

Intercultural borderlinking, intersubjectivity, and Bantu healing cults

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The complementary phenomenological-anthropological and psychoanalytical perspective on experience has grown out of my long-time intersubjective encounter with numerous Yaka elders in south-western Congo and Kinshasa. Bracha L. Ettinger's feminine psychoanalytical perspective on matrixial borderlinking helps to trace archaic layers, as well as healing capacities, in the (counter)transference and transsubjectivity at play in the encounter of patient, healer, (medical) anthropologist. The adopted perspective has come to espouse major Yaka perspectives on modalities and forms of mutually invigorating versus deflating encounters, intercorporeity and intersubjectivity. In turn, in as much as intercultural intersubjectivity becomes bifocal and reciprocal-looking from 'there' to 'here' as if it were 'there', it questions the blind spots in social science with regard to the invisible, and the elsewhere, untamed or uncanny.

[phenomenological anthropology, intercultural psychoanalysis, matrixial fascinace, borderlinking, Bantu healing cults, the invisible, the uncanny, Congo]

Intersubjectivity is a complex concept. (...) Sometimes we use it as a noun, to indicate that symbolic space that is created when two subjectivities meet and a shared reality comes into being. (...) At other times, we will use intersubjectivity as an adjective, to include the dynamic character of this symbolic space" (Tankink & Vysma 2006: 251).

When applying the above-mentioned view on intersubjectivity to Bantu healing cults, several elements stand out: the interacting body, encounter, com-passionate sensation, a matrixial resonance field, 'fascinace' and borderlinking – in an openness to the invisible and epiphanous, or bordercrossing into the elsewhere, the untamed and uncanny.

I myself have come to adopt a complementary phenomenological-anthropological and psychoanalytical perspective on the subject's experience, which I hold to be situationally and psycho-socio-culturally shaped (Devisch 2006a). This perspective has grown out of my (applied) medical-anthropological research in the post-colonial setting of Kinshasa and south-western Congo. It has been influenced by my limited

(Freudian and post-Lacanian) psychoanalytical clinical practice in Flanders, as well as by my attunement to subaltern and feminist (in particular, African-American) studies, and to the radical critique offered by subaltern studies on colonialism's paranoid and exoticising imaginaries.

In earlier studies (Devisch 1993: 1-9, 2006a, Devisch & Brodeur 1999: 3-20, Devisch 2006a), I have submitted the intersubjective and situational borderspace between hosts and the allochthonous anthropologist (who as heir of the former coloniser is beset by paranoid imaginaries and guilt feelings) to an incisive post-colonial scrutiny. Here, I will concentrate on the clinical encounter that constitutes a borderlinking between healer, patient and (medical) anthropologist. Departing from a paradigmatic healing cult as practised in the Yaka socioculture of south-western Congo as well as in suburban Kinshasa (Devisch 1993: 179ff., 1998), the present study attempts, first, to arrive at a phenomenological grasp of the healing process in its contextually interweaving of interacting bodies (cf. intercorporeity), subjectivities (cf. intersubjectivity), and visible and invisible worlds (cf. transworld borderlinking). My second aim, meanwhile, is to scrutinise the intersubjective and intercultural borderlinking encounter and reciprocity in which I, as anthropologist, am co-implicated. The type of intersubjective encounter I advocate avoids, as much as possible, my being intrusive, disfiguring, concealing or reductionist. It is, moreover, careful not to impose its own paradigm; it does not restrict me to looking through the window of my own worldview; nor is it a translation. Phenomenological anthropology and psychoanalysis, where being attuned with each other, require taking a sceptical stance with regard to the outspoken side of sociocultural life, to the face value of outward behaviour and interpersonal communication, and to the universalist claims of the social sciences. Both matrixial borderlinking relations and complex (counter)transference are at play in the long-dated intercultural encounter and engagement with one another's worldview and values, in lived-out contexts implying incommensurable life-worlds that, moreover, extend - even beyond the speakable - into both the epiphanous invisible and the uncanny. Any further development of a phenomenologically informed ethnography and a culture sensitive psychoanalysis should, therefore, grow into intersubjective co-implication and poly-logue, into a genuine "subjectivity-as-encounter" (cf. Bracha L. Ettinger), so as to emancipate such 'research' and allow for its transformation into a new discipline less tied to its Euro-centric and phal-logo-centric, partitioning antecedents.

Bracha L. Ettinger's matrixial approach, to which I will now turn, may offer a non-dualistic hermeneutics to understand, in south-western Congo and Kinshasa, the healing cults' initiates' intersubjective moulding of openness, experiencing and action interanimating the human life-world and the ancestral or spirit realm.

Matrixial resonance field and fascinace, according to Bracha L. Ettinger

Multi-sited field-research in the suburban contexts of Kinshasa has led me to a post-deconstructionist focus on encounter, becoming and *signifiance* (cf. Roland Barthes), and on emerging authoritative versus subversive meaning production - in particular

that of the independent prophetic healing churches (Devisch 2003a), the matricentred networks (Devisch 1995), and the associations of healers (Devisch, Lapika, Le Roy & Crossman 2001). Careful to avoid Deleuze and Guattari's (1980) over-pluralisation of sites of encounter (rendered by their notion of "a thousand plateaus"), relational entities and becoming-other, I am nonetheless sensitive to genuine intersubjective and compassionate hence intercultural encounter in co-response-ability in the make. It is my intention to approach it in its very contextually inventive yet culture-bound shaping. My approach favours culture-specific intersubjective and transworld borderlinking between humans themselves and with ancestors and nonhuman agents, that is neither fusional nor erasing selves, and in particular the mediumistic-divinatory and mild charismatic ways of sensing out, understanding, and situationally reshaping a world-order of things. In line with the Yaka ontology of consubstantiality among all living forms, Yaka epistemology does not seek to sharply demarcate between levels of reality in interplay. Intercorporeal and intersubjective relations and transactional meaning production and sharing of forces, as developed in the contexts of healing and trans-world communication, tie in with genuinely *matrixial* modes of a sensuous or mere corporeal opening-up to the affective streams, motivations, messages, knowledge and the like, between humans, ancestors and nonhuman agents and worlds even beyond the visible.

Bracha L. Ettinger's matrixial theory is indebted and yet very innovatively complementary to the object-relations theory (regarding primal intercorporeal attachment and its unconscious representations) of Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, Wilfrid Bion and Donald Winnicott, as well as to the psychoanalytical and/or phenomenological theories of Piera Aulagnier, Martin Buber, Pierre Férida, Jacques Lacan, Emmanuel Lévinas, Francesco Varela.¹ Her approach to 'feminine difference' differs from, or transcends, that of Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. In his teachings prior to the 1970s, Jacques Lacan treats the *Phallus* (i.e., the differential element or signifier without signified) very much alike the *Logos*, as the condition of meaning production through which the subject can come to perceive him- or herself and construct a self-image. In lines with Saussurean structural linguistics, Lacan in his early teachings considers separation, difference and deferral, as the very condition of meaning production, internalisation of the gendered order of language, individuation or subject formation. This meaning production sustains the signifier's meaningfully revealing the self-evident contact of (patriarchal) truth with itself in *Logos*.

Bracha L. Ettinger's original, cross-gender oriented view complements major gaps in, and in-between, the Kleinian 'object-relations' perspective, and the Freudian and the early Lacanian phallogocentric thinking on (sexual) differentiation.² Griselda Pollock (2006: 3-4) most poignantly characterises Ettinger's breakthrough in psychoanalytical thinking and clinical implications, as follows:

As Ettinger points out, psychoanalysis has developed along two major theoretical orientations: on the one hand, the legend of the subject cloven by its separations and alienated in the signifier, drive-directed in search of its lost objects; and on the other, the narrative of the subject formed in intersubjective relations, paradoxically called 'object-rela-

tions'. This latter tendency, that of the British post-Kleinian school, addresses earlier and more archaic moments of subjectivity than the classical Freudian and early Lacanian attention to the Oedipus complex as the decisive structure. It takes as its starting point infant/ carer relations as an archaic field of intersubjective relations and events. Ettinger can be understood as pushing back the theoretical as well as the psychological backdrop of these speculations to attend to the potentialities of later uterine events as co-events that always have at least two subjective elements in play. To engage with this theory, the reader, therefore needs to relax her/ his grip on the classic Freudian-Lacanian paradigms (...) Although Ettinger carefully plots her moves in relation to Lacan's theoretical models, she also goes beyond them.

Let us now more narrowly focus on some of Bracha L. Ettinger's basic concepts. In her view, the matrix is a sub-symbolic, (pre)psycho-corporeal and archaic borderspace. It is grounded in the prenatal borderlinking relation between the becoming-mother and the becoming-child (not yet born).

The Matrix is an unconscious space of the simultaneous co-emergence and co-fading of the 'I' and the uncognized non-I which is neither fused, nor rejected. It is based on feminine/prenatal interrelations and exhibits a shared borderspace in which what I call 'differentiation in co-emergence' and 'distance in proximity' are continuously rehonored and reorganized by metamorphosis³ (accompanied by matrixial affects) created by and further creating relations without relating on the borderspace of presence/absence, subject/object, me and the stranger. In the unconscious mind, the matrixial borderline dimension, involved in the process of creating feminine desire and meaning both co-exists with and alternates with the phallic dimension (Ettinger 1996: 125).

The matrix or matrixial borderspace, in Ettinger's terms,⁴ is a porous unconscious psychic sphere of enlarged subjectivity, hence transsubjectivity. "In the Matrix a meeting occurs between the co-emerging I and the unknown non-I". That is to say, transsubjectivity has something to do, in the unconscious, with the matrixial / maternal body as the 'archaic Thing', with the originary Thing-encounter with my m/Other. The matrixial is a 'trans-gressive' encounter-event, a transformational and co-poietic space of co-emergence and com-position, continual returnings at borderlines and limits: originary, a hybrid psychic object shared by mother and foetus, the matrixial transference is the uncognized archaic readiness in the subject for sharing and differentiating, cross-scripting imprints and exchanging traces, healing and wounding, co-emerging and co-fading, again and again. It is not possible not to share with one another.

The matrix is an intersubjective resonance field between compassionate subjects. In a matrixial rapport, psychic events in me are not 'purely' mine. For example, each sustained anthropological encounter, alike the prolonged psychoanalytic healing or even the aesthetical 'working through', creates its own psychic resonance field. Unconscious psychic traces, memory imprints, waves of *jouissance*, beauty or traumatic events, crossbreed via conductible borderlinks between healer, patient-initiand and anthropologist, between psychoanalyst and analysand, or between the com-passionate

artist and his or her lifeworld's beauty, traumas, scars, phantasms or enigmas. Such a matrixial sphere in a healing, initiatory, artistic, empathic or compassionate encounter, treasures the psychic capacity for sharing and for differentiation-in-co-emergence. It entails a form of co-initiation and co-poiesis. This is why such co-emergence - that of the meditative trance or the kind of *rêverie* or intersubjective projective identification between analysand and empathic psychoanalyst, for example - may have a healing power, as was already suggested by Wilfrid Bion (1962). Indeed, according to Ettinger's matrixial perspective, we can only deal with a number of profound psychic events by way of transferring them in an intersubjective space. In its transgressive, uncanny dimension, and most archaic or primordial maternal function, the matrixial metabolises psychic traces of the archaic m/Other. The matrixial screen and gaze takes one in, again and again in the now, into this archaic and primordial 'transsubjectivity in severality'. Psychic traces of the beauty or trauma of the world and of others, unconsciously at work in me, may emerge in the co-vibrating other just as similar traces at work in the other may emerge in me: such co-implicating or com-passionate hospitality - such as that between co-initiates, patient and healer, analysand and psychoanalyst or artist and lifeworld - emerges prior to the advent of the symbolic and paternal function on the heterosexual scene. In such shared subjectivity, shared psychic traces are transmitted and transcribed from one psyche onto another along psychic matrixial paths, threads and strings or affective streams that co-emerge and co-vibrate.

I believe that Ettinger, in using the notion of transsubjective rather than intersubjective, seeks to stress the unconscious inter-psychic capacity to communicate and share psychic imprints and to re-attune differentiation-in-co-emergence and separation-in-jointness in the encounter between I(s) and non-I(s) as well as between subjects and the world. In other words, Ettinger's notion of transsubjectivity broadens, firstly, the Kleinian view on the (inter)corporeal-(inter)subjective, and secondly the Lacan rest-notion of 'Thing' to 'Thing-Encounter' or 'Thing-Event'. The *infans* (in us, most of the time dormant) does not only develop in the archaic field of intersubjective relations (labelled as 'object-relations' in Kleinian prose), but does tune these 'subject particles' from the intersubjective field constantly in, by way of a cross-over or reverberation, with object-particles from the lifeworld. She very aptly defines the transsubjective zone that interlaces matrixial affects and weaves as the erotic antennae of the psyche. Transsubjectivity is moreover the psychic capacity to transcribe, in the psyche, not only affected psychic events but also enigmas of the Other and the world, that are repressed and not 'worked through' with-in several matrixial entities. 'Metamorphosis' in the matrixial borderspace is a *co-naissance*⁵ (insight through co-birth) of both the unforgettable oblivion and consensual judgement of taste that cannot entirely be inscribed in either me or others.

A matrixial trail, skirting the edges of sensation, vibrates on the edge of visibility when a passion based on marks of shareability become transgressive again and labors anew in com-passion and fascination, to perforate the screen of vision with a trace of trauma. When a world, internal and external, from which the artist has had to transfer and to which s/he had had to transmit, is shared with-in-difference via artwork, its presence

is made felt the instant the work awakens its strange beauty, pain and languishing-a languishing that is both yearning and an ebbing” (Ettinger 2006a: 148).

“Fascinace”, understood as “com-passionate hospitality” or “matrixial response-ability in wit(h)nessing” (Ettinger 2006b: 11), is the state of being awakened, for example, in initiatory healing that mobilises a transgression of individual borderlines. Indeed, fascinace ties in with the (collective) unconscious, the unthought-in-thought, and the strings of co-emerging ties or severalties. Fascinace and prolonged generosity or hospitality in the encounter of anthropologist, healer and initiand, psychoanalyst and analysand, or artist and lifeworld, may be likened to a screen for envisioning metamorphic borderlinks as it works through the co-emerging and cross-inscribed psychic traces of the Other and the “hieroglyphs of the world”. Shared affective streams that co-vibrate on this screen help to work through archaic zones of ourselves and, for example, our co-initiates, as well as through enigmas of the worlds of thinking or an unthought-in-thought. In the matrixial borderspace, both you and I co-emerge and cofade; I start from the co-emergence and from what I know in the other, that is, from within transsubjectivity. The matrixial is a connective, transindividual, transsubjective passage of traces between subjects and a quasi-telepathic possibility to intuitively, erotically, empathically join in into something that is traversing us as metamorphic borderlinks, as an unthought-in-thought.

On the metamorphic level, working through the psychic traces or threads and phantasmatic strings of the m/Other alike also the traumatic hieroglyphs of the world, patients, healers, artists and (psychoanalytically-trained) anthropologists may sense the social, psychic and cosmo-centred repetition of wounds, frailties and losses. They ‘wit(h)ness’ (i.e., are being/giving witness) to these wounds and losses. Metamorphic capabilities of empathy, compassion and joy, moreover, simultaneously arise while they are intersubjectively wit(h)nessing, and in a cross-over of visible and invisible worlds, to these wounds and losses.⁶

Before exploring some dimensions of the enigmatic affective-mental transmissivity or transitivity between I(s) and non-I(s) in, for example, compassion or empathy and initiatic healing among the Yaka, let me first look at Yaka people’s basic compassionate attunement to one another in co-response-ability. In the Yaka lifeworld, the multiple dimensions of intersubjective encounter and co-implication among humans, the lifeworld, the ancestral order, are developing in the realms of everyday life and actions, information, imaginary and knowledge, and in the flows between human, ancestral, and non-human constituents of the dwelt-in world.

Inter-embodiment in cults of affliction and the seat of the intersubjective

In Yaka society, the subject in his or her ability to enjoy good health and social consideration is made both the dynamic producer and historical-contextual product of intercorporeal and intersubjective knots within a complex weave of agencies, relationships and responsibilities (Devisch 1993). According to the Yaka divinatory etiology

(Devisch 1993: 132, Devisch & Brodeur 1999: 93-124), to become a person (*wuka muutu*), is to enter an interplay and endorse a very composite identity of multiple passionate, sensory, sexual and verbal fabrics and contextual ways of being-in-the-world. It is to knot those transmitter exchanges of life, emotion and desire, knowledge and meaningfulness, and this essentially between agnatic and uterine parents, between human beings and the extrahuman (ancestors, spirits, deity, i.e. the invisible), between the person and the lifeworld in all its concrete, moving and embodied situatedness. Paradoxically, a person's centre of gravity or body-self (*muutu*) is not formed starting from the individual and his or her individualistic self-centredness, but essentially in the various contextual and composite practices of exchange and embodied 'interanimation' proper to one's social position including age, gender, matrimonial state, public social role. The skin, the bodily members and orifices as well as the senses are the subject's embodied interface (*luutu*) of subjectivity and agency in discrete processes of exchange and engagement with the other and the world. To become a person is to be bonded and tied into those multiple forms of physical and social reproduction, sharing and bonding in intersubjectivity and interagency, that evolve during the subject's life and give form to the Yaka lifeworld. What I call the body-self captures the subject's sense of unity between body and mind, each person's embodied and active sense of engagement with, and permeability for, the others and the surrounding lifeworld. Yaka culture regards such reciprocity as an extremely vital tissue of ties or articulations in and between the spheres of body, self, family and the lifeworld. In other words, a person's health (*-kola*) and well-being (*-syaamuna*) is closely linked with the web of vital forces (*mooyi*) he or she is embedded in, and engaging with. This condition entails a form of being-in-the-world shared with others, a well-balanced and mutually invigorating interbeing (*-kolasana*) of intercorporeity, intersubjectivity and interagency. Inasmuch as the (suburban) Yaka consider that prosperity and health are the product of good kin (and neighbourhood or professional) ties, ill health is similarly attributed to problems among relatives (and co-dwellers or colleagues).

As the existential ground of self and culture (Csordas 1990) the body or more precisely the body-self is the site where inter-corporeal and inter-subjective being (being-with and being-for) and shared meaning and interagency are constituted. For the Yaka, good health entails a well-balanced, culturally defined, consonance and transduction between body, self, group, and lifeworld, each of which are understood as bodies (physical, socialised and signifying, respectively) in well-balanced or disharmonic resonance. The sensory body is the fleshy interface between the experiencing subject and culture, subjectivities and world. Corporeity is thus the locus of an inter-embodiment and the seat of the context-bound intersubjective world and interagency whose dynamics and many shapes remain largely unspeakable, inexpressible, indeterminate (Ahmad & Stacey 2001, Anzieu 1985, Massumi 2002, Weiss 1999). The numerous Yaka who have converted to Christianity, in particular those who have joined a Pentecostal or charismatic healing church, have come to reduce their precarious lifeworld to Holy Spirit / Satan dualities beset by a versatile Manichean logic (Devisch 2003a).

Affliction shatters the fold of interbeing, interrelating, permeability, and shared knowing and agency: it is seen to disrupt the maze of life-bearing, meaning-generating and individualising ties an individual is woven in and summoned to weave with the group and the world. This individualising weave, constitutive of self and fields of knowing and interanimation, first of all implies one's most basic bodily, particularly sensorial, modes of being-in-the-world, one's pristine childhood memories, one's idiosyncratic vital ties and moral engagements with the *matrilineal or uterine kin* and thus with the uterine source of life (the primary and fusional object). In Yaka conception, an incapacitating affliction (*-beela*), such as blindness, deafness, the inability to walk, or most dramatically insanity, involves a slippage in the required equilibrium (both ontological, experiential and idiosyncratic) with the maternal source of life. Links of *agnatic* filiation issuing from the founder ancestor of the partriline, by contrast, define one's social identity or set of identities embedded in social norms (Devisch 1993: 115-119). The development of one's social role and the public shaping of social identity involve group functions supervised by the male patriarchs. The Yaka corporeal and social identity is thus structured as a maze, a knotting (*-biinda*) that is multilayered and interwoven into other weaves. The process of weaving (*-kuba*) is also symbolically superimposed onto the process of healing (*-buka*). The modern North Atlantic civilisational perspective that situates a person's identity in a mental nucleus derived from an individualistic internalisation, introjection and projective identification does not accommodate the Yaka 'dividual' (Strathern 1988) subject or body-self and relational epistemology (Bird-David 1999).

Everything harmful to a subject's life and his or her multilayered weave is conceived in terms of thievery or sorcery, themes of quintessential attack on sociality and the subject's permeability that serve in fact to conceptualise the origin and nature of numerous sickness events and illness experiences (Devisch 2003b, 2005). The particular illness-causing effect that a theft or a spell has on the weave of intersubjectivity or interanimation, is associated with a knot tied too tightly, or too loosely. Lasting illness is seen either as a kink (*yibiinda*, *-biindama*) or binding that blocks (*-loka*) the body-self's vital links, or as an untied knot: both refer to an interlacing that impedes the intercorporeal, intersubjective and interanimating exchange between body-self, group and world. Illness is thus seen either as a torsion, as something that obstructs, encloses, enlaces, or as an intemperance, a dissolution, a dispersal, an effusion (*n-luta*, *phalu*). Any inversion of the norm-alised movement of the transactions of the bodily orifices (such as, vomiting, flatulence during a meal) is problematic. All serious perturbations in the exchanges normalised by the culture can be a symptom of a most serious illness; for example, when the boundaries of the body-self are compromised or eradicated by the effects of an oral or sexual bulimia, or closes in on itself ("when the heart shuts up on itself like a bundle of cassava paste"). A chaos-generating confusion (*mbeembi*), evoking madness, can result from an intrusion of the sexual or the anal into the sphere of nourishment. Sexual allusion during the preparation or consumption of family meals, the act of cooking during menstruation, obscene attitudes and gestures are all the more polluting, pathological and undermining the intercorporeity, intersubjectivity and interagency when they occur in the zones of transition themselves. Adul-

tery in the conjugal home, or the placement of excrements at the entrance of a home (a maternal space), as well as any other obscene act in this place (particularly on the part of a man who, for example, exhibits his bare bottom) signals the irruption of something that falls short of the social, of an alarming and chaos-generating power; these are the acts of an individual not in possession of him- or herself, who is ensorcelled, insane. Numerous metaphors concerning knots, the action of tying, interlacing and weaving are the basis of many Yaka therapies and rituals aimed at intensifying life, fecundity, the well-being of the group. Thus, for example, a course of cult initiatory healing normally ends by a re-knotting of conjugal ties, called “mutual incitement to an interlacing of legs” (*-biindasana maalu*).

Body-self, group and lifeworld co-develop in a morphogenetic resonance. Inspired by the manner in which Yaka culture approaches the body, the senses and the interpersonal field, I formulated the heuristic hypothesis of ‘the three bodies’, i.e. the correlative fields of the physical, social and cosmic bodies (Devisch 1993: 134-160, Devisch & Brodeur 1999: 13-19). This postulate scrutinises the extent to which a morphogenetic resonance may develop in the subject between psycho-corporeal experience (the body-self), family life and relations to the world. My research demonstrated the extent to which the masculine and feminine bodies provide different modes of interconnection or interagency. The masculine body-self is shaped by, and hinting at order and hierarchy (lineal, sequential, vertical), in particular through the acts of virile-physical and social reproduction. A senior man is praised for his proper and erudite mastery of rhetoric speech and display, spirit of reconciliation and emulation, strong gaze, and authoritative bonding, if necessary via coercion or even socially controlled violence. In patriarchal rural Yaka society as well as in the matricentred households of Kinshasa, women are encouraged to develop in very corporeal, sensory and sensual ways a matrixial connective sphere and transindividual continuity, preferably through shared bodily care in feeding, physical contact and the mother tongue, in the fenced off intercorporeal and intersubjective worlds of decency, commensality, conjugality, caring. For writing and for colloquial or business talk in the suburbs, most Yaka switch to the vernacular languages of Ikelevè, school Kikongo, lingala of Kinshasa, or to French. In its domestic and ritual use in encounters arousing vital interbeing, the yiYaka mother tongue may echo the archaic memories of the beginnings: as will be argued below, it has the capacity to be “‘calling out’ (*exclamare, Aus-ruf*), beyond and before itself” (Heller-Roazen 2005: 18), even into the realms of the euchronic, extrahuman versus the uncanny.

Aimed at reshaping the initiate’s culturally shaped modes of experiencing and organising the world, cult initiatory healing rites are being organised in the border-zones of the established socio-cultural order (Devisch 1993: 169-172, 213ff., Devisch & Brodeur 1999: 193-166). These healing cults involve cultural, embodied and cosmological traditions in which the initiates’ culture-specific sensorium and kinesthetic sensibilities, their body-self, their most vital kin relations, their core social values and their understandings and experiences of health and illness, are all durably shaped and encoded, primarily in the field of uterine descent. In these border-zones of liminal space-time, the patient-initiate is welcomed to an initiatic staging and playful ambi-

ence of inversion that may even involve the extatic reliving of most archaic moments of incipient subjectivity. The initiand is embraced in a fold of intercorporeal and intersubjective interbeing and interanimation inasmuch as the rite situates him or her between life and death (viz. foetal condition and autogestation), or foetus and mother. These cults of affliction (*phoongu*) pertain to an interregional Bantu civilisational heritage; some have even spread from south-eastern Nigeria down to the Cape of Good Hope (Janzen 1992, Turner 1968).

The invisible, or the untamed, elsewhere and uncanny: social science's blind spots

Western ratio has created otherness and subalternity partly to define itself through its very counter-image. Western modernity has indeed increasingly excluded, as sheer Negativity or Otherness, all what it considers unthinkable along its rational categories and positivist scientific paradigm privileging observation and visualisation. Indeed, modern science tends to focus on psycho-social and physical data solely in their mere cognitive or discursive nature and visual display or material expression. Similarly, through its constructs of alterity, the colonial era segregated what it perceived as essential difference. My work in the shattered worlds of suburban Kinshasa (Devisch 1995) has forced me to expose myself to, and examine from, an anthropological and (counter)transfential perspective, these partly defensive and projective intercultural and intersubjective constructs. I am in particular referring here to my exposure to the local epistemology of analogic thinking and the local philosophy of the real, in a world that unfolds itself through the interplay of everyday life and the manifold actions, motivations, improvisations and messages of humans, ancestors and non-human agents, visible and invisible worlds, in (healing) ritual and mediumistic divination in rural Yaka land. This has taught me to thoroughly avoid an overall viri- and Eurocentred bias susceptible to narrow down the autochthonous (i.e., other than Enlightenment and Christian) sites of signifiante, such as the body, the hunt, dream narratives, the lifeworld's *omina* or sentient landscape, auspicious actions and meaningful events, signs or messages.

My anthropological experience in Yaka land and Kinshasa has led me to also scrutinize the Yaka interaction with the invisible, the auspicious or the uncanny. It made me attentive to the dimensions extending beyond mere representation and the cognitive, that are tying in with the matrixial and bodily and in part developing beyond the representable, verbal, sayable. In Yaka culture, topics of concealment and (un)dress, purity and dirt, shame and intrusion made me interrogate perspectives on gendered embodiment, body politics and subjectivity formation. It made me listen to all sorts of language play (such as, babble, alliteration play, glossolalia, parables, parody, incantation, oath), and open up to non habitual or co-attracting modes of becoming-other and affective identification in dramatic arts and fields of vision (including multisense or synesthetic playing on suggestibility in entrancement, induced hallucination, dreaming, spirit possession, affective identification).⁷

While defamiliarising the familiar, these arts operate an extra-ordinary, if not metamorphic, borderlinking between consciousness and affect, fate and mundane daily reality, the human and the becoming-animal or -spirit, and the like. While suspending the distinction between the affective and the conceptual, they moreover offer ways to unveil the unsayable and untouchable, which alike the invisible may hint at both the cunningly unsettling spirit world, the epiphanous ancestral world, hence the uncanniness of witchcraft. All this is looked at in the (intersubjective and transworld) borderzones of communal rejoicing, dreamsharing, maternal caring, holistic healing, embodying the spirit in trance-possession, alike in the ecstatic gift of glossolalia or in mediumistic divination.

A similar matrixial borderlinking and co-attracting experience of porosity and sharing-in-difference (for example, at the unstable borderzone between the here and there, the living and the deceased, the visible and invisible, the familiar and the alien, the controllable and the uncontrollable, the self and the other, differentiation and integration) undergirds funerals and mourning, the lucid awakening from a dream, the bliss of art and humour. Such borderlinking inspires the transworld communication proper to a night-long moon dance aimed at arousing a new season's energies, alike to various artful and initiatory states of wonder and becoming. Witchcraft, as I will argue further on, inversely perverts borderlinking into anxiety stemming from destructive bordercrossing.

Dream and dreamsharing in Yaka society sustain a binding transworld communication with, or commitment to, the otherworldly. For the Yaka, the otherworldly comprises God – a Christian notion – and/or spirits (sg. *m-fu*, *phoongu*), ancestors (sg. *m-fu*, *khulu*, *khita*; namely named deceased forebears whose continuing memory defines the structural positions of their descendants in social life), formally celebrated in cults and rituals (in particular, divination, possession and healing cults, as well as cults sustaining professional male roles of agnatic descent). That is to say that, for the Yaka, the otherworldly realm installs major sources of becoming through relating, that is, sources of being in good or ill health in particular through one's borderlinking sensibilities or engagements and ties in the family and local society across three or more generations. All this proceeds hand-in-hand with the group elders' responsibility to fence off witchcraft and parry the group's invisible fates of suffering, conflict and horror (Devisch 2003b, 2005).

For the Yaka, dreaming and dreamsharing grant social authority to the ancestor and the invisible realm of spirits as the impersonation of a transsubjective *gnosis* that exceeds Western *ratio*. Dreamwork, according to the Yaka, is opening up the community to a space-time realm ahead of itself, that ties in (intersubjectively, and at the threshold of the this- and other-worldly) with the basics of life. As I understood it, dream in Yaka culture appears as the golden road to the cultural productions to both ground and reactivate the interpenetrating of the unconscious in the individual and the collective. These unthought layers in the cultural productions may entail what the subject does not (want to) know or remember about his or her (innermost or the group's) motivations, identification, death wishes, introjection, desire and affects as conveyed by the concatenations of images, themes, overlappings and effacements, and

possibly the sounds of the dream. Dreamwork may give voice to the unconscious and most private triggers of desire, glimmers of new possibilities, play of images, sensing of agency. It may moreover give voice to the given subjects' coming to terms with the intrusive alien civilisational worlds and, I would argue, to the working through, at the level of the collective-unconscious, of these intrusive alien civilisational worlds.

The Africanist ethnographer, studying dreams and dreamsharing of subaltern people who are entrapped in the myths of modernisation, faces several challenges that force him or her to extend the approach beyond the domain of Western-derived modern and postmodern anthropology and the taken-for granted modern humanist notions of the rational, self-steering, autonomous individual. The ethnographer may feel compelled to revise his or her ontological and epistemological frameworks so as to speak out the experience he or she has with local forms of authoritative dealing with the very ground of being and intersubjectivity, namely that his or her hosts situate in the extra-sensory realm of the divine, ancestors, spirits, bewitchment. In other words, will the ethnographer reproduce the blind spots in postmodern social science, and go on resisting ethnography's taken for granted commitment to an endogenous understanding? A given sociocultural practice or institution is first and foremost a local contextual one, and thus to be studied as people's own creation and approached from within its inner logic, ontology and terms, however without necessarily objectifying "the local view into the positivist terms of a truth claim" (Stroeken 2006: 786).

The more society stirs up its members towards virile emulation and excellence, the more it sets scenes and arouses phantasms of bordercrossing. The hunt and witchcraft in Yaka socioculture (Devisch 1993: 86-93) share very virile bordercrossing phantasms and intentions of exploring and harnessing mysterious forces beyond the rules of neighbourhood life and matrimony. These forces are associated with the far off unknown and indeterminate realms of the elsewhere and otherwise, wickedness and misfortune, witchcraft and Satan's machinations (the latter being evoked solely in the Christian healing churches), such as the ones projected in the all absorbing deep forest or engulfing river, the chaos of deep ravines, the choc on sight from weird fetishes, or the frenzy in disco bars like in mass gatherings.

The uncanny and witchcraft entail powerful modes of bordercrossing. The uncanny or *das Unheimliche* (Freud 1919), in Yaka socioculture, triggers autochthonous forms of sensing and beginning to think the unfamiliar, unhomely, strange, alien, weird, mysterious, extranatural. According to Nicholas Royle (2003: 2), the uncanny can be felt in response to witnessing manifestations of insanity, epileptic fits, something strangely beautiful, ecstatic(-like) exaltation, the figure of the double, and the like. As Julia Kristeva (1983, 1988) shows, that very notion of the uncanny moreover hints at the strangeness within the self,⁸ which particularly Enlightenment and North Atlantic Romanticism have projected or externalised onto the other as the counter-image of the dark side in ourselves. Yet, it is in and through our relations with others that we may disclose in us the possibility of seeing and being otherwise. It is indeed in that vein that postcolonial anthropology welcomes, beyond Euro-centred paradigms, the local ways of thinking the uncanny (in mediumistic divination, spirit possession, witchcraft, ancestral wrath, fate). Both psychoanalysis and anthropology provide original

forms of conceptual displacement for questioning what is at odds with ourselves and our metaphysics and epistemology. The uncanny exposes intersubjectivity to a trans-world realm beyond conscious and rational thoughts, recollected memories, spoken out desires and fears. The uncanny is linked to an experience of the unplaceable, of the impossibility of fixing the place of borders, of locating the programme (cf. Royle 2003: 19-23). As I have shown in the analysis of a paradigmatic dreamsharing from an university student in Kinshasa (Devisch 2006b), the engulfing fascinating strangeness of the uncanny is not an issue of "otherness" (understood as the reverse side of Enlightenment's and Christianity's views on ratio, sexuality, class, race). The dream witnesses to the student's self-defeating fascination (Thys 2006) with the procurement of a university diploma and fulfilment in Western eroticism and consumption. At odds with Enlightenment's pretence, the uncanny is indeed an issue of the increasing secularisation and the globalising automation and technological programming of our lives, experiences or comings and goings within and all around us.

The uncanny may destabilise the ethnographer and conjure his or her thinking. The host group may suck the ethnographer in its own anxiety vis-à-vis the uncanny realm of bewitchment. Dreamsharing entails only a mild exposure to the uncanny. But, when intimate informants turn the ethnographer into a witness of sorcerous spells or maleficent use of fetishes, he or she may feel dazzled by sorcery's and witchcraft's hallucinatory attack on every habitual mode of perception, categorization and valuation. In Yaka socioculture, sorcery and witchcraft (Devisch 2003b, 2005) is categorised as a nocturnal realm: it appears as haunted by a shadow or uncanny side of affects and 'forces' (in the Freudian sense of *Trieb*) that intimately tie in with particular subjective (personal), intersubjective (social) and cultural histories and axioms. The ethnographic encounter with this nocturnal realm might become inhabited by something that opens like an incubator of strangeness and dilemma in the very fold of the encounter and the intersubjective resonance, yet resists full grasp or understanding and possible standard evaluation. Is it an intersubjectivity or revealing screen where the Otherness at the very core of both the other and ourselves resonates together and opens to a new, (as) yet unsayable dimension of reality? It may offer itself as a potentially poetic or horror-like elsewhere and otherwise, in-between us or in our lifeworlds, at the outermost thresholds of what is yet non-visible and unknown to Western men.

Psychoanalytic revisiting of the intersubjectivity estranged by subalternity

A complementary psychoanalytical and anthropological attunement to worlds of multiplicity, alterity, subalternity, and the unthinkable may entail very estranging experiences of intersubjectivity. Based on the embodied intersubjectivity of anthropologist and his or her privileged informant-hosts, the meeting between the two forges and reforges their affects, old and new imageries, sensitivities, and both intimate and elusive memories and intellectual uncertainties or indecipherability. It further reshapes the anthropologist's understanding as an insider of local idioms, conventions, inter-

rogations and practices. Inversely, without the capacity of self-critical interpretative insight into his or her own native culture, the anthropologist would be unable to develop a critique of his or her interpretation of the host culture. Psychoanalyst and anthropologist share the experience that an inquiry into ambivalent Otherness (situated as it is on the thin line between unthinkable origin, the sacred, the marvellous, or the virtual and the poetic, the epiphanous fascination, versus the uncanny and engulfing or horror-like fascination) is simultaneously an exploration into the unknown and alien within ourselves and in-between us and our lifeworlds. In-depth complementary anthropological and psychoanalytical research (such as on divination, healing, dream-sharing, exorcism, witchcraft, violence) in Yaka milieus lays bare a very revealing but intrusive, if not altering, screen of ambivalent Otherness or uncanniness, making it resonate with streams of affects and consciousness in the field of encounter shared by both researcher and informants or co-participants in the encounter. Paradoxically, this alien(ating) element also bears testimony to some universally-human condition: it is the very condition of thinking, feeling, mourning, longing, inheritance and memory.

Attentive to experience, the phenomenological anthropologist – moreover attuned to Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus - is sentient that much thought, activity, intersubjectivity and interagency takes place outside of conscious awareness. Largely shared images, fantasies, etiologies, metaphors, and forms of discourse, signification and agency mediate people's everyday lives and their sociopolitical or religious and ethical commitments. But the anthropologist is not a blank screen, nor a neutral presence. Being myself heir to the former coloniser, and sharing cultural roots and mother tongue with most Jesuit missionaries in Yaka land, my presence over there in the early aftermath of the country's political independence in 1960, all this was eliciting transference haunted by the colonisation. My strongly ambivalent feelings regarding the colonial and missionary work in Yaka land, and more generally my multi-sited attunement to intercultural encounter has led me to ask myself if it is not the role of the psychoanalytically inspired anthropologist to confront both his or her long-time hosts 'here' and 'over there' with their own estranged self-perception in the mirror of Africanist, Occidentalist, or Orientalist constructs. But does such an unmasking role not exceed the anthropologist's unprejudiced or a priori benevolent alliance with his or her host community, an alliance which is the very ground for deep intersubjective, hence (counter)transferential exchange and 'wonder-ful' encounter? Two more questions, that I am as yet unable to answer, come to mind (expressed earlier on, in Devisch & Brodeur 1999: 231-255). First, if the anthropological encounter is not meant as a therapeutic one, is the psychoanalytically trained anthropologist entitled to envisage such a relationship? Second, to what extent does such zeal reflect a Western-derived anxiety for human perfectibility?

My experience in various research and clinical endeavours in rural and urban Congolese communities, as well as my direct exposure to diverse sociocultural worlds during short research stays or *in situ* supervision of doctoral students ⁹, has forced me beyond the neutral stance of the scientist. I have become more and more reluctant to leave out of the picture both the terrible effects of the estranging entanglement in the condition of subalternity brought about by the colonial or globalising (economic,

social, racial, cultural) models and institutions, and the (counter)transfere ntial dimension that shapes my experience of these effects. Perhaps I have initially sublimated my deep discomfort with the colonial and subalternity predicament through my aestheticising writing on rural Yaka socioculture, from where a minority of the populace, largely school educated, had emigrated to Kinshasa, and where even fewer people had embraced much of the missionary identity constructs. In contrast, most of the older Yaka men in suburban Kinshasa - most of whom were schooled Christians - with whom I met in the 1980s and 1990s passed over their ancestral origins in silence, all the while assimilating the antinomic or alienating masks of Zairean modernity in the contexts of the Mobutist state and missionary Christianity. They believed themselves to be caught up in the country's march toward a grand party-state, propelled by the drive to enter swiftly into global modernity. This was more often than not imagined as a world of greater power and a superior way of life, one fantasised as a state of abundance, luxury, and ease. I in turn felt strongly estranged by such phantasmic conjectures and the polemics that they spawned, insofar as it appeared that my hosts had themselves imbibed the imaginary colonial "invention of Africa" (cf. Valentin Mudimbe). From the early 1990s on in the aftermath of the massive uprisings in Kinshasa, whilst seeking to take the conceptual and behavioural systems of suburban Kinshasa seriously, on their own terms, and to clarify the dynamic of transference between host community and anthropologist, I have been compelled to ask an additional question: how helpful might it be to combine psychoanalytical and anthropological scrutiny in an effort to disentangle the estranging strangeness of the post-colonial subject and the expatriate anthropologist?

Beginning in 1993, a multi-disciplinary community intervention programme aiming to improve health-care services in suburban Kinshasa actually led us to reflect on the mind-set of the researchers (Belgian and Congolese social scientists and psychiatrists) involved (Devisch, Lapika, Le Roy & Crossman 2001). A sense of trust and the possibility of dialogue between researchers, healers, and health seekers in the suburbs alone is not a sufficient condition for mutual understanding. The modernising discourse and behaviour adopted by the healers, mimicking those learned during (Western) schooling as well as those of the researchers, at least while in their presence, were additional obstacles to achieving a more accurate picture of the dynamics of local plural health seeking and provision. Only researchers who are familiar with the healer's native tongue, local cultural idioms and age-old hermeneutics proper to the healing cults are able to circumvent these obstacles or estrangement with any credibility.

Moreover, being a product of secularist Western science, the social science researcher, like the psychiatrist, is often reluctant to appeal to Christianity whereas some cult/folk healers are anxious to do so. While the healer hopes to establish his or her own connection with modernity through such an association, the researcher is equally anxious to interpose some distance from religion in an attempt to communicate scientific authority and his or her 'university' status. On the other hand, he or she might just as easily - for the sake of research - wholeheartedly participate in a healing service for which, according to the criteria imposed on participants by the faith healers themselves, one must 'have faith' or 'be pure'. Given the omnipresence of Christianity

in the capital, it is no surprise that anyone can easily resort to Christian discourse without necessarily being a committed believer. The problem resides more in the fact that Christianity has been at the forefront of the civilising mission, particularly where local religious beliefs and practices are concerned, for these latter are, a priori, downgraded as 'pagan' or pertaining to magic and fetishism, depending on whether the dominant discourse is religious or scientific. Even the 'modern-educated' Congolese is anxious to avoid too close an association with those local autochthonous cultural spheres that smack of alleged backwardness and ignorance, for fear that such a relation - or mere contiguity - will make him or her appear equally backward and ignorant.

I am therefore also much concerned with taking a new look, from the perspective of my African experience, at my own native society and the habitus of North-Atlantic scientists. In particular I wonder whether the western anthropologist, on returning home and perhaps embracing psychoanalysis or intercultural philosophy, is able to unravel the unthought or deeply suppressed otherness so profoundly present in mainstream North-Atlantic consciousness. What goes on, one might ask, beyond the slipstream of ongoing research and backstage of the hegemonic scientific claims? Back in my Belgian home-culture in Flanders, I am often upset by the fixedness of a modern, male-biased outlook, propagated in the name of Western science or enlightened rationality and the autonomous subject. For it is this outlook that so relentlessly deploys defensive and projective phantasms with regard to the peoples of Africa south of the Sahara. The latter are ethnocentrically portrayed as the reversal of Euro-American ideals so as to allow us to metabolise a profound anguish with regard to our own instincts and sense of lack, degeneration and death, or the very real negativity and fear within ourselves. In the course *Anthropology of the Body*, which I gave from 1970 until 2004 as part of the MA programme of anthropology at the University of Leuven, I attempted to examine how subjects, their community and their lifeworld (in their particular locales) each configure one another in culture-specific (symbolic) ways. The course sought to unravel the transvaluation of the symbolic spatial patterning of the social and corporeal registers onto the cosmic, and vice versa. Moreover, the course aimed to develop a 'reciprocal anthropology', looking from 'there' to 'here' as if it were 'there'.

Epilogue

The complex intersubjective and intercultural, hence intercivilisational commitment and (counter)transferential relationality in which the active or co-participant anthropologist is engaged constitutes both an analytical tool and an object of study. It is precisely in the light of this confrontation that the anthropological endeavour which I am advocating radically opposes some of the deconstructionist stances in post-modern thinking. In my professional experience I have been deeply and morally touched by the intersubjective encounter with notables (family and group elders, matrones, diviners, healers, church-leaders, fellow anthropologists and colleagues), whether in their rural or urban settings, with whom I have come to share so much in southwest Congo

and Kinshasa (as well as somewhat less profoundly in the various African and Druze communities who hosted me for doctoral supervision).

Through his or her bifocal borderlinking sensitivities, the psychoanalytically trained anthropologist is led to interweave a relational self with, on the one hand, his or her long-time hosts and, on the other hand, his or her familial networks at home. Having witnessed so much politico-economic violence in the North-South clash of civilisations during his or her stay with the host group (I was a witness of the Ludite-type of massive uprisings in Kinshasa in September 1991 and January-February 1993), the anthropologist is perhaps motivated to lay bare the metaphysics, with its essentially Hebrew-Christian and humanist assumptions, feeding the North Atlantic civilisational anxiety with regard to lack and death. This anxiety is silenced in the North by an obsession with advanced, if not almighty, technology and a preoccupation with refined (hedonist) articles of consumption. Yet this same anxiety and mania underpins much of the portrayal by the North of the 'underdeveloped' South. In this light, a bifocal attunement may also help the psychoanalytically-trained and self-scrutinising anthropologist to overcome his or her ambivalence toward some of the Western-derived presuppositions and conceptualisation in Freudian psychoanalytic thought, particularly those pertaining to modernity's subject-object division and the self-centred individuality. Finally, such borderlinking between the metaphysical and affect-laden orientations of both the researcher' and his or her host and groups assists the psychoanalytically-trained anthropologist in bringing home his or her multi-layered, intersubjective self, interwoven as it is with others and their life-worlds, both 'here' and 'over there'.

Notes

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- 1 I am referring here to Bracha L. Ettinger's major psychoanalytical essays that entail a clinical perspective (1996, 1999, 2000, 2004, 2006a,b). Besides Paul Vandembroeck (2000: 237-274), essays regarding her theoretical work are offered in Ettinger (ed. 2000) and the Special section on Bracha L. Ettinger: "Memory, representation and post-Lacanian subjectivity" of *Theory, culture & society* 21 (2004) no 1. See moreover: <http://www.metramorphosis.org.uk/>
- 2 Bracha L. Ettinger (2006) offers an attentive reading and critique of Lacan's later teachings from 1970 onwards, and which have been recently published due to Jean-Alain Miller (Lacan [1970] 2001, [1974] 2005a, [1975-1976] 2005b). From 1970 onwards, Lacan subordinates his phallogocentric concern with the Oedipal dynamic and paternal metaphor (namely, the father figure as foundation of the symbolic order or ultimate signifier without signified), alike with the speaking subject engendered by the structure of language, yet embroiled in the mechanisms of representation. It is a shift from structural linguistic models to topology, such as the Borromean rings. This later Lacan deals foremost with the "Names-of-the-Father" as well with the place of the Real and of *jouissance*. The latter always leaves a remainder which cannot be verbalised: the object 'a'. Similarly, the later Lacan's focus is on *lalangue* and the signifier's indeterminate attachment to and substitution by *jouissance*. In other words, his focus is on the *sinthome* (Lacan [1974-1975] 2005b), a neologism depicting the open-ended enactment of symbolic and imaginary signifi-ance which is not a call to the Other, as it is guided by pure *jouissance* addressed to no one. Around an empty centre at the very edge of the sayable, the *sinthome* supports a structural or operatory relationship among subjects, and between subjects and the object world. Religious and political leaders, institutions, artists and literature (think of James Joyce) develop *sinthomes* in the form of deconstructed ('per-verse' [*père-version* in French] or per-versely oriented) motifs, puzzles and enigmas. The *sinthome* may effectively foster the audience's attention, whilst aligning them to 'empty' centres of signifi-ance. The *sinthome* remains beyond analysis or interpretation, yet triggers unconscious enjoyment, whilst mobilising and organising crucial orientation, commitment, embodiment, *jouissance*.
- 3 Bracha L. Ettinger's notion of 'metamorphic' is a neologism composed out of 'metamorphosis' and 'metra' (the Greek term for womb, uterus).
- 4 My presentation of Ettinger's psychoanalytical theoretical work moreover draws on the papers that she presented in Brussels (21.04.2006) at the Belgian School of Psychoanalysis, and in Antwerp at the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten (21.10.2006).
- 5 Indeed, the French notion of *co(n)-naissance* (literally co-birth; but colloquially referring to experiential knowing and insight) offers an insightful linguistic rendition of both the unconscious and sensuous intercorporeal and dialogical encounter and mode of comprehension in which the anthropologist is engaged. By virtue of the emotional, hence 'fleshy' (cf. Merleau-Ponty) co-implication of the subjects in a communal action -such as an apprenticeship, a palaver, a marriage or a therapy, the sharing of knowledge becomes *co-nnaissance*. In its utmost intensity or euphoric ambience, such knowledge-sharing is evocative of a matrixial, transsubjective borderzone.
- 6 This 'wit(h)nessing' is the intention of two remarkable types of communal artistic encounters with the public set up by the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten in Antwerp (Van Loo 2006) and the cities of Ghent and Leuven (Abdul et al. 2006).
- 7 Former studies (Devisch 1995, 2003a) have focussed in on the speaking in tongues in the healing communes of the sacred spirit in suburban Kinshasa. It is a parody of the confusion and abuse of tongues in the multiple communication fields in the suburbs. Through glot-tophagous parody, humour, or linguistic confusion and reinvention of tongues, in particular

- Kinois youth and adepts in the healing churches short-circuit the divine-like totalitarian discourse of some political leaders, or the angelic or prophetic speech in the healing churches. The speaking in tongues is also evocative of people's constant shift between vernacular local, professional and so-called international tongues. It somehow sacralises the suburban youth's glottophagous 'cannibalisation' of society's conventional speech.
- 8 Julia Kristeva (1988) eludes modernity's project that aims at the mastery of the self, and criticises the existing western models of subjectivity and identity. Her focus on the speaking subject dislodges the latter from its fixity in as much as it is tied to the symbolic order of doxa with its structural necessities and pre-given divisions. But her focus extends into the lived experience of the subject-in-process who is drawing on the transgressive potential of the semiotic, which resists the fixed terms of the doxa. The more this transgressive potential informs the signifying process, the more it may threaten to engulf and dissemble the subject from within. The fractured self fears the other, only to discover that what it fears is its own nightmare or otherness, its own ashes or abjection (Kristeva 1983).
 - 9 Some very diverse communities have offered me their hospitality for brief research stays in Belgium, southern Ethiopia and Tunis, or for supervision of Ph.D. students during their fieldwork in Cairo, Kinshasa and western Congo, northern Ghana, northern Israel, south-western Kenya, northwestern Namibia, southeastern Nigeria, KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, and northwestern Tanzania.

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