GONG FU AND THE ART OF DUPLICATION: TOWARD SOCIAL REPOSITORIES IN SUBALTERN HISTORY

Meghan Judge

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Supervisor: Tegan Bristow

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I Meghan Judge declare that this Dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts by Dissertation (Digital Arts) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

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This work is dedicated to all the womxn who have found strength, knowledge and wisdom within the teachings martial arts.

Abstract

The mechanics of how we come to know the past are flawed; the problem lies within the ways through which the narratives of history are consumed by intellectual society. In order to challenge our seemingly inert reliance on authority of primary evidence and archival protocols in the subaltern world, this research aims to unpack the values of social repositories in history through an analysis of the history of gong fu in Madagascar. To this end the research question is thus: *How does the ambiguous history of gong fu in Madagascar contribute to the value of social repositories in subaltern history?*

By making use of 'subaltern' as a guiding frame, this research looks toward social repositories of history through field work that involved multiple trips to Madagascar. These trips focused on tracing paths of informants, visits to sites of folk lore, interviewing informants, analysing oral history and creative production. In an attempt to recover the 'fragment' (stories, biographies, knowledge) the research is extended into creative work that takes into account comics and films that exist in relation to the subject. Digital arts is then deployed as an alternative language to the scribe-based ways of telling history; a mode of production, imagination and archival documentation in the form of an online repository that includes sonic art, animated images and textual explications.

It is through exploring power within the production of history that this research manages to locate alternative narratives and social repositories. In linking with the misrepresentation of black subjectivity and individual knowledge cultures propagated within universalist understandings of history that largely feed western paradigms, alternative narratives of the martial art gong fu arise and are put forward as symptomatic of larger local knowledges of Madagascar that could not easily fit into national archives or state-craft narratives.

This research finds that an understanding of social repositories in relation to social history enriches the intellectual understandings of subaltern history. It is therefore recommended that further research be done that informs the identification of social

repositories within subaltern history, to both enrich the general history of the subaltern world as well as possibly develop alternative languages to the hegemony of scribe-based history telling that explores ways to re-present these narratives.

Key Words

Ambiguity, Multiple Narratives, Universalism, Particular, Subaltern, Indian Ocean, Black Atlantic, Sonic Arts, Animation, Kung Fu, Madagascar, Social Repositories, Rethinking, Power, Silencing, Knowledge, Connected Histories, Open Work, Transnational Networks, Haitian Revolution, Decolonial Thought.

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INTRODUCTION

"but., uhm, the greatest thing that I always remembered was the fact that he mastered 'dédoubler': he could duplicate himself. And I heard the story of his maid who saw him reading a newspaper on a chair and then discovered him in another room sleeping, and she collapsed (laughs). I remember that story" Fanja Rasoanomenjanahary, 2017.

Upon relaying this story to me, Fanja's voice oscillated between bold excitement and trepid concern. How could this be true? Could this be true? This is the crux of the ambiguity that resides surrounding the history of gong fu in Madagascar, wherein multiple narratives such as this one exist. This dissertation fully embraces the uncertainty surrounding this history and treats it as a cue to look deeper into the social repositories that house such narratives, so as to understand more. The theoretical and practical relevance of this research thus opens toward social repositories, whilst exploring ways through which a new languages to speak into them can emerge. In order to achieve this, I ask the question: *How does the ambiguous history of gong fu in Madagascar contribute to the value of social repositories in subaltern history?*

My research explores approaches that favour the particular through embodied feeling, historical sites and memory. Much of the research was done in Madagascar between 2009 and 2018, but a large portion of the practical component was produced in October 2017 in Antananarivo, Madagascar. Whilst there, I worked with Fanja Rasoanomenjanahary, a past pupil of WISA gong fu, a school that has been central to the history of gong fu in Madagascar.

In chapter one I explore the knowledge surrounding the values of social repositories in Caribbean thought, specifically linked to scholars occupied by rethinking how to tell the history of Haiti. In the second chapter I unpack the history of gong fu in Madagascar, and the multiple narratives thereof that have lead to an ambiguity surrounding this history. In chapter three I present my practical component through an ethnographic project, as well as experiments into animation and sonic art as alternative languages to speak into this ambiguous history. I also introduce how my work is being shared and displayed through an 'open work' approach online. In the final chapter I conclude my findings.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Social Repository Values

1.1.1 Ambiguity within the archives

To begin, it is necessary to address upfront the issues of reliance on archives for researching social historical moments in time. The archivists hold an enormous power over identity and peoples remembrance, and a reliance on this as a singular research repository would render a skewed vision of any historical narrative. Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook (2002) unpack this power relation within the making of archives that shape the direction of historical scholarship, collective memory, and national identity, over how we know ourselves as individuals, groups and societies. Schwatrz and Cook argue that just as the individual narrative that enters the archive holds a particular position on what meaning it is deriving from its relationship to a particular social, whether legal or otherwise agended, so too do the archive behave in the same way. This relatedness to the control over the ways that history is stored can yield problematic results for researchers who rely solely on archives for their work. "The nature of the resulting 'archive' thus has serious consequences for administrative accountability, citizen rights, collective memory, and historical knowledge, all of which are shaped – tacitly, subtly, sometimes unconsciously, yet profoundly – by the naturalized, largely invisible, and rarely questioned power of archives" (4). The immense power, then, that the archive institution holds over social history (2), is something that I address throughout this thesis, with regards to alternative approaches to bringing in social histories.

Such concepts are not new in contemporary subaltern scholarship, the location in which this research work is situated, namely that of the subaltern 'consciousness' and 'voice'. To illustrate these thinkings I will now turn to two renowned works in the field: Ranajit Guha's *The Prose of Counter Insurgency* and Gyanendra Pandey's *In Defense of the Fragment*.

In *The Prose of Counter Insurgency*, Guha looks closely at those who joined rebellions in an act of counter insurgency throughout India, and the historical

writings that captured such events that rise up against the state. Within this analysis, Guha poses that understanding this history through facts written by colonial India is dangerous due to their ability to completely shift the perspectives of the reader. He claims that such facts disregard the logic of the choices of those within the rebellions and, instead, center nation-state narratives. In opposition to such literature on the subject, Guha argues that "Insurgency...was a motivated and conscious undertaking on the part of the rural masses" (46), pointing out that within the literature on the topic "Insurgency is regarded as *external* to the peasants consciousness and Cause is made to stand in as a phantom surrogate for Reason , the logic of that consciousness" (47). The logical and conscious choices, then, that motivated the rural masses are precisely what have been disregarded in the retelling of these histories. Guha thus proposes counter insurgency as a discourse of those in power, with the active willingness and reasons behind the joining of rebellions brought to the fore so that history be necessarily re-examined.

This re-examination of history is further explored by Pandey in his *Defence of the Fragment,* through his writings about violence in colonial and post-colonial India. Here, Pandey highlights the 'fragment' (that which represents minority cultures and practices) as a kind of historical source that is often neglected by mainstream historians. He proposes that these fragments be taken into account in order to speak into historical writings that exist beyond the nation - writings that he claims are complicit with the erasure of subaltern history. In search of these fragments that speak beyond the nation, Pandey compellingly argues for other histories found in the testimonies of those victims of trauma due to the partitioning of India and consequential Bhagalpur "riots" of 1989. "Part of the importance of the 'fragmentary' point of view lies in that it resists the drive for a shallow homogenization and struggles for other, potentially richer definitions of the 'nation' and the future political community" (29). Here, Pandey aims to subvert "the totalising standpoint of a seamless nationalism" (48) by bringing in more particular, marginalized narratives, and, by doing so, he raises a necessary critique of the plotting of the history of the world in a linear fashion wherein the nation state is said to be a necessary end.

Both of these texts critically highlight the necessity for the re-examination of history not only within India, but also in the subaltern world. They center a mistrust for posits within archival research written through colonial structures that neglect important social sources.

This issue of the archives also points toward a certain difficulty that Indian Ocean social history scholars have grappled with whilst writing about histories outside of a Eurocentric canon. Defining the Indian Ocean area itself has lead to much ambiguity; a space connected by waters whence multiple cultures traversed, each with their own perspectives and experiences. Michael N. Pearson (2007) elaborates on the difficulties of writing a history of the Indian Ocean and concludes that 'the only way forward certainly will be a more cultural studies approach' (28). His exhaustion clearly points to a multiplicity of occurrences within the region including the capturing of histories that mainly focus on maritime law and the developments of the colonies, which fail to successfully capture the entire connectedness of the Indian Ocean world. Pearson finds that there is a lack of social history research within this area in general, which renegades its rich history to that of colonial documents and maritime research. By drawing out more social histories within this region and looking at how their histories intertwine and connect between places (which I will explore in relation to my topic in chapter 2), I hope to contribute to this gap in knowledge. In contrast to this difficulty of defining the Indian Ocean area, Pearson points out that Gilroy managed to coin the term the 'Black Atlantic' by demarcating the space that reaches from the shores of one side of the Atlantic to another, a space that has been "formed as a result of connections and interactions, whether through migration, commerce or conquest" (30). By demarcating this area in such a way, Gilroy has enabled rich historical research to arise (30). Without opening toward the social histories of the Indian Ocean region that contribute to the archives of the region, it would remain void of such, and the area would be relegated only to maritime and colonial capturing of historical events.

The Black Atlantic, then, emerges as a reference, a comparison point, through which the Indian Ocean can look toward for ways of drawing out it's own social histories that would enrich the historical archives of the area (Hormeyr, 2007). A

similarity between the regions is presented within the issue of how social historians tell a history of these oceanic worlds outside of Eurocentric canons. Scholars such as C L R James, W. E. B Du Bois, Sylvia Wynter, Michel Rolph Trouillot, Joan Dayann, Pearson, P. Beaujard, K N Chaudhari, I Hofmeyer, F. Broeze Felipe Fernandez and many more have made significant contributions into rethinking how these histories are/can be told. Similarities emerge, such as the connections drawn out through the movement of people over these waters between lands, linking the two oceanic regions. The slave trade has had significant impact on the social within these areas, leaving rich social histories that occurred within the forced movement of bodies for labor across and between these oceans; people shared space and brought cultures with them over the treacherous and violent oceanic voyages to different lands (Campbell, 2007). Looking into the particularities that have emerged from the growing base of scholars who have focused on rethinking how the history of the Black Atlantic is told becomes important in understanding how a 'rethinking of histories' project might work and what it might look like. This rethinking project has proved successful in the opening toward alternative narratives about historicity within the black Atlantic (Gilroy, 1992). By understanding the thought that emerged around this rethinking project in the Black Atlantic an opportunity emerges to consider this thought as one that can also be applied to the Indian Ocean region so as to inform ways of thinking into how to tell histories through a localized and non-Eurocentric canon.

1.2 Rethinking history

1.2.1 Rethinking the Haitian Revolution

Central to this re-thinking project are the events that unfolded in the Haitian Revolution and the work done by scholars into thinking how to tell this history. In an online article titled *Atlantic Freedoms*, Dubois states that Haiti was, at the time of its revolution, the most lucrative and important state for Europe's activities in their building of wealth through colonization[1]. He goes on to inform us that the African

[1] www.aeon.co/essays/why-haiti-should-be-at-the-centre-of-the-age-of-revolution

slaves, about 40 000 of whom were arriving every year in boats mainly from the Congo, made up about 500,000 of the population at the time of the revolution. These people arrived with their own tactics and technologies, belief systems and cultures that linked directly back to African soil. It was these very same enslaved people and escaped Maroons who lead the first successful slave revolt that lasted for 33 years (Fouchard and Watts, 1981), an action that won independence for Haiti and saw the setting up of the first black state in 1804. This moment in history has proved to be immensely significant in shifting world history and Eurocentric canons in term of how to write these world histories.

However, according to Dubois in the article mentioned above (titled *Atlantic Freedoms),* there is a significant lack of written evidence by the Haitians themselves building up to the Revolution, which does not indicate that there was no work being done by the Haitians and the Africans who were in Haiti at that time. Dubois explains that these people had largely and purposefully been left out of the European educating systems and therefore had been unable to gain access to literacy, disabling their ability to capture their own history in that same way. However, this lack of written evidence does not imply that there is no history that occurred; it can only suggest that we must find ways through which to navigate into these histories that exist outside of written text.

Crucially, one document from the revolutionaries does exist: the *Haitian Constitution* of 1805, as written by Dessalines after independence, which fully considers race within human rights during the time of slavery and colonialisation. This constitution deals with issues that, globally, had not adequately been dealt with yet, even though a similar project of 'liberty for all' had emerged at around that time in France during the French Revolution (which took place between 1789 – 1799). The Haitian constitution pushes the notions of liberty proposed in the French Revolution (C L R James, 1989) further into the realm of dealing with an ideological conception of race from within the first black state. Anne Gulick proclaims that "The 1805 Constitution contains what in today's lexicon would be called a set of radical postcolonial aspirations, a community imagined, through a legal narrative, as

capable of doing something none of its models had done before: identifying both blackness and humanity as the basic signifiers of citizenship" (2006). In other words, Haiti proposed to the world a radical reconceptualisation of race through this constitution, most notably in article 14, a widely discussed topic amongst scholars. The 1805 Constitution of Haiti's Article 14 states: "All meaning of color among the children of one and the same family, of whom the chief magistrate is the father, being necessarily to cease, the Haytians shall henceforth be known by the generic appellation of blacks"[2]. Herein, the article defines the naturalization of Haitian citizens under one race, black, eliminating previous racial categories. The new categorisation of black "encompassed the various ethnic groups that had been involved in the struggle against the Western vision of mankind. Victory in adversity gave birth to this new character, which was a synthesis not only of Ibos, Aradas, and Hausas but also of French, Germans, and Poles" (Cassimir, 2009). In the making of this constitution a remarkable offering toward the emergence of human rights has thus emerged, rendering the Haitian revolution a moment of major global importance. A retelling of the history of the Haitian Revolution, thus, offers us an important route through which one can plot out a way to better understand what occurred during and building up to the revolution that brought forward these ideals that radically challenged racial views at that time. This retelling can assist in better understanding what influences, networks, cultures and people were at play and what effect they had on pushing through the immense achievement of revolution in a time where Africans were being enslaved and relegated to manual labor for much of Europe.

For many in Europe, the ability for slaves to revolt and claim their own independence and build their own state was 'unthinkable' at that time (Trouillot, 1995). This 'unthinkability' refers to Eurocentric thought at that time, much of which was documenting history through an understanding central to itself. It insinuates that much of Europe was incapable of thinking that such a revolution which proposed these ideals could be possible. Becket (2013), describes this notion

[2] www.franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9963587313503681

of the unthinkable further, outlining how it is "the social ontology that provides the condition of possibility for the categories and concepts with which people think" (56). As Europe was experiencing the French Revolution, the Jacobins emerged (a club titled the 'friends of freedom and equality' during the French Revolution) who had a major influence on the Haitians struggling for freedom (C L R James, 1989). It was these Haitians who pushed further the work being done by the Jacobins, in the notion that they were contributing to the same project of liberty for all. However, this work was not even comprehensible to Europe at the time; a Europe who still generally considered black slaves to be property was unable to comprehend that these very same slaves could produce a world significant document that furthered their project on humanity. This inability to think that something like this was possible has lead to much of the history of the Haitian revolution being largely left out of history books and for it to pale in comparison to the teachings of French revolution which is still so often taught to pupils in schools across the world. A lack of acknowledgement of the histories that the Haitians and Africans were involved in during the build up to the revolution has left a gaping hole in History's narratives, one that is slowly being filled with thinkers offering new approaches to the understanding and telling of such an ambiguous history.

1.2.2 Rethinking Universalism

One of the most significant examples of this inability to be able to think differently about this history on the side of the Europeans at that time has been traced by Buck-Morss (2000) to another world significant document produced in close proximity to the Haitian Revolution, a document proclaiming a philosophical universal historical ordering, written by German idealist George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. I will unpack Buck-Moss' argument in the section below, but for now I return to Hegel to better understand his proposition. Hegel's document had a major impact on the thinking of Europeans at the time. According to Merleu-Ponty (1964) this philosophical text has been one of the most influential within the European philosophies of history, most notably for the concept on 'world history'. It

introduces a universalist view of history that centers Europe (63). In its production, Europe is set as the center of the world, whilst those on the falloff areas outside are relegated to being less capable of making history, some of whom are incapable entirely.

This world significant document is the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and in it Hegel (1807) sets out to create a universal account of the world. Here, he reads history as a process of the world: a grand philosophical theory of the history and therefore of the world. The formation of history develops, for Hegel, through the movement of 'spirit' in the world and the actions of people working within the world. A dialectic is formed between the thesis and antithesis which creates contradictions and tensions until a resolution is found in the form of synthesis. Therefore, it is this activity in the world that moves history forward. Spirit is the activity of history, but it needs people to activate it, and this spirit comes to rest only when all dialectical energy has been resolved.

It is within Hegel's *Lordship and Bondage*, written in parallel to the French Revolution (Buckmorss, 2000), wherein Hegel introduces this dialectical moment that is defined as he explores the relationship between two individuals who become self actualized through each other, the one taking on the metaphor of a 'lord' and the other as the 'bondsman'. For Hegel, self consciousness is what is produced through this dialectical process *vis-a-vie* the other (183). In this sense Hegel is saying that the bondsman needs the Master to realize that they are indeed people, free like their masters. The bondsman sees himself in the master and therefore sees his truth. He needs to be made external to himself so it can be seen as truth to acquire a mind of his own (118); the worker/bondsman lives in a permanent form of his being for self, this is how the bondsman, through his work, comes to see his own independence. Hegel goes on to suggests that 'fear' and 'service', occurring at the same time, formulating an activity that allows reflecting upon. This is the universal mode that he proposes: service and obedience without fear produce a consciousness that is for itself; however, service and obedience coupled with fear produce a consciousness that is not for itself - there is action and movement. He thus opens the door for the justification of slavery in Africa and the 'civilizing' of 'other' peoples by Europe, the

ultimate truth where the spirit wishes to move toward, insinuating that the African condition is worse if it is left untouched; that Africans are not self conscious and are therefore only 'things', and that slavery becomes the condition through which Africans can enter history; it is the struggle with consciousness that allows for a moment of history to take place within Africa.

According to Hegel's philosophies, the only way for Africans to become free is for them to become enslaved. And so, within this, Hegel discovers a dialectical process that he applies to the entire world, centering Europe and the West as the ultimate last movement that the spirit attempts to reach, and thereafter a sliding down scale toward firstly Greece/Rome and then Asia, completely, and intentionally, leaving Africa out of this process of being able to participate in the making of history, and hence of the world. This proposal of a universal history thus centers Europe and pushes Africa from the world history map as outside of the ability to move with the spirit. It is a Eurocentric approach to universal history, quite different from the universalism proposed by Dessalines that "opposed the western vision of mankind" (Cassimir, 2009).

1.3 Gap in Thinking

1.3.1 Between Hegel and the Marooned Slaves of Haiti

Let us now return to Susan Buck-Morss' (2000) argument that links the Haitin revolution to Hegel's Master Slave dialect. Here, Buck-Morss argues for a new humanism to emerge from within the thinking of the universal. Within this proposition, Buck Morss also raises a connection between Hegel and Haiti by convincingly arguing that the Haitian Revolution directly inspired Hegel's Master Slave dialectic, wherein she provides convincing evidence that Hegel must have known about these events while he was developing this philosophy.

Buck-Morss argues that the Master and Slavery dialectic reads as a metaphor for Europe at that time. Haiti fought exhaustively for independence for 14 years, finally victorious in 1804, three years before Hegel published his *Phenomenology of*

Spirit, which, as we have recently explored, contains the earliest published and best known master-slave dialectic. If we are to look into political modernity, Buck-Morss argues, the Haitian revolution would be at its center. This positioning of the events in the Caribbean at center stage is significant in that Busk-Morss is claiming that these events influenced Hegel's writings, which in turn became very influential on the whole of Europe. By shifting the position of Haiti to center stage and Hegel outside of that, Buck-Morss has begun to offer some of this thinking that begins to form shapes within the ambiguous gap as set apart by the two proposed universalisms at that time (that of Hegel and that of the Haitian Constitution).

Buck-Morss's thinking critiques Hegel's universalism in his silencing of the Haitians, even though he was directly inspired by it. In her critique she outlines how intrinsic racism has restricted Hegel's treating of history as teleological, of a totalizing thought, thus creating a secular universalism, as seen through Hegel's racist views on Africa and the Christian roots of his universal history philosophy. She argues that the scope of Hegel's insights are reduced to a brief glimpse into a particular historical moment (155). "The Haiti revolution lies at the crossroads of multiple discourses as a defining moment in world history" (13). Thus, she argues that Hegel must have known about these events, and yet in his writings he chooses to silence the revolution (29). Slavery was spreading outside of Europe whilst enlightenment ideals that were in direct contradiction to it were spreading within Europe at the very same time. The enslavement of non-Europeans through force in and outside of the colonies had, by mid-eighteenth century, come to underwrite the entire economic system of the west (Acemoglu, Daron, Johnson and Robinson, 2005), which could account for the many silences within this world history, often written on the backbone of Hegel's universal ideals. Buck-Morss's critique, thus, problematizes a Hegelian trajectory of writing history from a Eurocentric perspective, through introducing her own research into how Hegel must have known about the Haitian revolution whilst writing his Master Slave dialect, and yet how he chooses to ignore mention of this in his writings.

She goes on to introduce her offerings of a new universalism that centers humans - a new humanism project, that is formed whilst thinking into the history of

the Haitian revolution. Instead of relying on the Hegelian view of history, Buck-Morss pushes past it, seeking out a new humanity that she claims emerges 'at the point of rapture', a humanity that can only come from those who don't have (119) "The greater the power a civilization wields in the world, the less capable its thinkers may be to recognize the naiveté of their own beliefs" (119). She claims that universality emerges through common links (75), and begins a project of imagining a universal history, a porosity, a concept that exposes peoples individual identities. Her project of universal history calls on scholars to revisit moments when this humanity was glimpsed, stating that it is "between these two spaces that we can find the truth." Through thinking through the events surrounding the Haitian revolution in different ways, we can see how the beginnings of proposals such as this one by Buck-Morss indicate not only that the Haitian Revolution holds key moments within history that lead to the proposals of new humanisms, but also that thinking into the gaps within history is indeed useful.

However, there is a large gap between Hegel's proposed universalism and the decolonial thought that emerged from within the Haitian constitution. Within the Haitian revolution, it was people largely from the Congo in Africa, freshly landed in Haiti, slaves that freed themselves and marooned themselves, that largely contributed to this change through their guerilla warfare technologies, such as approaches to attacking from the mountains when the enemy least expected it (Fouchard and Watts, 1981). These self-actualized actions lead to the building of a human universalism that brought with it perspectives of blackness, looking seriously at race. It was slaves who brought about such a change, despite the violent pushback from the colonizers and landowners. These slaves who brought with them rich cultures and beliefs from back home in Africa who, when Toussaint Louverture, a prominent leader of the revolution, failed by fault of appeasing Europe too much, pushed past him to the final stretch of the revolution for themselves (C L R James, 1938). The acknowledgement of this history is remarkably important in demonstrating that these Africans were not 'outside of history' and, further, that the knowledge carried within these people was a core enabler of such change.

Within the understanding of this history from a European position, an

ambiguity resides about what occurred within the build up to the revolution. The maroons were a group of freed slaves living outside of society, in the mountains, and there remains little to no recorded archives in the sense of paper trails and photographs about their lives and actions (Fouchard, 1981). This lack of paper-based facts within the archives highlights how this history has not been easily traced when relying on histories recorded on paper and there arises ambiguity within the retelling of this history. And yet we know that it was these maroons who contributed largely to the thinking of a proposed universalism that takes into account both race and human rights at a time when Africans were thought to exist outside of history in Hegelian terms.

The gap between Hegel's universalism and that of the Haitians demonstrates a gap in thinking about world events, thus revealing a space for re-thinking into the notion of universalism itself. The work done by scholars (some of whom I will unpack toward the end of this chapter) who tackle this challenge has lead to proposals of new universalisms as well as new ways of thinking into humanisms, the people entangled within these universal values. These offerings made by scholars are in part due to the rich complicating that the Haitian Revolution yielded with regards to ways of thinking about world history. This thinking within the gap between Hegelian Universalism and that of the Haitian Revolution has revealed a trajectory of thought that considers how to read into social histories and what a reading of them proposes for us whilst thinking about how to retell these histories today.

An example of this lies within the critique of Buck-Morss by George Ciccariello-Maher (2014), wherein he indicates that it requires more thought than one person to fill in these historical gaps. Ciccariello-Maher critiques Buck-Morss's inability to propose openings toward this alternative universalism that centers humanism that she proposes, as he claims her approach has a "a heavy-handed 'conceptual ordering' which leads her - like the Hegel she critiques - to approach the universal by negating, rather than truly passing through and inhabiting, the particular" (notions of the particular that echo those of the 'fragment' mentioned above in descriptions of the subaltern scholars Guha and Pandey). Buck-Morss is

critiquing the western canon by critiquing Hegel only, however, she is not bringing in new knowledge - she is not looking at what is there through the particulars of the people that she claims to be the center of her humanism project. Ciccariello-Maher's critique becomes significant in his demonstrating that there is a need to push deeper into the personal, into the particular that holds new knowledge.

Moreover, Scott (2010) proposes the possibilities of the particular further through his own critique of Buck-Morss's proposed universalism, where he raises a critical question about how the world can be written, but not through the European canon (160). About his analysis of Buckmorses writings Scott says "I am less concerned to find fault with its arguments…than to respond to the productive impulse I find at work in it, namely, to think the connection between slavery, emancipation, and universalism" (154). Here, Scott is proposing a throwing open of disciplines. He claims that Buck-Morss treats C L R James's *The Black Jacobins* as mere data, and that she considers this book to be not important because the 'western canon can critique itself' and therefore C L R James himself becomes unimportant. What does this notion imply? Do we need to listen more to the works of writers who bring forward knowledge that exists outside of the western canon? For Buck-Morss, the killing of the whites during the Haitian revolution was the end of her universalism, of her proposed humanity, not the massacre of vodou priests and others who lost their lives before them. So where is the line of her humanism? Scott finds that her line exists within the death of whites where she claims that a glimpse into humanity is seen and thus a point of no return is reached. And so, we can see from her borders of a proposed humanity that privileged whites benefit from her universalism most; those who had privileges still continue to benefit under this view. This critique of Buck-Morss reveals how sticking within the Western canon and critiquing that only without bringing in other knowledges can lead to a lack of understanding about the events that one is critiquing. This results in a lack of understanding the particulars of those involved and the knowledges that they carry that might exist outside of the Western canon. Thus, the historical gap (Hegal and the Haitian Constitution) is not sufficiently filled.

Scott (2010) proposes a new way of looking into this gap, and that is

by looking for openings for new knowledge to enter and shape our understandings of this history. Scott claims that a universalism is accessible, but only once we have dealt with its 'here and now' (2009). In his view, universalism can never be non-racial without deracialising work being done first. He outlines how universalism has been made through the excusing of whites and says that because of this we are going into a stage of reckoning. Scott proposes that the Haitian revolution is a possible moment for posing a decolonialsim dialect. Where Buck Morse privileges liberty and freedom for humans as the French did during their independence, she does not consider how racial identities play out within the making of those constructs. The end of Toussaint was the end of freedom for her: her barrier is freedom. However, for Scott, it was the *particular* that propelled the Haitians into emancipation. For him, Toussaint sees it too broadly, while Dessalines, Toussaint's general, who managed to push past the eager-to-work-with-Europe Toussaint's downfall and was able to path the way to independence, only sees what is in front of him. For Scott, the answer lies by seeking out a combination of these two: both the broad and the particular. For him universality is a principle that is useful, but it cannot *achieve* freedom in and of itself. Scott's thoughts into the Haitian revolution propose a space through which to deepen knowledge into these historical gaps, and thus to shape more of the ambiguous space in-between Hegel's proposed universalism and that of the Haitian constitution. It proposes both a looking into the particular as well as the 'useful' broad universalisms. On the one side we have a Eurocentric universalism, the progressive linear time line; with it reside Buck-Morss's universalism proposal and Hegelianism, a universal notion of freedom but one that is not able to achieve it. On the other side we have a postcolonial critique of universalism, one that is in favor of the particular, as described by Fanon (1963) and outlined in Dessaline's Haitian Constitution (1805). The latter understands a bringing of change within the retelling of history in direct response to a lack of understanding of what has happened with people on the ground whilst the events were unfolding.

1.3.2 Border thinking

This thinking begins to now guide me in the direction of thought emerging about how to think about history as something linked into the global and yet as something that cannot be defined without understanding the particular within the events as well. Mignolo (2000), an eminent semiotician in the Americas has furthered this notion of the particular in reference to coloniality, subaltern knowledges and border thinking. Mignolo states that "for five hundred years, universal history was told from the perspective of one local history, that of Western civilisation"(x). He proposes 'border thinking' as a decolonial approach to rethinking history outside of Hegel's imperial imaginations of spirit that totalizes all knowledges under one ultimate knowledge. According to Mignolo, "border thinking becomes, then, the necessary epistemology to delink and decolonise knowledge and, in the process, to build decolonial local histories, restoring the dignity that the Western idea of universal history took away from millions of people" (x). Border thinking proposes a 'geo- and body politics of knowing' (xiv), that both looks toward the inevitable entanglements of local histories with that of Western history, as well as a focusing on the local histories themselves. This entanglement gives rise to a space through which a thinking that exists within borders occupies the space of the personal. "'I am where I think' becomes the starting point, the historical foundation of border thinking and decolonial doing" (xiv). Mignolo goes on to explain this further by expanding on this change of thought, the predecessor of which was the logical *I think therefore I am*, which "focuses on the 'I think' whereas 'I am where I think' focuses on 'I', not a new universal I, but one that dwells in the border and is marked by colonial wound." (xiv). This is significant in that it demonstrates thinking that begins to shift toward local knowledges in the telling of histories, and a complication that is entangled in world history, giving more direction into thinking into the gaps between hegemonic/dominant forms of history telling and local knowledges. The focusing in on the particular within ambiguous historical moments such as the gong fu riots in Madagascar that I am researching, enable a people's encounter of the events to come forward, thus shaping the ways within which that history is told. This approach provides a richer localized historical narrative that both holds the potential for new knowledges to come forward about these events as

well as challenges dominant narratives about the events.

1.3.3 Tradition of black global intellectual thinkers

There has been an emergence of thinkers born from the tradition of thinking into the particular within history that challenges written histories and pose the question of how to go about writing them (Moyn and Sartore, 2013); this tradition of thinkers point toward the particular instead of the universal and offer us their insights into how they go about doing this. With the notion that thinkers from different areas around the world are contributing to the thought on world history in mind, perhaps looking into a global intellectual exchange, instead of a network of specifically universalist theorists, might yield some interesting thoughts into how to write about histories and provide examples of ways to think into them.

A good place to begin would be with those who have historically been excluded from this universalism and have therefor built up critiques of it over the ages: that is, those within the history of black global intellectual thought (207). Here, a history of communication and collaboration resides, where experiments in ways of pushing against universalism and enlightenment abound (208). There are very fertile moments of black thought over a long period of time, including 1) early formations of the Black Atlantic 2) between wars where propositions of human rights vs. self determination emerged 3) individuals such as W E B Debois and Julius Nyerere who proposed theories of African Socialism, whilst relationships within the Cold War emerged, as well as the development of a relatedness to the post colonial project 4) Robert Sobukwe's addressing of race/anti racism with a broad convention of Africanists. These contributions towards black global thought both invoke the particular as well as link it into a global network and movement of thinkers.

A brief examination of these global intellectuals who contributed toward histories outside of the universalist approaches to history has provided some useful examples of the proposals and knowledges brought into the thinking of histories that sit in the subaltern world and how to tell them. Moyn and Sartore (2013) speak into the formation of a black global intellectual history, as proposed by black writers

who thought into African histories, in the quest for the true "African authentic 'library'"(206), that "effectively recomposed universal history" (205). In this book there is a focus on "collectivist identities that can build a collective project together" rather than a universalism that attempts to make too much of an expansive generalist claim, which trips up on itself particularly over race. The book separates the universalist from the particularist and outlines their different articulation of world history. A good example of how this is done is within the detailing about Ferris (212) who contributed toward the early laboring's of pointing toward individuals such as Pixley Ka Isaka Seme and his "Regeneration of Africa" speech (214), where he points to the individual efforts of a Zulu man from South Africa as being not inhabited by their race but as people who could achieve success at the highest level in Western society. Ferris continued this work in various cases bringing forward individuals and events such as *The Zulu's as Fighters*[3], whilst Kinf Melenok of Abysinnia offered a reframing of civilization and where it initially took place, as based on the works of previous writers such as Boas, W.C Taylor, G.S Henry, Sergi, W.Z Ripley, Gregoire, and Volney. This offering dispels much of the enlightenment narrative, especially that of G W F Hegel, that "were being used in the 'civilising mission' in Africa" (210). These contributions "dramatically revised Hegel's geography of the black continent and compiled worldly intellectual and cultural resources to support their claims" (212). In doing so, this network of black global intellectual thinkers pushed back against the Western framing of the black world; reclaiming their identity as human in the aftermath of the Atlantic slave trade and imperialism in Africa. These black thinkers constituted an economy of knowledge that was constantly reshaped and contested internally, providing alternatives to the western framing of the universal history, rendering it only one trajectory of many (222).

It is the exclusion of Africa from the history of the world that is the gap within which these thinkers were operating within, drawing out particular and individual examples that began to shape this gap on a global scale. Du Bois offered

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[3] Appeared in the *Cable Dispatch* on May 31st, 1906

an analysis into this missing link with African history saying it "was not for a lack of evidence" that Africa had been left out of global history but that it "was an intentional omission performed largely in the service of European imperial expansion and accumulation of wealth. It was an imperial project designed to justify the enslavement, colonization, and exploitation of the continent and its peoples" (220). These contributions by the black intellectuals existed within their own networks that began to spread, leaning on each other and building up a counter to the hegemony of history writing about people in the subaltern world at the time. This approach has proved useful in filling up the gap with stories of particular accounts from individuals who are active participants in the world.

1.4 Where History Lies

1.4.1 Power, Humanism, and Bodily Knowledge

One notable scholar from the Carribean who provided a rich contribution toward this rethinking project was Michel Rolph Trouillot (1995). Through the retelling of the Haitian revolution and an analysis of the C.L R James' book the Black Jacobins, Trouillot grapples with where knowledge lies within history's production and the experience of history for individuals today. Perhaps this is best surmised by David Scott (2012):

> "But perhaps one crucial theoretical spur to this rereading of the Haitian Revolution was the publication in 1995 of Michel-Roplph Trouillot's Silencing the Past, because part of what this book did in a stark and elegant way, at once incisive and parsimoniously, was to open up the question of the Haitian Revolution as a question about historical - and therefore theoretical - knowledge. Not only were the revolution and its implications for the Enlightenment self-understanding of freedom repressed from the modern historical and theoretical imagination, but they were also, to begin with, 'unthinkable,' which is to say, indigestible, inadmissible, within the ready-made categories of European Enlightenment thought. Even as the events

> occurred, Trouilot writes, 'most contemporaries could read the news only with their ready-made categories, and these categories were incompatible with the new idea of slave revolution'" (154).

This book by Trouillot has provided me with much useful thought to work with and I will analyse it further in Chapter two, specifically in relation to power at play within the history of gong fu in Madagascar.

To return to the network of Caribbean thinkers for now, a notable contributor to the rethinking of humanity is Sylvia Wynter, who proposes a new take on humanism. In Wynter's offerings, this new humanism that exists to bring in the values of individuals and collectivity, is offered as a way through which to decolonise the Western canon. Her thoughts are best captured in the interview '*The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter'* by David Scott (2000). In it, Wynter offers insight into this building of her humanism, a humanism that is different to that of Buck-Morss; Wynter's work exists to reclaim a definition of humanism. She discursively constructs this humanism whilst choosing to inherit the agency within the rapture within Europe at that time. For Wynter the idea of humanism emerges at the same time as colonialism and she claims that "it is within these spaces where intellectuals begin to build an anti-colonial critique" (156). This critique answers the question posed earlier about 'who writes?' Which opens the question of where knowledge resides and who holds the stories of history. "I've never really seen myself as an academic, I've always seen myself as a writer in the general sense of the term, and so for me to write for *Savacon* then was just part of the intellectual struggle of the time, the kind of writing that marked the difference between what it was to be a 'native' colonial subject and to no longer be" (156). In her description about writing for the journal *Savacon,* Sylvia is expressing a need to write herself into being. This is apart of an imagining and reimagining of ones self that exists outside of the stereotypes already flush in the writings of the world (136). This imagining and reimagining leads to a complicating and a doubling through the splitting off of the stereotype posed by the Western canon (136). For her, the power within coloniality is what shapes those stereotypes and the struggle against this is

paramount to the humanism that she proposes (156). She states that "… if we want to be first rate intellectuals then we understand our work to be undoing the epistemically grounds of the way in which power is distributed…to be a first rate intellectual you have to commit yourself to the decolonial project, which aims at reimagining a world set against this power that has written it otherwise" (157). For Wynter, centering the decolonial project is paramount to allowing space for a new humanism to exist. The imagining and reimagining into a humanism becomes a social repository of history within which decolonial thought resides that focuses in on people as agents within history, people who shape their own anti-colonial critique.

A furthering of this notion of the particular over the universal, provides a riveting example of an embodying experience that exists within those power structures that Sylvia speaks of. These embodied experiences offer differing views from the ones presented by those in power; this 'embodying' becomes another value for social repositories that I will explore throughout this research. Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015) offers himself as a personal account about the fear of losing your body to the world (as experienced by marginalized/black/queer bodies), coupled with a need to save the black body by reclaiming it. Coates explores both the difficulties he finds within racial proclamations as well as those that emerge when thinking about how race is useful for the future; the difficulties are this: he wants to move forward, but it is always held in the structure of the world - the powers of the world - thus complicating the building of a new future project within the imaginings that Sylvia has proposed. His writings read as questions about futures and time. For him, to dream is to imagine a future which doesn't work. Further, Coates' works also shows how important time is, in relationship to histories/presents/futures; this focusing in on an individual, personal account of one person trying to imagine a better future becomes crucial in thinking through propositions of universality. It is through speaking into his embodied experiences of living within these complex racial spaces that Coates offers us yet another social repository, that of the embodied experience of living within both the past and the present, whilst imagining the future.

1.4.2 Vodou as an alternative repository of history

By locating the knowledge of the particular within bodily experiences, a question is raised: how do we *read* this knowledge that is entwined with both embodied experiences of localized histories as well as theoretical connections to global history? Research into the practices of vodou in Haiti by Joan Dayan (1998) sheds light on how this practice can be read as one that embodies, recalls and details the history of the Haitian people, a history that has otherwise been accounted for in the language of the former master or creolised versions of it, and not through the mother tongues or expressions of those Haitians who lived and experienced it in (2). Dayann treats the rituals and ceremonies practiced through Vodou as deposits of history (35). Here, she outlines how possession and dispossession both speak into the history of slavery in the country as well as the ways though which this history is still recalled today. The dispossessions that Haitians experienced through slavery "became the model for possession in vodou: for making a man not a thing but into spirit" (36). By drawing attention to the 'thing' and the 'spirit' a parallel is drawn to Hegel's proclamation that Africans are merely things, incapable of channeling the spirit that would bring them into the making of history in the world, thus paving the way for them to be taken as property by Europeans. Hence, the practices of vodou pose as an opening through which a reading into the complicating of this master slave dialect posed by Hegel can be achieved.

Haitians, Dayann claims, hold alternative histories to those of the oppressors. She looks toward the Haitians as people who have had a different localized experience of the ways through which slavery played out in the country, and therefore as people who hold a different knowledge about it. The "dehumanization or bondage, so much a part of displays of servitude or possession in Europe, where domestic slavery or the bond of property could become a metaphor for unparalleled intimacy or perfect devotion, worked differently for those who were not inventing the institution of slavery, accumulating property, or trying to justify mastery" (67). The different workings for the slaves or freed slaves are something that can be read through the practice of vodou.

Finding where these histories might lie then, is a task Dayann takes on fully

by exploring possession, master, slavery and sexuality within vodou. She points us in the direction of where to locate social repositories whilst unpacking what histories and knowledge have been housed within the Iwa. "A vodou history might be composed from materials such as oral accounts of the possession of Dessalines and his emergence as Iwa, god, or spirit, and equally ambivalent accounts of figures such as Ezili, Jean Zombi, or Défilée. Sinkholes of excess, these crystallizations of unwritten history force us to acknowledge inventions of mind and memory that destroy the illusions of mastery, that circumvent and confound *any* master narrative"(54). The term 'Sinkholes of excess', then, is introduced by Dayann as a social repository that captures unwritten histories. Vodou as a sinkhole of excess thus houses histories that are bound up in the Iwa, figures from the past that both represent certain complex experiences of slavery as well as people turned gods who hold important histories and myths within their re-tellings.

Histories and memories housed within the Iwa include memories of the slave revolt, and the complicated relationships between master/mistress and slaves. Dessalines, the first ruler in Independent Haiti, was restored as Iwa after his body was mutilated and no proper burial for this people's liberator took place. Défilée, a devotee of Dessalines turned diviner, "mourns and cares for the body of the Liberator" (45). She is concerned with proper burials and as well as for the "unquiet dead" (45). Jean Zombi was known for his brutality when it came to the slaughtering of the whites, and he has been restored to Iwa as the very act of standing up against colonization. "Born out of the experience of slavery, the sea passage from Africa to the New World, and revolution on the soil of Saint-Domingue, the zombi tells the story of colonization" (36). Ezili epitomizes the relationship between white or mulatto mistress and the black woman slave, a complex relationship fueled by jealousy, revenge and love. "Recognized as the most powerful and arbitrary of gods in vodou, Ezili is also the most contradictory: a spirit of love who forbids love, a woman who is most beloved yet feels herself most betrayed" (59). Ezili is an example of socializing within the master slave dialect, thus producing a new spectacle of civility and barbarism. She stored images from the past within her as she "dramatizes the cult of mystification: the splitting of women into objects to be

desired or feared" (59). These Iwa demonstrate links with historical figures and memories that have not faded. "The rituals of memory could be seen as deposits of history. Shreds of bodies come back, remembered in ritual, and seeking vengeance" (35). This emphasis on the memories of the past are being called upon again and again as apart of an acknowledgement of this past, in the present day.

The calling upon of the Iwa is done both as an act of reckoning with coloniality as well as a positing of images from those times in the present, implying that there is an unsettled past that still needs calling upon. These practices compose a counter narrative to that of the Europeans at that time, who were all too fond of surmising vodou to be a practice of nothing but superstitions, fueled with drinking of blood and the like (29) "Repeating the terminology of constraint became a way to provoke an alternative epistemology that was not necessarily conveyed in language. Herein lies a key to the ambiguous nature of ritual practice" (71). Ambiguity, then, emerges again as a key value that points toward the possibility of social repositories existing within it that may in turn house alternative epistemologies. The following paragraph sums up the connection between the calling of the Iwa, the past and ambiguity:

> "To be ridden by the mét tét, to be seized by the god, is thus to destroy the cunning and imperial dichotomy of master and slave, or colonizer and colonized. Submission to the god thrives on the enhancement of ambiguity, which could be described as follows: you let yourself be taken over by something outside of you, a force you want and don't want, control and don't control, and you get a sense of yourself that you did not have before. And the spirits unfold their potential in the lineaments of the human, getting what they did not have before, the material envelope through which they experience life on earth. In this exchange of spirit and matter, sacred and profane, the alleged disjunction is suspended. Finally, the forms of this experience of letting go and opening out do not depend on ownership'' (72).

Therein we can see that ambiguity allows for the suspension of disbelief,

wherein a person might find parts of themselves that they did not know before - parts of their histories placed within a bodily experience of knowing. A truth is found in ritual and myth that could not be found within the revolution itself. "The very suppression's, inarticulateness, and ruptures in ritual might say something about the ambivalences of *the* revolution: it was not so liberating as mythologisers or ideologues make it out to be, and the dispossessed, who continue to suffer and remember, know this" (29). In a history such as the Haitian revolution that links to a history of the people living in Haiti, a history that has no final settled narrative, reveals a necessary ambiguity through which the imaginings of the past can operate, drawing imagery from that past that link into the experiences of those who live within this ambiguity in the present, rendering them carriers of this history.

2. The History of Gong Fu in Madagascar

2.1 Gong fu 'riots'

2.1.1 Locating knowledge

In my research into the gong fu 'riots' in Madagascar that took place between 1984-1985, I have found it very difficult to find any in-depth studies on the matter that analyze the multiple narratives that exist surrounding the events, rendering me lost within the ambiguity of the moment. In fact, the way I heard about these 'riots' was via a traveling tradesman at an artisanal market where I worked as a teenager. This man had been to Madagascar and had seen for himself the impact of gong fu on the public spaces in Antananarivo, and he shared this story with me after I mentioned that I myself practice gong fu. In retrospect, this word-of-mouth knowledge seemed the only likely way for this history to have reached me in what proved to be something that was difficult to research from afar. I was raised in a country, South Africa, which had previously during the apartheid years attempted to cut off knowledge of the outside from its citizens. This isolation had a major effect on the flow of knowledge from neighboring African countries. Furthermore, Madagascar seemed particularly removed – it was often not even featured on the

popular maps of Africa that people proudly wore, dangling around their necks – and it seemed that the 'grand island' was apart of a different world somehow; for me Madagascar seemed to exist as a mere shape, stripped of all context, next to the shape of the African continent. The trader in the market's account of witnessing the military in Madagascar standing on street corners with huge guns, afraid of the possibility that any number of the everyday people walking by might be armed with their knowledge and embodiment of gong fu antagonized by the gong fu 'riots' that took place there, exposed me to a sliver of social activity on that grand island. Questions such as why the military was standing on the corners keeping an eye on everyday people emerged. What role did gong fu have in these so-called 'riots'? I knew that in the face of an almost complete lack of knowledge being shared about the country at home in Johannesburg I would probably have to go there myself to understand more. It has taken me several years of returning to Madagascar to deepen my knowledge on the topic through being present there and talking to people, and thus I was able to begin unraveling the multiple narratives that surround this event.

Whilst researching I found that following anecdotal accounts from people I spoke to in the areas where these events took place proved more useful than navigating through the online internet spaces and history books. For example, in the archives of the New York Times online I found an article titled *Around The World; 30 Said to Die as Youths Battle in Madagascar*[4] wherein gong fu practitioners are labeled as criminals. However, I discovered through speaking to people on the ground that they had a very different story to this. I began to realize that the people around the area where the uprisings took place held a different kind of knowledge about the events and it became clear that I needed to take these into account if I wanted to understand more. Some people were not willing to talk as the political tension was very high when I first went to Madagascar to investigate this history in February of 2009[5]. This unwillingness indicated that there were political tensions

[4] www.nytimes.com/1984/12/06/world/around-the-world-30-said-to-die-as-youths-battle-in-madagascar.html last accessed 11 March 2018

[5] I visited during the political crisis, often labeled as a coup d'état, that lasted from January to March of that year

within the story itself, even though it occurred in the early 1980s. Others, however, were eager to usher me in the direction of the WISA gong fu school and it's grandmasters – who played central roles in the playing out of this historical moment. It was through meeting the people in the market place where the uprisings had apparently taken place, and through meeting the grand masters within the WISA school, that a different narrative emerged to that produced by the media[6]. What had been presented via the media was clearly one sided – but if not on the side of the gong fu practitioners or witnesses in the market place then who's side was it on?

2.1.2 Ratsiraka silences

Locating an overall historical truth is not a simple task, for there is a *power* at play within the production of that history that both favors particular narratives about it as well as silences others (Trouillot, 2005). To understand this power play better I have worked closely with the Caribbean scholar Michel Rolph Trouillot, who I have mentioned in the previous chapter, as he provides an in-depth analysis of how power plays out within historical production. Here I will analyse the dynamics of power that have shaped certain dominant narratives within the history of gong fu in Madagascar, and how this power has in turn allowed for multiple narratives to emerge. Trouillot's power analysis proves very useful in thinking into the particulars at play within this moment of history; I find connections with Trouillot's theories of oppression from hegemonic power and the formation of the narratives of the gong fu 'riots', as produced by Didier Ratsiraka, president of Madagascar during the time of the gong fu 'riots'. Ratsiraka was a powerful man who generated his narrative about this history at that time that was then shared with global media.

Ratsiraka's narrative proclaims that he was protecting the citizens of Antananarivo from the gong fu practitioners who he claimed were a band of criminals. According to his narrative, Ratsiraka sent in his army to the WISA gong fu headquarters to quell riots that were being instigated by the WISA practitioners, where he killed their leader Grand Master Pierre Mizael Rakotoarijaona (most

[6] See New York Times article in footnote 4 above

commonly known as Master Pierre Be) and imprisoned many of his disciples. The media statement that was shared in the New York Times (mentioned above) shows Ratsiraka as clearly seeming to have served his people by quelling a violent movement that distressed his citizens. However, it is evident that during this time of Ratsiraka's rule in Madagascar he was beginning to tighten his grip on power, turning from a revolutionary socialist to a feared dictator, a reign that would last the longest of any Malagasy president to date, totaling 23 years, eventually ending with major protests that often turned bloody and fatal for the citizens protesting against his rule[7]. The gong fu 'riots', then, or perhaps uprisings are a better suited term, may have been one of the early push backs against the tightening of his grip by people in Antananarivo. This brings Ratsiraka's preferred narrative under speculation: was he inventing a particular narrative to cover his violent acting out against these pushbacks?

2.1.3 Historicity

When we consider this possibility, another one emerges - that of the possibility of more than one version of this history existing alongside Ratsiraka's proposed version. According to Trouillot (1995) there are two sides to any historicty 1) what happened and 2) that which is said to have happened. "In vernacular use, history means both the facts of the matter and a narrative of those facts, both "what happened" and "that which is said to have happened. The first meaning places the emphasis on the sociohistorical process, the second on our knowledge of that process or on a story about that process" (2). In other words, the first side represents the knowledge of what happened, and the second the narratives about that knowledge. This indicates, then, that Ratsiraka has offered us a narrative of his claims to this history, not necessarily a full truthful account of what happened according to all those involved in this moment in time. And if that is so, the harder task then becomes tracing out what actually happened, knowledge that we may only attain through analyzing intersecting alternative narratives from all

[7] www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/africa/ma-pres-ratsiraka.htm

those present about that same history together with Ratsiraka's hegemonic version.

Locating knowledge that emerges from an analysis of the power at play within the production of history becomes key to understanding how and where people house narratives that differ from Ratsiraka's version of this history. Trouillot (1995) addresses this locating by focusing on what knowledge emerges when one attempts to navigate through the production of historical narratives, describing the creation of facts and sources as a key locator for the tracing of power within history.

> "The play of power in the production of alternative narratives begins with the joint creation of facts and sources for at least two reasons. First, facts are never meaningless: indeed, they become facts only because they matter in some sense, however minimal. Second, facts are not created equal: the production of traces is also always the creation of silences. Some occurrences are noted from the start; others not. Some are engraved in individual or collective bodies; others not. Some leave physical markers; others do not. What happened leaves traces, some of which are quite concrete - buildings, dead bodies, censuses, monuments, diaries, political boundaries - that limit the range and significance of any historical narrative. This is one of the many reasons why not any fiction can pass as history: the materiality of the socio-historical process (historicity 1) sets the stage for future historical narrative (historicity 2)" (29).

Herein, Trouillot proposes that within an analysis of the traces of the materiality left behind by any historical moment, one can locate knowledge of differing, 'silenced' narratives via the social repositories of that moment.

To expand further on the definition of the silenced narrative, Trouillot explores the processes within which dominant narratives take shape. He outlines how power enters the production of history at several stages during the fact creation process and thus silences alternative versions of that same history to privilege itself. "Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in

the final instance)" (26). For Trouillot, power exists in the creation of facts. “Facts are not created equal: the production of traces is always also the creation of silences” (29). Here, Trouillot points out that power has a role to play within the creation of these fact that hold meaning for that fact creator, favoring one particular narrative over another. It is this meaning-making that occurs within the creation of facts that allows for power to enter, mold, and shape a particular narrative; a meaning that is significant to the creator of those facts. The possibility to privilege some facts over others thus emerges, resulting in an inevitable hierarchy within the placing of occurrences. This production of facts, according to Trouillot, leads to a production of traces, and thus, in turn, to a production of silences - silences of those alternative facts and narratives about a particular historical moment. What is significant about what Trouillot is saying here is that he is offering a way through which to uncover those silenced narratives. That is, through an exploration and an analysis of these traces that have been left behind, clues emerge that trace the points at which power was inserted to privilege some histories over others, and thus where alternative narratives to those created by those in power lie.

The two dominant sides of historicity within the unfolding of these historical narratives lie with, on the one side, Ratsiraka, who’s narrative thrived through the media, and on the other side with the gong fu pupils and those associated with Grand Master Pierre Be, who’s narratives are circulated mainly through their own means, occasionally being picked up by the media in more recent years[8]. On the one side, Ratsiraka claimed to have quelled violent riots that were started by the gong fu practitioners as lead by Master Pierre Be: In December 1984 he sent in the army and helicopters who swooped in to the headquarters of WISA gong fu where they attacked its leaders and claimed to have killed the founder Master Pierre Be, along with approximately 50 others, arresting 208 more (Schmid and Jongman, 1988). Within this act Ratsiraka claimed a certain heroism for himself: a president who acted on behalf of the people, ridding them of unwanted thugery. And yet, unsettled alternative narratives to this still thrive today, many years later. On the other side of

[8] news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1948288.stm last viewed 11 March 2018

Ratsiraka's narrative resides - the main alternative to this narrative - is that of the WISA practitioners who were involved in these 'riots' at the time. In 2009 upon beginning this research I met with Master Avoko, the son of Master Pierre Be, who gave me a booklet about the history of the WISA gong fu school that was founded by Master Pierre Be. In this booklet the WISA narrative is clear. They talk about the notorious Tanora Tonga Saina (TTS), the jobless youth force that Ratsiraka hired as his private security force, who were well known for attacking innocent civilians in the market place without consequence from the government[9]. Incidents of woman being kidnapped, held against their will and being raped began to spread and the WISA gong fu school took it upon themselves to act as protectors of the people, fighting side by side with the people against the TTS where they also located and released these women[10]. In 1984 gong fu members attacked the TTS headquarters, themselves claiming to be defenders of the people. The WISA narratives paint a different picture to that of Ratsiraka, one where Ratsiraka's regime is exposed as being violent and brutal, where people needed to rise up against his security force and protect one another[11]. These alternatives have created a rift between Ratsiraka's version of this history and that of the WISA practitioners, antagonizing the notion of one truthful historical narrative, and indicating that the two sides of historicity are indeed at play.

This splitting of narratives became more apparent when the famous gong fu trial took place after the fateful night when helicopters swooped in on the WISA gong fu headquarters, killing and imprisoning many practitioners. The public began to follow the unfolding court case about the trial of the imprisoned gong fu members, whilst Ratsiraka's hostility toward the martial art grew[12]. WISA members remained imprisoned whilst the trail dragged on from 1985 – 1988, eventually resulting in the release of 254 practitioners with no charge. Meanwhile, Ratsiraka retaliated by banning gong fu for many years after the incident making it illegal to practice; all

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[9] www.wildmadagascar.org/overview/loc/46-security.html last viewed 11 March 2018 last viewed 11 March 2018

[10] This information was relayed to me via anecdotal accounts from people who remember the events

[11] See footnote 8 above

[12] This information was relayed to me via anecdotal accounts from people who remember the events

WISA activity had to continue to exist underground in secret[13]. Further, the restricted access to media during the reign of Ratsiraka for groups such as the WISA school crippled the abilities to share their own versions of what had happened.

2.2 Multiple Naratives

2.2.1 Ratsiraka vs WISA

Through tracing power at play within the production of the dominant narrative by Ratsirkaka, I can see that he controlled the official narratives at least at four levels. Firstly, he labeled the gong fu practitioners criminals; secondly he assembled and arranged the facts that showed a conflict between the gong fu students and the TTS, favoring the TTS and thus renegading gong fu to the side of the violent; thirdly Ratsiraka then developed a narrative that his army had killed Pierre Be during the fateful night when they attacked the WISA gong fu headquarters; and finally when his body was displayed in the village where the attack took place he claimed that the body was confirmed to have been that of Pierre Be by those in the community who saw it. These facts that he created became the basis of his narrative that he concluded as the official narrative on the events[14]. It is evident that Ratsiraka then generated both sources as well as facts to support his narrative, which, as he was in a position of power, dominated the media, indicating the power he had during the production of these narratives.

However, alternatives lie to these facts at every instance. The gong fu pupils and many people who lived through these events claim that the gong fu practitioners were standing up for people, especially in response to the bullying of the TTS, who had grown out of control and were unmonitored by the president. In one instance, shots had been fired by the TTS in the market place where innocent victims were hit, and the abducting and raping of women were traced down and set free in a combined effort between the gong fu practitioners and the people of

[13] In my interview with Fanja (chapter three), she relays how she practiced in secret, only changing into her uniform when at dojo. She also says that only her immediate family could know that she was practicing.

[14] As seen in the earlier footnote about th New York Times article: www.nytimes.com/1984/12/06/world/around-the-world-30-said-to-die-as-youths-battle-in-madagascar.html last accessed 11 March 2018

Antananarivo who lived close to the market where the TTS operated[15]. Many citizens feel that the WISA pupils were indeed standing on the side of the people and that there was a collaborative effort between them to push back against Ratsiraka's oppressive rule as experienced via the TTS. These narratives make up some of the alternatives to the dominant version of Ratsiraka and we can begin to see here that these narratives amount to some of the silencing that took place whilst Ratsiraka constructed his own version of the events.

2.2.2 Mysteries

However, there is one crucial counter narrative that has given rise to much speculation and imagined possibility amongst the citizens of Antananarivo, involving the physical body of master Pierre Be. Some people who lived in the neighborhood where the killings took place claim to have not seen the body of Pierre Be when the military displayed it on a walk through the neighborhood for identification; people claim that the one that was walked through the village was not in fact his. This disagreement had given rise to questions about whether Ratsiraka even knew what Pierre Be looked like (why would Ratsiraka have asked the people if this was indeed Pierre Be's body?) Which then begs the question: was he even dead?[16] Further, there had been no traditional death ceremonies for the body, Famadihana, that are a wide spread practice throughout Madagascar that involve the body of the deceased, raising questions for some.[17] In some stories, the disciples of the school claim to have seen Pierre Be walk through the bullet littered air and disappear over the wall on the night of the attack[18], stories which have been spoken of and shared with gong fu pupils after the incident by the elders of their schools.

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[15] Anecdotal accounts as heard from Master Avoko

[16] Fanja discusses these points with me in her interview that I describe in chapter three of this dissertation

[17] These are anecdotal accounts from people I have spoken with in Antananrivo

[18] *Ny Hazo No Vanon-Ko Lakana Ny Tany Naniriany No Tsara, Federation Malagasy De Kung-Fu, F.F.K.F, 25éme Anniversaire, 1980 – 2005*, Rali Production. Translated by Fanja Rasoanomenjanahary into: *If A Tree Turned Into A Canoe, It Is Due To The Fertile Soil in Which It Was Growing, 25th Anniversary of the Malagasy Kung-Fu Federation, (F.M.K.M.), 1980-2005*, WISA gong fu history booklet. Rali Production

These mysterious narratives have given rise to many possibilities, including that of an almost mythical nature where people (especially young pupils) believe that Pierre Be actually cannot die. This belief is reaffirmed by a second narrative (mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation) that tells the story of a woman who was working in Pierre Be's house, who was one day cleaning the lounge some time before the night of the attack. Upon entering the lounge she saw Pierre Be reading the newspaper, upon which she then went to the bedroom to clean up there instead and to her surprise she saw him there having a nap on the bed: in two places at the same time! This narrative has given rise to a speculation that Pierre Be had the special powers to duplicate himself through meditation. Beliefs such as this one allow for possibilities of his still being alive, and hence for his possible return. These alternative narratives reside within the gap created between Ratsiraka's unsatisfactory narrative of having killed a thug, and the experiences that people had of Pierre Be who they saw as a man of and for the people - a hero. Herein, much like how Iwa in Vodou carry history forward (Dayann, 1998), so does the imagination also carry the memory of Pierre Be forward, floating on stories that hold promises and possibilities that suggest that he did not die. Hence, the imagination emerges as a key social history site within the history of martial arts in Madagascar.

2.2.3 WISA teachings

Moving beyond the value of social imagination and into that of the particular, several other alternatives to the image that Ratsiraka painted about gong fu exist. The teachings of WISA and the schools that stem from it are based on social principles such as standing together, standing up for other people and keeping Malagasy traditions alive in an attempt to remind people who they are and where they come from in the face of oppression. These values are taught in class during the first part of the lesson that focuses on both history and discussions with the students[19]. Thus the students and people connected to the WISA communities carry the knowledge of upliftment and community values. Many people claim that Pierre

[19] As described to me by Fanja in our interview that I speak more about in chapter 3

Be himself was a man who worked tirelessly for the people, offering medicinal and therapeutic healing services that he had learned in China, even when people did not have money to pay him. Narratives about him having joined social services that handed out rice to the public where he would always give an extra handful to poorer families are wide spread. Such supporting narratives[20] enhance the feeling that Pierre Be was a caring man who had healing abilities. These reports about the particular moralistic values through which the school operated contain knowledge that enriches the overall narratives about this history and providing deeper insight into the alternatives of Ratsiraka's dominant version of this history. The social narratives about the particulars of both the WISA school and Pierre Be become very useful in analyzing what occurred and how power has played out within the construction of historical narratives about this moment in time.

2.3 Active Subjects

2.3.1 The Entanglement of People

All of these multiple narratives have been narrated by people, and who these people are is important in thinking into why they narrate. What are people's roles within the making of history? According to Trouillot "History, as social process, involves people in three distinct capacities: 1) as *agents*, or occupants of structural positions; 2) as actors in constant interface with a context; and 3) as *subjects*, that is, as voices aware of their vocality" (23). Who are these narrators within the WISA history? While it is not possible for me to assess each and every narrator, it is possible to draw broad groupings of narrators, stemming from the existing narratives. The *agents* that Trouillot refers to can be read as Ratisraka and the TTS (the president and his private security force). Pierre Be could be considered as a second agent here as he had founded the WISA gong fu school just before the conflict with the TTS broke out, but, as we shall see a bit later[21], he seemed to have

[20] This information was relayed to me via anecdotal accounts from people who remember the events as well as Fanja's interview (see footnote 19)

[21] Pierre Be has a dream to return to Antananarivo, Madagascar from Shaolin, China, to help his people who were being oppressed

founded it in reaction to Ratsiraka, which would set him in the category of actors. The *actors* in this case would be those who are exposed to Ratsiraka's oppression and the extension of that into the disruption of the every day via the TTS in the market place, in this case those everyday people at the market, the pupils and teachers at the WISA school, and possibly Master Pierre Be himself. The *subjects* here, those who are vocal and aware of their own vocality, include all the active narrators within the WISA school, including the son of Pierre Be, Master Avoko, who generated an autobiography that tells the story of himself as a youth with his father during the difficult times of Ratsirtaka's rule. A third force of *subjects* that has emerged through this research are the students themselves who have both been exposed to this history through the teachings within the gong fu school as well as lived with/through it in their everyday practice of the martial arts and its embodied imaginings. These narrators play a critical role in reshaping history and, when considered more fully, in the way in which we think history plays out. This quote from Trouillot (1995) helps sum this up well:

> "In other words, people are not always subjects constantly confronting history as some academics would wish, but the capacity upon which they do act to become subjects is always part of their condition. This subjective capacity ensures confusion because it makes human beings doubly historical, or more properly, fully historical. It engages them simultaneously in the sociohistorical process and in narrative constructions about that process. The embracing of this ambiguity, which is inherent in what I call the two sides of historicity, is the first choice of this book " (24).

Here Trouillot centers people as the active makers of social history in that they both experience it socially as well as narrate those experiences. My research into the history of WISA is a social exploration and this centering of people is a critical guiding point through which I am able to seek the narratives out. Within my research I have not attempted to reveal one narrative as presiding over another, for there are far more than two competing narratives at play. Instead, by focusing on

subjects and their vocality, by focusing on *where* and *how* the history of the gong fu uprisings lie through these subjects within it, I am attempting to reveal the history makers. The makers of history find meaning in the construction of their narratives, which in turn reveal what that history is, more fully. The 'embracing of this ambiguity' that Trouillot speaks of is something that I will pick up again shortly as it has become a critical component to this research. It is also is a landmark value of social repositories that echoes out toward the research carried out in the Black Atlantic within which scholars have called for historians to dwell on a while longer so as to develop tools through which social knowledge of historical occurrences, that this ambiguity indicates are present, can be drawn out (Palmie, Dayann).

2.3.2 Gong fu pupils as narrators of history

To return to the role of the narrators for now, Trouillot's thoughts prove useful on multiple levels, not only as a robust analyses on the inevitable emergence of alternative narratives due to the careful creation of dominant narratives by those with power, but, as we have seen, he also clearly outlines the role of narrators as historians and provides enticing reasons as to why these historians should be taken more seriously if we want to uncover where history lies (1995). Through my research, I have come to understand that the pupils of the WISA school carry these alternative narratives of history within their experiences, memories and imaginations. They become the historians that Trouillot points toward in his book; historians who house narratives about a history that entangles the founder of their school, Grand Master Pierre Be, with uprisings against President Ratsiraka's oppressive rule. How Pierre Be is remembered and how his legacy is carried forward are wrapped up in stories, legends and myths: the teachings of the school, as well as those narratives told by people. Trouillot pushes us to understand this knowledge further:

> "Thus between the mechanically 'realist' and naively 'constructivist' extremes, there is the more serious task of determining not what history is - a hopeless goal if phrased in essentialist terms - but how history works. For

> what history is changes with time and place or, better said, history reveals itself only through the production of specific narratives. What matters most are the processes and conditions of production of such narratives. Only a focus on that process can uncover the ways in which the two sides of historicity intertwine in a particular context. Only through that overlap can we discover the differential exercise of power that makes some narratives possible and silences others" (25).

So, here Trouillot is pointing us toward the entanglement of people caught up in social contexts, such as Ratsiraka's rule at the time, and indicates that it is within understanding these entanglements that we can separate out the two sides of historicity: that which happened, and that which is said to have happened. Further, we can then begin to understand the power at play within the production of certain dominant narratives as well as those that have been 'silenced'. Here, silencing is invoked to illustrate that there is one dominant voice/narrative that 'wins' the challenge of being the loudest/most dominant. This silencing carries the agenda of its narrator. To understand better what the active engagement of silencing looks like Trouillot explains further: "By silence, I mean an active and transitive process: one 'silences' a fact or an individual as a silencer silences a gun. One engages in the practice of silencing" (48). In other words, the act of silencing is a conscious one, one that is fueled by an attempt to have a certain constructed narrative dominate, and hence silence, others. This silencing is an act of social entanglement, where different people vie for their narratives to be heard and those with power are able to create facts suited to them and thus attempt to silence others.

2.3.3 Materiality of History

To better locate these silenced narratives, it is possible to look into the materiality of this history that has been left behind so as to map out an array of alternative narratives that differ from the dominant one. As Trouillot (1995) points out "What happens leaves traces, some of which are quite concrete – buildings, dead bodies, censuses, monuments, diaries, political boundaries – that limit the range and

significance of any historical narrative" (29). These material remains hold clues that can assist in locating the silenced narratives. "This is one of the many reasons why not any fiction can pass for history: the materiality of the socio-historical process (historicity 1) sets the stage for future historical narratives (historicity 2)" (29). Material remains of the history of the uprisings and teachings within the WISA school include a booklet[22] created by the WISA gong fu school that speaks into the history of the school and has been shared within the gong fu community. The pupils of the school themselves also hold a knowledge, memory and a bodily experience of those histories; these students are therefore, I argue, themselves carriers of that history through their own individual and collective narratives pertaining to this history and therefore can be considered apart of the material remains of this history. Further materiality that can be traced includes attempts from Avoko Rakotoarijanoa (commonly known as Master Avoko) to share the history of his father, Pierre Be through a comic-based autobiography and a documentary. There are also a handful of traces on the Internet, none of which are robust, that point to both mentions within history books as well as blog posts and news articles. Then there are sites of historical importance, such as the famous food and goods market in Antananarivo, now relocated and renamed Analakely market, and the community of traders and civilians within it who were exposed to the TTS clashing with the gong fu members and civilians in that space, as well as the gong fu schools where this history was taught and experienced. All of this materiality still remains in Antananarivo, making it possible to begin to trace the silenced narratives that exist within them.

Picking up on the material remains of Avoko's autobiographical graphic novel, I find a clear, present day, declaration of the events; an act that attempts to carry this history forward in a way that rewrites it as a personal testimony. In the autobiography the active voice of Avoko is present, writing from the perspective of

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22 *Ny Hazo No Vanon-Ko Lakana Ny Tany Naniriany No Tsara, Federation Malagasy De Kung-Fu, F.F.K.F, 25éme Anniversaire, 1980 – 2005*, Rali Production. Translated by Fanja Rasoanomenjanahary into: *If A Tree Turned Into A Canoe, It Is Due To The Fertile Soil in Which It Was Growing, 25th Anniversary of the Malagasy Kung-Fu Federation, (F.M.K.M.), 1980-2005*, WISA gong fu history booklet. Rali Production

the son of Pierre Be and proposing new perspectives on the narratives at play. Avoko's comics appeared in a local Antananarivo newspaper[23] every week with a strip created by him about his family life and the words that his father said before his disappearance. Through the autobiography, Avoko is linking his personal experience with those experiences that everyday people on Antananarivo lived through under Ratsiraka as well as attempting to reach new audiences via the newspaper distribution networks. This attempt demonstrates an existing need to tell the story of Pierre Be in a different light, showing his father as a loving person living in a difficult situation. The underlying message weaves together the story of Pierre Be father to Avoko, with Pierre Be father of the people. It both demonstrates a need to give weight to narratives that have been silenced, whilst at the same time specifically adding to the narratives about Pierre Be being a man of the people.

[23] The newspaper is called Tia Tanindrazana

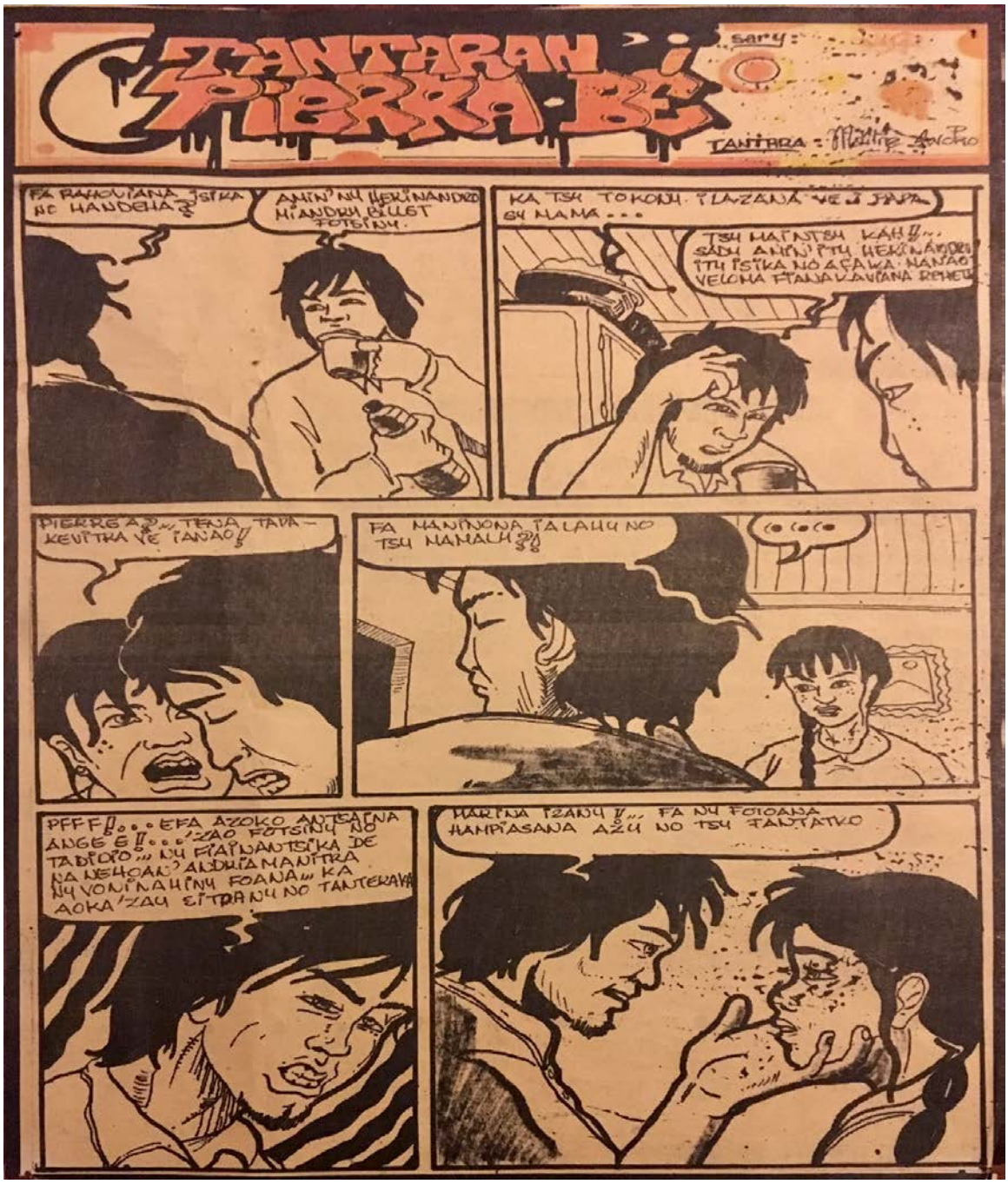

Figure 2.1 *Tantaram Pierre Bé, Author: Maitre Avoko.*

By treating these material remains, such as Avoko's autobiography, as sources of knowledge, we are able to bring in important information that helps us locate these silenced narratives and thus to begin to fill in some of the ambiguity between narratives. Avoko's autobiography could be considered what Trouillot calls

a ‘neglected source’. "Sources are thus instances of inclusion, the other face of which is, of course, what is excluded" (48). He goes on to explain this notion further "Silences are inherent in history because any single event enters history with some of its constituting parts missing. ... the turn toward hithero neglected sources (e.g diaries, images, bodies) and the emphasis of unused facts (e.g. facts of gender, race and class, facts of the life cycles, facts of resistance) are path breaking developments" (49). It is precisely these unused facts and overlooked sources that I have turned to within my research. The pupils of WISA, those connected to the history of gong fu and the events that took place during the uprisings are where I focus to uncover these narratives; I do this to help locate the alternative narratives to this historical moment as silenced by Ratsiraka. Trouillot points out that these alternative-narrative-holders, who he describes in terms of Haitian historians in relation to the history of Haiti “include physicians, lawyers, journalists, businessmen, bureaucrats and politicians, high school teachers, and clergymen” (56). They reference the sorts of historians who should be brought in, in order to better understand a historical moment.

2.4 Ambiguity

2.4.1 Ambiguity between narratives

To return now to the notion of ambiguity that has been mentioned a few paragraphs above, this is a key social repository that has been located in the first chapter of this dissertation whilst exploring the re-telling of history project that has emerged from within the Black Atlantic. Therein, ambiguity serves as a locator for ‘sinkholes of excess’ (Dayann, 1998), these sites of social history that we need to open toward (Palmie, 2002) and find a new language to express (Palmie, 2002). This ambiguous space resides between the two sides of historicity - that which happened, and that which is said to have happened. On the one hand, you have those in power determining dominant narratives, such as is the case with Haiti where what occurred in the revolution was ‘unthinkable’ at the time by those in the western world who then wrote that history from a Eurocentric perspective. On the other

hand there resides the social repositories of history that hold alternative and silenced narratives about those events. Just as we need to open toward these social repositories in the Black Atlantic, so too should we open towards them with regards to the ambiguous history of gong fu in Madagascar.

The multiple narratives vying for the spotlight within the spectrum of the history of gong fu in Madagascar have swayed the public in one direction and then the other, giving rise to the very same ambiguity as mentioned above that fills the space between them. Not only are the general public attempting to navigate their way through the ambiguities, but so are the students who were once strong believers in the WISA narrative today. Students who had been taught myths about Pierre Be having special powers such as levitation and the ability to duplicate himself are beginning to question this as they grow older, linking into queries about whether he is still, indeed, alive[24]. Trouillot finds importance and meaning in such ambiguity within historical moments, in that this ambiguity points toward something that needs more uncovering:

> History is always produced in a specific historical context. Historical actors are also narrators and vice versa. The affirmation that narratives are always produced in history leads me to propose two choices. First, I contend that a theory of the historical narrative must acknowledge both the distinction and the overlap between process and narrative. Thus, although this book is primarily about history as knowledge and narrative, it fully embraces the ambiguity inherent in the two sides of historicity. (22)

Here, Trouillot is indicating at the intersecting points of historical production and the narration of that same history, around which an ambiguity lies. By embracing this ambiguity he is allowing for these two historicities to exist and, instead of holding on to clear given facts that are embedded with power (as we have discussed earlier in this chapter), Trouillot is developing tools that look into this ambiguous

[24] Fanja questions stories she was told as a child in her gong fu classes in my interview with her as describes in chapter three

space so as to better understand this overlap of production and narrative creation. Hence, a better understanding of all the narratives at play can be had. Ambiguity, then, is affirmed as a critical component of understanding history, as it demonstrates the multiplicity of narratives at play within the orbit of power.

The ambiguity between narratives also draws our attention to the haunting of an unsettled past in the present moment, such as is the case with the unsettled past in Haiti (Dayann, 1998; Palmie, 2002). In the case of gong fu in Madagascar, the memory of Pierre Be has been carried within the gong fu pupils *vis a vie* the open ended mysteries and narratives told about him. It is almost as if he is being kept alive through these teachings, carried forward by those who feel as if his story is yet untold, or that there is a dissatisfaction within the ways that it has been concluded - there is an unsettled past and that past wont go away until, just like Pierre Be's missing body[25], the missing parts are in their proper place. This haunting carries the alternative narratives forward, passing on to new generations who continue to feel this unsettled past. Thus, the haunting of a past could also be considered a value for social repositories.

2.5 WISA as an Alternative Repository of History

2.5.1 Pastness in the Present

So much of the alternative narratives stem from the teachings and experiences of the people related to the WISA school, which proposes a new question: can the WISA school itself be treated as a social repository? If we consider that Pierre Be aimed at keeping Malagasy traditions alive within the teachings of the WISA school during a time when Ratsiraka was homogenizing much of the cultural landscape in Antananarivo - separating people from their traditional practices, and hence, according to Pierre Be, their sense of self - then we can begin to surmise that he was storing traditions and ways of being within the WISA teachings. His main goal here was to remind pupils who they are by uplifting them and restoring a resilience within them by preserving who they as Malagasy people are, as described

[25] This references the uncertainty that people have about whether the body shown to the neighborhood by Ratsiraka's army after they claimed to kill him was indeed his

in the WISA history booklet[26]. By bringing the past intentionally forward into the WISA teachings, Pierre Be was attempting to keep this past alive: bringing a pastness in the present moment. Therefore the practice of WISA can be considered to store social histories and knowledges.

Further, as seen in the WISA booklet, the knowledge that exists within the WISA teachings expands beyond Madagascar alone and link into connections that spread between Madagascar and China. Pierre Be started the WISA gong fu school after returning from the Shaolin Temple in China, where he was training to become a monk. Within the WISA school, he set out to merge teachings from the temple in China with his own teachings based on traditional Malagasy values. The vast knowledge then that WISA houses, points toward a connectedness beyond Madagascar, one that links outward across the Indian Ocean and into mainland China.

A new question about the sharing of knowledge between China and Madagascar thus emerges: is this sharing of knowledges linked into a past where knowledge and practice is shared by indigenous peoples (Smith, 1999)? The teachings within the Shaolin Temple itself are also based on the sharing of knowledges, that is, the philosophies of Daoism and Buddhism, one rooted in India (Buddhism) and the other in China (Daoism). And yet even these roots are blurry, with suggestions by scholars that Buddhism and it's associated martial arts originated in Africa (Kilindi Iyi, 1985), insinuating that these practices have traversed with people through places over many years. The history of Shaolin holds teaching from both Buddhism as well as Daoism, demonstrating this mixing of culture within its core (Shahar, 2008). Through seeing this interlinking of knowledges over time and place, it becomes possible to consider the WISA school as a continuation of such a trajectory, a movement carried outward by those who have

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[26] *Ny Hazo No Vanon-Ko Lakana Ny Tany Naniriany No Tsara, Federation Malagasy De Kung-Fu, F.F.K.F, 25éme Anniversaire, 1980 – 2005*, Rali Production. Translated by Fanja Rasoanomenjanahary into: *If A Tree Turned Into A Canoe, It Is Due To The Fertile Soil in Which It Was Growing, 25th Anniversary of the Malagasy Kung-Fu Federation, (F.M.K.M.), 1980-2005*, WISA gong fu history booklet. Rali Production

experienced the teachings and absorbed the knowledge of the past, in this case Pierre Be when he moved back to Madagascar.

So, Pierre Be carried these teaching with him when he founded the WISA school, but he also lived in the temples in China which has a strong history of peoples resistance to the spreading Chinese socialism/communism preserving their scripts, religion, practices (Shahar, 2008). This resilience also echoes out toward the teachings within the WISA school: whilst still studying at Shaolin, Pierre Be had a dream, and as the story in the WISA history booklet tells it, the dream was about his people back at home suffering under political oppression, losing a sense of who they were; he knew immediately that he had to return and put his energy into restoring the dignity of his people who he loved so much[27]. He left the temple in China and made his way back to Madagascar, where and founded the WISA gong fu school, thus beginning his own journey toward a peoples resilience through spiritual awareness, community values and the practice of martial arts.

2.6 Connected Histories

2.6.1 Movement of Knowledge

This movement of knowledge through individuals such as Pierre Be provides insight into a shared knowledge that has migrated with people over time, a movement that, if considered closely, yields more knowledge about these histories as carried through the social. Herein, a likeness can again be drawn with the black Atlantic surrounding the history of the movement of bodies during the slave trade, bodies who carried with them knowledges from whence they came as well as new experiences about the journey upon which they embarked. By tracing these knowledges we are linked into what Sunjay (1997) terms as the 'connected histories' of people. The connected histories of the WISA gong fu school unfold over time and

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[27] *Ny Hazo No Vanon-Ko Lakana Ny Tany Naniriany No Tsara, Federation Malagasy De Kung-Fu, F.F.K.F, 25éme Anniversaire, 1980 – 2005*, Rali Production. Translated by Fanja Rasoanomenjanahary into: *If A Tree Turned Into A Canoe, It Is Due To The Fertile Soil in Which It Was Growing, 25th Anniversary of the Malagasy Kung-Fu Federation, (F.M.K.M.), 1980-2005*, WISA gong fu history booklet. Rali Production

space up toward China, and yet they also dig deeper into a Malagasy past; stemming from Antananarivo. The two offshoots both root down internally within indigenous knowledges and traditions, as well as over the ocean, traced through people's movements from East Africa, the Islands, and China (Alpers, 2007).

My concern here is not about finding out exactly what influenced the movement of Pierre Be from Madagascar to China and back, as well as his exact thoughts that went into the merging of the Chinese and Malagasy philosophies. Rather, I hope to look toward the connectedness within the Indian Ocean to gain a sense of how knowledge has traversed with people who have moved within this region. By doing this, I hope to clarify in a broader sense some of the ambiguous histories that underpin so much of the social histories from within the region simply by understanding better how to think about these 'connected histories' within the region in general. This stepping back is an attempt to move from the particular back out again into the global, but in a way that implicates the particular into a global thinking of it. Herein I am working within the 'border thinking' proposal outlined in chapter one of this dissertation by Walter D. Mignolo. I do this because this border thinking enables one to think 'without borders', thus allowing for a connecting outward to take place from a central point, moving through the more recently prescribed borders in an area that has been moving outside of them for much longer[28]. This approach allows me to examine the movement of knowledge more freely, and to plot out network routes and connected histories as indicated by such movements.

Although I do not have all of these coordinates, routes and points, I am able to focus on some that link the movement of knowledge between China and Madagascar, which in turn implicates nearby islands, the east coast of Africa, parts of Asia outside of China and China itself. Here, I am taken as far back as the first centenary AD, when Alpers (2007) points out that "there are indications that the Mozambique Channel was regularly traversed and crossed by peoples of both African and Indonesian decent, the people of whom combined to populate the great

[28] www.bu.edu/africa/outreach/indian. Last viewed 12 March 2018

Island of Madagascar" (124). In fact, it is due to the study of movement of people in such an expanded area that Pearson (2003) suggested the Indian Ocean be renamed the Afrasian Sea, so as to decenter India and encompass the all too often marginalised Africa, which played a key role in the shaping of religions, trade and economic and community structures that moved through it. This sea space offers it's own particular universalism then, one that has been traced through the history of many individuals so as to uncover the larger historical potency of the region. However, this insertion into the history books has come up against the colonial borders that now define the areas, whose attempts at codification, control and surveillance of circulation have affected how this history has been written (6). As Alpers points out the "disappearance of seascapes in the way westerners view Southeast Asia is more than a curiosity of maps. It is a symptomatic of the general invisibility and underestimation of the regions maritime side [Emerson 1980]." Maps now concentrate on borders laid down by colonial powers" (26). These maps and categories disturb research done into social history within those areas, as they are confronted with having to be forced into categorised areas that are not based on social histories. Thus, disrupting these categories becomes an important part of reclaiming spaces based off of social histories.

2.6.2 Indian Ocean connections

As mentioned in the opening of the first chapter of this dissertation, the archive of the Indian Ocean world has been a source of frustration for scholars like Pearson (2003), wherein he suggests a more 'cultural studies approach' to the region that he later addresses as "a space defined by the exchange of ideas and material objects" (124). Alpers (2007) gives dynamic spirited examples of how these ideas and material objects flowed with people as they traversed the lands and seas connecting this region, most notably through migration, communities on the edge of the land who farmed the seas, merchants, craftspeople, musicians, those who were enslaved and others. Buddhism was a key religion moving within this region with people as they built Buddhist caves, which can still be seen alongside "Hindu temples, mosques, medieval forts to European port cities and

lighthouses" (3). Further, the influence of the religion of bonded African slaves that were imported into Madagascar mainly from Mozambique, are found in dance, new music and indigenous forms of spirit possession (132). Herein then lies an archive that helps fill the void in the missing history books that Pearson is frustrated by. Finding ways to tell these histories would bulk out this archive of social histories of this sprawling region. It is this dense concentration of a historic past that exists between the countries that historically link Madagascar to China and so many countries surrounding the ocean and seas in-between, that probably carved out the arteries through which knowledges of the regions flow, including that of Buddhism and an introduction to the arts practiced at the Shaolin temple in China.

These understanding of the past have provided insight into how knowledge has travelled through networks that sprawl out and link China and Madagascar over the waters, but what of the more recent catalysts that moved people, specifically Pierre Be himself? What were the global popular cultures of the times that, perhaps, seduced this young man into leaving home to dedicate his life to monkhood? Again, although I do not have the precise answers to this question, it is still possible to unfurl the connected histories of that time by looking closer into them so as to better understand an array of factors that may have influenced this decision that Pierre Be took, thus bringing in knowledge to this particular piece of social history. Vijay Prashad (2001) argues in favour of looking toward a polycultural world for socio-historical clues "our cultures are linked in many more ways than we could catalogue, and it is from these linkages that we hope our politics will be energized." (149). Shedding light on these interconnected cultural linkages then, could provide indications as to the role that martial arts was playing on a global cultural scale, as well as why it was becoming more and more popular at that time for people (especially, as we shall see, those operating under oppression) to practice it.

2.6.3 The Russian Revolution and Black Radicalism

The Russian Revolution is a good starting point here, as it had a profound impact on independent movements globally and the push back against capitalism at

that time. Indeed in Madagascar president Ratsiraka was the first long-term president voted in by an overwhelming majority to carry out his promises of setting up a socialist society within the island. Because of this, it is worth bringing in the context of this global socialism that was spreading throughout the subaltern world at that time. Trotsky had emerged as deeply critical of Stalin's reconstructive, industrialization and murderous reign that had anti-democratic tendencies and claimed that socialism could only exist inside of Russia. Trotsky moved toward a global ideal, claiming that socialism needed to be an international project[29], and thus Trotskyist traditions began to grow outside of Russia while he actively engaged the making of this vision whilst in exile. The influences of this spreading of socialism have had a major impact on global movements that began to emerge as a way to overthrow the colonial world. The political movement started to gain momentum in the world where people were seeing capitalism more and more as deeply problematic. At that same time, across the world, people were fighting for independence but also communism. People like C L R James became Pan- Africanists, working within the structures of communism, which experimented in bringing together struggles within the black world with communism, an anti-capitalist tradition.

So, who were the thinkers within this trajectory of thought? Prashad (2001) maps out a fascinating network of black radicalism that spreads throughout the world from USA to Asia and Africa, through people's movements and organisations that emerged and found solidarity within one another in the face of an explosion of US imperialism, third world debt and revolutionary struggle against colonialism. Prashad writes "it was a vibrant world of internationalism through nationality, in other words, of a particular universalism" (137). This tracing of the particulars within the push back against imperialism and colonialism reads as an important answering to those vague universal ideals that emerged from the west. Prashad traces the particular through an exploration of the growing connectedness of struggles surrounding Mao's radical critique of imperialism. He points out that this

[29] www.jacobinmag.com/2015/11/leon-trotsky-october-revolution-paul-le-blanc-stalinism/ last viewed 12 March 2018

critique of Mao's influenced Chinese Communism which in turn influenced the Black Panthers, who themselves built solidarity networks with the likes of the Native American Radicals, the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Japanese American Radicals and the Ethiopian Students Union. This internal expansion of solidarity through cross-network struggle did not remain within the Americas, it also spilled out across the seas, aligning with ongoing global struggles for independence wherein a common ground was being forged: that of the fight against imperialism and colonialism by a world sinking deeper and deeper into debt. "US imperialism was like a poison. Apart from Napalm, the United States used it's arsenal to finance capital to undermine the sovereignty of the nations of the Third World....The debt of the entire third world increased from $100 billion in 1970 to $1.3 trillion in 1990" (131). As this struggle was finding solidarity so too did revolutionary icons such as Bruce Lee begin to emerge: "from 1962 to 1974 the register of revolutions held only one entry, South Yemen, but by 1974 everything shifted. In the next six years revolutionary movements took power in at least fourteen states, from the overthrow of Haile Selassie in Ethiopia to the victory of the New Jewel Movement (Grenada) and the FSLN (Nicaragua), in 1979" (25). The dollar was against the currencies of the poor increased the sense of powerlessness. Big capital wrenched the reigns of history from artisans and peasants, who saw technology as the enemy rather than as the puppet of financiers and plutocrats. Whilst the currencies of the poor became weakened by the growing strength of the dollar "Bruce, on the screen, seemed able to ward off the evil of iron and steel, dollar and debt, with his bare hands." (132). We can see here a sprawling global network that emerged in solidarity under the banner of fighting imperialism on a local and global scale between the 1960s and the 1980s; with it comes traces of those who were involved in their own particular instances, as well as how these networks supported and shared with each other in acts of solidarity. According to Prashad, Bruce Lee became an icon for this solidarity, taking on this imperialism in his movies such as the popular *The Way of the Dragon*, that spread fast through these networks "Two years later, Bruce Lee would give us the perfect allegory both of Asian American radicalism and of the Vietnam War with The Way of the Dragon [...] the fight, set in

the coliseum in Rome, becomes a battle between Western civilization and Chinese civilization, between the paper tiger of U.S imperialism and the rising tide of the East." (140). And with the spreading of these movies, so too did the martial arts spread.

2.6.4 Martial Arts, Africa and Decolonialism

However, Prashad is quick to add that martial arts did not end with on-screen icons such as Bruce Lee. The practice of martial arts spread with Bruce as he opened up the traditions to non-Chinese learners and black students. In fact, as we have been reminded earlier by Kilindi Iyi the roots of martial arts may originate in Africa. Most historians of gong fu speak of Bodhidharma, a monk who came from Kerala in Southern India, who introduced Kung fu, which centered on the practice of Ch'i roughly translated in English to "life force" that needed to be kept active so that the monks would not fall asleep during meditation; this practice is central to that taught in the Shaolin temple (Shahar, 2008). However, Prashad examines how, through close examination of murals in Egypt from Beni Hasan, Iyi traces the martial arts as spreading from Africa up toward India. He points out that there are images of Bodhidharama with curly dark locks and stretched ear lobes, an image of a black connection in Indian history to which W.E.B Du Bois also nods toward in 1919, the "blood of yellow and white hordes" who "diluted the ancient black blood of India, but her eldest sits back, with kinky hair" (114). This, Prashad explains, is "not necessarily a claim to the racial or epidermal lineage of Buddha" but, rather, "it was a signal towards some form of solidarity across the Indian Ocean and between Asians and Africans in diaspora" (148). It is this openness toward the martial arts, Prashad continues, that Bruce continued on and off screen, as he defied the traditions that housed it as a pure culture for China only. The students that followed in his footsteps found a resonance between his teachings and the commitment to uplift their social contexts, and when they became Sifu's and on-screen icons themselves, much of the focus was set on building community power and raising the spirits of those living in unjust societies formed by colonialism, imperialism and slavery. For example, Prashad points us toward Mufundisi Tayari who trained young

people in Maryland "in the arts of *kupigana ngumi*, a Swahili phrase that means 'way of fighting fist'". Here, "he urges a development of a healthy lifestyle, discipline and community values" (134).

Prashad goes on to describes the benefits of gong fu on the youth thus:

> "Kung fu gives young people an immense sense of personal worth and the skills for collective struggle. Kung fu, Bruce pointed out in his sociology of the art, 'serves to cultivate the mind, to promote health, and to provide a most efficient means of self-protection against attacks'. It 'develops confidence, humility, coordination, adaptability and respect towards others.'(30). Words like respect and confidence jumps out at me immediately, for one hears the former from working-class youth and the latter from their hard working but beleaguered teachers. These youth live with a calculus of respect and disrespect, wanting the former but alert to the challenges of the latter. Their teachers want them to be confident. Kung fu allows for both and don't the kids know it. They are there on weekends for no 'credit'. And they fight not for just anything, but for righteousness." (132)

These particular parts of a social history of martial arts and the connected struggle against colonialism of that time reveal the global setting of the world space as Pierre Be chose to go to the shaolin temple to train to become a monk. Further, it was within these settings after Ratsiraka had turned back on his promise of a socialism that was meant to benefit all people that Pierre Be decided to return home so that he may, just like the disciples of Bruce Lee, lift the spirits of his people too[30].

[30] In the WISA history booklet there is a part that describes a dream that Master Pierre Be had where he had a calling to return back to Madagascar to help his people there. *Ny Hazo No Vanon-Ko Lakana Ny Tany Naniriany No Tsara, Federation Malagasy De Kung-Fu, F.F.K.F, 25éme Anniversaire, 1980 – 2005*, Rali Production. Translated by Fanja Rasoanomenjanahary into: *If A Tree Turned Into A Canoe, It Is Due To The Fertile Soil in Which It Was Growing, 25th Anniversary of the Malagasy Kung-Fu Federation, (F.M.K.M.), 1980-2005*, WISA gong fu history booklet. Rali Production

He captured this 'spirit' in the teachings by keeping traditions and philosophies alive, merging and housing it within the philosophies of Shaolin - Zen and Buddhism. Since it's founding in 1980, WISA has spread across the country, as described in the WISA history booklet mentioned above, with disciples of Pierre Be forming schools in the poorest of neighborhoods in Antananarivo. One past pupil recalls that gong fu had a profound effect on her whilst growing up in the lowest quarter of the town in Antananarivo, the capitol of Madagascar.

> It really helped…in many areas. Also in self defense, because I, when we were children we lived in the poor quarter of Ambohimarag, like the [ghetto], and we were surrounded by really poor people, we are from a modest family, and, like, most of our neighbors, the children they didn't go to school, and like their parents they were doing peoples laundry or something like that or fetching water for a living. And there wasn't a big expectation living in that area at that time, so gong fu really helped us in that, in the way that we could expect better from life, that we were worth something.
>
> Fanja Rasoanomenjanahary, *Interview with Fanja, Project_Interview with Fanja 2017*, 2017 (00:22:00 – 00:23:30)

Fanja symbolizes this embodied knowledge that Te-Nehisi Coats (2015) speaks of, her experiences speak into the 'geo-politics of knowing' (Mignolo,2000) through her experience of learning gong fu in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Antananarivo where WISA was being taught in secret, operating underground. She experienced the mysteries and politics surrounding the school both within the teachings in the class as well as outside of it, whilst grappling with how it affected her as a person associated with the school. And so, although it is not possible to interview Pierre Be about his experiences and knowledge of the WISA school, it is still possible to gain a better understanding of how these narratives play out on the ground *vis a vie* those who experience them and remember them today.

Thus, Fanja has become central to the practical component of my research, more of which is to follow.

3. PRACTICAL COMPONENT

3.1 Ethnographic Project

3.1.1 Locating the Object of my Research

For my practical component I used a 'Thick Description spiral methodology' (C Geertz, 1994) for locating the 'object' of my research. This approach allows for a deepening of description, filled with interpretation that details conceptual structures and meaning as opposed to fact; deepening description in this way fits with Trouilot's analysis of the production of history and meaning making through historicity, and an ability to trace out social histories outside of power-imbued facts. A spiraling out of ethnography using thick description has helped me locate the object within its connected ecology. This has then exposed the ecology surrounding the object, assisting me with my attempts to find the connected histories that I have just mentioned above (Subrahmanyam, 1997).

Thick description according to Geertz is outlined within four parameters. These are 1) Interpretive study: here an interpretive practice traces meaning of the raw observational material collected by an ethnographer so as to analyse it further. 2) The subject of interpretation is the flow of social discourse**:** here Geerts tells us that the interpretive process will yield the codes required for decoding social events; 3) Interpretation deals with extrovert expressions**:** as the ethnographer relies on the information that local informants impart with, it goes to say that the thickest of descriptions therefor rely on extrovert expressions of culture 4) Ethnographic description is microscopic: ethnographic findings propose a miniature view on a culture; by viewing specific and contextualised happenings we can build up a thick description of these happenings.

This approach is therefore immersive and qualitative in its workings which has allowed for the zoning in on the particular that I wanted to achieve, a glance into the proposed humanism that Wynter (2000) offers. With his in mind, for my ethnographic component I have worked through people, so as to understand better where the social history of WISA gong fu in Madagascar lies. It would not be possible

to provide a thick description through an analysis of this social history in general, as that would entail working through all the people in Madagascar, or even in Antananarivo, so I have instead chosen to work with the memory of an individual who carries the complexity of the multiple narratives surrounding this history. This person is the same past pupil of gong fu that I quote above, a past pupil of gong fu who came into my research by chance (as unpacked in the section below), Fanja Rasoanomenjanahary.

3.1.2 Feelings

Fanja holds within her recollections of gong fu feelings that hint toward an ambiguity about the history of gong fu, and also a certainty that links to her experiences of what practicing the martial art gong fu did for her in her life. I met Fanja when I returned to Madagascar for the sixth time in 2017 with the intention of focusing on deepening this research further. Fanja had responded to a call put out through an arts gallery[31] that I am affiliated with in Antananarivo looking for a French to English translator. There was no mention in this call about the topic of the research, but when I met her for tea to introduce myself and the research we fell into an emotional walk down memory lane about our histories as girls becoming young women whilst practicing martial arts. The feeling of this conversation moved me into restructuring my research, centering Fanja as the local informant. Fanja housed a certain ambiguity about which narratives to trust within the history of WISA gong fu, including an ambiguity toward some of the dominant WISA narratives about Pierre Be. It is within an attempt to stick with this ambiguity that compelled me to work with Fanja, a pupil who's personal story carries with it the complexities of experiencing all of these narratives as a pupil of the gong fu school, someone who has navigated through them into her adult years and does not sit on one particular side of power that attempts to shape these narratives at play.

This process of focusing and refocusing as my research shifted has helped me locate questions that point toward the center of my ethnographic spiral. It is thus a

[31] Is'Art Gallery

reflexive exercise, as it is not obvious where the questions lie and it is not clear when to stop drawing the spiraling line outward. However, through this process I have been able to see the connections that link the particular experiences of Fanja out into the spiraling ecology of the connected histories that surround gong fu in Madagascar.

3.1.3 Working through people

The first time I came to Madagascar was in 2009. During that time I worked through clues that emerged in the social landscape, leading me first to Analakely market and then through an array of people's suggestions, through which I was eventually guided toward the area where the old market had once been, the place where tensions between the TTS and the WISA gong fu pupils played out (as mentioned in chapter two of this dissertation). It was whilst talking with people on the ground in the market place and on the streets that this research began to take shape. Being present in Antananarivo for extended periods of time has enabled me to deepen the research, so much so that the context of it surprised me into rethinking what I knew. This rethinking occurred through experiences where I was confronted with the actual world, the social repositories within which multiple narratives reside. I began to find answers to the questions that I never knew to ask; there are some things I could not answer, like why and how Pierre Be went to Shaolin in the first place, and yet by thinking through the connected histories of these unanswerable questions knowledge has emerged, (as discussed in chapter two of this dissertation). Further unanswered questions drove me to return again and again to understand more.

Throughout all of this I became increasingly aware of my position as an outsider. It concerned me that I held the potential to sensationalise particular narratives with the same excitement I felt for them in the first place when I was not yet immersed in the details. Whilst there, I began to engage with the public spaces of the city, so as to expose myself to the surroundings and become acclimatised before writing anything about them. I roamed the city everyday, through the market place

where I bought my daily goods, jogged at sunrise on the 'exercise stairs'[32], ate in small restaurants perched on the hills and recorded sonic explorations into public spaces. I used my experience and what emerged from them as instruments for my own art practice, excavating dimensions that assist me in getting past the verbal through an exploration of sound and animation (spoken about below). These experiences brought up many feelings and thoughts that have helped me understand my positioning better. Herein I have interpreted both my thoughts that emerged from being present in that environment (Trouillot, 2005) shaped further by what Fanja and the other people who I chatted to had to say about this history. While I don't want this analysis of myself to take up too much space in this research, it should be noted that I spent quite a bit of time experiencing an array of energised and formative emotions that I documented in an auto-ethnographical and phenomenological way, paying attention to how my feelings and the environment felt, smelt and tasted. The outputs of which included a diary of internal shifting scapes where feelings ranging from privileged access through to links within my personal family history family emerged. And, although the feelings of positionality and self were a constant concern that emerged strongly within these experiences, they were given most room to emerge within the ethnographic project outlined below.

3.1.4 A Project design to Work at Material Sites of History

I designed a project so as to open up the ethnographic research to Fanja, who, in this sense, became my fellow researcher and collaborator within the project. It was wholly thanks to her participation in this project that I was able to listen to - and experience this listening to - first hand feelings of what living within the ambiguity of the multiple narratives of the gong fu history meant for a young woman who grew up in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Antananarivo, where the WISA gong fu's philosophy was at work in a social environment. In the project I mapped out spaces for interactions with the history of WISA gong fu to take place

[32] These are long stairways in Antananarivo commonly known as the 'exercise stairs' where people exercise daily at sunrise and sunset.

via spending time at a public historical site of importance, (Trouillot, 2005) as related to both the history of WISA as well as the participant. During this time the participants were to document the non-verbal space that exists within that dark hole full of feelings (Lorde, 1982) that arises from this experience. Herein, I hoped to gain some knowledge on the topic about how this history is experienced and remembered today by those exposed to the ambiguity between narratives.

The participants were both Fanja and myself; Fanja went to her old neighborhood and walked the very same path she used to walk to get to her gong fu school every week. She then spent time at the site where, as a child, she had first witnessed gong fu being practiced in the open under a tree. I, on the other hand, went to the Analakely market, the place that I first visited in 2009 to find information about the history of the 'gong fu riots', that very same market which had been moved from a neighboring area shortly after clashes between the TTS and WISA gong fu students broke out. The following day we met and I recorded a conversation-style interview about these experiences at historical sites of importance to us between Fanja and myself on a sound recorder. An extraction of the recording then become the base of the short film which I animated images on top of[33]. In the interview structure I had several topics that I wanted to touch upon that would allow the conversation to unfold around, as opposed to a list of questions. I allowed the interview process to be guided around these topics by the experiences and thoughts shared by Fanja as well as our shared knowledge on the topic. This project of the particular, thus, became the base from which further creative explorations (animation, sound) took place, and it also allowed for historical knowledge that the participants were holding to arise.

3.2 Animation as an Alternative Language

3.2.1 Internal Landscapes

Just as Wynter suggested in her proposed new humanism, the internal landscape of feelings that lies within each of us is a good way to locate the personal

[33] www.tellingtones.com

within the history of the gong fu uprising as set against the universal modes of history production. It is from this internal landscape of feelings that I have built the practical component of this dissertation, as described in more detail below. This body of work explores the tension between the imagined and the real, as linked to the values of the social repositories mentioned thus far. In this case, the imagination translates into the setting alight of possible futures in relation to the narratives at play, such as the possible return of Master Pierre Be one day. The real world, on the other hand, translates to the day-to-day experience of living within the locations that produce those narratives in the present. Here, feelings underlie both the imaginative and the real: people locate themselves through their feelings, whether related to how they recall a historical experience such as hearing one of the narratives about the history of gong fu for the first time, or, how pupils feel whilst practicing gong fu on an open piece of land in the city. Locating feelings as a central point allows for a deepening toward the particular as well as a spiraling outward of connectedness (as mentioned earlier) on the topic that leads further and further into its context and its connected histories. In this sense, the range from the particular through to the global connections that lean more on the side of the universal are able to co-exist.

Finding a language that helps in locating such feelings is an attempt to answer Palmie's suggestion, outlined in the first chapter of this book, that we try to find a new language through which to talk about alternative repositories of history (2002). This finding of a 'new language' emphasizes the need to break from the old ways of telling histories whilst presenting the possibility of finding new ways through which to tell these histories. Thus, the 'new language' can also be read as an alternative language to the hegemonic forms of history telling.

My practical component, then, sets out to explore the possibility of these alternative modes of communication as ways of retelling this history. In this sense, I have maintained the ambiguity within this history by thinking through how to speak into alternative repositories of history as posited via feelings and embodied experiences by those who experience this history. As an artist, I have chosen to explore the alternatives that both filmic animation and sonic art propose as a mode

of alternative communication in the retelling of this history, the base of which is the project outlined above wherein Fanja and I explore our feelings as we spend time at sites of historical importance to us pertaining to the history of gong fu. This choice both speaks into the politics of representation, both of how subaltern subjects are represented, as well as how humans/human stories are represented.

3.2.2 Issues of Representation

The first issue of representation in an African context expands into ways through which narratives about previously colonized areas such as Africa and including the Indian Ocean have been constructed and shared in literature and films by the hegemonic West (Gugler, 2003). Mostly, dominant filmic images of Africa include news reports and documentaries. Within them, the images that portray Africa are ones of war and famine. This is despite the films made by Africans who portray complex stories of everyday life, socio-political narratives and a growing number of sci-if and magical realism. There exists one Malagasy documentary on the topic of Pierre Be that I know of, made by Master Avoko and produced through his own production house *Avoko Productions.* Unfortunately, this has only been available locally and even there it is so scarce that I never managed to acquire it. In light of my inability to access this film and the issues of representation surrounding films in Africa, how I represent those within a retelling of this history then, remains key; how do I represent the narrators within the research respectfully so as to counter the negative images that circulate about the continent and those islands around it still today? And further, how can the use of animation, a key medium of expression I wish to use, add to this need to remain respectful to 'representation' itself?

Whilst thinking into the issue of representation, Wynter's proposed humanism comes to mind once again: how humans are represented speaks into thinking into ways of capturing not only the face of the person talking, but also *what* they are saying, and how they *feel* whilst they are saying it. This becomes especially important when making a documentary about the past where the visual archives do not provide enough content to work with and thus the particulars of the humans

within the narratives are not so easily acquired. Animation reveals itself as a tool within which the possibilities of closer representation then become possible. As Roe (2013) suggests, “As animation is not forced to resemble that which it represents, it offers freedom to explore possibilities for not only masking identities, but also interpreting the words of interviewees and illustrating and conveying a film’s themes and issues” (79). A reliance of archival content to make a documentary can lead to issues of shaping a documentary that relies solely on what footage already exists. In the Madagascar context formal archives of historical video footage are hard to come by, and sourcing private footage can be difficult, as I experienced whilst attempting to source imagery of the history of gong fu. Thus, by looking to alternative ways through which to capture the context and history of the narrative, it becomes possible to stick with the narrators story and, instead of diverging from it so as to make it fit into what archival footage already exists, to bring in new visual footage that stems from it so as to enhance what is being narrated.

This approach of working with the footage that you have now, and enhancing what is being narrated, including the feelings of the person who is doing the narrating, provides a new way of thinking into a proposed new language for the retelling of this history (Palmie, 2002). Roe (2013) indicated that animation thus becomes it’s own interpreter, digging deeper into the particular emotional landscape of the subject as related to the topic at hand. “As animation is not forced to resemble that which it represents, it offers freedom to explore possibilities for not only masking identities, but also interpreting the words of interviewees and illustrating and conveying a film’s themes and issues” (79). This ‘interpreting’ that Roe speaks of then becomes key in thinking into how to enhance this film via representing the ambiguity and other feelings that arise in Fanja as the interview proceeds and she encounters such spaces in her own retelling of her narrative.

In the animation I mix animation techniques with research components so as to bring in a nuanced experience of what is being brought up by Fanja. By doing this, I am interpreting her own words with my own research into a visual language. Roe discusses these 'modes of address’ as creating “moments of thematic and tonal punctuation in a documentary” (10). In my film, these ‘modes of address’ that Roe is

referring to take on the shape of real footage (photographs and screen grabs from online articles), mixed with drawings derived from real footage or altogether imagined based on my own research into the topic. These elements perform on screen in a shared space, enabling the audience to both experience the expanse of the narrative, as well encouraging what Roe calls "experiences that are hard to express in words" that upon viewing encourage "us to imagine, from our own point of view, and empathise with the unfamiliar experiences of other people" (15).

3.2.3 Between the Real and the Imagined

Working between these elements I find myself balancing exactly where I want to be: between the imagined and the real; an oscillation co-existence both here and there at the same time. This in-between space lends itself well to the theme of a necessary ambiguity that exists within the recalling of history (Trouillot, 1995; Palmie 2002), which I have drawn on, extended and enhanced within the making of this animation. According to Roe, working like this "can create a strange viewing experience of being aware at the same time of both the realness, and non-realness, of the final product" (81). In the context of the history of the gong fu uprisings, actors in the production of history spoken about in chapter two both generate multiple narratives of the historical moment as well as carry memories of experiences of those multiple narratives in the present day within both their embodied experience of it as well as their imaginations (Palmie, 2002). The tones that then begin to exist between the real and the imagined are what emerges from my experimenting with ways to represent both the physicalness of the human element of the narrator, who is talking, as well as their imagined space that is drawn upon whilst recalling incidents that make up the particular narrative, including points of hearsay and ambiguity. In the film you see the face of a woman looking at the elements that animate around her as if she is also noticing them as she speaks. Her eyes both follow these elements, indicating that she is 'reading' them as she talks, as well as at times flicker across the screen indicating that she is overwhelmed by the amount of information being displayed. This positing of both the human element within the multiple bits of animated influencing factors that dance on

screen, demonstrates a mood of being somewhat lost within the bits and pieces of information, knowledge and imagination at play within narratives about this history, both personal and general.

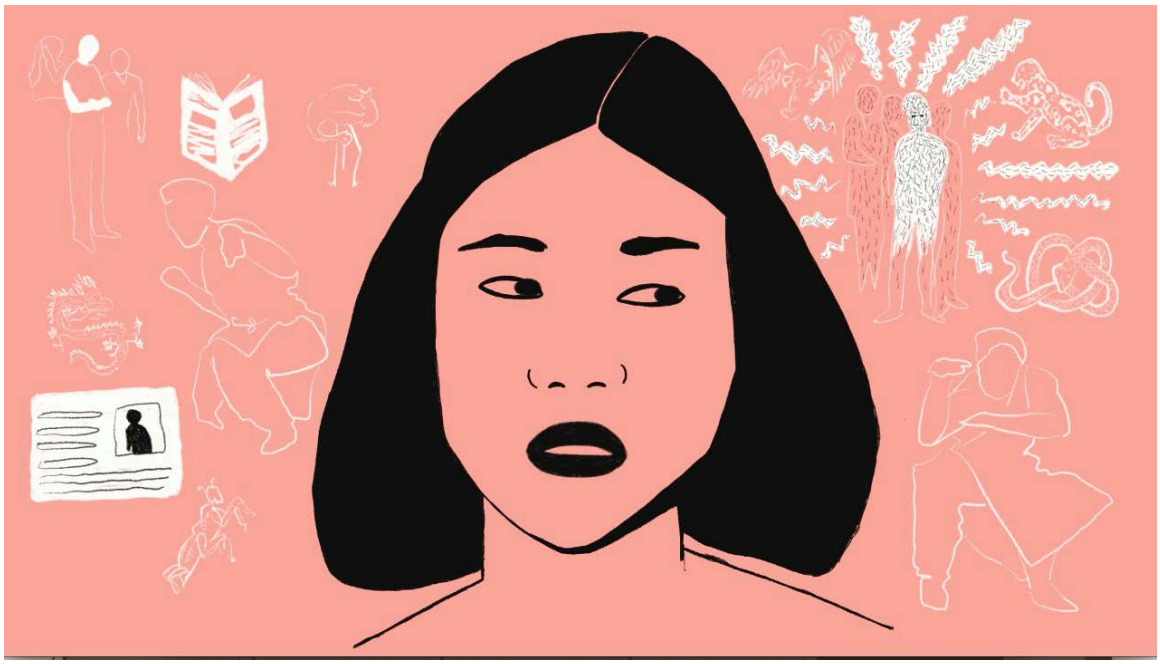

Figure 3.1 *Fanja Looks at Elements*

The decision to work with an illustration of Fanja's face instead of filming the interview is a conscious one that challenges the traditional approach of documentary film-making. The issues that refute this traditional approach are surmised by Roe thus: "films that replace the bodies of those who are already marginalised in society with animated characters could be open to criticism of depoliticising and disempowering their subjects through the animated aestheticisation of their physical form" (88). However, Fanja declared that she wished to remain physically anonymous (i.e. did not want to be filmed) but was ok to have her voice recorded for the animated film. Animation has a powerful role to play within choices of anonymity, disguising the presence of the testimony giver, as Roe explains: "Animation is used as a means of hiding the identity of the interviewees, sometimes because such anonymity is necessary for their safety and sometimes because it encourages participation from otherwise reluctant subjects" (94). By viewing a drawing instead of her real face, the viewers imagination is able

to rise up in a way much like it does when confronted by several narratives about the 'truth', and yet the presence of the testimony giver remains present through out via their voice, linking these narratives to that of a real person.

This is accentuated in animation that has, inherent in its means of production, an additional ontological complexity. "Rotoscoping, or the production of animation by tracing over live-action images, has a causal link with reality that is absent in most animation...they add complexity to the already ambiguous relationship between the animated documentary image and reality" (80). Further, for the viewer, a closer consideration of what types of knowledge are being displayed and consumed on the screen occurs. "Absenting the physical bodies of documentary interviewees, and instead representing them via animation, questions how, and what type of, knowledge is conveyed in interview documentaries" (14). This approach then enables me to speak into the knowledge surrounding body-knowing, as well as the connected histories to that body and narrative; my hope is that the audience will both be exposed to parts of the research as well as be taken on a journey of what moods those elements of research have for a student of gong fu such as Fanja. By centering the human and yet staying within a space of knowledge, emotions (and thus knowledge locked within those emotions) associated with the narrator are extended whilst she is relaying her testimony; it is possible to dig deeper into the emotional landscape surrounding the narrator whilst they are talking: "voices are produced by bodies: but can also themselves produce bodies…the animation is influenced by sound and it is "the voice which seems to colour and model its container" [Connor, 2000: 35]" (Roe, 2015, 77).

Sound, a non-seen component, is the base for this film; the audio recording of the interview as well as sonic clips taken from places of historical importance to the narrative itself, such as recordings of the general sounds of the busy market place, build the landscape through which the visuals exist. On top of the background sounds, Fanja's voice takes center stage. The animation is worked into and around both the content of what she is talking about, as well as the textures of what has not been said, as Roe (2015) informs us "Moments of non-linguistic vocal expression, such as natural pauses and hesitations of speech, are reflected" (77). Thus this

exploration into the sonic and how it manifests an animated film begins to shape the new language through which to speak about this history (Palmie, 2002).

3.3 Sonic Art as an Alternative Language

3.3.1 Toward feelings

In the choices surrounding the creation of this documentary-style animation I have shifted away from the presentation of bodily evidence as the traditional approach to evidence giving, as derived from early court cases where the camera was set up in the jury box facing the witness box capturing testimony (Roe, 2015). Instead, I focus on the voice of Fanja, a voice that becomes testimony to her own particular narrative. However, Fanja's personal narrative also forms apart of a larger collection of narratives circulating amongst people: the multiple narratives of this history at play. Thus, I do not place emphasis on the viewer needing to believe her words; rather I focus on moving beyond a truth and into the moods and experiences that her words bring up as taken from clues in her voice. In this sense the importance shifts from her physical body, deeper into herself - what massages her voice is carrying: an interpretive approach. The deeper space that we move toward begins to allow for a glimpse into that dark ambiguous space Lord (1982) spoke of: the knowledge connected to our own feelings.

A better understanding of sound then becomes crucial for me in being able to think through much of the practical component that stems from it. In his highly acclaimed research into sonic art, Wishart (1985) speaks of how soundscapes can be used as an alternative to what he calls 'scribe based research'. Herein lies a direct confrontation to the hegemony of history writing, coupled with a proposal of alternatives that take the shape of sonic art. Wishart challenges the notion of music itself being a scribe-based art form as he presents the case of emphasizing music as sculpture, rather than something created from notations. Through this, WISHART broadens our notion of the composer, and in thus doing he interrogates how music is made from meaning - a meaning that people create (13). "This is why I have chosen the title "On Sonic Art", to encompass the arts of organizing sound events in

time. This, however, is merely a conventional fiction for those who cannot bear to see the use of the word music extended. For me, all these areas fall within the category I call music" (4). Sound, or the 'sonic art', thus emerges as a proposition through which to express the alternative repositories within this dissertation.

Wishart (1985) describes things such as landscape and gesture as being able to enter our perceptions of the 'sound-world' we are listening to (7). This contribution is one that has been influential on Western views of music, as it challenges the traditionally structural approaches to music making, as well as the hegemony of scribe-based modes of communication (12). I find relevant links with the hegemony of scribe-based forms of communication that Wishart speaks of and those of the dominant narrative about the WISA school that Didier Ratsiraka published when he banned gong fu in Madagascar. By exploring sound as an alternative mode of communication to further this research, I am again attempting to open up the language that Palmie (2002) speaks of, enabling the speaking into alternative repositories of history.

3.3.2 Sonic as an Alternative to the Hegemony of Writing

By exploring the history of gong fu in Madagascar via it's alternative narratives and through the generation of soundscapes, I have been able to explore how it is that alternative modes of communication can threaten the hegemony of writing. The sonic recordings were done both through the interview as well as through the project of engagement I set up. Whilst generating the soundscapes at the material remains of this history I was guided by Trouillot's (1995) methods for meaning making in his book, combined with Wishart's (1985) work on meaning as synthetic activity.

On the one hand we have Trouillot's theories about needing to have an authentic experience with history through being present at the material remains of a particular history so as to create meaning for oneself and not reproduce the violence of the past (149). On the other, interestingly, meaning making for Wishart takes on a slightly different more embodied role. Whereas for Trouillot it is the physical environment related to that history that guides one toward an authentic

experience of it, for Wishart it is more of a self expression that attempts to make that meaning through it's communication back toward others. He states that "for the individual speaker, however, meaning is a synthetic activity. She or he means. Not merely a combination of words, but a choice from an infinitude of possible reflections, tones of voice and accents for their delivery, together with possibilities of movement, gesture and even song, enter into synthesis of the speech-act that attempts to convey what he or she means" (13). This guidance from Trouillot toward the authentic experience and then from Wishart toward an embodied meaning through expression combine to propose an interesting project that moves deeper into the particular by bringing in the politics of body knowledge as feelings. In the project that I devised both these suggestions are encompassed: in the first instance, a crucial connection is made with the self and the history via Trouillot's suggestions of finding an authentic experience, which is then followed by a sonic approach to finding meaning wherein Wishart proposes that participants are able to express themselves through sonic documentation of these experiences.

The sonic recordings can be heard in the background of the animated film, filling up the landscape and sculpting the environment through which the voice recordings of Fanja are heard. These sounds are then drawn on to express the animation with its 'tonal punctuations'. According to Wishart "the idea of meaning as a synthetic activity is most significant in direct communications with other human beings, which might mediate through musical instruments or recordings" (13). This communication with other human beings was explored by myself through the project whilst recording activity in Analakely market[34]. It thus linked the people all around me and the memories of my initial experience of Analakely market, where I was first attempting to locate knowledge about the history of gong fu, to the sound recording of the interview with Fanja about her experiences in the project. It has been through working with both Trouillot and Wishart that I have found meaning for myself through the creation of these recordings whilst being present at the

[34] As explored in this creation of a sonic clip wherein I sampled human voices and experiences and recreated the soundscape from the Analakely market: soundcloud.com/megatrops/analakely-market-samples-and-fanjas-story

material remains of this history and whilst producing expressions of what meaning arose for me whilst doing this.

3.4 Open Work

3.4.1 Visualising Alternative Repositories of History

In keeping with the values that have emerged from the research into social repositories done thus far, I have created a space where a new online audience can explore both the animated and sonic attempts to tell this story in a different language (Palmie, 2002). One of the key values has been ambiguity, and, in an attempt to stick within this theme again, I have made use of 'open work', a deliberate and systemic approach that keeps within the theme of ambiguity ever present so as to encourage a higher degree of participatory experiences (Eco, 1962). According to Eco the less conventional forms of expression are, the more scope they allow for interpretation and therefore the more ambiguous they are said to be. He goes on to indicate that, "whereas traditional forms of art confirm the conventional world, modern open work implicitly denies them" (xi), resulting in a high degree of improbability and unpredictability. However, he is also quick to highlight that although this approach contains a higher degree of information, it may not necessarily contain a higher degree of meaning. This meaning making is something that the viewers themselves should find within their engagements (Trouillot, 1995). The open work does, however, propose "an equation between the degree of openness, the degree of information, the degree of ambiguity, and the degree of contravention of conventions in a work" (xii). It represents a sense of 'discontinuity' that one experiences in the modern world, a sense that I have experienced whilst attempting to look for silenced and alternative narratives within this body of work. Thus, according to Eco, "the modern work is a form of knowledge of the world in which we live, insofar as it constitutes a bringing to consciousness of the nature of the contemporary crisis…a new way of seeing, feeling, understanding, and accepting a universe in which traditional relationships have been shattered and new possibilities of relationship are being laboriously sketched out" (xiv) This new

relatedness that Eco speaks of ties in well with my attempts to find a new language through which to talk about the social repositories and alternative narratives of the gong fu history.

The display of open work is placed in a blog on the Internet[35], a space not restricted to the borders of the country of Madagascar (Goldsmith and Wu, 2006), containing parts of the larger body of work that captures the varying tones of the overall research, both real and imagined. This body of work introduces a new audience to some of the values of social repositories that I have studied, such as multiple narratives, ambiguity and embodied memories. However, as Eco states, this display of information may be dense, and yet not necessarily more meaningful. Thus, in order to enable meaning-making on the topic from the viewer it is important to give the them agency, some way through which they can explore, in their own time, through the research and thus find meaning for themselves within this exploration (Fendt, Harrison, Ware, Cardona-Rivera, and Roberts, 2012).

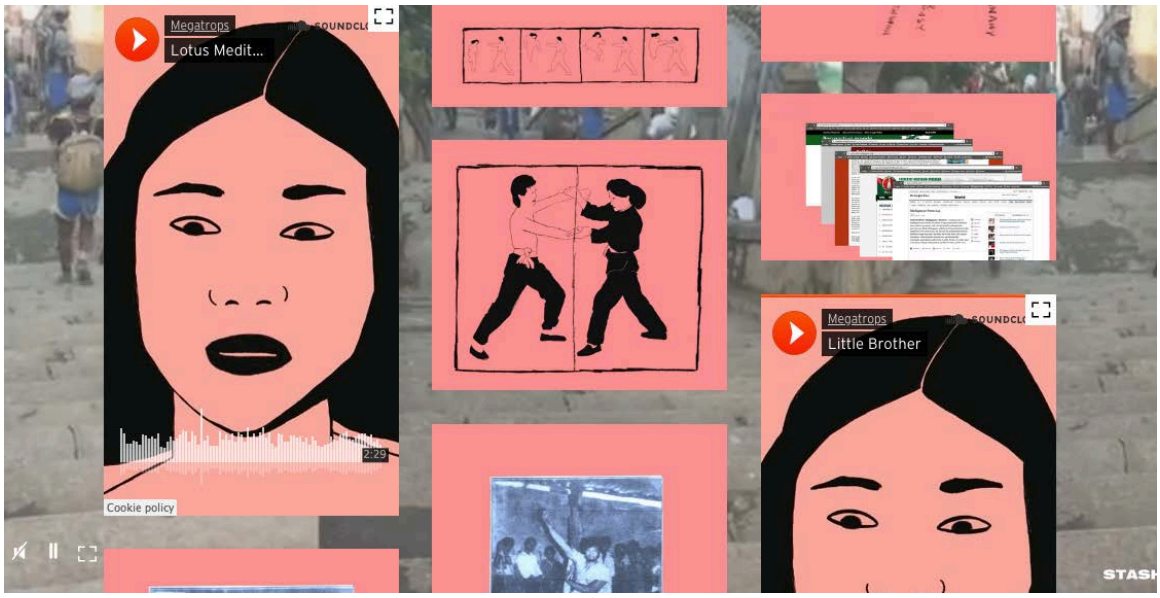

Figure 3.2 *Agency through Looking Around*

[35] www.tellingtones.tumblr.com

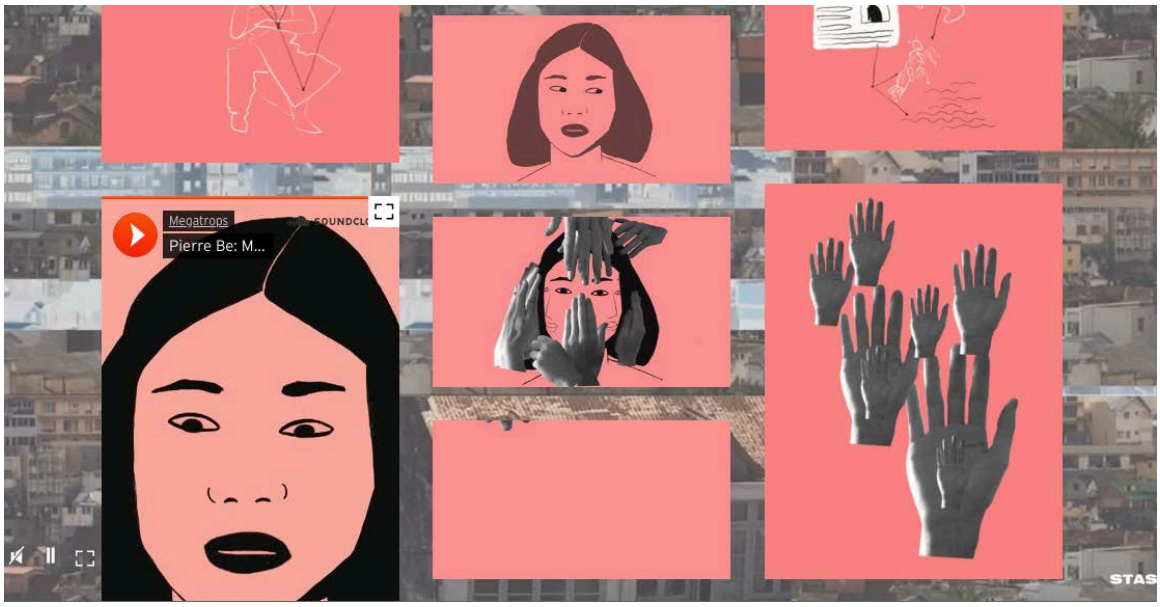

Figure 3.3 *Agency through Looking Around 2*

Here, the multiple modes of communication (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009) can be explored in a shared space and learned from. This space houses my exploration into developing an aesthetic for the film, which includes research into the topic as done by myself throughout this dissertation. The work includes several sonic explorations that both explore the locality of the topic as set in the Antananarivo context, as well as conversations with Fanja (as mentioned earlier in this chapter), about the project that we did that explores what it felt like to be present at sites of personal importance pertaining to the history of gong fu in Madagascar. The viewer then has a landscape of modalities through which to explore the topic and to locate their senses within, find meaning through.

3.4.2 Loops

Extracts from the short documentary-style animation are displayed in this blog that loop in time, demonstrating their own existence within the narrative. The effect is a mesmerizing one, wherein the viewer watches until they are satisfied, until they have found their own meaning from the moving image, before they move on to the next. The elements, all playing at the same time telling different parts of the narrative, enhance the feeling of ambiguity that is felt when researching this

history; multiple narratives surround you as you attempt to navigate your way through them and make meaning from them. These loops contain knowledge, relaying multiple levels of meaning. The loops are offset by the insertion of sonic recordings, which are much slower in pace and take much longer to listen through, allowing for the viewer to let their eyes roam to the surrounding looped moving images that link in to the sonic clips they are listening to, resting on them and possibly contemplating them for longer still.

4. CONCLUSION

In keeping with the contemplation of the open work in mind, this entire thesis proposes a deeper contemplation on ambiguity within social history. The focus has not rested on a necessity to find answers to the myths such as Master Pierre Be being able to duplicate himself, it has instead shifted to finding out why such narratives exist in the first place, and who houses them.

What, then, does such questioning offer to the value of social repositories in the subaltern? Firstly, in chapter one I have identified what those values are by looking toward the Black Atlantic, and specifically thought that has emerged through intellectuals who grapple with how to re-tell the history of the Haitian revolution and its aftermath. These viewpoints emerge from the adoption of a local, non-Eurocentric, standing. The result outlines a rethinking project that offers insight into the rethinking of social histories within the subaltern in general as it links into a global intellectual movement of thinkers who question the notion of universalism. These writers who offer a postcolonial critique of universalism, approach history in a way that removes it from the Eurocentric canons. In so doing, they reclaim an authority within history for themselves from the damage that the early enlightenment movement had on the image of Africa and those with African roots by bringing in particular, social histories. In so doing, the writers pose alternative repositories of history that lie in the social fabric of the local including: 1) the importance of ambiguity within locating these repositories; 2) a proposition that it is through 'border thinking' wherein the notion "I think where I am", that locates personal narratives in the retelling of social histories, can be generated; 3) the proposal of a new humanism that answers the question 'who writes?' leaning toward the particular within the retelling of social histories; 4) embracing a geo and body politics of knowing history, meaning knowledge acquired through bodily experiences thereof; 5) the consideration of condensed 'sinkholes of excess', wherein dense social histories lie.

As a result, these social repositories emerge as offerings through which to

engage social history in the subaltern world in general which I have borrowed so as to unpack the history of gong fu in Madagascar. Writers such as Trouillot (2005) have emerged from these thinkers with his analysis of power within history's production. Locating power within historical narratives has aided me in the second chapter, where I explore the case of the history of WISA gong fu. Within it, ambiguity and multiple narratives are exposed due to a power at play within the creation of specific dominant historical narratives, a power stemming from President Ratsiraka. In turn, this power has producing silenced narratives that have lead to the rise of multiple alternative narratives of this history. I go on to explore how these alternative narratives are thus remembered and carried forward by people exposed to them, specifically the students of gong fu through the teachings of the gong fu schools. Locating this people-based knowledge of this history has lead me to pose the question: could the WISA gong fu school itself be a considered a social repository of history? I argue in favor of this in chapter two. It has been through an analysis of the ambiguity within this history that I have been able to draw out a more particular knowledge of it.

After having zoomed in to the particular, I then pull out again, looking toward the globalization of networks of thought surrounding the connected histories of gong fu in Madagacsar. I begin to attempt to unpack the 'world' that the Indian Ocean consists of, and discover the difficulties that scholars have experienced whilst attempting to define this large, sprawling area. There is a long history of social movement and interconnections linking to the history of gong fu in Madagascar, including a more recent global fight against imperialism. By bringing in this knowledge I am able to understand more about why the teachings of gong fu in Madagascar have made such an impact on the social landscape of Antananarivo, and why multiple narratives about this history are still topical today. Now, it has been through an analysis of the connected global histories that surround the particular outlined in the previous paragraph that have enabled further knowledge to be brought in and for the positioning of this social history in a more global picture to emerge.

My thesis, then, both provides a social account of the history of gong fu, as

well as questions ways through which to talk about the alternative narratives within this history. In Chapter three, I explore what alternative languages to the hegemony of writing can be experimented with in an attempt to retell this ambiguous history. I do this through animation and sonic arts, the core of which is derived from a project I created that involving a gong fu pupil, Fanja Rasoanomenjanahary, wherein a personal, embodied experience of this history is relayed. I then share this work with a new online audience, keeping within the values of ambiguity identified above.

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