

Enacting and Re-inventing Identities

*Cultural Translation, Haunting Spaces, Decolonization, and Politics of Performance
through Contemporary Nigerian Performance Art*

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Summary

Enacting and Re-inventing Identities

*Cultural Translation, Haunting Spaces, Decolonization, and Politics of Performance
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Enacting and Re-inventing Identities is based on the surprising underrepresentation of non-Western artists on the international art scene. This situation can be partially founded in a tendency for Western contemporary art being associated as counterpart to the modernism movement. The linear logic of art history needs to be challenged since it classifies any other cultural timeliness than the dominating eurocentric as invalid. As a response the thesis introduces terms like *différend*, *hybridity*, *decolonial aesthetics*, the distinction between curated and curating cultures, *third space* and *heterochrony* in an attempt to project a non-imperialistic room for dialogue.

The thesis provides as a study of 2 performance works by the Nigerian artist, Jelili Atiku: "In the Red # 16: Obaranikosi" and "Senator Yerima's Wedding". The analysis of the two specific art works, one of them both performed in Lagos and in Copenhagen, works consistently as a prism for principle discussions on cultural translation, art reception and history writing. The French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard's theoretical concept of *différend* provides as paramount for the analysis of these translations. The theme is elaborated through a complex negotiation on Lotte Løvholm's own situation of reception influenced by Western art tradition.

A break with Western essentialism is suggested by showing a possible artistic (counter)strategy through Atiku's work. Atiku uses performance art as a media to challenge cultural identity by denouncing absence and presence. Atiku's representation of identity is analyzed through the French philosopher Jacques Derrida's critique of Western metaphysics and his concept *hantologie* (the study of ghosts). Here the reception of ghosts in different cultures is analyzed with

audience reactions from Atiku's parallel enactments in Lagos and Copenhagen. Thereby it appears through the reading itself that the most complex philosophical tools are inadequate and have to be disturbed by other inputs, taking into account what Derrida calls the *untranslatable remainder*.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Following the steps of a red mummy-like creature covered in balloons, 80 people force their way through the entrance of a small exhibition space with outstretched red wires. Like lines of bullets the red wires force the spectators to duck and crawl through the dark room. The only source of light is a beam coming from a projector and a few spotlights. From speakers come the sounds of foreign voices, the familiar sound of a traffic jam in an unfamiliar place mixed with the sound of the wind. The sound scape is occasionally interrupted by howls coming from the red mummy and the sudden sound of balloons popping. As the spectators manage to enter the exhibition space after being in the line of fire, they are met by a video projection. The video is projected into the corner hitting two walls simultaneously. The mummy lies in the middle of a busy street as cars are passing by. People on the street look at it curiously, and the mummy gets up and starts walking. Surrounded by balloons, the mummy also lies in front of the video projection in the corner. Suddenly, it starts rolling around on the floor dragging the attached balloons with it. The mummy then leaves the room through a door from where the video is being projected. The mummy re-appears. It is now at sea standing at the bow of a wooden boat. Then it disappears again. A 5-year old boy walks towards the video projection and stops where the two walls meet. He looks intensely at the projected mummy and at his own shadow. The video loops.

The above is a description of a performance by Nigerian artist Jelili Atiku called *In the Red #16: Obaranikosi*. It was performed at Kunsthal Charlottenborg in January 2014 as part of his six years long performance project *In the Red*. Through his artistic strategy, Atiku presents identity as both presence and absence at the same time. He offers a different way of understanding the ideas of culture and identity. His representation of cultural identity is symptomatic on the current challenges the international art scene is facing. How do the art discourse represent identities that have long been excluded? Contemporary art museums in the Western part of the world are starting to question their own function, as they are increasingly engaging in

the presentation of art from parts of the world that have been underrepresented.¹ The critical re-evaluation of the art institution must to be an open dialogue between those who until now have defined the art discourse and those who have traditionally been excluded. This thesis is an effort to escape a Eurocentric representation of art history as the universal truth. And where better to start than with the questioning of Western essentialism.

1.2 Research Questions

Through analysis of his artworks *In the Red #16: Obaranikosi*² and *Senator Yerima's Wedding*³ I will look at how Atiku deconstructs identity in his artistic strategy as a way of questioning Western essentialism. The main research question of this paper is:

How does Jelili Atiku embody cultural identity in his artistic strategy?

In aid of the investigation into this question are four sub-questions guiding the analysis of his two performances. I start by investigating Atiku's artistic strategy through cultural translation. In the performances, Atiku rearticulates history and challenges the concept of cultural identity through the use of language and symbols. My question is: *How is Atiku representing cultural translation with regards to the concepts hybridity and différend?* Following an analysis of how strategies of cultural translation can challenge Western ontology, I look at the concept of *hauntology*: the study of ghosts. Like ghosts, Atiku's representation of identity deconstructs the *metaphysics of presence* by simultaneously embodying both absence and presence. The appearance of spirits relates to his cultural heritage and I investigate the spectrality in his aesthetics by asking: *How does ghosts appear and haunting spaces perform?* In relation to ghosts, I explore the strategy of *decolonization*. The colonial ghost is haunting Nigeria and decolonialism is expressed in Atiku's work as a way of deconstructing old colonial values and embrace a cultural heritage that has previously been suppressed. I pose the question: *How do decolonial aesthetics manifest themselves?*

¹ Recently initiatives for questioning the way art from outside the West is being presented in the art

² See appendix i for materials on *Obaranikosi* p. 75.

³ See appendix ii for materials on *Senator Yerima's Wedding* p. 77.

Decolonialism is not an antagonistic project per se but rather a re-negotiation of the past as seen in the present. As the last part of my analysis I look at the construction of time. The concept of time in Western thought is closely related to presence and identification. I will examine Atiku's distortion of time by asking the question: *How is time expressed as a political strategy?*

1.3 Outline

The thesis has a literature review, a methodological section, an analytical section and finally a conclusion. The literature review explains the choices of literary source material for the thesis and explains the theoretical foundation of the analysis. The methodological section is a meta-reflection on the analytical method. It explains how research for this thesis has been structured and carried out. It clarifies how and why the analysis includes references to other performance artworks primarily from the African continent. Additionally, the concepts of *Africa* and *African artist* are questioned. The section seeks to clarify the context of the thesis and why some identities are generally left out of art history; a problem expressed in both the neglecting of performance art and in the (mis)representation of African artists in art history in general. The methodological section discusses how to write about performance art through a critical reflection on Western historiography.

The analytical section is divided into four different sub-themes. The overall theme for the analysis of Atiku's artistic strategy is cultural identity and the four sub-themes seek to support the investigation of the major theme. Each analytical chapter ends with a paragraph that summarizes and discusses an important problem relating to one of the sub-questions. The first chapter "Cultural Translation" looks at the two specific artworks through translation and colonial history in order to investigate how Atiku uses his artistic strategy to represent culture and identity. The second chapter "Haunting Spaces" studies the spectral qualities in the performances and investigates the idea of identity through a rejection of identification. The third chapter "Decolonization" analyses how Atiku's aesthetics can be seen as *decolonial* and it proposes what that entails. The last chapter "Politics in Performance" suggests that

Atiku approaches a political agency that is expressed through his concepts of time and his deconstruction of essentialism.

The frequent use of theories and theorists in this thesis is a manifestation of the unavoidable journey when trying to create a common language between my cultural (and theoretical) background and Atiku's artistic strategy. The use of many theorists presented in this thesis is my way of insisting on nuances and attempting to avoid any preconceived notions; my own as well as those expressed by others.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Presentation of Theory

The artistic strategy of Atiku is expressed through performance as a media since performance offers a negotiation of identity. The identity he negotiates challenges culture and the theoretical framework of this thesis is based on theory from both cultural studies and performance studies. At the center of the applied theories is French philosopher Jacques Derrida who is relevant due to different aspects of his research. His criticism of Western ontology and epistemology will be presented through the concepts of the *metaphysics of presence*, the *untranslatable remainder*, and *hauntology* in the analysis of the chosen artworks. Complementary to Derrida is a postcolonial school of thought that will be presented through one of its founding fathers, Palestinian literary theorist Edward Said whose book *Orientalism* from 1978 is a critical analysis of the West's representation of the Orient. As a critical supplement to Said's ideas, another important voice in the field of postcolonial studies is that of Indian literary theorist Homi Bhabha. His concepts of the *third space* and of *hybridity* are applied to further elaborate on how cultural identity is represented in Atiku's artworks. Finally as a meta-critique of both postcolonial studies and the analytical direction of the thesis, the ideas of British/Pakistani cultural theorist Rasheed Araeen will be used. He explains how non-white artists are forced to focus on certain themes to be accepted into a Western dominated art discourse.

Following the theories of postcolonialism, there has been an emergence of theorists who do not wish to be associated with postcolonialism but who nevertheless

are influenced by it; they can be called cultural theorists. Like Bhabha, Australian cultural theorist Nikos Papastergiadis looks at the complexity of cultural translation. And his concept *différend* will be used in this thesis as a premise for Atiku's artistic practice. Through the theories of another of the founders of postcolonial studies, Martinique philosopher Frantz Fanon, Cameroonian cultural theorist Achille Mbembe expresses how Africa is always understood as a negative interpretation. His diagnosis of contemporary Africa will be presented to explore violence through the concepts of *the living dead* and *necropolitics*; violence being a common theme in both *Senator Yerima's Wedding* and *Obaranikosi*. Jamaican cultural theorist Stuart Hall is analyzed for his way of connecting Derrida's *metaphysics of presence* to postcolonial thought. Hall explains how identity is constructed through hierarchical dichotomies. And a strategy of challenging these dichotomies is the concept of *disidentification*, introduced by American performance theorist José Estaban Muñoz.

Zairian literary theorist V. Y. Mudimbe is an important figure in postcolonial studies with his critical book *The Invention of Africa*. Mudimbe is, however, mainly used in this thesis for his analysis of African art history. Mudimbe takes a semiotic approach in his analysis when explaining what he sees as three major trends in African art. The analysis of the chosen artworks in this thesis also draws on the theories of phenomenology and affect. Through German theatre researcher Erika Fischer-Lichte, the affective character of the artworks is investigated. In addition to the affect, time and timeliness in Atiku's performances provoke feelings and experiences that will be described through Dutch cultural theorist Mieke Bal. With her concept of *heterochrony*, the use of video projection in *Obaranikosi* will be explored as a strategy to distort the Western chronological time. Another Western concept will also be addressed: *capitalism* as a premise for art; and it will be discussed through American researchers in performance studies Peggy Phelan and Phillip Auslander.

In addition to performance studies, American art historian Amelia Jones is introduced because of her criticism towards the way art history is generally being written. She expresses how performance art has often been left out of this history and her ideas are presented in order to explain the context of the analysis. Similarly, Nigerian art historians Okwui Enwezor and Olu Oguibe describe how African artists have long been left out of the art discourse. Enwezor and Oguibe both express a need

for different art histories presenting other cultural identities than those presented by the dominant Western discourse. Furthermore, Enwezor expresses how the art world is affected by *Westernism* and he challenges the narrative of modernism. American performance theorist Rebecca Schneider questions Western historiography, which is based on authenticity and the idea of the original. In addition to the criticism of historiography, German art historian Hans Belting criticizes the museum institutions and their concept of collecting and displaying objects from former colonies that were used for a performative purposes. These criticisms are very important when looking at Atiku's aesthetics. Atiku embraces his own cultural heritage with his art, which will be described through the ideas of American performance theorist Margaret Thompson Drewal and her research on Yoruba rituals. The concept of *decolonization* presented in the performances is further elaborated with Dutch sociologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse's theory on culture.

2.2 Discussion of the Theoretical Framework

There is an inherent paradox in the theoretical framework of this thesis: In an attempt to present a different representation of identity through artworks from Africa, French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who is the key to this theoretical framework, might seem slightly out of place. Derrida's criticism of the *metaphysics of presence* is nevertheless the theoretical basis of many cultural theorists (including Achille Mbembe and V. Y Mudimbe). In his acclaimed critical work *The Invention of Africa*, Mudimbe writes the following:

Because of the colonializing structure, a dichotomizing system has emerged, and with it a great number of current paradigmatic oppositions have developed: traditional versus modern: oral versus written and printed; agrarian versus customary communities versus urban and industrialized civilization; subsistence economies versus highly productive economies. (Mudimbe 1988: 4)

This Africa diagnosis is a criticism of the current world order that is consistently Western through its hierarchization and dichotomies, and Mudimbe's criticism is deeply rooted in Derrida's philosophy. Furthermore, Atiku expresses how his artistic

project is in a metaphorical sense a *decolonial* one, suggesting that there is an inherent logic that needs to be deconstructed, which can also be connected to Derrida. This is an attempt to explain why a white heterosexual man is yet again shaping the discourse.

3. Methodology

3.1 Context

“I will attend here as well then, to the ways in which art criticism has tended to leave out specific histories, and thus specific bodies, in order to purvey supposedly “new” ideas about art trends. The stakes here are high, because the histories that get told, and the ways in which they get told, determine what we remember and how we construct and view ourselves today.” (Jones 2013: 54)

As American art historian Amelia Jones suggests in the above quote from the article “Unpredictable temporalities: the body and performance in (art) history” there is a tendency to look at art history in a narrow manner. Jones looks specifically at how the history of performance art is left out in the two recent trends *relational aesthetics* and *antagonism*. In the exploration of these current trends, matters such as politics, process and relations, typically assigned performance art, are being presented as part of new movements in art. This thesis is an attempt to investigate the artistic strategy of Nigerian performance artist Jelili Atiku and its relevance and value in an international context. Art from the African continent is, like performance art in general, left out of the predominant art equation. According to Jones, there is a link between the neglect of representation of performance art in art criticism and the artists that are often drawn to performance art *non-normative subjects* as she calls them.⁴ Unfortunately, artists from the African continent still seem to be considered as *non-normative* in the international art discourse. I will deal with cultural identity and *being an African artist* in my research as a way of exploring the context of the art works I analyze. Furthermore, Jones suggests in the above quote that there is a lot at stake with the

⁴ Amelia Jones: “Unpredictable temporalities: the body and performance in (art) history” in *Performing Archives / Archives of performance*, p. 67. (Jones)

narratives and representations of performance art. The methodology is therefore a meta-critical reflection on the archiving of performance art, in which this thesis is subject to.

3.2 On Writing Performance Art History

Jones argues that the way performance art has been represented in art history is an example of how history in general is produced. She is critical towards the way historical moments in performance art are omitted from art critique in order for it to fit certain theories. She criticizes French art theoretician Nicholas Bourriaud's term *Relational Aesthetics*, - presumably the most criticized art theory in the 21st century. However, she also disapproves of American art historian Claire Bishop's term *antagonism* that itself is a criticism of Bourriaud's theory of relational aesthetics.⁵ This criticism of the criticism is metaphorically in itself an absurd image of how art history is constructed. In contrast, Jones stresses the importance of representing performance art in art history, though the important question is how it should be represented and preserved. One could say that a performance that is not documented in any way, essentially never happened according to a generally Western notion of history writing as a collection of sources: texts, photos, videos, objects etc. According to Atiku, this concept of history writing where an archive of objects becomes historical knowledge production is one-sided.⁶ Atiku works against this idea of the archive in his artistic strategy as a *decolonial* project stressing how performative objects from his own cultural heritage do not necessarily fit into the frames of traditional Western historicizing.

In performance studies, the act of performance has long been seen as ephemeral starting with American performance theoretician Richard Schechner's definition of theatre as temporary and immediate in the work *Theatre Criticism* from 1965. It suggests that once the performative body has left the performative space, the performance disappears. The same notion of disappearance in performance is present in the meeting between art history and performance studies, which neglects other ways

⁵Amelia Jones: pp. 62-63.

⁶ "Rød mumie gæster Charlottenborg – del II" in *U-landsnyt.dk* <http://globalnyt.dk/nyhed/30-01-14/r-d-mumie-g-ster-charlottenborg-del-ii>

of looking at history production according to American performance theorist Rebecca Schneider. In the article "Archive. Performance Remains" Schneider argues:

"If we consider performance as a process of disappearance, of an ephemerality read as vanishment (versus material remains), are we limiting ourselves to an understanding of performance predetermined by our cultural habituation to the logic of the archive?"
(Schneider 2011: 100)

Schneider questions Western historiography, which is subject to the idea of the original and to authenticity. The archive is a Western imperial space and when associating performance with ephemerality, the Western concept of archiving is reaffirmed; i.e. it emphasizes history production based on saving authentic materials.⁷ Schneider argues that is a missed opportunity to use performance to question and destabilize the concept of the archive. To Schneider performance remains, however, in a different manner than the archive remains and this difference can be translated into questions of identification. The archive relies on identification and originals, and Schneider suggests, "different ways of accessing history"⁸ with oral history being the most evident as it raises different criteria to historicizing. Oral history is always reconstructed, incomplete, and is never subject to the singular and self-identical origin that Western historiography values. Performance as memory renders the original's initial self-identity impossible.⁹ Schneider points out that the archive in itself is a performative act – an act of its own logic: "The archive performs the institution of disappearance, with object remains as indices of disappearance and with performance as given to disappear" (Schneider 2011: 105). This way of performing history production is a logic related to French philosopher Jacques Derrida's concept of the *metaphysics of presence* where disappearance and remains become dichotomies – with the remains being higher valued. Schneider wants to move beyond *metaphysics of presence* when looking at performance and she sees performance as a disruption of the archival logic because it re-thinks historiography as being an event.¹⁰ This logic is

⁷Rebecca Schneider: "Archive. Performance Remains" in *Performance Research*, pp. 100-102, (Schneider 2011).

⁸ Schneider 2011: p. 101.

⁹ Schneider 2011: p. 102.

¹⁰ Schneider 2011: p. 105.

interrupted in Atiku's performances where his body remains through the act of appearing. In *Senator Yerima's Wedding* the bodies of a girl bride and a groom reappears with the enactment of a controversial wedding. And *In the Red* becomes a medium for the violent past while Atiku's body reappears. It is in itself a reconstruction of historical events. Furthermore, Atiku challenges both the archive and the idea of performance as ephemeral by engaging in discussions and sharing his performances on social media suggesting a constantly moving archive or a never-ending performance. The question then arises if the motivation for this thesis to represent an overlooked and rarely exposed art form undermines itself because it reproduces and archives performance following the Western tradition. Indeed, as Jones expresses, the stakes are high in terms of which stories that get told in an art discourse that is thoroughly based on Western historiography.¹¹ Consequently, this thesis will challenge the discourse from within.

3.3 Aims and Objectives

In my on-going research on a contemporary movement of performance artists emerging on the African continent, I focus specifically on Jelili Atiku whom I have studied and collaborated with for the past year. Research on art from the African continent is still limited; especially when it comes to performance art. Therefore, I find it relevant to mainly reference artworks from Africa in my analysis, even though the art works I base my analysis on could as easily be understood in relation to artworks from other continents. My aim to describe the representation of identity in a cross-cultural context by looking at performance artist Jelili Atiku and mainly referencing African art is a modest attempt to contribute to the field of African performance art. I am focusing on two performances by Jelili Atiku that are very different in their aesthetics: *Senator Yerima's Wedding* and *In the Red #16: Obaranikosi*. *Senator Yerima's Wedding* is a spontaneous and highly political act that has only been enacted once as it addressed a specific event: a controversial wedding between a Nigerian senator and a young Egyptian girl. For my analysis of this specific performance I base my research on photos, videos and talks with Atiku himself about his performances. *In*

¹¹ Jones: p. 54.

the Red, on the other hand, is an on-going project and a performance series that I have been researching for the past year. The series was the basis for a video documentary I made with my colleagues Karen Andersen and Nanna Nielsen in collaboration with Atiku in 2013 called *Lagos in the Red*. The performance series consists of 16 performances and I will reference the overall aesthetics of the project and look specifically at one performance in the series: *Obaranikosi* – a parallel performance, first enacted in Lagos 19 December 2013 and then re-enacted in Copenhagen 25 January 2014. I curated the Copenhagen part of the performance for Kunsthall Charlottenborg together with my colleague Rine Rodin, and the analysis of this performance is based on my own account. The process of this thesis therefore consists of collaborations between Atiku and me, which have proven to be highly valuable to my research since it would have been impossible to collect all this information from traditional sources such as books and articles. There has not been written much literature on Atiku's work and therefore my collaborations during the film production, a performance art festival in Zimbabwe and most recently his performance in Copenhagen have all contributed greatly to the knowledge production for this thesis. Luckily, Atiku gave an interview when he visited Kunsthall Charlottenborg in which he articulated some of the points that I refer to in my analysis. The interview was conducted by *U-landsnyt.dk*, a Danish online magazine devoted to tell those stories that rarely get covered by the Danish mainstream media.¹² Their focus is widely *developing countries*, a term that is embedded in the magazine title but that one should avoid using, and their mission proved to be important: it turned out to be difficult to get the art oriented magazines and papers to cover the Atiku's performance. Only one art magazine covered the performance and they chose to interview the curators rather than the artist.¹³ The aim of the thesis is therefore to disprove traditional Western ideas and preconceptions about *African* art and emphasize the significance of Atiku's works. Since I am referencing a performance that I have been professionally engaged in it is difficult to be completely unbiased.

¹² "Rød mumie gæster Charlottenborg – del II" in *U-landsnyt.dk*
<http://globalnyt.dk/nyhed/30-01-14/r-d-mumie-g-ster-charlottenborg-del-ii>

¹³ "Danish neo-feminism and Nigerian performance art" in *Kopenhagen*
<http://kopenhagen.dk/magasin/magazine-single/article/danish-neo-feminism-and-nigerian-performance-art/>

3.4 Speaking of Africa

Dealing specifically with art from a Nigerian artist and mainly referencing artworks by other artists from the African continent inevitably raises a generalization issue. In the foreword of the anthology *Trends in Twenty-First Century African Theatre and Performance* the South African theatre scholar Temple Hauptfleisch targets the absurdity of using the word *Africa*.¹⁴ He emphasizes that Africa is an immense continent that consists of millions of ethnic groups, religions and languages. He does, however, clarify the use of the word in the anthology's title:

"So for the purpose of this book and the Working Group, what then qualify as "African"? Perhaps, as Kole Omotoso pointed out to me, the first thing you must actually ask yourself is: What Africa am I talking about?"- what region, sociocultural context, what peoples, what forms are we talking about, comparing and evaluating?" (Hauptfleisch 2011: 12)

When using general terms like *Africa* (or *Europe* and *Western* for that matter), one must elaborate further by clarifying the use of the term. And Hauptfleisch's need to express the methodology for the anthology in the foreword *Trends in Twenty-First Century African Theatre and Performance* apparently seems unnecessary, but this need must be understood in relation to the history of representing narratives and images of Africa. The representation of Africa is much too often less nuanced than the representation of e.g. *the West*. Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe expresses how Africa is always understood as a negative interpretation in his work *De la Postcolonie: essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine*. Influenced by Martinique philosopher Frantz Fanon, who made contributions to postcolonial studies in the 50's, Mbembe explores the impact of colonialism. The colonial partition of Africa is the extreme consequence of Western hegemony and it makes the African become the *ultimate other* for the purpose of differentiating the West from *the rest*.

¹⁴ Temple Hauptfleisch: *Trends in Twenty-First Century African Theatre and Performance*, pp. 11-12. (Hauptfleisch)

This invention also becomes essential in the West's own self-image.¹⁵ In fact the narrative of Africa is always about something else, somewhere else or somebody else:

“Dans le principe même de sa constitution, dans son langage, et dans ses finalités, l'énoncé sur l'Afrique est toujours le prétexte à un propos sur quelque chose d'autre, quelque autre lieu, d'autres gens” (Mbembe 2000: 11)

Mbembe elaborates further by explaining how the narrative of Africa is a mediation that gives the West an account of its own subjectivity.¹⁶ Narratives of Africa only occur in the entangled relationship with *The West*, making it crucial to explicitly investigate the reasons for using the term *Africa* or deciding to look specifically at *African performance*. It is of course impossible to talk about the characteristics of *African performance* in the first place, which Hauptfleisch also indicates¹⁷, just like it is impossible to speak about a typical European performance. This is not to say that it is impossible to generalize but simply to stress the importance of specifying the generalization.

3.5 Being an African Artist - *Being African*

In 1999 Nigerian art historians Okwui Enwezor and Olu Oguibe make an important contribution to art history with the anthology *Reading the Contemporary – African Art from Theory to Marketplace*. The emergence of such a work that seeks to acknowledge African art in its own right as well as to present a critical thought on the perception of African art was more pertinent than ever. It came a few years after the abolition of apartheid in South Africa and ten years after the heavily debated exhibition *Magiciens de la terre*¹⁸ in Paris. In the light of these events, time was ready for a new critical art

¹⁵ Achille Mbembe: *De la Postcolonie: essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine* p. 9, (Mbembe 2000).

¹⁶ Mbembe 2000: p. 11.

¹⁷ Hauptfleisch: p. 12.

¹⁸ *Magiciens de la terre* was an exhibition at *Centre Pompidou* in 1989 including 100 artists; half of them Western and half of the non-Western. The exhibition is considered to be the first exhibition in Europe displaying contemporary African art and it has received a lot of criticism for its curatorial choices; especially the selection of non-European art.

theory presenting new ways of understanding art from the great continent - on different grounds than the traditional normative discourse. Enwezor and Oguibe articulated a need for a new methodology thus:

”Our aim is not only to provide an alternative art history, but also to lay a groundwork for its methodology. We strongly believe that it is in the methodology that art history confronts the proper subject of its operation, that the most difficult and durable questions of its discriminations and discernments occur, that the flawed arguments and perspectives are engaged, that new interpretations are created, and that contestations (necessary for a sustained intellectual productivity) are tackled.” (Enwezor & Oguibe 1999: 14)

It is well over a decade since the anthology was published and the above statement is still very relevant in art discourse even though contemporary African art receives far more acknowledgement on the international art scene today than it did in 1999. The acknowledgement recently became apparent in the announcement of the above quoted Enwezor being chosen as the head curator for the 2015 Venice Biennale - the first head curator from the African continent that is. The anthology is mapping out the challenges and the qualities of contemporary art from Africa. It presents a collection of articles seeking to embrace the complexity of the continent through topics such as post colonialism, diaspora, African art history and cultural identity. Since *African identity* has long been constructed and defined by *others* there is a need for different art histories presenting other cultural identities than the one presented by the ubiquitous Western discourse:

”(...) one contentious issue that persists is that of the construction and contestation of identities; identities fashioned by others and foisted on Africans; identities contested and rejected by Africans. The result of this dynamic is the emergence of disparate art histories, the dominant version of which persistently displaces African perspectives on the question of identity, and on the parameters of cultural narration” (Enwezor & Oguibe 1999: 12)

For Oguibe and Enwezor it is important to develop a new methodological approach to art in order to change the wrong images and perceptions of Africa. By doing so, they sought to create new art histories. Oguibe expresses his frustration of the representation of African art by describing how African art will either be perceived in relation to the artist's biography with emphasis on her or his personal situation or to the tribal nature of the artwork itself. The artist will not be given a voice and most importantly not be given any recognition of the inherent artistic value she or he produces. Oguibe reaches a methodological approach by simply demanding that African art should be appreciated for the value it adds as a contributor to the art discourse.¹⁹ This way of presenting something as "exotic" that Oguibe describes is closely related to the colonial strategies of cultural supremacy that insist on the simplicity of the colonized culture. The artworks presented in this thesis relate to the idea of *African identity* and they all seek to present new realities and new identities.

4. Analysis

4.1 Cultural Translation

4.1.1 Otherness

In "Unpredictable temporalities: the body and performance in (art) history" Amelia Jones remarks how both Nicolas Bourriaud and Claire Bishop prefer to give examples of artworks by male Western artists when talking about relational process in art. Thereby Jones implicitly concludes that their reason for leaving out an important part of art history, namely performance art, is because of asymmetrical relations of power. She suggests that performance artists often come from historically suppressed groups in society:

"Artists who have identified with (or who have been made to identified with) non-normative subjectivities such as queer, Black, female, third world, disabled, working class

¹⁹ Okwui Enwezor & Olu Oguibe: *Reading the Contemporary – African Art from Theory to Marketplace*, pp. 20-21.

have much more often drawn to these aspects of creativity (embodiment and performance) (...)." (Jones 2013:67)

And, according to Jones, Bishop and Bourriaud do not wish to deal with these subjects when discussing relational aesthetics.²⁰ Jones does not elaborate on her thought any further. However her view on performance art as a highly political act suggests a link between artistic strategy and performance art as a media for giving voice to the historically suppressed.

Considered one of the first contributors to postcolonial studies American-Palestinian literary theorist Edward Said gave with his controversial book *Orientalism* from 1977 a critical analysis of the West's representation of the Orient (i.e. Asia and the Middle East, and to Said mainly the Arab part of the Orient). Through analysis of Western fiction, research, travel guides and politics on the Orient for the past 200 years Said defines the term *orientalism*. Achille Mbembe's critique of the postcolonial representation of Africa is connected to Said's orientalism when he describes how Africa is always a negative interpretation. Orientalism is a construction that is based on a Eurocentric view on the Orient with the sole purpose of positioning the West in a dominant position. The construction in variably produces stereotypes of *the other* as an exotic or primitive being that will always be described as a negative contrast to the West's self-image. It is an oppressive and dominant term that seeks to debase *the other* and it exists solely as a Western monologue since *the other* is not being given a voice of its own.²¹ The concept of orientalism also reveals a fixed view on cultural identity that first of all indicates that the West has a specific set of universally true values and secondly that the Orient, seen as a homogenous mass, with its values (or lack thereof) is in constant opposition to those values perceived to be true.

This concept of culture is static and it approaches what Dutch sociologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse describes as Culture 1 in the article "Globalisation as hybridisation". Pieterse describes two different concepts of culture: Culture 1 is territorial and static and it is related to a specific group or society, and culture 2 is in constant flow by being associated with networks rather than a specific group. For

²⁰ Jones: p. 67.

²¹ Edward Said: *Orientalism*, pp. 2-3 (Said).

Pieterse the two models are not mutually exclusive; they are forms that frequently interact.²² He is critical of the assumption that globalism is a Western process. He sees this view as a simplification of globalization since there has always been exchanges between Western and non-Western cultures as well as exchanges between non-Western cultures. He calls this process *global melange*.²³

4.1.2 Constructing Cultural Heritage

Said's orientalism is an investigation into how the West perceives the Orient and this asymmetrical representation of the European self in contrast to the Oriental other can be transferred to other colonial and postcolonial discourses. Not only was the colonized other constructed through categories of stereotyped knowledge by the West, the construction of *the other* also influenced the self-image of the colonized. And what becomes most problematic with the impact of colonialism is when *the other* sees themselves as *Others*.

Orientalism is not concerned with exchange; instead, as Said states, orientalism is the result of cultural hegemony. He also suggests that orientalism was so dominant that it became constitutive for all European perception about the oriental other:

“There is in addition the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness, usually overriding the possibility that more independent, or more sceptical, thinker might have had other views on the matter.” (Said 1977: 7)

To Said, Europeans did not have much choice other than to define and understand the orient through the perspective of orientalism.²⁴ Said has been criticized for the notion of disregarding (or simply not paying attention to) the possible fact of the resistance that must have existed in Europe towards ethnocentric, imperialistic and racist discourses of the Orient. He has also been criticized for his description of *the oriental other* as merely a passive victim of the subjugation of her or his cultural identity.

²² Jan Nederveen Pieterse: "Globalisation as hybridisation", pp. 176-178 (Pieterse).

²³ Pieterse: p. 169.

²⁴ Said: p. 238.

Said's theory is an important foundation to postcolonial studies and many of his concepts can be transferred to fit an African context. Atiku draws references to his own cultural background, his Yoruba identity²⁵, in most of his works and also in his reason for pursuing performance art. His reason for explicitly articulating his cultural identity is highly political just like his artworks. His works express how cultural memory has been destroyed by colonialism and how history in general is written selectively to fit certain Western ideas. Atiku's need to reference his roots as a Yoruba man must be understood as a way of rearticulating history as well as presenting new ways of producing historical memory.

4.1.3 Obaranikosi

“The fact of the matter is that, until now Western interpreters as well as African analysts have been using categories and conceptual systems which depend on a Western epistemological order (...) Does this mean that African *Weltanschauungen* and African traditional systems of thought are unthinkable and cannot be made explicit within the framework of their own rationality” (Mudimbe 1988: x)

In the Red performance #16 *Obaranikosi* is part of a political strategy. Though the word *obaranikosi* is Yoruba, according to Atiku many Yoruba people will not know what it means. This cultural amnesia seen in relation to the meaning of the word itself is rather paradoxical since *obaranikosi* means something close to forgetfulness. By reintroducing a Yoruba word that few people know without a subtitle explaining the connotation, Atiku insists on the value of his own cultural heritage while simultaneously distancing himself from Western epistemological order and asserting that other realities exist. However, it is also a brutal and divisive strategy since it will most likely isolate any audience without connections to or knowledge of Yoruba culture. The title of the performance becomes a statement declaring that either the spectator is presumed to be curious enough to investigate the meaning of the artwork's title or else she or he will not understand the intended meaning of the performance. Consequently, in the context of Atiku distancing himself from colonial and Western

²⁵ Yoruba is one of the mayor ethnic groups in Nigeria and it is one of the largest groups in Africa with around 35 million people. Yoruba culture is prevalent in Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and Sierra Leone, as well as in the Yoruba diaspora in Brazil, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago.

discourses, by insisting on a forgotten word that few people understand, it becomes part of a *decolonial strategy*. And the veiling and the ambiguity as premises of the performance is also what make it interesting.

Atiku began his performances in the streets of megacity Lagos – his hometown. This approach was a deliberate artistic strategy protesting the discourses represented by the established art institution. On the other hand, becoming an international artist having performed in venues such as Tate Modern's space dedicated to performance, *The Tanks*, and Transmediale's venue *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* in Berlin has challenged him to renegotiate this strategy. In *Obaranikosi* he creates a dialogue between institution and public space, and by making the performance a parallel work that is performed in Lagos and then in Copenhagen, he brings his Lagos environment to a Western audience in Copenhagen through video projection. The Lagos performance began in Makoko, a high-density area consisting of islands built of trash on the shore of Lagos Lagoon. With *In the Red's* androgynous mummy-like red creature, Atiku took over the space of Makoko in a rowboat with 40 balloons attached to his own body. After Makoko, the mummy moved on to Third Mainland Bridge, the longest bridge in Africa, on a tuk-tuk (a type of motorized rickshaw). The bridge, where millions of people are stuck in traffic jams for hours every day on their way to and from work, overlooks Makoko giving the passers-by a clear view to the slums from a distance. The performance concluded at the Federal Government's Printing Press building on Broadstreet in the central government area, Lagos Island, where Atiku unwrapped himself of the red bandages and left the room stripped down to his underwear. At the Copenhagen venue, a video from the Lagos performance is projected into the exhibition space on the mezzanine at Kunsthall Charlottenborg. The mummy arrives on a barge in tranquil Nyhavn - as a tourist or a stranger alien to this environment, it moves through the city before entering Kunsthall Charlottenborg. Being the last stop of the mummy's journey from Makoko, the exhibition space is not only transformed into a canvas of the chaotic Lagos, it is also transformed into a disastrous universe; an apocalypse – a space of science fiction, of cruel reality and perhaps even a rite of passage. The participants are encouraged to intervene or circumvent as they enter the space covered in stretched out red strings. The very room itself becomes a death trap where entering it becomes a challenge in itself by making

the audience duck and crawl. The mummy is a manifestation of human disaster and it catalyzes violence and self-destruction. All Atiku's projects are highly political – *Obaranikosi* is no exception.

4.1.4 Untranslatable Remainder

Atiku's artistic practice is deeply rooted in his own cultural background as a Yoruba man. Yoruba is one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria and an essential part of Yoruba culture is the concept of *Egungun*.²⁶ Atiku is invested in this Yoruba tradition and he organizes a biannual Egungun festival in his local community and he has published a magazine for his specific tribe, the Awori, honoring the traditions and culture. Atiku seeks to raise an awareness of the power of words with his performances by also generally referring to phenomena from his cultural background. The titles of his performances are often in Yoruba and thus they are themselves political statements. He refuses to translate the Yoruba titles directly into English words and he will gladly explain what they mean but he insists on the idea of direct untranslatability; especially of nouns such as *Egungun* where he refuses to acknowledge the frequently used translation "masquerade". According to Derrida, translation does contain an *untranslatable remainder*, which is reflected in nouns since they have historic and semiotic associations impossible to fully translate.²⁷ The word *performance* also produces such an untranslatable remainder and in most cases a translation of the word is avoided. However, Atiku refers to Egungun when talking about his performance art in his local neighborhood Ejigbo. First of all, this serves a pragmatic purpose since most people there would not know what performance art is. Secondly, it has the political strategy of questioning Western terminology and the idea of authenticity: as neither word is any more correct than the other, the local one is just as valid in the local context.

²⁶ *Egungun* will be further elaborated in the section "Not, not Humans & Spirits" on page 36. It refers to Yoruba tradition – performed in many ways throughout Nigeria as well as in Brazil where many Yoruba people were taken to during the Atlantic slave trade from West Africa in the 16th century. The word *masquerade* is often used to describe Egungun, however, Atiku despises that word because it does not do Egungun justice. Consequently, I will avoid using it when explaining the tradition and simply acknowledge that here there will always be an *untranslatable remainder*.

²⁷ Nikos Papastergiadis: *The Limits of Cultural Translation*, p. 142

In the book *The Limits of Cultural Translation*, Australian cultural theorist Nikos Papastergiadis maps out different theorists' positions towards cultural translation in a linguistic sense through Derrida's idea of untranslatability and French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard's term *différend* – not to be confused with Derrida's *différance*²⁸. With “untranslatability”, Derrida demonstrates the inherent inadequacy of translation. In addition, Papastergiadis argues that there is a connection between Derrida's *untranslatable remainder* and Lyotard's *différend*. *Différend* is present in conflicts where the disagreeing parties' arguments are not treated equally due to the lack of common rules accommodating both parties.²⁹ Papastergiadis points to the fact that when translating nouns, *différend* will always be present: “The proper name retains its value and refers to the same thing irrespective of how it is uttered. In this sense proper names cannot be translated.” (Papastergiadis 2000: 143). Papastergiadis states that in postcolonial societies there are many cases where *différend* will be present.³⁰ One example of this is the marriage between a Nigerian Muslim man and a 13-year-old girl, which is the controversial event that made Atiku enact the performance *Senator Yerima's Wedding*. In this case, Nigerian law was caught between two different systems with no common language: the one of human rights and the one of Muslim Sharia law. Nigerian law makes child marriage illegal but, at the same time, the law does not cover weddings in states governed by the Sharia law. Regardless of the outcome of the reform, one of the parties will be faced with *différend*: i.e. having its cultural traditions ignored by another party. In this case, it is simply impossible to get rid of the untranslatable remainder.

Papastergiadis sees a parallel in the art world:

“How will the discourse of contemporary art, which is predominantly Eurocentric and presupposes a break with the past, address non-Euro-American art practices that display a complex negotiation between tradition and modernity?” (Papastergiadis 2000: 133)

²⁸ *Différance* describes a literary idea. When saying it, it sounds like *difference* (difference) and it is misspelled intentionally to illustrate Derrida's philosophical concept: It is both a way of distorting the hierarchy between speech over writing, and a way of illustrating how words have different meanings under different circumstances to different people.

²⁹ Papastergiadis, pp. 132-133.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Here Papastergiadis argues that there will always be *différend* when attempting to translate a non-Western artwork into a Western art discourse. This type of *différend* is explicitly manifested in Atiku's performances. Both his use of Yoruba words that few people understand (even Yoruba speakers) and his refusal of translating them into English are ways of reclaiming language in a rather confrontational manner. He mixes both Hausa and Yoruba words in *Senator Yerima's Wedding* as a way of insisting on the inadequacy of translation. The way Atiku deconstructs both language and identity in his performances openly suggests a resistance to and the impossibility of being understood in terms of a Western art discourse. His strategy works against Western essentialism understood as a defining mode of traditional Western historiography that seeks to over-generalize, stereotype and reduce non-Western societies.

4.1.5 Rearticulating Stereotypes

Atiku's work places itself in at least two categories: the first category is the highly politically motivated one and it represents artworks that react spontaneously to current political events and social issues – these types of work serve as a protest and often use humor and satire as a strategy. The second category represents works that are less explicit and usually deals with questions of collective memory and human nature. Significant for both categories is their use of symbols. This thesis explores artworks from both categories: *In the Red* deals with the human nature of violence in its aesthetics and does not directly have an explicit political function while *Senator Yerima's Wedding* serves a very clear purpose. Senator Alhaji Ahmed Rufai Sani Yerima from the Northern region of Zamfara in Nigeria in 2010 married a 13-year-old Egyptian girl. The wedding made headlines in July 2013 during a legal review of the Nigerian constitution where Yerima argued that a clause in the constitution making it illegal for a man to go to another country to marry an underage girl was against sharia law.³¹ He demanded a new vote on this clause, and 60 Senators voted in support of

³¹12 of 36 states in Nigeria currently have instituted Sharia law (three of them only partly); all located in Northern part of Nigeria, which has a mainly Muslim population. The state of Zamfara was the first to implement Sharia in 2000.

Yerima's position for retaining the constitutional provisions while 35 voted against it sparking public debate on social media and in Nigerian news media.

Atiku performed *Senator Yerima's Wedding* quite spontaneously upon hearing the news of the review of the constitution allowing child marriage in Nigeria. In the performance Atiku dressed in turban and *bababriga* clothes (a regional style of clothing), in reference to the Muslims living in the Northern part of Nigeria, and he pushes around a wagon with a cage on top that has a young girl inside. Atiku's Yerima is a caricature of a Muslim man about to marry his 13-year-old bride. Coming from a Muslim background himself, Atiku is dressed in traditional Muslim attire during this performance – attire that you rarely see in the multicultural metropolis of Lagos or even in Zamfara for that matter. During the three-hour long performance, Atiku pushes around the wagon with the young girl dressed in a white wedding dress through the streets of his own neighborhood, Ejigbo, a high-density suburb to megacity Lagos, causing traffic jams and catching the attention of passers-by. Atiku eventually opens the cage and poses for a 20 min long photo session with his bride, her family, friends and neighbors - a compressed version of a typical photo session at a Nigerian wedding that can take hours. The young girl is laughing timidly during the performance that includes speeches, a wedding dance and finally the wedding bed: Atiku lays out a piece of cloths on the street, takes of his shirt, and he takes off his young bride's dress so she only wears a thin chiffon blouse and trousers. In the end they lay down on the cloths next to each other with a crowd of people surrounding them.

4.1.6 In Praise of Third Space?

In the book *The Location of Culture*, Indian literary theorist Homi Bhabha examines the interrelation and exchange between the West and the non-West through the discourse of colonial power. The discourse is focused on stereotypy and immutability, it maintains a hierarchy and marginalizes the colonized by articulating differences between the colonizer and the colonized. Unlike Said, Bhabha rejects the idea of colonial and postcolonial discourses being hegemonic and unambiguous. Through primarily literary studies, Bhabha explores the inevitable exchange between the colonizer and the colonized and describes the result of this exchange with different

terms (*hybridity* being one of them). Pieterse's concept of culture as a *global melange*³² is closely connected to Bhabha's hybridity. Hybridity to Bhabha is the product of tension and ambivalence between the colonizer and the colonized.³³ There is frequently an exchange between the two and Bhabha gives an example of this exchange through British missionaries' strategy to spread Christianity in India by offering free bibles (the *English Book*). In the local population, the Bible becomes a symbol of cultural authority and British literature while, at the same time, the Bible being completely dislocated from its discourse changes its original meaning through being presented as the universal truth – the word of God:

“It is the effect of uncertainty that afflicts the discourses of power, an uncertainty that estranges the familiar symbol of English “national” authority and emerges from its colonial appropriation as the sign of its difference. Hybridity is the name of this displacement of value from symbol to sign that causes the dominant discourse to split along the axis of its power to be representative, authoritative.” (Bhabha 1994: 113)

Translation can never be a true copy of the original and translation will inevitably add something new; something rewritten or altered. Bhabha calls this something *newness*. And even though the imperialistic project of colonialism apparently seems unilateral, the distribution of the Bible in Hindu is an example of cultural exchange and of newness.³⁴

The immigrant is, according to Bhabha, culturally translated by constantly being mentally located on the border between his home country and his new country. The immigrant is located in an in-between-space between different and often conflicting systems of value.³⁵ Bhabha is inspired by Jacques Derrida and he defines this space as a *third space* that is deconstructive: “*the foreign element destroys the original's structures of reference and sense of communication*” (Bhabha 2004: 326). He describes how this foreign element challenges the original by negotiating and denying its fixed structures. The immigrant gets a kind of double vision because she or he gets an insight into different systems. Hybridity is an in-between-space that integrates “us

³² Pieterse: p. 169.

³³ Homi Bhabha: *The Location of Culture*, pp. 111-112, (Bhabha).

³⁴ Bhabha: pp. 324-325.

³⁵ Ibid.

and them” contrasting stereotypy that simplifies the world with the purpose of separating “us and them”. Bhabha explains how stereotypy is a strategy used to objectify and suppress colonized individuals. However, the stereotypy lives on in postcolonial times as well and, according to Bhabha, it manifests itself in generalizing statements like: “That is how they are” and “I know them”.³⁶ While hybridity cannot terminate hegemonic power structures, it can transform their character. It is a *third space*.³⁷ Bhabha has been criticized for both his praise of hybridity and in a more fundamental way for the embedded paradox in the concept of hybridity; Bhabha’s hybridity implies a prior state of purity, which undermines the political aspect of hybridity. In that way, it is in fact a concept that is determined in opposition to purity submitting itself to what it is criticizing and to the metaphysics of presence. As a former colonial possession, Nigeria can be classified as a hybrid society and Atiku articulates the implications and the significance of this state in his aesthetics.

4.1.7 Re-enacting Histories / Re-inventing Identities

Atiku, with his small physique, does not resemble a rich Nigerian politician like Senator Yerima, and therefore his attire is rather explicit. The choice of fabric, however, is a reference to *African identity*. The fabric is called *ankara* in Nigeria and it is more commonly known as Dutch Wax Fabric – referring to colorful and florid printed cotton fabrics that one can buy in any African market. The fabric is associated with *Africa*. British/Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare, known for his photographs and installations with live size mannequins portraying colonial events while wearing Victorian style garments tailored in Dutch Wax Print, has made the multifaceted history of this print known throughout the art world. To Shonibare, the print tells the story of culture as a construction since most people would associate the print with Africa. However, the print is not African in origin the way one would assume. The colorful print was first manufactured by the Dutch to the Indonesian market and was for unknown reasons imported to West Africa in the 19th century where it became

³⁶ Bhabha p.107.

³⁷ Bhabha: p. 163.

more popular than to its original target group.³⁸ The use of this specific fabric in art works therefore plays with the idea of identity and culture.

The use of symbols in performance art as a way of renegotiating history and representing the colonial past is also present in works by artists such as Leila Anderson from South Africa and Ghanaian Bernard Akoi-Jackson. In four different set-ups performance artist Akoi-Jackson performs the series *Cos 90 ≠ 0: From Absurdity into Nihilism and Back: Something is definitely gained* (2012) for the camera while enacting different phantasmal identities: *Goldman, Blueman, Dutchman* and *Greyman*. A brief look at the photographs reveals that the artist is very particular about the carefully placed objects and their historical references. Ghana is widely known for its fabric production and prints, particularly Dutch Wax Print being a major export product. In recent years, the industry has experienced collapses – making buyers opt for Chinese produced ready-to-wear – threatening the cultural heritage of the production. Akoi-Jackson like Atiku uses fabric in his work to tell stories of postcolonial identity:

”The repeated use of this particular cloth implies a shared ownership of an object wherefore none of the characters can actually claim to authority over [sic]. My work rouses us to appreciate the ambivalence that ensues in identity construction.” (Akoi-Jackson 2012: appendix iii)

The ambivalence of this ownership is represented in the mix of fabrics in performances like *Greyman* where Akoi-Jackson is wearing a panama hat in a colorful checked pattern. Instead of the classic palm fiber material, the hat is made in the *madras* pattern originating from India's major fabric producing city Chennai.³⁹ The complex construction of heritage and identity in a global world is represented in that hat connecting hat textile industries across the globe. Behind Akoi-Jackson in *Greyman* hangs a series of photographs from the performance “The Handel” that he enacted in a public space in Amsterdam, where he invited passers-by to trade anything for a bag of Ghanaian chocolate.

³⁸ Okwui Enwezor: “Modernity and Postcolonial Ambivalence” in *Altermodern: Tate Triennial*, p. 28, (Enwezor 2009).

³⁹ See appendix iii (p. 83): Bernard Akoi-Jackson (2012), *Cos 90 ≠ 0: From Absurdity into Nihilism and Back: Something is definitely gained*.

The performance *Dutchman* is conceptually similar to Shonibare's installations: Akoi-Jackson poses on a concrete staircase dressed in a Victorian suit made in a light blue Dutch Wax Print.⁴⁰ On his head he has a periwig and a domino masque and next to him lays a liquor bottle, *Dutch Schiedam Aromatic Schnapps*, a reference to slave trade – alcohol being a valuable trade for a human being. In his right arm he holds a golden dummy raffle and the “Holy Bible”. Unlike Bhabha's *English book* that references the Bible's journey in India, this Bible is not translated into the native tongue suggesting another colonial strategy. This strategy seems more violent as it does not question its own inadequacy but brutally conquers (including a conquest of the language). The brutal nature of colonialism in West Africa becomes even more apparent with symbols of trade, slavery and racism in the frames. In Akoi-Jacksons enactment *Greyman* he holds gold cowry shells in his hands while wearing a red outfit in front of a green wall covered with objects such as a t-shirt stating “Zwarte Piet is racism”.⁴¹ The shells, like the other objects in the performances, symbolize the complex history of West Africa. The shells were originally used as currency in West Africa and Akoi-Jackson had these shells made in gold using an old wax technique for textiles and sculpture that has not been used for many years. The choice of material references *the Gold Coast*: the European gold industry in Ghana which is directly linked to slavery - Holland, Sweden, Germany, Britain and Denmark previously being the major colonial traders in that region. In the performance series *Cos 90 ≠ 0: From Absurdity into Nihilism and Back: Something is definitely gained* objects are carefully spread out in the frames in reference to the Western need to classify, collect and preserve objects. The location where the photos were taken references the Western concept of preservation as well: the *Ussher Fort* in Accra. It was built as a factory by the Dutch and today it is being restored by UNESCO as site of cultural heritage. The construction of cultural heritage composes complex dilemmas and even at times remakes history's wrongs by representing a selective part of history.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ *Zwarte Piet* (Black Peter) is a controversial Dutch Christmas tradition where Santa's helper is a coloured boy.

4.1.8 Hybridization

Performance artist Leila Anderson has a similar way of deconstructing history by renegotiating her own identity in the work *Afrika Lacht* (2012). *Afrika Lacht* is a total installation consisting of sculptures, video, photographs and improvisation. As the title says, Africa is laughing most of all at the ignorant and stereotypical ways in which it has been presented. As a white South African, Anderson plays with her own heritage and identity, and the idea of the colonizer in a satirical way. In one photograph she poses sitting on the savannah with a topee, a rifle and a grass skirt surrounded by chunks of ivory, zebra skin and the best Africa's wild life has to offer.⁴² It criticizes the wild life tourism in Africa and the long forgotten colonial past. Like Akoi-Jackson, she exposes current problems and traces them back to colonial history.

Like Akoi-Jacksons and Andersons performances, Atiku's works attempt to create new identities by articulating issues of the colonial past. Africa's most populous nation is Nigeria and it was, like most other former colonies in Africa, constructed as a consequence of the so-called *Scramble for Africa* beginning with the 1884 Berlin Conference where Great Britain obtained territorial rights over a large part of West Africa, resulting in the united country we know today as Nigeria in 1914. The nation is therefore rather young and consists of hundreds of different languages, religions and ethnic⁴³ groups; the major being the Igbo, the Hausa and the Yoruba. The nation's ethnic groups have been in conflict for centuries, escalating with the Nigerian-Biafran War in 1967 just seven years after the country's independence from Britain. The war resulted in an Igbo genocide that is rarely given much attention both in and outside Nigeria – a case of selective memory. Atiku's performance series *In the Red* can be seen as a catharsis of this gruesome event, questioning the destructive and violent human nature.

Senator Yerima's Wedding on the other hand touches upon Yoruba, Hausa, Christian and Muslim culture. Even though the actual wedding Atiku references is strictly Muslim, his play with other references as a way of highlighting the actual issue: the consequences of colonization. In the case of this performance the consequence to

⁴² See appendix iiiii (p. 87): Leila Anderson (2012), *Afrika Lacht*.

⁴³ Ethnicity is here used as a cultural discursive term referring to the collective set of norms, values, beliefs and symbols that unites a group.

Atiku is child brides. It is a manifestation of cultural conflicts: The name of his young bride, which is presented to the public in meticulously printed wedding programs, is a mix of Yoruba and Hausa adjectives: *Amoriya Jololo Lakasegbe*. *Amoriya* is Hausa for new wife, *Jololo* can roughly be translated into *little girl* (leaving the audience little doubt about the age of Atiku's young bride) and *Lakasegbe* is Yoruba and refers to someone with an unknown identity.

4.1.9 Is Atiku's strategy of representing cultural translation estranging?

Both *Oberanikosi* and *Senator Yerima's Wedding* treat the concept of cultural translation in different ways. *Senator Yerima's Wedding* represents a concept similar to Pieterse's notion of culture where two different cultural concepts interact with each other: one determined by flows of exchanges, and the other one by borders. Atiku enacts a wedding to show a representation of Nigerian culture. In this construction, the fragments of the wedding clash. The *ankara fabric* and the white wedding dress expresses how identity and culture are constructed. The tension and ambivalence that Bhabha presents through his term hybridity is manifested in this performance. As a former colonial possession, Nigeria is a hybrid environment and Atiku accentuates the implications of this in his aesthetics. By re-enacting the wedding Atiku articulates these challenges he as a Nigerian man faces in a society that has been constructed by colonialism. He exposes *différend* as a premise for the nation. The effects of the nation's history are expressed in the untranslatability that Atiku insists on. *Senator Yerima's Wedding* references Yoruba, Hausa, Christian and Muslim culture. It mixes different religious traditions and words from different cultures.

The title *Oberanikosi* is a statement that insists on untranslatability: a Yoruba word that very few people understand. A parallel to this artistic strategy is his use of the word *Egungun*. He insists on calling Egungun for Egungun and he despises the Western word generally used to describe the tradition: "masquerade". According to him, it has nothing to do with masking. And when explaining *performance art* in his community he uses Egungun to explain his actions. On the one hand it is possible to read this interpretation as a way of translating a Western classification into a specific local context. On the other hand it is possible to see it as a reclaim or a renegotiation of performance art and Egungun. Which one is more original? Atiku's need to reference

his roots as a Yoruba man must be understood as a way of rearticulating history as well as presenting new ways of producing historical memory.

The question then remains if he with this strategy alienates his audience: the spectators in his local community will most likely neither understand words like *obaranikosi* nor the combination of Yoruba and Hausa. And a Danish audience will certainly not understand either. One has to express curiosity in order to understand his project. Atiku deconstructs both language and identity in a way that expresses a resistance towards being understood only in terms of Western art discourse. Papastergiadis propose that there will always be *différend* when trying to translate a non-Western artwork into a Western art discourse. Atiku is at ease with being in the chaotic and tense epicenter of *différend*. He performs there.

4.2 Haunting Spaces

4.2.1 Disidentification

The red mummy appearing in the performance series *In the Red* is androgynous. The bandages remove all suggestions of fe/male shapes and it does not have a gender. This becomes apparent with *In the Red #15: How Not to Dance to Tchaikovsky Symphony* (2012) where Atiku is joined by female performer Grace Morgan Pardo.⁴⁴ In this specific piece, Pardo is wrapped in white instead of red contrasting Atiku's body and the bandages simply make the performer's body androgynous and genderless. In Yoruba culture, the red color refers to suffering whereas white indicates prosperity. Red and white together with black represent abilities of powerful women according to Yoruba's *Ifá*⁴⁵ – the last being black: causing death. A powerful woman in Yoruba tradition may have the power to bring transformation through all three forces.⁴⁶

Gender in Yoruba culture is performed in various ways during rituals and festivals, which according to American performance theorist Margaret Thompson Drewal, suggests a performative awareness of gender. In the book *Yoruba ritual: performers, play, agency* Drewal explains how different rituals reverse and deconstruct

⁴⁴ See appendix v (p. 88): Jelili Atiku (2012), *In the Red #15: How Not to Dance to Tchaikovsky Symphony*.

⁴⁵ Ifá is the religion of the Yoruba.

⁴⁶ Margaret Thompson Drewal: *Yoruba ritual: performers, play, agency*, p. 178, (Drewal).

the idea of gender: “Equally significant is that in ritual there is some amount of cross-dressing by both men and women, and in possession trance there are more literally gender transformations” (Drewal 1992: 190). The cross-dressing can be seen rather subtly by the male priests having their hair braided in the style of women. However, it can also be seen rather explicitly with female priests wearing phalli and women dressing in men’s clothes for various rituals.⁴⁷ Like the cross-dressing in Yoruba rituals, the shrouding of gender in the performance series *In the Red* is a way of creating new realities.

American performance theorist José Estaban Muñoz introduces the term *disidentification* that relates to minority groups. Disidentification is a way of challenging the dominant ideological structures. Muñoz bases his theory on linguistics and the individual’s identification with prevailing power structures. What he calls the “good subject” is the one living according to the established norm identifying oneself with both normative discursive and ideological structures. In contrast, the “bad subject” lives in opposition to the dominant power structures. This antagonistic position has an undesired effect as it actually reinforces the dominant ideology that the so-called “bad subject” is in opposition to. When insisting on being in opposition to the dominant power structure, instead of working within it, the subject acknowledges the structure as being the dominant one and submits to it. According to Muñoz, a displacement will therefore never happen.⁴⁸ And the “bad subject” will always be defined by the “good subject”. Disidentification is an in-between-gap that places the *disidentified* subject between the “good subject” and the “bad subject”: *disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology* (Muñoz 1999: 11). Disidentification seeks to change the dominant ideology from within, which it is closely related to Shonibare’s strategy of challenging the art discourse by doing the expected unexpectedly.

Disidentification as defined by Muñoz becomes apparent in performances by artists like South African Athi-Patra Ruga. Ruga plays with gender and his performances are connected to drag aesthetics creating mythical creatures with unidentifiable identity. In his performance series *The Future Women of Azania* (2010-

⁴⁷ Drewal: pp. 181-182.

⁴⁸ José Estaban Muñoz: *Disidentifications*, p. 11.

),⁴⁹ the only part of his body exposed are his legs. He is dressed in stockings, wearing stilettos on his feet and covering his body are hundreds of balloons. The colors of his garments vary in the different performances from bright and colorful to grey and black. His exposed legs become very seductive and playful as they stick out from the ocean of balloons. Where the mummy is sexless, Ruga's creatures are sexy. Atiku performs disidentification in another way than Ruga though: with neuter aesthetics. Both the mummy and the aesthetics in *Senator Yerimas Wedding* suggest a general criticism towards Western essentialism. Atiku, like Ruga, tries to escape definition. The politics of these artworks therefore lie in their way of deconstructing identity.

4.2.2 Performing Différance

In *Who needs identity?* Jamaican cultural theorist Stuart Hall argues that identity is a construction that is organized by differences and power structures. Hall's definition of identity relies on Derrida's *différance* and French philosopher Michel Foucault's school of discourse analysis. The idea of identity as a stable core is rejected; instead, identity is attached to historicization and is always in transformation.⁵⁰

“(…), actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not “who we are” or “where we came from”, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves.” (Hall 1996: 4)

Identity is a dynamic process and it is changing constantly as it is organized by differences and is, to a great extent, defined by others. It is always constructed through the relation to the *Other* and it only exists through hierarchically based dichotomies e.g. man/woman, colonizer/colonized, adult/child, North/South.⁵¹ Hall uses Derrida's *différance* to explain the construction of identity as well as cultural difference.⁵² Identity is assumed by the individual through *différance* and is always destabilized by what is being left out. Each position in the dichotomy depends on each other and

⁴⁹ See appendix vi (p. 89): Athi-Patra Ruga (2010-), *The Future Women of Azania*.

⁵⁰ Stuart Hall: *Who Needs Identity* pp. 3-4.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Hall: p. 6.

therefore the dominant position (the *colonizer*) will invariably destabilize if the perception of the *colonized* changes. *Différance* is the manifestation of this order and it is an intentionally misspelled word play referring to the word “*differer*” meaning either “to differ” or “to defer”. In the West, we are focused on what Derrida calls the *metaphysics of presence*.⁵³ According to Derrida, metaphysics associated with presence are highly valued in the West and the “metaphysics of presence” define all other metaphysics. In this system of value, the ultimate presence is identity. And the only way to challenge and deconstruct this system is to displace the relation between the dichotomies.⁵⁴

Atiku's body of work is a constant negotiation of identity and his performances are highly political, placing the performing body (himself) in a precarious position. Because his own body is present in his art works, his performances are always presenting parallel identities through his performative body and through his concepts: the identity of an artist struggling with cultural amnesia and suppression and, depending on the specific performance, phantasmal identities coming to haunt us. In *Senator Yerima's Wedding* he is that little girl about to get married and he is the man marrying her. He is the ambiguity of the event. He is the conflicting narrative of the performance. The actual wedding has become a tale since nobody is really aware of the content and the formalities concerning the event. Atiku reacts to that tale by creating new histories and new identities. His mix of cultural references makes it impossible for the audience to find recognition or *identification*; even to passers-by who, in some instances, think the wedding is *real*, shouting profanities at him. The performance will therefore represent absence as an artwork since it is absorbed by its surroundings: not artwork and not, not artwork. The subjects presented in Atiku's performances, represent absence - they represent absence because they cannot be defined through the metaphysics of presence. They are tangible but indefinable.

⁵³ Derrida bases his theory on German philosopher Martin Heidegger who in *Being and Time* (p. 26), argues that the concept of time in Western philosophy has remained the same since Aristoteles' definition in *Physics* in ancient times. This concept of time values presence.

⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida: “Signature événement contexte” in: *Marges de la Philosophie*, pp. 392-393. (Derrida 1972)

4.2.3 Phantoms of the Past, Present and Future

Like the groom's fabric in *Senator Yerima's Wedding*, the choice of wedding dress for the young bride *Jololo* is a statement of historical influences on the present. Dressed in a white wedding dress, with a tiara on her head and high glitter stilettos, she represents Christianity and a modern Westernized Nigeria. The white dress is a remnant of the former colonizer (Great Britain) with roots in the Christian wedding tradition. It is becoming more common in modern Nigerian Christian weddings for bride and groom to dress in a Western style but a white wedding dress would not be seen in the context at a Nigerian Muslim wedding. The wedding thus creates a somewhat chaotic mosaic of cultures and traditions. It is a re-enactment of an actual wedding but the symbolic nature of the performative objects and the *global melange* of these at the same form an imaginary wedding; or even a phantom wedding with references to Nigeria's turbulent history. Surrounded by ghosts of the past, the Senator marries his young bride.

Atiku deals with ghosts in his works most explicitly in his performance series *In the Red*. It is an on-going performance project that to date consists of 16 performances where Atiku embodies an androgynous mummy-like creature. Wrapped in red fabric reminds the audience of the human tendency towards violence and crisis.⁵⁵ The mummy-like creature with its sculpturesque qualities is neither woman nor man, neither black nor white, "not ghost, not, not ghost". His performative body takes the form of a dead person – a spirit – coming back to haunt the living. In *Spectres de Marx* Derrida begins his foreword with questioning the following statement: "Je voudrais apprendre a vivre enfin." (Derrida 1993: 13). To Derrida, it is evident that to learn how to live is learning how to live with ghosts: the ghosts of the past and the ghosts of the future.⁵⁶ The foreword presents a political aspect in Derrida's work following the fall of communism at the end of the Cold War and the victory of Western liberalism. The mission with his book is to receive the ghost of Karl Marx and to learn how to live with this particular ghost. Time is not ready to put Marx's ghost to rest and Derrida investigates the character of a ghost and reaches the conclusion that a ghost is always the same but every time we meet it, it is new. When it haunts, it will

⁵⁵ See appendix i: Jelili Atiku (2013), *In the Red #16: Obaranikosi*.

⁵⁶ Jacques Derrida: *Spectres de Marx*, pp. 14-15 (Derrida 1993).

therefore always be the first time it haunts. It goes beyond the construction of time.⁵⁷ Essentially, the ghost is a radical *other* because it challenges our perception of the self and it distorts the dichotomies that we hold on to in virtue of being from elsewhere and nowhere; timeless and location-less.

“Le sujet qui hante n’est pas identifiable, on ne peut voir, localiser, arrêter aucune forme, on ne peut décider entre l’hallucination et la perception, il y a seulement des déplacements, on se sent regardé par ce qu’on ne voit pas.” (Derrida 1993: 216)

4.2.4 Not, not Humans & Spirits

Egungun is a ceremony consisting of different events for honoring the dead according to different traditions within the Yoruba culture. In Egungun festivals, families, whose lineages have the right to perform Egungun, will dance and parade while wearing masks woven in fabric and covering their entire bodies. The Egungun represents something divine and today they also represent the spirits of ancestors. The Egungun masks are seen to be the physical representation of spirits but the spirits do not represent specific dead ancestors and they have descriptive names referring to the sacred origin of the spirits.⁵⁸ In *Yoruba ritual: performers, play, agency*, Drewal explains about the performers wearing the masks: “Presenting themselves as hybrids, they are not human – but to use Schechner’s double negative (1985: 110) – they are not, not human; not monkey, but not, not monkey” (Drewal 1992: 92). Additionally, the identity of the Egungun performers is always unknown, which suggests that it is, in fact, spirits coming to haunt the living.

There is a great respect surrounding the mysteries of Egungun, and it is not allowed for the audience to touch the participants of the Egungun. Egungun are today still highly respected and the participants are always watchful and keep an eye on their every movement in order to avoid getting touched. This awareness can to some extent explain the local reception of *In the Red* in Nigeria, though only to some extent because the spectators are, like anywhere else in the world, not a homogenous mass with the same set of values and references; thus not all spectators would thereby know

⁵⁷ Derrida 1993: pp. 16-17.

⁵⁸ Drewal: pp. 91-91.

about the Egungun tradition. The audience in Lagos for *Red Light* might well be afraid of the mummy and they are not at all tempted to touch it or provoke it. In the first part of the performance the mummy makes a sudden move and jumps into the air, runs towards the masses and then suddenly stops. At this point, the spectators are screaming and running for their lives.⁵⁹ In a way, there is a collective idea of how to welcome a ghost. When *Obaranikosi* was performed in Copenhagen, the audience reacted very differently. Few would show the same fear or respect when the mummy came towards them as they did in *Red Light*, others would stand their ground maybe even approach the mummy when it came near. It is possible that we are more used to contemporary performance art in public spaces in Copenhagen and thus react with curiosity according to our individual perception of what is expected from us as an audience. It could also be that we are just not used to welcoming a ghost. How do you even welcome a ghost? It is not something most of us will think about.

4.2.5 Welcoming a Ghost

Spectres de Marx introduces the concept of *hauntology* (the study of ghosts), which challenges *ontology* (the study of being). Hauntology is no different from Derrida's deconstruction since it disrupts the relationship between being and not being: The specter is neither being nor non-being.⁶⁰ Furthermore, deconstruction's awareness of the marginalized in language (and thereby those less valued in the Western system of metaphysical presence) is not just an endless play with words. It is an emphasis on history's repressed and unheard voices, which becomes evident in Derrida's dedication in *Spectres de Marx*: "Permettez-moi de saluer la mémoire de Chris Hani et de lui dédier cette conférence" (Derrida 1993: 12). Hani was the leader of SACP⁶¹; he fought for equal rights in South Africa and was the victim of a political assassination in 1993 during the negotiations that would lead to the end of the apartheid. His death sparked demonstrations and violence, which made Nelson Mandela appeal for reconciliation while asking South Africans to stand together and fight those who "wish to destroy

⁵⁹ Andersen, Løvholm & Nielsen: *Lagos in the Red*, 9.16 min.

⁶⁰ Derrida 1993: pp. 17-18.

⁶¹ South African Communist Party played a central role in the abolition of apartheid.

what Chris Hani gave his life for – the freedom of all of us.”⁶² To both Derrida and Mandela, Hani is one of history's ghosts that are worth welcoming.

Derrida's concept of ghost is described through Shakespeare's Hamlet, Karl Marx, and Max Stirner, and his ghost brings associations of the Messiah. And welcoming this ghost requires an open and anticipating attitude. Derrida argues that the event is not as one would assume, an action belonging to the present. He says the following about the event: “il y'aura eu de l'événement” (Derrida 1974: 269). The event to him is future past making it impossible to articulate anything about the event as it occurs and instead relying on the future's retrospect to decide if it took place or not. The event has taken place if it extends anticipation. Anticipation is a central element in performance art because it creates a space between fiction and reality. The question in this regard is: what would you expect from a ghost - or a red mummy for that matter?

4.2.6 The Memory of Flesh Remains

American performance theorist Rebecca Schneider suggests that performance is a medium of disappearance negotiating the conditions of the material.⁶³ She quotes and renegotiates American performance theorist Peggy Phelan's assumption that performance “becomes itself through disappearance”. Phelan is known for valuing the live experience of performance and its ephemerality. The quote must therefore be understood in an ontological sense. And Schneider obviously distorts the way it is meant to be understood by suggesting that performance passes through disappearance. She calls it the political manipulations of disappearance that questions the praise of ephemerality in performance and connects it to ritual; rites of passage where a person is asked to redefine and find oneself in the repetition.⁶⁴ It is first of all a confrontation with the metaphysics of presence. However, it also suggests performance as a transcending medium. In her investigation of disappearance, Schneider refers to death as the ultimate paradox between disappearances and remains; she uses the metaphor of flesh (as disappearance) and bones (as remains) to elaborate this paradox. Schneider

⁶² www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv02039/04lv02133/05lv02149/06lv02153.htm

⁶³ Rebecca Schneider: “Re-do: Performance-rester” in *Peripeti 14* p. 29. (Schneider 2010)

⁶⁴ Ibid.

asks if the memory of flesh might remain.⁶⁵ As mentioned earlier, Schneider questions the relation between flesh and bones in Western historiography and looks at the remains of disappearance, which inevitably changes the concept of achieving remains. *In the Red* embodies the remains of flesh like Egungun. The red bandages are the physical representation of ghosts and of the memory of flesh. Flesh that once was human now is death. Disappearance then also becomes the gruesome event we prefer to ignore. Atiku forces us to face this disappearance. And if the memory of flesh remains, performance is perhaps a ghost itself.

4.2.7 Postcolonial Ghosts

In the book *Postcolonial Ghosts*, Dutch professor in globalization studies Esther Peeren challenges Derrida's representation of spirits since he, despite his intention of confronting Western ontology, still is tied to Western epistemology. Derrida does not articulate cultural difference in his representation of hauntology and his ghost, while appearing to represent a sort of universality, is in fact a Judeo-Christian ghost: Derrida's ghost evokes a kind of horror or drive towards exorcism.⁶⁶ Peeren therefore questions Derrida's idea of welcoming a ghost because it is so closely connected to Christian logic. The welcoming of the ghost is connected to the welcoming of the Messiah. The logic behind Derrida's understanding of haunting is Western, the reader he is addressing is Western and therefore he does not present an adequate representation of hauntology. Peeren, on the other hand, examines Yoruba culture and explains how it accepts the idea of ghosts. The affect a ghost provokes comes from the intention of the ghost itself instead of merely being an act of haunting. The feelings towards ghosts therefore depend on whether it is good or evil.⁶⁷ This observation is very relevant because the concept of ghost is related to culture and, as mentioned above, Lagos spectators of Atiku's *In the Red* do react differently from the spectators in Copenhagen when confronted with the horrifying red ghost – red traditionally representing suffering. This straightforwardness towards ghosts is also present in a

⁶⁵ Schneider 2010: pp. 27-28.

⁶⁶ Esther Peeren: "The Postcolonial and/as the Spirit World: Theorizing the Ghost in Jacques Derrida, Achille Mbembe and Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*" in: *Postcolonial Ghosts*, pp. 329-330. (Peeren)

⁶⁷ Peeren: p. 333.

blog post on *Nairaland* titled “Are Ghosts living on Third Mainland Bridge”⁶⁸. The Third Mainland Bridge is the bridge Atiku crosses on a tuk-tuk in his performance *Obaranikosi* and the blog post refers to the crimes and accidents that occur on a daily basis on the bridge. The blog post shows how using ghosts as metaphors for unsettling occurrences is common in Nigeria.

In her analysis, Peeren argues that a sole focus on Derrida's presentation of ghosts would be incomplete and she prefers to include Mbembe's notion of *the living dead* from *De la Postcolonie* in her analysis.⁶⁹ She does note, however, that using Cameroonian Mbembe in relation to spirits in Yoruba culture also has its challenges. Mbembe uses the ghost as a metaphor for the sovereignty of states in postcolonial Africa. To him, the states possess a ghostly power, which is connected to the power to rule over life and death. This metaphorical concept is closely related to the so-called *necropolitics* and Peeren refers to Mbembe's article “Necropolitics” from 2003 to exemplify survival and violence: to Mbembe, survival means the death of the other.⁷⁰ There are several concepts of ghosts in Mbembe's Africa diagnosis and the citizen subjected to the ghostly sovereign power also becomes a ghost; a powerless ghost that is – or even a living dead.

4.2.8 Should Atiku's representation of identity be read through Derrida's *hauntology*?

The metaphysics of presence reveals how presence is highly valued in the West with identity being the ultimate presence. Through hauntology, Derrida suggests that ghosts challenge the dichotomy between absence and presence. Atiku's representation of identity deconstructs the metaphysics of presence and his way of performing identity simply suggests a concept of presence, which is not bound to Western essentialism. Atiku's way of performing identity relates to principles from the Yoruba Egungun tradition. Spirits in Egungun challenge presence and thereby identity.

⁶⁸ Nairaland is an online community for Nigerians: <http://www.nairaland.com/1594129/ghosts-living-third-mainland-bridge#20888523>

⁶⁹ Peeren: p. 331.

⁷⁰ Peeren: p. 339.

However, both Atiku's performances can be read through Derrida's hauntology. As mentioned above, *Senator Yerima's Wedding* becomes a phantom wedding. It is based on a real wedding that has become a tale and Atiku's representation of this wedding manifests Nigeria's colonial past. These references are incorporated into clashes in the chosen fabrics, attire, gestures and the choice of words, but the wedding also presents past in a new way. Likewise, *In the Red* is a representation of the past in the present. Here, the violent history of human beings is embodied in the androgynous red mummy. Like the masks in Egungun that are the physical representation of spirits, the red bandages are the physical representation of ghosts. The color red refers to suffering and the ghosts coming back to haunt are those who suffered a violent death. The body of this ghost does not know gender and it therefore reminds us (the Western observer) of our own way of constructing identities. It escapes the metaphysics of presence.

However, the question is if the spectral aspect in the performances should be read through Derrida. Yoruba traditions are intentionally incorporated in Atiku's artistic practice as a political statement. Therefore, the ghosts present in his performances are most possibly connected to this philosophy.

4.3 Decolonization

4.3.1 Limited Space

"The true history of the postwar British art is the history of an interaction and dialogue between artists of all races and cultures and its achievement is the achievement of multiracial society. But the system is unwilling to accept this because of the prevailing dominant view that AfroAsian or black artists cannot yet occupy a central space in the history of modern art, and this view is reinforced by an unwarranted intervention by a cultural theory which postulates a separate (sic) and an alternative 'in-between' space for AfroAsian artists with total disregard of the collective historical achievement of white and black artists." (Araeen 2001: 98)

When British/Pakistani artist and cultural critic, Rasheed Araeen says in the above quote "*a cultural theory which postulates*", he is referring to postcolonial theory presented by theorists as Bhabha. In Bhabha's effort to describe the complexity of

postcolonial exchange there will always be a risk of interpreting it as a praise of hybridity and in-between spaces. Araeen makes an important observation in the article “Re-thinking history and some other things” when criticizing the tendency to insist on separating *Afro-Asian* artists from the general art discourse. Because, as Oguibe states in *Reading the Contemporary – African Art from Theory to Marketplace*, the only way to get past a derogatory approach to African art is to accept it for its inherent artistic value to general art discourse.

Araeen investigates the idea behind the 'The Living Archive' of the African and Asian Visual Artists' Archive (AAVAA) in Britain for the journal *Third Text*. The archive was created during a time when non-white artists were not exhibited or recognized on the British art scene. Araeen expresses concern with the need for such an archive today as it suggests that artists with African and Asian heritage working in Great Britain are not on the same artistic level as white artist coming from Great Britain. It imposes an exoticism on the artworks of African and Asian artists by grouping them together and separating them from general contemporary British art. Furthermore, it forces these artists to articulate their art in a specific way with focus on specific themes that fits and reaffirms those stereotypical concepts. He describes a tendency on the British art scene where non-white artists tend to focus on their cultural background in their art and he explains how those artists are trapped in narrow institutional spaces while being forced to focus on themes like diaspora, hybridity and postcolonialism.⁷¹ They are trapped since there is no other space available to them to enter. If they want to be part of the general art scene, they must fit into this limited perception of what non-white artists focus on.⁷²

Nigerian/British artist Yinka Shonibare (MBE), who works within the field of postcolonialism, states in an interview for Art21 that “working as a black artist is twice as difficult”⁷³ and that his artistic approach is simply a way of getting a foothold in the system. Acknowledging that there is a limited space and many preconceived notions of what a non-white artist should work with, he would rather enter the limited space available and from there challenge the art discourse. He presents an anecdote in an

⁷¹ Rasheed Araeen: “Re-thinking history and some other things” in: *Third Text Spring 2001*, pp. 93-95. (Araeen)

⁷² Araeen: p. 98.

⁷³ Art21: “Yinka Shonibare MBE: Black Artist” www.youtube.com/watch?v=DeTA_m4IKes

interview with *The New York Times*⁷⁴ where his former art tutor confronted him with his African origin. He explains:

“I should have actually understood all along that there is a way in which one is perceived, and there’s no getting away from it. And I realized that if I didn’t deal with it, I would just be described forever as a black artist who doesn’t make work about being black.”⁷⁵

The situation for an artist like Atiku living and working in his home country Nigeria is of course different from artists like Shonibare (who lives between two cultures). Racial discourses become more present for Shonibare. However, Araeen’s criticism is relevant, not only to the British art scene but to the international art scene as well. The reason why artists from Africa are expected to deal with postcolonialism is to please a Western dominated art scene. The difficult task of translation that Bhabha emphasizes in *The Location of Culture* through German philosopher Walter Benjamin is made easier by constructing limited spaces for these artists to navigate in or to base an analysis on. This is why the reading of the artworks in this thesis is seen through a postcolonial discourse, making the translation more comprehensive for a Western art audience.

4.3.2 Sublating the Grand Narratives

Enwezor describes how the art world is affected by *Westernism* in the introduction to the 11th edition of the quadrennial Documenta in Kassel (which he curated). Westernism is a global integration process based on two phases: capitalism and “the perpetual interpretation of what a just society is”, which is predominantly a secular society. He explains this integration through German philosopher Jürgen Habermas’ distinction between societies and the life world. Enwezor further elaborates further on this distinction through the perception on non-Western countries’ development as a climb towards Westernism. Additionally, this perception sees the development

⁷⁴ “Headless Bodies From a Bottomless Imagination” in *The New York Times*, 17.06.09.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

momentarily stuck between tribal and modern, underdeveloped and developed, and theocratic and secular.⁷⁶

The art world itself is also affected by Westernism as it is divided into curated and curating cultures suggesting that the job Enwezor himself occupies as a curator is mainly a Westerner's privilege.⁷⁷ The role of the curator is about framing and narrating so the imbalance Enwezor describes in the art scene is a case of telling *the other's* story. This very thesis, and the performance in Copenhagen curated by two white Danish women, is, if we follow this mind-set, somewhat problematic.⁷⁸ However, internationally recognized artists like Atiku are in a position to pick and choose with whom to work and are highly engaged in discussions surrounding their art. Performance art to Atiku is not simply an instantaneous event but something generating much more than the act itself: for instance, he has published work as a continuation of his performances in order to approach critics, fellow artists and researchers asking them to contribute to the continuation of his performance. Initiatives like this give him the status of a curator of his own work. Furthermore, Enwezor's argument should not be read as a definitive elimination of Westerners' representation of art from Africa but rather as a concern towards an existing imbalance. Enwezor's concerns can be traced back to his criticism of a Westernism overshadowing the global art scene. There is a tendency to think of contemporary art as a Western construction because it is so closely related to the concept of modernism. Postcolonialism is, like postmodernism, a confrontation with the universal ideas of modernism. It is the end to all grand narratives; especially the Eurocentric narrative of modernism as the universal truth applicable to all cultures around the world. The transcendence of grand narratives into something new suggests a discontent with the general world order – or, as Enwezor calls it, Westernism.⁷⁹ Enwezor wishes to distinguish between the two declaring that postcolonialism, opposed to a postmodernism that wishes to challenge the idea of grand narratives, seeks to: “sublate and replace all grand narratives through new ethical demands on modes of historical interpretation” (Enwezor 2002: 45).

⁷⁶ Enwezor 2002: p. 46.

⁷⁷ Enwezor 2002: pp. 45-46.

⁷⁸ Maria Bordoff: *Danish neo-feminism and Nigerian performance art*.

⁷⁹ Okwui Enwezor: "The Black Box" in *Documenta 11_Platform 5: Exhibition*, pp. 45-46.(Enwezor 2002)

4.3.3 Modernities

Enwezor identifies in his speech at Tate Modern's Triennial *Altermodern*, curated by Nicholas Bourriaud in 2009, two notions of *modernity*: that it is European and that it can be transferred to non-European countries.⁸⁰ Enwezor goes on to question the idea of modernity as a universal truth that can be translated into non-European cultures and calls this idea of modernity *European imperialism*. He suggests a more complex and nuanced way of looking at modernity by suggesting that there are several *modernities*. Enwezor wishes to look at modernity *provincially* and he suggests that there is no single linear timeline in modernism. The notion of contemporary art is linked to modernity and it is therefore important to look at art in a local context instead of applying a universal thought that is in fact a Western construction. Enwezor gives an example by explaining the absurdity of looking for pop art in China in the 1960's in order to determine the culture's level of development. Pop art, which was a direct response to the consumer society and mass media in America, is untranslatable into a Chinese context since there was no such thing as a mass culture in China in the 1960s. But this absence does not mean that there did not exist as progressive contemporary art in China at that time.⁸¹ Enwezor goes on to describe a hierarchy of four modernities with the lowest being *aftermodern* – Africa's modernism. And according to Enwezor, Africa, unlike the Middle East (that has made a recognized contribution to the history books with the Islamic Golden Age), has not been making history and is therefore the antithesis to modernity. The notion of Africa is therefore absence of modernity.⁸² It is wrong to say that Africa has not been making history; the African histories have just not been made the way Western historiography works.

Atiku expresses his project as a "*decolonial*" one. Decolonial in the sense that he wishes to trace back his roots to a time before the event of colonialism and detach himself from the colonial structures and discourses. Both his native language and traditions have been suppressed during the process of colonialism and for Atiku decolonial aesthetics are expressed by incorporating elements of his Yoruba heritage

⁸⁰ Enwezor 2009: p. 27.

⁸¹ Enwezor 2009: p. 28.

⁸² Enwezor 2009: p. 28.

into his performance art; e.g. objects and concepts from Egungun or with Yoruba vocabulary used to preserve memories and cultural heritage through the use of lost words. In addition, Drewal calls the tradition of the Yoruba culture more modern than modernism when explaining the complex system of costumes for the Egungun festivals. The costumes that are associated with specific families and spirits are not fixated on a specific appearance but can easily change, which explains why masks from the Second World War can be seen on the performers: “Unfixed and unstable. Yoruba ritual is more modern than modernism itself.” (Drewal 1992: 20) Everything has been defined and established by the colonizer, which makes one modernity replace another modernity. Instead of mourning the decay of colonial structures in Africa, Enwezor looks at it as an inevitable development creating a gap for a new modernity to evolve in accordance with German philosopher Jürgen Habermas’ theories that modernity is an incomplete project.⁸³

4.3.4 The Missing Link

In the article “Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age” German art historian Hans Belting criticizes the Western concept of collecting and displaying objects. He questions contemporary art museums’ *raison d’être* and survival in the new global art landscape. By directing the challenges museum institutions face in this new age, Belting explains the history and relationship of what he calls *ethnic art* to the Western museum. He describes how postcolonial cultures around the world have been deprived their own history primarily because many *artifacts* or *ethnic art pieces* were taken to museums in the West where they were literally placed out of their context in a another culture.⁸⁴ But also because these objects lost their meaning and value by being placed in museum display cabinets, dislocating them from their performative purpose:

“Local audiences could no longer recognize masks that lost their reference to living bodies, appearing as useless objects in a collection where the former owners had even lost control of the objects’ protected meaning. The problem, moreover, was the clash with

⁸³ Enwezor 2009: pp. 38-39.

⁸⁴ Hans Belting: “Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age” in: *Contemporary Art and the Museum: A Global Perspective*, p. 18.

memorial strategies of the West, which resulted in reification and objecthood (sic) while indigenous memory could survive only in living performance.” (Belting 2007: 18-19)

According to Belting, another issue is the dispute on whether *ethnic art* should be placed in art museums or ethnographic museums in addition to the label *primitive art* suggesting an inferior art form. These issues have led him to the conclusion that there is a conflict between the contemporary art museum and *non-Western* contemporary artists. He simply asks, “Where do they [non-Western artists] belong?”⁸⁵ The question he poses criticizes the contemporary art museum and is a rejection of its relevance on the global art scene.

The criticism of the art museum as an institution relates to the art discourse of “*institutional critique*”. This form of commentary was made into art in the 1960s through conceptual art often taking place in public spaces since it is a criticism of the institution as a concept that has a specific way of addressing a select audience. In recent years, artists have challenged the idea of the institution and its apparent *Westernism*. For the 2003 Venice Biennial, American artist Fred Wilson created a conceptual piece, *Speak of Me as I am*⁸⁶, for the American pavilion and as part of the project that seeks to investigate otherness in the history of Venice.⁸⁷ He invited what appeared to be an immigrant street vendor from West Africa, who makes a living selling fake luxury bags to Venice’s tourists, to be part of the biennial. Instead of waiting for costumers in Venice’s streets as the vendors usually do, the outdoor pavilion space served as the black market for fake luxury goods as the vendor appeared to be there to sell bags and interact with the biennial audience. The vendor was in fact a regular tourist hired to play a West African immigrant in Venice for the purpose of the biennial and the *fake bags* were created by Wilson himself. This institutional criticism seeks to question the established frames for looking at art and also criticizes the art discourse itself - making it evident by placing a colored tourist with luxury bags in the middle of the Venice biennial where the audience is mostly a homogeneous

⁸⁵ Belting: p. 20.

⁸⁶ The title refers to Shakespeare’s tragedy *Othello*. The title is a quote from the play where the main character Othello, a colored general in the service of the Venetian Republic, realizes what he has done and decides to kill himself. It is part of his testament about how he would like to be remembered. The play deals with race and Wilson use the quote out of context to express racial discourse.

⁸⁷ Appendix vii (p. 90): Fred Wilson (2003), *Speak of Me as I am*.

mass of intellectual white Westerners.

Atiku's artistic strategy is deeply rooted in both institutional critique as presented by Belting, to whom institutions historically have deprived the former colonies their history, and also by Wilson, to whom the audience in an art institution is often homogenous. By insisting on doing most of the performances in the streets of his high-density neighborhood Ejigbo, Atiku implicitly criticizes the idea of art as a commodity and art for the select few. Today, the Nigerian art scene is well established with both a contemporary art scene in the form of galleries (e.g. the internationally recognized Centre for Contemporary Art located in the Lagosian suburb Yaba) and with auction houses located in the exclusive Ikoyi neighborhood (selling art to rich Nigerian and foreign costumers). By simply performing in the streets of his neighborhood Atiku avoids interacting with solely the cultural elite in Yaba or the rich elite in Ikoyi. They are welcome to participate in his performances but most of the time it will be on his conditions as his performances are for the ordinary people simply passing by. Furthermore, in his performances Atiku manages to connect the institutional critique with the discourse of Westernism. The criticism of the Western art museum and history production relates to the way artifacts from his cultural heritage is displayed; with few gestures, Atiku shows how these artifacts are supposed to exist in a performative context and not in a static museum display. He expresses the *missing link* between contemporary performance art and his own Yoruba roots.

4.3.5 Politics of the Signified

Zairian literary theorist V. Y. Mudimbe, noted for his critical book *The Invention of Africa*, also looks beyond the universalism that controls the art discourse when he describes three trends in African art in Enwezor & Oguibe's anthology *Reading the contemporary – African Art from Theory to Marketplace*. He looks specifically at art from several African countries and examines the trends in relation to their context in the article "Reprendre: Enunciations and Strategies in Contemporary African Arts". He describes the following trends: tradition-inspired, modernist and popular. Mudimbe emphasizes the latter trend by expressing how it places itself between the traditional and the modern trend by drawing on ethnic history while at the same time

deconstructing history.⁸⁸ African popular art distinguishes itself from the exotic perception of what African art is by creating a new language that articulates the postcolonial experience:

“This work reflected a drive to say and illustrate something new, to transcend the crisis of tribal societies and art disorganised by the impact of European culture, and to express the emerging new consciousness.” (Enwezor & Oguibe 1999: 39).

First of all, the term “African popular art” is very broad but it can also be interpreted rather condescendingly. However, Mudimbe narrows down the term by describing the characteristics of this trend in visual art as a figurative movement that uses a system of symbols to get unambiguous messages across. This movement in visual art often uses text as well for the sake of clarification. The presentation is a manipulation and displacement of symbols. Flaws and inadequate techniques are used as a statement challenging the aesthetical discourse of art. It is a narrative trend that seeks to renegotiate history and the paintings portray historical events or phenomena through their explicit messages that often are anti-imaginary which leads Mudimbe in his argumentation to question their qualification as artworks. Nevertheless, he concludes that they are indeed part of an art discourse in their significant way of symbolizing history; he uses the term *reprendre* to explain this process.⁸⁹ *Reprendre* can be understood as reclaiming, renegotiating and simply retaking the right to write history. This trend of popular art rearticulates history and by doing so it treats the *politics of the signified*.⁹⁰

There are no non-white artists in the art history of great masters from Ancient Greece and Rome, through France and Italy and from there transcending into contemporary art. You will hardly see non-white painters in the figurative sections of international art museums and it is possible to read the figurative trend in the works of those African artists Mudimbe classifies as popular artists as a strategy of appropriating art history in the works of these African artists Mudimbe classifies as

⁸⁸ V. J. Mudimbe: “*Reprendre: Enunciations and Strategies in Contemporary African Arts*” in: *Reading the Contemporary – African Art from Theory to Marketplace*, p. 46.(Enwezor & Oguibe)

⁸⁹ Enwezor & Oguibe: pp. 40-41.

⁹⁰ Enwezor & Oguibe: p. 45.

popular artists. Performance is another way of appropriating art history. There are clear parallels between the popular trend Mudimbe describes in African visual art and the Atiku's performance *Senator Yerima's Wedding* from 2013. Like the paintings portraying historical events in a specific symbolic manner, *Senator Yerima's Wedding* is a re-enactment of an event that made history three years after it happened. The symbols in the performance are hard to overlook.

4.3.6 Art as Affect

It is important to note that Mudimbe in his dissemination of popular art takes a semiotic approach to art when looking for signs representing meaning in the paintings. In terms of Atiku's performance art, it is important to further expand this analytical approach by looking at affect. Affective studies suggest that artworks can also be understood through the emotions they provoke and Atiku's performances are often devised to encourage certain feelings. German theatre researcher Erika Fischer-Lichte questions modern aesthetics in search for a new aesthetic to describe the performative tendency she sees in visual art, theatre, music and literature since the 1960s "fluxus-movement" – *a performative turn*. In the book *The Transformative Power of Performance* Fischer-Lichte describes this performative turn in art that calls for new aesthetics – *aesthetics of the performative*. She treats the affective nature of performance art through the legendary performance *Lips of Thomas* by performance artist Marina Abramovic in 1974. *Lips of Thomas* is a transgression of the body's boundaries: Abramovic starts off the performance by eating 1 kilo of honey, then by drinking 1 liter of red wine, breaking the wine glass with her hand, and cutting a five-pointed star into her stomach with a razor blade, followed by her whipping herself with a leather whip, and finally lying down on a cross made out of ice-blocks. Above her is a heater pointed towards her stomach, making the star-shaped cut bleed. After lying on the ice block for about 30 minutes, a member of the audience intervenes by carrying away Abramovic. The performance touches upon Christian rituals and capitalism's consumer society, and there are many signs and symbols ready for interpretation.⁹¹ However, Fischer-Lichte argues that the performance is first and

⁹¹ Erika Fischer-Lichte: *The Transformative Power of Performance*, pp. 17-18 .(Fischer-Lichte)

foremost experienced rather than interpreted:

“Such a performance eludes the scope of traditional aesthetic theories. It vehemently resists the demands of hermeneutic aesthetics, which aims at understanding the work of art. In this case, understanding the artist's actions was less important than the experiences that he had while carrying them out and that were generated in the audience.” (Fischer-Lichte 2008: 16)

Fischer-Lichte describes how Abramovic in *Lips of Thomas* rejects the aesthetics' distinction between subject and object making the audiences' interpretation more challenging. Her action of pushing her body's limits is the artwork. It is, according to Fischer-Lichte, not possible to separate artist from artwork in this specific performance and therefore the artwork is an event rather than an independent object. And, according to Derrida, what makes it an event is the surpassing of anticipation. The relationship between subject and object becomes blurred and cannot be determined precisely, which makes the specific relations impossible to classify; e.g. is the intervention by a member of the audience an act of compassion between two subjects, an objectification of the performer, or does the audience simply become puppets to the artist? The transformation of the relationship between subject and object in performance art makes the materiality of the act dominant. The performance can be self-referential and reality constitutive. It is a turn towards looking at what the audience experience and how they are affected rather than a focus on what the signs mean. Amelia Jones also argues for an acceptance of experiencing performance art's affect. Her claim touches upon to the refusal towards looking at the affective impact of an artwork in the art discourse, allowing art to be seen as touching. In suggesting this affective turn, she defends a phenomenological approach to performance art just as Fischer-Lichte does.⁹²

Fischer-Lichte calls the hermeneutic aesthetics outdated and she calls for new aesthetics since the conditions for artistic production have changed, thus suggesting a more phenomenological approach to performance art as well as to art in general.⁹³ In this phenomenological approach she does not abandon semiotics completely as the methodological approach would otherwise suggest. She continues to explore and look

⁹² Jones: p. 68.

⁹³ Fischer-Lichte: p. 17.

for signs and symbols in the art works in a dynamic way. This performative turn implies process rather than autonomy in the production of art, making the meaning (*the signified*) of symbols (*the signifier*) vary according to the specific context. Atiku's performances evoke different feelings especially according to the context they are performed in. *Obaranikosi* performed in Lagos and Copenhagen offers completely different experiences and the spectators experiencing it have different references. In Copenhagen the spectators entered an installation in the end of the performance that was designed to make them step out of their comfort zone – navigating through stretched out wires. The comfort zone in *Senator Yerima's Wedding* was also challenged as the spectators were invited to a marriage between a man and a child.

4.3.7 Re-enacting a Wedding

Just like Abramovic's *Lips of Thomas*, people were provoked by *Senator Yerima's Wedding* and they, if we follow Fischer-Lichte's ideas of performance as a process, had the power to influence the event like they did in *Lips of Thomas* by simply removing Abramovic from her own performance. Some were provoked because they thought it was a real wedding happening between a middle-aged man and a young girl. Others were provoked by Atiku undressing the young girl down to her undergarments and lying down next to her in the side of the street. Atiku starts the performance by having his young bride standing on a podium for about 10 minutes, their presence already creates a crowd from the beginning and by the time Atiku locks her in the wagon cage and starts pushing her around the neighborhood (as a trophy or an animal), the two performers are completely surrounded by people making it hard for Atiku to hand out the carefully printed wedding program explaining the context of this event. Atiku wrote a wedding program for the event, which includes the song "Great is Thy Resolution" a take on the Christian hymn "Great is thy Faithfulness". The statement in the re-enactment of this historical event in Nigeria's history of child abuse and neglect is very clear: A Muslim man is using power, religion and money to take a modern day slave. However, it is also a statement of modern Nigeria – at times a dangerous melting pot of cultures and religions. The crowd helps Atiku distribute the wedding program, which in detail explains the political context of the wedding to the audience. The order of the photo session presents all the names of the senators voting for the proposal. And

in case one would not understand the relationship between the names, Atiku carefully placed a comment in the wedding program that reads:

“The Senators who voted NO, that is those who did not want the clause deleted, include the following”.⁹⁴

The program, looking like any typical wedding program, states on the front page: “This is object of performance by Jelili Atiku”. Interestingly, these explicit indications do not reach everyone and some people use profanities and shout at Atiku, that what he is doing is wrong. However, nobody actually stops him; in fact, people help him at one point when his wagon gets stuck in a pool of water. In a country where mob justice is reality, it is rather daring to perform such a provocative act.

The wedding ritual has been described in early performativity theory by J.L. Austin in the book *How To Do Things With Words* (1975) as a speech act. Austin divides speech events into “constatives” (“there is a couple getting married”) and “performatives” (“I hereby declare you husband and wife”).⁹⁵ The latter cannot be classified as being either true, false or nonsense; it is simply a speech act executing what it articulates. However, it is necessary to determine the context in order to fully understand which meaning the speech act presents. Austin calls this the intentionality. Derrida, on the other hand, questions Austin’s speech act theory by pointing out that there is always the possibility of failure and production of something unintended in a speech event since it consists of “structures of absence” and *iterability*.⁹⁶ When solely looking at the intended in a speech event, one ignores that language is in itself productive and that reality is constitutive. Atiku does not include verbal gestures in his performances and *Senator Yerima’s Wedding* is no exception. To Atiku, the use of wedding vows would have been descriptive and the performative elements would have been diminished. And by performing a wedding without showing the actual ceremony Atiku does not give the audience the option of stopping the wedding from happening. That moment in Hollywood film weddings when the priest says: “Speak now or forever hold your peace” is not present. The option of intervention for those provoked or

⁹⁴ See appendix ii: Jelili Atiku (2013), *Senator Yerima’s Wedding*, programme.

⁹⁵ John Langshaw Austin: *How to do things with words*, pp. 12-13.

⁹⁶ Derrida 1978: p. 374.

offended is put into gestures instead. And the ones shouting profanities might become aware of Atiku's agenda once they investigate the aesthetics by reading the program that mixes English, Yoruba, and Hausa. The program in itself manifests the consequences of colonization. However, in his criticism there is also a very explicit contempt of the Hausa people living in the North of Nigeria. Atiku wants to express that the idea of child marriage is not part of the Nigeria he knows, thus distancing himself from conservative Islam. In his Yoruba culture, child marriage is a crime. The views juxtaposed in the performance become an example of the conflicts between the many different ethnic groups sharing one nation.

4.3.8 *Is it possible to enact decolonization in a former colony?*

“Modernism often functioned as a barrier protecting Western art from contamination with ethnic or popular art, and it marginalized local production as unprofessional. In response, non-Western art sometimes acted with an antithesis to the claim of universalism that was adherent in modernism.” (Belting 2007: 21)

Decolonialism in Atiku's artistic strategy is a confrontation with colonially applied power structures. Modernity is a colonial structure applied to the way art is understood in Nigeria, first and foremost through the art academies. Contemporary art is historically linked to modernity; however, this concept is not applicable in all cultures. Enwezor questions the idea of modernity as a universal truth and looks at the decay of colonial structures in Africa as a possible gap in which a new modernity can evolve. This notion is still tied to Western historiography, though. Could it be possible for something different to evolve? There are many different artistic strategies that work against the Euro-centric notion of modernity as transferable to all cultures. Decolonial aesthetics and performance art are just some of them. One could even argue that performance art in a Yoruba context in itself is decolonial aesthetics. In Atiku's case, it takes the religious and repetitive aspect out of Yoruba philosophy, changing Egungun from rite to art. Being trained a sculptor and having focused on installation art, Atiku (literally) embodies the principles of creating shapes and spaces in his performances and he thus emphasizes his own cultural heritage that has been suppressed during colonialism.

Atiku's artistic strategy is deeply rooted in institutional critique; both historically with former colonies being deprived their history and contemporarily with a specific cultural elite dominating the art discourse. The circumstances for a Nigerian artist living in Nigeria are different from a Nigerian artist living in diaspora. However, the limited space offered to both artists is a global issue. And Araeen's criticism can also be translated into the context of art from the African continent where artists are forced to deal with the issues of cultural heritage and postcolonialism in order to please a Western-dominated art scene. Atiku does deal with cultural heritage in his art but it is often in ways that are not completely translatable or comprehensible to a Western audience. The reason for that is his decolonial project that also challenges postcolonial thought.

Senator Yerima's Wedding inevitably raises the issues of who is more right: Western human rights, sharia law or Atiku's position of a Yoruba Muslim insisting that child marriage is a crime. *Differend* will be present in every case. In a former colony, the project of decolonization is a dangerous one when values from different ethnic groups clash. These ethnic groups were forced together because of colonialism without any regard to their individual cultures or traditions. And a century after the formation of the country we know today as Nigeria, many are in favor of redrawing the country's borders. The different ethnic groups in Nigeria are still in conflict. Decolonial aesthetics is about proudly embracing the ways of living and thinking that were devalued during the years of colonial rule. The question is how to do that without advocating violent conflict in a country that is culturally divided. Atiku strategically uses affect as a tool to encourage the spectators to form an opinion about the actual wedding. To take Fischer-Lichte's argument, it is unlikely that the audience during *Senator Yerima's Wedding* had an inner dialogue similar to the one above. So if you take away the rational and known references to different ethical values, you are left with a feeling. The feeling Atiku leaves you with is expressed through the image of him and his 13-year old bride lying next to each other almost naked.

4.4 Politics of Performance

4.4.1 Heterochrony

Part of Atiku's decolonial aesthetics manifests itself in a distortion of time. In "Heterochrony in the Act: The Migratory Politics of Time" Dutch cultural theorist Mieke Bal looks at memory through speech act theory by describing how memories are performatively produced in the past but acted out in present.⁹⁷ Bal's intention is to challenge the concept of time by looking at the micro-politics of migratory culture and within this culture she suggests multi-temporality. In Western philosophy time is often based on chronology and we use time as a way of measuring our lives (e.g. how productive we are), which suggests an objective timeliness. The migrant's concept of time is different since time can pass slowly when you are waiting for a residence permit or pass quick if you are trying to collect money to send back to your family. Bal presents the term *heterochrony* in addition to the term *migratory aesthetics* and she explains the experience of multi-temporality as *heterochrony*.⁹⁸ She refers to anthropologist Johannes Fabian who states that "culture is not a situation, space, or state but a process of confrontation" in her argumentation for heterochrony as an analytical tool.⁹⁹

Migratory aesthetics is a fluent phenomenon that embraces migration culture as well as aesthetical representation. And in this regard, heterochrony becomes an analytical tool to approach migratory aesthetics that represent different concepts of time(s), speed and movement.¹⁰⁰ Time is a construction created for the purpose of regulation, and the experience of time is not homogenous.¹⁰¹ Time is understood in terms of objectivity and chronology and Bal states that this way of understanding time is a product of the postcolonial era. She stresses the importance of questioning timely objectivity: "The super-impositions, tensions, and incongruous encounters of different temporalities alert us to the simple but oft-forgotten fact that time is not an objective phenomenon." (Bal 2007: 209). Heterochrony is the distortion of time making it

⁹⁷ Mieke Bal: "Heterochrony in the Act: The Migratory Politics of Time", p. 218.

⁹⁸ Bal: p. 203.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Bal: pp. 203-204.

¹⁰¹ Bal: p. 209.

condensed, wider or thicker and it challenges the ontological separation between past and present.¹⁰² According to Bal, migration has multi-temporality in common with video. Video is a migratory aesthetic that, through its performativity, communicates memories, narratives and experiences, which are unfamiliar to the West.¹⁰³ Heterochrony abandons objectivity and chronology through video presentations and migratory culture.

American/Nigerian performance artist Wura-Natasha Ogunji challenges the concept of time in *My father and I dance in outer space*¹⁰⁴. In the artwork, Ogunji uses stop-motion technique to distort the concept of time and the heterochrony she produces is an attempt to pursue the impossible: she is trying to dance with her deceased Nigerian father. Her movements become unpredictable as she will be jumping in one spot one second, and the next she will appear ten meters further away from the camera. The distortion of her movements makes her look like a bird, and the speed of her jumps is condensed, making her fly. The video's location looks like a pit with mountains of sand and gravel. It could have been shot anywhere and her movements in relation to the sand make the place seem alien or extra-terrestrial. The possible meeting between the two of them is staged in a familiar yet strange place, which refers to their own cultural journey: her father originally being an immigrant to American culture and Ogunji herself born and raised in America, being an alien to Nigerian culture. Ogunji becomes a migrant herself in the video; a migrant into the other world.

4.4.2 Looping

Where Ogunji's artwork specifically deals with migration, Atiku's use of video in his performances simply articulates another perception of time. In the case of *Obaranikosi*, migratory aesthetics are present in the use of the video from the first enactment in Lagos. In *Obaranikosi* performed in Copenhagen, the room Atiku enters is an installation containing balloons, wires, video and drawings. The audience must

¹⁰² Bal: p. 216.

¹⁰³ Bal: pp. 203-205.

¹⁰⁴ http://wuraogunji.com/artwork/1998747_My_father_and_I_dance_in_outer_space.html

enter this art installation if they decide to follow Atiku. He ends his performance inside the installation where a video is projected onto the wall.

The video showing the performance from Lagos is already playing when the audience enters the room. As Atiku enters the room with the video projection, he faces himself in a 14 minute compressed version of his Lagos performance. The video follows Atiku as he sets off in a rowboat in the high-density area Makoko, unintentionally falls into the polluted water, reaches land, leaves Makoko in a tuk-tuk, crosses the Third Mainland Bridge, lies on a busy street on Lagos Island, enters the Federal Government's Printing Press building and cuts off the balloons and then finally removes his red garments. Atiku leaves the printing press factory building and leaves the balloons behind on the floor. The balloons are the memory of his body and as they are laying on the floor, it looks like they are still attached to his body; that his body is still to be found somewhere underneath. Then the video loops and starts over again.

The performance in Copenhagen did not end there either. Atiku left the audience at one point when they were inside the installation and then came back to hand out red papers with handwritten names of wars on them. When he finally did leave the installation, there was perhaps the anticipation of him returning a second time. The spectators therefore sat for quite some time looking at the projected video from Makoko, which looped twice during their time inside the installation, before they started leaving the room. Videos that loop and do not have end titles or other ways of easily determining a beginning and an end tend to confuse. Time here becomes unreliable since it is difficult to know how long the video is or how long the object of documentation is. And in relation to Atiku's body being present next to the video, the notion of time becomes even harder to maintain because the narrative of the video gets intertwined with the narrative of "reality". The narrative of *the end* is challenged. The video conveys the experience of heterochrony, since it negotiates the distinction between past and present. The mummy is a migrant - always alien to its surroundings and perhaps always performing.

4.4.3 Escaping Capitalism

In the book “Unmarked: The Politics of Performance” Peggy Phelan praises the live experience of performance art. To her, performance art has a superior status from other art forms because it consists of individual acts that cannot be repeated or reproduced.¹⁰⁵ Performance art is characterized by being ephemeral and to her this part of performance presents reality: “Performance implicates the real through the presence of living bodies” (Phelan 1993: 148). Phelan suggests here that something can be more real or authentic than something else. She is concerned with presenting how performance art is different from mass media because it resists dominant structures such as capitalism and reproduction: “Performance’s independence from mass reproduction, technologically, economically, and linguistically, is its greatest strength.” (Phelan 1993: 149). However, in her fascination with this aspect of performance art she subjugates herself to the metaphysics of presence by insisting on authenticity and thereby suggesting a hierarchy between art forms - some being more real than others. Phelan argues that any performance subjecting itself to reproduction betrays its own genre.

The assumption that it is possible for performance art to prevent reproduction is unlikely according to American theorist in performance studies Phillip Auslander. In the book *Liveness: Performance in a mediatized culture*, Auslander rejects this notion by referring to Derrida who expresses how all memory is reproduction. Auslander makes his point clear by mockingly concluding that the only way of avoiding reproduction and objectification of a performance is if the subject actively chooses to forget the performance.¹⁰⁶ When it comes to the commercial art market, Phelan does, however, have a point. Performance does not produce market value in the same way as paintings and sculptures do. It is simply not possible to buy and take home a piece of performance art – only the prints of and objects from the performance can enter into the money-based system of art. The reenactment of *Obaranikosi* in Copenhagen is a perfect example of this relation between performance and monetary value. As part of the performance, Atiku had written down the Danish history of warfare dating back to the Swedish War of Liberation from 1521-1523 to the most

¹⁰⁵ Peggy Phelan: *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, p. 149.

¹⁰⁶ Phillip Auslander: *Liveness: Performance in a mediatized culture*, p. 156.

recent act of aggression – the military intervention of Libya in 2011. Pieces of red paper with all the names and dates of wars Denmark had participated in were spread out across the exhibition space on the mezzanine at Kunsthall Charlottenborg where the video of *Obaranikosi* in Lagos was screened. Atiku distributed these red papers during the performance and afterwards some members of the audience came up to him with their papers asking for his autograph. The performative object was at that point turned into a potentially financially valuable work of art. Performance is thus never completely detached from the monetary values that exist in the art discourse. But one could argue that *the choice* of performance tends to offer another option or difference.

4.4.4 Radical Politics

Enwezor describes how violence can work as agency through radical Islam in the 21st century that has come to define radical politics and agonistic struggle with Westernism.¹⁰⁷ Enwezor sees *9/11* and *Ground Zero* as metaphors for the ultimate crisis within Westernism. He views *Ground Zero* as a tabula rasa suggesting a space ready for articulating the ideological differences in the current global world order (a point of view that would most likely provoke a lot of people).¹⁰⁸ *9/11* was the collapse of Western dichotomies and the antagonistic battle with radical Islamism in this case becomes inevitable to Enwezor. Citing Martinique philosopher Frantz Fanon, Enwezor explains how the colonial project inevitably evokes violence. Terrorism is a confrontation with Westernism because it represents hostility towards the hegemony of capitalism. Enwezor also describes how the only agonistic project in today's global politics, radical Islam, risks alienating other polities also disillusioned by the *Western way* because of its use of violence and its intolerance towards women and minorities.¹⁰⁹

In the Red deals with violence in a rather abstract manner, which makes the performance series relevant in different contexts, and the references to violence changes according to the surroundings. The violent context that can be read into a performance like *Obaranikosi* will inevitably change according to the circumstances of

¹⁰⁷ Enwezor 2002: p. 46.

¹⁰⁸ Enwezor 2002: p. 47.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

the setting where it is performed. In the Copenhagen performance, the violent act of war was the focus point suggesting a kind of violence that is not directly affecting the Danish population. Since the Second World War, wars with Danish participation have taken place abroad, demonstrating the warfare of intervention, invasion and occupation of *other* nations. As opposed to the references of violence that a Nigerian audience will have, this kind of violence symbolizes absence; Nigeria still suffers scars from a gruesome civil war, Islamic terrorism in the North of the country spreads and the violence of mob justice (which has lately caught the attention of international media through the persecutions of homosexuals) is nothing out of the ordinary. Violence in this context is tangible and present. Having been raised as a Muslim in a Qur'an School, Atiku knows well how to argue against fundamentalist Islamist ideas – his political project is a non-violent one.

4.4.5 Postcolonial Necropolitics

The underlying theme of those two of Atiku's performances examined in this thesis is violence: the violation of a child's right and the violent nature of humanity as expressed by war and conquest. In *De la Postcolonie*, Achille Mbembe explains how colonial power is based on three types of violence: The first type of violence is the founding violence, which is constitutive to the right of conquest. It also lays the foundation of the other two types of violence: one being violence of the law through colonial sovereignty, which represents the sole power to decide the law; the other being everyday violence, which sustains the authority of the colonizer and oppresses the colonized.¹¹⁰ According to Mbembe, the only way for the colonizer to interact with the colonized individual is through violence as the relation is based on power structure of alienation and negation.¹¹¹ Many former colonies are infused with violence, which manifests itself through "postcolonial necropower". Mbembe's Africa diagnosis seems rather pessimistic and he has been criticized for generalizing with his negative views on behalf of the entire African continent. However, his analysis of violence on the African continent is relevant – especially when it comes to understanding the artworks of Atiku.

¹¹⁰ Mbembe 2000: p. 25.

¹¹¹ Mbembe 2000: p. 26.

Atiku sees violence as something absolutely horrifying and his representation of violence is explicitly repulsive. The identities he presents us with give us too many choices of identification and like the violence he depicts they overwhelm us. It is too much and they are too many, making it difficult to ascertain a specific concept. In a way, it is possible to read his cruel concept of violence as a persistent faith in politics. There exists exhaustion among certain artists in the West towards the political climate and their artistic strategies to oppose this climate and normative power structure is put into gestures of passivity, silence and withdrawal.¹¹² To Atiku there is still a faith in demonstrating as a way of influence. However he will also reject the violent demonstration that is present in the radical Islam Enwezor describes. Violence is purely destructive in Atiku's art and it will not serve as the agent. In "Necropolitics", Mbembe implicitly suggests that violence can be an agency. Like Enwezor, he looks at violence at its most extreme: terrorism. Mbembe suggests rather crudely that survival is violence since it relies on the death of enemies. So this logic of winning (or surviving) is dependent on the suffering of others. Islamic martyrdom, however, requires your own death to win (winning by killing others).¹¹³ Mbembe concludes mockingly that you may actually become free if you sacrifice your life through jihad: "For death is precisely that from and over which I have power. But it is also that space where freedom and negation operate." (Mbembe 2003: 39).

4.4.6 Making Room for the Past in the Present

Atiku performed *In the Red* in the Northern part of Nigeria in 2009 few months before the Islamic group Boko Haram began their attacks, which from then until the time of writing have killed an estimated 10.000 civilians and members of the security forces in the country. The name Boko Haram is Hausa and roughly translated *boko* means Western and *haram* forbidden. The group opposes anything associated with Western culture making universities and schools a target. The group has existed since 2001 but did not become a jihadist group until 2009 following the Nigerian government's investigation into the group's activities. The performances of *In the Red* in North

¹¹² Expressed theoretically by Italian philosopher Franco "Bifo" Berardi with his book *After the Future* (2011) and through American literary theorist Laurent Berlant with her book "Cruel Optimism" (2011).

¹¹³ Mbembe: *Necropolitics*, pp. 38-39, (Mbembe 2003).

Nigerian city Zaria were enacted few months before the first violent attack that killed 700 people in Bauchi Southeast of Zaria. The three performances Atiku did in Zaria in February 2009 could in retrospect be seen as a kind of warning - a bad omen. The violent attacks by Boko Haram have since escalated and the three states in the North Eastern part of the country bordering Cameroon have been declared in a state of emergency. Atiku's mummy in this interpretation becomes a ghost in Derrida's sense of the word: something from both the past and the future. The pains of the past and of the future are enacted in his performances. In Derrida's hauntology, the ghost becomes the Messiah since the specter is the one whose arrival we do not know when to expect but whom we recognize when he arrives. In terms of Jesus as the Messiah, it is possible to see references to the suffering of Christ in the performance series *In the Red*; most explicitly in *Red Light*, which is documented in the short documentary *Lagos in the Red*. Here, Atiku carries around a heavy ladder on top of his back and ends up sitting tied to the ladder for hours.¹¹⁴ However, it would be wrong to read Atiku's performances solely through Christian epistemology. Analysis is all about the eyes reading and it is unlikely that Atiku had any kind of Messianic aspirations when creating the performances. Therefore, it is important to note that in the tradition of Egungun it is not uncommon for the priest to function as an advisor or oracle to the spectators. Regardless of any Messiah associations or Egungun omens, the premonition of the performances in 2009 fits well into Atiku's overall project of making room for the past in the present in order to find alternatives to Western discourse for the future.

4.4.7 Can a Performative Strategy be Radical without Being Antagonistic?

In the former chapter's discussion I asked if it is possible to enact decolonization without advocating for violent conflict in a country that is divided. The terror of Boko Haram has a decolonizing purpose. This observation is not suggesting that decolonization per se is antagonistic. Atiku places norms and values of one ethnic group over another in a country that has a violent history, which calls for this question to be asked. Boko Haram opposes anything associated with Western culture and

¹¹⁴ Andersen, Løvholm & Nielsen: *Lagos in the Red*, 9.28 min.

targets civic institutions such as universities and schools. Atiku is also opposed to Westernism and tries to identify histories that have been forgotten in order to challenge the way Nigeria embraces Western values – such as capitalism. He wants to proudly embrace his heritage and his project could be read as conservative or regressive thinking in contemporary Nigeria. But unlike Boko Haram, who wishes to wipe away all evidence of colonial intrusion into the local culture(s), Atiku acknowledges that the colonial past is part of the present. It is just a question of how it is part of the present. Atiku does not offer a solution. This becomes most evident in *Senator Yerima's Wedding* where many different symbols and languages are mixed, as a diagnosis of Nigeria and as an acknowledgement of culture as a dynamic condition. His decolonial aesthetics could suggest a quest towards a forgotten authenticity; the Yoruba culture. However, it could also be read as a way of embracing cultural difference and oppose normative structures.

Both the regressive and antagonistic project that opposing Westernism can be is rejected in Atiku's aesthetics through his concepts of time. Heterochrony suggests that time is not necessarily an objective construction and that timeliness can be experienced differently. Atiku incorporates video in *Obaranikosi* at Kunsthall Charlottenborg and the video in the context of the performance conveys the experience of heterochrony. It negotiates the distinction between past and present. Like ghosts it goes beyond the construction of time: the ghost is always the same but every time we meet it, it is new. Literary scholar Peter Borum argues that we can only truly speak of one tense – the present. The past that was once a present time with its own past and future is now different in the present time. The past that is written into the present becomes something else. Present is an extension of past.¹¹⁵ The present therefore has the power to re-negotiate the past. A decolonial space in a present time will never be able to fully deny the colonial history. The colonial past is part of a decolonial present. This will inevitably also accept other cultures as being part of Nigeria's present.

Radical Islam in the sense of groups like Boko Haram has a notion of authenticity in its conflict with Westernism. Boko Haram opposes everything that is not in line with Sharia law, suggesting that there is one culture more original or true

¹¹⁵ Peter Borum: "Formbetingelser og revolution" in: *En tradition af opbrud*, p. 325

than any other. They are defined in opposition to the dominant Western norm and it is an antagonistic project that will not displace anything. In a way this antagonistic project reproduces the same strategy as Westernism – suggesting universalism. Atiku presents a view that first of all acknowledges another option of culture, one that is more fluent and, secondly, is a *third space* that, according to Bhabha, years of colonialism have produced.

5. Conclusion

In the Red represents an artistic journey for Atiku. He began doing performance art in 2004 and the performance series has been with him since 2008. The series also represents critical thinking towards the way Western discourses work as the dominant norms. This becomes most apparent in his way of representing identity. The mummy-like creature appearing in all the series' performances deconstructs identity: it is neither woman nor man, neither black nor white, "not ghost, not, not ghost". It escapes the *metaphysics of presence* by refusing to be identified. It represents a criticism of Western essentialism. The same criticism is present in *Senator Yerima's Wedding* where symbols and codes have been mixed in order to complicate the process of identification; and the name of the young bride in the performance is Lasagbe, which literally means "no identity" in Yoruba. Atiku's view on cultural identity is expressed through various strategies.

The representation of cultural identity in Atiku's artistic practice is a political statement. It is a way of representing *other* narratives of identity just as it is a strategy to articulate the impact of colonialism in these narratives. He uses performance art as a medium to negotiate identity by expressing how cultural memory has been destroyed by colonialism and how history is written selectively. His references to Yoruba culture is part of this strategy since it is his way of rearticulating history as well as presenting new ways of producing historical memory. Through the identities presented in *Senator Yerima's Wedding*, the colonial past becomes the present; as a ghost still haunting us. And through video, timeliness to Atiku becomes a political manifestation and negotiation between past and present. The video in the context of the performance

conveys the experience of heterochrony. However, the presence of the colonial aspect is treated as both the premise and as an opportunity to rearticulate the past. His decolonial aesthetics is a way of embracing values and philosophies that was devalued by colonialism. Atiku proudly embraces his cultural heritage as a Yoruba man; Yoruba is one out of many groups in the populous Nigeria and in Atiku's representation of the nation the environment is a hybrid. He exposes *différend* as a premise for the nation through the re-enactment of a controversial child marriage. Here cultural identity is exposed as an arbitrary construction.

Atiku is part of a movement of contemporary artists on the African continent who use performance art as a medium for appropriating art history and to claim the right to define their own history. They ask critical questions of Western thinking and translating their art into a Western dominated art discourse can often be challenging. The translation of non-Western artworks into a Western art discourse will most likely produce *différend*. Having been schooled in a Western art discourse, I have inevitably missed certain nuances in some aspects of my research. To comprehend a complex philosophy like *Egungun* that is so alien to my own cultural baggage is a challenge in itself. However, these mistakes and challenges are important. We cannot exclude non-Western art by hiding behind the shield of modernity. We need those other representations on the international art scene; the premise of experiencing as *other* when confronted with art from e.g. Nigeria is unavoidable but it is also an opportunity. It is a chance for the Western academic to experience being other and accepting not being directly addressed for once.

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Appendix i: Jelili Atiku (2013-2014), *In the Red* #16: Obaranikosi



Obaranikosi (2013): Makoko, Nigeria



Obaranikosi (2014): Copenhagen, Denmark

Appendix i



Obaranikosi (2014): Copenhagen, Denmark



Obaranikosi (2014): Copenhagen, Denmark

Appendix ii: Jelili Atiku (2013), *Senator Yerima's wedding*



Senator Yerima's Wedding (2013): Ejigbo, Nigeria



Senator Yerima's Wedding (2013): Ejigbo, Nigeria

Appendix ii



Senator Yerima's Wedding (2013): Ejigbo, Nigeria



Senator Yerima's Wedding (2013): Ejigbo, Nigeria

Appendix ii



Senator Yerima's Wedding: "Wedding programme"

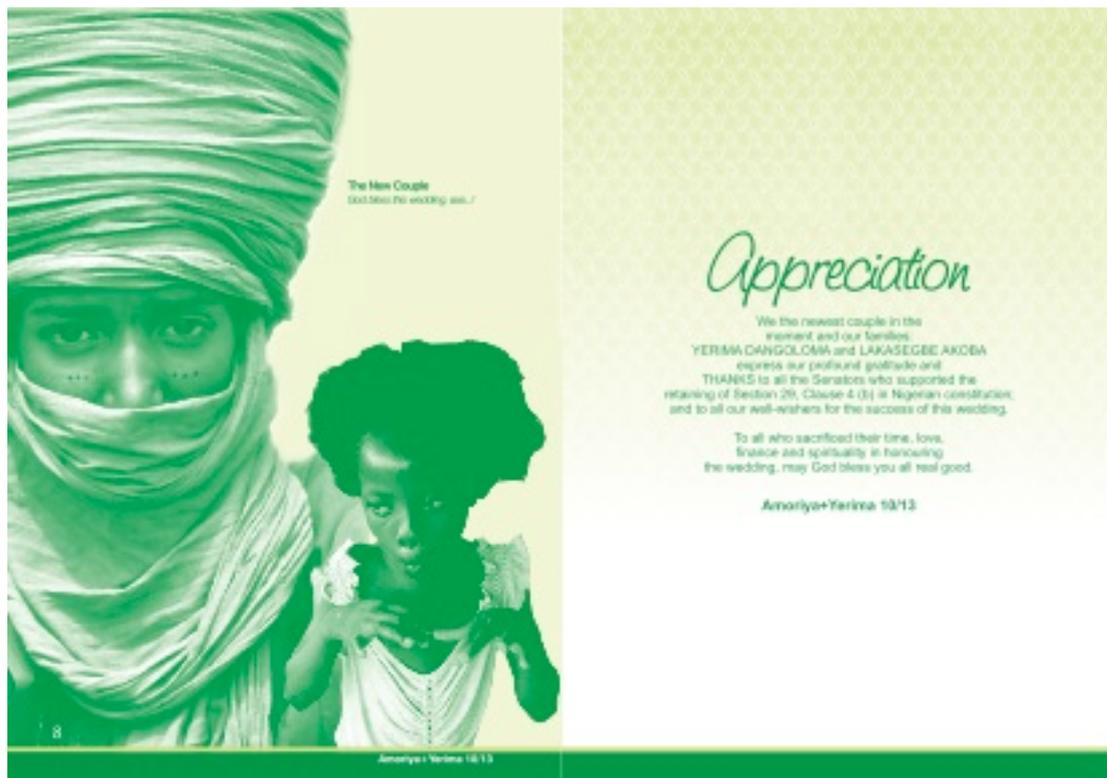
Appendix ii

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|---|---|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">HOW GREAT THOU ART (O HONOURABLE NIGERIANS)</p> <p>1. O my honorable senators! When I in admiration behold All the laws and powers Thy hand hath wield Struck with the sight of galaxies; and the mighty bang of thunder Reverberating beyond the great house displayed</p> <p>Chorus Then cries my soul, my liberator senators to Thee How mighty Thou art! How mighty Thou art! Then cries my soul, my liberator senators, to Thee How mighty Thou art! How mighty Thou art!</p> <p>2. When through the forest grooves I wander I savour the sonorous raits of the perching birds When I glanced through the grandours of mighty mountains I wholeheartedly welcome the gentle sound and breeze of nature.</p> <p>3. And when I think that my senators his Girl-Child not sparing Sent her to unholy defilement- I barely can take it in That at slaughter-house my sorrow know no bound Her future at stake-to bleed, confined and ruined to some canal pleasures.</p> <p>4. WHEN my Saviour Senator shall come with cries of declaration To take me back home-what gladness and gratefulness shall fill my heart? Then shall I bow once more in humble admiration And there proclaim, my honorable senators, how mighty Thou art!</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">TRAIN</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p>Best Man Senator David Mawi</p> <p>Grooms Men Senator Abdulmumin M.M Hassan (Jigawa South West) Senator Abdula'ah M. Danladi (Jigawa North West) Senator Adama Abdula'ah (Nasarawa West) Senator Ahmad Barataa (Adamawa South) Senator Akinyelure Ayo (Ondo Central, Labour Party) Senator Alkali Saidu A.A. (Gombe North) Senator Bagudu Abubakar A. (Kebbi Central) Senator Dahiru Umaru (Sokoto South) Senator Galaudu Issa (Kebbi North)</p> <p>Little Bride Seyi Azamilekan</p> <p>Sweet Girls Ucherins Tochuckwu</p> </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p>Chief Brides Maid Abugali Egbufoa</p> <p>Bridal Train Oromolan Tayee Olu Fatimoha Sale Abidahu Tukur Victoriana Odior Joy Umar-Abubakar Zayenabuu Yara Saidatu Abdulaziz Asalayu Zannah Mojaokuna Bello</p> <p>Page Boy Idris Damsata</p> <p>Sweet Boy Akpan A. Akpan</p> </td> </tr> </table> | <p>Best Man Senator David Mawi</p> <p>Grooms Men Senator Abdulmumin M.M Hassan (Jigawa South West) Senator Abdula'ah M. Danladi (Jigawa North West) Senator Adama Abdula'ah (Nasarawa West) Senator Ahmad Barataa (Adamawa South) Senator Akinyelure Ayo (Ondo Central, Labour Party) Senator Alkali Saidu A.A. (Gombe North) Senator Bagudu Abubakar A. (Kebbi Central) Senator Dahiru Umaru (Sokoto South) Senator Galaudu Issa (Kebbi North)</p> <p>Little Bride Seyi Azamilekan</p> <p>Sweet Girls Ucherins Tochuckwu</p> | <p>Chief Brides Maid Abugali Egbufoa</p> <p>Bridal Train Oromolan Tayee Olu Fatimoha Sale Abidahu Tukur Victoriana Odior Joy Umar-Abubakar Zayenabuu Yara Saidatu Abdulaziz Asalayu Zannah Mojaokuna Bello</p> <p>Page Boy Idris Damsata</p> <p>Sweet Boy Akpan A. Akpan</p> |
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| <p style="text-align: center;">ORDER OF PHOTOGRAPH</p> <p>Couple with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officiating Parsons 2. Bride's and Groom's Parents and families 3. The President and his cabinet members here present 4. Senate President, Speakers of House Representatives and all members that favoured the retaining of Section 29, Clause 4 (b): 5. The senators who voted NO, that is those who did not want the clause deleted, include the following: Sen. Abdulmumin M. Hassan (Jigawa South West, PDP) Sen. Abdullahi Danladi (Jigawa North West, PDP) Sen. Adamu Abdullahi (Nasarawa West, PDP) Sen. Ahmed Barata (Adamawa South, PDP) Sen. Akinyelure Ayo (Ondo Central, Labour Party) Sen. Alkali Saidu A. (Gombe North, PDP) Sen. Bagudu Abubakar A. (Kebbi Central, PDP) Sen. Dahiru Umaru (Sokoto South, PDP) Sen. Galaudu Isa (Kebbi North, PDP) Sen. Garba Gamawa (Bauchi North, PDP) Sen. Danjuma Goje Mohammed (Gombe Central, PDP) Sen. Gobir Ibrahim (Sokoto East, PDP) Sen. Gumba Adamu Ibrahim (Bauchi South, PDP) Sen. Hadi Sirika (Katsina North, CPC) Sen. Ibrahim Bukar Abba (Yobe East, ANPP) Sen. Jajere Alkali (Yobe South, ANPP) Sen. Jibrilla Mohammed (Adamawa North, PDP) Sen. Kabiru Gaya (Kano South, ANPP) Sen. Lafiagi Mohammed (Kwara North, PDP) Sen. Lawan Ahmad (Yobe North, ANPP) Sen. Maccido Mohammed (Sokoto North, PDP) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Sen. Musa Ibrahim (Niger North, CPC) 7. Sen. Ndume Mohammed Ali (Borno South, PDP) 8. Sen. Sadiq A. Yaradua (Katsina Central, CPC) 9. Sen. Saleh Mohammed (Kaduna Central, CPC) 10. Sen. Tukur Bello (Adamawa Central, PDP) 11. Sen. Ugbesia Odion (Edo Central, PDP) 12. Sen. Umar Abubakar (Taraba Central, PDP) 13. Sen. Usman Abdulaziz (Jigawa North East, PDP) 14. Sen. Ya'au Sahabi (Zamfara North, PDP) 15. Sen. Zannah Ahmed (Borno Central, PDP) 16. Sen. Ahmad Rufai Sani (Zamfara West, ANPP) 17. Sen. Ahmad Abdul Ningi (Bauchi Central, PDP) 18. Sen. Bello Hayatu Gwano (Kano North, PDP) 19. Sen. Ibrahim Abu (Katsina South, CPC) 20. Executives Governors here present 21. Speakers and members of all State Assembly here present 22. All Federal and State Judges here present 23. Federal and State Civil Servants here present 24. Members of Labour Union here present 25. All religious cleric here present 26. Friends and well wishers 27. Bestman and Chief Bride Maid 28. Couple Alone 29. Bride Alone 30. Groom Alone 31. The Public <p style="text-align: center;">WEDDING PROCESSION</p> <p>Walk through Ifosh Road to Jyana Ejigbo and back to No: 29, Ifoshi Road, Ejigbo.</p> |
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Senator Yerima's Wedding: "Wedding programme"

Appendix ii



Senator Yerima's Wedding: "Wedding programme"

Appendix iii: Bernard Akoi-Jackson (2012), *Cos 90 ≠ 0: From Absurdity into Nihilism and Back: Something is definitely gained*

ABSTRACT by Bernard Akoi-Jackson:

Cos 90 ≠ 0: From Absurdity into Nihilism and Back: Something is definitely gained.

The photographic series and video work collectively titled: “*Cos 90 ≠ 0: From Absurdity into Nihilism and Back: Something is definitely gained*,” was originally produced as my contribution to the collaborative project: “*Time, Trade & Travel*,” between The Nubuke Foundation in Accra, Ghana and the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The title of the work and the production processes I employed, allude to the lost wax process used in textile and indigenous brass casting industries. The work deals with the legacies of the post-colonialist enterprise. Playfully interrogating ideas of loss and disinheritance, I argue that “something may be lost in one culture and/but be gained in another.” In the same breath, I propose that identities undergo nuanced tropes of metamorphosis when dominated by another. The idea is not to brood too long on the injustices that may have been committed in the past, but to engage the possible positive energies inherent in these ruptures or disruptions in the natural progress of things.

There is the need for critical consideration of one's history and the collective paradigms to check that such tendencies towards erasure are not continually perpetuated. The work takes the forms of banners featuring ‘fantasy figures,’ fashioned out of a range of symbolic, fictive, historical objects and influences. I have separately named the characters: *Goldman* (Fig 1), *Blueman* (Fig 2), *Dutchman* (Fig 3) and *Greyman* (Fig 4).

Each ‘constructed’ figure refers to different historical characters in colonial and post-colonial discourse, with tongue-in-cheek allusions to this constructed domain we call history. Although it may be difficult to directly associate *Blueman* with any European colonizer in the 17th or 18th century, there is the inkling of the referral of Dutch colonizers to the Indonesians as *Bluemen*. This is probably due to the fact that the

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Javanese were always perceived as dyeing fabric in indigo and literally looked 'blue' upon contact with the Dutch traders of bygone centuries.

All of the characters I have created wear, hold, drape or use the wax print referred to on the Ghanaian market as '*Akyikyidiε ekyi*,' (the Tortoise's shell). The repeated use of this particular cloth implies a shared ownership of an object wherefore none of the characters can actually claim to authority over. My work rouses us to appreciate the ambivalence that ensues in identity construction. In this sense, my banners are a prompting towards the proposition that the identities and 'personages' we tend to put on have been developed via the *mélangé* of cultures through time, trade and travel. An interesting image is presented, when they all are seen together as is portrayed in (fig 5). It is though they stare at the viewer in a sort of familiar confrontation of frontality.

This take on identity is reiterated by the manner in which my photos are presented: the banners are commentaries on the world famous fashion advertisements of *Vlisco*, the Dutch company that has been at the forefront of the so called "African Print" industry since 1846. The banners represent a similar 'constructed' dream world; the colourful and paradisiacal hyper-reality that the *Vlisco* advertisements present to their numerous African consumers with renewed force on a quarterly basis throughout the year.

Quite interestingly too I chose as a site for production, *Ussher Fort* in Accra, a manifestation of European (Dutch) involvement with West Africa. This architectural relic is where the photographs were staged, performed and captured in 2012. The fort was built by the Dutch in 1649, functioned as a bastion, police station and is currently being restored by UNESCO and the European Union to become a museum since it is a World Heritage site. By choosing this location I engage with this tumultuous history that incessantly disturbs our collective memory.

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Figure 1 *Goldman*. From Photographic series, “*Cos 90 ≠ 0: From Absurdity into Nihilism and Back: Something is definitely gained*” in the project “*Time, Trade & Travel*.” Nubuke Foundation, Accra, Ghana and the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (SMBA), The Netherlands. © Bernard Akoi-Jackson. 2012



Figure 2 *Blueman*. From Photographic series, “*Cos 90 ≠ 0: From Absurdity into Nihilism and Back: Something is definitely gained*” in the project “*Time, Trade & Travel*.” Nubuke Foundation, Accra, Ghana and the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (SMBA), The Netherlands. © Bernard Akoi-Jackson. 2012

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Figure 3 *Goldman*. From Photographic series, “*Cos 90 ≠ 0: From Absurdity into Nihilism and Back: Something is definitely gained*” in the project “*Time, Trade & Travel*.” Nubuke Foundation, Accra, Ghana and the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (SMBA), The Netherlands. © Bernard Akoi-Jackson. 2012



Figure 4 *Greyman*. From Photographic series, “*Cos 90 ≠ 0: From Absurdity into Nihilism and Back: Something is definitely gained*” in the project “*Time, Trade & Travel*.” Nubuke Foundation, Accra, Ghana and the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (SMBA), The Netherlands. © Bernard Akoi-Jackson. 2012

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Figure 5 Installation view in SMBA. Photographic series, “*Cos 90 ≠ 0: From Absurdity into Nihilism and Back: Something is definitely gained*” in the project “*Time, Trade & Travel*.” Nubuke Foundation, Accra, Ghana and the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (SMBA), The Netherlands. © Bernard Akoi-Jackson. 2012. Photo courtesy SMBA

Appendix iii: Leila Anderson (2012), *Afrika Lacht*



Appendix v: Jelili Atiku (2012), *In the Red #15: How Not to Dance to Tchaikovsky Symphony*



Appendix vi: Athi Patra Ruga (2010-), *The Future Women of Azania*



Appendix vii: Fred Wilson (2003), *Speak of Me as I am*

