her usual 'char'<sup>76</sup> has become unreliable of late. Thinking of Toni, I ask her if she's looking for someone else to assist her. She says yes. I give her Toni's number, and in a few days time Toni is formally employed for R2 000 per month. Toni continued working for Gay, until she closed the business at the end of 2008, selling the house to the local YMCA.

Like many other Congolese migrants Toni migrates to South Africa, following her siblings who have already migrated to South Africa. She iterates her faith in God and like Eric asserts that living in South Africa is hard. One needs employment "to put food in your stomach". She is thus adamant that South Africa is a transitory space, rather than her final destination. I wasn't always sure about Toni's motivations. Yet it is clear even within our first interaction that Toni, like Eric utilises 'chance', and that I have been assessed to be a potential resource. Our economic exchange was based on chance – had Nene been at the church, Toni would not have braided my hair. Similarly, even though more directed, the second interaction is also based on an audacious sense of contingency. At the time of our interaction, whilst we had previously exchanged cellphone numbers, and had had a number of fleeting interactions thereafter, Toni's request came as a surprise. I didn't think that our acquaintanceship permitted a request of this nature, yet clearly Toni was of the opposite opinion. In hindsight the vignettes demonstrate chance, and the ability to risk and over-ride middle-class 'manners' and norms. When one is fairly desperate what I consider to be a short time of acquaintance is sufficient time for a request of this nature. Further as potential patrons are rather limited Congolese migrants are compelled to 'rush' their requests, risking rejection, whilst hoping for assistance. Initially confused by her request I wasn't able to see Toni's subtle intentions – to include me as a member in her social network, possibly as a patron.

While our initial engagement was based on a direct exchange – I paid Toni for braiding my hair – the 'relationship' once initiated could be negotiated. Unlike Eric's once-off interaction with the white woman, Toni's expectation of our relationship is different; hence her cultivation thereof. Our intermittent contact with each other thereafter, even during my time *out* of the field, created a bond that could be beneficial later. Thus, even though I was shocked by Toni's request, Toni felt comfortable after approximately two years of acquaintance to make her request for adoption. Her request un-nerved me as she included me as a participant in her life – a possible member of her social network. She therefore 'shattered' ideas of distance and non-involvement; I was becoming a social actor in her universe, not merely a pre-defined role. In retrospect when I consider this interaction through the lens of social capital, and my current understanding of

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<sup>76</sup> Domestic.

Congo's socio-economic history and the Congolese economic habitus, it is glaringly apparent that Toni was attempting to elicit my assistance as a patron. Given her limited English, whilst she referred to adoption, her reference could very well have been to the relationship of patronage – that I 'adopt' her as a client – rather than the legal creation of a familial relationship – that I adopt her as a child dependent. Toni's abrupt demeanour did not inspire immediate assistance. Unlike Eric, Toni lacked the social awareness of South Africans. Eric, having dealt with South Africans daily, figured out a way to approach one for assistance. While the approach entailed risk, it was a considered risk based on prior observation and knowledge of social etiquette in the South African environment. Eric also used his charm.

Each of our interactions gave me access to a little more of Toni's world and the reality of socio-economic struggle and dis-ease in the lives of single Congolese women. Whilst Toni lived with her brother and sister, and was thus able to pool resources with them, their combined income did not provide for spacious living arrangements. Rather they shared the flat with other Congolese residents. After their eviction and Toni's employment at St Claire's, they were able to move into their own accommodation in Diep River, a suburb approximately 10 minutes drive from Muizenberg.

The above conversations and interactions demonstrate the survivalist mode of Congolese migration, and the compulsion therefore to secure employment and further education. Always in search of something to provide more permanent employment, Toni completed a home carer's course, and considered completing a computer course. Each of these were hoped to improve her chances for employment. However, as she noted, her further studies did not secure better employment. Her choices of future employment fields indicate an inspiration to social mobility. Yet, Toni's limitations, inclusive of limited cultural and social capital, scupper her chances.

Toni realises that the acquisition of English is an important asset in the job market, and in the acquisition of accommodation. She notes that prejudice exists in face-to-face interactions in public spaces, and she implies that she is further prejudiced by her accent. She sounds 'other'. For Congolese men and women uncertainty is a given especially when employment is erratic or minimal, and when forced to share accommodation. Generally, women's acquisition of English demonstrated an adaptation to the environment, and more specifically an attempt to adapt to the language of administration and commerce. Lydia's use of English improved during her work as a child-minder, and through her regular attendance at Sonrise AOG, where services were translated either from English into French, or French into English. Without access to these forms of acculturation, women's progression into the formal market economy is delayed.

A further theme in the above vignettes is Congolese people's uncertainty regarding their rights, and their unease with questioning their treatment by South Africans. As noted by Godelina while some Richmond residents spoke about seeking legal counsel they had not pursued this. This non-action confirmed a trait or characteristic that I had noted in JC. While Congolese men and women did their best to make ends meet when for whatever reason their actions were thwarted they *accepted* the outcome. As JC noted, "When you are a migrant, you don't look back. As the day ends, that's the end of the day. Tomorrow, it's the start of a new day. A new day. You start from zero". With a certain fatalism 'failure' was accepted and the next plan made. Acceptance one could argue was also bolstered by an abiding faith in God. Both Godelina and Toni recognise the power of prayer and God's grace; yet Toni's reliance on the church for support seems largely minimal.

In short, when I consider Toni's interactions with me in light of her history her circumstances at the time, and her attempts to secure permanent employment, I am aware that my social positioning as an employed South African, who could speak English, the lingua franca of officialdom and administration in South Africa offered Toni an array of opportunities. Not only was I the broker between her and her long-term employer (the final vignette) but I also offered when present in the field opportunities to practise English. By 'hanging out' with me, Toni acquired cultural capital that had value within the South African environs. Her continued acquaintance with me involved work though. As a person in her network that could potentially provide assistance, our friendship had to be cultivated; hence her intermittent calls, and attempts to meet up with me whilst I was in the field. While Toni remained aware of the reason for my presence in Muizenberg and thus the benefits accruing to me she hoped that our acquaintance could also be of benefit to her.

*Mama Fifi – married with children*

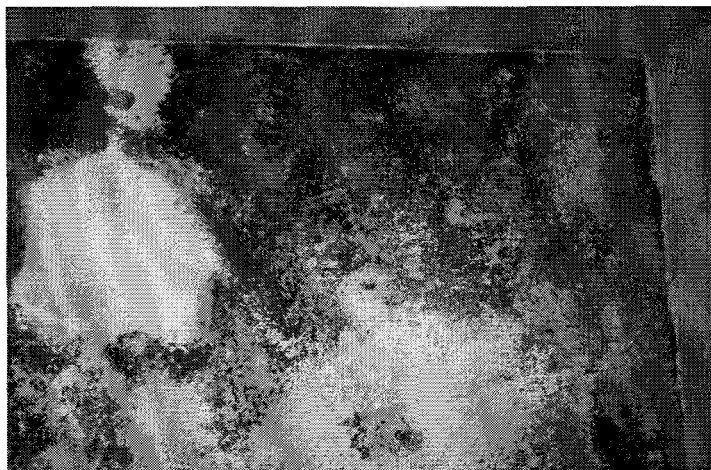
Unlike Toni, Mama Fifi is married with children. At the time of meeting her, she and her family seemed destitute.

Linda<sup>77</sup> and I have become progressively more acquainted with each other over the past few days. She is amicable and accepts my tagging-along without much concern. On our way to the Sonrise Assembly of God (AOG) church we take a detour to visit a Congolese family that Linda met through the church. On our way there, Linda stops at the corner café, and purchases six slices of chocolate cake for the children in the household. As we walk down Church road we greet some Congolese men

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<sup>77</sup> This field relationship is detailed in chapter six.

walking in the streets. They glance at us quizzically. Arriving at Yellow Rose, we are greeted by a security guard at the gate. Linda speaks to him briefly, and we ascend the stairs. There are no interior passage lights so the building looks rather gloomy. People's washing festoons the central area. As we get to the landing the smell of urine assails my senses. It seems to emanate from a toilet, most likely shared by all. Linda turns to me, wrinkles her nose and says "What a smell!"



Photograph 11: The ceiling of one of the bathrooms in Yellow House

She knocks on a nondescript door, and two older children who have run up the stairs, enter the flat. Mama Fifi is at the door. Linda hands a gift to her, but there's not much response. She strikes me as a rather gruff woman. She holds a young child in her arms. Linda tries to introduce me to her, above the hub-bub in the flat – children are talking behind a drawn curtain. We smile at each other in acknowledgement. The flat is barely livable. It is a small and cramped one room flat, divided into two by the curtain. A two plate electrical stove rests on the floor. A pot is precariously positioned atop it. From behind the curtains, the husband shows his face. I am watching everyone from the landing, as there is not enough standing room in the flat.

The girl who ran past us rummages furiously in her bag, taking out books and a jersey. Her odds and ends surround her on the floor, as she gets to the bottom of the bag and with a flourish takes out a small posie of flowers and gives it to Linda. "Here Linda; a flower". Linda accepts the flowers smilingly, and says "I will dry them. By so doing I will always have them". Linda hands over the tray of cake slices to Mama Fifi who hands it to a young boy of about six years of age. He is curious, and tries to lift up the covering. Linda and Mama Fifi continue talking, as Mama Fifi resting on her legs, stirs the contents of the pot. I can't smell meat. The young boy manages to get his hand under the covering, touches the cake, pulls out his hand and licks it. I smile. Angrily Mama Fifi admonishes him and takes it away. The flat is claustrophobic and squalid. We hurriedly try to take our leave of them.

Linda tells Mama Fifi that she should talk to me if she sees me in the street, as I will be in Muizenberg for a while. She looks at me with listless eyes. As we walk to Sunrise, I try to understand how Mama Fifi manages, as Linda intimates that both she and her husband are not working. At least the children go to school.

Mama Fifi's situation is not rare amongst Congolese. However, Congolese families are often assisted financially through their local church, or family members resident internationally (Nzayabino, 2005 and 2010). I cannot say whether this is the case for Mama Fifi and her family, as this was the only time we interacted. It seems however that this particular family were destitute. Later during fieldwork, Mama Fifi is pointed out to me again by one of my research informants. I am informed that she has a reputation for taking food away with her when attending any special events at the Assembly of God church, and being adamant when doing so.

Like the Blue House – notorious for drug activity and over-crowding – Don Pepe (aka Yellow Rose) had also gained a reputation in the area. By 2009, newspaper reports in the Cape Times, the major daily in Cape Town, reported on the suspected drug trade running from the building (Dolley 2009 a and b). As commented by a local resident, “Don Pepe was ‘overcrowded, dirty’ and was the ‘nexus of criminal and antisocial behaviour in Muizenberg’” (Dolley, 2009b). Yet, within this criminal den, impoverished Congolese, like Mama Fifi and her family, were forced to seek accommodation. Their presence in Don Pepe does not prove their complicity in the drug smuggling. However, like those in Kinshasa, Mama Fifi's struggles curtailed her options. As Iyenda (2005) comments,

“In many houses, on average 7.8 people shared the house, and 3.3 people shared a bedroom. In households with one bedroom, children of all ages and both sexes slept in the living room, often on old bags made from cotton and laid on the floor. The same room housed all kitchen utensils and household cleaning materials; in some cases, it also housed some kind of family livestock such as poultry. Where there was no door, the parents' bedroom was separated from the living room with a curtain, often made from the wife's old clothes” (Iyenda, 2005:66).

Thus while Mama Fifi and her family have to suffer the indignity of shared accommodation, and living in a building reputed for its criminal activities in Muizenberg her situation is comparable to that experienced at home. However at least in South Africa her children are able to go to school; an opportunity not easily afforded in the DRC, given its crippled educational sector (Iyenda, 2005). What strikes me though is Mama Fifi's seeming lack of social networks, *outside* of the

church. Despite her attendance at Sonrise AOG, Mama Fifi is limited to accessing similar individuals therein – eking out a day to day living, with no informational wealth that can lead to temporary or full-time employment<sup>78</sup>. Her situation confirms Wuthnow's (2002) proposition that certain churches can be insular, restricting people's access to bridging capital. For this particular family then, given their low social capital, the children are invested with dreams of social mobility. Therefore one sacrifices today, so as to secure your children's future tomorrow.

*Mama Erin – married with children*

Unlike the above lived experiences, the narrative of my next informant, Mama Erin positions her as a wealthier Congolese woman in Muizenberg, relative to other Congolese residents. Like Eric and Toni, Erin's narrative also involves contingency. Furthermore, her narrative underscores the centrality of Christianity, particularly Pentecostalism in her life.

Linda, Gianni and I walk, while chatting amiably, to the AOG church. Linda rings the bell and we wait. Our task tonight is to give gifts to Lydia and Cathy, and also to Mama Erin. The wind is blustery and cold, and no response to our hailing is forthcoming. Linda looks at me, and with a shrug of her shoulders says, "Let's go to Mama Erin". We walk across to the brown building on the other side of the street. I am slightly intrigued, as all I see are shop front windows. However, just a little way past the antique store, there's a flight of stairs on the right. Linda says, "She lives in this building. She lived in Cape Sands before, but she's been able to move". As Linda refers to Cape Sands, Gianni points out the building on the left. It's a large, imposing building. In the half light it looks derelict, somehow lost. As we reach the landing, Linda presses a white button. A ringing sound emanates from somewhere inside the building. A few minutes later, the door is opened by a tall, statuesque woman, almost ebony in colour. She embraces Linda and Gianni effusively, but with control. She looks at me inquiringly. Linda introduces me to Mama Erin. She welcomes us into her home, taking us directly into the bedroom, where I am surprised to meet twin girls. They are cute.

I am enthralled by the girls, and so don't pay much attention to the interaction between Mama Erin, Gianni and Linda. However, intermittently, as my attention shifts from the girls I catch parts of their conversation. Linda explains how busy she has been. Gianni just smiles while sitting on the bed. Mama Erin excitedly shows Linda a number of dresses made in Congo – to my eyes the patterns on the material are 'busy', but the dresses are beautifully made. Linda expresses her appreciation

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<sup>78</sup> On a visit to the church with JLM in 2008 he meets up with an acquaintance in the church. As we walk out after the service, Alain comments on JLM's healthy physique and then asks him if he doesn't have a job for him or know of employment opportunities in the area.

thereof, and so Mama Erin hands over two of the dresses to her. “For you”, she says. Linda’s eyes light up and she thanks Mama Erin. The girls excited by the laughter and happiness on display, vie for Mama Erin’s attention. They hang on her arms. Linda grabs them and play tumbles onto the bed. Anna<sup>79</sup> hangs back, but Maya<sup>80</sup> giggles.

Barely twenty minutes later, Linda, Gianni and I take our leave of Mama Erin and the twins. As we return to the backpackers, Linda encourages me to seek out Mama Erin at the AOG services in the weeks to come. Over the next few years of fieldwork, upon each return, Mama Erin is still living in the brown, non-descript building in Muizenberg. The girls are growing fast, and are about to start school in 2006. By chance Mama Erin and I bump into each other on the street. She invites me over to her flat the following day.

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The next morning I rise as the sun comes streaming through the window. By 10 o’clock I engage the buzzer of Mama Erin’s flat. Erin greets me at the interleading door, and then leads me through the back door, through the small kitchen into the lounge. She is wearing a *pagne*<sup>81</sup> like a sarong. And her hair is loose. “Erin, is it a good time?” I ask.

“Yes, yes come in”. She takes a seat in a white garden chair, and I take the strawberry coloured single seater. I am in awe of Erin’s beauty. Deftly she massages Vaseline along her hair line. Then scooping out Dark and Lovely relaxer she puts the relaxer on her hair, from the front of her head to the back. She turns to face the mirror – a number of squares bordered with green mosaic edging – and we talk whilst she smooths the relaxer through her hair.

Erin asks, “How is your mother doing?”

“She’s not doing that well. Her health keeps fluctuating – going up and down. I’m worried about her. But she’s better than she was a while back.”

“If I knew her name I can pray for her. It’s better to pray for a person, the name, than praying for all the people. I can also ask Mama Praise, she’s a powerful woman of God. She lives in Cape Sands.

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<sup>79</sup> A pseudonym.

<sup>80</sup> A pseudonym.

<sup>81</sup> A loosely tied wrap around skirt made from Congolese cloth.

She's really powerful in prayer. Lots of people go to her for prayer, and to ask her advice. Maybe she can even come to your mother's house, and pray for her?"

I'm slightly stunned by the suggestion, but taking it in stride say, "I'd appreciate that".

Erin responds, "My power comes from faith, and also because I'm the daughter of God. I read the bible, every day".

I nod, as I'm not sure how to respond. I admire the photographs on display as she sweeps her hands across her hair. The white relaxer cream highlights her features – small eyes, high cheek bones. As I look at the photographs I say, "You have a beautiful home here Erin".

"There's still so much more that I want to do. When I came to live here in Muizenberg, I was first living with other people. My husband came over. There was 15 people sharing one shower, toilet and kitchen. Guylain used to shower at the beach. Before he left he tells me I must find another place. A white man who also lives here, he knew what was happening. So he suggested I come and live with him and his wife. I think he felt sorry for the girls. We lived with him and his wife in Lakeside. But we left after a month. The man's wife was ill, and not okay with us living there. So we left. We ended up living in the church, at the top."

"In the church?"

"Yes at the top, where the crèche is."

"How long were you living there?"

"We were staying there for a month. And then we heard of this place for R2 200.00 a month. I was praying, praying, praying. I spoke to the manager and we got the place. He allowed us to pay the deposit off over seven months. So every month we pay R2 500.00".

"That's a lot of money."

"Yes, but my husband helps. And I was working. But I'm not working any longer. The company closed and moved to Nigeria."

"To Nigeria?"

"Yes. I was cleaning there [I'm slightly shocked by this revelation, as the photographs display a professional woman] and then answering the phones. My husband knows the owner of the business



– a white guy. During breaks I read the bible. Now, to get better in English, I've bought myself an English bible. I also worked as a waitress. The hours were different, and sometimes I worked at night. I wasn't home for the children. I learnt I shouldn't waitress. It's not for a married woman. The men there they show interest, giving you money and then asking you out." She shakes her head.

"Erin what did you do in the Congo?"

"I was in the Defense ministry working for Kabila [the] father in Kinshasa."

"Because I can see your photographs here you are really professional, wearing a suit and stockings."

"Yes, we taught to wear like that. In South Africa I see women don't wear stockings."

"I admire you for that. I'm a jeans and t-shirt person."

"I know. I see that. [We laugh] I met him [Guylain] because of my colleague. I was sending shoes home to Lubumbashi for my father. I am the oldest one see. I have five brothers and three sisters."

"That's a lot of children."

"Yes. [She smiles]. I met Guylain at the airport, and thereafter my colleague would tell me, Guylain sends his greetings. For three months. Sometimes he would call. [As she talks she partitions her hair into sections and starts to comb it.] Eventually I agreed to meet with him. I was taken by him."

"Why?"

"He speaks French so well. He was intelligent, and he dressed well. He also smelt nice".

I laugh out loud and say incredulously, "No Erin, smelt nice?"

"Yes, that's important. It means he knew how to take care of himself. But he was older, almost 10 years older than me. Also he was divorced. And you know, because I'm the daughter of God, I was worried. But I met him again when I was out with my friend. And she also liked him. She gave me the same reasons I was thinking. We were talking in KiSwáhili, and sometimes he was with us when we did that. Only later did he tell me that he also speaks KiSwahili [we giggle]. We married when I was 23, and he was 35. Then we had the twins. Guylain works in government in France."

"Why are you and the girls here if Guylain is in France?"

"He wants the girls to be schooled here. Soon I want to be a business woman. I'll buy in the DRC, and then send back to South Africa. Cloth can be bought for \$12, and with shipping it here it comes to \$30. Total. I can then sell it for \$100<sup>82</sup>. While I try my business my husband must keep his job. There's nothing but security here. And that doesn't pay the rent. I have two goals, two things I want to do. I want to be a strong woman of God, and I want to be a strong woman in business."

"You will be. You are not Catholic?"

"No. I grew up Catholic. But this woman, she was persistent. She asked me to come and visit her church. I didn't go. I kept saying no, or ignoring her. But I went. There I see they pray loudly, and they don't sit with the rosary. There they teach you the bible, and I started to sing in the church. I changed. My life changed since then, because I became the daughter of God. Even Guylain. He has changed. When he was here, he didn't leave me alone much. He stayed at home."

Erin interrupts our conversation when she gets up to wash the relaxer off her hair. She comes back with a towel around her head. For the next few hours we talk about her life in Muizenberg, while she dries her hair. Daniel, a son of one of the Congolese women in the church, moves in and out of the lounge as we talk. "I am baby-sitting him while his mother works."

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A few days later, as I accompany Erin to buy school clothes for the girls, we chat amicably in the car.

"Guylain wants me to buy a car. When he was here he said we needed one. I drove in Congo."

"There's nothing like driving. I enjoy it. Erin how do you manage with the girls?"

"Oh twins are a bad thing. Not always a blessing."

I am surprised by her response. "What do you mean?"

"Anna was sick, in and out of hospital for a long time. She was given lots of medicine. But nothing. I was tired of all of it, and so I threw away the medicine."

"You threw away the medicine?"

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<sup>82</sup> In 2007, when Hannah and I fly to DRC, we meet Mama Erin at the airport. She's also on her way to the DRC, but she's travelling to Lubumbashi. Our chat is short. But thereafter Hannah reports that she is initiating a business between DRC and South Africa.

"I kept praying and praying. I put Anna in God's hands. Guylain's brother didn't understand, and so he brought more medicine. I just threw it out again. I kept praying, day and night. She had a fever for one day, but she got better."

"What a relief."

"Even now, she will say, mummy my throat is sore'. I check and tell her, you're always praying, praying, praying. You're a child of God. You will be ok."

"That's faith."

"I have faith, because I'm the daughter of God. I'm not afraid to leave them alone at home."

"I was just going to ask you where are they."

"They are at home. They have the television, videos, radio to keep them busy. And I know God protects them."

Mama Erin's situation is qualitatively different to the circumstances of my other respondents. At this time, she was materially better off than the rest, despite her two dependants. When compared to Mama Fifi, their situations are starkly opposed. Erin has fewer children than Mama Fifi, she has a better command of English, and her husband is working overseas. Erin thus has access to a professional social network, and to remittances from France. Of course one cannot assume that Erin's husband is actually paid for his services, as DRC Ministers even in 2007<sup>83</sup>, were being paid erratically. Yet his residence in France gave him access to an international network of professionals, government officials etc. As Erin notes, her husband knew the Director of the company that she worked for as a cleaner and a part-time receptionist.

Erin is definitely of a different class position than Mama Fifi – not only is this observable in the clothing the women wear, but also in how their individual children are dressed. Erin's girls were always clothed in the latest fashion, and their hair was always well taken care of, and well dressed. While Mama Fifi's children were clean, their clothes were the worse for wear, and their hair simply braided, without any hair extensions. Thus, children are visible extensions of their mothers', or their parents' class, as their attire, and physical appearance demonstrate consumption patterns, and the presence of disposable income.

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<sup>83</sup> At the time of my trip to Kinshasa in September 2007.

In the same vein, place of residence also becomes a physical demonstration or symbolic representation of class. In the case of all the women presented above, class was distinguished through the size of the residence, the number of people one resided with, and the commodities on display in the residence. While Mama Fifi shared cramped quarters with her husband and children, Toni shared a two bedroom flat with five other people, whilst Erin had a three bedroom flat for the use of herself and her children. Although unemployed, Erin was able to maintain the flat as a result of her husband's assistance from abroad. Unlike Mama Fifi who had to cook on a two plate electrical stove, Erin's flat had a four plate stove, kettle, and refrigerator in the kitchen. The lounge although simply decorated had a television, dvd player, vcr and a small tape deck.

Given the 'normal' living conditions of Congolese in Muizenberg, Mama Erin's position is an anomaly. The ability to choose whether to work or not – she quit waitressing out of choice – and the gifts she gives to Linda distinguishes her from the other Congolese migrants in the area. A Congolese man or woman of lower socio-economic standing cannot afford to resign his or her position, nor are they able to provide gifts easily<sup>84</sup>. In short although Erin has the burden of two dependents she is able to navigate the demands of migrant life by relying on luck (as does Toni) – assistance from the white man – and the resources inherent in her social network – she lives in the church and she gets a job through her husband's contact at a company. Unlike Mama Fifi, Erin has a social network that offers potential assistance; assistance that she makes use of.

Erin also has God, clearly a powerful Being in whom she places her daughters' lives. In much the same way as Brazilians discard medical attempts at healing (Chesnut, 1997), Erin takes her daughter off medication; a seemingly reckless action. In so doing, Erin demonstrates her strong faith in God. Her faith is both vindicated and confirmed when her daughter returns to health. She actively passes on her faith to her daughters, as she admonishes them to pray for healing as they are "children of God" – words indicative of her Pentecostalism (Robbins, 2004). Robbins (2004) and others (Chesnut, 1997; Cole, 2010) note the salience of faith healing in Pentecostalism. Yet in Erin's case, not only does God provide healing, but He also provides physical protection for His children. Mama Erin speaks her faith, and believes fervently that she and her children are protected. Her attendance at Sunrise Assembly of God church encourages and asserts her faith demonstrably.

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<sup>84</sup> During fieldwork there were times however, especially during funerals, when Congolese of lower socio-economic standing contributed money to the funeral costs.

## **The Instrumentality of Church Attendance**

JLM and I have been at loggerheads with each other for some time with regard to what he sees as my non-religion. I am therefore mildly surprised when we are able to talk about Congolese experiences of Christianity, without quarrelling. On the spur of the moment I tape our conversation, without resistance from him.

"Start again" [I giggle].

"You want me to talk about Congolese?"

"Ja, about how when they go to other countries and they become more Christian."

"Hey, Joy, ja a lot of Congolese when they go, they get out of DRC, they become more Christian than they were in DRC. Why? First of all where they are going most of them, let me say 80% of us when we leave we don't know, we don't have people that can welcome us abroad. Do you understand? We just go like this and we can meet friends, or sometime we can start from nowhere. Or people that we meet are Congolese. So most of them when they encounter a situation of uncertainty right it's like they don't know what's going to be next right, like how they are going to find a job. They don't know right where to go and knock and get a job. So they have to rely on something that is, the person that is controlling their uncertainty. I mean let me call it uncertainty, which is God you know. So suddenly they become Christian. You see. So most of them when they come over here, they are."

"They become Christian."

"They become Christian, they start going to church."

"Or confirm their Christian beliefs through going?"

"No, it's like most of us are Christian but they are not."

"Practicing Christians .."

"Practicing Christianity in DRC, they're like .. because we know one thing we have families that we can rely on over there right? We have parents on which we can rely on over there. Over here we don't have parents. We don't have people to rely on. You know what I mean. So now you feel your future is very uncertain. Now there are churches around telling you you don't have to fear. Let me be brief. It's just because of fear. People fear. A lot of Congolese fear to suffer. They fear to suffer

and they fear, ok, they fear the possibility that they are going to perish. So one of the ways is let us go to church, and God is going to help us. He is going to help us out of it. You see. That's why, after most of them say 80% after they've received what they wanted, after they've gotten a job or whatever you won't see them going to church again (he laughs). You got to go now in the bars in some places, Congolese bars, you'll see them drinking there (laughs). I am telling you the truth. You see them drinking, you see them smoking ... all those things in Congolese churches you don't have to drink, you don't have to smoke. You don't have to be promiscuous or whatever. But then once, you know, they have security now they turn into doing that. Going to the bars, drinking, having women, things like that. (I giggle). Why are you laughing?"

"That can't be with all Congolese though."

"Joy, when you say all Congolese, you know yourself as you are studying things you don't generalise. But we are talking about, we don't say that everybody behave like that, you see. You don't say that everybody behave like that, no. I don't say like that. I am saying the majority. Like no I expect, there's something that you cannot expect from the Congolese. But there's also something that you can expect from the Congolese and then you know this is how they behave. This is one of the things huh, apart from loving to wear I mean beautiful clothes and something, some of the things Christianity."

"That they will be Christian?"

"Ja, most of them become."

JLM's words contextualise and affirm the narratives that have gone before. Facing uncertainty as regards accommodation, the host countries' bureaucratic procedures, and the reality of unemployment, Congolese turn to "the person that is controlling their uncertainty" – God. The church through ways of worship and sermons provide a sense of belonging in an alienating environment – bonding capital. As noted by Nzayabino (2010) the Assembly of God church in Yeoville provided praise and worship particular to the "Congolese culture". Intriguingly, JLM asserts that Congolese aren't necessarily practicing Christians in the DRC. However faced with insecurity, they become practicing Christians in the host country. As Nzayabino (2005:69) states,

"... migration is a theologizing experience. Forced migrants tend to become more receptive to religion and actively involved in church activities in host communities than in their home countries".

In essence the relationship sought with God becomes an instrumental one, as God is beseeched to provide for the migrant's survival needs. As many migrants are unable to rely on the security of their parents, they seek and respond to churches that offer solace. Hirschman (2004:1207) says,

“In past times, individuals could turn to the extended family (and the large community) for social and spiritual comfort as well as for material assistance. With smaller and less proximate families in present time, churches and temples can sometimes fill the void”.

As JLM notes, and Nzayabino (2005 and 2010) confirms, migrants become active in their congregation *after* migration as churches are more accessible and most needed in alienating places. Furthermore, churches offer access to ready social networks that could possibly provide assistance, information about jobs, accommodation and further socialisation in South Africa.

Migrants' insecurity does not only stem from circumstances in the host country, but also what JLM refers to as the fear of perishing – a psychological stress factor. Rather cynically he notes that once their needs are met Congolese remove themselves from the church so as to frequent Congolese bars and to “have women”. JLM's statement denotes a certain instrumentality in Congolese attendance at church. Writing about Tamatave, Madagascar, Cole (2010) reports the same finding. She (ibid) asserts that Tamatavian urban women initially join Pentecostal churches so as to access material wealth, or further opportunities for social mobility. Thus the joining of a particular church, and continued attendance there can be initiated by socio-economic deprivation. Denominational choice becomes strategic and evolutionary, rather than following a historical pattern.

Importantly, JLM also refers subtly to the importance of creating social networks within a church environment, when he notes that migrants “don't have people to rely on” in the host country. Mama Erin's ability to secure temporary accommodation in the church speaks to the importance of the social network and more specifically social capital. Further, Mama Fifi has also on occasion appropriated food at functions held at the Assembly of God church so as to feed her family. Therefore the church provides access to a social network, and often acts as a buffer against the vicissitudes of migration. Depending on the material and informational wealth in the social network, migrants find employment and accommodation. As in other cases of migration in the United States specifically, “[c]hurches and other religious institutions are one of the most important sources of support for the practical problems faced by immigrants” (Hirschman, 2004:1212).

*Pentecostalism amongst Congolese migrants in Muizenberg: 'reaching up and touching God'*

I was constantly intrigued by the verbal expression of faith, especially amongst the Congolese women I met. Conversations with them were often littered with phrases like “God is good all the time, and all the time God is good” – a phrase oft repeated during church services at Sonrise, the locally situated Assembly of God church. My official attendance at the church started on a mild spring day, 15 September 2004, approximately two months into fieldwork.



Photograph 12: The front of the Sonrise AOG Church

I wake up wondering if I really want to go to Sonrise. The church service starts at 10am. I am so accustomed to an early morning service, that 10am seems rather awkward. To avoid thinking, and thus deciding not to go, I busy myself getting dressed – no jeans and t-shirt I have to remember. I walk to the church, arriving at exactly 10am. The glass doors are open, and I peer through to the small hall. It is practically empty. Besides myself there are three other congregants – two men and one woman. For a moment I wonder if I am at the correct place, but then Emmanuel and Lydia<sup>85</sup> walk into the church. Lydia has Cathy, her daughter, on her hip. The service starts with praise and worship. I am not familiar with the songs, some of which are sung in Lingala, and others in French. I recognise Sister Ntombi, standing in front as part of the worship team. She has a really good, strong, clear voice. Mama Erin is also present, sitting in front with her well dressed twin daughters.

<sup>85</sup> Linda introduced me to Emmanuel and Lydia, a Congolese couple, at the start of my fieldwork. After our initial introductions we maintained contact primarily through the church.



Just prior to the sermon, I assume he is the priest<sup>86</sup>, declares, pointing to one of the male congregants that his wife had only recently come out of hospital, and the following night they were burgled. A general sound of disapproval fills the air, as the priest enumerates the stolen items – a DVD player, TV and VCR. “But thank God, they were not touched”.

The service is run in French and English. The priest starts the service with singing – worshipping. Throughout the service, he says, “In Congo we don’t have instruments. The only instruments we use are the voices of people. So lift your voices to God, clap and even stamp your feet.” Some songs are projected onto the white wall behind the lectern. The congregation responds excitedly and vigorously as the music is played louder. Erin starts to ululate. I am initially taken aback, as my sense of her is that she is careful and reserved. I gaze at those gathered. They are wearing their Sunday best. Some of the men are wearing suits, and the women wear fashionable skirts and blouses, or dresses. My mind wanders ever so often, as I attempt to keep up with the translation. I can hear some French, but am glad that the service is done in English. Emmanuel does the translation from English into French. Intermittently I stare out of the window, mesmerised by the sparkling blue ocean. The ocean glitters, as if filled with diamonds.

The service extends until 12.30. I am hungry, and fatigued. I am acculturated to the Anglican way of meditative worship and the ritual of the Eucharist. Today’s church service, however, has been dominated by much singing and clapping – boisterous singing and clapping, and no Eucharist. At the end of the service Emmanuel sees me and asks, “Where have you been?” “I’m still in Muizenberg. I’ve just been really busy. But I’ll see you and Lydia soon.” “Come along on Thursday. Lydia will prepare supper!” I agree instantly, as I am aware that I need to include a more diverse range of people and institutions in my research.

Writing notes later that evening, I record:

An immediate sense of the church is that they are more keen on identifying the congregation as Congolese and as a result the service occurs in two languages – French and English. The translation lengthens the church service considerably, especially if the person preaching has a LONG sermon. The clapping in the church is more visceral, and physical in comparison to what I am used to. During the service I wondered how the guys would react to this way of preaching; surely it’s not that far from their experiences? My senses feel overloaded, my eardrums particularly scarred. This is so different to what I experience in the Anglican church, and even at MCC. They have no pew leaflet

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<sup>86</sup> My Anglican acculturation is apparent here, as I refer to the officiant as a Priest, rather than as a Pastor.

either, so I couldn't follow the order of the service. No religious paraphernalia adorn the church, not even a cross. Why do people arrive late? Interaction between the priest and the congregation is immediate, with the priest saying something and the congregation responding instantaneously. Church seems to be an enjoyable event.

In the months that followed, my attendance at Sonrise waxed and waned with the particular demands of fieldwork, and as I focused my attention more solidly on the guys. However, the times that I attended it was always apparent that praise and worship were dominant aspects of the service, with songs sung predominantly in Lingala and French taking up the first 45 minutes of the service. Congolese congregants were not only resident in Muizenberg, but also living as far afield as Plumstead, Wittebome and Cape Town; between 20 minutes and 35 minutes away.

In much the same way that Narayanan (2003) notes that Hindus share an "embodied cosmology", Congolese congregants of Sonrise AOG, particularly the women were active in their praise and worship of God. While they did not respond through performative dance, their bodily movements – raising of arms and wide sweeping movements thereof, with eyes closed and head upturned – "plead, supplicate, petition, rejoice [and] celebrate" (Narayanan, 2003:13). During a women's gathering that I organised to become better acquainted with the women in the church, we had a wide ranging conversation over a rather strong curry that I had cooked. Topics of discussion included relationships, employment opportunities, and praise and worship in church services. Ntombi noted, "I love the way they worship and the way they put their hands up. It's as if they are touching God, reaching out for His blessings. And they are so grateful. I don't always understand the words, but they are strong in praise and worship, and as a result they are strongly blessed". Awifa responds to my question about the meaning of the hand movements, saying that when the hands are palms down moving from a position just above the shoulders to below the shoulders a blessing is being bestowed on those around one. When, however, the hands are palms up, and in motion, as if throwing water on oneself, one is blessing oneself. It dawns on me that since people are often moving their hands palms down they are constantly blessing those around them. I blurt this out, and the women seated around the table, all nod vigorously in agreement. This particular performance of blessing others, is reminiscent of Chesnut's (1997:81) words regarding faith healing – "...both clergy and laity [are used by Jesus and the Holy Spirit] as human conductors to restore the health of the infirm". In the case of Sonrise, all present are 'human conductors' of God's blessings. Further, while it seems morally correct to bestow blessings on others, rather than oneself – hence the blessings upon others – the moral code encourages everyone to reciprocate; an obligation of reciprocity practised in secular social networks too.

To the untrained eye, the hand movements are insignificant, a mere physical manifestation of response to the loud music and the encouragement of the Pastor. However, the 'faith dance', loud music and singing confirms a particular Congolese praise habitus, for as Nzayabino (2010) notes writing about Congolese in Johannesburg, "Congolese worship is traditionally characterised by loud prayer, praise and worship". Further this particular form of worship is also exemplary of Pentecostal "[s]ervices [that] appear spontaneous, experiential and exuberant" (Robbins, 2004:126). In short then, the performance and experience of one's faith and Christianity in Sonrise AOG is indeed an embodied cosmology; one not sufficiently studied in the social science literature on Pentecostalism (Chesnut, 1997; Cole, 2010; Robbins, 2004).

An important aspect, regularly emphasised in the literature on Pentecostalism is the link between poverty and the rise of Pentecostalism in Latin America, Asia and Africa (Chesnut, 1997; Robbins, 2004). Chesnut (1997:16) states, "Pentecostals seek spiritual power that will free them from material deprivation". This particular aspect of Pentecostalism seems peculiar to Sonrise too. The church is small, in comparison to some of the larger, more established Congolese churches in South Africa – like those in Yeoville, Johannesburg, and Woodstock, Cape Town. At every church service attended during the period of fieldwork, the congregation never exceeded 50 members; sometimes as few as 25 people were in attendance. Despite the often low attendance, in part as a result of people's work schedules, church services were filled with words beseeching God for his assistance, and thanking him therefor.

I have decided to tape the church service this morning. Alain, the worship leader, is not present due to work commitments. However, Emmanuel starts the service by saying,

"I'd like to greet everybody in the name of Jesus. I'd like to tell you that our God is good. (The congregants respond with an emphatic YES.) If you have seen the goodness of God and agree with me that God is good (He starts clapping his hands – people respond by clapping). If you haven't seen it, you can keep quiet. But if you agree with me this morning and say that God is good, Amen (more clapping in agreement). So we need to enter His presence, we need to enter his oath. And you know that He is the King of Kings (AMEN). So if you come in the presence of the King of Kings with your problems, you must expect an answer. That's how you need to come into the presence of God this morning. Come by expecting something. Stop thinking about outside, stop thinking about what you have been doing, just believe that you are entering the presence of God and you need to receive an answer to your problem. I believe that you come in with a problem, and as you go out the problem has a solution, because we are in the presence of the King of Kings. We need to thank God, we will start with prayer as we are entering his presence. Amen. (Those assembled respond, Amen).

Father we come to you this morning, we bring this service, into your presence oh God. We bring this service into your hands oh God. Take control oh Holy Spirit, oh God. Every person that has come with a problem Oh God, we expect a solution. We have to deal with our past and we bring it into your presence this morning Oh God, if you can give us a solution. We expect you to do miracles this morning. We invite you Holy Spirit to take control over every service, everything that we will be doing. We praise your name Jesus. All those who are sick, I believe will be healed today. All those who are sick, we pray they will be healed today. And we pray that Your name will be glorified. [As the prayer is being said, the piano is playing accompanying music]. Give praise to Jesus (slight clapping). Thank you Jesus."

Although the above is but a sampling of the church services held at Sonrise, Sonrise, like other Pentecostal churches emphasises faith healing and the receipt of blessings. Emmanuel's words support Mama Erin's faith in her daughter's healing and recognises the presence of 'problems' within the congregation. Although he does not enumerate these problems and hence one cannot assume that he speaks particularly of material lack, a comment made in a later service, situates the congregation within an economic environment of deprivation. Speaking about tithing, Emmanuel says, "Even if you receive only R1 200.00 a month, open your heart and give. Appreciate your blessings". And at a service held two weeks later, speaking about the church's vision for the new year of 2006, Emmanuel says, "We have to be aware that God has a plan, and that He has a vision for our lives, and we have to align ourselves with that vision. If we need money for our studies this year, God will provide. And if we need a husband or a wife, God will provide." Reminding congregants of God's provisionary power confirms the church's meagre means and that of its congregants.

Unlike WOLA in Nzayabino's (2005) study, Sonrise remained limited in what it could provide materially for its congregants. Wuthnow (2002) discriminates between bridging and bonding capital. In the case of Sonrise, bridging capital was near impossible, although bonding capital seemed high. Congregants, mainly working class Congolese and Angolans, had limited material resources. However, some congregants' loyalty to the church, and their continued attendance over the years, confirmed the social and psychological importance of the church. As Wuthnow (2002:670) asserts, bonding capital

"provides emotional support, camaraderie, the kind of personal empowerment that Durkheim (1915) associated with first hand participation in group rituals, and help in dealing with crisis and other life events".

Unfortunately though Sonrise like some churches in the States (Levitt, 2001) was unable to provide materially for its parishioners. Rather, the congregation was expected to give to the church in the form of monthly tithes.

When one considers Cole's (2010:7) statement, that "Not only do people create their social status by embedding themselves in networks of exchange. They also display their social connections through the ability to command material resources", one can argue that this is also a reflection of the church. If we are to consider the Sonrise AOG itself as an actor in the social networks created by its congregants it is clear that the church itself had limited social connections. Although part of a larger Pentecostal body, the local experience of AOG doesn't command the resources of certain AOG churches in the States, or South Africa for that matter. Thus while the church provided a means to exhibit Congolese praise and worship, and even Congolese patriarchy so creating an anchor (Robbins, 2004) for Congolese migrants in Muizenberg (bonding capital) congregants were unable to secure social mobility.

One could therefore argue, as does Chesnut (1997) that there is a link between deprivation and increased attendance at Pentecostal churches. In the case of Congolese migrants, building and sustaining an economic livelihood is replete with obstacles, as Congolese are relegated to working class positions upon entry into South Africa. Their migration does not lead to immediate class mobility especially if the migrant's social and cultural capitals are limited. In this situation, Congolese migrants, as other first generation migrants have done before them (De Voe, 2002; Godziak, 2002a and b; Hagan and Ebaugh, 2003; Hirschman, 2004; McMichael, 2002; Nzayabino, 2005) rely on their religious beliefs, and attendance at various churches to find a space of belonging therein separate from the alienating external environment (Robbins, 2004) and access to similar others. Religion is thus instrumental to coping with the vicissitudes of life as a migrant or refugee (De Voe, 2002; McMichael, 2002). As De Voe (2002:240) asserts, "As a social institution, religion functions to maintain and nurture the immigrant and refugee populations' original identity". Therefore, while attempting to create a life in South Africa, Congolese find support in the church.

#### *The Patriarchy of Sonrise AOG*

A further aspect of Pentecostalism and religion noted by Robbins (2004) and Hirschman (2004) is the sense of familiarity provided in and by the church. Hirschman (2004:1211) posits, "The certainty of religious precepts can provide an anchor as immigrants must adapt and change many other aspects of their lives and habits".

Across the years of fieldwork a number of subtle changes would take place in the organisation of the church. As noted by Robbins (2004) while Pentecostalism is indeed globalised the local organisation thereof is particular to the locale in which it is found. In the case of Sonrise AOG I would add that the changes wrought were specific to Congolese patriarchy, although others have noted the patriarchal nature of Pentecostalism, no matter the locality or nationality of the church (Cole, 2010; Robbins, 2004).

Upon my return to the field in 2006, Ntombi, the secretary of the church, and an avid and talented singer in the Sonrise worship team confirms that she has been admonished. She has not been singing for two weeks. I meet up with her to have breakfast and she relates:

"I started working towards my mission, Women Pray for Africa, to start on 9 July. I wanted to get all the women across the various churches together to pray for Africa. But when I informed the church thereof, Emmanuel told me that I should have asked for permission to do the mission. The guy that was helping me has been told to leave the group. Emmanuel wants to do everything the Congolese way. The songs and the services do not include Xhosa, Afrikaans or Sotho. And women are not allowed to speak without permission. Lydia told me that I want to divide the church, by starting a church of my own. But even Brother and Sister Williams have also gone. Sister Williams was the first to leave because she was not allowed to preach"<sup>87</sup>.

I ask, "Why are you not singing Ntombi?"

"I was told that a woman is not allowed to lead the worship. So Alain has been designated the worship leader."

The patriarchal structure of the church was further evidenced the Sunday after my conversation with Ntombi. During the church service, a Congolese woman stands up and declares, "Women should obey their husbands. It says so in the bible." She continues, "We should be grateful that they protect us. That they are the head of the family. This modern times where women ask for equality is incorrect". A murmur of agreement issues forth from the men. Immediately after she has spoken, an unidentified Congolese man gets up and stands in front of the congregation. Holding the microphone he praises her words, noting, "She is a good Christian woman".

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<sup>87</sup> And yet Toni's comment that women are allowed to preach in the DRC.

At the supper (noted above), I intimate that I would love to see more women preach in the church – “I would like to hear a female voice, a sermon from a woman who understands my experiences as a woman. You can see that women are powerful, and filled with God. Just look at how Awifa dances”.

Awifa responds, “I only love dancing in the church”.

Charmaine, a South African woman, responds directly to my statement. “I am not too sure if I would like that. I like it the way it is, because if women had to preach they are so powerful, that I think they would take over. They would. And men wouldn’t like that. They would feel like the women are degrading them.”

In support of Charmaine’s statement, Ntombi comments, “The church structure would never allow that. AOG doesn’t allow women to preach”.

The above admonishments of Ntombi and her evangelisation are reminiscent of Cole’s (2010) work amongst urban Tamatavian women. She reports that the socialisation of women into the church, furthered a conscious choice to choose ‘appropriate’ clothing, depicting “the creation of a new Christian self” (Cole, 2010:22). For Ntombi, the patriarchal direction of the church restricted her natural singing talent, her leadership, and the value she placed on strengthening women’s position in the church, rather than encouraging a closer relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Vexed by the changes, Ntombi referred to it as a means to further Congolese ways within the church. Congolese patriarchy and the patriarchal nature of Pentecostal churches is at once alienating to some women, and comforting and welcomed by other women.

“...Pentecostalism’s strong commitment to Pauline notions of patriarchy in which women are expected to subordinate themselves to men and participate in churches formally run by men has stimulated much research aimed at determining why Pentecostal Christianity appeals to women” (Robbins, 2004:132). Cole (2010) like Robbins (2004) argues that women are provided with opportunities to extend their social networks, and to obtain skills. Robbins (ibid) states that “[t]hese settings provide opportunities for women to develop public leadership skills and are often the one place in patriarchal societies where women can forge new relations outside their kin networks without exposing themselves to charges of immorality”.

I would argue that the Pentecostal church as a form of social capital is particularly important to migrant women, especially those who are married and/or have children, as they are often restricted to the private sphere during their first few months of arrival in a host country. If like one of my research participants, Lydia, they are newly married, communication beyond the household is often restricted to the people the husband knows, especially if the wife has no

personal contacts in the host country. As Lydia became more active in the activities of the church her social confidence grew as did her use of English. For Lydia in much the same way as it had been for women in Tamatave (Cole, 2010), the church became a “hybrid public/private [space] ... that, facilitate[d] women’s efforts to construct public social lives for themselves as modernity develop[ed]” (Robbins, 2004:133).

While Robbins (2004) speaks of egalitarianism within Pentecostal churches in the United States the same cannot be said with reference to gender equality. Although women have opportunities to expand their skill set in all women settings, especially when they respond to requests for assistance in the church, they are not encouraged to fill leadership positions. Rather women’s leadership is thwarted, as Ntombi’s suspension from the worship team denotes.

In short, as peer pressure was exerted by other women in the church, and male domination was accepted, women became more placid and demure in their expressions of worship, and more modest in their choice of attire. Shortly after our conversation, Ntombi left Sonrise AOG permanently, and within a year and a half, Mama Erin, who initially responded positively to the subtle changes, moved her expression of faith to the local Church of England church – Muizenberg Community Church (MCC). For Ntombi the move was necessitated by the continued alienation between her and Pastor Emmanuel. As Ntombi shared accommodation with Emmanuel and Lydia, the wound festered rather than healed.

For Erin the move from Sonrise to MCC not only evidences her disagreement with the manner in which the services were being run, but it also demonstrates a strategic awareness of social mobility. Sonrise offered a sense of belonging – bonding capital – to a predominantly Congolese congregation. However this led to exclusionary, rather than inclusionary practices. Further as the church provided Christian comfort to working class Congolese migrants, it could not provide a viable route to social mobility. As argued by Gold (2001:4), “When one relies on an ethnic network for economic needs, information or a social life, individualistic actions such as rapid assimilation to the host society or unfettered pursuit of personal mobility are constrained”. In short then, to increase the possibility of social mobility one had to increase the ‘risk’ of meeting different others; ‘weak ties’ had to be favoured over ‘strong ties’ in order to ‘get ahead’ (Granovetter, 2005).

## **Conclusion**

In comparison to the narratives that follow in chapter five, Congolese migrant women’s migratory experiences are qualitatively different to that of Congolese men. In Cape Town, most



if not all, car guards are African migrant men. Although arduous and forced to work long hours in inclement weather Congolese men practise and hone their acquisition of English during this time. At work and in public spaces they observe South Africans and their habits. Thus men, through their gender, are advantaged in public and economic spaces as they become acculturated to South African ways. Women who are as vulnerable as men are at the start of their sojourn in South Africa remain vulnerable for longer (Amisi, 2006).

Confined initially to the private spaces of their homes, women's acquisition of English is haphazard. Their lack of conversational English limits their employability which in turn impacts their acquisition of conversational English. Ultimately as the above narratives demonstrate women rely on social and personal networks for support and economic survival (as do men). Yet, even here the support that can be obtained depends on women's presence in social networks that extend beyond race, language, class, and church denomination. If they are unable to create and manipulate weak ties (an important aspect of the Congolese economic habitus), they are unable to forge a sustainable livelihood for themselves and their families. Unable to secure a stable presence in a secular social network, women turn to the church for comfort, compassion and comprehension of their circumstances.

According to the deprivation theory (Robbins, 2004), working class women fill the pews of Pentecostal churches as a result of their impoverished states. Emphasising bonding capital, the theory emphasises the importance of strong ties over weak ties (Chesnut, 1997; Robbins, 2004). However, discussions of Pentecostalism do not make allowance for those congregants or church members who are in search of bridging capital, rather than bonding capital. As demonstrated in the case of Mama Erin, when Sonrise AOG did not meet her expectations of social mobility, she 'defected' to the Muizenberg Community Church; a multicultural and middle class church. Fundamentally, while I highlight individual's social capital throughout chapter four, indeed Part II, I am also positing that a collective such as a church congregation offers collective social capital. If the collective social capital is low, as in the case of Sonrise AOG, then prospects of social mobility remains low and hence the need to find a church that offers more 'valuable' resources.

In conclusion for Congolese migrants survival and the creation of sustainable livelihoods are beset with a host of administrative and social obstacles, inclusive of xenophobia. Yet Congolese women and men through ingenuity, determination and an economic habitus primed for dealing with deprivation construct a viable life in South Africa. Making use of personal networks and contingency they secure information regarding accommodation and employment, they learn English and they become better acquainted with South African mannerisms. In short just as back

home in order to survive within the host country a Congolese migrant must extend her person-to-person network across social markers of difference such as race, class, religious affiliation, ethnicity, gender and nationality. The inability to do so has dire consequences for survival and ultimately limits social mobility and economic success.

## Chapter 5

### **Success Guaranteed: Economic Survival and Success through Religious Patronage**

“Luck is fickle; God’s ways are mysterious. Patronage, therefore, provides one at least down-to-earth insurance policy” (Galt, 1974:16).

“By making connections with one another, and keeping them going over time, people are able to work together to achieve things they either could not achieve by themselves, or could only achieve with great difficulty” (Field, 2009:1)

“Over a century ago, Nietzsche declared that “God is dead”. Nietzsche is dead wrong today, at least for immigrants” (Stepick, 2005:11).

Churches are spaces of created belonging, worship and familiarity for migrants, especially in an alienating host country. This aspect, the ‘bonding capital’ that congregations provide under conditions of insecurity, was emphasized in the cases discussed in the previous chapter. There are however circumstances in which migrants may choose to express their religiosity/spirituality in an unfamiliar church. They may prefer a church that shares their worldview, rather than their nationality; or they choose a different church for strategic reasons – to accelerate adaptation, and possibly assist their integration into the host society.

In this chapter I consider the extended case study of Robert and ‘the guys’. Here religion and economic success are inextricably linked. While personally I find it hard to attribute strategic motivation to the guys’ relationship with Robert, not to do so would be naïve. Prior to meeting Robert, the guys were struggling to further their economic aspirations in much the same way as Toni, Eric and Erin in chapter four. Through a chance encounter in a multi-cultural and multi-national church, Robert and Guy became better acquainted with each other, with Robert eventually offering Guy financial assistance. Guy in turn became bridging capital for Serge and Lyon. Where the initial direct and indirect links to Robert subsequently took the guys is the subject not only of this chapter but of Part III as well.

The dynamics of Robert's relationship with the guys are considered in light of work on patron-client relationships (Boissevain, 1966; Galt, 1974; Kenny, 1960), and discussions on social capital (Coleman, 1988; Esser, 2008; Field, 2008; Lin, 2008; Portes, 1998). In this chapter I demonstrate that churches are not merely places of worship and belonging for migrants and refugees as in the case of Sonrise. Church attendance is strategic in fulfilling obligations as part of a patron-client relationship, whilst also expanding the attendee's social network. Among migrants confronting adversity even one's *religion* may be the outcome of a strategic choice as the following anecdote suggests.

### **Choosing one's religion?**

JLM: "Listen when we were in Cape Town, there was this, the guy, that I called Saidi. That guy used to be a Muslim in DRC, now he's a Christian here in Cape Town."

"Um."

"Do you understand what I mean? When I call him Saidi, that's his name, a Muslim name. He has changed his name, now he's got a Christian name."

"Oh you mean that one at Serge's wedding?"

"So that man used to be a Muslim, a big Muslim. Even his family, his father is still a Muslim in DRC. Now he's a Christian. Why? Because most Congolese they come over here they don't have families. When they go overseas they don't have families. They're not sure how they can live, because it's not easy even here in SA. When you come over here in South Africa, we pass through, most of us pass through very difficult situations you see. It's not very easy to get a job. Before you get one you're going to live in some, in very bad situations. And sometimes your Congolese friends will be treating you badly right. Ok let me say that most of the time when you get somewhere they will start telling you, start pushing you, what what what .. you don't have this, you have to get a job. If you don't have a job I am telling you (emphatically said) it's a big problem, you see? It's a big problem to stay with Congolese, right. And in that situation people tend to now, it's like they don't see where to go. You see, they're like ok sometime by going to church, by praying God is going to open some ways. There are a lot of churches Congolese churches in SA. Why? Because some of them, some of those churches have been created for lucrative purposes. You know, it's like they know that people fear. Sometime women they used to be prostitute in DRC, when they come over here they become Christian. Do you understand? First of all, there's a lot of market in DRC, but they come over here and they see there are beautiful women also. There are so many beautiful women in South Africa

and people don't look at them. See, now what they do now is like ok no now we have to become Christian and by going to church we can find some man who had already gotten a job and you can get married to them."

"Hm."

"So you understand? So that is what I was just saying. I was talking about. Why did I come to this? I was saying about being maverick or whatever, trying to be very independent of everything. It's like I don't depend on how people think. On how Congolese want us to live here in South Africa, right? Because first of all when I came here in South Africa. You know in a country, in any country when you go, when you are foreigner in any country you need to have good papers. A lot of Congolese are they are into refugee things. You see that's the story I heard when I came over here in South Africa. You've gotta be a refugee, there's no other alternative. But when you go to Nigerian places or people from Cameroon they will tell you you know you gotta get married, you see, to have papers. Do you understand? I had some Cameroonian friend telling me that no you can change these papers of yours. Give us just a R1 000.00<sup>88</sup> and we can go and organise papers. It was true. Many people got papers through fake marriage. But I just decided to remain with the refugee papers. Which means that I was on a very wrong. Ok let me say they were right and they were wrong. They were wrong that is not that is morally wrong to do that. But they can be right, it's hard right now. The government is giving us as refugees, is giving us problems to have status and right papers, you see. That's why I would say if I had that maverick mind there I would be like no, all Congolese are like this. All of them have *ngundas* what we call *ngundas*, I mean refugee papers. I was not going to stay with those papers. I was not going to say no let me go and get the refugee papers. It's because I was thinking like everybody you see. Because Congolese do this let me do that, let me do this too. Most of the Congolese have refugee papers let me also get refugee papers. Now when you are independent you don't act or you don't think that where there is a lot of music that is where peace is or that is where joy is or whatever. Sometime in a very quiet place you can see people enjoying. That's why I am a maverick man now."

In the above extract JLM consistently highlights the difficulties experienced by Congolese migrants and or refugees in South Africa. Not only are there concerns about the 'refugee papers', but the assistance one would naturally count on as a Congolese man or woman – the assistance expected within one's network – cannot be taken for granted, nor relied upon. Given that those

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<sup>88</sup> Approximately \$147.

one relies on are themselves in a similar predicament the migrant/refugee is compelled to find work – “start pushing you what what what .. you don’t have this, you have to get a job”.

Implied within JLM’ commentary is the statement made by JC during a visit to him in March 2005. When I asked him why he had migrated to South Africa JC commented, “Because our stomachs were empty. Most of us have come to South Africa because we didn’t have enough money to feed ourselves and our families. It’s not the war. It’s our stomachs that pushed us here.” In essence this ‘fact’ would categorise most, if not all, Congolese immigrants as economic migrants, rather than refugees. JLM’ words – “All of them have *ngundas* what we call *ngundas*, I mean refugee papers. I was not going to stay with those papers. I was not going to say no let me go and get the refugee papers. It’s because I was thinking like everybody you see” – support JC’s comment, suggesting that the application for refugee papers in South Africa is a means to acquire a status that gives an African immigrant legal rights in the country without the fear of harassment by the police. The sought after refugee papers are therefore strategic assets in a world of uncertainty.

Further JLM implies, given our experience with Saidi, an acquaintance of his from the DRC, that under duress – “We pass through, most of us pass through very difficult situations you see” – Congolese are willing to change their religion in order to access assistance or social networks. The choice of religion and of denomination is definitely flexible and malleable. Decisions are responsive to the needs and circumstances of the individual. These needs might be spiritual, emotional and/or economic. As noted by Cao (2002), Chinese immigrants to New York join a local Christian church as it offers the youth a place of belonging – an alternative to joining street gangs or becoming truant at school. The church provides a family; a set of relationships emphasised among Chinese immigrants in general. In the context of my work, Lyon’s religious history demonstrates how choice of church or denomination was based on his circumstantial needs.

*Lyon – the flexibility of religious choice*

### Initiating Religious Worship

Over a few months Lyon and I have a number of conversations, over lunch, coffee or late in the evening, when Serge and Guy are studying. On one such occasion, Lyon confides:

“I was born in Katanga Province, DRC. My father is in the military and my mother is an entrepreneur. I was born in 1976, the eldest of three children – three children my mother had with my father. My primary school years were spent with my mom’s parents in Kinshasa, the capital city. I did primary

and secondary schooling there, at a Catholic school. I did rather well at school, getting the highest marks in languages.”

“Did you enjoy your schooling?”

“As much as we could, yes. The other boys complained a lot about the Catholic discipline – we had to keep short, neat hair. Our shoes had to be polished and our clothes had to be clean. That was easy for me; easy to accept the discipline.”

“Did you stay at the school during holiday periods?”

“No, I would go back home, by bus. I’d either go to my father’s place in Lubumbashi, my grandparents’ place or my mother’s home with her new husband.”

“Your mom remarried?”

“Yes. She and my father didn’t get on well.” I can see that Lyon is rather uncomfortable with this revelation, and so I remain quiet. He continues,

“When I went home, especially to mom’s place, I used to do kickboxing.”

“You kickboxing?” I can’t imagine that, knowing how staid Lyon is. I laugh.

“Yes, can’t you see my physique?”, he teases.

“Maybe” I respond and we laugh.

“My uncle had a gymnasium where he taught me how to kickbox. I would go often, especially when I had disagreements with my step-father. Mom didn’t always know what to do, so I would just leave, go to the gym and train. I was in the lightweight division. And I was good.”

“Even if you say so yourself”, I respond jokingly.

“I was really good, but my uncle always told me that I should strengthen myself. No not physically, but through spiritual means. So I had a needle, a spiritual object inserted under my skin. Under my upper left arm.” Lyon shows me the mark he still bears.

“It was supposed to protect me. I wasn’t too sure about it, but I didn’t want to lose any of my matches.” He’s quiet for a while, and then says, “But I took it out a year later.”

“Why?”

"I wasn't comfortable with it, and I met a woman, a girl, Marie, who was very religious. I removed the spiritual object because of her. And I became a Pentecostal Christian. It was different to the Catholic Church, more lively. And I felt I was filled with the Holy Spirit. I escorted Marie regularly to church services. I became so religious that when I prayed I would kneel, and put my forehead on the floor<sup>89</sup>. I even chose to be celibate. I had become a monk".

"Your parents, how did they respond to all of this?"

"My mother wasn't very happy. But she couldn't argue really. The Pentecostal church was really made for younger people, who were tired of the traditional Catholicism that they had been raised with."

"Marie?"

"That didn't work out. Besides I had to leave. I was studying for a Mechanical Engineering degree in DRC, even though I wanted to do something in languages. Then I was recruited into the Congolese army. I would die for my country and my people. My mother knew this. Even my own father. Mom was concerned about my possible deployment in eastern Congo – the area most troubled. So she asked me to leave. I left before they could come and collect me, with just a cell number in my pocket of a cousin living in Johannesburg, here in South Africa. That's how I came to be here. Ten years ago, I arrived by plane."

Lyon's relationship with God and his experience of Christianity was a primordial one – a primary identifier of the persona of Lyon – as he had been socialised within the Catholic church from a young age. As commented by Cole (2010:13) "most people inherit their faith from their parents." Despite being an externally imposed religion, Christianity particularly Catholicism was an important anchor in the lives of many Congolese men and women (Lyon included) with a lengthy history of acceptance within the DRC (MacGaffey, 1982; Thornton, 1984).

Thornton (1984) argues that the early years of Christian conversion at the hands of predominantly Portuguese Catholic missionaries in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and the 16<sup>th</sup> century were not wholesale conversion to Christianity, but rather a manifestation of a syncretic Christian cult, not dissimilar to the many other indigenous cults in the Kongo. His argument underlines that the Kongo nobility accepted Christianity voluntarily, with Nzinga a Nkuwu (Joao I) requesting

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<sup>89</sup> He still bears the mark of this practice on his forehead and his erect form and bearing is reminiscent of Catholic monks.



baptism in 1491, hoping in part to create strong relationships and links with Europe<sup>90</sup>. Fundamentally the Christianity that existed within the Kongo during the 15<sup>th</sup> to mid 18<sup>th</sup> centuries was recognised by Roman clergy as orthodox. The primary push for conversion of the natives came from the educated Kongolese elite who became priests or government employees. Later in the 1940s and 1950s while subscription to Catholicism continued to provide access to higher levels of education it also provided access to higher levels of class status, such as the categorisation of Congolese as *evolués* (the evolved) – a category assigned to those Congolese men and women who were able to demonstrate their ‘civilisation’ and thus be worthy of recognition by the Belgian State (MacGaffey, 1982; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). Thus, Lyon’s family, starting with his grandfather were Christian converts within the Catholic denomination.

The Catholic Church was responsible for all primary and secondary schooling up until the 1970s, initially setting the curriculum as befitted the needs of the colonial government. However, as Mobutu attempted a shift to *authenticité*, he divested the Catholic Church of its administration of education in 1975, as they opposed his regime. Within two years though as the state had failed dismally in the administration of the educational system it was handed back to the Catholic Church. In the 1980s the Catholic mission school system continued to operate within the DRC and thus Lyon’s education within this system led to his further entrenchment within Catholic (read Christian) teachings. Despite his faith however, Lyon admits to seeking physical assistance and physical strengthening by inserting a ‘spiritual object’ under his skin. Although Lyon expressed (more than physical) discomfort at this act, his tacit agreement reveals his ability to entertain contradictory beliefs simultaneously – Christian beliefs and the belief that a spiritual object, not God, can provide physical strength and assistance.

Lyon’s move to a Pentecostal church within the Congo is indicative of the waning impact of Catholicism in the DRC, as well as the changing needs of the Congolese youth and their relationship with the state (Wild-Wood, 2010). As noted by Chesnut (1997) the rise of Pentecostalism often coincides with increased social and material deprivation. As the history of the DRC is one of colonisation through commerce and Christianity, specifically Catholicism, Lyon’s move from Catholicism provided an indication of the changing political dynamic within the DRC – Mobutu’s waning hold on power and his eventual death in exile and Laurent Kabila’s presidency heralded a new era where State and Church were not intimately linked opening up various possibilities for Christian worship and expression. Thus, Lyon’s denominational change while indicative of a break with family expectations, also hints at a fundamental shift occurring

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<sup>90</sup> Joao I was therefore the first recorded Congolese man to initiate and maintain links with Europe clearing a path for later Congolese migration to European countries in the twentieth century.

within the political environment at the time – from a kleptocratic state to a ‘democratic’<sup>91</sup> dispensation.

### Adjusting to the host environment – Johannesburg, South Africa

In the next few months in Johannesburg, Lyon acclimatised as best he could, connecting with Congolese friends and family living in the inner city.

“I frequently shared accommodation with friends from back home. I couldn’t get into a tertiary institution here with my limited qualifications, so I tried to find employment. I found employment in a Chinese shop in Johannesburg, as one of their sales assistants. I really wanted to continue studying, so I saved as much money as I could. I lived, how do you say, on little little.”

“For a Chinese shop?”

“Yes, I worked six day weeks, and then I went to church at one of the local Congolese churches in Hillbrow on Sundays. I enjoyed the worship there. It was a familiar space, with people speaking French, Lingala and kiSwahili – and Congolese gospel music, sounding like Werrason.”

I laugh.

“But I had some trouble there. I had a relationship with one of the female congregants. But her parents didn’t like me. They kept asking questions about my background in Kinshasa. I kept working really hard, as I thought that once I studied I would prove to them that I was serious, and serious about their daughter. I had almost enough to pay my way through university, when I got really really sick. My stomach was on fire, cramping. I couldn’t walk without experiencing severe pain. So I went to the hospital, and had my appendix removed. It was an emergency operation.”

“I’m so sorry.”

“It happens. Life I mean. It gets worse though. When I came home, all the money I had saved, gone.”

“What?”

“Gone. You know as a refugee I couldn’t open a bank account. So I kept all my money in my room, with the door locked. When I got back to the flat, the door was open, and the money gone. My

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<sup>91</sup> A number of observers, including Rene Lemarchand (2009), would question whether the DRC was or is a democratic state under the Presidency of both Kabila Senior and Kabila Junior.

room-mate too. Three years I had saved. Three years. All gone. After that, the relationship didn't work out too so I decided to leave Johannesburg, and come to Cape Town."

Arriving in Johannesburg in 2000, Lyon adjusted to the alien landscape through active participation in a charismatic Congolese church. Through the church he confirmed his Congolese national identity connecting with a Congolese network that provided him with information regarding secure accommodation, employment, the South African way of life and the 'do's and don'ts' of life in the inner city of Johannesburg. In essence his social network acculturated him, in much the same way that Sonrise AOG, discussed in chapter four, socialised its congregants.

Working by day he observed black South Africans at work and at play, forming intricate perceptions of the host nation. By making a concerted effort to work, Lyon negated the negative stereotypes ascribed to refugees. On Sundays his attendance at church provided him with a community within which he found solace and a sense of belonging on two levels – shared nationality and a shared belief system. Lyon's decision to leave the church was not precipitated by an actual mismatch in terms of faith or worship, but rather as a result of personal problems. Within the environment of Congolese others Lyon could not remove himself from his history. He was judged accordingly despite his demonstrated religiosity. Thus the place of belonging that had held him upon his arrival in Johannesburg became limiting to his self-expression as he was unable to transcend his personal history within the Congolese church. Lyon's relocation to Cape Town was to be a fresh start – religiously, residentially and economically.

### Relocation to Cape Town

Lyon moved to Cape Town early 2004 with some assistance from his cousin, Serge.

"I arrived in Cape Town and started working as a security guard. I stayed in Retreat, a coloured area, in a house with this woman and her husband. I started going to the St James church, because of Serge. He was going there. Eventually the situation in Retreat was problematic. The woman and her husband fought a lot, and she would run into my room, or the room of another tenant. One night it got so bad, that I and the other tenants stopped the man from beating her, and warned him that if he touched her we would be beating him. After that, about two months of being here Serge introduced me to Robert. You know even then Robert was helping refugees? He was helping Serge at the time."

"And that's when Robert started assisting you?"

"Yes. Serge told him about my problems, and I think because Serge knew me, Robert suggested that I come and live with him, Serge and the others."

"And so you stopped working as a security guard?"

"Yes. And Robert and I had a number of conversations, as he always has with all of us about what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. We then decided that I should study at George Whitefield College. It would be easier for Robert, because I would be able to get a scholarship."

In Cape Town Lyon turned to a family member and the church for solace in the new environment. Yet this time it was not a Congolese church, but rather a South African Church, St James. Introduced by Serge, Lyon had instant access to a multicultural congregation and access to Robert, Serge's patron. Inevitably Robert also became Lyon's patron, allowing him to live with him and five other African refugees in Muizenberg. Robert's only condition for assistance was the expectation that Lyon would continue to follow and profess the Christian gospel. Thus, through his commitment to the church and his dedication to worshipping there, Lyon was able to access resources that would ultimately invest him with status and some level of integration within South African society, dispelling the connotations of his history. As part of the Congolese middle-class, Lyon placed a huge emphasis on tertiary education and thus his earnestness to secure a further degree. A degree would not only confirm his middle-class status in terms of Congolese expectations, but it would also negate the negative images of Congolese men, especially Kinshasa men that abound within the local South African population and the local Congolese population.

When discussing my research in Muizenberg with JC he asked about my reasons for choosing Muizenberg as a research site. That was when he complained, as mentioned before, that I was less likely to find something of value there as I had chosen to study "the rubbish Congolese". When pushed to articulate what he meant by 'rubbish Congolese' he noted that all Congolese knew that those living in Muizenberg were not well behaved, preferring behaviours exhibited within Kinshasa – congregating on street corners, drinking profusely, fighting and constant womanising. Further to this stereotype, local South Africans living in the Muizenberg area had negatively stereotyped all Congolese as uncouth, uncivilised, 'from the bush' and probably war criminals. Lyon had to present himself carefully within this social milieu being coined at once a 'rubbish Congolese' by virtue of his residence within the area and as unsavoury by the locals.

His presentation of self, and thus ultimately his identity as a Christian, was a dialectical process, in part created to counter the negative notions inherent within his own national group, as well as

to counteract the negative stereotypes and images that local South Africans had of them. Thus, while he could not speak for the entire Congolese population in Muizenberg, his behaviour as a well adjusted, conservative, law abiding, Church-going Congolese man rendered him as presentable and thus acceptable within the South African landscape – less threatening than the “raving and rampaging” Congolese who were said to have “running battles” in the roads of Muizenberg with each other and the local Metro Police, according to Mariette (see chapter 3). His behaviour was therefore the antithesis of the stereotyped Kinois identity. Fundamentally Lyon’s presentation of self within an alien environment was a continuation of and reconfiguration of an identity constructed within the confines of the DRC and his three year sojourn in Johannesburg.

Further, his attendance at St James and then later the MCC provided access to other Congolese Christians *and* similar others – multinational Christians; an entirely different social network to that which the church in Johannesburg provided. Thus he became part of a more settled community of Christians in South Africa, where he had access to a multicultural environment that did not pigeon-hole him within the South African government’s category of refugee. Within the South African church he finally finds his feet as his self-presentation as a Christian is more important than his nationality. He is thus able to ‘discard’ his past more easily within a community that focuses on *religious* identity, rather than national identity. Lyon’s narrative demonstrates that denominational choice is not static. Rather choice is an important factor, as one’s choice of Christian denomination is made according to personal needs and circumstances. For the immigrant then, choice of religion and/or denomination is responsive and can be strategic. Strategic use of religion is not however new. As Levitt (2003) comments, Haitian migrants convert to Protestantism so as to circumvent the demands placed on them through their Catholicism and beliefs in spirits. Cole (2010) confirms the strategic shift from one denomination to another in Madagascar too.

A neglected aspect in migration studies in the past two decades has been the importance of patron-client relationships, particularly in reference to theorisation of social networks and social capital. Social capital is often discussed in reference to second generation immigrants success at school (Zhou and Bankston, 2004) rather than as a means to acculturate or succeed for the first generation. In the following section I situate Lyon more specifically as Robert’s client and as part of a closed network formed with his cousin Serge, and Serge’s friend, Guy.

## **First Introductions – Robert and the guys**

I was resident in Muizenberg for approximately two weeks, when Gwynneth mentioned that Reece, her brother, was acquainted with a white South African man who assisted African refugees in the area. Two days later Gwynneth informed me of Robert's telephone number, and though nervous I called him. I explained my research intentions and Robert invited me to his home to discuss my work.

The day is sunny despite the early morning wintry mist. I meet Robert at his house. Tall, balding and fleshy, with smiling green eyes, and an easy grin Robert is casually dressed. From the quick conversation we have upon introduction, Robert's Christian affability is immediately apparent. He comments "You must be walking towards God to enter this house. It's a house of and for the Lord".

Preoccupied with his impending interview, Robert doesn't notice my silent response. He smiles, and whilst busying himself with the details of the interview, he hastily introduces me to three of his boarders – Guy, Serge and Lyon, who themselves are preparing to be interviewed by Joe, the producer of the documentary. When we sit down he asks "So how do you know Reece?"

I am slightly taken aback, but answer, "He's one of my best friend's brother. We have known each other for a while now."

"Ok, so how can I help you?"

"Well, I've been told that you are assisting refugees in the area?"

He nods.

"I'm doing research on them and I was hoping that I would be able to meet those you are helping."

"So what do you want to know about me?" he asks.

I smile, and am about to ask him questions when he says

"I was born on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July. I am 32. I'm the middle child. I have a sister and a brother. My father is a well-known priest, and I grew up in Plumstead and Wynberg. I was a high school teacher at a coloured school in Mitchells Plain for about two years. And now I am a musician. I compose and produce gospel music."

I nod as he talks, and then burst out laughing when he says, “White people don't have culture, and coloured people do!”

I think he is trying to put me at ease.

“My house is open. There are no boundaries. It's a house of and for the Lord. Whoever comes into my home, I'll feed.”

He is about to continue, when Joe interrupts us. Robert introduces me to Joe, and Joe asks Robert if he is ready for his interview. Robert jumps up, gives me a mischievous glance and says, “How do I look?”

I am flabbergasted by his open persona, and respond, “Presentable”. Serge and Guy look on from the kitchen. Robert quips as he wanders off: “You're welcome to hang around and see what happens”.

I feel that I am in the way, so I walk from space to space in the house. The heart of the house is the kitchen and open plan lounge. Simply decorated, the furnishings speak of a masculine, rather than a feminine space. There are no soft feminine touches like photographs, plants or scatter cushions on the couch. From the lounge, there are two short passages running perpendicularly – one leads to the front door, and the other to the bathroom, toilet and a third bedroom. As I move around, my footsteps, and those of others resound on the wooden floors underfoot. Just outside of the kitchen, there's a little courtyard dressed in grey stone. Across from the kitchen door, a two-bedroom cottage is visible. The doors to the rooms stand ajar. Roaming freely I feel at ‘home’, comfortable.

As I manoeuvre around people talking, over lighting and sound cables, Reece silently checks the sound, while Joe prepares his interviewees. As the interview focus shifts to Robert, the three ‘boarders’ and I strike up a conversation in the courtyard. Guy is the tallest of the three, and by all standards handsomely cute – his brown eyes are direct, open. I feel immediately at ease around him, as his inviting smile reaches his playful brown eyes. He comments that he has completed two years of medicine in the DRC prior to his arrival in South Africa. Serge, the smallest in stature, is guarded, but seemingly interested in my work. He leans forward quite a bit as we talk to each other, hesitantly at first, and then more easily as time goes by. His behaviour remains cautious yet civil throughout our brief conversation. Unlike the other two, Lyon is more enigmatic. Gracile in build and of medium height, he engages very carefully, weighing every word. His persona is heavy, not as

light as Guy's. And almost teasing. I feel awkward as he stares, observing me. I catch his eyes, and hope he can't read my thoughts: What is he looking at so intently?

Guy bursts into my thoughts, "Do you live here?"

"For now yes. I am doing research on African migrants here in Muizenberg".

Again Guy asks, "How long will you be?"

"For a while. I'm not exactly sure how long. But it's for my studies." Feeling interrogated, I ask

"So where are you from? I think I know ... but ..".

All three respond, Congo-Kinshasa.

"So you are Congolese?"

"Yes".

During the next five minutes Guy holds my attention. He introduces me to Congo-Kinshasa. His description is interspersed with comments from Serge and Lyon.

"There are two Congos – Congo Brazzaville and DRC. And in the DRC, Congo-Kinshasa, there are many provinces and many many languages. But there are four main Congolese languages – Tshiluba, KiKongo, Swahili and Lingala."

"Don't you also speak French?"

Lyon responds, "Yes, that's the official language. Everyone has to speak it."

"So where are you from in the DRC?"

Serge says, "I'm from Lubumbashi".

Guy replies, "I'm also from Lubumbashi."

"Not Kinshasa?" They display surprise. "What's the difference?", I ask.

Again Guy responds, "Lushois are more like Cape Townians. Soft, relaxed, more laid back, and not as grasping of women. But those from Kinshasa, those Congolese are rude, speak loud, and they love women. They are like this because they are from the capital."



I note the comparison between their world and mine. It hints at their presence in Johannesburg and Cape Town. I smile, because they seem to have picked up the stereotypes we have in South Africa of the two cities.

Serge adds, "So they are more like people who live in Johannesburg". They don't seem to like people from Kinshasa, so I ask,

"You don't like people from Kinshasa?"

This time Serge is quicker to respond. "No, Lyon, he is from Kinshasa and he is not like the others. It's just a, what do you say, a general understanding".

"Oh, ok. What language do you think I should learn to speak here? I'm thinking of learning Lingala"

For a moment they are quiet, thoughtful, and then Lyon says, "Maybe French. There's competition between the languages. Everyone is educated in French. But the army speaks Lingala. So if you spoke French you would be able to communicate with everyone".

I smile and say, "*Je parle français un petit peu*" [I speak a little French].

For the first time Lyon smiles and Serge says, "That's good. You say the words like 'pure' French speakers".

I blush slightly, and continue, "I have a problem with French. It's the coloniser's language".

They nod in agreement, and then Lyon speaks: "Look at it this way. How can we want to have our own language, when the rest of the world is changing to take on English and French? Even in France they speak English. Even here, as we speak we have to recognise that we are using English. If it wasn't for English we wouldn't be able to speak to each other. All the big countries, like America and Europe use the language and if we want to participate in the world then we have to speak a common language".

"Ok, but language is part of the culture".

Excited, Lyon says, "There's no difference between myself and a white Frenchman. We dress the same, we have the same mannerisms. When I look at him and me I don't see a difference". His body elongates as he says the words.

I persist, "But does the white man see the same thing?"

All three are quiet.

What an awkward moment. To lighten the mood, I laugh and say, “Ja, I know the Congolese. They love looking at themselves in the mirror. They love wearing nice clothes and shoes.”

I point to their shoes and Guy says, “But this is bought here in South Africa.”

I continue, “And they take their pants” I mimic taking my pants and placing it above my waist. They laugh collectively, and Serge says, “Arrghhh, who teach you about Congolese?”

I just smile. I then ask, “Will you agree? I was speaking to someone the other day and she said that the Congolese are more European than any other African?”

They hesitate, and then they nod in agreement.

Lyon says, “In Congo we learn French in school. We are educated in French. And we have to dress nicely. Our hair has to be cut short”.

We are still talking, when Joe calls on Guy. I look at Serge and Lyon and they smile. Serge says, “He’s going to be interviewed”.

As the day wears on I become better acquainted with Robert, Guy, Serge and Lyon. Over lunch, a simple one of cheese and onion snackwiches made by Robert, I am introduced properly to Joe. We all chat amiably, and in the midst of the conversation Guy disappears. About 10 minutes later I take my leave of them, promising to return for the Bible Study class on Wednesday.



Photograph 11: Visit to Holland December 2009, Guy, Lyon, Serge

Reflecting on the day, I came to understand the importance of the triumvirate – the guys – rather marginally at the time. In my fieldnotes that evening I wrote:

The guys and I consistently spoke as if three to 1 – I was in the middle and they formed a semi-circle around me. Their body language, and the manner in which they encircled me, provided an embodied sense of their easy familiarity with each other.

Over the months to come, and even years after formal fieldwork had been completed, their strong bond emanates from photographs.



Photograph 12: Visit to Holland December 2009, *Déjà vu*

Looking specifically at photograph 12 during March 2010 (uploaded onto Serge's facebook profile page), I experienced a moment of *déjà vu* and nostalgia. The photograph underscores the strong relationship they share with each other – Guy, as usual, is describing something in vivid language. Lyon is asking for further explanation, or disagreeing with his statement, whilst Serge observes them thoughtfully. Gazing at this photograph, I was slightly disoriented as the scene portrayed is one I had seen so often in another place, at another time. Had it not been for the backdrop – the houses and apartments and the cold winter's day reflecting 'somewhere in Europe' – I would have sworn they were in Robert's kitchen catching up with each other. In a telephone conversation in March 2010, I remind Serge of the many moments that they were ensconced in deep conversation like this in Cape Town, and he laughs: "Yes, you know us. You know us longer than Hannah or Dominique"<sup>92</sup>. They don't know that about us".

On that first day, I was aware of the strong relationship that Guy, Serge and Lyon had with each other. During research I started to refer to them as 'the guys', as they exuded a unified image. Often during the initial stages of research, I would arrive at the house to find all of them present, or arriving within minutes of each other. Through smses or quick cellphone calls during the day,

<sup>92</sup> Hannah and Dominique are married to Serge and Lyon respectively.

they maintained regular contact with each other. Their lived experiences in Muizenberg, while particular as a result of their diverse personalities, are very similar. And yet their experiences were different to those of other Congolese, like Toni, Eric and Erin, who lived there unaided by Robert, churches, or other non-governmental organisations. The guys' relationship with Robert set them apart from other Congolese, as they were assured of accommodation, food and study bursaries through his assistance.

Further, their self-presentations also distinguished them from the 'rubbish Congolese' in Muizenberg. Already at our first introduction, Lyon positions himself as a middle-class individual. Lyon's certainty of his Frenchness (his cultural capital), acquired through education in Catholic schools, was initially disturbing to me. My physical awareness of his embodied blackness and African-ness predisposed my comprehension of him as such. In truth, I expected to hear his, their, awareness of their own racialisation in the DRC. Yet here and throughout the time of fieldwork they seemed dismissive of their racial classification. They were civilised French men; men to be reckoned with. However, their dismissiveness of the connotations of race does not negate their awareness of globalisation and the impact thereof. As Lyon himself notes language is an important aspect of belonging and participation in the global market economy. Thus, while not articulating racial awareness, Lyon recognised the impact of the global economy and the importance of English and French within the global market<sup>93</sup>. By asserting his ability to speak English he confirms his civilisation and his worldliness. Ryan, Sales, Tilki and Siara (2008:686) state, "The ability to speak English ... was particularly important ... in gaining a fuller understanding of, and confidence in, British society". For the guys the mastery of English assisted their studies<sup>94</sup>, and their eventual employment in companies located in Cape Town in 2006 and 2007.

It is clear from the dialogue that the guys were careful in their responses. However, the little they *did* say conveyed a sense of pride, maturity, intellect and reserve. Guy was definitely more forthcoming; a more robust personality. Serge on the other hand was wary, whilst Lyon demonstrated both wariness and pride.

Robert's strong relationship with the guys was also readily observed on that first day. At the time of this meeting, Robert knew Guy and Serge just under two years, whilst he knew Lyon for four months. Rather than behave as boarders, or Robert's clients, the guys were comfortable in the

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<sup>93</sup> A perception also noted by Stoller's (2002b) West African immigrants.

<sup>94</sup> Guy and Serge were studying electrical engineering at the time, whilst Lyon was preparing to start his studies at George Whitefield college at the beginning of 2005.

living space. Robert's preparation of lunch also confirmed my initial perception that he and those he assisted had created a household, possibly even a family, with Robert assuming and revelling in the role of 'father'.

### **Robert's Christian Activism: A Christian Non-governmental Organisation**

Two weeks after our introduction, Robert agrees to a semi-formal interview. I suggest I take him out for brunch. He readily accepts. I collect Robert at 9:30 in the morning. He opens the door, and mouths "I'm on the phone with my mom". He attends to the call, and I walk out into the yard where Guy is hanging socks on the line. He is not his usual buoyant self. It strikes me that he is not a 'morning' person. I don't have to wait long before Robert collects me and we are off to Fish Hoek. I prefer speaking to Robert in a neutral space, as one or other of the guys is always at the house.

As I drive to the Spur I ask about his work. He is adamant that he is a helper, and that his assistance is unconditional. I am suspicious of his goodwill, for it does seem that he wants to convert people to Christianity; his particular sense thereof. His words are a litany – "The bible is the only truth. Jesus Christ is the truth, the way and the life. There can be only one truth, for even science cannot entertain two understandings. There is always only ONE truth". I find Robert's words amusing as he seems intent on converting *me*. I recall the very first day we met, and the way he 'healed' me. He struck me lightly on the forehead with his open palm and said "Be healed". The memory and his words extract a coy comment from me, "Try to understand, I'm not looking to be saved. I'm on my own journey."

"But you are my friend. And just like with the refugees, I am not looking to convert you. I know you are seeking though, and I'd like to speak to you about that one day." I nod non-committally.

Upon arrival at Spur, a South African restaurant chain, we are escorted to a booth, and order from a tired-looking waitress. The interview is more of a chat. Robert confirms that he has assisted approximately 25 refugees over the past two years. His work is his ministry. After a number of enriching experiences in America, he decided that he would return to South Africa so as to help the poor. Upon his return he found that the ones in need in his church were the refugees. Initially there were four refugees in the church congregation, and he assisted them with clothes, food, and their education. During the first year he experienced financial difficulties and thus sold his house, making a huge profit. Our conversation is wide-ranging, and whilst speaking of his assistance, he states, "Sometimes when the guys have friends over, they can get very raucous. Then I have to be firm with

my boundaries, about what I will allow, and what not. So I often tell them that it is my house, and they have to respect it and me.”

I wonder how vulnerable people respond to a statement such as this, but respond, “I’d do the same thing.”

He continues, “They are not very grateful for my assistance you know. Or at least they don’t tell me that they are thankful. So I’ve been trying to get this out of them. Socialising them into the South African way. So I tell them regularly, you should say please and thank you as this shows people that you have respect and gratitude for what they are doing, or providing.”

“How do they respond when you tell them this?”

“They are rather proud. I’m sure you can tell that by now having spent some time with the guys? They are not known for saying thank you, but I warn them that if they do not show gratitude, they will not be helped in the future”.

The waitress is rather surly. Robert notices and comments, “She must have gotten out of the wrong side of the bed. I want tomato sauce, and she’s nowhere to be seen.”

“Don’t bother, I’ll get it.” I catch myself in the act of getting tomato sauce and wonder why I am doing it? Am I image managing again? Am I trying to be nice?

When I return to the table I ask him, “Do you think a woman could do the job that you are doing?”

“Anyone can do it. Anyone. But I wouldn’t advise a woman to do it as there are safety implications that need to be considered. Besides I am single and I have no dependants and while that is the situation I will continue doing this work. However when I do get married, I am probably going to adopt some AIDS orphans as well, besides having my own children<sup>95</sup>.”

I’m at a loss for words, and so focus on the food in front of me – eggs, bacon, tomato and bread.

Without further encouragement, Robert speaks of what he perceives as a xenophobic event.

“Sometime in May I heard a commotion outside. I am rather accustomed to the common language of the coloured women in the street, but on this particular occasion it was the City Police who were raiding the house next door.”

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<sup>95</sup> At the time of writing Robert has been married for two years, and has adopted two African male siblings. In an email conversation about my doctoral write-up Robert asks for anonymity, as he re-directs his life to focus on producing music rather than assisting refugees.

"The Blue House?"

"Yes, you know about it?"

I shake my head and utter, "just a little."

"Those policemen used violence to enter the house and then set upon the occupants. They beat them with flashlights across the head. I ran outside when I heard the noise, and a guy from England who was living with me at the time took photographs to document the attack. There were large gashes in people's heads and blood running down their faces. I was astonished at the use of excessive violence. But it's no surprise really as the City Police are mostly young coloured guys who want to be gangsters. They've been trained for a mere six months."

"They were also probably under a lot of strain", I say, thinking about my research experience with police officers in Cape Town.

My comment doesn't really register, and slightly riled he says, "I was able to get a number of other people in the area, even a white man who lives above the shop, to make a noise about the entire event. I even got a lawyer to work on the case. I was interviewed a number of times, and the photographs that Dan had taken were also used. I still have copies of those photographs. Would you like them?"

"Yes. What happened afterwards?"

"I lost interest, especially after the victims withdrew the charges".

After about an hour and a half, we return to Muizenberg. I am contemplative, as I follow the winding road along the ocean back to Robert's house. He is quiet too. When we are about five minutes from the house Robert says,

"I just want to tell you something. We are always going to be honest with each other right?"

"Yes". I'm apprehensive of what he'll tell me, as I remember an earlier admonishment of my use of expletives.

"There are three rules. And I'm only telling you this, because I am your friend. And because it will make my life easier. One, if you can possibly have your discussions with the guys either at your place or in their rooms."

"You do know that I am not actually interviewing them? I am just hanging around really."

"That's fine, but there are times when I have meetings with people and the only space I can use is the lounge. For example the other day when I told you you had to leave, it's because I was expecting someone."

"That's ok, I didn't mind being thrown out". I am trying to lighten the conversation, but he is serious.

"Number two, the guys are really polite and so would never tell you that they have other plans. The other evening they had to go somewhere, but they were unable to tell you, as a result of their politeness. So they didn't go".

I laugh and say, "That's quite odd. I have been reading this text that discusses the perspectives that the 'locals' have of the researcher, and often these perspectives are heard years after the research. Now however I am hearing it at the beginning." I am irritated. Why can't the guys tell me themselves. I feel that we have an understanding, and yet Robert's comments indicate otherwise.

He continues, "Number three, I don't want you to question the truth of the bible. I can understand that you are questioning it, and why. You are still seeking. But I would prefer if you don't ask questions in the bible study. The bible study is for those people who have passed that questioning stage already."

I just nod, and say "Thank you for being honest with me". We take our leave of each other, and I can feel my body has tensed. Thinking about Robert's final comments, his three rules, I am agitated. If those in the bible study were past the questioning stage, then surely they could answer my questions? Wouldn't their answers, or their ability to answer, confirm their personal understanding and confirm their faith? What is he protecting?

As the day draws to a close, I sense that I have actually crossed a number of personal boundaries with Robert, and rather than deny me further access to the guys, we have renegotiated my access.

The semi-formal interview highlights particularities of Robert's persona and it denotes some of the ways in which he socialised his 'clients' into middle class ways of being. It is apparent that Robert places a huge emphasis on Christianity. While he doggedly denied that those he assisted had to be Christian, Robert found his initial cohort of clients within the church. Those he assisted thereafter were also encouraged to attend the local church in Muizenberg, if they weren't already congregants, and to attend Bible Study meetings held at his house every Wednesday. Robert's work was his ministry.



His comment regarding his financial difficulties shows that he is not a wealthy person. However he is financially astute, and aware of ways to make money in the South African property market. The profit he makes by selling his house allows him to purchase a further two properties – one in Muizenberg, and the other in Marina da Gama, approximately five to seven minutes away from Muizenberg. It is clear that Robert's knowledge of South Africa and South African middle class behaviours is instrumental in the lives of his clients. Through his assistance they are able to adapt to the South African 'field' (Thomson, 2008) that Robert is familiar with – a middle-class existence. By adapting to his 'demands' the guys, and his other clients, demonstrate a willingness and flexibility to learn 'other' ways. Indeed by expanding their social networks to include a middle-class South African who is willing to assist them, they have diversified their social capital (Ryan et al, 2008). As Ryan et al (2008:676) state, "...overcoming economic disadvantage may depend on the ability to forge weak ties with those outside one's own personal or ethnic social circles".

In short Robert's assistance provided three levels of support as enumerated by Ryan et al (2008), "emotional, informational and instrumental support". To these three, I would add a further type of support – spiritual or religious support. Robert provided socialisation into South African middle-class ways (informational support), provided his clients with accommodation, college fees, and food (instrumental support), offered assistance in times of distress (emotional support), and fellowship in his local church and in his home through bible study classes (religious support). Of course these forms of support are all interlinked, and not so easily disentangled. For e.g. religious support also provides emotional succour – a sense of belonging.

Further, although Robert as an insider/outsider has insight into the manner in which the guys behave, he is not necessarily aware of the further dynamics at play in his relationship with them. Robert's admonishment of what he perceives as rudeness – their ingratitude – reflects his unawareness of their expressions of gratitude. For Congolese men and women, immediate gratitude is not valued. Rather the presence of another in one's social network, and the possibility of delayed reciprocity confirm that gratitude will be shown through the action of reciprocity. Thus, while immediate gratitude – a simple thank you – is an important and expected middle class norm in South Africa, in the DRC, expectations and appreciation are silent, or silenced, as reciprocity – a firm sign of appreciation – is a given in one's social network.

Further evidence to the guys' close relationship with Robert, *and* their strategic use of the social network is when Robert tells me that the guys were unable to inform me of their plans. By this stage, I thought that the guys and I were comfortable enough to speak to each other openly. However, as is clear from Robert's words, the guys were unsure of how to tell me of their plans.

Not only is their silence an indication of uncertainty regarding the 'rules of engagement' with me, but Robert is instrumental in informing me of their discomfort. In this one act, Robert and the guys confirm the closeness of their relationships, and the guys demonstrate that they are strategic; they get a South African, their patron, to speak to another South African. Also by enlisting Robert's help, they confirm his position in their lives to both of us.

### **Formal Interview with Robert**

In December 2004, Gwynneth and I decided upon further reflection to confirm what Robert had told me by having and recording an interview with him.

Gwynneth and I have finally managed to secure a date and time for a formal interview with Robert. He welcomes us to his 'new' house, situated a mere seven minutes away from his Muizenberg home. The space is airy and light, lived in; it's so unlike the house in Hansen Road. This is a home, whereas the Hansen road house seems like a hostel, impersonal, but for the individual rooms of the men who stay there. Robert, amiable as always, encourages us to sit down while he makes lunch. He busies himself in the kitchen, and then joins us at the dining room table. Awkward during formal interviews, I am grateful for Gwynneth's assistance. I explain the reason for the interview and then launch into the questions.

"So how many guys have you helped?"

Robert: "Um off the top of my head I'd say about 25, 26, maybe about 30 by now."

"And if you had to break that up into nationalities?"

"Um mostly Congolese but also a number of Angolans and um, a few Rwandese, one Zambian and .... Ja ... I'd say that's all, and the rest are Congolese."

"What is it specifically about those guys? Why are you helping the particular ones that you are helping and not others?"

"Ok well, the way I started was through my church, and they, um the first guys that I helped were at my church. And then um from there it snowballed. The way I got a hold of ... the way I got to meet the rest of the guys was through the ones that I had helped already, so I didn't go out and find new people, it was always just passed on from the last people that I had helped."

"So was it word of mouth?"

"Ja, or just um like if one guy's cousin came then I would help him, then this guy had a friend that came you know and he'd need help and they'd ask me to help him and I'd do whatever I could for those people .. but there are more Congolese people here than any other country. So that's why it's mostly Congolese. It's not that I particularly went out and chased Congolese people."

"Ok so it's basically just because of numbers?"

"Um. And the second most people I have helped are Angolans, because they are the second most."

"So basically all these people are not necessarily resident in Muizenberg itself."

"No, I moved to Muizenberg after I started doing this. In fact most of the guys that I have helped don't come from Muizenberg or I don't meet them in Muizenberg. In fact I've brought them to Muizenberg to stay with me, much to their horror."

"Much to their horror, why?"

"Oh well the Lubumbashis don't like the Kinshasians, but you know that already." (We laugh)

"So what is it about these guys that made you take them in?"

"They needed a place to stay, but Jean-Claude and them had a place, a nice place and they had jobs and everything so they didn't need to be ... But Guy was moving around from place to place, kicked out here and kicked out there. And by the time I took him in, I already had a relationship with him for like a year in the church. So he was someone I wanted to help, and um ja then through him I met Serge and Lyon. And Serge was studying ... Serge was working nights and then he was going to study in the day. So he just wasn't going to sleep for a week at a time. So I decided to help him as well. And it's also like in terms of who I feel would work well in the house. I've gotta make that kind of decision. So it's a value judgement myself. So the fact that they were friends of Guy that was a good thing. Obviously they were going to get on with me. And I could see that they were nice guys, they were gentle, um ... I had a couple of guys who stayed with me that I was happy when they left. One in particular I actually had to throw out, the only one I had to do that to."

"Why the move to Muizenberg?"

"I bought a house in Muizenberg. I wanted to buy property, and it was the cheapest place to buy property."

"So you were renting in Wynberg?"

"Yes, in a flat. A big flat .."

Gwynn: "So you basically make a connection with some guy, with one of the guys and then you sort of see what they need. And then you try and see if you can meet the particular need"

"Ja."

Gwynn: "Is basically that how it works?"

"And the need could be accommodation, food, study bursary, spiritual guidance whatever."

Gwynn: "So you don't automatically go, you're working, you're working doing this, so now let us get you a study bursary. You sort of suss out first what they .."

"Ja see first what they want, what they need, what their goals are. Sometimes it's like a rescue operation. Like, they have nowhere to live. So forget about studying, we just need to get you out of where you are, and into a place to stay. Like Miguel. It was the case with him. And then there are guys that are quite stable, but they've sort of hit a dead end."

"And Roberto?"

"He's recently. He's one guy from Muizenberg that I started getting involved with. Because he was one of the bad ones, hanging around with the Kinshasians (we laugh). And then he just out of the blue came to me and said that he need R200 to get a job, because you know they've got to pay to get jobs. You know the story."

"Huh um I don't, so you're gonna have to tell me."

"Well there's like this ... if I work at a security company I can get you a job. But you gonna pay me first and then I'll get you the job. There's quite a lot of that going on. So he wanted R300 and he would have got a job. So I said well you can work for me for three days, because I was doing the house at the time. And I'll give you a R100 a day, and then from there he told me how he wants to change his life because he had been in the wrong crowd. And he wanted to get away from the drinking crowd and ... he wants to commit his life to God. And he has, he has. He's changed completely. And he comes to bible study of his own accord. There's no pressure to ... if they don't believe in what I believe in there's no pressure to do that. Obviously I mean that's one of my aims, that's one of my sort of motivations for the whole thing, is the spiritual side. But I don't force them to do that. And I don't say they have to come to bible study."

"Robert, the material side. How heavy is that on you at the moment?"

"Very very heavy. Do you hear me people." (For a second he's louder, as if he moved closer to the Dictaphone, speaking directly into it).

"He needs money." (We laugh).

"I've stopped keeping track.... It's quite a lot. Quite a huge amount. But my buying and selling property helps a lot. That's why I went into that business. So some people call me crazy. But I just give. I can't not. I can't not do it. Cos then they're without and I'm with. I can't live with that."

"So who's taking, this is a very personal question. I have a problem asking about finances, my issues."

"Ask anything you want."

"The financial side of things, right. Is there someone in the house specifically, who you say well there's an amount of money for the entire month and you need to disburse it. Or are you giving it to them as they need when they ask you for it, or how does it work."

"I give the money to Guy. He's managing the house for me now, and it's not a monthly basis. I'll say it's a weekly basis."

"So they, you said earlier they're taking over the shopping?"

"Ja."

"And everything else as well."

"Ja. And they're doing it really well .. they're being very economical."

"So you're cool with it?"

"I prefer it."

"Ok, It's interesting you say that because I remember a conversation we had a week, a week and a half ago on that Saturday, when I asked you what's going to happen to these people in the Blue House if they're thrown out, and you said: ag don't worry they know people. They'll find a place to stay somewhere."

"You see the one thing about that ... I know that sounds like a contradiction, but that is true as well. The way the Congolese culture works, if you're a fellow brother from Congo then they'll let you in. They're not going to chase you away. But it would be like very different conditions. It would be 10 000 people in one room, it would be no food, and it would be temporary. It wouldn't be a home, there would be enmity, there'll be issues."

"Um, why aren't the guys working at the moment Robert? Because I know Miguel's working ... and Lee-Bob is going to start at the computer place or something."

"You see Guy, Serge and Lee-Bob have been studying full-time. So I told them I would support them while they are studying, until the end of next year. So they don't have to work. I encourage them to find work in the holidays. But I mean if it's unrealistic to expect that. It would be nice if they could, but ... they are looking. Um but Miguel is working. I told him he's gotta if he wants to stay in this house he needs to pay me rent. But if he wants to study next year, then he'll go and study and then he also won't work. That's how it works. They're only there for a limited time and then it's over. Then you're on your own buddy."

"Ok, not literally on their own."

"Ja, obviously not, but they got to start, they can't get too comfortable."

"You have to shake their cage a bit."

"Mmm ... Lyon is working occasionally as you know. He's doing the security thing. Just until he starts college. But he won't need to work, because he'll be looked after in res, which will help me a lot. He'll have his meals and he'll have a place to stay and everything."

Gwynn: "You've been there a while. How's the numbers of Congolese in terms of the period that you've been there. Has it changed, have you seen more or less and how do you see it changing in the next year or so especially with the increase in property values and ..."

"I think it's gonna get less. It's still about the same."

"Have you got an estimate?"

"Of the amount of people there? I have no idea."

"I'd be interested to know how many are there. I don't think anyone knows. It's totally informal. And people just come and stay there ..."

“So it’s almost like a transit space.”

“Mmm ... but it will definitely .. they’ll get pushed to the outskirts because the village is getting upgraded. People are buying ... wherever you go in the village, you see people are just buying houses and sell them. Um ... the prices of the houses will deter people from renting it out cheaply. That’s been the problem for the last ten years in MZB. Or 15 years. People have been renting out to er just anyone for 4 or 5 grand a room because the houses didn’t cost that much they can afford to rent it out. The people who live next door to me in the semi next door to me. They are renting out for R500 for their whole house ..they paid for their house years ago so they don’t even notice.”

“That makes me wonder about Don Pepe, Yellow Rose ... what’s going to happen?”

“That’s owned by a very unpleasant shrewd business man ...”

Robert’s formal interview confirms the number of refugees he has assisted, and confirms that most of them have been Congolese. Further, he expresses the importance of adherence to his ‘personal’ boundaries – he recalls having evicted one of his clients from the house. As I noted earlier Christianity is an important aspect of Robert’s refugee work. While he had denied that his clients need to be Christians, Robert’s narrative of Roberto confirms the primacy of Christianity in his refugee programme. Robert believes that Roberto “wants to commit his life to God”, and that Roberto has demonstrated this desire, as he attends “bible study of his own accord”.

Further, while there is no political tenor to the relationship – Robert is not running for office, and thus doesn’t need the votes of his ‘clients’ – referring to his assistance as his ministry confirms his Christian zeal, and the ‘unarticulated’ reason for his assistance: leading men and women to Christ. Although patron-client relationships are asymmetrical, the patron does have expectations. In this case, Robert expects his clients to confirm their Christianity by attending Muizenberg Community Church. It was particularly telling when Roberto, having convinced Robert that he changed, reneged on the tacit agreement they had with each other. Rather than maintain his distance from his ‘drinking’ Kinois friends, he maintained contact with them. Eventually his ‘unruly’ behaviour led to his eviction from the house and stalled assistance from Robert.

As Robert notes he met Guy in the church. Thereafter Guy became “bridging capital” (Putnam, 2007), or like Eric in chapter four, a broker between Robert and Serge and Lyon. Robert assessed their suitability as clients based on his partial knowledge of Guy. As I noted in the discussion of our meeting, the guys presented themselves as respectable, middle-class young men – identities clearly preferred by Robert. Robert recognises the existence, and importance of

refugee networks, yet he doesn't refer to them as such. Rather he refers to the behaviours exhibited within a network – informing each other of possible assistance (“just passed on from the last people that I [assisted]”); offering links to ‘dissimilar’ others – bridging capital – (“through him I met Serge and Lyon”) and offering instrumental support when necessary (“if you're a fellow brother from Congo then they'll let you in”). In short he describes the social capital inherent in Congolese migrants' social network – social capital JLM argued isn't always available to everyone in the Congolese network.

As refugees or migrants, Robert's ministry is pivotal to Serge, Guy and Lyon's progress in an alien and unfamiliar space. Robert doesn't fully articulate the instrumentality of his exchanges with the guys or the rest of his clients. However, he senses that instrumentality *is* a part of the relationship, especially when he states “they can't get too comfortable”. In essence Robert's relationship with those he assists is that of a patron-client relationship. As literature on patron-client relationships shows, these relationships can be initiated either by the patron or the client. Thereafter the dyadic relationship is managed through various exchanges between the two parties (Boissevain, 1966 and 1968; Foster, 1963; Galt, 1974).

Boissevain (1966:19) defines the patron as “a person who uses his influence to assist and protect some other person, who then becomes his ‘client’, and in return provides certain services to his patron”. The patron is always in a more advantageous position with reference to resources – be they material, informational, social, or political resources – and thus power imbalances/asymmetries are constitutive of the relationship (Boissevain, 1966; Fortes, 1963). Robert, a white South African man has citizenship rights in his homeland of South Africa, and is highly familiar with his environment – more so than most white people given his experience in education in a coloured area. Robert's clients on the other hand had very limited rights, as their categorisation either as an asylum seeker, refugee, or immigrant, situates them as a non-citizen<sup>96</sup>. Also, as a *white* man, Robert was accorded certain privileges in the previous and contemporary political economy of South Africa, whilst his ‘clients’, black African migrants suffer the injustices of racism *and* xenophobia. Robert's social and cultural capitals thus position him as a vitally important asset within an African migrant's personal and collective network as he “maximizes [his clients'] security in the uncertain world in which [they live]” (Foster, 1963:64). As noted by Granovetter (2005) and Lin (2008) access to resources are limited when one only fraternises with similar others. In order to maximise future possibilities of assistance one has to create links that are external to one's social network. Therefore as a migrant it is imperative to cultivate weak ties

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<sup>96</sup> During the time of research, they were trying to confirm their refugee status with Home Affairs.



(Granovetter, 2005; Lin, 2008). It is just as well for them that Robert is a benevolent and not an exploitative patron.

In reference to the guys, it could be argued that they were specifically orientated to Robert's way of being, and were therefore more adept at 'playing the game'. Their cultural capital<sup>97</sup> and the manner in which they employed their economic habitus<sup>98</sup> set them apart from other Congolese migrants in the area. Their embodiment, and in the case of Serge and Lyon their relationship with Guy, provided an opportunity for educational and economic advancement. Serge, Lyon and Guy had become a *closed* network, as none of the other friends enjoyed the educational and economic benefits accrued during their relationship with Robert. Indeed 'the guys' epitomise Ryan et al's (2008:677) statement that "[m]igrants' ability to mobilize social capital and successfully engage in bridging may thus depend upon the cultural capital (language, skills and educational qualifications) at their disposal". For the guys, Robert's non-governmental organisation, described as "A gospel centred outreach aimed at assisting the people of Africa to become self-sustaining and Christ reliant" was a 'life-saver', a means to an end – an education, employment and entry to residence overseas.

While it wasn't always clear what Robert received from his relationship with the guys, patron-client relationships are forged through mutual exchange; exchange that varies in form and timing. The patron provides protection or favours as needed and the client reciprocates through extolling the virtues of the patron, or sending tokens of appreciation indicative of the economic or political means of the client (Boissevain, 1966; Foster, 1963; Galt, 1974). Robert's assistance was obvious, although the guys were reticent to discuss it. He provided them with financial assistance and accommodation, and also provided Guy, Serge and Lyon with introductions to their respective colleges. Their reciprocation came in the form of assistance in the church (Serge and Guy acted as sound engineers in MCC and Lyon actively participated in the order of the church services, and headed bible study classes for the youth); their active involvement in activities of Robert's refugee programme (Guy and Serge were board members of the non-governmental organisation) and their management of the house and their recognition of the relationship with Robert. As a sign of the position he held in their lives they referred to him as *mzee*, the kiSwahili word for uncle. As Foster (1963) noted Tzintzuntzan peasants reflected dyadic relationships, like patron-client relationships, linguistically. In the Congolese transnational community, the implication of Robert's 'title' was manifest.

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<sup>97</sup> Their previous tertiary education, their language skills, and their class consciousness.

<sup>98</sup> Their socialisation within a country that underscored the importance of survival through personal networks.

In 2009 Robert experienced severe financial distress, and was forced to sell his Marina home. A conversation with Serge and Hannah highlighted Serge's sense of obligation to Robert. Our conversation, although careful, confirmed that Serge was assisting Robert as much as he could. In a twist of fate, the patron became the client, and the client the patron. In 2008 Serge had the means to assist, as he held a highly prized position in a German company located in South Africa. Yet he was also obligated to reciprocate, for as Galt (1974:17) denotes

“Generosity becomes a point of honour, and to receive the gesture and return it in equal or greater kind is important not only as a rather negative means of saving face but also as a positive way of achieving higher status”.

Similarly, Serge's economic habitus in Congo-Kinshasa underscored the importance of one's personal network. Thus, his Congolese acculturation had prepared him for the possibility of assisting Robert and his obligation to do so.

## **Conclusion**

From the many diverse interactions observed over my fieldwork period of four years, it was apparent that the guys and Robert had created a genuinely appreciative and loving relationship. This affection did not exclude the fundamental presence of strategy however. The guys were clear as to their goals – they wanted to acquire a respected tertiary education and to secure middle class employment; goals that Robert could relate to. As commented by Wong and Salaff (1998:358) quoting King (1991:79), “network building is used (consciously or unconsciously) by Chinese adults as a cultural strategy in mobilizing social resources for goal attainment in various spheres of life”. In much the same way as Chinese cultivate *guanxi*, the guys cultivated their relationship with Robert so as to access resources that their co-national social network could not provide. In this chapter Lyon's narrative speaks to the limited resources (social capital) inherent within a Congolese refugee/migrant network.

However, a strength of the Congolese economic habitus is the characteristic to initiate, manage and cultivate person-to-person networks that cross markers of difference such as class, ethnicity, language propensity and neighbourhood peer groups. These solidary networks (Balikila, 2004) are instrumental to the survival of Congolese back home; they are also instrumental in the economic progress of Congolese migrants in host countries. Although all Congolese have access to this characteristic, success as deemed meaningful in the broader Congolese transnational community is dependent on cultural capital, personal skill, emotional savvy and luck. In the case of the guys, luck was on their side when Guy found a willing South African to act as his patron.

All three of my primary informants had arrived in South Africa in the early twenty-first century. As part of the third wave of Congolese migrants, their networks were dense rather than weak (Granovetter quoted in Wong and Salaff, 1998). By 2004, despite their residence in the country of two years or longer, they were unable to make serious progress towards their individual goals of completing their tertiary education because their networks were dense (Lin, 2008). Limited by the resources inherent within their co-national personal network, they accessed positions in the employment sector held by most Congolese men – employment as car guards and security guards. A chance encounter with Robert extended Guy's social network beyond co-nationals to include a weak but highly strategic tie. Guy and Robert created a patron-client relationship, and later Guy would be bridging capital for Serge, who in turn became bridging capital for Lyon.

They confirmed their suitability as clients by attending MCC the church within which Robert ran his refugee ministry. Their consistent attendance and active participation in church activities confirmed their Christian religiosity and morality and secured Robert's ongoing assistance. By deploying their economic habitus and their emotional savvy at a unique time the guys realised what research participants like Toni and Mama Fifi could not achieve – they assured the attainment of their goals and ultimately their social and economic success (see Part III)

In a deterministic way one could argue that the Congolese habitus, constructed since the 1960s in response to the non-welfare state, grooms Congolese men and women for migration. The uncertainties inherent in the migration journey and the process of adjustment in the host country are managed in much the same way that uncertainties are dealt with in Kinshasa or Lubumbashi – through reliance on one's social/personal network. However, such opportunities are not open to all, as an absolutely deterministic approach might imply. Such an approach belies the importance of contingency – luck – and denies actors their agency and abilities to improvise. Advantageous contingency and agency, linked to the cultural capital of class, are what make the difference in the fortunes of the subjects of Chapter four when compared with those of the guys.

In the moral economy of personal networks, those who progress often “incur popular hostility and resentment in society. They would appear to be too cunning and pragmatic. They spurn the sacredness of personal relations, turning ends into means (Wong and Salaff, 1988: 361 – 362)”. If we are to consider the relationship between Robert and the guys in light of Wong and Salaff's (1988) statement, then without a doubt the guys demonstrated their ‘cunning and pragmatism’. However, when we consider the relationship through the patron-client lens, we recognise that strategy is expected within the relationship – a point that Robert himself recognised and understood. For the Congolese who have been acculturated into the art of networking, strategising is thus a part of their 'expected' repertoire and way of being.

In short,

“Social forms [like networks or patron-client relationships] do not drop ready-made from heaven. Nor are they merely taken over blindly from preceding generations, or simply borrowed from neighbouring societies. They are generated or adapted by individuals and aggregates of individuals acting in accordance with their own interests within the limits imposed by existing social forms and values which, in their turn, were generated or adapted in the same way in the past” (Boissevain, 1968:545).

## Part III: Onward and Upward: The Romance Factor

### Introduction

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Successful migration is an outcome of the cultivation of various relationships, both temporary and enduring. In order to survive the passage to another country, migrants without papers may rely on others who might have the knowledge of the landscape, the placement of the border and possible border patrols, and the wherewithal to deal with bandits. Less cautious migrants will set off unaware of what lies ahead, yet may succeed in their aims. At their destination they will cultivate new relationships in order to further their migrant careers. In short migrants are adaptable, flexible human beings who take risks; sometimes considered and rational risks, oftentimes daring risks.

The creation of an intimate relationship is a risk of another kind. An intimate relationship opens one to scrutiny makes one vulnerable and provides a series of encounters where another witnesses the depth of your life. Relationships created across cultural difference, language impediments and societal norms are the most challenging and hence the riskiest of all forms of intimate relationship. Why might a migrant take such risks? Setting aside biological urges and the desire to settle down with a stable partner at a certain stage of life, it is possible that some migrants risk intimacy and even entertain marriage with a stranger for the same reasons that they take other risks in their migration careers: to further the goals that set them on the migration course in the first place! In this final section of the thesis I entertain this among other hypotheses while presenting case studies of actual transnational relationships forged by Congolese men during and since my fieldwork in Muizenberg.

In the previous section, I provided a narrative of certain *functions* of relationships. In chapter five, I grappled with what seemed to be a purely rational and economically driven relationship between my research participants and Bruce. The sketch of this economic relationship is further fleshed out in chapter eight. But in chapter five I unveiled the religious dynamics or aspects that were innate to the functioning of this relationship. The chapter demonstrates that religion, and specifically Christianity in this case, can be instrumental to the adaptation of Congolese men and women to the local environment. I ended the chapter by initiating further thinking around the opportunity structure provided by the church for meeting similar others in faith – other Christians – and dissimilar national others – Americans, Germans, South Africans, Ghanaians, Congolese – in the Muizenberg Community Church (MCC).

In this final section of the dissertation, I relate the conclusion of those relationships created within the church between single men and women of different nationalities. I was never party to

the intimate dynamics of each. However my contextualisation of these relationships, and the inscription of their meaning are positioned within a transnational space that crosses a number of countries (DRC, South Africa and countries in Europe), cuts across three time periods (past, present and future), spans two continents – Africa and Europe – and intertwines the colonial with the postcolonial. My research participants embodied a complexity that included desire and a search for love and companionship in the constant frame of their status as economic migrants and refugees. As Friedman (1994) relates, a true *mikiliste* always has his sights set on Europe. Yet, at the time of in-situ fieldwork I was more aware of my research participants' localised embodiment within Muizenberg. They worshipped locally. They bought food locally. They had their hair cut locally and they formed strong affective relationships with 'local' Congolese women. However they eventually married European women whom they met in the local church.

My focus on the field site negated a purposeful discussion of home or 'over there'. However when all three of my primary research informants married European women the possibility of a blind spot was apparent. Their marriages could be construed as instrumental to their achievement of their 'holy grail' – migration to Europe. As with Congolese *sapeurs* who labour, beg, borrow or hustle to travel to Europe, so too 'overseas' for the Congolese economic migrant, refugee, asylum seeker, immigrant or documented migrant is *lola* (paradise). In the following chapters I suggest that marrying a European woman provides a more intimately constructed form of success, as success comes through the consumption of the racial and class identity of another. Congolese are not alone in this paradisiacal dream of Europe's urban centres. Trying to understand African migration, a number of Africanists have argued that the link forged between the coloniser and the colonised during colonisation opened Europe to the vicissitudes of African migration at independence (Memmi, 2006). As Memmi (2006:73) notes, "History is also the history of migrations, and therefore of intermarriage".

Love, intimacy, sex – the lifeblood of poets' ramblings – received scant scholarly attention in the early twentieth century<sup>93</sup>. However, discussing the idea of 'romantic love' and its import in "mate selection" sociologists like Giddens prised open the door to social scientific investigation thereof (Giddens, 1992; Gross and Simmons, 2002). Using ideas of assimilation, integration, and/or pluralism, sociologists, considered the importance of inter-racial or cross-cultural marriages in the further entrenchment or dissolution of racial social distance in the United States (Kalmijn, 1993; Kitano, Yeung, Chai and Hatanaka, 1984). Earlier work by anthropologists considered intimacy through the lens of kinship. Anthropological forbears like Levi-Strauss (1969), Malinowski (1932), and Benedict (1935) explored the creation of political and economic

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<sup>93</sup> See Malinowski, 1932 though.

alliances through marriages constituted between different clans, ethnic groups or warring factions. The idea of the political economy of marriage and sex was thus securely planted within the earliest studies of intimacy.

In the 1960s and 1970s feminist academics reoriented social studies, shifting the focus from male-centred research to female or women-centred research. The dichotomy between men and women, and the further explanations of this dichotomy through further binaries such as culture:nature and public:private became more entrenched. Feminist theorists argued against the oppression and repression of women (and children) in both the private and public realms, birthing the conceptual phrase that “the personal is political” (Hanisch, 2006). In recent years, social scientists have “attempted to shift the analytical focus away from ‘women’ per se toward gendered analyses more broadly” (Constable, 2009:51). By focusing on gender, relationships are perceived as dyadic and dynamic contributed to quite actively by the individual actors in them.

Contemporary studies of intimacy have considered the impact of modernity and globalisation on intimate relationships. Authors like Constable (2009) and Pessar and Mahler (2000) talk about the “commodification of intimacy” and “gendered geographies of power”. References to the political economy of emotion, sex and marriage, transactional sex and the assimilative power of marriage for immigrants are made when contemporary social scientists consider the nature of intimate relationships (Bacas, 2010; Bossen, 1988; Cole and Thomas, 2009; Constable, 2009; Garcia, 2006; Maroon, 2009). Hardly ever do they refer to the possibility of love’s existence within these relationships. For example, Fleischer’s (2008) paper constructs a simplistic view of the relationships between Cameroonian men and German women, situating them within the impoverished economy of Cameroonian immigrants. In short, Cameroonian men are positioned as hustlers – calculating strategists – who are intent on playing the immigration system in Germany. They need a residence permit, and thus seek marriage to a German woman. Binational relationships are thus rational constructions based on the rational accounting of the African male. An African man’s proclamation of love to a European woman is suspect. Contextualised within a global political economy that distinguishes between first and third world politics and economics, the African other can only ever be constructed as a strategist.

The literature on sex and romance tourism provides a more complex sketch of the motivation of various first and third world actors. Whilst tourism is usually more transitory than migration both movements open geographic spaces, places and bodies to penetration by the other, however defined. The spatial assemblage of social, economic, material and national diversities is an immensely creative and productive transnational space. Bounded by national borders, the political and intimate geographies of a nation are ambushed by the arrival of non-national others. Globalisation opens geographic borders, allowing flows of capital, people, technologies and

theories across borders. Certain flows are curtailed and controlled however. Usually the movement of bodies is an interrupted flow. Flows of people variously defined as asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants, undocumented migrants, visitors, or tourists are treated differentially depending on the 'legality' of their categorisation. Visitors and tourists are identified as temporary sojourners, and thus of benefit to the host country, in large measure as a result of their passports and legal travel documents, to say nothing of their credit cards loaded with foreign exchange. Those without 'appropriate' travel documents particularly African immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers are potential leeches. Hence the legal or illegal presence of mobile bodies, worries the construction of the nation-state at a macro-level, and harasses the individual constructions of self within the state.

As a global but still nascent democracy in its eighteenth year South Africa continues to ride political waves of uncertainty, as the ANC government fails to create a nation-state. Party politics based on essentialising differences such as race or class work against a multicultural and/or pluralistic understanding of what it means to be South African. Moreover, the mere presence of African others in urban, peri-urban and rural centres, creates tensions between South Africans and non-South Africans, as recent outbreaks of xenophobic violence attest. In an uncertain political space possibilities exist for mutual understanding or mutual loathing. Muizenberg was just such an uncertain socio-political space when I commenced fieldwork in 2004.

In this section Muizenberg continues to be the backdrop and geographic container for relationships created across cultural particularities, national geographies, and gender constructions. Bodies invested with social meanings of alien or familiar were compelled to interact in public and semi-private spaces such as church congregations thereby creating social spaces that were simultaneously inclusive and exclusive of others. During my fieldwork, a diversity of social relationships was observed. However my interest was piqued by *intimate* cross-cultural or binational relationships. Unlike sociologists who are interested in the potential assimilative or integrative power of cross-cultural relationships I was intrigued initially by the *why* of binational relationships (Kalmijn, 1993; Qian and Lichter, 2001; Roer-Strier and Ezra, 2006).

I am certain that my biography had a primary role to play in what I chose to observe, especially since I had lived through the final years of apartheid (see chapter 3). Legislated and geographic separation created clear social boundaries that were not to be transgressed. As Elder (1998 :156) states,

“the apartheid State sought to organize and control a body’s ‘capacity to open itself up’ when that capacity challenged the State’s racialized and



heteronormative assumptions. An important contradiction was that once encoded as such, white and black bodies (in close proximity) threaten[ed] the state. After all, sexual relations across the ‘color [*sic*] bar’ would result in miscegenation and thereby challenge the myth of racial purity”.

I was thus intrigued by the very acts of transgression formerly recognised as acts against the apartheid State. Growing up as a coloured person I lived in a coloured neighbourhood, went to coloured primary and secondary schools and worshipped in a coloured church situated in an adjacent coloured suburb. My sister’s marriage to Gunther, a white German man was not cause for concern, as he shared similar origins to my maternal family. However my socialisation in a predominantly coloured environment instilled an expectation of racial and class endogamy, rather than exogamy. It is not surprising then that I would focus on racial, national and cultural exogamy and hypergamy.

My analysis of these binational relationships owes much to an assemblage of diverse texts and theorisations. Thus while ostensibly I discuss cross-cultural relationships, the conclusions drawn from the ethnography comment on complex constructions and expressions of individual embodiment, gendered geographies of power, bi-national relationships and the spatialisation of Congolese ontologies of masculinity. I request the reader’s patience as I move us along a winding path that attempts to answer the question “What’s love got to do with migration?”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Apologies to Tina Turner.

## Chapter 6

### Interrogating stereotypes: Linda and Gianni

“I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the ‘idea’ that others have of me but of my own appearance” (Fanon, 2006:131).

“History is also the history of migrations and, therefore, of intermarriage” (Memmi, 2006:73).

During fieldwork a number of newspaper articles published at the time, expressed the view that South African women were being lured into fake marriages by African migrants and/or refugees seeking South African citizenship. Government made a number of pronouncements, and asked South African women to check the official record of their marital status especially as a number of fake marriages had come to light (Mannering, 2004; Padayachee, 2010; Steenkamp, 2004). I was thus surprised when I met Linda, a European woman who openly declared that she had suggested to Gianni, her Congolese boyfriend, that they conceive a baby, and then move to Scotland.

In this chapter I focus on their relationship. I argue that a consideration of the dynamics of the relationship, particularly the political economy thereof, situates the Congolese man in a negative light, as he stands to gain the most from the relationship. Given his race, social class, and status as a refugee in South Africa, the social advantages accrued to him through union with a European woman within his social network exceeds the social advantages that accrue to her. However, I posit that this analysis is too simplistic and but *one* side of a more considered analysis; an analysis that includes the possibility of genuine love and affection and the recognition that Linda, as an empowered European woman, chose to be with Gianni, a black African man from the DRC, in full knowledge of his disempowered circumstances. A consideration of their relationship in this light demonstrates that Linda and Gianni are conscious actors. While macro political analyses situate them as representatives of their separate countries and continents, possibly even marking them as previous coloniser and previously colonised respectively within the global economy, a micro understanding positions them as empowered individuals exercising their agency. Their narrative thus negates an easy assessment of their relationship as strategic or unidirectional in its advantage.

## Questioning media stereotypes

It is the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2004. The final winter month in Cape Town is here and the incessant rain will abate. I've spent a few days in the field, and met a number of Congolese men either living or working in the area since the start of fieldwork in July. I am slightly vexed this afternoon. The inability to secure more permanent accommodation unsettles me. Lost in thought I walk past a white woman with black hair, and blue eyes, fussing with a dress.

I enter the kitchen, unusually warm on this winter's day, and switch on the kettle. I lean against the edge of the cupboard. Lost in thought I stare at the mountain. Breathtaking yet imposing, it keeps my restless mind still for a while.

The sound of bubbling water brings me back to the moment, and I search for a cup and teaspoon. For a backpackers I'm amazed at the clean surfaces. It is ordered, offering some respite from the disorder that continues to rattle in my brain. I am concerned about finding primary research informants. And on edge as I meet a possible gatekeeper in a few days. Gwynneth has told me that Reece, her brother, knows a guy living in Muizenberg who assists African refugees. I await her call to give me his number.

With tea cup in hand, brimming with piping hot tea, I try to avoid the woman who is struggling to iron a wedding dress. She swears under her breath, and I stop and smile. We greet and exchange pleasantries.

"Hi I'm Linda."

"Joy. You are getting married?" I am interested in her lilting way of speaking. So I ask tentatively, "You're not South African?"

"No, I'm from Scotland. Oh .... Yes I'm marrying a Congolese man".

"Oh that's funny."

Linda asks, "Why?" cocking her head slightly.

"I'm here doing research on them. On the Congolese in Muizenberg". I feel bolder saying that these days.

"Oh it's a bad time to be here really. You missed the invasion of the Congolese about two years back. Then it was Little Congo. Now Yellow Rose is being emptied out. The Blue House has had its

electricity cut. Congolese are being forced out of their abodes – places where they stay as many to a room as possible to save money. The landlords have really exploited them.”

Linda seems to know so much. Now I’m feeling a little nervous, worried that I have missed the influx.

“It was a truly Congolese place. Muizenberg that is. With salons and restaurants. Try and find the dancing places, if they still exist. You’d see Congolese men dancing and some Xhosa women hanging around. They like Congolese men, and always more than one. I’ve been living here for about two years”. I am trying to puzzle through her comments as she continues, “Yes, they [Xhosa women] have more than one. So that they can have hair, make-up, shoes. There’s a different one to provide for her different needs. But they’ve slowly started leaving. The Congolese I mean. The increase in rental means that they are moving to cheaper places of accommodation in Wittebome and Wynberg”.

I watch Linda intently trying to focus on her words; trying to store them for later when I write up my notes. As I focus, I register her bulging tummy. She is pregnant. How did I miss that? As she chatters on, her words flow in time with her hand movements. Pulling the dress over the ironing board, running her right hand gently over the dress, she picks up the iron and irons a stubborn hairline crease. The dress, cream or off-white, and possibly made of silk, looks rather old.

I hear Vic, the curmudgeon’s heavy footfalls as he storms up the stairs. “When are you going to be done?”, he booms.

Linda calmly surveys him and says. “Another 20 minutes or so”.

“Well hurry up, I’m trying to watch TV downstairs and your ironing is disturbing the electrical circuit”.

I’m glad I’m not at the end of that tizz. Linda glares at him and continues prattling on.

“I’m pregnant as you can see. Yes it’s Gianni’s baby. I still have about 7 weeks to go. I want to give birth back home”.

“Why not get married in Scotland then?”

“Ah it would cost too much really. Gianni would have to apply for a visa from here or the Congo, and then wait. I can’t rely on that. I want my husband with me when I give birth. My brother works in airlines, so he’d be able to assist with cheap flights, but it will add up to too much. So, we’re getting married here. Tomorrow. At the local church down the street”.

I can't believe my luck, she's marrying a Congolese! I hope I'll get an invitation to the wedding. But I'm too anxious to even hope for that<sup>95</sup>.

Linda continues, "I was hit on quite a bit here in Muizenberg. Even now, despite being pregnant, a Congolese man will make a pass. If I'm not married, he can still make his mark".

I tell her about my experiences with Danny and his persistence. I share his latest sms with her:

"Hi joy, I'm sorry for last Saturday, I know you, u're kind with me, don't take these decision because I like always to be your friend, please forgive me, thank you".

She laughs out loud, and nods her head. With a twinkle in her blue eyes she remarks, "The younger ones are persistent. If you speak to older Congolese men they will tell you that doesn't happen at home. One won't just go up to a girl in the street and propose her. But when they arrive here, they are told that here, women like to be approached. And that it's easier to get a South African woman, rather than a Congolese woman. Congolese woman, she wants money. No money no proposing".

Linda's words are cause for concern as I think about my acquaintance with Danny. I think I might have stirred up some trouble for myself. Uncertain, I ask Linda's advice indirectly. "I don't know what I've got myself into. I accompanied one of the Congolese men I met here, the one who sent me the sms. He's working as a car guard at Shoprite to his place in Kenilworth. He was rather adamant about my visiting him. It was awkward really. I didn't know what was expected. And before I could really settle down, his cousin took photographs of us."

"Oh Joy they love photographs. They get dressed in their best clothes and then go to the Waterfront. They have their photos taken there and then send them home. The young ones back home say 'I want that' and then they follow ... they come to South Africa. You are now his first girlfriend here in South Africa. Soon his mom will be making you *fufu*<sup>96</sup>. Nice girls, who don't drink are taken home", she comments smiling broadly.

Fretful I walk the shore. Men and women mill about. Children play games, laughing and chasing each other into the water. I look up and observe two Congolese men walking on the promenade, camera in hand. I sit down and watch them. They are dressed lightly for the weather, but don't seem to mind. They stop. Wait. They are watching a young white woman emerge from the ocean with a surfboard under her right arm. She is exhilarated. As she runs past them, they stop her and with gestures ask that she takes a photograph with them. She obliges, standing and smiling. Both of them have their photographs taken with her. She nods once

<sup>95</sup> Linda comments August 2010 that she regrets not having invited me to the wedding. She was rather reticent to do so, as she thought it rather strange given that we had only just met.

<sup>96</sup> In the DRC, it can be a thick or thin cooked mixture made with pounded cassava, depending on personal taste or ethnic socialisation. In South Africa Congolese use maize meal to make *fufu*; also referred to as *bugari* in kiSwahili or *pap* in South African lingo.

the photographs are taken, smiles, and runs off. They watch her go, turn and walk away lost in animated conversation.

A memory has just surfaced. And yet I'm standing here flabbergasted in response to *her* words. How does Linda know that I don't drink? Has she been reading me this whole time? And then I wonder if she's making fun of me.

"You might want to learn Lingala rather than French. Lingala's a mixture of French, Portuguese and English, and the same words are repeated over and over. I'll write some phrases down for you. But you must remember *mondele*. If you ever hear that word in conversation, they might just be referring to you".

"What does that mean?"

"White person".

We laugh.

Writing up our conversation later in the privacy of the double room, Opal is laying on the bed. The rain lashes the window pane, but I am not paying conscious attention. The sound merges with the sound of my key strokes on the laptop. I am truly excited. The delay in moving to permanent accommodation has resulted in my encounter with Linda. In a short conversation she has given me so much information. I'm not sure why but I trust her observations and her conclusions. Maybe because she is an intimate other? I'm taken aback at her candour, and yet understand it. She has nothing to lose. I'm not studying her I'm studying 'the Congolese'. I'm intrigued that she thought I was Namibian, rather than South African, noting I spoke English very well, and with an accent. Linda's been doing what I've tried to do over the past few weeks here in Muizenberg – trying to situate me. She has clearly met, or observed other phenotypically coloured women in the area. Who could miss them – often inebriated and spewing invectives? One cannot ignore their presence or their harried and sun-baked visages.

I start to work through some of what she has said. Her comment about Xhosa women intrigues me. Newspaper reports in 2004 and 2010 state that a number of African migrants, Congolese included, have had 'fake' marriages with South African women (Mannering, 2004; Padayachee, 2010; Steenkamp, 2004; Wines, 2004). The tenor of the articles suggests that South African women are victims. Implicit within this victimisation, one could argue, is the further attempt to exclude 'the other' – an African refugee – from the social life and landscapes of South Africa. As commented by Hubbard (2001:53), "... conflicts between different sexualities, moralities and identities are often orchestrated by the press in a lurid and sensationalist manner to create

national ‘moral panics’ about particular individuals and groups (McRobbie and Thornton, 1995)”. Indeed this was the case, as the South African government strongly urged South African women to verify their marital status with the Department of Home Affairs, as newspaper headlines reported from ‘600’ to ‘7 000’ ‘scam marriages’ or ‘marriages of convenience’ (Ntuli, 2005; Phillips, 2004).

Linda’s comments however demonstrate Xhosa women’s *agency* to find more than one man to satisfy their material desires. She avers that they are indeed in relationships with Congolese men to acquire material items (consumables); what Linda refers to as “hair, make-up and shoes”. There is no mention of love. Linda’s words remind me of Hunter’s (2009:146) historical discussion of the “political economy of sex” in South Africa. He states,

“In some cases, women’s livelihoods depend on gifts, for example, when monetary gifts mean access to food. In other instances, however, women can demand consumer goods such as a cell phone and flashy clothes. Consumption has long been an indicator of status in South Africa.”

Although his discussion focuses on relationships between black South African men and women, his analysis can be applied to relationships between Congolese men and South African women. Given the high unemployment rate amongst South African African men, plus the onset of globalisation and the importance of consumption, South African women turn to the ‘African Other’ for sustenance; a reality exemplary of Senegalese women in Ziguinchor (Venables, 2008) and Dominican women (Brennan, 2001). Hunter (2009:136) argues that

“over the twentieth century, ideas of love became embroiled with men’s emergent roles as providers. Crucially over the last three decades, men’s failure to marry and support a family has led to the fracturing of the implicit bargain that rested on men and women contributing to a project of ‘building a home’. Now, indignant at men’s unreliability, and with few prospects of marriage or employment, women can actively evoke the provider masculinity to justify milking boyfriends for gifts in new ways”.

South African women, driven by material desires that are spurred on by the full scale arrival of modernisation and globalisation, seek the fulfilment of these desires with the African other. Here, South African black women are portrayed as huntresses, rather than the prey – the direct opposite of the victimhood attributed to them by social media. These relationships are framed by academics through concepts of the “sexual economy” (Hunter, 2009), the “marriage economy/market” (Cole, 2005), “the political economy of emotions” (Thomas and Cole, 2009) and the “economy of desire” (Brennan, 2001). Contemporary relationships are therefore

analysed in reference to the political economy with scant, if any, attention to the *emotional* content of the relationship.

In the transit space of South Africa, Linda and Gianni's transnational relationship is initiated, created and maintained in an environment that prescribes the role of provider to that of the man (Hunter, 2009). Yet as is the case in the Dominican Republic, Madagascar and Jamaica, Gianni, a Congolese man, is 'disempowered' in his relationship to Linda, a European woman, by virtue of their countries' positioning in the global economy. Pruitt and LaFont (1993:437 – 438) contend that,

“[t]hose social and economic inequities as well as beliefs and stereotypes each partner holds about the Other work to construct a relationship uncomfortably similar to the power relationship between the partners' respective societies. The agency has shifted from the characteristic nation-state and its transnational corporations to the intimately personal arena. Breaking taboos and challenging tradition open uncharted territories of social relations. The outcome is never certain and carries with it the possibility of reproducing much of what is being challenged”.

In the global, hierarchical structure of race relations (Memmi, 2006; Nyamnjoh and Page, 2002), Linda's whiteness and Europeanness sets her apart from black South African women who navigate the public spaces in Muizenberg. Even within the political economy of South Africa, whiteness symbolises material wealth; a symbolic reality that Congolese men and women are aware of. Thus, despite her pregnancy, she is still considered “fair game” for hustling. A Congolese man can still “make his mark”. Her whiteness therefore increases her social value in the Congolese transnational community.

The relationships between Xhosa women and Congolese men, on the other hand, place similar economically and politically constructed others together. Despite South Africa's complex configuration as second world, black youth continue to be hardest hit economically, with unemployment exceeding 50%<sup>97</sup> for this cohort, whilst the national average was at 25.3% for the second quarter of 2010. The consumerist culture is most virulent amongst those who need to demonstrate upward mobility in a local economy that venerates material wealth. With apartheid's unbundling since 1994, black people have sought the goose that lays the golden eggs, seeking material comforts longed for, yet never attained during South Africa's segregationist and apartheid histories (May, 1999; Wilson and Ramphele, 1999). The birth of democracy promised

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<sup>97</sup> Noted as such in an article on unemployment in South Africa in Timeslive – <http://www.timeslive.co.za/business/article558427.ece/SAs-overriding-problem-is-unemployment> (accessed 19 September 2010).



the minimum for all: appropriate shelter, freedom of movement, electricity and water, development of the rural areas, and free basic education and healthcare. Yet the economy hasn't been able to absorb unskilled labour. In the contemporary social landscape, competition for resources and new material desires is rife, as conspicuous consumption is linked with material wealth and progress (a situation that exists in contemporary Kinshasa (Friedman, 1994)).

As the population is fairly young<sup>98</sup> (despite the onslaught of the AIDS pandemic) material possessions – the quality, style and quantity thereof – provide status or prestige. Thus South African black women persist in using “advancement strategies” (Brennan, 2001). One could argue despite the tenuous situations of refugees that the African other is still able to offer more in the way of material wants and desires rather than South African men.

In much the same way, Congolese men, as demonstrated by Friedman (1994) and Thomas (2007) are themselves immersed within an under-developed society that espouses consumerist values; values further entrenched within the experience of *mikili* ('overseas' – migration). Thus the impoverished situations that Congolese lived (Trefon, 2004) and live, combined with the experience of similar living conditions by South African women, particularly those of working class or lower middle class incomes, creates the possibility for relationships that involve direct and indirect forms of material exchange between similar others.

Linda compares Xhosa women with Congolese women – “Congolese woman, she wants money”. Her comment is similar to that made by a German tourist in the Dominican Republic about German women “Sure they [Dominican women] want money but not like women in Germany” (Brennan, 2001:649). In both contexts, ‘host’ country women are perceived as less materially oriented. As stated by Venables (2008:485) “European men, regardless of nationality, are believed to be everything that Senegalese men are not. In idealising the relatively unknown, dissatisfaction with Senegalese men is vocalised”. The ‘other’ assumes primacy in the contextualisation of one’s ‘own’, by virtue of his or her otherness, achieving a far superior status. Thus, while Congolese men might live under the delusion that South African women are *not* like Congolese women, the political economy in South Africa creates a different reality.

South African women, particularly African women according to Hunter (2001), *are* materially driven. The delusion encourages Congolese men to ‘propose’ South African women overtly. But why do they propose? What do they get from the exchange? Sexual and emotional comfort during times of loneliness? As Congolese migration is a fairly new migration to South Africa, single men are still the dominant sex among Congolese migrants. Companionship? Possibly a

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<sup>98</sup> 65.8% of the population is between 15 and 64 (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sf.html>, accessed 19 September 2010).

residence permit if it ends in marriage? But that would assume that Congolese migrants *want* to stay in South Africa.

I have more questions than answers tonight. Yet, when I complete my ruminations and close the laptop sleep comes easily. Dreams don't plague me.

### **Organising exchanges – flirting vs economic exchange**

After a newspaper search I secure more permanent accommodation the very next day. I am relaxing with Craig (the manager of the backpackers) watching the television upstairs. He says it has better picture quality and is tuned into his favourite channels. The sound of male voices speaking Lingala wafts up the stairs. Thinking it must be the recently married, we walk down to congratulate the happy couple. Turning the corner into the kitchen we encounter Linda and Gianni. They are accompanied by two of his friends and Francoise, Linda's escort down the aisle – a dread-locked white man of slight build. There's lots of friendly banter about as Francoise teases Gianni about his weight loss. "Clearly he missed you Linda".

Linda retorts sportingly, "All it took was five months. I come back and find him so thin". She's busy heating curry and rice in the microwave. She and Gianni have changed out of their wedding attire. The others are wearing formal jackets. "Would you like some Joy?"

"No thank you, I'm rather full".

I'm ready to hasten through the space, but she introduces me to everyone, informing them of my work in Muizenberg. The guys are seated on bar stools, watching Linda. Making myself useful I hand the plates to her, and pour each one a glass of water. One of Gianni's friends asks, "Do you work here?" Linda laughs, "No she stays here". We are invited to sit in on their conversation, but I indicate to Linda that I'll start doing the dishes.

Their laughter echoes, and I hear one or two French phrases. My thoughts are wandering when a male voice intrudes, "What is your name?" I half turn and smile. "Joy". He returns the smile and says "Ah you are joyful all the time". I smile searching for an appropriate response, but none comes to mind. "You are very beautiful. *Vous êtes très belle.*"

Linda 'saves' me, "Come come leave my friend alone. You can talk to her some other time". Gianni sees his friends off, Francoise bids everyone a good night, and Linda and I agree to go to church together on Sunday. As Craig and I walk upstairs I hear Linda and Gianni's happy laughter. As the evening draws to a close I try to recall the many times I've been hit on over the past few weeks.

Danny's constant attempts, Costas, and now Gianni's friend? The approaches feel like a tidal wave. Yet, I can't help feeling flattered. Woman's ego?

Sunday dawns, and I am late. I am irritated as I have missed an opportunity to be introduced to the entire congregation at Sonrise church. At a bit of a loss I shower reluctantly, dress and make my way to the Sunday market just a few kilometres away at Sunrise Beach. Upon arrival, the parking area and the surrounding streets are packed. Make-shift stalls bulge with their wares. Coloured men and women, white men and women, and even African looking men are selling everything – shoes, bags, toffee apples, children's toys, clothing, boerewors<sup>99</sup> rolls, even hats. Everything. It's a veritable feast for the senses, as the smell of the ocean mingles with the smells emanating from the stalls. The day is mild and bright, surprisingly so for a winter's day in Cape Town. People walk about. Men look slightly disheartened, as their wives or girlfriends are animated with the children, or lost in 'window' shopping.

I wander around for a bit with Opal in tow. A stall that sells bags catches my attention. There are quite a few bag stalls in this market, but this particular one is managed by a tall African man. I am intrigued by him, but I am also in need of a sling bag that could hold my notebook, markers and pen. Not a large bag. The bags on display are mostly for working women. But there are a number of light khaki green bags that would serve my purpose. The manager of the stall (I have assumed he is the manager/owner) surveys my movements. I touch the bag lightly and look up. He is next to me in moments. "That's R60". "I'll take it". He speaks to the Xhosa woman who is standing there, protected from the nip in the air by a thick jacket. She steps forward reluctantly into the shadow of the stall to package the bag. I give him R100, and while waiting for change I say, "You are not from here, are you?" He smiles a languid smile, "No, I'm from Senegal. I've been here now for 7 years. Trying to make my way".

"You're a long way from home".

"Yes. But there are good and bad people everywhere, no? I'm a foreigner here, but I don't want no trouble. I want to make what I can. Pay my rent. And have good relations with South Africans". He hands my change to me with a flourish. He has large hands. The Xhosa woman interrupts, "Sir", and passes him a carrier bag, which he passes to me. I'm loathe to just walk on but he has shifted his attention to another customer, so I take my leave of him.

While I remained flattered by the attention I received from Congolese men, the experience with the Senegalese trader 'normalised' the fieldwork situation for me. The research space became

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<sup>99</sup> Literally, farmer's sausage.

less sexualised. I observed the interaction between this Senegalese trader and his Xhosa employee with interest, as it denoted a monetary (economic) exchange embedded within the relationship of employer-employee. My interaction with him was also constructed similarly, as I purchased one of his products. Emotions were not exchanged. Although we exchanged words, his words were different to those employed by Congolese men in their interactions with me. His talk remained business like, with no underlying tenor. In Zelizer's (2000) conceptualisation, the Senegalese trader and I communicated making a direct monetary exchange based on our mutual assessment of the relationship – a fleeting relationship between seller and buyer. His confirmation of his economic reasons for being in South Africa confirms and organises the extent of our interaction. We had thus

“distinguish[ed] a qualitatively different social relationship ... from [another] by means of well-marked symbols, rituals and social practices. Rather like forms of clothing, styles of speech, choices of location, and kinds of meals, the form of payment mark[ed] the character and range of the social relationship [we were] enacting” (Zelizer, 2000:842).

His words were therefore strikingly different to the words and dulcet tones used by Congolese men as their *intentions* for our interactions were different. While subliminally Congolese men seemed to communicate their intentions to integrate through creating liaisons with South African women, the Senegalese trader's lack of interest in doing so, confirmed the reason for his migration – to make money and possibly return home.

### **Migration to South Africa**

Returning to the backpackers, I busy myself with my washing. As I'm taking the clothes from the drier, Gianni and Linda walk in. They greet, and Linda asks me to join them. We communicate our common 'sadness' that we weren't able to go to church together. Linda prepares a quick lunch for the two of them – baked potato, with a tuna, onion and mayonnaise topping. Whilst eating, Gianni speaks quietly about his life in the DRC.

“I left Congo when I was 18. I'm 28 now, here in South Africa. I work in Wynberg for Global Textiles”.

“I know that store. It sells cloth?”

“Yes, in Wynberg.”

“Don't you miss home?”

"Yes. But it would all be different now. Different buildings, different people. It would be strange for me. But my parents didn't want me to leave."

"Are you the youngest or oldest at home?"

"The youngest."

"Maybe that's the reason why they didn't want you to go?"

"Yes", he says and smiles. The oldest, they can go. But not me, not Gianni. I'm the youngest. I always got money and clothes from everyone that's overseas. So my parents didn't understand why I want to leave."

"So why did you leave?"

"I could see the President was in and out of the country. And my country was getting bad. I was also naughty" he responds, with a mischievous glint in his eye. Linda hugs him as she takes the dishes to the sink.

"So what do you think. Do I learn French or Lingala?"

"You must learn Lingala. We speak it in Kinshasa, where I come from. And there are lots of Congolese here from Kinshasa."

Linda comments, "You should take some names and numbers from Gianni Joy. A lot of the people he knows can help you hey. There's lots of people from Gianni's neighbourhood here. That's how everyone knows everyone."

I'm grateful for the suggestion: "I was thinking that maybe a woman should teach me?"

Gianni laughs boisterously for the first time during our conversation, and replies "Yes, that's a good idea. If it was a man he would say, will you go out with me?" Clearly unsolicited advances are normal for Congolese men. To add fuel to the fire Linda adds, "Even the other evening, remember after the wedding when we were here? The guys who were with us, Gianni's friends they were arguing about you. I told them, she's a nice lady hey, and they all agreed. The one who spoke to you he said he would take you, and then the other two piped up and said no *they* would take you". I blush, remembering Linda's save. Our conversation ends naturally, as Linda and I finalise the time to meet the following day.

Gianni's narrative reveals that he arrived in South Africa at the dawn of her democracy, alluding to political reasons, rather than economic reasons, for his migration. His response to my

question about missing home reveals a practical orientation and acclimatisation to his residence in South Africa. It reminds me of Jean-Claude's statement, "When you leave home, when you migrate, you start from zero. You can't look back. What's behind you? Nothing".

Gianni's story also confirms the presence, and importance of personal networks – those constructed through blood ties, and those constructed through the spatial dynamics of one's neighbourhood – for survival in Kinshasa. As noted in chapters three to five, this echoes MacGaffey's (1983) and Trefon's (2004) work on Kinshasa and the varied ways in which Kinois negotiate survival in a failed state. Linda's comment about assistance demonstrates that she too is aware of the assistance one could garner from friends.

Gianni also confirms the Congolese male predilection to solicit a woman's companionship. His confirmation thereof situates the behaviour as a given; a normative attitude held by Congolese men. Thus my female form is objectified and valued in relation to what it might provide. Gianni's words, Linda's earlier comments and Danny's sms provide a sense that Congolese men perceive women as soft and amenable.

### **Networks in Action**

As to be expected, even in late winter, Monday dawns overcast. Undeterred, Opal and I tackle the 3 kilometres to St James and back again. A middle-aged woman braves the Indian ocean at St James pool. I sit on a step of one of the changing cubicles in the half sunlight and watch her for a while. I breathe in and out as the waves move in and out. Opal scavenges amongst the rocks. The ocean's tides leave the shore bare of debris. But sea shells are stubbornly embedded within the sand. They glitter in the sunlight. Standing up, I initiate the walk back. Opal lifts her head recognising my intention. She joins me. I dawdle for a bit picking up some of the shells as mementoes. Pearly pink white colours glisten amongst dark brown and black mussel shells. I deposit the shells I have picked up into my jacket pockets. Walking back, they tinkle as they move to the rhythm of my footsteps. The sun seems higher than it should be, as the mist that escorted me on the walk in, has all but dissipated. I am late. Again! Rushing into the backpackers, Linda is in the kitchen in deep conversation on the phone. I rush up to my room, clean up and settle Opal. Coming back down to the kitchen, Linda is just stepping out of the flatlet. Her erect, stocky movements tell me she is irritated.

"Change of plans. You don't have to take me to the embassy any longer. I have to courier Gianni's application through to Pretoria. The application alone is R3 120, plus R220 for the TNT courier and then a further R83 for postal orders".

“That’s a lot of money<sup>100</sup>”.

“Yes, it is”. Her face contorts with worry. She’s about to lock the door, when she shakes her head and enters the flatlet again. “Come in”. She collects some documents, puts on lipstick and then rushes us out the door. We drive to the church, park and walk the short distance to the entrance. I’m still stunned by the positioning of the church – on the main road, behind a glass front. It could be mistaken for a shop. We ring the buzzer. A woman in an apron opens the door with broom in hand. We greet and I follow Linda up the stairs into Sister Ntombi’s office – the administrator of Sonrise Assembly of God (AOG). Linda explains her need to photocopy documents and Sister Ntombi advises her to make copies of everything, even the divorce decrees. I am startled, “Divorce decrees?”

Later in the day Linda notes, “I was married to Gabriel, my homosexual friend, and Gianni, he was married to his friend’s mother with no teeth”. Before I could question why, Linda continues, “We needed to be legal here. We needed some stability. You live wonderfully for two months, and then the final month of your visa you start to worry. How are you going to lengthen your stay? What happens if you are asked for your papers?”

So black foreigners aren’t the only ones playing the system? Looking at Linda, I am glad she can’t read or hear my thoughts.

On our way to Plumstead and then Wynberg, Linda and I continue our conversation. Lydia – Pastor Emmanuel’s wife – and Cassie – their 15 month old daughter – are in the backseat. Lydia listens to our conversation, without much addition. Cassie fusses intermittently.

“Congolese are really *stuck* here in South Africa. It’s not like they actually want to be here. But they can’t get out of the country because they don’t earn enough money to save. For example Gianni earns R800 a month. How can anyone live on R800 a month?”

“Maybe the government is worried that if they provide assistance to African migrants or refugees that they would never leave. But the opposite is happening. Maybe if they were given assistance, South Africa would just be a temporary stop over? A transit space?”

“Maybe. Yes”.

“But can one really be sure of foreign men in this country? How would they leave? Are they for real? My experience with some of them has been less than impressive.”

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<sup>100</sup> That amount translates into \$477.64 and 376.75 euros on 11 September 2010.

"I am not worried about that at all. I know Gianni loves me. I was the one to tell Gianni we should get pregnant. I planned this so that we could leave, get out of this country. So I got pregnant, returned to Scotland and applied for my husband to join me there. I want him at the birth of our baby. It's the only way we can get out of here".

"I'm just worried about supporting the man [financially]. That doesn't seem right".

"But how would Gianni get money to pay for his visa application? You know how severe that amount is. Then he still needs to purchase a plane ticket. On the money he earns?"

On arrival at Gianni's place Linda hops out of the car. "I'll be back soon". The immediate silence is deafening, and awkward. At least the sun is shining. I look in the rearview mirror, and Lydia smiles as our eyes meet. I am thinking about Linda's predicament when she returns 10 minutes later. Off to Wynberg, I take the back roads, rather than driving on the main road. Soon we are parked opposite Global Textiles. The sound of cars, pedestrians, hawkers' shouts and the particular scent of Wynberg assail my senses. Gianni is waiting for Linda on the pavement. They huddle, heads together talking rapidly. He sees Lydia, Cassie and myself on the opposite side of the road and waves. He turns to Linda and still talking, cups his hand under her elbow. He steers her across the road.

"Andrew told me that Gianni shouldn't come back to the house. He owes the landlord rent. What am I going to do? I leave tomorrow. What if they call the police on you? Throw you in prison?" Linda is distressed.

"Don't worry. It's gonna be ok. They are just telling you that because they think you are rich. That you have money. I'll sort it out tonight".

"Gianni?"

"It's ok. I've got to get back to work. See you later."

It's past one and I'm getting hungry. My stomach always takes precedence over whatever is happening. As we move through Main Road, Mowbray, I suggest we buy something to eat at one of the eateries on the pavement. Linda suggests we check one final second hand bargain shop and then have lunch as we make our way back to Muizenberg.

Thinking aloud about Andrew's subtle threat, Rita, Andrew's wife becomes a part of the conversation, as we rummage through second hand clothing on the clothing rails.



"Rita and Andrew must really think that I am helping Gianni but where would I get the money from? Rita is always asking me for things. When they got married, Andrew insisted I bring them a gift. So I gave what I could afford, a night-dress for Rita. But she wasn't happy. She just ummed in response. No thank you."

"On my wedding day, Rita and Andrew were there. She asked me for my wedding dress, actually the entire wedding ensemble. When I asked her what she would do with the shoes, she said she'd sell it." Linda laughs raucously, but there's a tinge of sadness underlying her laughter. I'm not sure if Lydia understands what she is saying, but she smiles.

Linda continues, "Rita doesn't speak English very well, but she can speak pretty well when it comes to asking for things". Slightly discomfited I laugh in response. As we walk out of the store, I quip to Lydia, "we should come to Mowbray again. Maybe find something for Cassie?" She nods, "Yes there wasn't much clothing there for child." We buy two parcels of fish and chips, and Lydia lights up. "We eat a lot of fish in Congo. Lots." Cassie has stopped fussing. Holding the 'slap chips'<sup>101</sup> she chews contentedly.

I drop Lydia and Cassie off at the church, and Linda and I return to the Backpackers. We are both rather tired. It has been a long, harrowing day. We take our leave of each other within minutes.

The above highlights a number of themes discussed in the literature on tourism, marriage migration and assimilation. Social scientific explanations and narratives of migration engendered women as dependents rather than independent agents during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (Brettell, 1995 and 2000; Buijs, 1993). For example Watts (1983), like many earlier migration specialists, tie women's migration from rural to urban areas in Nigeria to the movement of their husbands, or as a result of marriage. Writing against these gendered constructions, anthropologists like Brettell (1995; 2000) and Buijs (1993) demonstrated the agency of many migrant women in making the decision to migrate, and in their experience thereof. In the interstitial space of these two articulations lies a complex variety of possibilities.

In the case of Linda and Gianni, Gianni's immigration to Scotland is initiated by Linda's pregnancy – a pregnancy she suggested – and further supported by her assistance. Her revelation clearly positions her as the agent. Writing about romance tourism, Pruitt and LaFont (1993:427) note that "[w]hen necessary, the women provide the finances for the man of their choice...In the light of obvious poverty, she frequently views her financial contribution to the relationship as

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<sup>101</sup> A local reference to hot chips.

relatively insignificant". In much the same way, Linda situates her assistance within Gianni's economic reality – noting that his monthly income of R800.00 is insufficient to instigate further movement. My unease at the possibility of being used for financial assistance is thus thwarted by Linda's protestations noting Gianni's limited cash flow.

Despite dissimilarity to that noted by Watts (1983) – he is a man, not a woman – and qualitatively different to that noted by Cole (2005 and 2009) and Pruitt and LaFont (1993) – he is not a sex worker, and he is not unemployed – Gianni is still within a vulnerable position. Gianni's citizenship as Congolese, his global positioning as an African other, his relative poverty, and his status as a refugee in South Africa situates him in a global relationship of inequity with Linda. His disempowered status, by virtue of his history, sketches him as subaltern. As stated by Brennan (2001), "[t]ransnational spaces not only are sites of new economic, cultural, and sexual possibilities but also are location[s] which can reproduce existing inequalities." When considered in this light, Gianni and Linda's narrative reveals that the personal has indeed become political and transnational (Oloka-Onyango and Tamale, 1995).

Besides his relationship with Linda, Gianni is also positioned within a network of Congolese nationals. His instrumental value, or more precisely his social capital, within this network increased as his relationship with Linda progressed; and this instrumental value has made them vulnerable to the demands of Congolese others. Recognising Gianni's perceived increase in value Andrew and his wife Rita – Congolese he lives with – assume that Gianni has access to dollars and euros (material wealth) and other material resources of value through his relationship with Linda; a relationship solidified with the imminent birth of their daughter, their marriage to each other, and their impending immigration to Scotland. Thus, as an integral part of Gianni's network others within his network have access to her. His shared residence confirms his lack of monetary wealth, but his marriage to Linda, a European woman raises his status within the network by virtue of what *she* can provide. The perception that she can provide therefore elicits bold requests and expectations from those in Gianni's solidary network.

However, what Linda can afford as a wedding gift – a night-dress – does not match Rita's expectations of her status/prestige (or that of Gianni's). Without full awareness thereof, Linda is interacting with the expectations created through one's participation in Congolese *circuits personelles*; networks that could mean the difference between survival or death. Further, Rita's request for Linda's wedding ensemble offends Linda. Rita denudes the emotional and sentimental value of Linda's wedding attire by ascribing an 'intrinsic' monetary value to the shoes. Yet Linda's emotional investment in her clothing cannot be valued within Rita's frame of reference; a frame of reference that includes the political economy of Kinshasa and the reality of daily struggle there and here, in South Africa. All forms of exchange including balanced

reciprocity and redistribution are part of the Congolese second economy; and for the network to maintain itself, exchanges and redistribution need to be ongoing (Rubbers, 2009; Trefon, 2004). In short, Rita's seeming non-appreciation of the night-dress, is also a part of the exchange between contemporaries in a social network. As in the case of Eric in chapter four, appreciation and consideration are demonstrated in the exchanges – material or not – that occur *throughout* the lifespan of the connection. Showing dissatisfaction with an exchange – as Linda assumes from Rita's behaviour – is meant to initiate the exchange of a more valued item in the future, especially from one, who is considered to be 'better off' than the others in the network.

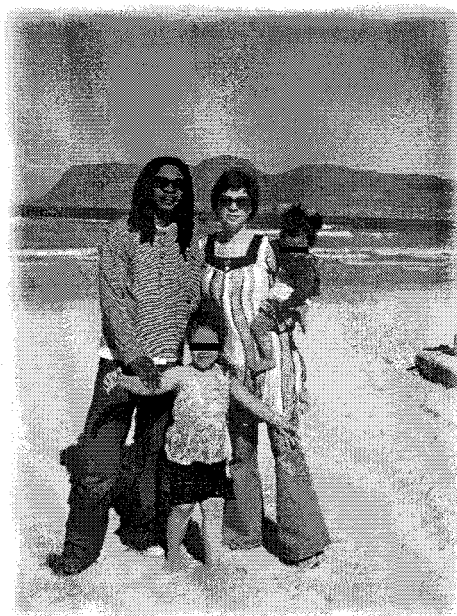
### **This is love ...**

The next morning, I go down to see Linda and Gianni off. Linda fidgets, getting all their bags together. Linda continues to be upset, feeling disheartened that she leaves Gianni behind once more. I'm emotional as she puts her bags into the car; a sign that she *is* leaving. Gianni looks on as we hug, and smiles. Gianni's friend will be taking her to the airport. "Promise me you'll go to the church." "I will." "Good!" We hug each other one last time then they are off – Linda to Scotland and Gianni to his accommodation in Plumstead. He seems to have managed his imminent eviction therefrom.

A few months later, I am visiting with Lydia and Ntombi. I've been invited for some Congolese supper – *fufu* and *ndakala* (small Congolese fish). Ntombi shares news of Linda and Gianni. Within a month of their wedding, just before the baby arrived, Gianni migrated to Scotland. The photographs that Ntombi show me, indicate two visibly happy parents with a baby daughter. The birth of Ariette is a tangible representation of their love. Although flaxen-haired she looks like Gianni. Lydia giggles and says, "She's white".

Gianni's immigration to Scotland proves successful. In August 2010, Linda, Gianni and their two daughters move to new accommodation in Scotland. Linda is thinking about further post-graduate study in Anthropology, and Gianni, wider in girth, is ably employed. In 2009, they returned to South Africa, and Muizenberg as a tourist family – a vastly different family dynamic and socio-economic reality compared to that which existed at our first meeting in 2004. It is apparent that Linda's love and affection for Gianni has been returned by him. The birth of their daughters Ariette and Katia, and their continued marriage supports the conclusion that they are building a family. For Fleischer (2008 and 2009), suspect of binational marriages in Germany, Linda and Gianni's relationship is an anomaly. Its duration and the addition of two children speaks of love and commitment, not strategy and victimhood. Their narrative thus compels the interrogation of stereotypes – here in South Africa and globally, and even within the academic

literature that speaks of women being used by men, and further that subaltern men are marrying European women only for citizenship.



Photograph 15: Gianni, Linda, Katia on Linda's hip and Ariette in front

## Conclusion

In the literature on sex and romance tourism, men and whiteness are rendered as privileged categories. Thus white men and white women are able to purchase intimacy from subaltern women and men. Further, white women are frequently constructed as the victims of black men's charm, and strategies to secure a 'quick buck' (Fleischer, 2009; Venables, 2008). Of the two signifiers however gender seems a stronger signifier of political power than race. Men, whether black or white, are written as dominant in their relationships with women of any race, whilst women of any racial category are constructed as victims.

In the case of Linda and Gianni however these stereotypes and/or easy assumptions are inverted. Linda is clearly empowered as she suggests pregnancy and migration to Scotland, her natal home, as a solution to their precarious living arrangements in South Africa. On a purely transactional level social advantage and prestige accrues to Gianni, rather than Linda. However the rendering of an intimate relationship through the lenses of exchange or rational theory, removes the emotive aspects of desire and intimacy. It also excludes the emotional and psychological investment made by women *and* men. As observed above Linda fears for Gianni's continued residence in his shared accommodation whilst in South Africa; and Gianni leaves the social network – a source of support – he participated in in South Africa as he migrates to Scotland to start a nuclear family with Linda.

The minutiae of their relationship, in part captured here as it occurred during the few days that Linda was staying in Muizenberg, reveals a relationship of mutual understanding, appreciation and care. Linda manifests the mannerisms ‘expected’ of a woman – care, devotion, respect; Gianni reciprocates through appreciation. Their relationship also opens a window onto Gianni’s personal network; Linda through her liaison with Gianni is included by default into his network. Unaware of the dynamics of the social network Linda is obligated to make the necessary exchanges for inclusion.

Her addition to the social network clearly increases Gianni’s social prestige, and yet it also impacts the expectations of him – he is expected to provide ‘more’, however defined, and so is his wife to the members in his network. As Gianni himself confirms to Linda – Rita and Andrew think that she is rich. Hence, while Gianni achieves prestige through his liaison with Linda, her addition to the social network also has the potential to complicate his relationships and the exchanges therein, especially as they are not in a financial position to splurge on consumer items for others.

In short, this chapter shows that the complexity of intimate relationships between individuals categorised as black and white, or European and African, or first world and third world, cannot be fully captured by a macro analysis that frames them as part of the global political economy. While the political implications of the relationship are indeed important, the social minutiae of these relationships speak volumes as to the intimate struggles a bi-national and bi-racial couple have to contend with as they plan for their future as a couple. While onlookers might see politics and strategy, the couple themselves experience their situation as a demonstration of love – recall Linda’s words: “I know Gianni loves me.”

Further, the newspaper articles that speak of fraudulent love relationships between South African women and foreign African men provide a simplistic story. As the above shows, *European women* also create liaisons with South African men to obtain citizenship status. Similarly South African women are not disempowered victims in their relationships with foreign African men. Rather they can also be strategists, who manipulate the feelings of their partners so as to access consumables that cannot be provided by unemployed local men. The stereotypes that abound with regard to foreign African men stealing South African women, disregard the agency of South African women. As the data depict power is negotiated within intimate binational relationships; it is not a given.

## Chapter 7

### Performing Masculinities: Sam and Noel

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In 2004 a period of revitalisation was initiated in Muizenberg. The City of Cape Town had promulgated a proposal, in partnership with the Muizenberg Improvement District to change the look and feel of Muizenberg; to revitalise it to its former glory. In the final two decades of the twentieth century, Muizenberg had lost its lustre, decreasing, rather than increasing its property values. An intermediate or transitory space it became decrepit. As commented by Nicol, a former resident,

“For some years Muizenberg had been in decline, restaurants closed and rowdy bars opened, many of our neighbours fled to the suburbs as the slum landlords bought up property and the ‘ghetto’s’ former quaintness took on the rough edge of what the sociologists call a ‘transition phase’... Our street was littered with broken bottles, half bricks, discarded shoes, the wrecks of cars. Men loitered in groups on the corners, music blared from windows. Babies crawled in the gutters, children played cricket in the middle of the road using tins as stumps. Women in curlers stood at their gates smoking” (2001:35).

In this maelstrom of inner city degradation and impoverishment in 2004 coloured women fraternised with Congolese men *across* racial, cultural and national lines. While chapter six provides a description of a relationship between ‘radically’ dissimilar others, this chapter presents the narrative of a love relationship between seemingly similar others. Here, I detail the dynamics of the relationship between Sam and Noel and the further insights the relationship provided as regards Congolese masculinities and related values. As the chapter demonstrates bi-national relationships are difficult, no matter the similarities, as the two parties are compelled to act as cultural brokers for the other.

### Sam and Noel: Initial Introductions



Photograph 16: Sam and Noel, on the sidelines of the soccer pitch at Sandvlei

A few months after encountering Linda and Gianni, I become acquainted with Carmen, a young cherubic coloured woman. Short in stature and fair skinned, I often see her in the company of Congolese men who reside in the Blue House. We bump into each other in the street, and she informs me that she's Angie's sister, one of the children I got to know early during fieldwork. We chat amiably for a while. She impresses me as sweet and particularly naïve. I feel an irrational need to protect her as we say goodbye and she walks through the gate of the Blue House.

Later that evening, as I return to visit the guys, Carmen is in the street. She looks miserable. "Carmen? Are you ok?" "No, I don't know what I'm going to do. My father's selling the house, and he wants my mother, myself and my sister out of the house. They've been fighting". I'm at a loss for words, and stay silent. "He is in a rush to sell as he can see that people are buying property here. For a high price. He wants to get out of here". "Any particular reason?" "No, he just wants the money. He drinks a lot".

A 1990 grey hatchback BMW pulls up, and a coloured woman, dressed smartly gets out from the passenger side. The Congolese man who has driven the car takes her hand. She stops, looks at Carmen and myself, and says, "Are you coming Carmen?"

"Yes Sam. This is my friend, Joy".

We nod in acknowledgement of each other and Carmen follows them. Loud music blares from the House. Juxtaposed with Robert's home, the distinctions in Congolese class cannot be more apparent. The Blue House, categorised externally as a den of immorality, houses Congolese drug

dealers and possibly South African prostitutes. Since the landlord's death the interior of the former backpackers has deteriorated, as more and more Congolese take advantage of the low rent. Juxtaposed with Robert's house, the difference is stark; his may also be filled with Congolese refugees, but they are church-going students, intent on completing their studies.

I recognise Noel, Sam's companion. Unlike the others who reside in the Blue House, Noel's strong bearing often softens with a greeting smile, or acknowledging nod of the head. I am intrigued by Sam's presence. I've only ever seen younger coloured women frequent the Blue House and its vicinity. She seems to be in her early forties.

### **The Soccerscape**

*"You are under our control"*



Photograph 17: Soccer team with Serge standing on the right

I arrive at Robert's house expecting to find Gwynneth. She is not there. Serge attempts a 'grown-up' voice and tells me "Gwynneth, she took Lyon to the salon. She is taking us to Camps Bay. She's not going to the soccer match".

"She won't do that Serge." I am aware that Serge and Lyon are unhappy about our decision to watch the soccer match at Sandvlei. But I cannot understand why. Irritable, I collect Gwynneth from the salon, and we rush to Shoprite to find sustenance. As we walk Gwynneth and I ruminate over Serge's comments. "I think they don't want us to go."

"But why, Joy?"

"I'm not sure. All I know is that I don't want to go with them again. The last time we went together Serge cut our visit short. It wasn't even half time yet.



“His reasoning?”

I relay our conversation at the time.

“At half-time Serge tells me, “Joy, come we go”. I’m irritated because I don’t want to leave. So after much back and forth I tell them “You guys can always walk home”. It’s strange Gwynn, the way they just stood there. Like stone statues, waiting for me to move. Lyon tried to break the impasse by saying, “Ok, you take us home, and then you can come back”. I was aware that they really wanted us to leave. They didn’t want me to see something. I just can’t tell what it is, or was. I must admit I felt like a child who was being admonished by parents, so I blurted out “But why do you want to go?”

Serge, although exasperated, told me in a measured tone “Do you want trouble? Those guys already asked, why is that woman taking photographs? There’s going to be trouble”. I think he was lying really but he remained adamant that we should leave. Eventually he said, “I personally don’t feel comfortable here. They are using bad language. They are shouting things like: why are you playing like that? Were you sleeping with a woman last night? And they are not saying it in such ‘nice’ language”.

Gwynneth laughs and says to me: “You really give them a hard time”.

“That’s why I don’t want them with us this time. I want to see what they didn’t want me to see”.

The infernal south-easterly wind has come up again. On our way back to the salon, Guy K drives past seated in the back seat of a rundown looking car. He shouts from the interior of the car, “See you at the match. It starts at 1.30pm”. We walk Lyon back to the house, eat quickly and then take our leave of Lyon and Serge. As we exit, Serge quips “I don’t want to hear anything about you on the street. You must be careful”.

I respond off the cuff, and stick my tongue out at him. Serge looks astonished, and Lyon smiles with delight. We get into the car giggling.

As I get into the car I remember a previous time when we watched soccer together – Serge, Guy and myself. We drove to Westlake. And as per usual Serge and Guy slip into speaking Swahili, French and then English when they remember that I am in the car. Even on that day, Serge would not allow me to get out of the car as we waited outside the players’ homes in Westlake. His watchfulness most certainly annoyed me even then. I’m a South African at home for God’s sakes.

Later that evening, we’ve returned from the soccer match. Lyon’s in his room. I enter so as to speak to him. We sit on the bed. As we are talking his face contorts. “Why do you smell like beer? I don’t like that at all. Were you drinking?”

"No, you know I don't drink."

"Then why?"

"Because I was in that environment Lyon. You can't expect me to be around people who are smoking and drinking and not smell like that."

"You need to go home and wash."

"Costas tried to kiss me, the guy at the salon."

"You know you must not allow men to kiss you."

"Jeez Lyon it's not like I invited him to kiss me. He just tried."

"Ok, but don't let them kiss you."<sup>102</sup>

The above narrative highlights Serge's insecurity about Gwynneth's and my visit to the soccer field. Initially the reason for his angst was unclear. What was apparent however, was what I perceived as his protective streak. Noting Gwynneth's delusive change of mind, Serge attempts to re-direct our plans; an attempt to 'save us' from ourselves. His concern was sufficiently obvious to create watchfulness in Gwynneth who later felt the need to escort me around the field. Contextualisation of Serge's concerns within our history as regular interacting actors at and in Robert's house raises interesting points: The public presentation of the guys living in the house was constructed around Robert's assistance through his non-governmental organisation. As members of the Programme and MCC, the guys managed their public image so as to demonstrate Christian morals and values. Further, their individual self-presentation was not only constructed around the expectations of Christian morality, but also that of Lushois (from Lubumbashi) men as civilised and highly educated young men in contrast to that of Kinois (from Kinshasa) – fast-talking hustlers. The contrast was profoundly situated in the juxtaposition of the two houses – Robert's House and the Blue House, and within the bodies of Congolese men.

Serge's injunction underscores the importance he places on presentation and representation. Given that Congolese men and women were aware of my presence and my fellowship/friendship with the guys, *my* behaviour could easily be attributed to them. The English idiom 'birds of a feather flock together' comes to mind as an apt aphorism of Serge's understanding. As part of their social network, my presentation of self needed to deliberately mimic their strategic presentations. My failure to do so would reflect negatively on them.

Serge's words and Lyon's questioning of my female form, impacted my future presentations in Muizenberg's public space. It reconfigured my comportment therein. In essence my body and its presence had meaning within the social space of Muizenberg since my arrival; a space

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<sup>102</sup> I was unaware at the time that 'allowing' a Congolese man to kiss you intimated to him that the two of you were dating.

continuously constructed by South Africans, Congolese and other Africans. I had been viewed, observed and assessed, as a South African coloured woman and as an acquaintance, and possible girlfriend, of one of the guys. Thus my body and even that of Gwynneth's were objects of diverse gazes, but specifically the Congolese male gaze at the soccer match. Serge's insecurity was twofold: 1) doubts about his ability to control the gaze of other Congolese men, and 2) doubts about his ability to control our behaviour as exemplars of his network. In Serge's conceptualisation his male body, and that of Lyon's and Guy's offered potential protection from other men's gazes and advances. Ergo, without their presence I, we, had no protection. Serge, whether intentionally or not, had constructed Gwynneth and myself as "sexed, and there for (heterosexual) men's sex and service" (Pettman, 1997:95). In contrast, Lyon, Guy and himself were "men [who were] subjects" whilst, as women, we were "bod[ies]-for-others" (ibid). Their presence at the previous match had subverted or re-directed attention from my body, as I was *literally* under their control; a point which Guy and Serge liked to make in jest when they'd retort to me, "You are under our control". The following narratives confirm this conclusion.

### *Performing masculinities*



Photograph 18: Soccer enthusiasts celebrating a goal

I am still lost in thought when we arrive at Sandvlei. Upon our arrival at the soccer field, Patrick, a Congolese friend of Guy K, greets us. He comes to the driver's window and peering in encourages us to walk with him "Come, I would like to walk with two beautiful women". Gwynneth and I are accustomed to this by now, so we ignore the comment. The grass is uneven in some places. As we are walking, I say: "Is Sam here?"

"Yes she is. She's sitting over there. Are you married?"

"No. We are still single ..."

"And your boyfriends are not here?"

"No, they're at home."

"Oh ok, because I was just worried about being pulled aside and asked what I am doing with the girlfriends". Gwynn and I laugh in response.

Patrick has definitely observed my comings and goings from Robert's house. Guy told me that the residents in the Blue House are unsure of my 'status'. They are confused as to my alliance with the guys, and my relationship with them. They see me with Guy, with Serge and with Lyon. Who do I belong to? Serge's warning resounds in my head, "I don't want to hear anything about you on the street. You must be careful."

Guy K catches sight of me and waves. Sam sits on the grass. When we reach her we greet, and she introduces us to her friend Faiza. Iza, as she is referred to, gets up to move into the shade, what little there is.

"It's hot hey today. I lost my sunglasses man, so the glare is hurting my eyes".

Gwynn graciously offers Sam her pair of sunglasses, and Sam accepts them. Guy K comes over and asks if I will take more photographs of the team<sup>103</sup>. Gwynn seems uneasy and hints that she'll come along, as I move off with Guy K. "No, I will be ok. You don't have to worry<sup>104</sup>". After more back and forth as Guy K's personal photographer, I return to Gwynn and Sam.

I fold my legs under me, and sit on the grass next to Gwynn. I watch the soccer match and those watching the game. I am unable to sit cross-legged for long – the grass tickles my legs, and I start to itch. It really is hot; typical of November's spring days in Cape Town. A Congolese man, of about thirty years old, dressed in jeans and white vest is videotaping the entire proceedings – the game and the spectators. Sam encourages me to speak to the camera, as he shoots those sitting and standing on the sidelines.

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<sup>103</sup> I had given him a copy of some of the photographs that I had taken at the previous Sunday's match.

<sup>104</sup> We were very aware that we were 'entering' an unknown space without 'protection' from the guys; protection which was not only offered through their presence as men in a predominantly male environment, but also by the fact that they spoke Lingala, kiSwahili and French.



Photograph 19: Unknown Congolese man filming the soccer match

Why is he documenting the game. Is it true that Guy K is trying to professionalise the team? Who will see it? What will they think?

I recognise Gold<sup>105</sup> playing on the field. "Sam, do you know him?"

"No, I don't."

"I saw him at the soccer match in Westlake, and he is quite a character".

He seems to play with a limp. After 15 minutes of lacklustre playing he is taken off the field. Without hesitation, he walks in our direction and needing no encouragement Gold throws his tall frame next to Iza (who had joined us again). With no shame, he shows her he is looking at her cleavage. She shoulders him, "No man, don't do that".

He doesn't move. "I can see you love doing it just by looking at your mouth."

Embarrassed, she hits him. Gold persists, ignoring her embarrassment, "Yes, you women like doing it."

Trying to help her out, Gwynn asks, "What do you mean you women?"

"You coloured women like doing it and you like doing it a lot."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> A pseudonym.

Linda's words reverberate in my head. "In Retreat there are lots of Congolese children. Older coloured women have taken in 19 or 20 year old Congolese men. They are ridiculed by the older ones, because they are relying on a woman. Being taken care of by a woman." I look at Sam. She's an older coloured woman. Iza is also a coloured woman, probably in her late thirties. She's striking, in her bone straight auburn hair.

Our laughter brings me back to the moment. Why are we laughing? Embarrassment or shame?

Sam asks: "Why do you say so?"

"You coloured women can kill a man. How do they say, you are greedy. But I can go for a long time. I have dated Xhosa women, coloured women, but never a white woman. And all the coloured women like to fuck. But I can go for long, because I wear big shoes."

I'm starting to 'see' what Serge was referring to. But hearing it in English, in Gold's thick accent, makes the lewd words more harrowing. Ignorance of Lingala and even Swahili has protected me before. I pause. Given his jocular attitude though it seems less offensive, despite his over-generalisation. He continues, "Yes, I don't take shit from women. If she doesn't love me I just move on."

Iza asks, "How do you know she doesn't love you?"

He positions himself in front of Iza, and peering down her cleavage yet again he counters, "You can feel she doesn't love you. You don't want that."

To no avail Faiza yells "Stop it Gold! Look the other way."

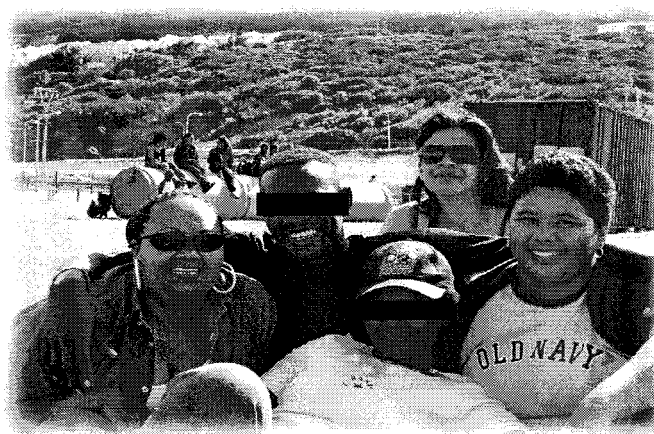
He remains persistent however, leaning his head towards her. "Give me a kiss man."

To diffuse the situation I suggest I take photographs of everybody. Immediately he strikes a pose in the middle of the women. But his lewdness still hasn't abated as he comments with a satisfied look on his face as I take the photograph, "I can keep each of you busy."

Gold dashes off when he sees Noel coming towards us.

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<sup>106</sup> A stereotype that exists within local perceptions – probably the source of the stereotypes held by Congolese men and women. See Kuli Roberts article at <http://www.wonted.co.za/index.php> for an article she wrote tongue-in-cheek that caused major uproar in South African as regards coloured stereotypes.



Photograph 20: Ayanda (front), Noel, Gold and Gwynneth (middle), Iza (back)

Patrick's words highlight the importance of male companionship on the soccer field and its environs – a space dominated by Congolese males – for the 'protection' of women. Male bodies provide protection from other male bodies – their lascivious behaviour, their attempts at sweet-talking and their fighting. Noel's presence threatens to interrupt and suspend Gold's lewd behaviour. So Gold departs before Noel's arrival.

For Congolese the playing and appreciation of soccer is embodied within the male form. Congolese men play on the field, whilst other Congolese men observe and document the game from the sidelines. In photographs we (in the photograph noted above) are the only women sitting close to the sidelines. Our presence cannot be ignored. Other women are either standing or sitting about 20 metres from the sidelines. Middle-class norms of propriety are broken by Gold through the placing of his body, his direct and lascivious gaze at Iza and his lewd comments, to which we are all privy. The soccer field becomes an inherently sexualised and heteronormative space for the women present (Hubbard, 2001).

Gold empowers himself – a rooster among the hens – in the physical *absence* of other Congolese men, yet still within their gaze. His exertion of power occurs across two socially inscribed categories, that of gender (micro-level) and nationality (macro-level). Not only is he a man, but he is also a Congolese refugee. Those in the group are women, all South African residents. Gold defeats South African middle class decorum through his words and his body – a body constructed as other by the South African government according to his nationality, but also by locals who are not blind to his foreign physicality. His behaviour, when read in this frame, reveals his violent claim to social and juridical rights that are haphazardly afforded to refugees, particularly African refugees. By so doing he adheres to and entrenches a Congolese masculinist space within Muizenberg. While his rights as a refugee are laughable in comparison to the rights of South African citizens, the soccer field becomes a site for contestation and renegotiation. Here

he subverts the power of citizenship, reterritorialising the landscape as Congolese, thereby positioning Congolese refugees as agents, rather than as victims of the state's "soft violence" (Elder, 1998) or what De Certeau (1986 cited in Rousseau, Rufagari, Bagilishya, and Measham, 2003:1095) refers to as "clean violence". The insertion of a Congolese ontology within the social landscape of South Africa is verbally violent and redolent with performances of hyper-masculinity. As noted by Gondola in reference to Congolese taverns (*nganda*) in France (cited by Thomas, 2007:166) "... the social environment is characterized by its homosocial nature: "Heavy smoking, drinking, *obscene sexual jokes, and sexual talk* were the favourite pastime for male customers" (my emphasis).

Yet Gold's lewdness is shaped not merely by his masculinist lens, but also by his previous experiences with coloured women and African women. In the discourse used by Gold, his mention of love surprises me. Quick to divert a serious conversation about this through a repeat gaze at Iza, Gold nonetheless notes the importance of communication and emotive expression for him in a 'love relationship'. These aspects of interaction are a fulfilment of *his* expectations. Women are therefore meant to be pliable and affectionate. Iza's constant refusal of his unwanted attention provokes it. And as we are 'docile and pliable' in our responses to his behaviour, he becomes the centre of our feminine gaze. In this instance our feminine gaze is defeated by his masculine gaze, as his behaviour is not constrained by our repressed irritation.

Finally, Serge and Lyon's reservations are clear. Knowing that the soccer field is a sexualised space, they tried to avoid our entry into it without their physical protection. Despite their absence our female presence is imbued with their male protection; recognised as such by Patrick, and yet disregarded by Gold.

#### *Inverting the male gaze*

Noel plays a short period of time, making no further inroads into the opposing team's half. He walks off disconsolate. Taking off his soccer boots, he places them in front of Sam and says, "Keep this here".

Sam recoils from them, "No, don't put these stink shoes in front of me". She places them behind her. Standing in front of her, he leans over her, picks up his shoes and throws them in front of her. "No leave them there, otherwise someone could steal it."

Rather proudly Sam says, "No-one can steal my husband's shoes while I am here!" He sits next to her fleetingly. I snap a photograph of the two of them, and then he's off to stand on the sidelines with the other men. Making sure he is out of earshot Sam teases, "My husband can't play to save his life, but ag shame."



As he walks away, Sam observes him, the way a cat watches its prey. Her words confirm what I think she's thinking, "My husband has a beautiful body. I can't wait for tonight."

I laugh out loud and Iza comments: "I was just thinking that he has a nice ass." Her words encourage our eyes to follow him as he walks away. We giggle like girls and I respond, "Ai, Faiza you are going to get into shit. You can't say that about Sam's husband."

Guy K's girlfriend, Ayanda, looks on rather shocked and says: "Is he your husband?"

Sam assesses her coolly and says: "Yes, we got married a week ago."

Immediately Ayanda says: "Where is he? Noel (she shouts after him), how can you not tell me that you are married?<sup>107</sup> What about me?" Rather provokingly she sticks her tongue out in Sam's direction. I can feel Sam's intense dislike of her. It's quite visible in her eyes. She retorts, "You are Guy's old girlfriend right? What about Tamara?"

"No, I am his girlfriend."

"So you're back?"

"Yes, I am back", she answers rather defiantly.

"Ok. You don't have to tell me. Noel told me everything about you!" Sam's words have visibly discomfited Ayanda. Not long thereafter, she moves away from where we are sitting. Sam's next words follow her departure, "I hear she came back supposedly pregnant with Guy's child."

In all innocence I state matter-of-factly, "She doesn't look pregnant."

"That's what I've been saying, but they don't want to believe me", she says as she continues to glare at the young woman's back.

Sam's gaze, directed towards her husband, undermines the dominant masculine gaze covertly and fleetingly. Our participation in that gaze subjects his body to female eyes; a rarity on the soccer field. Sam's marriage to Noel sanctions *her* gaze for as his wife she has a 'right' to view her husband. I am embarrassed to gaze upon him. Yet, our collective gaze of Noel, is called forth and encouraged by Sam rather than vetoed. Her comment lays claim to his body, speaks of her *right* to that body, and her experience thereof. While this subversion of the male gaze occurs in the homosocial soccerscape, the expression and experience thereof occurs collectively rather than individually. In contrast to the incidents with Gold, our reclamation of social power occurs in the space of similar others – women. The intrusion of the female gaze is unexpected and

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<sup>107</sup> Noel is not wearing a wedding ring.

fleeing. Yet that gaze is claimed as a right through the marital status of its *agent provocateur*. Sam's gaze is thus legal due to the nature of her relationship with him; the collective female gaze is sanctioned or vetoed by her.

This relationship and by implication Sam's 'ownership' of her husband is vocally and physically questioned by Ayanda, Guy K's girlfriend. Ayanda implies that the male form on the soccer field and its environs is 'open' to *any* woman's gaze. It is after all a public space. Yet Sam displays her jealousy and possessiveness, demonstrating *her* position in Noel's affections – she is his wife, and therefore privy to private conversations with, and information from, her husband. Ayanda is 'beaten' by Sam due to her lack of knowledge – a clear disadvantage in these circles. However, Ayanda's words to Noel's retreating back suggest that she has a close relationship with Noel. Ayanda's childish behaviour – she sticks out her tongue at Sam – challenges Sam's status. Yet the challenge remains facile as Sam's marriage to Noel super-cedes relationships he might have with other women. Not content, Sam demotes Ayanda further by suggesting that her return to Guy K is materially driven. Sam presents Ayanda as one of those women noted by Linda – a Xhosa woman desirous of consumables. Sam's construction of Ayanda's motives could be fallible as Guy K admitted that he participated in the illicit sale of drugs and alcohol. He is therefore a man with money and hence a sought after commodity.

Unlike Linda, Sam is verbally present within her husband's networks – networks that cross national, class and racial boundaries. Her presence in the field is that of a local, with local knowledge. Thus her social presence is more confident than that of Linda.

### *Performative Violence*

Silent, we return to watching the game. Proud to be Noel's wife, Sam regales us with a story to demonstrate his jealousy. "They were playing a match at Hartleyvale stadium. I went to support Noel as I do. And I didn't know he was watching me from the field. At half time, he came to check up on me. He was angry. He asked me who I had been standing with. I was surprised as he even reported what the guy was wearing and how we had been talking. He was so upset, that after the game, he just told us all to get into the car and he drove home".

We are still talking, when a ruckus breaks out on the field. I'm not sure what is happening, but Patrick, Noel's friend comes running over, and hastily encourages us to move from the sidelines. Gwynn picks up Noel's shoes and Sam states to Patrick, "I am not leaving here without my husband. They do this all the time." As we move further back towards the parking lot, Sam is upset and worried about Noel. Women – Xhosa and coloured – look confused and visibly upset. When Sam realises that Noel is in the midst of the fracas, she reiterates, "I am not leaving my husband behind."

The sound of glass breaking creates panic. Bystanders shout as a Congolese man shatters a beer bottle on one of the large pipes situated on the field. He runs menacingly back to the fray shouting "*Funga kinoi. Ta ko pika mapi*" [Hold the Kinoi. I'm going to beat him].

Wild punches are thrown but none meet the intended targets. Women are screaming which just annoys me further. A petite, stylishly dressed Xhosa woman looks at me in disbelief, "Why must they always fight like this? My boyfriend gets very angry, and he could get hurt."

I raise my shoulders, mute. I try to assess the level of danger that's present. Yet I see people trying to break up a fight. One or two Congolese men are trying to get at each other. Others hold them, trying to calm them down. Later Noel tells us that one of the opponents had tried to score a goal, and instead of kicking the ball, he kicked the goalkeeper in his private parts. Just as quickly as it had started the fight and the match come to a grinding halt. Final score: 2 -2.

The behaviour I observe on this day is alien to me. I have become accustomed to the guys' urbane manners, and their quiet show of concern. I am left wondering about the class structure and dynamics within the DRC.

We drove to a patch of field, with trees on the outskirts. Adjoining roads encircle the field, and ramshackle houses are dotted around the edges. We park behind a white Ford Escort X3. There are groups of Congolese men (most of them recognizable from Muizenberg) around each car, drinking heavily and talking to each other pretty loudly. I am taken aback and hesitant to stand with them. Guy and Serge also 'stay their ground.' We are firmly planted in our seats. "I am glad you guys are with me. I am not too sure that I would have been happy being here alone." As only Guy can reply, he says, "Yes, I thought so. That's why we came with you, because I know about this."

The fight confirms the dominant physicality of the masculine body in the soccerscape. Women are powerless in a brawl, needing protection (as initially provided by Guy, Serge and Lyon and then Patrick on this occasion), or commenting helplessly from the sidelines. Bravado and machismo heighten the possibility of clashes between 'warring' soccer clubs, as "men's bodies frequently become weapons, in power plays or sexual attacks" (Pettman, 1997:95). These clashes are vocal and physical demonstrations – a performance – of masculinity. The performed violence reminds me of male peacocks' demonstration of their plumage. It is all show, but no substance.

The presence of female observers strengthens the show of bravado, as men compete for the female gaze – women's attention. (Might the rapid de-escalation of the violent confrontation have been both the aim and the consequence of our removal from the sidelines?) Using their voices and their bodies, women demonstrate their love and concern for their men, for all to see and hear – a confirmation to the men that they are loved (and as noted earlier, expressions of

'love' appreciated by Gold). Relationships off-the-field are thus strengthened by the show of concern. Relationships-on-the-field are repaired through the consumption of alcohol and Congolese fare at the local Congolese tavern after the match.

Essentially, Gold and the other Congolese soccer players create a homosocial environment that speaks to the symbolic shattering of their 'otherness'. Kinshasa's failing economy and political stasis in the 1970s, further exacerbated in the 1990s by the civil war in Congo-Brazzaville and the civil war taking shape in Congo-Kinshasa, provided fertile ground for the renegotiation and production of masculinity/ies (Jewsiewicki, 2008). It is facile to argue that Gold's behaviour is a direct and *wholesale* transplantation of these manifestations to the South African landscape. However, the similarity between socio-political experiences 'back home' and those in South Africa cannot be denied. Congolese refugees experience xenophobia, economic struggle and deprivation, and limited political rights. In the face of oppression and repression social spaces become arenas of contestation. Thus, our bodies are inscribed as texts, displaying our nationalities, our class, our race and our gender. As Fanon (2006:131) comments "I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave *not* of the 'idea' that others have of me but of my own appearance" (my emphasis).

For Serge and Lyon the soccerscape was thus a threatening environment, in so much as it provided me with a new lens with which to perceive Congolese men, and by extension to reduce them in my estimation. As Serge noted, the soccerscape was uncomfortable for him, precisely because the embodiment thereof was the antithesis of *his* self-presentation.

### **A Funeral: Congolese Masculinities and Femininities on Display**

Guy calls early Saturday morning. The previous week-end we attended the wake of an elder in the Congolese community. Guy confirms that his body will be flown back to Congo at a cost of approximately R17 000<sup>108</sup>; a staggering amount for any Congolese person I currently know to accumulate. It must have been a collective effort. The previous Sunday Emmanuel had asked the AOG congregation for donations towards the funeral expenses. Our conversation is short as we agreed to meet later in the day. I am at a loss briefly, as I sit on the bed. The flat feels like a suffocating cave, despite the sun streaming in through the window. I need to move.

I convince myself to drive through the village, on my way to Shoprite, taking a detour down Atlantic Road. The roads of the village are quiet for a Saturday morning. The salon on the corner hasn't even opened shop. Driving down Atlantic Road, just before going under the railway bridge, I spot a good

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<sup>108</sup> Approximately \$2 503 in 2004.

sized mass of people standing just outside the make-shift Congolese church's entrance. Cars are lined up on either side of the road, making free-flowing movement difficult.

I park the car in Shoprite's parking lot, give Opal a passing glance as she jumps up onto the parcel rack, and wander into Shoprite. I'm wondering about the mass of people I've just seen, when I run into Guy.

"Bonjour, AGAIN."

"Bonjour Safi<sup>109</sup>."

"Did you see what's happening in Atlantic?"

"What?"

"There's lots of Congolese looking people outside of the church."

"Mmmmm. You want to go see what's happening?"

"Yes."

As we walk to Atlantic Road, the sounds of voices merge with the rattle of the train tracks overhead. Guy approaches the first Congolese man he sees, speaking to him in Lingala. As he chats with him, I look round. Noel is standing next to his BMW about 100 metres away. Guy turns to me and says,

"They are waiting for the body to come down from upstairs."

I recall the steep incline of the stairs and the narrow passage it provides. It must have been difficult getting the body up there. No wonder people are still waiting.

"And then they will proceed to the airport."

"This is the man we spoke about earlier this morning?" Guy nods yes.

Eager to see what would happen, I blurt out: "Do you want to go?"

"Yes."

"Ok."

"I'll be right back. I'm just taking the groceries back to the house."

"I'll be back soon as well. I'm going to fetch my camera and drop Opal at my place."

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<sup>109</sup> Besides calling me grandmum, Serge also referred to me as Safi, a kiSwahili name meaning 'clean', or 'pure'.

I rush back to the flat, grab my camera, secure Opal and find my way back to Atlantic Road within 7 minutes. The coffin still hasn't been brought down the stairs and placed in the hearse. I park about 50m away from the church, and get out, waiting for Guy. I can't see him in the practically all-male crowd that's still standing around. I hear my name from across the road. It's Sam. I wave and then join her there.

With perfunctory greetings over, Sam launches into the tale of the deceased. "The man who died, he died of a heart attack."

"How old was he?"

"46. He used to live in the Blue House. He had a stroke about two weeks ago, and they rushed him to False Bay Hospital. When he was there, someone called in to say there was a bomb in the hospital. In the madness that followed, the man had a heart attack."

I am listening to Sam, but I'm not sure of the story. I was told at the wake that he had died while asleep and that his wife had found him dead the following morning. I remember I was spooked. How could she sleep next to a dead man and not know? In the days that follow rumours make the rounds in Muizenberg during the burial planning. People whisper thoughts about witchcraft, believing the wife to be responsible for his death. As always, I'm sceptical of any possibility of witchcraft. Sam's story adds further mystery to the deceased and the manner in which he died.

Her voice breaks into my thoughts, "They are taking his body back to the mortuary in Khayelitsha. There was some problem about the flights. So his body will go back to the Congo on Monday or Tuesday."

Intermittently Sam's story is interrupted by greetings from Congolese men. The sun is much warmer now. It seems like it is 12 mid-day. Still people stand and wait in the direct sun. A man dressed in a three piece suit, with a leopard-skin hat atop his head parades up and down the street. In his hand he has a staff. He reminds me of the many pictures I've seen of Mobutu. Strange. I am lost in thought, when Gold comes running across the road. He closes the gap between him and me fast. I am standing with Sam, but her attention is averted by Noel. Gold greets loudly and asks if my boyfriend is present. I say "No". He looks down at me, smiles, and then takes off across the street. As he departs, weaving through the traffic, he quips: 'You're so beautiful. If I was a rapist, I would rape you'. I am completely flabbergasted. Finding my mind I retort, "You are full of shit!"<sup>110</sup>.

"What was that?" Sam asks.

"I'm not sure."

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<sup>110</sup> See Becker, Boonzaier and Owen (2005) for full account of this interaction.

The coffin finally makes its way into the sunshine. And Guy arrives. People move hastily to their waiting cars, ready to follow the hearse I assume.

I feel hurried on by the quick bursts of movement. "Let's go."

"I'm not going anymore."

"What?"

"Something's come up."

"Ok." I'm slightly irritated, and for a second toy with the idea of not going. But resolute I get into the car, as Sam joins Noel. She turns back, "Follow us."

"Bye Guy I'll see you later."

*The funeral home/mortuary: controlled public space*

Khayelitsha, one of the local African townships in Cape Town, is situated approximately 21 kilometres from Muizenberg. In an email to my supervisor in November 2004 I noted my angst at suddenly going alone:

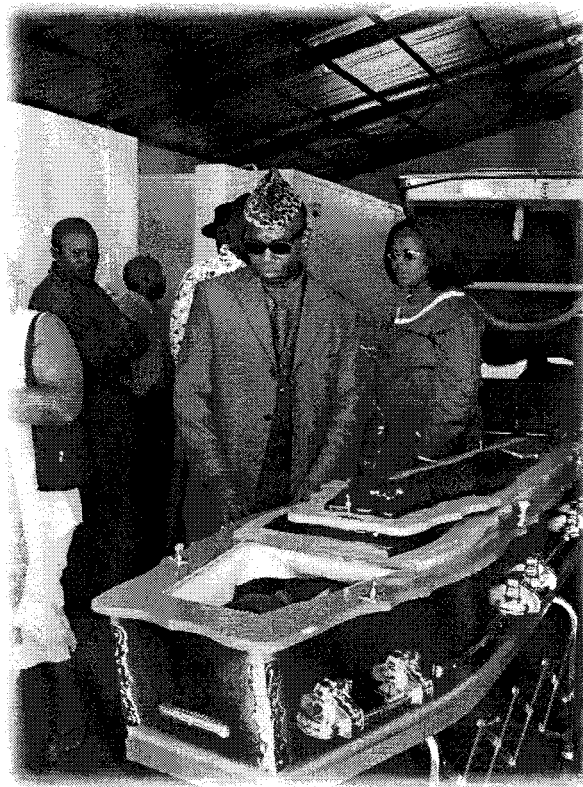
it was a peculiar feeling going on my own, really – for the first time i felt like i was without 'protection' ... at the previous funeral Serge and Guy had been with me... as well as Gwynneth.... With this one i was absolutely alone – i 'rationalised' by saying that i knew some of the faces present, and i would also have a friend in Sam .. so off we went in procession, with hazards on rather than lights ..."

The drive to Khayelitsha is uneventful, despite my jumping of the traffic lights. I follow the car in front of me, as closely as I dare, trying not to lose sight of the vehicle. The road is long and winding, stretching along the coast. Intermittently the sight of the many sand dunes covered by grasses or low lying shrubs is interrupted by the sight of the ocean – deep blue, turquoise and emerald. I am following without thinking, just intent on staying close. Suddenly the car in front of me swerves to the right. My brain processing slows down. Another car swerves to the left. And the bus comes to a halt. "Accident!! Go past the bus Joy". With "huh uh" resounding in my head, I slam on the brakes. Two minutes later the bus moves again, and we move past a cow grazing on the barren landscape. Shew, now that would have been a headline: "Anthropologist in accident following hearse". I laugh to relieve my tension and the knot in my stomach.

I arrive at the funeral home; a desolate and forlorn place with no trees in sight. Women are standing outside, whilst the men cram into an inside space. I follow. Sam sees me, and walks with me. "You alone?" "Yes." "You should have told me you were alone. I would have driven with you. I'll go back with you, ok?" "Thanks Sam. Do you think I can take photographs?" Eric, the car guard at Shoprite, sees me holding the camera. He gesticulates with his arms at shoulder height, indicating that I should walk up to the coffin and take photographs. I feel trepidation. The coffin is covered in turquoise, black and yellow paint. Unusual surely? The colours of Africa? The DRC? I am accustomed to brown or white coffins adorned with gold or brass trim.

This is uncanny. Photographs of a dead person? I glance around me. Women are standing on the right of the coffin, whilst men are on the left, seemingly without intention. I can't make out who the wife is. I snap the Mobutu look-a-like. He has a flag in his hand, and then photographs of the deceased. There's some robust conversation in Lingala, and then the coffin is opened again for viewing. I have the camera ready, but I just can't get myself to take a direct photograph of the deceased's face. I don't know what I expect, but the deceased's death mask is relaxed. He looks like he is sleeping; like he will wake up any minute and ask everyone what the fuss is about. Unlike the many Congolese men I met over the past few months, he has a thick head of hair; all black. Distinguished. He is dressed in black jacket, white shirt and black bowtie; making his final exit in style.





Photograph 21: Mobutu look-alike views the body as everyone views the body for the final time

Two years later, on my trip to Kinshasa with Hannah, I have flashbacks of this funeral. We are driving through Gombe at night. It's a sultry evening with people moving languidly to and fro. As we drive through what seems to be a main thoroughfare, I see a coffin on the pavement. Behind it a white tarpaulin ripples in the breeze. White garden chairs are positioned directly under the tarpaulin. The coffin stands alone and a thought goes through my head – "We are born alone, we die alone. Death, so intimate, is on display for all to see; for those who *care* to see." In a flash we have driven past and my thoughts disperse amidst the banter inside the Landrover.

The funeral provided an opportunity to view a mass of Congolese women and men in a public space together. However, my fieldnotes for this event reflect my focus on the masculine form – its bearing, behaviours and positionalities. Direct comments on the presence of women are lacking. Reflection on the peculiarity of my gaze displays the socialisation of my gaze in the field. I was accustomed to men in the public space. During the first few months in the field, I observed that men and women seldom occupied the same *public space together*.

Congolese men frequented the hair salon, and often walked in groups of three or more along the streets of Muizenberg village. Women were often observed within the public space of the Shoprite shopping centre purchasing food, or 'window-shopping'. They were always accompanied by their children. It was rare that men and women were found in the same public

space together, other than a church. The juxtaposition of two photographs taken at the funeral home suggests a near-natural gendered way of gathering.



Photographs 22 and 23: Congolese men and Congolese women on the sides of the coffin

Congolese men are thus the ‘normal’ inhabitants of the street. Their bodies dominate therein. On the day of the funeral Congolese women are the background actors. I am aware that they would have assumed more vocal and emotional displays of grief in the church, with a show of near-fainting spells, loud wailing and sobbing, and tearing at their *pagnes*. This show of grief is orchestrated in a contained space – the private and inner sanctum of the church. Vociferous and invasive mourning is not extended beyond the confines of the church. Thus women’s bodies, their vocality, their tears, their anguish are controlled. Women do not speak at the funeral of a man. A consideration of the photographs above show the restricted body postures of the women as they stand close to the coffin, with their eyes focused on the face of the deceased. The man in the background acts as an usher. The men seem more relaxed. The speaker uses his arms and hands to punctuate sentences.

The territorial power displayed by men is supported by Gold’s behaviour<sup>111</sup>. As on the day of the soccer match his words break the seamlessness of my observations. He compels me to pay attention to him through his words and the very presence of his body in my personal space. In the South African environment, where the rape of women is a pandemic, Gold’s statement is not without threat. It is reported that approximately 1 300 women are raped a day in South Africa, and that half of the South African female population will be raped<sup>112</sup>. His brutal words are a violation of my personal space, and an indication of the power he perceives himself to hold not as a Congolese, but as a man. In this interactive moment, in South Africa, South African

<sup>111</sup> I reflect more critically on this mini-interaction with Gold in a paper co-written with Heike Becker and Emile Boonzaier entitled “Fieldwork in shared spaces: positionality, power and ethics of citizen anthropologists in southern Africa”.

<sup>112</sup> See [http://www.rape.co.za/index2.php?option=com\\_content&do\\_pdf=1&id=875](http://www.rape.co.za/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=875) (accessed 20 September 2010)

nationality means nothing. Rather my form as a *woman* is interrogated. Whether Gold was serious or not, cannot be known. However, his words re-organised the power dynamics within our social interaction – if but for a moment.

To subvert his display of verbal power, I try to subvert the expectations he seems to hold of women – docility and accommodation – by swearing. My invective has no lasting effect though, as you will see in the narration below. The funeral, which is qualitatively different to that of the soccer match, provides Gold with an opportunity to display his bravado. As a transactional space the funeral predetermines a variety of relationships, actions and interactions that might occur. I expect reserve and control as signs of respect for the dead. Gold shatters my expectations. In a moment, I am reminded yet again of my powerlessness, despite my nationality, my native-ness, my researcher-status. Gold, situates my being within “two ‘systems of meaning’, both of which he ha[s] lived in – that derived from living in the DRC and the other created through his acquaintance with an alien environment, South Africa” (Becker, Boonzaier and Owen, 2005:126). I was aware of the one – being classified as a coloured woman in South Africa – and not the other – relationships between men and women in the DRC. I was clearly at a disadvantage.

The inert body of the deceased and the restricted (controlled) movements of the women are in stark contrast to the virility and movement of the living men. In death masculinity as performance is erased. Here the body no longer speaks through movement, agitation or force. It speaks only through clothing, the coffin and one’s social connections/social network – those who attend your funeral. Meaning exists for those who remain behind. For the deceased though, his “cult-of-appearance” (Jewsiewicki, 2008) is concluded. The viewing of the body yet again at the mortuary, confirms the death and the process of social disconnection. It is the final goodbye. He returns to his homeland to be interred in the soil from which he migrated; he returns to a land of old social networks without the ability to participate therein. Yet the members of this network, whether filled with family, friends or both – fulfil their final obligations; they will bury him.

*Noel’s affection and responsibility: a subtle show of masculinity*

Without further ceremony people make their way back to their vehicles. I can’t help but think “The body is lonely”. Sam walks with me. I am grateful for the company. As we get into the car she comments, “I thought your friend was coming with you”.

“So did I, but he changed his mind.”

“Men!”

"Ja. What can we do?"

"Noel is a good man though. I was married twice before you know. But it's only now that my children feel like they have a father."

"Children?"

"Yes, I have two daughters and a son. All three teenagers."

"That's tough."

"Noel is so specific neh when it comes to being a father. And he gets upset quickly. He's always on them telling them they must tell him where they are going. Not me, but him. I don't know hey. But I don't want a situation to develop between my children and Noel. I don't want to choose between them."

"Why do you say that?"

"My youngest, she answered him rather cattishly. He got upset and told her that he wasn't going to be particularly interested in their affairs any longer."

"It sounds like he was hurt."

"Yes, I know."

"I tried to talk to him, but first he didn't want to listen. Then later he wanted to talk and talk and talk."

"They seem to like doing that – talk and talk and talk."

"That's what I like about them hey. About Noel. He is not like South African men. When a Congolese man he loves you he loves you with all his heart."

"I don't know, Sam."

"I know. I was also worried about his feelings at the beginning. Were they genuine? But his loving behaviour was so constant that I couldn't question it. Whenever we walk in the road his hand is always there to take mine, without fail."

As Sam continues talking, images arrive unbidden: the guys' tight, close conversational circles. The way they look at each other – directly in the eyes when they are communicating. The close proximity of bodies as they walk in groups, talk in groups, or sit in the salon. The way in which Lyon walks alongside me, placing me on his inside, facing oncoming traffic – a means of physical protection.

"They are loving then?"

"Yes, and they don't mind to show it."

Sam's words confirm and support Linda's perception of her relationship with Gianni. For Sam, Noel's expression of love meets with her expectations; expectations not met in her previous two marriages. Sam's expectations include physically oriented, tactile expressions of love. Her relationship with her husband is solidified through private sexual intimacy (intimated in her comment on the soccer field), and also more publically appropriate forms of caring – taking her hand. This demonstrative behaviour, added to Noel's jealousy (identified and understood as such by Sam) convinces her of his constant affection and love. Noel provides Sam with a sense of romance. Although she notes her initial wariness as to his motives, she accepts his behaviour as sincere, given the consistency thereof. His consistency sets him apart from South African men.

Pruitt and LaFont (1993:427) recognise the use of speech patterns – referred to as 'sweet talk' – by Jamaican 'rent-a-dreads' to solidify relationships with European women. They note that,

"[t]he Caribbean man, who highly values proficiency at 'sweet talk' ... finds that his gender script for romancing women connects with her desire for romance. Ardent declarations of love, praises of beauty, and the like, which are a common part of a Jamaican man's repertoire, are seen as refreshing or passionate by the foreign woman who does not understand the culture".

In a society such as that of South Africa, in which women, especially working class black women, have been denigrated and 'played', the direct emotiveness of Congolese men elicits a responding feeling of emotion. Within South African communities female beauty standards are fashioned on global images of beauty; images that assert the beauty of fair skin, thin bodies and straight hair. A pigmentocracy situated within the colonial past of South Africa finds contemporary expression. Yet for men from the Congo, whilst this pigmentocracy is also apparent, a woman's beauty is in the eye of the beholder – her curly hair, the lines in her neck, her heaviness and even her grey hair can symbolise true feminine beauty. In South Africa thus, women who might not catch the eye of local South African men, do catch the eye of Congolese men. In return women craving romance are romanced by Congolese words, their show of jealousy, their orientation to family and their emotional presence.

As noted by Wonders and Michalowski (2001:551), "The expectations and desires of those with resources influence what 'others' try to sell them". Although this comment is made in relation to sex work in the Netherlands and Cuba, the idea can be applied to Noel and Sam's relationship.

*Both* partners have material, affective and emotional resources that are *desired* by the other. The exchange of these resources between the two impresses a personal value on the relationship also noted by those observing the relationship publicly. They have engaged in what Hoang (2010) refers to as “reciprocal care”; an indication of commitment.

Sam and her children appreciate Noel’s active parenting role as a father. However, Noel’s and Sam’s understanding of that role doesn’t always correspond.

Rousseau et al (2003:1099) state that,

“For the Congolese, the family is the most highly invested form of social organization. It evokes filiation, common places and property, but also a feeling of belonging that translates into affection, faithfulness, cohesion and common defences against outside forces”.

Noel’s hurt reflects the importance he places on family. Sam doesn’t fully comprehend this as she has struggled for a while to raise her children single-handedly. Thus the role of the father is a contested role within the lives of Sam and her children. They are not accustomed to a strong male figure, nor the demands Noel places on them for recognition of that role. Rousseau et al (2003) note that Congolese migration to, and family reunification, in Canada effects changes in family roles and behaviours. Congolese men and women become aware of the different social mores and societal norms as regards child-rearing in the host society. Noel’s words and his brief attempt to distance himself from the family dynamics hint that Noel is either rethinking his role in his instant family or, more likely, issuing a threat that it is not within him to sustain.

Sam’s relationship with Noel is not only a consumption of the body of ‘the other’ – African male refugee – which could be inferred from her statement made on the soccer field, but also a consumption and experience of the other’s cultural socialisation, expectations and desires. The anatomy of this couple’s desires transcends the physical. Their desires include a need for affective bonding, thus creating a unit that supports their children’s lives. Unlike Gold’s performance of masculinity, Noel’s masculinity finds expression in his care of, and attention to Sam and her children.

### **The Civilised Gangster and the Flashy Sapeur: Masculinities on Show**

It’s not much longer, and the journey that seemed so long when going, is cut short on return because of Sam’s presence. We pull up outside Jill’s place. Noel has already arrived. Carmen is standing outside. I smile and walk over. She is standing with a tall, handsome, coloured young man. Sam kisses Noel. I don’t know why, but I’m drawn to Carmen’s friend. As we stand there, Serge arrives, looking relaxed but wary. He stands next to me, with his hands in his jeans’ pockets.

My attention shifts to Carmen's friend. I am intrigued by him as he has the aura of all coloured gangsters – macho, strong – and yet I see a hint of vulnerability. His eyes speak volumes. He is accompanied by a younger man, dressed in hip hop garb, acting 'all gangster' using the words 'fucken nigga' in every sentence. I'm rather irritated, so I ask him, "Are you really happy with the life you lead?"

Carmen's friend, Didier<sup>113</sup>, retorts, "Of course he is happy with his life. I know where my bread comes from and I am living a life. I am alive".

I am taken aback by his anger. "Eish, but where does that come from? I am not even speaking to you. I am speaking to him."

Sam hears the frustration and agitation in my voice and comments, "Yes, there's a lot of anger in you".

"Really? I don't mess with people, unless they mess with me. *Ek lui 'n rustige lewe* (I live a peaceful/restful life)."

I am intrigued by his comment, as he noted earlier that he is a member of the Ugly Americans gang<sup>114</sup>. I comment "Yes but your environment."

"*Nee, moenie altyd sê dissie environment nie* (No, don't always say it's the environment)."

He doesn't seem happy. "You know the only reason that you can even be as angry as you are now, is because you really don't like the life that you are leading ... and you know, you are the only one that can change it."

"*Ai, nou hier kom die preek* (Ai, now here comes the sermon)."

"No I am not preaching. I am just telling you what I observe. It's my job to observe people every day, and I don't always tell people what I see. But what I see is that you have built so many walls around you that you won't allow anyone in. You don't even want to love someone."

"Ja, I have never been loved and I have never loved anyone."

"So you don't even love Carmen?" I am under the impression that he and Carmen are dating.

"No, I don't love Carmen."

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<sup>113</sup> A pseudonym.

<sup>114</sup> Cape Town, particularly the Cape Flats, is well known for its gang activity (see Steinberg, 2004).

"Don't let others pull you into things. I can see that you have a huge capacity to be of help to people."

"Ja, I have helped people a lot. People have just come up to me and asked for assistance, and I don't even know them. But it's easy for you to talk. You don't know what I've been through."

"So you are going to use your background as an excuse?"

"I was in jail for 6 years. I went in as a juvenile and came out in 2001."

"Three years ago?"

"Yes."

"What happened?"

"I stayed here in Muizenberg before and we *smokkeled* (smuggled), here number 13 Frankfort and number 14 Church Road. We moved to Kensington<sup>115</sup> as things were hotting up here. First I did small murders, and then later bigger ones. I'm a 26<sup>116</sup> – I sell drugs, I kill."

As he talks everyone has fallen silent. Carmen is sitting on his lap as he narrates his tale of woe. I feel broken for him. "Carmen, get off his lap quickly. *Nou gaan ek net vir jou omhels* (now, I am just going to hug you)". I hug him, and the response is mediocre. No show of emotion. Serge looks on, but says nothing.

Gold comes over and asks Sam and myself if we will escort him to his house, to collect his girlfriend. He suggests that if she sees that we are in the car, she'll feel more inclined to come back with us. Serge looks at Gold, and then at me. Softly he says, "Don't go". I am accustomed to not listening to Serge, so I accompany Sam and Gold. We drive out to Westlake<sup>117</sup>, seven minutes from Muizenberg, and stop in front of a small RDP<sup>118</sup> house. Opposite, the driveway has been converted into a *shebeen*<sup>119</sup>. Loud, blaring music escapes into the air. People, mostly coloured and African men, are sitting on chairs or atop overturned hard-wearing plastic beer crates. Large bottles of Castle beer are on display. A coloured woman sitting amongst the men stares at me, questioningly. Gold runs across, and then back to the house to collect his girlfriend.

<sup>115</sup> A predominantly coloured suburb approximately 10 minutes away from Cape Town's city centre.

<sup>116</sup> South African gangs use numbers in prison, as well as outside, to indicate members' positions within the gang hierarchy. A 26 is a gang member who has killed in self-defense, murdered another person or made a living out of drug smuggling, or stealing.

<sup>117</sup> A multi-racial, working class suburb close to Muizenberg.

<sup>118</sup> An RDP house is a government built house of small proportions, known for its poor quality and workmanship.

<sup>119</sup> Local tavern.



We return to Frankfort street unharmed, with Gold's Xhosa girlfriend and his friend, Goddard in tow. Sam and I return to our initial positions, alongside Carmen and Didier. Serge is nowhere to be seen.

Within seconds arms encircle me. Surprised, I turn to see Gold. Turning out of his grasp, I say, "Ai, no you can't do that!" Immediately, Didier admonishes Gold in Lingala, and although seated on the pavement one can hear the vehemence in his words. I am surprised to hear him speaking Lingala. Is he not coloured? Gold goes up to him, and standing over him with his finger pointed he responds vituperatively in Lingala. Noel, his uncle and other bystanders encourage Gold to calm down. Didier looks at him with indifference. I pull Gold's arm hoping to avert a physical argument. Noel intervenes, "He is right. Gold leave her alone". Gold still loudly vocal slinks away. He mutters under his breath, "These youngsters don't know how things are done". Tremor, Didier's foul-mouthed wanna-be gangster friend breaks a beer bottle in the road. Carmen grabs her eye, and Sam fearing the worst, swears at him. When Carmen opens her eye, inspection thereof confirms that it is dust, rather than glass that went into her eye.

For a hair's breath of a second Didier and I are alone. He says to me, "Because other men hit on another man's woman that's when trouble starts. And we all know that. Already your boyfriend didn't want you to go". So he heard Serge's comment. He thought that Serge was my boyfriend?

Relief is provided by the vision of a strangely coiffed and dressed Congolese male. He greets Noel. I stare. He has bright golden corn coloured hair; a feature that emphasises the rich darkness of his skin. He's wearing a tartan skirt, a double-breasted jacket and brown ankle-length boots. A large Gold cross adorns his neck. Pleasantries are exchanged, he allows me to take photographs and then he is off. I think I have just seen a *sapeur*!



Photograph 24: Sam posing with a *sapeur*

About 10 minutes later Gold returns to apologise profusely. He throws out his arms, in mock surrender. Didier is still controlled, and deadpan. "Don't apologise to me, apologise to her." He looks at me. Gold looks at me, "I'm sorry man". He extends his hand. I put my hand up, "It's ok. It's nothing mos." Gold's girlfriend has escorted him. She mutters: "That's why I don't like coming here", and walks to the car. She makes her intention to leave quite clear.

Yet again, the presence and invasion of masculine bodies creates tension and disjuncture in a public social space; a social space enacted in Muizenberg and dominated by Congolese men. Their bodies speak to each other as Congolese men, and to the women who are present. They dominate and exert their dominance through the control, and protection, of women's bodies in the public space – whether through gentle encouragement *not* to do something (Serge), the invasion of personal space (Gold's arms around me), or verbal protection with an underlying threat of violence (Didier). Their behaviours are sanctioned or vetoed by other Congolese men *across* age. Gold ignores the words and body language of his girlfriend as her performed docility – she doesn't speak to him directly in front of the others – evidences her socialisation within Congolese ways of doing and being. His position is thus sullenly supported by 'his woman'. Hubbard (2001) and Elder (1998) would argue that Gold's behaviour manifested the heterosexual normativity of the Muizenberg space, so constructed by previous apartheid legislation, and the post-apartheid renegotiation of space.

A certain disjuncture in the day's events though, is the appearance of the *sapeur*. His tartan skirt feminises his small frame. Yet he is not ridiculed or teased, despite the sense that his appearance

and posing subverts the hyper-masculine environment. It is cause for ponder and amazement. As Hubbard (2001:62) states, "... moments of carnivalesque transgression in the public gaze challenge the status quo, conveying a claim to inclusion which ultimately allows equal access". The doyen of the "cult-of-the-body" (Jewsiewicki, 2008) causes a break with overt masculinity.

*La sape, La Societe des Ambianceurs et Personnes Elegantes*, with origins in Congo-Brazzaville and Congo-Kinshasa was profiled in a South African newspaper article. Although strutting on the streets of South Africa, the African dandy (Thomas, 2007) has his eyes set on migration to the fashion capitals and colonial metropolises of Europe. Thomas (2007) asserts that the *sapeur* separates himself from the economic migrant through his emphasis on return migration. A *sapeur*'s journey ends upon return to his 'home' when he displays his *griffes* (couture labels), performing the *dans des griffes*<sup>120</sup> (Gondola, 1999). The *sapeur*, fulfilling a decidedly masculine rite-of-passage encourages his accoutrements to speak for him. Friedman (1994) reminds one that *la sape* had its origins in an impoverished state. Since the second economy continues to hold sway in the DRC, the urge and the longing to 'get out' obtain. As commented by Memmi (2006:73),

"Immigration is not specific to decolonization: it has existed in the majority of economically and politically backward countries for years. It is the product of poverty and fear, hunger and frustration, an apparently hopeless future."

For the *sapeur* then a successful migration involves return and acknowledgement of one's clothes, mannerisms, and other consumables by the general public, and one's personal public. Wealth in post-colonial DRC is conspicuous and ostentatious.

Thus, even though the *sapeur* is not easily recognised by the South African eye, his appearance in Muizenberg, arguably a multicultural (Congolese transnational) zone has meaning to the Congolese present. His foppish, skirted presence is simultaneously a moderating influence on the testosterone-charged gathering and a reminder of their greater purpose: to concentrate on affording the good things in life, such as designer clothes, and getting to their source, the First World.

The presence of these 'weird', volatile, angry and black African others compels Muizenberg and its conservative residents to acclimatise to their presences. Unlike the apartheid days of old, the control of *African* bodies is not sanctioned here – unless or until they break the law.

The above performative and often sexual experiences delineate the differences between Congolese and South African residents. They also demarcate qualitative differences in displays

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<sup>120</sup> Dance of labels literally.

of masculinity. Didier's performance of self categorises him as 'other' in the environs of Muizenberg and particularly the local Congolese *nganda*. He doesn't consume alcohol nor does he participate in profanity – verbal or otherwise. His control of self differentiates him from the extremes of Gold. Despite his occupation as a gangster, his behaviour puts him on par with the likes of Serge and Noel – protective, civil men.

Within Muizenberg the diversity of Congolese masculinities is performed both subtly and overtly. They rub up against each other, drawing virtual boundaries in physical and emotional space. These performances have an ontological meaning in and across the transnational social space that is Muizenberg. For Congolese, these behaviours are indicators of class and ethnic positioning. In a South African frame of reference these performances confirm the label of 'other' – national, racial and juridical others. Mariette's verbal representation of Congolese men evidences the creation of otherness amongst residents in Muizenberg.

"I am tired of the arrogance displayed by the Congolese. Three years ago it was really bad, with running battles in the street. Between Congolese men with pangas and lead pipes, shouting and screaming war cries. Even my maid, a Xhosa woman, does not like them. They are loud and arrogant. It's almost impossible to ask them to stop their noise. They respond by saying, "You white racist pig. I can do what I want in this country". Is this the first thing they learn when they come here?"

In a collective and alienating space Congolese men, in particular, "force their existence to be recognized" (Hubbard, 2001:62). By so doing they compel attention to and recognition of their presence, for as Hubbard (ibid) notes "...if a group does not exist in public, it is effectively invisible in the eyes of the state and 'decent' citizens, apparently having no rights and needs". Effectively though men like Gold create an untenable situation for themselves in Muizenberg, as their right to protection from their state and assistance from the host state antagonises the rights of South African citizens to law and order. Mariette is not the only vocal resident. Even for Robert, who assists African refugees in the area, Congolese men like Gold are to be controlled, especially in light of the depreciation of properties situated in the vicinity of makeshift *smokkelhuise* (smuggle houses) like the Blue House.

### **The Congolese Father**

As the day winds down Noel, Sam and I continue chatting. It's clear that Noel is distressed. He turns to me, "I really didn't want to be like my father, but I am starting to feel like I should be. The girls went out last night, without telling me where they were, and with whom. I think they thought that I

wouldn't come home, as I don't usually come home on a Friday. But there I was, and they were not there."

"But you know they told me where they were going. I was okay with it", Sam pleads.

"The girls are different to boys. And in the home, I'm the man of the house. They must listen to me. They are like two eggs that have to be treated gently, protected. But with all this trouble, I am going to open the bottom of my hands slightly."

Sam looks at him aghast.

I try to ease the conversation. "You know Noel, South African children are raised differently to kids in DRC."

"No, I'm with them now. I am their father. In Congo the man is always right, especially when it comes to family. He has to take care of his family, and the wife has to be accepting of him. Women are not allowed to swear at their husbands".

I have heard these words before from Lyon, Serge and Guy, so I just shake my head. I have had enough for one day. His anger, disappointment and hurt are apparent. He genuinely seems to love and care about Sam and her children. A few months later, Lyon and I argue about parental relationships in South Africa, particularly in African and coloured families. Our conversation reminds me of Noel and Sam's attempts at understanding each other.

"I would have a right to leave. I have to make sure that I am safe, and that my kids are as well."

Lyon: "But they are not only your kids. That's the problem with coloured and black South African women. When you speak to them they complain that the man only gives the seed, and then walks away. But they don't know what it's like to have a father. They don't even give men a chance. It's not like that in white families; that's why I don't want to get involved with a South African woman."

"But Lyon that's the way we were raised. South African women don't hold the men accountable, because we don't have other examples. Our mothers have always referred to us as 'their children'. Do you know what's accountable?"

"No ..."

"It's like say you know the ten commandments, right? That's God's law. Now if you go against that God has a right to ask you what are you doing? What's happening? Right?"

"Yes ..."

“Now that’s holding someone accountable. God holds you accountable to him. Now South African women don’t do that with the men.”

“That’s why you have a lot of work to do in this country. You must change it, because that’s not how it’s supposed to be. Like my father, he didn’t talk to us, like you know some people are friends with their children. My father wasn’t our friend, but when he used to call us to come and sit and talk with him, we knew it was a serious talk. We learnt from what he did, he didn’t tell us. And then I didn’t understand some things, but now that I am older ... my father used to be aggressive, and so I am glad that I don’t have that. But he was a father, he did things. Like here, South African men expect to come home, to sit in front of the television, the wife must cook. Like the children belongs to the mother ... no, it’s not like that in my culture ... it’s both parents’ children.”

As we argue I remember the many times I saw Congolese men walking with a child. The attentiveness, and the joy expressed by both the children and the men were unfamiliar to my eyes. Hearing a man claim his children was an even more foreign concept. I can’t fully conceptualise why.

The short conversation with Noel reveals his deep affection for his wife and their children. It underscores the importance he attaches to the role of father, and that his expected experience thereof is firmly ensconced within the personal experiences of his childhood. Noel and Lyon share a similar understanding of parenting – it is a mutual endeavour between mother and father. Sam’s experience of intermittent single parenting makes her wary of parenting by Noel; a fact that Lyon perceives as South African women’s possessiveness of *their* children. He questions this behaviour, noting in all seriousness that “It’s both parents’ children”, a sentiment Noel shares.

Throughout this very long day it is apparent that cross-cultural, cross-gender and cross-national attempts are being made to understand each other. Sam and Noel are experiencing two very different ways of being. Trying to be understood they revert to their personal locations within, and experiences of, societies vastly different to each other. Noel and Sam are both attempting to mediate between their personal experiences, their respective societies’ expectations *and* their expectations of each other. A meeting of two national cultures or societies is birthed within the physical space of Muizenberg, and enacted within the private spaces of individuals, creating a third emotional space. Cross-cultural, or bi-national relationships are fraught with difficulties – misunderstandings, miscommunication, familial demands, network demands, individual expectations and socio-cultural and economic realities. Living in close proximity actors are compelled to experience the other. Yet the outcome of these experiences cannot be divined.

## Conclusion

While this chapter has considered the intimate relationship of Sam and Noel, the situated-ness of their relationship within the Congolese spaces of Muizenberg is clear. Their relationship speaks to the many negotiations of self that exist within cross-cultural relationships; yet it also tells of both actors' willingness to engage the 'difficulties' in their relationship, and the changing contours of a South African space as it accommodates African 'others'.

Further, the chapter also details the social connections Sam is privy to, as the wife of Noel. While she is thrust into a hyper-masculinist sphere Sam has the ability and the emotional intelligence to deal with it. As noted above the created hyper-masculinist space sets Congolese events apart from the conservative space of Muizenberg. In my reading, Congolese men lay claim to the landscape, re-territorialising an alien and at times uninviting space as their own through physical and performative means. Their bodies speak their individual and collective power. For the guys, their physical presence as men and their shared nationality with other Congolese men offer protection to the 'soft' female bodies of Gwynneth and myself. Later, our bodies are 'protected' by Patrick and Noel, and still later, I'm protected by Didier. As observed during these various interchanges, the performance of masculine power is not always brutal, but can be rather subtle. When subtle, cultural capital – the knowledge of each other as Congolese men – is employed to curtail overt or hyper-masculine displays – recall the incident with Gold and Didier.

A visual and visceral contrast to the performance of male masculinity is the funeral I attended. Here the dead, inert body assumes centre stage. It underscores the ephemeral nature of vitality; a vitality Congolese celebrate in their music, their dogged survival despite the odds and the bold presences and expressions of the *sapeurs*. Yet even at the funeral, masculinity and masculine bravado are displayed, however covertly.

In all of the interactions above, Congolese women, inclusive of Sam and other South African women by default, are silenced and accept their silence. However, as observed in the interaction between Sam, Iza, Gwynneth and myself, these silences are also performative, as women subvert hyper-masculinity when they are in groups. While women demonstrate docility in front of their men, they find ways to subvert the assumed power of masculinity. Thus the chapter shows that, a pairing between similar<sup>121</sup> others, such as Sam and Noel cannot be assumed to be without serious negotiations or reappraisals of gender roles and expectations. Relationships are hard work – whether homogamous or hypergamous – and both participants act as cultural brokers for the other.

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<sup>121</sup> While Sam and Noel have different nationalities, they are of the same class, and they do share similar experiences of political repression –although the degree thereof is qualitatively different.

## Chapter 8

### Romantic Love or Migrant Careerism? Michelle and Guy; Hannah and Serge

"Just as white gazes on black, so black, also, gazes on white. Yet, all too often, discussions of alterity have portrayed only the Occident as the bearer of the gaze and the maker of meaning, whilst the 'Orient', the 'African' or the 'Other' is left as the passive object of Western curiosity. The interlocking of gazes is ignored" (Nymanjoh and Page, 2002:608 – 609).

"Europeans don't care whether or not Africa is represented. It's not their navel. Much in the same way that they are not our center. Europe is our periphery" (Ousmane Sembene, quoted by Thomas, 2007:85).

In this final substantive chapter I return to the issue with which this section opened: are the more stable relationships contracted between Congolese men and especially foreign white women based purely on 'love'<sup>122</sup> – or are these relationships also a means of furthering migration careers in which South Africa is but a stop-over on the way to a putatively more welcoming and promising overseas destination? I first encountered the two Congolese protagonists, Guy and Serge in the field in 2004. They were two of Robert's protégés, it will be recalled. While I deal with relationships and encounters from that period in the chapter, the main source of the case material in this chapter is my tracking of their experiences after that, when they met the foreign white women they would marry. In both cases I attended the weddings and in Guy's case, at least, was able to track his subsequent history, including the failure of the marriage, in Switzerland.

As in the other cases considered in this section, the relationships in which Guy and Serge became involved are also revealing of wider issues of changing African and European identities and the relationships between black and white in a period of rapid globalisation and the empowerment of women. Their relationships therefore speak to the intimate possibilities created at a time of increased globalisation, where biracial couples are able to meet each other in transit spaces, and not merely in their home countries. Unlike Noel, Serge's and Guy's cultural

<sup>122</sup> I am discomfited by any attempt to define and concretise the lived experience of love. While we, as anthropologists, could contextualise its understanding thereof, and so talk about love as expressed by Malagasy (Cole, 2005 and 2009) or Senegalese (Venables, 2008) the impact of economic and cultural globalisations has had wide-ranging effects that have led to diverse understandings, experiences and expressions of love, both in Africa and Europe. I therefore ask for the reader's patience as the narratives that follow will reveal the particular and individualistic experiences and expressions of love between Congolese men and European women.



and social capitals in Muizenberg, are *visible* and attractive to European Christian women, who are sojourning in South Africa for a short period of time. This chapter details the social dynamics of these relationships.

### **Michelle and Guy: Love gone wrong?**

I return to the field briefly in May 2006 to attend Guy and Michelle's wedding. Michelle's mother is South African and her father Swiss German. Is Europe in Guy's sights? It's raining heavily as I drive down the M5 to Muizenberg. No-one knows that I'm coming. I have a booking for the Lodge, a backpackers situated on the beachfront.

Upon arrival I call Lyon. "Hey, where are you?"

"I'm in the common room watching TV."

"Do you want to step out?"

"Why?"

"Just step out."

He exits from the college door, looks left and right and then sees me in the car. I get out, into the rain, and we hug. I have missed him. "Where are you staying?"

"At the Lodge, on the beachfront."

"Let's go."

We arrive at the backpackers. Lyon is concerned about the car. "Don't worry. They have a security guard here." We walk up the stairs, push the buzzer and are let in. The night concierge gives us a questioning look. I smile in response. He books me in, and Lyon carries my travelling bag up the stairs. I unlock the door to room number 8. It is cold. It is simply furnished. A single bed is situated behind the door; warmed slightly by a wall heater. A window opens up onto a small balcony. The door leading to the balcony is locked, and no key is visible. A small side table, with two wicker drawers is situated to the right of the door. I am tired. Lyon draws me to him and I hold on for a long time. We are catching up when Guy calls Lyon.

"Guess who's here?" Lyon passes the phone to me.

"Mr almost married man."

Guy guffaws. "You made it?"

"I wouldn't miss such an important event in my fieldwork." More laughter. "Are you nervous?"

"Yes."

"I'm going to have to ask you a number of questions hey."

As only Guy can respond, he says "NO PROBLEM".

I hear Michelle's raised voice in the background. "What is she shouting?"

"She's not shouting. She's just saying that there must be no questions tomorrow at the wedding."

"Oh O.K.. Are you really going to get married in this weather?" The quantity of rain reminds me of a tap that has been left wide open.

"Yes. It's a great blessing, no?"

"Good luck my friend."

"Thanks, see you tomorrow!"

Saturday is beautiful. Sunny, without a cloud in the sky. Lyon calls and asks me to meet him at the church. I walk along Beach Road. The Muizenberg Development is underway. The old Empire theatre is being revamped, with the ArtDeco frontispiece maintained. There's a slight nip in the air, a harbinger of winter closing in? Women and men seek refuge in the doorways. Evidently, the homeless population hasn't declined. I arrive at MCC and follow people up the stairs. The church has vacated its downstairs room, and moved upstairs into a larger, open and more airy space. It looks and feels more formal. Yet I still can't get accustomed to garden chairs in a church. I walk in through the glass doors, hesitant. Lyon comes over and we greet with a kiss. Hannah and Serge are standing at the back of the church. Serge, the resident engineer, is busy cueing up the music for the service. Hannah and I hug. Serge says 'Allo grandmum'. I laugh. He returns to the music, and Hannah and I speak quickly. She flew in from Holland to surprise Serge. She introduces me to Dominique, a friend of hers. "I leave again beginning of June."

" So soon?"

"Ja, I couldn't get more time off."

Serge joins us again. "Why are you so thin grandson?"

"Too much work." I'm about to comment that Hannah should rectify this, when someone announces the arrival of the couple. Serge starts the music – *not* the wedding march. Lyon shows me to a seat on the right – he is the service manager for the day. A quick glance round highlights the near emptiness of the church. The church is simply decorated: two long tin vases filled with many coloured flowers and enveloped with orange bows of organza sit atop two small round tables to the left and right of the church. A number of white garden chairs set out in rows, divides the space into two recognisable sections. Orangey pink rose petals are strewn from the door to the front of the church. Lyon takes a seat next to me. As we exchange seats, so that I can take photographs, Robert comes over to greet me.

"Hi honey, good to see you."

I hug him briefly. "Same here."

"You haven't missed me have you?"

"I have" I say, kissing him on the cheek.

As always Robert is in fine form, asking for attention. As quickly as he appears, he disappears. Guy and Michelle enter the Muizenberg Community Church – Michelle on the right and Guy on the left. They walk in slowly holding hands. Both of them are wearing white. Michelle wears a simple white dress, with spaghetti straps. A synthetic white rose secures the stole around her shoulders. She wears strapless high heeled peep-toed white sandals. I am surprised at Guy's adornment. He wears a white cotton suit, with white sandals. They seem dressed for a beach wedding – which indeed it was supposed to be. In May, as autumn surrenders to winter's grip? Madness.

Michelle and Guy stand in front. The resident pastor of MCC, John, wearing a very pink shirt, officiates the marriage ceremony. The actual ceremony doesn't take long. One minute I am thinking about Guy's change of status from being single to being a married man, and then John says to Guy "Repeat after me." John asks him, "Will you marry Michelle?" And unlike Guy, he responds quietly, "I will." Michelle is also asked to repeat after John. She professes that she will submit to her husband. This sounds like a cruel and grotesque joke to me. How can I submit to my husband? In what way? In all things? My internal rants are cut short when I hear John say, "Will you marry Guy?" Michelle says boldly, "I do." John puts the rings on the bible. He quips, "This is the first wedding that I am

presiding over, where I am also the ring bearer". A ripple of laughter moves through the room. He blesses them, they exchange wedding rings, and then, "You may kiss the bride". There's no fire in that kiss. It is prudish. A performance for the Christians present?



Photograph 25: Michelle and Guy exchanging vows, MCC, May 2006

After the marriage ceremony, John asks Brian<sup>123</sup> to deliver the sermon.

"I am not going to discuss the usual. I will focus on an important aspect of marriage – forgiveness. Why forgiveness? Why focus on forgiving the other without holding grudges? Because marriage is hard work, and it cannot be strengthened without forgiveness." Brian reflects on the biblical story of 70 times 7, referring to it as 77 times. I smile. He role-plays Guy getting angry with Michelle. And then Guy says, "Ok I have now forgiven you seven times. How much more do I have to do of this?" Brian answers in his own voice, "God would say, keep on forgiving. Forgive. One might not forget, but you have to forgive." Huh? Surely forgiveness, true forgiveness, entails forgetting? What is Brian saying?

Lyon intrudes on my reverie. "You are not taking any photographs. Give the camera to me." He walks to the front, and snaps Michelle and Guy. Then the camera dies. He looks at me, with his hands in the air. I raise my shoulders in bewilderment. How strange? Why now? I'm not sure I'm supposed to be here, documenting this. Is this a sign? Waiting for Lyon to return, I glance around the room. Most of the people gathered here are white, with just a spattering of black faces. This is truly strange. Where is Guy's family? The rest of the Congolese community in Muizenberg? I would

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<sup>123</sup> Brian is the secondary minister at Muizenberg Community Church, and often assists Robert with Wednesday night Bible Study classes.

expect to see more Congolese especially as Guy is popular. He reminisced often about giving rides to various Congolese in the area on a whim.

Brian ends his sermon, and Michelle and Guy are greeted effusively as they walk out. I kiss her on the cheek and embrace her. I then turn to Guy. As per usual he doesn't give me his cheek. We kiss each other on the mouth, and hug for a while. I don't know why, but I'm sad. The fray around them is getting hectic. Robert takes the lead: "Please people, the reception is by invitation only and those without an invitation can unfortunately not attend." People snicker in response. My eyes catch Lyon's and he mouths, "You are going with me."

The reception, held at Balthazar restaurant in Palmer Street, is a light affair. The decor is beautiful, simple. The 'food' – *koeksisters*, small quiches, scones, muffins and chocolate cake – is set up in the centre on trestles. The smell of freshly brewed tea and coffee fills the air. Chairs are pushed up against the perimeter of the walls. There's not much room to sit. The wedding couple sit at the front of the restaurant, in the bay window. Wedding gifts are stacked at the back of them. Robert clears his throat, and announces, "The wedding party will partake of the light spread first. Thereafter guests are welcome to enjoy the food." As Michelle and Guy saunter past me, I say, "You should at least have one dance together." Tersely she replies, "No." I don't like her. Slightly irritated I say jokingly, "What's a wedding without a dance?" I clearly hit a nerve, "This is not a traditional wedding anyway", she responds.

In my notes that evening I scribble type: more and more I realise that the wedding ceremony was denuded of the ritual, the pomp, the ceremony, the fanfare. Of course my observations do not portend a problematic marriage, but it does make me uncomfortable. There's a lack of African feel – no ululating and no dancing. I wonder if Guy is happy with this? It doesn't feel like the merging of people from two very different cultures ... Rather it seems like the one is accepting the imposition of the other. It makes me like Michelle even less. What would Guy have to continue giving up being married to her?

Robert delivers an impromptu speech. "The first time I met Guy was at church. I was intrigued by this man. At the time Guy's English was not too good, but he came to church dressed in a three piece suit – the ultimate gentleman. And from there we befriended each other. Guy became a part of my project, one of the first members. He is currently doing his internship, which he will complete at the end of June and then he is a qualified electrical engineer. Can we toast the happy couple?" Everyone rushes to find a glass, and solemnly we join Robert in saying, "To the happy couple." Guy gets up, with glass in hand. The simple gold band on his left hand is unfamiliar to me. "Thank you,

everyone for coming. To my cousin from Jo'burg, he took a bus to come down here. To others who have also come from far, thank you. I must also say thanks to Michelle's mom. Mom thank you for everything." And then almost as an afterthought he says "I would like to present my beautiful wife." We laugh and clap hands.

Robert and I, standing next to each other, reminisce. Watching him, Robert feels like a dad. "He was one of my fledglings, one of the very first I started working with. I joked with him yesterday, and told him that once he is married he is his own man. I told him, you won't be able to ask me for money anymore." And his response? You know Guy, "Mzee you can't say that." We laugh. Our conversation is interrupted when we are invited to sign the wedding book. I walk towards it, wondering what to write. I think of Gwynneth, and her absence today. I wonder what she would make of all of this. If she would like Michelle. As I crouch to write in the book, the words come unbidden:

*Life has many ups and downs with not much guidance at times; yet love's light shines forever true; may the wind always be in your sails; may the sun shine upon you in darkness; and may God's love continue to seal Your Soul Contract ... love always Joy and Gwynneth.*

Later in my fieldnotes I reflect: Yes I know that I was being a little wicked there [afterthought – when I think about the photographs we took together, I realise that they are a 'lifetime' away – yet those photographs show how Gwynn and Guy entered each other's space, and connected]. Maybe Michelle is just not as demonstrative? But I somehow expected to see the passion. When I asked Lyon later if he thought that Guy actually loved Michelle, he was rather taken aback with my question, and said "Yes, of course." I don't see how of course fits into it ...

This particular day marked a turning point in the research. Guy transitioned from a single, co-resident living in Robert's all-male house to a married man, co-resident with his wife, her mother and her dog. These physical and status shifts are expected within the human life-cycle for, as the guys noted, marriage and secure employment were important indicators of one's life progress. It also marked a break in what had been said, and what was done. In our very first encounter, Guy was adamant that he wanted to marry a Congolese woman. He argued that she would understand culturally what was expected of her, and what she could expect of him. Yet he married a white woman. Despite the arguments that Congolese were always open to others, and hence by implication that white women were not superior, the following extract from my field notes suggests otherwise:

Jean-Claude and I walk to the petrol station to buy some cigarettes. He still hasn't quit. As we walk we talk about his imminent wedding, and his anxieties around it. JC confirms that his father will be travelling to the wedding, and always intent on fulfilling his father's ambitions for him, he states, "My dad tried to show me what I must be as a man. He wanted to teach me the importance of working, working hard. So he told me a story of when a black man wakes up, and when a white man wakes up. He said, when a black man wakes up he scratches his balls, but when a white man wakes up he scratches his head. Meaning? A black man thinks of sex, his sexual appetite, whereas a white man thinks "what am I going to do today? For money?" He was trying to tell me that I should be more like the white man. So, I'm working, and now I'm getting married."

The story told by JC's father delineates colonial stereotypes of blacks/the natives and whites/the colonisers. Black people are attached to their bodies, whereas white men are thinkers. As colonisation emphasised mind over matter, black people were encouraged to denounce their bodies through education and religion. JC's narrative represents what O'Connell Davidson (2001:13) refers to as the split between nature and civilisation, between the body and the mind "perpetuated [by] a Cartesian and Christian tradition which views the body as part of the physical world that must be controlled (see Seidler, 1987:94)".

The wedding, devoid of any African feel, removes the vivacity of the body, Guy's body. Guy has been 'civilised,' whitened. His demeanour exhibited a different person and personality to the one that I had come to know over two years. He had been re-colonised and de-Africanised on a personal level. A practical representation of this is Robert's announcement that the reception is by invitation only. I understood later, when talking to Lyon that the budget for the wedding was limited. However given my knowledge of Congolese hospitality, this announcement is cause for derision. A celebration is a celebration, whether funding is limited or not.

Lyon and I spend the rest of the afternoon together. He is strangely quiet. As we drive back to Muizenberg, he receives a call from Guy. Guy communicates that they are seated in a restaurant in Stellenbosch and "we have done it". They are speaking in French, but I catch the gist of what they are saying. Lyon says the word "*fonctionnement*" (functioning). Lyon is congratulatory and laughing. When he puts the phone down, I interrogate him, "What was that all about? It doesn't sound good!"

"Guy told me everything's working."

"Functioning?"

"Yes, how'd you know?"

"I can hear you."

"He told me that I must let Serge know the good news." He picks up his handset again. I'm irritated to say the least. "I hope that if I am married to someone, that that won't happen. Where's the respect?"

"You are not getting it. I was teasing Guy during the week about it, and now he's just calling. Calling to confirm."

"But that's just the point! Why call?"

"We are close friends, Joy."

"It's derogatory and disrespectful of women. And nogal your wife. That you just married." I shake my head.

"Women also talk about it, and in even more detail."

We drive the further 10 kilometres in silence. As we arrive at the backpackers I am conciliatory. Lyon responds, "Remember the context within which our conversation happened. It wasn't just a call out of nowhere. Guy was responding to a discussion that we had in private. Amongst ourselves. He didn't mean anything by it, nor did I."

As noted earlier Guy's relationship with Lyon and Serge would change drastically in form as a result of his marriage to Michelle. And seemingly this reality was not far from his mind. Thus to affirm the inalienable bond between them Guy shared one of the most intimate moments with his 'brothers', his family, not to demonstrate a disrespect of his wife, but rather the respect he had for his peer and kin group – a further affirmation of their confirmed presence within his *circuits personnelles*. However his fraternity with Lyon and Serge is necessarily confirmed through the rendering of his wife's body as an object. Guy and Lyon's celebration of his mastery and his physical domination of Michelle supports the conclusion that he is virile – everything is functioning.

O'Connell Davidson (2001) suggests that sex tourists purchase the imaginary over-sexed, natural Dominican woman, child, or man because the image and the reality of "these objects" affirms their maleness, masculinity and their whiteness. In this frame, the above interaction between Guy and Lyon presents an inverse yet similar reading. As O'Connell Davidson (2001:13) notes,



"[m]en can only control their own bodies if they can command control over women's bodies". In chapter seven, I discussed similar dominations of women's bodies in the soccerscape and in public areas of Muizenberg. In a global pigmentocracy, the statement can read "*black* men can only control their own bodies if they can command control over *white* women's bodies". Yet, for the black man, the power perceived and obtained from this transaction remains limited to his own spheres of reference, control or influence. Fanon (2006:131) writes "I resolved, since it was impossible for me to get away from an *inborn complex*, to assert myself as a BLACK MAN. Since the other [white men] hesitated to recognize me, there remained only one solution: to make myself known" (author's emphasis). By marrying Michelle, and consummating the marriage Guy made himself *known*, visible. Pettman (1997:97) argues that "any sex across the race boundary between women and subordinate men betray[s] the complexities of power". Guy shared his 'success' with a close friend, who would also marry a white woman in 2008. They revelled in his masculinity and in my reading *confirmed* their blackness. While Guy maintained an antithetical public façade to that of someone like Gold's<sup>124</sup> ilk, his private persona revealed a more natural and unguarded demeanour; a demeanour which in racial terms could be considered a confirmation of his blackness. As Sanchez Taylor (2001) avers in relation to beach boys in the Gambia, their presumed hyper-sexuality as the racial other is preyed upon by white women. Gambian men and African men in general, have been stereotyped as hypersexual, natural, available and 'good in bed'. While the civilised, educated African might attempt to invert these stereotypes through restricting his body and improving his mind, behaviour such as that exhibited by Guy in a private moment confirms the stereotypes.

As I interrogate Guy's behaviour, I could also question Michelle's. Why did she marry him? Africa's colonial history and its postcolonial realities are often viewed through a political economy lens (Adepoju, 2006; Fanon, 2006; Memmi, 2006) tinged with conceptualisations of race, and less so class. In postcolonial arguments, power continues to be the staple diet of *primarily* white European men. Literature on sex tourism suggests that white European men are invested with longings for the exotic other. Their choices are not questioned because they have the monetary and social capital to purchase sex or intimacy from the third-world other (O'Connell Davidson, 2001; Nyanzi, Rosenberg-Jallow, Bah, and Nyanzi, 2005; Sanchez-Taylor, 2001). European women, on the other hand, are usually constructed as victims or unsuspecting prey of local Africans, Dominicans, or Caribbeans (Sanchez-Taylor, 2001). However authors like Nyanzi et al (2005) recognise that European women can be – and are – predatory, seeking (in their example) young Gambian men for sexual holidays or more regular sexual partners. As Guy narrates his relationship with Michelle, he positions her as the aggressor in the relationship. A chance encounter turns into a relationship as she wanted to date

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<sup>124</sup> Encountered in chapter seven.

him. She wanted the marriage. In 2009, while living in Switzerland, Guy and Michelle's marriage ends bitterly with rumours of her infidelity. The divorce settlement is yet to be finalised in 2011. Guy's words in an email to me vent his emotional anger, and his perceptions of Swiss women at the time of the break-up: "...living in Europe is like a curse for me. If I knew this before, I would not have come here no matter what. Swiss women are using Africans like toys. Once they do not need you, they drop you like toilet paper" (May 2009). He also mentions that he is dating three women simultaneously, one from Congo-Kinshasa, one from Kenya and the other from Jamaica – "but the Congolese one is in my heart and may be my future wife. Do not be surprised. I'm sorry if you are disappointed". A year after this email however Guy is living with, and sharing a flat, with a younger Swiss woman and her five year old bi-racial daughter.

In a social and political global economy that transacts relationships across cultures, nationalities, space and time, race, gender, class and sexual orientation continue to be valorised. And given contemporary reality, where bodies are more-or-less 'free-moving' subjects, a black African man can enjoy sexual intercourse with and even cohabit with or marry a white woman without dire consequences. In his realm of influence (the transnational community and his peers), his behaviour is lauded. As noted by Robert in a formal interview, "The others in Muizenberg, the Congolese, they've seen the guys with white women. Now they come to me, and ask if I can't get them white women too". At the time of this conversation, what we failed to recognise was that not just any Congolese man could get a European woman. Guy, Serge and Lyon had particular cultural and social capitals that primed them for beneficial interactions with European women. However the personal dynamics and the family and societal pressures placed on a bi-racial couple, especially in Europe remains daunting. When scholars like Fleischer (2008) can disregard Cameroonian men's proclamations of love to German women out-of-hand, then one has to recognise that European society in general might not be ready for a bi-racial, bi-national or bi-cultural pairing. In effect, whilst globalisation has brought us closer together and placed us within each other's physical and heart spaces, broader socio-political concerns do impinge on the personal.

### **Serge and Hannah: abiding love?**

Guy's wedding offers moments to observe Hannah and Serge. This is our second or third meeting. Hannah is amiable, and obviously in love with Serge. She reaches for his hand or kisses him consistently. Rather than being awkward, he seems to enjoy the physical attention. His conservative demeanour disappears when he is enveloped by her aura. We chat just outside Balthazar before going our separate ways. We agree to attend the service at MCC, and then have lunch together on the morrow. I am not sure, but I think Dominique is enamoured with Lyon.

Sunday, despite the cold start to the day, turns out gloriously warm. I am over-dressed, since I have no other clothes, but winter clothes along with me. After church we congregate at the little bistro next to Balmoral. A friend of Serge and Hannah's, Ovu, joins us for a quick coffee. I order my first red cappuccino<sup>125</sup>. We are waiting for Lyon to join us – he assisted during the service today. Hannah orders beverages for herself and Serge. Conversation is amiable. A Nigerian, and married, Ovu doesn't fit the South African stereotype of Nigerians<sup>126</sup>. A dentist by profession he runs a free clinic in the local townships.

Intrigued I say, "That must be hard work?"

"Yes it is, but it's fulfilling. I studied at UCT's Graduate School of Business to make sure that I could run an efficient dental practise. This is my way to give back."

"In the townships?"

"Yes. It's not easy. You know how prejudiced people are here especially if they hear you are Nigerian." We laugh. He is gentle and charming.

"And yet everyone's African at the end of the day!"

Hannah shakes her head vigorously in agreement.

"What happened yesterday?"

"What about yesterday grandmum?", Serge asks.

"There was no African-ness in Guy's wedding."

"Yes, I also told Serge that", Hannah responds.

"Michelle wanted it that way. Guy was ok with it."

Serge's reticence hints that he doesn't want to discuss it. I keep quiet.

Before long Lyon calls, and we take our leave of each other. Ovu pays the bill. I cannot help myself, and so I blurt out: "Now I know why women like Nigerian men. They spoil their women." Laughter echoes forth yet again, and other patrons look on slightly amused. I collect Lyon at the corner, and Serge and Hannah (with Serge driving) collect Dominique.

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<sup>125</sup> A rooibos cappuccino.

<sup>126</sup> In South Africa, a number of newspaper reports stereotyped Nigerians as drug pushers, pimps and scam artists.

Within a half hour we all meet at Kalky's for lunch. We stand at the doorway of the restaurant unable to decide on what we want. Hannah says, "I know what he wants", pointing to Serge. I look at Lyon. He shrugs his shoulders. "Ok I'll order for you?" He nods his head. "Dominique?" "I know what she wants", Hannah says.

Serge quips proudly, "Hannah knows what to do here. Let her handle it."

Hannah and I join the long queue, whilst Dominique, Serge and Lyon enjoy the autumn sunshine at a table outside. As we shuffle forward, we both pay attention to the black board displaying the specials. I tease Hannah. "You are really spoiling Serge."

"I know and he deserves it. He is so sweet really, and just such a good man. One doesn't find good men these days." I nod, as she gets dewy eyed. "I know that Serge loves me very much."

"Next!", breaks into our conversation. Hannah steps forward and places her order. I follow requesting two orders of snoek and chips. We join the rest outside.

Over the course of the next two hours photographs are snapped and I feel slight discomfort. Coloured families stare at what could be odd for them – two white women, two African black men and a coloured woman. Hannah asks, "Joy what do you do?" "I have been studying the Congolese – these guys!" Serge grins from ear to ear. Lyon states, "And now I'm doing my own study. I am studying a coloured woman." He grins at me. Irritated I respond, "Don't define me as such just because of the colour of my skin."

Why am I so irritated? I am aware of my otherness at the moment ... I feel like I am the odd one out. People would easily partner Dominique and Hannah with Serge and Lyon. Where does that leave me? Yet again whiteness appropriates blackness. I am ok with Hannah. She **feels** African, like she has an African heart beating inside of her. And she is just as loud as I am.

Lyon looks at my face, and senses the turmoil. "I knew you'd respond like that", he teases. I keep quiet. The coloured woman who assists with the orders walks through the tables, easily engaging with first this one, then the next. "Hullo my skatties (sweethearts)!" she says, stopping at our table. "Enjoying the sunshine?" She picks up empty plates. Her toothy grin and comic antics relaxes me. Hannah asks, "Can I have a glass of white wine please?" Serge looks at her. "Yes, for you. I don't often do it, but I am spoiling you today." Serge basks in the attention.

I am surprised by Serge's willingness to accept Hannah's attention publicly. During our previous interactions he had carefully constructed an image of control, reserve, caution and easy charm.

His restriction of my presence at soccer matches (noted in chapter seven), and his constant litany of “You are under our control” doesn’t concur with my observations on the day. I know he is mischievous, but even this has been displayed in controlled private spaces such as Robert’s house, or my car. Around Hannah he is ‘more’ than what he had allowed me to see previously – and this in public. Serge, in encountering the female other in his beloved, has relaxed.

Unlike Noel and Sam, the interactions between Hannah and Serge are intense, funny and relaxed. They tease each other, and demonstrate appreciation of each other whether verbally, visually (looking at each other in the eyes) or tactilely (touching hands, each other’s face or hair). Serge assesses *my* assessment of his behaviour when he takes her hand, or she kisses him on the cheek. Hannah, like Gold, crosses personal boundaries through movement, touch and gaze. Yet, whereas Gold’s behaviour was unwelcome, Serge welcomes and sanctions Hannah’s feminine gaze and attention. Although this environment is also sexualised, it is sexualised differently – by a woman’s subtle, yet overt overtures. The space, the day, is controlled by Serge and Hannah’s relationship. Lyon, Dominique and myself are observers, rather than participants.

While Cape Town is renowned for its cosmopolitanism, pockets of conservatism remain. As mentioned earlier, Muizenberg has always been an eccentric space. However, the vestiges of apartheid zoning and social ideology persist within the embodiment of Muizenberg – its inhabitants. Adjacent areas like Kalk Bay and St James were also racial enclaves. Thus, whilst democracy has encouraged interaction across racial categories, these interactions are often limited to work spaces, purely economic transactions and more cosmopolitan spaces like the Waterfront in central Cape Town. Hannah’s ‘invasion’ of personal boundaries – expressed in her relationship with Serge – *transgresses* the unicultural and uniracial norm in a predominantly ‘coloured’ space. Hannah’s love for Serge *and* her whiteness (in contrast to Serge’s blackness) opens their demonstration of love to public scrutiny, contestation and reorientation.

Further, Hannah’s payment of the bill for Serge, Dominique and herself positions her as economically more stable than and possibly dominant over Serge. At the time of this interaction, Serge was in his third year of studies, unemployed and assisted by Robert. Hannah, like Linda, therefore paid his bill without concern. She is aware of his situation and seems intent on displaying the existence of an intimate relationship. In her estimation Serge is “a good man”, and therefore worthy of her support. Given Hannah’s previous experience of relationships, her evaluation of Serge casts him as superior. In light of declining marriages in Europe (Fleischer, 2008) and some European and American men’s aversion to independent western women (Sanchez Taylor, 2001) the marriage economy in Europe decreases. The pool of available and

'good men' in Europe is limited and so Hannah extends her gaze beyond the confines of national and racial boundaries to secure a 'good man'.

### *The Church Wedding*

A year and a half later Serge stands nervously, with erect bearing, in the Muizenberg Community Church. It is a Saturday afternoon, and most attendees at his wedding are well dressed. Congolese men are well manicured and dressed in suits. Conspicuously absent are the Congolese women of Serge's age. The attendees are racially mixed and all have different relationships with the wedding couple. Some are life-long friends, others are MCC congregants and of course there are the family members. There are also those who are unknown to Hannah and Serge, but have made the effort to be 'seen' at one of the weddings of Muizenberg.

Hannah's family sits in the first few seats on the left of the church. Mama Innocent and Papa Maurice, Serge's aunt and uncle take pride of place in front, on the right side. They have flown in from Kinshasa, leaving their children behind. I would have loved to have seen Nadine, Evelyne and even 'naughty' Mike again. I remember the golden haired wig on his head, and smile.

As usual, cameras are at the ready in the hands of Congolese men. Hannah, with golden tresses flowing over her bare shoulders, walks in adorned in a near-white dress with an olive green sash. She epitomises the blushing bride. Serge, with hair cut back and dressed in black dress suit, white shirt and grey waistcoat waits for her in front. The broad smile on his face speaks volumes. Today two very different families – one German and the other Congolese – are joined. Yet everyone's joy at Hannah and Serge's union overwhelms the tenacious thought that swims in my head – are they marrying for love?

Hannah's father, Reverend Duwe, a priest, joins Serge in waiting for his daughter. Dressed in church robes, he will conduct the wedding ceremony. His sun-burned face cracks into a smile as he surveys Hannah's entrance into the church. She is on time. Hannah takes her place on the left-side of Serge amidst ululating and Hannah's father initiates the official proceedings. At least here, unlike Michelle and Guy's wedding, French-speakers are catered for as Pastor Emmanuel, the Congolese pastor of Sunrise, stands on the right-hand side of Pastor Duwe, at the ready to translate the ceremony into French. Hannah's father speaks slowly and clearly. He is funny and solemn. "I want you to remember on this day that I am asking you, begging you, to remain faithful to the vows that you are making. Remember to nurture each other." As he moves closer in time to the exchange of wedding vows, he picks up an African calabash. With the calabash in his hands, he says, "Look in

the pot". Serge and Hannah follow his direction solemnly. "I was given this pot, this calabash by one of my congregants in Namibia. I want Hannah and Serge to look inside." He is quiet. We wait. He says to the congregation, "What do you think is in the pot?"

People giggle and shift uncomfortably. A question during the wedding ceremony? To the attendees? People warm up, as he waits for responses. Hesitant voices call out "money, gold, nothing." I look at JLM, "What do you think is in there?" He shrugs. Mr Duwe continues, "A calabash is an African pot, a pot we store things in. Water, maize. But today I put a mirror at the bottom. When they looked into it now, they saw themselves. I want them to remember this day. And to remember the vows that they are making to each other; not to the rest of the people here, but to each other. When the storms come, as they will, remember that you saw a couple, two people joined, not single people."

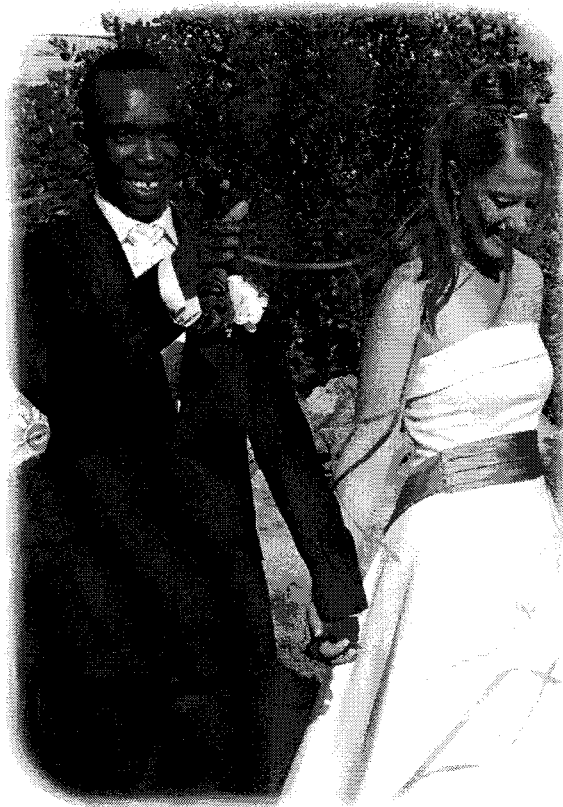
Serge and Hannah smile. I like Rev. Duwe. He is earthy. Hannah's father takes them through the wedding vows, as they face each other. Serge's voice is steady as he promises to love and cherish Hannah, and Hannah's voice is gentle when she promises to love and obey Serge. Some of those present ululate and others smile joyously at the exchange of the wedding vows. I glance at JLM when these words are being said and whisper that I could never promise to obey. He just shakes his head.

Rev. Duwe pronounces them husband and wife with "You may kiss the bride". To much ululation and clapping, Serge kisses Hannah daintily. I look at JLM. He mouths, "that's not real". The official photographer snaps away; Congolese photographers take photographs and video stills. Rev. Duwe asks them to sign the register, to officially mark their marriage. Robert and Dominique are witnesses. I join the growing throng of photographers in front. We take more photographs and then everyone streams into the sunshine and the wind that is Muizenberg.

As we exit the doors, wedding assistants hand us blue and gold streamers. They encourage us to line up as we await Hannah and Serge's official walk as husband and wife into the day. Hannah's mother and father are smiling broadly as her brother keeps his little cousin busy; Papa Maurice and Mama Innocent are more reticent in their body language and yet they too are smiling broadly. Mama Innocent pulls JLM aside, "You are next right? She's a good woman. A really good woman. You must marry her". He looks wide-eyed at me. I give a nervous giggle, and turn away.

A frenzy of people and movement greets Serge and Hannah as they step hand-in-hand into the sunshine, screwing their eyes up against the directness of the sun. Serge's face speaks of relief and great joy as Hannah beams from ear to ear. Friends, family and church acquaintances mill about as

everyone tries to get a photograph with the happy couple. I prefer to stand 'outside' of the bustle. I gaze at everyone, and intermittently take photographs. The photographs display a bit of Serge's history – his relationships with neighbours and peers from back home – all of them approximately the same age as Serge. There's the multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-national congregation of the MCC. Mama Irene (referred to in Chapter four) insists on a photograph with them. The clear blue sky is a beautiful backdrop to the wedding photos.



Photograph 26: Serge and Hannah exiting MCC, December 2007

Serge's relationship with Hannah, initiated during my early fieldwork became more serious during my absence from the field. While we maintained on and off communication during my absence, the seriousness of their relationship only dawned on me when I visited Muizenberg in May 2006 to attend Guy and Michelle's wedding.

Serge's betrothal inaugurated a new route on his individual journey as a migrant and a man. His wedding marked the end of his transition from a single student refugee sharing accommodation with other African refugees to a married and employed man living in private accommodation with his wife in Fish Hoek, a suburb quite close to Muizenberg<sup>127</sup>.

<sup>127</sup> An article written by Said Penda includes a photograph of Serge tinkering at his work desk (see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/5103456.stm> -- accessed 20 September 2010).



In contrast to Michelle and Guy's wedding, Serge and Hannah's marriage is an event that caters for the diversity of those present, embodying their particular roots. Emmanuel's French translation is provided ostensibly for Papa Maurice and Mama Innocent. Yet his translation is not absolutely necessary as both Papa Maurice and Mama Innocent are well conversant in English. However, a translation in French, a European and colonising language of the Congo, rather than in kiSwahili or Lingala, provides an air of sophistication as well as recognition of the guests' nationalities. Moreover, Emmanuel, the Congolese pastor of the AOG, is a perfect choice as translator. Himself a Lushois with a Masters in statistics from the University of Cape Town, Emmanuel embodies cultivation and erudition. Class as well as two nationalities are being symbolised here.

As ululating rings forth, the wedding is heralded as an African affair. A Congolese man marries a European woman on South African soil. The wedding performance speaks of MCC's multi-cultural and multiracial tenor, confirming the church's vision "to build a diverse community in Christ, to reach and save the world" (MCC Church pew leaflet). In addition it, as in the case of Guy and Michelle, situates the church as an important space and anchor in the lives of Hannah and Serge. Serge built a relationship with the church through Robert his patron; a relationship that finally extended beyond the confines of the church as a building. He also met Hannah here. Finally the wedding day provides Serge's family and age-mates from back home with a glimpse into his life in Muizenberg, as they observe and meet acquaintances, friends and work colleagues of his.

While the wedding itself was a traditional white wedding, this is not necessarily only an initiative of Hannah's side of the family. Rather, white weddings are of particular import in the DRC and now here as they demarcate the acquisition and expression of urbanity. Migrants to urban centres like Leopoldville (Kinshasa) and Elizabethville (Lubumbashi) adapted to living conditions and social mores within these centres. As a result the 'white wedding' was acquired to confirm the civilised nature of the urban migrant (Smith, 2009). There are usually three weddings – the civil marriage is constituted in a magistrate's office, the second is the formal church wedding, where it is customary for the bride to wear white and the third is the more traditional wedding ceremony, where friends and family who are unable to attend the church wedding are welcomed and a huge celebration is had (communication with the guys).

Throughout the wedding and the reception it is clear that two families and more specifically two cultures are merging. The wedding delineates the multi-cultural transnational space that Serge and Hannah inhabit. Their families are from different countries, different continents and different continental worldviews and their friends and acquaintances are also diverse.

Photographs speak of age-mates witnessing the union of their compatriot, of the MCC's contribution to the spiritual life of the couple and the family and friends that have come to support Hannah and Serge. It confirms Rev. Duwe's contention at the wedding ceremony, and later at the wedding reception that two cultures are merging; indeed it reflects the diverse participants in their social networks and the diverse social capital inherent in these networks. In effect the wedding confirms Serge's ability to forge solidary links across race, class, gender and nationality. In this manner, Serge embodies the Congolese economic habitus.

### *The Wedding Reception*

Hannah and Serge move across to the Muizenberg gardens to have photographs taken with family and friends. JLM and I return to St Claire's to change for the wedding reception. We arrive at the wedding reception as the day draws to a close, and the chill of the ocean wind settles. I don't know anyone standing ahead of us. Our invitation is taken, and we are led into the Muizenberg Senior Secondary School Hall. The hall is bland, with very few decorations.

I am so accustomed to large, splashy weddings that the simplicity of the hall surprises me. In the 'coloured community', conspicuous consumption is normal, no matter one's class. Family members join in, dressing up the wedding cars with coloured ribbon. Fairy lights fill the space. Mmmm.

The lack of hall decorations emphasises the head table, situated at the front, to the left. Hannah and Serge are seated in the centre. They are flanked by Rev. and Mrs Duwe, and Papa Maurice and Mama Innocent. The table is dressed in a white tablecloth with artificial flowers as the centrepiece. Organza cloth is draped as a backdrop. The wedding gifts are positioned on the stage to the right.

A wedding assistant takes us to our seats, two or three tables away from the couple. A quick glance at those seated at the table does not reveal a known face. There are two Congolese women seated at the table and three children under the age of 12. The table is also dressed with a white linen cloth, with white artificial flowers as the centrepiece. The chairs are covered with white and the overlay is a purple-pink organza. As the 'waiter' seats us, he asks if we would like anything from the bar. We request a cooldrink, and he returns with two litres of coke and fanta in hand. Champagne bottles are positioned in the centre of the table.

Lyon and Dominique are seated at the far right of the hall. The Congolese caretaker that works at the African Institute for Mathematical Studies and his family are present. There's the recent Congo-Brazzaville addition to Robert's programme – Eric – some familiar Congolese faces from the streets of Muizenberg and a host of other people I can't place are present. The hall is full. There's lots of

to and fro at the back as the caterers set up their large pots. A DJ arranges his music equipment and Charles, another of Robert's clients assists.

Soon my attempts at identifying people are thwarted as the speeches start. Hannah's father takes the microphone. In English, overlaid with a deep German accent, he speaks eloquently about the diversity in their respective cultures. He even gets the wedding attendees to laugh and clap. "My wife and I, we are very happy to give Hannah away in marriage to Serge. But Serge must recognise that she is an asset. She is beautiful, she is educated with a Masters in remedial therapy. She is self-sufficient and she has just secured a better paying position at a school in Cape Town."

He continues, "From next year maybe on she will be earning more money. She doesn't know yet. So I think she is quite a valuable asset. So, I would like to give her for free. But at the same time you didn't pay anything to the family, because I know you have the tradition of the *lobola* and I come from a tradition where I have to, I as the father, have to pay him (people laugh) as the husband and her future husband. I didn't make Serge any offer for her. Cos it is really true in the area where I come from in Germany as usual when you marry one of your daughters she gets a piece of land. I don't have any land, I am sorry Serge (people laugh) and normally then she also gets everything that belongs to the household, like bedding, furniture and so on, also some cloth to make clothing and things like that. Serge all *that* I cannot offer you. So from me you will also get nothing (people laugh). And because of this, I thought you know, both sides might be happy. I don't have to pay and *you* don't have to pay (people clap). So there are both sides (people clap again) we are saving a lot of money (people laugh). Maybe that's how you become rich, I don't know. That is just something I wanted to share with you also a little bit to entertain you. Of course I think I wish the two, as I said already at the service, I wish the two all the best, that they are *growing* spiritually um and maybe I can say a wish now.

In Namibia you know when you are grown, adult then people will call you *tate*, father. I am *tate*, *tate* to her and I am *tata* to Chris. Now I want to get to an advanced stage, I want to become a *tatekhulu* ... that means the grandfather<sup>128</sup>. So I think you have to work on that, please (people laugh). Ja, I think that would be nice. And I think you would like to become *unclekhulu* too (speaking to Papa Maurice) isn't it? Ok ... I think you have an obligation and maybe it's not too hard. Thank you for listening and I wish you all a nice celebration tonight that you remember this night. I wish you two also that you will remember this night."

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<sup>128</sup> In September 2011 Hannah and Serge welcomed their daughter into the world.

Hannah's father provides a narrative of the merging of two families, and more importantly the merging of two ways of being – Congolese and German – during his 'light entertainment'<sup>129</sup>. He speaks to a very diverse audience, yet his sentiments are resonant therein. At the start of his speech he seems disillusioned by the non-payment of *lobola* (a custom I am not aware of being practised by urban Congolese). However he uses this as an opportunity to rationalise the non-payment of the dowry to Serge's family – a custom in his natal town in Germany.

His discourse encourages much laughter amongst the multi-cultural crowd especially when he speaks of the savings that accrue to both families. In many ways Duwe's speech underscores the simplicity and humility of his family – they have nothing of material or consumerist value to give, except his daughter, who he perceives as a valuable asset. In Duwe's eyes her level of education, her beauty and her self-sufficiency makes her extremely valuable. And in Congolese eyes Hannah's attributes as enumerated here are indeed of value. The warm welcome and reception of our visit in the DRC confirmed Papa Maurice and Mama Innocent's acceptance and appreciation of her as an additional member of the family. A further testimony to acceptance was Sony's (Serge's younger uncle) surprise purchase of the gold wedding ring set for the couple on the last day of our visit there.

Despite his high valuation of his daughter, Mr Duwe's words can be read as masculinist. He objectifies his daughter's attributes by simplifying a complex human being and woman. He ignores the overt choice she made to marry Serge, representing her as an object to be transacted. The aspects he chooses to delineate are that of the material or external self. He does not speak of her personal characteristics. In a world of consumption where similar products are distinguished from each other through marketing, Mr Duwe emphasises the external 'packaging' rather than the content. His words emphasise the characteristics that are valued by his family, and also implies a response to what he assumes others in the audience would value. The particular attributes enumerated are however receding in value amongst European and American men as Sanchez-Taylor (2001) and O'Connell Davidson (2001) note that "[t]hey [women] can no longer be treated as objects of exchange" (O'Connell Davidson, 2001:19). Despite this 'new' reality as regards male and female relationships in Europe and America, Mr Duwe emphasises the notion of exchange or transfer, having just handed his daughter over to Serge in marriage. The transfer connects two families, but it also means that a woman is transferred from the protection of one man to another; from the father to the son-in-law. This transfer of rights is deemed acceptable within Christian tradition or at the very least within the public expectations of women held by the MCC.

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<sup>129</sup> I am extremely aware of the disservice I do unto my scholarship when I conform to essentialising 'ways of being' into German and Congolese – as if these two ways of being are definable, concrete objects 'out there'. However I am still in the process of creating a way of academic writing that questions every conceptual definition whilst using the concepts provided in the discipline.

The transfer of rights implies that Hannah the daughter, the woman, is subordinate to the father, and also subordinate to the husband as his wife (recall the marriage vows to obey). This suits Serge's expectations as he, Lyon and Guy had always claimed that I was "under their control". Hannah's submissiveness, performed overtly, stands in stark contrast to the earlier characteristics noted by Duwe – her independence. Without full awareness of the dichotomy he creates, Mr Duwe disempowers his daughter. His gendered embodiment of her contradicts her "technology of the self" (Foucault, cited in Jordan and Aitchison, 2008) that resists domination or control of her person and her body (recall her transgression of public space through her overt displays of affection for Serge).

Mr Duwe's 'wish', that Hannah and Serge produce offspring is an injunction, as he perceives it to be obligatory. This directive highlights his public role as father, and thus head of his family, and also pastor. He ignores the choice that would have to be made by *both* Serge and Hannah to extend their nuclear family beyond the two of them. Moreover the injunction offers confirmation of the family's full acceptance of Serge. Two families, two bloodlines, are permanently intertwined through the birth of children. Offspring confirm the bond of love, and unites two families at least for as long as the child/ren continue living. In light of the marriage statistics in Germany Duwe's statement is not surprising. Fleischer (2008:10) reports that "... in 2004, every sixth marriage was binational" in Germany. She also reports on the suspicion with which binational marriages are perceived. However, this is not displayed by Duwe. His acceptance mirrors the manner in which Serge (and Hannah) handled the brokering of the marriage. Serge learnt German so as to communicate with them and he stood up to scrutiny and questioning by Duwe at their first meeting. Serge's intentions, those of an honourable man, were clear. Robert's impromptu speech confirms Serge's attributes in light of those illuminated by Mr Duwe.

"We decided whether he should go to college or not and decided that he can go to college. I was worried because of the English. But by the end of that year he got the highest marks in the country for the course that he was doing. So now you know how intelligent Serge is. Very quiet, but a very clever guy. The college recommended that he goes to Cape Tech because they could take him to the next level. In that year he got the highest marks, 100% in Math at third year university level. He was then invited to do the telecommunications course, which is a very difficult course to get into. And only 15 people get into the course. Only clever people pass the course, and only 7 people passed that course and Serge was one of them. He is now working at a very responsible and stable position traveling around the country installing ATMs connecting them to satellites and to landlines. He is a very educated and intelligent guy and yet very humble. Every single Sunday he is at church doing our sound for us, and supporting our ministry in every way. And mostly I have really been

encouraged to see how he has grown in his love and understanding of the Lord and for Jesus Christ and for the gospel. So I want to pay tribute to him and say that I respect you so much (a number of people show approval through staccato shouts) and I appreciate you and I am very proud of you for what you have achieved, Serge Nkulula.” Some of those gathered shout out “Nkulula”.

A close reading of Robert’s speech reveals its responsive nature to Mr Duwe’s speech. Considering the close relationship<sup>130</sup> between Serge and Robert, his presentation of Serge’s attributes is expected. These attributes are particularly attractive to female members in the audience, as their ‘uh-huhs’ and clapping fill the air when Robert details Serge’s intellectual capacity, his employment status and his humility. Robert’s statement is imputed with meaning by different attendees at the reception: there is Hannah and Serge’s family, Congolese men and women, work colleagues of Serge’s, friends of the two families and fellow MCC members. To each of these cohorts, Robert confirms that Serge’s honour and status are beyond reproach. In response to Hannah’s family, especially Mr Duwe, Robert intimates Serge’s determination to ‘better’ his opportunities through education, while also noting that Serge’s intellectual capacity is of the highest order.

As O’Connell Davidson (2001) argues

“In Western discourses on racial ‘Otherness’, the notion of ‘civilization’ as the apex of an evolutionary process of social development has often been read as implying a radical separation from and/or corruption of ‘nature’, and thus involving a kind of loss, even as it confers intellectual supremacy upon the ‘civilized races’.

Serge’s improvement of self through education thus renders him as civilized, denuding him of his ‘natural’ African-ness. As noted by Linda, Congolese are the most “European Africans” she had encountered, and as argued by Lyon at our first meeting, “There is no difference between myself and a white Frenchman. We dress the same, we have the same behaviours. When I look at him and me I don’t see a difference” (Lyon, August 2004). To be recognised as a civilised human being, success is granted through educational achievement. Social capital increases as one attains higher reaches of education. This is accepted and preferred within the DRC, especially given the civilising mission of the early twentieth century, when a number of Congolese underwent Catholic mission education (Fabian, 1983; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). Education was thus espoused as an important indicator of evolution, social capital and class.

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<sup>130</sup> Serge has always referred to Robert as *mzee* – a Swahili term denoting elder and thus a term of respect. Rubbers (2009:638) comments that Congolese in Lubumbashi (Serge’s home town) are known to play with kinship terms, so as “to develop a more ‘balanced’ form of reciprocity”.

For Serge and his family the profundity of completing his tertiary education is enormous. His grandfather, the Commissar of Police during the 1960s, was schooled in Belgium. In a rare formal interview Serge reminisces about his grandfather's emphasis on schooling. "He always warned us ... you represent your family, your tribe, your area as a student. Everyone knew who was studying. They would ask you, when do you go back?" (November, 2007). The decision to truncate Serge's tertiary education in the Congo was not made easily. However, fearing his conscription into the army, his parents encouraged him to leave. The initial stages of migration proved difficult for Serge, as he was compelled to survive. The furthering of his education would only become a reality in 2006 – 5 years after his migration to South Africa. The completion of his studies was thus a fulfilment of his grandfather's ideal for his family, and also the closing of a circle. Unable to provide tertiary education for his other children Serge's father depended on him as the oldest child to represent the prestige of the immediate family. Serge's success was thus a dual representation: a reflection of his intellectual prowess and a reflection of family honour.

As part of a Congolese migrant population – some authors would argue a Congolese diaspora (Kazadi wa Kabwe and Segatti, 2003) – Serge's education and his employment in an international company increased his status in the Congolese "marriage economy" of Muizenberg (Cole, 2005). As he himself notes, he was propositioned by Congolese women.

"Joy you know, when I was studying no Congolese woman was really interested in me. You know what happened. I was boring to them because I was focussing on my studies. But now, they have been proposing me. One even said that she didn't mind if I married Hannah. She was willing to be my second wife, and then she could return to the DRC as my second wife (Serge, November 2007)."

The many sounds of approval made by Congolese women as Robert detailed Serge's educational and employment achievements support the perception of Serge's increased status. In a marked turn-around, Congolese women perceived Serge differently.

During the early stages of fieldwork, I had become acquainted with a particular love interest of Serge's – Sylvie. Of slight build and pretty, Sylvie visited Serge regularly. Lyon or Guy were always present as chaperones, thus confusing external observers as regards the primary love interest. Sylvie broke off the fledgling relationship however preferring to seek the attention of a working Congolese man. Without informing Serge, she was observed having lunch with the 'chosen one' at one of the restaurants in the Waterfront. Sylvie tried to deny the observation, but finally blurted out, "You are always focusing on studies. You don't have time for me". Serge added in relating the narrative, "And I didn't have money either". His assumed poverty was a blow to his pride; a pride learned from his grandfather, and demonstrated in his

modulated tones, his bearing, his controlled demeanour and his calculated behaviour. Sylvie's short-sightedness cost her a child out of wedlock and a disgraceful return to the Congo<sup>131</sup>.

Serge and Sylvie's non-relationship casts an interesting light on the political economy of desire literature. Sylvie and Serge's expectations and desires were clearly contrary to each other. Whilst Sylvie clearly wanted someone who would pay her attention and 'treat' her Serge's desires were future orientated. By focusing on his studies, rather than on intimate relationships, he *chose* to emphasise his future, rather than his immediate needs.

Within the complex of Congolese understanding, all men and women are considered to be adults once they are married. However, Serge and the others delayed their 'graduation' to social manhood and adulthood so as to be better *future* providers. The time it took to complete his degree and become employed was not long in relative terms. However, for Sylvie, whose needs were more immediate, Serge's focus was suspect. As Linda noted, Congolese women want money for conspicuous consumption; a point that Serge, Guy and Lyon often belaboured. In a complex society, like the DRC, where suffering is daily, the material dimension becomes important social signifiers of class; of the ones who are making it. In a country riddled with social and structural violence, any demonstration of wealth is thus lauded even if that expression of wealth comes at great cost, as in the case of many *sapeurs* in France (Thomas, 2007).

Serge's thinking and strategies set him apart from 'ordinary' Congolese citizens in the Congo – whom he refers to as the 'good Congolese' (June 2006). Able to migrate he aspired to and completed a higher degree that propels him further along a middle-class existence. He got out; and as Congolese would expect from a migrant, he succeeded economically and symbolically. Serge's attainments both materially and culturally validated his migration to South Africa from the DRC. Not only had he secured formal employment at a regular wage, but he completed his degree in Engineering and secured the love of a woman – a European woman. As in the case of Guy, Serge's marriage while not necessarily strategically manoeuvred, brings Serge an added prestige. Yet this prestige is not always valued by Congolese women. Lydia, in 2007, intimated concern when she reported that she had seen Lyon with a white woman. She felt that all three 'friends' dating of, and potential marriage to, white women were suspect. The distress shown by Congolese women hints at some of the Congolese migrant community's 'hesitation', specifically women, concerning exogamy and perceived hypergamy (Cole, 2005). Prestige is however

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<sup>131</sup> The progenitor of the baby, a member of Wednesday bible study classes eventually married an African American woman in March 2010 in the United States.



accorded by the men. Serge and Hannah's further migration to Germany in 2009 classes him as a true *mikiliste* as he makes the 'final' transition from Africa to Europe.

Socio-culturally, Serge's marriage reconstituted his position in the family from 'boy' to man. He finally deserved the position of being the eldest in his nuclear family. Moreover his marriage to Hannah increased his prestige amongst his male peers in Muizenberg and possibly even his family who are still in the DRC – Hannah's European-ness and her whiteness elevates his position, marking him as a 'big man'. Yet despite these material connotations attached to their marriage, their mutual love, respect and commitment to each other are evidenced in the photographs and later in Serge's speech at the formal reception: Not only does he thank his family, Robert and Gwynneth from the project, the guys, Hannah's family for 'producing' her, and myself but he thanks Hannah for supporting and believing in him whilst he was studying *and* without money. His words confirm his search for a non-material woman: a woman distinct from the stereotype of a Congolese woman. As Nyamnjoh and Page (2002:263) comment in reference to Cameroonian men's experiences with white women,

“For young male students, the attraction of a white girlfriend was also monetary. Relative to a black girlfriend, whites were seen as less financially demanding. However, in addition, white girlfriends were seen by some male students as more faithful. Precisely because they were less concerned with money, white girls, it was suggested, were more interested in romantic love”.

Serge's appreciation of Hannah's constant love is tangible and I am further convinced that *their* marriage is a marriage of love. That it appears to be happy and still endures at the time of writing is further confirmation of that.

## Conclusion

Here, as in the previous chapters of this section, love and intimacy are of paramount observational concern. However, it is the dynamics surrounding the relationship, or the external expression thereof, that speaks to the socio-cultural meanings attached to these relationships. These relationships cannot easily be analysed outside of societal categorisations such as race, class and gender at the level that anthropologists and sociologists conventionally operate. Yet to *merely* situate these relationships within the global political economy, or to construct them as *merely* transactional, fails to recognise the agency and choice of the individuals concerned, and risks distorting their reality. Altruistic love relationships are quite as plausible as transactional one-sided ones even in the context of Congolese migration aspirations. This chapter, indeed this entire final section, confirms the complexity of relationships between heterosexual migrant

Congolese and the 'others' of the opposite sex they encounter, the necessity of micro studies, and the importance of situating the micro within the relevant macro contexts.

## Conclusion

“[Africans] are presented as having little chance of progress as Africans or blacks, and [are] invited to intensify their assumed craving to become like the whites in Europe and North America” (Nyamnjoh 2000:5).

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In a continent where mass deprivation is the norm, European or western economic norms have been touted as a solution thereto (Escobar 2005). Africans of every class – from working class to the elite – migrate so as to acquire value, prestige and success. The chances of being a successful migrant, however conceived, are minimal at best for first generation African migrants, especially for Congolese migrants, who are all impacted adversely by economic impoverishment. Most Congolese are unable to secure passage via aeroplane to South Africa, let alone European countries, Canada and the States. Using various strategies to enter countries – applying for study permits, business visas, tourist visas, or seeking asylum – Congolese find themselves on the receiving end of a near global aversion to migration (whether voluntary or involuntary), particularly migration from Africa. The movement of African peoples is thus constructed as a flow that needs to be curtailed and policed, as non-citizen bodies move across permeable borders and into the various socio-political milieus of different African and European states. Received variably across the African continent as well as globally, refugees and economic migrants contend with xenophobic citizens and xenophobic state policies.

Movements from and within Africa resemble in some ways the transnational movements observed and charted in America, Australia, Germany and France since the 1960s. Yet they are also quite different. Congolese migration to South Africa, the topic of this thesis, is qualitatively different from Congolese migration to the States, Germany, France and Belgium. Not only is Congolese migration to South Africa an example of South-South migration, but the peculiarities of the South African polity differentiate it from those of European countries and the United States. While the Congolese transnational community shares a number of similarities, not the least of which is their continued interest in, and support for, Congolese musicians and dancers, and the ubiquitous reproduction of *la sape* in their various host countries (Thomas, 2007), their social, political, and economic experiences within African host countries, and in this case, South Africa differ from their experiences in western democracies.

South Africa has been lukewarm and antagonistic in its reception of African refugees. Despite the creation and ratification of a new Immigration Act in 2002, the government has been draconian and remiss in its administration of refugees, placing the burden of proof of refugee-

ness on the shoulders of Congolese and other African asylum seekers. This particular administrative burden has led to corruption and inefficient management of the permitting system in the Home Affairs department, as asylum seekers are encouraged to 'buy' the appropriate papers (Mail and Guardian online, 2009). Further the recent amendments to the Act in March 2011 demonstrate the South African government's continued commitment to *deter* immigration into South Africa, rather than ameliorating its tarnished reputation as a receiving country.

Given the South African government's disinterest and ill provision for them, most Congolese refugees and migrants have to rely on their personal ingenuity and their social networks to survive in South Africa, but they are also 'pre-programmed' to do so, as indicated by the very title of this thesis as well as the discussion in Chapter 2. Mobutu's abdication of responsibility for his citizens implicit in his exhortation *on se débrouille*, that they must fend for themselves, created a special kind of Congolese economic habitus, cultivated especially during times of economic distress (which have been virtually endemic in the DRC over the last 20 years). This *predisposes* Congolese migrants to the creation of social networks that extend beyond class, racial, ethnic and national lines. As noted elsewhere, the specific context within which they find themselves, of course, determines the potential for creating these links. However, once created, strategic links can open up career paths that include the aspiration to attain *lola*, the ultimate destination in the global North.

In spite of Congolese migrants' preparedness to fend for themselves, some are better prepared and better positioned than others when it comes to using their economic habitus to their advantage. Part II of the thesis revealed the importance of class. More than the general run of Congolese in Muizenberg, 'the guys,' were able to deploy their socio-cultural capital – conservative mannerisms and behaviours, previous tertiary education in the DRC, religious affiliation, presentation of self and self-expression – to gain access to a willing and economically able South African patron. Their situations, although dire during the initial period of their migration to South Africa, were irrevocably improved by their acquaintance and friendship with Robert. While their initial living conditions and employment as security guards and car guards might have given the impression that they were typical working-class migrants, they had socio-cultural capital not shared with other Congolese that attracted Robert and helped them all to advance their migrant careers. Not only were they able to create viable livelihoods within South Africa, but they were able, through marriage to European women, to transcend their political categorisation in South Africa as refugees and 'burdens on the state.' Further on-migration to Europe negated their disempowerment as refugees in South Africa and redefined them as viable and successful Congolese men, not pariahs, in their respective European host countries and in the Congolese transnational community at large. Serge boasts proudly on his Facebook page

that he was a Design engineer for Diebold and that he has studied at Uni Duisburg Essen in Germany, where he now resides with his wife. In his instance, posturing on Facebook can be likened to the *dans de griffes* performed by the *sapeurs* upon their return to the DRC (Friedman, 1994). Serge ‘shows off’ his intellectual prowess and class mobility in much the same way that *sapeurs* display their *haute couture* labels. For as Jackson (2007:129 – 130) so poignantly states,

It is a migrant form of consciousness that is constantly seeking some object that will give the isolated ego a sense of greater power and presence. One will feel good about oneself on the strength of the clothes or cosmetics one puts on, the car one drives, the house one owns, the club or congregation to which one belongs, the body one builds, the food or drink one consumes, the things, families, or friends one has. If the migrant appears to put an inordinate effort into acquiring and displaying what he or she perceives to be the crucial symbolic capital of the host culture, or seems to cling to the customs of the culture left behind, it is because he or she confronts every day the experience of being drained and diminished, cut down, made to feel small, reduced to a state of what Giorgio Agamben calls “bare life”.

Of course Serge’s success was in large part due to Robert’s assistance, and this reveals the imperative of diversifying one’s social network beyond nationality and class if one is to ‘make it’ in Congolese terms. Future research on transnational migration and diaspora development needs to consider the importance of client-patronage relationships constructed during migration, especially in reference to African migrants. While patronage is often discussed in relation to rural Africa, or in respect of state politics, migration theorists have not seriously contemplated its importance in the migratory process, and its various stages outside of the old ‘chain migration’ paradigm. As part of their economic habitus, Congolese migrants seek beneficial relationships – practising what Vincent (1978) refers to as “manipulative strategies” – so as to further the attainment of their goals. What westerners might consider as strategic or manipulative, Congolese and other African migrants regard more positively: receipt of assistance obligates the receiver to give in return, especially when the economic circumstances of the two parties are inverted. Client-patronage, with its inherent obligatory mechanisms, is therefore an apt conceptualisation of the interactions of some migrants’ relationships with more powerful peers and more powerful others.

As the narratives of my primary research informants indicate, the literature on client-patronage has relevance to the understanding of social relationships created across race and nationality. Thus, while the contemporary emphasis on transnational social space has underscored the social, economic, psychic and emotional value of a deep and wide social network, my own work shows

that one aspect of social networks – the relationship between clients and patron – should not be underestimated, nor further ignored. Through a focus on the transnational social space, and hence the reality of migrants lives across two or more countries, social scientists lose sight of the relationships created *in situ*. While I identified my research participants ultimately as transmigrants, I was compelled to recognise their embeddedness within a specific and localised context. I therefore contend that while we as social scientists and social theorists should maintain a focus on the transnational activities of transmigrants, we should not emphasise the global to the exclusion of localised activities and expressions of self that occur in host countries in response to the dynamics inherent therein.

In short, for my three research participants their ability to transcend the peculiarities of the South African state's xenophobic administrative practices, and the particularities of the South African economy supports the conclusion that migrants' success is built on contingency and the diversification of one's social network to further advance access to variable and valuable social capital, and the imperative to do so may reside deep in the cultural and national background.

The guys, in common with all of the Congolese in Muizenberg, sought solace in Christian worship, which in turn opened up possibilities for networking. Unlike the experience of the Muslim migrants from Malawi discussed by Vawda (2009) and the Muslim brotherhood that is so useful to Senegalese migrants (Dowden, 2008b), the various denominations of Christianity provide for different social capitals and possibilities to extend one's network beyond ethnicity and nationality. Recent literature has demonstrated the creation of a transnational religious space that transcends the boundedness of one country (Levitt, 2001), but there has been much less attention paid to migrants' involvement in multi-national or multi-cultural congregations.

A comparison of the two churches – Sonrise Assembly of God and MCC – provided a clear statement as to the choices Congolese men and women made regarding their social positioning within Muizenberg and the wider Cape Town and South African environments (Ch. 4); the two churches provided specific ways of religious being and religious and class belonging.

The Assembly of God church provided a near homogenous Congolese environment; an environment in which women were openly subordinated to men. Sonrise AOG thus offered a familiar space of being; familiar not only in regards to worshipping God, but familiar also in relation to the understanding of gendered relations 'back home'. In this way, Congolese migrants who worshipped in Sonrise were comparable to those early immigrants in the States, who entrenched their national bond with each other through religion and the reproduction of tradition in the host country (Hirschman, 2004). In contrast to Sonrise, MCC seemed to provide a more modern and progressive environment, which attracted Lyon, Serge and Guy and

simultaneously allowed them to distance themselves from 'ordinary' working class Congolese in Muizenberg and its surrounds; unlike Sonrise congregants the guys chose – and had the opportunity to create – social bonds outside of their national categorisation, with Robert and the women of other nations they eventually married. In this way they signalled their cosmopolitanism, their intention to extend their social networks beyond similar others and their understanding that South Africa was a transitory space. They were therefore looking out, whilst Congolese in Sonrise looked inward.

At the same time, their values were still Congolese when it came to gender relations. In the marriage ceremonies I documented in Chapter 5, women were still encouraged to obey their husbands and no woman ever had the 'privilege' of preaching. Women participated in the worshipping of Christ and God through their voices, and the playing of instruments, but never in the delivery of the sermon. Thus, in a superficial sense while MCC seemed rather different in the latitude it gave expression of self from Sonrise AOG, my primary research informants found a religious space that affirmed their basic understanding of relationships between men and women. While the guys may have perceived themselves as different and even superior to their co-nationals at Sonrise, they shared a cultural history that positioned women as subservient to men. In short, Congolese identities and expressions of self-hood were flexible and constructed *in situ*, responsive to the social dynamics of South African society and at times openly antagonistic to the (officially) liberal mores in South African society. Through their choice of a place of worship they were not so much rejecting their Congolese mores so much as exhibiting a capacity to worship across race, class and nationality – a cosmopolitanism that advertised their openness to 'outsider' acquaintances, friendships and eventually binational marriage. While their involvement in a local congregation could be interpreted as a willingness to integrate with the local and national mainstream society, it could also be read as a clear indication of their intention to migrate further. For immigrant populations religion offers both a sense of belonging and familiarity in an alien environment and it provides congregants with access to diverse social capitals, especially in a multi-national church like MCC (Hirschman, 2004). Thus, although Christianity in and of itself does not provide for a closed network, the practise of Christian rituals and or rites, as prescribed by certain Christian denominations does facilitate communion or interaction across socially constructed markers of difference.

While recent literature on African migration has emphasised the possibility of migrant remittances making a contribution to local development (Adepoju, 2005; Aina, 1995), the desire of migrants everywhere to support and invest at source hardly exhausts their motivations and aspirations. *On se débrouille* in the context of the quest for *lola* can entail "marriage to a partner abroad in Europe," as Van Hear (2004:9) has suggested and I have documented in this

dissertation. Binational marriages extend Congolese migrants' social networks beyond that of poor/working class Congolese, and can bring all manner of benefits, including the enhancement of remittances. However, it cannot be asserted that the sole reason for such marriages is the advancement of migrant careers. Such an analysis denudes Congolese migrants and their European wives of their agency. More subtly, such an analysis also maintains the colonial racial ideology that constructs whiteness as superior to blackness and ignores the political economy of sex, love and intimacy. When actors are considered in their embodied entirety, simplistic analyses are misleading as well as inappropriate. Numerous social categorisations – race, class, ethnicity, age, gender and nationality – intersect in these cases; binational relationships are complex social phenomena that provide sophisticated 'lenses' through which to study xenophilia. In the opposite context, Appadurai (2002) argues that the self is created and affirmed through acts of genocidal violence. He proposes that the act of physically violating another creates a symbolic disconnect between the perpetrator and the victim, confirming the presence of the self in opposition to the other. I would like to suggest that xenophobia, racism and genocide are not the only ways to identify, categorise and know the other. Xenophilia is another form of apprehending the other, and so identifying the self. By loving the 'extreme' or 'exotic' other, a mature and confident self that needs no murderous act to prove its existence rather reveals its nature through the intimate binational relationship. By loving the other, often in contravention of societal norms, or expectations, bicultural lovers make the unthinkable and inconceivable possible – the self is identified in the other. While the differences exist, these are consciously de-emphasised, as love, commitment to each other, and other similarities are emphasised and achieve salience.

The creation of new horizons through technological advancement has generated new forms of consumption – consumption that includes the consumption of the other through binational relationships and binational marriages. The ideational boundaries that existed between north and south, First and Third world, black and white, and European and African at the beginning of the twentieth century, are dissolving rapidly at the beginning of the twenty-first century in the wake of intense globalisation. Social boundaries and configurations of difference are experienced as permeable, shifting and negotiable, particularly in the private sphere. Migration agitates against geographic boundaries and xenophilia becomes a social possibility and a social fact. This reality has implications not only for the immediate families of these individuals, but also broader politico-juridical and institutional concepts such as citizen and migrant. The marriages of my research informants to European women question societal norms or mores that construct 'others' as more or less desirable. On a personal, intimate level, love is foregrounded – a love confirmed and vindicated through continued marriage and the birth of children.



Especially because Congolese have been impacted so heavily by the racial dimensions of colonisation, whose legacy persists, the possibility and reality of binational, biracial and/or bicultural relationships in the diaspora catches the rational scholar off-guard. The dynamism and emotion of the unexpected encounters contradict the fixity of racial, ethnic and national categorisations and lived experience in other migrant contexts, not least in other areas of xenophobia-prone South Africa. Discovering cases of xenophilia speaks to the possibilities that inhere in the process of globalisation, to decenter the importance of socially inscribed and informed identities, not least among migrants. Xenophilia speaks to the agency of individuals and their capacity to create synergistic intersections of race, class, nationality and ethnicity. While the world, inclusive of scholars, might continue to construct binational couples as anomalies or focus entirely on the political economy of these relationships (with an assumption of their instrumentality), the relationships themselves speak to a disregard for externally ascribed identities and meaning, and a move towards more personally created expressions of a cosmopolitan identity that does not depend on the maintenance of socio-psychological boundaries. These binational relationships speak of the possibilities that exist in creating new visions of a truly global world, where identities can be deconstructed, remoulded and reinvented. Again, in much the same way as the *sapeur* reinvents his being through a transformation in his external presentation, Serge, Lyon and Guy reinvented themselves by marrying European women. The transformation was however not merely one-sided. Their wives also experienced a reorientation of self. The experience of being a binational/biracial couple in Europe is definitely different to the experience thereof in South Africa, and Africa at large.

Further research that pays particular attention to these relationships as experienced in Europe will provide invaluable theorisations of the possibility of creating non-racial, unbiased, egalitarian societies that are not only multicultural in theory, but truly human and humane global communities in action. Facilitating and mediating this by-product of globalisation, in which migrants straddle a transnational social space across two or more countries, are the contemporary and expanding technologies that have provided the cell phone and social networking sites like Facebook, Myspace and Twitter. These technologies already connect Congolese migrants with other migrants and family members across the globe instantaneously – in theory. Globalisation may ‘shrink the World’ but it also brings into sharp relief the disparities between the First and Third worlds (Nyamnjoh, 2000 and 2004), and between the social classes within countries and the developmental differences between them. In the case of Congolese migrants, social media sites and access to internet facilities in the more developed world, and the now ubiquitous cell phone, have indeed provided opportunities to link with other Congolese in the transnational community and other nationals internationally.

While Africa may be the fastest growing market for cell phone purchases and cell phone users, Congolese still resident in the DRC, where the provision of electricity continues to be haphazard, often complain about 'low batt' – low battery power (Wrong, 2001a). Ultimately, the realisation of 'instant communication' (or any electronic communication at all) involving Congolese migrants and their families resident in the Congo, is dependent on the 'simple' provision of electricity, which cannot be taken for granted there. Africa's migrants are compelled to face disjointed realities that bring two opposing world views together. The first, in part bolstered by the many images of mass consumption originating from the west, encourages Africans of every class – from working class to the elite – to migrate so as to acquire value, prestige and success, indigenous values having been compromised through contact and local lifeways becoming untenable. But then the would-be and actual African migrant comes up against the second world view. This is the near global aversion to migration where Fortress Europe repatriates African migrants, or polices its borders so militantly that migrants perish at sea, or upon reaching Europe experience a xenophobic welcome from the state and its citizens (Fraerman, n.d; Goodman, 2011).

Since the 1994 elections, South African society has been expanding but also at times violently contracting as migrant groupings, such as Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Somalis and Malawians, let alone Congolese, enter the South African landscape. The period of racial segregation and apartheid have been replaced by democracy and the most liberal Constitution in the World, but it has cast a long shadow: relationships between the various ethnic groups in South Africa *are* strained despite government's initial attempts to create a unified nation. The arrival of migrants in the midst of a nation still struggling to be born and far from developed has not been universally celebrated, least of all at the margins of society, where there is a daily struggle for material and psychological survival. The satisfactions that flow from xenophobic violence, noted by Apparudai above, are only temporary. Harnessing the immigrants' energies and diverse ways of doing and being in the interests of building an economy with provision for all who live in South Africa is the better way. With a facilitating policy approach and effective administration and with the assistance of various interested stakeholders such as UNHCR, international and local NGOs, university research units like the African Centre for Migration Studies and civil society and refugee groups, migration within Africa can be portrayed as a boon, rather than a bone of contention, in the way that the US absorbed it with far less developed institutions and media before the First World War.

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