Critical Heritages of Europe

DECOLONIZING COLONIAL HERITAGE

NEW AGENDAS, ACTORS AND PRACTICES IN AND BEYOND EUROPE

Edited by
Britta Timm Knudsen, John Oldfield, Elizabeth Buettner and Elvan Zabunyan

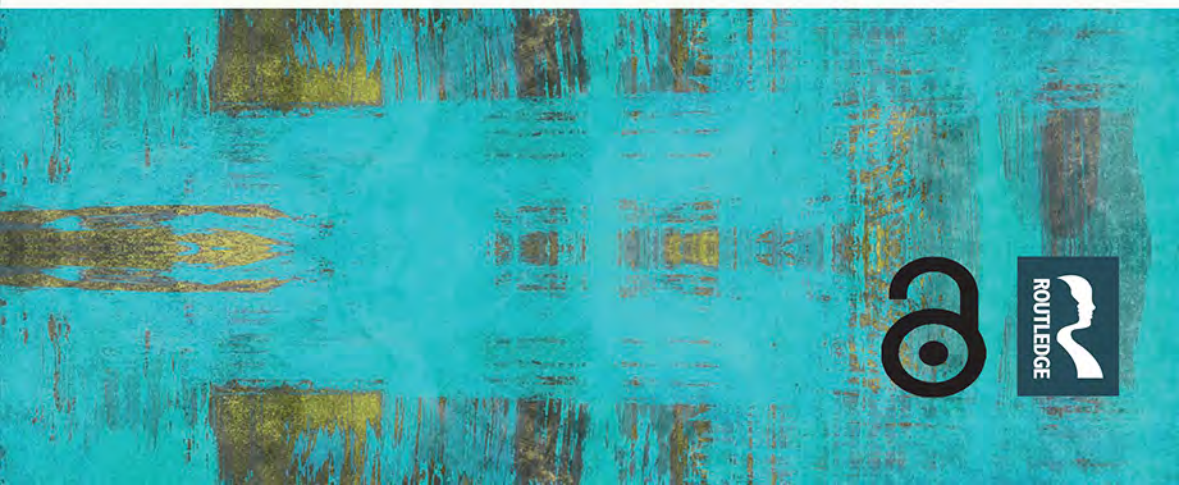

Figure 0.1 The statue of Edward Colston seen with a blindfold, 21 April 2020, in Bristol, United Kingdom.

Courtesy of Getty Images. Photo by Finnbarr Webster, 2020

Decolonizing Colonial Heritage

Decolonizing Colonial Heritage explores how different agents practice the decolonization of European colonial heritage at European and extra-European locations. Assessing the impact of these practices, the book also explores what a new vision of Europe in the postcolonial present could look like.

Including contributions from academics, artists and heritage practitioners, the volume explores decolonial heritage practices in politics, contemporary history, diplomacy, museum practice, the visual arts and self-generated memorial expressions in public spaces. The comparative focus of the chapters includes examples of internal colonization in Europe and extends to former European colonies, among them Shanghai, Cape Town and Rio de Janeiro. Examining practices in a range of different contexts, the book pays particular attention to sub-national actors whose work is opening up new futures through their engagement with decolonial heritage practices in the present. The volume also considers the challenges posed by applying decolonial thinking to existing understandings of colonial heritage.

Decolonizing Colonial Heritage examines the role of colonial heritage in European memory politics and heritage diplomacy. It will be of interest to academics and students working in the fields of heritage and memory studies, colonial and imperial history, European studies, sociology, cultural studies, development studies, museum studies and contemporary art.

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2022
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge *is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Timm Knudsen, Britta, editor. | Oldfield, J. R. (John R.), editor. | Buettner, Elizabeth, editor. | Zabunyan, Elvan, editor.
Title: Decolonizing colonial heritage : new agendas, actors and practices in and beyond Europe / Britta Timm Knudsen, John Oldfield, Elizabeth Buettner and Elvan Zabunyan.
Description: Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge, 2022. | Series: Critical heritages of Europe | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2021026670 (print) | LCCN 2021026671 (ebook) | ISBN 9780367569600 (hardback) | ISBN 9780367569617 (paperback) | ISBN 9781003100102 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Imperialism--Historiography. | Museums--Social aspects. | Historic sites--Social aspects. | Collective memory. | Decolonization. | Postcolonialism. | Europe--Colonies--Historiography.
Classification: LCC JV105 .D385 2022 (print) | LCC JV105 (ebook) | DDC 325/.34--dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2021026670
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2021026671

ISBN: 978-0-367-56960-0 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-0-367-56961-7 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-003-10010-2 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102

Typeset in Times New Roman
by SPi Technologies India Pvt Ltd (Straive)

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Badr El Hammami was born in Morocco and lives and works in Marseille. Through his frequently *in situ* artworks, notions of movement, migration, frontiers and politics interconnect with personal problematics related to memory and family. The artist has participated in different international exhibitions, most recently *Rencontres photographiques de Bamako*, 12th edition, curated by Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung (2019), and *Dakar Biennale*, artistic director Simon Njami (2016).

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Mohammed Laouli is an artist who lives and works between Salé, Morocco and Marseilles, France. The work of Mohammed Laouli has been the subject of several collective and solo exhibitions at Le Cube, an independent art room in Rabat; the Dakar Biennale (2018); the Kunstmuseum Mülheim (2017); the Carreau du Temple in Paris (2017); the ZKM in Karlsruhe (2013); the Marrakech Biennial (2014); Mucem in Marseille (2014); the Bruges Cultural Center (2013); the Victoria & Albert Museum in London (2012); and La Centrale for Contemporary Art in Brussels (2012).

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Elvan Zabunyan is professor of Contemporary Art History at the University of Rennes and an art critic. For over 25 years, she has worked across the issues of race and feminism as well as on the political and cultural history of the United States in relationship to artistic activism since the 1960s. Her book *Black Is a Color: A History of African American Contemporary Art*, published in French and in English, won the SAES/AFEA research prize in 2005. She contributes to national and international publications and is the author of four monographs, numerous articles in periodicals, and essays in books and exhibition catalogues, including *Adrian Piper* (MoMA, 2018), *Ellen Gallagher* (WIELS, 2019), *LaToya Ruby Frazier* (MUDAM, 2019) and *Kehinde Wiley* (Templon, 2019). In 2020 she co-edited the special issue 'Experimenting History with Contemporary Arts' for the journal *Slaveries and Post-Slaveries*.

Acknowledgements

The editors would like to thank Ilana Brown for her invaluable work in copy-editing the text of *Decolonizing Colonial Heritage*. We deeply appreciate the care and attention she has brought to this task, as well as her patience and good humour. We would also like to thank the two independent readers for their extremely helpful and constructive comments on the original book proposal we submitted to Routledge in 2020. The book is all the better for their input. We also thank Inayat Naomi Ramdas, MA in European Studies, Aarhus University exchange student 2019–2020, for helping us out at the very start of the book project. Finally, we would like to thank the members of the Horizon 2020 project UNREST ('Unsettling, Remembering and Social Cohesion in Transnational Europe') for their advice, support and inspiration.

Nick Shepherd would like to acknowledge the support of the Aarhus University Research Fund (AUFF).

Cristiano Gianolla, Giuseppina Raggi and Lorena Sancho Querol: We would like to thank Beatriz Gomes Dias, Isabel Castro Henriques, Inocência Mata, Kally Meru and Rosário Severo for their availability and kindness to tell their life stories, and Herberto Smith and Isabel Palmeira for their qualified technical support. Márcia Chuva has been an enthusiastic participant in the data collection and provided influential comments on an earlier draft of this chapter. John Oldfield, Elvan Zabunyan and Leila Bianchi Aguiar also provided invaluable support and guidance.

Lukasz Bukowiecki: I would like to thank our associate partner, the Museum of Warsaw, for providing access to the museum, its archives and its data and particularly all its staff members and associates who generously participated in the interviews. I wish to thank Ms. Ewelina Lach and the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw for their permission to use their photographs in my chapter as well as Ms. Anna Kotonowicz, a Warsaw Rising Museum spokesperson, and Dr. Nicholas Boston from the City University of New York, Lehman College for information on (the study of) Ali's life story that they generously shared with me. I am also thankful to my colleagues from the ECHOES project, Prof. Joanna Wawrzyniak and Dr. Magdalena Wróblewska, as well as Dr. Dariusz Zalewski, who kindly agreed to be

interviewed on his memory activism, for their comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

Csilla E. Ariese, Laura Pozzi and Joanna Wawrzyniak: We would like to thank our associate partners, the Amsterdam Museum, Fudan University, the Shanghai History Museum/Shanghai Revolution Museum, and the Museum of Warsaw, for their crucial part in this research. We are especially thankful to the staff members and visitors who participated in our interviews (2018–2019). The authors are also grateful for the research done by other colleagues from ECHOES Work Package 3 on 'City Museums and Multiple Colonial Pasts'.

Lu Jiansong would like to thank the Shanghai History Museum and its director Hu Jiang.

Brenda Coelho Fonseca, Leila Bianchi Aguiar and Márcia Chuva: We would like to thank Ana Aparecida Guimarães da Silva, Celina Maria Rodrigues de Almeida, Cláudio Honorato, Hilton Cobra, Mônica Lima and Souza for their availability and kindness to tell their life stories, and Silvia Figueiredo and Isabel Palmeira for their qualified technical support. Tâmisa Caduda has been an enthusiastic participant in the data collection. Cristiano Gianola and Keila Grinberg provided influential comments on an earlier draft of this chapter; and Elizabeth Buettner, Elvan Zabunyan and Lorena Sancho Querol provided excellent reviews. The Chácara do Céu Museum and Institute of Research and Memory of Pretos Novos kindly offered the space to interview Hilton Cobra and Claudio Honorato. Rane Morais Sousa translated the chapter.

Paulo Peixoto and Claudino Ferreira are grateful to Ricardo Almeida for his collaboration in the collection of empirical material and in interviewing festival participants.

Meghna Singh would like to thank documentary filmmaker and *Container* co-director Simon Wood; Nick Shepherd of Aarhus University; and Jaco Boshoff of Iziko museums of South Africa, who was the co-principal archaeological investigator for the excavation of the São José shipwreck.

Britta Timm Knudsen: I am deeply thankful for the collaboration with Jeannette Ehlers and the *Collectif Faire-Part* without whom there would be no article. This ensemble of Belgian and Congolese filmmakers is doing an amazing job in telling stories about Kinshasa and Brussels and the many relations between the two in multiple media and artforms. I am forever in debt to your courageous and steady decolonial endeavour that shines through everything you do, both thematically and methodologically. The ECHOES project learned a lot from the contributions of Jeannette Ehlers, Nizar Saleh, Anne Reijner and Rob Jacobs to workshops, Ph.D. courses and general conversations. Special thanks must go to Rob Jacobs, with whom I have been collaborating for some years now in teaching and research and whose friendship is deeply cherished. A heartfelt thank you goes to Benjamine Laini Lusalusa, also a member of the *Collectif*, to Stephanie Collingwoode Williams and to Sorana Munsya, for co-researching with me through participating in the

focus group. Your professionalism, candour and knowledge have increased the value of my contribution more than I could dream of. Yet another great thank you goes to Kasper Mikael Jacek, artist and academic journalist to the journalistic *Collectif Background* (Baggrund.com) who has been the artistic director behind our online sites www.keywordsechoes.com and www.keywordsechoes.com/interventions: Thanks to your work, a lot of decolonial localized perspectives, knowledges and art forms are now available to a larger audience. Last but not least, a deepfelt thank you to Casper Andersen and Christoffer Kølvraa for the academic journey we did together in ECHOES, the many hours of hard work, the mutual encouragement to self-reflexivity and to continue to face the difficult pasts, and for the always inspiring and nuanced discussions.

Cristina E. Clopot, Casper Andersen and John Oldfield would like to thank all of those who participated, either online or in person, in the three international workshops on heritage diplomacy organized by the ECHOES project between 2019 and 2020, among them Damien Helly, Andrew Murray and Walter Zampieri. We are also grateful for the support and encouragement of Britta Timm Knudsen, Jan Ifversen and Christopher Kølvraa. This chapter is a collaborative effort. We learned a great deal from our discussions on heritage diplomacy, both in Aarhus and Brussels (ECHOES international workshops 1 and 2), as we did from other members of the ECHOES consortium. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the support of the members of the Wilberforce Institute for the study of Slavery and Emancipation (WISE) at the University of Hull.

Preface

The origins of this book lie in the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme and the call ENG-GLOBALLY-01-2017: Strengthening Europe's position in the global context: science diplomacy and intercultural relations. In answer to this call, in 2016 we formed a consortium of six European partners that extended from North–South, East–West and smaller–larger empires but quickly realized that our subject matter made it imperative to expand the consortium to include non-EU-based participants. We thus added three partner universities and research bodies from Rio de Janeiro, Shanghai and Cape Town, which together formed ECHOES—'European Colonial Heritage Modalities in Entangled Cities'. The ECHOES project was formally launched in Hull, UK on 1 February 2018.[1]

ECHOES is one of a number of Horizon 2020 projects that have engaged with heritage issues. CoHERE, for instance, which ran between 2016 and 2019, engaged with the cultural and political importance of European heritages and their role in identity formations in the sphere of official and non-official practices. The project explored the impact of migration and globalization on contemporary Europe as manifested in intercultural dialogue and cultural forms ranging from living arts, food culture, education and museums to commemorations, protests and digital practices across a range of arenas across the continent.[2] Although colonial heritage formed part of CoHERE's wider agenda, however, it was not its main preoccupation. A second project, TRACES (2016–2019), also had a distinctive focus, in this case, the role of contentious heritage in contemporary Europe. Adopting an artistic/ethnographic approach, TRACES analysed the challenges, opportunities and practices inherent in transmitting difficult pasts and heritages. But here again, TRACES was less concerned with colonial heritage per se than with artistic practices, Europeanisation and the empowerment of local communities.[3] UNREST—a third project on difficult and contested pasts in Europe—also ran from 2016 to 2019.[4] Its aim was to propose a more inclusive memory practice in Europe so as to avoid the antagonisms that have been prevailing in European conflicts throughout the twentieth century. UNREST analysed, in particular, mass graves and war museums within Europe, and

some of the outputs included theatre performances and museum exhibitions which formed part of a communication strategy to wider audiences.

While these four projects are therefore interlinked, only ECHOES deals head-on with the relationship between the colonial past and the decolonial present. Our perspective is interdisciplinary and plurivocal and we reach out to former colonized communities, both inside and outside Europe. In focusing our attention on urban spaces, which is yet another distinctive feature of ECHOES, we shed critical new light on the diverse ways in which sub-national actors—artists, curators and citizens—have grappled (and continue to grapple) with the colonial past.

This volume presents important parts of the research done in ECHOES between 2018 and 2021, its various strands encompassing theoretical and methodological questions; the Europeanization of colonial history and heritage; city museums and multiple colonial pasts; entangled cities, artists and citizens; and heritage diplomacy's engagement with colonial pasts of ongoing international and local sensitivity, relevance and debate. In dealing with contemporary practices around ideological and material colonial heritage, we focus primarily on specific new actors (including particular artists, activists and curators alongside city museums and citizens associations) asking whether—or how extensively—they have decolonized (or are currently decolonizing) urban spaces, relics and other symbolic sites of colonialism. Just as importantly, we explore how these different actors have come up with new ways of thinking about and imagining decolonial subjecthood. We situate these enquiries within broader national, European and global trajectories in order to highlight the embeddedness of individual and local examples within a transnational set of inspirations, exchanges and initiatives.

Notes

1 ECHOES, http://projectechoes.eu (accessed 22 April 2021).
2 CoHERE, https://research.ncl.ac.uk/cohere (accessed 22 April 2021).
3 TRACES, https://www.tracesproject.eu (accessed 22 April 2021).
4 UNREST, http://www.unrest.eu/home/ (accessed 3 May 2021).

Introduction

Britta Timm Knudsen, John Oldfield, Elizabeth Buettner and Elvan Zabunyan

> Coloniality, as other scholars have correctly termed it, is a death project. Decolonization is what I call a theory of life.
>
> —Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni in Omanga 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested our resolve, as well as our commitment to human rights, especially when it comes to the protection of lives, health and well-being. As European states rushed to impose lockdowns, economic inequalities were quickly exposed, especially in relation to the world's poor for whom lockdown measures (even something as simple as washing one's hands several times a day with soap) were a luxury beyond reach. Workers in lower-paid sectors of the economy or those who depended on casual contracts saw their livelihoods threatened in the face of rising unemployment. A shortage of care services had a disproportionate impact on women, many of them members of immigrant communities, as providers of unpaid care work. Moreover, as statistics clearly showed, the worst effects of the pandemic fell on black and minority ethnic groups, marginalized communities affected by poverty, deprivation and the legacies of colonialism. This was not all. Perversely, rising death rates across Europe and frustration over the delays in developing a vaccine fuelled anti-Asian racism, which resulted in physical and verbal attacks, hate crimes and anti-Chinese rhetoric (Mercer 2020). Even efforts to contain the virus exposed worrying Eurocentric tendencies. Among other memorable episodes, this was brought to light by an incident in the French media, when two doctors' suggestion that Africa should be used as a testing ground for the efficacy of vaccines provoked a furious backlash, notably from leading African and Afro-European football stars. Didier Drogba, Samuel Eto'o and Demba Ba all protested fiercely on Twitter, characterizing the doctors' comments as denigrating, false and extremely racist. While this was an isolated incident in an increasingly heated debate, research and thinking in this area led to accusations that the Global South was all but absent in scientific and/or medical collaboration, or its presence limited to being a subject rather than a creator of science. These attitudes, in turn, have led to calls to decolonize global health, not least as a form of (African) resistance (Ahmed 2020).

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-1

In these and other ways, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed harmful and demeaning colonial mentalities, a kind of blindness connected to the lingering fantasy of European superiority, only further highlighting the urgent need for Europe to reckon with its colonial past. *Decolonizing Colonial Heritage* speaks directly to these debates. Put simply, our aim is to explore the common transnational European history of empires; to point to the traces of overt and unconscious forms of colonialism rooted in mentalities that have tended to imagine (and treat) the colonized as perpetual aliens and perpetual menials; to look at how new actors—citizens groups, contemporary artists, and figures within popular culture such as football icons—take on a critical heritage agenda to fight blatant colonial-style tendencies and racism; and, finally, to point to how a pluriversality of knowledges and ontologies can open up new horizons and futures for all of us. As we shall go on to explain, our perspective is future oriented and thus hopeful, if at the same time realistic and reflective.

Political climates in today's world

The atmosphere within which the ECHOES project originated was, on the one hand, an increasingly 'fortified' Europe created in response to the so-called 'refugee crisis' that reached new heights in 2015—an extended crisis that reverberated in every corner of the continent, despite the very different levels of exposure and forms of response across the EU's member states. On the other hand, anti-racist and decolonial agendas have continually unfolded, exemplified by the Black Lives Matter movement that since its origins in the United States in 2013 has targeted recurrent police murders and violence against black citizens. Similarly, #RhodesMustFall in Cape Town that took off in 2015 was a successful student movement that resulted in the statue of arch-imperialist John Cecil Rhodes being removed from the University of Cape Town campus (Chantiluke et al. 2018; Knudsen and Andersen 2019; Shepherd this volume, Chapter 3) and that also took issue with the fee system in South African education and the overly white and male-dominated curricula in higher education. #RhodesMustFall then spread to Europe. Oxford, for example, also saw a discussion of colonial symbols on campus as an outcome of the entangled relationship between Cape Town and Oxford, historically, symbolically and economically.

Responses to such anti-racist and decolonial activism and insurgencies often seek to secure and defend resilient imperial and colonial structures and ways of thinking, instead of accommodating (or even listening to or taking seriously) the claims of the protesters and making meaningful and more equitable changes (Mignolo and Walsh 2018). Counterinsurgent governance (Mirzoeff 2011) determined to uphold racialized distinctions and fortify borders—for example, the United States–Mexican border and the borders around the European Union—and to fuel domestic segregation policies and practices within nation-states seems repeatedly to prevail. The election of Jair

Bolsonaro in Brazil and Donald Trump in the United States, together with Brexit, can be seen as counterinsurgent (populist) movements and cultural backlashes fuelled by rising 'hot nationalism' (Billig 2017), and a broader mood of sentimental and nostalgic longing for a proud past that takes precedence over a threatening present that seems to offer only impotent and vulnerable points of identification.

Nostalgia for former empires and empowered cultural influence can likewise be seen in some countries in today's Central and Eastern Europe. It is widely recognized that this region was subjected to forms of 'internal colonialism' by the West (the Habsburg empire as well as imperial and then Nazi Germany, and more generally by global modernity) and by the East (the Tsarist Russian empire and then the Soviet Union). But it is far less acknowledged that in some countries there are still signs of nostalgia for a former lost 'empire' stemming from the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in the early modern era and in the political and cultural influence of Hungary on neighbouring nations until the end of the First World War (Glowacka-Grajper 2018). This was demonstrated by the colonial behaviour and mindsets of Poles who settled globally and by Polish elites at home who shared colonial aspirations of Western and Southern Europeans and whose power relations vis-à-vis peasants and ethnic minorities in today's Ukraine and Belarus appear analogous to those between colonizer and colonized.

Authoritarian and strong nationalist tendencies so readily palpable in countries like Poland today can in part be seen as counterinsurgent governance—such as severe counter-reactions from governments towards insurgencies and threats from transnational institutions (EU, UN) or from internal groups (including women) criticizing political measures—in response to fears of the alleged loss of majoritarian authority in a postcolonial world. Yet colonial frames of reference repeatedly prove multidirectional, partial and often contradictory, regardless of where one looks. Early twenty-first-century Hungary provides a case in point. As one of many Central and Eastern European states to accede to the European Union during and after 2004, it was not long before Hungary's prime minister, Viktor Orbán, accused the EU of 'colonial'-style encroachments into Hungary's domestic affairs in response to illiberal changes to the constitution and interference with the independence of its central bank and judiciary. 'We will not be a colony', Orbán proclaimed on 15 March 2012, Hungary's National Day marking the 1848–1849 uprising against the Habsburg empire. Hungarians 'will not live as foreigners dictate it, will not give up their independence or their freedom', he insisted, before quickly moving beyond the mid-nineteenth century to compare EU pressures to Soviet domination until 1989. Nationalist assertions of this nature against 'unsolicited assistance of foreigners wanting to guide our hands' later underpinned the Hungarian state's hostile response to the refugee crisis during and after 2015, when it went so far as to build a fence along its southern border with Serbia in an effort to keep out refugee inflows from Syria and other countries.[1] In this respect, Hungary's approach resembled the

defensive exclusion of minorities—especially Muslims—seen in many other EU countries, not least other post-socialist states that could also claim to have been 'colonized' in different eras by different powers, most recently by the Soviet Union. Yet Hungary's stance against refugee 'intruders' was far from a Central and Eastern European phenomenon: tragically, the refugee crisis generated defensive and outright racist responses across the continent whether we look to the Mediterranean-bordering countries in Europe's south, to its west, or to its north.

We argue that what apparently prevails in today's political climate are the systemic counterinsurgent, for example, imperialist/colonialist-style reactions towards decolonial agendas, expressed in political measures that reinforce domestic segregation and marginalization of certain groups and viewpoints that already speak from extremely disempowered positions. We see this in Danish policies to change the criteria and laws affecting disadvantaged housing areas (the so-called ghettos) in order to prevent 'parallel' societal formations (Windahl Pedersen 2020); in the forced separation of young married couples from non-Western countries, as happened with Syrian refugees, that resulted in Inger Støjberg, a former minister for Immigration, Integration and Housing, being impeached for illegal actions; and in revised rules for acquiring permanent citizenship for residents who have already lived and worked in Denmark for many years. These colonialist policies widen the scope of what Lewis R. Gordon, through close readings of Frantz Fanon and W. E. B. Du Bois, called the modern construction of 'problem people', whereby 'groups of people are studied as problems instead of as people with problems' (Gordon 2007) and the epistemic structure that supports such a category. Gordon wrote extensively on what it was—and is—like to live in a body labelled as a 'problem'. Decolonial feminist Madina Tlostanova has expanded on this category of 'problem people' in our contemporary world to apply it to formerly colonized subjects, enslaved persons and indigenous peoples, along with today's refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants. She points to how Muslim 'others' are constructed as the new emblematic 'monsters' within Europe and how the post-socialist 'others' are likewise included in this category. No one, she argues, is immune from becoming the new 'other', a disorientating experience that can extend so far as to become excluded from humanity in general (Tlostanova 2018, 2020; see also discussions in Buettner 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020). Exclusionary mechanisms of many varieties persist in postcolonial societies, with the groups targeted shifting and extending beyond those from societies understood as having experienced recognized forms of historical colonialism.

The political field invested with imperialist/colonialist reactions also reveals itself in different countries' research policies that interfere with and aim to manipulate the very subject matter of academic agendas. In June 2020, the French government criticized French academics who incorporated references to thinkers working in postcolonial and decolonial studies into their research methodology. The latter were accused of running counter to

the 'values of the Republic' and borrowing from the ideologies of 'North American' campuses. In the autumn of 2020, the debate grew even more virulent, with the publication of 'Le manifesto des 100' ('The manifesto of 100') published in *Le Monde*, an online petition signed by 258 scholars from various disciplines against what they called 'left-wing Islamophilia'. This manifesto described an alleged alliance between defenders of radical Islam and scholars working with US-imported approaches to indigenous peoples, race and decolonial 'ideologies'.[2] The rapid deterioration seen in the French academic context involved a strong conservative backlash against postcolonial and decolonial studies, as well as gender and intersectionality, with those who feared they were losing their intellectual and institutional hegemony responding with aggressive attacks. As a result of this, in February 2021, Frédérique Vidal, France's Minister of Higher Education and Research, requested an investigation into 'left-wing Islamophilia' within universities. This move quickly prompted demands for her dismissal in a statement signed by 22,000 academics, alongside a spate of public commentaries and articles contributing to long-running debates about the supposedly threatened state of the Republic (Onishi 2021). We thus currently find ourselves within a very complex dynamic of actions-reactions-counterreactions in which the decolonial is only a part.

Our book should be read against the general mood of lack of 'futurability', particularly in the Northern/Western hemisphere. This lack of futurability is not only put forward and analyzed as a political phenomenon but is also flagged as an important epistemic issue. Sabelo J. Ndlouvo-Gatscheni, historian and Chair of the Epistemologies of the Global South with emphasis on Africa at the University of Bayreuth, calls for new concepts to replace or add to the 'exhausted northern epistemologies' (Omanga 2020), while Italian thinker Franco 'Bifo' Berardi (2017) points to the extreme difficulty of opening the future for unpredictability, as the political has become impotent in contemporary societies and only shows itself via authoritarian and fascist longings towards past and nostalgic potency. We in ECHOES agree that an important stake in decolonial endeavours is exactly the future or, more precisely, how multi-perspectival desires to re-future the present reveal themselves. Tlostanova similarly describes de-futuring as a political strategy designed to keep people in a permanent state of exception, meaning exactly to take away their future, and she calls on indigenous, feminist and decolonial thinkers (including Enrique Dussel and Maria Lugones, among others) to refuture the present (2018). Sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, for his part, clearly thematizes the problem of future-less societies in his dichotomy between a sociology of absence and a sociology of emergence (Sousa Santos 2011), in the same way that he points to the reigning political and intellectual exhaustion in Europe and the Global North (Sousa Santos 2017).

Berardi, Tlostanova and Sousa Santos all turn to collective and connective actions and practices, such as self-directed citizen-based initiatives and artistic or civic imagination, in order to open the future, as we also do in ECHOES.

We focus on how colonial heritage is dealt with and practiced in urban spaces by actors including heritage professionals at a city level (specifically within city museums), citizen associations, social movements, or looser organizations grappling with difficult or dissonant colonial history and heritage and with site-specific artistic works and reworkings of existing monuments and in situ places. We support the close connection between heritage and the future so elegantly addressed by the Heritage Futures research project and its publication *Cultural Heritage and the Future* that offers a succinct definition of what 'future thinking' means for heritage: 'By "future thinking" we mean the way people anticipate what lies several years or even decades ahead informing how they act today' (Holtorf and Högberg 2021: 23). This future-oriented perspective is indeed what decolonial theory, thinking and practice revolve around. As philosopher and political theorist Achille Mbembe has put it, 'Postcolonial thinking writes itself into the future' and 'holds the dream of a new kind of humanism, a critical humanism that is based on the shared condition of what separates us' (Mbembe 2010: 85, 83, our translation).

Heritage discourses

Central to our argument is the notion of heritage, an omnipresent cultural phenomenon that accumulates in museums, archives and the landscape and that continually increases and diversifies (Harrison 2013; Harvey 2001; Holtorf 2005; Smith 2006). Heritage is notoriously difficult to define, resting as it does alongside words and ideas like culture, tradition and identity and thus constituting a pluridisciplinary field. The well-known opposition between heritage which takes the form of material relics such as monuments, buildings, artefacts and memorials, and heritage considered as a discourse in which each present constructs its own past (whether for strategic political reasons or through preservation policies), is at stake here. In the former connotation, heritage is commonly understood as an intrinsic material quality and long inseparable from notions of European artistic and cultural civilization. This has often proven a top-down, elitist approach that privileges certain objects, rituals and institutions over others at various historical junctures. Heritage in this sense can often be triumphalist in tone, celebrating heroic deeds or commemorating key events in a nation's or a continent's history. To illustrate this, one chapter in this book looks at how contemporary Europe lives under the shadow of a range of colonial histories and legacies (Buettner this volume, Chapter 1), while another investigates the imperial nostalgia behind Brexit as an affective longing for a presumed heroic past (Kølvraa this volume, Chapter 2). The discursive concept of heritage, on the other hand, considers heritage as a renewable resource that is transformed in any given present (Holtorf 2005, 130; Lowenthal 1985, 412; Tunbridge and Ashworth 1995). Although considered problematic, colonial heritage as used strategically to construct a local Shanghai identity forms the basis of curator Lu Jiansong's evaluation of the 'Modern Shanghai' exhibition at the Shanghai

History Museum (this volume, Chapter 7). Other chapters in this book discuss the institutional and historical barriers to decolonial approaches found at museums and world heritage sites (Ariese et al. this volume, Chapter 6; Chuva et al. this volume, Chapter 9).

As recent disputes over academic curricula, statues and the legacies of empire have demonstrated, a tremendous amount remains invested in these different notions of heritage, both for those contesting majoritarian viewpoints and from those defending them (Harrison 2013, 9). Indeed, the use of the word *heritage* in and of itself often gives rise to suggestions that dominant white European cultures are under attack from non-white protesters and radicals. In consequence, heritage for some is simply a resilient important marker of whiteness associated with a specific set of achievements—artistic, cultural, military, or political—that powerful figures insist must be protected at all costs. To suggest otherwise—or even to question the status quo—is all too often dismissed as 'wokery', a term that in many ways has come to define the culture wars currently sweeping across and beyond Europe. Such reactions are in fact signs of a counter-insurgent reaction from a majoritarian white viewpoint determined to protect heritage sites and monuments, and to accentuate a version of the past that advocates pride, rather than shame, dismay or anger, when difficult heritage finds itself placed under an intrusive, critical microscope (Macdonald 2009).

The insurgent contestation of heritage in public spaces and heritage institutions frequently comes from dissenting and often marginalized voices that demand to be heard and met on equal terms, especially when it comes to questions like 'Whose heritage?' and 'What is heritage for?' (The recovery of indigenous traditions, including the oral tradition of storytelling, is just one aspect of this type of 'inclusion'.) In recent years, for instance, a series of debates have erupted in Belgium around increasingly controversial statues of King Léopold II and the atrocities carried out in his name in the Congo Free State between 1885 and 1908 (Buettner 2016, this volume, Chapter 9; Lusalusa 2020). Meanwhile, Italian activists in Milan daubed the statue of the twentieth-century journalist Indro Montanelli with red paint in June 2020 in an orchestrated protest against his questionable activities in Ethiopia in the 1930s and 1940s, which led to accusations of racism and rape (Pozzi 2020). In Britain, angry #RhodesMustFall protesters in Oxford targeted Oriel College's statue of Cecil Rhodes, Prime Minister of the Cape Colony in South Africa (1890–96) and advocate of vigorous settler colonialism, demanding its immediate removal (see also Shepherd this volume, Chapter 3). Here again, these debates were fuelled not only by the ongoing presence of monuments of a colonial nature in public spaces but also by the marginalization and structural racism encountered by non-white communities living in Europe's cities, many of them long victims of deep-seated prejudice and discrimination.

ECHOES takes the notion of heritage as discourse and socio-cultural processes as a point of departure, but it is also clear that battles around 'whose

heritage' and 'what is heritage for' revolve around existing colonial vestiges or in situ places, particularly in urban areas. Heritage practices of removal and re-emergence (see below) are capable of rendering colonial legacies and artefacts, some of which have gone largely unnoticed or seemingly all but forgotten, newly visible and subject to fierce questioning (Edensor 2019). Indicatively, however, at the same moment that they come under the critical scrutiny of heritage actors they also become seen by others as historical monuments whose preservation is considered crucial. As Paul R. Mullins argues in his work on the American South, Confederate monuments have become 'screens' for anti-racist and civil rights struggles in the contemporary United States. Having been put up to normalize racism and present the Southern cause as honourable, these monuments have become contested sites of memory that appear to be disappearing, albeit at an extremely slow and halting pace and in the face of a strong backlash (Mullins 2021a, 2021b).

The decolonial necessity and option

Decolonial thinking and practice has gained transnational momentum since 2000 and is associated mainly but not exclusively with South American thinkers and activists such as Enrique Dussel, Aníbal Quijano, Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres and Walter Mignolo, along with feminist and indigenous thinkers like Maria Lugones, Gloria Anzaldúa, Linda Tihuwai Smith and Catherine E. Walsh (Shepherd 2018). Our chapters also take much inspiration from key African thinkers and writers who explicitly thematize the decolonial, including Achille Mbembe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Chinua Achebe and Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni.

In comparing decolonial thought with postcolonialism as it emerged as an intellectual movement in the 1980s and 1990s, we can identify significant differences between these two at times overlapping approaches. One extends from postcolonial theory's close association with leading proponents of South Asian and Middle Eastern origins and research foci such as Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and Edward Said, while much decolonial theory has originated in and emanated from South America. Then there are differences related to time: whereas postcolonialism mainly refers to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the colonial order began much earlier in the Americas, from the fifteenth century onwards (Bhambra 2014). Alongside these differences in time and space is the scale and impact of colonialism, depending on the place in question. European-imported diseases, together with violent acts of suppression, led to the extermination of approximately 65 million people in less than 50 years in Latin America. By contrast, despite colonialism's immense and varied repercussions across Asia, the Middle East and Africa, Europeans did not succeed in destroying indigenous cultures with anything approaching the same intensity, which is one of many reasons why the long-term impacts of colonialism vary so markedly (Quijano 2007: 170). This difference in scale plays a role in analyses of colonial aftermaths in postcolonial

and in decolonial thought. Postcolonialism often hones in on symbolic marginalization, linguistic othering and aesthetic forms of resistance, while many decolonial thinkers emphasize the resultant global geopolitical hierarchy still persisting in our contemporaneity.

We find these two lines of thought to be equally important rather than mutually exclusive, playing themselves out as persistent dynamics in our understanding of economic, political and socio-cultural contexts. Thus, while we continue to be inspired by the tradition for close readings of the symbolic structures, narrative worlds and discursive processes of colonial subjectivation which one finds in classics of postcolonial scholarship, we are equally inspired by four features of decolonial thought that have emerged or been given new emphasis in more recent scholarship. First of all, we adopt the idea of *pluriversality* to replace Eurocentric universalism and Eurocentric hegemony. We offer place-based perspectives and highlight their reactions towards multiple colonialisms and neo-colonialisms that many places and regions have been and still are subjected to (Oldfield 2018). All of these perspectives have valuable contributions to offer. Indeed, this book acknowledges different kinds of voices and writings, including those that at first sight might seem uncritical of colonialism and/or notions of curatorship (Lu, this volume, Chapter 7). Moreover, we also recognize that academic paradigms need to rest alongside, and work together with, other models or ecologies of knowledge and intersectional perspectives if we are to collectively work towards re-futuring initiatives. This perspective is visible in our volume in the wide range of case studies from both inside and outside of Europe, as well as in the space given to heritage practitioners and artists.

Secondly, pluriversality does not translate as relativism or local nationalism but as *trans- and inter-cultural* perspectives that understand cultures and societies as intertwined and present alternatives to the well-known strategies of 'othering' (BOZAR 2019). Inter- and trans-perspectives are present as the decolonial solution in the chapters on the future of Europe (Chapter 16), global curatorship (Chapter 8) and heritage diplomacy and artistic collaborations across borders (Chapter 14). Thirdly, we have made use of the performative practice-element in decolonial thinking, which manifests itself in our strong focus on heritage practices and in the strong element of activist agency and process that comes with the word *decolonize*, or decolonizing minds, practices and heritage institutions. Citizen activists and artists 'artivistically' create new worlds through their art or through 'guerrilla memorialization', as Alan Rice puts it (2011). Universes are created that challenge and critique hegemonic versions and gazes. In so doing, they invent new ways of 'touching' their audiences—such as in the virtual experiments we follow in Meghna Singh's chapter discussing Cape Town—and offer new embodied and affective forms of learning, experiencing and self-reflecting that extend from activist and artists' aesthetic interventions in public spaces (Mignolo 2008; Mignolo and Vásquez 2013; Mignolo 2014; Schütz 2018). This often occurs in urban spaces that are already fuelled by socio-material intensity and strong

place-based emotions, linked directly to the colonial past, such as the harbour areas in Rio (Chapter 9) and Lisbon (Chapter 4).

The fourth aspect concerns the importance we place upon using decolonial thinking and practice as a means of opposing de-futuring tendencies, in that such thinking points unequivocally towards a future of more diversity and less inequality. Not that such a future is necessarily within close reach—in fact, far from it. But alternative scenarios are nonetheless frequently tried out as alternative lifestyles and economic organizations on an experimental basis by groups defeated by capitalism and colonialism (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013; Sousa Santos 2017). *Re-futuring* happens in decolonial endeavours that are invested with the emotion and affect of hope and it happens in the politicized heritage modality of removal and re-emergence, as will be discussed further below.

This volume's focus is the re-energized breath of global decolonial agendas in academia, the arts, the heritage and museum sectors and in social movements and civic commitments as they engage with colonial heritage and anti-racist issues in general. Whether Europe-based initiatives lead the way or, as with #RhodesMustFall and other episodes, they take direct inspiration from developments on other continents, we believe that the time is ripe for Europe to make colonialism and its consequences part of the difficult heritage that it needs to confront and reflect on, in order to become a trustworthy collaborator in the building of future global alliances and cooperation. This 'ripeness' reveals itself in the mobility, dissemination and contamination of insurgent movements from one local context to another and in the ability to form a long-term social movement with decolonial agendas. The murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in late May 2020 provides a key case in point.

Floyd's tragic murder did not in and of itself provide the inspiration for Black Lives Matter, which first emerged in 2013 on the back of other egregious killings of African Americans by the police. Nonetheless, it was indisputably a key turning point in its power and transnational visibility (Harrebye 2015; Lebron 2017; Tarrow 2012). The 8-minute, 46-second-long video recorded on a teenage girl's cell phone went viral, bringing Floyd's death to the eyes of the mainstream and social media alike across much of the world. The murder became a *lieu de mémoire*, an immaterial memory site whose importance cannot be overstated, and it also became Black Lives Matter's tipping point as an anti-racist and distinctly global movement (Erll 2011).

Three days after Floyd's brutal death, three American artists, Xena Goldman, Cadex Herrera and Greta McLain, painted a mural on the spot where he was killed, adding a material and localized layer to the video's immateriality. They completed it within 12 hours with the help of Niki Alexander and Pablo Hernandez. The 6-metre long, 2-metre high image depicts George Floyd's portrait in the centre of a huge sunflower, in which the names of all the victims of police brutality in recent years are inscribed. Breonna Taylor, a young caregiver mistakenly shot eight times in her own

apartment in the middle of the night of 13 March 2020 in Louisville, Kentucky, was only one of these. George Floyd's name unfolds in huge letters that act as megaphones. Silhouettes of the activists in the letters complete the painting dated 25 May 2020 in predominantly yellow and blue colours. A singular message is inscribed at the bottom of the portrait, 'I Can Breathe Now'—as if George Floyd had only achieved this much-needed freedom after his death. A video showing this installation also went viral within a very short time, joining the site of his death as another interrelated *lieu de mémoire*, speaking to the series of political and cultural actions protesting the unbreathable climate and adding to Floyd's legacy. This urban painting in Floyd's memory then became projected and thus remediated on a large screen during his funeral ceremony in Minneapolis (Zabunyan 2020).

Decolonial methodologies

The ECHOES project has likewise turned to a heuristic analytical framework for assessing heritage practices in general. As we have outlined this elsewhere, we will limit ourselves here to a brief sketch of its main components.[3] In order to more fully engage with heritage practices at both the formal and informal levels, we have suggested four modalities—repression, removal, reframing and re-emergence—to confront and analyze the manifold contours and ramifications of the colonial past. Repression denotes practices that involve a silencing or denial of the colonial past, which is what has (and still is) happening most of the time across much of Europe. Removal denotes situations where the presence or absence of this heritage in public spaces, archives and discourses is actively or often antagonistically politicized, while reframing points to situations that seek to incorporate this heritage into new consensual—and at times commercialized—frames of reference. A nuanced analysis and discussion of reframing and re-emergent perspectives is seen in Peixoto and Ferreira's chapter on the intercultural Todos festival in Lisbon (Chapter 11). Re-emergence is used for the practices that, at least potentially, open up social space for new voices, affects and bodies forging relations or 'contact zones' (Ifversen 2018; Pratt 1991) between actors, which transcend both the antagonistic dichotomies of removal and the domesticating pressures of reframing, thereby opening up the possibility for a heritage practice that presents a lost opportunity from the past that returns to offer itself as a potential future horizon. Re-emergence transgresses linear temporalities as it connects and moves back and forth between the past, the present and the future. The dichotomy between imaginary and real is likewise dissolved to express the imagined decolonial future in the here and now (Knudsen 2018).

Re-emergence happens when heritage actors respond to memory erasure, epistemic colonization and persistent expressions of the political matrices that governed the past in urban space and public discourse. To take another example, it also occurs when academics or heritage institutions begin listening to the testimonies of local—often diasporic—populations and groups

and their 'banal' everyday experiences of racism and marginalization (Mahdjoub this volume, Chapter 10). The unfolding of the perspectives and life stories of these new heritage actors is in itself an act of resistance that offers decolonial alternatives to official narratives (Gianolla et al. this volume, Chapter 4). Re-emergence appears in the form of new heritage actors, as well as new epistemologies, narratives and phenomenologies that come to the fore to take issue with and challenge the predominance of Eurocentric paradigms, whether inside or outside Europe. Re-emergence can also be something as simple as art coming out of an encounter, as in the case of Shawn Naphtali Sobers's auto-ethnographic film *Tell Me the Good News*, which was made during his research visit to Cape Town in 2019 as part of the ECHOES programme (Sobers 2019). Re-emergence as agency distributed to new actors commenting on and intervening in established art historical Eurocentric white versions of public space representations is also seen in Chapters 5, 8 and 12.

As an entangled temporality between past, present and future, re-emergence happens in decolonial agendas in festivals, art installations, visual and sculptural works, street performances, curatorial works, documentaries, exhibitions, civic rituals and applied associations' work. It is propelled by emotions of hope, joy and vital energy, as the future morphs into the here and now and opens doors to new possibilities. Filled with hope for the future, contemporary agents invent sociologies and aesthetics of emergence (Bloch 1995; Sousa Santos 2011) that can retain their hold and allure, regardless of what the future actually brings (Rigney 2018). The 're-futuring' of societies occurs through decolonial endeavours that proceed in the subjunctive 'as if', thereby holding on to the possibility that the future can be shaped as an improvement on current conditions (Miyazaki 2004; Pedersen 2012). Re-emergence has also become apparent in Rio de Janeiro and Lisbon, where different black and immigrant communities have produced multi-layered counter-narratives and provided previews of decolonial pluriverse urban spaces through their heritage practices in harbour areas that remain heavily haunted by colonialism in its most brutal variants (Chuva et al. this volume, Chapter 9).

Yet another valuable methodological insight that all ECHOES participants have experienced extends from our own diverse backgrounds and life experiences. Without falling into the trap of thinking that 'unless I have undergone the exact same experience as the other, I know nothing of his or her pain and should simply shut up', as Achille Mbembe has put it (Mbembe in Bangstad and Tumyr Nilsen 2019), ECHOES affiliates have at times found their legitimacy as researchers of evolving heritage landscapes questioned or even challenged. We have been enriched by these encounters and discussions, coming away with greatly enhanced self-awareness and better able to reflect on our own subjective position. Those of us who are white, for example, have valued decolonial methodologies as a constructive means of grappling with 'white innocence' (Tihuwai Smith 2012; Tuck and Yang 2012; Wekker 2016).

Indeed, this approach lay behind Britta Timm Knudsen's attempt to distribute the authorial voice in her contribution to this volume (Chapter 14).

Decolonial re-emergent futures

As suggested above, at the present time it is possible only to catch glimpses of a decolonial world that has not yet arrived. These very glimpses, however, have taken us further in the direction of mobilizing and 're-futuring' societies. To go even further still towards a more equitable future requires an acute awareness of one's own positionality in the field of colonial-decolonial studies that extends to acknowledging structural differences and inequalities, not to mention histories of suffering that are impossible to overcome and lay to rest. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang have termed this an ethics of incommensurability that demands that, however irreparable some injustices might be, they nevertheless require that we continue to try to address them and make amends (Tuck and Yang 2012, 35). Katrine Remmen Dirckinck-Holmfeld also advocates for reparative critical practice in her new work on *Entangled Archives*, in which she focuses on the colonial histories of the Virgin Islands, Ghana, Greenland, India and Denmark with the aim of bringing artists and researchers from these different places together to form a transoceanic network to relive and repair painful pasts (Dirckinck-Holmfeld 2015; Jakobsen 2021). The encounters between these different groups are likely to be replete with ambivalence and prove disturbing and unsettling, yet they still offer the prospect of constructing a pluriverse world shared in common for precisely this reason. Intercultural encounters as zones of contact and friction are based on structural asymmetries and must work hard to cultivate respect, tolerance and ethno-relativism (Ifversen 2018). How is it possible to imagine a Europe other than the fortress we know from the 'refugee crisis'? Here, one could take as a point of departure the argument that Europe—not least owing to its colonial history—is already entangled with other continents, and that to take those entanglements seriously and responsibly would totally transform the idea of Europe (Ifversen this volume, Chapter 16).

Our volume's strong focus on art and aesthetic experiences has a double focus. On the one hand, embodied life experiences are more easily communicated through art forms that give life and expression to the sensuous and affective layers of experiences. The artists that are present across many chapters of this book all use highly different media and strategies of communications: we have paintings, video works, installations, performative arts, film, photographs, and also virtual realities technologies. The medium of communication to wider audiences is highly important, as it decides how audiences are supposed to engage with and *feel* the experience in question (Witcomb 2015). The medium of walking, for example, is a common tool to make publics themselves embody the traces of the past in an urban landscape. Bristol-based artist Christelle Pellecuer does this with her film *Echoes of Our Ancestors* (2021) that takes us on an embodied and poetic journey into

Bristol's slave-owning past.[4] Echoing the strolling, the work conceives of heritage in its mobility and no longer as an immutable anchor of the past, which opens up political and poetic possibilities in a future to be. To the extent to which the art forms are relational and deploy interfaces for audiences to engage with and immerse themselves into, while at the same time creating an escapist self-forgetting experience, the more they succeed in producing self-reflective subjects that have been touched by art. Meghna Singh's work in the immersive multimedia installation of *Container* deals at one and the same time with a lot of ambiguous feelings in the publics she is addressing: unruly moods and atmosphere-creation, feelings of empathy with the victims of historical and present-day slavery, and the responsibility-taking necessary to correct errors (Chapter 13). This mix of sometimes contradictory feelings is productive, we argue, as it shows very clearly that a decolonial future is not like a seamless dream but presents a delicate and self-aware balance out of all our comfort zones, pointing towards new horizons of collaborations that will make us all grow and feel alive.

Finally, our work has also made us aware of the need for more sensitive and innovative approaches when engaging with heritage and science diplomacy. Although models for International Cultural Relations (ICR) are commonly represented by interactions between states and state agents, we argue that a more complex approach is required that extends to a wider range of actors, including 'mid-space' actors. As our research reveals, those working on the ground, whether they be museum curators, artists or citizen groups, often create projects that involve a deeper engagement with colonial legacies in their communities. There is a great opportunity to further this agenda, we believe, by supporting and encouraging the work of such grassroots actors, much of which is focused on the restitution of colonial artefacts (Hicks 2020). Whether labelled as heritage diplomacy or International Cultural Relations, international collaborative projects that address the colonial past need to be based on a foundation of trust and mitigate against unequal power relations between partners. Active listening and the ability to foster genuine intercultural dialogue are skills that policymakers and EU professionals at all levels need to exercise routinely. This includes an openness towards integrating a wider range of actors in diplomatic activities and involving them in policy development processes. We believe that such an approach is both urgent and necessary, especially if we are to arrive at a more equitable representation of colonial legacies across Europe (Clopot et al. this volume, Chapter 15).

Structure of the book

Part I, 'Haunted worlds: ghosts of the colonial past', sets the stage with chapters that explore how Europe's long history of empires within and outside the continent have left palpable present-day legacies, both well-known and lesser known, some of which are still widely embraced while others are

increasingly contested. Elizabeth Buettner's contribution on 'Europe and its Entangled Colonial Pasts' examines the multiple imperial entanglements of countries in Europe's North and East as well as its West and South; moreover, she charts how Europe's colonialisms, external and internal alike, have shaped the European Union's evolution since its origins in the aftermath of the Second World War in the era of late overseas colonialism and decolonization. Her transnational chapter is followed by Christoffer Kølvraa's close reading of Sam Mendes's highly acclaimed film, *1917*. Its production and ultimate release in 2019 coincided with the Brexit referendum's aftermath, rendering it a cultural product speaking to multifaceted forms of British nostalgia for both an imperial past and for a future as a Global Britain freed from EU constraints.

Part I then shifts from Kølvraa's nationally framed example to three local urban case studies. Nick Shepherd's analysis of Cecil Rhodes's spectral presence across the landscape and built environment of the University of Cape Town's campus in South Africa takes the #RhodesMustFall movement as its starting point. Cristiano Gianolla, Giuseppina Raggi and Lorena Sancho Querol devote their chapter to African- and Afro-descended life stories that provide greatly needed 'subaltern', plural historical perspectives that serve as critical counterpoints to the celebratory early-modern 'Discoveries'-oriented heritage space that still dominates key parts of multicultural Lisbon's waterfront. Attention shifts from Lisbon to Warsaw within Łukasz Bukowiecki's piece that explores not an established, world-renowned and deeply controversial white imperialist of Rhodes's stature but rather a long-forgotten Nigerian-origin jazz musician, August Agboola Browne (whose *nom de guerre* was 'Ali'), apparently the only black participant in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. Ali is a newly rediscovered historical figure in contemporary Warsaw who has generated multiple forms of decolonial memory activism that point towards new possible Polish futures in this post-socialist Eastern European capital.

Part II, 'Contemporary heritage practices: new agents, urban space events, and intercultural encounters', launches with three chapters that hone in on museums and curatorship and that similarly extend across and outside Europe. Csilla Ariese, Laura Pozzi and Joanna Wawrzyniak discuss and contrast city museums' diverse forms of engagement with local colonial pasts and surviving heritage from the perspective of institutions located in Amsterdam, Warsaw and Shanghai that reveal 'No Single Road to Decolonization'. Their assessment is followed by a contribution by the curator of one of the museums they discuss, Lu Jiansong, who oversaw the permanent 'Modern Shanghai' exhibition at the Shanghai History Museum, which opened to the public in 2018. Jiansong naturally provides a different vantage point on the way the colonial past has been re-evaluated in early twenty-first-century China. One of the challenges faced by his team of curators, for instance, was to highlight the invasive and destructive aspects of colonialism, while at the same time emphasizing its constructive elements. Another was to make space within this narrative for Shanghai's more recent

revolutionary history. Elvan Zabunyan's chapter continues this emphasis on curatorial initiatives, casting its spotlight on the innovative contributions of the late Okwui Enwezor (1963–2019) to the globalized art world. His international art events in Munich, Kassel, Seville, Paris and Venice between 2001 and 2015 showcased the entanglement of colonial history not only with contemporary artistic practices but equally with contemporary politics. Like few other practitioners, Enwezor exemplified how decolonial gestures caused productive upheaval that unsettled predominant Eurocentric paradigms by presenting competing interpretations of the past by artists of non-European descent.

The next contributions within Part II concern colonial culture's echoes within visual culture and site-specific art starting with Rio de Janeiro. Márcia Chuva, Leila Bianchi Aguiar and Brenda Coelho Fonseca demonstrate the value of African-descended people's life stories in understanding the personal and collective meanings of the Valongo Wharf and New African Cemetery heritage sites linked with Brazil's history of slavery. Decolonizing heritage in this instance involves black resistance to the structural racism that remains deeply embedded within Brazilian society today. The next three chapters return to European settings that have long been multicultural spaces transformed by postcolonial migration. The first is Paulo Peixoto and Claudino Ferreira's analysis of the Todos festival, an annual event on Lisbon's calendar since 2009. With local authorities and the independent arts scene deliberately showcasing Lisbon as a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multireligious city, Portugal's still-powerful colonial history and memory (also discussed by Gianolla, Raggi and Querol in Part I, as noted above) becomes productively reframed within 'contact areas' where different groups converge and collide.

We then hear directly from individual artists themselves, including Dalila Mahdjoub in her own intervention as well as from Badr El Hammami and Mohammed Laouli (as interviewed by Marine Schütz), three Marseille-based artists of Franco-Maghrebi backgrounds who illuminate how their artistic practice confronts not only colonial heritage still prominent within French urban space but also how racism and contempt wreaks social and emotional havoc within ethnic minority communities from former colonies. From Marseille, we return to Cape Town with Meghna Singh's discussion of her collaborative, multimedia, virtual reality installation *Container*. Singh's initiative connects South Africa's history of slavery together with forms of modern-day exploitation in the aftermath of the 2013 archaeological discovery of a Portuguese slave ship that sank in 1794 with 212 slaves on board.

Decolonizing Colonial Heritage concludes with Part III, 'Imagining decolonial futures'. The first two chapters investigate new decolonial ways of thinking about Europe today and its inseparability from historical entanglements with other continents. Britta Timm Knudsen's contribution, 'Decolonial Countervisuality', offers an experimental approach to decolonial methodology in which she invited three heritage practitioners (Sorana Munsya,

Benjamine Laini Lusalusa and Stephanie Collingwoode Williams) on board as co-researchers and co-analysts of a Belgian–Congolese documentary. Distributing the authorial voice and its attendant power allowed multiple perspectives on the film to emerge, demonstrating the hopeful potential of work that gives space to a diverse range of actors and voices. Collaborative methods like these also sit at the heart of the next chapter by Cristina Clopot, Casper Andersen and John Oldfield on 'New Diplomacy and Decolonial Heritage Practices'. In moving beyond traditional state-centred approaches, 'heritage diplomacy' or International Cultural Relations prioritizes more egalitarian forms of 'listening' by fostering meaningful engagements with non-state actors such as curators, artists, musicians and citizens' groups. Intercultural dialogues of this nature offer promising opportunities to constructively engage with past colonial relationships and work against ongoing unequal power relations through building trust. By way of conclusion, Jan Ifversen's chapter on 'Decolonial Voices, Colonialism and the Limits of European Liberalism' links Europe's historical record of dealing with 'outsiders', including European Jews, to recent histories of excluding ethnic minorities located within and beyond the continent, not least Muslims. He links the 'Jewish Question' with the 'Muslim Question', which has taken on increased visibility and urgency during and after 2015's so-called refugee crisis confronting the EU. Grappling with contemporary 'crises' by situating them in the context of longer histories of internal and colonial oppression highlights the limits of European liberalism in the past, as well as the present: crucially, it also suggests new ways of imagining an intercultural, transnational, and entangled Europe of the future. As he writes: 'If we are to look for promises for Europe, we must turn to the outsiders, the misfits disturbing our coordinates of citizenship, community and belonging. Perhaps this is Europe's only hope'.

Notes

1 Simon Taylor, "Orbán Accuses EU of Colonialism," *Politico*, 16 March 2012, https://www.politico.eu/article/orban-accuses-eu-of-colonialism/.
2 "Une centaine d'universitaires alertent: 'Sur l'islamisme, ce qui nous menace, c'est la persistence du déni.'" Tribune Collectif *Le Monde*, 31 October 2020. https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2020/10/31/une-centaine-d-universitaires-alertent-sur-l-islamisme-ce-qui-nous-menace-c-est-la-persistance-du-deni_6057989_3232.html.
3 A fuller presentation of methods is available online: Casper Andersen, Britta Timm Knudsen, and Christoffer Kølvraa, "Keywords: Anthology Exploring the Keywords of Colonial Heritage," https://keywordsechoes.com (accessed 8 April 2021); Casper Andersen, Britta Timm Knudsen, and Christoffer Kølvraa, "Methodological Toolkit," *University of Hull*, 15 March 2019, https://hull-repository.worktribe.com/output/1429845/methodological-toolkit; and Britta Timm Knudsen and Christoffer Kølvraa, "Affective Infrastructures of Re-emergence? Exploring Modalities of Heritage Practices in Nantes," *Heritage and Society*. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159032X.2021.1883981.

4 This film, which was part-financed by ECHOES, was released in May 2021. Christelle Pellecuer and Michael Jenkins, *Echoes of our Ancestors*, https://vimeo.com/555261712 (accessed 27 July 2021)

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Part I

Haunted worlds: ghosts of the colonial past

Chapter 1

Europe and its entangled colonial pasts

Europeanizing the 'imperial turn'[1]

Elizabeth Buettner

Coming to terms with the long-term impact of empires and decolonizations and selectively (however reluctantly) grappling with their diverse histories and legacies count as widely shared experiences in many European countries in recent decades. Since the 1990s, a growing number of historians and academics in related disciplines have illuminated the wide variety of ways Europe and other parts of the world have 'entangled histories', or *histoires croisées* (Werner and Zimmermann 2006). From the early modern era onwards and gathering particular momentum in the late nineteenth century, Europe's evolution became increasingly intertwined with far-flung transoceanic regions as maritime empires expanded and transformed. 'Home' and 'away' were mutually constituted arenas, scholars insisted, not hermetically sealed separate spheres; Europe itself thereby became transformed through unequal geopolitical power relations, an increasingly globalized economy, and mobile peoples and cultures (Stoler and Cooper 1997). Global flows of people (whether enslaved, indentured, or voluntary), goods, capital, and ideologies linked European colonizing countries with overseas possessions and spheres of influence during an extended age of empire. Today, these complex colonial legacies and heritage remain central not only to postcolonial societies overseas but also still echo resoundingly across Europe itself.

Britain, France, Portugal, and other Western and Southern European examples remain the most familiar cases within the 'imperial turn' now taken by many scholars (Buettner 2016), but this chapter insists on positioning empires and colonialism as defining characteristics of a far wider European history, not simply that of a series of individual nations. Albeit in very different and inevitably uneven ways, Europe's centuries-long history of empires extended to Scandinavia together with Central and Eastern Europe, including during and after the state-socialist era. Europe has been historically forged by maritime as well as continental land empires (including the Habsburg empire, imperial and then Nazi Germany, and Tsarist Russia followed by the Soviet Union). As such, forms of colonialism not only extended outwards to the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Australasia but also across the Global North and inwards in the form of 'internal colonialisms'. Seas and oceans separating imperial centres from far-off colonies, in sum, were not an

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-3

inevitable requirement, either for empire or for colonial-style practices and relationships (Etkind 2011, 5).

Whether maritime, terrestrial, or indeed both, empires remained the dominant form many European polities took until well into the twentieth century—in Jürgen Osterhammel's words, well past the 'so-called age of nation-states' that has conventionally described the nineteenth century (Osterhammel 2014, 88–9). 'Empires can be nations writ large', as Krishan Kumar has put it, and 'nations empires under another name' (Kumar 2017, 23). Benedict Anderson's account of 'official nationalisms' similarly stresses how these could involve 'stretching the short, tight skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire' (as exemplified by the *British* empire or the *Portuguese* empire) (Anderson 2006, 86, 140).

Although the pages that follow can only scratch the surface of what is, by now, an immense and ever-evolving research field, they chart the inseparability of countless national/imperial and continental/global dynamics, briefly noting some better-known examples as well as pausing to take account of cases that remain less commonly viewed through imperial lenses outside specialist academic circles. Viewing forms of empire and colonialism located within and beyond Europe as candidates for comparative treatment and potential cross-fertilization rather than splendid isolation allows empire to be examined as a common European heritage, defining the continent and the wider world (Burbank and Cooper 2010; Leonhard 2016). If 'Europeanization' can be understood as 'a variety of political, social, economic and cultural processes that promote (or modify) a sustainable strengthening of intra-European connections and similarities through acts of emulation, exchange and entanglement and that have been experienced and labelled as "European"', to adopt Ulrike von Hirschhausen and Kiran Klaus Patel's encapsulation, then colonialism demands to be placed far more firmly within this rubric than has typically been the case (Von Hirschhausen and Patel 2010, 2). 'Europeanizing' colonialism, and ultimately decolonization, as both a transnational European (indeed, pan-European) and global heritage, moreover, also extends to recognizing their place in Europe's integration process since the late 1950s, a theme this chapter broaches in its conclusion.

Paving the way: approaching Western and Southern Europe's overseas histories

Since 'discovering' the New World across the Atlantic and ultimately circumnavigating the globe from the end of the fifteenth century, European states built upon pre-existing trans-Mediterranean engagements and nascent links with the west coast of Africa to carve out increasingly global forms of presence and power. Ocean-spanning realms presided over by Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Britain, and France expanded, contracted, changed hands, and increased once more across the Americas, Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific region, and along Africa's coasts before moving ever further inland as

more and more European countries competed in their 'Scramble for Africa' as the nineteenth century drew to a close. Imperial expansionism became integral to the very fabric of nation-states and to dominant conceptions of their identity and heritage. The pioneering roles of Spain and Portugal in the 'Age of Discoveries' featuring renowned seafarers like Columbus, Da Gama, and Magellan took their place alongside the Netherlands' global engagements integral to the Dutch seventeenth-century 'Golden Age' (Bethencourt and Curto 2007; Subrahmanyam 2007; Weststeijn 2014). Britain's and France's expansionism also gained momentum, ultimately rendering theirs the world's two largest empires in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Influenced by postcolonial studies (much of it spearheaded by literary scholars) and anthropology, historians gradually united what had long been distinct fields of academic work, bringing overseas empires within the fold of domestic European histories. Just as Anglophone scholars were long at the vanguard of postcolonial studies, so too were historians of Britain and the British empire prominent in the early stages of mapping what ultimately became widely known as the 'new imperial history' (Burton 2003; Hall and Rose 2006; Kennedy 2018; MacKenzie 1986; Ward 2001; Wilson 2004). Britain-focused work long remained strongly represented (particularly focused on its 'jewel in the crown' in India, settler colonies, and the West Indies), even as Portugal's entanglements with Brazil and Africa, France's with its vast empire, and the Dutch presence in and beyond the East and West Indies became the subjects of new research approaches (Koekkoek et al. 2017; Raben 2013). Not only was Britain's history explored as inseparable from that of its empire (and later the Commonwealth) and France's from *la plus grande France* ('Greater France') beyond the seas: empires were equally important (and perhaps more so) to smaller and less powerful nations on the international stage (Blanchard et al. 2008; Conklin et al. 2011; Stovall 2015; Wilder 2003). By virtue of overseas possessions, Portugal could claim to be much more than a diminutive, poor, and peripheral European country, while possessing Congo allowed Belgium the pretensions of being *la plus grande Belgique* (Goddeeris 2015; Goddeeris et al. 2020; Sanches 2006; Santos 2002; Sidaway and Power 2005; Viaene et al. 2009).

Colonial latecomers included Germany and Italy, which looked overseas as a means of consolidating their standing as newly unified nation-states by adopting behaviours characteristic of Great Powers. For state- and private-sector imperial enthusiasts, gaining footholds in Asia and particularly Africa meant winning their rightful 'place in the sun', whether in Germany's African or Pacific territories or the northern African lands claimed by Italy that led Mussolini to fantasize about the Mediterranean's possibilities as an 'Italian lake'. Overseas empires were thus explored as constitutive features of the political, economic, social, and cultural orders of European countries, whether they counted as long-established leading players or more recent arrivals on the international scene (Borutta and Gekas 2012; MacKenzie

2011; Pergher 2017; for introductions to a now-voluminous and ever-expanding body of work, see Buettner 2016, 1–19; Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2015a, 2015b; Schilling 2015; Thomas and Thompson 2018).

So integral was empire-building that the distinction between national and imperial territories and histories often proved difficult to draw. Scholars have long debated whether Ireland was subjected to England's internal colonialism that preceded and continued alongside Britain's expansionism across the globe (Hechter 1978; Howe 2000; Kenny 2004; McDonough 2005). Viewing Ireland's past—as well as Northern Ireland's experiences after it stayed part of the United Kingdom after Ireland's 1921 partition—through the lens of postcolonial studies has generated accounts of its subjugation through settler colonialism and heavy-handed rule from London, with Catholic Irish seen as racially inferior and undeserving of sovereignty in a manner that bore resemblance to Britain's (and other Western countries') stance towards Africans, Asians, and other colonial subjects (Bruendel 2017; Laird 2015). By the same token, however, many Irish (alongside Scots) had long featured prominently in Britain's collective imperial activities further afield, rendering Ireland simultaneously colonized at home yet colonizing overseas (MacKenzie and Devine 2011). Algeria under French rule provides a different example. Until forced out in 1962, France insisted that Algeria was not a colony but rather three *départements* of the nation itself, despite being situated across the Mediterranean as opposed to directly adjacent within Europe (Shepard 2006; Stora 1991). Portugal adopted a similar stance, with its dictatorship ultimately redefining colonies in Africa and Asia as 'overseas provinces' in 1951 (Jerónimo and Pinto 2013).

These cases illustrate the durability of European imperial agendas emphasizing bonds with overseas possessions well after the Second World War, a watershed conventionally understood as heralding the onset of widescale global decolonization. Some European overseas empires like Germany's had already ended, while the 1940s did indeed bring independence to India, Indonesia, and a handful of other territories. In countless settings, however, Western and Southern European powers sought to hold tightly onto their remaining empires in a Cold War world dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union, fighting anti-colonial insurgencies and other proliferating nationalist movements by insisting on national–imperial connectedness. Britain's persistent attachment to the Commonwealth that evolved out of empire, France's post-war relabelling of its empire as the French Union (and, like Portugal, designating many colonies as 'overseas departments and territories'), and the Dutch 1954 statute redefining Suriname and the Dutch Antillean islands as part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands all demonstrate the tenacity of imperial priorities and mentalities (Aldrich and Connell 1992; Murphy 2018; Oostindie and Klinkers 2003; Thompson 2012; Ward, forthcoming). Post-war European empires' survival into and often beyond the 1970s despite the intervening spate of decolonizations culminating in the early 1960s, moreover, renders Europe's global imperial histories not simply

durable national ones that, in their waning years, extended national citizenship to many colonized peoples across racial and geographical lines (Cooper 2014). As this chapter revisits in its conclusion, they also rendered the postwar European integration process as inseparable from empire, decolonization, and postcolonial dynamics as was the case for many individual member states in the future European Union.

Yet being part of imperial (and ultimately postcolonial) Europe did not require having held territory on other continents. Alongside Britain's informal empire comprised of vast regions across the globe that fell under its tremendous economic, political, and military sway can be placed imperial Germany's web of intercontinental engagements in Latin America, China, and other regions that greatly exceeded its 30-year era of formal colonialism in Africa and the Pacific between the mid-1880s and the First World War (Conrad 2010; Naranch and Eley 2014). Relatedly, scholars now frame Switzerland—long all but excluded from the 'imperial turn'—as a country that engaged in 'colonialism without colonies'. It counted among the societies that 'had an explicit self-understanding as being outside the realm of colonialism, but nevertheless engaged in the colonial project in a variety of ways and benefitted from these interactions' (Lüthi et al. 2016, 1; Purtschert and Fischer-Tiné 2015). Like other Europeans, the Swiss derived economic advantages from other countries' colonies and utilized shared notions of white supremacy that became apparent within their popular culture, fine arts, academic discourse, and understandings of national identity. Individuals' involvement in other powers' colonial projects as explorers, missionaries, scientists, emigrants, and travellers; profitable trade and overseas investments; colonial commodities and artistic and literary cultures; racial understandings of their majority populations as 'European', 'white', 'civilized', and 'superior' when contrasted with black, Asian, and Middle Eastern 'others': all count among the ways that Europeans across national lines could become complicit and enmeshed in the colonial endeavour. This worked to their own considerable advantage, whether they hailed from London, Paris, Antwerp, Lisbon, Berlin, or Zürich, or, for that matter, from Stockholm, Copenhagen, and other points further north.

Imperializing Nordic Europe

Scandinavia too has typically been all but absent from most understandings and academic analyses of modern European empires and colonial engagements, and with far less justification than Switzerland (Höglund and Burnett 2019). Denmark, for instance, may well have shrunk drastically in terms of land and power since the seventeenth century, but it nevertheless qualified as an imperial kingdom long afterwards. Most familiar is its severe contraction within Europe upon forfeiting a series of territories to Sweden since the mid-1600s (including Norway in 1814) and to Germany in 1864. Less widely known are the small territories Denmark once claimed in India, West Africa,

and the West Indies before selling the first two to the British in the 1840s and the third to the United States in 1917. Like other European countries with overseas dimensions, Danish imperial history also extended to involvement in the transatlantic slave trade and Caribbean slaveholding together with many other empowered forms of interaction with the 'tropics' (Adler-Nissen and Gad 2014; Andersen 2013; Jensen 2018; Olwig 2003).

Denmark's withdrawals thus significantly pre-dated many other European departures from overseas domains, but only if attention is restricted to its formal hold over parts of the Global South. Looking towards the Global North, by contrast, tells a far more complicated and extended story, one that remains underrepresented within colonial and postcolonial studies despite the gradual emergence of a stimulating body of specialist work. Denmark's expansive extra-European history in the North Atlantic and Arctic region dated from the time of the Vikings, continuing until and beyond the mid-twentieth century period that rendered decolonization a global, trans-imperial phenomenon. Danish colonialism in Iceland lasted until the Second World War and even longer elsewhere. In precisely the same early post-war years that saw France and Portugal proclaim their colonies to be 'overseas provinces' and the Netherlands redefine itself as encompassing its territories across the Atlantic, Denmark behaved comparably, bringing extra-European holdings into the nation itself. Greenland, with its native Inuit population, stopped being what was effectively a colony in 1953, not because it achieved independence but because, like the Faroe Islands, it was incorporated within the Danish kingdom. Denmark did this for much the same reason as other European empires—to justify the state's ongoing claims over lands that the United Nations deemed ripe for decolonization by announcing that they were no longer colonies at all and to stymie demands for self-determination. Having only achieved home rule in 1979 and self-governing status in 2009, Greenland still lacks full sovereign status outside the Danish rubric, thus qualifying—albeit rarely understood—as a case of incomplete decolonization to this day (Gad 2014; Jensen 2018, Chapter 4).

Nor was Denmark the only Northern European state engaged with imperial processes more commonly associated with other parts of the continent. Sweden's early modern expansionism extended to Baltic annexations as well as the acquisition of overseas outposts in the seventeenth century, including New Sweden in North America, the Caribbean island of Saint Barthélemy, and several trading posts in Africa. That it did not expand further was not through want of trying, only of success. Sweden had its own Africa Company and East India Company just as Britain and the Netherlands did, but unlike the latter its ambitions largely remained unfulfilled, with its non-European territories rapidly turned over to other competing powers. In the early nineteenth century it also lost Finland to the Russian empire yet gained Norway from Denmark, holding it until Norway gained independence in 1905. Whether Sweden's rule over Finland, and later Norway, was tantamount to a colonial project in terms of its manner of administration and subjugation of

local populations remains, unsurprisingly, a matter for debate (Fur 2013, 22; Neumann 2014, 126–7).

Denmark and Sweden may thus have ranked as minor imperial powers at best on the global stage, yet imperial powers they were nonetheless, even if on a smaller scale or for a shorter time than was the case for Britain, Portugal, or other examples noted above. Like the Swiss, moreover, Scandinavian colonial activities went significantly beyond any formal state-level territorial holdings and entailed multiple forms of involvement in other European countries' overseas projects (Brimnes et al. 2009). Whether as sailors, explorers, scientists, missionaries, traders, investors, or emigrating settlers or through access to colonial commodities, literature, and art forms, Northern Europeans also could make use of the material opportunities and self-aggrandizing racial understandings that circulated and embedded themselves transnationally (and transimperially) across European borders. Regardless of whether they belonged to states that formally possessed their own colonies across oceans or whether their own homelands could plausibly be described as colonies themselves within Northern Europe, they long remained active agents and beneficiaries of global imperial projects (Engh 2009).

Finally, in a manner comparable to the Irish within the British empire, Norwegians and Finns potentially count among the Europeans who qualified as being colonized at home yet played colonizing roles on imperial stages located further afield. Nor did the Finns' history of racialization within Europe—of having long been classified as of 'Mongol' or 'Asiatic' descent, and less 'white' than other Europeans—prevent them from engaging in forms of internal colonialism within their own borders after achieving independence from the collapsing Russian empire in 1917 (Keskinen 2019). Together with Sweden as well as Norway since its own independence, Finland's treatment of the indigenous Sámi peoples spread across borders in Scandinavia's far North involved racial discrimination, a 'civilizing mission', land expropriation, and exploitation of natural resources. Long considered 'backward' candidates for 'improvement', positioning the Sámi vis-à-vis other subaltern colonized groups remains all too rare within colonial and postcolonial scholarship beyond specialist regional studies (Fur 2013, 23; Lehtola 2015; also see other chapters in Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012; Naum and Nordin 2013).

Central and Eastern Europe's imperial turns

Modern Germany, noted briefly above, offers examples of both short-lived overseas colonialism in Africa and the Pacific that was terminated by its First World War defeat as well as a more lengthy history of encounters with Eastern Europe, particularly Poland. Many historians now argue the latter to have been tantamount to colonial power relations, not least given widespread German understandings of Eastern European ethnic groups as racially inferior. The tragic consequences of these outlooks culminated when much of the region fell under Nazi occupation and suffered from its racist and

genocidal policies. The Third Reich's targeting of Eastern European spaces for conquest and settlement and of Jews, 'Slavs', and other groups for merciless suppression, removal, or outright annihilation extended from longer histories of regional domination. Yet they also drew upon widely shared European colonial mentalities and behaviours recurrent on other continents, not exclusively from Germany's own history of genocidal war in early twentieth-century South-West Africa (Conrad 2010, 2013; Mazower 2009; Zimmerer 2011). The entanglement of Nazi occupations and the Holocaust within Europe with colonial oppression and violence outside Europe was set to continue into the age of decolonization, with memories of atrocities under Hitler informing international responses to European brutality while combatting anti-colonial insurgencies in French Algeria and other theatres of conflict in Asia and Africa after 1945 (Rothberg 2009).

Nazi expansionism, however, first began with its *Anschluß* (annexation) of Austria in 1938. As Hitler's forces entered Vienna that March, they assumed control over the short-lived republic that was a shrunken remnant of the Habsburg empire that had survived for over half a millennium before being brought down at the end of the First World War. After 1918, Vienna's urban landscape was that of a post-imperial capital whose grandiose architecture better reflected the multinational Austro-Hungarian empire of yesteryear that claimed over 50 million subjects, not the small and unstable Alpine republic it had become.

Historians have now begun re-examining the Habsburg monarchy's territories and structure as an empire, as opposed to focusing on ethnic nationalisms and the new nation-states that succeeded it (Judson 2016; Kumar 2017). Even so, few studies move past Austria–Hungary as a continental empire to situate it within wider global and maritime imperial histories. Yet the dynasty had once encompassed both Austrian and Spanish branches that saw Habsburgs ruling Spain alongside its vast territories in the New World until the early eighteenth century. When Spain and Spanish America passed into French royal hands, the Habsburgs consolidated their realm within Central Europe and expanded further east. Alongside Prussia and Russia, it took part in the 1795 partition of Poland after having acquired Galicia and Bukovina. The latter were widely conceived at the imperial centre as backward, primitive, misgoverned, and in dire need of 'civilization' via more enlightened Habsburg rule. As Pieter Judson underscores, the dynasty deployed 'the imperialist language of Western superiority articulated by proponents of global colonialism' (Judson 2016, 74; see also Feichtinger et al. 2003).

Come the nineteenth century, moreover, the Habsburg empire was not merely an inland *Donaumonarchie* (Danube monarchy) (Johler 1999, 88); it gained an increasingly prominent maritime presence in the Adriatic and Mediterranean, with Trieste counting as one of the world's ten largest port cities and Austria–Hungary's gateway to the sea. The Austrian Lloyd shipping company's trans-Mediterranean trade encompassed material goods and 'free' passengers as well as slaves transported between Ottoman and other

ports (Frank 2012). Austria–Hungary too thus counted among Europe's Mediterranean powers, albeit in a different way than France, Britain, Spain, or Italy with their hold over North African colonies, protectorates, and enclaves. As other European empires encroached further into Asia or competed in the 'Scramble for Africa', Austria–Hungary also viewed the global stage as important to its prosperity and its international standing as a Great Power, albeit a second-tier one. Its failure to take formal control of territory on other continents did not reflect a lack of interest in or a rejection of imperial projects; instead, it participated enthusiastically and profitably in global commerce. Alison Frank's research provides a much-needed reminder that an informal empire revolving around trade, shipping, and other activities characterized not just modern Britain or Germany, as noted above, but also described states like Austria–Hungary which are still more commonly remembered (and studied) as strictly 'continental' (Frank 2011).

Habsburg formal territorial expansionism in the age of high imperialism, meanwhile, involved acquisitions to its south and east that were tantamount to an internal colonialism centred on the Balkans. By the 1870s, Austria–Hungary entered a new phase of its struggle for land and influence against the Ottoman empire whose borders it shared. The 'Turkish threat' and the fight against the 'infidel' going back to the 1500s and 1600s (when Hungary itself fell under Ottoman rule for a century and a half) morphed into modern tensions pervading Ottoman relations with other European powers. Whether against Britain and France as their empires absorbed Ottoman territories in North Africa or against the Habsburg and Romanov Russian empires in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, the Ottomans' geographical reach contracted from the late eighteenth century onwards. Some areas like Greece, Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria became autonomous or independent with foreign backing, but successive Ottoman losses were largely other European empires' gains. Austria–Hungary's 1878 occupation of Bosnia–Herzegovina (and ultimately its annexation 30 years later) had all the trappings of a colonial project replete with a 'civilizing mission'—directed not least at its substantial Muslim population—meant to legitimize its control and governance, albeit an adjacent European colonial project as opposed to a distant overseas one (Judson 2016, 330).

Both within and beyond the continent, the Ottoman empire's status as the 'sick man of Europe' eroded ever further as it steadily receded from Europe and grew increasingly Islamic (as opposed to encompassing peoples of many faiths, most prominently Eastern Orthodox Christians and Jews, as it had before). While it was the locus of Western 'Orientalism' so influentially explored by Edward Said and acted as 'the classic "other" of Western civilization' (Kumar 2017, 76; Said 1978), the Ottoman empire was in fact long a decidedly European one at the same time as it straddled continents and was situated at Europe's ambiguous borders with the 'Oriental' world. 'It is indeed possible to stress the non-European—Turkic, Arabic, Persian—aspects of the Ottoman Empire', Krishan Kumar writes. 'Yet properly considered it has

at least as much claim to be thought European as, say, the Russian Empire' in terms of its geographical expanse, not to mention its centuries-long impact across much of the continent (Kumar 2017, 79). Like much else, its demise alongside Europe's other empires comprising the defeated Central Powers of the First World War attested to its entanglement with broader European trajectories until the end.

Europe's 'Orient' and colonial activities, as such, crucially lay beyond yet simultaneously within itself, most prominently the further east and southeast a more 'Western'-situated gaze extended. Indeed, Europe's Orients were at once overlapping and plural, with their geographical, cultural, and often racialized delineations historically in flux. The dividing line between East and West recurrently proved as frustratingly vague as it was intangible, perhaps most vividly in Europe's own contiguous Easts like the Balkans and Russia. Both have been widely imagined as European 'peripheries' (and often not 'properly European') or as crossroads between Europe and Asia, or Europe and its Near or Middle East (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992).

If the Balkans have commonly been construed as 'semideveloped, semicolonial, semicivilized, semioriental', as Maria Todorova has influentially explored (Todorova 2009, 16), in Alexander Etkind's interpretation the Romanov empire of Russia (1613–1917) counted as both an outwardly expanding Eurasian power and one that 'constituted itself through the process of colonization', thereby being 'created by the process it performed' (Etkind 2011, 67–8). Through state-organized (often forced) migrations akin to colonization by settlers as well as the naturalization of hierarchical cultural, legal, and class distinctions subdividing its own population—for example, between masters and serfs—the Russian empire 'colonized its own people'. 'Defining its others by estate and religion' just as 'Western empires defined them by geography and race', Russian colonial acts and mentalities extended both across its own heartland as internal colonization and outwards to Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Pacific. In this sense, Russia was 'both the subject *and* the object of orientalism' (Etkind 2011, 251–2; see also Kemper 2018).

That the Tsarist empire grew until it stretched from the Arctic to the Black Sea and from the Baltic to the Pacific (and once extended as far as California and Alaska) underscores the importance of its sea borders and maritime dimensions, thereby complicating its portrayals as primarily a land empire. Its intercontinental and global reach brought it into collision not only with the Habsburgs and Ottomans but with the Japanese, Chinese, and the British overseas empire, the latter as Britain moved beyond British India further north into Afghanistan and played a decades-long Central Asian 'Great Game' against Russian competitors for regional influence. Russia was a Eurasian empire as well as a European power, with the former in fact making the latter possible. As Mark Smith has summarized, '[i]ts expansionary identity was precisely what made it a great power like Britain and France, and even what defined its European status' (Smith 2019, 256; see also Kivelson

and Suny 2017; Lieven 2002). Russia's integrated history of European and extra-European modern imperialisms up to the Romanov empire's termination by the Russian Revolution was followed by the Soviet Union's multiple engagements with its constituent multinational republics, nearest neighbours, and the wider world alike (Martin 2001).

Examining Eastern Europe through a colonial and postcolonial prism has allowed scholars including James Mark and Quinn Slobodian to propose that the region qualifies as 'the first site of decolonization in the twentieth century' as new nation-states emerged with the dissection of the Habsburg and Tsarist empires after the First World War (Mark and Slobodian 2018, 352; see also Gerwarth 2017, Chapter 11). Its rapid occupation by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union during the Second World War, followed by its subordination within the Eastern bloc dominated by the Soviet 'evil empire' throughout the Cold War, entailed further phases of intra-European colonization as 'the West's original Third World, its nearest quasi-oriental space', as David Chioni Moore has put it (2001, 122). At the same time, however, it actively participated in a variety of 'Second World' socialist engagements with Asia, Africa, and Latin America via ideological solidarities and material interconnections as the 'Third World' struggled against colonialism and neo-colonial arrangements. As such, Europe's East as well as its 'First World' West were both connected with wider global transitions as overseas empires formally drew to a close, up until the Soviet empire's own disintegration between 1989 and 1991 (Mark, Iacob et al. 2019, Mark, Kalinovsky et al. 2020).

From decolonization to Europe's integration and postcolonial condition

Studying Central–Eastern Europe since 1989 as simultaneously post-socialist and postcolonial is only one way that Europe's shared colonial history and current shared postcolonial condition becomes apparent (Głowacka-Grajper 2018). As this chapter has outlined, European states and empires 'at home' were mutually constituted by manifold interactions with the wider world. These ties did much to make Europe what it was, whether in material, geopolitical, or cultural terms, and most certainly in terms of dominant racial self-identifications. Moreover, the gradual winding-down of overseas empires after 1945 occurred in tandem with Europe's increasing integration as it evolved during and after the 1950s.

Bringing Europe's imperial and decolonization histories together with the European Union's history since the birth of the European Economic Community in 1957 remains, to date, a move made in all too few academic treatments (with Hansen and Jonsson 2014, Patel 2020 and Pasture 2018 being prominent among them). Yet the EEC and later EU's inseparability from overseas empires and their histories, if largely unacknowledged, was just as pronounced as that of many of its member states that either still held colonies and other overseas territories or had recently relinquished them

when they joined (Bhambra 2009; Fisher Onar and Nicolaïdis 2013; Ward and Rasch 2019). This explains why Algeria (which France insisted was part of itself) was once part of the EEC until its independence, as was Greenland (as part of Denmark) until the late 1970s; it also accounts for the EU's current geographical expansiveness far beyond continental Europe through its many 'Overseas Countries and Territories' and 'Outermost Regions'. Scattered outposts extend the EU's reach into the Caribbean, South America, and the Indian Ocean (including the Dutch Antilles and French overseas *départements* and territories that still comprise parts of these nations themselves), into the Atlantic and Pacific, and to the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla across the Mediterranean in Northern Africa.

As such, like Europe, the EU is still not fully postcolonial in the present day, yet its population nevertheless testifies to the deep impact of colonial legacies and the unfinished business of empire. Ever since overseas empires began their post-war retreat, rising numbers of (ex-) colonial peoples arrived to ultimately render significant parts of the continent ever more multicultural and ethnically diverse (see Buettner 2016, 2018a, 2018b, and 2020, which discuss a far wider range of scholarship). Insisting on empire and colonialism as shared, if highly differentiated, European experiences goes hand in hand with recognizing the Europeanness of Europe's millions of ethnic minorities in the wake of decolonization. While they often arrived as citizens of late-imperial and recently imperial nation-states, many minorities from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the Caribbean suffered from social exclusion and found it difficult to gain acceptance, either as legitimate members of European nations or as 'European' more generally, on account of their allegedly 'racial', cultural, and religious differences from the majority. As Stuart Hall put it, they may have been 'in' Europe, yet were often not recognized as genuinely 'of' Europe (Hall 2003), despite being a transnational presence and a central part of Europe's 'identity', whether openly acknowledged or not (see also Balibar 2004, 223). The European Union's much-lauded aspiration to embody 'Unity in Diversity', as its motto celebrates, demands that greater attention be paid not only to national diversity but to its multicultural diversity that long-standing colonial entanglements have made an irrevocable part of postcolonial EUrope.

The EU's diversity also describes its current member states that have very different relationships with the colonial past. After multiple expansions, it has grown to include both ex-colonizing nations and those once tantamount to having been colonized themselves by their neighbours, whether they be Ireland or the series of post-socialist Central and Eastern European countries that have acceded since 2004. Within an EU that places a high priority upon internal freedom of movement at the same time as defending its external borders from unwanted migrants, intra-EU migrants from these countries have often found themselves racialized when they reached their destinations, albeit as whites and in distinction from those whose ancestral roots lay outside the continent (Fox 2013; Mark, Iacob et al. 2019, Chapter

3; McDowell 2009; Zahra 2016, Chapter 7 and postscript). Together with its 'inner East' (Ballinger 2017, 51), the EU is geographically, culturally, and symbolically defined by its most proximate 'others' across the Mediterranean and just beyond its eastern and southeastern land borders, particularly Russia, parts of the former Yugoslavia whose heritage is more Ottoman than Habsburg, and Turkey (Bakić-Hayden 1995; Neumann 1999; Risse 2010). These multiple 'Orients', including many characterized as mainly Islamic, qualify as EU 'neighbours' at best as distinct from viable candidates for future membership (Kølvraa 2017; Kuus 2004). Understanding EUrope's colonial heritage requires that attention be paid to how these 'others'—some already located within itself, some located just beyond its borders—have defined European identities, both historically and today.

Note

1 This work forms part of the ECHOES project which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 770248. It partly draws on Elizabeth Buettner. 2018. 'European Entanglements'. *ECHOES: European Colonial Heritage Modalities in Entangled Cities*. https://keywordsechoes.com/european-entanglements.

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Chapter 2

1917, Brexit and imperial nostalgia

A longing for the future[1]

Christoffer Kølvraa

If, as Fredric Jameson famously claimed, the cultural products of a society express the anxieties and desires of its political unconscious (Jameson [1981] 2002), then the financial and critical success of the BAFTA-winning movie *1917*, directed by Sam Mendes, might well rest on its very timely catering to a certain set of nostalgic desires and anxieties that emerged with renewed force in Britain in the shadow of Brexit, but which can be said to exits to varying degrees across Europe and the United States. In this chapter, I aim to show how *1917's* narrative of military valour can be interpreted as addressing, placating or indulging the anger, fears and hopes of British majority culture in ways that chime with both its distinct political situation and the wider socio-historical context. More precisely, I seek to show how various forms of nostalgia embedded in this movie and in the Brexit debate—which is clearly its implicit field of reference—ultimately express the impasses and insecurities of British national identity in ways that also implicate the country's colonial heritage and imperial history.

My approach is inspired by Jameson's work on the political unconscious and his thoughts on allegory and ideology, both of which rest on the assumption that cultural objects are always reflective of wider political struggles and should therefore be interpreted in light of—or indeed, contrariwise, should be interpreted as throwing light on—contemporary societal issues and anxieties (Jameson [1981] 2002, 1998, 2019). But while certain ideas and concepts in the following pages reveal this inspiration, my primary conceptual ambition here is not to implement Jameson's interpretative frameworks in any detailed or dogmatic sense. Rather, they serve as a framework against which the idea of nostalgia, as both an academic concept and a political accusation, can be critically discussed and qualified. This is necessary because while accusations of both 'national' and 'imperial' nostalgia have been pervasive in the Brexit debate, they have most often rested on a merely rhetorical use of the term. However, if fully unpacked, nostalgia can be used as an interpretative lens allowing for a better understanding of the seductive enjoyability of both *1917* and of certain elements of 'Brexiteer discourse'—the latter serving the former as something like what Jameson (2019) would call an allegorical code, a secondary narrative structure implicitly shaping and ordering the content of the story told.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-4

Brexit, Britishness and nostalgia

The fact that, at a superficial level, *1917* presents a nostalgic ideal of British national community in the shadow of Brexit has escaped few critics and commentators. The film, as one critic would have it, 'is intriguing only because of Britain's current moment. Certainly, the country's acrimonious withdrawal from the European Union makes a notable contrast with the onscreen camaraderie' (Dargis 2019). The film *1917* is in this sense part of what Edoardo Campanella and Marta Dassù call 'Anglo-Nostalgia'—something also clearly present in other recent British TV and film productions, such as *Victoria* (2016–19), *Dunkirk* (2017), *Darkest Hour* (2017) and the immensely popular *Downton Abbey* (2010–2015/2019) (Campanella and Dassù 2019a, 2019b). But as Danny Dorling and Sally Tomlinson have argued, such nostalgia pervades British politics and society also beyond popular culture, especially finding an outlet in the rhetorical strategies employed by 'Brexiteers' before and after the Brexit referendum (Dorling and Tomlinson 2019; Tomlinson and Dorling 2016). The accusation of nostalgia has, in this most straightforward sense, been used in the context of Brexit by a wide sway of academics, journalists or politicians to signify little more than a form of rhetoric in which the past covertly becomes a resource for articulating political ideals or remedies for contemporary society.

Such a straightforward nostalgic subtext is not hard to detect in *1917* or to connect to the wider anxieties of a Britain deeply divided in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum, not just between voters for Remain and Leave but also along newly aggravated racial and class lines (see Jackson et al. 2016; Norris and Inglehart 2019). Indeed, a kind of joint ambition to soothe the nation might explain the fact that A-list British actors crowd into minor or marginal roles throughout the film. But it is also significant that these well-known faces mostly play the roles of officers, because one of the significant choices that sets *1917* apart as a First World War movie is the way it portrays the officer class. The plot is set in motion by General Erinmore (Colin Firth) who—in what is framed as a gesture of paternal concern—sends the two protagonists, Blake and Schofield, on a mission to stop a doomed attack in which Blake's brother is to take part. On their journey across the trenches, our heroes encounter officers of almost all ranks, concluding with Schofield finally making contact with the commanding officer of the doomed attack (Benedict Cumberbatch) and relatively easily convincing him to call it off. What is significant here is that not a single one of these officers is portrayed as anything other than competent, caring and approachable from the perspective of the common soldier. As such, the movie fundamentally challenges the conventional 'lions led by donkeys' narrative that has typically narrated the war as a meaningless slaughter orchestrated by cynical or inept upper-class officers residing safely in French chateaux far behind the lines (Clark 2011). What is of interest here is not which depiction best corresponds to historical reality, but rather that the narrative consequences of shifting from one to the other

is that class antagonism moves to the background in favour of national identity. A framing of the war that emphasizes the distance between ordinary soldiers and their officers is, in the final instance, a potentially pacifist and internationalist one, because it can articulate the shared destiny of ordinary soldiers on both sides of the lines and thereby undermine national animosity as the leitmotif of the conflict. But *1917*, surprisingly for a contemporary war movie and even more so for a First World War narrative, moves decisively in the opposite direction. The communion of the ordinary British soldier and his superiors is also reinforced by the unrelenting antagonizing of the German enemy. There is no trace of that equally conventional plot element in First World War narratives where a comradely encounter between ordinary soldiers from opposite sides serves to question the very legitimacy of the suffering enforced on both in equal measure. The film does not for a moment allow the German counterparts of our protagonists to become humanized or even identifiable; they remain mostly menacing dark shadows sniping at, pursuing or killing our heroes.

This nostalgic construction of national communion not only concerns the interplay between class and national identity: the film also somewhat heavy-handedly seeks to extend it to racial/colonial differences. Indeed, the movie has received praise for affording colonial troops a consistent presence in its depiction of the war. Mendes has himself insisted that it was important for him to emphasize that it 'wasn't just a war fought by white men' (Gandhi 2020), and while colonial subjects are mostly fixtures in the background or encountered only in passing, there is one key scene that reveals the deeper logic of their inclusion. It entails a group of British white soldiers entertaining themselves by competing for the best parody of their captain's upper-class accent and heavy lisp. From the fringe of the group, a Sikh soldier dismisses their efforts as 'bloody awful' and is in turn told, 'You don't know, you barely even speak the bloody language' (Mendes and Wilson-Cairns 2018, 65). The Sikh soldier then goes on to deliver a perfect impression, which is consequently cheered by the rest of the men. This scene clearly imagines a working-class solidarity ultimately not confined by fractures of race or coloniality. But while this swift integration of the colonial subject into the class of 'ordinary soldiers' happens in the context of a mild challenge to (officer/upper-class) authority, it never fundamentally disturbs the image of national communion forged by the plot's succession of lovable officers. Thus, neither class nor coloniality are ultimately allowed to become defining differences. Instead, coloniality is folded into class, only for class to be folded into nation, leaving in the end the national community as the unrivalled focal point of identification.

It does not take much imagination to see why this is attractive nostalgic imagery in a contemporary context. The Brexit and post-Brexit political discussion in Britain has not only been divisive and fractious, but it has been so in multiple, often mutually incompatible, ways linked to the different intersectionalities of nation, class and race for different groups in society. This

confusion resides even at the heart of our understanding of the political phenomenon often cited when seeking to explain the current state of affairs, namely the rise of 'populism'. Populism has—not least by many populists—been understood as a working-class revolt against a political 'elite' with which they no longer share values, income brackets or mutual regard (Mudde 2004; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017). However, the political agenda of populist parties and actors has also been dominated by nationalist anti-immigrant and, at times, overtly racist discourse (Wodak 2015). What is important here is to notice, as Gurminder Bhambra has done, that if nationalist populism is understood in terms of class, then a 'methodological whiteness' eliminates the non-white working-class from consideration (Bhambra 2017b) and furthermore misrepresents the demographic fact that the voters behind US President Donald Trump and Brexit were much better off financially than the new working class of short-term precarious labour composed to a high degree of people of colour (Bhambra 2017a). What nationalist populism in this sense expresses is not so much a desperate blowback from the margins of post-industrial society, but rather a white identity politics proactively manoeuvring to defend structural racial privileges. Nationalist populism as a phenomenon, therefore, only confirms that there are still 'wages of whiteness'—to borrow David Roediger's classic term—a racial privilege of being working-class 'white', which undermines any interracial class solidarity (Roediger 1999).

All these initial observations serve to underpin the argument that the swift suspension of both class and race, under the umbrella of the nation, becomes immensely attractive because it offers a nostalgic alternative to a Brexit context full of confusing and shifting intersectionalities and antagonisms. But to move beyond such surface observations, and the equally superficial critique that they are not 'historically accurate', it is necessary to engage in more detail with the concept of nostalgia and its relationship to historical accuracy and error.

An oddity often encountered in public and academic discussions of nostalgia is that while the term most often signifies overtly romantic, idealizing or hyperbolically positive depictions of the past, the primary critique of nostalgia simply takes the form of correcting its historical errors or biases. In assuming nostalgic discourse to be vulnerable to factual critique, its detractors inadvertently end up assuming that the pursuit of historical accuracy is somehow still at the heart of nostalgia. Yet at the same time, most scholars engaging with the term soon find that nostalgia not only has little to do with a pursuit of historical truth but that the nostalgic mood is one in which the subjects are often very well aware of this. One can of course square this circle by instituting a certain double standard and assume that when we ourselves indulge in nostalgia, we at least remain aware of what we are doing, whereas our opponents are imagined to have been both tempted by nostalgia and unaware of having succumbed to it. Svetlana Boym famously manages to have it both ways by differentiating between a self-aware 'reflexive nostalgia'

and a 'restorative nostalgia' (Boym 2001). The latter is assumed to involve believing not only in the reality of its idealizations but also in the possibility of actually bringing back the past. Such distinctions between 'good' and 'bad' nostalgia have been variously conceptualized as progressive/reactionary, utopian/melancholic or future-oriented/backward-looking (see Pickering and Keightley 2006; Smith and Campbell 2017). They are often ultimately mapped onto the politics of Right and Left, with nationalism serving as the ultimate home ground for a 'bad' right-wing, melancholic, reactionary and self-delusional type.

However, instead of such double standards, which ultimately lead only to the ineffectual critique of pointing out factual errors in a style of speech never intended to be factual in the first place, we might follow the lead of scholars who have focused directly on the apparent affinity between nostalgia and fictionality. Pam Cook's analysis of 'nostalgia films', for example, argues that nostalgia always entails a conscious suspension of disbelief, a willingness to engage in a moment of 'let's pretend' (Cook 2004). This has some affinity with Alison Landsberg's idea of 'prosthetic memory': the past is remembered not because (or as) it was experienced, but via how it has been (fictionally) mediated—without that mediation ever actually being mistaken for historical reality (Landsberg 1995). The point here is that if we accept that all nostalgia is in a sense reflexive because it is aware of its own idealizations, then the critical analysis of nostalgic constructions cannot stop at revealing them as normative fictions. Rather, it must uncover the wider ideological functions they serve and the communal anxieties they gloss over. In short, nostalgia must in the widest sense be approached symptomatically in relation to the society that produces it and as a product of a certain contemporary political unconsciousness finding allegorical expression, above all, in the realm of (popular) culture.

Pastoral nostalgia and Little England

So far, I have concentrated on nostalgia as a certain kind of representational technique, one that produces normative fictions from historical material. But while nostalgia is highly flexible and can incorporate a wide field of historical objects, the (modern) historical context of its first formulation still means that a specific type of imagery and imagined space has most often lent itself to nostalgic intonation, namely the rural, bucolic realm rendered as manifestly anti-urban and anti-industrial, and thus from early on made to aesthetically represent a nostalgic escape from modernity into a kind of idealized pastoral bliss. Such idealized imagery of bucolic, pastoral bliss is very much an element in the nostalgia of *1917*.

As Peter Fritzsche has argued, nostalgia was from the beginning an eminently modern and 'bitter-sweet' exploration of loss in that it 'not only cherishes the past for the distinctive qualities that are no longer present but also acknowledges the permanence of their absence' (Fritzsche 2001, 1592). It is,

in other words, a form of longing dependent on modernity's strictly linear and progressive temporal imagination and, in a gesture mirroring modernity's ambiguity in relation to itself, at once mourns and celebrates what has been left behind. Nostalgia can be historicized as a phenomenon born from and configured in relation to a certain modern experience (Shaw and Chase 1989), which 'was not only saturated with narratives of transformation and movement but keenly aware of the estrangement that those motions called forth' (Fritzsche 2001, 1618). More precisely, nostalgia, as Linda Hutcheon points out, is 'a by-product of cultural modernity with its alienation, its much lamented loss of tradition and community' (Hutcheon and Valdés 1998, 23).

Nostalgia, therefore, might be thought of as a general form of cultural performativity, but it is one invented in specific historical circumstances and therefore originally filled by a concrete cultural imagery. If nostalgia was born as the psychological companion piece to urban modernity and to an experience of rushing forward into an unknowable and ever-expanding future, then it makes sense that it initially mobilized an archaic pastoral stability as its preferred imagery of a bygone bliss. Nostalgia, an eminently modern critique of modernity, nonetheless borrowed the imagery of a 'pre-modern' pastoral.

Nationalism, moreover, if not the primary then certainly one of the most enduring modern ideological innovations, to a large extent internalized and weaponized this ambiguity. It was an utterly modern ideology retooling the state for a new age and grounded in an industrial bourgeoisie, yet nevertheless holding not the bustling metropolis but the countryside as the sacred heart of the nation (Forchtner and Kølvraa 2015). Such romanticism has its own colonial dimension, in that the move from 'cosmopolis' to 'pastoral' is also one from a space of irrepressible heterogeneity to one of idealized—and among other things racialized—homogeneity.

As Edward Said has shown in *Culture and Imperialism*, the literary construction of rural bliss in nineteenth-century Britain—for example, in Jane Austen—always had to labour to repress the colonial structures that made such elegant affluence possible (Said 1994). And the coloniality/modernity nexus described by decolonial scholars such as Walter Mignolo, Madina Tlostanova and Aníba Quijano (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2007; Quijano 2007) is by no means threatened by a 'pastoral' nostalgic self-critique; to offer a sentimental and inward-looking nationalism as a rebuke of industrial modernity only further represses the latter's colonial underpinnings in the celebration of the former.

This dynamic was also part of the Brexit discussion, in which the conflict between Britain and the European Union could be painted as one between an incomprehensible and uncontrollable modern empire and the intimate space of a national British 'home' (MacMillan 2016, 2018; Manners 2018). Indeed, at times, Britain's own imperial past seemed to completely vanish in a rhetoric of borrowed colonial victimhood, such as when Boris Johnson warned that the country was 'truly headed for the status of colony' (Buchan 2018) in the face of what Jacob Rees-Mogg referred to as the EU's 'colonialist approach'

to the post-Brexit negotiations (Hughes 2017). But already on the eve of the referendum, UK Independence Party (UKIP) leader Nigel Farage of course seemed to be playing the same amnesiac game of role-reversal, when he declared it to be Britain's 'Independence Day'—himself thereby apparently becoming the hero of a victorious 'decolonial struggle' (Ahmed 2016).

The Brexiteers could, as such, be accused not of celebrating the British Empire but of wanting to forget about it. If the Brexiteers were 'Little Englanders' then their ideal of 'a homogenous white, Anglo Britain' (Bhambra and Narayan 2017, 10) could only be achieved if the empire was sacrificed to a 'historical amnesia' in which 'Britain's colonial past and post-colonial history [was] seemingly erased' (Broomfield 2017; Tharoor 2017). And while scholars such as Ben Wellings (2012) have shown how British/English nationhood evolved in such close entanglement with the expanding empire that the two do not exist as separate historical entities, it remains the case that many Britons are unaware of the fact that they, as Sally Tomlinson and Danny Dorling have put it, 'benefitted from what was in effect the plunder of a quarter of the world by one country' (2016).

If this national–pastoral nostalgia is a moment in which modernity stages its own critique but does so in an 'anti-industrial' and often rural imagery, then one scene in *1917* seems almost overwhelmingly to pursue such an agenda. But the idyll of the countryside is actually continually present in the film as it both literally and figuratively frames the action. Literally, the film's first and last scenes have our hero resting amidst green fields, framing his 'modern' ordeal of navigating the horrors of war with moments of rural bliss and restitution. But also, more figuratively, pastoral or bucolic domestic spaces continually serve as the lost or absent opposite of the modern military machine; as a 'homely' space soldiers long for, are alienated from, find violated, or finally return to (if only in death). As mentioned, however, there is one scene that especially pursues this agenda. It comes where Blake and Schofield, the trenches behind them at last, find themselves approaching a picturesque little farmhouse and discover that the retreating Germans have inexplicitly cut down an entire orchard of cherry trees in an act of what the script calls 'wanton destruction' (Mendes and Wilson-Cairns 2018, 44). This is not a very subtle metaphor. This vision of modernity's violation of the bucolic–pastoral is furthermore mapped onto the central (national) antagonism of the movie as Blake takes the opportunity to tell Schofield about his mother's cherry orchard with an enthusiastic innocence that associates him firmly with the uncomplicated values of a pastoral–national home.

Mendes, however, cannot resist using this location to further emphasize the danger that mechanical–industrial modernity represents to this pastoral domestic space and its subjects. As Schofield and Blake are searching the abandoned farm, a German bi-plane crashes into it, staging an even more violent clash between this space and the one piece of technology that, from futurists to fascists, became the very symbol of modern speed and excitement (Esposito 2015). As they pull the German pilot from the burning plane, he

inexplicably stabs Blake, securing a final reiteration of the apparent incommensurability between an agent of modern technology and a pastoral subject fresh out of his mother's cherry orchard. What follows is a death scene that can only be described as a heroic cliché: Blake dies in the arms of Schofield, with his last breath asking him to tell his mother that 'I wasn't scared' (Mendes and Wilson-Cairns 2018, 57).

The only way Blake's death scene makes sense in a contemporary war movie is by insisting that it requires a nostalgic suspension of disbelief, a willingness to go along with its proposed normative ideal even while knowing that this representation of the past bears little resemblance to actual history. That so few First World War soldiers had the good fortune to expire in as dignified a way as is afforded to Blake is, then, a less interesting critique. The theatrical hyperbole of this scene clearly indicates that what we are being offered is a self-aware fictionality, a purely imaginary but beautifully choreographed performance of the values, dignity and aesthetics inscribed in the pastoral as a modern self-critique (and as such a nostalgic object par excellence). It demonstrates, so to speak, exactly that the function of nostalgia is not to be believable but to allow us to indulge for a moment in a fictional escape. That this fictionality is, as I have argued, self-aware rather than delusional does not make it innocent or inconsequential. This kind of nostalgia is, in the last instance, enjoyed at the expense of certain others, because when the national–pastoral fantasy articulates an imagined premodern homogeneity this entails not just the wish to return to an idealized past but also the wishing away of those British citizens who are never represented in the pastoral setting, namely those whose presence is a direct consequence of the modern matrix of modernity and coloniality.

As Paul Gilroy has famously argued, one effect of 'postcolonial melancholia' (Gilroy 2004b) is a rejection of racial Others because they are 'unwitting bearers of the imperial and colonial past' (Gilroy 2004a, 110) the nation is trying to forget. In a similar vein, in her analysis of the emergence of a racialized 'we' in the discussions around Brexit, Bhambra points out that such imaginings about a white British Anglo-nation, constituted before and beside its modern imperial adventures, is a double violence towards those populations whose presence in Britain is a consequence of that colonial heritage:

> No subject of empire asked for [imperial] subjugation. Having been *included through subjugation*, it seems perverse to now be excluded by those, careless in their history and wanton in their analysis, who articulate a conception of the body politic and the body social as white, and do not wish *inclusion on terms of equality*. We didn't wish inclusion through subjugation, but we will not be wished away.
>
> (Bhambra 2016)

There are undoubtedly still groups in society for whom pastoral nostalgia forms an attractive escape from modern dislocations. Yet there is also

something strangely anachronistic about this 'high modern' longing for an image of premodern pastoral bliss, for it can certainly be questioned whether we are still living in the era of a forwards-rushing modernity. In a sense, then, it is not only the pastoral that is nostalgically recuperated from a bygone past but also the 'high modern' position that the viewer has to assume in order for pastoral nostalgia to make sense. In order to fully enjoy *1917*, what is required is a double engagement with nostalgic 'make-believe'. One has to go along with not only the immediate and primary nostalgic fantasy of the premodern pastoral as an anti-modern ideal but also with the secondary nostalgic fantasy that we are still in a modern world where the fictional recuperation of the pastoral corresponds to the deepest anxieties of our political unconsciousness.

A nostalgia for the modern

What we can find in *1917* is therefore yet another nostalgic layer, one that articulates not simply the original nostalgic desire to return to premodern pastoral bliss, but a nostalgia for the high modern time and context in which such 'pastoral longing' made sense. The film *1917* in this sense articulates not just a modern nostalgia for the premodern, but also a postmodern nostalgia for a modern that is itself 'becoming part of the past' (Turner 1985, 177).

While most recent treatments of nostalgia, such as that by Svetlana Boym, have gone back to thinking of it as a (pastoral) escape from the modern, the discussions in the 1980s and 1990s focused instead on how nostalgia operated in a situation of 'postmodernity' where many of the dynamics that first brought it into being no longer seemed present (Jameson 1984, 1991). Indeed, postmodernity has often been characterized as a 'stalled present' in which subjects were no longer able or willing to imagine a future of radical change, momentous historical events or the exciting possibility of ever new experiences (see Foster 1996).

This diagnosis was made by several scholars from the late 1970s onwards. But it is perhaps Fredric Jameson's work that is still the touchstone of such discussions as they continue today. The elements Jameson identified as key to 'late capitalism' have certainly not become less relevant or less globally prevalent. He points not just to the Lyotardian collapse of grand narratives (Lyotard 1984) but also to the fact that capitalism in its global extension no longer admits any alternatives and to the way in which political agency seems increasingly distracted and circumscribed in what Guy Debord theorized as the 'Society of the Spectacle' ([1983] 2010) and Jean Baudrillard as the rise of the simulacrum (1994). The accumulated effect, according to Jameson, is that it becomes increasingly hard to imagine substantial change to society. While surface 'modular' change is omnipresent—changes in fashion and new consumer goods circulating at a dizzying pace, for instance—it is, as Jameson famously quips, easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism (Jameson 1998, 50–8).

This collapse of the future is, perhaps counterintuitively, why postmodern culture is so saturated with what Jameson terms 'nostalgia'. However, Jameson uses the term to signify not so much a deep longing but rather the pervasive presence of 'retro-objects' (Fisher 2013). Without the means to imagine its future trajectory as anything more than an endless repetition of the present, it becomes impossible for contemporary society to attain its own distinct historical identity; it is instead forced to eclectically borrow cultural styles and expressions from past periods—thereby also undermining their distinct historicity in the process. As Mark Fisher has remarked, this 'slow cancellation of the future' means that 'those who can't remember the past are condemned to have it re-sold to them forever' (Fisher 2014, 25).

Mark Fisher is one of a number of scholars, including, for example, Jodi Dean (2010) and Franco Berardi (2017), who have reiterated the idea that the contemporary conjuncture is above all characterized by the collapse of the future. Fisher coined the term 'Capitalist Realism' to signify what he considers a pervasive inability to imagine alternatives to the global neoliberal order (Fisher 2009). Drawing on Jacques Derrida's notion of Hauntology (1994), but actually understanding the hauntological more in line with Avery Gordon (1997) or Stephen Frosh (2013) as an affective substratum of contemporary culture, Fisher argues that what haunts certain parts of contemporary avant-garde (music) culture is 'the not yet of the futures that popular modernism trained us to expect, but which never materialised' (2014, 27). This haunting does not, for Fisher, concern the non-realization of a specific future but rather the broader, and much more difficult to signify, mourning for the disappearance of the future as a general 'effective virtuality' (2012, 16). In Berardi's framing, it concerns the general experience of a loss of 'potency', an inability to force the transition from virtuality to actuality; to (re)open the future (2017).

But if such a loss is a part of our contemporary cultural experience and the political unconscious that it expresses then we can expect nostalgia—beyond its banal late capitalist commodification into a sea of retro-objects—to re-emerge with a new object, namely that unruly futuricity apparently so lacking in the 'postmodern condition' yet so easily idealized as being readily available in the grand moments of the modern era. The battles (*Dunkirk, 1917*), the leaders (*Churchill, Victoria*) and the sociocultural transformations (*Downtown Abbey*) that can be imagined as having 'changed everything' make sense as enticing nostalgic objects in 'modular' societies where—so to speak—nothing ever really changes anymore. What these cultural products offer (and *1917* is certainly no exception) is in this sense a nostalgia for a kind of experience felt to be no longer readily available, namely, one significant enough to be deemed 'historical'—and 'historical' both in the proactive sense of opening up new futures and in the retroactive sense of being something worth remembering and recounting.

In *1917*, this notion of a 'historical experience' is constructed by a set of plot elements addressing the theme of narration, its contexts, its limits and its

time. We quickly learn that Schofield cannot talk about his experiences during the Battle of the Somme, he finds it a strain to go home on leave, and he has traded a medal he was awarded. This kind of traumatic alienation is a well-known theme in war movies, and it is often signalled exactly by the protagonist's rejection of conventional markers of military valour such as medals. One also finds this in *1917* with medals being described as 'just a bit of bloody tin' or 'a scrap of ribbon to cheer up a widow'—only Blake insists, '[i]f I got a medal, I'd take it back home' (Mendes and Wilson-Cairns 2018, 20, 44). What is constructed here is, in the first instance, yet another example of the distinction between the modern, as the site of experiences of a magnitude such that they resist both linguistic and symbolic representation, and the innocence of Blake's pastoral sensibilities in which an untroubled speech would apparently easily flow from such traditional markers of merit and honour. But under this thematic, Blake's innocence appears childish and banal. The modern is no longer simply that which is escaped from in favour of an idealized 'premodern' wrapped in bucolic or pastoral aesthetics. The modern now has its own distinctive content—the overwhelming experience—and its own aesthetics, never more forcefully rendered than in the film's visual climax when the spectacular background of a burning city is clearly meant to call to mind the striking images of modernist painting. But while the magnitude of modern experience is, on the one hand, established by it being immediately un-narratable, its value is nonetheless ultimately established only by its eventual narration at a different time and place. The medals are inconsequential because the true prize for the protagonists is the very right to narration, the possession of a story worth telling when it becomes possible to do so.

Mendes dedicates the movie to his grandfather 'Who Told Us the Stories'. What this postscript establishes is a second site of narration where the story could be told, one in which these experiences cannot only be represented but become a cultural object of great respect and appreciation. Indeed, this situation of narration seems almost ingrained in the very fabric of the movie. The 'one-shot' cinematography employed—there is only one cut in the entire movie—has been widely celebrated as a technical masterpiece (see Kermode 2020). But some reviewers have conversely criticized it both for making the war seem 'beautiful and purposeful' (Berlatsky 2019) and for resulting in a disassociation of the viewer from the narrative, because one is at some level continuously conscious of the (often seemingly impossible) position of the camera relentlessly tracking our protagonists through trenches, crowds, explosions and underground cave-ins (Willmore 2019). But this tireless and forever attentive 'third party' in every scene can also be read as a brilliantly subtle cinematographic representation of the enraptured youthful listeners who have been told this story, that is, the grandchildren implicitly present as invisible spectators in the midst of the action narrated. The gaze constructed by this camerawork is one of unflinching attention and without critical distance, in other words, without any trace of 'postmodern cynicism' or distractedness. It is a gaze that serves nothing other than to attest to the force of the

narration itself, the value of a story worth telling; and in doing so, it nostalgically marks the kind of grand experience that might sustain such stories. It could therefore be suggested that the deepest meaning of this postscript is a nostalgia geared to soothe the cultural anxiety proper to contemporary societies, the unconscious fear that if the future holds nothing but the endless repetition or modular variation of a stalled present then there will be no more stories like this to tell the grandchildren.

Such a nostalgic desire for 'rebooted' grand narratives can also be traced in the Brexit discussion. Indeed, the 'Imperial Nostalgia' (Lorcin 2018; Tinsley 2020) through which the Brexiteer camp managed to re-politicize memories of empire (Rasch 2019; Ward and Rasch 2019) in the context of Brexit, can be understood as implicitly expressing such a desire for the re-opening of the future. According to Ben Wellings, Brexiteer discourse did not actually rely on amnesia or a rejection of empire: how could it when a 2014 UK poll found that 59 per cent still thought that the British Empire was 'something to be proud of' (Dahlgreen 2014)? In his opinion, therefore, one should 'reject outright the idea that "Leave" campaigners were "Little Englanders". Far from it: [they] were intent on returning the United Kingdom to what they saw as a pre-EU global field of action' (Wellings 2017). This was most evident in the idea of a 'global Britain' (Daddow 2019) as the centre of a post-EU foreign and trading policy revamping former imperial ties and loyalties of the Commonwealth or the 'Anglo-sphere' (Namusoke 2016). It would be easy to dismantle the realism of such plans. As Wellings notes, '[r]eferring to the Commonwealth in familial and friendly metaphors provides a false front to a whole manner of sins' (Wellings 2017), and many of Britain's prospective partners soon rejected the idea. It also fundamentally overlooked the fact that the UK's decision to join the European Community in 1973 was made in light of the realization that the Commonwealth was not a viable economic alternative to European integration and what was left of the UK's global role after the end of empire could only be salvaged as a partner in a united Europe (Gifford 2008; Glencross 2016; Wellings 2012).

But if, as argued above, nostalgia is in the last instance not underpinned by or dependent upon a strict realism then what is important is not that a revamping of the Commonwealth or the Anglosphere is a fantasy, but rather why it proved such an attractive one. In this vein, Michael Kenny and Nick Pearce rightly point out that

> the Anglosphere's potency is ideological, not geo-political…. It registers nostalgia, but also energy: Britain would be liberated to march on the world stage again, freed from sclerotic, conformist Europe and reanimated by the animal spirits that once gave it an empire.
>
> (2016, 306)

Clearly, this is as much a dream of the future as it is about the past, as Wellings has also argued: 'Britain's past greatness was a source of mobilising

inspiration for its future' (2017). There is as such undoubtedly a 'potent form of nostalgia' in evoking 'the ethos of a once great, sea-faring, imperial nation rousing itself from its slumbers' (Kenny 2017, 257).

This imperial nostalgia manages to mostly gloss over the historical realities of racial domination and colonial exploitation in favour of an image of empire as a site of adventure, possibility and ultimately boundless 'futurability'. Indeed, the very term 'Brexiteer', which was quickly adopted as a self-designation for pro-Brexit voices, intentionally incorporated an extra 'e' (becoming 'Brexiteer' rather than simply 'Brexiter') exactly so that it would recall the 'buccaneers' and 'privateers' of a British past of global high-seas adventure and domination (Barber 2018). This image of empire as adventure—as the exciting discovery and creation of new worlds—was by no means invented for the occasion. It has a literary trajectory running from Robinson Crusoe and the travel-narratives of 'civilising' non-European lands and peoples (Ifversen 1999) to the transformation of the colonial space of literary discovery into the extraterrestrial one of the science-fiction genre (Rieder 2012).

The reason such a nostalgic idealization of the imperial past proved tempting in contemporary British society might be that it offers a borrowed political futuricity; the prosthetic memory of what it felt like to believe in a future for the nation that could be shaped into something radically different from a perpetually stalled present. This was never clearer than when Boris Johnson announced that Brexit would be

> an opportunity to rediscover some of the dynamism of these bearded Victorians … not to build a new empire, heaven forfend, but to use every ounce of Britain's power, hard and soft, to go back out into the world in a way that we had perhaps forgotten over the past 45 years: to find friends, to open markets, to promote our culture and our values.
>
> (Johnson 2018)

This kind of nostalgia does not present itself as nationally self-sufficient, backward-looking or engaged in a 'little Englander'-vision of the UK and therefore also could be attractive to voters who would not have been tempted by a more 'pastoral–national' imagery, nor by more overt articulations of racial exclusion or hierarchy. But while imperial nostalgia does not engage directly in a pastoral wishing away of colonial history and those subjects that still embody its heritage, it nevertheless allows itself the fantasy that something resembling the imperial adventure might be re-staged. Not, of course, as a one-to-one re-enactment of the racism and brutality of the original production—'no, heaven forfend'—but nonetheless in a version still ultimately true to the original plot, characters and cast. At the heart of the idea about 'global Britain' is still a fantasy about treating the 'global' as a re-imagined colonial space, as the object of a certain adventurous Western subject once again the focal point and agent of history.

The problem with this imperial nostalgia is not simply the irresponsible unrealism of imagining a future that is not going to happen. Rather, the problem is that even indulging in enjoyment of this nostalgic fantasy puts us further away from the kind of futures that need to happen. And while the incommensurability (Tuck and Yang 2012) of parts of different lived experiences should be taken into account, the shared experience of living in a stalled present haunted by a future that never happened might, as scholars such as Achille Mbembe, Franco Berardi and Alfred Lopez (Bangstad and Nilsen 2019; Berardi 2011; López 2007; Mbembe 2019) dare to hope, serve as a starting point for new 'post-global' forms of solidarity and alliance-building. But films such as *1917* will be of little help in this endeavour.

Concluding remarks

The charge of nostalgia has been ubiquitous in the debates around Brexit. This makes it all the more urgent to move beyond a simple understanding of nostalgia that points only to a use of the past that lacks any concern for historical accuracy. The film *1917* lends itself eminently to an exploration of how nostalgia inscribes itself at different layers and in different ways in cultural objects. This film contains both overt, clearly intended nostalgic elements, as well as deeper layers of nostalgia that can be understood as the more subtle expression of a political unconscious seeking to cope with the impact of Brexit on the intersections of race, class and nation.

At its most heavy-handed, the film employs a rhetorical nostalgia in which the past becomes the mere instrument of an ideological discourse about the present and entails historical characters painstakingly made to enact ideals proper to the contemporary context—such as the dissolution of race and class into the warm communion of an externally embattled national community. But even when confronted with such overt politicizing of the past it remains crucial that we do not reduce the critique of nostalgia to one focusing on its lack of historical accuracy. Doing so fundamentally misses both the form and the force of nostalgia as entailing a suspension of disbelief, a wilful and self-aware indulging in a certain form of enjoyable fictionality.

This becomes clear when appreciating the anti-modern pastoral nostalgia that pervades many scenes, characters, conflicts and objects. The significance of Blake's heroic death, the crashing bi-plane or the felled cherry trees never hinges on whether they are 'realistic'. They are clearly not. Rather, their value is solely dependent on the extent to which they can play their parts as metaphors of a wider conflict between the pastoral and its modern counterpart and the extent to which they succeed in evoking the longing for the former as an escape from the tribulations of the latter. It is an affective, not a factual, narrative economy they partake in. As such, this is a more abstract and subtly seductive form of nostalgia, one in its own way intimately tied to a racially white national imagery and mapped onto the wider modern anxieties of Brexit as illustrated in the fetishized wish to 'take back control'.

But even this pastoral lament is in the last instance not the deepest level of nostalgia in *1917* or in Brexit. In engaging with the literature on nostalgia in the context of postmodernity, one can argue that what *1917*—at this level almost certainly inadvertently—constitutes is not a modern nostalgia, but a nostalgia for the modern. Ultimately, its pastoral nostalgic imaginary requires viewers to put themselves in the position of the modern subject to revisit a world of such forward-rushing futuricity that longing for pastoral calm becomes enticing. But to scholars such as Berardi, Fisher, Dean and Jameson this is no longer the world we inhabit. The anxiety that might be expected to pervade the political unconscious today is instead that the grand modern experiences and narratives have been permanently replaced by a stalled present neither very exciting nor particularly worth recounting. It is such anxiety that is addressed by *1917*'s deepest level of nostalgia, one that subtly mourns not the loss of pastoral bliss but the elimination of a 'historical experience' grand enough to hold the attention of the grandchildren.

The imperial nostalgia of the Brexiteers drew its energy not just from its politicizing of history but also because it seemed to offer exactly a re-opening of the future, a promise of new political adventures. There can be little confidence, however, that a future modelled and inspired by the imperial past will offer much hope or inclusion to those who still suffer the heritage of its original enactment. But if political visions such as those imbricated in Brexiteer imperial nostalgia are to be countered, it will not be enough to critique their lack of historical accuracy: the alternatives to be offered also need to 'recover some sense of the future as well as of the possibilities of genuine change' (Jameson 1998, 90).

Note

1 This work forms part of the ECHOES project which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 770248

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Chapter 3

Spectres of Cecil Rhodes at the University of Cape Town[1]

Nick Shepherd

After the #Fall

On 9 March 2015, in an event choreographed for the press, Chumani Maxwele, a student at the University of Cape Town (UCT), threw the contents of a portapotty at a statue of Cecil Rhodes strategically located at the main pedestrian entrance to the university's upper campus. Photographs of the moment were widely circulated. Maxwele wears a pink construction helmet, possibly referencing the red helmets of the populist political party the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and sandwich boards with the slogan 'Exhibit: White Arrogance @ UCT' (Shepherd 2020). The act of throwing human faeces is an established mode of protest in the Western Cape. Anthropologist Steven Robins has written with insight and humour about the 'poo protests' deployed by the urban poor as a means of protesting the slow pace of service delivery under the presidency of Jacob Zuma (Robins 2013, 2014). In Cape Town, this has manifested itself in the lack of water-borne sewerage in many of the city's informal settlements, forcing residents to rely on an unsanitary and unsafe 'bucket system'. Poo protests have taken many forms, including pelting passing motorists on the city's N2 motorway and dumping buckets of shit on the driveways and doorsteps of householders in the city's wealthy suburbs. As political theatre, poo protests tap into multiple taboos, including Xhosa notions of hygiene, civility and respect, together with their opposite, gross disrespect and insult directed against another person (Robins 2013, 2014) (Figure 3.1).

Lingering with the moment, we can further annotate it in the following way: the statue of Rhodes was sculpted by the British medalist and figurative sculptor Marion Walgate, wife of the architect Charles Walgate who played a role in the design of the upper campus of UCT following the death by suicide of its principal architect J. M. Solomon (Phillips 1993). The statue was commissioned by then Governor General, the Earl of Clarendon, and paid for by the Rhodes National South African Memorial Committee. Dedicated in 1934, it shows Rhodes seated in the pose of Auguste Rodin's *The Thinker* (*Le Penseur*), although slightly more upright than the original. His right elbow rests on his thigh, and his head—which is slightly

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-5

Figure 3.1 Chumani Maxwele and the Rhodes statue, 9 March 2015. Photograph widely circulated on social media. This version accessed from the UCT: Rhodes Must Fall Facebook group, 13 May 2020.

overscale—rests on his right fist. His left hand dangles over the edge of the chair or throne and is loosely clasped around a roll of papers. His gaze and the full force of his attention is directed forwards, towards the distant mountains of the 'Hottentots Holland'. Walgate's statue stood on a substantial plinth of granite blocks (it was the plinth rather than the statue itself that was splashed with faeces). Inscribed on the plinth are the words 'Cecil John Rhodes 1853–1902', and below this, some lines from Rudyard Kipling's poem *A Song of the Cities* (1893): 'I dream my dream by rock and heath and pine/ Of Empire to the northward. Ay, one land/From Lion's Head to Line' (Twidle 2012, 92). In the figurative staging of the scene, Rhodes is understood to be gazing north towards Africa (in fact, he gazes a few points south of due east). The statue was originally located approximately 100 metres further down the slope at the entrance of the upper campus proper. With the construction of the motorway bisecting the university's upper and middle campuses in 1962 (Rhodes Drive, which leads to Settlers Way), it was relocated to the position where Maxwele encountered it, at the intersection of the lower ring road and the university's Jameson steps (Shepherd 2020) (Figure 3.2).

Maxwele's action led to a month-long protest and the formation of the student-led social movement #RhodesMustFall (#RMF). Initially calling for the removal of the Rhodes statue, the protest broadened to encompass

Figure 3.2 Marion Walgate's statue of Rhodes at the University of Cape Town. Photograph by Danie van der Merwe, used under Wikipedia Creative Commons licence. This file is licenced under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic licence.

the legacies of colonialism and institutional racism at UCT and the call to 'decolonize' higher education (Nyamnjoh 2013). In the weeks that followed, #RMF protesters marched, picketed and held mass meetings. Numerous protest action focused on the statue itself, which was graffitied, covered over with black plastic bags, and became the site of spontaneous acts of defiance and disrespect. On 20 March, #RMF activists occupied the main administrative building of the university—Bremner Building—site of the Vice-Chancellor's office, which they renamed Azania House. During the occupation of Azania House, volunteers brought meals to the students, who conducted impromptu 'teach-ins'. It was during this period that student activists began to articulate the elements of #Fallist thinking. This draws from multiple sources, chief among them historical anticolonial and antiracist thinkers and activists, such as Frantz Fanon and Bantu Steven Biko, contemporary decolonial thinkers, such as Walter Mignolo, and feminist theories of intersectionality. At the centre of these different bodies of ideas are notions of race, gender and coloniality. In the years that followed, the student activists who were part of these protests would talk about the solidarity and

comradeship of the period of occupation (Dhlamini, personal communication, 23 May 2017; Mahapa, personal communication, 23 May 2017). On 27 March, the university's Senate voted in favour of removing the Rhodes statue. A few days later, the Council of UCT, the university's highest decision-making body, confirmed this decision. Finally, on 9 April 2015, exactly one month after Maxwele's poo protest, the statue was removed from the university campus. The South African social documentary photographer David Goldblatt captured the moment of the removal in an iconic image. A flatbed truck stands in front of the plinth. The Rhodes statue dangles in mid-air, suspended on the arm of a crane. A mass of onlookers surrounds the scene, many with cell phone cameras and tablets held aloft, captured by Goldblatt in the act of capturing the moment (Shepherd 2020).

There is something deeply satisfying about the fall or removal of statues when those statues are of unpopular or tyrannical figures. Such moments become allegorical in a larger sense. They speak not only of the hubris of power, but also of its fragility and the unexpected fall from grace (Shepherd 2020). Paul Maylam, Rhodes's most important recent biographer, recounts an anecdote in which Rhodes tells his friend Leander Jameson that he expects to be remembered for millennia: 'I give myself four thousand years' (Maylam 2005, 12). As a concept, history feels abstract and ungraspable. We understand that we are caught up in it, but at the same time its connection to the particularity and detail of our own lives can be difficult to fathom. When we are present at the dramatic fall or removal of a statue, as the student activists of #RMF were on 9 April 2015, we understand that we are part of history in the making and that, as the saying goes, 'history unfolds before our eyes'. At the same time, some important questions are left unanswered by these events. Everyone understands that an act like the removal of the Rhodes statue is a largely symbolic act, but how does it relate to, as it were, actually existing power in the world? What is the link between the symbolic act and the materiality of power? Should the removal be read as a statement of intention—a commitment to confront the legacies of Cecil Rhodes and colonialism at the university—or does it become an end in itself? And what form do these legacies take? A statue on the landscape is an obvious legacy in the sense that it draws attention to itself, but what about less obvious legacies? Do we feel confident that we would know these legacies when we see or experience them? What, precisely, are the forms taken by the coloniality of power and knowledge?

Heritage practices of symbolic restitution often target the obvious vestiges of colonialism, slavery and racism: statues, street names and so on. A starting point for my investigation in this chapter is the notion that coloniality exists as a form of deep inscription, in landscapes, in lives and in bodies of ideas and practices (Mignolo 2007, 2008, 2011, 2013; Shepherd 2020). A second starting point is the idea that the forms of this coloniality are very often hidden from us, in the sense that we see them but we do not recognize them as such. The term that I favour is a Freudian notion of disavowal: the

disavowed object is the thing hidden in plain sight, the thing that we do not (we must not, we cannot) name, because to do so would be to be confronted by uncomfortable truths or realizations (Bass 2002; Freud 1923). So, what are some of these deeper meanings and hidden truths in the case of UCT? Besides the statue, what other kinds of legacies has Rhodes left, in the landscape, in the university as an institution and in the lives of the students and scholars who share this landscape and this institution? What does it mean to live in relation to a systematic process of disavowal?

These are big questions. In this chapter, I will begin to address some of their aspects. Taking the events of #RMF as a starting point, I will move back through time to excavate the deeply inscribed coloniality of UCT. I am trained as an archaeologist, and what I propose here is a broadly archaeological method, perhaps as Michel Foucault would understand it: a critical tracking of genealogies, an uncovering of hidden archives and a tracing of the hidden sources of practices and ideas (Shepherd 2017). In the first part of the chapter, I go back to the period of the construction of the upper campus of UCT in the 1920s. In the second part, I revisit the 1890s and the period of Rhodes's tenure at the homestead of Groote Schuur, when he did so much to shape a memorial landscape and set in place the ideas that would frame his legacy.

Two factors make this an especially promising exercise, and one with potentially broader relevance in thinking about the nature and forms of coloniality. The first is the extraordinary degree of the historical involvement or entanglement of Cecil Rhodes with the broader landscape of UCT, along with the fact that he intervened so energetically to construct a symbolic landscape of forms. I have called this an 'exemplary landscape' in the sense that it was designed and constructed with a purpose that was partly didactic, partly the celebration of a particular kind of imperial power and partly playful—a fantasy landscape of dreams and imaginaries (Shepherd 2020). The means necessary to establish such fantasy landscapes are beyond most of us, other than on the small scale of a suburban garden or house remodeling, but for Rhodes it was not only possible but an important part of his legacy. UCT's upper and middle campuses form one part of the much larger Groote Schuur estate on the slopes of Devil's Peak, the eastern buttress of Table Mountain, which Rhodes acquired piecemeal through the 1890s (Phillips 1993). The other architectural elements of this landscape that I will discuss include the Groote Schuur manor house, the zoological garden established by Rhodes on the slopes immediately above this house and the imposing Rhodes Memorial completed in 1912. By way of spatial orientation, the Rhodes Zoo (also known as the Groote Schuur Zoo) lies on the immediate southern boundary of the UCT upper campus, while Rhodes Memorial lies on the immediate northern boundary of the university slightly higher up the slope. Together they form an ensemble of shared forms and deeply inscribed meanings.

A second factor that makes this a promising study location is the fact that, in many ways, UCT was conceived and established as an arch-colonial

institution. No less than Rhodes's landscape of forms, it was (and is) meant to be exemplary in particular ways. The central architectural elements of the upper campus were designed as part of a single coherent project, and it is for the most part a bounded 'campus', set apart from the surrounding city. I shall address the question of what 'arch-colonial' means below. For the moment, we might note that in 2012 the British publication the *Daily Telegraph* named the UCT upper campus as third in a list of the ten 'most beautiful university campuses in the world' (the top two being Oxford and Harvard) (*Daily Telegraph* 2012). As to what criteria of beauty are at work, as with the question of the 'arch-colonial', we should leave that to the body of this work.

It feels important to establish my own position in relation to the events and contexts described here. Beginning in the mid-1980s, I was a student at UCT. From 2000 to 2017, I was a member of the academic staff of the university, based in the Centre for African Studies where I established and taught a graduate programme in Public Culture and Heritage in Africa. In 2011, I began offering a Master's course on decolonial thinking and practice, and in late 2014, I hosted Walter Mignolo in an extended seminar in the Centre for African Studies that was to become an important source for #RMF and #FeesMustFall (#FMF). The story that I unfold here is one that would be familiar to students from the Centre for African Studies and formed part of my teaching at the university for many years.

The events around #RMF were a beginning, not a complete story. It led to further protests: the #Shackville protests against inadequate provision of student accommodation, the protest actions against artworks at UCT, the transgender initiative's protest at the Centre for African Studies Gallery, and the important national student protests of #FeesMustFall. These events have had a seismic effect on university life and culture in South Africa, to the extent that I would argue that there is a clear 'before' and 'after'. I would argue that many of the old certainties and entitlements can no longer be taken for granted and thinking and writing 'after the #fall' means having to centre on questions of race, gender and coloniality. Finally, this chapter situates itself as a limited exercise in thinking through the deeper meanings of the UCT after the #fall.

The temple on the hill

The South African College, later the University of Cape Town, was founded in 1829 on a site in the centre of the city. It moved to its current location on the Groote Schuur estate in the 1920s. Two things enabled this move. The first was the terms of Rhodes's will that deeded the land for the establishment of the university. The second was a bequest of money made by Messrs. Werner and Beit, mining magnates, the so-called Werner–Beit Bequest (Phillips 1993). From the beginning, the intention was that UCT on its new site should embody the ideals of an Oxbridge institution, a kind of 'Oxbridge in Africa'. In the final design of the university this intention was manifested in details

both great and small: the quadrangular colleges of the original men's and women's residential buildings and the stucco exteriors of the university buildings that encourage a luxuriant growth of ivy. Herbert Baker was at that time the pre-eminent South African architect, largely through his association with Rhodes and the many public buildings he had designed. Baker being unavailable, a younger architect from his studio, Joseph Michael Solomon, was commissioned to produce a design for UCT. Solomon was dispatched on a study tour of 'great universities of the world', which took him to the United States and Europe (Phillips 1993). His itinerary included the University of Virginia, whose Jefferson Rotunda formed the basis for the design of the UCT's great hall (Jameson Hall, named after Rhodes's confederate, and recently renamed Sarah Baartman Hall), an imposing structure in the neoclassical style. On his return, Solomon drew a plan for UCT that, with slight modifications, was the plan that was eventually realized in the construction of the university. Solomon's design works from a strong vertical axis and a series of cross-axes that follow the contours of the lower slopes of Devil's Peak. The vertical axis runs from the top of Devil's Peak through a small pavilion, or Summer House, constructed in the late eighteenth century, the only existing structure on the site. Arrayed along the vertical axis are the central pediment of the neoclassical façade of Jameson Hall, a series of dramatic flights of stairs that lead from level to level of the university (the Jameson Steps) and the central plaza. The cross axes take the form of a series of sweeping avenues, originally imagined as straight lines but later curved to allow for the natural contours of the site (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3 The University of Cape Town, with the Rhodes statue in its original position, slightly further down the slope. In the background, Devil's Peak. Author's photograph of the original located in the Manuscripts and Archives Department of the University of Cape Town Library. Used with permission of the University of Cape Town Library.

In design terms, Solomon's plan makes use of two architectural tropes, both of which are common in university designs, but seldom as perfectly realized as in the case of UCT. The first is the idea of the Temple on the Hill (Shepherd 2020). The idea is that one approaches the university from the base of the mountain—Rondebosch, in this case—sweating and toiling up the lower slopes via a pathway along the central axis (the Japonica Walk), a lonely pilgrim or seeker of knowledge. After several steep climbs up the Jameson Steps one finally encounters the temple (Jameson Hall) where, figuratively, one stands with the gods and, as it were, breathes the rarefied air and thinks deep thoughts. Along the route of this pilgrimage one encounters the statue of Rhodes, himself brooding, pensive, deep in thought. The second idea manifested in Solomon's design is the idea of the site of prospect. Standing in front of Jameson Hall on the central plaza of the university one turns one's back to the mountain and looks out at the city, arrayed below in distant prospect: Rondebosch, Rosebank, Newlands and further off, Athlone and the Cape Flats. This is a kind of looking—literally an 'over-looking'—which is filled with power and intention. Standing figuratively with the gods, one looks out over the busy minutiae of daily life, literally and metaphorically 'above it all'. I would argue that it is possible to understand this form of the gaze as a kind of imperial gaze, and I would further argue that the Rhodes statue itself instructed us in this form of gazing (Shepherd 2020). The pensive figure of Rhodes in his chair gazed out and over. What he gazed at is Africa, 'one land to the northward' in the words of Kipling's poem, figured by the distant peaks of the 'Hottentots' Holland' or the more proximate Cape Flats. Thus, Rhodes's statue, strategically located at the symbolic entranceway to UCT, formed a potent statement encapsulating the metaphorical thrust of the architectural design of the university and its dramatic staging on the slopes of Devils Peak. Conversely—but importantly—what might be called the imperial designs of UCT extend well beyond the single instance of the statue of Rhodes and are deeply scripted into the university's architectural fabric and the organization of space. The Temple on the Hill and the act of imperial gazing carry on, even after the removal of the statue of Rhodes. Indeed, they are part of the habitus of UCT, something that we absorb through our bodies as we inhabit and are inhabited by the space, and which we are only partially able to name.

For decades, I either walked or drove to the UCT campus, so that I feel that I too have been imprinted by this habitus, and I carry its marks as an unwilling legacy. It is certainly worth mentioning that it is mainly poorer staff and students, many of them black, who approach the university on foot—and would have encountered the Rhodes statue—while wealthier staff and students drive in via one of the other entrances. I suspect that it was strong emotion-rage against this habitus that gave a particular edge to the #RMF protests and allowed students to mobilize so effectively against the statue. If we look at faces in the crowd in photographs of the events of 9 April, we see a palette of emotions: joy, glee, but also sheer relief. Of course, all of this begs

the question: what to do about this more generalized habitus now that the Rhodes statue has gone? And does the removal of the statue mean that the imperial designs of the institution are merely more deeply veiled?

I want to take this argument one step further by linking it to questions of knowledge and epistemology. What does it mean (and what has it meant) for disciplinary knowledges at UCT when the figure of the researcher is placed above it all, and the life of the city unfolds at a distance, like the scurrying of so many ants? And further, what does it mean when this figurative positioning of the researcher in relation to their research subjects (which, after all, is not that uncommon in universities elsewhere) has taken place in the real-world historical contexts of colonialism and apartheid? I would argue that in the case of UCT this has manifested in what might be thought of as the university's state of exception. This has at least two aspects. One is the idea that the university stands apart from society and the struggles and stratagems of the people at the bottom of the mountain are not a core part of a scholar's concerns, unless they figure as data. In my own discipline, archaeology, I have argued that a common response amongst South African archaeologists in the 1970s and 1980s was to argue that the politics of apartheid was none of their concern. They understood their job to be the objective reconstruction of pre-history, untrammeled by the politics of the present (Shepherd 2003, 2007, 2015). My impression is that this kind of position was—and to an extent still is—quite widely shared across the disciplines at UCT. Numerous important interventions over the years have challenged and critiqued this aspect of UCT's state of exception. They include the interventions of political scientist Mahmood Mamdani in the late 1990s shortly after South Africa's first democratic elections as well as more recent interventions by Harry Garuba, Premesh Lalu, Njabulo Ndebele, Siona O'Connell, Xolela Mangcu and many others. Taken together, these interventions form a counter-tradition that is an enduring part of the university's legacy in and of itself.

A second aspect of this state of exception is the perception that UCT, while not quite a European institution, is also not quite an African institution—in fact, that it exists in an in-between state, not-quite-European and not-quite-African (in other words, precisely, a state of exception). Once again, the Rhodes statue provided a figurative rendering of this idea. Rhodes sat with his back to the university, fronting onto the city at the bottom of the hill and the continent that lies beyond it. Behind him lies the university, and behind the university lies the mountain and the empty sea (at least figuratively). Africa in this rendering lies somewhere to the front of Rhodes ('yonder lies your hinterland'). The thin strip of territory between the mountain and the statue of Rhodes, the belt that comprises the Groote Schuur estate, is constituted as something else, a partially European world at the tip of Africa. To grasp this idea in full we need to dig deeper into the layered symbolic landscape of the Groote Schuur estate and understand a figurative world constituted not only by the grand symbolic stagings of architectural forms, but also by plants and animals.

A last little piece of Rhodesia

In the early 1890s, Rhodes was at the height of his influence. A remarkable career had seen him make a fortune on the diamond fields of Kimberley where he established De Beers Consolidated Mines and become Prime Minister of the Cape Colony in 1890. In 1893, he first leased, and then bought, an estate on the slopes of Devil's Peak, Groote Schuur, along with 1,500 acres of surrounding land. Groote Schuur (big barn) had been constructed as a Dutch East India Company granary in 1657 before passing into private hands in the eighteenth century. Rhodes had Groote Schuur enlarge and renovated, entrusting the task to Herbert Baker, a young architect who was to play an important role in realizing Rhodes's vision in the built environment. Baker invented a new style for the purposes, marrying aspects of Cape Dutch vernacular—like the exaggerated gables—to English Arts and Crafts style (Claassen 2009). A frieze placed over the front entrance depicts the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in 1652 and the establishment of the Dutch settlement at the Cape.

Rhodes intended that Groote Schuur should be bequeathed to the nation as a state house and appears consciously to have incorporated British and Dutch (or Afrikaner) iconographic elements in the design. Other elements, notably the downspouts of the gutters and finials of the interior staircases, shaped like Zimbabwe birds, reference the site of Great Zimbabwe in the newly conquered territory of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Interestingly, the intention to bequeath Groote Schuur as a state house pre-dated both the South African War (1899–1902) and the Act of Union in 1910 that established South Africa out of a set of disparate territories, and as such it was conceived as a state house for a state not yet in existence (Shepherd 2020). From 1911 to 1994, Groote Schuur was the official residence in the Cape to 11 Prime Ministers, including the architects and perpetrators of apartheid. Significantly, when Nelson Mandela became head of state in 1994 he declined to live there, moving to a smaller house lower down the slope (Fischer n.d.).

Groote Schuur is now kept as a museum and can be visited by special application. I visited with a group of students from the Centre for African Studies in 2014. Rhodes's bedroom at the back of the house is kept as a kind of shrine. His bed faces the window, which has a view of Devil's Peak. Opposite his bed, a glass-fronted cabinet of curiosities is filled with Africana: carved wooden headrests, soapstone bowls, potsherds and stone artefacts. On top of the cabinet is one of the eight soapstone birds looted from the Great Zimbabwe site that was stolen by the hunter Willie Posselt in 1889. Against the objections of the local chief, Posselt sawed it from the column on which it was standing and sold it to Rhodes. This is the last remaining bird not to have been repatriated following the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980 and appears to have dropped from public consciousness (Mudariki 2014).

Shortly after the beginning of his tenure at Groote Schuur, Rhodes had a zoological garden established further up the slope of Devil's Peak, within

sight of his bedroom window. Sarah Ommanney, whose beautifully curated book *Lacuna: Groote Schuur Zoo* (2012) constitutes the most extensive source on Rhodes's Zoo, reports that this began as a 'herbivorous menagerie' but diversified when he was given a pair of lions and a leopard. Further gifts and exchanges rapidly diversified the zoo, and 'over the years a large variety of creatures was added' (Ommanney 2012, 37): a lion cub was exchanged for a camel from a circus; a Kudu bull escaped and got into the garden of Rudyard Kipling's home on the estate; a kangaroo escaped and was caught in a leopard trap and shot by a farmer. Photographs of the zoo show, in addition to these creatures, a blue wildebeest, a crested crane, vervet monkeys, zebras and peacocks. Like many zoos, the one constructed on Rhodes's estate was made in part as a social and political statement. Rhodes collected or was given animals from throughout the British empire, thereby rendering it a mini-empire of animals. It also served an important didactic function. Rhodes opened that part of his estate to the public, or at least to *a* public—middle-class and white, by caste if not by race—in the fractured public sphere that constituted colonial society. Following his death in 1902, his will stipulated that the zoo was to be kept open to the public free of charge. The zoo 'would open every day at 9 and close again at 5 to the sound of a whistle' (Ommanney 2012, 5). Around the time of the construction of the UCT upper campus immediately adjacent to the zoo site in the late 1920s, the original zoological garden was demolished and a larger and more ambitious zoo was laid out. Plans of the second iteration of the Groote Schuur Zoo survive. Birds and monkeys occupied the lowest levels of the zoo, while further up the slope were cages for 'large birds' and 'small animals'. The lions, king of beasts, occupied an imposing structure at the top of the slope: a deep pit-like enclosure built around a grassy knoll staged the lions against sweeping sandstone walls and the dramatic backdrop of Devil's Peak. Front-stage and back-stage zones divide the lion enclosure into an amphitheatre-like viewing area and a roofed and barred backstage area. Like the newly completed upper campus of UCT, the zoo is built around a strong central axis with a series of lateral terraces. The lion enclosure occupies an equivalent position to Jameson Hall, the great hall of the university and the cages on the terraces occupy equivalent positions to the main university buildings.

Rhodes appears to have been deeply interested in exploring the iconicity of lions, both as symbols of British empire and also in a more personal capacity (Rhodes was sometimes described as 'the lion of Africa'). The archives of the UCT Library contain the plans of an ambitious and impractical Lion House that Rhodes had Baker design around the time of the remodelling of Groote Schuur. They show a vast, colonnaded neoclassical structure—a kind of temple—through which wild African lions would be free to roam. In his 1934 biography of Rhodes, Baker writes that Rhodes had envisaged

> a spacious and beautiful building: a Paestum temple was in his mind where the king of beasts would be admired in his natural strength and

> dignity. The old Roman in him pictured the beauty of lions moving through great columns, and he was quite unperturbed when warned of the sanguinary fights that would ensue. The plans did not go far. The lion-house idea receded to the back of his mind, or took place only as a smaller cage-building.
>
> (1934, 46–7)

The Lion House is interesting as an idealized image that speaks to the relationship between Africa, a Western classical tradition centred on the Mediterranean civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome, and the civilizing mission of the British empire as interpreted by Rhodes in the final decade of the nineteenth century. It also speaks to Rhodes's ambition to establish a 'Mediterranean' civilization—meaning a white, Western civilization—at the southern tip of Africa, so unlike tropical Africa with its Mediterranean climate and unique flora.

In the Groote Schuur mansion, in the zoological garden and in the imagined Lion House, Rhodes set out to construct the estate as an exemplary landscape, a landscape filled with forms and symbols. This intention extended well beyond the built environment to include non-human animals and even plant species. Paul Maylam has written about Rhodes's ecological imperialism. Rhodes imported two hundred English songbirds to his estate in the belief that birdsong would restore his health. He said: 'It is my dream to fill my forests with the sounds of all the birds of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire … their song is nothing less than the song of civilization' (Maylam 2005, 73). He also imported llamas, fallow deer, kangaroos and grey squirrels, which outcompeted and killed off the indigenous red squirrels. As Maylam writes, 'The nightingales and thrushes died out, the rooks were killed off by carrion crows and the chaffinches were exterminated by the grey squirrels. Only the starlings survived—and, like the squirrel—became the curse of the fruit farmers'. 'Rhodes killed and caged indigenous fauna', Maylam continues. 'He imported exotic animals and transplanted alien trees on African soil' (2005, 156). This last phrase, a reference to one of Rhodes's most enduring legacies on the Groote Schuur estate, is a botanical one. Rhodes had three species of trees planted on his estate: imported English oak trees (*Quercus robur*, representing England), imported 'Stone pines' (*Pinus pinea*, also known as Italian Stone pine and Umbrella pine, representing the southern Mediterranean) and the indigenous 'Silver tree' (*Leucadendron argenteum*). I have argued that, like the idealized architecture of the Lion House and his experiments with animals, this triumvirate of tree species speaks to Rhodes's desire to create a hybrid landscape—not quite Europe, not quite Africa—in which the inheritance of a Western classical tradition was fused with British overlordship and 'the white man's burden' (Shepherd 2020; Shepherd et al. 2018). Contemporary visitors to UCT will find that Stone pines now dominate the landscape, so much so that they have become iconic of the institution. Many of my study abroad students from the United States, raised on images of *The Lion King*, interpret the Stone pines—with their flat crowns and spreading branches—as authentically African.

By the 1970s, however, public sentiment had turned against zoos like the Groote Schuur Zoo with its heavy bars and confining enclosures. Ommanney quotes a Miss Joan Cleenwerck in a letter of 21 February 1978, who writes: 'It is shameful to see large cats and monkeys etc., kept in small, confined cells' (2012, 41). In the early 1980s, the Groote Schuur Zoo was closed and the animals dispersed. The lions were reportedly sold to a 'canned' hunting operation in Namibia (canned hunting is the practice of hunting doped lions in small enclosures). Shortly after its closure, homeless people moved into the cages. In an attempt to force them out, the Public Works Department, the entity that managed the site, demolished many of the cages and the enclosures and bricked up the entranceways to the rest. Yet the lion's cage, the most obviously monumental structure on the site—and thus the one that signaled its status as 'heritage'—was left untouched and has been sporadically inhabited ever since. In a political history of apartheid, the closure of the Groote Schuur Zoo falls between the seismic events of Soweto 1976 and the township revolts of the mid-1980s. The unintended irony of a situation in which a discourse on animal rights could trump the rights of homeless black bodies seeking shelter feels like a very South African situation. In 1999, the part of the Groote Schuur estate that includes the zoo was incorporated into the Cape Peninsula National Park; at present, the site is overgrown and untended. It exists as an extended site of ruination, an archaeological site covering several hectares on the immediate southern border of the UCT upper campus, about 100 meters from the Centre for African Studies. In my time at UCT, the Groote Schuur Zoo site interested me as liminal space that was almost entirely disregarded but is also somehow key to the broader iconographic landscape. From 2001 onwards, I would take classes of students from the Centre for African Studies to the zoo site as a way of thinking about the entangled legacies of Cecil Rhodes at UCT. In later years, some of these students would go on to be active in #RMF and #FMF.

One of the many interesting things about Rhodes as a subject is the intentionality that he brought to shaping his own legacy. As Maylam stresses, 'Rhodes carefully planned and choreographed his own immortalization' (2002, 139). Following Rhodes's death, the conversation turned to how he should be memorialized by others. The original proposal, put forward by Earl Grey, was for a massive statue of Rhodes modelled on the Statue of Liberty to be erected on Signal Hill at the entrance to Cape Town's harbour. But '[t]his Cape Town was spared,' Maylam writes; 'Instead it got the Rhodes Memorial designed by the imperial architect, Herbert Baker, formally opened in 1912' (2002, 144). Rhodes Memorial is situated on the slope of Devil's Peak slightly above and to the north of the UCT campus. Along with the Groote Schuur Zoo site, it forms part of the immediate memorial landscape of the university and comprises three main parts. At the back, the highest part of the memorial, is a Greek-style temple fronted by columns, which Baker modelled on the temples at Paestum (Figure 3.4).

Baker also cites these temples as a source of inspiration for the Lion House, but in fact it seems clear that he was mentally revisiting the plans for the Lion

Figure 3.4 Rhodes Memorial, another temple on a hill. Photograph by SkyPixels, used under Wikipedia Creative Commons licence. This file is licenced under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en) licence.

House in designing Rhodes Memorial. Inside the temple is a bust of Rhodes in contemplative pose modelled by the sculptor J. M. Swan. Shortly after the removal of the Rhodes statue from the UCT campus the bust was modified: the nose was sawed off and an attempt was made to decapitate the bust by sawing through the neck from the back. Imposing steps lead down from the temple and form the second element of the design. At the base of the steps is the statue *Physical Energy*, the work of the Victorian allegorical artist George Watts. It shows an overscale nude male figure on horseback and manages to be both hyper-masculine and kitsch at the same time (Shepherd 2020). A second casting of *Physical Energy* now stands in Kensington gardens in London. A third replica was cast in 1957 for the British South Africa Company and unveiled by the Queen Mother in Lusaka, in the then Northern Rhodesia, in 1960. Following the independence of Zambia, a few years later it was taken to the Department of Antiquities in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia (Harare, Zimbabwe) (Maylam 2002).

On each side of the steps of Rhodes Memorial are four bronze lions, also the work of J. M. Swan. According to Baker, the lions were designed to express 'qualities of calm and reserved strength and power' (Baker 1934, 144), an echo of the 'natural strength and dignity' Rhodes was said to admire about the imagined lions of the Lion House.

The third element of Rhodes Memorial is a semi-circular terrace that offers spectacular views to the north and east, on an axis slightly to the north of the sight lines offered by the Jameson Steps and the university's central plaza.

Maylam suggests that 'Rhodes would have been delighted with the Memorial … Its prominent site and high visibility gives Rhodes an enormous, looming presence over Cape Town' (2002, 144). He notes: 'It is a thoroughly imperial monument, embodying a conjunction of architecture and empire-building' (2002, 144). Rhodes Memorial repeats, in fact serves as the original for, the twin architectural tropes so powerfully deployed by Solomon in the design of the UCT upper campus—the temple on the hill and the site of prospect.

A complex play of references and allusions is thus set up between the three elements that constitute the memorial landscape of UCT. Jameson Hall references the Paestum temple of Rhodes Memorial and is also echoed in the design of the imagined Lion House. The living lions of the Groote Schuur Zoo, meanwhile, are referenced by the bronze lions of Rhodes Memorial. The viewing terrace of Rhodes Memorial is repeated in the central plaza of UCT, which in turn is repeated in the small, semi-circular viewing platform in front of the lion enclosure at the Groote Schuur Zoo (at one point this contained a toposcope, a bronze plaque with directional arrows giving the distance in miles to the principal cities of the British empire). Lines of sight and forms of the gaze are recapitulated from site to site, by multiple agents: the bronze bust of Rhodes in the temple, the figure on horseback, the bronze lions, tourists and sight-seers on the viewing platform of Rhodes Memorial, scholars and students on the central plaza of the university, and the lions of the Groote Schuur Zoo, perched on their grassy knoll in the lion enclosure. At the foremost point of this immense play of signification and cross-reference and as a point of focus and intensification was the Rhodes statue of the University of Cape Town, the statue whose presence was understood as such a visceral affront by the student activists of #RMF (Shepherd 2020).

As I have described it here, the landscape of UCT and the broader landscape of the Groote Schuur estate consist of a dense network of signification and is deeply inscribed with the historical legacy of Cecil Rhodes. The material inscription of Rhodes's legacy takes many forms: architectural form; the organization of space; plant and animal species; archaeological sites and ruins on the landscape; and the more self-conscious making of space through statues and memorials. A final point is that this network of signification once extended across much of southern Africa, encompassing Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, Rhodes's burial site in the Valhalla of the Matopos and numerous individual sites, locations, shrines, statues, place names, ceremonies, feast days (like Southern Rhodesia's Founders Day) and so on. With the waning of the British empire, the independence of once-colonized territories and the re-evaluation of Rhodes's legacy, this landscape of memory has been radically contracted to the point where we can speculate that the Groote Schuur estate constitutes the last remaining outpost of Rhodesia (Shepherd 2020). The question that follows for those who are part of this landscape is: What does it mean to dwell figuratively in Rhodesia?

Spectres of Rhodes

Following the removal of the Rhodes statue, university managers had the plinth, which remains on the site, covered in a plain wooden box. This was painted grey but was soon graffitied. As I write in late 2020, the boxed plinth remains on the UCT campus. Over the years it has become a site for impromptu demonstrations and performances, like the small installations that are made on the plinth each year on the anniversary of the massacre of mineworkers at Marikana. It also enjoys a certain notoriety. I often see visitors and students posing for selfies in front of the plinth. One of the most eloquent reminders of the Rhodes statue was made shortly before its removal. In late summer the afternoon sun shines from the northwest, behind and to the side of Devil's Peak. Someone carefully traced the outline of the shadow of the Rhodes statue as it was cast on Jameson steps, and then filled this in with black paint. Now the statue is gone, but the shadow most certainly remains (Shepherd 2020).

My theme in this chapter has been the notion of deep inscription. I have argued that the legacy of Cecil Rhodes and the things he stood for—racism, patriarchy, colonialism, imperialism the exploitation of natural worlds—are deeply inscribed in the social, material and intellectual landscape of the Groote Schuur estate and the University of Cape Town. This legacy takes material forms, some of which—like the projection of Rhodes's ideas into plant and animal worlds—are surprising. It also takes less tangible forms: an embodied habitus, forms of the gaze and a certain relationship to knowledge and to broader society. As a kind of shorthand, I have named this landscape of forms and ideas 'Rhodesia'. In a second part of my argument, I have speculated that, dwelling in Rhodesia, one is at best partially and fitfully aware of the nature of this legacy and the many tangled forms it takes. Instead, it forms part of an ambiguous inheritance, handed down to us along with the tools of the disciplines and the norms of the institution.

In concluding, I would like to take this argument through one more step that involves generalizing the case that I present in this chapter. The case of Cecil Rhodes and UCT presents with unusual, and sometimes startling, clarity a certain relationship to coloniality in the institution of the university. There is something phantasmagorical about the story that I unfold. It reads as a kind of fairy tale complete with lions, forests and ogres who brood in temples. However, rather than seeing this as an exceptional case—as UCT tends to see itself—I would argue just the opposite. My argument is that the case of Rhodes and UCT presents with unusual clarity and intensity a set of dynamics and relationships that are a deeply inscribed aspect of the university as institution, wherever the university has a historical relationship to colonial worlds of practice, or slave economies, or is entangled with racism, patriarchy and other forms of patronage and privilege (as, in fact, is the case for most universities in most places). Indeed, I would argue that these relationships and dynamics are part of the ambiguous legacy of institutions in Europe and North America as much as institutions in the Global South like UCT. At the same time, this

legacy is generally disavowed. For a brief, brilliant moment the activists of #RMF found a language and a form of protest that was able to haul this legacy into focus. In doing so, I believe that they were aided by the form of the Rhodes statue itself, which so powerfully summarized this deeply inscribed coloniality, as well as by the sheer intensity of the surrounding symbolic and memorial landscape. I would argue that theirs was a brave and singular achievement whose meaning we need to cherish. To argue against systematic forms of disavowal, the disciplinary power of the institution and the very forms of a certain kind of reason is an extraordinary achievement that involves a kind of unlearning as much as a learning (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012).

Since the moment of #RMF, things have become more complicated and less clear, as perhaps is inevitable. Reputations have waned, the student movement in South Africa has been internally divided and university managers have seized on the 'crisis' of #FMF as an opportunity to force through a range of measures: ramped-up security, the militarization and gating of campuses, budget cuts, increased class sizes and random security checks. Some of the #RMF activists have talked of the emotional and physical toll taken by the events of #RMF and #FMF, the protracted struggle with university managers and the danger and insecurity of being exposed to a police presence on campus. In 2017, I left UCT for a position in Denmark, a society that struggles with its own relationship to coloniality. In a strange way, this has given me the distance necessary to think about these things. Cycling through the woods to the pleasant campus at Moesgaard, I think about the abandoned zoo, the Stone pines, the grandeur of Sarah Baartman Hall and the empty plinth and its unsettled history.

Note

1 This work forms part of the ECHOES project which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 770248.

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Chapter 4

Decolonizing the narrative of Portuguese empire[1]

Life stories of African presence, heritage and memory

Cristiano Gianolla, Giuseppina Raggi and Lorena Sancho Querol

Silences and invisibilities in the public narrative of Portuguese empire

Portugal was founded in the first half of the twelfth century; it is among the oldest states in Europe and was the pioneer of colonial expansion in the fifteenth century. It became a world empire that formally lasted until 1999 (when Macau's sovereignty transferred to China), but was largely dismantled soon after the Carnation Revolution on 25 April 1974, which ended over 40 years of fascist dictatorship. The regime forged by Antonio de Oliveira Salazar reinvigorated the co-construction of imperialistic and nation-state-building narratives that are intertwined in a way that endures to this day (Pinto and Jerónimo 2015). It determined the production of a selective and politically targeted version of colonial history that entails 'amnesic consequences' (Cardina 2016).

The decolonization of most of the African colonies in 1974 and 1975 definitively left the country in a 'semi-peripheral position' in the world system (Santos 2006), an ambivalent status that is central to understanding the debate on colonial heritage. On the one hand, Portugal is a relatively small state at the periphery of Europe that has lost the global leadership role it played in early colonial times, turning this loss into an 'empire of memory in which the past continues to live', or what Eduardo Lourenço (1999) calls a *mitologia da saudade* (mythology of longing). On the other hand, its public memory glorifies the vestiges of Portuguese empire, narrated with a paternalistic twentieth-century script, reinvigorated by the Salazarist deployment of the term 'lusotropicalism' (Castelo 1998; Rossa and Ribeiro 2015). This viewpoint elevates the genius of Portuguese navigators, the benevolence of its colonial administration, their socially inclusive and cordial regime and the moderate domination methods (*brando*) of the empire based on miscegenation (Da Silva 2002). The dictatorship used lusotropicalism as an argument to justify the persistence of a colonial empire at a time when European empires were being dismantled (Jerónimo and Pinto 2015). These characteristics outline what is understood as an 'imperial narrative', a public memory anchored in the glorification of an imperial past and the alleged

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-6

multicultural and benevolent character of Portuguese colonialism that excludes colliding and dissonant narratives (Meneses and Gomes 2013) and deeply marks the character of Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD, Smith 2006). In almost half a century since the installation of democracy, Portugal was unable to fully engage in a critical assessment of its imperial past. However, critical voices were always present and, in the last few years, the debate has been reinvigorated by a growing number of African and Afro-descendant scholars, activists and practitioners.

Slavery and its main oppressive contemporary social consequence—racism—is a key point of the revived debate. Nevertheless, lusotropical narrators refuse to engage with it and tend to historicize facts, insisting on the innovation brought by Portuguese colonial modalities. In this imperial narrative, the role of Portugal in slavery is an issue to be removed (Kølvraa 2018a), repressed (Kølvraa 2018b), or at best, re-framed (Knudsen 2020a), while counter-narrative building starts from the decolonial re-emergence (Knudsen 2020b) of this topic.

The discourse of Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, the President of the Republic, at Gorée island, during his visit to Senegal in April 2017, inaugurated a new polemical season of debate as he defended Portugal's colonial legacy, claiming that by starting to abolish the importation of enslaved people to their mainland territory in 1761, Portugal was also pioneering human rights and humanist approaches. Similarly, debates flared up that same year around the project of the Mayor of Lisbon to build the Discovery Museum and the unveiling of the statue of Jesuit missionary Father Antonio Vieira (Raggi and Gianolla 2020).

The 'mythscape' is the discursive realm 'in which the myths of the nation are forged, transmitted, reconstructed and negotiated constantly' (Bell 2003, 75). In Lisbon, it is strongly shaped by a heritage landscape that prominently displays colonial symbols and thus narrates the 'governing mythology' (Bell 2003) of the (imperial) nation. A widely known example is the *Padrão dos Descobrimentos* (Discovery Pavilion), located at *Praça do Império* (Empire Square) in Lisbon's Belém area, a celebratory mausoleum that was constructed in 1940 for the Exhibition of the Portuguese World to honour Portuguese navigators. Despite its monumental imperial narrative, its interior has been the location of initiatives that engage with the troubled past of Portuguese colonialism. Among the most recent contributions, *Racism and Citizenship* (Bethencourt 2017) explores the tension between racism and its resistance in the framing of critical, insurgent and inclusive citizenship; *Atlântico Vermelho* (Red Atlantic, Paulino 2017) disputes the scientific rationality of racism and expounds on the silenced pasts of people enslaved; and *Contar Áfricas* (About Africa, Camões Gouveia 2019) elaborates on the pluralism of views on the relationship between Portugal and the African continent.

While these initiatives have challenged the imperial narrative—not without controversies—there are a range of other actors and contexts through which counter-narratives are emerging. From the perspective of Participatory

Action Research (Gabarrón and Landa 2006), this study focuses on biographical methods (Lechner 2011), using semi-structured interviews to analyse trajectories that enable the critical assessment of the social, political, cultural and historical dimensions of life stories (Delory-Momberger 2004). While such counter-narratives remain largely 'unread' (not 'unwritten' as a growing body of scholarship demonstrates) by those who defend AHD, we believe that they pluralize understandings of colonial memory. Moreover, our methodology echoes the approach developed by social anthropologists in opposition to the positivist understanding of memory (Pujadas 2000). It allows for an exploration of the formative and transformative power of biographical research, entailing a wider interpretation that can enhance the value of narrative identities (Ricoeur 1983) existing in a determined socio-political context.

The main outcomes of this research provide a wider understanding of the relevance of African and Afro-descendant people and cultures in Portugal, past and present, confronting the ongoing impact of the imperial narrative on their socio-political marginalization. Life stories amplify the dynamic and inclusive knowledge of colonial memory in two ways: firstly, they help grasp the lived realities of imperial-excluding mechanisms; secondly, they aim at echoing decolonial and affirmative counter-narrative trajectories, experiences and initiatives.

The semi-structured interview script was prepared after almost two years of multidisciplinary and multilayered fieldwork in Lisbon, based on focus groups, interviews and participatory observation. Each interview was filmed by a team of three researchers and two technicians. They were transcribed, translated and analysed using critical discourse analysis, focusing on the two most relevant decolonial categories present in each interview, which are highlighted in italics in subsequent sections, as follows: Dias: *counter-narratives*; *political role of memory*; Henriques: *teaching of the History of Africa*, *invisibilized African places*; Mata: *decolonization of sight*, *musealization of people and cultures*; Severo: *intercultural education*, *democratize museum narratives*; Kally: *mapped the quarter in the city*, *being seen and being heard*.

The heritage interventions analysed are characterized by a bottom-up appropriation of cultural heritage of symbolic places, objects and literature, contributing to the decolonization of mind (Andersen 2018; Thiong'o 1986) and sight (see Inocência Mata below) and to the creation of participatory spheres of debate and cultural resonances (Greenblatt 1991) based on what we define as 'decolonization of hearing'. These areas of analysis fall in line with the challenge of enlarging linear and pacified views of history and the imperial narrative at their core.

This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the biographic data collected from five influential persons linked to the African presence in Lisbon heritage discourse. In order to fit the chosen methodology, the chapter dedicates a separate section to each life story in the following order: Beatriz Gomes Dias,

Isabel Castro Henriques, Inocência Mata, Rosário Severo and Kally Meru.[2] While these are just some of the people who play an influential role in the construction of counter-narratives, they were selected by the following criteria: (1) their personal and professional vocation developed in academia, curatorial work or activism initiatives (or a combination of these); (2) the power and originality of the life stories they had to tell; (3) the impact of their work on the controversial debate on heritage, reinforced in the last few years in Lisbon; and (4) the complementarity of perspectives of their individual life stories in relation to the imperial narrative.

The chapter structure was defined to allow each life story section to report the thoughts of the interviewee according to the analytical categories that emerged, which was aimed at articulating a categorized—but not systemic—understanding of current counter-narratives. After this brief introduction, the chapter includes five respective sections. The first focuses on how the public argument is reinforced by a very actual and debated heritage intervention carried out by Africans and Afro-descendants to dispute the imperial narrative in Lisbon (Dias). Then, in the following section, we investigate the roots and unfolding of academic knowledge on the African presence and history in Portugal and their impact on how that African presence is displayed in the heritage landscape of Lisbon (Henriques). Subsequently, another section explores two theoretical categories that substantiate connections between the historical roots and political visions in counter-narratives in heritage contact zones (Mata). The last two sections before the concluding part analyse two examples of heritage contact zones related to the African presence: (1) where intercultural education in a museum is strongly linked with colonialism (Severo) and (2) where a political struggle relates to the emancipatory potential of street art in a social housing quarter (Kally). The final section of the chapter is dedicated to a comparative analysis of the interviews with the aim of identifying empirical and conceptual entanglements among them.

The main findings of the resulting conceptual matrix of the five life stories stress the political role of memory (see Beatriz Gomes Dias below) in the diverse heritages related and outline strategies to face the different aspects of constructing counter-narratives to challenge the enduring imperial narrative of post-revolutionary Portugal. It becomes clear that heritagization processes of an informal nature (not directly linked to formal institutional processes) emerging from the bottom-up (Abreu 2015), reaffirm the importance of the specific knowledge, voice and decision-making power of civil society to complement top-down heritagization processes (i.e., those frequently characterized by their official rhetoric), which are often translated in a reducing dynamic that highlights the essentialisms of culture (Peixoto 2017). The evidence is that the social resignification of Africans and Afro-descendants implies the full recognition of their presence and political subjectivity—deconstructing the idea that they are in transition—and their relevant contribution to Portuguese history, culture, society and politics.

Building memory counter-narratives

The mythscape preserved in the Portuguese public space, educational system and academic research has silenced a number of issues related to the country's imperial past (Araújo 2013). The recent initiatives of African and Afro-descendant communities and organizations are playing an affirmative role in questioning the narrative of Portuguese empire, rooted in colonialism and slavery and reflected in the heritage landscape of Lisbon. Djass—Afro-descendant Association, founded on Africa day (25 May) in 2016, is the exemplar case to elaborate on this process. Beatriz Gomes Dias,[3] former Djass president and current Portuguese MP notes that:

> The existing monuments that occupy public space are all centred on celebrating the discoveries and reifying myths of national identity, and this … is something that needs to be disputed …. the way to do this would be to present a counter-narrative that could oppose, that could dispute, this hegemonic national narrative … through a monument erected in the public space where we could tell our stories, or tell the reverse side of this glorified history.

Dias strongly believes that the future *Memorial to Enslaved People* (Figure 4.1) should contribute to the construction of emerging *counter-narratives* and to the decolonization of the imperial narrative by creating a space of dispute centred on the perspectives of Africans and Afro-descendants. The Memorial project created by the Angolan artist Kiluanji Kia Henda (who won the contest organized by Djass[4]) is expected to be installed in 2021. It aims to remember the lives and dignity of enslaved Africans, contrasting it with the objectification to which they were exposed during their lifetimes and then crystallized within the imperial narrative. The counter-narrative is a celebration of resistance and homage to the dignity of these people who have contributed to the social, cultural and economic history of the country.

Dias maintains that the imperial narrative defines an unnecessary anachronism in the debate about slavery, as it considers that this issue belongs to a resolved past with no impact in the present. The main challenge to the construction of counter-narratives is the negation of racism and the argument that we live in a post-racial society. Counter-narratives struggle against these assumptions, challenging and deconstructing racist arguments, starting with the one that denies racism exists. Dias finds that the decolonization of colonial heritage has attained some, although still limited, results. The approval of the project of the Memorial and the slowdown of support for the construction of the Discovery Museum are important achievements. They emerge from the collaboration between academia, practitioners and activists aimed at pluralizing the narratives on memory and its meanings in today's society.

The *political role of memory* is made clear, for Dias, by the objectives of the Memorial: recognizing the subjectivity of the people enslaved, acknowledging

Figure 4.1 *Memorial to Enslaved People*, 3D model pictures: general view, detailed view, memorial future uses.

Courtesy of Kiluanji Kia Henda, 2019.

the role of Portugal in the trade of black human beings in order to question its impact in the present and struggling against racial discrimination concealed in the imperial narrative. These are necessary steps to foresee policies of equality and equal involvement of Africans and Afro-descendants in public life, thus enhancing social justice. Dias states:

> This is crucial. We have to look to the past to be able to understand the present, to be able to project the future and we cannot understand contemporary racism and racial discrimination if we do not understand the roots, their roots, where they were forged, where it is that they were built.

Dias underlines that the slavery-related subjugation of African people in the past forges the general idea that Africans and Afro-descendants are second-class people, not permanent inhabitants, but transitory migrants. This kind of idea is reflected in the social and economic conditions of many of those that, partially due to the gentrification processes of Lisbon, live on the outskirts of the city, because they cannot afford to live in the centre. They frequently work as unskilled and low-paid domestic or civil construction workers. While touristic branding appropriates their presence to convey the image of a miscegenated and multicultural Lisbon, Africans and Afro-descendants feel discriminated against and misrepresented in the memory debates, politics and culture of the country.

In order to decolonize the strength of the symbols and myths of the imperial narrative, counter-narratives need to be constructed through a strong collective symbolism. As a result of the firm negotiation of Djass with authorities, the Memorial obtained a central position in the port area of Lisbon (Campo das Cebolas). Moreover, a nearby building was assigned as an interpretative centre, which will also become a participatory laboratory for the construction of the (en)counter-narratives, to include the organization of events to take place in the periphery where Africans and Afro-descendants' communities live.

Rethinking African history and places

The political role of memory, the activism by Africans and Afro-descendants and the process of decolonizing the imperial narrative, sensitivities and minds within Portuguese society, all emerge from a different approach to the *teaching of the History of Africa* (Henriques 2007). After the Carnation Revolution of 1974, the first academic course on this topic was introduced into the Portuguese university system by Isabel Castro Henriques,[5] retired professor of the University of Lisbon (UL) and the subject of our second life story. As she explains:

> I studied in Paris at the French university [Sorbonne], and that's when I started to discover that Africa had history. Which in reality, in Portugal before the 25th of April [1974] was somewhat unknown, as Africa was made up of a whole set of populations fundamentally interpreted as peoples with no history, wild, backward, inferior, within the logic of Portuguese colonial thought.

The rising contrast between the course on African History and the academic tradition, based on the History of Portuguese Discoveries, was particularly stark because it began to deconstruct the relationship between the colonial past and the image of Africa, as produced in the imperial narrative. Henriques maintains that at the beginning, the historiographical change interested mainly students from former Portuguese colonies, especially Angola, Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe. Then, other foreign students from Europe and Brazil enrolled, and currently it is a consolidated course within MA and PhD progammes. The Eurocentric perspective taught in the course on the History of Portuguese Discoveries was criticized in depth and the new approach of teaching allowed students to focus on Africa not as one, but as multiple and plural Africas, with different and millenary cultures, civilizations and peoples. The academic knowledge changed progressively, but it was, and still is, a long-term process that needs to be implemented alongside an intense interaction with Portuguese society.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, exhibitions and public debates on African topics are increasing, and the joint progress in critical academic research is breaking a set of prejudices and discriminatory ways. An important achievement in building counter-narratives lies in the historiographic valorization of the *invisibilized African places* in Lisbon (Henriques 2011). Identifying the places and life stories of Africans in town contributes to restating their historical and current subjectivities and presence.

Henriques confirms that there is a deep relationship between the African and Afro-descendant communities who currently live in Lisbon and the African presence in the country since the fifteenth century when the first enslaved Africans were carried to Portugal. Racism and the social prejudice against Africans are historically based on the stigma created by slavery, which remains associated with skin colour (Bethencourt and Pearce 2012). The imperial narrative continues to deny that Portuguese history and culture is intrinsically entangled with past and present African cultures, identities, traditions and values. As Henriques explains: 'These enslaved Africans were fundamental elements in the very construction of Portuguese society. They worked in all, in all wealth producing sectors. All of them'.

The academic research led by Isabel Castro Henriques in the last 20 years has contributed to amplifying the visibility of African people who lived in Lisbon in the early-modern and modern eras. The results of her research programme were shared with civil society organizations to help write

counter-narratives on the 'mythscape' of Lisbon heritage landscape. A recent project coordinated by the cultural association Batoto Yetu forged commemorative stone plaques and busts of Africans, Afro-descendants and *mestizos* people to install in 20 locations in Lisbon, to narrate their historical presence in the city. While the aim of installing stone plaques is to make visible the places of African Heritage in Lisbon, the busts also revive African subjects, including African women. A few examples serve to highlight the impact of this initiative: the Mocambo was the early-modern African neighbourhood, whose vanished memory resurfaced from oblivion and reacquired visibility. The Rossio Square, one of the main places in Lisbon, revealed its history as the secular meeting point of Africans and Afro-descendants, highlighting the persisting presence and concentration of people from different African countries. In this place, the bust of Paulino José da Conceição, also known as Pai Paulino (1798–1869) will be installed. He was an influential and highly respected nineteenth-century mediator between African and Portuguese authorities, African whitewasher (*caiador*) and musician. Other busts that will be installed across the city in locations related to the African presence include those of Cape Verdean Andressa do Nascimento (1859–1927), also known as Fernanda do Vale or, pejoratively, *Preta Fernanda* (black Fernanda), who was a protagonist of Lisbon nightlife and established a meeting place for artists, writers and politicians, and Virgínia Quaresma (1882–1973), who was one of the first women to graduate from the University of Lisbon, a journalist and a women's rights activist.

This initiative has contributed to the creation of organized tours through these African places and provided further recognition of the memories of African protagonists in Lisbon's history. This demonstrates the impact of academic knowledge counter-narrative in society.

Decolonizing sight

A renovated approach to the history of Africa has impacted epistemological and semiotic methodologies in other areas, especially the humanities, soliciting a change in the viewer rather than in the object. Inocência Mata,[6] professor at UL, maintains that everything can be projected as an aesthetic object and given a specific cultural value with subsequent political implications. Mata is a critical and postcolonial comparative literature scholar, who argues that the *decolonization of sight* is a fundamental step to decolonizing the imperial mythscape and relates to the way we look at objects and subjects: 'The question is not the decolonization of art, nor the decolonization of literature, nor the decolonization of heritage. The question that arises is the decolonization of sight … the decolonization of one's view of art'. Mata affirms that the process to decolonize sight requires a decolonization of the way we build the images we see. Museums are designed to welcome a specific narrative; in Portugal, they represent an imperial and Eurocentric perspective.

Mata maintains that colonial sight does not overlap purely with colour and race. Africans and Afro-descendants can also internalize colonial sight and may need to undergo the same decolonial process, as this is a social rather than an individual issue. Likewise, white people can have decolonial sight. Sight in this sense is socially produced and is not innate in people, 'the question of racism is not a question of blacks; it is a question of society!' Mata insists that Afro-descendants must ally with those who struggle in the same vein, regardless of skin colour.

When applied to the study of literature, for Mata the decolonization of sight implies that there are no fixed meaningful facts, but rather, facts are produced to be seen as meaningful. Comparing postcolonial literature therefore implies reading European and African decolonial authors together, as opposed to focusing only on African writers. The key is in the critical approach to colonialism, not the place from where they write, because colonialism is not an issue restricted to the Global South. Mata goes on:

> I would study both Pepetela and Lobo Antunes. I am going to study both Paulina [Chiziane] and Dulce Maria Cardoso. Because they are writings that precisely come out … from that tension between the colonized and colonizers. So, I think we cannot change the heritage. The name says it, it is there. We have to change the way we look, how we look, how we receive this heritage and … who says literature, say the plastic arts … say the dance, say the form, say the clothing. So, I am convinced that it is mainly the sight, because the productions are there. And that's what I learned when I moved from structuralism to semiotics, it is no longer a product, it is production, because the product is there. Production is always in constant dynamics, like say an upgrade.

What for Mata, as an African person, is an object of everyday use, can be aesthetically produced as a cultural artefact deserving to be exhibited in a museum in Europe. This approach illustrates the *musealization of people and cultures*. Although the presence of African and Afro-descendants is long lasting, impacting and ostensible, especially in metropolitan areas, Mata contests assumptions that continually consider their presence as migratory and transitory, not occupying visible and stable places in the Portuguese nation. That is why the absence of Africans and Afro-descendants is normalized in public debate, and is musealized in ways that perpetuate racial discrimination. This musealization considers Africans and Afro-descendants, as well as their cultural productions, as part of a lost inheritance, part of the past. To deconstruct this mindset, memory, intercultural dynamics and identity politics are extremely relevant in Portugal.

Mata argues that the decolonization of sight involves a deconstruction of terms that are also used by anti-racist discourses that would lead to a broader awareness of social diversity. She goes on:

> Decolonization … has to start with language. In language, in manuals, in the media and obviously in the awareness of diversity, I think that is what the Portuguese do not yet have, the awareness that Portugal is a diverse country … And as a diverse country, the different segments of this society must have, must be represented.

One of the terms to be decolonized is 'racialized people', which is used to refer to social groups identified with an oppressed race, such as Africans and Afro-descendants. However, each 'race' implies the same process of differentiation and assuming that black people are racialized serves to 'normalize' the postulation that white people are not racialized and to restate that the white race is the standard.

In order to create a counter-narrative of this imperial normalization, social structures have to be tackled. However, Mata points out that in practice this proves to be challenging, as demonstrated by the process of meritocracy. Meritocracy is a perverse instrument of discrimination; it is used to hide the existence of race while reaffirming it. It does so by taking exceptionality as the norm and hiding the discriminatory normality. It restates, for instance, that if women are underrepresented in relevant social positions it is because they are inept, so if black people do not occupy prestigious and powerful places in society, it is because they are incapable. The first step to decolonize is to acknowledge that racial discrimination is the norm and that is not undone by the exceptionalism of a few examples.

Mata insists that while the African presence is part of the Portuguese culture, society and economy, it still needs to be recognized and seen as part of the national identity. It is contradictory that while Portugal is proud of its Atlantic past, it endures an imperial narrative that excludes the diversity of which it is constituted and what that implies.

Educating interculturally through museums

A decolonization of sight leads to a critical approach to museum studies. The concept of cultural mediation of tangible and intangible cultural goods has evolved to a new field, the field of museum mediation (Museum Mediators 2014), which encompasses the promotion of greater citizen participation and gives shape to processes of building connections between the cultural and social realms, allowing for work in political, cultural and public spheres. From this perspective, it covers a broad spectrum of practices, ranging from audience development activities to participatory museology—such as citizen's curatorship—with the goal of empowering every person to be an active museological actor.

Museums are privileged spaces to build cultural democracy within societies. As they deal with cultural heritage originating from diverse historical periods, they must assume their social responsibility as spaces of critical thinking and

education. It is essential to build a critical museology (Shelton 2013), to uncover unknown dimensions of history and to strip away homogeneous, singular and pacified stories.

Since the Carnation Revolution, the process of deconstructing the colonial image of a Salazarist nature has been slow and superficial in Portuguese museology. Museums whose educational services follow mediation processes in line with the values of decolonial theory and methods are still rare. Rosário Severo[7] is a museum mediator and head of the Educational Department at the National Museum of Ethnology (NME). When she arrived at the NME in 2016 and wanted to develop a mediation focused on combating social discrimination and racism, based on *intercultural education*, she faced some difficulties due to perceptions that the theme was considered irrelevant. Rosário Severo has worked in museums since 1985, where her profession, and also her passion, has been museum mediation. She says:

> I began to realize this very early on in the late [1980s] and early [1990s], … this very subtle racism, extremely dangerous coming from racist teachers and other educators of children. I am in contact with them every day.

There are various collections from the former Portuguese colonies that are located at the NME, in the Restelo area—a geographical reference from the colonial era in Lisbon and the place where the caravels left for the overseas conquest. Even to this day, their collection criteria and musealization frequently await in-depth investigation (Chuva 2020). These museums often exhibit an object-centred and historically linear museography, also characterized by a musealizing absence, which tends to perpetuate racial discrimination (Figure 4.2). Consequently, museum narratives frequently feed prejudices of different kinds, still deeply ingrained in Portuguese society, in the national education system and in the urban landscape, among other places. Severo highlights that this decolonial debate does not reach museum authorities:

> this debate only exists for us … for a certain section of the academy … in museums, no way. There was never anything said, no meeting to discuss it … just read the articles from most museum directors, just read their opinion texts.

That is why Severo believes that the NME Educational Service team has had, since 2016, a dual mission: to democratize Portuguese society's access to the museum and to *democratize museum narratives* about the social history of the country. The first challenge is to embrace society as a whole and to respect subjectivities in the way we build and share narratives about exhibited realities. The second challenge is to give voice to silenced stories, so that society realizes that history should be built from as many perspectives and

Figure 4.2 General view of African exhibition at National Museum of Ethnology. Courtesy of Fernando Guerra | FG+SG, 2014.

places of speech as possible, reflecting the diversity of protagonists it has had and that truth is neither singular nor unique. As Severo puts it:

> In all museums, there should be intercultural training! We have to speak to all the children, all the young people, all the people who come to visit us! … Nobody can be left out! … Integration, inclusion, but what is it? Include, integrate who? We simply have to respect individualities … We have to open things up, museums have to be for everyone, they have to be decolonised, they mainly have to be democratic.

From Severo's perspective, 'cultural decolonization' begins with a slow process of changing mentalities, of discovering the self and the other, in an unceasing search for respective biographical narratives. Institutions such as museums, and mediation tools such as intercultural education, constitute an effective way to decolonize the mind, narratives and also language (Sancho Querol, Gianolla et al. 2020a). As of today, there is still no regulation of the museum mediation professionals in Portugal, they often encounter diverse difficulties related to their recognition and working conditions. Severo

explains that mediators seek to understand and acknowledge the perspectives and experiences of the societies represented in their collections, trying to connect the musealized realities with current societies and social challenges, in order to value the culture of every child, youth or adult who visits the museum, creating a targeted experience. This approach contributes to the deep and conscious decoding of structural racism, characteristic of white privilege (Pascual 2020), which is, often unknowingly, absorbed and accepted on a daily basis.

Severo's life story and experience makes especially clear that, according to the principles of critical museology, particularly from an activist perspective (Janes and Sandell 2019), museums like the NME are advantaged places for decolonizing the imperial narrative and deconstructing the colonial historical and scientific paradigm.

Visibilizing the African presence through graffiti

The process of decolonizing sight entails institutional involvement in museums and emerges from social initiatives in specific contexts, where the impact of the imperial narrative produces marginalization and exclusion. The *Quinta do Mocho* is located in the Municipality of Loures, a region on the outskirts of Lisbon that is an African and Afro-descendant social housing quarter once marked by violence and criminality (Raposo 2018) and therefore classified as a dangerous and inaccessible place by the imperial narrative. In 2014, the Municipality organized an intercultural festival which inaugurated the creation of what has now become the biggest public art gallery (Gáleria de Arte Pública—GAP) in Europe (Figure 4.3), with social housing buildings painted with 139 graffiti images (as of 28 February 2020). After a few months, the Municipality organized guided GAP tours, an initiative that *mapped the quarter in the city* and was appropriated by the residents to introduce visitors to their cultures, to reinvigorate the quarter's economy and to articulate their counter-narrative.

Kally Meru[8] is the name chosen by José Carlos Ribeiro—one of the 'Mocho's guides'—who interprets the Afro-Portuguese nature of the quarter:

> I am Angolan. I have never completed the process for my Portuguese nationality, but I have four children and they are all Portuguese. The other kids are Portuguese. … But yes, people associate this neighbourhood with being African because of parents, grandparents and because of our skin colour.

In the 1980s, the Quinta was an unfinished urban project occupied by African immigrants mainly employed in precarious civil construction and housework (Carmo 2017), as a result of the immigration flow that followed the formal dismantling of the empire (Machado 2009). The festival and the GAP aimed to integrate the quarter, but with the growth of the amount of graffiti, the

Figure 4.3 Composition of three photos with different works of art and perspectives of the Public Art Gallery at Quinta do Mocho. Picture 1: *Reflex of an African Beauty* (*reflexo da uma beleza africana*) by Huariu (Portuguese artist); Picture 2: *Worker Ghetto Box* by MTO (French artist) and, on the right, *Pop Art* by Jo Di Bona (French artist); Picture 3: *Untitled*, inspired by the creativity of single child, by Utopia (Brazilian artist). Image by authors, 2020.

national and international range of artists, artistic prestige and visitors, the process exceeded its initial aims. Kally underlines the emancipatory force of these achievements: 'Less with less gives more. And we have a public housing project, which is a negative thing, we have graffiti that is considered a negative thing and together they have brought this success'.

Since 2015, and thanks to the commitment of Mocho's residents and authorities, the GAP fostered mutual recognition between society and the Quinta. Kally maintains that society has changed its perspective on the Quinta and visitors were welcomed. However, the community had to resist invasive attitudes that objectified them: 'decolonization was done through those who came to see the zoo or who came to the savannah. Because the first visit, yes. We felt like we were animals on display at a zoo'. Guides and dwellers required respect for peoples and places by prohibiting taking pictures of kids and demanding previous consent in the case of adults. Women used to wear African clothes, but changed to wearing more European style clothing to avoid being the unauthorized 'objects' of invasive photos. This resilience is expressed also through the rejection of exceptionalism: 'people approach us on the street because they recognize us as the Mocho's guides and they say that Africans are one thing, but Africans at Quinta do Mocho are something else. Calm down, no, it's not like that'.

On the community perspective described by Kally, Quinta's residents used to hide their provenance in order to reduce discrimination and social judgement, for instance, when applying for jobs. It was as if they

> lack certain things, because they did not know how to fit into society or society did not know how to accept them and this [GAP] is a door for society to come to accept us and for us to also find our own place in society.

The GAP developed residents' sense of belonging and social identity that make them enjoy some recognition, placed 'on the map of society. And of course, as we have visitors, we realize that we have value after all'.

Besides a reinvigorated mutual recognition, Kally highlights the gap existing between *being seen and being heard*: 'We are important, we are seen, but we are not heard.' While communication with the municipality has improved over the years, residents still consider that their relationship is insufficient and unsuitable. For decades, residents felt 'abandoned by the municipal government. From one day to the next, the Municipality entered the neighbourhood here with music, an art festival'. The GAP would follow, and while residents cannot select artists, they are being consulted by some of them on an informal basis concerning the portrayal of artistic subjects, which is something that has increased with the growing prestige of the gallery. While in some cases dwellers have disapproved artistic choices, they generally grew a sense of ownership for their building's paintings. Kally suggests that community engagement and ownership could be strengthened if graffiti

could be maintained and an educational process would associate Quinta's children and youngsters with artists. However, the community's existing relationship with the municipality does not suggest that they would be formally supported with such an initiative, as indicated by the limited response dwellers normally receive on demands related to the infrastructure of the neighbourhood and housing.

The GAP labour relations reported by Kally further expand dwellers' counter-narratives. Guides worked as unpaid volunteers for three years, receiving tips and selling self-produced gadgets. After receiving an underpaid—less than half of national minimum salary—and flat consultant contract by the Municipality in response to their demand to professionalize their work, they initiated their own company, despite the Municipality's opposition. Kallema was funded in 2018 under the leadership of Ema (Emanuela Kalemba). Kally emphasizes: 'She is a woman, she is African, she lives in public housing, that is, everything that would not be advantageous in the first place we managed to transform into something very productive'.

The emerging voices and sight of entangled counter-narratives

The five life stories outlined above focus on vocational experiences and individual trajectories that elaborate a range of concepts, emerging from the different forms in which the decolonization of history, memory and heritage narratives are produced in Portugal. The main challenge of this work lies in the fact that these life stories are incomplete and not related by or to a general theory, but instead, they share the common goal of decolonizing the Portuguese imperial narrative by tackling heritage and cultural processes. They articulate epistemic trajectories that complement each other without levelling, thereby enunciating a comprehensive understanding of the political role of memory against the general idea that the African presence is transitional and part of a musealized past. A finer appreciation of the resulting theoretical, critical and decolonial matrix can be accomplished by analysing the existing complementarities that materialize between these counter-narratives.

The two concepts outlined by Inocência Mata—'decolonization of sight' and 'musealization of people and cultures'—crosscut all the life stories. The resilience of Mocho's dwellers against the invasive and commodifying attitudes of the visitors and institutions, served to empower Quinta's residents to resist their own 'musealization'. The struggle to have the project of the Memorial approved is carried on with activists' resilience, as expressed in their relevant achievements in the negotiations with the Municipality. As Mocho's community took ownership of the narrative about the Quinta, it enforced a political subjectivity that resonates with the political role of memory outlined by Beatriz Gomes Dias. The Memorial aims to decolonize the genealogical construction of race and undermine racism. The GAP has

an analogous scope by resignifying the relationship between the city and its African presence in one of its formerly marginalized zones. Both approaches focus on the political subjectivity of Africans and Afro-descendants, rejecting exceptionalism, and thus echoing a dismissal of the rhetoric of meritocracy, as elaborated by Mata.

The GAP counter-narrative shows that the decolonization of sight is a fundamental step—albeit insufficient in itself—to crossing the abyss of colonialism (Santos 2014). Besides becoming an 'exceptional' zone of selective African visibility, African quarters in Portugal are generally seen as peripheral zones of nonbeing (Fanon 2008), as demonstrated also by the enduring struggles for social recognition and justice by Quinta's dwellers, to affirm their own, social, cultural, economic and political subjectivity. The life stories of Rosario Severo, Isabel Castro Henriques and Mata demonstrate that deconstructing the imperial narrative, predominant in the mythscape, should entail a participatory reconstruction. Arguing against the musealization of people, Mata's activism echoes Mocho's struggle for self-realization and allows us to indicate that the next step forward is what can be defined as 'decolonization of hearing' and is necessary for the African presence to assert itself fully in the public debate.

The participatory initiatives that are to be organized in the interpretative centre associated with the Memorial and the dialogue implemented in museum's intercultural education activities have mirroring aims. The work of Henriques with the toponymy plaques of African places and the installation of busts of significant African people all contribute to a debate that is further stimulated, for instance, by African–Lisbon walking tours. These examples show that a general characteristic of counter-narratives is decolonizing the African invisibility as a first step, and to hear the African subjectivities as a second step. However, there is no chronological order among them, as sight and hearing are strictly entangled in the bottom-up perspective. This is a struggle against the idea that Africans and Afro-descendants are (permanently) in transition on Portuguese territory and that their cultures do not belong.

The political role of memory opposes the process of cultural commodification and gentrification that manipulates the 'multicultural' dynamics emerging from counter-narratives, turning them into marketable products and reinstating the lusotropical and miscegenated—however exclusionary—identity (Garrido Castellano and Raposo 2020). The different resilience strategies against this process highlight the complex interplay between the bottom-up and the top-down heritage processes. While these life stories are carriers of grassroots-based approaches in different forms, they also entail distinct approaches, such as those of social activists (Dias, Kally) and institutional professionals (Henriques, Mata and Severo). Institutional heritagization processes (public formal recognition) are envisaged by the Memorial and the GAP. It is a decolonization of sight and mind, a bottom-up process for institutional recognition. Opposite dynamics occur in the critical work carried on in academia and museums, as 'authorized' loci of enunciation

of the public narrative into society, which are attempts to decolonize the imperial narrative in the trajectory from institution to society (top-down process). These five life stories therefore complement bottom-up resilience against the objectification and musealization of people and cultures through top-down processes of decolonization. Top-down processes face very challenging negotiations to resist the imperial attempts to re-narrate the empire as a benevolent, humanist project or a historicized multicultural touristic product.

Museums are especially affected by the systemic consequences of the fact that 'every remembrance is subject to specific interests and functional uses' (Huyssen 2014, 181). African heritage is thus reproduced with uncritical and reductive selection, with research and exhibition of collections that convey the imperial perspective, as delineated by Mata. Alternatively, Severo's counter-narratives outline that in order to overcome the ethnocentrism of a museology based on AHD, and predominantly organized around ethnocentric aesthetic criteria, the collection's selection principles as well as their presentations, should focus on the symbolic, historical and cultural values that each piece possesses within their original contexts, together with the related knowledge of their creators, users and connoisseurs. This approach strongly resonates with the teaching of African history introduced by Henriques, which, in turn, paves the way for intercultural education, fundamental in the framework of a critical museology, and centred on decolonizing collection interpretations (Sancho Querol, García et al. 2020b). This is a structural contribution to a plural and inclusionary understanding of memory that can impact on the democratization of public discourse.

Dias, Henriques, Mata and Severo provide a fine-tuned counter-narrative of the relationship of cultural and heritage processes with history and memory in Portugal. Disputing the institutionalized imperial script about Africa, its presence and relevance in the public debate, they expose the imperial narrative with the need to reconsider education at various levels: school, university and in other public, open initiatives. Comparing these life stories with the one of Kally serves to stress the diachronic connection between the different counter-narratives and the political role of memory. While Dias and Severo stress the relevance of deconstructing the present (i.e., the invisibility of African heritage) starting from a decolonization of narratives on the past, Kally shows how creative processes can intervene in the opposite direction, deconstructing the past (i.e., the invisibility of the African marginalized community) by decolonizing the present (through the narrative of the GAP). Heritagization is a process in need of expanding, rather than contracting its relationship with memory, in inclusionary as opposed to exclusionary ways (Smith 2006). The academic debate goes in-between these empirical cases. The life story of Henriques details how a teaching approach to African history that is rooted in social memory and dissonance from the imperial narrative was established, as inscribed in the mainstream approach of the discipline.

From her almost half a century of experience with African history, Henriques outlines the latency needed for the change of narrative to occur. However, Portugal has also witnessed a recent reinstatement of the imperial narrative by mainstream political leaders and emerging extremist nationalist forces, which strongly reaffirms the negation of the genealogy and ontology of racism in the country. These attempts to buttress the imperial narrative reinforce the 'musealization of the absence of Africa' and further extend the latency of decolonization. Arguing against this, the chapter shows that the imperial narrative in Portugal is increasingly being challenged during times of confrontation marked by the unprecedented articulation of decolonial counter-narratives; it is an unparalleled—however challenging—occasion to deconstruct the colonial mind and racist politics at one time.

Notes

1 This work forms part of the ECHOES project which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 770248. The authors are listed alphabetically.
2 The life stories videos are available at https://www.ces.uc.pt/echoes-wp4/lifestories. The interviews were collected in Portuguese, transcribed by Ricardo Almeida and translated by Mark Carpenter. Any other translations were made by the authors.
3 Interview of Beatriz Gomes Dias by Cristiano Gianolla, Giuseppina Raggi and Márcia Chuva, Lisbon, 11 January 2020, see note 2 above for the link to the life story video.
4 More information about the contest is available at "Memorial de Homenagem às Pessoas Escravizadas—Lisboa." *Djass-Associação de Afrodescendentes*. Accessed 25 February 2021. https://www.memorialescravatura.com/.
5 Interview of Isabel Castro Henriques by Cristiano Gianolla, Giuseppina Raggi and Márcia Chuva, Lisbon, 21 January 2020, see note 2 above for the link to the life story video.
6 Interview of Inocência Mata by Cristiano Gianolla, Giuseppina Raggi and Márcia Chuva, Lisbon, 14 January 2020, see note 2 above for the link to the life story video.
7 Interview of Rosário Severo by Cristiano Gianolla, Giuseppina Raggi and Márcia Chuva, Lisbon, 10 January 2020, see note 2 above for the link to the life story video.
8 Interview of Kally Meru by Cristiano Gianolla, Giuseppina Raggi and Márcia Chuva, Lisbon, 10 January 2020, see note 2 above for the link to the life story video. As explained by the interviewee, Kally Meru is a nickname inspired by the Italian cartoon *Calimero*. While we use the surname to refer to other interviewees in the text, in this case the first part of the nickname was preferred to the second part because it reflects the preference of the interviewee who affirmed: 'I'm better known as Kally', and it is the form used in published texts and in society.

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Chapter 5

Decolonizing Warsaw

The multiple afterlives of 'Ali'[1]

Łukasz Bukowiecki

'Ali' (hereafter Ali) was the codename of August Agboola Browne, also known by alternate spellings of his first, middle and even last names. Since the early 2010s, in both Poland and beyond, Browne has become one of the most recognized resistance soldiers fighting in Warsaw against the German Nazis during the Second World War, even though historical sources attesting to his involvement in the Polish Home Army are scarce and sometimes mutually contradictory. Browne's life story and visual representations have been revealed and reframed in recent years through scholarly communication, media coverage, cultural production, commemorative events and memory activism. Why has the case of Ali garnered such widespread attention? The simplest, and often repeated, answer is that it is due to his Nigerian descent. Ali is believed to have been the only black combatant in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, the 63-day long resistance operation to liberate Warsaw from German Nazi occupation. However, when this apparently straightforward explanation is examined further, it seems to provoke more confusion than understanding. Clearly, a more critical and reflective approach is called for in this case. Accordingly, the principal objectives of this chapter are firstly to identify the main social actors reanimating the long-dead Ali in contemporary Warsaw; secondly, to analyse the most important functions this rediscovered historical figure is being employed for; and, finally, to discuss the ways the figure of Ali could potentially regain its own positionality in this haunted performance.

While the point of departure for this chapter is what happened with the images of Ali alongside their associated stories and values during the 75th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising in 2019, it also traces their earlier circulation and evolution in the city through the creative practices of artists and scholars, NGO projects and activities undertaken by several Warsaw museums. After decades of being silenced, the spectre of Ali keeps reappearing in various representations, and, as such, he haunts the Polish public sphere. To account for his intermediate status between (unsuccessful) oblivion and (elusive) hyper-visualization, this chapter relies on the notions of repression and re-emergence as modalities of managing and practising colonial heritage, as proposed by Casper Andersen, Britta Timm Knudsen

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-7

and Christoffer Kølvraa (2019) within their larger contribution to the decolonial paradigm (Knudsen and Andersen 2019). According to Kølvraa (2019a, 2019b), 'the concept of repression simultaneously connotes the forceful rejection of a past experience, and its "return" or lingering existence despite this effort', while re-emergence is 'the modality through which we seek to capture those practices carrying the promise of entangling the colonial past with the hope of better futures, yet in a state of becoming'. As Knudsen (2019) argues, re-emergence may express itself 'through hauntings/spectrality—staged or just unveiled—that give rise to activism and responsibility often afforded by affects, moods and atmospheres'. Re-emergence allows for 'the creation of old/new assemblages having the capacity to open up pluriverse epistemologies, entangled materialities and communal efforts that avoid the trap of identity politics' (Knudsen 2019). In the case of Ali, the potential of re-emergence may be identified not only in an increasing presence of his material representations in Warsaw's cityscape, reproduced socially and in a sense sacralized, but also in the social energy that this process involves and evokes.

The chapter chiefly draws on two sources. The first of these are the findings of research conducted collectively at the Museum of Warsaw (ECHOES 2018) as part of the Horizon 2020 ECHOES project. Between 2015 and 2017, the museum purchased two out of a series of visually striking portraits of Ali painted by Polish visual artist Karol Radziszewski (b. 1980). These portraits were then exhibited, one after another, in the museum's core exhibition *The Things of Warsaw*, opened to the public in two separate phases in 2017 and 2018 (see Bukowiecki 2019). The assumptions, narrative and impact of this exhibition were learnt from a close ethnographical reading of the exhibition, individual interviews with its curators (see Bukowiecki and Wawrzyniak 2019) and focus group interviews with three groups of visitors (see Głowacka-Grajper 2020).

The other main source was the results of complementary research on Ali's recent career in Polish public discourse, the activities of other Warsaw museums in this regard, and the assumptions and results of memory activism that have arisen around the issue of establishing a monument to commemorate Ali in Warsaw's urban public space. The latter process was initiated in January 2018 by an NGO called the Wolność i Pokój (Freedom and Peace) Foundation and developed in cooperation with the Warsaw city authorities. This joint initiative resulted in the erection of a commemorative monolith to Ali in Stefan 'Wiech' Wiechecki Passage in the very centre of Warsaw on 2 August 2019, just one day after the official celebration of the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising. The parts of the chapter that draw on these complementary sources are based mainly on existing data, such as an exhibition catalogue (MSN 2017), a press interview with an artist (Dubrowska 2017), or a video recording from the monument's unveiling ceremony (FPF 2019). However, the chapter also relies on the author's correspondence with a Warsaw Rising Museum's (MPW) spokesperson and an interview with Dr.

Dariusz Zalewski, who initiated memory activism resulting in the creation of the Ali memorial.

The reader should note that the biography of Browne himself, his family and their descendants presented in this chapter relies on already published scholarly and journal articles (Boston 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; Karpieszuk 2011; Osiński 2010). In this regard, the chapter neither reveals new information about Browne derived from primary sources nor does it discuss contradictions one may notice in them; this has recently been initiated by the American sociologist and media scholar Nicholas Boston (2020d). At the same time, Boston's other works (2018, 2021) provide further analysis of the (mis)articulations at the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender/sexuality that may present a challenge to the way Ali has been represented in media discourses and visual culture.

A newcomer who comes back

Browne was born in 1895 in Lagos to Nigerian parents. After some time spent in the UK and the Free City of Danzig, he moved to Poland in 1922, where he lived for more than 30 years, working mostly as a jazz musician. Before the Second World War, he married a Polish woman who gave birth to their two sons in the late 1920s, though the couple probably separated soon afterwards. His (ex-)wife and children escaped German-occupied Poland in the autumn of 1939, but he is believed to have taken part in the defence of Warsaw in 1939 as a volunteer soldier and later, under the codename of Ali, as a combatant in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. He survived the war and decided to stay in communist Poland. He married another Polish woman in 1952 or 1953, and in 1956 they immigrated together to France and then to the United Kingdom, where their daughter was born in 1959. After Browne left Poland, he was almost totally forgotten in Warsaw's public memory for many decades. He died in London in 1976, but it was only a few years ago that his grave was found by right-wing Polish activists devoted to the renovation of the tombs of Polish soldiers buried in the UK (E.J. 2017).

Ali's posthumous return to Poland and Warsaw, in particular, started in 2009. When Dr. Zbigniew Osiński from the MPW was undertaking research for a biographical lexicon of the uprising insurgents (MPW n.d.), he came across Browne's application card for the Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (Karpieszuk 2011), a Polish state-led monopolistic union of veterans and victims of the Second World War (see Wawrzyniak 2015). The document, in which Ali described his involvement in the Warsaw Uprising, was dated 1949, the year when the Union was formed but also the year when the fiercest Stalinist repressions directed at the former soldiers of the Home Army began in Poland. This coincidence convinced Osiński that Browne's self-description on the Union application form was historically reliable. As he argued in an article titled 'Szeregowiec Ali' [Private Ali] published in 2011 in the leading Polish newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 'in 1949, those who claimed

they took part in the Uprising could not have expected any benefits. Just the opposite' (Karpieszuk 2011, 9).

Motivated by this accidental archival find, Osiński continued his investigation, looking for other traces of Warsaw's long-forgotten Afro-diasporic combatant. Osiński disseminated the results of his research in a short article (2010) that appeared in an edited volume devoted to the history of the African diaspora in Warsaw. The volume was published by the Afryka Inaczej [Africa another way] Foundation, an NGO established in Warsaw by Mamadou Diouf, a musician, journalist and social activist of Senegalese descent living in Poland since the early 1980s. Interestingly, Diouf, the volume's co-editor, returned to the subject of Ali's involvement in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising by releasing his own song 'Agbola#44' in November 2020 (Diouf 2020).

Since the publication of Osiński's article, the story of the 'Warsaw insurgent from Nigeria' has been enthusiastically covered by countless broadsheets and tabloids of various political persuasions with a local or national readership. Regrettably, these articles all share a neo-colonial oppressive language degrading Ali to the status of merely another bizarre 'object' found in the cabinet of curiosities ('a sensation', 'a revelation'). Even now, more than ten years since the initial 'discovery', samples of such exoticizing approaches may be found in the press. For instance, in an article in *Polska: The Times* newspaper (Strzyga 2019), Ali is described as 'the most exotic Warsaw insurgent' whose 'colourful fate is still waiting for an thorough presentation'. 'Colourful fate', an idiom used to express the idea of a rich, interesting life—even when stripped of its potentially racist meaning—still sounds awkward, as a tool to transform Browne's life story into an Orientalized adventure attractive to readers.

Ali depicted and displayed

Osiński's academic article, as well as early media coverage of the topic, inspired Warsaw-based visual artist Karol Radziszewski to include an image of Ali in a mural depicting Warsaw insurgents that was commissioned in 2009 by the MPW (Dubrowska 2017). Ultimately, this project was rejected and therefore never implemented, but Radziszewski reused the concept in his other works. In 2016, he presented a series of paintings called *Ali* (Radziszewski n.d.) at the BWA Warszawa Gallery (the BWA). These consisted of various imaginary, non-realistic portraits of Browne. Instead of contemporary acts of performance such as murals, Radziszewski chose the traditional form of oil painting and a Picassoesque style of expression, in order to rewrite history by suggesting to audiences that representations of Ali should have been familiar to them for years. As Radziszewski explained,

> I used the traditional medium of painting because this is my subversive strategy of rewriting history … When you see paintings on canvas, it

> seems to you that they have always existed in Polish history. They are associated with Picasso, with the 1940s and 1950s. People remember something, but they don't know exactly where they have seen it. After three years they no longer remember which year [the paintings] came from, and after five years it seems to them that these paintings had been created a long time ago. Because they should have been created then. This is a rewriting backwards [of history].
>
> (Dubrowska 2017)

Such a strategy may be identified as a retroactive re-emergence, as Radziszewski intended to work on 'a lost opportunity from the past that returns to offer itself for creating alternative futures' (Knudsen 2019) by creating imaginary versions of (art) history through interventions into technique and style. For Radziszewski, it was important to create an intense symbol that could intervene from a minority and migrant perspective in order to rewrite the official history of a 'completely white, Catholic, homogenous' Polish society (Dubrowska 2017). Therefore, in several of his representations of Browne, Radziszewski created a link between Polish political symbolism of the Second World War and a consciously applied postcolonial perspective, re-using Picasso's manner of viewing Africa, as Picasso was for him 'the first to in some sense appropriate African art, while also introducing it into the art mainstream' (Dubrowska 2017).

Aside from such 'classical' oil paintings, Radziszewski also marked the occasion of the BWA exhibition by executing a charcoal sketch of a fantastical half-man, half-fish he called *Syren* on one of the gallery's walls, thereby repeating, and rewriting, a gesture Pablo Picasso had made during his visit to Warsaw in 1948 on his way back from Wrocław, where he took part in the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace. At that time, Picasso sketched in charcoal the Warsaw mermaid (known as *Syrena*, the feminine form of *Syren*, which is a masculine neologism) on a wall in a private apartment located in one of the then newly erected block of flats. This half-woman, half-fish is depicted on the city's coat of arms and, according to local folk tales, she lived (or lives) in the River Vistula, from where she took (takes) care of the city (see Wrońska and Rasmus-Zgorzelska 2020).

Picasso's mermaid brandished a hammer instead of her original heraldic sword to underline that when a war is over, a period of peace needs new heroes: in this case, workers instead of soldiers, which was particularly true for a communist state fiercely committed to restoring the city from its wartime ruin and to 'the Fight for Peace'. Radziszewski's *Syren* modifies the well-established image of the Warsaw mermaid and its Picassian embodiment: the head of a fictional white woman is replaced by the head of a historical black man—Ali, who happened to be a soldier. The figure has gained the face of a famous insurgent, but has retained his non-military attribute, still holding a hammer in his hand, though in this case the tool symbolizes a postulated 'reconstruction of dialogue' (Dubrowska 2017).

In March 2017, the *Syren* was one of the artworks exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (the MSN) at a temporary exhibition titled *Syrena herbem twym zwodnicza* (The beguiling siren is the crest) that inaugurated the museum's new location on the banks of the River Vistula (MSN 2017). By taking an expansive, multitasking approach, this exhibition sought to literally bring the museum closer to (becoming) the mermaid's home, while also entering into a dialogue with Warsaw's local identity symbol and discussing global struggles with hybridity and awkwardness that have been using the images of mermaids in the modern and contemporary visual arts. This was also a significant development in the revival of Ali's visibility, for it was the first time that his image had been publicly presented in Warsaw's urban space outside museums and galleries. The exhibition was advertised by a large-scale mural painted next to Warsaw's central Metro underground station, which depicted, among other works, Picasso's mermaid and Radziszewski's *Syren* (see Figure 5.1).

The captions accompanying both reproductions provided explicit explanations of the direction of inspirations between these two artists and confirmed the presence of the Ali's face on the sketch of *Syren*. Eight years after Osiński had started research on Ali at the MPW and the same number of years after the project that included Radziszewski's mural featuring an image of Ali had been rejected by the same museum, Ali became visible in the cityscape for the very first time in his afterlife.

Ali at the museum

A single entry in the online lexicon of insurgents available on the MPW website still remains one of the main secondary sources on Browne (MPW n.d.). However, the museum has neither incorporated Browne's life story nor any image of him into the narrative of its permanent exhibition. The exhibition's content has not been updated since its opening in 2004, five years before Ali re-emerged in Warsaw's urban memory. The MPW exhibition, frequented by more than half a million visitors per year and considered the most popular representation of the 1944 Uprising in the Polish public history sector, remains therefore silent about Browne's life story.

The first institution, and the only one so far, that has referred to Ali in its permanent exhibition and included Radziszewski's representations of him is the Museum of Warsaw. Two of Radziszewski's paintings from the *Ali* series were purchased by the museum in 2015 and 2017: one depicting a young black man with a bare chest against a white and red background resembling the Polish national flag (see Figure 5.2) and another showing a young black man dressed in a Polish insurgent army uniform (see Figure 5.3).

The acquisition of these portraits provoked a dialogue between the aims of Radziszewski's own memory activism and the curatorial strategy developed at that time at the museum. It took place when the Museum of Warsaw was employing a comprehensive, multilayered transformation that resulted

Figure 5.1 Pablo Picasso's Warsaw mermaid and Karol Radziszewski's *Syren*, reproductions next to Warsaw's central Metro underground station, as part of a large-scale mural advertisement of the *Syrena herbem twym zwodnicza* (*The beguiling siren is the crest*) exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, March 2017.

Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

from the implementation of the concept of *Things of Warsaw* as a tool for the reassessment of the rich museum collections (ca. 300,000 objects) and a framework for designing a new core exhibition, purposefully devoted to 'extraordinary stories of ordinary things' (see Bukowiecki 2019, 19). The *Things of Warsaw* exhibition is divided into 21 separately designed thematic rooms that contain more than 7,000 original historical objects of various value, material and function. All of them come from the museum's collections and are displayed as material remnants, silent witnesses to and important participants in the city's multi-threaded past (MW 2018; Trybuś 2017).

In May 2017, the first eight thematic rooms of the exhibition were opened to the public, including the Room of Portraits, co-curated by Paweł Ignaczak and Magdalena Wróblewska. As the exhibition catalogue explains, the portraits presented there 'show Varsovians—by birth or by choice—who played a significant role in the city's history', representing 'four essential groups of images in the Museum collection: members of the authorities, servicemen, representatives of different professions and the intelligentsia, as well as women' (Ignaczak and Wróblewska 2017, 55). One of the highlights of this room—and the only new acquisition displayed there—was the aforementioned Radziszewski's cubist painting of a bare-chested Ali. It was hung centrally and surrounded by representations of other fighters from the

Figure 5.2 Karol Radziszewski's 2015 portrait depicting a bare-chested August Agboola Browne, code-named Ali, participant of the Warsaw Uprising, displayed in the Room of Portraits at the Museum of Warsaw between May 2017 and July 2019.

Courtesy of Ewelina Lach, 2017.

city's history, white men from various historical epochs solemnly dressed in uniform. In August 2019, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising, Browne's (half-)naked portrait was replaced by the other one from the series acquired by the museum. In the second painting, Ali is wearing a uniform much like the other men whose portraits hang on the wall.

Members of the museum's curatorial team shared various opinions on the meaning of displaying these two portraits of Ali. On the one hand, as hinted by some curators, the bare-chested Ali provoked a genuinely decolonial and masculinity-critical viewpoint by deconstructing the military roles of the other men in uniforms presented in the Room of Portraits. Various contrasts strengthened this impression: Ali's nakedness and sexuality was in conflict with the repressed bodies in tight clothes that surrounded him, his blackness—with the whiteness of the other depicted soldiers and the bright white-and-red colours of the Polish flag behind him—with the dark or grey backgrounds of other portraits. On the other hand, some curators saw this setting as reproducing, rather than reversing, colonial and racist images. Without a uniform, Ali was stripped of his dignity and this problem could only have been redressed by literally re-dressing his portrait.

The case of Ali's portraits at the Museum of Warsaw shows how the thoughtful purchase of contemporary artworks for the museum's collections could change the way an exhibition tells stories about the city's difficult pasts,

Figure 5.3 Karol Radziszewski's 2017 uniformed portrait of Ali, displayed since 1 August 2019 in the Room of Portraits at the Museum of Warsaw.

Photo by author.

by using new perspectives proposed by an artist, subsequently supplemented and altered by museum curators. Radziszewski's portraits of Ali—so seemingly different from other paintings displayed in the Room of Portraits and therefore likely to attract visitors' gazes—helped the museum propose a clever counterbalance to the recently emerging Polish nationalistic narrative on the memory of the Warsaw Uprising, to critically engage with the collection of portraits stored in the museum and, last but not least, to uncover hidden entanglements between the city's wartime past and the (post)colonial imaginary. At the same time, both paintings evoked a pluriversity of interpretations among the museum's visitors. For many, Ali has become a symbol of Polish patriotism quite conventionally related to a narrative of national victimhood, albeit widened to accommodate a Polish–Nigerian migrant. For others, his representation next to portraits of servicemen from the museum collections questions the well-established patterns of collective memory of a white and homogenous Polish society and challenges its military idioms.

Ali in the city

When Radziszewski was implementing his artistic visions in cooperation with consecutive Warsaw museums and galleries, both the city authorities and official representatives of the 1944 insurgents remained silent about Ali.

Only the Freedom and Peace Foundation, an NGO that was established in 2010 but shared a name, values and its membership with the activist anti-communist Freedom and Peace Movement from the 1980s, encouraged the Warsaw City Hall to erect a permanent memorial to Ali in the city's public space. This bottom-up initiative funded by individual donors and supported by the media (Kozubal 2018a, 2018b, 2019) involved consultations with many institutions, both local and national, including the district and municipal administration, the MPW, the Warsaw Historical Monuments Conservation Office and Poland's Institute of National Remembrance.

Ali's monument was one of the biggest initiatives undertaken by the Freedom and Peace Foundation in recent years. Why did they choose Ali as a hero of their memory activism? Dariusz Zalewski, sociologist and activist from the Foundation who initiated this process and authored the inscription placed on the memorial, explains that the idea to honour Browne in Warsaw came to him by accident, or as coincidence, in November 2017, when, on the one hand, the spokesperson of Młodzież Wszechpolska (All-Polish Youth), far-right ultranationalist Polish youth organization, claimed that a black man cannot be a Pole, while, on the other, the activists of a radical right-wing portal *Idź pod prąd* (Go against the tide) found and cleaned the gravestone of Browne in London's Hampstead Cemetery.

Only in December 2017 did Zalewski meet Zbigniew Osiński from the MPW and ask his director for a letter of recommendation for the idea of memorializing Ali in Warsaw's public space, so as to start initial talks on that topic with the Warsaw city authorities in January 2018. Although both the museum director and all the policymakers and city hall officers were much in favour of the concept, it took more than a year and a half to implement it, mostly due to discussions on the form and place of the commemoration, as well as a miscommunication between the City Hall offices.

The project evolved from the idea of a commemorative plaque near the Aquarium jazz club on Herbert Hoover Square in a historical area of the city (to mark that Ali was a jazz musician in his civilian life) into a free-standing stone monolith with inscriptions placed at the intersection of Stefan 'Wiech' Wiechecki Passage and Chmielna Street; two important pedestrian shopping streets in the contemporary city centre, but also close to the operational location of the 'Iwo' Battalion in which Browne is believed to have been serving during the Warsaw Uprising. The final design of the memorial and its execution was commissioned by the Foundation, with the approval of the city authorities. The monument was unveiled during an official ceremony that took place with the participation of local policy makers and former Warsaw insurgents on 2 August 2019, just one day after the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of the uprising.

Once completed, the monolith was claimed by members of Warsaw's African diaspora as their own site of memory, too. On 1 August 2020, the Nigerian–Polish community organized a celebration of the 76th anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising at the monument in order to

commemorate Browne's involvement in the Polish resistance during the Second World War. A few hours later at the same spot, artist and activist Mamadou Diouf performed on djembe and gave a speech on Ali's legacy as part of a commemorative event hosted by the Freedom and Peace Foundation (FPF 2020). In turn, photos depicting Ali's Warsaw memorial feature in a video clip accompanying Diouf's song 'Agbola#44' published on the artist's YouTube page (Diouf 2020).

In terms of form, the monument differs from Radziszewski's portraits in almost every respect (Figure 5.4). Its front features a handmade engraving of a photograph of Browne in his forties or fifties by a sculptor and engraver Lucjan Trzebiatowski. Far from being uniformed or bare-chested, he is dressed in a civilian evening suit, white shirt and bow tie, producing an image that, according to Zalewski, fits the story of the lifestyle and personality of Browne, known for his elegance and charm. Instead of the symbolic visual shortcut characteristic of Radziszewski's artworks, the memorial provides a bilingual Polish–English description: 'In honor of Augustine Agboola Browne, nom de guerre Ali, a jazz musician and participant in the Warsaw uprising of African origin. Poland was the country he chose to live in'. Finally, while Radziszewski's portraits are conspicuous by their size, provocative in form and strong in message, the commemorative monolith seems to be humble, restrained and unobtrusive—almost invisible to those who do not know it stands there. The monument's modest size makes it hard to believe how many people involved in its creation were mentioned in the official speeches accompanying its unveiling, a ceremony attended by prominent figures such as the Mayor of Warsaw, Rafał Trzaskowski.

Despite essential differences in the ways Browne is depicted in the portraits purchased by the museum and on the memorial in the street, the values derived from his life story are in both cases practically the same. During his speech, Trzaskowski claimed:

> Warsaw has always been open and tolerant. Many interesting people have come here—and it is the same today. Today, Warsaw is just as open to everyone who wants to live in Warsaw; it is an open and tolerant city—and August Browne is a symbol of this…. I am very glad that in the name of tolerance and recognition of everyone who stands shoulder to shoulder with Poles, with Warsaw residents, in the fight for freedom, for someone who deserves to be remembered and deserves our warm thoughts, … today we can unveil this stone, unveil this little obelisk, symbolic in a sense. Let it become a symbol of an open, tolerant, smiling Warsaw. This is how it always has been, this is how it was in the interwar period, and this is how it is today and let it always be so.
>
> (FPF 2019)

Surprisingly, given that the message was so consistent, or at least complementary, to the one that had been proposed by Radziszewski and promoted by

Figure 5.4 The commemorative monolith of August Agboola Browne at the intersection of Stefan 'Wiech' Wiechecki Passage and Chmielna Street, Warsaw.

Photo by Adrian Grycuk, 2019. Image source: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Agbola_O%E2%80%99Brown#/media/Plik:Upami%C4%99tnienie_August_Agbola_Browne_w_Warszawie.jpg (CC BY-SA 3.0 pl).

the Museum of Warsaw, there was not a single word at the ceremony that at the very same time the bare-chested Ali was being replaced by the uniformed one at the museum's core exhibition.

Conclusions: what is Ali used for?

It seems that the figure of Ali functions separately in the fields of historical research (for which the MPW is responsible), artistic expression (Radziszewski's artworks presented permanently at the Museum of Warsaw and temporarily at the BWA and the MSN) and public remembrance (an NGO initiative supported by the city authorities). The multiple afterlives of Ali run in parallel to each other and differ from one another in terms of the means of expressions and stakeholders involved, but in the final reckoning they are structurally similar to each other. Ali is a role model of everything a citizen or a hero can be, whether he is regarded as a 'Varsovian by choice' or a foreigner who found his new home in Warsaw, and at a time of great trial,

was ready to sacrifice himself for his second homeland and hometown. His life story is used for retroactive wishful thinking on the culturally diverse open-minded Warsaw of the past. Such thinking is directed against today's forms of racism and primordialism in the Polish social imaginary and, therefore, may promote tolerance and hospitality in the society of the future. However, such an approach also carries the risk of fuelling Polish complacency and repression of the past (and present) intolerance towards and violence against minorities and migrants. Ali has become a strong, affirmative symbol that, however, demands very little indeed by way of both the audience reaction and interpretation. So little is known about Browne himself and his life choices, that it allows readers of his image to fill it with their own beliefs, hopes and values. As Boston noticed, Browne's 'war service is honoured by conservatives and progressives alike to symbolise the Poland of today' (2020c). Unfortunately, this process sometimes gives rise to binary thinking and oppressive wording, despite the efforts of artists, curators and memory activists to present Ali as 'not only a proud symbol of Poland's past, but [also] a promising model for its present and future' (Boston 2020b).

Multiple images and stories of Ali are used as a tool for decolonizing the collective memory in Warsaw, by decentring the well-established historical narratives or canons of representation, and lending visibility to once invisible minorities. Such decentring of critical endeavours is the first step towards a more decolonial future. To decolonize Ali himself we need to stop treating his spectres as objects and should allow them to have their own subjectivity, so as to let them speak with their own voices. Including Browne in the national regimes of collective memory should denormalize and change them, rather than hypervisualize him or compartmentalize him in a section of historical curiosities. The first step to achieving this would be to introduce a more critical attitude to assess Browne's unique life story. The revival of an image of insurgent Ali provokes, on the one hand, the question of whether and, if so, how foreigners have to prove their heroism and dedication to their second homeland in order to become fully acknowledged members of the community. On the other hand, Ali as a subject takes his investigators on a journey to uncharted territories, where any categories used to describe his life story might at once lead the way and be misleading. Ali's spectres come back to remind us that (pre-war) Poland happened to be 'the country he chose to live in' once, but also that for some reason (post-war communist) Poland was the country he decided to leave.

Note

1 This work forms part of the ECHOES project, which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 770248.
All translations from Polish are my own unless otherwise noted.

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Part II

Contemporary heritage practices: new agents, urban space events and intercultural encounters

Museums and curatorship

Chapter 6

Curating colonial heritage in Amsterdam, Warsaw and Shanghai's museums

No single road to decolonization[1]

Csilla E. Ariese, Laura Pozzi and Joanna Wawrzyniak

Following the first wave of decolonization as part of the discourse of the New Museology[2] movement (Karp and Lavine 1991), the late 2010s have given momentum to the global debate on decolonization in museums. This momentum has been influenced by multiple factors: the ever-more active and social role of museums thanks to the increased participation of diverse (non-) staff (Ariese-Vandemeulebroucke 2018; Golding and Modest 2013; Simon 2010); the debate on object repatriation reignited in 2018 by the Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy report (Sarr and Savoy 2018); and the increasingly vocal demands to deal with racism and violence as colonial legacies during the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. Not only heritage practitioners but also governments, communities, activists, and artists are grappling with contested heritage in museums (Message 2015). While much critical heritage discourse concentrates on the very institution of the museum with both its colonial roots[3] and its future as a site of decolonial contestation, this chapter argues that it is necessary to look comparatively at the development of decolonial narratives in various parts of the world to better understand the dynamics of present changes.

It is oft-stated that decolonization is denormalization. Thus, decolonization involves the destabilization of reigning perceptions and established narratives of colonial pasts and legacies. Regardless of the degree of decolonization, it also means shifting authority. In the process of destabilizing the existing status quo, both support for and resistance to decolonizing processes is to be expected. However, it is not the same canon that is destabilized everywhere. Our overarching question therefore explores how the global decolonization movement, influenced by historical and cultural particularities, results in divergent discourses and practices on the city level. How is destabilization through decolonization encouraged, supported, or resisted in urban centres and, specifically, their museums?

By focusing on three cities in three very different cultural and geographical regions—Amsterdam, Warsaw, and Shanghai—this chapter explores the specificities of narratives and agents of decolonization in their museum spaces.[4] Amsterdam provides an example of Western European situatedness as a former global colonial power and as somewhat of a 'trendsetter' in terms

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-9

of contemporary critical heritage discourse. Warsaw represents the in-between situation of an East-Central European city that was implicated in overseas colonization but without any direct involvement in the conquest of land. Shanghai, meanwhile, exemplifies remnants and representations of European colonialism in Asia as well as Chinese ambiguities of dealing with this legacy today. Both Warsaw and Shanghai add a complexity to what colonization can mean beyond 'overseas colonization'. Warsaw was at once a victim of the imperial ambitions of Prussia and Russia as well as home to an elite that aspired to the colonization of what is today Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania. Shanghai, in turn, was controlled by European colonizers who settled in several enclaves, yet China has also worked to influence and annex areas outside of its borders.

These differences notwithstanding, each city abounds in museums, Amsterdam over the longer term and Shanghai and Warsaw thanks to recent museum booms. Our analysis shows how museums influence decolonization processes in these cities, taking city, ethnographic, and art museums as examples. Differences include, for instance, the degree of agency of (ethnographic) museums, the extent to which racism is related to colonization, and how self-reflective the process of decolonization is able to be. Moreover, the case of Shanghai shows that 'decolonization' does not necessarily equal 'critical' discourse. Ultimately, the comparative focus adopted here helps to identify factors that escape analysis of single cases.

Amsterdam: colonizer in the past, decolonizer in the present?

The city of Amsterdam, through its historical role in both the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the Dutch West India Company (WIC), was directly involved in the global colonial system. In various overseas areas including South Africa, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Suriname, and islands in the Caribbean, these two companies were active colonial agents. They were trading companies that exploited humans and natural resources and served under mandates of city officials and the Dutch Republic. Under these mandates, the VOC and WIC engaged in colonial activities such as the possession of land, the construction of cities, towns, and trading posts, and the enforcement of their laws and rules. Atrocities such as genocide, the trade in enslaved persons, the sexual exploitation of women and girls, and physical violence were committed, in many cases 'legally' (see, e.g., Kemasang 1985; Schnurmann 2003; Thomson 1994; van Rossum et al. 2020; Worden and Groenewald 2005). Alternatingly alongside or in conflict with the British, French, Portuguese, and Spanish—as well as the Belgians, Danes, Germans, Italians, and Swedes—the Dutch were part of a systematic European endeavour of overseas colonization.

Today the city of Amsterdam has a population of just over 850,000 that encompassed 174 nationalities in 2019 (OIS Amsterdam 2019, 55). This

population is very diverse, with 32 per cent having been born abroad and a further 22 per cent born in the Netherlands but who had at least one foreign-born parent (56). Significant Surinamese and Antillean communities, for instance, still reflect direct colonial ties.

Amsterdam by and large perceives itself to have been an overseas colonizer in the (distant) past. In line with this general self-perception, what does it then mean to decolonize in this city and its museums? For the city as a whole, recent years have witnessed a focus on public spaces and their visible or 'audible' colonial histories, particularly with respect to monuments and place names. Efforts have been made to increase the visibility of traces of the past already present in the city. The research project *Mapping Slavery* and the resulting publication *Amsterdam Slavery Heritage Guide* (Hondius et al. 2014), for instance, set out to highlight tangible heritages, mainly related to slavery, that are visible in Amsterdam's urban spaces in the form of gable decorations, statues, and buildings. Other initiatives have sought to replace certain histories with others, exemplified by the municipality's decision in 2019 to rename a series of streets in the IJburg neighbourhood. Previously named for 'heroes' (all male) of a 1573 naval battle, in future the streets will be named after persons (male and female) who fought against Dutch colonial oppression in the (former) colonies. A third aspect has involved shifting the narrative, for instance, by re-labelling the statues of 'colonial heroes' as 'colonial oppressors'. This debate was boosted anew in the wake of the Dutch Black Lives Matter protests that took place in mid-2020 and resulted in the vandalism of colonial statues and buildings, including the Tropenmuseum, that were in turn followed by vandalism targeting anti-colonial statues (which were defaced by the letters WLM for 'White Lives Matter'). In response, the municipality called for new research to map monuments, buildings, and place names with colonial ties, while curators, historians, and activists engaged in debates in the newspapers over whether statues should be removed, re-labelled, changed, or destroyed (e.g., Dijksterhuis 2020).

In terms of decolonizing Amsterdam's museums, the initiative was taken by the city's ethnographic museum, the Tropenmuseum. As an institution that once carried the term 'colonial' in its name and whose collections were partially amassed as a result of the 1883 Colonial Exhibition (van Dijk 1992), it is perhaps little wonder that the self-reflective act of decolonizing the museum was spearheaded here (van Brakel and Legene 2008; van Duuren 1990). This is comparable to the global museological trend of decolonization in which ethnographic museums have been held accountable for their colonial collections (Kreps 2011; Peers and Brown 2003). By now, many ethnographic museums have been involved in the repatriation of objects, engagement with source communities and stakeholders, or have renamed themselves. The Tropenmuseum has worked on decolonization for decades by adding critical, self-reflective labels indicating the sources of the collections, exhibiting slavery, pairing ethnographic objects with the work of contemporary artists, and sharing the institution's authority through research

and artist residencies. The institution has actively sought out destabilization, although this has neither been an easy process internally, nor always embraced externally.

Not all of Amsterdam's museums have been equally involved, however. Part of the issue has been the assumption that non-ethnographic collections do not contain colonial objects. Thus, although the Amsterdam Museum has objects collected from colonies or gained through colonial profits and although it discusses the colonial history of the city in its exhibitions, when asked some staff members did not construe it as 'a colonial institution' (e.g., interviews AM_S12; AM_S22; AM_S24; AM_S27). On the other hand, one staff member did consider that 'everything that has to do with the city is that [: colonial], so the museum is a part of that' (interview AM_S26, my translation). Clearly, museum staff members are divided in what they consider 'colonial' and/or what needs decolonizing; their differences reveal where they draw the line for acceptable destabilization. The 2020 advisory report on *Colonial Collections and Acknowledgement of Injustice*, which was supported by, among others, the Tropenmuseum and Rijksmuseum, will possibly allow for wider identification of colonial collections and their repatriation (Gonçalves-Ho Kang You et al. 2020). A second obstacle has been the argument that certain types of objects—for example, of the colonized—are missing or were never preserved, thus making it challenging to represent non-normative histories in traditional museological ways. However, the 2020 exhibition *In the Presence of Absence* (Stedelijk Museum) innovatively selected artworks to 'challenge the idea of collective knowledge and public consciousness through stories that remain unseen, have been ignored'.[5] In so doing, it provided additional arguments to weaken this second obstacle to decolonization.

The still-dominant perceptions of Amsterdam as a historic colonizer resist denormalization primarily through three disconnections that might otherwise lead to destabilizing actions. First, it creates an artificially wide rift between the past and the present, effectively detaching present-day situations from their historical foundations. This has the effect of freezing even relatively recent events such as the Indonesian Independence War (1945–1949) into a distant past, thereby making it difficult to claim that the colonial 'past' is relevant. Second, it represses the fact that the Kingdom of the Netherlands still has overseas territories in the Caribbean today under two political structures: constituent countries (Aruba, Curaçao, and St. Maarten) and special municipalities (Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius). Furthermore, the Netherlands still maintains unique relationships and ties—financial, political, educational, trade, and infrastructural among them—to former colonies such as South Africa, Indonesia, and Suriname. Some of these relatively newly independent states are also actively seeking reparations or legal resolutions to colonial injustices, some of which were committed during the twentieth century (van den Herik 2012). Third, it tends to disregard the existence of modern structures of systematic oppression that have their roots in

colonialism, such as modern slavery (e.g., in sweatshops); the exploitation of natural resources abroad, leaving local populations to deal with the damages; or tourism, which has been termed 'neo-colonialism' in the Caribbean. Many of these examples are cases in which the Global South is being exploited for its labour, environment, and resources for the benefit of the Global North, thus echoing colonial notions and actions. Conceptualizing Amsterdam as a historic colonizer arguably enables the city and its inhabitants to disconnect from any involvement in such modern structures of oppression. Thus, decolonization in these areas is not so much opposed as it is ignored.

Placing Amsterdam's colonial role so fixedly in the past has also resulted in decolonization becoming the remit of museums dealing with history—such as the city museum mentioned above—in galleries devoted to historical colonial periods. In 2013, the Scheepvaartmuseum held an exhibition called *The Black Page* in which the slave trade was discussed historically; contemporary ties were absent. Overall, recent colonial migrations, colonial legacies surviving today, and present-day oppression remain much less explored. An exception was Tropenmuseum's special exhibition *BITTER Chocolate Stories* staged in 2018–2019 that featured the personal stories and portraits of six child labourers employed on cocoa plantations.

Thematically, Amsterdam's decolonization efforts have focused on slavery, as was the case with the exhibitions *Afterlives of Slavery* (Tropenmuseum 2018) and *Aan de Surinaamse Grachten – Van Loon & Suriname (1728–1863)* (Museum Van Loon 2019), as well as the installation *Blood Sugar* by artist Patricia Kaersenhout (Cargo in Context 2017).[6] Although drawing more attention to Amsterdam's involvement in slavery and the trade in enslaved persons is still sorely needed and plans for a museum of slavery in Amsterdam will hopefully come to fruition, the emphasis on slavery also raises the risk of obscuring other colonial histories, atrocities, and forms of oppression. Some of the aspects of Dutch colonialism that demand far more critical attention in and beyond museums include the genocides of local populations in Indonesia at the hands of the VOC and later the Dutch army, the forced migrations of Dutch orphan girls to colonies to marry colonizers, the role of the Netherlands in South African apartheid,[7] and the Indigenous children taken from their parents by Christian missionaries. Focusing on slavery as almost synonymous with colonialism in this respect has enabled other issues to become obscured; accepting decolonization and destabilization in one thematic area has allowed other areas to remain neglected.

Thus, the reigning perception of Amsterdam as a historical colonizer has paradoxically enabled the city to disconnect itself from many colonial legacies, frameworks, structures, and ways of thinking that persist today. Discrimination and racism are ever-present in Amsterdam despite its image as a tolerant city (Wekker 2016). Recently, however, there has been stronger opposition and protests against racism have escalated with museums choosing to collect and exhibit these (Ariese 2021). In Dutch BLM protests in 2020, structural, institutional, and individual racism was overtly linked to Dutch

colonialism in speeches and on protest signs. Luciano de Boterman photographed two protests in Amsterdam and collaborated with the Amsterdam Museum on both a physical exhibition in its public courtyard and in curating an online BLM gallery for its *Corona in the City* digital exhibition. By engaging in this topic, decolonization in Amsterdam is also becoming more clearly linked to global decolonial movements. In a similar vein, the exhibition *What We Forget* at the Nieuw Dakota gallery (2019) showed the works of contemporary artists drawing broader European links to colonialism and relating (neo-)colonialism to environmental exploitation.

Ultimately, freezing the colonizing role of Amsterdam in a distant, historical past has rendered it challenging for the city of Amsterdam and its museums to decolonize. So far, emphasis has been placed primarily on monuments and names in the city, on the ethnographic museum, and on many slavery-related themes. Important decolonial progress has been made in all of these areas, yet more urgent and necessary work remains to be done, including in the re-presenting of Amsterdam as a colonizer in the present. As a staff member at the Amsterdam Museum put it, 'decolonization is denormalization' (interview AM_S21, my translation), and there are manifold ways that the 'normal' image of Amsterdam can still be disrupted.

Second-hand (de)colonialism in Warsaw

The various forms of institutionalized decolonial reactions seen in Amsterdam and other postcolonial metropolises have been absent from key museums in Warsaw, where decoloniality has only occasionally been performed by (mainly white) critically minded curators. This stems in part from the city's ethnic composition, with the vast majority of its nearly two million inhabitants being white, predominantly Catholic Poles yet also encompassing poorly integrated new groups of migrant workers. The main reason, however, relates to Warsaw's peculiar postcolonial historical situatedness in East-Central Europe in a manner quite different from that of Western European cities.

First, in European land conquests of the nineteenth century, the countries of this region did not participate in the processes of colonization as independent states, as they themselves formed part of other land empires at the time. This contributed to the notion that they qualified as other victims of great European powers (in this case Prussia and the Romanov and Habsburg Empires) rather than as participants in Europe's worldwide colonial engagement. But what this discourse of 'internal colonization' (Thompson 2000) often misses is that for political and mostly economic reasons East-Central European populations migrated globally, contributing to settlements around the world and, moreover, that its elite often shared the colonial aspirations of Western and Southern Europeans. For instance, some Polish aristocrats kept black servants as curiosities and decorated their estates with 'oriental' goods, plants, and animals. Furthermore, East-Central European travellers and explorers, educated in St. Petersburg, Leipzig, Berlin, Vienna, Paris, or

London, participated in buying, exchanging, or stealing objects from other parts of the world, some of which found their way into ethnographic museums of the newly independent East-Central European nation states after 1918. Most importantly, however, colonial-style relations were replicated by the Polish elite with peasants and ethnic minorities in the territories of today's Ukraine and Belarus. These factors have been aptly described by one museum curator interviewed for our project as a 'second-hand colonialism' by white East-Central Europeans (interview APM_1).

Second, the Cold War left a mixed legacy with regard to colonialism. On the one hand, communist states supported decolonization around the world, one of the results of which was that many Asian, African, and Latin American activists and students visited or lived in cities like Warsaw. Party propaganda stressed the communist bloc's contribution to the liberation of humankind not only from 'the chains of capitalism' but also from accompanying forms of enslavement, including racist prejudices worldwide. On the other hand, however, despite its decolonial component, the communist culture of knowledge contributed to the dissemination of a European vision of the world, not least by organizing all-white archaeological and ethnographic 'expeditions' to non-European countries that competed for local resources and contacts with those organized by capitalist states. Overall, the engagement of Eastern Europeans in other cultures left the region with an implicated legacy of colonial violence (Lehrer 2020; Rothberg 2019)—even as it was filtered, nuanced, or enriched by communism (Mark, Kalinovsky, and Marung 2020) and complicated by the region's own subjugation to foreign powers (Lebow, Mazurek, and Wawrzyniak 2019). This implicated legacy can still be discerned in Warsaw's urban space today, despite the city having been destroyed and its museums' collections looted by the Nazis during the Second World War.

Let us take a brief look at the non-European collections of Warsaw's main museums. Both the Royal Łazienki Palace and the Royal Palace at Wilanów have collections of East Asian early modern and modern art, at the latter in special 'Chinese rooms'. The Royal Castle in the Old Town has over 600 eighteenth- to twentieth-century carpets from the Caucasus and Middle East and the National Museum keeps over 10,000 Chinese, Japanese, Indian, and Middle Eastern objects in its Collection of Oriental Art, while the State Ethnographic Museum (SEM) has over 22,000 non-European objects, including a large collection of Africana. The Asia and Pacific Museum (APM) exhibits numerous items from across its wide regional remit. The APM also holds works by Polish artists inspired by Asia.

The origins of these collections vary. Some were amassed by royalty and aristocrats in the early modern era, while those established more recently contain donations or market acquisitions. However, the African collections of Polish ethnographic museums originated from an expedition to Cameroon organized in the 1880s by a Russian naval officer of Polish-German extraction, Stefan Szolc-Rogoziński, and his two colleagues, ethnographer Leopold Janikowski and geologist Klemens Tomczek. All three fantasized about

Polish colonies in Africa, and thanks to British support briefly competed against Germany for control of Cameroon. The SEM holdings were destroyed during the Second World War and supplemented by donations from various interwar and post-war Polish explorers as well as by African objects held in previously German institutions (situated at the territories gained by Poland after the Second World Wars) and by collections of other Polish museums as the result of centralization during the communist period (Kamocki 1966; Nadolska-Styczyńska 2011). The APM was founded in the mid-1970s by a communist-era merchant naval officer and diplomat whose career took him to many countries throughout Asia, Australia, and Oceania, with Indonesia inspiring him the most (Morawski 2016).

These differences notwithstanding, what most of these institutions have in common is the way their narratives neither problematize nor profoundly historicize the cultural encounters from which their collections originated. In Warsaw's residencies and art museums, visitors are often encouraged to admire 'exotic' objects and those viewing ethnographic museums are meant to value the contents as offering insights into foreign folk cultures without questioning how they travelled to Poland. Although the need to decolonize this type of display is a familiar topic to some curators of those collections, as yet there have been no institutionalized or widespread attempts to deal with this implicated heritage in permanent museum exhibitions. Just as in Warsaw's botanic gardens, zoo, and the zoological collections of academic institutions, as well as in other museums, many individual objects have been left devoid of a context of entangled global history. In this way, the colonial implications of white East-Central Europeans are still largely repressed in the city's most prominent and institutionalized heritage spaces.

While in the main museum venues little effort has been made to engage in the destabilization of the established cultural canon, the decolonial agenda has instead been raised in other forms and places, with, for instance, the Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art (UCCCA), the Museum of Warsaw, and the History Meeting House organizing projects about the city's multicultural inhabitants, including the oral histories of Africans and Asians living in Warsaw. Recently, a number of temporary interventions have focused on the relationships between the Polish People's Republic and Asian and African countries, such as the exhibition *Polish-Indian Shop* held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in 2017 that was devoted to both the larger aspects of economic modernization in Poland and India and the personal networks and unofficial trade of the time.

In addition, global colonial entanglements have been explored more profoundly by artists rather than regular museums. For instance, the Slavs and Tatars collective represented in Warsaw by the Raster Gallery challenges imperial and orientalist framings of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In a 2019 retrospective exhibition at the UCCCA entitled *Synthetic Folklore*, curator Janek Simon generated a digital mix of ethnic forms, patterns, and motifs from India, Africa, South America, Europe, and Poland to convey

that culture is produced collectively through complex processes of exchange and to ask whether digital globalization can protect societies from xenophobia and essentialism. Joanna Warsza in *Everything Is Getting Better: Unknown Knowns of Polish Post-colonialism* (2017)—presented in Berlin and discussed in Warsaw—offered an overview of various themes of the Polish colonial experience and their retrospective curatorial representations from the 2000s. *Unknown Knowns* brought together Prussia's internal colonization of Eastern Europe during the nineteenth century, Soviet imperialism as a form of colonialism, and the internal colonial aspirations of Poland, such as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth or the Polish Second Republic (1918–1939) and its unrealized imperialist plans in Cameroon and Madagascar (Warsza 2017). The exhibition was also meant as a critical reference to contemporary politics by showing that Poland's past expansionary ambitions are repressed in current right-wing rhetoric, particularly in the migration crisis when prominent politicians claimed that Poland, contrary to western or southern European states, had no moral obligation to help refugees because it had not contributed to their situation in the first place.

These examples point to two divergent directions of the contemporary museum discourse in Warsaw: of the conventional, uncritical, permanent, main museum displays and of the engaged, interpretative, and often provocative temporary curatorial and artistic decolonial projects. It appears that decolonial destabilization of the canon is permitted for or even expected from artists, but has been unwelcome or unthinkable in other realms. We have observed an instance of this kind of parallel monologue within a single institution, the Museum of Warsaw, which we studied in depth (Wawrzyniak and Bukowiecki 2020). The portrait gallery of its new permanent exhibition destabilized the mainstream collective memory of white, male military heroism by placing a contemporary portrait of the (only) legendary black participant of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising in a prominent position. Centrally located among other military men, it questioned both their social roles and aesthetic representation (see also Bukowiecki's contribution to this volume). However, the same museum whose main concept of its permanent exhibition is based on displaying and narrating stories of objects for everyday use in Warsaw still shows many items that call for contextualization of their colonial provenience (such as a monkey toy, elephant figurine, or cocoa can). Most astonishingly, one of the buildings in which the museum is housed is called *kamienica pod Murzynkiem*, which literally translated means 'house under a little Negro'. This seventeenth-century name derives from a gable decoration featuring the head of a black boy on the building's façade. The nearby café is also called *pod Murzynkiem*. Despite the fact that for at least a decade, black Polish communities have protested against being called *Murzyni*, the house's name is so familiar and transparent to museum curators that they have never attempted any recontextualization, at least not before BLM initiatives across the globe in 2020 provoked a new set of discussions within Poland. More generally, several curators and Warsaw guides we interviewed did not even

think that the very term colonization/decolonization had any relevance in the Polish context (interview MW_5; MW_21; MW_23; MW_FGI_1; Głowacka-Grajper 2020). Thus, the lack of relevance of the term indicates why decolonial processes are not even on their radar for consideration, let alone supported. The dichotomies of progressive vs. silent look likely to continue in Warsaw unless institutional steps are taken to raise or support the multicultural awareness of a larger number of curators. Unlike in the Amsterdam case discussed above, Warsaw's museum space needs a far more profound historicization of its colonial implications if it is to meet present and future challenges.

The colonial matrix of power: the case of Shanghai

Certainly, museums based in non-Western countries can also spread world views that reflect the ideas of their (former) colonizers. This is considered to be a long-lasting consequence of the success of what Walter Mignolo calls 'the colonial matrix of power'. According to Mignolo, the modernity paradigm intrinsic in the colonial project became an integral part of the political life of colonized societies, which often freed themselves from their invaders but not from their epistemological structures (Mignolo 2011). This is the case with the People's Republic of China (PRC) whose museums formalize triumphant historical narratives to assert the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (Denton 2016). As such, Chinese museums are agents of the stabilization of narratives promoted by the authorities. Any sort of destabilization, and therefore decolonization, of well-established national and revolutionary mythology is discouraged.

The CCP exerts a profound influence over the historical narratives presented by museums at national, provincial, and city levels. Shanghai is not an exception, and its institutions also show low engagement in decolonial practices. Two main issues haunt museums in Shanghai: first, their refusal to deal with China's own colonizing past and its present role as a neo-colonial power and second, their support of a nationalist discourse that influences the display practices used for China's ethnic minorities. These two problems are related, as China's imperialist history still influences the contemporary perception of Han Chinese as the norm, relegating ethnic minorities to social groups without a history.

The imperialist history of China and its political and cultural influence in Asia are well studied. During the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing dynasties (1644–1911), China expanded its political, military, and cultural influence beyond its own borders, fulfilling colonial projects aimed at eliminating 'unfriendly' populations and occupying their territories (Perdue 2005). At the end of the nineteenth century, however, China experienced Western and Japanese colonization. After the end of the First Opium War (1839–1842), foreign forces pressured the Qing dynasty to open port cities (including Shanghai) to foreign trade and to concede extraterritoriality to foreigners

(Chan 1977, 257). This system is often referred to as 'semi-colonialism', a concept that describes when a country, despite nominally preserving its juridical independence, is dominated by imperialist powers (Osterhammel 1986, 296–7). At the end of the War of Resistance against Japan (1936–1945), foreign powers lost their privileged positions in China (Chan 1977). Furthermore, the CCP started new expansionist projects after 1949 by occupying Tibet and Xinjiang, annexations often considered neo-colonial ventures (Olimat 2017, 214–5). Thus, as in the case of Poland, China can be considered both a colonizer and a victim of colonialism.

China's own colonial projects are seldom acknowledged in its museums. Its curatorial practices are embedded in Marxist-Leninist ideology and are highly critical of foreign colonialism (Varutti 2014, 36). However, at the same time, Chinese museums are based on epistemologies developed to satisfy the demands of ethno-national politics (Denton 2016). As a result, museums use the expansionist history of the Ming and of the Qing dynasties as a catalyst to remind the public of China's past greatness while whitewashing less glorious historical episodes (Pozzi, forthcoming). Meanwhile, memories of foreign imperialism are employed to foster nationalist feelings and to celebrate the CCP's success in liberating China from external intervention (Denton 2016). Following this trend, public history institutions such as the Shanghai History Museum/Shanghai Revolution Museum (SHM) present China's imperial history as a symbol of national pride.

Despite their nationalist message, Chinese institutions do not necessarily celebrate ethnic homogeneity. China defines itself as a 'multinational state' composed of 56 ethnic groups, among which the Han Chinese are a majority (C. Wang 2004, 6). The city of Shanghai currently has a population of 27 million inhabitants of whom 98.8 per cent are Han Chinese. Inhabitants belonging to ethnic minorities thus comprise only 1.2 per cent, although they are increasing. Shanghai also has over 150,000 officially registered foreigners. While Chinese museums acknowledge diversity within ethnic groups, they also minimize interethnic frictions and privilege a representation of harmonious relations, with the Han Chinese portrayed as guarantors of peace (Varutti 2011, 7–11). This bias is also present in Shanghai's museums, both those based on ethnographic collections (the Shanghai Natural History Museum, SNHM; the Shanghai Museum, SM) and on history (the SHM; the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, SJRM).

In contrast to Amsterdam and Warsaw, Shanghai does not have an ethnographic museum, yet the SNHM and the SM inherited part of their collections from the ethnographic museum of the Royal Asiatic Society (RAS). Built in Shanghai in 1874, the RAS collected items to better understand the Chinese environment and culture. However, the movement of items from a colonial institution like the RAS to local museums did not guarantee the decolonization of display practices. For instance, in the SM (an institution dedicated to ancient Chinese art), nine galleries exhibit Han Chinese artworks, while the tenth is dedicated to minority arts. The division between

'Chinese art' and 'Ethnic minorities' craftsmanship' shows how the latter, although considered part of the Chinese nation, are still represented as the 'other'. While the galleries of Han Chinese artworks indicate the names of artists and contain clear chronological information, artefacts in the tenth gallery are often described as 'folk art' and lack references to artists' names (X. Chen 2007, 217). Visitors to the SM are therefore invited to admire ethnic minorities' objects as devoid of history and individual agency (Karp and Lavine 1991).

Han nationalism inevitably reproduces ethnic discrimination (K-H. Chen 2010, 83), which museums thus disseminate. The 'Peking man' is arguably the most notorious case of a scientific theory employed to prove the longevity of the Chinese as a biological race (Schmalzer 2008). In 1929, the excavation of *Homo erectus* bones on a site near Peking sparked discussion about the possibility that Chinese people might not share a common human origin with the rest of the world. At present, several Chinese paleoanthropologists still argue that the *H. erectus* group that arrived in what is today's China independently evolved into *H. sapiens*, therefore denying the theory that all modern humans are the descendants of *H. sapiens* that migrated out of Africa (Cheng 2017, 575). This theory is controversial and has been refuted by scientists inside and outside China, yet museums such as the SNHM still mention the possibility that the Peking man pre-dates other *H. erectus*.

The tendency to glorify Han ethnicity is also noticeable in history museums. Despite Shanghai's status as a cosmopolitan metropolis, its public institutions minimize cultural, religious, and ethnic differences that distinguish Shanghai's past and present inhabitants. This is particularly evident in the SHM (Pozzi 2021). Its exhibition acknowledges that Shanghai was a city built by immigrants, both foreigners and Chinese coming from other provinces. However, Europeans, Sikhs, and Japanese are presented in a colonial framework. The exhibition reduces descriptions of their daily lives and interactions to a minimum, showing instead the detailed institutional and economic development of the city. Furthermore, the exhibition also represses cultural differences among the Han Chinese. In the early twentieth century, Shanghai's population contained immigrants for whom provincial associations were much more significant than their Han identity. People coming from different Chinese provinces had their own associations, buildings, and temples that defined their identities in the city (Goodman 1995). The exhibition, however, minimizes the importance of provincial identity, removing any grey areas that do not fit the state-supported Han-centred history.

A notable exception to the SHM's disregard of Shanghai's ethnic and cultural diversity is its attention to Shanghai's Jewish community, to which curators have dedicated the cabinet 'All cities denied access for Jews, Shanghai was the only exception'. Through miniature model houses and shops, this display describes the poor yet decent life of Jewish refugees in the city during the Second World War, representing Shanghai as a safe space for hundreds of

desperate exiles. The inclusion of the daily life of an urban ethnic minority might look like a 'decolonial attempt' by the SHM's curators, but this representation of the Jewish community remains very colonial in nature. The unmentioned longer history of Shanghai's Jews is entangled with Western colonialism. Sephardic (or Baghdadi) Jews were among the first foreigners to arrive in Shanghai with British traders in the 1840s, and some spent their entire lives in China. The Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) and the Bolshevik Revolution (1917–1918) brought new influxes of Jews to Shanghai, mostly from Russia (Eber 2017, 1–2). Both the SHM and the SJHM, however, only refer to the nearly 20,000 European Jewish refugees who fled to Shanghai in 1938–1941 because its unique status as a metropolis under the control of several foreign powers did not require them to carry visas (Gao 2011, 203). Mainly from Germany, Austria, and Poland, the refugees settled in the Tilanqiao district, a destitute neighbourhood that soon became known as the city's ghetto. Most survived the war years working in the city or thanks to donations by several Jewish associations. At the end of the war, they largely immigrated to the United States, Canada, and Australia (Fiszman 1998).

The SHM and the SJRM's erasure of memories of other Jews besides refugees was due to the CCP's nationalist politics after the 1990s. After the establishment of the PRC in 1949, authorities repressed the memory of the presence of the Jewish war refugees. For instance, the Moses Synagogue, a gathering place in Tilanqiao, stood vacant during the 1950s and 1960s and was later used as a governmental building. During the economic reforms of the 1990s, however, memories of the Jewish wartime community resurfaced. Thanks to China opening up, many Jewish former residents of Tilanqiao came back to visit the synagogue that became a commemoration space (Y. Wang 2017, 114). In 2005, the synagogue and surrounding areas became the SJRM. It was built to support the 'Shanghai Ark' myth, a metaphor employed by official newspapers to describe the unique significance of Shanghai to the Jewish refugees (115). This discourse, promoted by the SJRM, claims that although the Jewish refugees suffered greatly under fascism in Europe, they were welcome in Shanghai where they lived simple but happy lives (116). This myth intends to celebrate the Han Chinese's good will as opposed to Europeans who did not provide safety for refugees. However, this discourse fails to take account of the memories of the Jewish refugees, who do not always agree with the SJRM's perspective (116). Although the case of the representation of the Jewish community in the SHM and the SJRM might seem like an attempt to grapple with forgotten stories of non-Han Chinese inhabitants, a closer analysis reveals that the decision to establish the museum in Tilanqiao was strictly political.

To conclude, although they are critical of the Western colonial system, museums in Shanghai remain highly colonial in nature. The CCP's authorities exert control over museums at both national and city levels, constraining the destabilization of nationalist narratives and discourses and inhibiting the progress of decolonial practices.

Comparing decolonization

This brief comparative venture into three very different urban museum spaces adds complexity to the current decolonization wave. It calls for attention to the question of how the global decolonization movement, influenced by historical and cultural particularities, results in divergent discourses and practices on the city level. As such, how is the destabilization of decolonization encouraged, supported, or resisted in urban centres and, specifically, their museums?

First, we have observed important differences at the level of agency in our three case studies. Historically, Amsterdam's decolonial discourse—similar to that found within other Western cities—was triggered by debates revolving around its ethnographic museum, the Tropenmuseum. Yet the State Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw did not play a comparable role. Instead, in Warsaw it was mainly independent artists and curators who pushed the boundaries of collective memory by recalling forgotten or silenced colonial histories. That said, in Amsterdam today artists and activists have indeed moved to the forefront of new waves of decolonial initiatives (discussed in greater detail in Ariese 2021). In Shanghai, however, the CCP exercises such a strong influence over museums' representation of history and culture that curators must take authorities' perspectives into account and activists are silenced.

Second, one of the most important tenets of the most recent decolonization movement in Amsterdam has been the struggle for racial equality. This has only been weakly echoed in Warsaw due to the existence of such a tiny minority of non-Polish activists aided by their white, liberal counterparts coupled with a limited sensitivity towards multiculturalism among curators. China and Shanghai reveal a different stance on race and racial equality. Unlike Warsaw, Shanghai is characterized by significant urban diversity, but this is either largely disregarded in favour of Han Chinese uniformity or 'othered'. Indeed, as the example of the Peking man shows, the focus is rather on setting the Chinese racially apart from all other humans.

Third, comparing Shanghai with two European cities shows that the term 'decolonial' does not always mean 'critical' or 'self-reflexive' in the way it has been postulated by the New Museology movement. Shanghai's museums, with their exhibitions planned in a top-down manner, reflect the current politics of memory within the Chinese Communist Party that accords limited recognition to regional and urban differences. Chinese museums are decolonial in the sense that they deal strongly with their history of European settlements; however, they are not self-reflexive in terms of critically assessing their own past nor of engaging diverse actors into the process of developing exhibitions.

Finally, we have also flagged how all three cities and their museum spaces experienced conflicts in viewing their roles in the past and present. Amsterdam has conceptualized itself firmly as a colonizer in the (distant) past. Its focus on particular colonial aspects, primarily slavery, removes energy and resources from the unresolved implications of coloniality today. Warsaw in turn has

not worked through its history and heritage deeply enough to account for the colonial implications neglected in the city space. Indeed, on an institutional level all possible entanglements of internal or second-hand colonialism tend to be disregarded. Shanghai with its past as a colonized city and its present role in China's neo-colonization efforts is deeply colonially entangled. Tapping into nationalism and patriotism produces a positive representation of Chinese imperialism and the ways in which Shanghai wrestled itself free from its oppressors, rather than any attempts to atone for hardships inflicted upon ethnic minorities in the past and in the present.

Overall, the comparison shows that there is no clear, single direction in which decolonization in museums and the associated debate will develop in the future. This is true not just for the cities discussed in this chapter but also for a myriad of places in the world whose histories are similarly entangled and contentious. Whether they concern the (former) overseas colonizer, the historically colonized, the still-colonized, the internally colonized, the internal colonizer, or a mix of any of these, processes of decolonization will be complex and vastly site- and situation-specific. Beyond historical reasons, the current demographic composition of a particular city and differences in actors will also play a role in the perceptions of colonialism and the need for, and the means to, decolonize.

Notes

1 This work forms part of the ECHOES project which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 770248.

2 The New Museology movement developed from critique in the 1970s of 'traditional' museology, which centred on collections and viewed the museum as a cultural authority. The New Museology instead emphasizes the social and political roles of the museum and perceives it as a place of dialogue.

3 For more about the colonial history of the museum and great exhibitions, see Bennett (1995) and Corbey (1993).

4 Research for this chapter was realized in 2018–2020 as part of ECHOES Work Package 3 'City Museums and Multiple Colonial Pasts' led by Joanna Wawrzyniak. We focused on city museums as they have often been overlooked in mainstream scholarship that concentrates on ethnographic and art museums. However, we also followed developments in the broader museum scene of each city, and our argument is embedded in our wider analysis of exhibitions, museum programmes, staff interviews, and a variety of secondary sources. Note: interviews with staff at the Amsterdam Museum are noted as AM_S; interviews at Warsaw's Asia and Pacific Museum are noted as APM_; and interviews at the Museum of Warsaw are noted as MW_ or as MW_FGI_1 for focus group interviews.

5 As quoted on the exhibition page of the Stedelijk Museum website.

6 These and more examples are discussed in greater detail in Ariese (2021).

7 Two recent exhibitions in Amsterdam focused on South Africa, *Good Hope: South Africa and the Netherlands from 1600* (Rijksmuseum 2017) and a show of South African photographer *Santu Mofokeng* (FOAM 2019). However, both were criticized for not overtly linking Dutch historical colonialism to the system of apartheid.

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Chapter 7

The influence of Western colonial culture on Shanghai

A case study of the 'Modern Shanghai' exhibition at the Shanghai History Museum[1]

Lu Jiansong

Located at 325 West Nanjing Road, the Shanghai History Museum opened to the public in March 2018. The site covers a total area of 23,000 square metres, nearly half of which consists of exhibition space. Housed within the former premises of the Shanghai Race Club (a heritage site from colonial times) that lies west of the People's Park (a symbol of Shanghai's position within the People's Republic of China since 1949), its setting in the city centre renders it both conveniently located for visitors and the physical embodiment of the historical and present-day conditions that combine to structure its narrative and points of focus. As its name makes clear, the museum is dedicated to the history of the city of Shanghai, China, and is home to a permanent exhibition divided into two parts: 'Ancient Shanghai' and 'Modern Shanghai'.

'Modern Shanghai', the subject of this chapter, focuses on the city's history from its establishment as a port trading with foreigners in 1843, a time when Shanghai became transformed from a town into a metropolis, to its development as the most prosperous port and a key economic and financial hub in the Far East. The late Qing Dynasty, the founding of the People's Republic of China, and the Anti-Japanese War serve as historic points of reference further dividing its subject matter into three chronological sections: 'The Rising of Shanghai City (1843–1911)', 'A Bustling New Metropolis (1912–1936)', and 'Shanghai during War (1937–1949)', which also encompasses the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

Modern Shanghai's ascent and development is inseparable from Western colonialism. On 29 August 1842, China and the United Kingdom signed the Treaty of Nanjing, which forced Shanghai to open as a trading port with the British initiating the first concession in Shanghai three years later. Countries including the United States and France also established concessions of their own in the years that followed. Over the course of the coming century, a transnational mix of Western colonialists sold products in Shanghai, set up factories, and established banks, among other important contributions. The impact of Western colonial culture on Shanghai's rise and development, whether in terms of its economy and municipal administration or indeed virtually every aspect of its cultural and social life, simply cannot be underestimated.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-10

Exploring the manifold ways Western colonialism has shaped Shanghai's history as a city within this exhibitionary context posed many curatorial challenges. Western colonialism has had a twofold impact on the development of modern cities like Shanghai, both destructive and constructive. In planning the exhibition, we prioritized presenting an objective perspective that would demonstrate colonialism's invasive and destructive as well as its constructive dimensions.

In demonstrating the invasive and destructive elements, we took as our starting point the conviction that the nature of colonialism has been to expand modern Western countries by aggressive means, looting the economy, politics, culture, and even territory from colonized countries and cities. As such, we view it as far from glorious. In Shanghai, Western colonial rulers took political control of the residents within the concessions through institutions including the Municipal Council (工部局), Shanghai Volunteer Corps (万国商团), Patrol House (巡捕房), Mixed Court (会审公廨(法庭), and Customs (海关). These institutions were involved in severe violations of Chinese rights and made the concessions in Shanghai akin to 'nations within a nation'. Western colonial rulers controlled Shanghai's economy and benefitted from raw materials, investment, and cheap labour. The exhibition at the Shanghai History Museum therefore reflects coercive aspects of colonialism, exemplified by Shanghai having been forced to open as a trading port, forced to establish concessions (see Figure 7.1), forced to be involved in unfair

Figure 7.1 Shanghai History Museum, foreign settlements in modern Shanghai, exhibition room, 2021.

Photo by author.

trading, forced to become a market for multiple products, forced to give up its extraterritorial rights, forced to offer privileges to foreigners opening factories and financial businesses, and forced to accept loans with harsh conditions attached. Local business and financial dealings were suppressed as well.

By contrast, in demonstrating the constructive part of colonialism, we argue that Western colonial culture when considered objectively also had positive effects on Shanghai's rise and development. With the introduction of advanced Western thinking, people's minds were liberated and democracy and science were awakened; more advanced science and technology facilitated the flourishing of modern science and technology; advanced manufacturing technology and equipment assisted the development of a modern industrial economy; imported financial practices contributed immeasurably to the banking and securities sector; innovations in the areas of culture, education, and health paved the way for modern education, medicine, libraries, museums, cinema, and theatres. These influences mainly occurred between 1843 and 1936, a period that can be divided into two stages which the museum's exhibition respectively terms 'The Rise of Shanghai City (1843–1911)' and 'A Bustling New Metropolis (1912–1936)'.

'The Rise of Shanghai City'

Between 1843 (when Shanghai was opened as a port and concessions were established by Western colonial culture) and 1911, transport links and abundant resources resulted in its rapid transformation from a city that relied on shipping, trading, and traditional cotton textile handicrafts industries into a diverse economic and business centre. It achieved the status of the most important metropolitan city in the Far East. At this stage, the influences of Western colonial culture on Shanghai were at their most powerful, as can be seen in the following illustrations:

Urbanization

Before the First Opium War in 1840, Shanghai had already become an important commercial city on China's southeast coast. With a population totalling approximately 600,000, its economy revolved around port trade along with its sand shipping industry and traditional cotton textile handicraft industries. The expansion of the various concessions after 1842 greatly intensified its urbanization. Moreover, in 1863, the United Kingdom and the United States merged into an International Concession, after which Shanghai became divided into three parts, the Chinese settlement, the International Concession, and the French Concession, which were in turn run by three separate administrations.

Business

Western countries developed trade with China after Shanghai was forced to open as a trading port. Banks were established and merchants grew greatly in number, with the British Gibb, Livingston & Co., and Jardine Matheson; the German Siemssen & Co.; and the American Exxon Mobil Corporation counted among the leading international concerns (Figure 7.2).

Western countries subsequently opened factories in Shanghai. By 1894, they had already set up 45 factories, including eight shipbuilding plants, six textile mills, and seven printing and packaging factories, which opened the doors to modern industrial development in Shanghai and provided employment for a growing community of industrial workers. Taken together, the opening of foreign banks, insurance companies, and securities companies facilitated the rise of Shanghai's financial industry. Driven and stimulated by the demands of Western capital, Chinese-funded industries, commerce, and finance also gradually emerged.

Figure 7.2 Shanghai History Museum, foreign business in modern Shanghai, exhibition room, 2021.

Photo by author.

Municipal administration

Westerners introduced new management models and brought their municipal experience to bear on the ways their new and expanding concessions were managed. They developed a planning and construction system and applied it to urban streets, modern transportation, postal communications, and public utilities such as lighting, water supply, and fire prevention and control services. As a result, the Chinese settlement also started to develop municipal construction 'in the concession style'. Shanghai thus embarked on a development path that differentiated it from other traditional Chinese cities and launched the process of the modernization of municipal administration.

Modern education and culture

The introduction of Western culture enabled the spread of new ideas concerning education along with cultural establishments. Several Western-style universities, middle schools, and elementary schools as well as educational and cultural facilities such as libraries and museums emerged. Western journalism, publishing, and printing also began to develop in Shanghai.

'A Bustling New Metropolis'

Building upon its earlier phase of development and expansion, Shanghai's urbanization process reached new heights in the decades after the founding of the Republic of China in 1912. Shanghai quickly became the most prosperous port and the centre of economy, finance, and culture in the Far East, and Western colonial culture continued to have a very strong impact on multiple fronts.

The Far East's largest industrial centre

Between 1912 and 1926, Shanghai witnessed a second phase of growth with the establishment of many new factories. Despite Western countries' involvement in the First World War from 1914 to 1918, Western capital still found plentiful opportunities to take advantage of Shanghai's industry and trade. Not only did Western industries occupy a relatively large portion of the market (with American and French commercial power companies accounting for 84 per cent of the total power generation capacity in Shanghai in 1935, to name just one example); Western capital also brought many new forms of industrial production to Shanghai such as electricity, electrical appliances, chemicals, rubber, pharmaceuticals, and food processing.

The Far East's largest commercial and trading centre

Western businessmen flooded into Shanghai once the Republic of China was founded, with foreign banks opening one after the other. Shanghai became a

metropolis overrun with foreign adventurers where Western goods prevailed. Shanghai's economic activities became increasingly connected with world markets, further consolidating its role as an East Asian trade and business hub. Commercial trade boomed as never before, with imports mounting to 14 million tons a year during the 1930s. With the seventh highest import tonnage in the world, Shanghai's dynamic port became the most important shipping centre in the Far East.

The Far East's financial centre

With the development of industry and trade by the 1930s, Shanghai's financial market also achieved unprecedented prosperity. Shanghai had become home to 68 banks from nine countries, namely Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Japan, the United States, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Italy. Statistics from 1933 reveal that most foreign banks in China were based in Shanghai, with 27 of the 29 nationwide (excluding the Northeast area) having branches there. These included the British Commercial Bank of India, the Chartered Bank, HSBC Bank, the Bank of France, and the United States' Citi Bank, among others. Moreover, the founding of the Republic of China was followed by the establishment of new foreign-funded insurance organizations, with as many as 161 companies from 14 different countries having arrived on Shanghai's urban stage. Shanghai thus had become not only the largest financial centre in China but also an international financial centre for the Far East to such an extent that it was known as the 'New York of the East'.

Municipal administration

Under the strong influence of Western-style municipal planning and construction, public infrastructure and the availability of public services changed rapidly in Shanghai. Streets, gas lamps, running water, electric lights, telephones, trolley buses, and trams were all established as part of the city's infrastructure. With the formation of a multifaceted public transportation network and the introduction of advanced fire-fighting equipment and management methods, moreover, Shanghai's municipal development approached that of developed cities in the West.

Shanghai as a communication centre of Chinese and Western culture in modern China

Shanghai entered a golden decade from the 1920s to the 1930s with the increase in prosperity brought about by industry and commerce, the growth of international metropolises, and the widespread introduction of Western culture. Its news, publishing, literature, theatre, fine arts, music, and cinema

all developed rapidly, yielding a Shanghai-style culture that brought together elements from China and the West alike. Shanghai had become a modern Chinese cultural centre, a newspaper and publishing centre, the birthplace of modern education for China, a literary centre, a Chinese theatre centre, and an Asian Hollywood centre.

Fusing Chinese and Western styles to forge a modern new urban lifestyle

During these years, a diverse society comprised Chinese and foreigners of many nationalities expanded, influencing fashion, food, and forms of housing alongside language and other customs. This generated a new social scene in which local Chinese and Westerners mixed and old and new trends coexisted. Shanghai not only had a reputation for being the showcase of world-class buildings but also could claim to be the Chinese birthplace of Western-style clothing, Shanghai-style language, and a Western-influenced culinary culture (Figure 7.3).

Figure 7.3 Shanghai History Museum, Art Deco furniture in modern Shanghai, exhibition room, 2021.

Photo by author.

Problems and challenges

Mounting the 'Modern Shanghai' exhibition at the Shanghai History Museum has posed a number of challenges, not least of which is the paucity of relevant artefacts. As already noted, the museum was only established in 2018 and, as a result, systematic collecting started relatively late. Not surprisingly, therefore, there are gaps in the exhibition, making it difficult to reflect the whole picture of Shanghai's rapid urban development. It should also be said that finding such artefacts is also problematic. Many of them have either been lost or destroyed, especially during a period when Shanghai underwent significant changes, especially as a result of wars.

A further challenge related to the scope of 'Modern Shanghai' is that at one point, it had been proposed to include a separate section on 'Red Shanghai', which would deal with the significant historical contributions that Shanghai had made to the revolutionary struggle of the modern Chinese nation to resist foreign aggression and fight for the independence of the Chinese nation and the people's liberation. In the final exhibition installation, however, the museum decided to merge 'Red Shanghai' into 'Modern Shanghai', ending the exhibition in 1949. These different narratives are by no means contradictory—far from it—but arguably the result of the integration of the two is that neither the urban historical development of Shanghai nor the city's revolutionary history has an independent narrative logic.

Conclusion

Although Western colonialism brought advanced culture, advanced science and technology, and production methods to Shanghai and thereby shaped its urbanization process and the development of industry and commerce in modern China along with it, these benefits cannot excuse the many forms of colonial exploitation that occurred in Shanghai over more than a century. We choose, however, to place emphasis upon its modern history that entailed a productive blending of cultures and cultural coexistence that extended from the convergence of civilizations as Shanghai's history unfolded. In mid-nineteenth-century to mid-twentieth-century Shanghai, in sum, we find both a unique local setting that evolved to achieve both national and global significance that deserves to be recognized as a microcosm of modern China.

Note

1 This work forms part of the ECHOES project which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 770248.

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Chapter 8

Decolonizing contemporary art exhibitions

Okwui Enwezor (1963–2019), the turning point of curatorship

Elvan Zabunyan

In the twenty-first century, the history of exhibitions has become a crucial field for those interested in contemporary commitments to present renewed visions of the world. These visions of the world are reinvented because we choose to consider them from the point of view of history, a history that would engage in the 'globality' conceptualized by Édouard Glissant (1997). These commitments are clearly dealing with global knowledges, European colonial empires, postcolonial critical studies, alternative art practices, gender and racial concerns, and the deconstruction of hegemonic centres and peripheral realms. As one of the most innovative curators of the last two decades, Okwui Enwezor (1963–2019) managed to restructure conceptions of history and culture, and question from the inside the effect that 'alternating currents' have on a globalized art world. In choosing to free up boundaries, he produced shifts between cultural and artistic identities. As a curator, Enwezor participated in the upheavals of all predominant Eurocentric paradigms through institutions offering contemporary artists a pluriverse platform to present competing interpretations of the past. By choosing to decolonize exhibition modalities, while maintaining historical continuity with the models of major international contemporary art exhibitions, he succeeded in reframing colonial history through the practices of artists (Knudsen 2018).

The last major group exhibition organized by Okwui Enwezor while he was still director of Haus der Kunst in Munich (he was the museum's director from 2011 to 2018) was entitled *Postwar: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945–1965*. It was the first time in the history of exhibitions that this crucial post-war period had been considered from a global perspective (Enwezor et al. 2016). As he explained in a lecture in Paris in 2016, it was no longer a question of making vertical art history based on the main artistic centres of the time (Paris and New York, in particular) but a horizontal history of art (Enwezor 2016). What was important to him was to propose a history of the post-war era not by focusing on Europe and the United States but by highlighting the numerous other scenes around the world in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. The project was not about rewriting art history, but rather about broadening the boundaries of our

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-11

understanding of art and carefully examining the work of the artists: 'The goal of the exhibition was to look globally at what the artists make where and with what' (Enwezor 2016). The exhibition allowed him to examine the narratives he called 'missing'. The note available on the Haus der Kunst website sums up Okwui Enwezor's intentions perfectly:

> In eight dramatic chapters, the exhibition guides visitors through the 20 years following the Second World War, demonstrating how artists coped with, and responded to, the traumas of the Holocaust, Hiroshima and Nagasaki; how the two political blocs of the Cold War exploited the arts and created an opposition between realism and abstraction, and how displacement and migration produced new cosmopolitan contexts across the world. The post-war period also marked the end of European colonial systems; the rise of nation-building, decolonisation and liberation movements; partition of countries in Europe, Asia and the Middle East; as well as the Civil Rights movement in the United States. These changes unleashed an incredible energy visible in the art of the time. New technologies began to pour into everyday life; the space age fascinated artists as well as the masses, opening up a completely new and dynamic field of artistic consideration.[1]

Taking into account all the political, scientific, cultural, and artistic dynamics in order to think about this period is a method Enwezor applied to all his curatorial projects. It is inconceivable for him to detach artistic creation from its production context. Looking at this global history from the point of view of contemporary art also allowed him to integrate into his thinking historical questions and events that have been neglected by mainstream history and that have not been sufficiently considered to be connected. Their correlation, however, reinforces the collective nature of their agency.

Okwui Enwezor thus insists on the correspondences: the civil rights movement in the United States was inspired by decolonization movements in different parts of the world; as is well known, the emancipation models conceived by Gandhi were taken up by Martin Luther King. In this sense, it is necessary, according to Enwezor, to study 'the way art and artists confronted the disillusion of colonial empires' (Enwezor 2016). When he referred to events such as the September 1961 Belgrade conference of the Non-Aligned or the First Solidarity Conference of Peoples of Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Tricontinental Conference held in Havana on 3 January 1966 and decided to include them in his *Postwar* exhibition, he was clearly evoking historical moments following the Bandung Conference of 1955 that initiated the Non-Aligned Movement in the midst of the Cold War. This was a major event whose analysis is also at the heart of research initiated by the South American School of Decolonial Thinkers which works on 'epistemologies of the South' (De Sousa Santos 2014). Their reflections today occupy an increasingly prominent place in the context of contemporary art (Allain-Bonilla et al. 2020).

The Tricontinental was a conference of revolutionary movements from Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Primera Conferencia de Solidaridad de Los Pueblos de Africa, Asia, America Latina), which emerged from two important dynamics both linked to the anti-colonial movements (Barcia 2009). First, the dynamic of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), created in 1961, which included certain regimes with a more conciliatory attitude towards the colonial empires. Second, the dynamic that was constituted outside of the NAM with the creation of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) in 1957, which concerned other movements in the context of still unfinished anti-colonial wars and was of a more radical nature. The NAM and AAPSO platforms often collaborated and made possible the production of the cultural meeting that took place in Havana with the Tricontinental (Mahler 2018). These moments when the modalities of anti-colonial struggles are collectively discussed allow us to question the forms of artistic and critical expression created at the same time. With his exhibition, by integrating these events into the 1945–1965 timeline in the same way as known and recognized events in the Western world, Okwui Enwezor analysed how these struggles and commitments influence artistic production, how artists themselves participate in the elaboration of concepts that extend the field of cultural production, and how artistic circulations are developed. By choosing to study the post-war era and, in particular, the crucial tipping point of decolonization in the 1960s, he opened up new horizons for the interpretation of world art history. He thus confirms that this interpretation did not just come into being in the 1990s, as is often stated, but already existed 30 years earlier.

However, the 1990s enabled the theorization of concepts that marked an indisputable turning point in art epistemology. The contemporary art world was then in the midst of a metamorphosis, seeking, in the continuity of the effects produced by certain large-scale exhibitions like the 1986 Havana Biennial, 1989 *Magiciens de la terre*, and the 1993 Whitney Biennial, to understand the importance of a reflection based on the issues of difference and marginalization. In Havana and in Paris, for the first time, artists from the Asian and African continents were exhibited together at an international event; in New York, works from African-American artists, who until then had little institutional visibility, were shown. Cultural and postcolonial studies were then convened like a new critical apparatus, allowing art history to decompartmentalize itself.[2] Based on a contemporary reading of the consequences of colonization and decolonization, and of immigration and exile, intellectuals and artists questioned the forms of inclusion and exclusion operating in the field of social and artistic practices. They thereby used the tools of decolonization to deconstruct their own field. Through their production, they committed to examining racial, social, or gendered problematics. Within the exhibitions themselves, moving, fluid, syncretic, artistic temporalities and spatialities gave new life to the modalities of mobility. The theoretical concepts were therefore tied to the work of the artists. This transformed

landscape of contemporary art has had an impact on the way works are read by art historians and curators, who are consequently opening up to transversal methodologies and artistic pluriversality.

The exhibition as a medium to deconstruct the dominant history

Because it welcomes and connects in the same space works produced by artists from all around the world, the 'exhibition' as a medium, particularly when it involves large-scale group shows such as biennales, is becoming an increasingly important field of study and a true space of hospitality. The coexistence of pictorial, sculptural, filmic, photographic and performative forms, their meeting, their dialogue, their assembly, give rise to the intermingling of thousands of fragments, as many as the artistic proposals conceived in connection with the creative contexts located on the five continents. These moments of shift and fusion between art and politics, between art and cultural differences, between art and the history of the past, are those that allow the development of another history; a history inherent in artistic and intellectual universes that articulate with each other as a means of promoting vanishing lines that undo authoritarian and conservative points of view. The latter formats the modalities of creation according to criteria that claim to be universal, but which are above all formalized and inscribed in an academic tradition that does not include pluriversity. Okwui Enwezor insisted on the deconstruction of the European canon of fine arts that gave rise to modernism. According to him, it was necessary to emphasize that this modernism does not have a dominant status as its sole privilege.

In Okwui Enwezor's method, there is always the desire to think about the exhibition in the form of juxtapositions, as two boundaries that touch each other and highlight differences and affinities. The works that meet in a space are there to establish entanglements of meanings, forms, historical and artistic narratives. For the curator and director of the museum, the relationship to a revisited chronology of history is at the centre of a reflection based on a geopolitical and social as well as poetic and aesthetic analysis of artistic production. The exhibition is the place of all convergences, where encounters as well as dialogue between artists and intellectuals from all over the world are possible. The exhibition provides an opportunity to reshuffle the diplomatic cards, to change institutional perspectives and to modify the viewpoints standardized by European hegemony. 'All my work as a curator has been devoted to implicate different territories of practice in the exhibition', Enwezor explains (Enwezor 2016). These different territories and the distinct but complementary fields of specialization are also related to his own intellectual biography.

Born in October 1963 in Calabar, Nigeria, Okwui Enwezor arrived in New York in 1983 to study. He graduated in political science at the Jersey City State College. But he was also a poet, and it was through writing that he

began to reflect on the context of contemporary art and noted the glaring absence of African artistic practices in the public and private institutional framework, whether in galleries or museums. In 1994, to compensate for this invisibilization, he founded the journal *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* with Salah Hassan. Published by the Africana Studies and Research Center (ASRC) at Cornell University, it chose to present African artists or artists of the 'African Diaspora', thus reflecting a production that focuses on a long history that integrates the legacy of slavery in the Americas (North, South, Caribbean), but also of colonization and subsequent migrations.

Taking into account his own experience of migration between the African continent and North America, he analysed the chronological milestones that mark the historical moments that need to be reconsidered from off-centre perspectives. He applied these questions specifically to cultural displacements beginning with his first major curatorial project, the second Johannesburg Biennial, organized in 1997 in a South Africa just emerging from apartheid (Becker and Enwezor 1998). Enwezor decided to deviate from the sense of national belonging and decided to curate a project where the usual definitions of an art that would resemble a national identity are voluntarily blurred. Traditionally, a biennial brings together, by national section, the work of artists from different countries. Enwezor chose instead to invite six co-collaborators of different origins (Gerardo Mosquera from Cuba, Hou Hanrou from China living in Paris, Yu Yeon Kim living in Seoul and New York, Octavio Zaya from Spain living in New York, Kellie Jones an African-American living in New York, and Collin Richards from South Africa). They would in turn select artists whose works were part of a reflection on the notion of borders, which had to be overcome in order to avoid national recognition. The numerous geographical displacements, a consequence of colonization and/or immigration, were taken into account as an essential parameter: almost all the curators were living outside their country of origin or shared their time between two different cities, at least one of which was integrated into the Western world. Whether they came from Cuba, China, Korea, Spain, the United States, or South Africa, all of them explored the limits of nationalism critically in all its forms. Beyond the idea of nation, the idea of community was thought of as fluid, open, appealing to unprecedented temporalities. This mobility, both physical and artistic, was also to be read in light of the African diaspora to which Okwui Enwezor belonged, the subjective experience motivating in some way the intellectual construction. Curating an exhibition in relation to a historical context that sheds light on the present and the urgency of analysing this context through art was always the starting point of his thinking.

The short century

In Europe, the exhibition that propelled Okwui Enwezor to the peak of celebrity as a curator was *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation*

Movements in Africa 1945–1994 held between February and April 2001 at the Museum Villa Stuck in Munich. As Julia Friedel recalls, more than 15 years later, 'the first German blockbuster exhibition of contemporary art from the African continent was born' (Friedel 2018). With this large-scale project, Enwezor chose to make Africa the primary laboratory of his curatorial expertise by insisting on the historical nature of the independence and liberation movements of a continent that was decimated by colonization. Nevertheless, this exhibition concept, articulating history, culture, philosophy, economics, and politics, served as a framework for almost every other exhibition he organized thereafter. This concept based on pluri- and transdisciplinarity allows him to make Africa radiate on a world scale without it being the exclusive centre of its preoccupation, or being thought of as a theme defined according to a cultural area. Indeed, Africa as it is presented in *The Short Century* is at the heart of global transfers, its history irrigates that of the world, a world that has coveted it for its resources, that has exploited it to leave it drained but that reveals itself through an artistic potential that has been unknown and neglected, a potential that is born from the ashes of colonization with all its symbolic power (Dawson 2003). It is thus the African modernity at the time of decolonization that he chose to show with this project, with this pivotal date of 1945 as a starting point: 'Decolonization, and its attendant ideological and philosophical contestation of Western imperialism, does … remain one of the most significant events of the twentieth century …', he wrote in the introduction to the exhibition catalogue (Enwezor 2001, 10).

In an interview with Carol Becker, Okwui Enwezor spoke at length about the genesis of the project, both the exhibition and the book, as well as the foundations of his thinking:

> There has been a range of historical shows that looked at the intersection between political and ideological forces and the ways in which artists and intellectuals responded. However for a continent that is really an unknown quantity, one that not many people have been in contact with in any substantial way, it presents a very different challenge in terms of the kind of material that you can put into an exhibition. How do people apprehend, distill and interpret the range of materials that may not yield their full meaning on a visual platform alone? Working with both primary sources and interpretations of these sources was crucial. Chronologically, the exhibition ends in 1994 to make that point of transition and the beginning of something else. More important it has two book-ends. One is 1884 to 1945. In 1884, the year-long Berlin conference began; it was the source of the Berlin Congo Act, which resulted in the partition of Africa among the European powers. The show does not really touch the process of colonization. But it touches the results of course. The second book-end is the post-apartheid period, which for me really represents the exhibition: the continuous meditation by

> intellectuals and artists of the subject of decolonization: the agoras of decolonization, the discontinuities of decolonization, and the problematics of the heritage of decolonization.
>
> (Becker and Enwezor 2002, 14)

For Enwezor, the chronological milestones, 1945–1994, he chose for the exhibition are crucial because they refer to the events that mark the beginning and end of African struggles for independence. October 1945 is indeed the date of the 5th Pan-African Congress held in Manchester, a major event since the decisions taken there, a few months after the war, opened up concrete prospects for African independence. Other events that *The Short Century* recounts include the Négritude movement, Pan-Africanism, Pan-Arabism, but also the wars of independence of Algeria (1954–1962), Mozambique (1964–1974), and Angola (1961–1974). The date 1994 that concludes the chronology is the end of apartheid in South Africa with the first multiracial legislative elections and Nelson Mandela's election as president on 10 May 1994.

The exhibition presented 60 works by more than 40 artists. Some, such as Alexander Skundar Boghossian, born in Ethiopia in 1937, of African and Armenian origin, spent a large part of his life in the United States (he died in 2003 in Washington, DC). His painting is based on the notion of travel, of transition from one culture to another, from the permanence of this 'double consciousness' studied by W. E. B. Du Bois as early as 1903 in *The Souls of Black Folk*; a 'double consciousness' that Okwui Enwezor made his own, like many intellectuals and artists who live between two cultures and who navigate in this in-between space granted by interculturality (Ifversen 2018). The work of Alexander Skundar Boghossian was also exhibited by Okwui Enwezor in *Postwar*. The curator often worked very faithfully with several artists as if they represented for him both aesthetic and political anchors that allowed him to draw this essential historical thread that constantly connects the past to the present.[3] In the spatial arrangement of the works, pictorial and sculptural forms are juxtaposed with filmic forms, visual and textual archives. The status of each exhibited element is considered in relation to the others. Thus, in one of the exhibition rooms, the film *Les Maîtres fous* (1954) by the French anthropologist Jean Rouch (1917–2004) stands side by side with the bronze sculpture *Killed Horse* (1962) by the South African artist Sydney Kumalo (1935–1988). The wall text accompanying Rouch's film explains: 'This film was banned for 20 years by the colonial powers because of its depiction of the Senegalese ritual of imitation'. The work exists in the exhibition as a visual testimony of rituals that critically mark colonization. The mention of the censorship it has undergone belongs to its history as much as to that of a long history of colonization and decolonization.

It is in the hanging of the works and the installation of the various showcases in the exhibition space that Okwui Enwezor, like any curator, creates a spatial language where the dialogues produce meaning beyond a simple formal approach. In one of the rooms devoted to architecture, the

representations of the Medina, the Kasbah, the Native Quarter, the Township, and the Settler's city are all examples of spatial configurations confronting colonial power and social and economic imbalances. As Enwezor recalls in his conversation with Becker:

> The notion of the West is a fiction. The West does not exist insofar as it represents a body of knowledge to which we are supplements…The artists I've known and have worked with bringing us back to postcolonial in the widest and deepest sense of the word, that is, as the heritage of all of us, because the postcolonial is this place of rupture. We can no longer attempt to articulate the postcolonial as the elsewhere of the West, when in fact, it is the West. It wasn't only Africa that was decolonized; the end of empire was also a process of decolonization.
>
> (Becker and Enwezor 2002, 25)

Making the West a fiction and the postcolonial experience a breaking point gives new breadth to the fields of theoretical and artistic knowledge (Chakrabarty 2000; El-Tayeb 2011; Hassan and Dadi 2001; Sakai 2001). The rupture is only a rupture because it creates new ways of thinking about the history of art and the history of exhibitions. Enwezor gives an adequate response to these cultural interrelationships by confirming that the curator has the responsibility to orient critical thinking by using art as a support:

> The curator who endeavours to leave the institutional area of history and the canon has to risk a little bit. That is to curate within culture is to see art in a totality that is not simply bounded by art history. It is there that we begin to make room for new forms of knowledge, new possibilities of articulating different types of intelligence that are unruly and cannot be disciplined by [the] academic world. That means that often the curator needs to be experimental.
>
> (Becker and Enwezor 2002, 26)

For Okwui Enwezor, curating exhibitions was a way of confronting history, of being a reflection of it. When he was entrusted with the artistic direction of the 11th edition of the *Documenta*, this experimental form that he gave to the making of an exhibition was forcefully revealed.

Documenta11

When *The Short Century* exhibition opened in Munich on 15 February 2001, the *Documenta* project curated by Enwezor was ongoing. While the opening was an important moment for the art of the African continent, the appointment of the first 'non-European', and African, curator at the head of a prestigious international contemporary art event was a decisive turning point for art history. The *Documenta* in Kassel, a monumental exhibition, which, every

five years proposes the discovery of the work of guest artists from cross perspectives, is an exemplary case study for understanding the cultural, diplomatic, and economic mechanisms that have made up the artistic landscape since the second half of the twentieth century, which find expression through the intertwining that is made possible by the interculturality of artists and their production. Created in 1955 in a Germany split between East and West, bearing the fracture of the Cold War, *Documenta* has since followed a path tracing alternative pathways for contemporary art.

The year 1955 was also the date of the Bandung conference, already mentioned above, where, in the midst of decolonization, countries that chose not to belong to either bloc positioned themselves as 'non-aligned' and appropriated the notion of the Third World as an Afro-Asian emancipatory force. In the various editions of *Documenta*, from its creation to the present day, contemporary artistic proposals have been based on discursive and aesthetic forms that are most often progressive. At the same time, however, they exist according to the standards imposed by the art market and art tourism, which sometimes deactivate their initial potential. Okwui Enwezor's *Documenta11* allowed for an unparalleled paradigmatic shift since it was the first global attempt to literally decolonize art history and artistic practices. In an interview with Rex Butler entitled 'Curating the World', published in 2008 in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, Enwezor points out: 'I wanted to begin with the idea that the world rather than Kassel was the central animating factor, and that Kassel was only one platform' (Butler and Enwezor 2008, 18), before adding a little further, as a reminder:

> The art world is shifting. Who could have imagined all that has changed from even ten years ago? Many things are different. Without the 1990s there would not be a global art system. No one thinks Paris or New York is the centre of art anymore (20).

To confirm the paradigm shift of the exhibition itself, Enwezor, with his team of co-curators (Carlos Basualdo, Susanne Ghez, Sarat Maharaj, Ute Meta-Bauer, Octavio Zaya, and Mark Nash), chose to break the event into five platforms, each held in a different city on the European (Vienna, Berlin), Asian (New Delhi), African (Lagos), and American (Saint Lucia) continents, with the fifth platform being the exhibition in Kassel. These platforms and the different places chosen were symbolically arranged according to the philosophical idea of archipelagos enunciated by Édouard Glissant, whose thinking illuminated the platform *Créolité and Creolization* in Saint Lucia. The five platforms were held staggered between March 2001 and September 2002.

In order to understand the theoretical genesis of *Documenta11*, it is important to consider the year 1997, which marked not only the opening of *Documenta X*, under the artistic direction of Catherine David, but also the second Johannesburg Biennial mentioned above. By considering art history, philosophy, sociology, economics, political science, law, ethnology, and

anthropology as critical tools, the 1997 *Documenta* was a vehicle for a theoretical charge that at the same time opened the way to new reflections on art and its process. During the 100 days of the event, Catherine David brought together a conference of artists and intellectuals. Major personalities were invited, notably tutelary figures of postcolonial studies like Edward Said and Gayatri C. Spivak. Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, Abderrahmane Sissako, Raoul Peck (whose 1991 film *Lumumba, The Death of the Prophet* was presented in the exhibition), Ariella Azoulay, Carlos Basualdo, Geeta Kapur, Wole Soyinka, Okwui Enwezor, Étienne Balibar came to speak at this monumental exhibition designed according to an urban itinerary that explored the movements of artists. In the voluminous *Politics/Poetics* catalogue, the chronology begins in 1945, and extracts from literary, philosophical, and theoretical texts of Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Édouard Glissant, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Michel Foucault, and James Clifford literally intermingle with the images of current events and the works reproduced. This was the first time that these names had come together in association with works by artists. Many of the famous authors whose texts are included in the 600 pages of the book are those who, through their literary, political, and social commitment, marked the cultural movements of decolonization. The notion of 'becoming minority', created by Deleuze and Guattari, offers a major epistemological shift when it comes to decentralizing hegemonic positions. This was a time when the use of the Internet was not yet generalized and yet the way the concept of networks is established makes it possible to envisage encounters and interweaving. While *Documenta X* confronted the political potential of art since 1945 with its existence in an ethnocentric Western world, it also helped to anticipate the artistic direction of *Documenta11*, which was structured around the notion of democracy. Interestingly, the final interviews that conclude *DocumentaX*'s book catalogue (David and Chevrier 1997) are those with Étienne Balibar and Jacques Rancière, two philosophers who reflected, in a distinct way, on the contemporary definition of democracy (Balibar et al. 1997; Rancière et al. 1997).

It is this notion of democracy based on the postcolonial question that serves as the springboard for the first platform entitled *Democracy Unrealized*, initiated by Enwezor and his co-curators. Enwezor, in an article published in 2003 entitled 'Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art as a State of Permanent Transition', insisted on the importance of postcolonialism in his critical method as a curator:

> Contemporary art today is refracted, not just from the specific site of culture and history but in a more critical sense, from the standpoint of a complex geopolitical configuration that defines all systems of production and relations of exchange as a consequence of globalization after imperialism. It is this geopolitical configuration and its postimperial transformations that situate what I call here 'the postcolonial constellation'. The changes wrought by transitions to new forms of governmentality and

> institutions, new domains of living and belonging as people and citizens, cultures, and communities, define the postcolonial matrix that shapes the ethics of subjectivity and creativity today.
>
> (Enwezor 2003, 58)

Democracy Unrealized was held in Vienna on 15 March 2001 (while it was still possible to visit *The Short Century* in Munich). Discussions and conclusions continued in Berlin on 9 October 2001, a few days after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, which led to the implementation of repressive policies on a global scale, while the symbolic hope of a renewal with the passage to the twenty-first century was brutally buried. This transformed landscape was no longer only that of art in a postcolonial perspective, but also, and even more importantly, that of historical links revisited in light of the power relationships between the different powers of the globe whose balances were reversed. This platform evoked, on the one hand, a construction of democracy that would be based, among other things, on the origins of the word (Rancière), or on the possibility of thinking of the notion of citizenship as intrinsic to class struggle and freedom (Balibar). On the other hand, there would be a frontal analysis of the process of democratization as totally inherent to global capitalism and how it would determine 'every facet of cultural and political life around the world' (Enwezor et al. 2002a, 13). It is precisely this issue of a pluriversal world view that was raised in the introduction to the publication of the first platform. In trying to define the term 'unrealized', which is attached to that of democracy in the title, the authors stress the imperative of discussing the way in which liberal democracy, in the wake of the Cold War, was presented not only as the best of all systems, but also as the most accomplished and the most complete. The co-curators analysed their project as follows:

> The central impetus of this project is to discuss how liberal democracy has been presented in the post-Cold War setting—not only as the best system but as a totally realized, essentially completed project. From this rather triumphal, post-Cold War perspective, if democracy is to be described as a finished project, it means that no structural changes are conceivable or necessary, that it is complete in all its foundational features—only small technical adjustments and minor tinkering may be needed in future. The logic of this argument can be seen as the technocratic interpretation of the term unrealized, which is seen as fine tuning of democracy procedural methods and due processes that have already been largely settled. This has been the way in which the main Western democracies view themselves—at best, as 'incomplete implementations' of equality and justice on which modern democracy is based, rather than limits, flaws, dead-ends, and problematics inscribed in the principles themselves. In reaction to this presumption, we start from the idea that

> *Democracy Unrealized* is a matter of bringing to light what liberal democracy promises but fails to deliver.
>
> (Enwezor et al. 2002a, 14–15)

It was in accordance with a real political commitment that the event was envisaged; it was not only a question of making the exhibition an artistic encounter, but of considering it in light of radical motivations that study the political, historical, social, and cultural stakes with precision. At the heart of these questionings in relation to democracy are the tools provided by postcolonialism, this 'emergence of the postcolonial state as it grapples with the imperfect legacy of imperialism and colonialism' (Enwezor et al. 2002a, 13). This impasse in democracy as conceived by the West is also underlined by Stuart Hall's essay 'Democracy, Globalization, and Difference', which opens the discussion to a plural approach, to the notion of democracy from which emerges, almost in spite of itself, the discourse on otherness and difference.

Hall begins his essay with an amusing reminder,

> One is tempted to say of democracy what, according to an essay by Immanuel Wallerstein, Mahatma Gandhi said of Western Civilization. 'What do you think of Western Civilization, Mr Gandhi?' someone asked him. To which he replied, 'It would be a good idea'. The organizers of *Documenta11* were wise to recognize that, in relation to the conditions of existence of artistic practice today, few topics are more significant than the fate and future of democracy.
>
> (Hall 2002, 22)

Within the desire for a uniform and globalizing construction of the world, the flaws that appear to emanate, paradoxically, both from those who claim a nation-state and from those who manage to construct critical responses to this unilateral process of economic and cultural instrumentalization. At the very moment when the latter was imposing itself on the world at the end of the Second World War, this same world was unravelling in the wars of independence and decolonization. It is therefore within the context of major political disturbances and transformations, whose painful consequences are often minimized, that the notion of democracy tries to exist in a sometimes fallacious way. The decision to make democracy the subject of the first platform shed new light on the links that could be established between politics and art. The debates raised were also arranged with regard to contemporary artistic production. Students and professors (artists, theoreticians, art historians) of the Wien Akademie of Bildenden Kunst (Vienna Academy of Fine Arts) were also involved in these debates. It should also be remembered that the *Democracy Unrealized* platform was set in the Viennese context of Jörg Haider's Austria and that these exacerbated nationalisms are still visible in a number of European countries today.

The second platform entitled *Experiments with Truth: Transitional Justice and the Processes of Truth and Reconciliation* was held in New Delhi, based on notions that examine the plural experience of truth. The third platform *Créolité and Creolization* took place in January 2002 in the Caribbean, on the island of Saint Lucia; Stuart Hall participated, along with Derek Walcott, the great Caribbean writer whose birthplace is Saint Lucia. Isaac Julien, born in 1960 in London, whose family is also from Saint Lucia, was present as well (Enwezor et al. 2002b).

Held in March 2002, the fourth platform, *Under Siege: Four African Cities*, which was organized in Lagos, questioned the future of large African cities, such as Freetown, Johannesburg, Kinshasa, or Lagos. It was thus in his country of origin that Okwui Enwezor completed an unprecedented theoretical journey. The idea of these platforms was indeed to make a reverse movement: if we consider the context in which all these postcolonial theories were developed, we see that they emanated from intellectuals from non-Western countries who came to Europe or the United States and began to teach and publish there. The importance of travelling to an island in the Caribbean, or going to a city in India or Nigeria to discuss directly on site with thinkers and others interested in the debate, was a novel process that served as a backward reminder of migration movements and key elements of colonial history. As Enwezor constantly reminds us, it is necessary to shift our gaze away from thinking that the centre and the periphery, the North and the South, are constituted solely from the West.

These are all questions that the fifth and final platform of *Documenta11* was attempting to address in the form of an exhibition held in Kassel at five different locations in the city. The experience of the platforms was thus supposed to build a preliminary groundwork for an art event that would welcome around a hundred artists from all over the world and open up an international art space for the first time to 'others', that is, to those from other hemispheres of the globe. The theoretical requirements attached to the form 'exhibition' raise a question: while *Documenta11* is a set of critical questions that lead to an exhibition, does a visit to the exhibition in Kassel provide an opportunity to question the themes addressed in the previous platforms? Does Platform 5, which is the exhibition, open up, thanks to the works, avenues for reflection that resonate with Platforms 1, 2, 3, and 4? In short, does the exhibition, which is in a way the culmination of this process put in place by the curators, allow us to understand, without referring to the discussions that have been held elsewhere in the world, what led to the choice of artists, the works, the locations, the scenography of the exhibition, the different buildings that housed the artistic works and the formal and theoretical correlations among them? Did all the conclusions of the discussions lead to a different way of thinking about the structure of an event like *Documenta*? What concessions were made? How were the notions of space-time thought out? These are the questions that might recur in every study of such large-scale events. While the notion of mobility tends to be emphasized, the

Figure 8.1 Renée Green, *Standardized Octogonal Units for Imagined and Existing Systems*, 2002, Documenta 11, Auepark, Kassel, 2002.

coexistence of proposals, whether they are plastic or filmic, whether they take the form of performance, installation or more traditional hanging, is a spatial parameter of existence. The curators of *Documenta11* selected 109 artists or collectives, a large majority of whom were from non-Western countries or were of non-Western origin but living in the Western world. It is through the pluriversality of perspectives and with these artists that contemporary political thought has been formed.

Terrible nearness of distant places

A guiding thread in Okwui Enwezor's thinking as an intellectual, poet, and curator is the way places, near, and far, are entangled with each other. These near and far places are characterized by the concrete effects of displacement related to desired or forced migration, exile, colonization, the way colonial empires continue to exercise forms of economic, political, or symbolic power over former colonized countries. From the introduction he wrote for the *Documenta11* catalogue (and perhaps even before, but it has not been possible to verify this), Enwezor proposed reflecting on the question 'What is an avant-garde today? The postcolonial aftermath of globalization and the terrible nearness of distant places' (Enwezor 2002, 44). In 2007, the same idea was taken up in the concept he proposed for the second Seville Biennial of Contemporary Art (BIACS 2) entitled *The Unhomely: Phantom Scenes in Global Society*. In its introduction, he says:

> BIACS 2 is thus conceived as an opportunity to address the contradictory logic of distance and proximity that represents the dialectical structure of many artistic procedures of the last decade, by highlighting the participation and engagement of contemporary artists in the deep interrogation of the fundamental historical realignments currently being generated through many forms and activities across the world…The exhibition will examine the ways in which artistic practice seeks to mediate the distinctions between civil society, civic space, and social reciprocity through community and collective activities.
>
> (Enwezor 2007, 14)

The BIACS 2 project was conceived according to three 'framing points': the first point concerns the way intimacy is conceived in terms of representation and space, the second point elaborates the notion of proximity juxtaposed to that of contiguity. However, as Enwezor points out, 'proximity here is not a form of shallow distance, rather it has increasingly become a form of disturbing nearness' (Enwezor 2007, 16). By comparing 'proximity' and 'nearness', two words with the same meaning, Enwezor seeks to differentiate between them by the very spatiality that brings them together, both objectively and subjectively. By evoking intimacy, he also opens up reflection to emotions. Finally, the third point takes into account the first two in order to question the concept of neighbourliness. The exhibition unfolded in the city, and a work such as the banner created by the American artist Renée Green made it possible to synthesize these three points where distance, strangeness, and proximity coexist and repel each other at the same time. On this banner, hung on the balcony of a building in the city, the word 'Bonvenon!' was displayed in large red letters on a blue background. This word of an unknown language is familiar but also foreign. *Bonvenon* means 'welcome' in the universal language Esperanto. By saying 'welcome' in Esperanto, this language without

territory, Renée Green calls out to passers-by in the context of an exhibition whose curator insists on this 'terrible nearness of distant places'. Esperanto represents the utopia of a universal language that is nonetheless foreign to everyone (Figure 8.2).

Okwui Enwezor's 2012 exhibition in Paris confirms this leitmotiv with the way he has created vital connections between near and far. The Triennial held at the Palais de Tokyo is entitled *Intense Proximity*. In the concept paper written in April 2011, one year before the opening of the artistic event, Enwezor brings together the contextual and conceptual approaches behind his vision for la Triennale. By inviting the idea of inhabiting, which becomes a way of thinking about the space one occupies, the distance that separates us from others, the displacement that affects us when existing in a situation in which we are striving to belong, adhering or not to the structures that govern our position as a citizen. The 'measures of home' to which Enwezor refers resemble what he first names in all caps, 'THE BORDERS of France'. 'THE BORDERS,' he writes in his statement, 'are the parts of the territory that present a duality of near and far' (Enwezor 2011). This 'near' and 'far' are joined in the project's title, *Intense Proximity*, and here one feels its tension. This is mostly due to the fact that it springs from an anecdote, mentioned in the opening paragraph of Enwezor's piece, about that relatively evil incident of soup containing meat and pork that was distributed by extreme right-wing organizations to the homeless in 2006, and thereby discriminated against certain religions. Intensity could thus also be 'intrusion'. But the 'BORDERS'

Figure 8.2 Renée Green, *Bonvenon!*, banner from *Climates and Paradoxes*, 2005.

Figure 8.3 Sarkis, *La frise des trésors de guerres* (*The frieze of war treasures*), 2012, in *Intense Proximity*, Triennale, Paris, 2012.

of France are also responsible for its emphasis on cultural movement, shown in the way it values the idea of a 'frontier space' more than a 'national space'. Consider the country, France, where La Triennale takes place. It is a 'national space' that has broadened or expanded over thousands of kilometres and now touches three oceans—Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian. The movement of this 'national space' in terms of 'a physical place' as opposed to a 'frontier space' that acquires 'new contaminated morphologies (local, national, geographical, non-national) constantly' (Enwezor 2011) can be brought to mind perhaps, using this very astute explanation, and considering the specific case of the French Caribbean Islands (*Les Antilles françaises*). In reality, with France's overseas states (Martinique and Guadeloupe are nearly 7,000 kilometres from France) one can say that the 'national space' and the 'frontier space' are interchangeable, one and the same. While being completely beyond the border (*hors frontière)* geographically, they are connected politically, socially, and economically by an ongoing colonial history. However, its distinction is evident in a cultural perspective. It is the Creole language that weaves and preserves the links to memory, the history of slavery, the traces of violence and oppression, the poetry, the spoken and written word, the genealogy, the postcolonial, and the Utopia (Zabunyan 2012a, 2012b).

In the introduction to the anthology published on the occasion of the exhibition, Enwezor provides additional clarification:

> The curatorial proposal of *Intense Proximity* begins with the assumption that the tensions that presently exist between social, cultural, economic, and political systems and their affiliated partisans is a common fact of contemporary multicultural societies. It also recognizes that parts of

> these complex communities and conversations are products of historical events in which processes of migration, colonialism, exile, and expulsion are intimately entangled.
>
> (Enwezor 2012, 21)

When the 56th International Art Exhibition of the Biennale di Venezia opened in May 2015, all these processes listed by Okwui Enwezor were still relevant. That year was marked by the global media coverage of the tragedies related to the tens of thousands of deaths in the Mediterranean. Repeatedly and with an insistence that extended from exhibition to exhibition, Enwezor tirelessly reiterated that the world is forever wounded by these movements of people leaving their countries to try to find refuge in the inhospitable European countries that welcome them in often appalling conditions. In the catalogue, the artistic director of one of the oldest events of international contemporary art (the Venice Biennale was founded at the end of the nineteenth century, in 1895) recalled once again his reasons for making the exhibition a reflection of the world that humanity inhabits. His observation was bitter:

> The global landscape is again in disarray. Today again it is scarred by violent turmoil, panicked by the shadow of economic crisis and viral pandemonium, secessionist politics, and a humanitarian catastrophe on the high seas, deserts, borderlands, as immigrants, refugees, and desperate people seek refuge in seemingly calmer, more prosperous lands. But recent news from elsewhere does suggest that there are no more safe havens… It seems, now, that we live in the terrible wakefulness of new crises, uncertainty, and a deepening insecurity across all regions of the world.
>
> (Enwezor 2015, 18)

The period of profound turmoil he describes, recalling that in advance of this excerpt all the movements of political demands (civil rights movements, anti-colonial projects, feminist struggles since the 1960s) and their impact on the work of artists, writers, filmmakers, composers, musicians, and actors are anchored irremediably to the present. By titling the biennial *All the World's Futures*, Enwezor shows that for him art and artists are at the heart of a historical process that links the past to the present, the present to the future, 'a project devoted to an appraisal of the relationship of art and artists to the current state of things' (Enwezor 2012, 19).

As a journal founder, curator, museum director and poet, Okwui Enwezor worked relentlessly from within the institutional system of art to transform the ways artistic productions are received from countries all over the world—countries that, at some point in their history, have been confronted with colonization, exploitation, oppression, racism, discrimination. Deeply and elegantly linked to the artists with whom he built his path, he made his political and social commitment a successful gamble. By choosing to give artistic

works in museums, biennials or major contemporary art events a critical and political function and by choosing to exhibit artists from all over the world under the same conditions as those imposed by the white cube of the museum, Okwui Enwezor changed the dominant canon and decolonized a history of exhibitions that, until the end of the 1990s, did not yet question the possible entanglements of memory, affects and colonial history. He participated in the creation of a reframed history of art by choosing a world historical perspective and insisting on the fact that European modernity was initiated by its contact with Africa.

An exhibition that he had conceived in 2018 and 2019, which he wanted to see open before the US presidential election of 2020 and was unable to finalize due to his illness before his passing, *Grief and Grievance, Art and Mourning in America*, was inaugurated in February 2021 at the New Museum in New York. A posthumous curatorial experience based on a grand narrative that resonates the most recent events in history with the violence of the past. Art history, as well as the history of exhibitions in the twenty-first century, began with Okwui Enwezor and continues with him, even in his absence.

Notes

1 "Postwar: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945–1965," *Postwar at Haus der* Kunst. Accessed 28 February 2021. https://postwar.hausderkunst.de/en/.

2 In the follow on of the exhibition *Post-war: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945–1965*, Okwui Enwezor had thought of a second part for this post-war period, a major exhibition that he entitled *Postcolonialism*, which will be organized posthumously at the Sharjah Biennale in 2022, https://universes.art/en/sharjah-biennial/2022.

3 Georges Adéagbo exhibited at *The Short Century*, at *Documenta11* and the Paris Triennial; Frédéric Bruly Bouabré exhibited at *The Short Century*, at *Documenta11*; Isaac Julien exhibited at *The Short Century*, at *Documenta11*, the Paris Triennial, the 56th Venice Biennale; Bodys Isek Kingelez exhibited at *The Short Century*, at *Documenta11*; Santu Mofokeng exhibited at *The Short Century*, at *Documenta11*; Yinka Shonibare exhibited at *The Short Century*, at *Documenta11*; Pascale Marthine Tayou exhibited at *The Short Century*, at *Documenta11*; Jane Alexander exhibited at *The Short Century*, at *Documenta11*; Renée Green exhibited at *Documenta11*, at the 2nd Seville Biennale; Adrian Piper exhibited at *Documenta11*, the 2nd Seville Biennale, the Paris Triennial and the 56th Venice Biennale; Trinh T. Minh-ha exhibited at *Documenta11* and the Paris Triennial; Steve McQueen exhibited at *Documenta11* and the 2nd Seville Biennale; Harun Farocki exhibited at the 2nd Seville Biennale and the 56th Venice Biennale.

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Echoes of colonial heritage, visual culture and site-specific art

Chapter 9

Sensitive memories at a World Heritage Site

Silencing and resistance at the Valongo Wharf[1]

Márcia Chuva, Leila Bianchi Aguiar and Brenda Coelho Fonseca

The Valongo Wharf, built in 1811 in the Rio de Janeiro port region, became a World Heritage Site in 2017. It is regarded as a historic archaeological site for sensitive memory because nearly a million enslaved Africans arrived in Brazil through this port. In 1843, a re-urbanization project was carried out to build a new wharf for the arrival of Princess Tereza Cristina de Bourbon who had married D. Pedro II, the Emperor of Brazil, by proxy in Europe. From that moment, the place was called Empress Wharf *(Cais da Imperatriz)*. During early twentieth-century urban reforms and Rio port renovations, the wharf was buried, giving way to the Comércio Square. After landfill renovation work, the area was further from the sea and took on a new character.

In 2011, the different layers of the wharf were unearthed while conducting renovation work for the Porto Maravilha project.[2] This part of the city has been a hub for people of African descent since the first half of the nineteenth century, and in the early twentieth century people started referring to it as Pequena África (Little Africa). The Wharf and other urban locales—such as the Pretos Novos Cemetery, a place where Black Africans were buried in the nineteenth century, which will be addressed in this chapter, and Pedra do Sal, considered the cradle of samba in Rio[3]—are traces and material remains of coloniality (Mignolo 2011). Coloniality is construed as a modern-colonial world system into which nineteenth-century Brazil was inserted. It is based on three tiers: modernity, slavery, and science. In Brazil, slavery was abolished in 1888. However, post-abolition events show that the modern-colonial world system, based on structural racism, still prevails. Racism in Brazil is the rule, not the exception, and is defined as discrimination against racialized people, in other words, those who 'coloniality manufactures as "the other" to be subjected to discrimination, exclusion, exploitation, disdain' (Vergès 2020, 18). Racial discrimination is more than simply a remnant of African slavery; even after the abolition of slavery, no measures were instituted to include formerly enslaved people in society (Araújo 2015). Although segregationist laws have never been enacted, such population groups have been marginalized economically, socially, and culturally. And post-abolition has become a long-lasting period with effects persisting to this day. Racism affecting people of African descent as well as native Indigenous peoples must be construed as

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-12

pertaining to coloniality, which shapes society and turns discriminatory principles into second nature behaviours and actions. Therefore, structural racism can be defined as:

> The hierarchy resulting from racism does not only affect society and its foreign relations—as in colonization—but affects, above all, society's internal structure, defining hierarchical patterns, making historic forms of domination commonplace and justifying state intervention on discriminated groups, which is the case for Black and Indigenous people [4].
>
> (de Almeida, 2018, 139–40)

This chapter considers a strategic understanding of heritage as an action concept, tied to history, seeking to avoid stagnant or essentialist perspectives to analyse Valongo Wharf as multiple pieces of heritage and memories in motion (Smith 2006). It is important to highlight the role played by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the process of recognizing sensitive memories as regards slavery and the transatlantic trade of enslaved Africans. Similarly, the relationships local agents establish with this colonial legacy, defining the experience of facing racism as an axis, manifested directly or indirectly in their statements. In this chapter, their narratives of denunciation and resistance are analysed.

To understand the symbolic meaning of the tensions related to designating the Wharf as a World Heritage Site, we have examined its application dossier, the list of World Heritage Sites selected over the last 20 years, and UN and UNESCO official international documents. For the relationships local agents have established with colonial legacy, priceless empirical material has been collected from interviews conducted between May and December 2019. While selecting interviewees, multiple social criteria and relationships with the port area territory have been taken into account. All interviewees are people of African descent and not representatives of social movements. They are delivering first-hand accounts and claim that their lives have been affected by the process of heritagization of the Wharf. These characteristics can be seen as a direct result of the need to expand processes of listening, producing, and disseminating memories and narratives about the past, highlighted by silencing of racialized groups, one of the many consequences of racism, a structural element of oppression in Brazil. In a context marked by increasing dehumanization and violence mainly targeting Black people, recording interviewees' narratives is ever more relevant because it is akin to keeping a record of stories of resistance and social agents who have been historically silenced (Trouillot 1995). It becomes an important tool for affirming narratives about a past rife with exclusion and violence and for reaffirming the importance of decolonial and anti-racist struggles in the present.

To conduct the interviews, we created flexible scripts. Our opening question addressed the impact of Valongo Wharf heritagization on the lives of

participating subjects and the relationships established with the port area. We decided to keep interviewer remarks to the bare minimum, seeking instead to listen to personal narratives provided by interviewees.[5] Statements by interviewees can be construed as important ways of recording processes to build diverse identities (Santos 2014), and oral history may be regarded as a tool for creating heritage (Thompson 2006). Both offer tools to amplify the participation of subjects directly involved in processes of heritagization. The fact that this material is so rich and specific does not allow for any kind of generalization. Opting for life stories allows for understanding individual narratives, which helps in the broader analyses of societies, as set forth by Paul Thompson (1990), and provides access to subjectivities. Thus, it offers one of the ways to displace centralities, causing discomfort within mainstream opinion and changes in attitude as regards the perspective of decolonization of heritage.

Therefore, while analysing the material, we have focused on Pretos Novos Cemetery and the Wharf. Although there are no paramount public cultural policies targeting the cemetery, narratives by our interviewees have placed it in a central position as the most vocal materiality of the dehumanization process enslaved Africans have been subjected to. The cemetery was found in 1996, long before the Valongo Wharf was located. During the renovations of a house on Pedro Ernesto Street, researchers were able, through archaeological investigations, to locate the burial plots of thousands of slaves. Through 2017, religious and household items were found, in addition to the evidence of 5,563 buried bodies, which have become objects of archaeological studies by researchers at Rio de Janeiro Federal University's National Museum – UFRJ (IPHAN 2017). Maria Merced Guimarães and Petrúcio Guimarães, owners of the house, immediately reported the findings to the city government and decided to convert the property into the Institute of Research and Memory Pretos Novos (IPN), a place displaying archaeological artefacts from the old cemetery, providing exhibitions, offering courses and guided tours on topics related to the diaspora and the presence of people of African descent in the region.[6]

Placing the cemetery and the Wharf in World Heritage debates

In 2017, the Valongo Wharf was registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The decision was based on the VI evaluation criterion, emphasizing the exceptional universal value of the site based on the association between past human rights violations, current resistance, and empowerment of people of African descent. The connections between the transatlantic trade of enslaved Africans, slavery in Brazil, the contemporary Black presence in the port area, and the traumatic and painful memories of that past embodied in the materiality of the Wharf have been highlighted. Advocating for the right to memory for people of African descent and reparation policies for centuries of slavery and racism are the main arguments set forth in the application

dossier for acknowledging Valongo Wharf as a historic site of sensitive memory (IPHAN 2017; UNESCO 2017a) (Figure 9.1).

At the local level, the process of redemocratization of Brazil and the mobilization of Black movements while discussing Brazil's National Constituent Assembly have enabled the passing of laws criminalizing racism and setting up the Palmares Foundation in light of Brazil's 1988 New Federal Constitution. In addition, the Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality (SEPPIR) was founded in the 2000s.[7] In the context of the United Nations (UN), it is important to highlight the Durban Conference held in South Africa in 2001, which placed racism at the centre of international debates. For the first time in history, slavery and the transatlantic trade of enslaved Africans were acknowledged as crimes against humanity. Such crimes are linked to the racism that shapes contemporary societies (UN 2001, 6). At the same event, the international community, and a major Brazilian entourage in Durban, praised UNESCO's Slave Route Project as an important initiative capable of breaking the silence around issues pertaining to slavery and the slave trade. With broad support from African countries, expressed at the 1992 meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), UNESCO has taken up the project in compliance with demands presented by Haiti and Benin (OAU 1992; UNESCO 1993). Since then, a series of actions have been developed by member countries, including Brazil, which have resulted in the Inventory of Sites and Places of Memory of the Atlantic Slave Trade and the History of Enslaved Africans in Brazil[8] (Mattos et al. 2013, 2014).

Figure 9.1 Valongo Wharf. World Heritage dossier submission ceremony on 10 July 2017.

Photo courtesy Oscar Liberal.

There is no doubt that debates held at the level of the UN represent an important change as regards questioning structural racism and implementing public reparation policies at different levels. With regard to Brazil, on the one hand, it is in this context that affirmative actions were carried out by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's administration (2003–2010). On the other hand, the processes of heritagization on a global scale led by a Brazilian federal agency (IPHAN) have insisted on reproducing mainstream narratives about the colonial past by highlighting, under UNESCO's World Heritage seal, sites linked to European, white, and Catholic national portrayal.[9]

The World Heritage List reflects the mainstream heritage view, legitimated and systematically reiterated by UNESCO and its consultative agencies, which validate national narratives guided by the universal modern paradigm (Smith 2006). According to Laurajane Smith, the listing creates meanings, '[t]he listing process creates or recreates sites as universally important and meaningful' (2006, 99). Her criticism fits the perspective of coloniality: what is regarded as universal, in fact, expresses Western modernity (Mignolo 2011). The meeting celebrating the 30th anniversary of the 1972 World Heritage Convention has not set the stage for confronting mainstream narratives nor have there been voices echoing the debates held in Durban the year before (UNESCO 2002, 7). Over the past 20 years, even though the largest number of registered sites come from European countries, there has been an increase in enrolments from countries belonging to the 'peripheral' regions.[10] However, monumental, aesthetic, and Eurocentric elements are still paramount on UNESCO's list.[11]

The Valongo Wharf case exposes the tensions and disputes surrounding heritage processes on local and global scales. As noted by Simone Vassallo and André Cicalo, local conflicts and the multiple points of view surrounding the candidacy of Valongo Wharf have been concealed by the consensus built for its recognition as a World Heritage Site (2015, 255). The final text submitted to UNESCO can be analysed in the context of its drafting as a result of provisional agreements between heterogeneous views and power relations at stake, between different agents and institutions. In this process, the performance of Black movements, researchers and two government institutions must be emphasized: the Palmares Foundation and the Secretariat for Racial Equality, at the time headed by Eloi Ferreira Araújo and Luiza Bairros, important Black militants who did significant work in the 1980s.

Although the World Heritage title granted to Valongo Wharf represents an effort to overcome mainstream opinions, which have been permeating national and international preservation policies, its materiality and aesthetic value have been strongly emphasized with its candidacy. Excluding Pretos Novos Cemetery from the central area set for protection, placing it only on the site's heritage 'buffer zone',[12] shows there is still a lot of work to do to overcome mainstream narratives. Such designation highlights the secondary place the cemetery holds in the heritagization process, reinforcing the more than a decade-long silencing practices since finding the remains of enslaved

Africans.[13] For example, the 2016 International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) report silenced the voices of history by suggesting that

> solely the elements which the site can represent within its boundaries by critically reviewing the contribution and inclusion of elements such [as] the quarantine facilities, store houses, market of enslaved people and the New African Cemetery, which do not seem localized within the present boundaries or are not known or represented in archaeological remains.
> (ICOMOS 2016, 2)

Such silencing can also be seen in a quick review of the iconography built into the application submitted to UNESCO in which only one image refers to Pretos Novos Cemetery: a general plan of the area dated 1791. This fact is important since visual resources were key while drafting the dossier, which results in a vast amount of iconographic material including photographs, plans, maps, drawings, and caricatures. The photographs are noteworthy both for the amount (137 photographs) and for the technical and aesthetic care. The absence of images of the cemetery contrasts with the countless photographs of the wharf. Considering the area that makes up the site's buffer zone, there are, for example, two photographs of Pedra do Sal, one of the Hanging Garden of Valongo, and one of D. Pedro II Dock Building.

The emphasis given to the wharf's aesthetics exposes the relationship between the race for World Heritage status and the international tourism industry (Peixoto 2002). The UNESCO advisory agency, by focusing the explanation to register the Wharf (silencing other places of sensitive memories) and its connection with the seafront, demonstrates the strong tourist appeal of heritagization. Setting up a landscape project that recovers this lost relationship with twentieth-century urban reforms, as suggested by ICOMOS (2017), ensures the inclusion of Valongo Wharf in the international tourist itinerary, based on a pacifying aesthetic heritage. Such an aestheticized image stands in opposition to the discomfort caused by the archaeological remains of Pretos Novos Cemetery, which reveals the mortal remains of enslaved Africans and the still-open wounds of colonialism in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Pretos Novos Cemetery: between silencing and resistance

The presence of slavery and African heritage have been systematically erased in Rio de Janeiro. Although throughout the nineteenth century, the city was home to the main landing port for enslaved people in the world, there are few references to Africans and African descendants in the territory. Policies for preservation of cultural heritage in this city are still geared towards references to a European heritage, such as properties linked to public management, Catholic religion, and military defence. Thus, the treatment given to Pretos

Novos Cemetery, where those who died upon arrival at Valongo Wharf or who died in the required quarantine were eventually buried, is an example of silencing material references in history. The cemetery was part of a complex that included the wharf and warehouses where enslaved people were traded. Estimates suggest that during the last six years of operation, more than a thousand people had been buried each year (Pereira 2007). After the ban on the trade of enslaved Africans,[14] the cemetery became a place for disposal and accumulation of garbage. In the late nineteenth century, the area was taken over by buildings due to urban expansion (Tavares 2012) (Figures 9.2 and 9.3).

In the interviews, the impact of finding the cemetery is profound. To the point of changing career paths of some interviewees and engaging them, at different levels of commitment, to actions geared towards building memories about the diaspora and their ancestors. Actor and cultural producer Hilton Cobra served as director of Cultural Center José Bonifácio (CCJB) in the port area from 1993 to 2000.[15] He is the founder of Cia. dos Comuns (theatre group), coordinator of the National Forum of Black Performance and former president of the Palmares Foundation (2013–2014). He refers to the region of Pretos Novos Cemetery as 'the heart of the birthplace of Rio de Janeiro, there in the heart of Black deaths, Black burials when enslaved people would arrive; they were enslaved, never slaves'. He is proud of having worked towards transforming the house where the first remains were found.

> Merced's family, the whole family, the girls, her husband and Merced herself, said: 'I'm here digging a treasure. It has to be made available.' … And it was remarkably interesting. Down here, there was earth. Here,

Figure 9.2 Pretos Novos Cemetery on 10 January 2021.
Photo courtesy Isabel Palmeira.

Figure 9.3 Pretos Novos Cemetery on 10 January 2021. Detail of the archaeological showcase displaying buried bodies.

Photo courtesy Isabel Palmeira.

> there were mortal remains. Here, there were ornaments. Here, there was earth. Here, there were bones. Here, there were ornaments. It was like that. It was like that. I mean, it is still like that! … I do not remember exactly what I did, I know I did a lot of work with Merced, so that she could turn that project into what it is today, even though what it is today gets no recognition.

Participating in this project and working as director of a cultural centre in the port region were remarkable experiences in his career: 'It was really more than a job, it was an extraordinary learning experience, I have learned you have to be generous, offering your work to something deeply significant'. During the interview, he emphasized that the traces of colonial slavocrat past and the experiences of people of African descent in the area surrounding the Wharf are important references for residents. Also, he discusses the lack of actions targeted at building and sharing silenced memories:

> People who live there, those people look up to this history of the Black world as a reference for their lives…. I would say that the day we make it, I keep saying we, Black people, must create this circuit and revitalize the area to our own benefit—which has been renovated just for them—we will have a Rio de Janeiro, which is 'more better', let's just say it is going to be 'more better', more beautiful, more delicious, more enjoyable with that evident culture, fully exposed.

Cláudio Honorato is a historian and research coordinator at IPN.[16] He first visited the port area as an undergraduate student for a pedagogical research project on enslaved people in the region in the nineteenth century. He comments there was little interaction with the area: 'And, as an undergraduate student, I continued to do research on the port area with no interaction here in the port area. As most researchers do, right?' However, his visit to the cemetery to record an interview in 2007 would develop into an invitation to work as a researcher at the institute, where he still holds a position to this day.

> Then, my relationship with the port area grew ever more engaging. I started working here at IPN. Then, we set up *Caminhos da Escravidão* (Paths of slavery). As universities wished to learn more about the area, they have asked us to make a route. Then, I have made a huge route starting at Praça XV and ending here.

Cláudio Honorato refers to *Paths of Slavery*, a project he calls pedagogical tourism, which he created in partnership with other IPN researchers. The route's itinerary runs through streets in the port region and includes places, such as Santa Rita Church, Prainha Square, São Francisco da Prainha Church, João da Baiana Square, the Hanging Garden of Valongo, Pedra do Sal, Depósito Square, Harmonia Square, Nossa Senhora da Saúde Church, Cultural Center José Bonifácio, Valongo Wharf, the market where humans were bought and sold, and IPN—Pretos Novos archaeological site. IPN's central role in building traumatic memories on the diaspora is voiced in accounts by our interviewees in stark contrast to the little attention governmental officials pay to this archaeological site. As a professor and historian who changed the course of his professional life after visiting the cemetery, Cláudio Honorato states: 'Within this process, I identify IPN as one of the greatest guardians of memory, of history in the port area, because it all started there.' Everyone believes there is a need to expand the impact of this finding since thousands of bodies and artefacts have been found here, they embody, in a unique way, the violence of diaspora and show the fate of many enslaved Africans. According to Hilton Cobra:

> When you discover an archaeological site that big and in a place like that, governments should protect it, actually enclose it. The place is more than vital to our Black lives. Extraordinary archaeological studies would have to be made available. And those officials, all of them, secretaries, mayors, do not fully understand what that means. And they do not understand the damage resulting from the fact that Merced's project is not fully successful nowadays. If we consider that samba schools have been born there, in that place, that the first enslaved people arrived right there at that wharf, the first enslaved people were buried there, on Pedro Ernesto Street, all that area.

Although remembrance is very painful, it can be built up through studies of the burials. It can become a source for raising awareness on racial issues in modern day Brazil and an inspiration for resistance. Born in the port area where she still lives to this day, private teacher, and school inspector at a municipal school in the region, Ana Aparecida Guimarães da Silva has extensive experience as a resident and worker in the area.[17] She is quite proud of the growing appreciation of the 'history of her ancestors':

> With Pretos Novos, you know, many children's corpses, corpses of sick people, you know, were thrown and buried that way. So, it was akin to a second Holocaust…. Both those holocausts represent an incredibly sad part of history: slavery and the slave trade, but I feel proud. I like being Black, I want to be Black.

It is important to note that even when referring to events prior to the Second World War, Ana has used the term 'second Holocaust' to demonstrate all the horror involved in slavocrat practices, especially embodied in Pretos Novos Cemetery where many of the bodies of victims of the African diaspora have been found. According to her, the fact that thousands of enslaved people who did not survive mistreatment and the unhealthy environment in the crossing from the African Coast to the city of Rio de Janeiro and were not granted a decent burial is akin to a 'second Holocaust'. She is trying to emphasize the genocide and trauma linked to a historic event that is still silenced.

Our interviewees were acutely aware of the role finding the cemetery has played and the actions to promote IPN in building narratives on the diaspora and processes of redefining blackness towards racial ethnic empowerment. Such awareness contrasts with the limited actions taken by the authorities to preserve it and include it as a part of the history of the area, either by promotion of the site or by funding research. Among the many causes for silencing and neglect towards places of traumatic memories, such as the old cemetery, the continuities between a past and a present of exclusion and violence, the actions of racialization stand out and run deep in the structure of Brazilian society. Similarly, the intrinsic genetic memory in the buried bodies of diaspora victims and its long-term traumatic effects have remained concealed. For a better understanding of this phenomenon, we turn to Valongo Wharf's process of heritagization and the forms of appropriation and resignification of the place when it was turned into a material and symbolic representation of such sensitive memory.

Valongo Wharf: blackness, identities, belonging

The finding of Valongo Wharf and its later heritagization by UNESCO, associated with major renovation work carried out in the port area aimed at having the government create new leisure and tourist places, has caused

different impacts on our interviewees. Mônica Lima e Souza has academic standing as a professor at UFRJ.[18] She holds a PhD in History and is specialized in African History and was very involved in drafting Valongo Wharf's World Heritage dossier as one of the research team members. Along with her as the historian, anthropologist Milton Guran and architect José Pessoa were part of the group. She has taken on a mediating role between the academic world, the institutional world (IPHAN–UNESCO), and social movements utilizing her ability to listen and her good relationship with representatives of Black movements, especially members of Quilombo Pedra do Sal who attended public meetings and negotiations.[19] Mônica Lima found as she contacted sources during the research process that the 'dimension of pain was fundamental to conceptualizing Valongo Wharf as a historic site of sensitive memory'. According to her, 'nothing in that history was something easy or simple to tell'. She believes that the experience changed her and helped her confront her own story:

> Valongo has also meant an encounter, it meant facing myself, my roots, my stories…. So, today, I just think that area is my area, it is my constituency, I have taken that history as part of my own story.

Another interviewee is Celina Maria Rodrigues de Almeida, Yalorixá Mãe Celina de Xangô, priestess of Candomblé.[20] Since 2007, she has been a coordinator at the Cultural Centre Pequena África located in the Rio de Janeiro port region where she has lived for a few years now after having come from São Gonçalo, a metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro. Since the 1980s, she often came to the port region to work as a radio broadcaster for Rádio Nacional, located in Mauá Square. She has a personal, religious, and professional relationship with the region. She was directly involved with the research work carried out on Valongo Wharf as a religious consultant providing ancestral knowledge to help identify objects found in the area. Her work on the site came as an invitation by head archaeologist, Tania Andrade Lima, who recognizes her religious knowledge as a path to horizontal dialogue between knowledges (Lima 2013). Celina Maria's first words at the site were 'My God, what am I doing here in this place!' She adds:

> It was my great challenge as a *mãe de santo* [priestess of Candomblé], to set foot in that place, at Valongo Wharf. That was the place where I started over. That was when I truly felt it was my mission. First, to know where I came from, who I am, and where I am going.

Mãe Celina regrets the neglect by public authorities towards the pieces collected on the site: 'I am very sad because two hundred years of our history has been buried, has emerged, and, unfortunately, there is no place to tell the history of slavery'. And she takes ownership of that silenced history:

> If I do not believe that there, that area, that place, even as a *mãe de santo*, as a Black woman, from a Black family, what am I going to believe in? When I first set foot there, I heard Xango's [Orisha in Yoruba culture known for his powerful axe] voice in my ear going like this: 'your answer is right here'. And so, I have found the answer. So, it meant a grand fresh start, a fresh start on history, a fresh start.

Ana Aparecida Guimarães da Silva speaks with intimacy about the territory. This was her childhood playground with no reference to Valongo Wharf, which does not appear in her memories. However, the theme of African heritage has grown more important in the context of revealing the Wharf remains and undertaking major reforms in the port area in 2011. Ana's narrative underpins the dimension of pain revealed when she says that 'it touches the human heart, one of your ancestors right there [at the cemetery]. Who knows if one of them is family? Certainly, we are the result of miscegenation'.

Her narrative shows evidence of a self-transforming attitude, building a sense of belonging within history related to the arrival of Black people at the Wharf. She says:

> I am still part of history, I feel that it cannot come to an end, Black people's history cannot come to an end. They are the ones who have come, built, and been prevented from entering the places they built, right?

Brazil built its wealth on the backs of enslaved people with a complete disregard to their humanity, and the enslaved have been expropriated and excluded from history. Transforming the Wharf into a piece of merchandise in which the enslaved have been placed as subjects of history does not comply with the end of the process of enslavement. However, resistance against silencing memories of struggle and gradually implementing reparation measures is a daily exercise performed by African descendants in Brazil over the long post-abolition period. Ana Aparecida Guimarães da Silva has also spoken of the positivity of Black bodies because she is gaining appreciation of the physical traits of her blackness: 'Oh, each passing day, we have been showing ourselves more appreciation, we have been letting our hair grow naturally, [it's] so good growing our hair the way it is'. According to Nilma Lino Gomes (2002), curly hair shows blackness on bodies, as Black identity is materialized and embodied. Hair and body affirmation for Black people is also a strategy of resistance.

The three women interviewed, Mônica Lima e Souza, Celina Maria Rodrigues de Almeida, and Ana Aparecida Guimarães da Silva, reveal a process of identity building as it relates to their blackness when talking about themselves by following a common path: direct contact with the dimension of suffering caused by slavery is felt as their own pain. And, in light of this,

they see themselves as part of history, taking on a decolonial attitude that breaks away from mainstream silencing.

Becoming part of Brazilian history, these women seeing themselves as subjects of history, means building a broader belonging to the nation 'they have built and have been prevented from entering', as Ana Aparecida said. Similarly, Mônica Lima, upon acknowledging that this history is also her own, claims 'I have embraced this history as part of my own story'. And Mãe Celina said that it has drastically changed her life and given her 'a grand fresh start, a fresh start on history'. Overall, being included in history comes as a finding, a rite of recognition to the pain experienced by their ancestors, which mirrors their own stories. Such finding shows the structural absence of Black people in narratives about the Brazilian past.

Heritage and memories on the move

The historic singularity in the process of shaping structural racism in Brazil manifests itself in racial democracy ideology. With his work *The Masters and the Slaves*, published in 1933, Gilberto Freyre ([1933] 1995) systematized theories on racial democracy that had been discussed since the late nineteenth century and gained great effect and longevity in Brazilian social thought. Freyre described violence and inequality as circumstantial and not structural in colonial society, when referring to miscegenation processes between white, Black, and Indigenous people, which resulted in a mixed-race population and harmonious social relations (Castelo 1998). Kabengele Munanga, questioning Freyre's theses, states that 'miscegenation underpins discriminatory expectations because Black people are supposed to become light-skinned, instead of being accepted as they are' (2010, 450). According to Silvio Luiz de Almeida (2018), racial democracy ideology has rendered bodies domesticated and made commonplace unequal ways of living.

Humanization processes, which were unthinkable when slavery was legal, Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) suggests that to this day they carry ambiguities related to possible reality as seen in our interviewees' narratives. What is deemed unthinkable in the mainstream worldview prevails to the detriment of facts. In other words, although racial discrimination is a non-bailable offence in Brazil, in real terms it has been incorporated, recognized, naturalized and, therefore, in most cases, it has become invisible, unprecedented, silenced. Despite referring to another temporality and context, Trouillot's statement seems to refer to present-day Brazil: 'Worldview wins over the facts: white hegemony is natural and taken for granted; any alternative is still in the domain of the unthinkable' (1995, 93). Racial ethnic empowerment, which may occur because of racialization contexts, is the result of displacements that have taken place within the scope of subjectivity establishing a connection to an envisioned collective be it Black women, Black movements, the Brazilian nation. Manifested in resistance to discrimination, Black people created a narrative for racial identity in which

phenotypic traits have been turned into something positive and have become a way of affirmation for people, that is, voices aware of their power.

The Rio de Janeiro port region is also known as Little Africa because of the massive presence of African descendants. The area has been recognized as the birthplace of Rio-native samba because of the samba circles (*rodas de samba*) held there accompanied by Black musicians, composers of this new rhythm.[21]

Archaeological excavations that resulted in exposing the remains of Pretos Novos Cemetery since the 1990s and the Valongo Wharf since 2011 have caused varied effects. Urban reform planners had not foreseen some of those effects in the region, such as new forms of cultural appropriation increasingly seeking to update the memory of blackness in the territory. Such memory has been progressively silenced throughout the twentieth century by means of deterioration and neglect of the port area as well as marginalization of local population. However, there are countless performances taking place in that area, reinforcing the Black territorialities defined by Little Africa, such as physical, symbolic violence as well as resistance. Among those, we highlight washing the Wharf *(lavagem do Cais)* held once a year by D. Celina and two other priestesses of Candomblé and the frequent capoeira circles (*rodas de capoeira*), on the stones around the Wharf.[22] Carnival parades for *blocos*—organized, often theme-based, groups that come together to party during Carnival—such as Escravos da Mauá and Prata Preta can also be mentioned as they occupy places of great symbolic value for the memory of Black people's struggle, in the same way CCJB, by Hilton Cobra, and Harmonia Square, by Claudio Honorato, are mentioned.[23] Frequent guided tours in the African Heritage Circuit of a touristic or pedagogical nature are still some of the performances that keep the streets in the region bustling.[24] Resistance is also expressed in the struggle of Quilombo da Pedra do Sal whose former residents remained in their homes, even after gentrification because of the major urban reform carried out in the area by the Porto Maravilha project. All those manifestations demonstrate how vibrant African-based cultural expressions are in many symbolic places. The exercise of listening, via oral history, has enabled us to show the presence of plural, contradictory stories, neutralizing the single history stemming from silencing actions. Therefore, it has also offered new meanings to vestiges recognized as colonial heritage, favouring decolonization movements, which are multiple and diverse.

Throughout this chapter, the secondary aspect of Pretos Novos Cemetery was analysed despite all the evidence that it was a key part of the complex spearheaded by Valongo Wharf, revealing tensions and disputes in the process of heritagization on local and global scales. This operation, in turn, was opposed to the narratives of the people whose voices highlighted the importance of encountering the discomfort and pain the cemetery evokes. There are multiple pieces of heritage and memories in motion, forging stories of racial ethnic empowerment, inclusion, and belonging while also creating stories of exclusion, whitening, and the strength of economic power.

Building narratives on ancestry and the African presence in Brazil, as well as the very conditions of existence related to race, belong to processes of empowerment and belonging, as shown by our interviewees' statements. They are expressions of the anti-racist struggle, as a tactic or subversion (Certeau 1984) and to incorporate new practices of resistance based on facing discrimination.

Notes

1 This work forms part of the ECHOES project which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 770248.
2 Porto Maravilha was a great undertaking carried out by the government in the Rio de Janeiro port area. The project aimed at a tourist boom expected for the 2016 Olympics and 2014 World Cup. It caused a brutal transformation in the area. See Maria Lucia Borges de Faria (2016).
3 Pedra do Sal is a large stone with stairs carved by enslaved people in the nineteenth century. In 1986, Pedra do Sal was hailed as a monument for Black culture by the Rio de Janeiro's Institute of Cultural Heritage (INEPAC, acronym in Brazilian Portuguese). That was the first and only act of recognition of the presence of Black culture in the port area.
4 All translations are our own unless otherwise noted.
5 The interviews were conducted by Brenda Coelho, Keila Grinberg, Isabel Palmeira, Leila Aguiar, Márcia Chuva, and Tâmisa Caduda. Interviewees chose the location of the interviews, which was meant to make them feel more comfortable. Interviews lasted from 50 to 120 minutes. Edited versions of the interviews are available on the website for University of Coimbra's Centre for Social Studies (CES): https://www.ces.uc.pt/echoes-wp4/lifestories
6 An interview with Merced Guimarães was conducted by researchers from Fluminense Federal University's Oral History and Historiography Laboratory (LABHOI). Another interview is available: "Merced Guimarães relata a crueldade da história do maior cemitério de escravos das Américas," *Youtube*, 8 March 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bo1rQJAs5xs&t=114s
7 Brazil's SEPPIR was founded in 2003 under President Lula da Silva's administration. In 2015, it was incorporated into the Ministry of Women, Racial Equality and Human Rights. During President Bolsonaro's administration, Sérgio Camargo, President of the Palmares Cultural Foundation, has been working actively against Black movements. Therefore, by Presidential design, the Palmares Foundation no longer serves its founding purposes.
8 Milton Guran served on the Slave Route Project's Scientific Committee while drafting of the inventory was under way. In 2015, he took office as Coordinator for the Working Group on Valongo Wharf's candidacy.
9 Amongst the fifteen Brazilian inscriptions on the World Heritage List, other than the Valongo Wharf, there are ten colonial cities and colonial Catholic buildings, two sites of modern architecture, one archaeological park with millennia-old cave paintings, and Rio de Janeiro as cultural landscape. For further information, please refer to "Patrimônio Mundial," *IPHAN*. Accessed 4 March 2021. http://portal.iphan.gov.br/pagina/detalhes/24.
10 Survey carried out by the authors on UNESCO's website in July 2020. "World Heritage List," *UNESCO*. Accessed 4 March 2021. https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/.
11 Registering the Angolan site Mbanza Kongo in the same year as the Wharf is a good example of keeping mainstream narratives. The former Kongo kingdom,

which played a crucial role in the trade of enslaved Africans, was recognized as a World Heritage Site due to the emphasis on Portuguese presence and as a gateway to Christianity on the African continent (République d'Angola 2016).

12 A 'buffer zone' is 'an area surrounding the nominated property that has complementary legal and/or customary restrictions placed on its use and development to give an added layer of protection to the property. This should include the immediate setting of the nominated property, important views and other areas or attributes that are functionally important as a support to the property and its protection' (UNESCO 2017b, 30).

13 In 2011, the central role played by the Wharf in the Historic and Archaeological Circuit to Celebrate African Heritage, created by a decree enacted by the City of Rio de Janeiro, was subjected to criticism by Black movements, especially because the cemetery was once again overlooked (Vassallo and Cicalo 2015, 258).

14 In 1831, the Brazilian Congress enacted the Feijó Law, which set forth that all enslaved people who entered Brazilian territory by land or through ports, coming from abroad, would be free. This law, however, was not properly followed. Therefore, the international trade of enslaved Africans in Brazil was only brought to an end in 1850 upon passing of the Eusébio de Queiroz Law.

15. Interview conducted with Hilton Cobra in December 2019 in the gardens of Chácara do Céu Museum. CCJB was set up in 1986. During the 1990s, under the management of Hilton Cobra, it became a reference centre for Afro-Brazilian culture. Over that period, Cobra was responsible for setting up a series of shows and exhibitions with Black artists and issues related to blackness as well as organizing a bibliographic collection related to Afro-Brazilian culture.

16 Interview conducted in August 2019 at IPN.

17 Interview conducted in December 2019 at her home.

18 Interview conducted in December 2019 at UFRJ History Institute.

19 Quilombo Pedra do Sal, located in the Rio de Janeiro port region, is an area listed by Palmares Foundation as a remaining *quilombo* community. Located on the large stone with stairs carved in the nineteenth century by enslaved people, it was granted protection as a Black culture monument in 1986.

20 Interview conducted in June 2019 at her home.

21 Among them Donga, Pixinguinha, João da Bahiana. For further information on the history of samba in Rio de Janeiro, refer to Martha Abreu (2017).

22 Priestesses of Candomblé who joined are Mãe Edelzuita de Oxaguian, Mãe Beata de Iemanjá, as well as Mãe Celina de Xangô.

23 In his interview, Claudio Honorato has referred to Harmonia Square as a place of historic urban uprisings, such as the 1904 *Revolta da Vacina* (Vaccine revolt), when the population refused to be vaccinated against smallpox. People have set up barricades in that square and several other areas in the city. For further information on the subject, refer to Nicolau Sevcenko (1983).

24 For some of those circuits and highlights, see "Passados Presentes: Memories of Slavery in Brazil," *Pasts Presents – Memories of Slavery in Brazil*. Accessed 4 March 2021. http://passadospresentes.com.br/site/Site/index.php

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Chapter 10

Traces of contempt and traces of self-esteem

Deconstructing our toxic colonial legacy

Dalila Mahdjoub, translated from French by Shirley Lambert

As the Senegalese scholar, musician and writer Felwine Sarr has written: 'Colonization has left substantial traces on self-esteem… There is a plethora of stigma we have to work through to re-articulate a favourable and fertile presence in the world and to retake ownership of ourselves' (Sarr 2016, 89). Sarr's words resonate well beyond the borders of Africa. These words echoed a diffuse and devastating feeling deep inside me. I feel a sense of urgency to deconstruct these stratified traces of internalized contempt in order to neutralize them. These 'traces of contempt'—the residue of an alleged superiority of one human group over another human group—could be similar to the dust of the nano-racism described by Achille Mbembe (2016). This 'narcotic form of the prejudice of color, which is expressed in seemingly innocuous everyday gestures, in the course of a nothing, an apparently unconscious remark, a quip, an allusion, an insinuation, a slip, a joke, an innuendo'. Or as Raoul Peck describes it: '"Light" racism is also racism. It hurts just as much. Especially when it persists innocently and builds up' (Peck 2020, 25).

It is from this uncertain and vague place in some region of my head where these little traces of contempt accumulate that the matrix of my work as an artist is formed. A place where images, stories—sound or video—of my loved ones mingle, and archives that do not directly affect me, the whole constituting my bitter-deposit to be deconstructed. My 'pharmacy' of Fanon, Baldwin, Mbembe, and Sarr offers me tools-concepts to deconstruct and build my archives-works (Phay 2016). There is for me something in all of this on the order of vomiting (Baldwin 1975), as if to purge myself of filth, to free myself of it and to reconcile with me and mine. I place—here—four fragments of an unfinished/in process inventory, the off-screen of my past or future creations, overseen by my portmanteau of words (Sarr 2016). It is from a few snippets of family stories that I will try to understand the roots of a cumbersome and instinctual violence that overwhelmed my father despite himself and that I found as something normal in the majority of immigrant men in our neighbourhood. I did not want to resign myself to this idea, which I sometimes heard from my mother's lips, that the French were more civilized than us and thus had the monopoly on gentleness, kindness, and good manners. My intention rather is to pull the threads back to the roots of this violence, to

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-13

Figure 10.1 *I have the pleasure…* Drawing in black ink and soft pencil 0.05 mm on tissue paper, photograph. Papiers de soi(e) series. Format 50 x 32.9 cm, 2017.

what made my parents come to this country where they were neither awaited nor wanted. Thus, the method put to use here is (auto-)biographical and multi-vocal, presenting the testimonies of different family members whose experiences bear witness to everyday racism—past and present—through their own wordings and framings (Figure 10.1).

Go To Ben-Bella

Said Mahdjoub

This passage is taken from a series of interviews with my father between February and July 2003 when he agreed to be filmed. A small DV (digital video) camera, placed on a stand, filmed while my father, who was in his appointed seat in the corner of the black leather couch, in the high-rise apartment at Champs-montant, told the stories of his work between France and Algeria with precision and fluidity. I was working then on the Sonacotra project.[1] The specific time we chose corresponded to his return to France at the end of 1964. His first stay for work began in the fall of 1956, after his father and older brother had forced him to leave the Koranic school to guard the sheep. He was then about seventeen. At the end of 1962, after Algeria's independence, he 'returned definitively'. Very quickly, driven by poverty, he made arrangements for a new return to France at the end of 1964. He found himself in a room in the Foyer Sonacotra in Sochaux, specifying, 'I lived on

the eighth floor'. At that time, the doors to work were closing. This moment started with a dream. The dream of a voice, on a Monday morning, while he was still asleep.

> One Sunday afternoon I was sitting with some friends from the Foyer Sonacotra. And I told them, as we Arabs say, 'Someone who does good and who has not done evil, the good God he has done something good for him! Me, I did nothing wrong and the good God he has done nothing but wrong! I don't know why!' And I was pissed off. And I said to them, 'My word, if tomorrow "I'm not hiring", the day after tomorrow I won't spend the night here!' And that was true! And where will you go? I was going to go to one of my brothers, Said, in Port-de-Bouc. And I didn't know the region, I thought I would find work there, but there was none. Luckily I didn't go. I had sworn, and I was going to go. I had just enough money. I was counting on the room that I was going to give back and get back my deposit. And I was going to go with the few pennies I had left. I wanted to go to Said and perhaps I would find some work there? The good God had decided that my fate was here. We went to sleep there that night. I in my room! Very early Monday morning, the others hadn't got up yet for work, and someone came to see me, someone came to me, I didn't see him, I was still asleep, someone was with me and was talking to me, 'Get up and go to work!' I told him, 'No! For me there is no work!' He said to me, 'Yes! There's work at Leroy's! There's none at the other place!' Like that! I said, 'No, Leroy—he made me work four days and after that he told me there wasn't any!' He told me, 'I told you Leroy's! There's none at the other place!' Twice! I was startled, I woke up, and I realized I was alone! No one! All alone!
>
> I went back on foot to Sochaux … I arrived at the roundabout—at that time there was a store there called Suma, a department store instead of Daguet, a store/supermarket—it didn't close at noon. I went in and bought a baguette and a piece of Gervais cheese and a bottle of water … I told myself, I'll eat and go back out this afternoon and make another round of the offices in this neighbourhood … If I find work, good; if I don't find any, I'll go see Mr. Mafa and ask for my deposit, and I'll go join my brother the same day! I came home, my aunt's son asked me if I had been hired … I told him, 'No, nothing at all!' He said, 'So will you leave this evening?' Wait, I still have this afternoon, I'll make another round, and if there's nothing, I swear I won't spend another night here! And it was true. And first of all, leave me alone! I was angry. Several residents were there and were eating a *marga* (stew) with meat, they invited me to come and eat with them. I told them no! I'm not eating. They asked me why … I told them God had given me cheese and some bread. I would eat the cheese and bread that were mine! You, He has given you work! Me, in spite of my hands, there is no work! And so, I am eating my

bread and my cheese! I'm not eating with you! They insisted, I said NO! I put down my cheese and bread and ate, then I drank a coffee.

And they left to go to work and me, I went to Sochaux. I had already passed by Héricourt, I went to an office … I was still on the sidewalk—that day, I was no longer just looking to get hired, I intended to get angry! I was angry. I didn't even realize what I was doing—I got to this office … He said, 'Leave!' sweeping the air with a wave of the back of his right hand. Heck no, I'm coming in! I was in, and I was angry! When I was inside, he said, 'Why did you come in, I told you to leave!' I said to him, 'Why, is it forbidden to walk on the sidewalk?' He said, '"Algerians like you", they come here to ask for work!' Well, no, I came to have a walk! And then you, you tell me to leave! You don't have 'the' right! And I didn't come to ask you for a job! I came for a walk! And I have the right to walk on the sidewalk! It's for the town, not for you! I made quite a scene. He said to me, 'Go on, leave.' I left there and rubbed it in by going to the next office, 'it makes no difference'. I wasn't looking for a job! At that moment I was just looking to shout my head off.

At any rate, they didn't want to give me a job. Because in the last few days, when I went to see them, they told me 'Go to Ben-Bella!' And yes, today, I had only my anger to pour out on them, and I would go from there! I wouldn't be working for them! I didn't want to anymore! That day my anger got in front of my steps! It preceded me! Rage was overwhelming me! I got angry in all three offices there … And I came back to Sochaux, I arrived at the brasserie—there was no autoroute at that time, the route for Belfort was the one that passed by Vieux-Charmont—I had heard that there was a boss called Sodrac, those who wanted to work, he would hire them. I told myself, I'm going to go round by his place to see if he wants to give me a job … And if he doesn't hire me, it's the last one. I'll come home to put my stuff away, and I'll leave. But I wasn't done! I got to the roundabout, a policeman was standing next to me, directing traffic, it was a quarter to two … And the lady who worked as secretary in the Labor Office came by with her Quatrelle … I saw her! She put her head out of the window like this and smiled … She told me, 'Come!' The policeman standing next to me cheated me, he went to her! Now that the police officer had gone to her, I lowered my head and passed the crosswalk in front of her, I didn't look at her at all and took the sidewalk towards Vieux-Charmont!

I had walked some two or three hundred meters … There was a red light for her, the light turned green, she passed in front of me, she stopped her Quatrelle, she was on the sidewalk facing me and called me, like the voice in the morning! 'Mahdjoub Said! Mahdjoub Said!' I turned to her, she beckoned to me and said, 'Come quickly, I have to go to work.' I crossed the road and joined her. She said to me, 'I have taken a lot of trouble for you.' I said, 'How so?' She said, 'Mr. Fester, there are a lot of people who come to see him, he gives them papers, and they choose a

job, and you, he never gave you a paper! And, well, I found you a job! My word, I looked everywhere, there was nothing, there was only something at Leroy's! There was not another place!.' It looked like it was she who had spoken to me that same morning! One could say it was her! How was this possible? The same words? She told me, 'It's only for four days, but if you take my advice, go work!' I told her, for just a day, I would work! Because I had sworn to! So for four days … At that moment, she was alone in her Quatrelle, I hesitated to ask her, could I get in with you … No! No, no, it was too much for me to ask! I couldn't! I couldn't ask her to let me get in her car! I let her leave with her Quatrelle. Neither did she suggest that I get in with her, nor did I ask her to let me get in! For me the chief thing was that she had found me a job! The same day!

So she, she left in her Quatrelle. And there were coaches, they came from Belfort, passed through Vieux-Charmont and stopped in front of the railway station of Montbéliard. Their yard was there. And every half-hour there were two that left, two that arrived from Belfort, all day long. She drove off to get to work on time, and I walked past the Prado cinema in Sochaux, the bus stop was there. I arrived at the bus station, I swear I didn't wait a second! I got to the shelter level, there were people waiting, I stopped and the bus came inside, brushing me lightly, I didn't have to wait at all! It arrived at that very time. It stopped, I got on first. At that time you paid 50 centimes, I paid and got on. It stopped in front of the railway station. I got off and took the Montbéliard road and went in the direction of Sainte-Suzanne to the Labor Office. When I arrived, I found the room packed! I couldn't even get to the door. I said, 'Leave me be, I want to get through the door.' You know Arabs! And the people were testy, they didn't have jobs, there was no work! There was one who said to me, 'What do you mean? You arrive after the others and you want to go through the door?' I told him, 'I have an appointment with Modeva [the labor recruiter].' 'No, no, no, Modeva doesn't give appointments.' I told him, 'To me, yes!' He replied, 'No!' Nonetheless, the other people told him, they told him, 'Let him by, he's going through the door.' He said to me, 'If you are going to knock on the door, he's going to insult us!' I told him, 'In any case, our faces are what he's insulting. They have always insulted us! As if we had any value! Nor would we have had to come here! Nor would they insult us! Let me go through the door!' He got in my way, I grabbed him, I pushed him out of my way, I tossed him aside, he fell on the others! They said, 'You want to mess with all of us or what!' There was one of them who walked over and said to them, 'Let him through the door!' I told him, I'm going up to the door, whether we have to fight or not! The door, I'm going to it! This isn't your affair! He said to me, 'Now he's going to insult us!' I told him, 'That's not your problem!'

I went up to the door and began knocking softly. And this Fester, he was a bad one! He answered from inside, 'There's already someone here with me! Who's knocking on that door! Leave the door alone!' And so, I

> was pissed! I gave the door a huge kick! Like a crazy person, that day! I told him, 'Well, I'm breaking that door! How unhappy you are! How unhappy you all are! So, yeah, I'm breaking this door!' I found myself deciding, like him! I kicked the door! One of them said, 'Didn't you hear that?' I said, 'You shut up, Arab!' I told him, 'Me, I'm breaking this door!' Nothing could have stopped me that day. And that worked! That worked! And then this lady came, she opened the door, she said to me, 'Ah! Mr. Mahdjoub, come in!' He said to her, 'There is already someone in front of me!' She said to him, 'No, no, no, it is I who told Mr. Mahdjoub to come!' Everything I had done was ok. It didn't matter. When it has to happen, it happens. I went in, she closed the door behind me.

In 1977, Lionel Stoleru, then Secretary of State for Labor, said, 'We don't kick anyone out, but we don't leave the door wide open like before', defending his return assistance measure, the so-called *million Stoleru*.[2]

In 1981, I remember, I was 12, the bus for the Peugeot workers had just stopped at the bottom of our apartment building, I was doing my homework in the small room next to my sisters' and my bedroom. My father came in and asked my mother to come into the kitchen. His tone—usually authoritarian—seemed suddenly more serious, 'Habou y taichouna!' (They want to throw us out!) 'Over there we have nothing; we don't have a house!' Later on, my father told me, 'The bosses at Peugeot called in the immigrants and especially the Algerians to force them to go back home.' And yet, poet and Kabyle singer Sliman Azem would sing, 'Neither has he gone away, nor has he stayed, neither has he stayed, nor has he gone away.'

The double injunction, recurring and humiliating, to 'go home' and that of having to justify our presence, weakens our legitimacy to be here as descendants of France's colonial adventure. 'Where do you come from? Yes, but before, where were you born? Ah! But before then, you, your family, where did it come from?' (Taubira 2018, 13). Christiane Taubira recalls these questions, seemingly so innocuous and devoid of malice, but whose repetition throughout a lifetime freezes us in a status of eternal 'alien or immigrant of an umpteenth generation' (2018, 13). The order to have to justify our presence is fruitless. It only adds to the lack of consideration, projecting a demeaning self-image onto the targeted people. As Frantz Fanon aptly reminds us, 'If there is a pointless approach, it is certainly one which consists, for an oppressed person, in speaking to the "heart" of his oppressors' (2014a, 524).

In addition, this order calls for restorative work on ourselves. 'To leave the shame, to reverse the stigma, to reverse this shame that weighs upon our origins. We are forced to do difficult work!' says Serge Romana (2019). In my father's account, violence became a means of 'rehabilitating himself in his own eyes' (Fanon 2014b, 496). When he explained to me—with aplomb, 'I took to deciding, like him!' he was doing neither more nor less than what

Figure 10.2 From One Threshold to Another. Installation on the threshold of the Adoma social housing (formerly Sonacotra), two bedroom doors from the first Sonacotra home *Le Parc* in Argenteuil, silkscreen print. Dimensions of the space, 1 x 1 x 2.10 metres. Marseille, 2007.

Frantz Fanon has described: 'At the level of the individual, violence detoxifies. From the colonized it gets rid of his inferiority complex, of his contemplative or hopeless attitudes … Violence raises the people to the loftiness of the leader' (Fanon 2014b, 496). A path of reparation to get out of 'self loathing' that is too often reflected in ambivalent relationships, mixed with mistrust between Algerians from here and from over there: 'Blédards', 'Bnat França', 'Ouled França', 'The villas of the immigrants'. Symptoms of this iniquitous and persistent divide between Europe/West and Africa. What connects a master to his slave is even more tragic than what separates them? (Baldwin 1975) (Figure 10.2).

The executive

Habiba Mahdjoub

> Racism is based squarely on a question of power. Racism begins at some point when you have the power to define me. Such a power that I will not escape your definition.
>
> (Baldwin 1975)

This audio recording was produced in August 2020. At my request, my sister Habiba recalled this moment—which she had told me about several years before—a moment of suspended silence.

> It concerns my training as part of my position as a staff representative. The training took place over five days in Belfort, in a hotel conference room. We were five CFE-CGC [French Confederation of Management–General Confederation of Executives] representatives, executive representatives from the company Safran Landing Systems in Molsheim. We were there with other executives from other companies, overall, we were a bit less than 20, and there were three or four companies represented in the room. The trainer came from Lyon, five days of training, each one a full day. The training went very well, but from the start of the meeting I noticed a small young woman, fairly young, pregnant, who was sitting across from me. The tables were laid out in a U shape and the trainer had his table in the middle. And so, facing me, there was this tiny young woman, very nice, and I felt her gaze from the first day of training, but a rather insistent look, even embarrassing, because at the beginning I met her gaze several times, it wasn't too annoying, but after a while, I felt that it was non-stop. And I found that a little weird.
>
> The first day we had a little coffee break in the middle of the morning and the young woman came up to me while I was helping myself to some coffee, she actually came to apologize. She introduced herself and then told me, 'I just want to apologize because you certainly must have felt my rather insistent gaze on you.' Then she made a small remark about my hair, with regard to the length and colour of my hair that had impressed her—but not that—what had especially impressed her was the fact that 'a-person-like-me' called Habiba Mahdjoub, with her lightly tan skin could be the personnel representative, could be an executive in an Alsatian company, especially Alsatian. Because she had never seen that before. And she, she came from an Alsatian company located more to the north of Alsace and well to the north of the Bas-Rhin. And in fact, they didn't have a 'person-like-me' on the staff of the company or likewise on the management staff. She told me, 'I'm very surprised to see that a 'person-of-your-origin' can represent an Alsatian company, management and chosen, this is unheard of in an Alsatian company.' Afterwards, she made a slight comparison with her company, telling me that there was not a 'person-of-foreign-origin' like me. And so to see people with an executive position and, in addition, representing the staff, that for her was 'Wow!' She immediately apologized again, saying, 'please don't take this the wrong way! I have no preconceptions about "people-of-foreign-origins". Quite the contrary! It's pretty good that we have "people-of-different-nationalities" or of "different-origins".' She said, 'It's what is lacking in our Alsatian companies.'

It was in this little fleeting moment of astonishment, which was expressed between my sister and this young woman by way of a simple look that was unusually insistent, invested with good will, a look that caused my sister embarrassment and discomfort, a look that led the young woman to feel obliged to apologize, her excuses mixed with well-meaning flattery—it is in this suspended time, where the presumed executive takes shape and implodes here—in which you, the 'person-of-foreign-origin', you are unconsciously predictable. There follows the flattery, to which watchfulness encourages you not to consent, if you want to avoid being locked into the figure of 'you-are-not-like-the-others', or even the phantom-figure 'you evolved people' with its dangerous pitfall of exemplariness, success, and meritocracy that separates me from my peers and therefore from myself.

I have the memory of my father's words, 'Work in school to have a trade, so that no one can walk over you.' In his way, he was telling us what James Baldwin wrote to his nephew,

> You were born into a society which spelled out with brutal clarity, and in as many ways as possible, that you were a worthless human being. You are not expected to aspire to excellence: you were expected to make peace with mediocrity'.
>
> (Baldwin 2018, 29)

Christiane Taubira adds,

> To this speculation on mediocrity, that of consenting to paternalism as befits unfinished beings, of corresponding to clichés in order to arouse compassion, or even of giving in to assimilation, alienation being very close with its inevitable procession of frustrations and disabilities that Frantz Fanon described better than ever'.
>
> (Taubira 2018, 13)

Rage

Djamel Mahdjoub

> Being under-estimated, not being considered, is the reason for rage. In a certain way it is even more painful, because it is much more common, much more mundane, it is even more dangerous than utterly brutal things like lynching or massacre. Inevitably, we want to be considered at any cost!
>
> (Baldwin 1975)

The following dialogue comes from a conversation between my brother and me, a moment when we spoke of everything and nothing, where the words

were free and could escape as soon as they were spoken. It was at Fos-sur-Mer at our mother's house in August 2020, where I, as I often did, needed my cell phone to record the accuracy of my brother's crude words, steeped in crystallized anger. His words, as if chanted, speak of saturation from the accumulation of these traces of an ambient and mundane contempt. Faced with this contempt—however residual it might be and from force of habit—each one of us uses self-esteem defence strategies. Our discussions were part of this work on our self-esteem. This scene took place in 2008 in the context of a welding training programme at the AFPA (National Agency for the Professional Training of Adults) in Belfort.

> The 'fat guy' every time he said—there was a 'black' with us—you know, a guy my age, he always called him 'the nigger', 'Oh, the nigger!' The 'black' said nothing. You know, he was a 'little-*meskin* [poor] guy.' I said to him, 'Why are you letting him do it! Slap him in the face!' He replied, 'It's not important. It's nothing.'
>
> 'Don't let him talk to you like that!'

He said to me, 'It's nothing. It's not mean.'

> Ok! If he doesn't want to defend himself, I'm not the one who is going to defend him! Me, I don't give a damn!
>
> There was one morning, we were having coffee. We started at eight o'clock and then we had the dining hall, we poured the coffee into a machine, and then it happened like this, I swear! The fat guy opened the door and walked in like someone who thinks they are awesome! And then he came in like that … I don't know what that was about! Yeah, he was sitting in front of me, like that! He said to me, 'Anyway, "people-like-you", how often do you change your residence cards?' Then I said, 'What?' I said to myself, 'I misunderstood that! What do you mean! "People-like-you"?'
>
> He said to me, 'Yeah, well, you! Your residence cards, how long do you have them?' I looked at him and said, 'Are you stupid or are you doing it on purpose!' I added, 'In my opinion, you're stupid!'

He looked at me and said, 'Pardon me?'

> I told him, 'Shut up! Stop talking already! And what's more, stop talking to me! Don't talk to me!' Then he began to play the game, you see … I got up, I blew a fuse, I swear! I got up and said to him, 'Now you are going to shut your trap, you know what! And you're going to kneel down in front of the door there! Get down on your knees right now and apologize. Get down on your knees!'
>
> Then he got up like that and said to me, 'Apologize for what?'

There were only French people! And the 'whites,' they said to me, 'Oh Djamel, it's ok.'

I told them, 'You, you shut up, I'm talking to him now!' He was looking at me like this, then he said to me … he began to 'uh, uh,' like the kids, you know when you yell at them! And then the 'whites', they were saying to me, 'Djamel, it's ok.' You know, I was really aggravated! I told him, 'Now, you know what, either you get down on your knees, or I'll bash your head against the wall! Now, get on your knees! It's the last time I'm telling you!' He did it. He got down on his knees! 'Now, you know what, you're going to stay on your knees! I'm going to drink my coffee! And then if you're good, you get up and we'll see later!' He stayed on his knees! No more noise in the room! I swear, nothing! I sat down, I was like that. (*Mimicking his hands trembling with anger*.) I drank my coffee like that, then I looked at him. And you know, he was gasping for air! Then I looked at him and no mercy! I looked at him like that. I left him at least five, ten minutes on his knees like that, like a dog! And then I looked at him like that and said, 'You know what, now you're going to get up! I'm never going to see you again. In the workshop, if you see me in front of you, *fiiit*, you change direction! You understand?'

He replied, 'Yeah, yeah, ok!'

I said to him, 'From now on, when you see me in the room, you don't come in anymore! Go on, beat it!' He didn't speak again. Never again in his life! 'Ah, that's the way you should talk now!'

ME: But don't you think that this attitude, mind you, risks provoking even more hatred?

DJAMEL: It will be justified! Look, you speak, you take the consequences! How you talk! How do you say 'the nigger'! How do you say that! You see that in telling us nothing, you take us for 'less-than-nothing'! So there! At some point, stop! Stop! Stop! Me, I've always respected you! Respect me! Don't love yourself! You are racist! I don't give a fuck! But don't come looking for me! Where do you come from that you believe that people, they have residence cards! Where are you from? Are you stupid or what! No, but really! Where are you from! Damn, I was born here! I still have to prove myself! I have to do more things than you do! Behind the two faces acceptable to the Republic, that of 'You-aren't-like-the-others' or that of the 'unfinished being', looms the face—more threatening, deportable by The Republic, which will degenerate to just one possible outcome—the face of the young savage, the thug, the delinquent, the barbarian, the Islamist, even the terrorist.

The violence that Djamel expresses here—similar to that of my father, almost instinctual—became a means that 'detoxifies. It rids (the colonized person)—the individual—of his inferiority complex' (Fanon 2014b, 496).

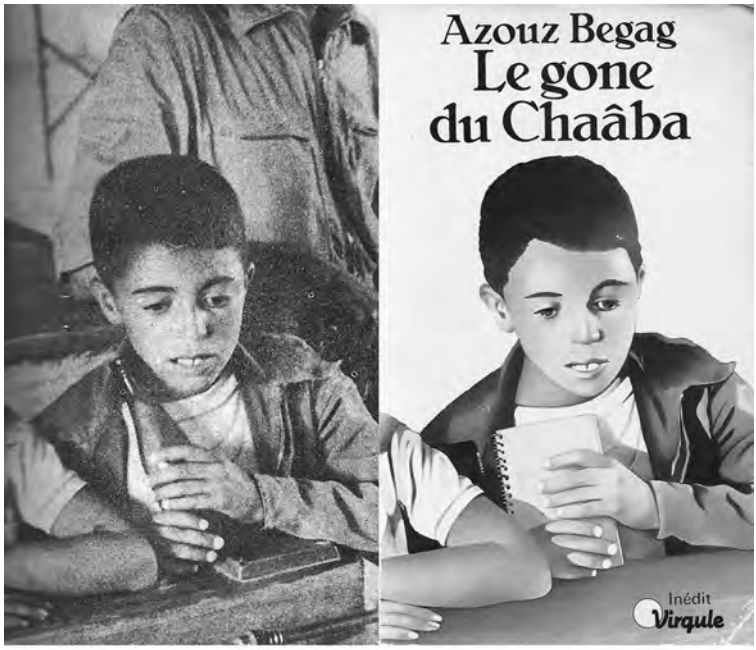
Vomiting the face of 'you-are-not-like-the-others'

Small shift of the bottle on the small yellow notebook

Traces of contempt are also found in images (Figure 10.3). One of these traces is nested—here—in the gesture of the illustrators, in the replacement of an object (the bottle) by another (the small yellow notebook). It was by chance, about twenty years ago, that I brought together these two nearly identical images (in the centre). One is a black and white photograph, the other is an illustration from the autobiographical novel by the Franco-Algerian author Azouz Begag. For a long time, I asked myself what thought process would have led illustrators to refer to this representation of a child from a propaganda work, *Algeria: Birth of a Thousand Villages* (*Algerie* 1960). This publication extols the merits of the regroupment camps in the middle of the Algerian war. 'Thanks to the regrouping, schooling is developing … with makeshift resources … which are improving each day. Even in the provisional regroupment camps, in French, in Arabic, … children are being educated.'

At the end of November 2018, I got in touch with the illustrator. To my question, 'Why did you choose this book as a source of inspiration?' she replied, 'the publisher gave us the book from which we took the picture', and, 'we needed a little Arab'. Here the captions on the source image that run the length of these fantasized representations only remind us of what—a few

(a)



(b)

(c)

Figure 10.3 *Naissance de mille villages, Algerie*. Imprimerie Baconnier, December 1960. Illustration de couverture Monique Rozier-Gaudriault et Jacques Rozier, *Le gône du Chaâba*, Azouz Begag, Éditions du Seuil, January 1986. *En juin, à l'Assemblée Nationale, Dominique de Villepin chahute avec Azouz Begag, ministre délégué à la promotion de l'égalité des chances*, photography by Mehdi Fedouach, *Le Monde*, 8 November 2005, 3 © AFP.

Figure 10.4 *Monopoly of Gentleness* (vector drawing), 2020. Photograph reproduction. Boissonnas, Frédéric, and André Taponier. 1924. "European Kissing Her Child." *The Human Races*, 13. Paris: Éditions Hachette.

years later—will be the subject of controversy. The famous Article 4 of the Law of 23 February 2005 reads: 'The school programs in particular acknowledge the positive role of the French presence overseas, especially in North Africa'. History will show—in an uncertain coincidence—that Azouz Begag, author of the book *Le Gône du Chaâba*, became Minister Delegate for the

Promotion of Equal Opportunity between 2005 and 2007 during the heated debates around this article that shook the National Assembly. On 12 December 2005, Azouz Begag asked for the repeal of Article 4. In reply, the UMP (Union for a Popular Movement) deputy stated, 'If there hadn't been colonization, neither Mr. Léon Bertrand nor Mr. Azouz Begag would be ministers of the French Republic!' (Luca 2005). And he added, 'And don't tell me this law is going to set the suburbs on fire. You think in the suburbs that they take an interest in the laws?' (Thibaudat 2005). As a result, the small yellow notebook becomes a symbol, referring to the positive role of colonization.

I had made an appointment with our ophthalmologist for my mom and our eldest son. The doctor asked him, as she did each time she examined him, what level he was at in school. On learning that he had just passed his entrance exam for medicine—after a moment of surprise—she congratulated him and immediately added, 'Really, we live in a great country, we have a school that allows the kids from the lower classes to make it!' Basically I agreed with her on the school, but I felt a form of restraint when it came to feeling eternally indebted. She then examined my mother. 'What do you do during your day?' she asked her. My mother mumbled hesitantly, 'I do a little housework … I watch TV …' And I added, 'And you also take Arabic lessons.' Then the doctor turned toward me, asking, 'And why not French lessons?' (Figure 10.4)

Self-esteem, disparagement of the other, here this prevailing double-talk appears, of Europe with regard to Africa and its diaspora—deconstructed by Felwine Sarr.

> The two discourses must be taken together, the "self branding": We are the best, we are the center of the world … But the others, also, are underdeveloped, in the process of development … We find terms that are always in the imagination of the civilizing mission.
>
> (Sarr 2018)

Notes

1 *D'un seuil, à l'autre*, project produced with Martine Derain, 2004–2007. "Martine Derain," documentsdartistes.org. Accessed 5 March 2021. http://www.documentsdartistes.org/artistes/derain/repro1.html

2 Journal Officiel de la République Française. 1977. *Débats parlementaires - Assemblée Nationale* – 1st session of 5 October, 5844. https://archives.assemblee-nationale.fr/5/cri/1977-1978-ordinaire1/004.pdf.

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Chapter 11

Reframing the colonial in postcolonial Lisbon

Placemaking and the aestheticization of interculturality[1]

Paulo Peixoto and Claudino Ferreira

Cultural events are an increasingly important component of placemaking logistics and policies of aestheticization of interculturality. Festivals—a form of public celebration and a unique and ritualized moment in local life—are, in particular, an opportunity for the development of multifaceted approaches to the planning, design, and management of public spaces, offering the possibility of manipulating urban identities. This chapter examines the context of the *Todos* festival, aiming to reveal how the event reframes Portuguese colonial history and memory in postcolonial Lisbon through the aestheticization and intensification of interculturality. The formal participation of the local governing body (Lisbon City Council) in this cultural event makes the festival a significant dimension of the logistics of production and aestheticization of interculturality in the city of Lisbon. We argue that, both from an organizational perspective and from the viewpoint of cultural users, festivals, and *Todos* in particular, are a specific form of instrumentalizing culture and massifying cultural practices. In doing so, they produce and reproduce ideologies of consensus and a rhetoric of the conviviality of the differences, whose intention is to aesthetically reframe the 'contact areas' where different groups meet and struggle with each other. The rhetoric of conviviality is embodied in ways of organizing, promoting, and living the festival by emphasizing and radicalizing differences and diversity. Conviviality is thus mediated by institutional actors favouring the emergence of a festive space and a socially shared discourse that promote urban modes of togetherness.

The prominence that culture has assumed in contemporary urban intervention processes allows us to highlight two important dimensions of this chapter: the discursive and aestheticized construction of interculturality and the role of heritage as a mediator between tensions and differences that are found in culture. Placemaking, as a strategy for managing public spaces through culture, heritage, and community participation, acts both as a rhetorical mechanism and a planning tool for the production of interculturality. As highlighted by Marisa de Brito and Greg Richards, 'Increasingly [as events reinforce their attractiveness as a planning tool], public administrations seek to co-ordinate the events in their jurisdiction to create synergies between events and to maximise the benefits generated' (de

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-14

Brito and Richards 2017, 2). The creation of the *Todos* festival in 2009, with the active participation of the Lisbon City Council, is part of the assumed effort to combine cultural programming, urban regeneration, and social inclusion.

In this scope, we scrutinize *Todos* (an event that celebrates interculturality) as a key initiative that promotes an 'ethics of tolerance' and an 'ethics of the encounter' (Edmonds 2011; Oliveira 2015) and participates in the production of new urbanscapes. We also identify heritage allegories that strategically use local multiethnicity to reconstruct urban public space and make it attractive to tourists, to gentrifiers, and for the purposes of urban leisure market. *Todos–Walk of Cultures*, which takes place annually in September bringing together a diverse set of activities, is part of a larger placemaking plan that seeks to affirm Lisbon as a multicultural, multiethnic, and multireligious city.

As instruments of culturalization of urban planning, the festival's initiatives occur both in spaces where the presence of minorities is felt in Lisbon's daily life and in symbolic places related to the colonial past. Giving visibility to minorities, their ways of life, their cultural and gastronomic habits, and debating racism, inclusion and difference have proven omnipresent dimensions of the past twelve festivals. Highlighting the role of events in the transition from a place-branding strategy to a placemaking strategy (Richards 2017), *Todos* is also a tourism event that aims to consolidate an urban marketing strategy promoted by a city that wants to be sold as a multicultural product.[2] Several organizations, such as Lisbon Walker, organize tours around *Todos* themes; as an itinerant festival, *Todos* changes venues every three years. The tours tend to focus on places connected to the history of slavery, including Largo de São Domingos, Poço dos Negros, and Madragoa, seeking to show how 'the massive trade of African slaves became an essential component of the triangular commerce in the Atlantic Ocean and marked the darkest page in the History of the Discoveries' (Lisbon Walker 2020).

Cultural events and placemaking

Todos is a clear example of a placemaking approach to cultural events. The city's administration (the City Council's body responsible for cultural action) and a private non-profit association of independent cultural producers (the Academia de Produtores Culturais) partner with each other to organize the festival.

The festival's director and the main person responsible for its cultural concept and programme, Miguel Abreu, is a well-known representative of Lisbon's independent arts scene, as a theatre actor and director as well as the founder and current director of one of the first independent agencies of cultural production founded in Portugal (Cassefaz, founded in 1987). His agency is also involved in organizing the *Todos* festival.

The festival's concept and cultural programme is, therefore, in large part the product of the dynamics of Lisbon's cultural scene at the beginning of

the twenty-first century and in particular of the performative arts scene. Miguel Abreu and the Cassefaz agency use the *Todos* festival to make an assertive and innovative statement on the performative arts scene. It is a statement directed to the artistic scene, but also to the city as a territory and a social and political community. The idea that the word *Todos* tried to summarize—an inclusive festival, aimed at promoting the encounter and dialogue between all sorts of people and cultures, on the one side, and an event capable of fuelling the city's territories with lively and lived cultures, on the other—was, since its initiation in 2008, both an artistic statement and a political one, taking a position on the role of culture and the arts in city planning, city life, and city image. The festival's concept and programme assume therefore the active role of culture, and cultural agents, as protagonists of the production of an urban territory and community driven by a participatory, inclusive and intercultural set of ideals and imageries.

These inclusive and participatory ideals, which mixed artistic dialogue between diverse languages and forms of cultural expression with a political conception of the city as a place of intercultural understanding and democratic coexistence, met the expectations of the political power and the local administration for the development of the city. For local authorities, the *Todos* festival was assumed to be part of a strategy to use culture—and culture diversity in particular—as a privileged platform to face some of the major issues the city faced in its development prospects: the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities; the economic and social revitalization of old and traditional neighbourhoods of the city centre; the development of an ethnic market and an image of culture diversity and dynamics, as a strategy to attract tourists and middle- and upper-class consumers; the promotion of an image of a cosmopolitan and creative city as part of the economic and symbolic positioning of Lisbon in intercity competition (see Costa et al. 2017). At the inauguration of the third festival in 2011, the Mayor of Lisbon, today the Prime Minister of Portugal, António Costa, formalized Lisbon's accession to the European network of intercultural cities.[3] On that same occasion, he announced the move of his office to the area (Mouraria) where the festival was being held in order to highlight the benefits of combining cultural activities with urban regeneration and requalification projects (see Oliveira and Padilla 2012).

Todos represents urban intervention where the cultural agenda of a part of the local arts community and the political agenda of local authorities converge. Consuming and assuming this convergence, the festival adopts clearly the purposes of a placemaking approach.

As declared in the official discourse of the festival, *Todos* focuses on 'the development of the entire community that gives meaning to the project' (Academia de Produtores Culturais 2020a). Although it is not clear what the 'entire community' means exactly, the expression emphasizes the idea of a wide and non-exclusive participation, suggesting a basis for the encounter and exchange between local residents and workers, natives, immigrants,

tourists, artists, and consumers. The festival takes on the mission 'to make Lisbon a city where cultures intersect and help each other. Where contemporary arts help to remove barriers related to differences in ages, opinions, visions, helping to promote dialogue and respect between all' (Academia de Produtores Culturais 2020a). The motto of the 2020 festival (*Todos 2020|Passengers of the World*) exemplifies the close relationship between the festival's mission and the rationality of placemaking. Stating that 'the festival … promotes and celebrates interculturality in the city of Lisbon' and it intends to 'develop the interaction between Passengers of the World, living and working in the Portuguese capital' (Academia de Produtores Culturais 2020b), the initiative seeks to bring about collaborative ways that can contribute, through culture, to improve neighbourhoods and to inspire people to collectively appropriate, reimagine, and recreate public spaces (see Zitcer 2020). Aiming to strengthen the ties between people and the places they share, in the view of its promoters, *Todos* is an 'opportunity … to get to know better the places of [the] territory and what is not usually visible to our daily gaze, from the corners to reveal the stories and the community that lives in it' (Academia de Produtores Culturais 2020b).

As an event that is repeated in time and space, *Todos*—assuming that the community input is essential to the placemaking process—promotes the development of what Andrew Zitcer (2020) calls creative placemaking: a context in which artists, arts organizations, and community development practitioners deliberately seek to integrate, beyond the time and spaces of the festival, arts, and culture into community daily life activities.

To this extent, cultural events are an increasingly important component of placemaking logistics. Festivals in particular are an opportunity for the development of multifaceted approaches to the planning, design, and management of public spaces offering the possibility of manipulating urban identities (Jamieson 2004), insofar as the effects of the festival persist beyond the event itself.

As Kirstie Jamieson notes, in describing and analysing the Edinburgh case, although festival

> spaces appear as though spontaneously formed by the company of strangers and the collective experience of performances, the city *en fête* is also the result of painstaking planning by a city administration that seeks to control the ways in which public spaces change.
>
> (2004, 65)

This institutional and planned intervention means that cities are not just stages for events, but above all, places produced through events (Richards 2017). Like the Edinburgh festival, *Todos* takes place as a 'framed spontaneous play which contrasts routine everyday life' of minorities (Jamieson 2004, 65). 'The bounded appeal of live performance, outdoor reveling, and alternative ways of using the city during festival time reveal how the festival gaze

manipulates urban identity' (Jamieson 2004, 64). The carnival atmosphere surrounding the festival also means that in such events the totally unforeseen could happen.

Borrowing from Michel Foucault the concept of eventalization, one can say that festivals offer both the opportunity 'to make visible a singularity at places' and rediscover 'the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies … which at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal and necessary' (Foucault in Burchell et al. 1991, 76). Adopting the festival format, the event enhances the conversion of multicultural and cross-cultural logics into intercultural dynamics. In other words, the cultural and ethnic diversity of Mouraria (multiculturality)—although it may not promote engaging interactions every day—is mobilized by an event to allow the confrontation of different cultures. This confrontation is based on a cross-cultural communication, which allows differences to be perceived, opening the way to individual change. Eventalization emerges as an opportunity, based on multicultural and cross-cultural dynamics, to promote collective transformation; to question the dominant culture; to force the mutual exchange of ideas; to increase deep relationships; and, by consuming interculturality, to realize an ecology of knowledge (Santos and Meneses 2010) in which everyone learns from one another and grows together.

The eventalization of urban space (Pløger 2010) requires that the relationship between events and places be made from a transversal and integrated approach (Richards 2017), so we can identify and analyse the function and importance of events in the dynamics of construction and transformation of territories.

From this perspective, approaching cultural events and their inscription in the urban fabric also implies considering the diverse forces, interests, and logics that converge, or diverge, around their staging in urban public settings and their connections to local social, cultural, and economic dynamics. As Paulo Cezar Nunes Junior (2019) demonstrated in a recent study on urban festivals in Portugal and Brazil, mass cultural events are hyperbolized examples of the growing pervasiveness of a modulatory mode of power (Deleuze 1992) that regulates and shapes social and cultural life in the commodified and culturalized city by means of decentralized, invisible, and continuously transforming technologies and devices of social control (Hui 2015).

Urban festivals are contexts of practice and experience where actions and individuated participants are modulated by the powers that frame the event's regimes of making things happen and conveying meaning. Depending on the nature of the festival, major forces framing the event's way of organizing and giving sense to practices and places can be urban policies and planning paradigms; the economic and symbolic logics of cultural, entertainment, tourism, and media industry; the symbolic economy of recognition and legitimacy that organizes competition and dispute within the arts field; or the politics of identity articulated by cultural, social, or political movements.

Thinkers like Jonathan Beller (2006) or Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2001), among others, highlight the efforts to escape the cognitive and emotional chain that appears to be totalitarian and colonizes the body and the intellect and infects culture at all levels. These efforts require locating, analysing, and (re)conceptualizing resistance strategies. In this context, it is essential to highlight the minority perspectives and modes of resistance that affirm themselves in the form of corporate tactics. The positive aspect of belonging emphasized by Hardt and Negri (2001) can be found in the cultural manifestations of the festival. The sense of a mutual recognition is the basic ingredient for the multitude to react with a desire to create community.

At the same time, as eventalization becomes a growing trend in urban planning policies and strategies, festivals also become powerful devices of modulation of urban life and urban space in general, framing the urban experience in accordance to the logics of those same forces and regimes of control. The spectacularized, culturalized, commodified, and cinematic city (Boyer 1996; Reckwitz 2017) or the plastic and flexible ever-changing city is a social and cultural territory largely shaped by the same principles that frame mass events' regimes of action and sense making: a dynamic succession and accumulation of interchangeable ephemerous happenings, experiences, and sensations, organized by regimes and technologies of information that articulate the continuous resignification of places, people, memories, heritages, and practices as a cosmopolitan, individualized, subjective, and performative way of living the city.

Todos main concept *Walk of Cultures* illustrates the staging of events to ease people into the experience of the city of Lisbon through the mediation of cultural participation within the framework of the eventful, cosmopolitan, intercultural, and ever-changing city. This framing derives from the politics of eventalization where local authorities and urban planners, the cultural and creative sector and the arts community converge. By the mediation of *Todos*, together with a series of other events that shape the cultural landscape of the city, the politics of eventalization and culturalization are in the fullest sense modes of placemaking that present contemporary Lisbon as a place for both living and experiencing floating between cultures that are paradoxically exhibited to be fugaciously appropriated as daily expressions of identity.

Festivals: instrumentalization of culture and massification of cultural practices

The analysis of the impact of festivals on the organization of urban space and the emergence of new territories has become one of the most intriguing fields of research in interdisciplinary cultural studies (Brennetot 2004) in particular because they hold a potential for collective transformation. Arnaud Brennetot argues that festivals represent a new form of cultural event that became popular in the second half of the twentieth century. The author highlights that festivals are a form of reminiscence of celebrations and

collective living that has become particularly appreciated in contemporary urban contexts (Brennetot 2004, 30).

The expansion of culture and arts festivals after the Second World War mixed the reinvention of the nineteenth century celebrations of national and local identities with the prominent role that festivals gradually assumed as tools for the international distribution, diffusion, and consecration of cultural and artistic oeuvres and practitioners. The development of cultural policies in Europe, together with the growing investment of cultural and media industries in festivals and large events as a means to distribute mass and media culture, contributed decisively to the increasing proliferation of festivals that matched the lifestyle and consumption desires and expectations of the new highly qualified urban middle classes (Autissier 2008). At the same time, from the margins of dominant and mass culture, other festivals, as settings for the experimentation of innovative and unorthodox modes of conceiving the interaction between artists, audiences, and place and bring a new political significance to festivals, arouse a more social, participatory, and inclusive tone (Quinn 2005).

Although this growing proliferation of festivals from the 1970s on, as culture gradually entered the agenda of urban policies as a potential catalyst for economic regeneration and development, festivals were invested with a new role and performativity. They became part of processes of instrumentalization of culture by urban policies (Vivant 2007), as tools for the economic regeneration and social revitalization of cities and city quarters (Evans 2001). For urban planners, city authorities, local stakeholders, and cultural intermediaries, festivals became desirable tools for various ends: for colonizing the urban landscape with the colours, sounds, and movement of a vibrant and cosmopolitan culture; for positioning the city in the international circuits of high and mass culture events; for attracting professionals and entrepreneurs from the creative industries; and for producing and marketing internationally fashionable images of a culturally dynamic city (Ferreira 2010; Quintela and Ferreira 2018; Richards and Palmer 2010). Elaborating on festivals entering the agenda of culture-led urban policies, Bernadette Quinn (2005) synthesizes three major functions that festivals take on nowadays: the festival as image maker, as tourist attraction, and as community. A fourth function should be added: the festival as arts and culture activator and mediator.

Under these conditions, festivals further proliferated and fuelled a field of increasingly diversified mainly urban intervention, as they are conceived, organized, and put into action connecting both with the arts and culture arena and the field of territorial policy and planning and increasingly with the media industry and their new digital realm.

This diversification is in line with a process of modelling, which creates festival formats and more or less formalized modes of operating culturally, economically, socially, and symbolically through festivals. The global circulation of ideas and experiences among experts and professionals of

cultural intermediation and the development of an international professionalized market and production of events play an important role in this modelling process, one that further inflates the performativity of festivals as devices of control and regulation in the city of subjective individuals, as argued above.

Approached from this point of view, the *Todos* festival is a manifestation of an urban festival model that in recent decades has proliferated a little throughout the world: the 'intercultural festival' or 'multicultural festival'. Although *Todos* is organized according to a set of programmatic goals that are inseparable from its insertion in the city of Lisbon, it aligns with a more general trend, particularly striking in the cities of the global capitalist North. This trend reflects a meeting point between the use of cultural festivals as tools for urban regenerating and city marketing policies and as instruments of cultural and artistic intervention of a cosmopolitan, integrative, and communitarian tone—the point at which the rhetoric of the horizontal encounter and dialogue between artists and the community meets the rhetoric of the intercultural, cosmopolitan, and postcolonial city (Fincher et al. 2014).

When, in 2009, the Lisbon City Council created GLEM—Gabinete Lisboa Encruzilhada de Mundos (Lisbon crossroads of worlds office)—the municipality assumed the importance of culture and heritage in promoting strategies for urban regeneration and for reinventing the old models that were used to promote social inclusion, especially those addressed to the most marginalized areas of the city. It was in the scope of this initiative that *Todos* emerged, presenting itself as a project that aimed to generate bonds of solidarity, mutual knowledge, discovery and respect in the urban fabric (F. Brito 2020).

Since the beginning, GLEM—the municipal body responsible for the design of *Todos*—has developed several initiatives aimed at one of the city's most ruined historic neighbourhoods: Mouraria.[4] As Marluci Menezes points out, Mouraria is a neighbourhood that represents the popular, heritage, and multicultural character of Lisbon. A place that faces a dual urban condition, crossed by countless setbacks and heterogeneities: on the one hand, the ageing of the population, the degradation and precariousness of living conditions, drug trafficking and consumption, prostitution; on the other hand, it is a dynamic neighbourhood due to the renovation brought about, in the last decades of the twentieth century, by immigrant settlement. And it is also an expressive place of culture and diversity (Menezes 2011).

Created in a context in which festivals assume themselves to be a new solution for the massification of culture, *Todos* becomes an instrument for building a territory for interculturality. The logic of itinerancy in the spaces of the 'Lisbon of the Other' (Martim Moniz, Mouraria, Anjos, São Vicente, etc.—neighbourhoods inhabited by citizens of foreign origin, mainly people from countries that have a historical relationship with Portugal: Brazilians, Cape Verdeans, Mozambicans, and citizens from the former Portuguese colonies in India), throughout 12 festivals, to foster, through the performing

arts, an aesthetic of the encounter and conviviality in which the territory becomes the hero of a collective show (see Brennetot 2004, 30).

Analysing 'the city of festivals', Émilie Simard asks why festivals are so often related to the challenges associated with cultural tourism? Emphasizing that the roots of new urban economies, in post-industrial contexts, make festivals appear in a framework of ambiguity between the sphere of culture and the sphere of tourism (Simard 2010). Underlining these two dimensions and highlighting some other aspects, Elsa Vivant concludes that culture is increasingly instrumentalized for the benefit of a global urban strategy and relies on Irina van Aalst and Inez Boogaarts (Vivant 2007, 51) to conclude that, more than cultural neighbourhoods, the spaces where festivals take place, are true leisure centres where culture is just a pretext or a prefiguration of twenty-first-century theme parks. In this perspective, the space of interculturality is a space that is aestheticized and, at the same time, essentialized. There, cities concentrate elements of attractiveness that respond more to the massification of urban tourism than to a cultural offer aimed at local inhabitants. In this circumscribed space, visitors find the necessary amenities to appropriate the space as a leisure centre. The belief in the magical role of culture as a lever in urban regeneration operations leads to the symbolic valorization of degraded neighbourhoods and an innovative cultural strategy seems necessary for the development of a city and its competitive positioning (Vivant 2007). In this context, cultural events pave the way for the radicalization of differences that, being progressively subjected to processes of escalation, is the essence of theme parks in the twenty-first century.

The celebratory interculturality that tends to characterize festivals fosters a massification of cultural practices and the massification of cultural practices reinforces the staging of celebratory interculturality. Indeed, this form of interculturality repeatedly selects the most characteristic and recognizable aspects of the otherness to show them in an exacerbated, albeit simplified and consumable, manner. The *Todos* initiative is not just about the days of the festival. The logistics of production and aesthetization of interculturality, which is intensely manifested in the four days of the festival, is based on the daily reconfiguration of the public space, aiming at its transformation into a hybrid space (De Molli et al. 2020; García Canclini 2013)—a space that is both a residential space of immigrant communities and a stage for the manifestation of the cultural practices of ethnic and religious minorities. As demonstrated by Marluci Menezes (2004), the neighbourhood has an intense life, where residents live with visitors, tourists, and traders. It accumulates different migratory waves (citizens of African countries who speak Portuguese, Chinese, Indians, Bangladeshis, and Pakistanis), as well as young, professional gentrifiers, who have recently settled there. The neighbourhood is now a mixture of an older population, generally associated with illegal commercial practices, and an immigrant population that gradually appropriated the public space, such as the Praça do Martim Moniz. This immigrant population is composed of Indians, Chinese, Brazilians, and Nepalis and today

constitutes the matrix for the representation of the neighbourhood as the centre of Lisbon's interculturality.

The logic of itinerancy (one territory per triennium) allows cultural programming to develop and reveal unknown and relegated urban spaces. The regular support of cultural activities of minorities and the effort to involve them in the initiatives of the festival to give visibility to diversity are both factors that favour not only the loyalty of the public of *Todos* festival but also the professionalization of members of minorities in the field of gastronomy, design, performing, and visual arts, and generally in the area of culture. This logistics, reinforced over 12 festivals, makes it possible to create an 'atmosphere of enthusiasm and proliferation' (Frost 2016, 569), which ultimately characterizes the festival. As Nicola Frost stresses, 'festivals—especially those featuring indigenous or migrant populations—have come to encapsulate, even delineate, cultural diversity as a positive social fact' (2016, 569; Florida, 2009). Cultural diversity creates an atmosphere characterized by the emergence of processes of aestheticization that result from 'being "in-between" multiple ambiguities' (De Molli et al. 2020, 1494).

We cannot, however, fail to point out that *Todos* takes place in a 'contact zone' (Ifversen 2018; Pratt 1991; Santos and Meneses 2010) where different cultures meet and struggle with each other, usually in unequal conditions. A kind of an 'intercultural hybridity' (Collado 2016; García Canclini 2013) functioning as a reality capable of producing ambivalent and contradictory identities (which are at times structured in a dialogical relationship and at other times become entities that ignore or oppose each other). And also the *ex libris* of a 'concept city' (de Certeau 1998) of a former colonial capital that converts interculturality into performance. This unveils the 'complexity of interculturality' and brings out the risk of 'essentializing identities and of caging others in stereotypes' (Ifversen 2018). The festival tends—from an organizational perspective—to produce attractive otherness that covers up the political tensions and incommensurabilities (linguistic, religious, gastronomic, etc.) in the contact zones.

Reframing the colonial in postcolonial Lisbon

The heterogeneity and the diversity (seen as a resource of the cultural programming of *Todos*) result from historical processes based on social arrangements of two different major periods: one, the older, linked to the Portuguese colonial process; the other, more recent and partly related to the former, linked to the dynamics of migration and refugee flows that choose to live and work in Lisbon.

In this context, heritage is seen by the organizers of *Todos* as a mediator between tensions and differences found in culture. One can say that the space and time where the festival takes place correspond to the formula of the third space, in the sense given to it by Homi K. Bhabha (1994). This meta concept

of postcolonial sociolinguistic theory of identity and community, which turns us all into hybrids, explains the transformation of individual identities from the opportunities for interaction and negotiation of meanings framed by coexistence with otherness. In this sense, the rhetoric of the festival falls within the scope of the concept of the third space. Nestór Garcia Canclini (2013) argues that heritage does not have a mere cultural dimension. More than cultural, heritage is intercultural in the sense that it embodies the opposing and confronting differences as a result of cultural hybridization. The public support given to the different communities, the aid for development of ethnic trade, the public policies for the promotion of religious tolerance, the visibility given to newcomers in official Lisbon City Hall publications, are examples of the ways public agents seek to value and use differentiated heritage to aestheticize and foster interculturality on a daily basis. The festival replicates, in a celebratory and interactive logic, the cultural sharing between heterogeneous groups. The spectacularization of difference is part of this effort to hybridize taking heritage as a major resource.

In the wake of Canclini's argument, as in many other cities marked by a long and dense colonial history whose inscriptions remain on the materiality and immateriality of several places and memories of those cities, postcolonial Lisbon of the twenty-first century is confronted with the need to keep up with the trends of recognition of the identities of minorities. However, the recognition of the heritage dimension and the cultural valorization of minorities were slow and selective. The major cultural projects of the late twentieth century, such as the world exhibition Expo 98 (Ferreira 2006), as well as the cultural projects and proposed cultural facilities of the first two decades of the twenty-first century, and the current priorities of the Lisbon tourist industry reveal weak recognition of the Afro descendant heritage and the limited access for minorities to sites and heritage resources. One could say from Lisbon what Cesar Augusto Velandia Silva and Juan José Ospina-Tascón conclude regarding Cartagena das Indias: 'The challenge of [Lisbon's] heritage role is to try to reverse this double image of the city and its links with its inhabitants.[5] It must be reinforced by a process of education and reconquest of heritage spaces by Afro-[descendants]. This is how the interculturality of heritage acquires the capacity to balance people's hopes and needs' (Silva and Ospina-Tascón 2020).

The festival is an initiative that intends to reframe the colonial in postcolonial Lisbon. It assumes the mission of ensuring the transition from a multicultural perspective (which only recognizes the diversity that separates the communities) to an intercultural perspective (which presupposes the existence of interactions, confrontation, and exchange between different communities).

Twelve festivals have been completed, and we can conclude that the founding ideology of the festival has been incorporated by the festival-goers. The testimony of one of our interviewees[6] is an example of this:

> The first thing I said to my wife is that they discover every year spaces in Lisbon that the Lisboners do not know and do not appreciate. In our daily life, we don't have access to these spaces. And they somehow managed to realize that these places exist and transform the spaces, which were formerly linked to other activities, through culture. This is what I like most about the festival. The second thing I like the most is precisely this integration of cultures. In other words, I believe that racism is born out of ignorance of the other. And getting to know the other is a way for us to realize how close we are to each other.
>
> (David, 43)

It is also clear that placemaking dynamics have contributed, from the festival-goers' perspective, to the regeneration and de-stigmatization of neighbourhoods inhabited by minorities. Urban rehabilitation operations, policies of positive discrimination of businesses exploited by Afro-descendants and other minorities, a policy of active mobilization of cultural agents involved in the festival *Todos* and the creation of opportunities for these agents to become professional, as well as the development of institutional communication aimed at valuing the diversity guaranteed by minorities are factors that allow for a reframing of stereotypes, favouring a postcolonial imaginary fuelled by the aestheticization of interculturality (Figure 11.1).

> The festival is an opportunity to rediscover these neighbourhoods. Mouraria has changed completely in the past ten years. They have really contributed a lot to this. I lived nearby and never passed through Mouraria; I went down Avenida Almirante Reis. Now I always pass by Rua do Bemformoso, from behind. So, for me, the festival completely changed the image of the neighbourhood. I was convinced that, there, it was just drugs and prostitution. That exists. But there are many other things. I now also go through that place.
>
> (Ana, 51)

The analysis of the answers to two questions included in the interview script are shown in a cloud of words (Figure 11.1) that reveals the way festival-goers incorporate the ideology of *Todos*.[7] Interculturality (although often referred to as 'multiculturalism') is by far the most used expression to characterize the festival and the atmosphere permeating the city. This word, which has defined the ethos of the event since its premiere, is reinforced by other terms that contribute to the aesthetic dimension of interculturality. The word culture, in the contexts in which it is used in the responses of festival-goers, translates not only the importance of culture in the transformation of the place and in urban regeneration, but also, and above all, the valorization of a culture that allows the projection of diversity, inclusion, discovery of the territory, and engagement. And that, representing the spirit of postcolonial

Figure 11.1 Cloud of words to characterize the festival or the relationship of the festival with the city.

Lisbon, makes the event and its manifestation in urban space an interesting phenomenon.

Although the specific dimension of racism and colonialism are not the most evident in the festival-goers' responses, the role of the festival in this dimension is recognized by several interviewees.

> I'm not going to tell you that the festival is opening minds. It doesn't work that way. But I think it is important to know and learn from other cultures in order to understand the roles and importance of communities. As European colonisers, it is important to learn at least a little from other cultures in order to eliminate this racist structure in which we live. In this respect, the festival seems important to me. A festival of this kind forces us to confront other realities.
>
> (Frederico, 27)

The reframing of colonial processes in postcolonial readings, such as the *Todos* festival intends to achieve, is all the more important as the event is assumed to be specifically aimed at the Portuguese. In a recent interview, the head of the Lisbon municipality for culture declared the ambition of the festival to contribute to the inclusion of minorities and to the fight against racism and xenophobia.

> *Todos* has always been designed for residents. It has never been a festival for tourists or Erasmus students. In fact, it has always had the objective of looking at the diversity of the city's communities, and trying to bring them into the daily life of Lisbon, and, above all, I believe, the objective of making that diversity visible to the people of Lisbon, while creating inclusion mechanisms for all those people who are often outside the arts and culture circuits. This was the initial commitment of *Todos* and it is

> the commitment that remains, and the time in which we live reinforces this need, due to the emergence, throughout the world, of racist and xenophobic movements, at a time when we are witnessing a great fragmentation of the communities themselves, and therefore this objective of inclusion, of the link between the communities, of the creation of cohesive communities, in a logic of proximity, remains.
>
> (Catarina Vaz Pinto *in* Adamopoulos and Reis 2020)

Conclusions

Seeking to highlight the process of producing a performed interculturality that aims to reframe the colonial and the otherness in an aesthetic dimension, we start from the concept of placemaking in order to accomplish a contemporary analysis of Lisbon's historic neighbourhoods and the challenges they face at a time of urban requalification operations, escalating tourism, and the realization of cultural events.

We specifically analysed the *Todos* festival, the twelfth completed in 2020, which sees itself as an event to promote interculturality, as it adopted the logics of placemaking and the narratives of post-coloniality. Initiatives such as the *Todos* Orchestra—which was one of the first to be consolidated and to assume a structural character, acting as the festival's brand image in the time and space that exist beyond the moment of the festival (every September)—or more recent ones, such as *Todos* Saberes e Sabores Culturais (*Todos* knowledge and cultural flavours), which promotes the gastronomic heritage of minorities, as well as collective exhibitions of artists featuring sketches of foreign businesses in the streets of Lisbon focused on immigrant entrepreneurship underpin the role of heritage as a mediator between tensions and differences that are found in local culture. As if the inevitability of daily coexistence with the heritage of the others would end up provoking a flattening of the contested character of the heritage. Contributing to sustain the rhetoric that states that Lisbon is a place of intercultural dialogue, where diversity is not only tolerated, but protected and stimulated.

When we asked festival-goers to reflect on their experience, what they think of the festival, and the importance of the festival for the city, what is notable is that they do not evoke specific venues. Rather, they frequently reproduce the narratives of the ethics of the encounter and the importance of the festival to contribute to discovering the territory and the otherness. In the interviews, *Todos* is described as being 'interesting', 'cosmopolite', and 'engaging'.

Initiatives such as the *Todos* festival must, however, be placed in the context of all the cultural initiatives and projects that political actors want to implement in a city that has become a major tourist attraction on an international scale. If, on the one hand, *Todos* is an event that intends to promote interculturality, acting in marginalized areas of the city, on the other

hand, in the noblest and most recognized spaces, projects are designed and approved that reproduce the domination of cultural and heritage hegemonies. But at least symbolically, by providing the conviviality of racialized working classes, immigrants, and ethnic minorities, *Todos* also functions as a tool for questioning the security claims and practices that stigmatize minorities and vulnerable groups.

Notes

1 This chapter is part of the project ECHOES European Colonial Heritage Modalities in Entangled Cities that has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 770248.
2 The festival is promoted by the Academia de Produtores Culturais (a private agent) and the Municipality of Lisbon (a public agent responsible for the governance of the city).
3 In 2012, Lisbon took a prominent place in the creation of the Portuguese network of Intercultural Cities (RPCI), which now includes 11 municipalities from different regions of Portugal. The network is seen as a response to the diversification of Portugal's ethnic landscape from the 1990s when Portugal began to receive immigrants to work and live. In the middle of the last decade, the foreign population with legal status reached nearly 400,000 people. Brazil was the largest community, followed by Cape Verde, Ukraine, Romania, China, and Angola (see 'The Portuguese Network of Intercultural Cities', *Council of Europe*. Accessed 5 March 2021. https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/portugal).
4 Mouraria (literally, the Moorish quarter) is the place in Lisbon where the Moors, who did not leave the city with the Christian reconquest (1147), settled.
5 On one side, this double image is a city dominated by the 'traditional notion of white and Catholic elite heritage'. From other side, it is a city marked by 'a plural notion of Afro-Colombian, indigenous, peasant and pagan heritage'.
6 At the eleventh festival (2019), we carried out 45 interviews with festival-goers in the venues of *Todos* festival. The interviews were carried out in the *vox pop* modality. The interview script contained six questions. The answers were recorded and transcribed and analysed using *MaxQda* software. The 45 interviewees were randomly selected. 31 were Portuguese; 3 French; 2 Brazilian; 2 Italian; 2 Angolan; 1 Albanian; 1 Syrian; 1 Guinean; and 2 had dual nationality; 29 had attended previous editions of the festival and 16 were participating for the first time. Quotations from attendees were presented under pseudonyms along with their ages.
7 The two questions whose answers were retained for this analysis are: What is your opinion about *Todos* festival? How important is the festival for the city?

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Chapter 12

Aesthetics and colonial heritage

An interview with artists based in Marseille[1]

Badr El Hammami, Mohammed Laouli and Marine Schütz

Beginning in 2000, art in France has revealed a striking proliferation of works exploring the complex cross-cultural relations that have resulted from a long history of exchanges between France and the Maghreb. The attitudes towards identity and difference that have unfolded in media debates, especially when related to immigration or violence, provide the impetus for many works of art exploring Franco-Maghrebi identities.

While a significant proportion of these artworks reveal a common aim to counter Western stereotypes about the Arab difference, many involve a wider critique of the relations between France and its former colonies by investigating the traces of empire pertaining to its representation in monuments. The city of Marseille was historically marked by colonial history. As the gateway to the East and to Africa, which makes it an important crossroads for European, Mediterranean, and African cultures, many street names and monuments bear witness to this past. A number of artists located in Marseille take as a starting point the weight of colonization on historical narration and representations in order to unfurl a critique of colonial narratives that, although written in the past, remain the source of intense suffering.

This interview, which took place in the summer of 2020 with contemporary artists Badr El Hammami and Mohammed Laouli, centres on questions about the relations between decolonizing the arts and monuments, their own backgrounds, and the effects of the recent Black Lives Matter struggles on their artistic production.[2] Their comments explain how they approach traces of colonialism (such as memory erasure, epistemic colonization, and the monument as a persistent expression of the political matrices that governed the past) in order to denounce unequal relationships of the present. While their responses point to the quest for two types of justice—social and memorial—they convey a conception of the decolonization of knowledge aimed at imagining societies that are more concerned with the place of the individual. These artists' responses also illuminate aspects pertaining to the new relations that can be put into place between Morocco and France. Indeed, Badr El Hammami and Mohammed Laouli develop representations of colonial histories that go beyond a unidirectional process of contestation and overcome restrictive nationalist visions of identity in the Maghreb, thereby showing an

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-15

aspiration for transnational approaches that are determined by the complexity of Franco-Maghrebi identities in art in Marseille.

Marine Schütz: In France, the consideration of colonization seems to oscillate between the difficulty of its recognition and the political valorization of its supposed 'positive aspects'. Yet colonial issues made an early appearance in your respective works. Badr El Hammami, in your work *Sans titre* (2012) (Figure 12.1), you have put forth representations of the world where you propose other modalities of relationships by transforming borders into connective zones. Borders rank high among the salient legacies of French colonialism in Africa. Such an overcoming of the legacies of colonialism seems to be central to your work; can you explain its genesis?

Badr El Hammami: The installation *Sans titre* (2012) is made with wool and represents a world map. I chose to let the rest of the wool threads fall and

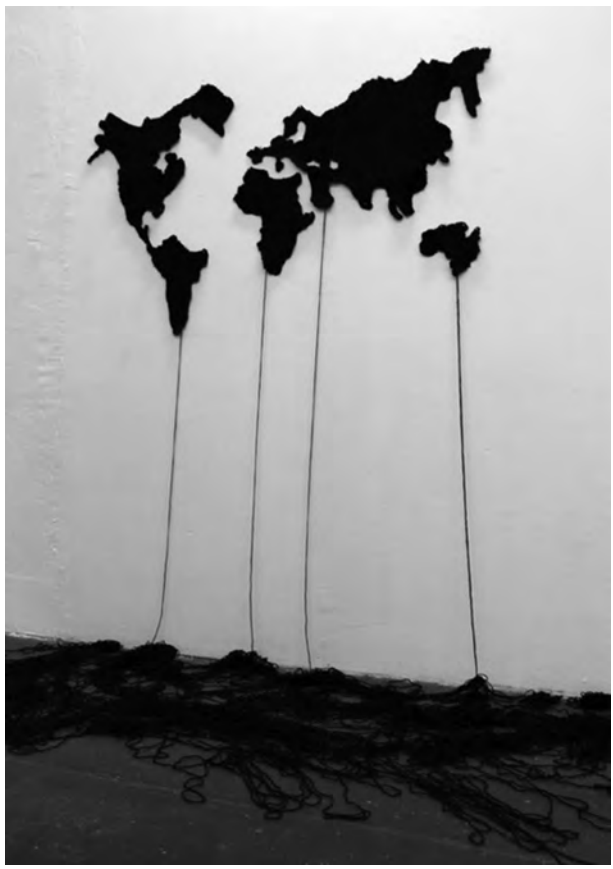

Figure 12.1 Badr El Hammami, *Sans titre*, 2012, wool, 180 x 140 cm, view of the exhibition *Vie privée et familiale*, Espace 29, Bordeaux, France, 2012.

form a set of threads that cross each other. The choice of wool is not a coincidence: it was a heavily imported material in colonial times. There are two things that interest me in this installation. The first one is the representation of borders in history textbooks, of those lines that separate countries and that shape an image of their roots, without a beginning or an end. But each line is loaded with a tragic history. The simplicity of these drawings of world maps has always been a way for the colonial powers to assert control over territories. The second is that I always think of a particular sentence when I see a world map, that of Georg Simmel, who says: 'The border is not a spatial fact with sociological effects, but a sociological fact that takes on a spatial form.'[3]

Marine Schütz: Mohammed Laouli, the presence of colonial issues in your work also seems closely linked to space, namely to urban space in Morocco and France.

Mohammed Laouli: I decided to get out of my studio because when I was in Morocco, at one point, the enclosed space was not enough for me; it didn't nourish me and there wasn't much to draw on from my imagination. I don't work with my imagination. I am an artist who works with reality. The evolution of my artistic practice has had as its goal public space and the streets in order to be in direct contact with the people and what is happening in the reality of today. I started to create my interventions in Morocco. There, there are not so many statues. They all have been removed. There was one of [Hubert] Lyautey, but it is at the French Institute.[4] So in Morocco I started doing my interventions with people. That's where my interest in public space started. When I came to Marseille, I was already doing the work *Frontières Fluides* with Katrin Ströbel, a project that takes public space as its starting point. But for my own work, because I was in Marseille, which is a city with a huge colonial heritage, I began to confront these statues, because it is something that is there, that is present, that marks and summarizes a whole history. The whole colonial history is there, in these sculptures.

It was with the *Ex-voto* series that these questions about colonial history began. It's been three years since I started working on these questions and from this point of view, from France. Now, I work from both sides; before, I only worked from Morocco. And now I'm on this side. This is a sensitive subject. In *Power Dance*, you see that in the pieces I've made, there is a kind of conflictual relationship, an aesthetic of conflict—for example, when I juxtapose a *kepi* with the pompoms of a djellaba (Figure 12.2).[5] Sometimes I am afraid of propagating an aesthetic of war and that the work may be misunderstood. You can see that my work *Chasing Ghosts, Homage to the Harkis* is a video that is difficult to understand. It passes for an homage to the *harkis*.[6] But I don't pay homage. I use the story of the *harkis*, the situation, like other stories, the colonization, and the postcolonial situation, because up until this very day we continue to face the scars of this story. These stories are so strong and violent that they interest me. Yet it is not the personal histories of the *harkis* that interest me but rather the mechanism that produced this and the effects as well as the impact of this today.

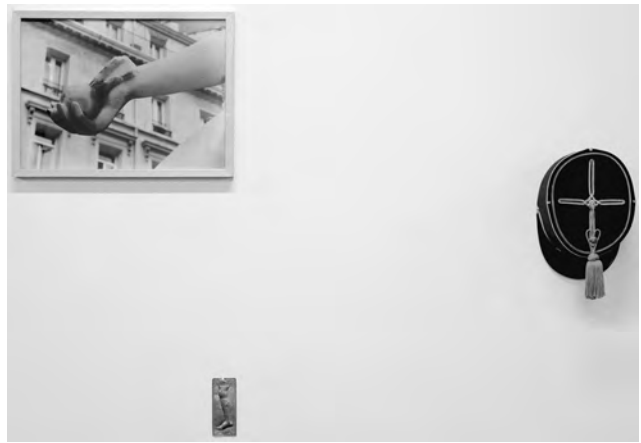

Figure 12.2 Mohammed Laouli, *Ex-votos*, 2018, *Colonial kepi vs pompon* (Installation), *Untitled* (photography) and *Necklace* (found object), view of the installation in the Friche de la Belle de Mai, Marseille, France.

Marine Schütz: Badr, your work *Thabrate* deals with the means of communication used by Moroccans who migrated to France after decolonization in the 1960s. The ways you allow entangled French and Moroccan histories to reemerge seems to challenge French national narratives on the history of colonialism, which are often conceived—as in Benjamin Stora's analysis—as a form of collective amnesia.[7] How has your personal history led you to such critical approaches to colonial history?

Badr El Hammami: Concerning my origins and the way I treat colonial history, you have to know that Morocco was a French and a Spanish colony, the Rif [mountainous area in Morocco] was colonized by the Spanish. So I have always been interested in my native region before the history of the Moroccan nation. But from a young age, I was interested in the French language. Yet in the Rif, everybody speaks Spanish; I always had this impression that the Spanish were still there. The proof that European borders go all the way to Morocco (they don't stop at Spain) is the existence of the Spanish enclaves Ceuta and Melilla, two large European cities in Africa![8]

This is an example of a contemporary colonial history that remains taboo in current debates. In one of my artistic productions, *Sans titre* (2012) (Figure 12.3), with a coin and a table, the coin comes from the Franco era. It spins non-stop on the table. It is a way for me to say that the colonial question is still topical; there will be no flip of the coin.

Marine Schütz: After the death of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter movement has targeted certain aspects of the legacy of colonialism, such as its monuments and the systemic effects of racism on the psyche or the

Figure 12.3 Badr El Hammami, *Sans titre*, 2012, coin and table, view of the exhibition in La Kunsthalle, Mulhouse, France.

employment prospects of Black populations in the United States and Great Britain. Your video *Les Sculptures N'étaient Pas Blanches* (Figure 12.4) takes as its starting point the reactions of anti-racist activists, who poured red paint on Louis Botinelly's sculpture, *Les Colonies d'Afrique*, that was erected in Marseille during the colonial exhibition of 1922. In this work we see you at work, cleaning these stains from *Les Colonies d'Afrique*. What is your relationship to these current events?

Mohammed Laouli: I use current events, the debates born of Black Lives Matter, as a catalyst to underline the colonial relationships and the colonial and postcolonial situation between here and there, this space that is France and the other side of the Mediterranean. This act allows me to underscore points that are really very sensitive and that you can't define with words. It's the question of taking care of an image that represents the colonized. How can you do that without the image? That's the strength of the image.

Marine Schütz: For this reason, your work functions as a sounding board for these Anglo-American debates, even if the population of Marseille seems to have been relatively unreceptive to controversies about the decolonization of monuments. However, while the issue of removal was often at stake in these debates, you have prompted a physical approach to colonial monuments that is based on gentleness. Where does this act of cleaning that you perform in your video come from? And what is at stake with such an approach?

Figure 12.4 Mohammed Laouli, *Les Sculptures N'Étaient Pas Blanches*, 2020, video. Copyright Mohammed Laouli/ECHOES.

Mohammed Laouli: In *Ex-Voto*, I had made marble plaques on which I said, 'Thank you for colonization'. There, I am taking care of the colony. I am giving thanks. In *Ex-Voto*, I was starting from colonial facts and events such as the Berlin Conference. I found it interesting to make a Catholic ex-voto from a marble plaque.[9] It was conscious and intentional. There is an irony. A bitterness. There is the balance of power: you (the colonizer) consider me weak. I am the dominated one. So, I let you believe that you dominate me.

I consider *Les Sculptures N'Étaient Pas Blanches* as another step in my work because I was able to treat these violent facts with gentleness and subtlety. It's too difficult to approach these subjects without violence. You can't approach colonial history in the world by denying violence. It is thanks to violence that I was able to arrive at this notion of taking care. I hope that from there this will lead me back to ways of working in the realm of gentleness when dealing with violence.

In relation to aesthetic resistance or aesthetic decolonization, I realized that I have made this gesture of cleaning hundreds of times in Morocco because when we go to the men's hammam, two or more of us go together, and one of us often takes care of the other's body by removing dirt from the skin with a glove. So the ritual that I set up in the video is a ritual inspired by the protocol of the Maghreb hammam, a common space of sharing and of purification.

Marine Schütz: What was the intellectual genesis of this video?

Mohammed Laouli: During the lockdown [caused by COVID-19] I made a new series. I even found a new content for my practice. I lived with this

sculpture [*Les Colonies d'Afrique*] when I landed in Marseille and also with the *Statue of Peace*.[10] When I come into contact with something, an object that becomes part of everyday life, it is reflected in my work. It's important that my experience as an immigrant is here, in my work.

So during the lockdown I found myself a subject: modern sculpture. In the street, I found beautiful engravings of sculptures created by the Louvre Museum in the 1960s. There's Rodin, there's everyone: the French and European modern, Dutch sculptors, etc. The prints were in my studio for three or four years. And during the lockdown, as I was into sculpture, I began to exchange the features of the sculptures on the prints, the head with other faces, which are faces of the South, North African, Mexican, Black, etc. I played with that and I found something, without knowing the story of *Les Sculptures N'Étaient Pas Blanches*. When I learned the story of *Les Sculptures N'Étaient Pas Blanches*, I thought it was huge. There was a documentary produced by Arte called *Non! Les Statues antiques n'étaient pas blanches*.[11] It said that a German politician who had a connection to Winckelmann decided that all sculptures would be white, which related to the so-called superiority of the white race.[12] Because the Ottomans had coloured sculptures, the Greeks had coloured sculptures. This, so that the European would not be confused with the others.

Marine Schütz: Your remarks about this series of collages and this documentary suggest that, at a certain point, with the invention of modern aesthetics during the eighteenth century, the link between art and race was confirmed in a canon that represses any form of plurality. Your work thus seems to be directly linked to a critique of the effects of modernity on the construction of a white, European aesthetic, which, in its very enterprise, intended to crush all forms of pluralism.

Mohammed Laouli: Yes, it is a decolonization of the body, of the body of sculpture, because it is the canon of the body, it is the basis of modern and European sculpture.

Marine Schütz: Thus, you approach another relationship between art and decolonization that concerns representation itself. Questions of representation are at the heart of the colonial enterprise. You started from this matrix, as if you were deconstructing modern/colonial aesthetics by taking an interest in the question of representation. For aesthetics has excluded all other forms of expressions other than fine arts in order to classify them as ethnology or folklore. The eighteenth century appears as the key moment when the understanding of the diversity of the aesthetic phenomenon contracted.

Mohammed Laouli: Absolutely. And there, you arrive at something very important: my interest in the votive form. When I wanted to approach this power relationship between two poles, the colonized and the colonizer, I chose the votive form because Georges Didi-Huberman in *Ex-Voto: Image, Organe, Temps* says that the votive form was denied by art historians, that it was not considered an art form.[13]

Marine Schütz: In short, you have constructed your approach to the dialectics of the colonial/colonized by choosing a form that itself had been marginalized?

Mohammed Laouli: That's what interests me. What is important is that the form of thanking was like an introduction. With *Ex-Voto*, I found a way to work in a kind of third space, as Homi Bhabha used to say,[14] which is open to all kinds of negotiations, to all kinds of things that are part of this process of decolonization. Whatever I do, I'm in a sea, I can't swim without a 'decolonization vest'! Historically with the votive form, we return to the situation, to this thought that dominates the balance of power between the colonized and the colonizer.

Marine Schütz: We have dealt with the issue of the decolonizing of the arts. In France, the notion is driven by a group of thinkers, Décolonisons les arts (Let's decolonize the arts), formed by Françoise Vergès, Eva Doumbia, Kader Attia, etc. They stand out for having developed narratives of colonialism that, while being critical of established power relations, sometimes seem to reassert old cleavages, especially those between different facets of racial and cultural identity. What is your view of their actions and attempts? Badr, what do you think of such approaches and more broadly of the role of artists in the decolonization of art, evoked by Mohammed?

Badr El Hammami: As far as the Décolonisons les arts movement is concerned, I am not very convinced by what they say. I listened to Françoise Vergès at the Friche de la Belle de Mai.[15] What I understood from them is that Arab artists must speak only of Arabs and Black artists only of the Blacks, and the workers must speak of the workers. What shocked me is that she comes from neither of these backgrounds herself. I have the impression that she did not understand that artists have always decolonized the arts; it's even an engine of creativity and it is not simply a question of decolonizing by contributing to colonial history, but also by way of collective imagination. Transgression is a form of decolonization. What touches me in works of art is when they evade a direct interpretation, when they are open to several interpretations—they are not mass-produced IKEA tables.

Marine Schütz: Which artists do you have in mind?

Badr El Hammami: We can cite these artists, who, in some cases, often went unnoticed but have always addressed this question of decolonization: Trinh T. Minh-ha, Miklos Onucsan, Isaac Julien, Meschac Gaba, Ariella Azoulay, Guy Tillim, Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, Bouchra Khalili, etc.

Marine Schütz: Badr, in the movements pressing for the decolonization of knowledge, the issue of monuments dominated the headlines this summer [2020] in Bristol. In June, we witnessed the toppling of the statue of slave trader Edward Colston by activists during a Black Lives Matter demonstration. What is your perception of how the colonial heritage was dealt with in Marseille?

Badr El Hammami: Concerning the toppling of the sculptures, to tell the truth, I completely disagree with the idea of erasing the history of these

monuments, which is like saying that the concentration camps, the traces of Nazism, must be removed. That's what extremists usually do, we've already seen it with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan with the destruction of the Buddhist statues (the Buddhas of Bâmiyân) and in museums in Iraq and in many other countries. Erasing the history of historical monuments is erasing a history for future generations. Without the evidence, doubt is planted about the very existence of these stories.

Marine Schütz: In your own work, you seem to pay a lot of attention to the forms that allow history to persist. With the *Thabrate* project, you worked on the communication tools that Berber immigrants have used since the 1960s to transmit their culture. You seem interested in the effects that colonization in Morocco had on culture and on the narration of history.

Badr El Hammami: The reason I am interested in sound archives and transmission is simple: I lived in Morocco for 20 years and these stories are related to our Amazigh (Berber) culture, which was completely banned from history books in our country. But this is what remains, and by being a strongly oral culture it allows us to continue to perpetuate these memories and traditions. This is exactly what the Riffian generation did in the 1960s. Unable to communicate with their loved ones back home (I'm talking about the Riffian workers who arrived in France in the 1960s) given that landline telephones were not common in Morocco and the majority were illiterate, they had the intelligence to use audio tapes after 1963, when the Philips brand marketed this technology, to record actual oral letters that would go back and forth between France and Morocco. My father is part of this generation. What I find interesting in this recording process is that Berber culture is an oral one, and it is not because it is not written that there is no history. Written history has always been the story of the victors, but the way it is written doesn't tell how things exactly happened.

There are many stories related to the colonial era that have gone unremarked in history books. I am particularly interested in stories on the margins of history; for example, being a Moroccan from the Rif region (in the north of Morocco), I tried to understand what happened during the Rif War (1921) in relation to France in general and Marseille in particular. That's what interests me, to look where there is a gap in history, geography, politics, etc.

Notes

1 This work forms part of the ECHOES project which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 770248.

2 The ECHOES research project created the 'Key Interventions' section on its website with the aim of gathering different projects that emerged in the wake of 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. See *ECHOES*, https://keywordsechoes.com/interventions (accessed 11 December 2020).

3 Georg Simmel, *Sociologie* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2010), 606.

4 Hubert Lyautey was a French military officer during the colonial wars and became the first Resident General of the French protectorate of Morocco in 1912.

5 *Power Dance* was a solo exhibition by Mohammed Laouli that ran from April to June 2019 in Le Cube—independent art room, Rabat, Morocco.
6 *Harkis* is the term for the Algerian soldiers who fought on the side of France during Algeria's War of Independence. Many relocated to Marseille after Independence and in spite of the difficult living conditions they experienced upon their arrival in France they are commemorated with plaques in the city. One can be found on the back of the *Monument aux morts de l'armée d'Orient*. The artist questioned this commemoration in his project entitled *Chasing Ghost*.
7 The French historian introduced this notion in several texts, including Benjamin Stora, "Women's Writing between Two Algerian Wars," *Research in African Literatures* 30 (3) (1999): 78–94.
8 Ceuta and Melilla are two autonomous Spanish cities located on the north coast of Africa, opposite the Iberian Peninsula. They represent a special case within the Spanish state because they are landlocked on another continent and are the object of a Moroccan territorial claim. See Yves Zurlo, *Ceuta et Melilla: Histoire, représentations et devenir de deux enclaves espagnoles* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005).
9 The Larousse dictionary defines ex-voto as 'a painting or symbolic object hung in a church, a venerated place, following a vow or in thanksgiving for a grace obtained'. See "Ex-voto," *Larousse*, accessed 11 December 2020. https://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/rechercher/ex%20voto.
10 This statue, erected by Joseph Chinard during the Napoleonic wars, was placed in front of the Marché des Capucins in 1802 and removed seven years later. It was finally returned to its original location in 1984. Today, this sculpture made in the beaux-arts style is surrounded by the stalls of the market of the Algerian district of Marseille.
11 This 2019 documentary, made by Benoît Puichaud and produced by the TV channel Arte, takes on the argument by the archeologist Philippe Jockey about the myth of a 'white' Greece. See Philippe Jockey, *Le Mythe de la Grèce blanche* (Paris: Belin, 2019).
12 Prussian archaeologist and art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768) was the founder of archaeology and art history as modern disciplines. On his contribution to sculpture, see Daniela Gallo, *Modèle ou Miroir?: Winckelmann et la sculpture néoclassique* (Paris: Éditions Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2009).
13 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Ex-voto: image, organe, temps* (Paris: Bayard, 2006).
14 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004).
15 The artist refers to a conference during the 2017 *Art-O-Rama* Art Fair.

Chapter 13

Enslaved bodies, entangled sites and the memory of slavery in Cape Town

The meeting of the dead and the living

Meghna Singh

The aftermath of the brutal killing of George Floyd by a white policeman in Minneapolis has led to an ever-increasing effort towards anti-racist activism around the globe. Protests and political demands under the heading Black Lives Matter are being pursued all over the world. The surveillance and policing of historically marginalized and racialized groups and individuals, creating specific modalities of oppression and discrimination, has been deployed since the days of slavery. In South Africa, this racialized policing has continued from its apartheid days upholding segregationist policies against its non-white citizens. In 2018, during the busy holiday season over Christmas in Cape Town, Clifton beach made headlines nationally and internationally. However, this time, not for being a top beach destination for the holidaymakers but rather as a public site to be reclaimed by the local black population. The hash tag #ReclaimClifton swept the news headlines as the organizers responded to private security guards asking black people to vacate the beach at 8 o'clock in the evening from 16 December onwards. The news stated,

> Professional Protection Alternatives (PPA), a private security company hired by some residents at Clifton 4th beach, was accused of ordering people off the beach after 8pm last Sunday. Protestors slaughtered a sheep to exorcise the "demon of racism" after days of rising tension and claims about apartheid-style beach bans'.
>
> (Mjo 2018)

The slaughtering sparked tensions at the beach, with animal rights activists opposing the act and the city's mayoral committee member for safety and security, JP Smith, stating that it was illegal to slaughter an animal in a public space without consent of the state government. Activists said that they were reminded of laws under apartheid where beaches were reserved for the exclusive use of whites. Their slogans stated, 'Never again will our beaches be segregated. We call on all our people to exercise their freedom of movement and access to our beaches' (IOL 2018). There are many demons that still haunt us in Cape Town and the act of slaughtering a sheep to reclaim a public space is a good starting point to discuss the history and pain of this country.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-16

Clifton beach has not always been a space occupied by rich white folk. It was in the news only a few years ago with the reporting of the discovery of the remains of a Portuguese slave ship that sank with 212 slaves on board in 1794, their hands and legs shackled as they drowned. The remains discovered in 2015 are part of an ongoing archaeological expedition (Boshoff et al. 2016). One of the principal archaeological investigators for the excavation of the *São José* shipwreck, Jaco Boshoff, states that there might be a possibility of a mass grave of the drowned slaves at Clifton beach, and they intend to conduct ground-penetrating radar to explore that possibility (Boshoff, personal communication, June 2018). Engaging with the given situation I ask the question: what if there is a discovery of a mass grave of drowned enslaved ancestors who were a part of the Middle Passage on their way to Brazil from Mozambique? What does that mean for the memory of slavery in the city that has a relationship of denial with its historic past? One does not think of 'forgiveness' and 'reconciliation' when we think of a nation oppressed under colonization. However, the end of apartheid saw the Government of National Unity set up the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 1995 as a restorative justice body to help citizens speak about human rights abuses through public hearings. Perpetrators of violence also gave testimonies and requested amnesty from both civil and criminal prosecution. The TRC operated under the tagline 'healing our nation', through truth and forgiveness. But 25 years later, what is its legacy? In her article, Pearl Boshomane asks the question, 'What has it done not only for South Africa as a country, but for ordinary South Africans?' (2016). Furthermore, Fanie du Toit argues that reconciliation was initially accepted by South Africans as an acceptance of their interdependence, with a strong commitment to justice and inclusivity. The post-apartheid leadership was mandated to build on these commitments in order to create a more just society over time. However, data from various public opinion surveys reveal that, despite important achievements, the government's failure to pay reparations, combined with state corruption and denial from the white community, have created increasing disillusionment with reconciliation (du Toit 2017). Furthermore, based on one of the documents from Wits University's Traces of Truth project (which preserves and archives documents relating to the TRC), Boshomane states that 'it erases the fact that racism was the root of apartheid, which downplays white supremacy, making it easier for systematic racism and white privilege to continue and thrive uninterrupted' (2016).

Given this background, what if the dead come to demand justice in a space occupied by privileged white people sunbathing and relaxing on the beach? Cape Town remains a racially divided city, a city of contrasts with extreme wealth and poverty co-existing. What happens to the artificial veneer of the city when the dead resurface and present the past to the people? This very scene provides the starting point for the installation art virtual reality project

Container directed by Meghna Singh and Simon Wood that reflects on historical slavery by commenting on modern-day servitude. It places the audience on Clifton beach next to a white family as they witness the emergence of enslaved people pulling a container out of the ocean. Through a progression in historical time, it takes the audience on a journey into an endless maze of containers that reveal different forms of slavery: from following an enslaved man on a sugarcane plantation to watching a domestic servant in a colonial household to an Asian massage parlour and ending in a sweatshop using child labour in Bangladesh.

Container highlights the concept of 'European entanglements' as proposed by Elizabeth Buettner in the Horizon 2020 project ECHOES (European Colonial Heritage Modalities in Entangled Cities) methodological toolkit. She proposes that 'global flows of people (whether enslaved, indentured, or voluntary), goods, capital, and ideologies link European colonizing countries with overseas possessions and spheres of influence'. She further states that these 'complex colonial legacies remain central not only to post-colonial societies overseas but also echo resoundingly across Europe itself' (2018, 13). Inspired by Avery Gordon's writings on hauntings and ghosts (1997) and haunting and futurity (2011), the piece presents a meeting of the dead and living as a way to move on in the city. Gordon asks for a 'new sociology' and 'new forms of subjectivity' to bring about 'radical political change'. She proposes that we need to think beyond the limits of what is comprehensible. Inspired by her writings the project presents a strategy of imaging beyond the comprehensible to initiate healing and respect our ancestors. In her more recent writings, Gordon draws a parallel between racial slavery and modern capitalism in the United States. Furthermore, I borrow from Britta Timm Knudsen's concept of 'reframing', which she describes as the 'politicized mode of "re-emergence"'. She states that

> the colonial past tends to become de-politicized, packaged and consumed as just another "experience". A reframed colonial past can then, while boosting local, regional or even national economies, prevent awareness of, public debates on and actions relating to the past in question.
>
> (Knudsen 2018, 41)

The same can be extended to South African society: the poorest are the people who suffered under colonialism and apartheid and form the underclass of society. Gordon asks us to be hopeful and borrows Kodwo Eshun's phrase 'inaugurating ones' to describe the present generation as not merely reactive subjects and to carry on emancipation work (Gordon 2011, 8). Focusing on the emancipation work that needs to be done not only in South Africa but globally, the work hopes to create an awareness that the present generation or the 'inaugurating ones' carry forward into the future while remembering and respecting the ancestors and providing justice in society.

Cape Town: a city of contrasts

Cape Town remains one of the most racially divided cities in South Africa. The apartheid city planning continues to divide people along racialized identities. '"White spaces" and "black spaces" remain separate through devices such as empty tracts of land—"buffer zones" between areas declared for different racial groups' (Shepherd and Murray 2007, 6). The contemporary face of the city for European and American holidaymakers is one of luxury amidst the unmatched beauty of the mountains and the ocean. It is a global cosmopolitan city, unique to the continent, dotted with world-class shopping malls, restaurants, and shopping. It is a city that denies its past like no other. Here I would like to quote archaeologist Nick Shepherd who states,

> In the contested public sphere of the postcolony there is a certain kind of pleasure that is premised on institutionalized forgetting. Or we might put this differently, by saying that for those who can afford it the ultimate holiday lies in taking a holiday from history.
>
> (Shepherd 2015, 104)

The history of slavery and apartheid is disavowed in the city and life carries on without social and economic restitution for the people who have suffered for decades. Furthermore, South Africa, as the space of a postcolony is described by Mark Fleishman, citing Achille Mbembe, as 'the multiple, contradictory moments of everyday life in Africa read against the persistent accretions of slavery, colonialism, apartheid and neo liberal forms of democracy' (Fleishman 2011, 8). He further states,

> In this palimpsestuous time space, diverse urban worlds exist in the same territory filled with discontinuous fixtures and flows and odd juxtapositions and the past has an uncanny habit of inserting itself into the present in surprising and unexpected ways.
>
> (Fleishman 2011, 8)

In the preface to his seminal text *Children of Bondage*, the historian Robert Shell explains the 'compelling similarities between slavery and apartheid in terms of legality, demographics, civil rights, and voiceless victims' (1994, xix–xx). Nigel Worden similarly writes of how slavery in rural and urban areas at the Cape encouraged racially based injustices, which were institutionalized by later policies across all areas of the country (1985, 4). Discussing present-day inequalities and their relation to the history of the country, I would like to borrow Anthony Bogues's (2010) idea of 'historical catastrophe', which suggests that an atrocious set of events set in the past are reproduced and recapitulated in new forms and contemporary disguises. Bogues suggests that it is not one historical event but a series of catastrophic events that condition our present. These traumatic events are recapitulated through time and their

effects are borne on the bodies of their subjects. For Cape Town's victims of slavery and apartheid, this experience is recapitulated through their movement in the divided city where they continue to experience the segregation between the rich whites and the poor blacks. Writing about the history of colonialism and capitalism, Paul Gardullo states,

> For far too many of us, the intimacy of individual lives are lost among or abstracted in the numbers. But they were, in the words of the curators at the Smithsonian Museum, inscribed in every coin that changed hands, each spoonful of sugar stirred into a cup of tea, each puff of a pipe, and every bite of rice.
>
> (Boshoff et al. 2016, 4)

The recent student-led protests for decolonization of universities in 2015 and 2016 demonstrate that discontent amongst the 'born-free' generation is crystallizing and that South Africans are demanding redress for historical injustices. The Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall movements' demand for free higher education and the call for decolonization of the university curriculum showcases societal ruptures that have the potential to tear the contemporary fabric of South African society.

The project *Container* uses this idea of 'historical catastrophe' as a trope to present the journey from historical slavery to men, women and children caught up in modern-day servitude around the globe. Told through layers of the physical, virtual, constructed, and documented, a dark shipping container becomes the stage for true stories of people caught up in the system of modern slavery enabling our consumer society. In today's world, be it Cape Town, New York or London, there are thousands of people being exploited and work for nothing. It is not only the outsourcing of the production of commodities to the developing world that seeks cheap labour; the world's major cities are filled with invisible people forced into economic and domestic servitude. People have become commodities, which is the very definition of slavery: people as products. The 2017 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery report calculates that of 24.9 million victims of forced labour, 16 million are thought to be in the private economy, 4.8 million in forced sexual exploitation, and 4.1 million in state-sponsored forced labour including mandatory military conscription and agricultural work (ILO and WFF 2017).

> Modern day slaves aren't captured, stocked like cattle on slave ships, and sold in public auctions. They are men, women and children lured into trafficking by the promise of a job and better life and then forced to work with little or no pay, or coerced to sell their bodies.
>
> (Potenza 2014, 9)

The proliferation of contemporary slavery, despite legal sanctions against it, points to a greater need for global awareness, prevention, intervention, and advocacy.

A meeting of the dead and living as a way to move on

Container is made in memory of the 212 enslaved men, women, and children who died in shackles when the *São José Paquette de Africa* sank in 1794. Those who survived were sold into slavery in Cape Town. Their descendants continue to live amongst us today. The work takes its inspiration from Avery Gordon's idea of 'haunting' that she describes as

> a way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with (such as with transatlantic slavery, for instance) or when their oppressive nature is continuously denied (such as with free labor or national security).
>
> (Gordon 2011, 2)

The possibility that there might be a mass grave of the drowned slaves from the *São José* or even the possibility of dead humans tied to shackles resting on the ocean bed just 100 metres from the beach makes their presence very much alive amongst us. Bringing Gordon's idea of 'haunting' into the space of Clifton beach, I would like to reiterate her point that 'haunting is not about invisibility or unknowability per se, it refers us to what's living and breathing in the place hidden from view: people, places, histories, knowledge, memories, ways of life, ideas' (Gordon 2011, 3). Gordon would describe the presence of the dead of the *São José* as a 'seething presence' of what is not there, what is past or lost or missing or simply not clearly visible (Gordon 1997, 22). Within this landscape and in order to feel and respect the presence of dead ancestors requires an 'experimental and embodied engagement' and I would like to suggest that this different engagement is what she describes as 'sensuous knowledge': sensuous knowledge is

> receptive, close, perceptual, embodied incarnate … it tells and it transports at the same time. Sensuous knowledge always involves knowing and doing. Everything is in the experience with sensuous knowledge. Everything rests on not being afraid of what is happening to you.
>
> (Gordon 1997, 205)

Adopting the notion of a 'sensuous knowledge' in the conceptualization of *Container* allowed us to interact with the dead in a way that treats the dead with the respect they deserve. It allows us to present them as the embodiment of humans who finally deserve justice for the past. Looking at transatlantic slavery in her book *Ghostly Matters* (1997), she suggests that engaging with a ghost 'is about putting life back in where only a vague memory or a bare trace was visible to those who bothered to look' (Gordon 1997, 22). Writing about the significance of the ghost, she states that the ghost is important as it offers

us future possibilities and a sense of hope, an opportunity to 'repair representational mistakes' and to create a 'counter memory for the future' (Gordon 1997, 64). This is because a ghost is 'pregnant with unfulfilled possibility, with the something to be done that the wavering present is demanding' and '[t]his something to be done is not a return to the past but a reckoning with its repression in the present, a reckoning with that which we have lost, but never had' (Gordon 1997, 183). To engage with the idea that the ghost presents possibilities gives us a chance to respect the dead of the *São José*, not to disavow the dead and the past but to see it as an opportunity to create a space for healing. This is in line with the concept of 're-emergence' by Britta Timm Knudsen that states 'any emergence in the colonial field is also a re-emergence of past unacknowledged possibilities actualized at a specific time and moment' (2018, 1). The opening scene exhibiting the emergence of the dead from the ocean, walking on the beach, a space reserved for hedonistic pleasures of the rich invites an opportunity for people to engage with the ghosts. Gordon suggests that 'we must reckon with the ghost graciously, attempting to offer it a hospitable memory out of a concern for justice' (1997, 64).

In her more recent writing on 'haunting and futurity', Gordon (2011) draws a parallel between the legacy of slavery and US capitalism. This comparison is most pertinent in the contemporary political and social climate not only in the United States but globally. One can extend this parallel to South African society with the disparities between the rich whites and poor blacks in the racially divided city. Writing about the inheritance of racial slavery, she states,

> Slavery has ended, but something of it continues to live on, in the social geography of where peoples reside, in the authority of collective wisdom in the veins of the contradictory formation we call New World modernity, propelling, as it always has, a something to be done. Such endings that are not over is what haunting is about.
>
> (Gordon 1997, 139)

Borrowing from her suggestion, I would like to propose that the approach to end suffering and not just to witness it is 'to use haunting as the meeting of the dead and the living'. Gordon explains this methodology as:

> With this particular conception of haunting, I was trying to develop a working vocabulary that registered and evoked the lived and living meeting, in their historical time, of the organized forces of order and the aggrieved person when consciousness of that meeting was arising, haunting, forcing a confrontation, forking the past and the future. I thought at that meeting point—in the gracious but careful reckoning with the ghost—we could locate some elements of a practice for moving towards eliminating the conditions that produce the haunting in the first place.
>
> (Gordon 2011, 4–5)

How does the meeting of the dead and living work in the context of Cape Town? I would suggest in the post-colonial city, this meeting means paying attention to the fact that the ghosts need to rest in peace. It is not only about going back in historical time and trying to undo the past or apologizing for it but this methodology entails a promise to the dead about how we, as a people, shape the future. I propose that the present generation of South Africa, the 'inaugurating ones' (Kodwo Eshun's term), will bring about the transformation, do the emancipation work, the work that was promised but not followed through. *Container* hopes to contribute towards that awareness and generate a movement of action to demand change in society. It hopes to act as a trigger in inspiring a belief 'which has guided the worldwide movements to abolish slavery and captivity, colonialism, imprisonment, militarism, foreign debt bondage, and to abolish the capitalist world order known today as globalization or neo-liberalism' (Gordon 2011, 8).

Container: witnessed the invisibilized—a response to the *São José* shipwreck

Container is a collaboration between me and documentary filmmaker Simon Wood. We have directed and co-produced the project together. It has been co-produced by the non-profit organization Electric South, based in Cape Town. Electric South collaborates with artists across Africa in emerging storytelling by providing mentorship, production services, and funding to explore their worlds through immersive, interactive stories, including virtual and augmented reality and other digital media. *Container* will be presented as an installation experience at festivals, in public spaces and in museums around the world.

A few kilometres from Clifton beach where the remains of the *São José Paquette de Africa* wreck rest, cargo ships enter and leave Cape Town's busy port laden with thousands of shipping containers, their contents invisible, rarely discussed. Playing on the theme of the 'invisible', *Container* uses the hidden world of goods crisscrossing the globe in anonymous shipping containers to highlight the lives of the invisible millions that continue to be enslaved in new forms of modern-day slavery. The story of *São José* could have been told by creating a piece of work that commented on historical slavery but the creative strategy was to comment on contemporary slavery by linking the two and use the shipwreck as a starting point. The shipwreck, the invisible containers and contemporary economic servitude are the inspiration to craft this story.

Positioned at the intersection of virtual reality and installation art, the project invites people into a surreal maze-like world of containers, where they witness the truth behind the 'invisibilized'. The journey begins at Clifton beach, which hides the secret of the drowned slaves. The experience is about unravelling this secret. The viewer is taken on a cyclic journey that ends where it started. A mix of documentary and constructed reality, we witness black

bodies trapped in an endless historical cycle of servitude. As part of the cyclic process, people emerge from water, take us on an unknown journey into the world of products and eventually sink into the ocean again. The underlying creative idea for the script is as follows: the ocean cannot speak but has ways to remind us of those who were chained, those who drowned, those immersed in new forms of economic servitude and those made invisible. It is not only the outsourcing of the production of commodities to the developing world that seeks cheap labour but also major world cities like Cape Town are filled with invisible people forced into economic and domestic servitude.

The set-up of the project includes a container as an installation experience, a container as a tactile virtual walkthrough experience built using photogrammetry and Unity using an Oculus VR (virtual reality) headset, and a container as a 180 degree video experience. The first container you enter is an installation. It looks pretty much like any other container, the walls are damp, and there is a strong smell of the sea. There is a bench in the room. Eventually someone will ask you to wear an Oculus VR headset, and you enter our second container, a virtual container. This begins your immersive virtual reality experience of being inside an identical container space generated using the photogrammetry and Unity technology. You can move around and explore the space but you become invisible to yourself: you can touch the walls without seeing your hands. It creates an embodied alienating feeling of entering a universe without being able to see your own body as part of the world. Once you sit down on the bench, it triggers a 180 degree video, allowing you to access the third container space. This is a mixture of documented realities filmed inside the Port of Cape Town and constructed realities based on testimonies from men and women we have met through our research of the past three years.

The film component of the project is divided into six scenes. The opening scene depicts Clifton beach with enslaved people emerging from the sea. The third container's floor is covered in thick sand. Oblivious to the container's surroundings, a white family laughs and jokes as if they are relaxing on a beautiful African beach. A large man sips a cool drink while his wife browses through a fashion magazine. Their children play in the sand. The boy builds sandcastles all around himself while the little girl meticulously digs herself into a hole. A large wave crashes, forcing the family and the viewer to look up. A two-dimensional image of Clifton beach appears on the container wall as if a film is being projected in the cinema. In the distance we see two black men emerging from the sea (Figure 13.1).

They strain as they pull heavy chains from the ocean. Focused on the task at hand, they move up the beach pulling the chains and leaving the two-dimensional world behind as they enter the three-dimensional world of the container. They now stand next to the white children. Following them, we see four more black people emerging from the sea. The family looks on in shock as the men continue to pull the heavy chains. Attached to the chains, a container slowly rises from the depths. Suddenly, the container door violently

Figure 13.1 *Container*, Meghna Singh & Simon Wood (2021). Actors Shanda Shandu and Chuma Sopotela as the enslaved people pulling chains out of the ocean as a white family looks on. Film still from *Container*.

opens, the two black men drop the chains on the floor and then, with the white family, exit into the darkness.

The next scene is set in a dense sugarcane field where we follow a brutally wounded Mozambican man as he stumbles through the plantation. Sweating profusely, he enters the next container filled with soil and collapses into a hole. An Afrikaans maid buries the fallen enslaved man and unrolls a beautiful red carpet revealing a surreal colonial room ready for afternoon tea symbolizing 'domestic slavery' (Figure 13.2).

Scrutinizing the carpet for traces of dirt she sweeps vigorously. Dust begins to rise filling the container and blinking neon red lights slowly appear. The lights take shape into a garish red sign 'Full Body Massage'. Beneath the sign, bathed in red light, a large Dutch sailor lies on a table. A slight young Korean girl rubs his chest, working her way slowly towards his groin (Figure 13.3).

The lights get brighter and brighter engulfing the container in infinite blood red. Finally, the focus moves to 'children'. Four children sit on the container floor stitching logos onto Nike apparel. A cramped sweatshop in Bangladesh employs children who work long hours with little sleep. The light flickers off and on, we find ourselves in a rock quarry where a teenage black girl is breaking rocks with a hammer. We hear a loud thud and water starts gushing in from the roof of the container. She struggles then disappears into the depths (Figure 13.4).

Momentarily we are engulfed in the underwater stillness; products gently float in front of us. A diver's bright torch discovers us, blinding us. The

Figure 13.2 *Container*, Meghna Singh & Simon Wood (2021). Actress Rehane Abrahams as a maid in a colonial household. Film still from *Container*.

Figure 13.3 *Container*, Meghna Singh & Simon Wood (2021). Actor Albert Pretorius as a sailor in a massage parlour. Film still from *Container*.

Figure 13.4 Container, Meghna Singh & Simon Wood (2021). Actress Chuma Sopotela as the drowning woman. Film still from *Container*.

container's doors burst open revealing the white family staring back at us on Clifton beach. We look out of the door to our right and see a black man and a teenage boy standing outside holding chains as though they have just pulled the container out of the sea.

Virtual reality, immersion, and a demand for change in society

> The concept of putting oneself in another's shoes to vicariously share experiences using media is not new. Even a print medium that presents no simulated sensory information can feel relatively realistic when an individual becomes deeply engaged. However, no other medium to date has been able to replicate the degree of realism that the Immersive Virtual Environment Technology offers.
>
> (Ahn et al. 2013, 10)

Container is a virtual reality 180 degree three-dimensional film. We chose this format because of the close three-dimensional proximity it allows between the viewer and the subject (50–80 cms). This enables a hyperreal tactility and viscerality of the constructed environments. By disrupting the comfort of

one's personal space, we aim to facilitate an emotional engagement with the human condition that moves the audience. In addition to the element of proximity, we are working with one continuous long take enabling a seamless journey across time and space: from historical to modern-day slavery. As with every VR180 film following 180 degrees of action is 180 degrees of darkness. In *Container*, this echoes the continuous darkness that the system of slavery has brought to our society.

The unique immersive characteristics of VR are an important part of understanding how this new technology compares to linear media in informing and engaging audiences on important social issues. The underlying artistic approach to the narrative is to create an experience that is surreal and seamless. We have focused on a seamless edit between scenes where one scene morphs into another, making it feel like a theatrical real-time experience. A great deal of attention has been paid to the art direction of the constructed realities to make them as real as possible. The six different scenes of modern-day slavery have been thought through very carefully. We are working with method actors and rehearsing inside the confined dark space of the container to be able to demonstrate the emotions and stories of the people being represented. The idea of bringing the actors to the confined space of the container to represent real-life characters is a very different approach to filming characters at locations, which has been done previously in documentary filmmaking. There is no dialogue in the scenes that builds the tension within the characters as the scenes are to be experienced beyond language in an embodied way.

Taking the case of immersive environments further with the installation art virtual reality (VR) project *Container*, I will now discuss how the medium of the project proposes to push boundaries within academic research to sensitize the audience towards historical and contemporary slavery. Modern-day slavery is widespread across the globe, and we need a collective effort from diverse sources to create something impactful to make people realize their own participation in the system. We need to work across different sections of society from policy makers and politicians to the educators and the local public to take a step against this form of servitude.

Interpreting historical slavery in Cape Town and presenting it in its contemporary avatar, modern slavery, I researched and thought of a lot of effective immersive tools to stir a reaction in the audience, which should in turn demand justice, take responsibility, and hopefully take conscious action. There has been a case made for virtual reality to trigger emotions in people to take action. Feeling present in an experience generates feelings on the part of the viewer towards the characters depicted. A number of clinical studies, as well as a large body of anecdotal evidence, show that viewers have a stronger emotional response to a scene witnessed in VR than they do to one watched on a two-dimensional screen. Research has been conducted on the effect of embodied experience on people's attitudes. In the article 'The Effect of Embodied Experiences on Self-Other Merging, Attitude, and Helping

Behavior' (Ahn et al. 2013), the authors propose that 'immersive virtual environment technology (IVET) provides users with vivid sensory information that allows them to embody another person's perceptual experiences'. From the conclusion of three experiments they conducted, they state:

> Immersive virtual environment technology (IVET) can be used to enable individuals to easily and effectively experience the world from another person's point of view. With novel affordances such as multisensory inputs and naturalistic control of point of view, IVET allows for a literal demonstration of climbing into another person's skin to embody his or her experiences first hand. Vivid, multilayer perceptual information simulated by digital devices enable individuals to see, hear, and feel as if they were undergoing the sensory experiences in the physical world—what we call 'embodied experiences'. Using IVET, embodied experiences allow the user to experience the closest realization of the portal to enter another person's mind and body.
>
> (Ahn et al. 2013, 8)

Conclusion

This chapter presents a new way to view the question of the memory of slavery in Cape Town. The potential possibility of discovering a mass grave of slave ancestors at Clifton beach not only makes us question how the remains of the dead have been dealt with in the past, but also asks us to think of future ways of viewing the system of slavery. Reflecting on the unfortunate forceful historical migrations of Africans to the New World, we have to imagine the journey of the Middle Passage, the torture and pain and the specific misfortune of the passengers on the *São José*. Virtual reality as a medium helps construct atmospheres that allow for a communication with the figure of the ghost through narrative and sound. This experience allows an engagement with concepts such as 'being and presence (over non being and absence)' (Buser 2017, 5). It also lends greater authority to the concept of 'hauntology' coined by Jacques Derrida in Specters of Marx, which Michael Buser likens to 'a philosophical and ethical destabilization of all manner of dualisms and universalizing totalities' (Buser 2017, 5).

Using this medium in the project *Container*, we hope it lets us consider how historical slavery has evolved into a much larger system of servitude around the world. The question remains: how do we propose to move forward in the city?

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Part III

Imagining decolonial futures

Chapter 14

Decolonial countervisuality[1]

Britta Timm Knudsen with Sorana Munsya, Benjamine Laini Lusalusa and Stephanie Collingwoode Williams

In 2018, the Centre for Art on Migration Politics (CAMP), situated in the Trampoline House, a community space for refugees, asylum seekers and citizens in Copenhagen, hosted an exhibition entitled *Decolonizing Appearance* with the visual theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff as guest curator. As in Mirzoeff's book from 2011, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*, to which I will return at length later in this chapter, key questions regarding appearance framed CAMP's exhibition. One video work created by Trinidadian-Danish artist Jeannette Ehlers (*The Gaze*) is striking: on a split screen, the audience sees a group of people on the right-hand side: 15 brown and black people, including the artist herself, all kneeling Colin Kaepernick style to protest the oppression of minorities in the United States.[2] Barefooted and all dressed in black on a black background, the performers of *The Gaze* are facing the viewer. But due to the long, high-angle shot of this group photo, the faces are blurred. On the left side of the split screen, every single individual from the group photo appears close-up for 20 seconds on a black background, maintaining direct eye contact with the viewer. Even though the impression of the video is of a rather static situation on a split screen, smaller processes unlock the static nature of the situation: the closed eyes open slowly; silence is replaced by an electronic sound-cloud by Lamin Fofana—dream-like and ominous; the division between the screens is transcended, as one person walks from right to left to say the often quoted, familiar sentence 'I am here because you were there', vaguely echoed, pointing to the constructions of African-Caribbean and African-American people by colonial empires, as well as connecting migration to colonialism directly (Kushnick 1993; Mignolo 2011). The sentence is uttered and the performer looks at us—the viewers—for two minutes. In this way, both space and time interconnect and expand (Figure 14.1).

The two shot angles position the viewer in two different ways. The high-angle shot perspective puts the viewer in the position of a CCTV camera placed above the scene for the purpose of surveillance. The close-up shots place the viewer as an equal, horizontal onlooker. The scenes represented in both cases—the kneeling crowd and the individual looking at you directly in the eye—are themselves a direct expression of resistance to a dominant white

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-18

Figure 14.1 *The Gaze*, Jeannette Ehlers (2018). All performers are looking back at the hegemonic gaze to draw it into the field of vision. Film still from *The Gaze*. The image is acquired through VISDA, Visual Rights Denmark in 2021.

gaze. Either they are a visible protest against the inclination of the white gaze to ostracize, marginalize and subjugate the race-gender-religious-ethnic others who are performing the kneeling gesture. Or they are a direct challenge to this white gaze by simply looking back, dragging the gaze into the field of vision, thus being excluded from a safe space of voyeurism. In this way, the white gaze is doubly decolonized: through collective protests by black subjects claiming the right to visibility and exerting the right to challenge the dominance of the white gaze. *The Gaze* is also curated as an interactive work, with refugee asylum seekers from the infamous Danish deportation centre Sjælsmark as performers. In this way, the work is embodied by implicated subjects that take part in the distributed decolonizing enunciation of the whole work.

The decolonial option (Mignolo and Walsh 2018) has actualized the need to revisit visual culture theory because visuality and its relationship with knowledge has been central to the legitimization of Western hegemony since the beginning of modernity. Mirzoeff (2011) sees visuality and its different modalities as powerful tools in the hands of authority and political regimes to name, categorize and define the real. He claims (with Spivak [1999] amongst others) that in modernity and the epoch of historical colonialism, there is a convergence of visuality and the right to look producing a world-generating optic of modernity *as* a generalized Western gaze (Mirzoeff 2011, 8). To decolonize that gaze would entail the right for all to look in order to end the Western/Eurocentric dominance in economics, politics and culture. As decoloniality indicates the end of coloniality as a systemic and structural inequity, we are dealing here with something that is not yet the case, exactly as the term 'decolonial re-emergence' (Knudsen 2018) promises: coming from the future and connecting to a past that haunts the present, it is about creating spaces where it is possible for everybody to look and appear outside coloniality. These spaces prefigure a decolonized future and allow people to appear and exist beyond the colonial matrices of representation. They include more than multiple spatio-temporalities: 'If appearance is decolonized, it prefigures in the present a poetry from the future that others might aspire

towards' (Mirzoeff 2018, 11). They also install a subjunctive mode in the world we know: 'People act as if they were free, as if what happens there happens' (11).

Prefigured spaces offer a preview of decoloniality, according to Mirzoeff, as a glimpse of a future yet to come. What I offer in this chapter are examples of decolonial countervisuality in the form of prefigured spaces as a resistant mode in interactive and participatory artworks—*The Gaze* being one, the documentary *Faire-part* another. The analysis of *Faire-part* is polyphonic, evolving out of a focus group discussion involving experts and practitioners in the fields of art, heritage activism and African-European relations. My main argument is that previews of decoloniality—co-creating them or experiencing the spectacle of them—are key events in order to imagine more equal societies and to secure long-term investment in lasting structural changes to systemic inequalities. I will, however, begin my reflections with Frantz Fanon's theory of the white gaze and the potential for resisting it, as well as subsequent important contributions to this line of thought, before moving on to consider *The Right to Look* and its ambitious history of visuality and countervisuality from the seventeenth century onwards, with a view to adding substance to Mirzoeff's rather vague unfolding of countervisuality from the polyphonic reading of *Faire-part*.

White gazes and visceral-affective responses

The white structural and racist gaze is attacked in two ways in *The Gaze*: through collective protest and through an individual reclaiming of the right to look back thus challenging the hegemony of the white gaze. One of the key texts to understand the dynamics between gazing and embodiment is still Franz Fanon's *Peau Noires, Masques Blancs* (1952). Although it is beyond the scope of this article to deal with this seminal work in any depth, I will take up the intercorporeal encounter between a black man and a little white child in the train staged by Fanon and subsequently referred to by numerous postcolonial and decolonial scholars (Homi Bhabha, Nelson Maldonado-Torres and Neetu Khanna, just to mention a few), as both a violent encounter with colonial power and difference and a scene of emotive contagion and transmission between two trembling bodies, complicating a simple binary opposition (Khanna 2020, 7).

The encounter, seen and felt from the perspective of the black man, has three phases that follow the triple visual existence sensed by Fanon: (1) 'Mama, look a Negro' (Fanon 1952, 90) says the child, a comment that is perceived by the black man as a 'simple' or almost neutral (in the jargon of the past) observation. A body takes up space and appears in the field of vision under the gaze of the other. This means that all bodies are visible to an imagined all-seeing eye. It also means that all bodies are dependent on the visual recognition and acknowledgement of others in order to come into existence. That is why the black man in the scene smiles and feels empowered

by this remark. (2) The little boy proceeds: 'Mama, look at the Negro, I am afraid', which immediately evokes a desire to laugh in the black man, although this visceral reaction is blocked by violent nausea. In this sequence, the black man is confronted with the emotional reaction of the child, whose perspective apparently is unequivocally directed to the bodily scheme of skin and race and its resonance in the white child's body. The resonance in the child's body is clearly a reaction of 'away-ness' from the socially marked body in question (Ahmed [2004] 2014). But despite the difference in semantics, the affective attunement in the two bodies is similar in intensity (Massumi 2009). (3) The scene ends like this: the black man trembles because he is cold; the little boy trembles with fear because he believes the black man is trembling with rage and flings himself into his mother's arms crying: 'Mama, the Negro is going to eat me up' (Fanon 1952, 92). Trembling with shame and self-hatred (also due to the anthropophagus allusions), the black man is denied positive existence and self-expression through the white racialized gaze and finds no adequate symbolic expression of his visceral-affective reactions to his own annihilation. The ultimate consequence of the white gaze is to deny him existence, as it is repeated over and over again in racist attacks—by official authorities—on black citizens.

What Franz Fanon discovers during this intermezzo is that the generalized, neutral other for whom all bodies are equal seems to be missing for all black bodies. Scholars of visual culture and cultural studies have subsequently worked out visual theories that show that any intercorporeal encounter is dependent on how bodies are mediated and framed in a particular society.

Critical race theory scholar Sarah Ahmed argues that there is no generalizable other that serves to establish the illusion of bodily integrity. The body is imagined to be related to and separated from particular bodily others. Difference is not found in the body, but is established as a relation between bodies in two different categories: the familiar (assimilable, touchable) others, and the strange (unassimilable, untouchable) others (Ahmed 2000, 44). Thus, when Fanon claims that 'the real Other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man' (Fanon 1952, 131), he is pointing to the inevitable position of unfamiliarity that black bodies assume when the white gaze represents familiarity (imagined as non-racialized). When everyone assumes the burden of particular body images, this includes taking on the social antagonisms and conflicts that distinguish bodies from each other. What Ahmed adds to the theory of intercorporeal encounters between white and black individuals is that these encounters are always mediated by any given society's matrices of that relation, which—in principle—nuances the relationship. More importantly, however, Sarah Ahmed, in particular, underlines that dominant hegemonic majorities are established based on familiarity between their members, while the category of unfamiliar others are the ones any particular society ostracize: a group that in principle is expandable, which feminist and decolonial scholar Madina Tlostanova has supported through the discursive framing of so-called 'problem bodies' (Tlostanova 2018) that affect

large groups of people in contemporary European societies: refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, Roma, Muslims and Eastern Europeans.

The merit of Neetu Khanna's book *The Visceral Logics of Decolonization* (2020) is that it focuses on how the involved bodies react viscerally and affectively to the encounter. In Fanon, the black man laughs, feels nauseous, vomits, cries and trembles in reaction to the labelling imposed by the child. The interesting thing, as Khanna argues, is that these socio-physical reactions to the scene point to visceral similarities and contagious transmissions between the two bodies involved in the meeting: both are trembling but for different reasons. The exit that the black man in the scene chooses is verbal: he attacks the mother of the child and tells her that she 'can kiss this Negro's ass', while she blushes and feels visibly ashamed (Khanna 2020, 132). In this way, he provides a violent answer to the racial violence in the scene. The complex intertwining of power asymmetry and affective attunement—meaning that they are both intensely affectively invested in and reacting to the encounter—between the two bodies has a more general point ascribed to it: colonial (fear) and revolutionary affect (anger) derive from the same emotive energy. Although one can acknowledge that anger is a completely legitimate emotional reaction to the genocidal and devastating consequences of colonialism—which are still unacknowledged by many European nations—the inspiring thought in Khanna is her will to transcend the binary logic of destroying or being destroyed in the intercorporeal encounter.

The question this chapter poses is what a shareable affect or emotion could be for those choosing the decolonial option? The crucial question is: how is it possible to form political movements and protests despite structural inequalities, different memories and intergenerational heritage that install incommensurable differences (Tuck and Yang 2012, 35) between the social actors who claim the same decolonial vision? Some would say that such an endeavour is impossible from the very start. In the later analysis of *Faire-part*, the emotion of hope—experienced from different unequal positions—is used to qualify a possible common attunement in decolonial work. I try to connect the concept of hope to the visual previews of decoloniality mentioned above that, according to Mirzoeff, are glimpses of a future yet to come. Sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos uses the principle of hope from German philosopher Ernst Bloch to flesh out his 'sociology of emergence' and to conceive a future that is open and not yet determined (de Sousa Santos 2011). One needs to distinguish hope from utopian, ideological thinking, from specific directions of desire or horizons of expectation. Sousa Santos distinguishes between a sociology of absence in which criticism is oriented towards the forgotten, the repressed and the marginalized. This way of thinking is temporarily oriented towards the past and the present. By contrast, the 'sociology of emergence' is oriented towards what is not there yet but nevertheless connected to possibilities in the present. The 'now' expands symbolically, because the always uncertain future is concretized in the present and is always dependent on what the social actors in any present are capable of doing.

The affect of hope here becomes a social resource in the present regardless of the future prospects of any concrete project. Hopeful actions create associations between potential futures and a here-and-now that could be rethought from the perspective of the future (Miyazaki 2004, 157). By 'pre-experiencing' what has not yet happened and what might not happen, subjects form an image of the potential future independently from how realistic this future is (Pedersen 2012, 144). Thus, something new is added that decisively breaks the linear thinking of the present as a consequence of the past. It is in the exact moment of the opened present that the moment of hope reveals itself, which ties hope to the not yet known or the not yet present, the very principle of openness to the world.

Visuality and countervisuality

Before adding more substance to the political dynamic of countervisuality on the basis of previewing glimpses of the future in contemporary art projects, let us look briefly at the three regimes of visuality that Mirzoeff presents in *The Right to Look*. The connection that many decolonial scholars make between modernity and coloniality (Mbembe 2003; Maldonado-Torres 2007; Mignolo 2011; Quijano 2007)—notwithstanding the tendency to unify modernity as a monolith, which has met some criticism (Cooper 2005, Jay 1993)—is echoed in visual culture theory because visuality has been central to the legitimization of Western hegemony since the beginning of modernity. Vision constitutes an epoch's field of vision and the entire sum of discourses that make up visuality (Foster 1988); perception is part of visuality and is therefore orchestrated by a politics of vision (Bryson 1988, 107). In Mirzoeff's works, the visual dynamic between oppositions is called visuality and countervisuality, constituting three distinctive modalities organizing the field of vision historically: the plantation complex, the imperial complex and the military-industrial complex.

The plantation complex (1660–1860) had its origins in a Foucauldian sense in a 'new colonial order of things' and was sustained in the construction of the sight from above, indicating what was visible to the overseer on the plantation, and was a combination of violent enforcement and visualized surveillance (Mirzoeff 2011, 50). Countervisuality in this regime is thus the active refusal of visuality's claims to authority. Empowered by images of decentralized collective agency and the irreducible autonomy of all persons, countervisuality takes many shapes throughout history: from slave revolts, to general strikes, and representational forms of protest (caricatures, posters, revolutionary paintings, antiracist and antifascist films) to alternative ways of imagining and modes of becoming that challenge authoritative regimes (Milbrandt 2012, 460).

With the imperial complex (1860–1945), the locally based production of crops and the violent regime of exploitation of enslaved labour, grew into a more abstract and intensified global spatio-temporal biopolitical segregation,

demonstrating the incommensurable hierarchy between civilized ('modern') and Indigenous ('living in the past') in colonies and metropoles on the basis of race. The imperial complex was facilitated by the Christian missionaries and the close relationship between the plundering of both natural and cultural resources and accumulating them in colonial metropoles led to increasing resistance to modern imperialism by nineteenth-century working-class and radical intellectuals. The visual expression of this countervisuality is people gathering in the streets to protest collectively.

The visuality of the military-industrial complex (1945–present) is expressed through techniques of managing populations and installing regimes of separation. Counterinsurgency—which is hegemonic visuality fighting back against any attacks on its hegemony—takes the shape of building walls, creating camps, promoting domestic segregation and superseding the spectacle of the nuclear war by information warfare in the form of fake news or other digital, softer tactics of cultural infiltration. What does countervisuality look like in the military-industrial complex of permanent surveillance? The answer that Mirzoeff offers to this question is rather vague: a new reclaimed and rediscovered everyday life and practices of the everyday 'that is not found but made' (Mirzoeff 2011, 309). My intention in presenting a multifocal analysis of the documentary film *Faire-part* from 2019 is not only to analytically demonstrate how *Faire-part* can be read as a decolonial piece of art but also to literally perform a collaborative project that although modest opens the future in the present along the lines of hope.

When we consider contemporary ways of decolonizing colonial legacies in public spaces globally, it becomes apparent that many forms of institutionalized responses and informal decolonial resistance, actions and insurgencies in cities find themselves within Mirzoeff's general modes: the installation of alternative heroes/heroines to replace obsolete colonial relics such as Christopher Columbus statues around the globe, collective protests against racism and all kinds of representational forms of criticism that disturb the authority of a visual regime. As a politicized form of colonial heritage action, removal has been used to reclaim the right to contest heritage selections (presences and absences) in cities (Kølvraa 2018). The active removal of statues we have witnessed in many cities, as part of the anti-racist protests after the murder of George Floyd, exemplified by the toppling of the statue of slave-trader Edward Colston in Bristol on 7 June 2020, is a strong mobilizing action in a public space because it offers an opportunity to witness and play an active role in making history by providing a countervisual response to the white gaze that annihilates—literally—black citizens. There is no doubt that such actions may be justified (Mbembe 2016) and considered necessary steps on the way to decolonizing spaces, institutions and minds. But despite their mobilizing, affective energy, such actions are only the beginning of a long and steep path. What I hope to achieve in the last part of this chapter is to acknowledge and advance towards a more decolonial future: a collaborative colonial heritage modality based on united social resources in the present.

Faire-part as countervisual documentary

Faire-part is a 58-minute documentary released in 2019 and made by two Congolese cineastes and residents, Nizar Saleh and Paul Shemisi, and two Belgian cineastes and residents of Brussels, Anne Reijners and Rob Jacobs. It plays out in Kinshasa, showing how everyday resistance to visible and invisible traces of colonial legacies happens in artistic performances in the city's many neighbourhoods. *Faire-part* invites the viewer to eight street performances taking place in various parts of Kinshasa that deal either directly with colonial issues: the colonial past and Congo's constant struggle against old and new colonial powers pillaging resources, and the countervisual celebration of other heroes such as Patrice Emery Lumumba from DRC's (Democratic Republic of the Congo) new history as a young nation; or more derived problems such as the upcycling of garbage into new resources and the role of technology as well as prostitution, rape culture and violence against women. Genre-wise it uses very intelligently a performative mode of expression (Bruzzi 2000) that includes and shows the production processes of the documentary itself.

A participatory method

In order to practise—methodologically—what my text talks about and what *Faire-part* actually represents, namely decolonial countervisuality, I needed to include multiple ways of seeing in the analysis of *Faire-part*. Acknowledging different ecologies of knowledge (Mignolo and Walsh 2018; de Sousa Santos 2007; Tihuwai Smith 2012), and at the same time feeling the strong urge to break the monopoly of academic institutions on research, I chose a participatory research method to involve research partners not affiliated to research institutions in their professional lives (Bergold and Thomas 2012; Cooke and Kothari 2001). I resorted to forming a focus group for the creation of a 'communicative space' (Bergold and Thomas 2012) that allows openness, dissenting views and conflicts to appear and contribute to the process of knowledge production. This means that the rest of the chapter is multivocal: it includes different voices on the documentary to include 'a parallax of perspectives' and 'different angles of vision', thereby improving the analysis of the film (Swartz 2011, 49). The focus group members are experts in the fields of heritage activism, art and decoloniality. We—to include myself as an egalitarian partner in the focus group—live in Aarhus and Brussels, and the gender bias of our group—solely women—is a reverse mirroring of *Faire-part*, which is strongly male dominated, in particular when it comes to the performance art from Kinshasa.

The members were Belgian-Congolese Benjamine Laini Lusalusa, also known as Lili Angelou, a decolonial activist and critical counsellor and a new member of the Faire-part collective; Stephanie Collingwoode Williams, an anthropologist, social worker and trainer who is Belgian-Ghanaian;

Belgian-Congolese Sorana Munsya, a psychologist who works with African art; and me, a Danish cultural studies scholar who works with difficult heritage, art and decoloniality. In terms of the values of participation that Christopher Kelty et al. (2015) have summarized in their seven dimensions of participation, our focus group had high scores: we could all learn from the experience; we were all able to exert resource control and had high visibility in the project; and we all had a voice concerning the analysis of the film, which is why I try to level myself with the rest of the focus group members, although I am the bearer of the white gaze and the institutional academic racism that the other three focus members invoke and oppose, not least in calling our focus group 'a white space', indicating that my affiliation with a European university from the wealthy North 'coloured' the entire space (see below).

For the focus group discussion, I made a discussion guide to cover at least five analytical dimensions of the film: (1) How is Kinshasa represented in the documentary? (2) How are the site-specific artistic expressions and their dealing with colonial heritage represented? (3) What role does the genre—performative documentary—play in the enunciation of the film (for example, disclosure of the filming process)? (4) The film as intercultural encounter. (5) Positionality and countervisuality in the film. We met virtually for two hours in late August 2020. I had permission to record our conversation and subsequently wrote down our analysis, which my focus group co-members had the opportunity to read, comment on and over-write. Co-authorship of the entire chapter was also put on the table.

Considering my co-researchers as knowledgeable subjects with the same rights as professional researchers leads to questions about the material resources needed for participation. The three women were remunerated to participate in order to signal social recognition of the value of their contribution to the research process (Bergold and Thomas 2012, 10). Access to individuals who would be interested in discussing a documentary film with an unknown scholar from a small northern European country was more difficult than planned (what did I expect?). After several fruitless attempts through local specialists to make contact with associations dealing with colonial heritage issues, I used a personal contact to the decolonial artistic environment in Brussels to find at least one person who might be interested. This person then composed the focus group, and she is the reason the group could be formed. The other focus group members 'did it for her', as they explained to me during the session. They also unanimously declared European universities to be non-inclusive white spaces. What I encountered here was a clearly critical attitude towards the scientific institution that I am part of and an attitude that I could only try to nuance through creating a safe space for our conversation about the film. ECHOES, EU and H2020, which is the scientific institutional framework that I represent in this case, offered the three focus group members a collaborative project in which they served as active partners in the analysis of *Faire-part* (Simon 2010, 187). Although the focus group is framed

by me as an ECHOES member, the content of our analysis of the documentary emerges as a co-production between the four of us. It is beyond any doubt that the analysis of the documentary improved significantly due to the gazes and voices involved.

Multiperspectival analysis of Faire-part

Who constitutes the focus group?

Three important things happened in the focus group discussion that demonstrated not only the potential for commonality between the different perspectives represented in the group, but also the differences between the four of us. Everyone agreed that *Faire-part* is in itself a decolonial archive that is opening a future, not least because it closely connects the question of *Who we are* asked by the filmmakers to how it is possible to represent Kinshasa and its art scene (Benjamine[3]). Secondly, some concepts were rejected, for example, the concept of interculturality, which the three invited participants did not like because 'interculturality is a trap, as it runs the risk of concealing the incommensurable hierarchy amongst cultures that it tries to overcome' (Sorana). Thirdly, along with positive comments, severe criticism and scepticism were likewise expressed with regard to the sincerity of scholars engaged in decolonial agendas, and suspicion that these agendas were popular at the moment and therefore capable of attracting funding. Fourthly, an abundance of rich perspectives on the film were presented that showed differences in the ways the film was perceived and revealed that using a focus group was a good idea because it allowed a parallax of gazes and perspectives to be identified.

Common statement about Faire-part

The following statement was something the focus group could agree on:

> *Faire-part* is a film about Kinshasa at some level but it is likewise a film about doing a film about Kinshasa and how the impossibility of a straightforwardly representational desire is expressed through a whole range of strategies to render visible 'back-stage areas' of this film production in order for audiences to assist in the film emerging. The audience is thus let into the editing process, to the rehearsing processes before a filmed event, to the creation and discussions around voice-over text and so on and so forth. The exposure of the production process, as a decolonial gesture, pluralizes the camera's gaze and multiplies and diversifies authorship to the film. The end goal of this strategy stressing the embodied and subjective value of any perspective is also to show that the exposure of the authorial gazes and voices are necessary preconditions to mobilizing around any countervisual statement about the real.

Figure 14.2 *Faire-part*, Nizar Saleh, Paul Shemisi, Anne Reijners and Rob Jacobs (2019). We see here how the film crew (Anne Reijners and Rob Jacobs) on the left side of the image is part of the picture that is framed and seen from yet another angle, multiplying viewing positions. In the centre of the image, we see one of the street art performances entitled *Kongo Poker* consisting of a small pushcart, two performers crying out to invite audiences to play poker on the future of Congo. Film still from *Faire-part*, courtesy of the artists.

Favourite scenes

All four of us had favourite scenes and topics in the film to which we attributed particular value. For Stephanie, the key question—posed in the film during a discussion between Paul and Nizar—was: how is it possible to criticize Europe with a film that is financed by Europe? She believes that this question alone reveals the limits of any criticism of Europe, and this in itself renders true criticism impossible. Likewise, she pointed out that languages carry colonial memories, which explains why Paul feels that Kinois women keep themselves at a distance when he courts them in French. Being unable to speak Lingala, a language spoken in several countries in Central Africa, due to his upbringing in Gabon, Paul, like Nizar, who is half Indian and who complains about the racism of the Indian populations against darker-skinned people in Africa, is something of a stranger to the DRC: 'They are part of it but not quite part', as the title of the documentary also indicates, said Stephanie.

Benjamine had a quite complex performance as her favourite scene. Congolese artist Yanos Majesticos and Belgian cineaste and visual artist Rob Jacobs performed a symbolic gesture of restitution of a macabre piece of colonial heritage: a golden tooth from P.E. Lumumba's mouth, the only thing remaining after the assassination and later maltreatment of Lumumba's body by the Belgian-American forces who removed the hero of Congolese

independence and first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1961. The two performers—unequally positioned in relation to this legacy but equally dressed in shirts and shorts (colonial attire)—read aloud excerpts of the book *The Arena, the Story of Lumumba's Assassination*, written by the Belgian police officer Gerard Soete, who took part in the murder of Lumumba and kept his teeth as a souvenir. The text is full of graphic details about the disposal of Lumumba's body, which was sawn into pieces by Soete and immersed in sulphuric acid. The performance takes place right in front of the statue of Lumumba along Lumumba Boulevard, and the text excerpts are read aloud in both Dutch and Lingala by the two performers, who also exchange languages, allowing them to speak each other's language when describing this particular colonial legacy. In order to stress the colonial entanglement of the DRC and Belgium, the two performers rotate their heads like Siamese twins connected through their colonized minds. Benjamine reads this scene as a symbolic restitution of the hero's teeth, which were taken as trophies by the Belgian authorities but were reclaimed recently by Lumumba's relatives. The decolonial gesture of the performance is spectacular because it revitalizes the discussion of continued colonialism in the form of direct violent interventions in an independent state's sovereign right of self-determination (Figure 14.3).

Sorana's favourite point in *Faire-part*, which is a general point, is that the documentary unfolds a vision of decolonization quite close to Mirzoeff's definition above, underlining that decolonization is a way of imagining the future and the type of society we want to live in. And she adds: 'this future is

Figure 14.3 *Faire-part*, Nizar Saleh, Paul Shemisi, Anne Reijners and Rob Jacobs (2019). We see Congolese performance artist Yanos Majesticos and cineaste Rob Jacobs in a bodily entangled gesture during their performance on Lumumba, on Lumumba Boulevard. Film still from *Faire-part*, courtesy of the artists.

always connected to the past but without getting stuck with it', linking this feature of not getting stuck to the ephemeral character of live performances that appear as decolonial alternatives to the more 'solid' legacies in city spaces in the shape of monuments, statues, etc. Archiving the ephemeral is a recurrent problem, but *Faire-part* as a visual archive fulfils the documenting function quite well in this case, according to Sorana.

My own (Britta) favourite scene is when Paul films Anne with a hidden camera in his bag and discloses that this is something he feels forced to do occasionally as a filmmaker (filming people without their knowledge), as the Kinois are suspicious of potentially exploitative and surveillance uses of the camera even though he explains his artistic purposes. This is the first time the camera mode shifts from medium and close-up still shots to the more movable and slightly shaky images of a movable body camera. The reason I like this scene is that it shows how Paul from Kinshasa and Anne from Brussels both relate to filming differently because of the different implications of filming in their respective countries. Paul experiences scepticism towards the camera because the relationship between cameras and regimes of surveillance is automatically connected to colonial regimes of visuality in the Congolese context for a majority of the population. While Anne is speaking from a context in which discourses of the rights of individuals to manage their public appearance overshadow or repress the memory of colonial regimes of visuality for the majority of the population. This shows the insurmountable difference between the perspectives of the conqueror and the conquered in relation to filming and subjecting others to the filming process.

Differences and positionality

'The four filmmakers were born on two different sides of history, but they imagine a shared future. They feel close, they cannot understand themselves without each other. They cannot make this film without each other', declares the voice-over at the very end of the documentary (54:51). There is no doubt that the interdependency and hopeful collaboration based on a shared painful past is clearly expressed in the declared ethos of this artistic collective. The collective seem to have a long-term commitment—for instance, they work together in SOKL, an ongoing series of decolonial actions in public space, 20 of which took place in Antwerp in 2019,[4] with plans to travel to other Belgian cities in the years to come. Film projects are also being carried out for the city museum of Antwerp and their ethnographic exhibition *100x Congo*, addressing issues of restitution. Thus, the long-term commitment to work together on decolonial issues is the loose structure of this artistic collective. But is this interdependency doomed to repeat old power structures?

In many of its scenes, the film reveals many incommensurable inequalities between the two Belgian and the two Congolese artists: financially (the funding for the current project is European), technologically (access to camera

and sound equipment is unequal), industrially/culturally (cultural and artistic richness on the ground in Kinshasa is not necessarily mirrored in a government-supported film industry in Congo as it is in Belgium), and in terms of physical safety (the Belgian guests in Kinshasa sleep under a mosquito net, while Paul does his editing in the room where his three children are sleeping without a mosquito net). The documentary does not hide these structural differences and inequalities, which could lead to an ethics of incommensurability that Eve Tuck and Kayne Yang put forward that leaves no hope of reconciliation between former colonizers and former colonized (2012, 35). However, the collective also makes an attempt to challenge these structures of inequality: shooting the film in Kinshasa gives the two Belgian artists the opportunity to familiarize themselves with an entangled space. It is definitely the business of *Faire-part* to put the two Belgian filmmakers in the clear position of being a white foreign minority there, to reverse the former metropole-colony power relation. Nevertheless, although they are positioned differently from the outset, all the members of the collective seem to be both strangers to and familiar with Kinshasa.

Although the members of the collective embody colonialism as heritage differently—seen also in the car scene in which Rob rehearses the performance about Lumumba's remains and in which he does not remember the perpetrator's name correctly—the differences and similarities between the members of the collective are to some extent redistributed during the documentary. The mastering of local languages, music tastes and practices and knowledge of urban geography is not distributed according to a simple logic of a local-foreigner. The members are positioned differently on a structural basis, but the performative mode of the documentary allows them to embrace the fact that they are distant from what they are looking at. With the documentary as a contact zone both in its telling and showing mode (Ifversen 2018; Pratt 1991), this demonstrates that structural injustices may be slightly disturbed through persistent strategies of travelling to each other's worlds to lose your footing momentarily (Lugones 2003).

What does countervisuality look like in Faire-part?

Countervisuality is revealed most obviously in the fact that all the scenes in the film feature an embodied camera that is part of the field of vision in the documentary. No scene appears innocently as reality itself. It is clear that all the scenes have been framed by someone, and the effort made to show the embodied vision in every performance suggests a parallel between the artistic performances and the documentation of that same performance: they are interdependent and at the same time susceptible to both critical scrutiny and indulgent tolerance. The collective of *Faire-part* asks audiences to take both perspectives in their viewing of the documentary. Sorana and Benjamine pointed to the relationship between the artistic ephemeral performances and their decolonial endeavour and the documentary displaying sincerity and

modesty in its approach as hopeful and showing the path to new ways of archiving contemporary heritage forms.

Countervisuality is also revealed in the fact that the artistic performances take place with the whole city as a potential stage. Site-specific to the legacies, materialities and practices available at certain places in the urban space of Kinshasa, the tactics of resistance that the artistic performances present and their de-institutionalized appearances in public space as part of everyday life underline that these socio-political issues need to be present and discussed in everyday life—like here on the street—to have any impact (Stephanie). It might sound like a cliché that Kinshasa is a city in the making, but even so this seems like the most fitting way of explaining its creative energy, she argues. Kinshasa is a city that is one of the African continent's largest urban conglomerations today, home to a population of over 11 million inhabitants. Kinshasa's unbridled growth began in 1878 when Henry Morton Stanley set up four trading posts along the River Congo connecting what later became a flourishing urban conglomeration of Leopoldville-Kinshasa and its surrounding villages, forming a large market system where goats, fish, salt, enslaved individuals and European goods were traded by the local Teke and Humbu populations (De Boeck 2011, 265). In 1910, the riverbank was lined with at least 80 storehouses, belonging to several industrial enterprises and trading companies. In the first half of the twentieth century, Leopoldville—as Kinshasa was named before independence from Belgium in 1960—became a segregated city with a white heart called La Ville (the home of the city's European population) and a surrounding, peripheral African city, La Cité[5] (home to an increasing number of Congolese). This division, which is the legacy of racial segregation, continues to mark Kinshasa's urbanscape today (De Boeck 2011, 266).

During the city's postcolonial expansion from 1960 to 2010, a fascinating development from a decolonial perspective took place. The tangible divisions between the two main parts of the city and other empty no-man's lands forming divisive lines between the various living areas were the reason the city was scattered over such a vast distance; and the no-man's lands became re-ruralized, engendering a new type of agrarian urbanity (De Boeck 2011, 267). Unhindered by any kind of formal industrialization or economic development, and due to the lack of architecture and infrastructure, the city's resources developed into the bodies, movements, practices and discourses of urban dwellers (De Boeck 2011, 271; De Boeck and Plissart 2004). De Boeck describes how city dwellers are transformed into active participants of their own economic, social, political or religious agendas. They become entrepreneurs, mastering the skills of improvisation; and as we can see in *Faire-part*, this do-it-yourself aspect of the city is a fertile ground for unbridled, non-institutionalized artistic expressions. This strong, self-organized reclaiming of the cityscape is now threatened by the city governor's endeavours to cleanse the city of its irregular, anarchic and unruly housing constructions and activities. Subjecting Kinshasa to untamed neoliberal global modernity—as the

city governor wishes (like any city governor in today's world)—interferes (at least to some extent) with the everyday entrepreneurial spirit of the city's actors.

Without falling into the trap of praising irregular activities, a lack of infrastructure and the anarchic reclaiming of space (because that is what cities in northern Europe lack completely), it seems to me that this cityscape allows plenty of room for interventions and entrepreneurial initiatives. The portrait of Kinshasa avoids portraying Kinshasa as a 'poor' city, and the city is rendered without voyeurism or exoticism (Benjamine). Instead, it seems that the abundance of live performances at street level has always been part of Kinshasa's powerful socio-cultural resources. As *Faire-part* witnesses and documents, these performances that open up the everydayness of the cityscape towards old/new potentialities, the previews of decolonial futures take the form of 'critical utopias' (Hroch 2011). Adding to the very mobilizing previews of decolonial futures—for example, in toppling statues—we are reminded that any decolonizing endeavour is unending and has to be done over and over again (Sorana).

Final remarks

This chapter has used contemporary performance art and a collaborative experiment to investigate ways of practising decoloniality after choosing the decolonial option. Adopting Mirzoeff's idea of countervisuality as a preview of decoloniality, I discovered that countervisuality came through in strategies of dragging the onlooker into the field of vision. In *Faire-part*, we discovered that the exposure of authorial gazes and voices is necessary in order to display any degree of reality capable of mobilizing politically. *Faire-part* portrays the rich art scene in Kinshasa, a city full of decolonial activities and actions, a city whose inhabitants are fully aware of and interested in discovering the painful past. Kinshasa also presents abundant opportunities for self-organized reclaiming of the cityscape.

The focus group discussion and editing process involved in the analysis of *Faire-part* added significantly to the chapter in three ways: I was corrected immediately when a Eurocentric view—despite all the best of intentions—took over. We all discovered new forms of colonial heritage through the others' perspectives, and the result is something that we have produced and own in common. After all, a main part of the article is a collaborative effort that—even though this effort could have been expanded even further—tries to meet the just and fair requirement for a co-created future for all. *Faire-part* presents a long-term commitment for all the involved filmmakers to honour the truth about the cruelty of (unending) colonialism, learning and remembering together a painful past, a shared responsibility for documenting and decolonizing cities and minds and to travel to each other's worlds to learn. As *Faire-part*—from the French, meaning 'participating in'—offers a way of looking into the future together (Bangstad and Nilsen 2019) through collaborative

projects, this chapter intends to—both content-wise and formally—take yet another step, albeit a tiny one, but nonetheless a step in the same direction.

Notes

1 This work forms part of the ECHOES project which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 770248.
2 This performative way of expressing protest against oppression of minorities has been spreading during the global insurgencies in the wake of the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on 25 May 2020.
3 The linguistic use of 'we', 'us', and the use of the focus group members' first names is deliberate and expresses the need for a slight change of tone in my—otherwise—academic text. The informal and collegial spirit of the focus group discussion that characterized our conversation, is thus documented in the use of the members first names.
4 SOKL, "Decolonial Actions." Accessed 7 March 2021. www.sokl.be.
5 La Cité and La Ville are both French names for a/the city.

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Chapter 15

New Diplomacy and decolonial heritage practices[1]

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What are the diplomatic potential and obligations of decolonial heritage practices? This is the issue we address in this chapter, taking as our point of departure recent debates around International Cultural Relations (ICR), which emphasize calls for cultural co-operation at a global level to promote peace and encourage resilience and economic recovery (EUNIC 2020). While well-meaning, however, the clear alignment of other forms of diplomacy with the foreign policy goals of the European Union (EU) and its member states, has made ICR difficult to implement, particularly at the state level. Too often, the influential practice of 'soft power', evident in older notions of cultural diplomacy, gets in the way of meaningful cultural co-operation, leading to the persistence of colonial agendas and Eurocentric ways of thinking, including negative perceptions of the Global South and the marginalization of those disempowered by former colonial relations (ECHOES 2021).

For these reasons, we follow the so-called New Diplomacy Studies, which moves beyond traditional state-centric ideas that regard diplomacy as the preserve of the state, foreign ministries and their authorized agents (Cooper and Hocking 2000; Eban 1999; Murray et al. 2011). Rather, 'plural diplomacies' involve a broad range of diplomatic stakeholders that play a role in the dialogues and negotiations among states and groups in order to find ways of living together (Cornago 2013). State-led diplomacy is, in many cases, responsive to the initiatives and agendas of non-state agents' diplomacy, which is also notable in the heritage field (Winter 2015). In our approach, we adopt Costas Constantinou's (2013) notion of mid-space diplomacy, a form of diplomacy in which a third actor aims to enhance mediation through activities that bring two (or more) sides together in a constructive relationship. According to this formulation, the mid-space diplomat

> acquires legitimacy from the interstitial—from the international or intercommunal—making the most of not taking sides or by functionally distancing oneself from the sides; in other words, uses one's craft to support actions that re-engage and re-position the "sides".
>
> (Constantinou 2013, 145)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-19

This position in the middle allows more flexibility by seeking 'new knowledge and insights from plural locations, across national frontiers, from within humanity's contrasting histories, value systems, and beliefs' (Constantinou 2013, 146). Thus, it is a requirement that mid-space diplomatic stakeholders 'participate meaningfully in the formation and transformation of knowledge upon which issues are presented, debated, and decided' (Constantinou 2013, 145–6).

An important element of mid-space diplomatic practice is a willingness to adopt what Luigi Di Martino (2020) labels 'active listening': that is, an ethical approach to listening, based on a genuine interest in the other's perspective and placing listening as an outcome in and of itself. Listening is the primary characteristic of two-way communication, and practices of active listening need to be developed to achieve the long-term goals of mid-space heritage diplomacy. Nigerian author Chinua Achebe (1930–2013) articulated this form of mid-space diplomacy insightfully in an interview conducted at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in 1988. From the standpoint of the formerly colonized, Achebe emphasized the importance of the willingness and ability to listen within the asymmetrical relationship that continues in our postcolonial world:

> We have done a lot of listening ourselves. This is a situation where you have a strong person and a weak person. The weak person does all the listening. Up to a point the strong person even forgets that the weak person may have something to say, you see, he is simply there as a fixture. You simply talk at him … So it is important that we listen, that we develop the ability to listen to the weak. Not only in Africa, but even in your own society, the strong must listen to the weak.
>
> (Afrikan Liberation 1988)

For us, Achebe's point is pertinent because he insists on the need to redress the terms of debate and engagement. Who does the talking and who does the listening is key, as strength and weakness are part of the positionalities in diplomatic relations, not intrinsic qualities of individuals. Moreover, Achebe reminds us that the legacies of colonialism are not exclusively about Global North and Global South relations but also concern relations within societies in the North and South. All of these elements are central if diplomacy is to have a decolonial function and not simply repeat age-old patterns of exclusion and coloniality.

As has been pointed out by several scholars, diplomacy—enacted by state agents as well as non-state agents—has been part of Western repertoires of control and dominance, particularly in colonial contexts (Constantinou 2000; Opondo 2010). Decolonial scholars like Siphamandla Zondi (2016) therefore reject new diplomatic theory and argue that it reproduces coloniality and is Eurocentric in ways that inevitably lead to the exclusion of experiences, voices and archives of people outside the geopolitical West. We recognize the

importance of this critique and share the ambition to move from a 'Western monologue to a diverse multilogue' (Zondi 2016, 20) to allow a plurality of knowledges to play a role in diplomacy. Indeed, the decolonial critique is a forceful reminder of the need to investigate the foundations of diplomatic knowledge and rival perspectives, which mid-space diplomacy insists upon. In the context of decolonial heritage diplomacy, the notions of indigenous knowledge and community-based knowledge are central for opening spaces beyond traditional Western diplomatic discourse.

Types of knowledge: indigenous, local, community

If the acknowledgement of a broader range of diplomatic stakeholders is one of the pillars of the New Diplomacy Studies, another is a different conception of knowledge or, rather, an appreciation of different types of knowledge. This resembles the decolonial insistence on pluriverse epistemologies, which also brings to the fore the question of knowledge: who owns it, how is it constituted, where is it located? Of late, decolonial debates have focused particular attention on indigenous knowledge, that is, the traditions and belief systems of 'native' or 'aboriginal' peoples. Researchers such as Catherine Walsh (2018) use examples such as the concept of *buen vivir* (or *sumak kawsay* in Kichwa, loosely translated as 'good life') to reflect on aspects of interculturality, as this concept has become mainstreamed at a national level in Ecuador (see also Vanhulst and Beling 2014). With indigenous knowledge transferring from the margins to institutionalized and nationalized discourses, the question of what being Indigenous means and its corollary, what indigenous knowledge might consist of, becomes even more pressing.

Answering these questions is far from easy or straightforward. Definitions can also be hazy and even unhelpful. Significantly, the UN does not provide a conclusive and definitive definition of what Indigenous people might mean as a concept. Having said that, the common interpretation of indigeneity in international treaties and legislative frameworks does point to some common characteristics, among them self-identification or the continued inhabitation of lands from pre-colonized times. Often, claims to indigeneity are connected with political aims, but that is not necessarily what we are interested in here. Rather, our purpose is to consider the 'characteristics' of Indigenous people, such as their 'unique traditions', or the fact that they 'retain social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live' (UN n.d.). Marginality and distinction thus become hallmarks of both internal and external recognition.

Article 31.1 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, for instance, addresses the question of indigenous knowledge in these terms:

> Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional

> cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.
>
> (UN 2007, 22)

Perhaps most prominent at the international level is indigenous knowledge related to the environment, often linked to the sustainable development discourse, as in the case of the *buen vivir* concept above (Vanhulst and Beling 2014).

Where the possibility for confusion creeps in is in the use of similar or equivalent terms that are often used interchangeably (see Oguamanam 2008; Quiroz 2002). The UN and UNESCO—to offer an example—lump together 'indigenous' and 'local' knowledge, at the same time adding a shorthand definition, namely 'the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings' (UNESCO n.d.). They also emphasize the intangible aspects of 'local and indigenous knowledge', such as 'social interactions, ritual and spirituality' and link this to the sustainability agenda. This sounds very much like indigenous knowledge (strictly defined) but arguably opens the way for broader and more expansive uses of the term, based on definitions of what is (and is not) considered 'local'. Anthropologists have long been writing on knowledge generated by living in particular settings, guided by situated interpretations of one's locality (Canagarajah 2002; Geertz 1983). Chidi Oguamanam (2008) highlights a further terminological quandary with the term 'traditional knowledge', and notes that WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) includes indigenous knowledge under the category of traditional knowledge, as a form of knowledge specific to Indigenous peoples.

The key point, however, is that most authors, albeit invested in the use of one term or another, highlight the marginalization of such forms of knowledge due to colonial power relations and Western-centric approaches to knowledge production, evident in the use of terms such as 'oppression' and 'destruction'. Debates about indigenous knowledge, often based on relationality rather than binaries common in many Western approaches, highlight tensions at both epistemological and ontological levels, where this 'Cartesian-Newtonian science is grounded upon violent epistemology that seeks to possess the earth like a master owns a slave' (Semali and Kincheloe 1999, 43).

Meanwhile in Europe, these debates have led to an energetic reassessment of the production of knowledge, a lot of it focused at the community level. All communities produce knowledge, invariably linked to notions of place, whether physical or spiritual. This is what Ullrich Kockel (2012, 62) means by 'from-here-ness'—his gloss on the German word *Hiesige* ('local' or 'locals')—a

kind of rootedness that arguably has more to do with a community and its traditions than it does to a specific place or location. 'From-here-ness' is an interesting contribution to the debate on the conceptual foundations of decolonial heritage diplomacy but has limitations in the sense that it ignores the importance of what we might call 'from-there-ness'—the knowledge that members of a community, particularly a recently constituted and/or diasporic community, bring with them in the form of traditions, memories (some of them traumatic), rituals and representations of one kind or another (dramatic works, music, fictional narratives and works of art) that help to define that community and preserve its identity and heritage (Grinberg 2019). Therefore, any notion of 'community knowledge' needs to recognize the importance of 'from-there-ness', which is equally important in creating a sense of 'rootedness' among communities, however large or small (Massey 1991).

As a final caveat, it is important to stress that with respect to colonial heritage, we are not dealing with 'a community' in the homogeneous sense of the term but communities in the plural: diverse, multi-layered, plurivocal (Waterton and Smith 2010). This is particularly the case in large urban settings: Lisbon, Rio, Bristol, Warsaw, Paris. In the United Kingdom, a lot of attention is paid to the 'BAME community', which in reality consists of a broad collation of groups—Indian, African, Pakistani, West Indian/Caribbean—that in different contexts would consider themselves separate communities. The same is broadly true of communities labelled 'Hispanic' or 'Latin American'. Here again, these labels betray Eurocentric notions of community and identity that, in turn, ignore the provenance of specific cultural assets, whether songs, music, art or folklore. Community knowledge is dynamic and malleable and should be given the same consideration as other types of knowledge, not least in diplomatic practice.

Mid-space actors

Debates about knowledge and the production of knowledge have, in turn, empowered third actors and given them renewed impetus. This is perhaps most evident in the case of museums. In the past, museums tended to align themselves with official (state) versions of the past, or what we might call 'institutional knowledge' (Bennett 2013; Macdonald 2012). But today they are much more likely to be aligned to 'community' and 'indigenous' knowledge (Crooke 2006; Onciul 2015; Watson 2007). This is particularly true in the case of city museums, such as those in Lisbon and Amsterdam, which see it as part of their job to engage with local communities and to represent their concerns, whether cultural, social or environmental (Ariese 2019). Much the same applies to citizens groups and artists, many of which are intent on restoring marginalized voices to view. Citizens groups by definition are rooted in a sense of community knowledge, however loosely defined, just as they are determined to preserve this knowledge and give it some form of expression, whether through music, art or film.

Symptomatic of this new consensus is the Transperiphery Movement Exhibition in Hungary, a collaboration between curators, academics and artists designed to decolonize Eastern Europe by restoring marginalized histories to view—in this case, the experience of Hungarian migrants in South America, as well as those of Cuban migrant workers in Budapest (Ginelli and Szakács 2020).[2] Here and elsewhere, curators have emerged as critical voices in debates concerning Europe's colonial heritage. Professor Dan Hicks, Curator of World Archaeology at the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford, has been especially active in leading calls for the restitution of African works of art, not least through the museum network, Action for Restitution to Africa, which works with curators in Europe, as well as Egypt, Ghana and South Africa (Anon 2020). Dan Hicks's broadside, *The Brutish Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution* (2020) makes a powerful case for the urgent return of such objects, as part of a wider project of addressing the outstanding debt of colonialism—further proof of the growing importance of third actors in forcing us to confront the colonial legacies of Europe's entangled past.

Similarly, artists across Europe, Africa and the Americas have led calls to decolonize museums and art galleries, joining those voices calling for a reckoning with the past—evident not only in the removal of statues and other symbols of colonialism but in the creation of new works that situate slavery at the centre of the black experience (ECHOES 2021). As many of the chapters in this volume demonstrate, artists often draw on a wide range of affective practices in their works, including forms of indigenous and community knowledge (Schütz, this volume). They have also been at the forefront of efforts to go beyond the 'comprehensible' and to create works that initiate 'healing and respect' for others, as witness Meghna Singh's collaborative work *Container*, which utilizes immersive multimedia to draw uncomfortable comparisons between historical slavery and forms of modern exploitation (Singh, this volume). Artistic practices, as a result, present fertile ground for establishing mid-space 'contact zones' (Pratt 1991). We would go further. Artists should be considered heritage diplomats, reclaiming and repurposing different types of knowledge, while at the same time challenging us to rethink many of the implicit and explicit epistemological hegemonies that work to the detriment of Europe's (and the EU's) engagement with its colonial past and decolonial present (Andersen et al. 2020).

Such interventions have re-energized heritage debates across Europe. They have also succeeded in opening up dialogues, some formal and others informal, that have the potential to impact institutional policy and push it in new directions. In the following sections, we consider two case studies: one historical, the other more contemporary, that speak to this new agenda, emphasizing not simply the broader, interstate, dimension of New Diplomacy Studies but also the importance of mid-space actors and different types of knowledge.

Arnhem Land expedition: a successful case of restitution

The first example we consider here is a restitution case involving a major US museum (the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC) and a series of Australian diplomatic agents, including Indigenous groups. The focus of this case study is a set of bones taken from—and later returned to—the Aboriginal area of Arnhem Land in Australia's Northern Territory in the 1940s. In 1948, following years of exchanges involving scientists and official government representatives, a large-scale joint US–Australian expedition was planned to explore Arnhem Land, an area that was presented as a place to explore pristine, primitive cultures. The initiative was, as researchers note, a political act, embroiled in Cold War politics, as Australia was keen to build better relations with the United States and to distance itself more from the United Kingdom (Beazley 2011). The composition of the scientific expedition team also reflected these politics, being made up of a mix of Australian and Smithsonian researchers. It was led by the Australian ethnologist Charles P. Mountford, assisted by the archaeologist Frank M. Setzler from the Smithsonian Institution (Thomas 2011, 2014). The scientific team included an ornithologist, mammologist, ichthyologist, botanist and other scientists, each with a particular interest in an aspect of the life and natural surroundings of the Arnhem Land.

This expedition followed the old-fashioned 'expeditionary' style of gathering knowledge, with little or no input from the researched Indigenous populations (Thomas 2011). Tens of thousands of artefacts were collected, from tools to crafts, to flora specimens. Significantly, the bones that became the crux of this case study were not officially part of the expedition's scope; indeed, their removal from the territory was hidden for a few years after the end of the expedition. Even their removal was arguably fraudulent. Frank Setzler, having seen the bones in a cave, waited for the guides helping him to fall asleep after lunch before seizing them. Based on the terms negotiated before the start of the expedition, collected items were divided between the United States and Australia. The hidden bones were subsequently sent on to the Smithsonian with the other artefacts collected during the expedition.

In line with our discussions in the first part of this chapter on actors involved in diplomatic engagements, a closer examination of both the expedition and the recent repatriation campaign events shows a complex network of agents, both official and unofficial. The original 1940s lobby and negotiation work, for instance, can be attributed to key Australian people such as influential politician Arthur Calwell, Minister of Information at the time, Alexander Wetmore, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, and Gilbert Grosvenor, President of the Australian National Geographic Society (Beazley 2011; May 2011). These interactions, mediated by formal and informal channels, led to the shared Arnhem Land expedition.

The events that led to the case for restitution show an equally complex web of agents involved in the process. The Smithsonian was initially reluctant to

respond to any claims for restitution. Martin Thomas (2011, 2014) notes that the restitution of the bones was the result of a long process that began as early as the late 1990s, with various governmental and non-governmental agents involved in the lobbying activities. Aboriginal elders, anthropologists and Indigenous groups demanded their return and, eventually, even the Australian government became involved. In 2005, as a result of these initiatives, the Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Lionel Quartermaine, formally wrote to the Smithsonian to request the return of the bones.

The defining event that, according to researchers (Neale 2011), swayed the views of the Smithsonian took place in 2009. That year, a symposium was held at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra that discussed, among other topics, the issue of the bones. The symposium, which had Indigenous people in attendance from across the area covered by the expedition, included a passionate plea from the Aboriginal elder Thomas Amagula for full restitution of the objects. In a telling reference, Amagula alluded to US efforts to repatriate the remains of US soldiers who had lost their lives overseas. Reflecting on this intervention, the director of the symposium, Margo Neale, later wrote that:

> I believe this was a case of the power of soft diplomacy over political pressure. Representatives from the Smithsonian in the audience were able to experience the human dimension of the impact of missing ancestral remains, as community members spoke of their distress at the loss, and the shame they felt at not being able to save their 'old people'.
>
> (Neale 2011, 435)

Although we would take the notion of soft diplomacy discussed by Neale with a grain of salt, we can see the importance of third actors clearly here, empowered to voice their opinions and build necessary alliances to ultimately influence interstate and interinstitutional relations to the benefit of their cause.

Diplomacy, as Constantinou (2013) notes, entails a sensitivity towards difference and a genuine openness towards diverse knowledge paradigms. Catalogued as human remains, based on a Western taxonomy of artefacts, the Smithsonian researchers placed the indigenous bones in storage. Thomas (2014) reflects on the transformation of subjects into objects, how the bones were treated in a similar way to the other artefacts collected from the expedition, whereas, according to indigenous ways of thinking, they had not lost their subjectivity, just because the people involved were dead (Thomas 2015b). This is why he contends that a more accurate description of Setzler's action would be kidnapping, rather than theft. Moreover, what we see at play here is the reproduction of colonial power relations, where community knowledge is relegated to the margins and institutional knowledge prevails.

A moment when this mismatch of knowledge paradigms became all too evident was in the response of the Smithsonian's representatives to the restitution claims. Ignoring these calls for decades, the Smithsonian finally returned a part of the bones in 2009 (Thomas 2015a). A year later, the remaining bones were prepared for return and three local representatives from Groote Eylandt, Gunbalanya and Milingimbi (Victor Gumurdul, Thomas Amagula and Joe Gumbula) travelled to Washington, DC, to collect them, where they performed a smoking and singing ceremony to appease the anger of the spirits that had been wrenched from their country. The ancestral remains were subsequently brought back to Gunbalanya where another (and more broadly representative) ceremony was performed a year later.

To the Arnhem Land's Indigenous people, these bones were never mere objects. Within their ontology, a clear connection existed between the bones and the spirits of their ancestors. The moving documentary *Etched in Bone* (Thomas and Bijon 2018) clearly presents the distraught community trying to appease the anger of these lost souls. The burial ceremony was presided over by one of the last remaining elders, Jacob Nayinggul, who spoke various Indigenous languages that the deceased might have spoken during their lifetimes (Thomas 2015b). Thomas reflects powerfully on the importance of this moment of return: 'Living Aboriginal people find their navigational points on their country by knowing the dead are in certain places' (Murdoch 2011). Thus, within the community, the presence or absence of these ancestral remains mattered more deeply than in the institutional logic where they were classed as artefacts and hidden away in a cupboard.

The Arnhem Land restitution campaign, long-winded as it was and involving different types of actors, led to positive changes in Australia's policy field. The case study thus underscores some of Constantinou's (2013, 158) observations on the proliferation of a 'diplomacy from below and from non-centralized places combined with transnational issue-specific actorship, often with rich and rival knowledge resources'. In 2011, the Australian Government created a dedicated repatriation policy, as well as an all-Indigenous International Repatriation Advisory Committee, that aims to provide opportunities for active engagement in such cases, including the agency to decide when and how the repatriation should take place.

The same cannot be said of the Smithsonian Institution. Repatriation claims continue to be considered on a national basis mostly, based on the National Museum of the American Indian Act (1989, amended 1996). Thomas (2015b) notes that there is no homogenous approach to repatriation claims across the Smithsonian Institution's different museums and that his attempts to officially discuss the Armhem Land episode with staff members of the National Museum of Natural History were turned down. Moreover, informal discussions suggested the claim was treated as 'the return of a "loan" rather than a "repatriation"' (Thomas 2015b, 155).

The situation does not seem to have changed much since 2015. The museum's current policy only refers to Native Americans and Native

Hawaiian people (NMNH 2012), and mentions that international requests are 'contingent upon international agreements, unless the materials in question are found to have been acquired illegally or under circumstances which render the NMNH's claim of title invalid'. The National Museum of the American Indian, on the other hand, seems to be more open. While its repatriation policy (NMAI 2020) focuses on the same groups mainly, it also mentions that requests from international indigenous communities will be considered on 'a case-by-case basis' (NMNH 2012, 8). This case study therefore shows how different types of knowledge can coexist, or, rather, how they can generate tensions in contentious matters such as repatriation claims. More importantly, however, it also shows how different types of agents, official and unofficial can work together to bring about beneficial results at both the national and international levels.

A museum for Danish colonial history

During the spring and summer of 2020, Danish politicians and members of parliament across the political spectrum expressed their support for the idea that Denmark should have a museum dedicated to the country's colonial history (B. Nielsen 2020a). This idea originated among non-state groups, including the association *Kolonihistorisk Center*, an NGO that since 2015 has worked to create awareness about the colonial history and heritage of Denmark (Kolonihistorisk Center n.d.). The plan was to locate the museum in the former West India Warehouse (*Vestindisk Pakhus*) built in the port entry of Copenhagen in 1780–1781 to store goods from Denmark's colonial possessions in the West Indies. While the outcome remains undecided, the case of the museum highlights two characteristics that we have identified as key markers for decolonial heritage diplomacy: the initializing influence of non-state agents whose activities spurs or forces politicians to act; and secondly, the mobilization of knowledges and pluriverse epistemologies to create awareness and promote institutional change.

As in other Western European countries, colonial history and heritage have been the subject of increased attention in Denmark during recent years, and the idea to establish a museum for colonial history must be seen in this context. Specifically, the centenary in 2017 of the transfer of the Danish West Indies to the United States (since then known as the US Virgin Islands) constituted a key moment with elaborate commemorative activities across Denmark, which included also numerous museum exhibitions. Based on an extensive study of nineteen of these centenary exhibitions and interviews with 26 curators, leading expert on Danish colonial heritage Astrid Nonbo Andersen concludes that '[c]ompared to the previous neglect of this history [of colonialism] in Danish museums the 2017 special exhibitions in this regard represented a major leap forward' (Andersen 2019, 77).

Curatorial practices and ideals differed widely across this exhibition landscape but were generally informed by what Lorena Sancho Querol refers

to as cultural and museological mediation, aimed at 'the promotion of greater citizen participation and expression, giving shape to processes of building connections between the cultural and social realms', which in museum contexts covers a broad spectrum of practices, ranging from audience development activities to participatory museology (Querol 2020). Two exhibitions from the centenary year exemplify this. The first, *Blind Spots: Images of the Danish West Indies Colony*, in the Danish Royal Library in Copenhagen, was curated by art historians and focused on the history of slavery, inviting audiences to engage critically with present-day manifestations of racial stereotypes in a range of media contexts (Andersen 2019, 67–8). Meanwhile, at the Danish National Museum, the exhibition *Voices from the Colonies* placed the history of the Danish West Indies within a broader context of Danish colonialism and centred the narrative around 37 individuals and their stories (V. Nielsen 2020b).

There was extensive involvement of artists in both of these exhibitions. In *Voices from the Colonies*, clay figurines made by Beninese artists Marcelline Hounhouenou and Agathe Yaovi were used in displays that addressed Denmark's role in the transatlantic slave trade. This part of the exhibition built on existing collaborations with curators in Benin and, as one of the curators in Copenhagen, Louise Sebro, explains, the shared ambition of the curators was to find a way 'to show the scale of enslavement and awfulness of the structure [of slavery] while trying to find ways of insisting on the humanity and individuality of those who were enslaved' (Klint 2018). The work of artists went beyond exhibition spaces, however. The Danish–Caribbean artist Jeannette Ehlers and St Croix artist La Vaughn Belle were both involved in the *Blind Spots* exhibition in the Royal Library and later collaborated to create a sculpture modelled on Queen Mary, one of the main leaders of a labour revolt in St Croix in 1878, known as the Fireburn. Entitled *I Am Queen Mary*, the 7-meter tall monumental public sculpture is located in front of the West India Warehouse, the building now under consideration to house the museum for colonial history (Knudsen 2018; Yoon Pedersen 2018) (Figure 15.1).

The former warehouse is owned by the National Gallery of Denmark and is used to store and display the *Royal Cast Collection*, a collection of more than 2,000 plaster casts of seminal sculptures from Greek antiquity to the Renaissance. The Royal Cast Collection was established during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and is, in part, testament to a Winckelmanian-like elevation of 'whiteness' as the foundational ideal of beauty in European art—an ideal that became entrenched during this period. The entangled black and white histories within the former colonial warehouse were used by Ehlers in 2014 in her video installation *Whip It Good* in a forceful critique of colonial imagery, aesthetic ideals and contemporary racism. As art historian Mathias Danbolt notes, students and artists traditionally have brought their white canvases to the Cast Collection to copy the canonical examples in the history of European art, whereas the artist–protagonist in Ehlers' video performance

Figure 15.1 Inauguration of *I Am Queen Mary* by the former West India Warehouse, Copenhagen. Courtesy of La Vaughn Belle and Jeannette Ehlers. Photo by Sarah Giersing, 2018.

> is not here to learn history by copying it, she is here to give it a beating. Appearing as a reconfigured black Goddess of vengeance, she strikes back at the persistent myth of Greece as the cradle of Western art and Modernity—a myth that has fueled the co-constituted discourse of modernity/coloniality.
>
> (Danbolt 2016, 281)

The interventions in and around the former warehouse forcefully re-established the connections between the physical building, colonial history and contemporary coloniality. As art historian Ida Nørgaard notes, what is most significant about *I Am Queen Mary* is her location:

> Placed in front of the West Indian Warehouse, that for 250 years was used to store Caribbean sugar and rum brought in from the colonies and today houses the Royal Cast Collection which set the stage for Ehlers

> video work of *Whip it Good*, the queen stands out as a counter-narrative to the dominance of Eurocentrism represented in this place.
>
> (Nørgaard 2020)

As Knudsen emphasizes, the statue creatively reinstates the entangled histories of Denmark and the US Virgin Islands. *I Am Queen Mary*, she argues, is a key example of an intervention in the modality of 're-emergence', that is, 'a lost opportunity from the past that returns to offer itself for creating alternative futures' (Knudsen 2018). The entangled histories almost literally become concrete in the plinth of the statue, which has been made of coral stones originally cut from the ocean around the US Virgin Islands by enslaved Africans and used for buildings on the islands during the colonial era. Moreover, using modern scanning technology, the face and body of the statue is created as a hybrid between Mary and the two contemporary artists Belle and Ehlers. Pointing out the wider significance of the artists' intervention, Knudsen concludes that *I Am Queen Mary* serves to destabilize

> the internal homogeneity of an expanded Danish nationhood, of Copenhagen joining a community of former colonizers (finally) commemorating colonialism. It introduces an intercultural communal multi-vocal artistic work as a politically appropriate answer to colonial heritage issues … Here, multiple sources are at play, they merge, emerge and re-emerge, at one and the same time, representing all of them and none of them entirely, with the past-future axis blown apart, and with a hopeful modesty, depicting the not yet of a more inclusive future.
>
> (Knudsen 2018)

In this case from Copenhagen, we see how alliances between curators, academics, artists and institutions have collaborated to produce significant public awareness of a previously marginalized side of Danish history. The creative use of the entangled histories indicates how curatorial and artistic practice can make concrete the abstract ideals of connecting 'from-thereness' and 'from-here-ness' to help create a sense of rootedness for different communities living within the same space.

In particular, the work of these groups has re-established the connection between the West India Warehouse, colonial history and the need to confront racism and marginalization in the present. When politicians, members of parliament and state bureaucracies are now considering a formal institutionalization of Danish colonial history in the former warehouse, they do so in response to the activities that non-state agents have carried out to create awareness of coloniality and, just as important, to connect it to the histories within this space. It is by no means certain, however, that this (decolonial) interpretation of an entangled past and present will prevail. In Denmark, colonial heritage remains a contested space and groups with more

conservative—if not outright celebratory—interpretations of Denmark's colonial past have also seized upon the opportunities created when third agents initiate discussions about colonial heritage in order to try and advance their own agendas. To us, however, this ongoing situation only underscores the continued need for mid-space diplomatic efforts that connect plural locations and diverse viewpoints.

Conclusion

In their different ways, these case studies demonstrate how grassroots movements and independent cultural actors can successfully initiate meaningful intercultural dialogue and, in the process, build more equitable systems of collaboration and representation. They also highlight the importance of mediation, facilitated by mid-space actors attuned to the different values that states and groups attach to the same cultural artefacts. This brings us back to the question of 'active listening'. Where a former colonial relation is known to exist, this history needs to be brought into the discussion, so that the effects of its legacy in the present can be openly discussed and interrogated, not with a particular agenda in mind but with the intention of mitigating unequal power relations. In the same way, institutions and policymakers at all levels need to carefully tailor their activities and processes so as to respond to and incorporate hitherto marginalized voices (ECHOES 2021).

Decolonisation is not an event but an ongoing, continuous process. If we are to face up to the enduring legacies of past wrongdoings and create a future that is both fair and equitable, then we need to move away from official narratives and Eurocentric notions of 'heritage'. A decolonial approach to ICR stresses the importance of dialogue and active listening, appreciates different perspectives and recognizes the importance and value of different types of knowledge: 'indigenous', 'local' or 'community'. Whether labelled as heritage diplomacy or ICR, international collaboration projects and initiatives that address past colonial entanglements need to be based on a foundation of trust and mitigate against unequal power relations between partners. In other words, we advocate a holistic approach that recognizes the different ways knowledge and heritage are produced and consumed, as the foundation for decolonial heritage practice, both inside and outside Europe.

Notes

1 This work forms part of the ECHOES project which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 770248.

2 The Transperiphery Movement is an independent interdisciplinary exhibition project curated by Eszter Szakács and Zoltán Ginelli. It was originally planned to open during the Biennale Budapest 2020 edition; however, the event was cancelled due to the coronavirus crisis and postponed for 2021 (Ginelli and Szakács

2020). The exhibition brings together hidden histories of colonial relations in Eastern Europe with the Global South, relations that are often disregarded in postcolonial studies. The project combines academic research with modern art created by an international group of artists from across Eastern Europe. The exhibition also has a strong educational focus, a series of engagement activities with pupils are planned to help them understand the complexities of Hungary's recent past and counteract nationalistic approaches to history teaching.

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Chapter 16

Decolonial voices, colonialism and the limits of European liberalism

The European question revisited[1]

Jan Ifversen

Let me begin by quoting Mekki Ali, a Sudanese refugee interviewed in the so-called Calais Jungle. He says: 'I say to the British government, they have to accept the people and particularly the Sudanese, to accept them or to find a solution for a way ahead to the future, because [the] Sudanese were colonized by Britain'.[2] He is addressing Britain, but his query is certainly also relevant to Europe. It is part of a European question.

The European question relates to European integration. In European historiography, major challenges are typically called 'questions'—questions that are indeed often synonymous with major political and social problems in need of solutions (Anidjar 2013). Modern European history provides a series of such questions or problems. In the nineteenth century, for instance, the so-called national question signalled efforts to gain entry into the recognized geopolitical order. Communities that found themselves geopolitically misplaced posed this question to become nation-states. Only the countries controlling the power balance could, however, answer this question and decide which were entitled to be called nations. In a Europe made up of nation-states conducting national identity politics, non-national others constituted fundamental political problems. Nineteenth-century European history is suffused with questions of 'misfits' such as women, Jews, Muslims, and the colonized, all categories deemed unfit to become full members of the community according to the dominant national matrix. All were designated as questions or problems requiring solutions.

While questions of the existing misfit might be answered or 'solved' over time, new categories of misfits have regularly appeared in their place. Today there is much talk about the migrant question, or rather the migrant crisis, in Europe. Questions that become difficult to solve often tend to be conceptualized as crises that designate dilemmas characterized by indecision, uncertainty, and insecurity (Ifversen 2017). The path of European integration of late has followed a crisis rhythm, with the migration crisis being the most recent in a series of problems that fundamentally destabilize the idea of European unity. The question of the 'misfit'—in this case, the migrant—therefore also challenges the very idea of Europe and its emphasis on European integration and reopens the European question. This latest crisis

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100102-20

can, however, also be viewed as a return to an older question. As stated by Nicholas de Genova in his reflections on the status of the European question, it is 'increasingly fashioned against the postcolonial specter of a mob of mobile (nonwhite) non-Europeans' (De Genova 2016, 88). The 'mob of mobile non-Europeans' describes those migrants who for many Europeans have become such a problem they produce a crisis for Europe. In dominant political discourse, they are considered outsiders. This 'outside' is, however, questioned by Mekki Ali, the Sudanese refugee quoted above. The Sudanese are here, he says, because the British colonized the country he fled. The migration crisis makes visible entanglements between Europe and places formerly colonized by European powers. Until at least the 1970s when the last colonial wars ended and most of the former colonies became independent states, many European states faced the colonial problem, one that in 1950 Aimé Césaire considered the main problem facing European civilization in his famous *Discours sur le colonialisme* (Césaire 1972). The colonial entanglement thus returns to haunt the European question in the form of a 'blind alley': 'Whether one likes it or not, at the end of the blind alley that is Europe, I mean the Europe of Adenauer, Schuman, Bidault, and a few others, there is Hitler' (Césaire 1972, 37). What Césaire here points to is the risk that the new, post-war project for Europe stays nothing but an illusion based on repressing past inhumanities. The resistance of the colonized—in Europe and the colonies—will continuously remind the post-war Europeanists of this repression. A European question, which does not reflect on those excluded from Europe, will thus end in a blind alley.

This chapter investigates the European question in light of the 'problematic' questions of those categorized as unfit to be in Europe. I want to discuss similarities between the questions raised against problematic 'others' and to look closer at the dynamics of exclusion which still create blind alleys for an idea of Europe. In mainstream European politics, the others, 'the misfits', have either been repressed from history or kept in a constant interim position with no voice in discussing the European question. If we are to have any hope in the transnational and intercultural potential contained in the idea of Europe, it is time to listen to those who have been marginalized and silenced. This is particularly true for a European like me safely anchored in Northern Europe.

The Jewish question

We can understand these questions as interpellations of uncertainties in the political ordering of Europe. The expansionist strategies of inclusion that characterized both European imperialism and liberalism always carried with them ideas of borders, limits, and differences. Dynamics of equality and of assimilation operated with difference as their backdrop. Groups could only attain access to a community (and its state) if their differences could be overcome. The inclusion of the poor 'dangerous classes' relied on the formalization of equality within abstract citizenship. Granting women access to the

public and political sphere was based on a disembodiment, where 'women's difference is not … a public difference' (Brown 2004, 17). In both cases, the strategy of the liberal state proved successful. Neither the worn-out bodies of the poor nor the gendered bodies of women would disturb the fiction of inclusion that liberalist ideology promoted. The presence of other groups, however, challenged the limits of this fiction. At the international level, the geopolitical management of difference operated as a standard of civilization set by the European empires (Gong 1984). Since the nineteenth century, the colonial empire with its mission to civilize became embedded in the liberal nation-state. With both belonging and sovereignty filtered through the symbolic coordinates of nation and people, it became crucial to establish state technologies for managing diversity. The question of belonging (or not) found its answer in the ideology of the liberal state with its formalized conceptions of citizenship and its specific biopolitical practices. Dynamics of equality and of assimilation operated against a background of difference. Groups or categories only won access to the national community (and its state) if their differences could be mastered. The first group to pose a serious challenge to the liberalism of the nation-state was neither the working class nor women but those categorized as Jews. The Jewish question became the first test of how far the European liberal state would go in its practice of assimilation and exclusion.

While the colonial question was primarily discussed among colonial administrators, proto-ethnographers, and—somewhat later—legislators and educators (Saada 2003), the Jewish question became a general topic in public discussion. In fact, this question was less about a specific marginal group than about ways of managing diversity. As Jean-Paul Sartre demonstrates so clearly in his book *Réflexions sur la question juive*, written in 1944 within close range of the terrible *Endlösung*, the category of the Jew was an invention produced by public opinion, not a 'historical fact' (Sartre 1948, 11). For nationalists, the Jew is a scapegoat necessary for the imaginary of a pure nation. Anti-Semitism is thus the logical racist supplement of nationalism. This is in line with the argument made by Hannah Arendt in her analysis of the liberal state that is conquered by the nation through nationalism, 'which is essentially the expression of this perversion of the state into an instrument of the nation' (Arendt 1958, 231). The perversion is exemplified both by anti-Semitism in Europe and by racism in the colonies. Sartre makes the same gesture when he states that for the racist, the Jew is a 'pretext' that elsewhere can be replaced by blacks or Asians. The Jew is thus not only a question for the anti-Semite. The nineteenth-century European nation-state vacillated between two solutions to the Jewish question: the racist exclusion and the liberal, or what Sartre calls the 'democratic', assimilation option. The latter strategy is, however, not more recognizant of difference. As Sartre so elegantly puts it, the anti-Semite

> wishes to destroy him as a man and leave nothing in him but the Jew, the pariah, the untouchable; the latter [the democrat] wishes to destroy him

> as a Jew and leave nothing in him but the man, the abstract and universal subject of the rights of man and the rights of the citizen.
>
> (Sartre 1948, 40–41)

In both cases, the Jew is eliminated. Sartre's criticism of the emptiness of liberal universalism—based as it is on a fiction of abstract man that discards difference and inequality—mirrors Marx's famous analysis of the Jewish question as the problem par excellence that kept disturbing this fiction (Marx 1994).

Sartre points to the social psychology of racism where the anti-Semite is caught within a structure of destructive desire and the 'Jew' is trapped in an objectified gaze. Assimilation is simply a zero-sum game for people categorized one way or the other. If a person accepts the offer of assimilation, he or she still has to 'look at himself through the eyes of others' and cultivate 'himself in order to destroy the Jew in himself' (Sartre 1948, 70). For the Jew, this means escaping into the universal in an effort to refute any attachment to what society labels Jewishness. Sartre speaks of a masochism—mirroring the sadism of the anti-Semite—where Jews constantly objectify themselves to match the dominant gaze of society. The Jew who responds to the offer of assimilation denies any particularity and exists as a pure abstract in society willing to renounce his or her liberty. The mission is, however, impossible since the Jew remains unassimilable in the eyes of the nation-state. Thus, the Jew is haunted by the image that society creates for him or her when answering the Jewish question. In 'The Jew as Pariah', written the same year as Sartre's text, Hannah Arendt pointed to the same blind alley of assimilation. The Jew who pursues assimilation she calls a parvenu who simply 'ape(s) the gentiles' and plays the role expected by society. This is the 'modern would-be assimilationist Jew' she compares to the figure of the *Schnorrer*, a Yiddish term that mirrors the anti-Semite stereotype of the Jew. Becoming a *Schnorrer* is for Arendt to become 'one of the props which hold up social order from which he is himself excluded' (Arendt 1944, 110, 116).

Sartre also highlighted the predicament of the inauthentic Jews who constantly negate the Jewishness assigned to them by society while at the same time being obsessed with the consciousness of being just that, Jews. Inauthenticity leaves another possibility, namely the authentic Jew who revolts and asserts himself or herself as particular within society. This means choosing oneself to identify as a Jew and rebelling against the universalist illusion of liberal society. 'He is what he makes of himself', as Sartre puts it (Sartre 1948, 99), while Arendt goes further and turns the rebelling Jew into a pariah who uses his or her marginal position to intervene in society. Arendt's pariah is the Jew who 'transcend(s) the bounds of nationality' while at the same time embedding himself or herself in Europe (Arendt 1944, 99). Pariahs reject the image of the purifying nation and avoid the 'double slavery' of either trying to become assimilated or to completely opting out of society and constructing a separate nation. Being a pariah does not mean accepting

marginality, since the pariah has the advantage of an external position that brings with it 'a transformative movement' (Zolkos 2011, 198). As such, the pariah is aloof and never quite at home in the world. He or she is, by turns, the poet who criticizes the world from without; the rebel who attacks oppression; or the schlemiel—the awkward, seemingly helpless, clumsy Jew, the Chaplin-esque fool—who incidentally reveals the injustices of society (Zeldner 1953). Whichever the case, the pariah signals a position of resistance and of hope for 'a true blending of cultures' (Arendt 1944, 106).

The colonial question and the colonized race

Europe's colonial question concerned how to justify sovereignty over colonial subjects and how to govern colonized peoples (Scott 1995). Lord Cromer, the arch-bureaucrat of the British Empire, both emphasized the right of the superior 'Anglo-Saxon race' to rule the 'subject races' and outlined regular policies for the treatment of these races (Cromer 1913, 17). That racism was an integral part of the technologies of power executed in the colonies has been demonstrated with devastating effect by the polyphonic voices of the colonized. Just as the Jewish question turned racism into a tool of exclusion within Europe, then, racism was an answer to a colonial question that both consecrated white dominance in the colonies and restricted access to the metropole. While 'far from view' for many Europeans, the racist prerequisites of the slave trade, slavery, and other brutalizing elements of colonial systems constituted the matrix of modern European racism (Goldberg 2006).

The Jewish question took centre stage in nineteenth-century Europe because the Jewish minority was proximate. But as ties between the imperial metropole and its peripheries grew tighter, the colonized came to Europe in increasing numbers. Consequently, assimilation would become a more pressing issue within the colonial question. When Frantz Fanon wrote *Peau noire, masques blancs* in 1952, he directly addressed the colonial matrix as the white construction of blackness. As he stated near the outset, a black soul is 'a white man's artifact' (Fanon 1986, 16). Throughout the text he aimed to deconstruct the 'fixed concept of the Negro' that held the colonized in 'crushing objecthood' through a classifying, imprisoning, primitivizing, and decivilizing mode (Fanon 1986, 35, 109, 32). Being designated black, Fanon insisted, was to be reduced to one's body beyond any representation. A black person was simply black skin, slave to his or her appearance (Fanon 1986, 116). The double enslavement—both as a slave of the white and as a slave to his or her body—produced an inferiority complex similar to the masochism of the Jew. Through this complex, the black person was placed in a constant state of lack when compared to a white person. When the educated black tries to assimilate and become like the whites—Fanon calls it 'lactification' and wearing a 'white mask' (Fanon 1986, 47)—he or she is caught in the same cul-de-sac as Arendt's Jewish parvenu. There is no escape from blackness, which simply denotes a problematic being. The body of the black person is

essentially problematic for the white person because it represents depravity and destruction. Fanon exposes the psychopathology of European racism in its reduction of the black to a male body of pure sexual aggression, 'a penis symbol' that threatens the entirety of white society. Blackness thus becomes the negation of social life.

These similarities between the Jewish and the colonial questions have been highlighted by several observers, including Fanon himself in his engagement with Sartre's reflections on anti-Semitism (Cheyette 2005; Gibson 2003; Rothberg 2009). At times, he views anti-Semitism and black racism as structurally identical. While the categories of black and Jew are both overdetermined, the Jew is not locked into his or her body and is not perceived as a biological but rather an ideological danger (Fanon 1986, 165). In so doing, Fanon—in line with Sartre—appears to discard the sexualized and corporeal symbolic that long nourished anti-Semitism in his effort to make black racism the matrix for European racism, thereby placing the Jew in a position between being black and being (more) white (Gibson 2003). Yet Fanon simultaneously held on to the view that the Jew was his brother in misery. European racism is thus structural in the sense that it demonstrates the racial logic of assimilation. When Fanon concluded his book by stating that the 'the negro is not' (Fanon 1986, 248), he points to both the role of racism within the European concept of humanity and his own liberation from this false humanism. And like Sartre and Arendt, he argues for the authenticity of the pariah as the only way out. Fanon's pariahs can still be poets among the dominant but as we know from *Les damnés de la terre*, they are primarily the revolutionaries who do not seek recognition, preferring to leave Europe to itself in order to build 'a new history of man' (Fanon 2004, 238).

Post-war Europe: all questions solved?

After the so-called final solution, it was no longer possible to ask the Jewish question in Europe. It translated into the memory of the Holocaust as a constant reminder of the guilt carved into European identity. Perhaps it would be more precise to say that the question found its answer in a political myth of a Europe both radically reborn yet nonetheless still founded on the traumatizing event of the Holocaust. On the one hand, Europe's 'virgin birth' (Onar and Nicolaïdis 2013, 292) made it possible to disconnect from the past, close the Jewish question, and pave the way for a re-universalized future. On the other hand, the memory of the Holocaust made room for a rewriting of European history. David Theo Goldberg adds that this rewriting dissipated the entire question of race in Europe. Only pre-war anti-Semitism could be granted the status of European racism; all other forms of racial exclusion would be disavowed. 'Racial europeanization has rendered race unmentionable, unspeakable if not as reference to an anti-Semitism of the past that cannot presently be allowed to revive', he argued (Goldberg 2006, 339). With race eliminated as a political concept and the surviving Jews

reduced to actors in a European memory theatre—a term borrowed from Max Czollek, who points to the function of the Jew in the German memory theatre as guarantor of a healed Germany (Czollek 2018)—the scene was set to make colonialism and the colonial other vanish from the European horizon.

Post-war Europe with its compensatory surplus of Holocaust memory (Judt 2005, 289) was, therefore, also characterized by a deficit, the effacement of its colonial history (Buettner 2016; Prutsch 2015). Decolonization would be the chapter title historians would insert to signal the end of old Europe and the beginning of a new, disentangled Europe. Colonial legacies would re-emerge in the shape of migrants or Muslims, Europe's new poor, always disconnected from Europe; or in neo-colonial relations camouflaged as developmental policies. As early as 1950, Césaire tried in vain to remind Europeans 'that no one colonizes innocently … that a civilization which justifies colonization … is already a sick civilization' (Césaire 1972, 39). With racism relegated to the most paranoid corners of ultra-right anti-Semitism and the Jewish question replayed in the European memory theatre, the question of the unfit could be closed. With the uplifting of the Holocaust to a founding myth for Europe and with nationalism filling in where racism was subtracted, the way was paved for a compromise between the supranational visions of the new Europeanism and the older Europe *des patries*. The former could be expressed as a European universalism capable of at least simulating a new mission to civilize (Kølvraa 2012; Nicolaïdis et al. 2014), as long as references to past European imperialisms could be silenced. The compromise between supranational institutions and nationalism found its motto of 'unity in diversity' where the latter could extend no further than the diversity contained within the nation-states (Fornäs 2012). Then came crises: first the financial crisis of 2006–2008, which challenged internal unity between Northern and Southern Europe, and in 2015 the so-called refugee crisis, which heralded a dramatic inward-looking turn in European policies. The question of the other was thereby re-opened.

The migrant crisis: a *choc en retour*?

The migrant crisis forced Europeans to confront the presence of colonial entanglements and highlighted the postcolonial challenges to European identity (Bhambra 2009). Colonial history comes back as a *choc en retour*—or boomerang effect—already exposed in Césaire's indictment of European civilization. With the full revelation of Nazi crimes, Europeans brutally experienced the effects of the racism that they had long practiced elsewhere. They became exposed to their 'own habit of seeing the other man as an animal, … treating him like an animal, and … objectively to transform *himself* into an animal' (Césaire 1972, 41). In her work on the origin of totalitarianism, Arendt directly linked the *choc* to the imperialist 'experiments' conducted by the Europeans in Africa that prefigured the full unleashing of

the racist dynamics embedded in nationalism (Arendt 1969). The *choc*, according to Arendt, was part and parcel of nationalism's true nature. Europeans, however, overcame the first *choc* with an impressive strategy of repressing the colonial legacy and became born-again universalists. Only marginal voices such as Césaire's insisted on reminding Europeans of their inhumanity.

The refugee crisis—soon to become the migrant crisis—created yet another *choc en retour*. Even if migration has been a dominant feature of European history since at least the early nineteenth century it had not fundamentally threatened the national imaginary. By contrast, political rhetoric feeding the current crisis creates a generalized image of the migrant as unstable and unsettled, with the migrant becoming caught between two opposed perspectives. Within the dominant discourse, the migrant is basically a person on the move without attachment to any place. People migrating, on the other hand, come with a purpose of settling. The migrant concept, however, leaves little discursive space for the natural end goal of settlement. In ordinary parlance, migration extends over generations. As Fatima El-Tayeb puts it, the concept is 'at once implying a temporary and a permanent condition: migration appears as always reversible, coming with an expiration date, but at the same time stretching over several generations' (El-Tayeb 2008, 652). This constitutes a conceptual deadlock: whatever else you might have been, or might wish to be, you essentially stay a migrant. The concept marks a condition of temporality and in-betweenness as well as a point of asociability. The migrant is reduced to bodily presence without any status or story.

This migrant is not stateless, but we can find many similarities between the current migrant and the stateless that Hannah Arendt pointed to as the crucial pivot in modern European history. Based on an analysis of the nationality question unleashed in Europe after the First World War, she emphasized the deficit resulting from the final nationalization of the liberal state. The deficit was made up for first by national minorities desperately in search of a state or—if this proved impossible—in search of international protection; and second, by people left over, namely the stateless people completely lost in their situations of being simultaneously homeless, stateless, and without rights. Just as in the migration crisis of 2015, the right of asylum was the first casualty. For Arendt, this European crisis led to 'the realization that it was impossible to get rid of them or transform them into nationals of the country of refuge' (Arendt 2007, 281). The stateless person is unwanted and 'superfluous' in every way. He or she is an outlaw, outside legality and forced to break the law for survival, and without history. In her very personal text, 'We Refugees' from 1943, Arendt explores the experience of refugees being asked not to tell their stories. Like today's migrants, they are both out of time and out of place. However, worst of all, since stateless people are outlawed, they have also lost their right to have rights, which marks the absolutely lowest point of humanity. They are, in Arendt's words reduced to

'abstract nakedness' and to being nothing but human beings (Arendt 2007, 300, 297). In a sense, this reduction is comparable to the one performed through racialization: people's presence is enough to condemn them, but here the reduction goes even further than the slave whose body is still worth oppressing.

If, in the migration crisis since 2015, the stateless can still officially seek asylum and thus speak about the past, the dominant discourse tends to reduce them either to bodies to be incarcerated in internment camps or to being out of place wherever they are present. The remaining option is to refer the migrant question back to older questions in which case migrants are equated with Muslims and essentialized through Islamophobia or with blackness and essentialized through racism. The discursive strategy at play is thus to outline a contradiction marked on one side by the reductive concept of the migrant and the other side by the 'fullness' of race.

Back to the Muslim question

European answers to the Jewish and the colonial question moved from the internal, racial logic of assimilation to the utter genocidal violence of the Holocaust and colonial massacres. Jews and colonized Africans were certainly not the only others who challenged the liberal imaginary of the European nation-states. Although 'the Muslim question' is a term used mainly by scholars to denote the growing racialization in late twentieth-century Europe of citizens and migrants based on religion, it is rooted in a historical question of 'the Muslim' as the external political enemy (Anidjar 2013; Bracke and Aguilar 2020; Norton 2013; Selby and Beaman 2016). As a historical question, 'the Muslim' is both embedded in a European Orientalism that forms an important matrix of colonial domination and an earlier fear of 'the Turks' (Yapp 1992). In a structural sense, the Muslim question is coterminous with the Jewish and the colonial question. Together they form a triangle of challenges faced by liberal assimilation policies where racialization includes religion, culture, and origin (Meer 2013). Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are the twin forms of a racialization based on religion, which secures a European imaginary of both being secular and Christian, of being abstractly universal and essentially cultural at the same time. In both cases, the racialization works to combine bodily demarcations (physical and sexual deformities as well as erotic fantasies) with religion and culture (and often religion *as* culture).

While the questions were certainly entangled in European colonial governmentality (Katz 2018), 'the Muslim question' also has a separate history of becoming the empty signifier of racism in a Europe that officially silenced racism after 1945. As Goldberg succinctly remarks, any articulation of race within Europe was rendered 'unmentionable, unspeakable if not as a reference to an anti-Semitism of the past' that only lived on in small pockets at the most extreme right (Goldberg 2006, 339). In this atmosphere of a

universalism aimed at providing healing in the present and open up a new future through the memory of the Holocaust and the oblivion of colonialism, the Muslim question reappears as a reframing of the problem of migration. When migration is rendered a problem with the end of the economic miracle for West Europeans in the 1970s, we see a systematic 'muslimification' of migrants who had previously been viewed either through their postcolonial or their national origins (Adamson 2011; Parekh 2006). The specific attachment of the Muslim question to migration has led scholars to speak of this form of racialization as a new racism that does not need a bodily or 'biological' reference. Étienne Balibar, who was prominent in introducing the term, insists on a difference between a racism built around biological heredity and a racism claiming cultural difference as 'insurmountable' (Balibar 1991, 21). Later, the term 'cultural racism' gained prominence in discussions of discrimination against people based on religious categorizations (Birt 2009; Modood 2008). In light of the prominent role that Islamophobia has assumed in Europe since Balibar alluded to a new racism more than 30 years ago, it makes less sense, however, to underline the semantic variations with older forms of racism. The concentration of exclusionary mechanisms in the nodal point of Islamic fanaticism happens through a set of equivalences that includes classic racist depictions of deformed bodies—a case in point is the Danish Mohammed cartoons from 2005—and direct references to fertility and sexuality, the latter configured in fantasies of a demographic 'replacement' of the 'pure' European population (Bracke and Aguilar 2020).

These different questions of the unfit derive from dissimilar historical contexts, but they interrelate in the assimilation strategies that liberal European states tested out in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is therefore difficult to make one the prototype of the others. Is European anti-Semitism the prototype of a 'non-biological racism' as Balibar claims (1991, 24)? Alternatively, is, as Goldberg would argue, the racism of colonial governmentality the paradigmatic one (2006)? There are certainly distinctions. Fanon pointed to the difference between being completely caught within one's body as was the case with racism against black people and being caught in religion. Jews in Western Europe could negotiate their parvenu status differently than people from the colonies. They could potentially hide under the abstract umbrella of the liberal state, which only granted very limited access to colonized people. In the end, the only options left for the unfit towards the assimilation technologies of the liberal state are between the parvenu and the pariah.

People targeted by the Muslim question indeed changed their responses. We see a move from passive observations of mounting Islamophobia by a fragile group of postcolonial migrants in the wake of 11 September 2001 and the Western involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan that led to the forceful consolidation of a Muslim identity in the European public sphere. The adoption of a Muslim identity as a political marker by marginalized groups in European societies made an important contribution to shifting the

assimilation agenda from an insensitive and abstract universalism to a politics of recognition and identity (Birt 2009; Modood 2008). More recently, both established and rising populist parties have demonstrated a strong tendency to regard identity politics as both a direct attack on liberal values, often condensed in free speech absolutism, and what the majority sees as a perverted effort by minority groups to undermine community cohesion. Due to the spread of Islamophobia to established parties in Europe, responses among minorities identifying as Muslims have taken the form of more direct protests against discrimination and a reinforcement of the transnational dimensions of this identity.

We are here

In September 2012, a group of undocumented migrants in Amsterdam initiated a protest movement under the motto, 'We Are Here'. By taking up residence in abandoned buildings they began to make their presence publicly visible (Dadusc 2017; Odugbesan and Schwiertz 2018). In the name of the undocumented, they published a manifesto stressing that 'We demand our existence to be acknowledged in official policies and laws. We are here and we will remain here' (quoted in Dadusc 2017, 275). Being undocumented or—in the eyes of the state—illegal is the most radical expression of asociability. By challenging public disengagement and criminalization by the state, the undocumented turned their position into a strategy of resistance. Crucially, when migrants added the phrase 'because you were there' to their rallying cry, they shifted the perspective from universal morality to history and memory. The migrants bring with them a historical legacy of entanglement the Europeans had repressed in order to reduce them to anonymous characters without history or rights.

Resisting anonymity and bringing in history are steps in a strategy of resistance conducted by the allegedly unfit to protest against brutal integration policies. If we are to reflect on transnational possibilities in Europe, we need to listen to the voices of the groups that from the beginning of European modernity presented alternatives to assimilation and abstract universalism. These are the groups that modern Europe branded pariahs, parasites, and criminals. Hannah Arendt advocated the position of the conscious pariah who would use his or her role both as outsider to criticize the homogenizing effects of the nation-state and as a rebel who would resist. It would be a poetic outsider like Heinrich Heine who would denounce 'the nonsense' of cosmopolitanism—the most grandiose version of abstract universalism—to 'transcend the bounds of nationality' and favour 'the true blending of cultures' (Arendt 1944, 99, 106). The conscious pariah is the one who turns the 'aloofness' of the poet into politics and fights for political rights to be different. This involves rebelling against assimilation, but even more against the hypocrite play performed by the parvenus who have surrendered to the pressure of the majority. The pariah is always fighting this double slavery

imposed by both the majority and the parvenus. Arendt presented the pariah as a necessary structural position or 'ideal human type' within European modernity that could be filled with different stories (Bernstein 1996, 29). In its most pure form, the structural pariah would come 'in the guise of the "stateless"' (Arendt 1944, 111).

The concept of the pariah has this rhetorical capacity of turning exclusion into a strategy of both resistance and alternative thinking. When Europeans speak of the parasite, they use an even more figuratively racist term. Where the pariah is an outcast, the parasite is a metaphor that turns communities into destroyers of life. The term came to play an important role in the anti-Semitic perception of Jews as not simply aliens or less civilized but also as capitalists who literally destroyed the body of the people. As parasites, they live off the body of their host and finally kill it. The term became a nodal point in the anti-Semitic bio-mythologization of race and society with its crucial linking of blood, body, and exploitation (Bein 1964) and reached a climax in Nazi ideology. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler would write that the Jew 'remains the eternal parasite, a sponger (*Schmarotzer*) who, like a terrible bacillus, spreads out more and more as soon as a favourable medium invites him to do so' (quoted in Bein 1964, 19).

While the parasite here is a symbol of impurity, intrusion, and destruction, just as with the pariah we can read it counter-intuitively, as Michel Serres does in his book *Le parasite* (Serres 1982). For Serres, the figure serves to signify a relationship of dependence. In the conventional sense, the parasite is dependent on the host, but the host is also dependent on somebody else. All relations are thus parasitic or, as Serres puts it, 'we parasite each other' to the extent that it becomes foundational, 'the atomic form of our relations' (Serres 1982, 10, 8). In his theory of relationality, parasitism thereby differs from relationships based on gift-giving or exchange. The former operates through the continuous circulation of tokens that uphold obligations; the latter are relations accounted for through symbols of exchange. Parasitism in this reading is not only asymmetrical—taking without giving—it is also disturbing. We tend to see societies as either based on the dynamics of gift giving or on the exchange of goods or words, but Serres introduces parasitism as a third form of relationality where dependency is the basic dynamics. Such cascades of dependency have been vigorously depicted in Bong Joon-Ho's Oscar-winning 2019 film *Parasite*, which makes the crucial point that, despite belonging to different social classes, we are all parasites.

Parasitism does not simply outline a social theory that opposes theories based on asymmetrical exchange (the Marxist theory of exploitation) or symmetrical exchange (the liberal theory of individuals or citizens interacting). Parasitism is also a theory of dynamic differences. In Serres's rendition, the parasite is also an interceptor that disturbs order (1982, 11). Inspired by information theory, Serres speaks of the noise that comes with parasitic relations. On the one hand, noise disturbs the ideal of smooth and transparent interaction. In a social logic of exchange—for instance, between free and equal

citizens—noise needs to be overcome. When unity or identity become the ordering principle, the noise of the parasite is threatening and has to be expelled. The parasite is a symbol of disorder while also being the necessary transformer and inventor of something new. It is therefore an impossible but dangerous idea to eliminate the noise brought about by the parasite. Turning the otherness of the noise and the parasite into contradiction leads to fantasies of 'immunization' (Burton and Tam 2016, 122). Only if the parasite is recognized as a factor that challenges both these imaginaries and brings with it social creativity, can we think beyond the 'condescending liberalism', as Sartre described it, and towards a society based on interculturality (Sartre 1948, 98).

Transnationality and interculturality

Hannah Arendt turned the pariah into both a privileged observer of plurality and a political actor of transnationality. Serres more generally pointed to the creative role of 'the parasite'. Critiques of current assimilation policies see the migrant or refugee as 'the critical vantage point' through which Europe can be decentred (De Genova 2016, 92). In light of the catastrophic final solution to the Jewish question, Arendt saw some hope—a pardon and a promise—in the ideas of a European federalism that would replace the nation-state (Rensmann 2006; Selinger 2016). In the post-war struggle against nationalism and fascism, 'the slogan was simply Europe' (Arendt 1994, 112). Arendt's endorsement of European federalism, however, concerned more the Jewish minority. Her slogan included neither postcolonial outsiders in Europe nor those on the colonial 'peripheries'. Europe today is hardly the solution anymore, but rather a question to be re-posed. If we wish to invigorate the transnational possibilities linked to a certain idea of Europe, we must listen to Europe's new pariahs and parasites. Only they carry hopes for a Europe that is decolonial and intercultural. Balibar has proposed an intercultural model for Europe based on the potential embedded in its character of being a borderland (Balibar 2009). Reflecting on the fact that borders of the European political space are overlapping and permeable—both in the sense of free movement of labour and migration—he regards this as potential for an intercultural normativity. With his term 'borderland', Balibar proposes a way out of the risks linked to supranationalist visions of Europe as a global power (Kølvraa 2012) or to cosmopolitan exaltations of its normative power (Beck and Grande 2007). The borderland is a zone 'where the opposites flow into one another, where "strangers" can be at the same time stigmatized and indiscernible from "ourselves"' (Balibar 2009, 210). The borderland also contains the potential for 'cultural invention' stemming from the constantly renewed presence of differences. Balibar's vision of a borderland Europe is based on the idea that Europe is heterogeneous and differs from itself. I would add that it is exactly the heterogeneity of the supposedly 'unfit', the

pariahs and the parasites—and not all differences as Balibar seems to imply—that is crucial for making the borderland a normative term.

Apart from some rather general considerations about translation and mediation Balibar does not indicate precisely how such creativity might emerge (see also Balibar 2003). Using Mary Louise Pratt's influential term, we can speak of borderlands as 'contact zones' where differences are not easily neutralized and mastered. The stakes are higher in the contact zone, but so are the potentials. The contact zone is the social space where actors, by meeting, clashing, and grappling with each other, negotiate their differences (Pratt 2007, 7). Conditions are often unequal—as in colonization or migration—and strategies include resistance, rejection, assimilation, and imitation. Pratt, however, also points to other effects of contact. Even in highly asymmetrical circumstances, we might find effects of transculturation, that is, ways that subordinated groups 'select and invent' from the dominant culture (Pratt 2007, 7). Transculturation thus highlights the creative force of the subaltern. We can see this as a process of translation—the master metaphor for intercultural contacts—that points to the efforts of taking each other seriously. The subalterns are speaking back in ways that not only disclose the hollow nature of abstract universalism, but also introduce new forms of living together and of a future beyond current forms of co-existence.

If we are to transcend the nationalist and racist supplement of the European liberal state, where new forms of brutalism take shape in the desperate efforts to control unwanted bodies (Mbembe 2020) that further expose the hollowness of Europe's so-called universal values, we need to listen to the voices of others. The others are here to tell their stories of Europe. Even when being silenced, interned, and reduced to pure bodies, they continue their resistance nonetheless. They are mobilizing under slogans such as 'let us de-integrate' proposed by the Jewish pariah Max Czollek (2018), 'we are here to stay' launched by refugees, or 'we are here because you were there' already used by migrant activists in the UK in the 1970s (Grantham and Miller 2017). In a post-war Europe shattered by the Second World War, the anti- and transnationalist projects articulated through European integration contained promises for the future. These promises, however, never seriously affected the assimilationist and exclusionary dynamics of the European nation-state; neither did they pose the question of a postcolonial Europe. If we are to look for promises for Europe, we must turn to the outsiders, the misfits disturbing our coordinates of citizenship, community, and belonging. Perhaps this is Europe's only hope.

Note

1 This work forms part of the ECHOES project which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 770248.

2 As quoted in *The Telegraph*, 3 August 2015 ('Calais Migrant Crisis'), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsTTTbYT1NU (accessed 29 April 2021).

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