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An Inhospitable Port in the Storm: Recent Clandestine West African Migrants and the Quest for Diasporic Recognition*

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At the heart of diaspora is the image of [a] journey... The circumstances of leaving determine not only the experiences on these journeys, but also the circumstances of arrival and settling down.

(Ugiris 2001: 1)

Introduction: Contesting the African Diaspora

Although the etymological root of 'diaspora' is particular (from the Greek, to scatter and sow), its contemporary applications are now many and varied (Cohen 1997). In the latest phase of transnationalism and globalisation, diaspora has become what Phil Cohen describes as 'the master trope of migration and settlement' (1998: 3). The term is deployed indiscriminately to describe travellers and cosmopolitan elites as well as political refugees, economic migrants and guest workers. 'In these ways, the dispersed diasporas of old have become today's "transnational communities" sustained by a range of modes of social organisation, mobility and community' (Vertovec 1999: 448). With such apparent elasticity and fluidity, what constitutes the criteria for 'authentic' diaspora inclusion is highly contested: 'Focusing peculiarly on the ethnic axis of homelands and abroad, theories of diaspora overlook the transgressions of the national and lose sight of the new dynamics and topography of membership' (Soysal 2000: 1).

Nowhere is this problematic more apparent than in classical versus contemporary conceptualisations of the African diaspora (Hanchard 2004). That is, much theorising on and periodising of the African diaspora either privileges the narrative of transatlantic slavery (*roots*) or addresses the social and historical processes of imperialism and (post)colonialism (*routes*) (Hall 1990, Gilroy 1993). These earlier circuits of trade, processes of settlement, and political economic regimes did create similar and different points of reference for 'older' African diasporic constituents in the Americas, the Caribbean and Europe (Okpewho 1999, Palmer 2000). However, in the twenty-first century, there are 'newer' African diasporas, whose origin narratives are interwoven with but not exclusively defined by either 'The Middle Passage' or Empire and their aftermath (Koser 2003).

Borrowing from the seminal essay 'Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World', co-authored by historians Patterson and Kelley (2000), I refer to these contemporary African diasporas not simply as political *spaces* but also as *processes* and *conditions*. That is, first, contemporary African diasporic processes extend the links of the migration chains which originated in the historical moments of the transatlantic slave trade and the rise of European Empires, wherein two adages pervade the collective consciousness of these older African diasporas: 'We are here because you brought us here' or 'We are here because you were there.' Second, contemporary African diasporas are spatially constituted wherever African (post)colonial and transnational constituents find themselves, be that conventionally in the Caribbean, North and Latin America, or Europe (Green 1997, Modood and Werbner 1997, Torres and Whitten 1998). Their spatial and 'racial' locations as both gendered African diasporic agents and former Black colonial, tribal and island subjects inscribe sameness as they mobilise and politicise (Obichere 1975, Bousquet and Douglas 1991, Adi 2000, Gilroy 2000a). Finally, African diasporic conditions persist and are transformed by the interface of transnational African diasporic traditions of resistance, protest and cultural innovation with global economic, politically gendered and racialised hierarchical structures which exclude as they appropriate and commodify (Campbell 1985, Rose 1994, Chuck, D. 1997). In other words, local and dynamic diasporic spaces, processes and conditions intersect with and in fact are produced by transnational identities, translated cultural commodities and global political strategies (Lipsitz 1994, Browning 1998, Brown 2005).

In the following discussion, I will demonstrate the ways in which new cartographies of the African diaspora contribute to a reconfiguration of gendered and racialised situated politics of belonging in Fortress Europe, where immigration control remains an issue that polarises political debates and public opinions. As such, I suggest that for clandestine West African migrants enroute to Spain via Morocco, a contingent state of (un)belonging is fabricated in response to both their legal and social exclusion. From a legal standpoint, most taking these treacherous journeys do not meet the criteria for refugee status outlined by the 1951 UN Convention (Fargues *et al.* 2005). Socially, the popular folk concept of 'race' (Ifekwunigwe 2003) as it pertains to local Spanish and Moroccan constructions of 'Blackness' and 'non-Blackness' inform and impede the collective and personal projects of these 'new' African diasporic agents (Calavita 1999, Daly 2001, Sage 2005). The popular folk concept of 'race' is a potent dynamic social and cultural imaginary, the naturalisation of which attaches symbolic meanings to real or manufactured physical differences. Along with other hierarchically positioned signifiers such as gender, generation, ethnicity, religion and social class, these create, explain, justify and maintain social inequalities and injustices and perpetuate differential access to privilege, prestige, power and ultimately belonging. In my analysis, I will illustrate the complexities and politics of new African diasporic processes in the latest globalising age, wherein borders remain permeable for the transnational flow of capital and information but not people.

Roots and Routes: Rehistoricising, Retracing, and Replacing Points of Origins, Multiple Trajectories, and Endless Termina

This chapter represents one facet of a broader ongoing theoretical project, which, using the transnational circulation of people as a paradigm, rethinks the gendered relationship between continental Africa and the African diaspora. Rather than treating contemporary processes of continental African migration as separate entities outside the diaspora paradigm, I outline a theoretical formulation which assumes their interconnectedness and demonstrates their dynamism. In 'Rewriting the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic,' historian Zeleza provides a useful typology of 'contemporary diasporas' as those which formed since the late nineteenth century and distinguishes them on the basis of three waves:

the diasporas of colonization, decolonization and the era of structural adjustment, which emerged out of the disruptions and dispositions of colonial conquest, the struggles for independence, and structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), respectively... the diasporas of structural adjustment have been formed since the 1980s, out of the migrations engendered by economic, political and social crises and the destabilizations of SAPs.

(2005: 55)

With an emphasis on 'diasporas of structural adjustment', I theorise about the ways in which gendered processes of transnationalism and globalisation have reconfigured continental African migration routes to Europe, which I conceptualise not as *faux* diasporas ('economic migrations'), but as new epistemologies of the African diaspora (Kim Butler 2001). These transnational migratory processes include the smuggling of West African (and North African) women and men via Morocco to Southern Spain – the Gateway to Fortress Europe – (Harding 2000b) and the trafficking in West African (in particular Nigerian) women to Italy as part of the global sex trade (International Organization of migration 1996, Agathise 2002, Ifekwunigwe 2004). These exemplify clandestine movements 'by any means necessary' of the unwanted and the impoverished (as opposed to the 'brain drain' elites) from structurally (mal)adjusted West African urban centres to economically and demographically restructured Western and Southern European metropolises (Harding 2000a). What motivates West African migrants is the promise of European Union (EU) wages '10–15 times higher than in Africa... [given] the [GDP] gap between the EU and the less-developed non-EU Mediterranean [and Sub-Saharan] countries' (Gold 2000: 133). At every stage of the migration process, strategies are highly gendered (L. Morris 2002). That is, West African clandestine migrant women and men may share a similar destination, but by virtue of their globalised structural positions, their destinies will be very different (Westwood and Phizacklea 2000). Sassen's (2003) dialectical configuration of global cities and survival circuits demonstrates the extent to which migrant women, who are over-represented in the service sector labouring as nannies, domestics or sex workers, are integral to the growth of economies in both 'the North' and 'the South'.

Conventionally, these contemporary continental African dispersals have been analysed either utilising traditional tropes of 'push/pull' migration or within the broader contexts of European asylum and immigration discourses (Sadqi 2005). Here, I argue for the reassessment of recent clandestine West African migrations as culturally specific, differentially gendered and similarly racialised new African diasporas, which are situated within not outside the latest political economic circuits of global capitalism (Bashi 2004, Akyeampong 2005). Placing clandestine West-African migrant women and men at the centre, it is my intention to provoke a rethinking of what constitutes volition, agency and victimhood in theorising about the African diaspora in particular and diaspora in general (Anthias 1998, Braziel and Mannur 2003). As agents and victims, these 'unofficial' migrants deploy strategies which exemplify both the limits of individual agency and the exigencies of survival. By (re)imagining 'new' temporal and spatial dimensions of the African diaspora, within which there are compound and multiple forms, I seek to demonstrate the ways in which the historical ideas, economic processes and political projects of continental Africa and the African diaspora are (and always have been) mutually constituted (Zeleza 2005).

As an example of this continental/diasporic African interface, my discussion will focus on clandestine movements from West Africa to Europe via Morocco and southern Spain. With reachable roots on the continent, these contemporary African 'irregular' migrants speak from multiple locations as transported and transplanted daughters and sons of 'over-lapping' diasporas (Lewis 1999). Lewis (1999) is specifically addressing the American–African diaspora in a North Atlanticist frame. However, the dynamics of over-lap and intersection in new temporal, spatial and experiential configurations of African diasporas also resonate in very interesting ways in the context of the migrations about which I am writing. As such, this blurred complexity forces a rethinking of the dynamics of diasporic and transnational activities at what Yeoh, Willis and Fakhri (2003) call 'the edges'. That is, enroute to southern Europe, West Africans frequently traverse former colonial French African territories, pass through the contested Spanish/North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, and then make their way to Maghreb/Arab spaces, where they cross the Mediterranean in order to enter Iberia. The borders crossed are not just physical but also symbolic, economic and political.

Migration has gained momentum in all Mediterranean countries of the Middle East and North Africa (Med-MENA). Not only are the number of migrants sizeable, but their rate of growth largely exceeds that of total populations. Med-MENA remains a major region of emigration, and at the same time it receives significant flows of immigration, whether destined for the region itself or in transit to Europe. The circulation of people has long been a key component – maybe even more important than trade – of the relations between countries, within the region and with the outside world.

(Fargues *et al.* 2005: 5)

At the same time, the nation-state is both extraneous to transnational identities formation and integral to the everyday policing, surveillance, management and containment of racialised and gendered African diasporic bodies (Richmond 2002).

So Many African Lamentations are Buried in the Sahara and Drowned in the Straits

There are a lot of bodies in that [Saharan] desert... Sometimes you see bones by the roadside. They are all Africans heading for Europe.

(Ken Umoli (a Nigerian migrant) cited in P. Harris 2001)

On 14 November 2000, in the United Kingdom, as part of the 'Who Will Save Africa?' series, a Channel Four documentary aired which challenged conventional perceptions of contemporary African migration routes to Europe. Using relevant cinematic excerpts from this piece as a lens, I intend to ground and contextualise my undoing of the notion of African diasporic home-making as leaving and then staying put. In other words, appropriating Bauman (1998: 93), I interrogate the 'vagabond' dimensions of this new African diaspora. This critical reading of 'Exodus', which was produced and directed by Sorious Samura (2000), an award-winning film-maker from Sierra Leone, serves as a point of departure for my subsequent discussion of the politics of asylum and immigration in Fortress Europe.

The film opens with an image of the southern Spanish coastline wherein several coast guards are tending to a dead African male body that has washed up on the shore. This un-named migrant is one of the countless Nigerians, Ghanaians, Sierra Leoneans, Malians, Senegalese as well as Moroccans who will not complete the arduous journey which begins in their natal countries and ends in southern Spain – the hallowed portal to the rest of Europe. The migrants traverse multiple national borders. Their journeys may entail protracted stays in particular locations or staging posts:

Clandestine migration is becoming a serious problem with multiple consequences, since Morocco is no longer a transit destination but sometimes a forced destination. Whilst Morocco is not becoming an *intended* destination country for irregular migrants seeking employment, it is becoming a *de facto* destination country because Europe or other destinations are closed to irregular migrants.

(Emphases in original, text, Sadiqi 2005: 227)

Their passages are frequently orchestrated and facilitated by 'carriers' or 'fixers', who, capitalising on desperation and misery, run a lucrative trade in human cargo. These North and West African carriers are part of but not necessarily connected to a global, highly organised and sophisticated communication system for the transportation of undocumented migrants (Morrison and Crosland 2001).

According to Harding (2000a), there are two northern routes for West Africans on their way to Europe. The 'right side' traverses Niger and Libya with the final leg involving a bid by sea via Turkish or Lebanese coasts. The 'left side', which is the focus of this chapter, entails travelling along the road to Mali, turning left at Algeria and then staging dashes across the Straits of Gibraltar from Tangier in Morocco. With stepped up border control of the Straits, new Spanish routes have opened up, in particular via the Canary Islands (Arrango and Martin 2005). In the global cartography of smuggling and trafficking routes, this is part of the 'blue route,' which 'crosses the Mediterranean bringing people from Africa and

Asia through North Africa to Europe via Greece, Italy, Spain (and more recently) Portugal' (Morrison and Crosland 2001: 4). There are numerous transit stops along the way such as Bamako in Mali, where Samura interviews two groups of his fellow country men and women. In the first group, one of the Sierra Leonean women describes the ways in which some turn to prostitution, others to begging, not only to raise the necessary funds to continue the journey but merely to survive. The second group is comprised entirely of young men who lost their families during the political unrest in Sierra Leone. Constructing an imaginary England devoid of any awareness of the exclusionary and racist practices which make it impossible for anyone who is not socially designated White to be conceived of as English, one of them declares: 'I'm an Englishman. That's why I decide to go to Europe.' Celebrating the twin Western spirits of individualism and capitalism, another demonstrating his football skills for the camera exclaims: 'Why should I not make money out of this football?' Though these sojourners may have specific destinations in mind, 'Europe' is configured as a monolith in much the same way 'Africa' was and is imagined by Europeans (Hammond and Jablow 1992).

If one is able to raise the funds to travel on from Mali, another natural barrier must be transgressed – that of the Sahara Desert, which is 5,000 miles across and 700 miles from top to bottom. Says Samura: 'The Desert is a gigantic filter except for the young, strong and those who can pay well' (Samura 2000). The human smugglers have an important role to play at this stage. Those who can afford to pay them are transported like cattle in open trucks. When there is a shortage of hard cash, women's bodies are used as sexual currency, which highlights what Sassen (2003) refers to as the strategic nexus of gender within not outside globalisation processes. Fuelled by the local media, it is the popular Spanish belief that African women have strategically had themselves impregnated enroute in order to acquire residency, which they are granted if their child is born on Spanish soil (personal communication, Huelva, Spain, 9 May, 2001). Albeit potentially challenging, the full extent of clandestine migrant women's empowerment 'strategies' as opposed to their victimisation is an under-explored area which would benefit from situated and grounded ethnographic research in these transit milieux.

The less fortunate attempt the journey on foot. From the Desert, 'the first of the great barriers the refugees face', the lucky reach the northern tip of the continent, Ceuta, a Spanish enclave in northern Morocco – 'the First World dropped tantalizingly into the Third' (Gold 2000, Samura 2000). As the Spanish have paid millions fortifying Ceuta's border so that it is virtually impregnable, 'the Comrades', as the sojourners call themselves, now travel west to Tangier, the centre for the 'connection men' who act as intermediaries between the Africans and the Moroccan, Algerian and Spanish 'fixers'. Here, where the Moroccan coastline almost seems to embrace the coast of Spain for a 100 kilometres, the 'fixers' arrange the short but potentially fatal passage across the Mediterranean in Zodiacs, inflatable boats crammed to capacity with political refugees and economic migrants, who have each paid at least \$1,500. When the sea is calm the coast guards patrol the waters in helicopters looking for African Boat People. Not

everyone completes the crossing. Many boats, too overloaded with human cargo, capsize. Osas Osamede, a certified accountant from Benin City, Nigeria (and a repeat migrant having previously emigrated to Sweden), recounts his miraculous journey:

On 24 August [2000], at midnight, thirty five passengers crammed into a tiny boat set off into the dark sea. No one could see in the dark that the boat was old and patched in places. Only one hour into our crossing, we began to sink. Within minutes the inflatable boat was flat and we were in the water. From 1am till 7.30am we trod water and then, finally, a Spanish fishing boat rescued us. They called the Spanish Guardia Civil, who took us to Tarifa Port and then on to Algecira. After staying the night in a detention cell, we were taken to the police. The police got us to complete paperwork and then allowed us to leave. Unless there is an agreement between countries, it is difficult to deport people – and there is no agreement between Spain and Nigeria.

(Samura 2000)

Osas, who now stays in Malaga, spent a month sleeping on the streets in a cardboard box before being offered accommodation by a Non-Governmental Organisation. When asked by Samura whether his 'new Western home' was worth the arduous passage he replied: 'Anyway, be it in our homelands or not, we know we are nobodies, nobody is prepared to give us a chance. We are as good as dead. Who cares if we die on our way. Not even you, so why can't we take the risk and die now?'

This is not the first time Africans have been crammed like sardines into vessels and transported across hostile waters. The seeds of these contemporary African migrations were sown as part of the same economic imperatives of transatlantic slavery and mercantile imperialism. From Garvey's 'Back to Africa' Movement, to Rastafari, to the modern-day pilgrimages of middle class African-American and African-Caribbean roots tourists, the 'Mama Africa' to which so many descendants of slaves yearn to return in spirit if not in body, is not the same Africa that contemporary African migrants are leaving behind (Chabal 1996). Living Africa is vast, heterogeneous, complex and contradictory and thus can be partially defined by but not reduced to the lowest common denominators of AIDS, corruption, tribalism, wars, ethnic cleansing, poverty, famine and political violence. High theories and on the ground analyses of contemporary Africa and her most recent diasporas must continue to acknowledge and include the unsettling impact of under-development of which inequalities in the distribution of the fruits of global capitalism are just the latest manifestations. At the same time, the retelling of histories of victimisation and exploitation would be incomplete without the dominant counter-narratives of resistance, rebellion, liberation, innovation and ultimately survival.

Parting Words: Destination Fortress Europe, Destiny Diaspora

The distinction between 'refugees', 'asylum seekers', and 'economic migrants' is becoming harder to sustain. All are seeking shelter against violence, whether political or economic. The woman who dies in childbirth for want of basic medical care, a child who perishes from avoidable sickness, are no less dead

than someone persecuted for belonging to a minority ethnic group or for holding the wrong political opinions.

(Seabrook 2000: 34)

What I have addressed is the applicability of the diaspora concept to contemporary flows of undocumented West (and North) African migrants who arrive by boat on southern Spanish shores. Though there is nothing particularly novel about these movements, what is new is the increased role transnational crime syndicates play in the smuggling of both illegal migrant workers and refugees (Morrison and Crostrand 2001). In spite of the narrow UN Convention definition of a refugee, making motivational distinctions between political and economic refugees is becoming exceedingly difficult (Ogata 1995). The designation 'bogus asylum seeker' has entered the popular and political lexicon precisely because of the managed tightening of European immigration control regime (Neumayer 2005). The only 'legitimate' means of entry is via the asylum route (Gilbert 2004). In other words, there is a direct correlation between the management of refugee flows and increased border controls and the growth in the people smuggling trade (Nadig 2002). Protection itself is a form of persecution (Pittawa 2002). Yet, if we examine the root causes of global migratory flows from South to North, such as (post)colonial underdevelopment, environmental decay, an globalisation, then not only are European nation-states culpable but their international responsibilities transcend the limited definition of a refugee outlined by the UN Convention: 'It is indeed a tragic irony that Third World immigrants are refused entry by a Europe whose imperialism has created the conditions which have led to the acceleration and increase of international migration in this century' (M. Martin 1999: 83-4). A political designation thrust into the realm of the economic (Pittaway 2002, Sesay 2002).

As a magnet and the common point of entry for many unauthorised immigrants, nowhere in Europe is this political economic debate more pressing than in southern Spain, where new African diasporic history is unfolding every day. Coastlines have become frontlines and may soon be transformed into war zones. At the EU Summit in Seville in June 2002, British Prime Minister Tony Blair unsuccessfully lobbied for battleships to patrol the Straits. However, after six Moroccan soldiers reclaimed the tiny and uninhabited 'Parsley' Island (or *Perej*, in Spanish and *Leila* in Arabic) on 11 July 2002, six days later, Spain fought back with an armada of five gunboats and two fighter jets. The purpose of the occupation was, among other disputes, to force Spanish engagement with the 'human problem' of people smuggling across the Straits, the interface between Africa and the developed world (Tremlett 2002). As recently as September/October 2005 another battle was waged over illegal immigration at the contested borders to Ceuta and Melilla – 'the stepping stones to Europe'. This time the combatants were 'sub-Saharan African' clandestine migrants and the Spanish Guardia Civil.

At least eight Africans have been killed in increasingly desperate attempts to reach Melilla and Ceuta ... over the past six weeks. On most nights since early summer they have sought to clamber over three-metre-high border fences in groups of several hundred at a time using ladders made from pine branches held together with strings or rags of clothing.

In the countless European, African and American media accounts I read of these recent desperate insurrections, rarely was gender mentioned in a differentiated fashion. Moreover, the accompanying dramatic press photographs, which depicted the pan-African border-warriors as exclusively male, contributed to the relative invisibility of clandestine West African female migrants in popular media reports of these encounters. Yet, the true extent of the differential gendered politics of survival as manifest in the specific challenges facing clandestine migrant women of childbearing age was highlighted by Xavier Casero, a *Medecins Sans Frontieres* doctor, who had been administering to those making a bid for Europe via Ceuta and Melilla:

I've seen a lot of women give birth in the forest. About 10% of the immigrants are women and around a quarter of these women are pregnant. (Another quarter have small babies.) In a month and a half, I saw six deliveries in the middle of the forest with no medical help apart from us, but often we arrived too late to help with the birth... The immigrants won't go to the hospital because the police are around – they prefer to stay in the forest, hidden from the security services.

(BBC News 14 October 2005)

In the past decade, it is estimated that at least 3,000 African Boat People or *Pateras* as they are known in Spain, have drowned attempting the passage across the Straits, described as 'the largest mass grave in Europe' (Tremlett 2001b). *Pateras* are rickety wooden fishing boats frequently used to transport migrants. Spain is the third-most popular holiday destination in the world. Therefore, Spanish tourism officials have begun to complain about the bodies which periodically wash up on Spanish beaches fearing the frequency of their appearance may begin to damage tourism (Tremlett 2001a). Since January 2001, 10,000 Africans have been detained by Spanish authorities after making the treacherous journey across the Straits of Gibraltar, the 14-kilometre or 8.7-mile stretch of water separating the tip of Morocco and the southern Spanish coastline (Harris 2001). If the waters are calm, the crossing only takes 35 minutes.

Two-thirds of those intercepted are North African, Moroccan in particular, the remaining one-third is sub-Saharan Africans from Senegal, Mali, the Gambia, Cote D' Ivoire, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone (Tremlett 2001a). There is a deportation agreement between Morocco and Spain which means Moroccans are deported within 24 hours (White 1999, Corkhill 2001). There is no such agreement between Spain and sub-Saharan African countries. Sub-Saharan Africans are generally served with a 15-day expulsion order which is erratically enforced (Lennon 2000). Many of the latter 'disappear' (Katherine Butler 2001). The lucky ones make their way to other European destinations, where there is no language barrier and/or where they have established social networks for the provision of shelter, employment and other essential resources (Crisp 1999). Others remain in Spain hoping they will obtain legal residence permits which will allow them to work. The unlucky eke out livings as best they can which may entail sex work, drug dealing or agricultural labor (Bales 1999, Corkhill 2001).

The sending of remittances is the transnational glue binding all recent arrivals to their communities of origin, facilitating the future passage of other family members (Crisp 1999, S.Martin 2001) or enhancing one's status in one's community of origin (Portes 1999, Al-Ali *et al.* 2001). There is a lived tension between the migrants'

desire for eventual repatriation back 'home' (with elevated status and a bulging bank balance) and the harsh social realities for undocumented smuggled migrants. This dialectic is emblematic of the African/diasporic nexus. Their vulnerable status as illegal immigrants deprives them of the rights and entitlements afforded citizens and designated refugees (Daniel 2002). Although there have been 'regularisation' processes, which grant amnesty to illegal immigrants who are able to 'prove' that they have been working in the country for two years, there are considerable disparities in the success of different immigrant groups (Corkhill 2001: 840). The obvious contradiction of such a policy is the difficulty of proving residency if one is illegal, leading to the growth of a black market in false documentation (Corkhill 2001). Moreover, in January 2001, a law was passed which made a distinction between 'legal' and 'illegal' immigrants, thereby making it easier to forcibly expel the latter and penalise employers who hire illegals (Corkhill 2001).

This marginalisation is compounded by everyday racism and threats of violence. Daily survival dictates that migrants create support systems, pool resources (i.e. share housing and information), maintain transnational links (i.e. send remittances and correspondence to family in their natal communities) and renegotiate meanings of community and belonging:

The cosmopolitanism of migrants has entailed the proliferation of illegal or clandestine spaces. This can be seen in the existence of genuine unofficial towns constituted by so-called illegal immigrants. It can also be seen in the flexible practices adopted by illegal immigrants in the country of reception, and in the xenophobia which contributes to confining them to legal obscurity. In these spheres of illegality, marginality might favor the reconstruction of complex forms of community life.

(Mbenbe 2001: 11)

These survival strategies exemplify the intersectionality of 'new' African diasporic identity politics with the exclusionary immigration policies and practices of Fortress Europe (Yúval-Davis *et al.* 2005). Yet, as Soysal argues, immigrants' demands for civic recognition and inclusion are frequently predicated on universalist 'claims' which transcend nationalist and in certain instances diasporic discourses: 'Individuals and collective groups set their agenda for realization of rights through particularistic identities, which are embedded in, and driven by, universalistic and homogenizing discourses of personhood and human rights' (2000: 12). This turn to particularistic universalism is illustrated beautifully by Osas Osamede's 'World Without Borders' response to Sorious Samura's suggestion that some might view his path of entry as a form of trespassing: 'The whole world is for us all' (Samura 2000).

A shrinking and ageing population as well as an economic boom suggest that Spain will need 12 million immigrants over the next 30 years (Carroll 2000). At the same time, Spain has completed the installation of a \$120 million radar system that forms a 550 km electronic wall across the Mediterranean (Carroll 2000). The system can detect boats at distances of up to 11 kilometres. Never the less, it will be virtually impossible to 'stem the tide' of desperation and determination, simply by sealing borders. Such drastic measures only act as temporary deterrents, for as soon as one entrance is sealed another is made porous.

By 2015, it is estimated that between 15 and 20 million migrants will have made a bid for Western Europe via Spanish territory (Hardine 2000b). I refer to

this as the paradoxical and racialised politics of exigency and exclusion. In order to cope with labor shortfalls, European countries such as Spain distinguish between the 'right' and 'wrong' sort of immigrant. That is, the gates are thrown wide open for skilled workers. Whereas, the doors are slammed shut for unskilled workers from developing countries. Unless of course, the latter have cheap labor to sell. Thousands of British and northern European expatriates retire to Spain every year without difficulty (O'Reilly 2000). Eastern European immigrants are welcomed and in certain instances actively recruited. On the other hand, North African, West African and Latin American illegals experience racial discrimination and hostility from the indigenous Spanish population who have reinvented themselves as 'White': the 'legal construction of illegality consigns these immigrants to the margins of the economy, racial "otherness," exclusion and economic function are mutually exclusive' (Calavita 1999: 529).

While not discounting the importance of the traditional refugee regime and its concomitant human rights agenda of aid and protection, one could argue that 'refugee' discourses and policies in fact provoke polarised public expressions of either liberal paternalism or right-wing xenophobia, particularly about social integration and the role of the welfare-state (Geddes 2002). Immigration policies are reproduced as popular narratives of nationalism (Hier and Greenberg 2002). As border-crossers, African Boat People have violated the sanctity of sovereign borders, which are not just territorialised but also gendered and racialised. Anthias defines this transgression as the politics of 'translocational positionality'.... 'the social relations of "othering" on the one hand, and resource struggles on the other' (2001: 633). For example, a 50-page guide was published in Spanish, English, French and Arabic by a regional government's health council advising immigrants, many of them Muslim with their own ablution rituals, on hygiene matters, on how to bathe (Daly 2001).

In the Spanish national imaginary with selective amnesia about its Moorish inheritances, Moroccans and Sub-Saharan Africans are marked not just as racially different but also dangerous and 'dirty'. Social and cultural relations between Catholic Spain and Muslim Morocco stretch back fourteen centuries (Chandler 1992, Pimental-Bey 1992). In this new unsettled age, the Spanish are once again demanding 'Moors out of here' (Myers 2000). Four years ago, while in southern Spain presenting a keynote address at a conference on 'Gendered Spaces', I asked some of my Spanish colleagues whether 'Moorish' anxiety was related to the fact that from a racialised standpoint, Moroccans are much harder to keep under surveillance and thus contain than their Black African counterparts. To which they responded too quickly and too emphatically 'no'. (Personal communication, Huelva, Spain, 9 May 2001). A Spanish exchange student at the British university where I used to teach was more honest when she admitted: 'We do not mind the Africans. They are helping strengthen our economy, since they will take the jobs we do not want. It is the Moroccans we do not like. They are responsible for the crime'. (Personal communication, London, United Kingdom, 14 December 2000). Although based on the different ethnographic context of internal African diasporic movements from West to South Africa, Morris' suggestion that visible alterity can

lead to the scapegoating of black African migrants is pertinent: 'because of their physical features, their bearing, their clothing style and their inability to speak one of the indigenous languages, they are in general clearly distinct' (A. Morris 1998: 1123).

To conclude, the 'worlding' of Africans as a 'state of being "cast out" into the world' has happened before (Simone 2001: 17). Though these journeys are as treacherous as the Middle Passage, the difference is that these Africans are (un)wanted. The sitting of the (un)wanted is not unique to Spain. Most European countries, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and now Ireland, are grappling with 'the asylum and immigration problem'. When I have presented this work in the United States, colleagues have drawn parallels with the migrations of both Haitian and Cuban Boat People. Nor are these migratory processes uniquely African. For examples, similar dramas are playing themselves out in Australia with Afghan and Iraqi refugees, in Canada and the United Kingdom with Chinese migrants, and with Mexican and Central American migrants on the US border with Mexico. Once they land, their vulnerable status as illegal immigrants deprives them of rights and entitlements afforded citizens and designated refugees.

My contention is that these aforementioned contemporary migrants, most of whom have not been granted political asylum by Spain on the grounds of refugee status, should be recognised as the latest transnational manifestation of older African diasporic processes (Mazrui 1990, Sefa Dei 1998, Mazrui 1999, Koser 2003). In European (and North American) metropolitan destinations, the new migrant cosmopolitanism (Membembe 2001) that is manufactured also demands that we come to terms with the heterogeneous dialectics of Africanness and Blackness in different diasporic frames (Stoller 2002, Koser 2003). Their consciousness of home as both continental African and diasporic is multi-sited and imagined but not imaginary and territorialised as well as both de-territorialised and re-territorialised. When we witness these more recent dispersals, we must name them as part of a historical continuum within not outside the African diaspora – the latest layers. More recent migrants and refugees from continental Africa have different, shared narratives of home, community, longing and belonging than do their predecessors. The 'myth of return' is to a place they recently knew rather than to a place they can only imagine. Such a repositioning forces a rethinking of the constitutive dimensions of persecution and victimhood, which have been integral criteria for 'classical' diasporic membership. Such a paradigm shift politically empowers African economic (and political) refugees and relocates their struggles within a broader Pan-African diasporic framework. The persistence of globalised, racialised and gendered inequities as manifest in the legal and social exclusion of clandestine West African migrant women and men enroute to Europe affirms the importance of viewing African/diasporic formations as dynamic and historically contextualised and thus cyclical rather than static and ahistorical. The harsh economic, social and political realities of this situated (un)belonging remind us that spanning five centuries and still unfolding, the unique history of the African diaspora is also in part both a history of continental Africa and Fortress Europe.

Notes

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