

AFRICAN AESTHETICS AND THE EVERYDAY: COMMUNITY, HEALING AND LIVING.

by

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STUDENT DECLARATION FORM



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ABSTRACT

This research is about traditional African art and aesthetics, loosely thought of in the West as comprising sculpture, poetry, acting, costume, music, dance and acrobatics, often attached to ritual. It is better understood as an activity designed to heal and bring the community together. It is underpinned by rich philosophical ideas of the interrelatedness of the self and the community (Holdstock, 2000; Ramose, 2002; Kimmerle, 2015); depth experience, inter-subjectivity, embodiment and affect (Senghor, 1962; Anyanwu, 1987; Holdstock, 2000). There is little work being done which directly examines the abstract dimensions of traditional African artistic practices and/or attempts to ascertain their value for African countries today. By approaching the topics of traditional African art and the everyday in art and cultural theory using a psychosocial lens, this study is methodologically concerned to emphasize individuation in the context of community supported by art or aesthetic practices and prioritise a closeness to participants' experiences. Further, by using this approach this research connects previously unrelated knowledge and ideas. African conceptions of interrelatedness and communalism, the invisible and/or invisible universe, the gerundial character of African languages and being, and ideas from African aesthetics such as 'sound' as a model of reality are brought into dialogue with psychoanalytically informed thinking of western provenance, for example Winnicott's conception of 'the space' of cultural experience as a space of illusion and Ehrenzweig's notion of a restless but powerful perceptual scanning of the whole object. Deleuze and Guattari's metaphysical ideas of the world as a 'rhizomatic' continuity of unstable relationships are also brought into the frame.

The primary research was conducted between October 2016 and April 2018 in the Central African country of Cameroon. The research methods comprised a mix of sensory, visual and performative interview techniques aimed at helping to access in depth subjective meanings needed in order to help explore the primary research question: What can traditional African art and aesthetic practices contribute to our understanding of healing and everyday modern culture in Cameroon? The participants were a range of spiritual healers and artists, who were influenced by traditional culture and three groups of Psychology Masters students from three Universities in Cameroon: Yaounde' I; Dschang; and Douala. With the psychology students the research used a

group-based research method called the visual matrix (VM). This method was specifically designed for researching topics that contain difficult to express ideas and to help unveil a social-cultural, cultural imaginary. This research is the first to use the visual matrix research method on the continent of Africa and in the Central African country of Cameroon. In a VM the researcher creates a setting that allows the emergence of associations, images, feelings and ideas stimulated by cultural material. This cultural material directs the attention of participants towards the research topic. In this case a mix of photographs showing traditional Cameroonian art objects, rituals and contemporary works influenced by traditional art were used together with a soundtrack of traditional music. According to many authors (Bebey, 1975; Holdstock, 2000; Ramose, 2002; Kimmerle, 2006) music and dance are of special relevance in African art and so in the environment of European style education institutions, this mix of methods was considered apposite whilst practical.

The key findings are firstly that an African vitalist and syncretistic aesthetic sensibility persists in everyday life in Cameroon. Amongst the traditional healers and musician in the case studies, this sensibility is firmly lodged along with their traditional beliefs. Yet they are both flexible and realistic about the challenges that modernity presents to tradition (McCaskie, 2008). However, the metropolitan European style educated students in the visual matrix session demonstrate, a 'doubleness' of a vitalist and syncretistic aesthetic sensibility alongside technical rationalism. However, it is an unreconciled duality of aesthetic sensibility that produces a person who is conflicted and a malaise over what can properly be called African. For modern Cameroonians to be free of feelings alienation, regret and concern, there must be a re-valorization of traditional art and aesthetic practices alongside the modernity. Modernity in Africa cannot be confronted in health without a renewed regard for who Africans are and what they bring.

STUDENT DECLARATION FORM

ABSTRACT

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Often when people state that they have been driven by a lifelong all-consuming desire to do 'something or other', it seems like a cliché! I now believe that nothing could be further from a cliché and that this experience is something common and as real as breathing (from my reflexive diary).

This research is about traditional African art and aesthetics. Traditional African art is loosely thought of in the West as comprising sculpture, poetry, acting, costume, music, dance and acrobatics, often attached to ritual; but it is better understood as an activity designed to heal and bring the community together. It is judged by the 'user' for its effect and ability to modify the observer or initiate/knower's spiritual state. It introduces the topics of mythology, religion, and politics into everyday life and is underpinned by rich philosophical ideas of the interrelatedness of the self and the community (Holdstock, 2000; Ramose, 2002; Kimmerle, 2015). Also, a view of the human that highlights ideas of depth experience, inter-subjectivity, embodiment and affect (Senghor, 1962; Anyanwu, 1987; Holdstock, 2000). A great deal of traditional African beliefs and practices are still existent today in both the rural and urban situation of African countries and this is a major theme of discussion vis-à-vis the topic of development in African countries (Njoh, 2006; Kohnert, 2007; Ngong, 2012). Despite this, there is little work being done which directly examines the abstract dimensions of traditional African artistic practices and/or attempts to ascertain their value for African countries today.

I came to my most recent personal series of questions about this topic after a lifetime of being a practicing musician and artist with a passionate interest in all things African. I remember when I was 12 one of the first books I ever bought was *The New Larousse Encyclopaedia of Mythology* (1968). Despite the large sections on for instance, Ancient Egyptian, Assyro-Babylonian, Greek, Roman, there were only a sorry few pages on Black African mythology.¹ Whenever I looked at this book, I was secretly disappointed

1. This was before learning about the ground-breaking 'Ancient Egypt was African' research and writing of the Senegalese historian, anthropologist and physicist Cheikh Anta Diop (Diop, 1974). Diop's thinking has more recently become influential in both mainstream historical and archaeological research and African Studies (Bernal, 1987; Carroll, 2007; Allen, 2008)

to see so little comparative writing about a part of the world that somewhere was a major part of my ancestry. Later, at 14 when I first listened to the music of the Nigerian Fela Kuti, I remember sensing what a great cultural tradition must have underlain his musical world. I think that my early interest and passion for all things African was simply, like the young and white Robert Farris Thompson, “ignited” (Iseman, 198).

As soon as I was old enough, I would regularly go out alone to pub music ‘gigs’ to listen the London concerts of South African jazz Artists such as Dudu Pukwana and Mongezi Feza. Later as a practicing musician, for a long time, my favourite bass player was Johnny Dyani, a South African whose percussionist son I played with for about two years. As a young black person growing up in the context of a racialised world and history of colonialism, there was always at least a feeling of insult and struggle in connection with my interest in African art and music and I still carry a resentment that is borne of this feeling. In part, my experience recalls the personal narrative of latent racism and “assaults made upon them by the very nature of Western culture” of the Martinican Franz Fanon (1991, p.196). I have no doubt that my feeling of resentment forms part of my drive throughout this research and thesis. It is and will always be part of me. Perhaps it is funny to think but I believe it helped my body survive those long and painful overnight bus rides on Cameroonian roads.² By now, it is a ‘hip-hop world’, and it can at times be hard to find a young person who is not at least slightly enthusiastic about some aspect of ‘black’ culture.

The point of my being a practicing musician and artist has never been far from the surface during this Ph D journey and beyond. Years of internationally playing concerts, devising set-lists, writing, meeting and being produced by Brian Eno and producing tracks myself; appearing in videos directed by, for instance, Lyndsey Anderson and Derek Jarman, and in plays and both indoor and outdoor live art performances have inevitably made a mark on me. Many of the people I have worked with are now considered leading avant garde artists and thinkers of the 20th century and their work has left a lasting impact that spans both popular culture and contemporary art. At 16,

2. In Chapter 5 I talk about my research trips to Cameroon and getting used to the extremely bumpy roads and coach trip rides around the country.

my older brother introduced me to photography and I have long used it as both a source of relaxation and inspiration. In general, if I am anything of a researcher, as the old expression says, “You can take the boy out of the city, but you can’t take the city out of the boy”. During my first degree in psychology, I managed to restrain from mixing my artist self with my studies. However, later in my MSc and certainly during this Ph D, the artist Jim Parris was always either implicitly or explicitly present. It was during my MSc and under the tutelage of Dr Sal Watt that I first discovered how areas of the social sciences have been transformed since the 1980’s due to the influence of postmodernism and feminist commentary (Stanley & Wise, 1983; Jones & Watt, 2010). The researcher is no longer regarded as outside society and culture but instead, a reflexive actor within it. In general reflexivity is promoted in research writing to help engender trust in the reader and particularly in the field of Psychosocial Studies the researcher’s subjectivity is understood as part of the study (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). In addition, art, theatre, poetry, music and dance are all utilisable as part of research (Gergen & Gergen, 2012).

In my research, my artist self was sometimes like a shadow, sometimes like a favoured work overcoat that you know will see you through a tough day ahead. The mixing was sometimes like, for example, the practical circumstance of working with the help my long-time Cameroonian artistic collaborator and friend Tchoumo “Xumo” Nounjio to create music for the Visual Matrix research method used in this study, meeting in Cameroon Tchoumo’s brother who helped me recruit in Cameroon artists and musician for interviewing, and sometimes the employment of a practiced syncretistic aestheticism in both the taking and/or selection of photographs. This Ph D research journey has by now not only informed me but also inspired me. Today, I continue to work with a range of artists and academics and I am currently the lead artist for the creation of a giant aleatory architectural participatory installation called The Divination Palace. Informed by both Yoruba Ifa divination and the entirety of this thesis, the ‘palace’ will equally combine fabrics, movement and music to remind us of our common existential concerns and that we are one of many, a community.

Following in the path of my life-long passion for the topic of traditional African art and music, an important moment in my Ph D journey was when in 2014 I visited an exhibit

by the then winner of the Turner prize Duncan Campbell. His winning work contains footage from *Les Statues Meurent Aussi* by Alain Resnais and Chris Marker's film-essay on African sculpture and colonialism, which is used to explain the 'death of purpose' of classical African objects separated from a world where all is art, where all is religion. The exhibit provoked me to ask more questions and wonder what was the response to that wonderful art today in African countries. Another important moment in my Ph D journey was in 2015, in response to my Ph D sponsor, and later supervisor, Professor Lynn Froggett's advice that my Ph D application should contain a well worked out logistical plan of exactly how I would travel and work in an African country I took a rare moment to search on Youtube using the search words 'Africa psychoanalysis'. I immediately discovered a presentation by Dr Ebede-Ndi a Cameroonian who is an Assistant Professor of East West Psychology at the Centre for Writing and Scholarship in the California Institute of Integral Studies. His own doctoral research explored connections between traditional African healing practices and psychoanalysis and he has contributed to many cases of research. Encouraged because of my close existing connection with Tchoumo "Xumo" Nounjio, I messaged Dr Ndi. To my delight, and despite the time difference between the UK and California, he replied in less than 12 hours and we arranged to communicate by Skype. The whole episode and meeting felt somehow fated, an especially salient moment in my life that recalls British psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas' concept of the 'aleatory object' (1993). It was Dr Ndi who introduced me to his old university friend Dr Joachen Banindjel in Cameroon. Dr Banindjel's own research also explores connections between traditional African healing practices and psychoanalysis. I must thank both Dr Ndi and Dr Banindjel for their intellectual contribution and to both Dr Banindjel and his wife I owe a debt of gratitude for an immense amount of practical support and kindness to enable my research. All this contributed to my choice of Cameroon.

Around the time of the Duncan Campbell exhibit, whilst doing a Masters in Psychology at Liverpool Hope University, I became conscious of a burgeoning amount of literature and studies that described the endurance of traditional African art and aesthetic practices, and how these practices had never been static in history. There is a long tradition of looking outside African communities for sources of inspiration, not only to other African cultures but also to Asia, Europe and since the last century, especially

America (Visona' et al, 2000; MCaskie; 2008; Farris Thompson, 2011). I also became conscious of how there is currently an international renaissance of interest in traditional art and practices in the continent itself (Pailey, Ebede-Ndi, 2016; 2018; Pailey, 2018; Banindjel, in edit; Taiwo, 2014, in edit). In addition, I have witnessed how there has been a renewed focus on the topic of African aesthetics through the work of the Senegalese poet, philosopher and statesman Leopold Senghor (Holdstock, 2000; Donna V. Jones, 2010; Diagne, 2011; Thiam, 2014). In short, I became convinced that if I could research in almost any country in Africa, I would find some interesting answers to my research question or similar of: What can traditional African art and aesthetic practices contribute to our understanding of healing and everyday modern culture in Cameroon?

One book in particular that I encountered whilst doing my Masters, opened my mind to the value of the topic of African aesthetics for questions in psychology and cultural theory. This was *Re-examining Psychology: Critical perspectives and African insights* by the South African clinical psychologist, T. Len Holdstock (2000). One passage from Holdstock's book, proved to be especially important in my story when in 2015 I met with Professor Maggie O'Neill to discuss my interest in doing a Ph. D. research. This was a passage which uses the writing of a fellow South African, Clegg (1977), and describes the traditionally intricate incorporation of ideas and experience in dance in Africa (see Lorenzer in Chapter 4, p.81). It was this passage that inspired Professor O'Neill to introduce me to the work of the German psychoanalyst and cultural theorist Alfred Lorenzer. Lorenzer's ideas extend beyond an individual therapeutic psychoanalytical concern and coalesce in ideas of the mutual constitution of the individual and social realms (Bereswill et al, 2010). This is how I first became aware of the possible points of contact between traditional African art and African philosophical ideas of the interrelatedness of the self and the community and the emergent field of Psychosocial Studies. Incorporating the ideas of Lorenzer and others, Psychosocial Studies alerted me to seeing the individual and social as irreducibly entwined.

As a means of enquiry, Psychosocial Studies challenges any straightforward focus on language and cognition and is equally interested in the senses, emotion and affect. In short, Psychosocial Studies is concerned with the full range of possibilities of emotion,

affect and embodiment that are implicated in art and very much in the quotidian art of Africa which is concerned to find a powerful transcendental potential within the symbol or object. Starting from the 1990's, Psychosocial Studies already includes a considerable amount of literature on the emotional and affective experience of art (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Berman, 2012; Froggett et al, 2014; Froggett, Manley & Roy, 2015; Froggett, 2018; Manley & Roy, 2018; Cummins & Williams, 2018; Berman & Manley, 2018). Because of these ontological and epistemological perspectives and their related research methods, Psychosocial Studies makes a compelling choice for examining a topic that highlights ideas of depth experience, inter-subjectivity, embodiment and affect, and additionally is richly multi-sensory and participatory.

The structure and chapters of this thesis

As a field, Psychosocial Studies is concerned with the full range of possibilities of emotion, affect and embodiment that are already implicated in art and arguably, the *raison d'être* of the pragmatic art of Africa. Consequently, in order to adequately answer the question: What can traditional African art and aesthetic practices contribute to our understanding of healing and everyday modern culture in Cameroon?, it was necessary to first put this area of scholarship into dialogue with African art and aesthetics which, in turn, brings a wide range of fields into conversation with one another including, art history, musicology, post-colonial theory, race and religion. This demand has shaped the chosen structure of my thesis. Although throughout my thesis examples and explanations of the research topic are drawn from sources across a vast swathe of the continent of Africa, my research location was the Central African country of Cameroon and so I limit any findings and discussion to that country and my primary research question.

Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of traditional African art and aesthetics before examining the primary research question. The chapter starts by pointing out some broad recurrent formal connections in traditional African art and then moves on to discuss a series of important themes within it. The topic is too large to be completely covered in a single chapter. Instead, the approach in general here is to discuss cases and examples that capture a unity of attitude and philosophical foundation that can be

called 'African'. When I present examples of traditional African art, they may come from Cameroon and/or from my visits but may also come from a broad swathe of the continent. As much as my sources allow, the artefacts are listed with the artist's name; ethnic origin; the name of modern country of origin. Africa is delineated as the zone of Africa that covers "the Nubian Desert to the Cape of Good Hope, and from Senegal to Zanzibar" (Ramose, 2002, pp. 50 - 57). In this respect, this study resembles the work of Robert Farris Thompson, who has visited various West and Central African countries but mixes into his analysis and writing examples from the broad range of African countries, "for which the literature yields pertinent material" and goes on to remark that it is lamentable that further African countries were left out (1974, p.3). The chapter starts by explaining and presenting examples of formal aspects that can be observed throughout a great part of the continent. It then outlines various topics that help produce an understanding that is adequate for the analysis and discussion of the research question.

The topic of African aesthetics has developed amidst a great deal of discussion and rhetoric around race, racism, transatlantic slavery, and colonialism during the last century. Chapter 3 introduces some of the issues that stem from this background and that are important for an analysis and discussion of African aesthetics and its current value in Cameroon; also, how these issues can contribute to the topic of traditional African art and everyday culture today, touching on social and cultural theory. In doing so, this chapter highlights the work and ideas of various African and African diasporic writers in particular the Senegalese, poet, philosopher and statesman Leopold Senghor whose work, despite criticisms in the past, has received renewed interest (Steadman-Jones, 2006; Diagne, 2009; el Malik, 2013; Thiam, 2014). As the Australian writer on continental philosophy and postcolonialism Simone Bignall has recently said:

the subjective style of Négritude correlates with intuitive reason and an image of thought as affective and creative; these are epistemological, noological and ontological tendencies, which Senghor aligns culturally with Africa. This, however, is not an exclusive cultural attribution, since Senghor is also deeply influenced by European traditions of thought including the creative evolutionism of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, whose affective theory of the complexification of the 'noosphere' itself draws influence from Bergson and Spinoza. These, of course, are influences shared by Deleuze." (2021, p.251).

Senghor is deeply influenced by Bergson and his writing is interesting for contemporary thinking on topics such as post-colonial studies and black and African aesthetics. In addition, it highlights how black and African aesthetics are interesting for a thesis and research method that draws on Deleuzian theory of emotion and affect (1987), such as the Visual Matrix used in this study (Froggett et al, 2014).

Chapter 4 introduces some of the major strands of theory in Psychosocial Studies and elsewhere that inform the methodology, and research methods employed in this thesis. These include Deleuze and Guattari (1987) Bergsonian continental philosophy the British object relations theory of Donald Winnicott (1971); the psychoanalytical art theory of Anton Ehrenzweig (1967); the socio-cultural theory of the German Alfred Lorenzer; and the existential phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968, 2002). In each case, these strands of theory are put dialogue with examples of traditional African art and music practices from this and other studies. These theorists are chosen because of how they either focus directly on the experience of art, emphasize the aspects of affect embodiment or sensual experience.

Chapter 5 describes the psychosocial methods that were selected for this study and outlines the circumstances and progress of the total of six weeks research conducted in Cameroon between the autumn of 2016 and spring of 2017. Given the communitarian and qualitative character of the topic, my study is methodologically concerned to emphasize individuation in the context of community and prioritises closeness to participants' experiences. Two primary research methods have been utilized, (1) sensory and photo elicitation interviewing and (2) the Visual Matrix Method may both be understood as employing free association and states of reverie in the production of data (Bion, 1962, 1970). In particular, the Visual Matrix Method is designed to create an aesthetic container to work free associatively in a group context and produce imagery that bears on the object of enquiry (Froggett et al, 2014). Many of the images used in both the photo elicitation interviewing and the Visual Matrix Method were of traditional African art and modern art, inspired by traditional African art from a range of countries other than Cameroon. In this respect, this study resembles the 1970's research of Robert Farris Thompson, who for instance played

video sequences of traditional African dances from Zaire to Cameroon audiences, Yoruba dances from Nigeria to Dahomeans in Benin, and so on, soliciting responses and then writing them down. In addition to the primary research methods, I used the methods of taking photographs and making field notes, and keeping a reflexive diary during my visits. In Psychosocial Studies, the keeping of diaries are part of an ameliorative response to the psychosocial concern that neither the researcher or participant/s is transparent to themselves and that the reality of research is a series of relationships replete with unconscious subjectivity (Wengraf, 2000; Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Hollway and Jefferson, 2013), feelings, and affect. Another response is the use of panel analysis. In addition, these photographs along with the reflexive diary often informed my analysis of data and are used to help write about my subjective experience of the research (see Chapter 4, p.118).

Many photographs taken during the first visit were used as stimulus material in the other two primary research methods. Photo elicitation interviews are based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview (Harper, 2002). It offers the advantage of helping to manage language difficulties and/or problems of working through interpreters. In this research the method effortlessly communicated the focus of enquiry and enabled the participants to express perceptions, ideas and values in connection to it. In addition, ad hoc interviews were conducted both with people who I randomly met, and with those I was introduced to by my primary contact Dr Joachen Banindjel, and other contacts in the country. Dr Banindjel is a clinical psychologist from the University of Yaounde', Cameroon. His work and research encompasses the topics of intercultural psychology and traditional therapies. The Visual Matrix Method in particular was developed precisely for examining difficult to express ideas and feelings such as those produced by art (Froggett et al, 2015). It is also valuable for being a group method that can generate psychosocial data in a social setting, that itself can become an aspect of the analysis. This method is particularly apt for a study of traditional African art because of its profoundly 'in-life' and social nature. This chapter ends with a series of sections that consider the advantages and limitations of the methods, ethical considerations, role of the researcher's life and subjectivity and leaving the field.

Chapter 6 is a series of four individual case studies based on analyses of interviews. Traditional healers were selected as the primary interview participants to use as case studies because of both their knowledge of traditional culture and religion, and their practice that involves traditional artefacts, singing and dance. However, traditional beliefs and/or knowledge of traditional art are far from confined to healers and play an important role in the work of great number of contemporary musicians and artists throughout Africa and the diaspora (Bebey, 1975; Farris Thompson, 2011; West, 2011; Gilvin & Stomberg, 2014; Akpang, 2016). In addition to visiting and conducting interviews with traditional healers, in the interim between visit one and visit two I negotiated interviews with some contemporary Cameroonian artists and musicians. One was with a famous 'tradi-modern' sculptor; one a famous street musician; one an instrument maker and one a 'musicologist' with a connection to a Cameroonian traditional culture museum. These interviews with contemporary Cameroonian artists of various types helped me to further contextualise traditional art and music within the complex picture of tradition and modernity in Cameroon today. The 'musicologist', Mr Art, with a connection to a Cameroonian traditional culture museum is used as the fourth case study in this chapter. The approach in this chapter is to mix observations and quotations from the individual case studies, ad hoc interviews, plus my own recorded and developing reflections, and the ideas of both the African and the European theorists surveyed in the earlier chapters. At the end of each of the four case studies is a summary of its analysis. The chapter concludes with an overall summary of its findings.

Chapter 7 is a description and analyses of a series of three Visual Matrix sessions conducted at three different universities and city locations in Cameroon. These were the universities of: Yaounde´1, Central Region; Douala, Littoral Region; and Dschang, West Region. The participants at each location were Masters psychology students who are taught by Dr Banidjel. As a group they provide a clear example of both Cameroonians who are successfully in receipt of a European style education and in a discipline mostly characterised by rational scientific thinking. They came from a broad selection of ethnicities and places throughout Cameroon. Each Visual Matrix session report is followed by a summary of its analysis. The end of this chapter is an overall summary of the three Visual Matrix sessions and their analyses. Similarly to Chapter 6,

and the case studies, the approach in this chapter is to mix observations and quotations from individual matrix sessions with data from interviews, plus my own recorded and developing reflections and the ideas of both the African and the European theorists surveyed in the earlier chapters.

In Chapter 8, I discuss my primary findings and a discovery from the four case studies, three Visual Matrix sessions, and supporting data from the various ad hoc interviews that were conducted during the research. The first finding is that a vitalist and syncretistic aesthetic sensibility persists in everyday life in Cameroon. This was found to be strongly so for the traditional healers and musician in the case studies and complicatedly so, for the Masters Psychology students. The secondary finding is that, amongst the European style educated students, there exists a nostalgia and longing for traditional culture and its associated 'value'. Amongst this group, the recollection and experience of traditional African art and culture produces a mixture of feelings of awe, pride, and alienation. The secondary findings are firstly, that the traditional healers and musician in the case studies, who are firmly lodged in their traditional beliefs and remain both flexible and realistic about the challenges that modernity presents to tradition. Further that European style educated Cameroonians maintain a complex relationship towards their traditional culture. A third but important related point arises out of my use of an associative methodology and the discovery that young Cameroonians are peculiarly at ease with associative thinking. This too is discussed as aspect of a cultural relationship to the world and modality of aesthetic experience in the everyday. It also gives rise to the thought that Bion's idea of reverie (1962) as the tolerance of a meditative and akin to daydreaming feeling, can be something strong and intense as well as gentle. I discuss these findings and what they can contribute to our understanding of healing and everyday modern culture in Cameroon.

Before the study commenced, a detailed summary of the research and research methods was submitted to the Psychology and Social Work Ethics Committee at University Of Central Lancashire for approval. This included an evaluation of the processes of recruitment and gaining consent to participate in the research. Copies of the actual interview and filming consent forms to be used in Cameroon were included in this process. In addition, both the Cameroonian UK High Commission and the

University of Douala were contacted before travel and permission for my research was obtained from both of them.

CHAPTER 2: TRADITIONAL AFRICAN ART AND AESTHETICS

To examine the research question outlined in the introduction, it is useful to first obtain an overview of the topic of traditional African art and aesthetics. This will provide a context and framework for the study. Although Africa is characterized by great variety of artistic production, ethnic particularities and differences, there are several formal aspects and traits that stand out across the continent and testify to an underlying aesthetic and connection between aesthetic mediums (Visona' et al, 2000). A summary of these aspects will provide the basis for an understanding of the everyday quality of traditional African art and how it forms part of an unremitting practice of aesthetics that involves ideas that are of value to the individual and community.

As already discussed, the topic of African aesthetics has developed amidst a great deal of discussion and rhetoric around race, racism, transatlantic slavery, and colonialism during the last century. Chapter 3 introduces some of the issues that stem from this background and that are important for an analysis and discussion of African aesthetics and its current value in Cameroon. Also, how these issues can contribute to the topic of traditional African art and the everyday culture today, touching on social and cultural theory. In doing so, this chapter highlights the work and ideas of various African and African diasporic writers but in particular the Senegalese, poet, philosopher and statesman Leopold Senghor who arguably remains the most African influential scholar of African aesthetics (Diagne, 2009; Thiam, 2014).

Leopold Se'dar Senghor died in 1991. His writings on African aesthetics span the years 1939 to 1993 (Diagne, 2011). This thesis often relies on two of his seminal articles and a collection *African-negroe aesthetics* (1956), translated into English by Elaine P. Halperin. Also important has been *Critical standard of African art* (2017), recently translated by Brian Quinn and *Prose and Poetry* (1965), translated by John Reed and Clive Wake. More widely it can be argued that the topic of African aesthetics and the sometimes linked topic of black aesthetics (Farris Thompson, 2011; Taylor, 2016), have been plagued by emotive misapprehensions that have slowed the development of the field (Irele, 1981). Or differently, the topic has been subsumed under post-colonial studies (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2006). However, recently Senghor's ideas have be

used in discussions of indigenous African philosophy and African diasporic art and aesthetics (Anyanwu, 1978, 1987; Holdstock, 2000; Ramose, 2002, 2016; Taylor, 2016). In addition, the theoretical importance of Senghor's thinking has been reevaluated in the recent work of a range of authors (Donna Jones, 2010; Diagne, 2011; Laleye, 2014; Thiam 2016). In these recent assessments of Senghor, the importance of Nietzsche and Bergson for his writing has been emphasized (Donna V. Jones, 2009; Diagne, 2011; Shaw, 2013; Thiam, 2014) and more modern connections found between his work and that of Deleuze & Guattari (1987); and Glissant (1990). In this way Senghor's writing must be seen as of great relevance to contemporary thinking on the topic of African aesthetics.

Another key source used in this thesis is the work of the American art historian Robert Farris Thompson (1974, 1984, 2011). After developing an early passion for black music and black art, the white American Farris Thompson went on to become one of America's most prominent scholars of African art. His long periods of research were conducted in many African countries including Cameroon. He learnt to speak Ki Kongo, Yoruba, French, Spanish, Portuguese and many pidgin languages. In his 1983 book *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*, he explains the roots of African influence in the Americas and Caribbean (Iseman, 1984). It is in this book that he coined the term 'black Atlantic', which was later used by Paul Gilroy for his book *The Black Atlantic* (1993). Gilroy's book develops the view that 400 years of trans-Atlantic slave trade has not only influenced Africa, the Americas, Caribbean and Europe but created a culture that is not specific to any of these places. Further that the cultural hybridity created by this historical event has played a highly influential role in the formation of modernism.

In addition, this thesis also makes a lot of use of the 1969 book by John Mbiti, *African religions and philosophy*. Although there have been a great many papers on the topic of African religion published since then, none are based on such broad field work across the continent by an African author. Mbiti's late 60's and early 70's writing remains an important reference work on the topic (Some', 1999; Kamara, 2000; Thiam, 2014). Mbiti has been criticised for using a Western and Christian positionality in his writing (Wiredu, 2003). In 1971 he told the New York Times, "The days are over when

we will be carbon copies of European Christians ... Europe and America westernized Christianity. The Orthodox easternized it. Now it's our turn to Africanize it" (Sandomir, R. (2019), *John Mbiti, 87, Dies; Punctured Myths About African Religions*, *New York Times*, Oct 24, 2019 [online]. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/24/world/africa/john-mbiti-dead.html> (Accessed 2 Feb, 2020)

Formal Aspects of Traditional African Art

One of the formal aspects of traditional African art may be regarded as the promotion of *innovation of form* through history and a concern for creativity across the continent that appears in a great diversity of art traditions. This can be seen in the variety in a small geographic area, single culture and/or artist's work, and through history. For instance, in many cultures that traditionally have a monarch, the imperative is that the new monarch coming to the throne creates new places and artefacts including, a new palace and capital, and art forms such as textile designs. Also, in the preparation of masquerades, such as *Flali* in Côte d'Ivoire (see Fig. 6.7, p.147), which was invented in the 1970's by an artist working with a performer in the Guro community of Côte d'Ivoire, there is a long tradition of looking outside a community for sources of inspiration, not only to other African cultures but also to Asia, Europe and since the last century America. As Farris Thompson puts it, it is wrong to assume that "tribal" Africa was committed to stasis (2011, p.52).

The aspect of *Visual abstraction* has been highlighted by Robert Farris Thompson, who has coined the phrase 'mid-point mimesis,' i.e. a style that avoids both illusionistic realism and hyperabstraction (in Shobat & Stam, 1998, p.32). Fig. 2.1 (p.16) shows a mask from the Bachan peoples of Cameroon. Even where styles are more humanistic, one can still detect the obvious use of boldness and pattern, as in the case of Fig. 2.2 (p.16) from the Bamun peoples, also of Cameroon. The Bamun example is 84.5 cm in height and likely to have been used in stilt dances. These visual characteristics are not only confined to masks and used in performance. The importance placed on abstraction in traditional African art can also be observed across sculpture, architecture, textile design and other forms.



Fig. 2.1 Bacham,mask. Wood. Cameroon. Ernest Hahn, Rietberg Museum, Zurich (Fagg, 1965, p. 65)

Fig. 2.2 Bamun, mask. Wood. Cameroon. Jacques Verroust, British Museum, London, Jacques Verroust, (Fagg, 1965, p. 67)

The aspect of *Parallel asymmetries*, as a hallmark often lends a simultaneous quality of both being static and having a quality of movement. It is often allied to the performative quality of the object, as in the case of the object being carried, worn by a dancer or even painted on the body as in the case of men in the Nuba peoples of Southern Sudan (Visona' et al, 2000). The symmetry of the body may be distinguished by the effect of asymmetry through painting, for instance, on one side. Bold asymmetries also characterise African architectural design and façade painting (see Fig 2.3, p.18).

The Nankani example in figure 2.3, exemplifies how traditionally in Africa, many two dimensional forms are meant to be admired three-dimensionally. The Nkani wall painting above is an example. This idea is known as *Sculptural primacy*. Flat textiles become three-dimensional when used as tents and enclosures, they span time as well as space. Or when used on the human body as part of a masquerade, they span time and space plus dynamically move through space. Until recently in Africa three-dimensionality of all types, has dominated over two-dimensional representation such

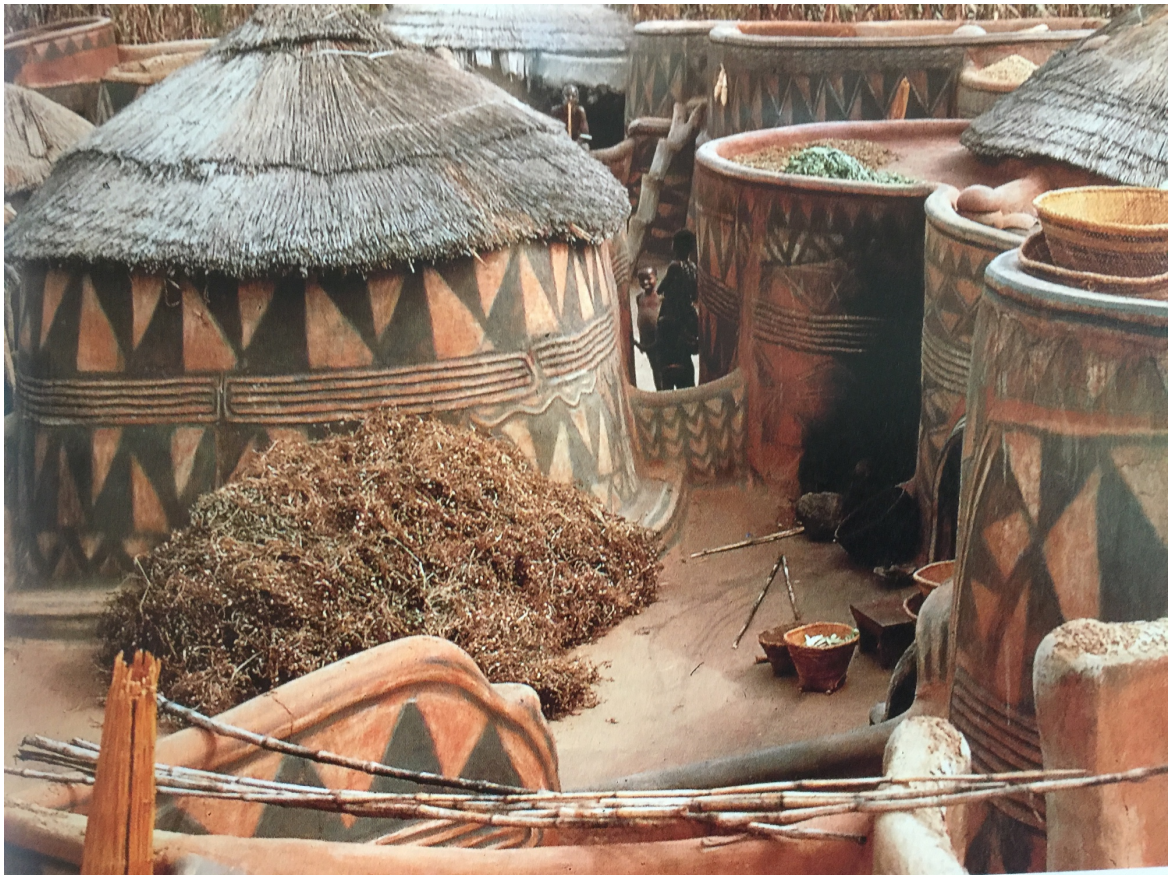


Fig. 2.3 Nankani compound, Sirigu, Ghana, 1972 (Photograph from (Visona' et al, 2000, p.163).

as painting. Amongst important traditions of two-dimensional marking, engraving or raised designs exist.

Masquerades and *performance* itself are also a formal aspect of African art. "It may well be that for African peoples, performance ... is the primary art form" (Visona' et al, 2000, p.18). In Africa performance very commonly includes music and dance. It may be conducted with artefacts such as sculptures, masks and dance wands and in the form of a complex festival (Visona' et al, 2000). The aspects of display, gesture, dance and other stylized forms of expression are essential to the meaning of the art (Farris Thompson, 1974; Small, 1987).

Humanism/Anthropomorphism are also a highly notable formal aspect of African art. Traditionally, there may be found a great variety of types of adornment and transformation of the human body. The We people of Côte d'Ivoire consider a painted face to be as spiritual as the physical equivalent of an actual mask. There is also a focus

on representations of the human body, human spirit, and human society. T. Len Holdstock (2000) describes an instance of a Belgian art dealer who lamented that all the African artworks he received were only of human figures and or faces. “Even portrayals of animals in masquerades and other arts often include human derived elements, such as jewellery or elaborate coiffures” (Visona’ et al, 2000, p.18). Nearly all the art and architecture of the continent possesses a human scale.

Ensemble/Assemblage. “An isolated statue or other African work is rare and exceptional” (ibid). As at shrines or in masquerades varied works are usually assembled together. Also, individual works may comprise many individual pieces. Throughout Western and Central Africa, works of power containing many materials exemplify this aspect (See Fig. 2.4)



Fig. 2.4 MS’s Legba hat. Cowrie shells, hair and miscellaneous materials. Photograph: Jim Parris, 10th October, 2016.

The aspect of *Multiplicity of meaning* is described by Visona’ using examples that help to explain why researchers are so often presented with different interpretations and meanings of a single form. For example, a Dogon *kananga* mask can signify a bird, a crocodile or a primordial being. Or an Asante small copper alloy sculpture, used as a precise weight standard and called a goldweight, depicting a bird with its head turned back, has a number of translations. One translation is the phrase, “pick it up or it falls

behind”, which in turn has a variety of meanings (2000, p.19).

The idea of multiplicity of meaning found in traditional African art objects extends beyond a simple reproduction of metaphor and may characterize a richness of expression that is best understood as a type of poetry. The frequent use of the human form creates a mixing of postural and formal qualities and helps to dialogue moral concerns. The expression of these concerns continues into masks and other objects. In parts of Africa, including parts of Cameroon, there is a great tradition of ornate sculptured stools, chairs and thrones, often involving carved figures worked into the design (Visona’ et al, 2000) (see Fig. 2.5). Some societies carve everyday objects



Fig. 2.5 Chokwe stool, Wood. Height 13. 25 inches. Angola (Farris Thompson, 1974, p. 100).

with human legs. In the case of a Dan peoples, the ladle of a rice spoon and the limbs or head of a beautiful woman are recombined to symbolize the highly moral action of generosity. Amongst the We and Dan peoples, women known as *wunkirle* are honoured for their generosity. On certain feast days, women honoured in this way dance carrying specially sculpted spoons, accompanied by singing. This cultural

celebration of largesse is embodied in the generous spoon and often figured standing limbs. The precise posture or emotion of the human parts, in combination with the swelling curve of the spoon communicates more than one type of giving. For instance, that the ladle shape is suggestive of a pregnant woman's womb has not escaped art historians such as Robert Farris Thompson (1974). The achievement of these objects is to combine in one piece in a poetic way a multiplicity of ideas about, for instance, community, political authority and God. They can be understood as a type of poetry, rich in affect, and are readily translatable to other mediums such as dance.

Traditional African Art's Social Embeddedness

One understanding of traditional African art's highly 'social' quality comes from considering how it is the complete range of people in the community that encounters the art object or performance that give it its meaning. These may include, makers, 'empowerers' (who can also be diviners, healers, chiefs, elders and family), users and/or participants. In addition, advocates who are charged with responsibility for guarding necessary information about the object's advocates (who can also be diviners, healers, chiefs, elders and family) (Blier, 1995). This depth of the social and art's integration leads Nketia to remark that "A village that has no organized music or neglects community singing, drumming, or dancing is said to be dead" (in Chernoff, 1979, p.36). For these reasons, many people that I interviewed in Cameroon, including musicians and healers, immediately responded with a familiarity, pride, and profound belief in its value (see Chapter 5 for a description of methods and recruitment of participants and Chapter 6 for case studies). Their contributions recall Anyanwu's (1987) remark that, "African art touches on realities which are lived or experienced. It is related to the African modes of life and it creates a world that is personally relevant and satisfying" (Anyanwu, 1976, p. 513).

The Distinguishing Features of African Music

Despite the immense diversity of instrumentation, playing and listening styles across the continent, a distinguishing unity of attitude and approach can be discerned in its music. This unity of attitude and approach is revealed in many ways including, the

choice of sounds. In Europe, music is conventionally considered a pure art form for the expression of life and emotion (Bebey, 1975). In connection, its instruments have developed to produce specific timbres and frequencies. In contrast, music in Africa often reverses the procedure and in addition to stringed, wind and percussion instruments and the human voice, utilises natural sounds that may to the uninitiated produce a cacophony. Examples of this include the bull-roarer. This is often a simple rectangular piece of wood, about 15 centimetres in length, with a piece of string attached at one end. When swung it produces a noise that sounds something like a car engine but is traditionally associated with a panther. The Dogon in Mali use it to signify the end of a funeral and period of mourning. The sound is regarded as the voice of their ancestor and symbolizes the revelation of speech to humankind. The instrument is found and used across swathes of the continent. Another example observed in a great part of the continent is the sound of pestles on mortar, used in the production of food and often used as rhythmic accompaniment to songs sung by women as they grind (Bebey, 1969).

Broadly speaking the conventional European conception of music is for its own sake and a pure art that is created to be pleasing, whereas traditionally in Africa music plays an essential role in the everyday and is not created to please but is the use of the medium of sound to “express life in all of its aspects” (Bebey, 1969, p.3). An insightful explanation of this point comes from the words of the French ethno-musicologist Hebert Pepper, who spent 11 years living amongst the forest peoples of Congo and Gabon:

I had the impression that I learnt more about my art in the African school than in the Western school. The latter certainly taught me to appreciate the quality of the finished article, but it sometimes seemed so far removed from the everyday world that I began to wonder if it bore any relationship to it. The African school, on the other hand, has taught me that what matters is not the quality of the music itself, but its ability to render emotions and desires as naturally as possible (Pepper in Bebey, 1969, p.5).

Traditionally in Africa music is an essential part of many social events and they would be meaningless without it. Allied with dance it can provide a frivolous seeming event with an important moral message or make a serious ritual enjoyable. For instance, it is

not a priest who sacralises a Zulu wedding, only the dance can do this (Holdstock, 2000). The essentialness of the music conveys a supra-responsibility to the musician who leads the event and who feels responsible for not just the music but the whole occasion. The social aspect is paramount and according to the American musicologist John Chernoff puts it, “the music is important only in respect of the overall success of the social occasion” and, the African “does not focus on the music but on the way, the social occasion is picked up by the music” (1979, p.67).

This way of thinking about music recalls the musician and musicologist Christopher Small’s assertion that music is not a thing, or a collection of things, but rather an activity. He considers that the word ‘music’ should be considered a verb and posits a theory of ‘musicking’ that encompasses composing, performing and listening. His thinking is greatly informed by the study of traditional African music and describes how in contrast to it, in European music of all kinds, today’s musicians and listeners consider music to be an entity. The act of composition is viewed as creating a sonic object, and the act of performance is viewed as rendering a service to “a sonic object”. For instance in classical music, the audience sits in stillness and silence contemplating separate ideas of object and performance (1987, p.50). The music is considered to have a completeness before a single note is sounded.

Secondly, rhythm is of central importance to the Africa musician (Chernoff, 1979, Small, 1987; Senghor, 2017). The focus and creativity shown over this dimension of music is extremely rich and complex. For instance, in most African music there is a rhythmic polyphony, with at least two different rhythms providing a type of counterpoint. Only a common beat may hold them together and the down beats are very likely to be positioned in different places. During an interview with a musician in Cameroon, I witnessed a festival and many groups playing traditional music. One was a group of young players generating great excitement but the playing to my ear seemed rough. Despite my many years of working as a musician in Europe, I was unable to interpret the complex use of polyrhythm played with a youthful energy. This emphasis on rhythm has encouraged many authors such as the music anthropologist Alan Merriam (1964) and John Chernoff (1979), to describe an African metronomic sense, which enables musicians, dancers and listeners to all hear a common beat even if it is

not explicitly sounded. This African metronomic sense is understood as enabling the development of rhythmic structures and interaction between performers that are very rare in Europe. This sophistication in rhythm makes up for an apparent lack of melodic sophistication that is sometimes observed by Westerners when confronted with traditional African music.

Chernoff studied African drumming in Ghana for a period of 6 years under the tutelage of a number of master players. He writes intensely about the 'metronome sense' as being an aspect of an 'interrelational' dimension of music making that does not have to be developed for European music:

From the point of view of the listener, it (metronome sense) entails habits of conceiving any music as structured along a theoretical framework of beats regularly spaced in time and of co-operating in terms of overt or inhibited motor behaviour with the pulses of this rhythmic pattern whether or not the beats are expressed in actual melodic or percussive tones. Essentially, this simply means that African music, with few exceptions, is to be regarded as music for the dance, although the "dance" involved may be entirely a mental one. (Chernoff, 1979, pp.49-50)

Chernoff's trailing reminder of an equanimity of object, body and mind through music, the idea of sensuality in thought, draws out ideas of both Merleau-Ponty's idea of embodiment (see Chapter 4, p.82) and Senghor's African aesthetics. In particular, Senghor's definition of thinking according to his own explanation of African aesthetics as a way of dancing (in Thiam, 2014). Chernoff's explanation also demonstrates possible connections between Deleuzian ideas of affect (see Chapter 4, p.84) and Ramose's metaphysics (see Chapter 2, p.35). In short, the affect of the music is literally a 'thinking feeling' that all, a group, are attuned to (see Deleuze & Guattari in Chapter 4, p.84). However, when this same point is married with Chernoff's description of how in Africa, the dancer's feet may have rattles attached and "it is the listener or dancer who has to supply the beat: the listener must be actively engaged in making sense of the music" (1979, p. 50), we begin to understand how music in Africa is not an object but a pointed activity. This is the South African theorist Holdstock's point when he says that in Africa there is a "focus in aesthetics towards its dynamic aspect rather than the end product" (2000, p.184).

Thirdly, it is assumed that everyone is musical enough to participate in some way in communal music making. The highly skilled players are not designated as only specialist at playing or professionals but instead, as leaders or pacemakers of an activity or event. This communal conception of music renders everyone as a participant and performer at the same time. For instance, individuals may call out in appreciation when something in the music or dance affects them strongly, and in this way, their outward expression of feeling then dramatizes the social value of the performance.

Fourthly, extensive improvisation is common. This does not mean entirely free playing but involves a knowledge of a framework and rule and conventions, making it like a language. Pre-existing material may be used but it is always made to compliment the live social occasion and other performers, whether playing or dancing. In this way, the distinguishing quality that traditional African music lends to jazz may be clearly seen. For instance, in combination with the earlier point, music making may result in a unique creation that is never again repeated and can happen anywhere. In the case of formal composition, such as amongst the Chopi in Mozambique, pieces may only last for a year or two before being replaced and forgotten even by the composer (Small, 1987). Traditional songs handed down through history are also important, especially in matters of for instance education and royal tradition, but in general, the 'in the everyday' and communicative quality of music means that songs too are designed to allow improvisation. In a further interview that I conducted in Cameroon, a traditional healer spoke about his in-performance search for inspiration to 'tease in song' another traditional healer during a ceremony.

Lastly, music and dance are interconnected to a degree that is unknown in Europe. Musicians may play while dancers dance, but also musicians may play whilst they dance and dancers may contribute to the music, by a process of responding to and inspiring one another. Bells or rattles tied around ankles and wrists are not merely ornamental but integral to the performance, which may also involve masking, costume and drama. Dance alone is also made to communicate social matters. As the Ghanaian ethnomusicologist Kwabena Nketia puts it:

It can convey matters of personal or social importance through the choice of movements, postures and facial expression. Through the dance, individuals and social groups can show their reactions to attitudes of hostility or cooperation and friendship held by others towards them. They can offer respect to their superiors, or appreciation and gratitude to well-wishers and benefactors. They can react to the presence of rivals, affirm their status to servants, subjects and others, or express their beliefs through the choice of appropriate vocabulary or symbolic gestures. (Nketia in Small, 1987, pp.28-29)

The topic of traditional African art and music has an important relation to shamanic practices and healing. The case studies of traditional healers in Chapter 6 of this study include examples of this. Music, singing and song are important and often also contribute to the overall situation of the “shrine” (Gore, 2007, p.135). Traditionally, “rhythmic patterns often distinguish secular and sacred music and one healing tradition from another” (Holdstock, 2000, p.188). Concerning the important combination of music and dance, Holdstock observes how in urban areas of South Africa, “children often provide the drumming in the afternoon and in the evening for the dancing which is such an important component of the training and the therapy of the aspirant healers” (2000, p.188).

Artefacts as Modifiers of Mental States

An important aspect of traditional African art related to shamanistic practices is the role of artefacts in modifying mental states. The idea of traditional African art as a modifier explains why the art historian Susanne Blier (1965) has argued that most of the African works she has studied remain an enigma because the works are tied to the innermost thoughts and fears of the people. She considers that in the places where she has studied, southern Benin and Togo, art is critical to a range of psychotherapeutic practices: that display a multifocality rarely evidenced in the West., often involving not only words (talk), “but also a full range of sensate experiences” (1995, p.14). Blier notes that, “while transference is seen to be critical, in this part of Africa it is often an object ... rather than (or in addition to) the intervening therapist that is the primary medium of this transference process” (ibid). Blier’s work is also important at the start of this chapter on African aesthetics because it warns us not to

ever omit the psychological, plus a religious and philosophical dimension and its linguistic corollary from our perspective on the topic. By highlighting these aspects, we can start to interpret ideas about its quotidian functional quality. As the Cameroonian professor of religious studies, Elias Bongmba puts it, in the African context, “It is important that the religious and nonreligious dimension of the art be held together and in doing so, one should not dismiss the religious meaning and the power of an art object to deepen life in a profound manner” (2009, p.188).

Interrelatedness and Communalism

During my second visit to Cameroon, and in a conversation with a stranger in a camera print shop, he explained to me that when you are a thief you are still in the community; when you are practicing witchcraft, the whole community knows but you are still in the community. These are anecdotal examples of a differing from the Western of the African conception of community. Mphahlele (1962), Mbiti (1969) Anyanwu (1984) Ebede-Ndi (2013) and Kimmerle (2006) et al all variously describe how community holds an importance in African thought and practice that contrasts with the spirit of and concern for individualism that characterizes modernity. For the South African philosopher Ramose this feeling about community is an aspect of the ethical strain and philosophical conception sometimes known as *ubuntu*. Senghor, following his own childhood experience and the work of Belgian Franciscan priest who went to the Congo as a missionary Father Placide Tempels, directly links this African spirit of communalism with “a religious, animist existentialism” (Senghor, 1956, p. 27), suggesting that:

The other – adult, Ancestor, genius, or God - far from being an obstacle, it is a prop, a source of vital force. In this confrontation of theme and the Thou there is no conflict only peaceful agreement, no nonrealization, but a greater realization of the individual essence (Senghor, 1956, p. 27).

The idea of “no conflict only peaceful agreement” as a component and of an energetic interrelatedness is a possible indication of ontological difference of selfhood; a contrast with the need for privacy and goal-oriented relationships that are characteristic of modern lifestyles (Holdstock, 2000). According to T. Len Holdstock the

“interrelatedness of the African concept of the self cannot be stressed enough” (2000, p. 105).

Senghor’s religious vitalism and phrase ‘a communion of souls’ is important for a full understanding of the ‘value’ of interrelatedness traditionally in Africa. It points to how aesthetic behaviour and art in the everyday may be difficult to analyse because of the existence of something more abstract than the social, polemical or therapeutic but that nevertheless pertains to them (see Chapter 4, p.69). The discussion chapter (see Chapter 8, p.218) highlights how it is the quality of communion in traditional African art and practices that provides the answer to a great part of the primary research question: What traditional African art and aesthetic practices contribute to our understanding of healing and everyday culture in modern Cameroon? In my research, the healer MS gave the example of “overjoyed” people eating in a ceremony. It was a rich description and healthy reminder of just how much his practice is also linked to public ceremonies where, as emerged in the first visit, he leads the proceedings (see Chapter 6, p.138). The woman who was my local intermediary was keen to describe MS as “the captain of the team” in this role. Further, the thrust of the meaning of both the local intermediary and MS indicate something of both how in the African context, the activity of music (Small, 1987), can be a conduit of both healing and relation in society; “by being embedded in the context of shared experiences, in a sense of community, healing through music and the arts can go beyond individualized “therapy”” (Hintjens & Ubaldo, 2019, p.281-282).

Ramose’s translation of *ubuntu* philosophy and remarks such as, “a community is not a given. It is a construction out of relationality” (Conversations of The World - Part 2, 2016) are partly mirrored in the work of the German psychoanalyst Sigmund Foulkes. Foulkes ideas were informed by the social psychology of Norbert Elias, psycho-social ideas from the Frankfurt school, and also by the school of Gestalt psychology. Foulkes also insisted on the interconnectedness of existence and stated:

... each individual – itself an artificial, though plausible, abstraction – is basically and centrally determined, inevitably, by the world in which he lives, by the community, the group, of which he forms part...the old juxtaposition of an inside and outside world, constitution and environment, individual and society,

phantasy and reality, body and mind and so on, are untenable. (Foulkes 1948, p.10)

However, the psychotherapist and group analyst Farhad Dalal notes a type of faltering in Foulkes' work, in which "he cannot hold the holistic tension" (Dalal, 1998, p36).

More recently Dalal has isolated in Foulkes a more complex Post-Foulkesian position in which "pre-existing" notions of community and communion appear (Foulkes in Dalal, 1998, p. 63).

Healing and the Aspect of Communion

In the introduction I say that an important moment in my Ph D journey was when in 2014 I visited an exhibit by the then winner of the Turner Prize, Duncan Campbell. His winning work contains footage from *Les Statues Meurent Aussi* by Alain Resnais and Chris Marker. This is a film-essay on African sculpture and colonialism, which is used to explain the 'death of purpose' of classical African objects separated from a world where all is art, where all is religion. The Burkina Faso 'medicine man' and academic Malidoma Patrice Somé illustrates the essence of an 'art as healing' paradigm when he remarks in his book, *The Healing Wisdom of Africa*, "Artistic ability, the capacity to heal, and the vision to see into the Other World are connected for indigenous people" (p.96, 1998). Traditionally in Africa the sacredness and function of art as a gateway to the realm of ancestors and spirits is demonstrated by the way that very often the artist is not observed whilst working because as Somé puts it, "No one should disturb a person who is consulting with Spirit, or he may attract the Spirit's wrath" (ibid). In my research in Cameroon, the musician MA expressed a similar conception of art and music when he said "... here we have rhythms that heal, sound that heals diseases, we have those instruments" and "when music is good, spirits come" (see Chapter 6, p.162). In addition, about an undeniable connection between art as healing and the community Somé recalls:

Sometimes I have wished that there was a museum of art in my village. But then I remember that collecting art in one place, to indigenous people, would be a sign that people want something from the Other World that is not being supplied adequately; they would be experiencing a thirst that is not being quenched. (Somé, 1998, p.96)

In one case study of this research, the healer MT provided an example of his praxis that illustrated the important use of family in a process of healing ritual. Also, the communicative and caring dimension of sensorial life in acts of cooking and eating, plus likely singing. As the healer put it, "To do it (his healing) well they need to call the family member and make a celebration dinner and they would pray the medicine to go work" (see Chapter 6, p. 149). In his description of his healing session, Ebede-Ndi, a Cameroonian from an entirely different region of the country, recalled his family and friend looking on whilst he underwent a healing process by a pygmy healer for a possible "depression". They stayed the entire day whilst the healer did invocations and a great many other things. He recounts that later, "my family brought me home, bought food, and invited all the people in the village to eat and celebrate my recovery. I began to feel better" (2016). "Once more, the undeniable power of communal rites for healing is asserted, whether coming directly from God, or the elders (*ancestors*), and through altars or prayers enacted in the community" (Gallego, 2020, p.71). Both examples illustrate how healers understand the role that context plays, in combination with aesthetic, bodily and emotional experience in healing (Byrne, 2013; Hintjens & Ubaldo, 2019).

The topic of healing in relation to traditional African art has been explored in psychoanalysis and social science research through the topics of 'shamanic healing practices and fetish objects (Sow, 1980; Blier, 1995; Denham, 2015; Henderson, 2013; Ebede-Ndi, 2016). The case studies of traditional healers in Chapter 6 of this study include examples of these. Broadly speaking, the practices of traditional African healers may be divided into three phases. In the first, divination, "the therapist establishes what physical, emotional, or spiritual problem is making the patient sick". The second phase is "psycho-drama", or healing practices designed to facilitate the healing process. Healing practices comprise a long list and can be any of: "confession, role-playing, abreaction, play and stories inspired by legends, fables, folklore, folktale, movement, verbal reinforcements, expectation (belief in the healer's abilities to help), symbolism and enactment (object personification and casting of spirits), dream interpretation, cleansing, aromatherapy or fumigation, dance, trance". The third and final phase is the treatment. This may be any combination of "herbal/plant medicine, fasting, prayer/invocation, reconciliation with family, community, ancestors" (Ebede-

Ndi, 2016, p.31). Many of these aspects are interpretable using psychodynamic ideas of transference and containment (see Blier in Chapter 2, p.25) The link that art has with healing is evident in practices of divination, herbalism and occurs transparently in the aestheticism of many healers. Many types of artefacts are often involved (see also Chapter 6, p.129). However, to limit an understanding of traditional African art and the ideas that intersect with it would be to misrepresent both its religious scope and everyday, 'in-life' quality. It accords with Dona Azar Weir-Soley who surmises that "principles of interconnectedness, interrelatedness and interdependency of everything in the known cosmos is the basic tenet of the African worldview" (2009, p.4). About this point of the 'interconnectedness' of things according to an African world view, it is valuable to read the words of Mar Gallego, the academic writer on literature of the African diaspora. As Gallego puts it:

In traditional African religions, it is not possible to draw a line between the physical, social and cultural worlds. Hence traditional healing is regarded as a very significant source of alternative and empowering knowledge transmitted through ancestors and healers. (Gallego, 2020, p.72).

The work of healers is regarded as of great importance for individuals, villages and communities. They can be both men and women (Mbiti, 1969; Gallego, 2020). Writing in 1967 Mbiti describes the main function of these healers as "first and foremost concerned with sickness, disease and misfortune ... believed to be caused by the ill-will or ill-action of one person against another, normally through the agency of witchcraft or magic" (1969, p.165). The traditional healers and musician in my 2017 case studies are firmly lodged in their traditional beliefs but remain both flexible and realistic about the challenges that modernity presents to tradition. For instance, the healer MT considered that modernity had impacted on magical practices in Africa and explained that, "my father while about to die told me he cannot hand over all aspects of the tradition to me because of civilization". However, today in Cameroon he hopes to open a grand twin clinic for traditional healing and modern medicine. The healer MF rejoiced in the way that singing works to maintain a connection with the ancestors and implore them to do good, and also used the topic to remind me that ideas of mystical power in Africa are also associated with witchcraft. In my research I found that a

suspicion of the practice of witchcraft by some healers and others was not uncommon. This concern and the transformation and role of healers practices today forms a part of a growing critical discussion of both traditional African healing and witchcraft following colonialism, modern medicine, globalization and the effects of urban contexts (McCaskie, 2008; Ngong, 2012; Njoh & Akiwumi, 2012; Njoh 2016). The South African cultural anthropologist Dale Lancaster Wallace warns of a short-sightedness and danger:

in attributing 'witchcraft' or 'occult practice' to negative events in society in the absence of a deep investigation into contributory factors such as poverty, family dysfunctions, embedded social problems and the religious context(s) in which they arise" (2015, p.45-46).

My experience of traditional healers accords with Mbiti's thinking and research that, "they need and deserve to be respected both as persons and for their profession" (p. 167). In general, from MF and the other healers I interviewed and used to write case studies, I felt a sophisticated religious philosophical regard of healing that accorded with the conviction of Onwuanibe that, in African thought "the metaphysical sphere is not abstractly divorced from concrete experience; for the physical and metaphysical are aspects of reality, and the transition from one to the other is natural" (in Ramose, 2002, p.81). At the start of Mbiti's chapter on the work of healers and other everyday 'specialists' in traditional Africa, there is a complex mix of conceptions and a 'lost-in-translation' quality at work about the meaning of healing. Writing recently, Gallego explains that healing traditionally "involves both the patient's physical and spiritual wellbeing" (2020, p.70), and Mbiti states, "the medicine-man applies both physical and 'spiritual' (or psychological) treatment, which assures the sufferer that all is and will be well" (1969, p.165). The point of a different type of healing is returned to in Chapter 8 of this thesis.

All three traditional healers MS, MT & MF exhibited an extremely close understanding and appreciation of nature. In addition to the physical use of 'herbs', this closeness was evidenced in the artefacts they used for healing, and in the rich series of responses and associations made to the photographs I showed of traditional African art objects, rituals and contemporary works influenced by tradition (see Chapter 6,

p.129) (see APPENDIX H). In one case, I was suddenly inspired to think of the natural world as God by the wave of the healer's hand as he gestured showing to me the forest stretched below where we stood (see Chapter 6, p. 170). The African spiritual healer Djenaba Dioum Kelly highlights how it is not only the reverence for art, connection with the ancestors and the power of communal rites at play in the traditional African conception of healing but also "being in tune with our natural environment" (n.d. The Power of Traditional African Healing Methods. The Chopra Center. Accessed December 1, 2018. <https://chopra.com/article/power-traditional-african-healing-methods>). The grand gesture made by the healer that suddenly inspired me possessed an effortless theatricality that itself seemed inspired by the quality of the environment. From this recollection, the importance of both context and aesthetic in the everyday is once again highlighted and recalls the thinking of Anyanwu about an 'in-life' African art when he says, "African art touches on realities which are lived or experienced. It is related to the African modes of life and "it creates a world that is personally relevant and satisfying" (Anyanwu, 1976, p. 513).

Senghor's African Aesthetics and Bergson's Critique of the Primacy of Intellectual Reason and Materialist Positivism

This thesis uses ideas of an authentic African epistemology and aesthetics, such as outlined by Senghor (Irele, 1990, p.75). Although Senghor was clearly inspired by the advent of the French philosopher Henri Bergson's philosophy, and he often talked about the "1889 Revolution", because it was the year of publication of Bergson's *Essay on the immediate data of consciousness*, his Negritude vitalist ontology is the African-centred one that he first learnt in his childhood in Senegal from his uncle. Bergson's vitalism is a critique of the primacy of intellectual reason and materialist positivism founded on the concept of duration. Duration highlights the manner in which time is actually experienced as a continuous flow or movement, whilst the mechanistic time of science wrongly uses spatial concepts and distorts our perception of things. In both his 'Introduction to Metaphysics' (1903) and 'Creative Evolution' (1911) Bergson advanced his idea of the primary role of intuition for knowledge. Through intuition "concepts emerge *from* the object rather than being applied *to* it" (Lefebvre & White, 2012, p.62). For Bergson, by using purely rational thought we always:

find ourselves turning in a real circle, that which consists in laboriously rediscovering by metaphysics a unity that we began by positing a priori, a unity, that we admitted blindly and unconsciously by the very act of abandoning the whole experience to science and the whole of reality to pure understanding (Bergson in Lefebvre & White, 2012, p.62)

For Bergson, in contrast to this technical rationalism, intuition accords with the reality in which “we live and move and have our being” (ibid). In *Creative evolution*, Bergson (1911) illuminates his concept of *elan vital* first by a critique of the idea of a ‘mechanical’ process of evolution and the unpredictability of its outcomes. This precludes the possibility of real change because everything is directly shaped according to its antecedent. He considers a teleological approach of ‘finalism’ as equally problematic because it implies an *a priori* existence of outcome. Only the idea of an original vital impulse, *elan vital*, can truly account for the creation of life and the diversity that results. Secondly, by establishing that humanity is, in contrast to animals, essentially *homo faber*, Bergson demonstrates a pragmatic, analytic and quantitative inherence within intelligence that precludes the immediate access to a qualitative reality. Only an alternative mode of knowing can help the human proceed to knowing the qualitative product of the vital impulse. This mode of knowing is Bergson’s idea of instinct or intuition.

For Bergson, intelligence and intuition share a complex foundational relationship:

Consciousness, in man, is pre-eminently intellect. It might have been, it ought, so it seems, to have been also intuition. Intuition and intellect represent two opposite directions of the work of consciousness: intuition goes in the very direction of life, intellect goes in the inverse direction, and thus finds itself naturally in accordance with the movement of matter. A complete and perfect humanity would be that in which these two forms of conscious activity should attain their full development (Bergson 1911, 228).

Senghor’s ideas are ‘Bergsonian’ but not a plain repetition of Bergson’s thinking. They also accord with the work of Father Placide Tempels (1959) idea of the spirit of African religions. According to Senghor, “The whole system” of African religions in general is “founded on the notion of vital force. Pre-existing, anterior to being, it constitutes

being. God has given vital force not only to men, but also to animals, vegetables, even minerals. By which they are.” (Senghor in ‘Négritude’, 2014). In this African religious vitalism, the vital force of an individual can be devalued or reinforced, and forms part of a hierarchy of forces that is also discussed by other authors of African religion (Parrinder, 1976; Mbiti, 1969).

The Beninese philosopher Paulin Hountondji (1983) has critiqued the concretization of African philosophical ideas following Tempels (1959), for not being based on written texts and as being a type of vague ‘ethnophilosophy’. But detractors like Hountondji fail to acknowledge that a cultural and historical analysis of traditional philosophies reveals that life and the universe can be interpreted very differently even in today’s world. Anyanwu highlights the significance of this point for ontological difference and aesthetics well when he says:

I admit that all men, in spite of cultural differences, may have the same primordial tendencies; but there are still differences in the interpretations and meaning of such tendencies. Whereas a philosophical synthesis of experience is desirable and urgent in the twentieth century, I doubt that the plurality of world visions can be sacrificed in favour of one cultural philosophy alone, that is, the European. Our thought, logic, language, world view, etc. are the products of culture; and we cannot get out of the universe of culture to grasp that *One Thought* which the ‘perennialist’ and the ‘universalist’ philosophers assume to be the same for all men. (1987, pp. 237-38).

Linguistic Factors in African Aesthetics

Anyanwu’s view (1984) and difficulty in thinking that the traditional character of African people could ever fit into a Western framework of understanding, finds interesting echo in the work of the American author, poet and music critic Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones). Baraka considers that although the African American and white jazz musicians in the 1920’s and 1930’s, expressed the same “artefact”, the latter could “never” understand the former. He suggests that the white jazz clarinetist Bix Beiderbecke played “the artefact *of jazz* (my italics) given expression”, whilst in contrast, the black jazzman Louis Armstrong played an Afro-American tradition. Armstrong, according to Baraka, was like an “honored priest of his culture – one of the most impressive products of his society” (2002, p.154). In his seminal book *Blues*

People (2002), Baraka interestingly uses a poetic flourish to suggest in his title of a chapter, “Swing— From Verb to Noun” and in this way evokes the same idea of the verb in explaining African related cultural phenomenon. This point is interesting for the current thesis because it points to how indigenous African languages and their diasporic retentions alone can illuminate an African epistemology and aesthetics.

This point is also interesting for Ramose who cites the American theoretical physicist D. Bohm. Ramose regards indigenous African philosophical conceptions as consistent with the idea of the ‘rheomode language’, as described by D. Bohm in his book, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (2002) and “the gerund rather than the verb is the ontological basis of the rheomode language”. For Ramose, “the rheomode language is an attempt to avoid the logic of linguistic violence to reality as a wholeness. Like Bohm, the present writer takes the rheomode language as no more than an experiment” (Ramose, 2002, p.104). It is Bohm who reminds us of the pervasive way in which European languages lead to a function of thought that divides things into separate entities. For instance, he provides the example of talking about ‘rain’ and says, “consider the sentence ‘It is raining.’ Where is the ‘it’ that would, according to the sentence, be ‘the rainer that is doing the raining’? Clearly it is more accurate to say: ‘Rain is going on’” (1980, 2002, p.37). Bohm’s fundamental point here is that the ‘verb’, movement or change, is less abstract a property than the subject or noun. Ramose explains that, “the rheomodic language understands the verb as the verbal noun, that is to say, the gerund”, and this effective counter to the fragmentation of being through language, stems from the root of African traditional philosophies going from “the Nubian Desert to the Cape of Good Hope, and from Senegal to Zanzibar” (2002, pp. 50 - 57). Much earlier, Senghor (1956) remarked that “what marks African–Negro languages is, first of all, a richness of vocabulary” and about the West African language of Peul, that classification could depend on the semantic, phonetic or grammatical aspect but that above all the verb is the most significant. Senghor with his ideas of an African religious vitalism, also considers the primarily “African-Negro” spoken languages as an expression of the idea of vital force in Africa. He uses the African language that he knew first hand, Wolof, to also point out the gerundial character of indigenous languages:

In Wolof, by using suffixes, one can construct on the same root more than twenty verbs which vary in their meanings; one can also construct at least as many derivative nouns. While contemporary Indo-European languages stress the abstract notion of time, African – Negro languages emphasize the aspect the concrete manner in which a verbal action occurs. In other words, the latter are essentially concrete languages. (Senghor & Halperin, 1956, p.31)

Ramose's thinking is in fact a development of the much earlier work of the German scholar Janheinz Jahn (1961), who borrowing from the earlier writing of the Rwandan A. Kagame, explicated an indigenous African philosophy of being that comprises of four categories:

- *Muntu* is the philosophical category for God, spirits, the living-dead ancestors, the living and certain trees. These possess a 'force' and intelligence.
- *Kintu* includes all things that lack intelligence or are under the command of *Muntu*, such as animals, plants and minerals.
- *Hantu* is the category of time and space
- *Kuntu* is a category of affects such as laughter, beauty

According to Jahn and similarly to Ramose, these items are defined by their linguistic stem 'ntu', which is a universal force that never occurs apart from its four manifestations. It is not the effect of these forces or manifestations but their being. But the forces are continuously in action (1961).

Ramose also finds great significance in the precise etymology of the word '*Ubuntu*' for African philosophical ideas. He considers that it is best approached as a hyphenated term. *Ubu* is the idea of be-ing in general in an ontological sense, "enfolded be-ing before it manifests itself in the concrete form or the existence of a particular entity". *Ubu-* is always oriented towards unfoldment or *-ntu*, a nodal point in the creation of forms and modes of being. The two, cannot be separated on an ontological level; they are in fact "the indivisible one-ness and wholeness of ontology and epistemology". The word *umu* tends to be more specific and pertains especially to *homo-loquens* or *homo-sapiens*; the human being and maker of religion and laws (Ramose, 2002, p.50). *Umuntu* then reintroduces the idea of motion and connotes that the inquiry into

experience, knowledge and truth, is an ongoing process “impossible to stop unless motion itself is stopped” (ibid, p.51). Ramose insists that *-ntu* is best understood as a noun and *ubu-ntu*, which remains an indivisible one-ness and whole-ness is therefore a verbal noun.

Because the idea of doing takes precedence in the formulation of its meaning, *ubu-ntu* may nominally be thought of as a gerund, but it also gerundive, since at an epistemological level it may manifest as a form of social organisation such as religion or law. The word Rheomode is derived from the Greek verb ‘Rheo’ meaning to flow and Ramose invokes the idea of flow as a counter to the idea that Being and Becoming need to be considered oppositional terms. “Instead of recognising only be-ing becoming, that is, the motion, language insists upon the fragmentation of be-ing becoming into be! and becoming” (ibid, p.55). From this ‘fragmentation’, and counter to the concept of *ubuntu*, be-ing becoming, is perceived as chaos because it is perceived to be void of certainty or equilibrium. This is experienced as a problem of human existence. To solve this problem, the concept of order is invoked, but “since the projected order is based upon an unbridgeable opposition between be-ing and becoming, how then can ‘order’ come out of chaos?” (ibid, p.55). *Ubuntu* may therefore be understood as a logic of and for be-ing as a wholeness and ‘against the fragmentation of be-ing through language’. To further distinguish *Ubuntu* and emphasise the importance of the idea of flow within it, Ramose also advises against the use of holism in describing the African philosophic view and proposes the term ‘holo-ness’.

What is clearly interesting for my study is that Ramose’s analysis of many African languages is also an adequate argument for the interrelatedness of the African concept of the self, the related ontological stress on the group and community and a further related emphasis on the aspect of participation in artistic production. This is because the psychosocial perspective used in this research, conceives of the individual and society together, and utilizes a raft of theory that supports this vision. In particular, by choosing the group psychosocial Visual Matrix Method, which is designed to produce a shared type of data, it is hoped to illuminate a topic that is framed by ideas of interrelatedness and community. How a type of doing takes precedence in the

formulation of the meaning of *ubu-ntu* is, in addition, ontologically echoed in the much earlier thinking of Senghor who states that, when considering traditional African languages as literature and aesthetics, from a traditional African perspective “writing is synonymous with abstraction, and hence with impoverishment” (1965). But Senghor equally considers that traditionally in Africa all literature and art is poetry (1956). By this, he does not simply mean art as the sensuous presentation of ideas, but the use of an already sensuous symbol in order to bring the idea closer to the real and vital experience. Senghor’s thinking highlights a powerful transcendental potential within the symbol alone, as in the following example:

For what strikes ... is less the appearance of an object than its profound reality, its surreality; less its sign than its meaning. Water enchants him because it flows, fluid and blue, particularly because it washes, and even more because it purifies. Sign and meaning express the same ambivalent reality. However the stress is on meaning, which is the significance – no longer utilitarian, but moral, *mystique* of the real – a symbol. (Senghor, 1956 - *Diogenes* 4 (16):23-38)

Senghor’s African aesthetics here also recalls the work of Rene Schwaller de Lubicz. Schwaller was concerned to uncover spiritual and cosmological insights from studying ancient Egypt and in the early 20th century had in fact studied painting under Henri Matisse, who at the time was deeply influenced by the work of Bergson (Lachman, 2000). By poetically intoning the primacy of affective experience, “what strikes ... is less the appearance of an object”, Senghor’s thinking here also recalls the much later Bergsonian philosopher Gilles Deleuze’s concept of ‘virtuality’ compared to ‘actuality’, that “the soul is the expression of the world (actuality), but because the world is what the soul expresses (virtuality)” (Deleuze in Colebrook, 2002, p.56). Recently Bignall has written about the basis of a philosophical alliance between poststructuralist continental philosophy and the Negritude philosophy of Senghor, finding that:

For Deleuze, as for Senghor’s ‘African’, difference (when it is adequately conceived) is not objectified as a negative or oppositional facet of a representative and defining identity; but rather is a kind of creative force that one encounters in a shared movement of affective transition. (2021, p.249)

Despite the existing acrimony surrounding aspects of Senghor’s life and writing (see

Chapter 3), his Afro-Bergsonian oeuvre remains a powerful model for both examining the African aesthetic paradigm (Diagne, 2009) and intervening in postcolonial theory (Steadman-Jones, 2006; Greedharry & Mrinalini, 2008; Bignall, 2021).

Writing about a Baule mask (see Fig. 2.6 and quote), Senghor's ideas can also be united with a number of generally agreed ideas from African art history. For instance,

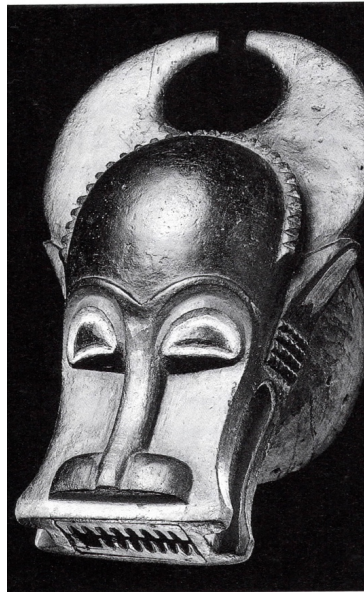


Fig. 2.6. Bonu Amwin mask. Baule. Côte D'Ivoire Before 1919. Wood, 19.25 (49cm). Musée Barbier-Mueller, Geneva (Visoná al, 2000, p.220)

Here we see the face of a man with a bearded chin, the horns and ears of a bull (sometimes the horns are replaced by a crescent moon), birds that peck at the forehead are at the horns of plenty; this is the perfect example of the image that creates over and over beyond the world of appearances. The more an image is unreal, surreal, the more it expresses (Senghor, 1956, p. 32).

'Multiplicity of meaning' which has been noted as one of several formal aspects that appear in artistic production across different African cultures. The art historian Monica Blackmun Visoná remarks how this trait helps to explain why researchers are so often presented with different interpretations and meaning of a single form. The complexity of meaning in African art objects may manifest in language and literature and contributes to poetic styles of expression, both in the quotidian (Brown, 1999; Mweti, 2008; Finnegan, 2007; Azuonye, 2010) and traditional forms of praise poetry (Barber,

2000 & 2006; Finnegan, 2007).

It is Anyanwu (1987) who reminds us that when reflecting on traditional African art, we are reflecting on art in an oral culture. In connection to this point and ideas of the importance of performativity in African languages, Ngugi wa Thiongo observes how that even when compelled to adopt colonial languages in Africa, the “peasantry and the working class ... Africanised it ... so totally as to have created new African languages”. These according to Ngugi, retained the syntax and rhythms of the original African languages, “were kept alive in the daily speech, in the ceremonies, in political struggles, above all in the rich store of oratory – proverbs, stories, poems, and riddles” (1986, p.23).

The Importance of Participation

According to many authors (Bebey, 1975; Holdstock, 2000; Ramose, 2002; Kimmerle, 2006) music and dance are of special relevance in African art. K.C. Anyanwu, in his article ‘The idea of art in African thought’, has stated convincingly that music is the most important form of art in Africa (Anyanwu 1987: 251-3, 259). They are perhaps the simplest illustration of the importance of participation in the traditional African world view. Andrew Tracey, writes of the idea of participation in African music thus:

The most fundamental aesthetic principle in Africa concerning music or anything else is that without participation there is no meaning. You can go so far as to consider African music as being a form of co-operation that happens also to produce sound. (1983, p.227).

Examples of music and dance as being a form of co-operation are found in a significantly great number and far stretched series of locations in Africa (Farris Thompson, 1974). They frequently demonstrate a special type of antiphony, which is in addition to the lead singer or dancer alternating with a chorus, known as call-and-response, the lead often overlaps or interrupts the chorus. Nowhere else in the world does this ‘overlapping’ occur so frequently (Farris Thompson, 2011). Alan P. Merriam observed this among the Balu of southern Cameroon and regarded the chorus carrying, “the one inexorable part of the rhythmic structure” (in Farris Thompson, 1974, p. 27), whilst Farris Thompson highlights how similar patterns of this Africanistic antiphony occur throughout the diaspora. Thompson cites J. Van Wing from a study in

the Democratic Republic of Congo, and who observed “There are always two bodies or two groups of bodies in movement” and “They perform periodic movements that are like questions and answers” (2011, p. 5). Of special interest to this study is the participation and mutual cooperation of what in the West would otherwise be a passive audience.

The utilitarian attitude and performativity contained in Andrew Tracey’s example once again mark out the way that African art is a practice of aesthetics, but it is Anyanwu (1984; 1987), following the work of Senghor, who is most clear that there may be a strong difficulty in communicating African cultural realities to the uninitiated:

If there has been any misunderstanding of African culture by Western scholars, it cannot be laid upon the idea of racism alone. Rather the problem likely stems from the difficulty “of making explicit the character of the African people so that it fits into the framework of Western understanding” (Anyanwu, 1984, p.278).

Anyanwu understands that Western philosophy is also home to many non-Cartesian ideas but considers that there are underlying ontological differences between it and traditional African philosophies (Ruch & Anyanwu, 1984; Anyanwu, 1987). One difference that he outlines, similarly to Andrew Tracey, is that the important dimension of participation is an aspect of aesthetic experience in Africa but is inexorably linked to the idea of community. “The individual is an artistic medium through which Life-Force or Sound manifests itself in the community” (1987, p.258). To illustrate the importance of community, an interesting comparison can be made here between the creation myth of Adam and Eve, isolated in the Garden of Eden and the mythology of creation amongst some African peoples, in which the first parents always emerge as a readymade collective – husbands and wives, children and even animals (Setiloane, 1986).

For Ramose, the idea of participation is also an aspect of the philosophy of *Ubuntu*. In his Ubuntu philosophy there is both an ontological and epistemological imperative to participate in and through the music, to dance, “the dance of be-ing” (2002, p.59). Senghor illuminates well part of Anyanwu’s thinking about a qualitative difference of the experience and value of participation in types of artistic production when he uses the example of Sudan. In this example, Senghor describes the “natural” integration of

art into social activities and a “religious feeling”, and that in comparison to the occidental, “they take up not merely a Sunday or “theatrical evenings” (1956, pp. 26-27). Here Senghor’s illumination of the experience of art contrasts starkly with ideas stemming from the famous analysis of the effects of its reproducibility in the age of photography outlined by the German theorist Walter Benjamin (2008), plus the ideas of its commodification and the attachment of a cash value to art by Theodore Adorno (2008), and the art historian John Berger (2008). These theorists were amongst the first to outline a marginalization and objectification of the art object in modern society. The earlier African author’s view is that because it is fully a way of knowing, traditionally in Africa art and its participation form part of everybody’s everyday and are integrated into every aspect of life. This is a radically different prospect in comparison to a conception of art solely as the product of an individual artist’s imagination, and in which its products are “intended as the objects of disinterested contemplation” (Small, 1998, p.107).

Anthropomorphism and Abstraction

Anthropomorphism is also a highly notable formal aspect of African art. “Even portrayals of animals in masquerades and other arts often include human derived elements, such as jewellery or elaborate coiffures” (Visona’ et al, 2000, p.18). Nearly all the art and architecture of the continent possesses a human scale. In many different traditional African peoples, masks and masked figures are directly associated with the theme of the ancestors. Biebuyck describes how the Lega people of Eastern Congo, call a mask “*kansusania ka muntu*, what resembles a human being, or *lukungu lwa wakule*, the skull of a dead person”. Some Lega people simply call the mask, “*lukungu lwa tata*, the skull of my father”. Amongst the same Lega people, “*Lukwakongo* masks are carved to represent, the Great-Old-Organizers” those who are not to be ridiculed; “the Great-Old-Ones-of-the-Truth” who introduced goodness; “the Bearded-Folk” who manifest equality; or *tumbukutu* insects that emphasise a “oneness and solidarity which guides them” (in Bongmba, 2009, p. 192).

The work of Farris Thompson reveals how the anthropomorphism and persistent production of human figures in African art is an essential part of an artistic tradition

that is often concerned to simultaneously represent both the qualities of vigour and composure and evince ideas of embodiment. For instance, the Pidgin English expression “looking smart”, possesses great meaning expressed in both sculpture and dance. The concept involves the idea of nature and line cut or incised (cicatrized) in vivid equilibrium. For instance, a rhythmic separation of body parts may be observed both literally in dance and figuratively in sculpture. The vital qualities of for instance, speed, strength, grace and flair become embodied in design and patterning. “Multiple enactment and variety, (“they jump and turn themselves”), multiple usage of colour (*ita m narang*, literally: cap with colours), and embodiment of tradition” (1974, p.18). These same forces appear in the famous *eyima biere* (see Fig. 2.7) sculptures of the Fang of Gabon and Equatorial Guinea in which one observes, both stylised muscle, clearly sectioned body parts and rhythmically patterned body sections. These works



Fig. 2.7 *eyima biere* sculpture. Wood. 19.25 inches. Fang. Gabon. (Farris Thompson, 1974, p.19).

once resided by images of the ancestors, denoting the long lasting and important values they express.

The same qualities of vigour and composure observed in both African sculpture and dance, are described by Farris Thompson as the aesthetic quality of 'coolness' and as both a canon and tenet of traditional philosophies. He remarks:

Generalisation by style reflects a cultural preference for ideal substance and spirit, setting aside the possibility of naturalism. It identified another kind of realism, a concern with abiding concepts. (1974, p.43)

The linguistic range of the concept of 'cool' spans 35 Niger-Zaire languages ranging from Wolof in Senegal to Zulu in South Africa. More complicated than the European notion of *sang-froid* it contains ideas of "composure, self-control, and social equilibrium" (Farris Thompson, 1973, p.40). By a careful comparison between West African and East African languages, nuances of discretion, healing, rebirth, newness or purity are found. Both in the Yoruba and Kaonde languages, respectively of Nigeria and Zimbabwe, 'raw, green, wet, silent' appear. The metaphor of cool in African symbolism greatly exceeds notions of moderate coldness, self-control or imperturbability. The "cool mouth" (*enun tutu*) of the Yoruba and "cool tongue" (*kanwa kahoro*) of the Kikuyu in Kenya are "not the stony silence of anger ... *They are* (my italics) "the mask of mind itself" (Farris Thompson, 1973, p.49).

The idea of 'coolness' as both a canon and a tenet of traditional philosophies alludes to the possibility of profound cultural differences which fall into the category of what Senghor means when he says "we Africans have a temperament and spirit which is profoundly original" (in Reed & Wake, 1965, p.49). Senghor's thinking here accords with Farris Thompson's viewpoint that similar meanings of 'coolness' only occur elsewhere when, "the phrasing is used by or has been influenced by the presence of black people" (1973, p. 41). The attributes of coolness demonstrated in traditional African art allow an understanding of various eudaimonic themes that pertain to traditional African culture. Also, they simultaneously provide some insight into how these eudaimonic themes may be transmitted in both performance and participation. Coolness as a cardinal tenet can transform the performer into a shining, affective source of moral power. Its facets draw upon several ideas including, clarity within the

dance or product, and smoothness. The Mbam in Cameroon prize dancing that is smooth and not harsh, whilst Yoruba and Liberian Dan peoples consider fine movement to resemble a spinning top, “because no part of a top will wait, the whole thing is going” (1974, p.44). Similarly, an admiration of smoothness is often seen in African sculpture. In addition, Farris Thompson remarks on the custom in Africa of dancing “hot” with a “cool” unsmiling face. This last quality denotes the frequent preoccupation with religious ideas of the intersection of vitality and the restoration of composure and ideas pertaining to the value and participation in life of the living-dead ancestors (1974, pp. 43-45).

From his observations and his reflections on African art, Farris Thompson reminds us that any study of the value of art and culture will be wrapped up with what are firstly cultural assumptions of what is valuable. In the case of traditional African art, these are primarily religious philosophical ones. These very different philosophical premises inform traditional African art and the aesthetics it generates. As to its primary goal, it is “the awakening of the human spirit in communion with the sacred” (Ani, 1994, p.203). This fact is the main reason why it is commonly not representationally life-like. Forms have to be distorted, or rendered abstractly because the forces they portray cannot both morally and philosophically be treated like something that is assimilated or overcome.

Similarly, Farris Thompson’s observations provide a translation of the characteristics of African artistic production and shows it to be religiously aesthetic in character. For example, as Farris Thompson says about African music and dance:

Time in African music and dance cannot, of course, be contaminated by descent into real time, the sources of petty stress and perturbation. Dance is Great Time, the time in which coolness is ideally realized. Vitality and mind must be made to correspond, like the use of stress in “swinging” music, in order to approach the gods. Coolness, the Songhai of the Niger say, comes in lightening and rain, securing human life within spiritually insured calm. (1974, p.45)

What Farris Thompson points out here about African music and dance, may also be said of a plethora of examples across traditional African art and even recalls Senghor’s ideas of rhythm as, experienced in the experience of architecture and as a

transcendental surreality, or poetry of the sign, so that “water enchants”, and is no longer simply utilitarian “but moral, *mystique* of the real – a symbol” (Senghor, 1956 - *Diogenes* 4 (16) pp. 23-38). Once again, Senghor’s ideas draw close to those of Schwaller de Lubicz (see p.38). Schwaller posited that ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics worked by expanding thought in contrast to the more abstract form of writing, alphabetical letters. For Schwaller, with hieroglyphics:

The image, the form, is there concretely before us, and it can thus expand, evoking in the prepared viewer, a whole complex of abstract, intuitive notions or states of being – qualities, associations and relationships which cannot be described or defined but only experienced. A centre-ing sense of unification later results from this inwardly expansive movement of mind. (Lawlor in Schwaller de Lubicz, 1978, pp.10-11)

This idea of different emphases of awareness reflects some of the relative differences in world view that this study also examines.

Traditional African Art as Music

Ideas of music and especially rhythm have permeated the formal analysis of African art since it first became of interest to European theorists. The French art historians Paul Guillaume and Thomas Munro’s *Primitive Negro Sculpture*, published in 1926, made great use of the idea of rhythm in explanation of the effects of African sculpture. According to them in their 1926 work, enjoyment of African sculpture “is by a music composed at will” in which:

contrasting rhythms that ‘affect the sensitive eye and brain as a series of powerfully reiterated shocks in line, ridge, and roughened hollow, alternated with smoother intervals, like recurring bursts of drums and brasses in music. Distributed, spaced, contrasted, welded firmly together by repetitions of them, each shape is given its maximum aesthetic effectiveness, and the power of the whole is made cumulative, brought to a focus by the unity of the design. (in Diagne, 2011, p.67).

Senghor however also attests to a more vitalist appraisal of music within African art. Answering, “What is rhythm? It is the architecture of being, the internal dynamism that gives it form, the system of waves it gives off towards others, the pure expression

of vital force. Rhythm is the vibrating shock, the power which, through the senses, seizes us at the roots of our being” (1956, p.33). It is interesting to note here both the similarity in thinking and differences in tone between Senghor and the philosopher Susanne Langer. Langer considered art to be the finding of form for feeling and remarked that “In the first sense, all art has the character of life, because every work must have an organic character, and it usually makes sense to speak of its “fundamental rhythm”” (1965, p.214). Langer elaborated a distinction between presentational and discursive symbols. For her, presentational symbols, found in art and music, represent a distinct realm of thought, a feeling and sense data that lies intermediate between abstract language and the material world (Hollway & Froggett, 2012). Senghor and Langer both regard aesthetic behaviour as an important mode of thinking in the everyday but for Senghor it is the “best means of knowing” (Senghor quoted by Brockway, 1963, pp.33-34).

By understanding the fact of music ‘s communicative existential character in African aesthetics and the everyday, it is possible to discern the implied parallels between Senghor’s religious vitalism and Ramose’s African ‘metaphysics’. As described above, Ramose considers that indigenous African philosophical conceptions are anchored in the idea of *Ubuntu* and that *Ubuntu* philosophy is consistent with a belief in a universe that is unfixed and thereby musical through the dynamic situation that results from its unfolding. This African philosophical conception of the universe is both flowing and musical. It is a dynamic conception of the universe which leads to the ontological and epistemological imperative ‘to be in tune’ or join in ‘the dance of being’ (2002, p.59). Ramose ascribes a rheomodic character of this African conception of the universe and draws on the ideas of the Western theoretical physicists Prigogine and Stengers (1985) and quantum physicist David Bohm (1980, 2002) for the development of the idea (see above). Whilst fully admitting to the limitations of the metaphor of music, Ramose argues that participation “on hearing the music of be-ing” (pp. 49- 60) becomes an ontological necessity for aesthetic judgement.

To fully understand traditional African art, one must be “a participant-performer all at the same time” (Anyanwu,1987, p. 252) or in Senghor’s words:

The Negro-African could say: 'I sense the other; I dance the Other; I am'. Now, to dance is to discover and to recre-ate, particularly if the dance is a dance of love. It is in any case the best means of knowing. So that cognition is at the same time discovery and creation, or rather recreation, and the recreation is the image of God. (quoted by Brockway, 1963, pp.33-34)

As an investigation of traditional African art and music, these points cannot be overstated, for art traditionally in Africa is rarely entirely divorced from music and its participatory potentialities. Further, that from these points it is possible to understand how in an oral tradition, philosophy is differently done (Anyanwu, 1987). Indeed, it is through 'the metaphor of music' that almost all the authors discussed conceptualize what they consider to be the major religious and philosophical concerns of African aesthetics. Starting with Senghor's early ideas about this art, whether visual or oral, 'rhythm' is highlighted. But 'rhythm' is not simply marking a pulse through time but rather is as experienced in the experience of architecture, "a mathematical formula based upon unity in diversity", and 'vital' (*sic*), (Senghor, 1956, p.33-34). Writing on African aesthetics supporting this idea is detailed throughout the work of Robert Farris Thompson, who talks about 'rhythimized textiles' (1983) and "the non-verbal 'texts' of the dance" (2011, p.7). What Farris Thompson refers to as 'rhythmised' quilts, provides an important indication of the endurance of these aesthetic qualities in the diaspora. Farris Thompson considers North American 'break patterning' textiles to bear a hereditary connection with West African *Kente* cloths and other African traditional textile designs.

Another formal aspect evokes ideas of dynamic movement. This is the aspect of 'parallel asymmetries' (see Fig. 2.8, p.49) highlighted in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional designs and mask by the art historian Visona' (2000). This aspect as a hallmark often lends a simultaneous quality of both being static and having a quality of movement. The symmetry of the body may be distinguished by the effect of asymmetry through painting, for instance, on one side. Bold asymmetries also characterize African architectural design and façade painting (2001) (see Fig. 2.9 also see Fig 2.3 p.18).

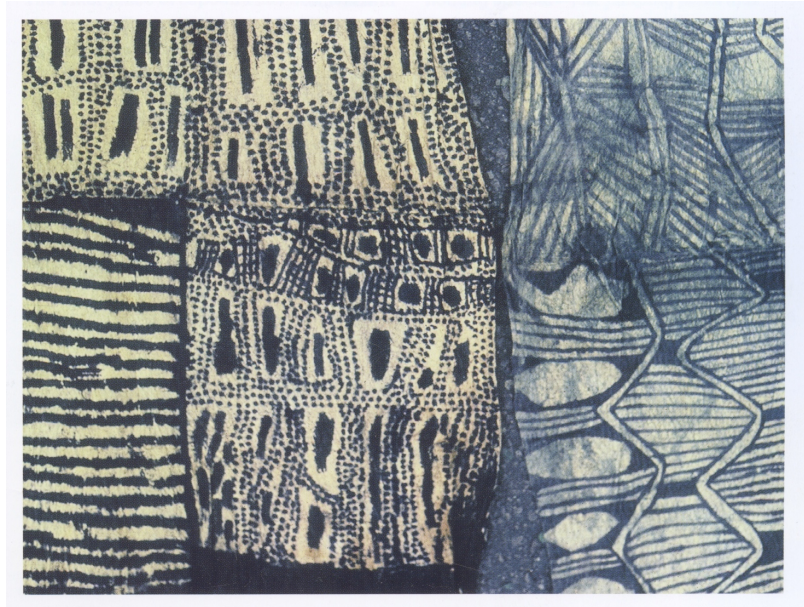


Fig. 2.8 Bark Cloth, 20th century Mbuti Pygmy, Ituri rainforest, Democratic Republic of Congo (Farris Thompson, 2011, P.53)

The Nankani and Kassema (see Fig. 2.9) geometric patterns borrow from nature and the names given them, for instance *yidoor*, “lines running straight” and rows in a



Fig. 2.9. Tie´be´le. Burkina Faso. The African village where every house is a work of art (2016)[Online](Available at: <https://www.the-open-mind.com/the-african-village-where-every-house-is-a-work-of-art/> (Accessed: October 19, 2019)

cultivated field, and also the ideas associated with them of continuity and unity (Visona' et al , 2000, p.165 -5), demonstrate a profound interest in optical effects. The simultaneously static and moving quality of asymmetrical symmetry in African art and the philosophical idea of a rhythmic musical architecture can therefore be understood as a metaphor for the very universe. In a universe that is simultaneously analysable and chaotic, a way of knowing that regards rational thought and aesthetic experience as equally important, becomes logical for its understanding. But the African world of art is not only, "as fully knowing in its own right as the world of science" (Anyanwu, 1987, p.259), it presupposes a mystical hierarchical universe of vital forces and in this way consecrates all ideas of relation and community.

The Functionality and Holism of Traditional African Art

Power according to Dogon sculptors, lies in works that make "everyone stop breathing" (Hoffman, 1995, p.56). It was often examples of striking African masks and sculptures that helped to inspire the iconoclastic European artists of the start of the 20th century, such as Pablo Picasso. According to Picasso's friend, the art theorist Andre Malraux, Picasso said of his famous visit in 1907 to see some African masks at the Trocadero Museum in Paris, that it made him understand how they are tools. The artist remarked that:

If we give spirits a form, we become independent. Spirits, the unconscious ... emotion – they're all the same thing. I understood why I was a painter ... Les Damoselles d'Avignon must have come to me that very day, but not at all because of the forms; because it was my first exorcism painting!" (Picasso in Malraux, 1995, pp.10-11).

This topic might still be inspirational for modern art and primitivism's radical and therapeutic aims (Newton, 1996). However, we are left to speculate just how much Picasso and the other European artists and theorists interested at various times in modern art's therapeutic potential, have understood about the therapeutic potential of the traditional art they were looking at, when placed in austere museums and out of their correct context.

As if in a more theological echo Mbiti (1969) Ramose (2002) and Anyanwu remind us

that ultimately traditional African art demands the acknowledgment of not just mythology and religious concepts, but also “concepts of man and nature, the meaning of the word or language, and the African view about space and time” (Anyanwu, 1987, p. 248). In this way, Bongmba’s statement that “aesthetic qualities are also found in works that some consider strange, ugly, frightening, repulsive, grotesque, or hidden” becomes more strange and opens up the idea of types of aesthetic experience that evade Western categories altogether. A theory of aesthetics that focuses only on a traditional European discussion of beauty, or only originates from European thinking, is of no use at all in understanding a traditional African art of the everyday (Ani, 1994).

Linguistic support for this thinking comes from the anthropologist and art historian Daniel Biebyuck, who argues that the Lega people of Congo use the term *bwami* to describe a sculpture as ‘good’ if it fulfils its function (in Bongmba, 2009, p. 191). As Robert Farris Thompson says of traditional African art, it is “a very hard-nosed way to use art ... art forms are juridical and medical, as well as aesthetic” (in Iseman, 1984). Following this, the reasons why works, which some people might call ugly are created and considered beautiful may be many. Some works underscore the power and authority of rulers or others function to create fear and encourage people to be law abiding, others remind people of the traditional mechanisms of sanction (Bongmba, 2009). In many societies, a religious regard for the ancestors is also combined in the creation of artefacts and performance. Bongmba point that traditional African art has characteristics that may be disturbing, but that these same qualities also compel attention from observers and scholars, is a useful one for understanding the functionality and holism at play in traditional African art (2009).

A powerful example of functionality and holism at play in traditional African art is provided by the masquerades that come out during festivals like the *ngungun* in Yoruba society. Amongst Wimbun peoples in Cameroon and Nigeria, the masks of the *nwarong* society (a closed society that serves a judicial function) represent ancestors and carry out punishments on members of the community who have violated any social codes. Bongmba writes that although the masks of the *nwarong* society look magnificent, especially in movement, it is their function of helping the community keep alive the memory of the dead ancestors that provides their overriding meaning. As Bongmba puts it, “This purpose makes the object beautiful.” (2009, p. 192).

Another example comes from Susan Preston Blier, who has written extensively about a type of sculpture produced primarily in the West African countries of Benin and Togo but not dissimilar to some artefacts found in Cameroon. These are known variously as *bochio*, *botchio* and *bocie*, meaning empowered (*bo*) cadaver (*cio*) (see Fig. 2.10). Blier writes that the aim of these statues is to encourage well-being and help with traumatic feelings. Also, that the fabrication of *bocio* involves a range of concerns that are general to art and obviously, everyday object and assemblage art e.g. division, dislocation, and dissolution. Describing one such artefact, Blier says:

Try to imagine a sculpture of greater visual provocation, one which more powerfully jars sensibilities or confronts silent spaces, ... This is clearly not an object of beauty; its surface is covered with what Michael Taussig (1987, p.6) would call a “garbage heap” of matter – iron, beads, straw, bones, leather, rags, pottery, fur, feathers, blood. In their varied massing on the surface they emanate qualities of tension, anxiety and danger (1995, p.1).



Fig. 2.10 Example of *bochio*, *botchio* and *bocie*. Benin and Togo. Photograph: Yuji Ono (Douauoi & Chande's, 2011)

The art historian Clement Akpang also points to a failure to always understand the influence of traditional African aesthetics when 'tradi-modern' artists in Africa sometimes produce examples of everyday object and assemblage art. Akpang

attributes this problem to a dominant Western paradigm that treats African everyday object and assemblage art as simply an extension of European modernism, or a failure to recognise it as influenced by “cultural particularities/inspirations or determined by traditional philosophies” (2013, p.46).

For instance, *Earth's Skin* (2007) (see Fig. 2.11) is a work by the Ghanaian contemporary sculptor El Anatsui, made from thousands of tiny waste objects, such as bottle tops transformed into a vast fabric creation. Gallery notes often discuss the choice of materials, and explain that Anatsui's sculptures, talk about the interrelated topics of trade, slavery and African culture. However, traditionally a mat can be a symbol of many, many things and is highly traditional for sleeping and even burial. The object holds profound meaning and contains a mix of religious and magical ideas.



Fig 2.11 El Anatsui (2007) *Earth's Skin*. Aluminium and copper wire. 177 x 394 inches. Courtesy of Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. [Online]. Available at: https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/el_anatsui. (Accessed: 17th March 2020).

La Nouvelle Liberte, by the Cameroonian contemporary artist Joseph Francis Sumegne is another example of tradition inspired modern art. It uses disused industrial sized engine parts to make a 15 metre high abstract human figure (see Fig. 2.12, p.54). Both this work and the more internationally known works of El Anatsui may be considered as examples of contemporary African artists whose work may be interpreted as stemming from “the determinations of ... traditional philosophies” (2013, p.46).



Fig. 2.12 Joseph Francis Sumegne (1996) *La Nouvelle Liberte'*. Scrap metal. 15 metres. Douala, Cameroon. (Photograph courtesy of the artist)

Summary

In the preceding chapter the topic of traditional African art has included much about the importance of performativity, and its relation to linguistics. It has also included ideas about aesthetic syncretism in relation to objects and the human body. In addition, about a pragmatic working of psychic states and processes which cannot always be defined but only experienced towards processes of education, realisation and healing. These points are invaluable for understanding African art and aesthetics. Africa's aesthetic pragmatism stems from a traditional Africanistic religious vitalism and philosophy that regards art as a way of knowing. However above all, traditional African art should be understood as a matrix of everyday relationships between people and things. In short, the extension of the aesthetic dimension into what a life is and is mainly composed of, a 'communion of souls' in the face of an unpredictable universe. It is this world view that shapes the aesthetic pragmatism, functionality and holism of traditional African art.

Traditional African art and aesthetics are an indication of the African epistemological attitude (Senghor, 1965; Anyanwu, 1987). This attitude is an alternative to scientism

and is a “logic of integration or coordination” (Anyanwu, 1987, p.246). It is from a knowledge of all these points and ideas that my research question - What can traditional African art and aesthetic practices contribute to our understanding of healing and everyday modern culture in Cameroon? - has emerged and grown in importance. This reading begins to make sense of how African aesthetics and traditional philosophy can be put into dialogue with the psychoanalytical theory and Continental philosophy that informs the field of Psychosocial Studies. But before doing this in Chapter 4, it is important to pause and in Chapter 3, look at a range of issues that still cloud the topic of traditional African art and aesthetics and so form part of its relevance to the Cameroonian, African and African diaspora today.

CHAPTER 3: DEBATES SURROUNDING TRADITIONAL AFRICAN AESTHETICS

Western misconceptions of Traditional African Art

A major source of misconceptions of the topic of traditional African art is a “universalization of European aesthetic paradigms” (Sanga, 2017, p. 312). In connection with this, there is often a failure to understand that there may be radically different philosophical premises and ideas about aesthetics informing art forms and practices (Ani, 1994). These have contributed to a disqualification of certain specific ethnic African artistic practices, objects and discourses from the realm of aesthetics. Sanga attributes this effect to the same problem observed by Agawu (2003), Mazrui (2005), Mudimbe (1988), and Serequeberhan (2003). This problem, the authors consider, is that the concept of ‘Africa’, when used alongside the topics of philosophy, art and aesthetics, sometimes carries with it “a baggage of Eurocentric representations of the continent of the Other of Europe” (ibid, p.314). Post-colonial thinking, for all its sophistication has not adequately addressed this. African aesthetics remains either ‘exoticised’ or worse, consigned to a form of primitivism (Ani, 1994).

Drawing on the visual art scholar Rowland Abiodun, whose work explores Nigerian sculpture and associated beliefs and practices, Sanga attacks the role of the use of European aesthetic paradigms in interpreting traditional African art, stressing that to reduce any confusions about an ‘African Aesthetic’, introduced by the use of Western concepts, theories and discourse, African derived paradigms must be introduced:

a brighter future of the field when ‘the role and involvement of African scholars will be much greater’, when studies in [African] aesthetics and art criticism will make full use of philosophies of the African peoples’, and when interpretations of African art will be done ‘from inside the culture that gave it birth rather than from outside’ (Abiodun in Sanga, 2001, p. 317).

What is curious amidst this heated controversy is how the African derived paradigm developed by Senghor since 1949 has become a topic of such derision amongst many black and African scholars.

The Controversy Over Senghor's Contribution to African Aesthetics

It was Senghor who also wrote in 1936 the words “emotion is Negro, as reason is Hellenic” (in Diagne, 2011, p. 69)¹, which of all his *Négritude* African aesthetics writing, created the most controversy and was met by the most criticism from such African scholars such as Marcien Towa (2012) Kwasi Wiredu (1980, 1996) and Paul Hountondji (1983, 2002). The complexity of the furore that this statement produced creates a complexity for my thesis because Senghor enters fully into a religious vitalist ontology that is often compared to the vitalism of the Frenchman Henri Bergson, whose work so impressed him. Senghor's 'Afro-vitalist' thinking appropriates Bergson's critique of the primacy of intellectual reason and materialist positivism and thereby demonstrates the similarities between Africanistic religious philosophical ideas and the post-modern theory that stems from it (such as the work of the French and philosopher and psychoanalyst, respectively, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (2013)). The strong and lasting accusations that Senghor provoked with a single statement suggest a powerful sensitivity to the topic.

One can argue that back in 1936 and afterwards for most of the 20th century, if Senghor's famous “Emotion is Negro, as reason is Hellenic” statement had been in the reverse, the idea would never have received more than a cursory repudiation or instead regarded only as a questionable oversimplification or even, a racist slur on black people's capacity for feelings. Instead it represented for some African scholars a belittling of the African capacity to think rationally and critically, a vindication of racist theories of intelligence, and a re-working of the very rationale underpinning much of the history of slavery and colonialism. However in reality, Senghor's ideas on African aesthetics are nothing more or less than a personal and direct interpretation of their fundamental aspects, and the problem belongs to the racist world into which they entered, as I will argue below.

The whole debate about Senghor's African aesthetics stems from a confusion that his

1. Diagne (2011) argues that the whole debate about Senghor's words is mistaken because Senghor was in fact making an aesthetic reflection about the comparative pleasures found in classical Greek art and traditional African art and the contrast between analytic representation and a desire to portray invisible forces. Also that Senghor was continuously concerned to highlight how this distinction demonstrates Africans' contribution to the developments of a great proportion of 20th century Western art.

ideas were a repeat of dual race theories that suggested that the colonized world was composed of inferior societies ruled by a primitive mentality, in contrast to Western societies ruled by rationality (in Diagne, 2011). However, this is a debate predicated on the idea that rationality is more valuable than intuition and so inconsistent with Bergson for whom, although humanity is pre-eminently intellectual, “a complete and perfect humanity would be that in which these two forms of conscious activity should attain their full development” (1911, p. 228).

There is a debate about who can validly speak about Africa that stems from an anti-colonial and post-colonial reflection that leading African interpreters depend on Western frameworks of understanding and that even the most explicitly ‘Afrocentric’ writers, knowingly or unknowingly, are to some extent “engulfed in the history of the same and its contradictions” (Mudimbe, 1988, p.43). In this vein Senghor’s oeuvre has been dismissed as the work of someone trained in a Western manner and himself categorizable as a non-authentic elite. As such his writing was challenged by for example, the Beninese philosopher Paul Hountondji (2002) and the Ghanaian writer Kwasi Wiredu (1980). In 1969, the first president of Guinea Ahmed Se’kou Toure’ irately said of Senghor’s ideas that they were “an irrational weapon encouraging the irrationality based on racial discrimination arbitrarily exercised upon the peoples of Africa, Asia and men of colour in America and Europe” (in Thiam, 2014, p.117). However, the admission of the problematic character of parts of Senghor’s oeuvre should not necessarily demand that we abandon it entirely. His more complex ideas remain valuable for developing the topic of African aesthetics and art. This point is apparent in the new wave of publications (Njani, 2006; Diagne, 2011; Thiam, 2014). Se’kou Toure’’s 1969 criticism of Senghor also hints at the breadth of racism’s effects. The interpretation and understanding of African knowledges has been and remains hampered by latent racism, ignorance, religious discrimination and a primacy of Western ideas (Mbiti, 1969; Fanon, 1995; Biko, 1996; Holdstock, 2000; Lee, 2015; Wallace, 2015). Senghor understood and experienced this but was nevertheless inspired to write an African vitalist philosophy largely based on his childhood time in Senegal, with his animistic cattle-herder uncle, Toko’ Waly Senegal. In addition, to his publications between 1945 and 1993, his papers are a rich source of knowledge on African aesthetics and art (Diagne, 2011).

It is reasonable to say that, with the possible exception of Jane Nardal (Sharpley-Whiting, 2000; Edwards, 2003), Senghor focused more on the topic of African aesthetics than Franco/Caribbean intellectuals such as Franz Fanon and Aime' Cesaire, who in contrast focused on the 'space' and effects of oppression. His writing does in places reflect on ideas of occupation and corruption in connection with European colonization, however these instances are largely dismissed as too muted. As recently as 2013, the Canadian philosopher Devin Zane Shaw, similarly to Se'kou Toure' above, found 'insufficient' criticism offered in Senghor for the post-colonial situation in Africa and concluded "Senghor's vitalism is a philosophy of becoming which nevertheless lacks an account of radical political change" (2013, p. 92). Toure's attack is mute because a philosophy of becoming does not have to automatically be ideological in character. Radical or not, Senghor's African aesthetics represent one of the earliest and most comprehensive attempts to represent African aesthetics as an important contribution to humanity and something that Africans should value. As the Indian English critical scholar Homi Bhabha puts it, "post-modernity, postcoloniality, post-feminism" are meaningless if the 'post' is limited to 'after' in meaning. Each of these represents a liminal space, a never completely 'beyond' (1994, p.4). In his concept of 'metissage', Senghor similarly also regarded cultural hybridity as fluid process throughout human history. His writing long reflected the controversial argument in Martin Bernal's seminal 1987 work, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, that cultural productions of ancient Greece are described as both influenced by Africa and Asia and also racially merged with them. In 1993 for example he published an essay entitled *Ancient Greece and Negritude*. His oeuvre is a philosophy of mixture and convergence that emerged at a time in history when it was valuable to, as he did, also proclaim the universal importance of Africa and *What the black man contributes* (Mader, 2003). As the Senegalese professor of French and Philosophy Souleymane Bachir Diagne puts it: "there has never existed, with Senghor in particular, a pure essentialism. All of a piece, to be taken or to be left out" (2011, p.190).²

2. In a long letter to his American biographer Vaillant, Senghor claims "Negritude is not an essence" but "a phenomenon" in the sense that Teilhard de Chardin uses the word, or "if you prefer, in the Sartrean sense of the word, an *existence*" (in Diagne, 2011. p.190)

There is a danger in dismissing Senghor as simply essentialist scholar of “throwing out the baby with the bath water” (Thiam, 2014, p.118). His own Africanistic critique of colonial and technical rationalism is still relevant as a description of the topics of black and African aesthetics today (Holdstock, 2000; Diagne, 2011; Taylor, 2016). His wider thinking mainly demonstrates that he, like Bergson, considers that intelligence and intuition are not mutually exclusive.³ In addition, his observation that European languages stress an abstract notion of time, whilst African languages emphasize “the concrete manner in which a verbal action occurs” (1956, p.31), and about the African experience and value of participation, that in “black” Africa, “any manifestation of art is collective, for everyone’s benefit, and with everyone’s participation” (1956, p.28), were made almost 50 years before the South African philosopher Mogobe Ramose’s important expansion of philosophy through Ubuntu (2002). Together, these points make Senghor an extremely valuable writer for this thesis of art in the everyday. The traces of essentialism found in Senghor, are in fact much more nuanced than those found in the works of many of the most influential European philosopher’s works (Ani, 1994), and are a failing that otherwise leaves Senghor’s work very relevant to my thesis. Senghor's originality amongst African writers and in addition, his Nietzschean, Bergsonian and Merleau-Pontian resemblances, mark him out as important to many contemporary theorists interested in African aesthetics (Holdstock, 2000; Donna V. Jones, 2009; Diagne, 2011; Taiwo, 2014, 2020; Thiam, 2014; Taylor, 2016).

Senghor, like most African scholars since the advent of modernity and colonization, is fundamentally an individualistic, atomized self and “a creature of modern economic relations” (Thiam, 2014, p.119). Nevertheless, his oeuvre represents an African inspired critique of European technical rationalism and a ground-breaking insight into the value of re-examining traditional African ontology and epistemology. For me and other authors, his 1963 remark below represents both a reclamation of black pride and a post-colonial challenge for African countries (Thiam, 2014; Taylor 2015; Diagne, 2019):

3.The thinking of both scholars has come to gain powerful evidence from the fields of neuroscience. For instance, the professor of neuroscience Antonio Damasio points out that the mind cannot be described by a computational model alone. It is feelings and emotions founded in our older biological systems that frame human intelligence, consciousness and creativity. Human intelligence is inextricably linked to our biological capacity to survive and flourish (2000).

We have inherited from our ancestors our own faculty of knowing. Why then, should we change it just when the Euro-peans are telling us that it is precisely the twentieth century faculty and the most mature? (Senghor, quoted by Brockway, 1963, pp.33-34)

More recently, the French writer from Martinique, Edouard Glissant, has noted that the African elements of the cultures that comprise the Caribbean and Brazil, have been looked down upon (Glissant, 1997). For Glissant the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Caribbean region indicates a profound process of creolisation which has produced a new identity that blurs the joins between the original identities and is unpredictable. Glissant calls this new identity, '*Antillanite*' or '*Caribbean-ness*'. Glissant defends his conception over Senghor's *metissage*, regarding *metissage* as a model of cross-germination founded on an essentialist understanding of race. But fundamentally, the two thinkers' works are based on very different epistemic foundations. Senghor's Africanistic philosophy is a vitalist and religious understanding of life and Glissant's theory of '*tout-monde*' (1997, 2002), on the other hand, is an entirely Continental philosophy of rhizomatic connection and unpredictability. Glissant uses Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the 'rhizome' (1987) (see Chapter 4, p.84) to explain cultural hybridity, subject subjectivity and the interpellations of the imperial Other as something ever-changing; the Other is never absolutely other but rather a fantasy that forms the basis of exoticism.

Glissant considers that the contradictions and tensions that pervade postcolonial African countries today are merely attenuated by the existence of an 'African' cultural and geographic hinterland and that Africa is in a painful process of parturition. Harney (2004) however thinks that in African countries compared to the Caribbean and other African diasporic regions, the negative psychic effects of a history of Atlantic-slavery, colonialism, and European style education did not render the same degree of injury and processes of transformation.

Fanon's idea of 'Lactation' and Alienation in Black People

In contrast, the Martinican psychoanalyst Franz Fanon, wrote powerfully in the 1950's about racism and the toxic processes of 'lactation' (1952, p.47) that beset black people

in the face of a white led global hegemony of modernist European thinking. The type of alienation manifests as a loathing of the black self and black culture. Further, that this contempt and self-loathing has by now long existed within and emanated from not only the outside among whites but also from Africans themselves due to a type of alienation, or self-oppression stemming from cultural assimilation and Western educational norms. Fanon's psychoanalytically informed thesis points to processes of 'introjection' and 'projective identification' at work due to cultural assimilation, identification with the oppressor and European education. In Melanie Klein's idea of 'splitting', these processes are linked to forms of defence against anxiety by the psychical division of objects and self into 'good' and 'bad' parts (1975). In Fanon's example of alienation stemming from cultural assimilation and Western educational norms, what is distinctly African and by association a blackness, becomes bad. The consequences for a regard of traditional African art and culture may be a type of insidious psychosocial malaise precisely because the culture of a black African people can be traced in the everyday and everywhere in the life of the country.

These negative effects of assimilation expose the racial constraints of approved knowledge in the colonial and by default, world-wide hegemony of modernist European thinking and positivism. Consequently, the European knowledges and educational ideals that have shaped much education in modern Africa, may transmit damning ideas about culture and traditional practices because they do not conform to technical rationalism and models of society. From this perspective, there exists the potential for complex types of ambivalence and a tension within the thinking of modern educated Cameroonians towards traditional art and culture. For Fanon: this "intellectual alienation" only manifests in educated black persons like himself. The inevitable psychic tensions are not felt by less 'educated' working-class 'blacks' or plantation workers, "they knew they were black" (1995, p.174). This alienation is born of "the contempt that a given branch of humanity is held by its form of civilization that pretends to superiority" (1995, p.174). The affects that stem from this inherent attitude of the colonizer are a mix of anger and shame. Educated at an elite Catholic school in Senegal, Senghor himself reflected over how through this education he had acquired an ambivalence towards aspects of everyday life and an African world view. He critiqued colonial French education saying, "it loathes what is concrete and

practical, perhaps what is African; what there is of a bourgeois or of a utilitarian nature in the spirit of “engineering Schools” affects it but little” (Senghor in Hymans, 1971, p.12). This tone echoes both the ‘contempt’ and ambivalence that Fanon felt over European education. It pervades the remarks that appear in my research done in 2017 regarding difference and loss of the ‘value’ and ‘values’ of traditional African culture (see Chapter 7, p.204). The point is also useful for opening up a discussion of an alienation through mass consumerism that may be discerned in the traditional aesthetic regard of fabrics and clothes vis-a-vis the modern (see Chapter 7, Report on Douala Visual Matrix, p.198).

A further dimension in the consideration of a loathing of the self and all things African created by a history of Atlantic-slavery, colonialism, and European style education is that although these have had a profound psychic impact on African and African diasporic peoples, the injuries suffered from these in Africa did not render the same degree of injury and processes of transformation (Harney, 2004). Fanon himself implies this, whilst knowing that it raises issues of geographic precision in his thinking, when he contrasts his own ‘highly educated’ Martinican quest for ‘dis-alienation’ with those of “a negro laborer living in Abidjan” (1995, p.174) the economic capital of Côte d’Ivoire in West Africa:

I can already see the faces of all those who will ask me to be precise on this or that point, to denounce this or that mode of conduct. It is obvious—and I will never weary of repeating this—that the quest for disalienation by a doctor of medicine born in Guadeloupe can be understood only by recognizing motivations basically different from those of the Negro laborer building the port facilities in Abidjan. In the first case, the alienation is of an almost intellectual character. Insofar as he conceives of European culture as a means of stripping himself of his race, he becomes alienated. (Fanon, 1995, p.174).

Similarly to Fanon, the Kenyan writer and founder of the Gikuyu language journal, Ngugi wa Thiongo, locates aspects of alienation within the African middle classes that stem from their European education. Especially amongst the European language educated “the petty bourgeoisie”, who because of their indeterminate position between the empowered bourgeoisie and the peasant class, experience “a vacillating psychological make-up” (1997, p.22).

In connection with the toxic potential of European languages for the psychological make up of Africans and black people in general, the psychotherapist and group analyst Farhad Dalal points out that issues of race and colour are ever present and cathected with often negative associations within European languages such as English. The notion of blackness itself is both used as “an auxiliary space into which untoward material is projected” and labelled onto material already considered repellent (2002, p.222). I and many British black people sometimes laugh wryly at how the financial expression ‘being in the black’ is a rare contradiction of this point. This rare contradiction is interpretable using Freud’s theory that the playful aspect of a joke functions to reduce what is alien or uncomfortable for the subject (1989). However, I regard this particular joke as an especially complex one because although it serves to reduce the pain of racist injury inflicted on black people through language, it is ironical and carries the positive association of blackness to an ideal or superior state of being in financial credit.

It is consequently amidst a situation of suffering, anger and confusion that any African philosophy and research such as this thesis, which, does not simply challenge an overarching dominance of modern Western thinking but instead wishes to dialogue with it, must enter. To not highlight this point would be a failure to recognize both the barriers that all knowledges attributable to Africa must surmount before leaving “its own place, its own contribution, by which the common heritage will grow” (the Nardal sisters in Hymans, 1971, p.40). Plus, it is precisely amongst the same old questions of the impact of modernity, slavery and colonialism that a current analysis of African aesthetics and culture must be conducted in order to best gauge both its precise character and value for African countries and elsewhere today.

Current signs of a new spirit of African nationalism and identity

Although the impact of Islam, Christianity, colonialism and modernist European thinking is undeniable in everyday life in a great proportion of Africa today, aspects originating in former cultures have endured (Mbiti, 1969; Bravmann, 1974; Nkrumah, 1964; Ramose, 2002). According to the Bangwa Cameroonian scholar of multicultural education Michael Ndemanu, himself from a region that I researched in, the Catholic

church “chose to tread a fine line by embracing some of the African cultural and religious practices that did not markedly deviate from their Western church’s own canons” (2018, p.73). For example, stems of the leafy ‘peace tree’ (known as *nkeng* in the Nweh language) which carry immense traditional cultural and religious symbolism but are used in both church processions and for the adornment of alters (Ndemanu, 2018).

Regarding the impact of Christianity on African spirituality, Ramose remarks that it is a markedly Afro-Christianity that manifests elements of the influence of Christianity and not the converse (2002). Recently the Ndemanu wrote:

there is an inescapable embeddedness of traditional African religions in people’s ways of thinking and knowing to a point that it is nearly impossible to extricate oneself from it without strong feelings of stripping off a major part of one’s cultural identity. (Ndemanu, 2018, p.71)

In 1964 the first president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, clearly mindful of an indigenous cultural religious regard and the manner in which the missions of Christianity and colonialism often overlapped in Africa (Njoh, 2012) wrote “The African Hercules has his club poised ready to smite any new head which the colonialist hydra may care to put out” (1964,p.70). The indigenous cultures of Africa may have experienced and be experiencing transformation but it would be a gross oversimplification to imagine that this transformation is simply in the direction of European global modernity or unidirectional. In part echo of Ndemanu’s thinking, the Cameroonian psychoanalytically informed social psychologist Ebed-Ndi expressed to me, “the culture is within us and we cannot get rid of it, no matter how hard we try. We are born within it and it is in our DNA. ...” (personal communication, 2018). The biological assertion of cultural transmission within Ebede-Ndi’s words is a highly controversial one and offers an extreme example in a complex debate going on in postcolonial theory about precisely how individuals can be said to share an essential cultural identity (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2013). Different authors give different nuances to their conceptions of cultural identity with great consequences for how its transmission and location may be understood. For instance, for Senghor ‘it’ is firstly about cultural values (in Reed & Wake, 1965).

As early as 1974, when researching the topic of traditional African art, Robert Farris Thompson also remarked “without question, among the many winds of change sweeping tropical Africa is a sense of artistic cultural solidarity” (1974, p.5). Recently, the Senegalese philosopher Issiaka Prosper Laleye has observed that today in Africa there is in fact an acceleration in processes of both “deculturation and re-acculturation of Africa ... our aesthetic experience, while we await to see its implications more clearly” (2014, p.27). This rapprochement now even extends amongst Ngugi’s European style educated and language speaking ‘bourgeoisie’. This year, in a webinar of African Ph D researchers a young Congolese, who can translate English, French, Portuguese and Russian and was brought up a Catholic, declared “maybe we have to go back to our own religion” (personal communication, 6th November, 2020). Recently on a BBC World Service programme, the Liberian academic Robtel Neajai Pailey, from SOAS, on the theme of current signs of a new spirit of African nationalism, spoke about an:

" ... outgrowth of a decolonisation, Pan-Africanist movement across the whole continent... it’s a bigger conversation that’s happening across the whole continent in academic spaces but also at national level”. (Weekend, BBC World Service, 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w172w71zj78ylrg>)

Laleye (2014) remarks that:

The African cultures of yesterday are not dead, far from it in fact, but those of tomorrow are not yet born, and indeed there is still some way to go until they are ... today’s Africans, just as other peoples, live and survive by combining elements from multiple sources and whose trace is marked by the African aesthetic experience. (p.27)

The implications of deculturation and re-acculturation are unknown but obviously important to at least African countries. Modernity in Africa cannot be confronted in health without a regard for who Africans are and what they bring. They “must begin with the assumption that Europeanness is not inevitable” (Ani, 1994, p.27). To achieve this will require an equal study of their own cultural inheritance and languages.

Contributing to this spirit of reclamation is a central concern of this study because African countries may have to accept European influence but should not have to experience it as a dominance and this can only be achieved by understanding what they contribute back (Ani, 1994). This point is also contained in the far-sighted

rationale and humanitarian import of the following words taken from a 1932 article in *The Revue du Monde Noir*, a journal published in Paris by the Nardal sisters from Martinique, Jane, Paulette and Andree:

Rather than drawing the Negro world behind us in the wake of our errors, it would be better to try to understand it more thoroughly than in the past, to develop its own qualities and, in the orbit of human civilization, to leave it its own place, its own contribution, by which the common heritage will grow (in Hymans, 1971, p.40).

Summary

Senghor's idea of vitalism is an 'Afri-centred' religious one. Senghor elaborates the mystical quality in experience which stems from emotion in contrast to technical rationalism. He interprets the traditional African world view as founded on the idea of a God-given vital force that links man and all matter. In this ontology, "being is force" (Diagne, 201, p.84). His ideas amount to a spiritualism that can be interpreted as a version of Bergsonism, which stresses the import of intuition as the most profound mode of knowing. In addition, his stress on emotional experience as not only a psychological state but as a mode of apprehension brings his ideas into contact with and even unifies some of the different strands of theory that are discussed in Chapter 4. For example, Ehrenzweig's 'syncretistic perception', a human faculty of scanning of the whole object that is open to primary process accords with Senghor's remarks on the 'Negro' African's epistemological attitude as stemming from a perspective that regards all objects as 'alive' with aesthetic qualities and "compared dialectically in the very act of cognition" (Senghor, in Brockway, 1963, pp. 33-34).

The traditional African epistemological attitude was never a pure and homogeneous one and has been throughout history subject to worldwide processes of influence and disruption. This point recalls Edouard Glissant *Tout Monde* (1989) and Senghor's own *Me'tissage* (Thiam, 2015). My study suggests that in today's Cameroon and perhaps elsewhere in Africa (Kohnert, 2007), the traditional African epistemological attitude is still of importance. When Senghor defines thinking as a way of dancing, he does not subscribe to essentialist ideas of fixed difference between races but to the idea of

cultural differences in seeing the world (Donna Jones, 2010; Diagne, 2011; Thiam; 2014, 2015). As Ani (1994) opines, post-colonial thinking for all its political sophistication has not adequately addressed this - ergo we also need Senghor. The Senghorian, 'all is culture' philosophy can be summed up in his view that the theory of Negritude was "the sum total of the values of the civilization of the African world" (in Reed & Wake, 1965, p.99). As Diagne puts it, "this conviction that what is at stake is the demonstration and defence of cultural identities, has often been reproached, sometimes unjustly" (2011, p.187). What is at stake in this research is how well Psychosocial Studies and its research methods can illuminate aesthetics and subjectivity, and the possibility of cultural differences in seeing the world, in Cameroon today.

Psychosocial Studies "is an emergent perspective, the exact contours of which necessarily remain indeterminate at present" that draws on a broad mix of disciplines, including psychoanalysis and aspects of discourse psychology, continental philosophy, anthropology and neuroscience (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009, p.2). The advent of psychosocial research methods make it possible to re-examine the topic of African aesthetics along with the ideas of Senghor and other African philosophers such as Anyanwu (1987) and Ramose (2002). This is because, through their collective interest in non-discursive experience, and in the case of Psychosocial Studies, the imagining of the social and psychological together (see Chapter 4), they share in some of the critical standards of African art. However, it is against a lingering background of the persistent questions of the impact of modernity, race, slavery and colonialism that a current analysis of African aesthetics and the everyday will inevitably be conducted and these must also be addressed in order to best gauge both its precise character and value for African countries and elsewhere today. Through its structure this thesis attempts to bring together these diverse elements in a way that is of value for anyone, like myself, who is concerned about the future welfare of African countries today.

CHAPTER 4: AFRICAN AESTHETICS, PSYCHOANALYSIS, CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY

It can be argued that until very recently the analysis of aesthetic behaviour in the everyday has been neglected in contemporary social science (Holdstock, 2000). Firstly, because it is not something that is easily suited to empirical scientific analysis. Secondly, in relation to art and when appearing in critical theory, it may contain something immanent that is not reducible to any social, polemical, or therapeutic analysis alone. However, in the case of Africa, which is traditionally replete with a concern for the transformative potential of art and its role in invisible forces in the everyday (see Chapter 2), this would prove anathema. Traditional African art is primarily a pragmatic concern, and is considered 'beautiful' by virtue of its efficaciousness; its ability to modify the observer and/or possessor of it (Bongmba, 2009). The character of these concerns of transformation and the philosophical ideas that underpin them are of theoretical interest to psychoanalysis and Continental philosophy (Senghor, 1957; Sow, 1980; Vogel, 1997; Blier, 1993; Ramose, 2002; Jones, 2010; Diagne, 2011; Thiam, 2014). In particular, psychoanalytical concepts (Freud, 1901, 1905); syncretistic perception, containment and expansion (Ehrenzweig, 1967); plus the non-Cartesian philosophical notions of 'flesh' and 'chiasm' (Merleau-Ponty, 2002); and vitalism, intuition and duration (Bergson, 1911; Deleuze & Guattari, 1988). Further, the thinking of Donald Winnicott (1971) can be used to illustrate as yet undiscovered aspects of the African everyday aesthetic. The work of these European theorists is reviewed next because both their ontological concerns and regard for culture as something of fundamental importance for experience for everyday life and feelings of satisfaction within it chimes with traditional African art and philosophies.

Connections between African aesthetics and the ideas of Anton Ehrenzweig

An example of Ehrenzweig's notion of aesthetic syncretism can be found in the Spanish painter Picasso's distortions of the human form (1965). Picasso was known to greatly admire the abstraction and use of parallel asymmetry found in many traditional African and Oceanic masks and artefacts (Rubin, 1984; Kart, 2007, Diagne, 2011). Long after his visit to the Trocadero Museum (already discussed in Chapter 2, p.42), Picasso expressed to his intimate friend the writer and art critic Guillaume Apollinaire that:

I have felt my strongest artistic emotions, when suddenly confronted with the sublime beauty of sculptures executed by the anonymous artists of Africa. These works of a religious, passionate, and rigorously logical art are the most powerful and most beautiful things the human imagination has ever produced. I hasten to add that, nevertheless, I detest exoticism (Picasso in William Rubin *Les demoiselles d' Avignon*, *Studies in modern art*, 1994, p. 220).

In these words Picasso introduces thoughts of traditional African art's management of extremely complex ideas about a link between spirituality and composition, that explain its use of simplified forms. On another occasion Picasso commented to Malraux, "what interests me is their geometrical simplicity" when asked about the African art objects in his possession (Rubin, 1994, p. 220).

Ehrenzweig theorized that the creative process and perception of art is reliant upon an implicit order that is nevertheless apprehended and that is in fact more powerful than the visible or overt order that is open to analysis, and available to discourse. The apprehension of this order is enabled by what he calls 'syncretistic perception'. Syncretistic perception is a comprehension of the whole object, a type of 'flying leap' that takes in at a single sweep the information it contains. At the core of Ehrenzweig's Freudian theory of perception, is the idea that perception of the object and/or artwork is bound up with phantasy and the concept of primary process or the workings of the 'unconscious'. Freud's concept of phantasy is taken from one of his most famous publications, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901). It refers to the unconscious' infiltration into daily life by influencing 'conscious' planning and thoughts. The concept of primary process comes from another of Sigmund Freud's famous publications, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and is characterized by the unbound quality of connections experienced in dreams. 'Primary process' is most easily understood when contrasted with what Freud called 'secondary process'. The former produces ambiguous effects illustrated by the 'rule breaking' quality of dreams; the sliding and condensation of meanings. For instance, the disguising of a thing by replacing it with another thing and the superimposition of more than one thing onto a single thing. In contrast, secondary process produces linear mental functioning characterisable by "waking thought, attention, judgement, reasoning, controlled action" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973, pp. 339 -340).

According to Ehrenzweig, in syncretistic perception the 'differentiated' perception or the stable and structured view that we use in making sense of the world is disrupted by primary process to create an 'un-differentiated' view that appears unstructured. The differentiated view is analytic and the un-differentiated view is syncretistic. This type of unrestricted vision is involved in the discernment of the shape and flow of poetry, stories, and music and often provides their most powerful meaning (Froggett et al, 2011, p.33). It is syncretistic perception that produces the distinctive quality of child art, and the apparently chaotic effects that this may produce are deceptively so. For instance, from the style of children's' drawings or the work of a professional caricaturist or cartoonist one may still often discern a likeness that is more powerful than a 'realistic' likeness.

Ehrenzweig's ideas are important for this thesis because they provide ways of understanding the abstraction and formal qualities that often characterize traditional African art as a pragmatic and healing management of dynamic forces in the everyday (see Chapter 2). Similarly, his explanation of the role primary process plays in perception and the creative process, provides an explanation of how the distance between the 'me' and 'not me' of real objects is attenuated, even eliminated (Froggett et al, 2011, p.33). This is a characteristic of both the descriptions of African vitalism (see Senghor in Chapter 2, p.26) and my research findings (see Chapters 6, 7 & 8). It also points to how the activation of primary process in everyday aesthetic behaviour requires management and has a healing potential (see Blier in Chapter, 2). Both of these aspects may be regarded as definitive of the role of traditional African art.

In Ehrenzweig's model, the artist or viewer must bring to bear the un-differentiated view of syncretistic perception to integrate "countless unconscious cross ties" (Ehrenzweig, 1967, p. 102) and an "embodied aesthetic appreciation is brought to bear on the object" (Froggett & Hollway, 2010, p.11). Ehrenzweig mainly wrote of painting because it dominated the visual arts at the time he was working but his argument goes much wider to consider a wide range of forms of creative endeavour from painting and sculpture to mathematics, linguistics and the physical sciences. The same principles apply to 'found object' art, music or communal dance. In a recent exhibition at the Turner Contemporary Gallery in Margate, UK, black American sculptural assemblages,

paintings and quilts were brought together (We Will Walk – Art and Resistance in the American South, 2109-2020). The guitar by Freeman Vines (see Fig. 4.1) exhibits an Africanistic aesthetic syncretism by reminding of the ambiguity of forms in nature. Freeman's title of *Youruba Guitar* and facelike carving makes connection with a widespread African spiritual interest in nature and in particular trees (Jahn, 1961).



Fig. 4.1. Freeman Vines, *Youruba Guitar*, photo by Aaron Greenhood (2019-2020) [Online]. Available at: <https://www.howandwhentoreference.com/> (Accessed: 26 February 2020).

Notwithstanding their respective different perspectives of psychoanalysis and religious vitalism, Ehrenzweig and Senghor echo each other in the contention that a pre-cognitive type of perception is linked to deep and powerful psychic forces. Ehrenzweig

describes a dynamic realm of perception, hidden below a “conscious surface coherence” (1967, p.75) and “the raw diffuse matrix below” (1967, pp. 75-76), Senghor an “ontology of rhythms” that “seizes us at the roots of our Being” (Senghor in Diagne, 2011, pp.79-83).

The existence of these ideas in African art and traditional philosophy is further exemplified in the work of Farris Thompson, who regards the type of abstraction in traditional African sculpture as reflecting a concern for not achieving too much realism. This point recalls Picasso’s comment that “what interests me is their geometrical simplicity” when asked about the African art objects in his possession (Rubin, 1994, p. 220). Farris Thompson affords a partial explanation for this control, by using an anecdote from the Bassa people in Liberia in which a carver loved his wife so much that when he carved a mask it highly resembled her. When the mask was first brought out for a public function, people instantly recognized the inspiration and called out the carver’s wife’s name. The elders were unhappy at the carver’s lack of self-control, “the artist had betrayed the myth of the mask, thus revealing that masks were man-made and subject to the vagaries of human emotion” (1974, p.26). Like Ehrenzweig’s professional caricaturist or cartoonist the carver’s own ‘vagaries of human emotion’ were understood as playing an important role in the creation of the normally more abstract masks.

Amongst the many examples of traditional African art that demonstrate an understanding of the intellectual and formal possibilities of abstraction and parallel asymmetry (Visona’ et al, 2000), is the Ghanaian example of Nankani mural painting. An example of this is the architecture of Kassena peoples of Burkina Faso (The African Village Where Every House is a Work of Art, 2016) (Fig. 2.3, p.18). In this example straight lines are used to work like an “attack on conscious gestalt perception” (Ehrenzweig, 1967, p.69). This same aspect appears in the work of British artist Bridget Riley’s work (see Fig. 4.2, p.74) (an artist Ehrenzweig both knew and wrote much about). This type of patterning is aesthetically prized by the Nankani people and plays an important role in their ethnic and cultural identity (Visona’, 2001).

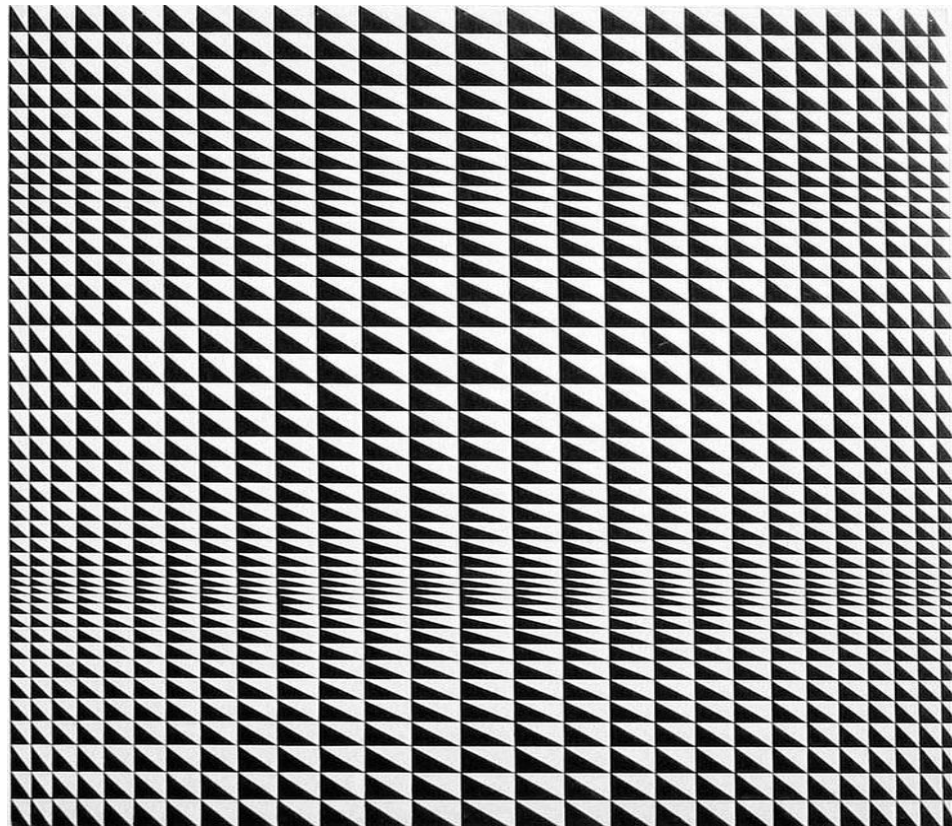


Fig. 4.2 Bridget Riley (1963) *Straight Curve*. Offset lithograph. (Ehrenzweig, 1967, between pages 146 and 147)

A further connecting idea between Ehrenzweig and the traditional African view of art, and even its religiousness, lies in his theorisation of psychic processes of creativity. Ehrenzweig, following Freud, James Frazer, and Otto Rank, draws on the pantheon of mythological figures and stories that appear in the history of European art to illustrate his theory. Ehrenzweig refers to the myth “The Dying God” - that is to say all myths in which a god or goddess dies and is resurrected - to describe the constructive role that processes of “dedifferentiation” play in the act of creativity. Death is a state in which it and love and hate have no separate meaning and illustrates the mental state before the reintegration of aspects of the self that produces creativity. In traditional African belief, complex ideas of a connection between life-death, thought, protection and creativity occur. For instance, amongst the Fon peoples in Benin, is a belief that the *ye* aspect of the psyche, is the principle liaison between the dead and the living, but is also associated with protection, thought, creativity, sacrificial blood (Blier, 1995).

Blier also considers that the African artefacts she has studied address what Ehrenzweig calls “containment (trapping) and expansion (liberation)” (1967, p. 173). By

'containment' Ehrenzweig paradoxically means the experience of 'claustrophobic containment' and anxiety and of a 'limitless expansion' in which the imagination can grow.¹ For Ehrenzweig, the artist may dissolve or dedifferentiate their associations, images, feelings and ideas into this holding space to enable growth or creation. This play with space is fundamental to the creative process and always reflected in a work of art or is "the minimum content of art" (Ehrenzweig, 1967, pp.171-74). For Blier, this type of spatial experience can be observed in the *bocio* figures she has studied in southern Benin and Togo and found elsewhere in Africa, such as the *nkosi nkondi* figures found in southern Congo studied by the anthropologist Wyatt MacGaffey (Blier, 1995, MacGaffey, 1988) (see Fig 4.3). Their genius is their use of dynamic formal qualities such as deformity, dislocation, putrification and pollution and transformation, and may combine with aspects of their creation and empowerment to embody important emotional desires concerned with life.

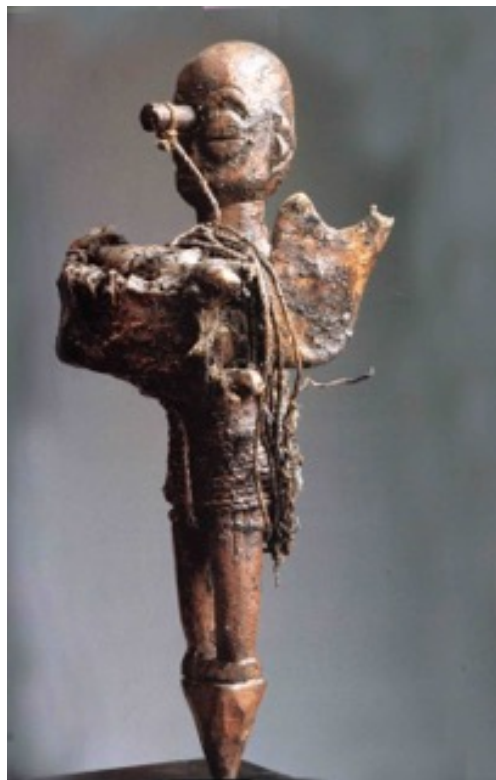


Fig 4.3 Fon *bocis* Republic of Benin. Wood monkey jaw and miscellaneous materials. Wooden peg inserted in forehead. Photograph from Blier, 1995, p.119).

1. This is not the conception of 'containment' normally discussed in psychosocial terms and that draws on the work of Bion (1962, 1970). The capacity for managing anxiety and retaining and exploring unconscious affect linked to ideas. This concept is used extensively to explain the shared space of the Visual Matrix Method used in my research. Thoughts and feelings are 'contained' in the shared space of a matrix and worked through (Froggett et al, 2015) (see Chapter 5, p.95).

African Aesthetics and Winnicott's 'potential space'

Come at the world creatively, create the world: it is only what you create that has meaning for you. (Winnicott in Joffe, 1968)



Fig. 4.4 Mother and child. Wood. 18 inches. Ashanti. Ghana. Wood. (Farris Thompson, 1974, p.46).

The work of Donald Winnicott contains, “a sensibility to the human need for reliable relationships ... the meaning of life and what it is within that makes life worth living” (Abram, 2007, pp. 2-5). It simultaneously offers both the basis for a psychoanalytic understanding of aesthetic experience and the fundamental importance of this experience for everyday life and feelings of satisfaction in it. This point recalls Anyanwu’s (1987) remark that, “African art touches on realities which are lived or experienced. It is related to the African modes of life and “it creates a world that is

personally relevant and satisfying” (Anyanwu, 1976, p. 513). In addition, it explains why Mbiti describes Senghor as “an all is culture” theorist (1969). The point is that traditional African cultural knowledge, as in Winnicott’s thinking (1971), demands the recognition of the role of phantasy and schizoid mechanisms in cultural experiences, and hence in understanding what a life is.

Central to Winnicott’s ontogenetic theorisation of experience is the quality of the ‘good-enough’ mother’s attention to the baby’s needs. For instance, when the baby is hungry and cries a satisfactory and satisfying response satiates the baby’s physical hunger while providing the illusion to the baby that its hunger created the ‘breast’. In turn, this illusion contributes to the baby’s developing sense of ‘I’ not ‘me’ *vis-à-vis* the environment. This capacity of the infant to create, “is an overlap between what the mother supplies and what the child might conceive of” (1971, p. 16). Winnicott called this foundational relationship in reality formation, primary psychic creativity (1988, p.416). Winnicott links these processes of illusion and creativity made possible by the good enough mother, to his idea of ‘potential space’ (1971). This ‘potential space’ exists “between the subjective object and the object objectively perceived” (Winnicott, 1971, p.135). Winnicott’s ‘potential space’ is an explication of the importance of the quality of the mothering in determining the ability to use 'potential space' where play ‘happens’. This space in adulthood becomes the space of adult cultural experience. For Winnicott illusion and the experience of magic are embedded in this “space of maximally intense experiences” (1971, p.100).

There is a sensual aesthetic regard in Winnicott’s ideas that is revealed through the importance to his theory of the physicality and style of the mother’s attention to the baby and the child’s use of objects, such as its thumbs, fingers and hands, and later the older child’s ‘comfort’ blankets and soft toys. Further, Winnicott explains, as the child develops, a ‘transitional object’ may be for instance, the child’s “mouthing, accompanied by sounds of “mum-mum”, babbling, anal noises, the first musical notes, and so on” (1975, p. 232). Winnicott says that for the newborn and up to 12 months, the transitional object “must seem to the infant to give warmth, or to move, or to have texture, or to do something that seems to show it has vitality or reality of its own” (in Abram, 2007, pp. 342). In the introduction to his seminal book *Playing and Reality*

(1971), Winnicott expands his interest in objects and the techniques of mothering to include “rocking, both the child's rhythmical movement of the body and the rocking that belongs to cradles and human holding” (1971, p. xiii). The sensual or experiential quality of the object is essential to its creation in the infant’s mind. For Winnicott these objects and phenomena are an intermediate area between the ‘me’ and the ‘not-me’; between the infant’s subjectivity and what is objectively perceived. Winnicott is clear that in later life, we continue to create transitional phenomena through our uses of art and culture. Further that “the place where cultural experience is located is in the potential space between the individual and the environment (originally the object)” (Winnicott’s parenthesis) (1971, p.135).

Through Winnicott’s idea of ‘the potential space’ and cultural experience, emerges an insight into the sensual poetic regard of ideas that is contained in the traditional African use of mythology, art and symbols. For instance, in the example of a *wunkirle* spoon of the We and Dan peoples (see Chapter 2, p.19) a sensual poetic regard of the woman’s body during pregnancy is brought together with an everyday object and its use to express the ideas of generosity and life giving (see Fig. 4.5).



Fig. 4.5 Dan spoon. Wood. 24.5 inches. Liberia-Ivory Coast (Farris Thompson, 1974, p.58)

The sensuous and imaginative realms are similarly united in Senghor's thinking on African aesthetics. Senghor uses the example of water to express the 'inside' meets 'outside' 'traditional experience' or the experience of a "profound reality ... surreality" (Senghor, 1956 - *Diogenes* 4 (16):23-38)² The meeting of sensual and cultural experience in Winnicott's work unearths some important notions for African aesthetics if one remembers that traditionally in Africa, although there are a great variety of cultural approaches to nursing children, the child is often carried during nursing on the back or bosom of the mother or another woman of the village. Also, traditionally in many societies, suckling may take place anywhere and as Mbiti puts it, "breasts are taken out openly without any feeling of embarrassment or shame" (1969, p.117). It is in this context that infants are exposed from the very start to the songs, music and dances of their community. The African mother typically sings to her child and rocks and engages in community dances with the baby/infant on her back. She even plays drums with the infant on her lap. The nonsense syllables she might use to entertain the child often imitate drum rhythms (Holdstock, 2000). Winnicott certainly emphasises the physicality of suckling/nurturing but it is above all aspects such as the precise style of suckling/nurturing, taking place 'anywhere' in the everyday context, that suggest cross-cultural implications for transitional phenomena and potential space for African aesthetics and the everyday.

Lorenzer's 'Vital' Conception of Everyday Experience

Winnicott's psychoanalytic object relations theory provides a way of understanding the connection between emotion, sensual experience, and the environment. They bring the psychological and social together and so are important for psychosocial theory. Winnicott's ideas, anticipate the 1970's socio-cultural theory of the German sociologist and psychoanalyst Alfred Lorenzer (Lorenzer & Orban, 1978). Although taken up by some theorists in the field of Psychosocial Studies (Breswill et al, 201; Froggett & Hollway, 2010; Froggett & Hollway 2012; Froggett, Manley & Roy, 2015), Lorenzer's work remains little known outside of Germany and Scandinavia. His work is

2. Senghor's "*mystique of the real*" also recalls Freud's notion of the 'uncanny' but whereas Freud (1919), according to Bloom (1982), focuses only on the uncanny as something dire, in Senghor it is neither negative nor positive and is about meaning.

important for the study of traditional African art because it similarly brings together different registers of experience: embodied, psychic and social. Similarly to traditional African art practices, ideas of the multi-dimensionality of symbolism and the embodied nature of experience are foregrounded. In Lorenzer's case these concerns offer a way to conceptualize the mutual constitution of different realms of experience and to analyse cultural texts and in the case of traditional African arts they offer a way to support living and healing and to manifest spirituality.

Similarly to Ehrenzweig, Lorenzer posits that the individual is perceptually engaged by a matrix of relations that are never entirely in conscious awareness. These relations are understood as a process of mutual constitution that is located "within the 'interplay' between" the individual and the social (Lorenzer in Bereswill et al, 2010, p. 230). This distinction and his ideas in general make his theory socio-cultural as well as psychoanalytical. "the body and the social are not easily separable" (ibid, p. 227). The relevance of this thinking for the topic of traditional African art stems from how it is both richly multi-sensory and performative, and once again, is a practical 'in-life' concern about the everyday, interrelation and community.

A central idea of Lorenzer's is 'the scenic', "an affective and embodied register of meaning and experience that is said to have its origins in the earliest phases of life" (Bereswill et al, 2010, p. 225). For Lorenzer this "register" infuses all experience, and vitalises our experience of the world, "rendering it subjectively meaningful and more alive than it would otherwise be" (Bereswill et al, 2010, p.24). This 'register' or scenic experience is early on in development naturally composed of highly patterned types of activity. For instance, the characteristic normal baby care of routinized "feeding, soothing, cleaning, 'conversations' with caregivers, mirroring games of various kinds, and so on" (ibid, p.226). For Lorenzer, these 'interaction forms' are therefore processes of negotiation and agreement. Life, both actual and imagined, comprises an endless number of interaction forms and in this way social processes become 'sedimented' in our inner selves, tuning us into the "historical-cultural-social forms" (Lorenzer in Bereswill et al, 2010, p.230). The underlying affective and embodied experience of interaction forms means that a trace of all experience is always outside of conscious awareness.

Lorenzer uses this point to explain the basis of his depth hermeneutic research method (DHM) which has been influential in the development of psychosocial research methods such as the scenic compositions and visual matrices used in my study (Froggett and Hollway, 2010; Froggett et al, 2014). In DHM researchers reflect upon their own affective and embodied (together with aesthetic) responses to interviews and other texts (Bereswill et al, 2010; Froggett & Hollway, 2010). With this idea of attending to, or 'joining-in-the-action' (Bohleber, 2016, p.97) in an aesthetic response to data to unearth the affective dimensions of experience, Lorenzer's DHM bears comparison with the pragmatic interest traditional African art also has in affect and emotion (Holdstock, 2000). Characteristically, the same ensemble of the individual, social and collective dimensions often appears in traditional African art. As Holdstock (2000) following Strathern (1998) explains, African aesthetics are intimately bound up with values, "Art for art's sake, unrelated to social, cultural, and spiritual functions, is therefore not common. Art commits the person to the community. That is perhaps the reason why infants from the earliest age are exposed to the songs, the music, and the dances of the community" (1988, p.183 -84). Similarly, Clegg (in Holdstock, 2000), describes an imperative quality that is personally experienced but includes individual and social and collective dimensions in the example of warrior dance performance in Africa:

While the dancer explores himself in relation to others, his internal being manifests itself. Through words, body movements, and gestures the personal values and feelings of the dancer are explored and expressed. The physical body mirrors, and at the same time is constrained by, the social body (Clegg in Holdstock, 2000, p.196).

Through a multi-sensory use of music/movement/symbolism/, the affective experience that accompanies the reading of a text is engaged and a unity of the dancer and the community is expressed.

Similarly, Blier's idea of "masking concerns" in traditional African art (Blier, 1995, p.396) may be viewed through a Lorenzerian lens. During an interview in Cameroon, a musician and musical instrument maker explained to me that in some secret societies

that use masks in ceremonies and processes of initiation, there is also a practice of healing people by placing the 'magical mask' onto an inflicted person. The individual being, both literally and metaphorically 'gets under the skin' of the social being or set of knowledge.

African Aesthetics and Merleau-Ponty's Embodied World

The spirit of the body is in the body. When you dance the spirit will come out of the body. So everything you want to do, the spirit achieves that through the body. Which is the spirit and the body. ('Mr Farmer', Traditional Healer, 2017)

Traditional healers are key holders of traditional knowledge in Africa. In common with a raft of modern and post-modern European thinking, they regard the human body as being at the intersection of the material world, emotions and more abstract dimensions of experience. The role of dance and thoughts about the body in traditional African art and aesthetics highlighted in Chapter 2 (p.33), makes the later thinking of Merleau-Ponty interesting for the topic of African aesthetics. This French philosopher's existential phenomenology emphasises subject embodiment in perception. The early work of Merleau-Ponty on perception posits a unity between the seer as much as the seen, or as he says, "every habit is simultaneously motor and perceptual" (2014, p.153). Merleau-Ponty died before the completion of his final work *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968). In this final work he goes further and introduces his idea of the *chiasm* and 'reversibility'. The idea of the *chiasm* unveils embodiment as a seamless communication between the individual, environment and works of art. A pre-conceptual intertwining in which the "flesh" is the spirit and the body:

a new type of being, a being by porosity, pregnancy, or generality, and he before the horizon opens is caught up, included within it. His body and the distances participate in one same corporeity or visibility in general, which reigns between them and it, and even beyond the horizon, beneath his skin, unto the depths of being (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p.149).

Merleau-Ponty's thinking and ideas have been influential in phenomenological thinking about art, film, music and dance and have also contributed to the ideas of the post-modern French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. However, for these

theorists Merleau-Ponty's corporeal 'flesh' is too literal and they propose instead that a more abstract, pan-dimensional idea of "the house" be seen as "the intermediary between inner and outer worlds ... "that is, the fragments of diversely oriented planes that give flesh its armature" (Bogue, 2003, p.167). A more Africanistic existentialism comes from Senghor. Inspired by his experience of traditional African art, Senghor introduces the idea that sensuality and rhythm may be "the architecture of being" (Senghor, in Diagne, 2011, p. 79). Rhythm alone may be the site of aesthetic mediation and the structure to which the flesh adheres. By introducing the idea of rhythm as a house of being, Senghor eliminates any need for an intermediary between the flesh and inner and outer worlds and makes the body intrinsically artistic, musical, dynamic and an expression of vital force. Senghor's ultimate claim here is that because rhythm "is incarnate in sensuality", the "Negro African" aesthetic sensibility benefits from it:

What is rhythm? It is the architecture of being, the internal dynamism that gives it form, the system of waves it gives off towards *Others*, the pure expression of vital force. Rhythm is the vibrating shock, the power which, through the senses, seizes us at the roots of our *Being*. It expresses itself through the most material and sensual means: lines, surfaces, colours, and volumes in architecture, sculpture and painting; accents in poetry and music; movements in dance. But, in doing this, it organizes all this concreteness toward the light of *Spirit*. For the Negro African, it is insofar as it is incarnate in sensuality that rhythm illuminates the *Spirit*. (Senghor in Diagne, 2011, p.79)

Senghor's unframed Africanistic conception, also accords with Ramose's idea of participation and "the dance of being as an ontological and epistemological imperative to be in tune" (2002, p.59). Taken together, the ideas of all these thinkers are interesting for African aesthetics because of their correspondences with aspects of Continental philosophy. Merleau-Ponty's highlighting of the role of the body in experience resonates with the multi-sensory and participatory topic of traditional African art and philosophy because both challenge a Cartesian mind-body split; and focus on how an "intercorporeity" is rendered perceptible in works of art" (Bogue, 2003, p.166).

Traditional African Art as Philosophy and Deleuzian Metaphysics

As discussed in Chapter 2 (p.24), in his African aesthetics and life philosophy, Senghor has appropriated much of the language of Bergson's critique of the primacy of intellectual reason and materialist positivism. The post-modern French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's ideas are also highly influenced by those of Bergson. In Deleuze & Guattari's book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1998) they introduce the idea of the "rhizome" as a foundational model of reality. Rhizomes are characterized by a continual growth that has no formal centre and is non-hierarchical. In their work the model of the rhizome becomes a set of qualities found everywhere in life and the universe. Form and content are not ontologically distinct ideas and similarly the many is not subsumed under the idea of the singular, as in the traditional Western philosophical view.

Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of the rhizome has been applied to other artistic media including architecture and film. It has also become an important concept in social sciences such as postcolonial studies. In the field of Psychosocial Studies, it has been used to describe the non-linear, branching style of thinking together with a sensation of timelessness that occurs in the Visual Matrix psychosocial research method employed in this study (Froggett, Manley & Roy, 2015; Roy & Manley, 2017). The psychosocial theorist Julian Manley uses it to conceptualize the quality of affect discoverable in the Visual Matrix, an "indefinite, directionless, interconnected tangle, where meaning arises through temporary and heterogeneous connections of intensity of affect, which are constantly fluctuating" (Manley, 2018, pp. 102-3).

The Deleuzian 'rhizomatic' linking together of the themes of improvisation, spontaneity, art and life in general, recalls the "holon-nessism" (my italics) of Ramose's 'hol-ism' as a permanently departing state of motion rather than rest (2002, p.57). Additionally, they illuminate Anyanwu's concept of African art as an inseparable aspect of a "unitary life-process" of aesthetic regard contextualized in community:

We can logically analyse the subjective aspects of art (personal chi, will, style, improvisation, spontaneity, skill) and distinguish them from the objective aspects (Sound, Life-Force, Chukwu, Community, Continuity or Rhythm); but, in concrete reality, the subjective-objective aspects of artistic creativity are inseparable. (Anyanwu, 1987, p.258)

Drawing on the 17th century Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza's and Bergson's philosophical concept of duration and the virtual (see Chapter 2, p.32), Deleuze and Guattari explore ideas of affect and sensation produced in art that are important for a conceptualization of the Visual Matrix Method. Following the thinking of Spinoza, the essential aspect of an affect or sensation for Deleuze and Guattari is that like the primary examples of pleasure, pain and desire, it can only exist as something active and changing. Once again thinking of it as 'rhizomatic', Deleuze and Guattari produce their twin ideas of "territorialization" and "becoming". As in Bergson, these processes are essential to true creativity and begin around challenges to space and time. For example, Deleuze and Guattari cite the ability of the orchid to mimic the female wasp, by which it attracts a male wasp and enables the process of pollination. They write:

The orchid deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of the wasp: but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized, becoming a piece of the orchid's reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen" (Deleuze & Guattari ,1988, p.10).

This semiotic mapping is naturally interlinking, and is for them "a zone of indetermination, of 'indiscernability', as if things, beasts, and persons endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation. Deleuze gives the example of Captain Ahab in Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick*. Ahab has perceptions of the sea because he has entered into a relationship with a whale called Moby Dick (1994). He has become a combination of affections and perceptions. If he strikes Moby Dick, he strikes himself but now he really does have perceptions of the ocean. It is the 'interwoven-ess' of things that precedes their idea and gives the aspect of multiple-meaning in traditional African art its affective power (see Chapter 2, p.18). These ideas of simultaneous ephemeral and eternal connection in Deleuze and Guattari's writing both recall and elucidate Senghor's ideas of the aesthetic sensibility involved in traditional African art, already discussed in this chapter in relation to Donald Winnicott's ideas on object-relating, object-use and symbolism.

Senghor's traditional African "mystique of the real" is a cultural alternative to Deleuze and Guattari's "zone of indetermination, of indiscernability"; a 'rhizomatic' continuity

of unstable relationships. It is the suggestiveness and ability of traditional African art to create such rich emotion and affect in African thought. About this point, Senghor explains how formal traits within traditional African art such as multiplicity of meaning and parallel asymmetry (see Visona' et al, 2000, in Chapter 2, p.18) contribute to this process of "exemplary suggestion ... over and over beyond the world of appearances". The more non-linear the expression of ideas in the artwork are, the greater the "suggestion" (Senghor, 1956, p.32). Here Deleuze and Guattari's presentation of the non-linear connection as a rhizome can illuminate Senghor. For these thinkers, it is always an 'assemblage' of entities that produces utterances, "The utterance is the product of the assemblage – which is always collective, which brings into play within us and outside us populations, multiplicities, territories, becomings, affects, events" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.51).

In addition to the rhizome, Manley also uses Deleuze's idea of territorialization to describe the meanings that emerge in the Visual Matrix research method used in this research. Through a Deleuzian lens the contributions in a Visual Matrix are 'rhizomatic' in connection, as Manley puts it, "temporary meanings are constantly emerging and submerging", "visual and affective fragments create unstable relationships with other fragments" (2018, p.103), the affects are the "*nonhuman becomings of man*" (Deleuze, 2003, p. 169, D.'s italics), and neither entirely belong to subject or object and exist in dynamic relation between interior and exterior worlds. Following Deleuze, Manley's work highlights affective experience in art and the rich associations that emerge from it and research methods that use it. For instance, in a Visual Matrix study of the theme of regeneration and renewal of place in a North England town, Manley (2018) uncovered how the image of an old, circa 1950's, ironing board led to many expressions and sometimes highly emotional thoughts and affect from the group of participants. This was despite the mundanity of the physical object. In the context of the case of the African aesthetic of the everyday, an example in my research would be the traditional healer MF's tender and religious contribution over the traditional artefact of an equally mundane mat. One of MF's phrases that stands out in his quote is the use "no laugh" to mean quite the opposite i.e. 'this is something important in the sense of powerful'.

MF: And now we still use it to follow our traditional ways with. Anytime (unclear words) ... now one from the market ... So we use this, this is a traditional something that you can no laugh from here. We use this and do many things from our tradition, this thing. This is a mat. (see Chapter 6, p.157).

In this Cameroonian example the everyday object and its aesthetic qualities are united in a powerful sensory poetics that expresses an ongoing cycle of production (Deleuze), or the image that creates over and over again in transcendence of representation (Senghor). The affects, the “*nonhuman becomings of man*” (Deleuze, 2003, p. 169, D.’s italics) are undiluted.

Deleuze develops the concept of the body-without-organs (BwO), first used by the French playwright and actor Antonin Artaud in the 1948 radio play, *To have done with the judgment of God*. In the play, Artaud ‘blames’ God for alienating us from our true indeterminate bodies and providing us with an organized body on which he can place judgement and we can be restricted by political inscriptions. Free from a scientific understanding that is reliant upon ideas of “discontinuity”, the human body is no longer constrained to be human. Deleuze once again uses the example of Ahab and the whale, ‘becoming-whale’, as a combination of affections and perceptions that is an ‘interwovenness’ of things (1994). Again obeying ‘the principle of the rhizome’, this process is multi-layered. Ahab and the whale share a mutual obsession with revenge on each other, whilst Ahab’s leg is physically digested by the whale (Powell, 2005).

Also, consistent with ‘the principle of the rhizome’, the main characteristics of the BwO are, “openness, change, mutability, fluidity, feedback, complexity” (Kennedy, 2000, p.99). Deleuze’s ideas are a mix of unfixity and relation. *Bocio*, are types of sculpture produced primarily in the West African countries of Benin and Togo and are similar to the artefacts found in Cameroon and other parts of the continent. Their construction characteristically expresses and embodies ideas of division, dislocation, putrefaction and pollution (p.217), these sculptures succeed in being both multi-layered and discontinuous. Through their organic messiness they echo Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of the rhizome (1984) (see Blier in Chapter 2, p.52). Examples of these artefacts have already been discussed in this chapter, in connection with the ideas of

psychoanalytical art theorist Anton Ehrenzweig, however their applicability to Deleuze and Guattari's will not be missed here through an examination of how the fabrication of *bocio* involves the assembly of a range of obviously, everyday objects.

Echoing Deleuzian ideas further, Blier writes that the aims of many of these statues is to encourage well-being and help with traumatic feelings. Also, that many *Bo* sculptures share with the related alchemic practices of Voodoo, a "dual valuation of constancy and transmutability" (1995, p.209). Through their formal qualities these sculptures succeed in being rhizomatic, multi-layered and discontinuous in their construction with a resultant quality of being strange, ugly, frightening, repulsive, grotesque, or suggestive of something hidden, unmade or becoming (see Fig. 4.6)



Fig. 4.6 Wood, iron, and multimedia surface. Wooden key inserted in shoulder, dog's skull lashed to stomach. Benin and Togo (Blier, 1999, p.288).

p.82). As Senghor puts it, the more non-linear the expression of ideas the greater the “suggestion” (Senghor, 1956, p.32). The choice of materials is unbound, accords to an alchemic need and is frequently multiple. For instance, one recorded example contains: wood, iron, beads, straw, bones, leather, rags, pottery, fur, feathers, blood. Blier also notes that the featureless quality of many of these figures, belies the fact that many “are linked closely to themes of psychological projection and substitution” (1995, p.277).

As Blier explains, *bocio* artefacts may be examined using a range of psychoanalytical conceptions discussed earlier in this chapter but by their expression of both self and other *bocio* artefacts also express a Deleuzian rhizomatic thinking, and the concepts of territorialization and BwO. A characteristic use of animal physiognomy that does appear in some figures but above all it is a quality of indiscernibility, non-linearity that recalls Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of becoming (1987) and produces an openness to suggestion as understood by Senghor (1956). These characteristics may be expressed by the omission of features, an emphasis on deformity, assemblages of materials, mixed additive elements or disparate processes of manufacture.

Deleuzian ideas such as territorialization and the BwO help to conceptualize the processes of affect in traditional African art. They also provide an addition to ideas of transference and object relations theory, in this thesis' discussion of the important healing aspect of traditional African ‘art as a modifier’ (Blier, 1995; Vogel, 1997). Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas are another example of the relationship between types of Continental philosophy and traditional African religious and philosophical ideas that I unearth in these pages. Mbiti’s description of an African religious universe becomes interpretable as a world of powerful aesthetic sensibilities, made possible by an epistemological attitude that prizes qualitative experience as much as quantitative and considers the material world also a manifestation of an invisible one.

Man gives life even where natural objects and phenomena have no biological life. God is seen in and behind these objects and phenomena: they are His creation, they manifest Him, they symbolize His being and presence. The invisible world presses hard upon the visible: one speaks of the other, and his

idea that African peoples 'see' that invisible universe when they look at, hear or feel the visible and tangible world. (Mbiti, 1969, p. 56)

This religious vitalism and idea of an invisible plane is also expressed in the Deleuzian conception of the BwO. "the non-organic life of things" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 173), a vital intensity that is coextensive with the idea of becoming.

Summary

This chapter has brought traditional African philosophical ideas about for instance, the interrelatedness of self (Holdstock), the invisible and/or invisible universe (Mbiti), the gerundial character of being (Ramose), the meeting of the sensuous and imaginative realms and the experience of a profound reality or "surreality" (Senghor in Diagne, 2011, p.83), into dialogue with concepts from psychoanalytical art theory and psychoanalysis, and Continental philosophy. The best umbrella term for all these notions might usefully be, 'the invisible universe' (Mbiti). For instance, this invisible universe cannot be directly seen or measured but, like sound and music, it is a force that creates affect and meaning (Senghor, 1957; Anyanwu, 1987). This conceptualization of the African aesthetic helps us to understand the idea of invisible forces in the everyday and African art and aesthetic practices as interpretable as a form of Winnicott's 'potential space', the space of illusion and "of maximally intense experiences" (1971, p.100). Similarly, psychoanalytical ideas such as Ehrenzweig's restless 'minimum content of art', the human potential for dissolving associations, images, feelings and ideas into a limitless holding space, also provide a way of envisaging experience in the everyday, as possessing something invisible, dynamic and not reducible to it. For example, the workings of the unconscious and how in the 'potential space', objective and subjective views of reality combine to present a third one (Winnicott).

Similarly, although phenomenology and psychoanalysis are not fully compatible, they do converge in some respects (Askay and Farquhar, 2006, p.343), and it is possible to perceive an echo of Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology and idea of the reversibility of the body in experience (2014), in the sensual genesis of transitional

phenomena described by Winnicott (1971). In particular, from Winnicott's close attention to both environment and psychosomatics, and his statement that "At first there is soma, then psyche that in health gradually becomes anchored to the soma" (In Abrams, 2011, p.6). In short, there is cause for a more radical interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's ideas about the body and movement and a view that expressive movement from the beginning is "intersubjective, communicative and embodied in reciprocities" (Levin in Dillon 1991, p.61). It is this quality that draws Merleau-Ponty's work most usefully into the realm of African aesthetics and traditional philosophies (Farris Thompson, 1974; Ramose, 2002; Purser, 2011). This understanding of Merleau-Ponty's work and the 'converging' ontological position of Ehrenzweig and the object-relations theorists is useful for researching art and aesthetic practices that are framed by the religious and philosophical ideas outlined. Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) metaphysical ideas of the world as a 'rhizomatic' continuity of unstable relationships are similarly highly valuable for examining the topic from the perspective of the Western academy (see Abiodun in Chapter 3, p.56). Deleuze and Guattari share with Senghor a common inspiration in the work of Henri Bergson and so points of connection might be anticipated. They are both types of metaphysics and regard aesthetic experience as an encounter with a transcendent 'being'. Their primary separation may be considered a matter of precise theological detail, in Africa the details of which often remain to be clarified (Wiredu, 1999).

The next chapter presents my research and a mix of research methods that are largely derived from the field of Psychosocial Studies and informed by many of the European theorists discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Methodology

As described in the introduction and Chapter 2, traditional African art in Cameroon and in many countries in Africa is loosely thought of in the West as comprising of sculpture, poetry, acting, costume, music, dance and acrobatics, often attached to ritual, but is better understood as an activity designed to heal and bring the community together (Ebede-Ndi, personal communication). It is judged by its effect and ability to modify the observer or initiate/knower's spiritual state and combines this with ideas of invisible forces in the everyday. It is also underpinned by rich philosophical conceptions of the interrelatedness of the self and the community (Holdstock, 2000; Ramose, 2001; Kimmerle, 2015) and a view of the human that highlights ideas of depth experience, inter-subjectivity, embodiment and affect (Senghor, 1962; Anyanwu, 1987; Holdstock, 2000). To comprehend these points and traditional African art (Anyanwu, 1987) one must also understand that the African epistemological attitude (Senghor, 1957 and in Brockway, 1963) prizes qualitative experience, feelings and affect, as much as quantitative. It regards thought "as a wholeness which includes the indivisibility but also the mutual dependence of the 'rational' and the 'emotional'" (Ramose, 2003, p.276). These ideas are married to an ontological and epistemological imperative to be an actor and observer or a performer participant all at the same time, (Anyanwu, 1987) (see Chapters 2, 4, and the Yaounde' Visual Matrix report in Chapter 7, p.173). These points together, about the African epistemological attitude, are especially important for my discussion of aesthetic experience in Cameroon today. They are also important for assessing the value of traditional African art and everyday culture for Cameroon today.

Because of the communitarian values, 'in-life' character and ideas of invisible forces in the everyday that are germane to traditional African art and aesthetic practices, my study is methodologically concerned to prioritise a closeness to participants' experiences both as individuals and in groups. Equally, there was a need to mitigate a focus on language and cognition and consider the senses, emotion and affective experience of art. The field of Psychosocial Studies is differently but equally concerned

to acknowledge the importance of many aspects of experience (see the examples of psychoanalytical and Continental philosophy discussed in Chapter 4). This makes psychosocial research methods ideally suited to examining the research topic of traditional African art.

The core of the research was conducted during two three-week visits to Cameroon. The first in October, 2016, and the second in March through April, 2017. The research methods and process used were all drawn from or accorded philosophically with the field of Psychosocial Studies. In short, this is the epistemological position that participants are not transparent to themselves and that the reality of the research situation is a series of relationships replete with unconscious subjectivity (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013). The research methods comprised a mix of sensory, visual and performative interview techniques, and the group-based research method called the Visual Matrix Method. Also, a synthesis of photo ethnography and the sensory, visual and performative interview techniques was utilised when ‘moving around’ in Cameroon and doing ad hoc interviews. In addition, I made field-notes and contributed to a reflexive diary during my visits.

Photo elicitation and sensory interviewing

Many researchers have also noted how all the senses and the performative dimension of an interview may often contribute to producing rich data (Vokes (n.d.); Pink, 2007; Malinowski in Vokes, 2007; O’Neill & Hubbard, 2010; Hughes, Roy, Manley, 2014). Photo elicitation in particular was one of the primary research methods in this research. The photo elicitation interview method simply involves inserting photographs into a research interview – in this case my selection. It is thought to offer the advantages of helping to manage language difficulties and/or problems of working through interpreters (Harper, 2002). It is known to be an enjoyable technique that produces interviews that are free flowing, undirected by the researcher, and contain personal memories and stories (Pink, 2007; Harper, 2012). In psychosocial research it is regarded that in telling a story the narrator takes responsibility for “making the relevance of the telling clear” (Polyanyi in Chase, p.2 in Lieblich & Ruthellen, 1995, p.2). Psychosocial theory posits the value of free association and participants’ stories in

research to help obviate the masking effects of participants' internal defensive needs. This point stems from the psychoanalytical assumption that threats to the self produce anxiety, and that the self and self-image may be defended at an unconscious level (Klein, 1975).

Above all, both my primary method of the Visual Matrix Method and photo elicitation and sensory interviewing were especially suited to my research question, which required the gathering of an 'experience near' type of data that reflected the symbolic-associative, affective and embodied responses that are characteristic of traditional African art and music. The use of photo elicitation and sensory interviewing rather than language alone encouraged the participants to respond with their own frame of reference, associations and memories (Pink, 2009). Additionally, as a researcher I was armed with my research question of: What can traditional African art and aesthetic practices contribute to our understanding of healing and everyday modern culture in Cameroon? These methods allowed me to communicate the topic under research without for instance resort to my own language and taxonomies. The thinking behind my precise selection of photographs may have also helped to convey my sincere interest in and respect for the topic, especially by how I mixed both very traditional examples with those of contemporary artists and practitioners.

Another criteria that I considered was to be sure to include images of both men and women. This was in order to alleviate a bias toward men that I perceived in published photographic representation. The reasons for a possible bias are beyond the scope of this thesis but seem likely connected to both an early lack of women ethnographers, particularly in field-work and a failure to represent the lives of women (Jones & Watt, 2010; Pink, 2013). In addition, I was also curious about questions pertaining to the traditional status of women in Africa (Njoh & Akiwumi, 2012; Njoh, 2016; Sesanti, 2016). One image I selected was from a performance by the Kenyan woman performance artist Ato Malinda (see APPENDIX I). Malinda is an internationally recognised artist who combines video art, performance art, installation, and painting. Recurrent themes in her works include female identity, black identity, African identity and women's social status in Kenya. In 2010, Malinda performed a piece called

On fait Ensemble (We do together) in the mangroves of Douala's River Wouri (Aforiatta-Ayim, 2011; Varma, 2014).

In my research 14 photographs were used. Ten were in colour and 4 were black and white. These were numbered on the back to help with connecting them to specific parts of the interview. The photographs were selected by me, using the criteria of being examples of traditional African art, performance and ceremony, or modern art influenced by tradition. Six were known to have been scenes or examples from Cameroon. Three of these were photographs that I took on my first visit, one was sourced from a Cameroonian intermediary, and the rest were selected from books or websites. The remaining eight other images were examples of traditional art from other countries in sub-Saharan Africa or of international modern art and were obtained from books or websites (see APPENDIX H for all 14 images). This approach of freely showing examples of art and practices from far ranging parts of the continent to participants is used in the work of Robert Farris Thompson (1974). Before my second visit to Cameroon, I used email to consult with Dr Banindjel about the suitability and appropriateness of the 14 photographs for showing to participants in Cameroon. In the cases where I was returning to interview someone who had allowed me to take photographs and/or film on my first visit, I made copies of the photographs to give to them. The aim was not to present an anthropological series of examples that precisely accorded with the ethnicity of the participant in order to unearth specific cultural meanings (Bignante, 2010). Instead, the aim was to quickly start a comfortable and easy interaction (Pink, 2007) that would produce responses about the topic of traditional African artistic production today in Cameroon.

The Visual Matrix Method

The primary group method used was the Visual Matrix. The Visual Matrix Method was developed and tested by Froggett, Manley and Roy (2015) through a study that aimed to understand the impact of public art on an English town. Since then it has been put to many other uses, for example of the cultural symbolic forms through which we experience death and dying (Ramvi et al, 2019), impotence (Froggett, Manley & Wainwright, 2017), art objects and exhibitions (2014), and technological futures

(Froggett, Muller & Bennet, 2019). It was chosen because it generates shared responses when the material has a notably sensory and affective dimension (as opposed to cognitive or discursive), such as in the sensory lived experience of art. In my research the method produced sensory associations which often melded the imagistic, acoustic and haptic. In addition, the shared material the method captures is highly useful for enquiring into an art that itself expresses important notions of shared experience. The quality of thinking in the matrix is illuminated by for instance Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the 'rhizome' (1984); the thinking in the Visual Matrix is 'rhizomatic' rather than linear and thematic. Further, by Winnicott's idea of 'potential space' (1971) and that in the matrix the participants 'playfully' explore together located in-between the symbolic cultural and personal experience of the stimulus. Similarly, Lorenzer's (Lorenzer & Orban, 1978) notion of how the socio-cultural and personal realms are indissolubly linked in our apprehension of the world and a cultural text brings to life already existing sensory and affective layers of personal experience. (See Chapter 4 from p.76 for more about the theory of these authors).

In existing accounts of the Visual Matrix the participants are assembled in a quiet and uninterrupted space and "the method demands carefully crafted 'soft' facilitation and particular conditions and steps" (Froggett, Manley & Roy, 2015). The researcher takes on the role of a sensitive and supportive host, is non-directive but encourages by modelling and/or participation, associative thinking in response to a stimulus. During a Visual Matrix, participants sit in a 'snowflake' configuration of chairs (see Fig. 5.1, p.97).

The 'snowflake' configuration of chairs discourages dyadic interactions or group dynamics. The 'host' invites the participants to speak any associations and images, feelings and ideas that come to mind, "as and when they wish and without turn-taking" (Froggett, Manley & Roy, 2015). Because these associations are spoken 'out' into the space, the participants also associate to each other's images and thoughts. Visual matrices thus create the condition for shared thinking. The researcher may transcribe and/or make notes during the session. After the session there is a post-matrix discussion (PMD), in which participants change the seating into a horse-shoe pattern. This is to help the participants transition from the wandering 'reverie' of the

matrix and begin to extrapolate meaning, make links and interpret. A board or flipchart is used to help map and record the ideas. The involvement of

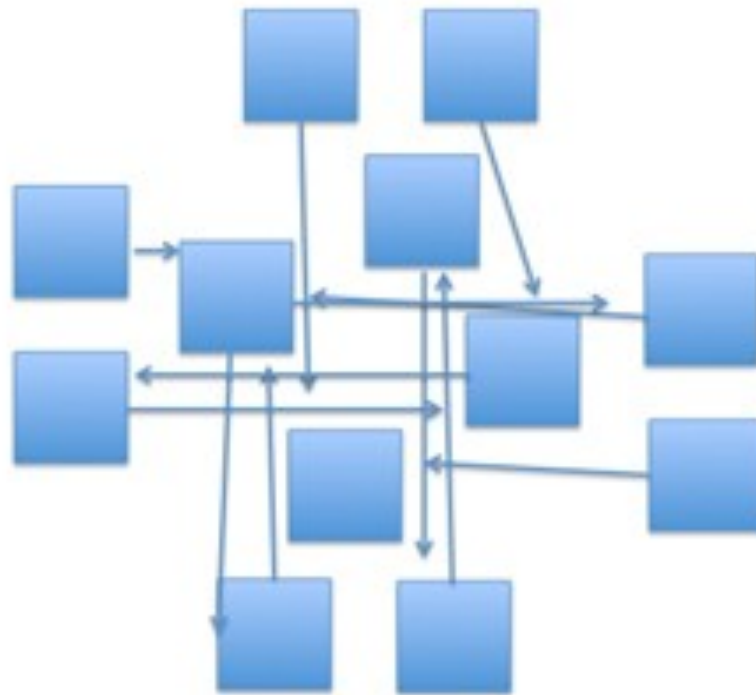


Fig. 5.1. The "snowflake": Squares represent chairs and arrows the gazes of participants (Froggett, Manley & Roy, 2015).

participants in the interpretation process is considered to be essential by many psychosocial researchers (Stopford in Clarke & Hoggett, 2009) and the PMD offers this opportunity and effectively establishes the frame for the interpretation that is usually undertaken in a research panel. Both stages of the Visual Matrix are audio-recorded.

The Visual Matrix Method is a direct descendent of the earlier method of Social Dreaming and the Social Dreaming Matrix. In the Social Dreaming Matrix participants bring their ideas to the shared space of the matrix in the form of dreams, images, thoughts and feelings. Lawrence himself suggested that the idea of matrix came from Sigmund Foulkes (Lawrence, 2003b, p.167), but subsequently modified the conception and use of it in the Social Dreaming Matrix. Foulkes' oeuvre is a tradition of group work (in contrast to the matrix work in both Social Dreaming and the Visual Matrix) that

directly engages with group dynamics, whereas the Visual Matrix intentionally attempts to avoid them. Hence the use of the 'snowflake' seating arrangement, and the facilitation style which is designed to avoid group dynamics such as alliances, polarisations (splitting) and projection onto a leader. In the Foulkesian tradition the matrix is available for analysis of the life of the group itself, whereas in the visual matrix, the focus is on the affective and sensory-symbolic production of the matrix and an also rhizomatic, non-linear in connection social dimension (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

In the quality of the associations of a visual matrix a relation to Foulkes' foundation matrix and the intertwined elements (psycho-biological and socio-cultural) are present. Foulkes' concept of the foundation matrix partially resembles Lorenzer's conception of shared experience discussed in Chapter 4. Lorenzer also considers that the embodiment of sensual and affective experience found in repeated interactions in the earliest phase of life (specific interaction-forms) is inscribed as sensory information in the neuro-physiological structure of the brain (Bereswill et al, 2010, pp. 9-16). However, Lorenzer very clearly positioned himself as a socio-cultural theorist rather than a psychoanalytic theorist or group analyst and his whole project is to show how 'scenes' (such as are produced in a visual matrix) arise out of interactions (symbolic interaction forms) between the subject and the environment and that embodied lived experience is intrinsically socio-cultural. It is in this way that the role of containment imagery, affect and symbolization within a matrix setting should be understood (Froggett et al, 2014) rather than through a Foulkesian lens concerned with group processes.

The aspect of the matrix that I analysed is clearly based on the shared sociocultural experiences of the participants, as modern Africans who nevertheless retain a profound attachment and imaginative access to the ways of life of traditional rural villages from which their families and ancestors come. This is in line with my research aims which are to understand the value and healing potential of traditional African aesthetic practices and artforms in modern Cameroon. My enquiry is into cultural imaginaries and use of the Visual Matrix is not directly therapeutic in intent. Hence my focus is not on the dynamic matrix which arises out of the interactions between

participants, but the coming into being of a rhizomatic matrix which is activated by their shared affective associative image production. The product of this associative activity is an emergent cultural imaginary which already exists among them but which they are supported to voice in symbolic form by the conditions the matrix provides.

However, the psychotherapist and group analyst Farhad Dalal has isolated in Foulkes a more complex Post-Foulkesian position in which the concept of the matrix contains “a static pre-existing part we call the ‘Foundation matrix’” (Foulkes in Dalal, 1998, p. 63) in which notions of community and communion appear and a fundamental biological and socially transmitted “drive to belong” (2002, p.112) is posited. Dalal’s Post-Foulkesian position in particular appears to bear some relation to translations of *ubuntu* philosophy. A Visual Matrix is designed to produce a ‘space’ that is trustworthy for our thoughts and feelings by use of a quiet and uninterrupted space and the careful ‘soft’ facilitation of the researcher. In the African context of *ubuntu*, Ramose’s African relationality (see Ramose, Chapter 2, p.34) and arguably Dalal’s Post-Foulkesian notion of a ‘drive to belong’ may play a particular role (see also the Reverie in African Contexts and this Research section in this chapter, p.27). In her research in South Africa the South African art psychotherapist and artist Hayley Berman conducted a Social Dreaming session with community arts counsellors, student groups and the staff. Berman remarks that not only did “the dreams *keep* (my italics) coming in a tidal wave of images” but when the participants were invited to translate some of their contributions into an art image, they chose to work as a group saying, “We are different but we are one”, “Every one of us is important and make up the whole” (Berman, 2012, p.186).

Regarding a psycho-biological ground of shared experience in matrices, there is something notably sensory in the use of music alongside photography as a visual stimulus. The rhythmic and visceral qualities of music almost certainly stimulate a shared *embodied* experience rooted in biology, as or more powerfully than photographs, but still expressed in cultural form. However, as Manley says in his research using an artwork of photography, found objects and videos with the sound of talking in which the audio had been manipulated so that the words and intervening gaps and sounds of breath were played separately, “there is a complexity of talking

about “visual” as if it were separate from the other senses” (Manley, 2018, p.99). Across all three individual matrices in this research, there were examples of reverie and a production of images propelled by the sounds and music. These views and findings chime with the phenomenological thinking of the anthropologist Tim Ingold’s remark that “the environment that people inhabit is not sliced up along the lines of the sensory pathways by which they access it. It is the same world, whatever paths they take (2011, p.316). A notable performative example of this point came in the interviews when the healer MT looked at a photograph of a fellow Cameroonian being recorded playing traditional music (see Fig. 6.8, p.148) and responded with a joyous and embodied show of dancing to a memory of music.

Because of my personal experience of music, I intuited that it would be a productive way to stimulate shared associations. However, I primarily used music in addition to images because of its importance and pervasiveness in African art and culture (see Chapter 2 pp. 21-25 & 39-41. To intentionally omit it would have been a curatorial *faux pas* and a microscopic unintended example of the processes of assimilation and subordination to European and modernist totalization that non-Western art is too often subjected to in galleries and museums (Enwezor, 2013). Still, nothing in my music career quite prepared me for the powerful affirmation in the Yaounde’ Visual Matrix (see Chapter 7, p. 173) of “Music generates everything else. It is music, it is music ...”. When describing an indissoluble connection of the senses, Manley states something very important for traditional African art and aesthetics, leading to the African philosophical regard of ‘sound’ as a model of reality (Anyanwu, 1987; Ramose,2001). The musician and art specialist MA’s words “we believe that the mask is a religious drum” (Chapter 7, p. 168) carries the view that African ‘spirituality’ cannot be merely ascribed to the realm of metaphysics and may, as highlighted by Senghor, be understood as a philosophical perspective aligned with Spinozian and Bergsonian definitions of affect and matter (Bignall, 2021).¹

1. According to Senghor, it is significant that in Wolof, the main language of Senegal, there are at least three words to translate the word ‘spirit’: xel, sago, or degal, whereas images have to be used for the word ‘matter’: lef (thing) or yaram (body) (1970, p.184).

Photo ethnography and ad hoc Interviews

Another method and source of data was the practice of photo ethnography and the making of ad hoc interviews. Nick Emmel and Andrew Clark (2011) have discussed how walking and photographing alone in the vicinity or area of the research, enabled them to think reflexively about it, and I experienced the same thing during both visits. The ad hoc interviews usually started by me explaining my interest in the topic of traditional African art and often used my set of photographs of traditional African art or contemporary African art inspired by it, and/or involved discussions about traditional culture, and artefacts such as masks and musical instruments.

Scenic compositions

A secondary research method was the writing of scenic compositions. Originally called a 'pen portrait', these have been developed as a method over the course of several studies by Lynn Froggett (Froggett and Chamberlayne 2004, Froggett 2007, Froggett et al 2007, Froggett and Little 2012, Froggett and Hollway 2010, Froggett et al 2014). Scenic compositions are brief in length, often no more than a page, 'literary' portrayals that capture the details of the research encounter whilst retaining "access to the embodied and emotional responses of those who write read and share them" (Froggett et al, 2014). They are an important self-reflexive tool. The writing of these also provided an *aide memoire* and additional source of data.

Like visual matrices, scenic compositions bring together post-Kleinian ideas about modes of knowing with Lorenzer's concept of scenic understanding. They make use of a creative writing style to preserve the researcher's imaginings and sensory impressions. These are then preserved within the aesthetic and literary culturally shared tropes and genres within the composition. The same text also remains open to hermeneutic and thematic analysis. In Ehrenzweig's syncretistic perception, the observer best achieves "a personalized and embodied appreciation of art" by a process of dedifferentiation (Froggett & Hollway, 2010, p.12). The unconscious scanning of the mind provides an un-differentiated view of a text allowing ideas to emerge and link organically. For Lorenzer, the 'provocations' in a scenic composition allow the

researcher's emotional experience vis-a-vis the topic to emerge and be available for analysis (ibid)). Scenic compositions conform with the psychosocial aim of working with the emotional, irrational, and aesthetic within the research process and take the researcher's reflexivity seriously enough to render it into a type of secondary data. In the current study these were used in the writing of the case studies.

Reflexive diary

In addition to taking photographs and making field notes, I contributed to a reflexive diary during my visits. Reflexive writing in this study is understood in the manner of the Tavistock Institute which integrates theory while attempting to retain a deeply personal voice (Brown, 2006). Reflexive writing in psychosocial research is an ameliorative response to concerns of the inevitable influence of subjectivity and research relationships on research outcomes (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013). These notes provided a locus for my autobiographical exploration. The advantage of working with a reflexive diary has not been explicitly reflected in qualitative research methods literature (Watts, 2009). In addition, even today there are few books on the emotional consequences of fieldwork (Jones & Watt, 2010). The reflexive diary was read prior to the writing of the scenic compositions. In turn, the scenic compositions were read prior to the writing of the case studies that appear in Chapter 6 and the visual matrices in that appear in Chapter 7. Collectively all the methods provided many opportunities for a type of triangulation of findings. Together they provided differing perspectives according to their inherent aspects. These differing perspectives helped to produce and guide the interpretation of the data in general.

A Brief Overview of the History and Geography of Cameroon

Before reading about the more precise aspects of this research's methodology and progress it is useful to ensure that the reader has some knowledge of the history and geography of Cameroon and its peoples. Without this knowledge the reader may struggle to understand and contextualise the factual information and decisions made and concerns that arose in connection with the research. Where the reader is already highly familiar with the country of Cameroon, they may wish to skip this brief overview.

Cameroon, officially The Republic of Cameroon, is a country in Central Africa. Due to its immense ethnic and geographic diversity, it is frequently described as “Africa in miniature”. It covers an area of 475,650 square kilometres or approximately twice that of the UK. The population is approximately 25 million with a roughly urban versus rural population split of 50/50. The terrain of Cameroon includes lush rainforest astride volcanic hills, thick equatorial rainforest, sparsely vegetated plateaus, and dry savannas. There are over 275 ethno-linguistic groups that very broadly correspond to four major groups: Sawa, Grassfield, Beti Fang, and Sahelo Sahelien. These languages and dialects remain commonly spoken, although English and French are the official languages and Arabic is widely used in the North to learn the Koran and for some religious practices. Estimates of the proportion of population observing traditional African religious beliefs are 40%, with the remainder being 40% Christian and 20% Muslim. However, examples of syncretism in religious belief complicate these estimates and it is fair to say that today in Cameroon traditional beliefs are still very much alive, especially in rural areas. Prior to independence in 1960 (Francophone regions) and 1961 (Anglophone regions), for about 40 years, part of the country had experienced French colonial rule and part British. Prior to that was a period of German expansion. Both the colonial period and the introduction of Christianity, sometimes involved acts of violence (West, 2011). In the 18th century Cameroonians ferociously resisted foreign religions (Bettoto, 2012).

In recent years, the mainly English-speaking North West and South West Regions has undergone unrest and campaigns of agitation led by separatists. The Anglophone separatists claim they face marginalization by the mainly Francophone rest of the country. Since the second half of 2017, life in the two regions has almost come to a standstill because of tension and conflict which have been at a cost of about 3,000 lives and 500,000 forced from their homes (BBC, 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-44452409>, Accessed 25th February, 2020).

Process and Methods

Both research trips to Cameroon, were facilitated by Dr Joachen Bandindjel who is a clinical psychologist from the Universities of Yaoundé, Douala and Dschang in

Cameroon. His interests include cross-cultural conceptions of mental illness, traditional African approaches to therapy and their relevance in specialized education. He has written works on art therapy, ethno-medicine, trauma and post-traumatic experiences, curse and trauma. During my research, his assistance in daily planning, ethnographic knowledge of how to approach traditional healers and when necessary, clarification of their meanings, was invaluable to me. Further, his teaching at the three universities in Cameroon provided me with ready access to the cohorts of students there, plus meant that I also met other academics in Cameroon.

My travel around Cameroon meant spending up to 11 hours a day using a mixture of second-class coach, local taxis, and local motorbike taxis. This was exhausting for me a 60-year old British man but it was an essential part of my getting to see and becoming accustomed to everyday life in Cameroon. By the end of the two visits I had started to take for granted travelling by night on buses whilst nearly always sitting at least three persons to two seats. In the extreme heat with no air conditioning and bumpy roads, I often thought the bus suspension would surely break. In addition, these nighttime journeys were nearly always interrupted by the system of military road checkpoints. For these everyone on the bus would have to disembark and wait in line to have their identity cards and in my case passport checked. These road checks could be tense moments for everyone. In practice, the first visit functioned as a context orientation period, as well as an ethnographic data collection period with photography. I regard the whole experience of travelling by 'second-class' bus, Toyota minibus and two-person pillion on motorbike taxis as invaluable for bringing me closer to the experience of everyday life amongst the majority of Cameroonians. An amusing moment was when I was driven on the wrong side of the road, on the back of a motorbike taxi directly into oncoming traffic. I very quickly understood that the driver was in fact immensely practiced at doing this and I felt surprisingly safe.

First visit Process and Methods

First visit ethnography with photography

Especially on my first visit to Cameroon, I could not have known how my interest in the

use of photography would aid and inform my research (also see the first parts of the MT & MS case studies). During the first visit I took an immense number of photographs and a small amount of video. This activity functioned as an *aide memoir*, visual process of note taking and reflexivity plus a sociable activity. During the first visit, two encounters with traditional healers very smoothly morphed into a highly mobile and sensory type of interview with photography. The photography worked like a 'can opener' or 'ice breaker'; a relaxed way of communicating things about myself and what I was interested in (Collier and Collier, 1986; Pink, 2007). In the two interviews, I was actively directed by participants and told what objects and views to photograph and which not to photograph. It was agreed I could return and interview again. My informants were informed that they would receive copies of the photographs being taken then.

Ad hoc interviews in the first visit

Ad hoc interviews in addition to ones following a process of recruitment (see *Interview recruitment in the first visit p.105*) were very much a feature of both visits. Given that my own view was necessarily that of an outsider it was helpful to the process of enquiry to meet and spend time with as many people as possible. Conversations with strangers who were curious about me for instance, naturally occurred during my stay and even whilst flying to and from Cameroon. After I explained my research topic, participants would often provide a related narrative or anecdote. Although ad hoc interviews were generally much briefer than the arranged interviews and other methods they were still a useful source of inspiration and triangulation. These interviews were either recorded as written notes or using a digital recorder and sometimes photography.

Interview recruitment in the first visit

In the first visit, except for the ad hoc interviews, I relied upon Dr Banindjel's contacts wherever we went in Cameroon to work as intermediaries in a process of recruitment. Dr Banindjel's own research interests include traditional African healing. Traditional healers were mainly selected as the primary interview participants because of both

their knowledge of traditional culture and religion, and their practice that involves traditional artefacts, singing and dance. The breadth of their traditional role is exemplified by how in *nganga* the *Ki-Kongo* word for ‘expertise’, translates as, “traditional priest, doctor, savant, expert” (Farris Thompson, 1974, p.2). In Cameroon as elsewhere on the continent, a great deal of syncretism following the historical arrival of Christianity, Islam and modern science in medicine, has transformed matters so that the term ‘healer’ sometimes includes practitioners who for instance, either in part or fully, also practice a form of Christianity or Islam. However, the overlapping with traditional beliefs should not be confused with an abandonment of traditional beliefs and in many instances is closer to the appropriation of a new religious liturgy (see Bravmann, 1974; Mouiche, 2005; West, 2011). The approach to recruiting traditional healers with a highly indigenous world view and ‘religiosity’ was a mixture of consulting intermediaries and trial and error.

My primary Cameroonian contact and organizer, Dr Banindjel, spoke both French and English but had previously researched healers from Francophone areas of Cameroon only. I do not speak French and so we decided upon recruiting in the Anglophone mainly English-speaking North-West and South West provinces. However, even within the Anglophone areas traditional healers may not speak good English. Their list of languages may be: any of nearly 200 languages; French, English, German, Pidgin English, ‘Pidgin’ French or *Camfranglais* (the Pidgin languages are typically an ‘Africanised’ and/or mixture of French, or English or German that borrow rhythmically and syntactically from indigenous languages), I knew therefore that I would encounter a variety of problems of translation. However, by travelling to the heart of some of the Anglophone regions and with a local intermediary to help with any Pidgin English, I hoped that any linguistic challenges could be respectfully managed. The aim at all times was for a respectful communication and the mediation of a possible imbalance of power (Jones & Watt, 2010).

First visit interview participants

During the first visit, I met and interviewed seven healers. These were:

1. M. Singer (MS) was a male high-ranking healer. This was evidenced by his possession and use of a nine 'horned' mask. He used many traditional artefacts and music in his practice and was trained by his grandfather. He preferred to speak in French and was approximately 60 years old. (See MS Case Study in Chapter 6, p.130)
2. Mr Top (MT) was a male high ranking healer and diviner who possessed many traditional artefacts. He was head of a regional association of traditional healers that has over 300 members. He was trained by his father. He spoke in Pidgin English. He was approximately 85 years old. (See MT Case Study in Chapter 6, p.144)
3. Ms Angela was a female who claimed to have been ordained to heal by the Christian God. She was very active in two church choirs and used only herbs and "prayer to God" but had a highly traditional dug basin of water in the ground where she worked and had piles of the leafy 'peace tree', which carries immense traditional cultural and religious symbolism (see Chapter 3, p.65), which she used extensively in her preparations. She spoke in colloquial English and was approximately 40 years old.
4. Mr Farmer (MF) was a male 'traditionalist' who used art and performance as praxis. He spoke in a mix of Pidgin and colloquial English and was approximately 65 years old. (See MF Case Study in Chapter 6, p.151)
5. He was another male who stated that he was Muslim and that he only worked with herbs but was said by an informant to secretly use artefacts. He was an Anglophone speaker and approximately 40 years old.
6. He was another male, who claimed to have learnt from a dream that he should heal, but was extremely evasive about describing his practice and declined to be recorded. He spoke in colloquial English and was approximately 35 years old.

7. Finally, there was a Nigerian immigrant who claimed to only work with herbs but refused to be audio recorded. He spoke in English and was approximately 50 years old.

1 to 5 were recorded using a digital recorder. Sometimes supplementary notes were written in my field diary. In the cases of 6 and 7, I wrote notes from memory a short time afterwards. As described above the first visit meetings with MS and MT very smoothly morphed into a highly mobile type of interview with photography. I made notes from the others.

Recruitment relied on the suggested strategy of Dr Banindjel of working with local intermediaries who were known to him. The healers were first contacted by mobile phone about the research some days ahead and then again on arrival in their part of the country, often after an overnight journey by bus. If a visit was possible, we then continued to their precise location. Nothing more formal than this would have been practical because of the highly independent organization of healers. First, my Ph D status and the nature of the research was explained to them. They were then given a form that gave the same information. This form and all other forms had been agreed previously by the UCLan Ethics Committee (see APPENDIX A). If the healers agreed to be interviewed, they were informed of their right to withdraw from the interview at any time, their right to withdraw their data at any time and, that it would not be possible to withdraw their data once the final analysis had been undertaken. They were also provided with details for further contact, and sources of support in case of personal upset (APPENDIX B), and requested to sign a consent form (see APPENDIX C). They were then presented with separate forms detailing these same points for interviewing and/or photography and video (see APPENDICES D & E). Copies of all forms were left with participants. In the event of a full interview a transactional payment was made, as would have been offered for their healing services. It is customary for traditional healers to receive gifts and/or payment from indigenous clients and visitors. Gifts and payment are important as symbols of respect and appreciation as much as they are transactional. The amount the healers received from me was a little more than they would have received from a typical Cameroonian client. The aim was to communicate to the healers my sincere respect for them and

recognition of their customary rewards, but not in a tokenistic way. I believe the combination of payment together with working through an appropriate Cameroonian intermediary and/or gatekeeper, meant that the slightly greater money uninfluenced the interviews.

Second Visit Process and Methods

The experience of the first visit enabled me to add detail to and refine any existing plans for the second visit. In the second visit, ethnography with photography (also a small amount of video), and ad hoc interviews continued, but I was now able to enquire more deeply into the topic of traditional African art and music, using a range of planned methods. The first visit both left me with a variety of questions and allowed me to develop my research methods for the second visit. The research design in the second visit created a contrast between the 'traditional' and the contemporary urban educated out of which emerged interesting instances of hybridisation. In this way, differences between urban and rural populations related to the research topic were discoverable and used in a discussion of a picture of negotiation between tradition and modernity in Cameroon.

Second visit photo elicitation and sensory interviewing

In the second visit interviews, photo elicitation, observations, photographs, follow up questions from the first visit, plus new discussion of objects in the environment, were all used to elicit responses. The French cultural theorist and philosopher Roland Barthes has discussed the polysemic character of photographs, how they may be interpreted differently by different people and have a trail of meanings (1981). An important reason for including the technique of photo elicitation was that it offers the advantages of helping to manage language difficulties and/or problems of working through interpreters (Collier & Collier, 1986, p.106). Following the method of Susan Schwartz (1989), the participants were first told that they would be shown some photographs and they should talk about any of them together or separately in any way that they wished. The photographs were then spread out in front of the participants in a random fashion. The photographs (n14) in the current study showed traditional

African art objects, rituals and contemporary works influenced by tradition (see examples in Fig. 2.1, p.16). The set of photographs included ones taken in the first visit and from meetings that had so smoothly morphed into a highly mobile type of interview with photography. The overall selection of photographs was designed to represent examples of traditional images of art (including contemporary work influenced by it). Some of these were examples of the art and performance of the regions of Cameroon being visited. The interviews were usually with three to five people present (a more detailed description of the process is given in the individual case studies). Pink's observation that many ethnographic interviews are a negotiation between the research aims and "the relationship and particular style and sociality that develops ..." (2015, p.75), is apposite. Provided I was given consent to do so, the interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. (see APPENDIX H FOR ALL 14 PHOTO ELICITATION PHOTOGRAPHS)

Second visit Visual Matrix sessions

During my second visit to Cameroon, I also conducted three Visual Matrix sessions at each of the University of Dschang, University of Douala and University of Yaoundé (an overview of the delivery of each session is given at the start of each individual Visual Matrix report). The method allows the emergence of a shared type of free-association and is usually led by photographs or other visual stimuli but because of the importance of music and its traditional accompanying role with other art forms (Farris Thompson, 1974; Holdstock, 2000; Gore, 2007; Visona' et al, 2000; Ebede-Ndi, 2016), both images of traditional art (including contemporary work influenced by it) and a soundtrack of traditional music were presented together as stimulus material for the sessions. This soundtrack had been created with the help of my long-time Cameroonian artistic collaborator and friend Tchoumo "Xumo" Nounjio and was a continuous sequence that faded between examples of traditional instruments played alone, massed drumming, a field recording of a ceremony in Cameroon, and a modern studio recording inspired by traditional music. All the sections were wordless to avoid the influence of words and to allow the emergence of undirected associations, ideas and feelings from participants (to listen go to <http://neoglobal.net/music.html>). No doubt my many years of devising set-lists for music concerts and a desire to satisfy may have influenced the sequencing.

However overall, I am convinced that the selection was an appropriately broad one that did not simply entertain but communicated the depth, variety and culture of traditional of Cameroonian music.

The images were augmented sets of (20 & 24 instead of 14) of the photographs used for the photo elicitation interviews that showed traditional Cameroonian art objects, rituals and contemporary works influenced by tradition (see individual matrix session reports for more detail). For the final matrix session Dr Banindjel selected four more images, to reflect Cameroon's ethnic variety a little more widely (see APPENDIX I for additional images to APPENDIX J). These additional images were from some photographs that I had taken during the days before at the Museum of Civilization in Dschang. This type of refinement prior to my fieldwork arguably increased the 'generalizability' of the images I used. This growing level of collaboration and confidence between Dr Banindjel and myself born of time spent was also interesting in general for the application of the method and would, I believe, be beneficial for any future studies in Cameroon.

The soundtrack was a 10.5 minute long and was played through a portable but adequately loud device. The duration of the presentation was the same length as the soundtrack, 10.5 minutes. It was only possible for participants to sit in a 'snowflake' configuration in two Visual Matrix sessions, and none of the locations were quiet spaces. All the locations differed from the North European norm and had for instance, a tropical architecture of openings in the walls instead of closed glass windows. The site of two university locations created interruptions by socially loud groups of students passing by, whilst the third location was next to the busy playground of an elementary school. At one university, the location was a very large lecture theatre with fixed forward-facing seating which made it impossible for the participants to sit in a 'snowflake' configuration.

The activity of the sessions in two of the locations was not 'soft', they had something of an animated classroom atmosphere and the participants often raised their hands to obtain permission from Dr Banindjel to speak their associations. All the same, I noted a feeling of seriousness, passion and strong, sometimes emotional, engagement from

the participants. Also, a feeling of comfort with, rather than constraint by, authority. Put simply, it felt to me more like a very relaxed professional and/or scholastic gathering, than a period of quiet meditation. The existence of reverie in the Visual Matrix, or Bion's idea of a daydreaming, "meditative" state of attention (Froggett et al, 2014, p.17), is usually considered the optimal condition for associative thinking. Durings the sessions I became anxious that there was not enough reverie, and the very large and small group sizes and dissimilarities from 'normal' North European matrix environments and progress. However, when I later asked Dr Banindjel whether reverie had been there, he said that it had. My anxiety that no associative processes and depth responses had occurred was allayed. Much later, I was able to discuss this issue with Dr Ebede-Ndi the Cameroonian social psychologist who translated the sessions and who inevitably had to listen very closely to the recordings of the sessions. In his words, "they (the participants) were speaking from the bottom of their heart" (personal communication). The interpretation of the Visual Matrix sessions also revealed that the associative process and imagery had been produced from reverie. I consider that Ebede-Ndi's comment was particularly helpful. The idea of 'speaking from the heart' is obviously not precisely the same as reverie but brings together similar issues of the role of imagination, affect and embodiment in experience. Two of the Visual Matrices (n28 & n44) lasted nearly an hour and had between 15 and 20 minute PMDs; one Visual Matrix(n6) was 30 minutes with a 15 minutes PMD (see individual session reports for more detail).

Second visit interview and Visual Matrix participants and recruitment

The planned research in the second visit began by re-interviewing two male 'traditionalists' who used art and performance as praxis and the one female, who claimed to have been ordained to heal by the Christian God and used only herbs and "prayer to God". The agreement with Dr Banindjel was to continue to work with intermediaries from an Anglophone region and to try and recruit at least two extra traditional healers who held traditional religious belief and used traditional artefacts and performance as praxis. The recruitment for the visual matrices had been an important part of discussions with Dr Banindjel from the very beginning of planning the research. As a lecturer Dr Banindjel routinely worked with Psychology Masters

students and this group presented a good example of modern European style educated and language speaking Cameroonians. The locations of the students were the universities of Yaounde', Dschang and Douala and spread across a broad part of the country. In the weeks before my second visit the Visual Matrix sessions were advertised to Dr Banindjel's many Psychology Masters students in all three locations. The university student participants came from a broad selection of ethnicities and places throughout Cameroon. Our belief was that a good number of these would be from the Anglophone regions and/or speak good English. All of the students in the groups except for one in the Yaounde' group were Cameroonian. The student from a different country was from Chad. Across the three groups the proportion that grew up in rural villages compared to a city was approximately 40/60. The character of the sample groups of the Visual Matrix sessions compared to the traditional healers, set up a rough contrast of ideas/mind-sets between the 'traditional' and the contemporary urban educated. However in Cameroon, as in other African countries, traditional ontologies remain common in both rural and urban localities, and the urban context alone remains "a powerful lens through which to address debates around ontological pluralism" (Wilhelm-Solomon, Bukasa & Núñez, 2017, p.146).

Second visit arranged interviews

In addition to conducting interviews with traditional healers and three Visual Matrix sessions, in the interim between visit one and visit two the brother of my long-time Cameroonian artistic collaborator and friend Tchoumo "Xumo" Nounjio (see Chapter 1, pp. 3-4), Rass Nganmo Nounjio, arranged for me to conduct some interviews with some contemporary Cameroonian artists and musicians. One was with a 'tradi-modern' sculptor Joseph Francis Sumegne; one a street musician; one an instrument maker; and one a 'musicologist' with a connection to a Cameroonian traditional culture museum (see MA Case Study in Chapter 6, p.161). These interviews with contemporary Cameroonian artists of various types helped me to further contextualise traditional art and music within the complex picture of tradition and modernity in Cameroon today. This was important if I was to accurately frame my research within a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1975). I also conducted a further eight ad hoc interviews with people either known by Dr Banindjel or entirely unknown by either of us. In the

interviews with Sumegne, and the 'musicologist', and some of ad hoc interviews, the same set of photographs used with the healers was also used. Many of the questions in these interviews were informed by the ethnography, photography and interviews that had already been conducted with traditional healers.

Process of Data Analysis

Process of interview data analysis

The process of analysing the interviews was both concurrent with and followed the data collection. I continuously reread the field and reflexive diary notes, and reviewed any audio recordings, photographs and/or video, noting any thoughts and theories as they emerged. This approach accords with Silverman's idea of 'comprehensive data treatment' (2017). Before finally writing each case study, I first reread the field and reflexive diary notes, scenic compositions and I looked at any related photographs. Audio transcriptions were completely read through before being read through in a process of back and forth interpretation; constantly re-evaluating what was being said, how it was said, and the affective character of the research encounter. By this process of working, the themes and explanatory quotes that emerged were recorded within the Microsoft Word version of the transcript using a different font and highlight colours. Although an attempt was made to separate the themes and related ideas, it was characteristic of them that they sometimes overlapped. Whenever synergy was found, connections with existing literature and my working hypotheses were noted alongside the quotes in bold type. The ad hoc interviews were also read for any connecting themes and data from them is used whenever it helps illuminate the analysis of traditional healer's accounts or Visual Matrix sessions.

Overall, a recall of the sensory and affective dimensions of the interviews or scenic experience of them were used in combination with the physical transcriptions to produce reports that would eventually comprise the main body of four case studies plus summary sections. I often erred on the side of using large quotes to emphasize the participant's voice and to ameliorate the risk of distortion and/or a 'too close' editing of their words. Through my authoring I have tried to bring the observer and the observed together in a balanced way that reproduces my participants as people rather

than objects of study (Wolcott, 2009,). Finally, the material from each case study was compared, and an overall case study report was produced in which common themes and differences were discussed. The themes that emerged across the four case studies provide a kaleidoscopic view of the complex topic of traditional African art and music and in accord with the subject of Psychosocial Studies they sometimes crossed over and are not necessarily 'closed off' for the sake of clarity. The interview findings were later discussed alongside the matrix reports and other data.

Process of Visual Matrix data analysis

As is required in the Visual Matrix Method analysis is conducted by a panel of researchers usually in several 'passes' over the data. The first is normally done close after, even the same day, in order to help preserve the experiential immediacy of the impressions that remain from the Visual Matrix. The use of panel analysis for at least part of the analysis is encouraged in psychosocial research methods, because it helps avoid examples of 'wild analysis', where the subjectivity of the single researcher leads to examples of runaway unchecked interpretation (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Chamberlayne, Bornat & Wengraf, 2000). In my research, the panel comprised Dr Julian Manley and myself for two of the visual matrices and Professor Lynn Froggett, Dr Julian Manley and myself for one. Each of the three matrices required three analysis sessions. We worked using the individual matrix transcripts, first taking turns to sequentially read aloud sections of the transcript. Then we pursued cycles of interpretation moving from relatively experience near scenic views of the matrix to relatively experience distant interpretations (Froggett et al, 2014, p.51), in each of the three sessions the panel worked back and forth between the emerging meanings and the matrix material, asking: What is being said?; How is it being said?; Why is it being said in a particular way?; and what does the overall text do? My own disposition to interpret in a particular way was discussed to encourage reflexivity. In the second set of panel analysis sessions, a week later, the transcript was read again and the distance created by the break was used to find new meanings and links. In the third panel analysis session the panel is ideally augmented with an outsider who has expertise relevant to the material. In the current study, a planned visit by Dr Banindjel to the UK failed to transpire because of visa difficulties in his visiting the UK. Instead, copies of

the Visual Matrix data were sent to him and Dr Ebede-Ndi and they were communicated with by video internet.

The material from each matrix session was written up as a report with a summary section. Finally, the material from each report was compared, and an overall Visual Matrix report produced in which any common themes and differences were discussed. In accord with the Deleuzian idea of non-linear or rhizomatic connections, sometimes the ideas produced from the matrices connected with others or trailed off feeling incomplete. The matrix findings were later discussed alongside the case study interviews and other data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical codes in qualitative research have developed alongside the field itself, plus changes in technology and communication. In general, their purpose is to ensure the: dignity; privacy; safety as a result of the research; and confidentiality of participants (Punch, 1986). In the current research, I always tried to conduct affairs in a respectful, responsive and supportive fashion. Sometimes this was also a frustrating impediment because of the limited time that I had access to participants and in Cameroon. For instance, in the case of one participant, due to a failure in communicating precise arrangements beforehand, on my arrival, the participant insisted that he did not have much time.

Before beginning the research, ethical approval was sought from the Psychology and Social Work Ethics Committee at UCLAN and the Institutional Ethics Committee of the University of Douala. All participants, for instance healers, university students, planned and ad hoc interviewees, were adults who participated voluntarily. All of the case study participants and some of the ad hoc interviewees had in fact been interviewed before, by for instance other academics, and/or media featuring art and music. The university students, were Masters psychology students who had been taught about research ethics themselves and participated in the current research voluntarily. Prior to all interviews and matrix sessions, the topic of the research and the origin of the researcher was discussed with the participants. A letter of consent was used with a

separate information sheet that explained the right: to withdraw from the study at any time without giving an explanation; the right to withdraw their data up to one month after the interview; the maintenance of confidentiality by anonymisation; plus my name, the address of my university, and my telephone number and email. The information sheets used advised of the opportunity to gain support from Dr Bandindjel or myself should any emotional issues arise from participation in the Visual Matrix. In addition, in the case of the arranged interviews the participants had already been given Dr Banindjel's telephone number. Any interview participants who I hoped to photograph and/or video were also presented separate consent forms and information sheets for photography and video. These contained the same parameters of consent and information as the interview forms and sheets. The photography and video consent forms stipulated that no images showing people's faces would be used and in publications any use would conform to the copyright laws of Cameroon. After the interview, the participants were debriefed. Participants retained their own copies of all the letters of consent. (see APPENDICES B,C,D,E,F,G for examples of all interview and Visual Matrix session information and consent forms)

Regarding confidentiality, traditional healers as participants are complicated cases because their lives and activities are 'professionally' clothed in customary secrecy plus contain religious magical contracts with both the ancestors and spiritual forces. They are for these reasons both highly motivated to not express some things. However, as holders of cultural knowledge who play a major role in the pragmatic use of the art and music of Africa, they remain a key source of data in this type of research. At the end of an interview in the second visit, one healer explained to me how he had sacrificed a chicken after he had given permission for me to photograph a particular mask during the first visit, so that the associated 'power' would not be angry. Apparently, I had been given privileged access to both the artefact and its meaning. However, I purposely do not use the photograph in this study because I feel we have now forged a friendship based on his understanding of my sincere respect for his beliefs. Perhaps one day I will meet him again and the same mask will prove an interesting topic of discussion. There are clashes and sources of anxiety, the 'agony of betrayal', that can come about for both the participant and researcher in qualitative research (Fine, 1995; Jones & Watt, 2010).

In the current research, the ethical point that merely 'giving something back' may not fully satisfy inequalities, power dynamics and status differences between the researcher and participant (Bourdieu, 2000), is offset by the way traditional healers are not squeamish about the idea of a transaction. What often seemed more important was the interaction with their, 'brokers', family relatives and or close friends. Even minor confusions with these persons, was a potential threat to successful recruitment and the research process. However, overall the traditionally often transactional nature of healers' practice meant that there was the requirement of a commercial exchange, similar to any Western private therapy situation. Accordingly, the healers were all paid for their interviews.

The Role of the Researcher's Life and Subjectivity

As in many fields of social science research today, Psychosocial Studies fully acknowledges the role of researcher subjectivity in research. However, it is principally in psychosocial reflexivity ideas of unconscious inter-subjectivity and an invisible interplay between the researcher and researched is accommodated (processes of transference and counter transference) (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). The researcher is no more transparent to themselves than any of their participants and the reality of research is a series of relationships replete with unconscious subjectivity (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013). In this Role of the Researcher section, I provide a brief autobiography. This is not simply an unconsidered catalogue of my life story so far - in it I try to provide a picture of both my achievements and what has made me as a feeling person because as Walkerdine puts it:

The researcher's feelings tell us how a researcher comes to produce such an account and opens it to the possibility of different readings of the same material. It tells us that the process of reading itself is not all in the text but is produced out of a complex interaction between reader and text. But perhaps it tells us more than this, I am no more, no different from the subjects of my research (Walkerdine, 1997, p.73).

My personal history is so wrapped up with this subject that at times, especially during the first visit, I felt very emotional. Rumen Petrov remarks that research can also be "a process of general mourning and working through" (2009, p. 193). My interest in the

research topic of African art is linked to my earlier career in the arts, which was often inspired by and working with African music and art and also by many discussions with African artist friends. I am a black British male of 60. I grew up in a highly white area of North London but at home we had a fine collection of music that included my parents' Sarah Vaughan and Brook Benton; and my elder brother's Jimmy Smith, and Fela Kuti records. My parents and their friends were like many black people in Britain necessarily faced with current debates on race, the newly independent commonwealth countries, and the civil-rights movement in the U.S.A. My mother in particular, always held a keen interest in the history of Africa and African diaspora. I remember how in 1977 all my family sat glued to the T.V. as Alex Hayley's iconic series 'Roots' was aired. One of my father's war veteran friends was an important black activist in London during the 60s and 70s. His name was Andre Shervington (Tuckey, 2002) and he was instrumental in founding the Notting Hill Carnival. I attended this from an early age and I was always struck by the broad popularity and power of Afro-Caribbean carnival to transform such a big part of London and bring peoples together.

As a psychology undergraduate at the end of the 1970's, I was exposed to both ignorance and a not always guarded racism. I was surprised to encounter this in higher education. I was much younger then and believe I survived it because I was already accustomed to it since childhood and simply went on sublimating my resentment. But I have never got over it and imagine that it is part of my motivation even in this study. After graduating with a poor degree, I went on to have a moderately successful career as a jazz-pop musician, selling over 3 million records and touring internationally. My interest in African music grew further in those years because of the opportunity to work with some excellent African players and experience something of the African music scene in Paris.

Later my success in the music industry waned and I diversified my playing into theatre, and street arts. But the African influence remained and I collaborated with a Cameroonian musician and architecture student to create a series of shows inspired by ideas taken from traditional African rituals. These shows were a frenetic mix of music, dance, live art and sculpture (Nzi Dada, 2018) and the discussions I had in the creation of them were the foundation of my ambition to research the subject of traditional

African art and music more fully. I imagine I can be viewed as an Africanist, but I believe that this position empowers me to come back to central issues of its meaning and value and re-engage them in ways that others have not done. This study is as much a space for me to reflect, as to report and these concerns have greatly featured in the motivation and direction of this research.

My reflexive diary notes from when I was in Cameroon were very sparse in number and quality. I did not feel easily able to write whilst there. This was partly just exhaustion from the heat, arduous travel and language barriers but I know that deep down I was also emotionally conflicted. These notes are more like observational and ad hoc interview notes. I now find them stunted emotionally, possibly because for a long time in the process of this research there were things that I was too tired of, both as a person and researcher, to write. This example is rooted in my observation of a broom outside a neighbour's door and watching a woman across the street sweeping the ground in front of a house. Reading it now, I think it reflects how I felt then:

13.10. 16

I like the reed brooms and hand brooms. They are so effective but seem almost still like the plants that they were.

I was perhaps feeling the strain of sublimated activity and the resentment I describe in Chapter 1 (p.2). Also, I was certainly labouring under the recent death of my father but I now understand that that feeling never truly goes away. I think that for a long time I found it very difficult to take a critical distance from my data and this affected my ability to think about the data contextually. This meant that there was maybe a resistance to taking on the tensions over modernity presented in the data, especially by the Visual Matrix students. This filtered my expression of what was important in the data and is why some of the selection and analysis emerged at a very late stage. In part, there may have been a tendency to idealize and over-identify with traditional African culture that was emotionally linked to the death of my parents. This may have represented a search for enduring 'parental' objects in a context where the ancestors guarantee continuity and meaning. However, as I explain in my brief autobiography above, I have long been passionate about African art and music and so I also know that

some idealization was simply born of enthusiasm for it. If nothing else, it has left me with an expanded way of thinking about what is sometimes prejudicially described as “mystical power” (Mbiti, 1969, p189). Overall I would say that my experiences in Cameroon alerted me to how spirituality is something everyday and axiomatic to the topic of traditional culture and art in Cameroon. I hope that I have succeeded in communicating its pervasiveness without falling into the trap of creating a feeling of the exotic about it.

I started this section by declaring that my personal history is very wrapped up with this research and it is for this reason that I have included this brief autobiography and notes from my reflexive diary are included as an appendix (see APPENDIX K). As Stephen Fineman puts it:

We are all prisoners of our personal history. Repressed feelings do not disappear from the psyche but are held in check through various mechanisms of defence which disguise the conscious presentation of feelings (Fineman, 1993, p.24).

As I have already stated my research is definitely in part motivated by a type of ‘unfinished business’ about the experience of racism in my life and some unanswered questions about part of my heritage. Looking back, I think this contributed to making me feel an increased responsibility to do justice to the people that I met and interviewed and the country of Cameroon. However, I feel happy that this may have been one of those occasions when a feeling of stress and responsibility has been a positive thing and helped to ensure that my research has been both ethical and respectful of the people I met along the way. I can only hope that this section and the ‘write-up’ of this research has communicated enough of who I am for the reader to make an informed decision to trust my account and read on (Behar, 2003).

Translation Issues in this Research

Translators have long been used in social science research within a researcher’s own country (Venuti, 1998; Temple & Boguisia, 2008; Temple & Koterba, 2009). Further, in an increasing globalized world characterized by high levels of diversity and overall

increasing migration into Western countries (Hugo, 2005; Prowse & Goddard, 2010), incidences of it will be naturally encountered more through time. In the current study there were firstly 'two' combinations of translation required, from Pidgin English to English and secondly from Pidgin French and/or French to English. Both types occurred both within the interview situation and afterwards in the preparation of transcripts. The health and social care researcher Boguisia Temple and linguist Katerba (2009) argue against the treatment of language translation in research as an undifferentiated medium or uninfluenced by who translates. However, the current research project is a psychosocial study also, and so already challenges any assumptions about the unitary and rational subject and researcher within research situations (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

In the current research, all translation from Pidgin English or *Camfranglais* or 'Pidgin' French or French during interviews with rural participants was done with my gratitude either by Dr Banindjel or a local intermediary. Although a university academic Dr Banindjel grew up in a rural part of Cameroon and at regular intervals goes back to experience family life there. Further, the intermediary most often involved was also near to finishing his Masters in Psychology but was ethnically local, or from nearby. Both Dr Banindjel and he may therefore be nominally regarded as possessing an insider status along with their translation skills plus a well-developed desire to provide 'good untransformed' data. Nevertheless, in many fields of enquiry problems have been associated with a simplistic ascription of insider status to the translator based upon a common language alone. In many issues of class, age, and generation may still be an influence on the interview process. In the example of modern-day Cameroon, ethnic difference may frequently be at play and involve subconscious cultural presuppositions (Gumperz, 1982). Further, as Baker describes, there can be no neutral "spaces in between" and "a politically attuned account of translation or translators would not place them either outside or inbetween cultures. It would locate them at the heart of the interaction" (in Temple & Katerba, 2009).

In the current research, both French and Pidgin French, interview and Visual Matrix recorded data were translated and transcribed by Dr Ebede-Ndi a Cameroonian from a francophone region of the country who graduated from the same university in Yaoundé used in the current research for the second Visual Matrix session. He is an

Assistant Professor of East West Psychology and teaches both academic writing and research methods as a fellow at the Centre for Writing and Scholarship in the California Institute of Integral Studies. His own doctoral research explored connections between African healing practices and psychoanalysis and he has contributed to many other cases of research. He would undoubtedly be conscious of problems such as loss of meaning in translation due to what Temple and Koterba (2009) refer to as 'tidying up', or the insensitive use of correct grammar. Similarly, the problem of what Lawrence Venuti (1998) calls the 'domestication' of texts, due to a failure to consider possible loss or change of meaning due to differences between words and concepts in different languages. Ebede-Ndi's credentials for the task are, in short, extremely good, however once again, the reflexivity and lives of both researchers and translators are inevitably engaged in the research process.

Leaving the Field

Leaving the field is not simply about 'winding things up'. Real relationships may have been established during the research and there is an implied responsibility on the part of the researcher (Scott-Jones & Watt, 2010). However, as already stated in the current research, I am 'especially' attached to the topic of enquiry. I am now overjoyed to have visited Cameroon and would gladly go back and visit it again. I am likewise overjoyed to have become acquainted with so many people there. This includes the academics and 'intermediaries' who translated and aided me, and the musicians, artists and above all traditional healers with their intimate knowledge of the topic of traditional art and music that I love so much. After returning from the second visit, I was obviously happy to preserve any further contact with anyone and actively sought to repair any cases of confusion that came about. A simple example of confusion was when after a very long journey to interview a traditional healer, we were unexpectedly invited into a house before going to meet the healer. Once inside the house we were offered food and fed. Later it transpired that they were angry that we had not offered payment for the food. It seems that this arrangement had somehow been fixed as part of the overall arrangements. Dr Banindjel, the intermediary and myself were all unaware of our rudeness. When I later discovered this *faux pas*, I was sure to send adequate payment although it was quite difficult to arrange this. Some amount of overlap of responsibility after leaving the field is not uncommon in qualitative design

and ethnographic studies and requires close scrutiny by the researcher (Goldring, 2010). Although this and the few other examples were minor affairs, I was conscious of how both the distance, possible perception of power imbalance and cultural difference may have contributed to the quality of researcher participant relationships. In actuality, I felt very frustrated by how both distance and difficulties of direct communication complicated and slowed resolving the matter of the payment for the food.

Practical Issues in this Research

During my first visit I learnt that travelling around Cameroon in crowded buses and Toyota vans and on motorbike taxis is definitely best done by taking only a small bag and a minimum of things. The planned itinerary for the second visit meant that both Dr Banindjel and I would sometimes be away from his home for six days. Even by keeping the number of necessary things in my medium size rucksack to a minimum I often found the weight of it frustrating to carry. My portable music playing device was chosen because it gave a good quality sound, powerful enough for groups of around 25. It worked best by being plugged in and was anyway considerably lighter without batteries. I judged correctly that the universities in Cameroon may not have spaces commonly equipped with digital projectors but would definitely have electricity. Other weight savings made included simply not taking much clothing. We both did this and after visiting one particularly dusty location, we both had to buy more trousers from a market on route. On the trips that included a Visual Matrix, I also took my 20 Visual Matrix images printed on A3 size sheets of card, a small digital audio recorder for interviews and a digital camera.

One important recommendation comes from the example of the problems created by the Dschang Matrix's large space and number of participants. In this matrix the problem was precisely how to manage the positioning of the digital voice recorder in such a large space. By testing I settled on a compromise between the recorder being in the middle and whenever an outlying person spoke, calmly moving it closer. Because of my experience of studio music recording, I sometimes think that Visual Matrix researchers should always arrive with at least two digital recorders so that, if necessary, these can be spaced around a larger space and/or group. Using commonly

available software such as Garageband, it would be possible to quickly either mix or edit these different recordings into one synchronised recording before doing the analyses.

The technical problems I encountered in the Douala Matrix were because of a power cut and so of the random unforeseen category. Nevertheless the experience has taught me that it is good to be a little extra cautious in African countries like Cameroon about potential technical problems. For instance, the use of photographs and batteries is probably safer than assuming there will be electricity even in an urban area. In short, expect a few more problems. Despite the ordinariness of the problem, the failure to include music in one matrix session (for the report on the Douala Visual Matrix see Chapter 7, p.198) was a major curatorial *faux pas* and a microscopic unintended example of the processes of assimilation and subordination to European and modernist totalization that non-Western art is too often subjected to (Enwezor, 2013). The returning researcher should try hard to avoid this failure. Notwithstanding this criticism the affective and sensory-symbolic production in the Doula Visual Matrix, although more linear and logically constructed, was still rich and valuable for analysis.

Reverie in African Contexts and this Research

A Visual Matrix session may be regarded as a 'container' (Bion, 1962, 1970) that is experienced as being trustworthy for our thoughts and feelings. The participants are assembled in a quiet and uninterrupted space and guided by the researcher using a style of 'soft' facilitation. If successful, the session creates 'reverie' and encourages the emergence of associations, images, feelings and ideas (Froggett et al, 2014). In psychoanalysis, 'reverie', is often associated with a personal experience of day-dreaming or a meditative free floating type of attention. In a great deal of psychoanalytic literature it is not automatically prevalent in the everyday. Instead, it requires "a tolerance of the experience of being adrift" and assumes "the most mundane and yet most personal of shapes ... ruminations, daydreams, fantasies, bodily sensations, images emerging from states of half-sleep, tunes ... that run through our minds ..." (Ogden, 1999, pp.158-60). The important British psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion's idea of the quality of reverie as "without memory and desire", lends an esoteric

note. Like dreaming, it owes something to both conscious and unconscious experience, taking place “in a ‘no-time’ place” (Manley, 2018, p.67).

However, in African contexts especially, what Ogden refers to as a state of “half-sleep” is best not thought of as either a “mundane” lack of sensation or activity. For instance, the healer MT’s expression of everyday vitality and sensorial connection, “make the mess” (see Chapter 1, p. 29 and Chapter 6 p.149) and the expressions of emotions of all three healers in my case studies regarding their ancestors and living-dead family, are intensely joyful manifestations of love and excitement in connection with what are sensitive and dourly understood in the West topics of illness and death. ‘The only way is up’ emotionally speaking and yet “the most mundane and yet most personal of shapes ... ruminations, daydreams, fantasies, bodily sensations” (Ogden, 1999, pp.158-60), reverie, is clearly present in my interrupted interviews and Visual Matrix sessions (see Chapters 6 & 7). Together these examples allow us to start unwrapping the psychosocial relevance of Ebede-Ndi’s observation that in Europe, before European football players go to the pitch they are often collectively quiet but in the equivalent situation, Cameroonian players sing and dance together (personal communication).

From the Yaounde’ matrix in particular comes the observation that a relatively chaotic atmosphere can be the context for a feeling of seriousness, passion and strong, sometimes emotional, engagement from the participants (Chapter 7, p.172). Put simply, in contrast to a period of quiet meditation an animated situation could still provide a container for reverie. In African contexts, the matrix as a quiet, uninterrupted, caring and supportive container for participants thoughts, associations, images and ideas may therefore be considered not essential for the production of reverie. The participants are able to relax and be comfortable in a great variety of situations. The researcher should not become anxious if the participants ‘choose’ to transform the matrix into a variously relaxed, animated, passionate and/or joyous event. However, ethically speaking, it is important that the researcher remain adequately concerned for the participants’ wellbeing and makes satisfactory provision for the event of any emotional issues arising from participation.

Conclusion

The methods used in this study were selected because of both the communitarian and qualitative character of the topic. This character necessitated both an examination of individualisation in the context of community and the need to prioritise a closeness to participants' experiences. The three primary research methods were (1) ethnography with photography, (2) sensory and photo elicitation interviewing and (3) the Visual Matrix method. Secondary methods included the writing of scenic composition, reflective diary entries, ad hoc interviews. As a group of methods, along with moving around and meeting people in Cameroon, I think they enabled me to rapidly engage with what is a very sensory and visual topic and usefully address my research question: What can traditional African art and aesthetic practices contribute to our understanding of healing and everyday culture in modern Cameroon? Photo elicitation interviewing is known to often succeed in being a fun and sociable interview method. Originally used in phenomenological social science research, it can still be regarded as an associative method (Harper, 2002). It enabled me to ameliorate both the mixture of language difficulties and the need to communicate my research topic without me the researcher framing its meaning for the participant. This point was replicated in the group associative method of the Visual Matrix and the contributions in response to images of traditional African art and music were heartfelt in quality, suggesting an emotional embodied response. This was a key characteristic of the topic but also spoke convincingly of the appropriateness of this method for researching it.

The use of the group based associative method of the Visual Matrix also enabled me to ameliorate both the mixture of language difficulties and the need to communicate my research topic without me the researcher framing its meaning for the participant. This method is designed to capture a shared experience of a topic that may be too abstract or uncomfortable to bring into consciousness or readily express. Because of this, the "understanding of healing and everyday culture in modern Cameroon" aspect of my research question was made available to analysis. My main regret is that I had not arrived in Cameroon with more knowledge and experience of my research methods. At times I could have remained calmer and less stressed. However, despite this, I would not have fundamentally done anything differently because I think the combination of

methods was correct for the research question. Inevitably I would have enjoyed the luxury of more time to both ease the progress of the research and enable the gathering of more observational data but to guarantee that this was a valuable addition to my research would have needed a very long stint there and would have been impractical for me.

But much more significantly, by grounding these methods in the field of psychosocial research and using the psychosocial method of the Visual Matrix, I was researching the topic of African aesthetics in a new way. A purely phenomenological approach could make the claim of being 'experience near' but psychosocial methods are especially concerned to get beneath the surface experience of things and unearth the aspects embodiment and affect. Because of this, the Visual Matrix is arguably the method of enquiry that the field of African art and aesthetics lacks. In addition, many of the other psychosocial research methods developed so far would have met difficulties of both language and time. For instance, the Free Association Narrative Interview method developed by Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson (2013), relies on the establishment of a type of flowing conversation and the eliciting of personal narratives and so can either require many encounters and/or a great amount of post interview clarification. Because of the logistics of travel and rest, I needed methods that worked well in a short time of encounter. In addition, once back in the UK any further contact with participants was nearly always an impractical proposition.

CHAPTER 6: FOUR CASE STUDIES

The four case studies offered below are written to provide an impression of my experiences of interviewing mainly traditional healers or priest diviners during my two visits to Cameroon. The aim is to demonstrate the meaning of the topic of traditional African artistic production in Cameroon today from the perspective of those who use traditional artefacts in their practice and possess traditional religious beliefs and/or a fusion of traditional beliefs with Christianity or Islam. Healers of this type in Africa are holders of rich amounts of cultural knowledge and continue to play a major role in the pragmatic use of art and music. Traditional healers remain immensely important in the everyday lives of people throughout Africa and fulfil a range of different social and political roles in the community. Their range of practices include divination; physical, emotional and spiritual healing; directing birth or death rituals, counteracting witchcraft; and narrating the history, cosmology, and myths of their tradition. The comprehensiveness of their roles often qualifies them, along with elders and chiefs, as holders of cultural knowledge and authentic spokespersons on objects and performances (Mbiti, 1969; Blier, 1995). Nigerian Yoruba priest diviners are called *babaláwos*, literally ‘father of esoteric knowledge’. In Yoruba belief, creativity is intimately associated with God and “as a result art and aesthetics manifest a distinctive divine *ashé*” (Lindsay, 2020, p.136). Research was conducted by the American sociologist and anthropologist Kent Maynard (2004) amongst the *Kedjom* people in a part of Cameroon that I visited in my research. This describes a situation of increasing commercialization and the transformation of traditional medicine’s focus on group concerns towards treating the individual that stems from the colonial period. Healers use and knowledge of traditional aesthetic practices is valuable for this enquiry and the primary research question: What can traditional African art and aesthetic practices contribute to our understanding of healing and everyday culture in Modern Cameroon? The four case studies are also interesting for providing a rough contrast between the ‘traditional’ rural and the ‘contemporary’ urban educated. The three Visual Matrix sessions were conducted with groups of Cameroonians in high education.

The contributions reproduced below contain all the major themes that emerged during the interviews and are examples of traditional interpretations of traditional African artistic production today in Cameroon. Although the fourth case study is of a modern educated musicologist and teacher, his profound traditional religious beliefs and deep knowledge of the practice of traditional music, made him an appropriate choice for the research topic. Each case starts with a description of the location and circumstances of the interview plus the history of the region when it illuminates something important in the participant's background. My intention is to bring the participant alive for the reader so that as much as possible of the affect within the interview and their words may be felt. This is appropriate because the study is interested in understanding the affective and embodied aspects of traditional art. Each case ends with a summary of the findings from the case.

Case Study of Mr Singer (MS)

MS lives in the rural outskirts of a large city in part of the South West Region province of Cameroon. The region is beautiful and fertile, and is famous for scenic crater lakes and national and tropical forest reserves that boast the highest number of species so far found in Africa. Species include gorillas, monkeys, forest elephants, buffalo, antelope, and leopards. This area was originally peopled solely by Bakweri peoples and, starting from the colonial period has experienced waves of immigration from elsewhere in Cameroon and West Africa related to modern banana plantations. This has contributed to a process of both ethnic mixing and tensions (DeLancey, 2000). MS possesses his own farm and is also a traditional healer known openly by locals to use traditional African artefacts such as masks in his practice. When we arrive at his farm he is not there but our local guide, a young woman from the area, calls him on her mobile. After about 20 minutes, MS arrives on a very large motorbike. Small motorbikes are everywhere in Cameroon, but large motorbikes appear stylish and suggest that the rider is more successful. MS is a handsome man of about 60, and dresses with an attention to style.

This time I am asked to wait outside in a lean too hut that seems to be a type of waiting room. On the first visit MS's hut was extremely messy, with many scrappy

looking things, such as half-filled plastic bottles, pots, broken wooden sculptures and stools made of sculpted figures. Here on this second visit, there is a clear place for us to sit and fewer items around. Everything seems to be very well organized. The change is notable and I wonder about it. Perhaps it is an example of changing trends and healers in Africa using a modern medicine waiting room and consultation room model. On the wall are two framed government certificates attesting that he is an officially registered healer. Before we go in a patient emerges and briefly talks to me. His manner is confusing and I assume that he has poor mental health. There are three of us present in total, MS, Dr Banindjel and myself. I explain that I want to start by hearing him talk about the photographs. "I get you" he says in English. Dr Banindjel lays out my set of 14 photographs. MS quickly leafs through them, easily recognizing the subjects of most of them. However, he seems a little reluctant, uninterested but then finally says, "among all the photographs I haven't seen my own photographs". I now understand the reason for his reluctance. Before I left him on my first visit, I had promised to return with copies of the photographs that I took of him and his artefacts. He goes on and says, "because if there were my photographs, I could say something about them". I do in fact have copies of the best photographs I took and give them to him. The laughter and long pause to look that follows my production of the photographs of him and his artefacts could be simply relief and joy at receiving something promised but I think there is something more. A mixture of love and pride in seeing himself, the spiritual healer with his 'magical' artefacts.

He now seems more comfortable and engaged. He takes his time looking at a large photograph of his 'hat' (see Fig. 2.4, p.18) that resembles a Legba hat from Benin and described by Blier (1995). Legba hats are associated with the important deity of the same name and used for "maintaining life and encouraging well-being, particularly by transforming and dissipating situations of difficulty or potential trauma" (Blier, 1995, p.209). MS carries on:

MS: well, I believe, with regard to this, I have said it's a family dance image, what we call "*Koungan*"

DB: "*Koungan*"

MS: if you don't belong to the family, it goes from generation to generation. For a foreigner, you will never be able to attend this meeting. I talked about it from the beginning

This point about "family" was an underlying theme at times during the first visit but was overwhelmed by the activity of photographing and the powerful images I was experiencing. The deity of Legba is often seen as a "promoter of both life's benefits and life's stresses" (Ayido in Blier, 1995, p.92) and so the artefact's significance for his "family, it goes from generation to generation", is understandably strong.

Once again, he seemed a little reluctant, uninterested and I suggested that I post him copies of any unseen photographs. Likely he would have been equally proud and enthused to see them and I regretted my foolishness in not simply bringing them or at least the digital information. Satisfied for now, we carry on looking at some of the photo elicitation photographs. What follows, first confirms that MS is familiar with the traditional art and rituals of many ethnic groups in North West, South West and Western Cameroon and that this is partly explained by the waves of immigration into the zone where he lives:

MS: ok, what I wanted to distinguish here regarding the question you asked is that...this comes from me, this is from the Bafoussam. We are all from the West (of Cameroon). These are things from Bamenda. They are similar to the masks we filmed here last time. If you want to define this properly, I will put all this together and give a name to each one of these

MS: it's the same, because here the Bafoussam have, what the Bafoussam have we also have them, because those are things for chiefdom. These are the chiefdom's juju. We are all from the West, it's in the West. These are chiefdom's juju. We also have them. They, the Bafoussam, have them as well. OK, the Bamenda, they have them, the masks. We have similar masks, we the Bamilike, we have them. That's why I said I can group all these, because if I go to Bamenda and I see their juju, I cannot run away. I cannot run away. Here at home, it's the same thing. When you are in this, what can I say, in this society

Further that in some examples, there is a completely common, "We also have this", tradition between groups.

MS: Bafoussam, for example, this and this are two different things. When I need to go out with this, I take this, when I need to go out with that, I take that. The Bafoussam have this. We also have this. This comes from the chieftom.

At this point, DB asks directly about the possibility of MS' magical powers travelling to the other ethnic areas represented in the photographs. DB says, "so, I would like to know, can you carry your juju from here and go dance with it there in Bamenda?" and MS replies an emphatic "no" and explains that one has to go there and that there, it is better for him to use their "juju" and that, "If we have to get out together, I will follow their lead". Of interest, is not a precise anthropological description of magical practices rather the way DB uses "dance" as a verb for magic. I start to move onto a theoretical question about the link between singing, dance and healing. At this point, intriguingly he pauses to make clear that he is a "healer" and not a "witchdoctor", meaning someone who practices witchcraft:

MS: what links them all? Well, I will first say something. From the beginning as we are here, there are witchdoctors and healers. There are witchdoctors and healers, because witchdoctor is someone who sees before healing. And, healer is someone who knows that if you have headache, they can use a certain herb to heal you. For a witchdoctor, you can be a witch and come in here, they will know. You can come in here and have headache, I am the one who is going to tell you that you have headache. This is a witchdoctor, healer, two different things.

It seems important to him that we are clear on this point. However, when DB immediately pushes on asking "what is the link between singing, dancing, and healing?", MS seems frustrated at the character of the question and retorts firmly, "that's why I say, for example, I am a witchdoctor, I sing, I dance, I heal...what is the question?". His question is one of irritation and it seems like we should ask no more or else risk offending him. But he has now used the word witchdoctor rather than healer about himself, indicating that the function of a healer may not be simply understood. During the first visit MS had explained how he uses certain sounds in addition to artefacts in his healing. The tone of finality now in his statement forecloses any possibility of him demonstrating the precise sounds or words he has in mind. We seem to be on 'sacred ground'. Once again, I recall Gore's words that "Songs refer to the

ideas and practices of the shrines but, more crucially, may also constitute them” (2007, p.135). We are on sacred ground with this matter.

During the first visit, when I asked MS about the use of music and songs in his practice it initiated not just the showing of the ‘Legba’ hat but an extensive exhibition of masks and artefacts along with rich descriptions of their use in combination with songs. He explained, at that time:

MS: ... when there is a spirit on a patient, well, when I put him here (outside chair) (see Fig. 6.1, p.135) to work on him, there are songs that I start to sing while I work on him.

MS also stated that by using songs and various sounds, he is able to:

MS: ask for the power from the ancestors before (inaudible) make it practical

MS: to ask for strength from the spirit to add it to my strength

MS: to build defence around the patient

This explanation of the potential role of song in spiritual healing recalls Charles Gore, and how healers time and again attest to the importance and role that song and singing play at stages in life and in magical ceremonies. Gore states:

In performance, however, artefacts are only one element. Whenever *ohens* (priests) perform publicly, song is at least as important a part of their performance; it completes the dancing through which *ohens*¹ are possessed by their deities (Welton, 1968). The songs can be led by the performing *ohen* or by the followers, depending on the situation... Some *ohens* are renowned for their skill with song ... (2007, p.135).

1. *Ohen* is the name for a traditional priest in the Benin part of Nigeria.



Fig. 6.1 'The chair'. Photograph by Jim Parris, 10th October, 2016.

During my first visit MS also modelled a striking mask that with its nine horns revealed MS to be a very high ranking healer (see Figs. 6.2 & 6.3). His high ranking further evidenced the seriousness of both the magical and aesthetic ideas that must be attached to the artefacts shown to me.



Fig. 6.2 MS wearing mask. Photograph by Jim Parris, 10th October, 2016.

The mask contained a dense and geometric use of cowrie shells (see Fig. 6.3).



Fig. 6.3 MS's mask. Photograph by Jim Parris, 10th October, 2016.

Everyday “cowrie shells and pottery vessels make reference to *vodun* generally” (Blair 1995, p.302). They feature in an endless variety of ways in ritual masks, fabrics, however in this mask, they are the primary material apart from its ‘magically’ long dreadlocks.

MS also enthusiastically exhibited to me some different animal masks and leopard skin (see Figs. 6.4 & 6.5, p.137) and explained:

MS: ... there are often other masks that have a pig's head ... this is gorilla, this is chimpanzee, there is monkey, well, each person [animal] has his meaning because, well, gorilla is stronger than monkey. So the person who wears gorilla (mask) means that he is stronger than the other



Fig. 6.4 MS shows a leopard skin he uses in healing practices. Photograph by Jim Parris, 10th October, 2016.



Fig. 6.5 MS shows a gorilla mask that he uses in his healing practices. Photograph by Jim Parris, 10th October, 2016.

His conception that every animal (“person”) has its own meaning and relative strength, conveys the idea that their different characters are what is valuable. For MS, the different characteristics of things creates possibilities of connection. This point recalls Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of rhizomatic connections that are lateral and not hierarchical (1987). MS, like the philosopher Deleuze and psychoanalyst Guattari, is

interested in processes of becoming that stem from meanings of connection such as family and community. His matching of different persons with masks and artefacts of different animals is a semiotic mapping like the authors' concept of 'territorialization' (1987). Deleuze and Guattari provide an example of the interchange of sign and meaning between a wasp and an orchid (see Chapter 4, p.84-85). In MS's case, human characteristics are shared with animal traits.

During the second visit, I now ask the question "... can a person be sad when they sing?". MS answers:

MS: we are always proud when we sing because, for example, especially for us the Bamileke, when there is a funeral, we have killed a cow, there are goats, pigs, fritters, there are drinks, so you should be proud because you will eat whatever you see

His answer is outwardly banal and at first glance little to do with singing but re-introduces the idea of the in-life quality of traditional artistic practices and points to a way that we can successfully locate in the everyday "a notion of aesthetics as it might impact on the theorising of everyday life" (Highmore in Johnstone, 2008, p.80). The notion of "proud" that MS expresses is emotional, not stiff but evocative of all the magic that accompanies people joyously gathering together to eat and sing. It is a passionate image about the food, "we have killed a cow, there are goats, pigs, fritters, there are drinks", his list is appetizing for him. There is the sense of a plentiful feast and the idea of sociability. This last point together with his stress on the value of music and dance confirms his regard for all the senses in life as part of magic in the everyday. Ideas of a quotidian art of living that may be understood as relevant and satisfying, a type of healing, are fused with sacrificial ideas demonstrated in the remark "we have killed a cow".

DB continues the line of questioning about singing, dance and healing. However, MS is noticeably keen to move things onto a different example of his practice. This example and the scene of "overjoyed" people eating in a ceremony, are a rich description and healthy reminder of just how much MS' practice is also linked to public ceremonies where, as emerged in the first visit, he leads the proceedings. The woman who is my

local intermediary seems keen to describe MS as “the captain of the team” in this role. The example also seems to stress a related importance of participation in traditional African art and life and recalls Senghor’s (2017) regard that African art is “by everyone, for everyone” and also just how socially embedded the healers are themselves. Further, the thrust of the meaning of both the local intermediary and MS indicate something of in the African context, the activity of music (Small, 1987) “can indeed provide powerful channels toward healing and “balance” in society and that “by being embedded in the context of shared experiences, in a sense of community, healing through music and the arts can go beyond individualized “therapy”” (Hintjens & Ubaldo, 2019, p.281-282):

MS: um... witchdoctor, when we say singing and dancing, it’s in the field, for example, when we go out with juju in the field, I sing and I dance. And the people who are there to accompany me follow the rhythm of the song and we dance together following the same moves/steps. Well, I understand that maybe you wanted to know that the song we are singing means something or...

MS’ final flourish of “maybe you (DB) wanted to know” could be interpreted as, either helpfulness or his continuing to change the direction of the interview, and perhaps something connected with the problematic nature of interviewing spiritual healers and their need for secrecy; or that he thought I was interested in the song in a literal way. This may indicate that he perceives Westerners as interested in music as more of an entity than action, or source of affect, “power” (see Small in Chapter 2, p. 22). However, here in the interview, when talking about singing, in the context of an encounter with another ceremonial group of different ethnicity, “from Bangoula”, MS seems happy to convey something of how “... the power happens only in the song” and that his singing is part of a complex production, including a ‘performance poetry’ (Finnegan, 2007). MS’ magical regard of singing is also a nuanced understanding of affect and emotion as invisible forces in the everyday. Here in the interview, talking about singing, in the context of an encounter with another ceremonial group of different ethnicity, “from Bangoula”, I also feel drawn to recall the same braggadocio exhibited by hip-hop rappers and their ‘battles’ (Perry, 2004; Bynoe, 2006; Farris Thompson, 2011) or Jamaican reggae ‘toastmasters’ (Moskowitz; 2006; Henriques, 2011). There are types of continuity between African cultures and diasporic African cultures,

cultural and aesthetic connections can still be made, or as Gates puts it for instance, “only a fool would try to deny continuities between the Old World and the New World African cultures” (1992, p.125).

MS: yes, there are. For example, when we go out with this juju, we are protected. A group may be coming from Bafoussam, maybe for a funeral. A group may come from Bangoula. We will gather in the field. You know that these are people who like show off strength. There are three groups. I will try to show off my strength, power, through spirit. You, too, the other...the power happens only in the song. So, I sing to provoke/tease you.

Ideas of magical power and strength going on in the musical competition between groups indicate how the performative dimension of the singing may be the primary aspect of the song. The song, music, is not an entity or thing and performance has an existence that transcends it (Small, 1987). For instance, MS gives an example of when it “is to tease you”. The “power” of the song is allied to artistic ideas of inspiration and improvisation. Further songs, magical religious operation; role in healing by providing a communication with the ‘living dead’ ancestors:

DB: yes, I see...as well as words

MS: yes, the language is to tease you

DB: to size you up

MS: most of all, to show you that I am superior. At that moment, when you see that I am superior to you, you will ask for help from another person. That’s you will call the name of a great healer from somewhere and ask them to join you to fight me. That’s the same thing that happens with the song when we sing to heal.

Also, during these ‘theatrical clashes’, songs can serve to “appease”:

MS: for example, I first said here that in the field we can sing to tease. When I sing to tease you and in the end I see that you are superior to me, then I will sing a song that will appease/calm you, a song to bring me down and bring peace

Above all, as the interview progresses now, MS explains that it is the songs ability to be ‘heard’ by the ancestors that is significant:

MS: ... because you can come in here, I see that the work I need to do on you is above my level, I will sing to call the name of my father that I inherited from, who gave me strength on this earth. I will sing to call his name so he can increase the spirit in me so I can heal you. So, there is a hierarchy.

If the client's ailment is beyond the healer, the ancestor's connection with "power" is sought. And, as Mbiti describes (1969), a recently deceased 'in memory' relative is likely to be beseeched in order to reach the 'beyond memory' magical ancestors:

MS: it is high, because, it's high because I found myself inferior for your healing. Now I sing to ask my ancestors while calling the name of my grandfather, while calling the name of my grandfather so he can ask power to the ancestors and give it to me through spirit so I can heal you.

MS does not stop describing the essential role of singing whilst reminding us that traditional African healing is a system that usually also involves plant medicines, "herb" (Ebedi-Ndi, 2016):

MS: no, the problem is that I found myself inferior for the job I want to do. I sing to ask for power to my grandfather and his ancestors so he can give me power because I know that it's with this herb that I will treat you. But I still need a little bit of external power, because if I go straight it won't work. I have to sing and ask him to add more power to this herb so I can treat you

By saying "I have to sing" MS once again draws attention to the "power" and magical ability of music to reach the ancestors and God for help, It is an inseparable picture of religious belief, performativity and affect. About dance's connection to music, MS is intractable:

MS: if you dance without singing you are a fool

With these words MS confirms the epistemological character of traditional African art, "cognition is at the same time discovery and creation, or rather recreation" (Senghor in Anyanwu, 1987, p. 251). He is also clear about the commanding role of the drum when combined with singing and dancing, plus a strict series of conventions that

underlie the highly developed traditional use of polyrhythms, cross-rhythms, off beat phrasing and call-and-response:

MS: we don't beat the drum anyhow because to play the drum like this one, for example, this dance (sound of dancing) to play the drum you need two drums. This is the big one. There is a smaller one that we place like this and play like this and there is another one you play with two sticks. The three must convey a rhythm. And now the rhythm will set out what you are going to sing. And when you sing with the drum, the foot follows.

His contribution "when you sing with the drum, the foot follows" indicates his essential understanding of embodiment as part of the experience of art. It is an enactment of the verbal quality of African "musicking" (Small, 1987, p.51). Music, by which I also mean dance, follows function for meaning (Nketia in Small, 1998) (see Chapter 2, pp.24-25).

Next, MS' mobile phone rings and I once again listen to it, with its infectious modern remix of a traditional dance beat. When we return to the interview, it seems like things are drawing to an end. I round on the question of the future of traditional medicine in today's world. MS' response is a stoic one that also shows a customary concern for passing on his knowledge before the inevitable transition:

MS: what I think that could happen, last year, well, what I do here as healer is that every day when I am here, sometime I have a 100% success for my healing. That's when the next year comes around, the same way I started is the same way I will continue because I often have a 100% success rate. Especially, what I am thinking right now is, I look, because, well, death can happen at any time. Right now, I am looking to find someone who will be close to me

The final words of "someone who will be close to me", feel decidedly tender in emotion.

Summary

Once again, whilst demonstrating a knowledge of art and practices from other parts of Cameroon and further afield, the participant makes sure to 'reveal' their own

ethnicity. Again, there is evidence of a strong sense of kinship (“family, it goes from generation to generation” and includes the living dead) and the way that a tender emotional connection seems to characterise the healer’s succession. The two visits to MS helped to further my understanding of how, traditionally in Africa, it is important to replace the analysis of aesthetic objects with a more dynamic conception that emphasizes activity and motion (Farris Thompson, 1974). The art historian Patrick McNaughton explains of West African Mande people’s masks that they can be both figurative and an actual container of medicine and *dalilwu*, “the thing that can make something work” (1998, p.43). In some ways that this phrase could serve as a maxim for African art and music.

From the two visits, I also saw how the traditional approach to healing produced a similar appearance of pride and professionalism to that found in Western doctors and therapists. MS takes a pride in both his successes and the artefacts that he uses. His masks are both containers of power and personal tools. When MS demonstrates a greater enjoyment, talking about his practice via an instance of his ceremonial group’s chance meeting with a rival group, it highlights how the ‘aesthetic dimension’ he inhabits is imperatively both a ‘performative’ and social one. Further, MS enacts the noun as verb quality of African “musicking” (Small, 1987, p. 51) and that, in accord with the participatory epistemological character of traditional African art, “cognition is at the same time discovery and creation, or rather recreation” (Senghor in Anyanwu, 1987, p. 251). Taken together, MS’s case communicates what is meant by the quotidian quality of traditional African art and music and how it functions in both the personal and social realms. The examples and description of his religiosity, masks and song, produce an inseparable picture of belief, performativity, symbolism and abstraction that in turn, produce powerful affect in both intimate and social settings. There is also a social feeling of pride produced in the festive list. This suggests how a sensory-symbolic expression of human community and connectedness is also at the root of a power to heal and produce joy; further, a type of everyday resilience in life.

Case Study of Mr Top (MT)

The participant lives in a traditional compound some miles out of a town in the Bamenda Grassfields in the North West Region province of Cameroon. This is a mainly English speaking region. Sandwiched between savannah and tropical forests and possessing both a rainy and dry season, there are a great many types of crops grown in the area. The habitation of the area dates from antiquity and the peoples of this part of Cameroon are famed for their possession of many types of music, folklore and dance. The wider region is ruled by a regional king called a Fon. Historically the area witnessed a great deal of military resistance to colonial rule by Germany at the end of the 19th century. This was followed by a period of British rule after the 1st WW until the creation of the modern nation of Cameroon. Since then the region has experienced increasingly violent unrest and campaigns led by separatists, fighting for independence from the Francophone rest of Cameroon (West, 2011; Warnier, 2012).

The participant MT, is a traditional healer of great local import and the head of a regional association of traditional healers that has over 300 members. He is about 85 years of age he says that “since am old (*I*) do not still have retentive memory”. He strikes an avuncular figure and the number of his six wives and 28 children present appear to have great affection and respect for him. He has been interviewed on television about his practice. “We do well” he says about this, using the first person plural. “I don’t know England, but my magic know England” he says. His religious syncretism means that he does not “work” on Sunday and sometimes goes to a church, where he prays for more power to heal. MT is a ‘big man’, a traditional African star. I visited him twice and at the end of the first time a solitary husband and wife couple were waiting on a bench outside to see him. That visit had very smoothly morphed into a mobile type of interview with photography. During this partly outdoor tour, MT gestured grandly to indicate the vast tropical forest that stretched to the horizon from where we stood. Somewhere out in the start of this expanse I saw a bottle that looked like a traditional herbal preparation buried halfway in the forest soil.

MT is not only a ‘big man’, he also has big ideas. At the start of the interview in the second visit, there are five of us present, MT himself, his ‘protege’ son, Dr Banindjel, a

local facilitator and myself. MT harbours grand ambitions for the continuation of traditional healing in Cameroon. Once again, his apprentice son sits quietly beside him, assisting precisely when and where possible but never too much. Always keenly concentrating and obviously receiving a training of sorts but always with a strong note of affection. After asking him what he thinks is the future of the spiritual healing 'profession' in Cameroon he explains that he wishes to open a grand twin clinic for traditional healing and modern medicine. Two of his daughters are trained nurses and his idea is that they would be involved.

MT: My plan for the big clinic is to equally show humanity that traditional medicine is very important and is still alive. It can be combined to yield greater result for human survival. Unlike medical laboratory that will give result for types of illnesses, in the big clinic, I will use the *ngambe*, a traditional laboratory through which I diagnose spiritually when I see a patient. The advantage of the big clinic is that the patient, who is critically sick, will not be moving from one place to another. He sleeps on the same bed or room and both treatments are administered. What I am telling people as a traditional doctor is that most illnesses with the Blackman or Africans is witchcraft and there are many ways I can determine or diagnose spiritually and also provide cure before medical treatment follows.

But it is about his "father, through grand, grandfathers" that MT generates the most emotion and because of this MT is like a bridge between an Africa of past magical wonders and the present. A past in which for instance, as Senghor explains "... the brotherhoods with secret rites. These play a social, even a political, and, particularly, a religious role" (Senghor, 1956, p. 26). MT's claim that he no longer has retentive memory, pales into insignificance against the powerful and graphic 'ancestor' recounting:

MT: My father through grand, grandfathers from generations past inherited traditional medicine. It is from him that I have also inherited traditional medicine that I am now equally training my children and wives to also take over when I am not more living. My father was a hero in the village, everybody feared him because of the types of mystical healing he was carrying out. My father could command mystical diseases to appear and destroy crops and attack people, so that people will dare not touch him or his family. My fathers could disappear and appear. My father had traditional medicine that he used human blood

to appease it. My father while about to die told me he cannot hand over all aspects of the tradition to me because of civilization. Though my father died, his spirit and the spirit of my grandfather still live with me and I could go to my father's grave and invoke his spirit for help and wisdom.

The 'umbilical cord' of "father through grand, grandfathers", that "still" lives with him, demonstrates an 'ancestor' meaning of time. This accords well with Mbiti's *Zamani*, a traditional African oceanic conception of the past that is neither after or before, and incorporates a process of individuals continuing to exist after death (1969, pp. 20-24).

When MT is shown my selection of 14 photographs of traditional art and practice and modern art influenced by it, he indicates a traditional regard of all art and the way that, "literature and art are, quite naturally, integrated into social activities sustained by religious feelings" (Senghor, 1956, p.26). For instance, whilst raising a photograph of a priestess from Olori, Nigeria dancing whilst holding "a dance wand in honor of Shango" (Visona' et al, 2000, p.253) (see Fig. 6.6), MT recounts a highly practical example of family life:



Fig. 6.6 Priestess dancing with wand in honor of Shango, Olori, Nigeria (Visona' et al, 2000, p.253).

MT: this is a man who has been married to his wife, they have been a happy couple, they have got children; here they are performing the required traditional ritual, to ensure that the children grow up well in a good life; and also that they may get lucky in life; (pause) that is why they have that traditional stick in their hand.

MT's interpretation of the action is decidedly 'ordinary' communal experience and any unfamiliarity with the practices of different African peoples is overtaken by a religious and practical regard of the role of the artistic production in the photograph. In another example of MT's response to a photograph showing a different peoples' traditional Flali mask dancer from Côte d'Ivoire (Visoná' et al, 2000, p.15) (see Fig. 6.7), he again provides a social image that once more contains a religious and practical regard of the art:



Fig. 6.7 Flali mask in performance, Bangofla, Côte d'Ivoire (Visoná' et al, 2000, p.15).

MT: when a person dies in the village, the dancer puts on this 'Juju'²; the villagers get together with the family and friends of the deceased, and they buy themselves drinks, and while drinking this 'Juju' will then come out and do the 'Juju' dance. It is only after this ceremonial ritual is done the funeral ceremony of the deceased is truly done. And if this final rite is not done, then the spirit of the dead one will not lay in peace. The family of the deceased will have no peace either; they will be plagued by traditional curses from the spirits of the ancestors.³

Another photograph (see Fig. 6.8) produces a description and feeling of joy and an embodied show of it by dancing to a memory of music:

MT: these are some village youths; while drinking or just hanging out, they often want to feel joyful; they get together performing traditional dance; they play an instrument (he imitates the sound of the instrument and dances from the waist up to the rhythm whilst smiling); and they are dancing to the music. Traditionally it is called the Guitar Dance.



Fig. 6.8 Rass Nganmo Nounjio recording traditional music Photograph courtesy of Rass Nganmo Nounjio.

MT's interpretation need not be understood as contradicting any precise textual meaning because a multiplicity of textual meaning is common to traditional African art (Visona' et al, 2000) and in so many cases, there is an ontological focus of the object and/or performance as a "modifier" of lives (Vogel, 1997, p.94). The photograph is not a purely traditional scene, for instance there are young Cameroonians holding microphones and recording equipment, but MT is speaking about 'traditional life'. Further, what is most interesting for this study is the seriousness that MT assigns to the artistic production, and the embodied responses, plus a highlighting of feelings of

2. In this research the word 'juju' is used by participants to mean a spirit or an invisible force also sometimes objects, masks, costumes and the wearing of costumes.

3. The anthropological researchers Wilhelm-Solomon, Bukasa and Núñez describe identical beliefs and use of ritual in both rural and urban South Africa (2017, p.146).

joy, good fortune, and peace.

During my first visit, MT spoke about his training by his father and said, “I started when you should do it the same as he was doing I was about eight years old”. The words “do it the same as he was doing” are evidence that the practices and use of herbs that he learnt require a strict application and are sometimes magically nuanced by the inclusion of social organization. For instance, he goes on to say:

MT: Or sometimes we call the family member, would make dinner with the family people, make the mess and they cook fine. To do it well they need to call the family member and make a celebration dinner and they would pray the medicine to go work. They would call the family together and they would sit together eat.

This wider explanation of the scope of his praxis illustrates the important use of a whole family group in a process of healing ritual. Also, the communicative and caring dimension of sensorial life in acts of cooking and eating, plus likely singing. In his description of his healing session, Ebede-Ndi, a Cameroonian from an entirely different region of the country, recalls his family and friend looking on whilst he underwent a healing process by a pygmy healer for a possible “depression”. They stayed the entire day whilst the healer did invocations and a great many other things. He recounts that later, “My family brought me home, bought food, and invited all the people in the village to eat and celebrate my recovery. I began to feel better” (2016).

After this, we were given a tour of his compound by his protégé and we then re-joined MT in his ‘consultation’ hut and a traditional divination session ensued. In the process, MT used a basket containing about a hundred small objects such as shells, kola nuts, stones that were of many different colours. He and the client were sitting around a small table. After asking the client to lay their hands across the basket he then vigorously shook it two or three times whilst quietly singing something. He then turned the basket over so the objects fell into a random pattern on a mat on the table. Fingering and peering at the objects he then spoke to the client about their health; the past and future to come:

MT: Yes, that *ngambe*³ that I threw down is like an X-ray in the hospital,

which is used to see the inner self of any patient who comes with an illness to the traditional doctor for healing. By throwing the 'ngambe' down, I am able to see if the illness is caused by man or is from God.

Returning on the second visit, my first question to him is about his quiet singing immediately before turning the basket over. MT says, "When you sing you call their name, way they open for you" "Damn fine way!" Once again, the ancestors are never far away both figuratively and literally in matters of divine magic. "Damn fine way" expresses the power associated with singing in traditional culture. About its role in connecting with ancestors he is emphatic ... "You don't sing for nothing there ... Sing, sing, sing ..."

Also during my first visit I was allowed to see and photograph many artefacts including an abstract mask made from what looked like cow hide that MT called Bobo. Normally Bobo is only seen by the initiated or on the occasion when an important person dies. At the end of the second visit, shortly before we leave, the digital recorder is switched off and I am for the first time alone with MT. He remarks that the last time I left he had sacrificed a chicken to help make sure that Bobo was not offended by me seeing and photographing it. I had been granted a privileged access to this spirit. Maybe this was because I came with the Cameroonian Dr Banindjel and a local intermediary. Maybe it was because MT liked me. Or maybe it was all these things and more. I will never be sure.

Summary

Looked at together, my visits reveal MT to be simultaneously a healer, diviner, priest, singer and dancer. The mixture of a diviner and healer is not necessarily uncommon, but what becomes clearer through spending time with MT is how their connection with types of artistic production, masks, dance and music is a seamless one. All these elements are important for influencing and revealing both the everyday and grand affairs of life. The solitary husband and wife waiting outside during my first visit were as familiar in appearance as a couple I saw the last time I visited my GP in Manchester,

3. *ngambe* is the name for part of the divination process used by MT.

UK. MT recognizes that modernity has changed Africa because he says that his father told him that he could not teach him everything he knew because of modernity. However, MT continues to maintain a religious vitalism and “lives in a religious universe” (Mbiti, 1969, p.15). Elderly and with problems of “retentive memory”, he must already be venerated as an ancestor. But above all MT reminds one that, as Anyanwu remarks, “African art touches on realities which are lived or experienced. It is related to the African modes of life and it creates a world that is personally relevant and satisfying” (1976, p. 513). It plays a functional role in the demands and passages of life. It is a pragmatic art that is philosophically rooted in a religious universe in which the social is reified. It is culture.

Case Study of Mr Farmer (MF)

The participant lives in a small rural town in the Bamenda Grassfields in the North West Region province of Cameroon. The habitation of the area dates from antiquity and it has experienced waves of African immigration starting in the 17th century, leading to a complex picture of cross-cutting ethnic competitions and ties, variously overlain with traditional religions, Christianity and Islam (Pelican, 2015). The traditional ruler is known as the Fon and he is both the head of traditional government, and charged with keeping the ancestors happy. Fons are selected from a group of princes and by a system kept secret from all those eligible, thus eliminating the possibility of the involvement of corruption in the process. As a result of the Berlin conference in 1884 this area of Cameroon became part of the German Empire. The Fon’s power was undermined through a process of taxation and indirect rule. Later at various times, the region experienced both British and French authority. The undermining of traditional culture and religion continues to today in post-colonial independent Cameroon, where Fons can still be held in contempt by the state (Warnier, 2012). Jujus, masked spirits, music and dancing, the lives of princes, traditional regulatory societies of the Fon’s power, and warrior organisations are all important parts of the Nso culture (Nkwi, 1997; Warnier, 2012).

The participant MF was suggested by our regional intermediary because he knew about my interest in traditional art objects and had heard a story that they have

“objects” in that town that can “sing” and the participant is rumoured to be in possession of one. He is a traditional healer who lives and works in the town. A tall slim man of about 65 years. He was trained by his mother, a traditional healer, from childhood in the use of ‘leaves’ and family shrine but did not commence working as a healer himself until well into his adulthood. MF’s house is down a narrow lane at a spot on a roadside girded by small rudimentary looking houses. The interview takes place in the compound of MF’s house, where he usually works. We are five in total, MF, his friend (our contact), Dr Banindjel, our regional intermediary (local language speaker) and I. There is an air of excitement amongst us and it seems like we all anticipate that this interviewee will have made the hard extra 3 hour journey here worthwhile. MF’s voice is mellifluous and charming.

Throughout the earlier part of MF’s interview, where he is shown the photographs of traditional art and practice (also contemporary examples) from many different parts of Cameroon, he makes sure to position himself and use his knowledge in ways that mark out his locality and people. However, simultaneously, he demonstrates a great flexibility, critical flair and imagination in pointing out continuities that exist between the geographically and historically disparate objects shown in the photographs whilst explaining the magical and aesthetic ideas he attaches to the artefacts shown in the photographs. For instance, when looking at a colourful and highly geometrical abstract painting by Turner Prize nominee Yinka Shonibare (see Fig. 6.9, p.153), MF firmly links this with both his compound (“A place like this compound”) and with another photograph that he had earlier emphasised as a temple for Muslim people that also features geometrical patterns but on the walls of huts in a Nankani compound from Sirugu in Ghana (a place approximately 1000 miles distant from his locality).

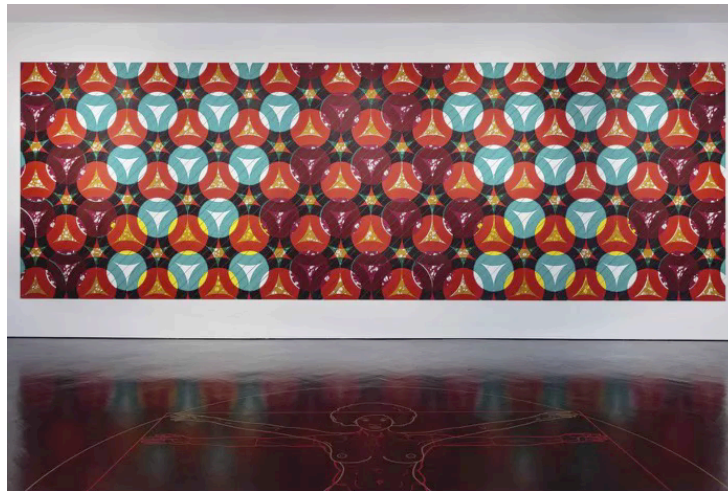


Fig. 6.9 *Yinka Shonibare (2016) ... and The Wall Fell Away*. Photo: Mark Blow. [Online]. Available at: [https://www.pinterest.co.uk/search/pins/?q=shonibare&rs=typed&term_meta\[\]=shonibare%7Ctyped](https://www.pinterest.co.uk/search/pins/?q=shonibare&rs=typed&term_meta[]=shonibare%7Ctyped) (Accessed: 10th February, 2016).

MF: OK this is a temple I know. This temple is for Muslim, for Muslim people. This temple is for Muslim people. A temple.

His othering of the Nankani is simultaneously used to explain a deep magical aesthetic conception of Shonibare's artwork by denoting it as a temple where, "you can have anything from there with your prayer". Finally, he rounds on the way that even Shonibare's artwork can be used in the operation of his prayers or magical practices

R: The meaning of this picture, this painting, is a prayer place.

MF: Yes. You can take anything, any flower from a place like this ... I would say this is a farm, according to what I see. This is a farm. This is something very clear. This is a place that you can have anything from there with your prayer. A place ... like 'your' farm.

R: Thank you. A place like this compound, so you can. So, someone with your knowledge can look at this picture and do many things ...

MF: YAH, there are many things that are described here, that you can gain from there to help

R: Do you think that people who don't know your tradition would still have something

MF: WELL ...

R: Feel something, an affect or ...

MF: ... this is the tradition of a different place but I can still use from here and go straight with them

The trailing comment here, and the idea of going “straight” to somewhere unknown, is highly important here. Going straight ‘there’, is getting magical power and healing. In addition in “you can have have anything from there with your prayer”, prayer is characterised as a state of reverie (Bion, 1962, 1970); a “place” of Ehrenzweigian polyphony and syncretism; and a “farm” of Deleuzian rhizomatic connection. But triumphally pointed here at healing. Together, this ontological and epistemological shift makes a demand on me to fully accept that this other human being, who lives their life subsumed within the same multiplicity of existential concerns as myself, nevertheless has a different world view to me.

Another binary of division and commonality is found in the way that the photograph that is considered a compound of an ‘othered’ Muslim people still provokes a mention of the commonality in African cultures around the strongly felt theme of family. Ramose’s (2002) conception of a ‘family feeling’ amongst a diverse range of African cultures, is coincidentally linked to the theme of strong family ties itself.

MF: (Mumbling) We are like this. (Indicating Pic 3 of Nankani compound) This is so traditional of the family.

To complicate matters further, he introduces the possibility of analysing British Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare’s painting ... *and The Wall Fell Away* (2016) (see Fig. 6.9, p.153) by means of the taste sense and so fully confounds the usual Western sensibility of art appreciation by introducing more senses into the discussion.

MF: There are many grass here. Some are sweet, some are bitter and some (unclear words) (laughs)

He excitedly invites us all into the shrine hut that adjoins the courtyard where we are sitting. It contains two statues of figures surrounded by offerings of mimbo, salt and red oil and with great affection announces, “this one has the name of my father and this one has the name of my big father” and that “The spirit of father is here and the spirit of my big father is here”. His affectionate tone continues as he explains that it is

this intimate connection with his ancestors that empowers his practice. For him this same feeling of intimacy and affection will also underlie the power of a mask such as shown to him in one of my interview photographs (see Fig. 2.1, p.16).

When asked “How did you become a healer?” MF ‘took a bow’ and then slid into complete Pidgin whereby he spoke about his life story and the role of his mother in this. I wondered at the need to change from his broken English, which I had been enjoying. It was no accident. He seemed somehow incapable of recalling this marvellous story in another tongue. I wonder if to speak about his past and mother in anything other than his native Pidgin would have been impossible for him to achieve a required sense of tenderness and intimacy, or was it because to continue speaking in the ‘white man’s’ English about his mother would have been a betrayal of his identity and national pride. There were three others present, all Cameroonians. Again, Ngugi (1986) comes to mind and the idea of new African languages, created by the peasantry or working class, retaining the musical performativity of original languages. But this man was a traditional healer whose ancestors were his link with great powers and so perhaps to talk of them was also a religious act and should be done in respectful and heartfelt language, in case they were listening - theirs and his language – not English. These possibilities all point once again to the importance of family, living and dead, ties and include aspects of affection and duty plus the threat of menace:

MF: I had grown up as a professional builder and had no interest or idea that I will ever be a traditional doctor despite the fact that my mother taught me the herbs. It was when I felt sick so serious and after several drugs from the hospital did not give me any better that I started remembering some herbs could give a cure and I started going to the bush to cut some of the herbs my mother showed me to cure my illness. But little did I know that my illness was related to the shrine my mother left. This was until my brothers after consultation with some elderly traditional healers, found out the cause of my illness and it was revealed that the ancestors were angry and needing someone to continue communicating with them in the family and that I was supposed to be the one. I refused since I already had the building profession that I was doing. But in order to save the family from the anger of the ancestors, I had to accept. It then came to me that what my mother was showing me was a school I was going, she was initiating me into traditional medicine. This was around 1973. Due to pressure from my brothers I finally took over the shrine till today. One thing that made me scared about traditional medicine was the negative effects,

that you don't go against the laws of the shrine and you must have to appease the gods by making sacrifice in effect that is why inside the shrine you see the arts of work that represents my ancestors (from translation).

This was all delivered as a purposeful monologue and indeed contains the very justification of his profession whilst lamenting its downside. His warning words, "you don't go against the laws of the shrine" imply danger. There is a powerful mix of family fear after his illness, along with outside pressure from other traditional healers, contributing towards MFs change of life. The element of fear seems to effortlessly pass from him and towards the extended family in general and clearly has both a uniting potential for family life and a disciplinary one for the maintenance of tradition. I am a Western person and an artist but on reflection was slightly relieved at not being solicited to join in any practices and at one point even declined the offer of being told my future.

MF directly admits to a type of performativity in his statement that "When you are a doctor, you have to use your voice! It's our voice that can make somebody to laugh, it's our voice that can make somebody to cry. So a doctor has to get a music". I feel this taking place through his grandiose sounding use of 'Yah' for exciting emphasis and even a bi-lingual borrowing of "*Voila*" to provide an even greater effect. These simple observations of his language use provide me with an insight to his meaning that, "So a doctor has to get a music" and how this may both literally involve singing or playing or in fact be part of the treasure of Africa's voiced and auditory arts (Finnegan, 2007, p.1), what Ngugi regards as "the great legacy of African life and languages ... our common well" (1986, p.126).

One of MF's phrases that stands out in the interview is the use of "no laugh" to mean quite the opposite i.e. 'this is something important in the sense of powerful'. The phrase is first used in connection with a type of sculpture created by the eminent contemporary artist from Ghana, El Anatsui (see Fig. 2.11, p.53) who, using thousands of tiny waste objects, such as bottle tops and sweet wrappers, has created numerous vast fabric creations. The photograph of El Anatsui's sculpture is an unusually close-up and ambiguous one (see Fig. 6.10, p.157) but MF still instantly recognizes it as a

traditional artefact and interprets its traditional meaning. He reminds us all that the idea of a mat is highly traditional for sleeping and even burial.

MF: And now we still use it to follow our traditional ways with. Anytime (unclear words) ... now one from the market ... So we use this, this is a traditional something that you can no laugh from here. We use this and do many things from our tradition, this thing. This is a mat.

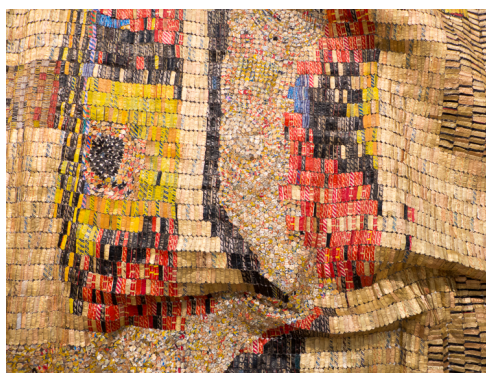


Fig. 6.10 Tight close up of *Earth's Skin* by El Anatsui (see Fig. 2.11, p.53 for image of sculpture and details).

The cultural and religious importance is amplified when MF enthusiastically responds to a momentary entry from the intermediary sitting present:

MF: Your, our grandfathers would use to sleep with this. This was the first time [*historic time of tradition*]. But now we use this.

I: That was the bed of the ancestors.

MF: YAH, VOILA!!!

The second time the phrase 'you can no laugh' is used, MF almost reaches to grab me as if to physically convince me of the point's seriousness. This occurs at the point when I have moved onto the use of questions derived from the interview or from earlier interviews and am telling about my interest in singing and how another healer had brought it up as important. He says:

MF: In healing?

R: In healing yeh

MF: No, no, very, that's why I tell you that (unusual pause) hear music and singing cannot laugh for anything!

Elsewhere in the interview MF openly admits to using laughter as a technique and so the phrase 'no laugh' or 'cannot laugh for anything' gains extra significance. Once again, he appears to weigh the importance of aesthetic experience in healing. Where the use of drugs is mentioned it is equally wrapped up with performance and the aesthetic experience of object and moment. This point recalls McNaughton's study in which masks are both a figurative and actual container of medicine and *dalilwu*, "the thing that can make something work" (1988, p.43).

MF: This is a mask, this is a mask, this is a mask. But what this mask can do? I can take this mask and treat this mask with some drugs, eh some leaves and a lot of herb. Then this mask can begin to say something to people. But the mask can be saying something, can talk but it will combine it with leaves.

Above all music, singing and song are mentioned and appear to be a type of model for everything that is transpiring. As Gore writes, "Songs refer to the ideas and practices of the shrines but, more crucially, may also constitute them" (2007, p.135).

I: Do you use music with this thing? (African type of guitar)

MF: Yes I do music with them (ancestors) and er ... with this thing

I: And communicate with this thing?

MF: And I communicate my message with them

But although MF rejoices in the way that singing works to maintain a connection with the ancestors and implore their assistance to do good, he also uses the topic to remind me that ideas of mystical power in Africa are also associated with destructive actions and fear:

MF: Yeh it can be like that because sometimes your voice can be saying and sometimes, do you know that there is evil, do you know that we have people that they don't do what we are doing now? (Begins to be quiet)

R: Yeh (Quiet)

MF: Do you know that there are people that they are (unclear words) in the er country. We are transparent. But some people are not transparent, they cannot be transparent. So that, somebody can come and put ... (unclear words) here and we are not seeing them but you feel that ... (unclear words). Have you witnessed such a thing? Somebody a tell you something about that. So that is something they call witchcraft!

R: Yeh

MF: Something can whoo- and-it- and you begin - to cry- eagh!!

At the end of talking the regional intermediary interrupts and asks about the story of objects that can “sing”. He says:

I: “Before you answer question, is there any object that can sing. Is it true that you have an object that can sing, that can talk?”

MF: To, to this place?

I: Yes

MF: To this place, to inside this my place?

I: No, I’m just asking if you have some object that through this thing can communicate, that can talk and sing? OK

MF: Like, like dance or sing or ... no we don’t have that here

I: OK

MF: Because to sing and dance is to make with the family ... (unclear words) ... God says your ancestors. They make voice

I: OK

The intermediary lived almost 100 miles from where we were and had before told me of the story of a magical singing object in the locality that I should see. What I take from this anecdote is evidence of the intermediary’s enthusiasm to show me an example of the power of traditional African art objects plus how rumors about these objects can become a series of incredible stories. In the end the healer once again confirmed the importance of performance and participation as the route to the

magical ancestors. Also, that a magical religious regard for the ancestors is not an obvious one of worshipping them but is connected with feelings of love and protection towards living family. In MF's last line, art, singing and dance; family, living and dead, are all one. However, more importantly MF is describing the presence of the other world right here in this one. This point recalls Nkrumah's words when referring to a former time, "These African societies did not accept transcendentalism" (1964, p.12). Nkrumah is referring to a former time but MF's words come from Cameroon today.

It is dark night when we leave. I walk ahead as we climb the steep narrow lane that we came by. Accustomed to a world of ubiquitous street lamps, I marvel at the silky sweet darkness that surrounds me like a cloak. Others use their mobile phones to assist finding their way. Instinctively, I know that MF can see me. I quickly wave a happy goodbye to him and hear his wonderful laugh.

Summary

Whilst demonstrating a knowledge of art and practices from other parts of Cameroon and further afield, MF makes sure to 'reveal' his own ethnicity. Also, once again a sacred importance of family is indicated (Mbiti, 1969). Moreover, the deliberation over Shonibare's work recalls the artist and psychoanalyst Stephen J. Newton's idea, after Anton Ehrenzweig, that "creative man can absorb the ego's temporary composition into the rhythm of creativity and achieve self-regeneration" (1996, p.100). MF's world view fully accepts that ecstatic states and creativity are two sides of the same coin. His, "I can still use [this](the painting) from here and go straight with them", is attributing to Shonibare's work a "fundamental therapeutic intention" (ibid, p.89) and an authenticity that shows that the artist has exorcised symbolic fragments from within their unconscious and made them ready for 're-introjection' (Ehrenzweig). However, like a traditional West African storyteller, a *griot*, MF's analysis of Shonibare's work is from the outset a pleasing 'multisensory poetry'; a thinly veiled performance that treads warily in the realm of invisible forces.

MF's use of pace, intonation and the imitation of sounds throughout the interview, connects with the immense topic in African studies after Ngugi (1986) of the effects of

losing and/or abandoning indigenous languages in favour of European ones. Ngugi highlights how African languages and traits such as the musicality of African languages, often owe their survival to poorer people in Africa. Further, MF's words "So a doctor has to get a music" conjoins a raft of themes and helps illuminate just how traditional Africa's holism automatically prevents any direct Eurocentric comparisons of practices. "Music", and especially singing are part of the treasure of Africa's voiced and auditory arts (Finnegan, 2007, p.1). They are undeniably affective and, of magical and religious import, and "If he happens to be a Yoruba, he would refer to those terrible vocal forms handed to him by his forefathers, such as the Asan, the Ogede, or the Ofo, patterns of pure sound ..." (Sowande, 1966, p. 28).

Case Study of Mr Art (MA)

The participant lives in the city of Foumban in the West Region of Cameroon. Today, in times of national peace, Foumban attracts tourists to its palace and museums. At the turn of the 19th century, the famous Bamoun ruler Sultan Njoya built the large German Baroque and Romanesque palace. Traditionally, the Bamoun attribute great importance to ancestral spirits and these are associated with the skulls of the deceased. Since its introduction into the kingdom at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Islam has been closely intertwined with examples of indigenous belief. Bamoun Islam is rooted in the *Tijaniya tariqa sufi* order, unlike in other parts of Africa where Sufism has become dominant. But, since the start of the 1990s, both political liberalization and Islamic modernity have all had their effects on Bamoun society. During this time, many Bamoun who have studied in Sudan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have brought about what is known in Foumban the 'Wahhabite' infiltration. The former politico-religious foundation on which were based both the legitimacy of the royal household and the unity of the Bamoun people has been impacted [Mouiche, 2005].

The participant, MA, has selected the palace as the place to meet and do the interview. MA is a graduate and a musicologist, holding a specialist knowledge of the Bamoun people's art and music. He is highly familiar with the palace and neighbouring museum's contents of statues, masks, dyed textiles, clay and bronze pipes, spears,

charms carved furniture and more. When Dr Banindjel (DB) and I arrive, there is a festival taking place in the palace in celebration of an anniversary of the national government. There are many different performances in the large palace courtyard and representing the different Bamoun “ethnics”. The different performances include drumming, dance, singing and sometimes musket firing. A message comes to us that MA is busy somewhere. We wait, observing and filming. He finally appears and takes us to a balcony area of the museum where a selection of traditional musical instruments is on display. He is approximately 40 years of age. With thunderous drumming and other sounds of the festival still clearly audible in the background, we sit. We are four in total, MA, an older male musician colleague of MA’s (VA), Dr Banindjel (DB), and myself. VA sits slightly apart from us, feeling and occasionally gently striking a drum of immensely low tone.

I start the interview mistakenly thinking that MA’s graduate and musicologist status guarantees him as holding a modern Western world view. I launch into a theoretical question inspired by Leopold Senghor’s *African Negroe-Aesthetics* (1956) and MA is utterly confused and struggles to give an answer. DB reframes the question, referencing the cultural image of a traditional ceremony and immediately obtains a confident reply:

DB: that is, what is the link between mask and music, that is, for example, when there is a ceremony, there are people who put on masks and go out to dance

MA: yes, because for us, Bamoun, as soon as we play music, we invoke spirits. Bamoun believe that, maybe they want to imagine how spirits are through masks, they want to speak to people through masks, because when we play music, when music is very good, spirits come to you

DB: when music is good, spirits come

MA: yes, it is like that. So there are masks, masks...we want to imagine how the ancestors were, how those spirits are, that is why we put on masks in our music

DB: that means there are spirits in masks that speak to people

MA: yes

Interestingly, DB had immediately invoked the realm of the performative and MA has immediately conjoined it with the idea of ancestral spirits. Although MA's world view and religiosity is in fact entirely traditional Bamoun Islam, his remark that "when music is very good, spirits come to you" contains the same feeling of wonder that, in my previous career, I have experienced and found to be mutual with many musicians. MA is equally effusive about the curative dimension of Bamoun music, saying "... here we have rhythms that heal, sound that heals diseases, we have those instruments." But there is more to MA's opening response to DB's framing of the question. By his "for us Bamoun" MA both positions himself firmly within his own ethnic group. Spurred on by MA's immediate rich response, I embark on another question informed by my reading of current theoretical trends in anthropology and the social sciences:

R: and...again, the connection with the visual, for instance the mask, the...not just the visual, all of the senses, is there...is there a connection with all of the senses?

MA: yes, of course, of course, of course, when we, maybe children, when the mask go out, there is a day, a special day for that and children are afraid, they are first afraid, people are afraid, and the mask represents... (loud noise in the back ground), because with fear also, you imagine how the rhythm, music properly

Here, the university educated musicologist MA provides an Africanistic lens on aesthetic experience. Using the example of children, he provides the notion that, "with fear also, you imagine how the rhythm, music properly". In many ways, we are situated at a dimensional crossroads. Whilst viewing photographs of a traditional ceremony, we are also experiencing a contemporary Bamoun festival going on (loud noise in the background). I cringe in fright every time a musket 'goes off'. MA's "ancestral spirits" inspired intermeshing of emotion and physiology parallels Anton Ehrenzweig's idea that art is not only inevitably dynamically involved in the production of emotions but that the emotional response itself can be essential for the "deepest experiences" of it (Ehrenzweig, 1965, p.115). MA's knowledge also points to a reversal of centuries of a European culture of occularcentrism "in which vision alone was the ontological sense par excellence" (Marks, 2000, p.144; Jones, 2010, p.144), and music supporting the visual and/or text, that the text can instead support the music to

powerful affect (Anyanwu, 1987: 251-3, 259). The point is reinforced when DB picks up my question again, returning to it to focus on the senses, all the senses:

DB: that is, regarding the senses, that is sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell; does it have a link with all of this?

MA: of course

DB: with all the body...when someone dances, does he see something? Does he smell something? Does he hear something? Does he taste something? It is in that sense

MA yes, yes, yes. As soon as you hear the sound, you see the mask, sometimes you come out of yourself, you are not yourself anymore, that's what I am trying to say, you are not in yourself, I believe you understand, you are not in yourself anymore. It is when you see masks, when you hear the sounds of secret societies, you are lost

VA: and you don't even see, you just hear music

This joint contribution by MA and his older colleague VA is about the depth of experience in rituals and recalls the psychoanalyst and artist Stephen J. Newton's discussion of 'ecstatic states' (1996). Next, VA 'echoes' the theme of fear, saying "my friend, tell him also that in our tradition there is music that frightens people". There is a sense of awe and pride in these words that recall the view of Dogon people's sculptors, that power, lies in works that make "everyone stop breathing" (Hoffman, 1995, p.56).

The theme of fear art and the idea of 'music that frightens people', is perhaps also a mark of cultural authenticity, for a little later, both MA and VA work together to amplify a combined religious and artistic puritanism:

MA: no, me, I make antique music, I don't create anything. I make what I learned

VA: from the ancestors

MA: everything I am telling you, I learned it. I have no right to create it

What is important here is that MA is highlighting how African music, including its aspects of improvisation and antiphony, are held in spiritual regard. This point echoes Ramose's metaphysical conception of *ubuntu* in which even the universe is best conceived as a "musical harmony" (2002, p.60). But VA's echo of "from the ancestors" is also a reminder that the meaning of the ancestors in traditional African culture carries a religious regard of membership of the community and the prospect of mystical links with the realm of the departed, that are best captured in the poetry of the Senegalese poet and story teller, Birago Diop:

Those who died have never left,
They are on the woman's breast,
They are in the wailing child
And in the kindling firebrand
The dead are not under the earth.

They are in the forest, they are in the home

The dead are not dead.
(Diop in Irele, 1998, p.49)

I now ask a series of questions that probe Africanistic ideas about music inspired by another African philosopher's work:

R: ... this...this brings me to, uh, the other theorist I have been reading, he is a Nigerian philosopher Anyanwu, uh, you say music comes first; Anyanwu talks about sound being the model of African reality ... sound, please, comment

MA: yes, yes, yes, there are gentle sounds, loud sounds, like the one you just saw (heard) ((a loud gunshot sound)) ... there they are crazy... crazy. There are gentle sounds they come with reality, because when we eat, you cannot put those things. There are those kinds of music with the Bamoun people that accompany meal or misfortune

"yes, yes, yes" is his response and his meaning of sounds "that accompany meal or misfortune", ceremonies, is a heftily traditional African one. It holds ideas of 'sound' and aesthetic experience as "related to the African modes of life" (Anyanwu, 1987, p. 246). MA's words here along with a later pairing of the ideas that, "when you hear the sounds of secret societies, you are lost" in connection with "to sacrifice animals", introduces a psychodynamic notion of the aesthetic experience, and that it is a type of

death. It recalls the Freudian Ehrenzweig's, after Frazer (1890, 1980), theme of 'The Dying God' and a descent to the final 'oceanic-manic' stage of 'undifferentiation'; "The important constructive role of manic fusion in creative work" (1967, p.191). That death is a state in which love and hate have no separate meaning and that this is consistent with a constructive mental state preceding a reintegration of fragments of the self and creativity (see Ehrenzweig in Chapter 4, p.69).

What emerges next through a long and at times muddled explanation by both MA and VA is a series of passionately felt and entangled themes. Firstly, is the theme of fear of loss of traditional culture. At first, the theme appears to contain the idea of defeat:

MA: well, we...uh...habitually, Bamoun tradition, we cut the links with the ancestors now with modernization ... we cut the link we had with the ancestors. Before, I could go out at night... at midnight and speak with the ancestors, they would understand, they would react. Now it is not like that anymore

VA: now with modern life, all is mixed up

DB: so now you are just doing it like that with nothing to do with the ancestors

VA: we think about them above all

MA: ...but this is happening everywhere, isn't it? ... we have changed what we used to do in the past, to play ... maybe ... music of secret societies, to sacrifice animals ... the ancestors...it is blood...now it is not the same anymore, Islam, modern music

There is a marked ontological connection between music and traditional religion in the pairing of, "when you hear the sounds of secret societies, you are lost" and "to sacrifice animals". Also, both Islam and modernism emerge as the foci of change. In the following contribution there is a feeling of a besieged group, of facing great odds, and the possibility of defeat. MA is on a religious mission to preserve the "real tradition of the West [of Cameroon]":

MA: yes, because it is not everybody, it is not everybody that has modernized, because here we try not to abandon everything ... it is not

everybody that continues with it ... for the moment, I am the only one forcing all this. If I don't have the strength, I will finally abandon it

VA: the real tradition of the West [of Cameroon]

But with the sound of musket blasts still overheard from the courtyard of the palace, MA invokes the warrior history of his Bamoun people as a source of inspiration for his current defence of their culture:

MA: ... the Bamoun Kingdom is made of ethnics, we grouped different ethnics, led wars, conquered people, won. The people who (we) conquered had each their own music, their own music. When we launch war, we take the people and bring them here in the palace and play their music here in the palace. It is a lot of work. I have maybe 600 + musical directory in my head. You see what I am saying. It's in here, in my head ... I am the only one who conserved all of it. Now, for the moment, those ethnics had their chiefs. When they lose their tradition, they come to me to ask...they lost it and come to ask me for help

We move on and talk about the value of rhythm. MA relates how the current sultan and sultan's mother insists that from babies the royal children are immersed in traditional music and "...that is why all the princes, the little princes who are born, they have complete rhythm". I wonder at a royal family today that values the aesthetic dimension of rhythm as much as perhaps learning to speak Latin or Ancient Greek.

Finally looking at the 14 photographs that I have been using in the interviews with traditional healers, MA laughs and says "Yes Bamileke this is good (laughter)". He has instantly recognized a neighbouring ethnic group's masks and costumes. Thumbing through the rest of the photographs, he pauses a long time over the photograph of a sculpture by the Equatorial Guinea artist Leando Mbomio Nsue, who studied in Spain. MA seems intrigued by the works fusion of European influence and traditional *Fang* sculpture (see Fig 6.11, p.168). Like MA, Mbomio's work tussles with the fact of a powerful past and the inevitability of changes.



Fig. 6.11 *Mascara bifronte* by Leando Mbomio Nsue, in Visona' et al, 2000, p. 365).

After finishing looking at the photographs MA says:

MA: the Bamoun, we had this, all these, but we believe that the mask (basque) is a religious drum, even the museum the Sultan is building with snake, Bamoun are saying that...

VA: it is not normal

This final joint offering by MA and VA recalls Mbiti's remark, "the sound of the drum speaks a religious language" (1969. P15), and highlights dynamic processes of embodiment in which an artefact or text can resound like "a religious drum". Further, it introduces the often complicated and even controversial issue of the curatorship of African cultural artefacts (Atwood, 2012). VA's "it is not normal" is an objection, and indicative of the opinion of traditionalists that the exhibiting of certain artefacts weakens or trivialises them.

As we leave, we again pass the many groups playing in the palace courtyard. Now there is a group of young players generating great excitement but the playing to my ear seems rough. Also, the sound of the players and crowd seems almost indistinguishable. It is like street carnival at its most unabated. I recall the South African musicologist Alan Andrew Tracey's remark:

The most fundamental aesthetic principle in Africa concerning music or anything else is that without participation there is no meaning. You can go so far as to consider African music as being a form of co-operation that happens also to produce sound. (1983, p.227)

... also, the words of the Cameroonian writer and composer, Francis Bebey:

Westerners are frequently at a loss to understand the music of black Africa: the concepts of Africans are so totally different. African musicians do not seek to combine sounds in a manner pleasing to the ear. Their aim is simply to express life in all of its aspects through the medium of sound. (1975, p.3)

Summary

The traditional art of MA's Kingdom of Bamoun can both heal and/or frighten people. It can be used to conjure up a highly fuelled mix of emotion and physiology, in response to its sounds. The traditional Bamoun culture and religiosity is inseparable from its art and music, after all "when music is good, spirits come". There was a belief that art is not only inevitably dynamically involved in the production of emotions but that emotional response, can be essential for deeper experience. The interview also revealed (with some very loud reminders) how the strongly identifying MA was in a battle to safeguard his beloved culture and art. He is experiencing his culture under assault from Islam and modernity. However, he has chosen to battle with all his strength. Above all there is something deeply felt about his fight to preserve "the real tradition of the West [of Cameroon]".

MA admits to the full challenge he feels in his work to preserve a respect and understanding of the value of traditional artistic practices. "Outside", the forces of disinterest appear to be winning and far from everybody is engaged with his renaissance concern. Above all, from MA comes the idea that sounds and music with its aspects of improvisation and antiphony are not only used in pomp, religion, religious states and everyday situations but are also held in a religious philosophical regard.

Summary of the Four Case Studies

The traditional healers and musician are firmly lodged in their traditional beliefs but remain both flexible and realistic about the challenges that modernity presents to tradition. For instance, MS described his recent yearly success rate as 100%. The healer MT considered that modernity had impacted on magical practices in Africa and explained that, “My father while about to die told me he cannot hand over all aspects of the tradition to me because of civilization”. However, today in Cameroon he hopes to open a grand twin clinic for traditional healing and modern medicine. In another case, MF spoke proudly of the success of his entrepreneurial move to run a type of café in the waiting area at the entrance to his workspace. The musician MA admits to the full challenge he feels in his work to preserve a respect and understanding of the value of traditional artistic practices. He is like a stoic warrior facing great odds.

None of the healers in the case studies were specialist sculptors, dancers or musicians but all exhibited as them in some way. Their personal idiom was itself artistic in the broadest way. For instance, MF’s analysis of Shonibare’s work was a pleasing ‘multisensory poetry’. The musician MA, took an intense moment to ‘read’, the photo of a mask by Leando Mbomio. When MT walked and gestured towards the vast tropical forest that stretched out below us, his action had an air of theatricality and a purposeful comedic edge that produced a joy in me. It was something “unimpeded by the surface mentality” (Lawlor in Schwaller de Lubicz, 1978, p.11), something lived and real. Not a young man he still paused to dance a little from the waist up when describing the dancing and music of a traditional funeral masquerade. However, all of their aestheticism was pointed at the service of magical healing, protection and a religious contact with the ancestors. In short, both a joy giving and weighty enterprise, filled also with responsibility and danger.

A vitalist regard of nature by the healers was made clear in their use of artefacts that were parts of animals and/or masks that portrayed them. Also, their farming and herbal practices. MT showed me the bottle of medicine buried halfway in the forest soil, where it could draw magical power from the earth. This continuing religious and circumstantial connect with nature however, should not be confused with a separation from modernity. In MT’s compound sat two large Toyota jeeps and MS drove up on an

impressive motorbike. Nearly all the interviews were interrupted at least once by mobile phones and MT even had a TV in the room where we sat. They invariably preferred to speak in only English, French or a Pidgin variety of the two, but as Cameroonians at least partly understood all of these languages. This 'bi-lingualism' and state of post-colonial connection to Europe, characteristic of Cameroon, in combination with traditional beliefs creates possibilities of a 'hybridity' that produces a third narrative that challenges the claims of cultural totalization (Bhabha, 1996).

The healers all evidenced a syncretistic aesthetic sensibility. It is a generative poetic-sensory regard that is linked to a web of traditional associations. This recalls Anyanwu's point that the traditional African epistemological regard makes no radical separation between "mythology, religion, philosophy, politics, art, science" (1987, p245). For instance, the healer MF responded to an ambiguous close-up of El Anatsui's vast modern fabric sculpture, *Earth's Skin* (2007) (see Chapter 6, pp.156-57), with an outpouring of tender and religious feeling mapped onto the very real fact that traditionally people in many parts of Africa are buried shrouded in large mats. In this way, we were also brought into contact with ideas of the living dead, his family ancestors and the intercession with the spirit world and God. Similarly, MA remarked that masks were traditionally thought of as religious drums, implying a normative conception of synaesthesia.

The four case studies showed how the African idea of art is imperatively both a 'performative' and social one. This performative, social and 'in life' quality abolishes all separation between art and life. The lives and practices of the interviewees exemplified how traditional art survives as an 'in life', quotidian experience. MS's evocative description when he "goes out" in public ceremonies was an example of a highly complex performance involving moments of improvisation in response to the concrete world of his community. The local intermediary's remark during my first interview about MS being "the captain of the team" must be interpreted in contradiction to the modern stress on the individual, with a stress rather on the word 'team' than 'captain' (see Chapter 7, pp.138-39). This picture widens Christopher Small's verbal concept of 'musicking' in Africa, in which everyone is considered to be musical and able to participate in some way, and highlights a quotidian conception of

African aestheticism, and understanding “in the black African school ... any manifestation of art is collective, for everyone’s benefit, and with everyone’s participation” (Senghor, 1956, p.28).

The four case studies reflect how traditionally in Africa, art is a concretization of African philosophical religious ideas (Anyanwu, 1987). It follows function for meaning, is much less ever, solely the product of an individual artist’s imagination, and “intended as the objects of disinterested contemplation” (Small, 1998, p.107). That music in particular, is not an entity but an activity. Africanistically, its aspects of improvisation and antiphony are not only used in pomp, religion, religious states and everyday situations but are also held in a religious philosophical regard. Further that these invisible forces are regarded as “no can laugh”, powerful, weighty forces needing to be dealt with responsibly. Together, the four cases present a picture of the complex mixture of an enduring passion, love and belief in it plus how it is sometimes painfully challenged to sustain respect and understanding in the face of Christianization, Islamization and a modern world disinterested in it.

CHAPTER 7: Visual Matrix Session Reports

Report on the Yaoundé Visual Matrix - 20.03.17

For my second visit to Cameroon I planned to give a 20 minute introduction before each Visual Matrix (VM), introducing myself, explaining my background in arts and music and that I was now a Ph D researcher from the University of Central Lancashire working in the field of Psychosocial Studies. In addition, I would state the question I was looking at and about the VM's background and development. This was all intended as a professional prerequisite and because I imagined a short presentation by a visiting foreign student might somehow contribute towards giving something back in return for their participation. Before leaving the UK I had adapted a Powerpoint used in previous UK presentations for use in Cameroon. This was 2017 and I remember painstakingly selecting drawings of black participants for the animated part of the Powerpoint in which, one by one, figures of different people appear on the screen whilst I say something like:

A person speaks an image or images and while that person speaks an image another person just thinks their own associations and images, feelings and ideas. And then once that person has spoken maybe another speaks their images ...

However, about two weeks before going Dr Banindjel made it clear that any possibility of doing any Powerpoint presentations with anything more than my laptop was not guaranteed. So before going I hurriedly had my 20 VM images printed on A3 size sheets of card and busily experimented with using Blu-tack and drawing pins for sticking them up on a variety of wall surfaces. I was relieved to think that there would at least be electricity for my music playing device and the 10.5 minute soundtrack.

The morning of the first VM session, which was in Yaoundé, I was understandably anxious that things should go well. I persuaded Dr Banindjel that it would be good to arrive as early as 8.30 for the planned 10.00 start, to allow for setting up and unforeseen circumstances. The process of recruiting the students had involved a mix of word of mouth, email and social media and with no obligation to participate it was entirely unsure how many would turn up. On arrival at the university it also became

unclear if we would definitely find the person with the key for the space we planned to use. At this point I decided not to remain anxious and instead simply wait patiently, reassuring myself that if things went terribly wrong, at least I had another two VMs planned.

10.00 arrived and there were no students or any sight of the person with the key. At about 10.30 about 28 students arrived. They had just completed an early morning exam but despite this there was an atmosphere of energy and earnest interest in what we were all about to do. The amiableness and significance of the occasion was summed up by how we all lined up for a group photo. After the photo taking, with still no key in site, I proceeded to deliver my 20 minute presentation outside and simply by voice. As Dr Banindjel (Jaochen) had said, the majority of the students understood English well and I was reminded how effective a brief oral presentation can be. As I was finishing the man with the key turned up and it was agreed that I should be left to go in alone for 30 minutes to prepare things. The inside was a large space for education with open window sections and movable chairs (see APPENDIX J for an image). There would inevitably be intermittent noise from outside. I steadily went about blu-tacking my images to one wall. On just one corner was a perilously damaged looking plug-point. I nervously plugged in my music playing device and breathed a sigh of relief when I heard it working and knew I would be able to play the soundtrack I had prepared.

At the start of the matrix itself, it quickly became apparent that although the majority understood and spoke English well enough, they nearly all preferred to express themselves in French. Very quickly the contributions began to be interjected with requests to speak in French. In the VM the researcher takes on the role of a sensitive and supportive host, is non-directive but, importantly, sensitively encourages participation and so although I felt frustrated I quickly nodded assent whenever a request was made. After a short while nearly all the contributions were uninterruptedly made in French. The atmosphere and activity in the session overall was something like an animated classroom and the participants often raised their hands to obtain permission from Dr Banindjel to speak their associations. All the same, I noted a feeling of seriousness, passion and strong, sometimes emotional,

engagement from the participants. Also, a feeling of ease with, rather than constraint by, authority. Put simply, it felt to me more like a very relaxed professional and/or scholastic gathering, than a period of quiet meditation.

Music generates everything else. It is music, it is music...

The Yaoundé Visual Matrix started with what was almost a list of the associations that would accompany the affect of the stimulus material. There were thoughts about culture, beliefs, joy and sadness. Ideas of transformation linked to practices and customs steadily developed in the form of overlapping memories and associations that were characterised by similar qualities of affect. The affects were often presented as polar opposites or a combined paradox. Sometimes the associations were like a ghostly, surreal set of imagery that invoked a realm of fantastical creations and magic. These sometimes mirrored the paradoxical combinations of emotion. The music was often expressed as playing an authoritative cultural role but never entirely eclipsed the images, poetic ideas and close memories in the generation of affect.

At first in the session's start was a long period of silence that slowly produced a religious landscape filled with the ancestors and different types of animals:

... most of whom it's linked to their ancestors

Spirituality, related to spirituality

..... (Inaudible) we can associate in some language but sometimes we cannot understand....

(Inaudible)

Animals...

... Animals? Is there any connection with other elements? Because when you just say animals, you must know if there is a connection to something ... (spoken by the Cameroonian matrix facilitator)

(Laughter)

1. Unless otherwise indicated all quotations in this chapter are from the participants.

(talking to other PP): Yes, we talked about animals...Now you pretend as if you didn't hear them talk about animals

To dance

(Laughter)

I saw elephants dancing

(Laughter)

... you know the kind of mask they wear a certain way, right?

(talking to other PP): ...you can speak in French

I hear some animals, some elephants, sometime they were like crickets, locusts

(talking to other PP): Let people talk...

Locusts sound, locusts make me feel that it was the night sometimes. Sometimes I was afraid with the music, sometimes it makes me feel, feel afraid. Like dun... dun... dun... Some (of) the pictures always make me feel afraid

Time and again, the speakers 'co-hosted' polarised types of emotion:

There were emotions: joy, sadness...

I am sure that there were not many people... there was also spirit, my ancestors...and the feeling was not just scary, sometimes it was like the joy, people around are shouting, they are celebrating, most like that.

However, the session metaphorically took off like a rocket when the group rounded in agreement upon the idea of music and sound's affective role vis-a-vis existence and spirituality.

(talking to other PP): Let people talk, don't argue...

We already belong to a culture that says it all

It is within culture that we find everything else

Music generates everything else. It is music, it is music...
(citing a popular definition): Culture is the only thing we have left after we forget everything else.

(Applause and laughter)

It's music...

It is spirituality first

This recognition of music and sound's importance, involved a pragmatic conception of traditional African art and music, in which it is used to "resolve problems":

... I observed that all the different sounds we listened to have almost no words. In function of the instruments that were played in the sounds, each one of us tried to associate them to a specific culture. There were no words, but in relation to the instruments that were played, I was trying to associate them to a specific culture that shows how it manifests either joy or sadness or community gathering to resolve problems in the village.

The coupling of "It's music" and "It is spirituality first" was indicative of the great volume and richness of cultural ideas attached to the topic of traditional African art that emerged in this Visual Matrix. The pairing also indicates how it is a mix of diverse meaning and inspiration. As indicted before, the music contributed to the production of a range of polarised emotions such as fear, joy and happy associations that were sometimes a combined paradox. It created strong affective and immersive memories - "I would feel like I am in the ceremony" - or embodied experience with strong thought of cultural identity.

... there was also spirit, my ancestors... and the feeling was not just scary, sometimes it was like the joy, people around are shouting, they are celebrating, most like that.

For me, for example, there was music that just played, it scared me and ... (inaudible) ... I told myself, I am this culture, it is me, and this is how our ancestors were doing it ...(inaudible)...Every time music would play, I would feel like I am in the ceremony, it confirms to me that I am in this culture, I am this culture.

The experience of the music in this matrix session could sometimes be described as extremely powerful in affect, some kind of force that combines body and mind and "is

always in activity” (Manley, 2009, p.81). Indeed, this point was fully drawn out in the post matrix discussion:

... for me, for example there was a metaphysical side, that’s when the music was playing my spirit varied. When the music was loud, my spirit moved, when the music was soft my spirit softened as well. So, my body will move with the music. My body was sometimes fast, sometimes calm, it reflected how I felt inside at the time I was listening to the music, what kind of emotion I had. Sometimes I realized the more the rhythm is pronounced, if I was afraid for example, the more my emotion intensified. The less the music was loud, the more my spirit softened. I would feel serene and at that moment I will enjoy the manifestations those images suggested.

This post-matrix contribution almost perfectly echoes the Spinozian and Deleuzian conception of affect as something that is always in movement and varying in intensity. It also mirrors the conception and how affect for these philosophers “combines body and mind rather than separating them in a Cartesian fashion” (Manley, 2009, p. 81). The similarity of conception is demonstrated through Spinoza’s own definition of affect:

By emotion (*affectus*) I understand the affections of the body by which the body’s power of activity is increased or diminished, assisted or checked, together with the ideas of these affections. (Spinoza in Manley, 2009, p. 81)

This synthesis or ‘combining’ is central to the functionality of traditional African art (Senghor, 1957; Anyanwu, 1987). In addition, it highlights Sowande’s point of a clash between African and Western epistemologies, when he says “Our traditional man would tell us that sound was *evocative*, not that it ‘could’ be, but by its very nature it was *evocative*” (1966, p.28). However, in the above post-matrix contribution, the student participant’s classification ‘metaphysical side’, others him from Sowande’s traditional man, who understood affect not as theory but as experienced facts.

Interspersed throughout the Visual Matrix was a fragmentary debate about the genesis of music, spirituality (including the idea of the ancestors), and culture, vis-a-vis each other. However, this debate remained interlaced with ideas of divine forces and the ancestors as synonymous with African ‘culture’:

When we speak of culture, ok, I don't think a human, like us right now, we won't impose culture if there is no divine appearance somewhere that means a tree in our culture, for example, a baobab, when a branch falls down, we already know that somebody is going to die.

But that is culture

(Everybody yells "it is culture")

The group's striking unison over the words "it is culture" indicates an affective resonance in connection with a spiritually revered symbol of life known throughout a vast part of the continent (Holdstock, 2000).

Music and dance were linked to associations of religious initiation and known by the group to play a central and dynamic role in types of connection with divine forces, such as the ancestors. They 'transmitted', "the spirits' message, ancestors' message".

... it seems like it's not only...it is not anyone who plays music, it is not anyone who can dance in that ceremony. It looks like they are initiate people... in a sense they are not just dancing, they are not just making music to entertain. They are like a medium. In a way, they transmit the spirits' message, ancestors' message. And the others are not just...are not just benefiting (enjoying) from the music, they receive the message.

The affect felt in connection to the themes of parents, grandparents, the ancestors, spirits, other worlds and spirituality was most powerfully evoked by the music and often connected to an idea of "in the village". In addition, this type of emotional and embodied response to the music is extended to be a multisensory, emotional, embodied experience that produces fantastical associations:

From time to time, music scared me as if I was watching a movie, a movie that at a moment announces a fright, an elephant scream, and the insects and all that tell me in my head, there is a meaning to it. While I was listening to the music, at a moment, I really felt I was in the village. And in the village, I felt like I was living in our ancestors' time to talk about totems, especially at the time when there were sounds and voices of animals and bizarre sounds and this fear sent me back to the village and I saw many totems, because at the time we used to say that our parents who have totems used them to protect their offspring. That's to say that you may find yourself in a difficult situation in the

middle of the night traveling from one village to another, maybe on foot, your parent or ancestor, your grandparent who has a totem would accompany you, and during the trip he would be walking in the farm, maybe it's an elephant that you hear in the distance, maybe it's a lion, maybe a panther, you would only hear the sound; a sound in the dark that you can't see. When you don't know that it could be your grandfather, then you are afraid. You are so afraid that you run away, but when you arrive at home and tell him what happened, how you ran away because you were afraid, there was so much noise. He would ask you what you were afraid of. You would say you don't know. That's the kind of noise I was feeling in the music.

This contribution is a fantastical ghostly imagining, “especially at the time when there ... bizarre sounds”, full of animals “maybe it's an elephant that you hear in the distance, maybe it's a lion, maybe a panther”. There is an interplay of the senses exemplified by the idea of “a sound in the dark that you can't see”. In this study, the pervasiveness of multi-sensoriality in traditional African art, music and dance was also confirmed in the case study of MA. The music used in the VM presentation included different sections of music, played on various traditional musical instruments and a field recording of crowd noise and sound at a ceremonial procession, however no actual animal sounds. Nevertheless, for the student “the music” produced such a rich reverie that he describes hearing “sounds and voices of animals and bizarre sounds” and these in turn produce “fear sent me back to the village”. The affect includes a feeling of fear of the unknown mixed with protective feelings about family, ancestors and the use of artefacts. The extract ends with the indication of an emotional and embodied experience in the words, “That's the kind of noise I was feeling in the music”, where the music is ‘felt’ as opposed to simply ‘heard’.

In the slow opening episode of this matrix session, the onomatopoeia of “dun ... dun ... dun” is stimulated by the music and is an embodied response that combines with an association of locusts and is possibly also connected to a photograph in the presentation of a mask that is an abstract insect-like face (see Fig. 2.1, p. 16). The feeling of fear stemming from this association demonstrates how music itself is abstract and ambivalent in its affect. The same mask was associated in the Dschang Visual Matrix with an idea of and photograph of a chair - also feelings that include fear. Once again ideas of multiplicity of meaning (see Chapter 2, p.18) and transformation,

are manifested in the art. An explanation of this idea and type of problem was expressed in the further contribution, “we can associate in some language but sometimes we cannot understand”.

The onomatopoeia of “dun ... dun ... dun”, also echoes the idea of music’s power to induce reverie that came from the interview with the traditional musician MA. MA put it like this, “with fear also, you imagine how the rhythm, music properly” (see p.163) It brings together both Senghor’s Africanistic idea of the despotic power of rhythm “to make us enter into the spirituality of the object” (Senghor in Taylor, 2016, p.1997) with Ehrenzweig’s remark that art is not only inevitably dynamically involved in the production of emotions but that the emotional response itself can be essential for the “deepest experiences” of it (Ehrenzweig, 1965, p.115). It is interesting to note here that the musician MA had also remarked that ‘traditionally’ African people think of masks as spiritual drums. These points once again remind of a synaesthesia and poetic interchange of the senses as characteristic traditional African art and African aesthetics and suggesting that such contributions in the session were in fact very close to the sensibilities in the case studies.

The experience of the music in this Visual Matrix could sometimes also be described as one that produced images and associations that were like a daydream that could feel far away and characteristic of Bion’s ‘reverie’ (1962, 1970). At other times it was described as, “some kind of force” or affect, that provides strength and courage:

When the song was singing from the beginning, I felt like the ancestors, there was some kind of force, courage, I felt like I was facing an imminent danger and I needed the ancestors. It was like I wasn’t from this world anymore, I felt like I was far away with the ancestors.

What makes me afraid is that those pictures ... it seems as if I am in a world that I do not understand. Juju is another world. That is what made me think that ... according to the music, the music was coming ...was making me feel afr... so afraid. It seems as if some music is linked to danger.

It is a world that the participant does not understand, “far away with the ancestors”, that emerges partly into consciousness through the reverie. The participants are

simultaneously apart from the world of the ancestors and capable of entering it and “*feeling like the ancestors*” (my italics). This point echoes the ambivalent picture of modern Cameroonians’ estrangement from traditional culture accompanied by feelings of attachment to it, that will be discussed in Chapter 8. The ‘fear’ and ‘danger’ expressed illustrate Spinozian and Deleuzian theory well, because the emotions are in movement, the participants were ‘becoming ancestor’ like Captain Ahab’s entering into a relationship with the whale (see Chapter 4, p.85-87).

The contribution “I saw elephants dancing” in the early ambiguous long episode of the matrix was most likely stimulated by the image of Bamileke secret society members all wearing abstract elephantine costumes and dancing together. It both followed and raised a round of laughter when first mentioned, possibly because of a playful awareness of insider/outsider ethnicity. There was an ethnically diverse selection of participants in the matrix session group from this university (University of Yaoundé), where some students would have been Bamileke and would perhaps have a close knowledge of the ceremony pictured in a photograph used and other students would be of a different ethnicity and perhaps have an outsider perspective. However, the image association of especially large creatures, elephants, is also, once again, a markedly aural association, “I hear some elephants”, and simultaneously made more complex by the image of “some elephants, sometimes they were like crickets, locusts”. The selection of animals also produces a contrast between the very large, heavy and strong with very small, light and delicate, recalling the unbound quality of connections found in dreams. It is a paradoxical combination that subtly mirrors the feelings of joy and sadness and other polarised emotions that appeared in the session such as fear with joy or happiness, existing together.

The meaning of animals in many traditional African cultures, is discussed in Chapter 2 and elsewhere in this thesis. The accurate depiction of nature in the mythology, philosophies, religion, mystical practices, and traditional art is not only a pointer of the strong eco-awareness within traditional African life (Maware, 2014) but also an indication of how animals form part of a religious universe, that once again contains invisible forces and mysteriously veiled messages awaiting interpretation. Traditionally

they serve to communicate complex philosophical ideas about transformation and the human psyche (see Fig. 4.6, p.82).

As Anyanwu (1987) leads us to expect, the Visual Matrix produced associations that were a fusion of all the aspects of Cameroonian cultural life including religious and spiritual ones. In one response to a photograph of a mask (see Fig. 2.1, p.16), these associations highlighted the sensory poetics of the object and how the body and senses impinge upon and 'affect' our thought. In this myriad of ideas and images of statues talking and "an old man with some kind of ears" were signifiers of unknown messages. This was another example of how African art objects may be understood as a type of poetry and a practical use of abstraction and the power of arbitrariness (Ehrenzweig, 1968, see Chapter 4, p.69; Mbembe, 2001). In the words of Senghor, "The more an image is unreal, surreal, the more it expresses" (1956, p. 32):

What I can say, at a certain moment in the music, I felt like, uh, the statues that were in the images had a spirit, that's it felt like those statuettes were talking, that's they are not used for whatever, it is more about what the statue means or transmits or the kind of spirits it has, what is incarnated. That statue incarnated something deep, that's a spirit, a message, and whatever. For example the statues that looked like the statue of an old man with some kind of ears. When I looked at it, I looked the one that has like a head. Through the music, it was like there were those statues that incarnated spirits or that were talking and the question remains, what does that mean?

The expressed idea of "statues talking" and able to hear "with some kind of ears", in this Visual Matrix, was a "whatever" communication "that's it felt" and is not logocentric. It was a "whatever" or communication that was expressed time and again in the Visual Matrix and points to an ontology of the senses that is very different from the Western habit for the medium of music, film and plastic art. The idea of statues talking is simultaneously an idea of them as containers of a "deep" 'power'. This "something deep" is not regarded by the student as a fear or anxiety, but instead is regarded as a type of coded message.

The laughters that they couldn't suppress

Very early in this Visual Matrix, there manifested an episode that is characteristic of a key aspect of what can emerge through the research methodology. This type of moment is described as “when panel members are excluded from a shared sense of meaning or when something unspoken, undigested or otherwise in excess of language seems to be present” (Bereswill et al, 2010, p. 239). This moment in this Visual Matrix was when the Visual Matrix facilitator, Dr Banindjel, interrupted about an association to animals and remarked “when you just say animals, you must know if there is a connection to something”. This immediately raised a round of group laughter, with one participant breaking into an accusation with another and saying to them, “Now you pretend as if you didn’t hear them talk about animals”. This mix of laughter and contretemps was immediately followed by an example of the already discussed association of dance with the image of elephants dancing but all the time within a scene that continued to contain laughter. Among panel members in the analysis there was a sense that the data contained something unspoken but present during the session. The laughter had been rapid and thoroughly shared. It conjured the impression of a common or instantly recognised joke about aspects of traditional art and culture. For the panel in the analysis it provoked a feeling of ambiguity. The admonishment of the others’ merriment by one of the participants suggested that an element of controversy had entered into the matrix and indicated the possibility of an alienation from traditional culture among many of the European style educated students (see Douala Visual Matrix in this chapter, p.198).

Freud emphasised how the playful aspect of a joke functions to reduce what is alien or uncomfortable for the subject. There is a type of affective complicity between the ‘teller’ and the object of the joke and that is why, for instance, that the best jokes about a cultural group are told by members of that group. Further, the joke and the spontaneous bodily breakthrough of the laughter, are not merely a comforting and temporary relief of repression but an indication of conflict. The readiness of the other to laugh also exposes her as caught in collusion with knowing what is alien, uncomfortable or a site of conflict (Weber, 1982). Glissant (1989) provides a haunting reflection that is pertinent to the laughter in the Yaounde’ matrix session with his

observation on the contradictions and tensions that pervade African countries today. He considers that these tensions are merely attenuated by the existence of an 'African' cultural and geographic hinterland and that Africa is in a painful process of parturition. For Glissant, the story of the traditional *griot*, historian, must end using the cadence of slave ships at sea and finally produce like a sign of torment, "The laughter that they couldn't suppress" (1989, p.391).

However, when the thinking in the session became about the idea of music and sound's affective role vis-a-vis existence and spirituality, there was the response of both laughter and applause to a famous dictum taught in high school. Its words, "Culture is the only thing we have left after we forget everything else", denote a particularly final conception of culture for Cameroonians. In addition, the group later produced a striking unison over the words "it is culture". Here it is appropriate to recall Harney's (2004) thinking that in African countries, the negative psychic effects of a history of Atlantic-slavery, colonialism, and European style education did not render the same degree of injury and processes of transformation compared to African peoples in the diaspora. The laughter and applause in response to the famous dictum indicates that Glissant's notion of a painful African 'becoming' that is only moderated by the existence of a cultural and geographic hinterland, is incomplete without the acknowledgement of the survival of a pre-existent identity.

Summary

Anyanwu (1978; 1987) reminds us that traditionally African artistic expression, is a pragmatic epistemological concern, contextualised by mythology, religion and political experience. Further, after Senghor's African epistemological attitude, there is an Africanistic anti-Cartesian integration of the sensibilities, which embraces the idea of a logic of art or aesthetics, (ibid, p.246). A clear example of this was the idea of, through the music, a statue providing a "whatever" communication "that's it felt", and is not logo-centric. There were also examples of polarised emotion, fear with joy or happiness, stemming from the same affective and embodied experience of the art. Amongst this group of young and educated Cameroonians, there was a general feeling

of excitement about the traditional art and music and it was shown to be both a source of ethnic and wider national, identity, pride and emotion.

However, key to a discussion of findings about traditional African art in Africa today is the impact of the history and influence of Christianization and Islamization, European style education, and experience of modern urban lifestyles. Like the majority of habitable places of the world, Africa has always been exposed to global influences. Even before the advent of colonialism in Africa, contact with Europe and Asia had produced significant amounts of syncretism in religious beliefs and so the meaning of traditional art in some communities had already been enlarged by influences from the rest of the world. Nevertheless, a great deal of indigenous thinking in connection with traditional art persists to this day (Mbiti, 1969; Bravmann, 1974; Blier, 1995; Chitungu, 2013) and so the Western educated Masters students represent an interesting cohort for analysing responses to traditional art and culture in the everyday today.

The phrases within the contributions, such as, “the images made me see the greatness and richness of African culture”, “this is Africa and I was happy”, and “I became emotional” all point to a great emotional value felt for the art and culture of Africa. These and other contributions in the matrix demonstrated that these modern educated Cameroonians were fully knowledgeable about traditional African art and culture’s ‘metaphysical’ configuration and its ubiquitous religious regard for the ancestors. The emotionality felt was therefore a firm indication that despite over a century of colonialization, Christianization and Islamization, there continues to be a cultural and religious attachment to traditional artistic forms and practices. The mix of associations, feelings and affect produced in the Yaounde’ Visual Matrix demonstrated how participants could be both in contact with traditional culture and alienated from it. In short, a “twoness” (Mbembe, 2001, p.12) of sensibility. The participants’ eager responses and rich associations were a series of images and sounds often connected with animals. Other important images were of village life. In sum the suggestion is that an indigenous African cultural imaginary endures in content but is complicated by a tension borne of its contradictions to modernity.

Report on the Dschang Visual Matrix - 23.3.17

Once again after discussion Joachen agreed that we should arrive early to allow good time to both prepare and say hello to the students. We arrived at 8.30 A.M and again I was feeling a little anxious about what conditions I might find and now how well I would be able to communicate with the students. We did not know it but once again the students were doing an exam that morning and would not be finished until around 10.30. This meant that I at least had a comfortable amount of time to prepare the presentation and space. The space was a large lecture theatre, with long bench seating and large tropical open window architecture (see APPENDIX J for an image). Once again, there would inevitably be intermittent noise from outside. I even remember the noise of other students passing and talking and a building truck at one point. Still I went about sticking the images in an intentionally 'semi-irregular' pattern across half of the very large wall and then testing and positioning the music player. Positioning the chairs in a 'snowflake' configuration was impossible because of how the space was a large lecture theatre with classic university style long rows of fixed seating. A further problem was precisely how to manage the positioning of the digital voice recorder in such a large space. By testing I settled on a compromise between the recorder being in the middle and whenever an outlying person spoke, calmly moving it closer. In reality this whole exercise made me feel even more anxious because I was convinced that it created an even further deviation from a prescribed delivery of a matrix session.

Close to 11.00 about 44 students arrived. From the actual start of this matrix, as before in Yaounde', it seemed that although they all understood English well, they nearly all preferred to participate in the session in French. I once again felt frustrated about this but was starting to understand that their desire was connected to an earnest enthusiasm; the seriousness of these psychology students in participating in a VM session and a strong, sometimes emotional, engagement with the process of the matrix. However, personally I still felt deflated by the experience and it would take me a very long time to overcome the memory of the anxiety and frustration.

The Dschang Visual Matrix session highlighted the everyday role that traditional artistic production may play in individual and family life plus activities such as, initiation,

spiritual cleansing, the regulation of crime and misdemeanours plus the conduct of royalty. It confirmed the view that traditional artistic practices reflect the values of rural Africa, where the bonds of extended family and community are a strong force (Mbiti, 1969; Kimmerle, 2015). Further, that this experience of traditional African artistic practice and communalism is not uncommon amongst the students in high education at the University of Dschang. The contributions in the session confirmed that whilst traditional African art and music is certainly a matter of ethnic identity and pride, a “my culture”, there is also considerable degree of inter-ethnic knowledge of it. This knowledge contributes to the expression of a Cameroonian, and even broader African identity. However, the session also reflected a concern of traditional “culture losing its original value”. Further, that “as time is passing we are losing the original values”; the thought that modernisation and specifically technology were incompatible with the “purely African”, “we saw some of the guys with headphones, which is not something that is purely ... purely African”.

From the session in general there emerged a myriad of memories and associations that represented, different poles of emotion; types of satisfaction, joy and fear in connection to traditional African art and music; examples of a feeling of awe and of anxiety or consternation. The memories were rich and close feeling, “How did it [use to] happen ... when maybe there was a moment of joy”, comprising a quotidian fear, easily recreated, “Now, that the images are not there anymore, there is a feeling of fear for me because there is a ...”. From out of this complex emotional tableaux emerged an unreal, sous/sur-real (Senghor, 1956), set of associations that as in the Yaounde´ session suggest the persistence of an African vitalist and syncretistic aesthetic sensibility in the everyday in Cameroon.

The image that creates over and over beyond the world of appearances

In the Dschang session the memories, stories and ideas expressed, were strongly affective, “brought a feeling of fear in me”. They were characterized by a contradictory tableau of fear laden memories, ideas of secrecy, stories involving inexplicable forces, accompanied by positive associations and feeling:

So, I also started to run away and there was an image that reminded me of a face, generally, there was a reading, when we opened that page for me it was always good, so many images and sounds made me think of it.

... I was happy to see certain traditional things, cowries for example and I was afraid.

... most of the images reminded me of chieftdom. For example, I am from a region where tradition was really good ... tradition is practiced there a lot. There was a time when the totem of a Notable would devour [eat] people, so these images have brought a feeling of fear in me.

The memories and associations ranged across many senses, sight, sound, taste, smell and touch and were a rich embodied sensual experience:

These societies come out during important ceremonies and when they come out like this, they perform rituals and incantations, for example, they can plant bananas and in an instant they grow and in an instant they ripen and we can eat them.

There was an image, people were wearing large hats, in our language we call it Nkougang. Not anyone performs that dance. This made me think about the meat I eat all the time, because when my grandfather goes to the chieftdom for that dance, he always comes back home with a lot of meat. He puts it in a barn to dry the meat and when I go to the village, I collect it. So when I saw that dance, I thought about meat and I want to eat.

The associations could be so visceral that they would provoke the participants into imagining being hungry and eating.

From the above examples, one recalls Anyanwu's remark that, "African art touches on realities which are lived or experienced. It is related to the African modes of life and it creates a world that is personally relevant and satisfying" (1976, p. 513). There was an explanation of complex rites and dependent observances "they perform rituals and incantations"; specific clothing "There was an image, people were wearing large hats, in our language we call it Nkougang"; materials and tools "the totem of a Notable". However, a further contribution that described the dance procession of a "Notable", which "comes with a certain force that makes you understand that you should run

away”, recalled how the traditional artistic production marshalled its forces, like much of art anywhere, in a purposeful reminder of social hierarchy.

The type of “fear in me” associated with some practices and performances, plus ideas of prohibition and secrecy was sometimes a source of consternation and purely fearful:

There are also some images that remind me of cleansing rites. Because they also say that no one should go there without the company of an initiated, one that is trained to cleanse, and those things that happen in the backyard and with the kids who often play there, because I live in a neighbourhood where people do those kinds of things where we go through, and we are told not to walk through there. Shouldn't they find specific places to do things like that? Those are the things that create fear in me

This contribution exemplifies how complex feelings towards traditional practices in modern Cameroon may be heightened in urban situations. It may be that part of the anxiety is possibly connected to a competition for space in the urban setting of a “neighbourhood”. However, once again, the feeling of fear was also part of a broader collage of conflicting associations that included “when maybe there was a moment of joy”; images of family and community participation and/or celebration:

When I observed the image ... with the first sound it reminded me of my childhood when I lived with my grandparents. How did it [use to] happen ... when maybe there was a moment of joy, we had to share ... drink, we invited all the grandparents in the neighbourhood, they would come and sit with their musical instruments. They would play music while consuming matango, we call it matango, [matango is traditional palm wine]

... culture is a collective issue. When people come together at time they celebrate. And when they are celebrating, music for celebration is played. At time when they come together, there is another music that made me feel that they have come together to dance and sanction because of their traditional regulatory system, traditional justice system.

The words “when maybe there was a moment of joy, we had to share ...” contained the idea of the production of happiness through the experience of people coming

together in a shared cultural event. This idea markedly contrasted with a following nightmarish image of a 'brother', "who was in isolation, he was alone and looking very angry, very aggressive:

I saw an image where there was somebody who was in isolation, he was alone and looking very angry, very aggressive. So it recalls the images of my elder brother who is very aggressive, very destructive. So when I saw that image, it dropped to my ... the evil things that he has been doing and that image in isolation that is how he lives, he lives in isolation and he is always very annoyed, very aggressive, very destructive.

... where a person seems to grab something makes me think of solitude in death ... solitude in death ...

... and in that solitude, there is suffering, sadness from the way he lowers his face

The contribution "culture is a collective issue" in contrast to with the emotional pairing of "somebody who was in isolation", with a brother who "is always very annoyed, very aggressive, very destructive", provides a nuanced understanding of the idea of 'culture' in the session and suggests that it is an idea of 'communalism'. Further, this cultural conception of communalism drawn out in the matrix session, additionally provided the insight that collective aesthetic practices such as traditional "music" and "dance" are not only appropriate for types of "sanction" but are also a source of salvation from night(s) of anger, whereby "everybody should feel at peace":

So, one image that I saw there was somebody in isolation. He was looking very angry at night, so that is ... that is an abstract individual in the community. So when they are dancing to sanction ... the dance to sanction ... those are the people that the society with music and culture should be connected and everybody should feel at peace.

The image of the "abstract individual in the community" may be understood as directly in opposition to a 'concrete' conception of culture identical with communalism. In connection the linked thought, "they are dancing" so that "everybody should feel at peace", may be understood as 'supra' ethical (beautifully moral); religious; rheomodic;

embodied response in counter to the cultural 'impossibility' of someone being outside the community.

One series of images and associations that emerged in the Dschang matrix session were partly linkable to a photograph in the matrix presentation that I took of a 'chair' that is used by the traditional healer MS in his practice. The chair (see Fig. 6.1, p.135) is extremely simple in form, a right-angled slab of wood. In contrast, the series of images and associations that emerged were a surreal, 'Dalian' landscape of 'chairs'. The first image was of "a piece of wood carved like a chair", and the connection with cleansing rituals and washing is simple enough because of the bowl also in the photograph. "it makes me think of ... of rituals, of rituals maybe against curse or cleansing of curses or releasing washing rituals":

because normally we need to cleanse in the river, so therefore there is a chair like that in the corner of the house or in the backyard, or sometimes there is a small rock where a juju can sit so that different ... so that uh a person can perform rites if there is no river around

However, the chair is now interchangeable with an abstract mask (see Fig. 2.1, p.16), a mask which is, an 'eruption' of eyes, ears and mouth, and that, to the participant, "looked like a chair" in the first place. Further, the now chair/mask can hear, see, speak and feel people, because it is believed that if you are guilty, the chair will vibrate when you sit on it, plus everybody will see it:

There was like a carving there, which looked like ... which has eyes, ears, mouth, and looked like a chair and by this it represents all system of the human being ... and I can say that that (the) chair, because in certain houses there are special chairs for particular people. You can say it's the chair of a successor and nobody may sit on it, but there are some chairs where if somebody commits a crime or has done something wrong, he/she will be invited to sit in that chair. And as you sit on it, if you are guilty you will be given percussion¹, because that chair is considered to see everything everybody does, it hears what everybody says and it feels people that is the tradition and cultural beliefs of our society.

This collage of psychic "masking concerns" (Blier, 1995, p.396) (see Chapter 4, p.81)

1.The 'term' percussion in Cameroon is commonly used as 'vibration'.

recalls Senghor's unreality, sous/sur-reality, a creation "over and other beyond the world of appearances" (1956); a nomadic expression of ideas in the objects.²

Even in madness we can do something useful

In this matrix session were a series of contributions about a nationally famous example of contemporary Cameroonian sculpture. The image was of *La Nouvelle Liberte'*, the monument at the Deido Roundabout in Douala (see Fig 2.12, p.54) created by Joseph Francis Sumegne. Sumegne is a contemporary Cameroonian artist who makes tradition-inspired masks and sculptures. Despite the sculpture's very urban setting and modernist art connections, in this matrix session the image of the sculpture was still met with an expression of the traditional cultural conception of communalism and affect. Also, it evoked the traditional African religious belief and feeling that without a link with the inspiration from the ancestors, there is no creation (creativity) (see research interview with Mr Art), and that creativity is tied up with thought and protection. Further that, along with destiny and morality, these attributes "serve at once to distinguish persons and to define them within the larger framework of an interactive, spiritually empowered universe" (Blier, 1995, p.204).

This interesting sequence of ontologically related ideas commenced with a sanguine contribution about 'madness' that seemed to challenge a straightforward Western 'as illness' conception of mental health. This positively reminded that "even in madness we can do something useful":

... the perception I have ... the perception is associated with the rhythm of the music. The moment where or, well, for starter, when music is associated with certain images, it makes me think of the creative aspect when a person finds himself/herself in an urgent situation... for example, I can take the image of the Deido roundabout, since in this case we were made to believe that the image is a mentally ill person who might have conceived that image (s). So when I saw this, it allowed me to associate it with music...it allowed me to understand that even in madness we can do something useful. And to go further,

2.Senghor writes and explains of another mask: Here we see the face of a man with a bearded chin, the horns and ears of a bull (sometimes the horns are replaced by a crescent moon), birds that peck at the forehead are at the horns of plenty; this is the perfect example of the image that creates over and over beyond the world of appearances (1956, p. 32).

In the above example, the adverb “even” signifies the feeling of optimism for the thought that follows it, that “in madness we can do something useful”. The rationale for this ‘positivity’ about madness however, becomes plain if we remember the ontological significance ascribed to art and music; its “aesthetic pragmatism” (Holdstock, 2000, p. 183) and that it represents a concrete conception of culture, identical with communalism and satisfying (Anyanwu, 1987, p. 246) in affect. This conception of culture assembles a broad terrain of emotion, representation and symbolization, and may be understood using Lorenzer’s idea of scenic experience, “an ongoing register of affective and embodied experience and meaning” that is constituted by and dialogic with the social and collective (Bereswill et al, 2010, p.226).

During the creation of the monument at the Deido Roundabout, *La Nouvelle Liberte’*, rumours were rife in Cameroon about its creator, Sumeagne. People were talking about a madman clandestinely going around at night collecting “rubbish” and taking it somewhere “secret” (from interview). *La Nouvelle Liberte’* is an inspired sculpture that uses disused industrial sized engine parts to make a 15 metres high abstract human figure. Sumeagne and his ‘African art’ expression lies somewhere between what Susan Vogel categorises as international and of the European academic, city dweller and traditional, of small villages and by artists working for their particular ethnic group (1991). In photograph, Sumeagne, in his tradition inspired’ headdress, is a little startling, ‘a Cameroonian Salvador Dali’, that could also be linked to the idea of a masked spiritual-healer or witchdoctor. The line between the contemporary artist who makes tradition inspired creations and a practitioner of traditional cultural and religious beliefs becomes uncertain. Bongmba, reminds us of the role of the traditional diviner in sending messages to the people (2009). The artist’s own conception of the work’s meaning is curiously at odds with the traditional influences that he admits to. In interview, the artist explained how the work’s title and form reminded of the French national motto, *‘Liberte’, e’galite’, fraternite’*, and the Statue of Liberty in New York, U.S.A, because it similarly dialogued issues of political versus personal freedom. “liberty rests on your capacity to respect public interest for instance, the interest of your nation, the interests of the universal” (from interview).

In the Dschang matrix session, the thoughts and feelings that emerged in relation to the monument at the Deido roundabout included ones of mental strength, resistance plus independence and pride. In addition, thoughts and feelings about the nation's independence; its "freedom":

... the image that retained my attention is the other one, the one we see at the Deido roundabouts in Douala. It reminds me that Cameroon obtained its independence, its freedom,

In this response about national political independence vis-a-vis a contemporary work of art influenced in form by the traditional art of the country, we can also locate a further example of admiration for traditional culture. The symbolic end of colonisation at independence, plus even historical taints of slavery mark both the statue and traditional art practices as important for feelings of both national pride and "freedom" from colonial dominance. Cameroon was a major source of slaves in the transatlantic slave trade. This lasted from the mid-17th century until the 19th century. Slaves were mainly transported to the Americas and Caribbean, also other parts of Africa and Europe as well. Some Africans died resisting capture (Aubrey, 2014). In addition, until the 1930's, a blind eye was shown to agricultural slavery in Cameroon itself (Andrea, 1998). In response to the presentation music and images of traditional art along with examples of modern traditionally inspired art there are no associations that can be interpreted as a historical critique of a tradition and its connections with corruption, or used to make the claim of an "Afrocentric" romanticism (Glissant, 1997).

The valorisation and importance of "the freedom of cultural heritage" for these students is also demonstrated by many contributions from the post-matrix discussion:

From the ... I come to realize that culture is diversified. Different communities have their own cultural representations at the same time these cultures are interrelated, because there are pictures I saw which look like those that come from my place and even the music which was related, that relates ... that sound is like the music which is used in my village during the annual festival, they are related to other cultures

--- I would speak of cultural heritage and Cameroonian identity

We realize that the scene we just witnessed retraces art and culture, culture and music. The two themes show the power of the

Cameroonian being, his/her downfall as well, his/her glorious moments, and moments of despair

... while observing all those images, the theme, for me, is cultural identity and representation

The freedom of cultural heritage

I would say cultural practice as power of liberation

Summary

The Dschang Visual Matrix produced a train of commentary that highlighted how for educated young Cameroonians, the traditional artefacts and music of Cameroon remains a powerful source of aesthetic experience and emotions. It produces the combined paradox of admiration and fear that is awe. A finding of this study is that there was a persistence of a vitalist and syncretistic aesthetic sensibility amongst these European style educated Cameroonians, as there was in the Yaoundé session. This was characterised by the emergence and affective resonance of a surreal 'Dalian' landscape of 'chairs'. These findings were confirmed in the post-matrix discussion:

... from what I saw and heard, the theme for me is about the deep Cameroonian tradition in images and sound, admiration and anguish/anxiety – since there is at the same time a feeling of admiration and a feeling of fear

... for these images, I retain the value of cultural representation: elements of the problematic of living

... and sometimes belief:

... some images for example the witchdoctors here in the West (of Cameroon), when we go to those people it's because we want protection or healing. It is true that it is often scary but here in photograph (?) at the end of the year when we are about to sow...the Notables will cover the village that's to say if your altar is outside, it will be hit so this is also to protect ...

... I wanted to talk about the relationship between culture and spirits when we can grow, ripen, and eat a banana at once, it means that spirits are around, right there

As a whole many of the associations, images and ideas presented in this Visual Matrix provide a restless picture of both competing and synthesized emotions, and activities that are often concretised in the everyday with reference to foods, drink and common images of communal gathering that involve eating, drinking and dancing. Also, both Anyanwu's idea of an aesthetic continuum as characteristic of African vitalism and finally, Mbitis' observation that:

... the invisible world is symbolized or manifested by the visible and concrete phenomena and objects of nature. The invisible world presses hard upon the visible: one speaks of the other, and the African peoples 'see' that invisible universe when they look at, hear or feel the visible and tangible world (1969, p. 56).

These ideas are never far away in these contributions.

Notwithstanding some consternation and fear amongst urbanite Cameroonians towards some practices that are "scaring people away", there is knowledge of the positive aims of practices. Traditional art and associated practices form the background of a complex picture of struggle between feelings of cultural belonging and experiences of alienation from and fear of that culture. This type of struggle appears in the following contributions from the post-matrix discussion along with thinking about ethnic cultural diversity.

... from a general view, I understand that different tribes have different cultures. Secondly, we see that some of the cultures are used positively, because some are really frightening and are scaring people away and then there are some that are used for celebration ...

Cameroonian cultures are at the same time a source of anxiety and a source of therapy

From the post-matrix discussion also came a pairing of conscious observations and ideas about traditional African artist practices, such as "some are really frightening and are scaring people" with unemotional ones such as "different tribes have different cultures". These are examples of both an alienated incomprehension of traditional African art and culture and of an anthropological thinking that conforms with Fanon's view that, the highly 'educated' African, 'black', person, battles with the fact that

traditional African culture and practices do not conform to technical rationalism and models of society. In comparison, the less 'educated' rural healers that were interviewed, 'know they are black' Africans, and experience more unitary selves (Fanon, 1952; Ngugi, 1986). This point must be returned to in the discussion.

Report on the Douala Visual Matrix - 28.03.17

The Douala Visual Matrix was held in the *Institut Panfricain de Psychomotricite et Relaxation de Douala* and the *Centre d'Education, de Rééducation, de Thérapie Psychomotrice et d'Education Spécialisée (CERTPES)*

(<https://entreprise.prosyjob.com/fiches/25295/default>). This is an institute and place of education that specialises in working with children with developmental and learning differences. The IPPR and IPPR-CERTPES are both recognised and affiliated to similar organisations in France and Italy. We arrived at 9.30 believing that the participants would start to arrive about 10.00. This left me very little time to setup but Dr Banindjel had been informed by the institute that there was a projector available that would work with my laptop. I thought this was going to be the first time that I would do a VM similarly to how I would quite likely do it at a UK university; using Powerpoint to both present about the VM method and do a VM presentation that presented the images and music together in sequence. Neglecting to be cautious, I had left the 20 A3 size photographic prints used in the other Cameroon sessions in the room where I was staying in Dr Banindjel's house in a different part of the city.

The planned stimulus material was 24 images made into a Powerpoint on my laptop plus the usual soundtrack to be played on my music playing device. 24 images was 4 more images than the other two matrix sessions. These additional 4 images were selected by Dr Banindjel from some photographs that I had taken during the days before of this second visit at the Museum of Civilization in Dschang (see APPENDIX I). I had already discussed my selection with him in the intervening months between the two visits. He now considered that I should increase my images to reflect Cameroon's ethnic variety a little more widely. To achieve this he selected four additional images. One image he selected was of a trance ceremony from the west of Cameroon. This

precise topic is also an important aspect of his own research. The inclusion of 4 more images, was another reason for now deviating from the method of images printed on A3 size sheets of card and finally attempting the use of a projector.

On arrival I was introduced to the staff at IPPR and generously provided with a projector. The room allocated for the VM was a very small one (see APPENDIX J for an image). From immediately outside came the constant sound of children playing in an adjoining school playground. I reflected on just how extraordinarily loud and shrill the sound of excited children's voices can be. I began to set up the projector and chairs for the presentations and plan how I would rearrange the chairs into a snowflake configuration for the matrix after the VM presentation. It was now about 10.00 and as arranged some of the participants started arriving. We gathered in a different small room where they could wait with each other before the VM. Because of the very small size of the rooms I had already decided to use the other room to make the brief introduction that explained about myself, my background in the arts and music and that I was now a Ph D researcher from the University of Central Lancashire working in the field of Psychosocial Studies. In addition, stating the question I was looking at and briefly about the VM's background and development. The participants seemed a little older and more professionally mannered than many of the participants I had met in the previous VMs. Soon there was only one participant who had not arrived and he called to say that he would be quite late. It felt unfair to wait for only one person who may be a long while travelling across busy Douala and so I began my introduction. After this I left them in the room with Dr Banindjel and returned to the other room that was planned for the VM presentation and matrix to check things there. It was at this point that there was a power-cut and returning to the VM space I realised that unless power returned, I would have to present the VM images on my laptop with no soundtrack because my music playing device, although portable, had no batteries in it.

Because of one late arrival and waiting for the end of the power cut, I now took some time to go outside and try to buy batteries. I was not really hopeful of success because the type of batteries needed were not the more commonly available AA size but instead a rarely available size. Outside, in the increasingly hot day, I was to realise that there were no shops of any kind in the streets around the institute. By now it was

almost 10.30 and I decided that if all the participants had arrived, a good host would not ask them to wait the unknown duration of the power-cut. Alone, back in the small room it was extremely hot and now there could be no use of the electric fans in the rooms. At that time of year, Douala is regarded by Cameroonians as being very humid and the circumstances made things much more so. Outside the small space, the shrill sound of the children continued unabated like a Hitchcock soundtrack to my renewed feeling of frustration and dismay. Only my years of learning the value of the axiom 'the show must go on' sustained me. I quickly removed the projector from the table I was using as a stand and repositioned the table, now with only my laptop on it. I moved this table a little closer to where the participants would be sitting and turned my laptop on it to face them.

The Douala Visual Matrix and post matrix discussion were brief (30 minutes and 15 minutes), and there were only a few participants. The participants were all second year Masters Psychology students (n6). Similarly to both Yaounde' and Dschang, although they understood English well, all but one preferred to participate in the session in French. Four of the six participants were working social, health and education professionals. Five participants were female and one male. The matrix presentation was eventually commenced at about 11.00.

The contributions of the participants contained a mix of memories and associations about the overall topic of traditional Cameroonian art that were at times close to intellectual in thinking. Coextensive with this, the participants often spoke using well-crafted sentences rather than the 'mixed up' syntax that can give the impression of 'lots of things jostling to get out'. At times, the contributions exhibited an almost anthropological perspective, and there was less of a sense of 'inside-ness'; of being 'inside the culture' compared to the previous visual matrices. Examples of a more formal structuring in thinking and talk included, "For me, I was sent back to two aspects, already, I can say three". This example indicates a conflict between the recall of powerful memories and a cognitive, listing psychological involvement. This result and the profile of the participants, prompted looking for contributions that were perhaps coded or veiled examples of affective and embodied experience.

Notwithstanding the more linear, logically constructed style of thinking, the images evoked emotion and affect, and associations that contained a type of nostalgia. There were examples of participants being “sent back” to, or “made (to) think about” first hand, vivid memories and associations often involving childhood, traditional village life and specific examples of traditional artistic production in Cameroon today:

I would say those images sent me back, in fact, to Cameroonian cultural reality. That's, we have a chance of knowing how Cameroonians live, because we can see on the one hand a symbol of wood where we do laundry, and on the other hand, we see houses as if we were at a harvest, and on another hand we see historical and symbolic monuments. And they also sent me back to other...to cultural dances where, for example, I had the impression that there were rites...traditional rites, and on another hand, it was like there was a traditional wedding, because we saw... I saw a young woman's smile, and on another hand, it was like a funeral, there were funerals ceremonies. So for me, all those images are full of Cameroonian sociocultural realities.

Despite the idea of an educated metropolitanism demonstrated in the participants' style of expression and contributions, “the artistic side of Cameroon” was still connected to a powerful “universe of fear”. The fearful affect could be powerful enough to “run for maybe two weeks” and the persistence of their affect was a surprise:

Well, I would focus more on the artistic side of Cameroon. The diversity of the Western side with masks that personally make me afraid and sending me to a universe of fear because since childhood I don't like to see those masks. It is true it is the image of Cameroon but I don't like it, because it raises in me a feeling of fear and they stay in my spirit, they will run in my spirit for maybe two weeks ... the thing that was also remarkable to me was those masks that frightened me a little bit.

It contained ideas of fearful magical forces that could be contained in artefacts:

I want to come back to the third image where there was a mask in the shape of a chair. I tell myself if I go to a village and they give me that chair I will not sit in it, because it scares me.

They say if you come near them and their outfit even touches you, you will begin to rot. Only those that are initiated can wear those outfits. So when you see those outfits, you are afraid.

... Yes, because I ... when I see those images I say those are me, maybe I can sit, maybe because I am from the chieftom and I was initiated, but somebody else cannot just come and sit in it, because if you sit in that chair maybe you would not be able to bear a child.

The 'fearful' contributions also included a note of amazement and possibly awe from the health and education professionals. "The thing that was also remarkable to me was those masks that frightened me a little bit". However, amongst the attributions of fear were positive "I say those are me", "I am pleased because I can see myself in them" ideas of identity and feelings of pride.

I would say that ...what I am going to say, I don't think it's necessarily silence ... for me, I identify with those images as an African and a Cameroonian, that's there is repetition several times, I have no negative emotions, that's I have no fear, I have no distress, on the contrary, I identify myself with the images, and I am pleased because I can see myself in them. So, on the contrary, I am happy.

Thoughts about traditional African arts' place within healing methods were perhaps no surprise given the psychology student or health and education professional status of many of the participants. However, associations with fabrics and gowns within the Visual Matrix images were omnipresent and appeared as a metaphorical 'wrapping' for types of feeling for traditional art and/or culture itself. Although these associations suggested a relatively 'cognitive' apperception within the Visual Matrix, the 'holding onto' of the images of fabrics and gowns and often closely linked qualifying phrases such as, "For me, those images made me think about, I want to speak from a personal viewpoint", pointed to a strength of feeling that the participants held in connection with the images of artefacts within the Visual Matrix. Indeed, the duality within this Visual Matrix of both a 'wrapped up' or concealed unconscious vis-a vis, a knowing regard of the aesthetic quality of fabrics and fashion, seems to be central to an analysis of it.

Except that they did not have the muscles like the Senegalese

Although music was never mentioned in the contributions, in a very early contribution dance was, when the participant was “sent back ... to traditional dances ... and at the same time healing”. The verbal phrase “sent back”, suggesting a separation or compartmentalization of the life world of the participant. In the same contribution, the participant “saw a fabric, a gown, and that rather sent back me to funerals”. This early connection between artistic production and important passages of life, once again recalls Anyanwu (1987) when he says that traditionally African artistic expression is a pragmatic epistemological concern, contextualised by mythology, religion and political experience. The early connection with the idea of ‘fabric’ also provided a key metaphor within the Visual Matrix for talking about what was “typically African” within traditional art and culture.

The following contribution contains the start of some highly complex thought and feelings about the subject of traditional art and culture in Cameroon:

I also wanted to add something else. I saw two people in an image in wrestling position. That reminded me of a reading we used to do at the primary school: “handsome black wrestlers.” It is practiced in Senegal. Except that they did not have the muscles like the Senegalese who practice this sport. And also, I saw the statuette of a, in fact, I don’t know. It rather sent me back to the image of a little child who is showing the direction to the house and because his mouth was open, those words made me laugh. Thinking about or associating with a child, generally children in the village who can’t articulate words very well, but they nonetheless have some pointed words for example to show you the direction when you come and want to go somewhere

The poetry as pedagogy idea of “a reading” and the image of “handsome black wrestlers” exudes ideas of admiration, power and sensuality. In this Visual Matrix the respondent is reminded of “handsome wrestlers”, however, the ones they imagine belong to Cameroon and not Senegal. The two imagined Cameroonian wrestlers “did not have the muscles” of the idealized Senegalese. This “I also wanted to add something else” imagery is a peculiar contradictory mixture of thoughts and feeling; an

irresolution of thoughts about weakness and failing in addition to the heroic and sensual.^{2,3,4,5}

Further, the idea of “laughing” at “children in the village who can’t articulate words very well”, works as a metaphor for difficult to express ideas in adulthood and the adjunct to it of “nonetheless have some pointed words for example to show you the direction when you come and want to go somewhere” indicates possibilities of a profound ambivalence towards traditional art and culture amongst urbanite, cosmopolitan Cameroonians. Once again, as in the other Visual Matrices, a restless picture appears of both competing and synthesized emotions produced by the affective and embodied experience of the Visual Matrix, but also a picture compounded by feelings and processes of alienation.

Of value and values

The undetermined idea of cultural tradition, is pointedly linked to traditional artefacts of statues and masks in Cameroon, by the interjection, “And also, I saw the statuette of a ... in fact, I don’t know”. This same link to the idea of cultural tradition also serves as a bridge to a vivid image and association of powerlessness. This time in the form of

2. Male wrestling in Senegal and elsewhere in Africa is highly traditional. Nuba people’s wrestling in Sudan was made famous in the West by the German film maker and photographer Leni Riefenstahl (1976)

3. Senegal was led between 1960 and 1980 by the poet and philosopher Leopold Senghor and under whom ‘the arts’ in Senegal were put to work in a programme of cultural nationalism. In Senghor’s Senegal, art was “functional and part and parcel of the living day-by-day reality of things ... *and* (my italics) culture is not an adjunct to politics but its pre-condition and justification” (Alioune Sene, Senegal’s then minister of culture, in M’Bengue, 1973, p.10). Under Senghor’s leadership, traditional art was re-appropriated into modern African culture and education via a revisionist reading of its role in the achievements of European modernists such as Picasso. However, it may be argued that in Senghor’s Senegal, a too limited model of traditional African art was nurtured (Vogel, 1991). Many African intellectuals (Appiah, 1997; Soyinka, 1988; Hountondji in Grinker & Steiner, 1997; Towa, 2012) have bemoaned that much of the art produced in connection with that period in Senegal’s history “presented a disturbing visual relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, a blind adoption of the Other’s ideas of oneself”, a too close incorporation of the European modernist vocabulary (Harney, 2004, p.50).

4. The Nigerian academic Denis Ekpo (2010) enthusiastically quotes Nietzsche in proposing a deploying of ‘Post-Africanist’ art in the service of Africa’s modernization after the Senghorian Senegalese model, but simultaneously eschews the Bergsonian and Nietzschean formulations of non-discursive forces that are common to Senghor’s Africanist aesthetics.

5. After the 1980’s the strong patronage of the arts in Senegal went into a major reverse and in part through necessity, artists sometimes used recycled found objects as a solution to the withdrawal of economic support.

a child and the idea that children in the village “can’t articulate words very well”. An image that also evokes the affect of humour and a “made me laugh” embodied response from the participant. The interrelated themes of African traditional art and culture’s struggle and relative weakness in the face of historical national change and global modernization permeated the Douala Visual Matrix. However, both below and elsewhere, it never seemed entirely unravelled or unwoven from participants’ lives or ideas of its ritual and magical “value”; and/or being a practical source of existential guidance:

So, they sent me back mostly to culture and gowns were just symbols to show that at each event, like she was saying, they can wear gowns to mark the ceremony. So, they sent me back mostly to culture and the statue at the roundabout is just to show us where we are, to orient us.

The pride in the affective and embodied potential of traditional gowns of Cameroonians was both communicated to and experienced by me in an ad hoc interview with a Douala gentleman. The day of that interview, the normally oppressively humid Douala climate remained hot but included a beautiful cooling breeze. The gentleman explained that when walking in a suit and tie one perspires and yet people do not want to dress like before, which was much more comfortable in that climate. He insisted on both he and his lawyer wife changing from the casual Western clothing they had been wearing, into traditional clothing to show me. They reappeared from their house and he said, “Before, everybody wore gowns, you just wrap like this”. It seemed they were proud of this clothing and remarked, “Yet in the past, people dressed like this every day. This is how we lost part of our culture. We have been transformed.” There is a sensual easy quality in the traditional clothing, that is expressed in the phrase “you just wrap like this” (see Fig. 7.1, p.206).



Fig. 7.1 “Before, everybody wore gowns, you just wrap like this.” Photograph by Jim Parris, 27th March 2017.

Something of the Douala gentleman’s “This is how we lost part of our culture. We have been transformed” statement seems to lurk in the final contribution from the Douala Visual Matrix. In this contribution, what seems on the surface a contradictory, “It was something typically African that emphasized this European and African mixture”, points to ideas of the changing cultural ‘value’ of traditional gowns and fabrics through time. Also, the idea of “the same design but they are different in value” describes different types of aesthetic ‘value’ vis-a-vis experience:

For me, the sense (meaning) of the gowns, traditional gowns made me understand that in old days (antiquity) when we consider the Bamileke there are several types of gowns, they certainly have the same design but they are different in value, and this allows me to talk about the current context, the context of valorisation of the gown in Africa and particularly in Cameroon where I saw fashion march that is typically African in a TV show. It was something typically African that emphasized this European and African mixture. They would wear jeans and add

something African with designs. It really made me think of this artistic universe.

Further, the statement “it was something typically African”, suggests a continuing purchase on an Africanistic aesthetic in the European educated Cameroonian participant’s “artistic universe”, and any related traditional ‘values’ and philosophical beliefs. Traditional ‘values’ may include the values of rural Africa, where the bonds of extended family and community, are a strong force and related ideas of security and welfare linked to expenditure for others, as compared to accumulation (McCaskie, 2008).

Nostalgia a mixture of feelings

As already indicated, the emotion of nostalgia emerged in the Douala Visual Matrix. The emotion often accompanied images and memories of weddings and funerals:

Like she said before that this used to make us believe...those images showed that we were losing our tradition, because when I was saying that it made me think of my childhood, it gave me a feeling of nostalgia when I was seeing this. And when I see this now, it is not very easy to see those images again like in reality. We find these now a little bit in the West (of Cameroon), with the Bamileke. For example, in our culture when there was wedding, girls would dress with stuff like that to accompany their sister and there were ceremonies. So, it made me feel nostalgic because we don’t have those traditions anymore. That’s my contribution

As I look at the images, what comes to mind is I have the feeling that in the villages, those were cultures we used to practice a lot in the past. Today, those cultures are neglected. In funeral ceremony for example, there were things we used to do in the past that are neglected today. So we now say things like let’s just have a small ceremony. We don’t really respect things anymore. Even monuments in the village, sometimes you see the head of an ancestor in a monument that’s damaged.

The sense of regret “that we were losing our tradition”, shame that “We don’t really respect things anymore”, and nostalgia in these last two contributions might logically seem to wrestle with the already cited idea of traditional African art and fearful

magical associations. They challenge any notion of rationality purely, underlying the conjunction between the individual and the cultural. Also, a further complexity is introduced if we recall the earlier part of the report and the metaphor and actual image of wrestling, being linked to a feeling of powerlessness and a desire for a stronger representation of traditional culture. A lament for tradition, concern for loss and an admiration for or the desire/attraction to the idea of stronger representation may all be considered connected ideas in this Visual Matrix.

The social and personality psychologists Wing-Yee Cheung, Constantine Sedikides and Tim Wildschutt consider nostalgia to be an adaptive process to ameliorate fundamental concerns in life. They distinguish between types of bitterness, regret and melancholy about the past and 'nostalgia', which they consider to hold an existential functionality connected to feelings of intimacy and love (2016). Their studies further suggest that nostalgia accompanies feelings of pride and self-compassion (2017). The idea that the composition of Cameroonian cultural life has changed and many traditional aspects nowadays "are neglected", clearly appeared as a melancholic theme in the Douala Visual Matrix.^{6, 7, 8}

The images that emerged such as for example of the vulnerable and powerless child, also suggest a caring and worrying concern that "our traditions are being gutted". Already discussed in this Visual Matrix and others has been the experience of admiration and pride found towards traditional cultural life. It may be conjectured that should nostalgia contain feelings of love, intimacy and pride and provide a healing relationship, as considered by Cheung, Sedikides and Wildschutt, that this dynamic

6. In Freudian psychoanalysis, mourning is traditionally treated as a gradual and automatic attenuation of the suffering caused by the loss of a loved one. Freud in particular introduced the notion of mourning as a working through and in Kleinian theory the idea is enhanced to include a hopeful reinstatement of the feared and loved object in phantasy. Freud showed a gradation between normal mourning and pathological mourning. In the range of cases of pathological mourning: the subject feels responsible for the death of the loved object; denies it; believes they are possessed by the dead person; or are a victim of the same cause of death; and lastly melancholia (Laplanche & Pontalis, 2006).

7. Klein's model of mourning provides possibilities of working through and achieving a reinstatement of the loved object. However, Klein's model of mourning is linked to a Judeo Christian/Abrahamic conception of time and death. The essence of the African conception of time and death is different. Death is experienced less as an ending, "The dead are not dead" (Diop in Irele, 1998, p.49) (see Chapter 6, p.165).

8. However, the trauma found in this session is a collective one and like the contribution that was a longing for a more "handsome" Senegal, it "demands economic, social and cultural changes" (Palacios, 2017, p.85).

role may function to ameliorate matters and weave elements of the past into a contemporary reality.

The frequent occurrence of and narrative around the topics of weddings and funerals, and the idea that those rituals and “cultures are neglected”, may be understood as containing the distinctly African dimensionality found in Mbiti’s writing about weddings and funerals as part of an ontological rhythm where all members of “the community meet: the living, the departed and those yet to be born” (1969, p.130). By understanding that many of the associations in the Douala Visual Matrix contain a philosophical type of meaning and the ontological focus or ‘fabric of’ traditional African life, we encounter once more the possibility of different types of aesthetic ‘value’ vis-a-vis experience, framed by the words “they certainly have the same design but they are different in value”.

The performative, sensual and metaphoric qualities of gowns and fabric contain the psychosocial perspective that “the triple consideration of the body, the mind and the social environment must go together” (Mauss, 2001, p. 31). However, it is Clement Akpang’s concept of ‘the determinations of traditional philosophies’ (2013) existing within some traditional African art and contemporary African art inspired by tradition, that remains foremost in my mind and apposite for thinking about the idea of ‘value’ versus ‘cultural values’ in the Douala Visual Matrix. As part of ‘Africanity’, the memories and images of marriage and funerals were undoubtedly framed by ideas about initiation, transition and the ‘living dead’. In his 1970’s “Broken Pot’ series El Anatsui “gave sculptural form to concepts of transition central to African metaphysics and social configuration” (Oguibe, 1998, p.54). The words “they certainly have the same design but they are different in value” similarly confirm the participants ‘metaphysical’ configuring of the idea of fabrics and gowns within the Douala Visual Matrix.

La Nouvelle Liberte’

The image of Sumegne’s *La Nouvelle Liberte’* is like the contemporary sculptures of the Ghanaian artist El Anatsui, an example of found object sculpture, this time using

industrial size engine parts. Both artists' works may be said to traverse into a new "artistic "universe" from the traditional but in some ways owe much of their determination to tradition.⁹

In the Douala Visual Matrix, a traditional Africanistic conception of art as a powerful source of healing and therapeutic counselling or guidance clearly emerges in the poetic connection with the statue and its roundabout location. The image of *La Nouvelle Liberte'* in the Douala Visual Matrix (see Fig. 7.2), produced, "right away", passionate responses; types of contributions that were part of a rhizomatic (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) (see Chapter 4, p.84), or organic web of feelings that generally contained the theme of 'guidance', or that whereas, "culture and gowns were just symbols", "the statue at the roundabout is ... to show us where we are, to orient us". In contrast, in



Fig. 7.2 by Joseph Francis Sumegne (1996) *La Nouvelle Liberte'*. The *Nouvelle Liberte'* statue is broken (2016. Blabla Cam) [Online]. Available at: <https://www.stopblablacam.com/culture-and-society/2611-231-the-nouvelle-liberte-statue-is-broken> (Accessed: 20th December, 2016).

9. This also recalls the idea of the "aesthetic of the in-between" (2011, p.39), an ... ambiguous, 'dualness' or hybridity that Souleymane Bachir Diagne's discusses as Jean Paul Sartre's response to the work of the Senegalese storyteller/poet Birago Diop and Senghor himself. Of Diop, Sartre felt that the poetic value, "consisted partly in the presence, underneath it, of something else (another language, another voice, an old art of expressing), *a je ne sais quoi* which is no less real for being so" (Diagne, 2011, p.39).

interview the artist Sumegne described how the *La Nouvelle Liberte'* work, was a discussion of ideas about freedom vis-à-vis responsibility and that the idea of liberty is conditioned by a need to respect public and national interest (ideological thinking that is typical of the historical coloniser 'France' but that Sumegne also makes indigenous claims for).

The ideas and feelings that emerged around the sculpture in the Douala Visual Matrix, as in the other visual matrices, highlighted the possibility of the work carrying Blier's idea of the alchemical role of traditional types of African found object sculpture in maintaining life and encouraging well-being, particularly by transforming and dissipating situations of difficulty or potential trauma" (1995, p.209).

A connection with the aesthetic and traditional practice of body tattoo scarification is also made through the Deido roundabout image and processes of the Visual Matrix. Examples of elaborate body tattoo scarification were once common to the Bamileke group in Cameroon. In interview, the influence of Sumegne's Bamileke grandmother's traditional body tattoo scarification on his art, was made plain. They provide a sensual and tactile/visual/multisensory example of traditional African art and directly inform the woven tapestry aesthetic of Sumegne's sculpture. In the Visual Matrix, Sumegne's 'tradi-modern' statue was linked with highly traditional 'values' of already cited important, symbolic and religious occasions in life, of funerals and weddings:

... for example, the monument at the Deido roundabout that also strongly represents that culture. In the West (of Cameroon), I saw some ceremonies that look like dowry ceremonies.

And they also sent me back to other...to cultural dances where, for example, I had the impression that there were rites...traditional rites, and on another hand, it was like there was a traditional wedding, because we saw...I saw a young woman's smile, and on another hand, it was like a funeral, there were funerals' ceremonies. So for me, all those images are full of Cameroonian sociocultural realities.

Once again, around the 'tradi-modern' assemblage example of art, a complex mixture of emotions emerged linked to feelings of nostalgia:

When I see for example old images, old photographs when somebody arrived with people around him that made me think of my grandfather, because he used to tell us stories about his time. He liked to say during Ahidjo time (Ahmadou Ahidjo was Cameroon's first president from May 5, 1960 to November 6, 1982) that's how he used to make his entrance. But now, for example, the Deido Statue made me think of my family in Limbe, because every time I go to Limbe I see that statue and it makes me feel like I am going to Limbe (smiles). So, those images made me think about the village. Like I was saying my grandparents used to tell me stories of old time, so right away the images made me think about my village, my family.

The latter contribution especially, renders a precisely drawn and perhaps even humorous memory of a storytelling grandfather. There was a "When I see for example old images, old photographs" and "tell me stories of old time". This tender nostalgic recollection was mixed with loving feelings for "my village, my family". It once again suggests the possibility of a dynamic role of nostalgia that may function to ameliorate matters and weave elements of the past into a contemporary reality (Sedikides & Wildschutt, 2016; 2017). It also implicates the Deido statue as a 'magical' source of inspiration and guidance towards nostalgic and/or 'healing thoughts'.

It seemed as if the loving feeling in the Douala Visual Matrix did not consistently extend to the powerful, sometimes surreal associations, excited memories and feeling of 'roaring' admiration for the village discussed in the other two visual matrices. Instead it was confounded by images of frustration and contrasting impressions of the experience contained in traditional and modern fabrics. A possible explanation for this 'gentler' type of reverie and experience of and admiration for traditional African art and culture is the absence of music in the Visual Matrix presentation. Also, the small group size of six. The ambiguity found in the metropolitan and educated social worker professional Douala participants recalls Fanon's ideas of processes of racist alienation towards self and one's own culture, already mentioned and to be discussed further in the final chapter. In this matrix, the alienation was equally a type of frustration, expressed in the sensual longing felt towards "handsome black wrestlers". However, the respondent is only reminded of "handsome wrestlers" and that they belong to "Senegal" and not Cameroon. The two imagined Cameroonians "did not have the muscles" of the idealized Senegalese. The melancholia and concern expressed over

tradition in this association is also a melancholia and concern over the relative strength of Cameroon as a nation today.

Summary

In Visona' et al's *A history of art in Africa* there is a reproduction of a photograph, dated 1908, that features the now legendary ruler of the Bamun peoples, Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya. The photograph is extraordinary in both form and content. It literally scrolls out across the page like a Bayeux Tapestry and approximately has a ratio of seven to two. The photographer obviously felt compelled to create a panorama by the subject matter, which is primarily a huge horizontal piece of fabric. In the photograph (see Fig. 7.3), the royal sultan Njoya stands in colonial uniform besides his surrogate, who is fantastically adorned with many different artefacts including a voluminous patterned loincloth that extends out on either side by approximately six meters. By appearing in a photograph in this way, the sultan seems to illustrate two worlds of aesthetic possibility; two different aesthetic experiences and sets of 'values'.



Fig. 7.3 Njoya with surrogate wearing costume for a festival, Bamun, Cameroon, 1908 (Visona' et al, 2000, pp. 348-49).

In the Douala Visual Matrix, aesthetic experiences and sets of 'values' within traditional Cameroonian life were uniquely associated with an image of "handsome black wrestlers". This romantic image of masculinity from a woman participant, and as a representation of African culture suggests a powerful longing attachment. The participants in the Douala Visual Matrix seemed to have tasted their classical world or are at least intimately close to it. They possess feelings of love, pride and self-compassion, "I identify myself", connections with it. This model of nostalgia is predicted in the work of Sedikides and Wildschutt (2016, 2017). A cultural reality that

can be experientially summated in the image of “handsome black wrestlers” remains an attractive prospect whether for a 19th Century Romantic poet or a 21st century health and education professional. Once again one recalls Anyanwu’s point that, “African art ... is related to the African modes of life and it creates a world that is personally relevant and satisfying” (1976, p. 513). For the ‘initiated’, there is something too good to lose about the traditional African cultural reality and from within a picture of contemporary global malaises: diseases, illnesses, societal failure, global warming and extinction by scientific discovery, its adaptation and survival remains valuable for Cameroonians as both a source of well-being, identity and future resolution:

... I identify with those images as an African and a Cameroonian, that’s there is repetition several times, I have no negative emotions, that’s I have no fear, I have no distress, on the contrary, I identify myself with the images, and I am pleased because I can see myself in them. So, on the contrary, I am happy.

Overall Summary of the Visual Matrix Sessions

In Chapter 2 it was shown how the Nigerian philosopher Anyanwu (1978, 1987) highlights the significance of an ontological and aesthetic difference between the traditional African and the modern (1987, pp. 237-38). In the extract below there is a measure of anti-colonial rhetoric and even bile in the words of the Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah when he says:

In the age of European violence, you whose work was the telling of our narrative were cut off from our future, suspended as in a sentence of death, and jokingly described as mere griots, praise singers to times now dead. And we who grew up in the patriarchal violence of the pillagers’ tutelage, we were nurtured on the strangest narratives, rooted in blood, watered with lies. That odd narrative said only one story was human “the European story”. It said that one narrow story would have to account for everything: the beginning of humanity, its progress, its destiny . . . In the fields of triumphant power we left our minds for dead. And yet under the chaos of the *slaughterhouse of souls*, sometimes a mind here, another there, refused to die. (2002)

However, Armah’s words also contain the trace of many of the aims and concepts current in post-colonial theory and methodology (Mudimbe, 1994; Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2013). Across all the matrices were examples of a multi-sensoriality, and

synaesthesia in response to traditional African art (Drewal, 2005) that demonstrate 'the African mind' has not been left for dead, but endures despite the historical forces of globalisation and modernity. These included contributions that echoed Scwaller's conception of a synthetic, vitalist mentality and "A method of viewing ... comparable to our hearing faculty" (1978, p.11), and Anyanwu's view that in Africa, 'sound' functions as a model of reality (1987). It was as if the participants were simultaneously apart from the world of the ancestors that is not understood and capable of entering it and "*feeling like the ancestors*" (my italics). Across the three individual matrices, the examples of reverie and contributions ranged from "middle of the night" imagery propelled by music, that recalls Merleau-Pontian ideas of embodiment (see Chapter 4, p.82) and Spinoza's own definition of affect discussed above in this chapter. In contrast, there were contributions that were an 'academised', linear style thinking, veiled examples of affective and embodied experience. In short, a finding of this study is the persistence of an African vitalist and syncretistic aesthetic sensibility in the context of a very high achieving European style educated populace (West, 2011), producing a "twoness" (Mbembe, 2001, p.12) of sensibility in the everyday in Cameroon.

Very broadly, the three VisualMatrix sessions conducted in Cameroon, revealed that some direct experience of traditional African art and music practices is not uncommon among students in higher education in Cameroon. From this experience and knowledge emerged themes of both ethnic and wider national pride in the art plus its ritual and magical "value" and its value as a source of existential guidance. The emotions produced included awe, a paradoxical combination of fear and joy. In addition to pride, there were contrasting feelings of embarrassment and anxiety that indicated an alienation from traditional culture of the European style educated students. However, in the Douala Visual Matrix this competing mixture of feelings was attenuated by feelings of nostalgia, regret and anxiety plus thoughts of traditional African art and culture's struggle and relative weakness in the face of historical national change and global modernization. Despite the complexity of the Douala Visual Matrix, the themes, as in the other two visual matrices, remained woven into participants' lives and married to traditional ideas of "value", as well as sometimes

being a practical source of healing and providing answers and solutions to problematic feelings stemming from crises in everyday life.

As the work of Sedikides and Wildschutt (2016, 2017) indicates, nostalgia may function in the everyday as a healing, adaptive process that functions to ameliorate existential concerns connected to feelings of intimacy and love. However, in the Yaounde´ and Douala Visual Matrices these feelings were confounded by a type of tension or alienation from African tradition, experienced by the Western educated and professionally qualified participants. It was like guilty secret that “no one escaped” or a surprise and nervousness over the enduring power of traditional African art in the participants’ sensibilities. This point is best expressed in the contribution from the Douala post-matrix discussion that spoke about the impact of the images of traditional African art:

.... everything that was said, it revealed in each of us memories, that’s no one escaped memory, imagination, so I can see the impact of those images within thought, especially the images we saw ... What image can raise in us as a negative or positive thought

In both the Yaounde´ and Douala Visual Matrix sessions were clear examples of how participants could be both in contact with traditional culture and alienated from it. There is a persistence of an African vitalist and syncretistic aesthetic sensibility in the context of a very high achieving European style educated populace (West, 2011). However, the Yaounde´ matrix session especially was the scene of “the laughter that they couldn’t suppress” (Glissant, 1989, p.391) in response to the images of traditional art and practices. This was an affective bodily expression of a complex type of conflict in which something repressed is given temporary relief from a public demand of secrecy (Weber, 1982). This indicates that an indigenous African cultural imaginary endures in content but is complicated by a tension or “rubbing against” borne of its contradictions to modernity. This point is central to the main findings and will obviously be returned to in the discussion.

However, although the richness and quality of the reverie changed across the three matrix sessions, the images of traditional African art always generated evocative

memories and a collage of associations that indicate its enduring powerful affect, and the possibility of a strong and animated or intense group reverie, compared to a gentle and quiet one. The broad feeling of nostalgia already mentioned in respect of the Douala Matrix was connected to both a complex concern over the fitness of tradition and a concern over the fitness of Cameroon as a nation today. From this point, it is possible to discern the highly complex tapestry of thoughts and feelings that the topic of traditional art and culture touches on; an intertwined set of 'values' within traditional Cameroonian life and a powerful longing attachment to them. The feelings of love, regret, shame, enjoyment, pride, frustration and consternation produced in the matrix in response to the topic of traditional African art, reflect the human experience of the effects of colonialism and the spread of Western education and modernity, or debates in postcolonial theory. This point will be returned to in the discussion along with interrelated ideas about the importance of participation in African aesthetics.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The early chapters of this thesis demonstrate that there is already a lot of literature on African aesthetics, (Senghor, 1957; Anyanwu, 1978, 1987; Ramose, 2002; Farris - Thompson, 1974; Small, 1987; Bebey, 1975; Chernoff, 1979). In addition, there is literature and empirical work that examines the topic of African aesthetics as an everyday source of reconciliation and healing (Farris -Thompson in Iseman, 1984; Blier, 1995; Vogel, 1997; Kohnert, 2007; Bongmba, 2009; McCaskie, 2018; Ebede-Ndi, 2016). My research extends the anthropological, art history and psychoanalytic perspectives of the above authors by using psychosocial theory and methods to examine aesthetic experience in the Central African country of Cameroon. It has produced an account that is unlike those that rely on close questioning and or observation alone, and examines the emotion, affect and intangible aspects of aesthetic experience in response to artworks and aesthetic practices. A discussion of the primary research question: What can traditional African art and aesthetic practices contribute to our understanding of healing and everyday modern culture in Cameroon - shows it to be equally about ideas of holistic healing and a need for type of cultural 'healing'.

The primary findings are firstly that an African vitalist and syncretistic aesthetic sensibility persists in everyday life in Cameroon today. This syncretistic aesthetic sensibility was found to be sensory – synthetic; suggestive like sound or music; “A method of viewing ... comparable to our hearing faculty” (Schwaller de Lubicz, 1978, p.11). Its persistence was found to be strongly so for the traditional healers and musician in the case studies and more ambiguously and ambivalently so for Cameroonian Psychology Masters students. Secondly, amongst metropolitan European style educated students, the recollection and experience of traditional African art and practices often produces a feeling of awe, a combined paradox of emotions such as fear and joy but that within this group there is also a 'nostalgia for' and concern for the loss of traditional culture and its 'values', connected to feelings of regret, pride, and mourning. Cameroonians remain affected by experiences born of colonialism and the forces of globalization and modernity. The traditional healers and musician in the case studies, who are firmly lodged in their traditional beliefs, remain both flexible and realistic about the challenges that modernity presents to tradition (McCaskie, 2008).

However, in contrast, the metropolitan European style educated students exhibit an ambivalence towards traditional aesthetic practices and modernity. In short, there is a continuing duality of cultures that is connected to complex issues related to aesthetics.

The research also suggests an African cultural confidence in participation and collective experience; community as affect. This “communion of souls” (Senghor in Murobe, 2003) or ontological and epistemological imperative to participate (Ramose, 2002) is considered important in African aesthetics and philosophy and garners some psychosocial evidence from this study via a discovery that arose from my use of the group Visual Matrix research method. This was when the Cameroonian students were found to be ‘peculiarly’ at ease with associative thinking in group situations that are loud and busy. I use the themes of collective experience and an African vitalist and syncretistic aesthetic sensibility plus aspects of an ‘alienation from’ and ‘longing for’ traditional African art to structure the discussion as follows:

- Participation and Collective Experience
- An African Vitalist and Syncretistic Aesthetic Sensibility
- Alienation from Traditional African Art
- Nostalgia for Traditional African Art

Participation and Collective Experience

It is interesting to halt here and once again note the words of Onwuanibe who says of the traditional African idea of the self, it is important to remember that it is based on the conviction that, “The metaphysical sphere is not abstractly divorced from concrete experience; for the physical and metaphysical are aspects of reality, and the transition from one to the other is natural” (in Ramose, 2002, p. 81). I introduce this point already into the theme of participation because of a need to recall the critical point for my thesis and theory that a traditional and persisting aesthetic sensibility in Africa is linked to an epistemological paradigm that is very different from the technical rationalism strongly associated with the Western version of modernity. It is a traditional religious and philosophical paradigm not stemming from blind faith, but instead rooted in African cultural experience.

The persistence of an African vitalist aesthetic sensibility was found to be definite for the traditional healers and musician in the case studies and more ambiguous and ambivalent for the students. However, as the Cameroonian Ebede-Ndi noted after listening to the recordings of all three sessions (see Chapter 5 p.112), the students were highly engaged in the research and “spoke from their heart”. In addition, their contributions were replete with examples of awe, a paradoxical combination of emotions such as fear and joy. There were both tender and fearful narratives about ritual, healing, animals, the natural environment, everyday family life and community gatherings that demonstrate that the traditional affective African experience of art, no matter how challenged by the imbibing of technical rationalism, is not extinguished. The use of music, images and form still has a powerful affective and associative quality. This power is both connected to and explained by a cultural concern for participation that renders everyone an artist. It also renders singing, dance, creativity in language and colourful costumes as vivid and colourful expressions of the idea of connection. Similarly, when the healer MT gestured grandly to indicate the vast tropical forest that stretched to the horizon, he was indicating the symbolic importance of the natural world for his religious universe. Like his bottle of medicine buried halfway in the forest soil, where it could draw magical power from the earth his world view maintains that, as Mbiti puts it, “the invisible world is symbolized or manifested by the visible and concrete phenomena and objects of nature” (1969, p.57).

Additionally, when the healer MS enthusiastically exhibited his various animal masks and a leopard skin, he was simultaneously demonstrating that invisible magical forces are like the contents of nature, both different from each other and a type of family. For instance, the gorilla, the pig, the monkey and the leopard all possess a different character. It is their non-linearity of expression that creates the immense range of semiotic possibilities that were evident in the artefacts and practices that MS exhibited and described. In MS’s work and life, the Deleuzian concepts of rhizomatic connection, deterritorialization/reterritorialization and becoming are both intellectual and doctrinal. Whether intentional or not, his substitution of the word ‘person’ for the expected word of ‘animal’ (see Chapter 7, pp.136-38) indicates his understanding of processes of becoming that echo Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas. In addition, the

contribution in the Dschang matrix session from a participant reflecting on Joseph Francis Sumegne's statue, that "Even in madness we can do something useful" (see Chapter 7, p.193-94), contains a Winnicottian (1971) reverence for the role of illusion in our lives. Further, it contains a Winnicottian regard of culture as important for "the continuity in the human race that transcends personal existence" (1971, p.135). It is in relation to such ideas of continuity, community and communion that the remark in an ad hoc interview I did during my second visit must be understood. The remark came about when I was in a photo printing shop and a stranger happened to see a copy of a photograph I was making to give to MS. The stranger only spoke to me for about two minutes and without any questioning made the point that traditionally in Africa, even if someone is a criminal they are still part of the community. I admit that as a European I fail to truly comprehend this idea but it seems to me to speak to the heart of a traditional African idea of collectivism.

The power of the African religious vitalist aesthetic sensibility, like an interwoven 'mat' of association is shown both literally and figuratively in the remarkable response of the healer MF to an ambiguous close-up of El Anatsui's vast fabric sculpture, *Earth's Skin* (see Fig. 6.10, p.157). His words were an outpouring of tender and religious feeling mapped onto the very real fact that traditionally people in many parts of Africa are buried shrouded in large mats. As a 'scene', it exemplifies how the array of embodied and unconscious suggestion expressed across my research encounters indicate a cultural imaginary that bears a cloth-like 'interwovenness'. This point is partially echoed in the Douala series of matrix associations about African culture's value and a difference between the meaning of traditional gowns and modern African fashion. The African quality of the 'interwovenness' of experience recalls Senghor's poetry and phrase, "In the distance, antiphonal singing like the cloths of Sudan" (Senghor, 2017, p.11). The author is undoubtedly referring to the creative African overlapping and improvisation in singing (see Chapter 2, p. 40) but the scene he evokes in his words, seamlessly unites Small's (1998) idea of the verbal quality of African 'musicking', and that it is not a thing or a collection of things, but rather an activity (see Chapter 2, p.22), with Ehrenzweig's dynamic concept of syncretism (1968, p.60). Further, this point provides a window on how the traditional African epistemological attitude and experience of art is a dynamic and 'vital' inter-connectedness of not only man, but

man, society, animal, environment and God. In Small's thinking, the act of musicking establishes relationships in its composition, performance and locality and it is in those that the meaning lies. These relationships are not only the sonic ones but also between the people involved and serve as a metaphor for cultural and even religious ideals of relationships. Using Ehrenzweig's thinking, the dynamic potential of the 'interwovenness' of the African music object and designs of cloth, and of the inseparability of performance and public portrayed by Senghor, is highlighted. As the Nigerian's Omatseye & Emeriewen write, in African society, art and the life of people reflect each other. These authors remark that It has "its own history, its aesthetic content, as well as powerful emotional content. This is the case in the African philosophy of cloth" (2012, p.61).

The point of a persistence of an African religious vitalist aesthetic sensibility is also pertinent in relation to the more narrowly defined syncretism often associated with African religiosity. It is widely commented in Cameroon that many people are in the church in the morning and at the diviner's place in the afternoon (Njoh, 2006) (a point echoed regarding South Africa by Ramose (Conversations of the World Pt 2, 2014)). The very high-ranking traditional healer MT is a case in point (see Chapter 6, p.144) but a large number of all the healers (see Chapter 5, pp.106-07) and other people that I met and/or interviewed engaged in some 'official' religion. Whereas the uptake of Christian worship in the rest of the world is declining, it is increasing in many African countries. This appetite can be misunderstood as the coexistence of religions in plurality (Lado, 2006) but this is an illusion. For instance, questions about the nature of the adoption of the Christian faith are pointless because the African religiosity is already, "all the way ontological" (Ramose, 2016). The African uptake of Christianity carries with it the influences and promises of colonialism and modernity, however the existential experience of its devotees is thoroughly African. Concerns over the status of traditional culture, that as time is passing it is being lost, are enveloped by the knowledge that it contains "some kind of force" or "spirit ... ancestors" (see Chapter 7, p.181). In addition, that it has a "value", a feeling of interrelation with the living and living dead and access to a rich web of associations that give expression to this interrelation. Culture is regarded as a collective practice that infuses everyday life and "the society with music and culture should be connected and everybody should feel at

peace” (see Chapter 7, p.191). The Yaounde’ matrix session group’s striking unison over the words “it is culture”; the joyful response of many to the dictum, “Culture is the only thing we have left after we forget everything else” (see Chapter 7, p.177); and the idealisation of the more culturally ‘muscular’ (see Chapter 7, p.203) country of Senegal are all important indicators of the emotional importance of traditional African culture for Cameroonians today. Since its independence, Senegal has embarked on a history of debate and changes in governmental policy over the role of its art and traditional art. Senghor’s approach as president between 1960 and 1970 has been critiqued as a too close incorporation of the European modernist vocabulary (Harney, 2004, p.50) but the net impact of his major early emphasis on culture resonated for Cameroonians in the matrix sessions.

In his interview the elderly MT (see Chapter 6, p.144), responded to a photograph of a Flali mask in performance, with a description in which the *juju* both literally and metaphorically dances:

MT: when a person dies in the village, the dancer puts on this ‘Juju’; the villagers get together with the family and friends of the deceased, and they buy themselves drinks, and while drinking this ‘Juju’ will then come out and do the ‘Juju’ dance”. It is only after this ceremonial ritual is done the funeral ceremony of the deceased is truly done. And if this final rite is not done, then the spirit of the dead one will not lay in peace. The family of the deceased will have no peace either; they will be plagued by traditional curses from the spirits of the ancestors.

This contribution is notable here because it contains the point that the spiritual success of the ceremony is above all reliant on participation. This village occasion is a confirmation of the simultaneity of the realms of the living and the living dead. To forego this occasion, invites the possibility of curses from the spirits of the ancestors and so it requires a significant response by the whole community. It religiously reinforces the idea of the value or importance of the community. The adoption of Christian and Islamic faiths can still be understood as fuelled by the underlying cultural invariant of a valuation of participation and collective experience.

What emerges in this study is a view of how the enduring value ascribed to

participation and collective experience is dynamically linked to both its original benefits of healing the individual and bringing the community together, and responses in the negotiation of modernity in today's Cameroon and other African countries. For instance, the continuity of a post-colonial uptake of Christian and Islamic ideas of worship should not be understood as the rejection of an indigenous religiosity but as supported by it; as the survival of a cultural template that maintains its essential character. This cultural character or background philosophy is, like a fabric, capable of absorption without disintegration. The richness of the contributions that emerged in the matrices, despite the 'less than ideal' conditions, demonstrated that the modern Cameroonians were deploying an African cultural trait of collectivism to enable them to speak emotionally in the presence of one another. It was an enactment of Senghor's notion of 'a communion of souls', regarding traditional African philosophy and art (Senghor in Murobe, 2003) and Farris Thompson's phrase "community occasions of the spirit", in relation to black art in North America (2011, p.54). It is likely that this trait and the practice of sharing aesthetic experiences helps Cameroonians to mitigate and live with the consequences of colonialism and Eurocentrism today. It is a self-reminder of a distinctly African identity. The containing quality of communal practices have long been acknowledged by psychoanalytical thinkers (Kelly et al, 2012). From the way the matrix sessions produced such rich contributions, despite the 'less than ideal' conditions, comes the thought that "culture is a collective issue" and collective aesthetic practices such as traditional music and dance are not only appropriate for types of "sanction", but are also a source of salvation from "night" (s) of anger, whereby "everybody should feel at peace". In addition, the thought arises that reverie can be something strong and intense as well as gentle.

Lastly there is a point that is interesting for a cross-cultural discussion and the theorization of the Visual Matrix Method. This is that a peculiarly African cultural confidence in participation and collective experience helps to explain why the conditions of a quiet, uninterrupted space for the creation of a container to encourage reverie, were possibly not critical and may not even have been even preferable. It is possible that in Cameroonian and other African cultures, as in the case of at least two of the Visual Matrix sessions, a communicative and communal situation can also

provide a container for mental states, reverie (Bion, 1962), affect and free-floating ideas.

The ease with which the participants made a connection with the form of the Visual Matrix and produced embodied emotional responses in the reverie was not simply because everyday life in Cameroon is sometimes full of commotion. Most parts of Douala on a Sunday were quiet, relative to a busy European city. Out in the countryside one could easily find a peaceful spot or if for instance driving, a lonely long stretch of road. Markets and public gatherings were noisy and excited situations but this is their nature. In the matrix sessions the noisy interruptions from outside the rooms and the animated character of the matrix groups inside indicated a familiarity and enthusiasm and recalled a cultural tradition of aesthetic practices such as singing, dancing, oral expression that from childhood are not only enjoyed in a spirit of fellowship but are used to bring the community together. The noise and movement of others is regarded as a natural part of this scene and framed by an ontological regard for participation as being in tune with a dynamic universe in motion (Ramose) or the idea that community is affect. They might say of it all, "this is living" and so are able to use it generatively, like the visitation of the *juju* spirit and/or the music in the presentations, to vitalise their experience of the multiplicity of meaning of and interwoven cultural connections already established in the images of traditional and 'tradimodern' art. This produces a richly embodied and affective experience of the matrix and heartfelt associations.

An African Vitalist and Syncretistic Aesthetic Sensibility

Across the data in this study is a rich series of explanations and examples of affective experience in response to images of traditional and influenced by tradition African art and music. These explanations and examples indicate a persistence of an African vitalist and syncretistic aesthetic sensibility. There was a response of awe and a myriad of associations, images, ideas and narratives in connection with ritual, magic, healing, animals, the natural environment, everyday family life and community gatherings. This vitalism is a cultural African one in which a spiritual force is considered to permeate not only to men, but also animals, plants and the material world. In the cases of the

traditional healers and musician in the case studies, this vitalist and syncretistic aesthetic sensibility was firmly linked to traditional ideas and beliefs. The metropolitan European style educated students evidenced a picture of complex duality, of possession of both a vitalist aesthetic sensibility and one framed by an acculturated positivist reason, that owed something to their Western influenced education. It was as if they were metaphorically apart from the world of the ancestors yet capable of entering it and “*feeling like the ancestors*” (my italics) (see Chapter 7 and p.181).

The examples in the data of this African vitalist and syncretistic aesthetic sensibility broadly conform to Senghor’s idea of an African epistemological attitude, characterized by both the suggestiveness of objects in the creation of meaning, and a despotic power of rhythm “to make us enter into the spirituality of the object” (Senghor in Taylor, 2016, p.1997h). They also illuminate how the experience of the spirituality is a connection to invisible forces that can be characterised as both dynamically and rhizomatically linked. For instance, the example that appeared within a fearful association at the start of the Yaounde’ Visual Matrix of , “a sound in the dark that you can’t see” (see Chapter 7, p.180), broadly mirrors the traditional musician MA’s combination of sensory and emotional experience, “with fear also, you imagine how the rhythm, music properly” (see Chapter 6, p.163). In contrast, in the Douala session, where there was an absence of the music, there was a relatively linear, formally structured style of thinking. From this observation along with the thinking of important writers on African art and culture (Bebey, 1975; Farris Thompson, 1974; Chernoff, 1979) it can be inferred that the role of the music was particularly important for the syncretistic promotion of “countless unconscious cross ties”(Ehrenzweig, 1967, p.102) (see Chapter 4, p.71) and/or vitalizing the object. In another example from the Yaounde’ session, a participant’s reflection about the experience of the music and images highlighted how the Spinozian and Deleuzian conception of affect as something that is always in movement and varying in intensity, must be understood as something ‘alive’ (see Chapter 7, p.178).

Alienation from Traditional African Art

As already discussed, in the case of the three European style educated groups and, by

extension, it is reasonable to suppose, a great proportion of Cameroonians, there is a finding that a vitalist syncretistic aesthetic sensibility endures alongside a modern technical rationalism. This finding suggests a model of coexisting paradigms that can never meet and a 'doubleness' in play in everyday life of Cameroonians. For instance, the moment in the Yaounde' matrix session when Dr Banindjel interrupted to ask about an association to animals and was immediately met with a peel of group laughter, indicates a clash of feelings around the topic of traditional art and culture for the highly 'educated' in Cameroon (see Yaounde' Visual Matrix, Chapter7, p.184). It was a moment of embarrassment that indicates an alienation from traditional culture of the European style educated students. This situation accords with Fanon's ground breaking idea that 'educated' African, 'black', person, battles with the fact that traditional African culture and practices do not conform to Western modernity (Fanon, 1952). The 'doubleness' of sensibilities in metropolitan educated Cameroonians is therefore not simply a site of psychic and political struggle (Fanon, 1956), or a 'hybridity' that produces a third narrative that challenges the claims of cultural totalization (Bhabha, 1996). Rather it is an unreconciled duality of aesthetic sensibility that produces a person who is conflicted (Fanon, 1956). This conflict can only be reconciled by acknowledging both types of existential experience. A firm acknowledgment of both will necessarily encounter resistance (Serequeberhan, 2003) because it is denied a space of expression within a Western economic, academic and cultural hegemony which emphasizes a lifestyle of individualism, materialism and the pursuit of monetary wealth.

The stuff of traditional African art and culture is very different to that of colonialism and modernity. It is soft by comparison, has long been trampled underfoot but has resisted annihilation. This endurance may owe much to how it offers both a 'protective' and 'generative' value in relation to the often both harsh experience of colonialism and post-colonialism and the very act of positivist reason necessary for the assimilation of Western economic and cultural models (Gilroy, 1993). Claims of an African epistemological attitude that is founded on emotion as much as rationality (Ramose, 2016) have long been met with furore since Senghor's 1939 controversial statement but it seems clear from my research that in order for people to be free of feelings of the ambivalence and longing found in this research, African countries like

Cameroon still need to “break out of ... the colonial framework which gives an apologetic character to any African idea” (Irele, 1981, p.112). No simplification or romanticism of an African past is necessary (Simiyu, 1987; Soyinka, 1993), simply a serious re-examination of aspects of tradition and culture (Njoh, 2006; Ramose, 2016).

Changes to forms of thought, together with modern technology, language and dress have produced a time of cultural undecidability, a “zone of occult instability” (Fanon, 1967, p.168) that promotes chaos in society. However, no matter how changed through history, traditional African art, “the prime mediator of the African consciousness” (Irele, 1981, p.81), remains of importance to Cameroonians in general. European-highly-educated Cameroonians in particular may find themselves caught in a state of ‘doubleness’ and negotiating two cultures, but it is only by understanding the value of their traditional philosophies and art that the country will begin to prosper. African countries must maintain what traditional attributes can help them go forward and deselect many Western values that do not complement their own indigenous values. The important role of language also has to be mentioned here, because if as Senghor (1956), Wiredu (1996) and Ramose (2002) indicate and Ngugi (1997) claims, indigenous languages form an important site for understanding traditional philosophies, ontology and epistemology, then it is surely important that education in African countries take up the challenge of preserving a variety of these languages.

Nostalgia and Longing for Traditional African Art

At this point, it becomes possible to start imagining how an enduring African aesthetic sensibility in the everyday and a philosophical value ascribed to participation and collective experience are dynamically linked to the benefits and resolution of tensions that pertain to them in today’s Cameroon. For instance, if traditional African art is an art that works in the everyday to create types of healing and existential guidance, it then holds some key to why changes in the Cameroonian ‘artistic universe’ produce an ambivalence over modernity in the successfully European-educated portion of the population. The technical rationalism of modernity undermines the associative principle and imaginative life that confers a vitality in the everyday. The experience of

traditional culture is both an ameliorative and satisfying alternative to the one defined by “the colonizer and his entire world system” (Dalal, 2002, p.95).

The metaphor of cloth or fabric remains the material that best defines traditional African culture - no other material conveys better its emotional colour, rhythms of design and possibilities of transformation. In its design and enormous scale, El Anatsui's fabric sculpture *Earth's Skin* (2007) (see Fig. 2.11, p.53) and other works in its series, encapsulates this well. The idea of cloth or fabric appears as a metaphor and symbol of traditional African art and culture across my data. It is framed by a tender longing and respect for its power and ability to comfort, envelop, hold, drape, hide and reveal sensuous underlying shapes, providing movement and colourful affect. As was said in the interview with the healer MF, “that was the bed of the ancestors” and so it poetically accords with African religious feeling about life as shaped by powerful invisible forces.

The interrelated themes of African traditional art and culture's struggle and relative weakness in the face of historical national change and global modernization, permeated the matrix sessions. In the Douala session, they worked like a melancholic counterpoint to the expressions of nostalgia and longing for something missing, such as in the association of “handsome black wrestlers”. Like a focus for nostalgia and other feelings and ideas, the image of the ‘tradi-modern’ found object sculpture *La Nouvelle Liberte'* by Joseph Francis Sumegne, produced associations in both the Douala and Dschang sessions that combined the ideas of creativity, healing, and guidance with those of longing. In one of his novels ‘Ports of Call’, the Lebanese born author Amin Maalouf wrote: “After all, what else *is* our future made of, if not of our longings?” (1995, p.35)¹. His words capture perfectly the point that the experience of ‘longing for’ something contains the clues to the shape of a future. Cameroonians in general remain affected by painful experiences of colonialism and post-colonialism. As recently as last year, a violent near civil war wracked many of the areas I visited in my research, killing at least 3,000 and displacing over half a million (Bone & Nkwain, 2020).

1. Translated from French Alberto Manguel

A Different Type of Healing

If as already discussed (see Chapter 2, p.50), all traditional African art should be understood as a matrix of everyday relationships between people and things and the extension of the aesthetic dimension into what a life is. It is equally shaped by and part of a pragmatism, functionality and holism designed, to produce healing; be a source of salvation and peace (see Chapter 2, p.28). The earlier discussion of the value and values of indigenous culture compared to the Western contains the point of a different artistic universe and changes in the Cameroonian 'artistic universe' that produce misgivings and feelings of dissatisfaction with modernity in the successfully European-educated portion of the population. If the 'doubleness' of a vitalist and syncretistic aesthetic sensibility that persists alongside the technical rationalism that I found in European style educated Cameroonians is not simply a site of psychic and political struggle (Fanon, 1956), this psychosocial study helps flesh out the point and its content.

The finding of this study of traditional culture as something that is satisfying, a fabric like envelopment linked to ideas of love, continuity and family is made more powerful by understanding that the involvement of the ancestors, living and dead, makes it an existential healing that fathoms the deepest human questions of our place in the universe, mortality and death. Further, that it is a non-transcendental spirituality in the everyday, for instance shown by the importance of the use of family and groups in the practices of healers. This 'magic' is made effective by an ontological regard for participation as being in tune with a dynamic universe in motion (Ramosé, 2002) and the power of something more abstract than what is seen or heard (Senghor, 1956). As the healer MT put it:

MT: Or sometimes we call the family member, would make dinner with the family people, make the mess and they cook fine. To do it well they need to call the family member and make a celebration dinner and they would pray the medicine to go work. They would call the family together and they would sit together eat.

This 'scene' is obviously interpretable using psychoanalytical theories of transference and containment (see Blier in Chapter 2, p.25), or as a pragmatic use of the faculty of

'syncretistic perception' (see Ehrenzweig and Lorenzer in Chapter 4, p.71 & 80).

However, to limit the understanding of traditional healing to these aspects would be to misrepresent both its scope and everyday, 'in-life' quality past and present. In addition, a lasting value and possible wider contribution in a post-pandemic world today that has been newly alerted to the human importance of love, continuity and family.

Fanon monumentally succeeds in presenting the psychological effects of colonial subjugation and racism within the African diasporic middle classes, including a de-humanising alienation and estrangement from culture. However, his Marxist critique of colonialism has little to say about the 'what' of culture beyond its curtailment to the lives of the 'peasant class' (1995). My findings 'flesh out' the effects of an alienation and estrangement from traditional art and culture in Cameroon. However, I unearth both a scene of differences in relationship and "a place and role for the enduring particularity of differences in the relationship" (Bignall, 2021, p.255). The awe, pride and longing for the different type of healing found in African culture supports Ramose's view that many Africans and the 'colonizer' are 'missing' something of great value (Conversations of the World Pt 2, 2014).

Hayley Berman is a South African art psychotherapist and artist who has worked in post-apartheid South Africa and has used group dynamics to address the social issues of that country (2010, 2012). Berman develops a psychoanalytically informed analysis of a failure of South African society to mourn a colonial history and the atrocities of apartheid and cites the psychoanalyst Michael Feldman to produce both an explanation and warning:

"[h]istorical objects from the past are alive in the present in the form of internal objects. These internal object relations, if not made conscious, will be lived out to the detriment of the analysand" (Feldman in Berman, 2012, p.115).

Creating conceptual links between the work of psychoanalysis, as conveyed by Feldman, to individuals and society is arguably appropriate to not only South Africa but also other African countries when reflecting on the feelings of loss and ongoing cycles of violence and conflict found in my research. Berman's research intentionally focuses

on the immense problem of societal postcolonial trauma. However, by focusing on the experience of traditional African art and using appropriate methods my research draws out the image of traditional African culture as a fabric like envelopment linked to ideas of love, continuity and family. An object of enduring reparative and generative quality. If as Berman considers, after Winnicott (2002), the democratic potential of a society is intrinsically linked to the experience of an 'ordinary good home', "to one's internalized psychic home, the group as a symbolic home, one's familial home, the extended homes ..." (2012, p.116), the traditional African understanding and use of family and community to produce healing and 'balance' should be regarded as important for many African countries today.

Conclusion

Culture has no fixity or original state (Bhabha, 1994) however neither is it discontinuous with former states. A hegemony of modernist European thinking and lifestyle weighs heavily on the survival of a traditional African everyday. European style educated Cameroonians maintain a complex relationship towards their traditional culture. The question is how to go forward in collaboration with the ancestors, enjoying their protection and ideas of love, family and community in tandem with a world of neo-liberalist ideals and individual isolation (Ani, 1994; Kohnert, 2007; Njoj, 2016). An ongoing understanding of this situation is valuable to Cameroon and possibly other African countries because it can ameliorate the tensions and mobilize the sense of longing felt for the traditional everyday towards the future. In this way, it can assist in the development of more satisfactory Africanistic models of development.

Cameroon in its current relationship to European culture has to appropriate the latter rather than transform itself into another version of Europe and run the risk of being lost between two irreconcilable selves. To achieve this, it has to re-think post-colonial African identity from an Afri-centred perspective. For instance, the aborted 1960s and 1970s social experiments in Tanzania of *Ujamaa*, an African socialist model of development led by its then President Julius Nyerere, should not be discounted in its bravery and vision and may still serve as a source of inspiration.

The primary research question: What can traditional African art and aesthetic practices contribute to our understanding of healing and everyday modern culture in Cameroon? is perhaps best answered by re-examining the view of Gilroy that modernity has been from its onset a transcultural and international experience; a field of circulation that is mapped by a crossing and re-crossing epitomized by the contact between Africa, Europe and the Americas since the 15th century (1993, p.7). My research highlights how an unaccompanied, uncomplicated idea of such a transcultural and international experience does not extend everywhere and is far from true in Cameroon. The 'doubleness' of a religious vitalist and syncretistic aesthetic sensibility that persists alongside the technical rationalism that I found in European style educated Cameroonians helps to understand both the continuing popularity of traditional healing methods (Wilhelm-Solomon, Bukasa & Núñez, 2017) and, paradoxically, the burgeoning uptake of Western Christianity in African countries such as Cameroon (De Witte & Witte, 2010; Ndemanu, 2018) and a frustration and disunity of nation. For everyday modern culture to be free of feelings of the ambivalence and longing found in this research, there must be a new leap of faith back to the ancestors to accompany the changes wrought by modernity and globalisation. In this respect, the spirit of flexibility and realistic responses to changing times and patterns of life that I observed amongst traditional healers in Cameroon today are exemplary. My research suggests that a certain re-positioning of thoughts and attitudes towards Cameroonian identity claims, may be a fruitful way out of 'Europeanisation' and the beginning of a path towards a vision of Cameroon from an Afri-centred perspective. In terms of post-colonial emancipation, the point is to stop being the object of the other's gaze and adopt their own gaze.

Contribution made to knowledge of the subject treated

It can be argued that the lack of indigenous African ideas and 'local' experience in social and cultural theory is a sin of omission (Gilroy, 1993; Glissant, 1997; Holdstock, 1999; Ramose, 2016). To start, consider the words of the black American poet, critic and theorist Fred Moten, "By way of poet and philosopher, Edward Glissant's suggestive phrase, I have begun to consider Blackness as "Consent not to be a single being" (Moten, 2017). Moten's words form part of current discourse within the fields

of black studies and aesthetics but could easily slot into many parts of my study. This study presents original knowledge and research findings regarding the topics of traditional African art and the everyday in art and cultural theory that combine questions of 'race' and cultural value. It interrogates Moten's racial regard of 'black' American culture and Paul Gilroy's (1993) influential thinking that the crossing and re-crossing epitomized by the contact between Africa, Europe and the Americas since the 15th century, has produced in modernity, a culture that is not specifically African, American, Caribbean, or British. In contrast, this study's findings remind us that, it would be short-sighted to "study Africans in the United States or Brazil or Jamaica, without some appreciation for the historical and cultural significance of Africa as a source and origin" (Asante, 1990, p.15). This point should not be regarded as a form of facile racial nationalism. Rather it affirms that unless we continue to take traditional African art and culture more seriously as an object of enquiry, we will never truly understand Moten's "Blackness", and both the contribution and social and psychological malaise surrounding and affecting Africa and African diasporic communities throughout the world. This thesis has made a small but original contribution in support of such a point of view, based on empirical fieldwork among Africans with both relatively traditional and modern perspectives.

In addition, the South African authors Wilhelm-Solomon, Bukasa & Núñez describe a situation of 'ontological insecurity' especially in urban environments that "arises from a proliferation of synchronous, disjunctive and evolving ontological frameworks" (2017, p142). For these authors "African urbanisms characterized by an ontological plurality are a source of insecurity" (ibid p.148). In the struggle for liberation, Fanon admits to links between the indigenous art of a nation and its national consciousness (2005). When an art is so shaped by and part of a pragmatism and functionality in the everyday, it can be no surprise if that nation partly falters and dissembles under "the insidious agenda of colonialism" (ibid p.145). However, any post-colonial analysis that rounds on disjunctive or transformational experience of European education and/or urban environments alone, demonstrates a certain ontological short-sightedness. The colonial and post-colonial moment and the insidious affects of racism may shape the black psyche (Fanon, 1986; Dalal, 2002) but this point does not automatically marginalise the role of other forces.

Fanon himself finds differences and a need for precision when expressing the affects of colonialism and racism on the black psyche across geography and class. A close reading sees the author contrast a labourer building the port in Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire with himself, "a doctor of medicine born in Guadeloupe". The former simply "a victim of a system based on economic exploitation of a given race by another". The latter, embroiled in "the quest for disalienation" (1995, p.174). There is space for a broader understanding of ontological plurality. Once again, by looking at the data of this study a picture of insecurity alone, even amongst European style educated and metropolitan young Cameroonians, is inadequate. In this empirical study I show the importance of an associative vitalist and syncretistic sensibility in the everyday experience of contemporary Cameroonians. I show how this aesthetic sensibility, far from being a traditional remnant is actively used to navigate the conditions of contemporary life and contributes to an unresolved duality that does not conform to a plain picture of cultural conflict or hybridity (Fanon, 1956, 1987; Gilroy; 1993, Bhabha, 1996).

The 'doubleness' of a vitalist and syncretistic aesthetic sensibility that persists alongside the technical rationalism that I found in European style educated Cameroonians is not simply a site of psychic and political struggle (Fanon, 1956), or a 'hybridity' that produces a third narrative that challenges the claims of cultural totalization (Bhabha, 1996). Rather it is an unreconciled duality of aesthetic sensibility that produces a person who is conflicted (Fanon, 1956). In addition, it helps to understand both the continuing popularity of traditional healing methods and, paradoxically, the burgeoning uptake of Western Christianity and a frustration and disunity of nation. This point has a relevance for the many studies that describe the continued growth in importance of types of Christian worship in Cameroon and other African countries (Lado, 2006; Njoh, 2006; Sang-Bok & Miller, 2013; De Boeck).

This study is the first study to use the Visual Matrix research method on the continent of Africa and in the Central African country of Cameroon. In previous research the Visual Matrix research method has been used in the UK, Scandinavia, Singapore and Australia. The Visual Matrix Method was developed by a team from the University of Central Lancashire led by Professor Lynn Froggett that included Dr Julian Manley and Professor Alistair Roy, precisely for researching subjects that are characterised by non-

discursive and embodied experience such as art. In the process of the research, differences were observed in the progress of the matrix sessions in Cameroon in comparison to the UK, Scandinavian, Singaporean and Australasian Visual Matrix studies. In these contexts participants are assembled in a quiet and uninterrupted space where “the method demands carefully crafted ‘soft’ facilitation and particular conditions and steps” (Briefing for Participants in Visual Matrix Workshops, 2016 handout). The researcher takes on the role of a sensitive and supportive host and is non-directive but encourages by modelling and/or participation, associative thinking in response to a stimulus. The participants sit in a ‘snowflake’ configuration to discourage dyadic interactions or group dynamics. These aspects of the research method are informed by the psychoanalytical theory of for instance, Bion and his idea of reverie as a “meditative” state of attention (Froggett et al, 2014, p.17).

In the sessions in Cameroon, none of the locations were quiet spaces. The activity of the sessions in two of the three locations was not ‘soft’. There was something of an animated classroom atmosphere and the participants often raised their hands to obtain permission to speak their associations. Also, It was only possible for participants to sit in a ‘snowflake’ configuration in one Visual Matrix session. Despite the less than ideal conditions the contributions in the Cameroonian sessions, produced rich associative thinking, images and affective experience. This discovery gives rise firstly to the thought that young Cameroonians are peculiarly at ease with associative thinking. Secondly, that in the African cultural context noise and communal situations can facilitate a powerful container for reverie, and further that this can support syncretistic aesthetic perception. In short, there is a cultural dimension to the conditions in which reverie is facilitated and experienced. This discovery leads to an expansion of the theoretical thinking underlying the Visual Matrix research method and shows that reverie can be generated in busy social conditions and not only restful uninterrupted ones and may even be enhanced by stimulation.

In the African context, the evidence of this study supports the idea that today, traditional culture may have been undermined but is not overthrown, and may be a source of meaningful identity and psychic security that is an essential benefit to African countries. They point to the survival of certain modes of African thought in the

face of European ideas and the hope of countering what Abiola Irele has pointed to as a kind of malaise over what can properly be called African and “a kind of estrangement that forms part of our general sense of alienation - cultural as well as political and economic - as contemporary Africans” (1990, p.45). Long before Irele, thinkers such as William Du Bois (1996) and Franz Fanon (2005) described types of alienation and pathology within the African diaspora stemming from the historical situations of slavery and colonialization and so the potential for well-being and importance of this study extends much further than Cameroon and the continent of Africa.

Lastly, the focus of this study coincides with a renewed interest in indigenous African ideas in academic spaces and at a national level in African states (Laleye, 2014; Pailey, 2018). In many ways, the ideas about traditional African art taking shape within this post-colonial development recall the ideological and philosophical aspects of *negritude* writing before it (Donna V. Jones, 2010; Diagne, 2011; Irele, 2011; Thiam, 2014). To also contribute to this spirit of reclamation is a central concern of this study and if any justification is needed, I believe it is contained in the far-sighted rationale of the Nardal sisters Jane, Paulette and Andrée who said:

Rather than drawing the Negro world behind us in the wake of our errors, it would be better to try to understand it more thoroughly than in the past, to develop its own qualities and, in the orbit of human civilization, to leave it its own place, its own contribution, by which the common heritage will grow (in Hymans, 1971, p.40).

AFTERWARD

What Next for the Researcher?

Upon my return from Cameroon after the second visit, I was pleased to have established some valuable research contacts in Cameroon. Since then I maintained contact with many of the friends and researchers I worked with there, including Dr Banindjel. Here in the UK I have become a member of the newly created University of Birmingham African Researchers Network. Since making an online presentation for the network about my research I have been in contact with fellow researchers in African art, healing, religion and culture. These include the Nigerian Ph D researcher Augustine Farinola at University of Birmingham and Dr Paul Akin-Otiko, a lecturer in Medicine, Religions and Cultures of the Africans at the Institute of African and Diaspora Studies, University of Lagos, Nigeria. These two and others from across Africa are currently working on a draft of a book entitled 'Philosophy of African Music and Arts' and have asked me to contribute a chapter based on data from my research.

However above all, this Ph D research journey has not only informed me but also newly inspired me as an artist. Today, I have assembled a range of artists and academics to work with me on a new project I have initiated, the creation of a giant aleatory architectural participatory installation called The Divination Palace. Informed by both Yoruba *Ifa* divination and many of the impressions I gathered during my research and in the writing of this thesis, the 'palace' will equally combine fabrics, movement and music to remind us of our common existential concerns and that we are one of many, a community.

Classically in an *Ifa* divination a *babalawo* (diviner priest) uses both artefacts and types of musical text. The *babalawo* throws 16 palm nuts to determine a configuration of eight sets of signs. Each of the 256 possible configurations available is known by a name and is associated with its own oral literature. As the *babalawo* chants the appropriate texts the client interprets them for themselves (Bascom, 1991). The Divination Palace simultaneously functions to randomly determine an individual

outcome for each audience member and remind them that they are part of a dynamic weave of relation with others. Using 16 specially created corresponding types of fabric banners and musical divination texts the audience will become part of an immersive collective experience that is randomly generated yet unique to them. As part of this process each audience member will be gently led by an 'MC/acolyte/musician in together shouting their names and performing simple movements. They will all then 'hoist' their decorated fabric banner within a structural frame as their musical divination text is played. As they participate in this process, the structural appearance of the entire Palace will be transformed through the random outcome of each audience member and participants will be immersed in a related traditional African soundscape that evolves alongside the visual structure.

I was invited to explore this project through an artist's residency at 101 Outdoor Arts Creation Space in Newbury in November 2019. With the financial and technical support of 101 I assembled the creative team of The Divination Palace for an early trial of the installation. The team included my long-time artistic collaborator Tchoumo "Xumo" Nounjio (see Chapter 1), Dr Olu Taiwo (Senior Lecturer, University of Winchester, Department of Performing Arts and member of the University's Centre for the Art's as Wellbeing) and Josephe Cocles (to see examples of her paintings go to: <http://www.chuckgallery.com/portfolio/josephe-cocles/>).¹ We explored possible mechanisms by which to hang the banners with a 12m x 12m square and 4m high structure, giving a sense of scale to the idea, as well as experimenting with the musical and visual language of the piece. After a sharing with some audience the feedback included expression of delight and satisfaction from the combination of elements. This was a rewarding validation of The Divination Palace's intent to create a moment of self-reflection and sharing and allow the audience to briefly contemplate their lives, and perhaps find some type of healing or satisfaction.

1. Josephe Cocles has also worked with the fashion designer Mike Sylla. Sylla's use of gold and other colours exemplars the powerful use of colour that will be used in the design of The Divination Palace's fabrics. See links:
<https://i.pinimg.com/236x/ec/bd/d4/ecbdd430b5b3694483e48ce521dcb4bf--mike-dantoni-afro.jpg>
<http://afroculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Mike-Sylla.jpg>

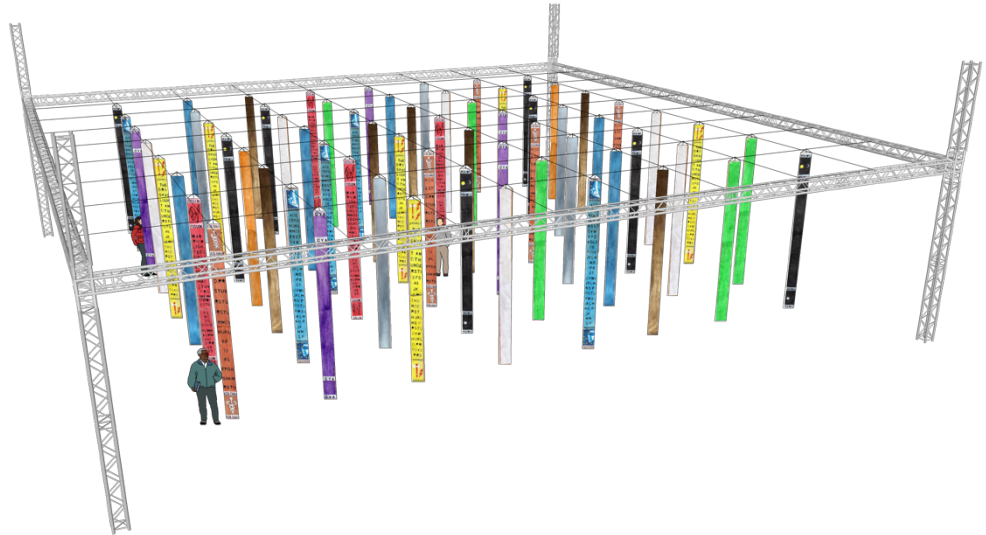


Fig. 8.1 Architectural drawing of The Divination Palace, 101 November, 2019. Courtesy of Andrew Crofts.

I am currently raising funds to complete the project and after further stages of development this year, the final piece will be presented at a number of arts festival in the UK (and possibly internationally) in 2022. This project will bring together my work as an artist with my Ph D thesis, and will bring elements of the world of traditional African art to audiences here in the UK.

2020 has been a disruptive year for the entire planet because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The normal complications of international travel have been greatly increased by it. Despite this I would like to return to researching in Africa and hope to use my Ph D to do this. I remain encouraged because of how so many of the healers I was introduced to in Cameroon proved to be kind people who when approached with a sincere interest and respect for their knowledge were ready to give fascinating insights into traditional African art and culture. In addition, how my use of the Visual Matrix Method proved to be an effective tool for helping to understand cultural and social issues in an African country today. Above all, I remain enthused as ever about the topic of traditional African art and aesthetics.

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APPENDICES:

APPENDIX A: Project Approval from the UCLan Ethics Committee.

APPENDIX B: Information Sheet for Interview Participants.

APPENDIX C: Consent Form for Interview Participants

APPENDIX D: Information Sheet for Photography and Video

APPENDIX E; Consent Form for Photography and Video

APPENDIX F: Information Sheet for Visual Matrix Participants

APPENDIX G: Consent Form for Visual Matrix Participants

Appendix H: 14 Photo Elicitation Interview and Visual Matrix Images

APPENDIX I: 10 Additional Images for the Visual Matrix Sessions (6 Yaoundé and Dschang and 6+4 Douala).

APPENDIX J: Photographs from 3 Visual Matrix Locations (the Universities of Yaoundé , Dschang and Douala)

APPENDIX K: Notes from My Reflexive Diary

23rd August 2016

Lynn Froggett/James Parris
School of Social Work, Care and Community
University of Central Lancashire

Dear Lynn/James,

Re: PSYSOC Ethics Committee Application
Unique Reference Number: PSYSOC 293

The PSYSOC ethics committee has granted approval of your proposal application 'Scenic experience and the traditional art of Cameroon'. Approval is granted up to the end of project date* or for 5 years from the date of this letter, whichever is the longer.

It is your responsibility to ensure that:

- the project is carried out in line with the information provided in the forms you have submitted
- you regularly re-consider the ethical issues that may be raised in generating and analysing your data
- any proposed amendments/changes to the project are raised with, and approved, by Committee
- you notify roffice@uclan.ac.uk if the end date changes or the project does not start
- serious adverse events that occur from the project are reported to Committee
- a closure report is submitted to complete the ethics governance procedures (Existing paperwork can be used for this purposes e.g. funder's end of grant report; abstract for student award or NRES final report. If none of these are available use [e-Ethics Closure Report Proforma](#)).

Yours sincerely,



Gayle Brewer
Vice Chair
PSYSOC Ethics Committee

* for research degree students this will be the final lapse date

NB - Ethical approval is contingent on any health and safety checklists having been completed, and necessary approvals as a result of gained.

Information sheet and invitation to participate in an Interview by Jim Parris from University of Central Lancashire, UK.

You are being invited to take part in my Ph D research examining traditional ritual/folk performance and art of Cameroon. My research is asking what Cameroonian performance and art can contribute to the new subject of Psychosocial Studies. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why it is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information – my contact details are at the end. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

As a part of my research, I am asking both spiritual healers and art practitioners in Cameroon to talk and tell stories about the ritual/folk performance and art of Cameroon.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at anytime from the interview without giving an explanation.

What do I have to do if I decide to take part?

If you take part I would like to audio or even video record the interview but I will be happy to interview you without recording. If I do not record, I will leave very soon after the interview to make notes. Up to one month from the date of the interview if you request, I will delete any recording, transcripts or notes from the interview.

What are the benefits and risks of taking part?

It is hoped that once completed this study will be a respectful reflection of some of the traditional art and cultural practice of Cameroon that simultaneously communicates the knowledge that it may contain for the subject of cultural engagement. Further, it is hoped that it will give interesting exposure to the heritage of Cameroon and contribute to improved understanding between continents.

Although it is unlikely, any interview can evoke upsetting thoughts or memories. Please remember that you are not obliged to share any thoughts or ideas that you don't want to. You may withdraw from the interview at any time. If you are upset I will direct you to other people for appropriate support if you want me to.

What if I have a complaint about the study?

If you have any concerns about the study you please feel free to discuss it informally with me, or Dr Joachen Banindjel by email:
jobanindjel@yahoo.fr

Another option is to contact my Director of Studies, Professor Lynn Froggett by email:
LFroggett@uclan.ac.uk

If you wish to make a complaint it should be addressed to the University Officer for Ethics at OfficerForEthics@uclan.ac.uk The University Officer for Ethics will document the concern, and refer it to the Chair of the relevant e-Ethics sub-committee within two working days.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Only members of the research team will have access to recordings, transcripts and notes. These will be kept on devices with password security, UCLan servers or locked in a filing cabinet on university. They will be destroyed after 5 years.

When I write the Ph D thesis and any other publications arising from it, neither your name and any information that might identify you will be contained in it and I will ask you if quotations can be used.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The Ph D thesis will be published by the University of Central Lancashire. I will also present papers at conferences and submit to academic journals for publication.

Who has given permission for the study to go ahead?

The research ethics committee of The Schools of Social Work and Psychology has given permission for the study to go ahead.

Contact for further information

You can contact me for more information about the study:

Jim Parris: jparris@uclan.ac.uk

Thank you for considering taking part in this study and for reading this information sheet, which you should keep if you decide to take part in the study.

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Scenic experience and the traditional art of Cameroon.

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

Jim Parris (MPhil Researcher)
School of Social Work, Care and Community
University of Central Lancashire
Preston, PR1 2HE
jparris@uclan.ac.uk

Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet, for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I understand that basis on which I can withdraw from the study

I agree to take part in the above study

I agree that recordings, transcripts and notes of this interview may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research.

I understand that it will not be possible to withdraw my information after one month from the date of the interview.

Please tick box

Yes

No

I agree to the Interview being audio recorded

I agree to the Interview being video recorded

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

Name of Participant Date Signature

Name of Researcher Date Signature

Information about Jim Parris from University of Central Lancashire, UK, photographing and/or video recording.

You are being asked to consent to acceptable and appropriate photography and/or video recording of art and practice connected with the everyday or the preparation and performance of ceremonies. This will contribute my Ph D research. My research is asking what Cameroonian performance and art can tell us about the individual and the community. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why it is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information – my contact details are at the end. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Do I have to give consent?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to give consent. If you do decide to give consent you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to give consent you are still free to withdraw your consent at anytime up to one month from the date of signing without giving an explanation.

What are the benefits and risks of taking part?

It is hoped that once completed this study will be a respectful reflection of some of the traditional art and cultural practice of Cameroon that simultaneously communicates the knowledge that it may contain for the subject of cultural engagement. Further, it is hoped that it will give interesting exposure to the heritage of Cameroon and contribute to improved understanding between continents.

You will receive copies of any photographs and/or video recording.

What if I have a complaint about the study?

If you have any concerns please feel free to discuss it informally with me, or Dr Joachen Banindjel by email:

jobanindjel@yahoo.fr

Another option is to contact my Director of Studies, Professor Lynn Froggett by email:

LFroggett@uclan.ac.uk

If you wish to make a complaint it should be addressed to the University Officer for Ethics at OfficerForEthics@uclan.ac.uk The University Officer for Ethics will document the concern, and refer it to the Chair of the relevant e-Ethics sub-committee within two working days.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Only members of the research team will have access to any original photographs and/or video recording. These will be kept on devices with password security, UCLan servers or locked in a filing cabinet on university premises. They will be destroyed after 5 years.

When I write the Ph D thesis and any other publications arising from it, I will not use any photographs or video that show peoples' faces and names of persons or places. Any use will conform to the copyright laws of Cameroon.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The Ph D thesis will be published by the University of Central Lancashire. I will also present papers at conferences and submit to academic journals for publication. No photographs and/or video recording showing peoples' faces will be used in publications and any use will conform to the copyright laws of Cameroon.

Who has given permission for the study to go ahead?

The research ethics committee of The Schools of Social Work and Psychology has given permission for the study to go ahead.

Contact for further information

You can contact me for more information about the study:

Jim Parris: jparris@uclan.ac.uk

Thank you for considering taking part in this study and for reading this information sheet, which you should keep if you decide to take part in the study.

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Scenic experience and the traditional art of Cameroon.

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

Jim Parris (MPhil Researcher)
School of Social Work, Care and Community
University of Central Lancashire
Preston, PR1 2HE
jparris@uclan.ac.uk

Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

My consent is given voluntarily and I understand the basis on which I can withdraw my consent.

I give my consent for photography to be used in the above study.

I give my consent for video recording to be used in the above study

I agree that the data gathered in this study may be stored on devices with password security, storage websites with password security, UCLan servers or locked in a filing cabinet on university premises.

I understand that no photographs and/or video recording showing peoples' faces will be used in publications and any use will conform to the copyright laws of Cameroon.

Name of Participant Date Signature

Name of Researcher Date Signature

Information sheet and invitation to participate in a Visual Matrix run by Jim Parris from University of Central Lancashire, UK.

You are being invited to take part in my Ph D research examining traditional ritual/folk performance and art of Cameroon. My research is asking what Cameroonian performance and art can tell us about the individual and the community. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why it is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information my contact details are at the end. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

As a part of my research, I am asking students at 3 universities in Cameroon to participate in a 'visual matrix' to explore what traditional ritual/folk performance and art of Cameroon brings to mind. A visual matrix is a facilitated discussion that allows people to use their imaginations and say what an artwork or other visual stimulus brings to mind and how it makes them feel.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will have this information sheet to keep and refer to and you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time from the matrix and without giving an explanation. It is important to remember that once the matrix is in progress anything you say is in the public domain and will in turn influence what others say. Anything you say cannot be extricated from the process. However, if for any reason you indicate you are uncomfortable with my quoting what you have said directly, you may ask for this to be withheld up to one month from the date of the matrix.

What do I have to do if I decide to take part?

If you take part in my Visual Matrix session you will be asked to offer your feelings and associations, including further images the process brings to mind. Because it is led by imagery and visualization it offers ways of understanding experience that do not rely on people's ability to explain it in words.

Conduct of the Visual Matrix

The visual matrix demands a carefully crafted but 'soft' facilitation and a number of conditions and steps.

1. The participants in the matrix (numbers can be between 6 or 35 with approximately one facilitator for every ten people) assemble in a space where they can work without interruption. No previous knowledge or experience of the method is required.
2. The group is presented with stimulus material that bears on the research problem or question – in this case it will be photograph/video, of traditional Cameroonian art practitioners and practice; the socially embedded cultural forms and practices of Cameroon.
3. The participants, including the facilitator(s), are seated in a snowflake pattern to avoid direct eye contact. This makes it easier for them to speak into the space rather than directly to one another.
4. The facilitator invites people to offer any images, thoughts and feelings that come to mind, as and when they wish and without turn-taking, pointing out that they may be prompted either by the original stimulus or by the contributions of any member of the group.
5. The facilitator takes a non-directive role, participating along with others and modelling the process of making associations when the matrix veers into analysis or discussion. The production of images in the matrix takes precedence over verbal expression as participants contribute further images, thoughts and feelings which accumulate, forming a kind of visualised 'collage'.
6. When the matrix is brought to a close there is a short break, the chairs are re-arranged into a semi-circle and the group moves into discussion mode, reflecting on what has emerged in the matrix, identifying clusters of imagery and associated thoughts and feelings. The facilitator notes the emergent themes and ideas and the links between them on a board or flip-chart. The research team

will later work on this material to understand how the artwork has affected the group and the value of the experience.

What are the benefits and risks of taking part?

It is hoped that once completed this study will be a respectful reflection of some of the traditional art and cultural practice of Cameroon that simultaneously communicates the knowledge that it may contain for the subject of cultural engagement. Further, it is hoped that it will give interesting exposure to the heritage of Cameroon and contribute to improved understanding between continents.

Although it is unlikely, any interview can evoke upsetting thoughts or memories. Please remember that you are not obliged to share any thoughts or ideas that you don't want to. You may withdraw from the matrix at any time you may wish. If you are upset I will direct you to other people for appropriate support if you want me to.

What if I have a complaint about the study?

If you have any concerns about the study you please feel free to discuss it informally with me, or Dr Joachen Banindjel by email: jobanindjel@yahoo.fr

Another option is to contact my Director of Studies, Professor Lynn Froggett by email: LFroggett@uclan.ac.uk

If you wish to make a complaint it should be addressed to the University Officer for Ethics at OfficerForEthics@uclan.ac.uk The University Officer for Ethics will document the concern, and refer it to the Chair of the relevant e-Ethics sub-committee within two working days.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

If you agree to take part in the visual matrix the group discussion will be audio recorded and transcribed, and notes taken. As this is a public discussion confidentiality will be limited because other people are present. However, only members of the research team will have access to the recording, transcript and notes. These these will be kept on devices with password security, UCLan servers or locked in a filing cabinet on university premises. They will be destroyed after 5 years.

When I write the Ph D thesis and any other publications arising from it, I will not use your name and nothing that can identify you will be contained in it.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The Ph D will be published by the University of Central Lancashire. I will also present papers at conferences and submit to academic journals for publication.

Who has given permission for the study to go ahead?

The research ethics committee of The Schools of Social Work and Psychology has given permission for the study to go ahead.

Contact for further information

You can contact me for more information about the study: Jim Parris: jparris@uclan.ac.uk. Thank you for considering taking part in this study and for reading this information sheet, which you should keep if you decide to take part in the study.

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Scenic experience and the traditional art of Cameroon.

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

Jim Parris (MPhil Researcher)
School of Social Work, Care and Community
University of Central Lancashire
Preston, PR1 2HE
jparris@uclan.ac.uk

Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet, for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I understand that basis on which I can withdraw from the study

I agree to take part in the above study

I agree that recordings, transcripts and notes of this process may be stored in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research.

I understand that it will not be possible to withdraw my information after one month from the date of the process.

Please tick box

Yes

No

I agree to the Interview being audio recorded

I agree to the Interview being video recorded

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

Name of Participant Date Signature

Name of Researcher Date Signature

APPENDIX H: 14 photo elicitation and visual matrix images

(The details written below the images did not appear in the interviews and visual matrix sessions)



MS's mask. Photograph by Jim Parris, 10th October, 2016



Bacham mask. Wood. Ernest Hahn, Rietberg Museum, Zurich (Fagg, 1965, p. 65).



Dan *Gle Gbee* dancer. (Farris Thompson, 1974, p.167).



Joseph Francis Sumegne (1996) *La Nouvelle Liberté*. La Nouvelle Liberté statue is broken. (2016. www.stopblablacam.com)



Flali mask in performance, Bangofla, Côte D'Ivoire (Visona et al, 2000, p.15)



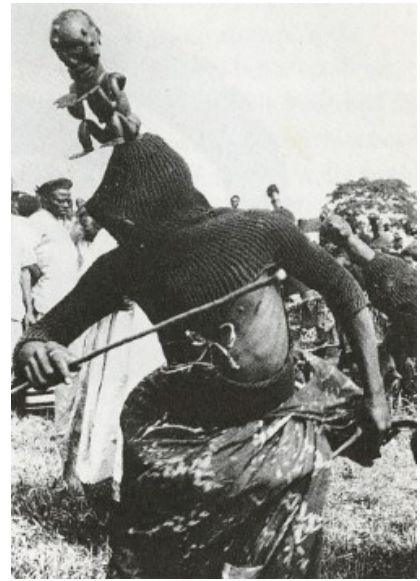
Flali mask in performance, Bangofla, Côte D'Ivoire (Visona et al, 2000, p.15)



'Rass' Nounjio recording traditional music playing. Photograph courtesy of 'Rass' Nounjio.



MS's Legba Hat. Photograph by Jim Parris
10th October, 2016



Skin-covered crest mask in
performance, Bamenda, Cameroon.
1932, (Visona et al, 2000, p.337)



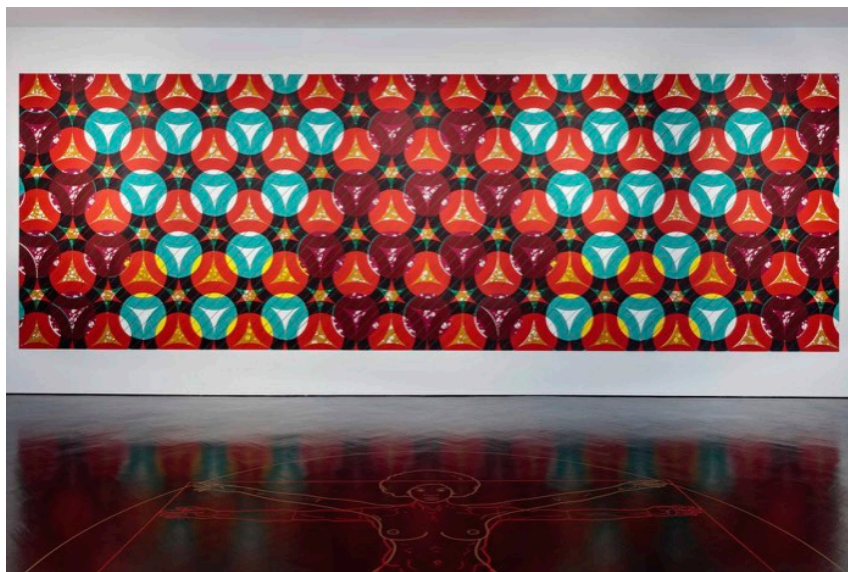
Priestess dancing with wand in honour of
Shango, Olori, Nigeria



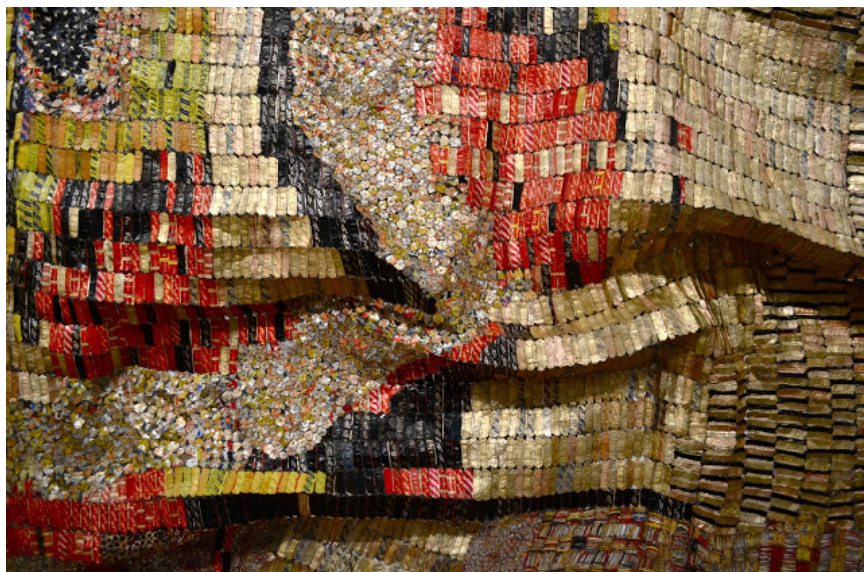
Cameroon, Ejagham, Ngbe dancer (Farris
Thompson, 1974, p.173).



Nakani compound, Sirigu, Ghana, 1972 (Visona et al, 2000, p.163).



Yinka Shonibare (2016) *... and The Wall Fell Away*. Photo: Mark Blow. Courtesy Stephen Friedman Gallery.



Tight close up of *Earth's Skin* by El Anatsui (see Fig. 2.11 page 142 for image of sculpture and details).

APPENDIX I: 10 additional images for the visual matrix sessions (6 Yaoundé and Dschang and 6 + 4 Douala)

(The details written below the images did not appear in the interviews and visual matrix sessions)



Bird sculpture. West Region, Cameroon. Museum of Civilization, Dschang. Photograph by Jim Parris, 22nd March, 2017.



Ato Malinda, *Looking at Art; Looking at Africa; Looking at Art*, performance (2009). Photo: Barbara Minishi. Image courtesy of Ato Malinda.



Cameroon, Ejagham, Ngbe dancer (Farris Thompson, 1974, p.173).



Trance ceremony. West Region, Cameroon. Photo from Museum of Civilization, Dschang. Photograph by Jim Parris, 22nd March, 2017.



Hut in West Region of Cameroon. Museum of Civilization, Dschang. Photograph by Jim Parris, 22nd March, 2017.



Mbira musical instrument. Wood. Cameroon. Museum of Civilization, Dschang. Photograph by Jim Parris, 22nd March, 2017.



'The chair'. Photograph by Jim Parris, 10th October, 2016.



Mask. Cameroon. Museum of Civilization, Dschang. Photograph by Jim Parris, 22nd March, 2017.



Artefact from MS' hut. Photograph by Jim Parris, 10th October, 2016.



Kuosi Society elephant mask in performance, Cameroon. 1985 (Visona et al, 2000, p. 351)

APPENDIX J

Photographs from 3 visual matrix locations (the Universities of Yaoundé, Dschang and Douala)

Photos by Jim Parris, March 2017.



Notes From My Reflexive Diary

8.10.16

During my first visit, the traditional healer MT seemed to very quickly sense my academic 'split personality'. During my first visit to him, I was noticeably excited and emotional at the start of the interview. My voice on meeting him and a group of about 10 people became louder and louder and my intended questions ever more confused. He said that I was emotional because the ancestors had accepted me. I instantly recognised the value of this explanation as a type of transference, a healing narrative of immense subtlety and power. He then sent his son and protégé out of the room and the son hurriedly returned with a beautiful statue of a man. MT explained that the statue was of his father and then to my amazement gave it to me. My own father had died less than 5 months before. Looking back, I now feel that MT was expressing his sense of a link to the ancestors and, as explained in the above reflexive statement, they would as far as he was concerned would be naturally prescient about my life. It was as if Africa was meeting me and enquiring into me through this powerful inter-subjective exchange rooted in its cultural and religious ideas. The event transformed the interviewer/interviewee relationship and feelings naturally flowed out of my personal life into the situation of meeting with this highly experienced healer. I still have the statue and it is now part of a love and connection to my father. The impact of this episode on my relationship to my study is undoubtedly a strong one.

Later I was directed to one of MT's traditional healing huts and told that I should go in alone. It was entirely dark. Perhaps if I had stayed a very long time, my eyes would have become accustomed to it but that seems entirely unimportant now because the darkness was perfect for what I started to feel. It was cool and perfectly quiet. The dark space seemed to be dense with spirits which I construed as the ancestors. They had come to greet me and I was alone with them. It was like being in a deserted church but without it feeling lonely. Instead, I felt I surrounded by a loving family that I felt I had always been denied. The experience imparted a conviction that they exist and that I would never be alone. This was an authentically African analogue of a religious feeling and I weep at not knowing it before. I have spent a lifetime thinking

that Africa's traditional religions did not qualify as 'proper' religions but I have changed my view . The accumulation of hundreds of years of racist and irrational ideas held by Europe's greatest minds since the Enlightenment and the burden of a lifetime of suffering under the illusion that Africa held no history and culture of value, suddenly appeared to lift.

The whole experience of my visits to MT and memory of my parents has helped to sustain me at times during the long Ph D writing process. The sadness I feel over missing them has also motivated me to not give up trying to finish.

14.10.16

We were dancing and BB said "Focus ... move your whole body".

15.3.17

Below is my photograph of a woman that I met on the plane. She insisted on disembarking from the plane by carrying her bag "Cameroonian style". I think this was partly a response to our conversation together but I was impressed by how she could still do it after spending many years in Europe.



I was struck by how it was only my fellow woman passenger who carried her bag on her head as we walked off the plane and through the airport. I think her action came about from a mixture of longing for her former life and non-European identification. On the plane, she had been recalling rich memories of her now dead husband, who she described as a typical chauvinist *Bassa* man. It was obvious that she had loved him immensely. The skill of carrying on the head in this way must share a lot with the skill of riding a bike and so anyone can learn it.

21.3.17

Immediately after the Dschang Visual Matrix, Dr Banindjel introduced me to an English speaking clinical psychologist colleague who was from an Anglophone part of the country. He confirmed his own a belief in the ancestors still exist as a potent force in people's lives. He also alighted on a point that I encountered when talking with others in Cameroon. This was the way that during colonialism children had been punished by their parents for speaking their own language at school, this "pushed people to a distance with their own culture". He said that some people were totally distanced from

traditional culture but the majority are trying to syncretise and these people were most mentally a risk.

He said that he considered that there was an imperative to find a third way in order to avoid the growth of social problems connected with the confusion provided by a blind adoption of modernity. "We must integrate our ethnicity into the global world. What we must bring to the table is what we are fundamentally". This idea obviously points to some huge issues such as what it is fundamentally to be a Cameroonian. He also said that long ago, the anthropologist Evans-Pritchard had talked about the early error of trying to put traditional African conceptions into Western language and conceptions. The impact of the historic disregard and destruction of indigenous languages is again a huge point that has been made by Ngugi. I wonder if a growth in national regard for traditional culture should not be met by a growth in the understanding of it worldwide. I would be delighted if in some way, no matter how small, this research could contribute to such a prospect. In addition, I hope that this study may provide new insight into the important question of African cultures negotiating tradition and modernity.

Entry into a Christian school or the obtaining of a modern job often involved abandoning a traditional name in favour of a Christian one. Regarding the success of Christianity in Cameroon, the psychologist said that its introduction had involved a lot of violence and now perhaps cognitive dissonance explains the passion for it. He explained that the state had implemented a policy to establish both modern and traditional doctors and the standardisation or formularisation of traditional 'potions'. Also, that some traditional healers were concerned that this Western attitude and implementation will minimise the performative ceremonial aspect of their work.

14.12.19

The extract from my reflexive diary notes about people punishing their children for speaking an African language, especially when at school, is something I heard many times in Cameroon and from Cameroonians elsewhere. It holds a clue to what I am calling an ambivalence and possible process of mourning across my data (see Chapters

7 & 8). *Psycho-socially speaking, it is significant mixture of feelings from my personal biography and the experience of being in Cameroon. Researchers' attention to their own affective and embodied response to data is central to Lorenzer's depth-hermeneutic method (see Chapter 4). The response, or provocation, will inevitably reflect researchers' personal biographies but these are simultaneously in a dialectical relation with a social or collective dimension. I think the painful mention of punishing children brought out the hurt I experienced as a child due to racism. I have been traumatized by racism in the UK where I grew up. I guess the reason I do not often speak about it is because black and mixed race people have so nearly all experienced it and are literally tired of expressing it. However here in this psychosocial research it is suddenly centre stage.*

The word trauma is equally applicable to some of the experiences expressed in my data regarding European style education and both Cameroon's colonial and post-colonial history. The modern nation of Cameroon history, began in 1961 with the unification of the two former British and French colonies. Since then it has struggled for complete unity in a variety of regions. Since 2016, the mainly English-speaking North-West and South West Regions have experienced increasing unrest and campaigns of agitation led by separatists. Anglophones claim they face marginalization by the mainly Francophone rest of the country. Since the second half of 2017, life in the two provinces has come to a standstill by three years of conflict, which have been at a cost of about 3,000 lives and 500,000 forced from their homes. At times recently there have been internet blackouts imposed in the North-West and South-West provinces (BBC, 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-44452409>, accessed 25th February, 2020; Chimtom, 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-49931662>, Accessed 25th February, 202). During the last four years of this research, I have become a friend of one of the participants and one of his sons that lives in the affected areas. Almost monthly, we greet each other and exchanges best wishes using WhatsApp or even phone. It is remarkable how easy and cheap it is now to do so. About a year ago I was buying something in my local supermarket and suddenly some photographs appeared on my phone. They showed the healers place of work where I had sat and interviewed him. It had been burnt down and destroyed by the Cameroonian army. More recently, I was told by the son that one of his brothers, and the healer's youngest son of about 20

had been shot dead by the army. My life and character has been impacted by racism, however these new stories are of much worse suffering that is connected to the past and present world of people that I have come to know and love through the research. They create feelings of anger and sadness that I believe at times have made the writing of this research onerous.