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Theatre in Circulation:

Performing National Identity on the Global Stage in Cape Verde, West Africa

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By

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ABSTRACT

Theatre in Circulation:**Performing National Identity on the Global Stage in Cape Verde, West Africa**

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This study examines how Cape Verdean theatre artists construct transformative performances of race, gender, language, and colonial history at the Mindelact International Theatre Festival on the Cape Verde Islands. The aim is to understand how international theatre festivals participate in the production and shaping of new social imaginaries about nationhood. Drawing on my sustained ethnographic work with Cape Verdean performers and archival research into the festival's media coverage, I analyze three trends that featured prominently at Mindelact from 2004-06: dramatizations of oral histories about colonial-era rebellions and drought, theatre and dance performances foregrounding Cape Verdean women's labor and sexuality, and adaptations of Western plays. I argue that when Cape Verdean artists circulate this theatre to a festival context, they rewrite central narratives about their country's national identity. By analyzing how festivals operate as mechanisms of circulation, I expand globalization theories that reassess how cultural production functions in an age dominated by increased circulation of people and finance.

The Mindelact Festival is a crossroads for Lusophone (Portuguese-language) theatre from Europe, Latin America, and Africa. Drawing on the islands' complex history with Portuguese colonialism, I demonstrate how a festival venue privileging Lusophone theatre is a productive site for performers to interrogate colonialism's legacies of historical bias, restrictive gender roles, and regional formulations of racial identities and linguistic hierarchies.

Cape Verde's creolized society is a product of centuries of African and European peoples and traditions intermingling on the islands. I analyze how theatre artists strategically perform facets of this Creole identity at Mindelact in order to situate their islands' local culture within Cape Verde's still emerging national identity. To examine the impact of circulation on these performances, I situate theatre productions within the material and social conditions enabling their circulation to the festival: media discourses, funding, rehearsal tactics, performance training, and audience expectations. I maintain that the convergence of these factors in a festival arena allows locally devised Cape Verdean theatre to become incorporated into a national dramatic canon that helps shape public perception of the islands' national identity.

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PREFACE

In many ways, this scholarly journey begins in September of 1999, when, as a young, fresh-out-of-college Peace Corps volunteer, I sat in the auditorium of the Mindelo Cultural Center on São Vicente Island in Cape Verde, awaiting the opening performance of that year's Mindelact International Theatre Festival. About the production, *Tabanca Tradiçon* (Tabanca Tradition), staged by the Cape Verdean theatre group Ramonda, I knew only that it was inspired by an elaborate Afro-Christian street festival celebrated yearly in Ramonda's neighborhood of Achada Grande and considered the most emblematic cultural tradition of the group's island, Santiago. Perhaps conditioned by my educational upbringing in Aristotelian theatre, I expected that the performance would center on a story triggered by the events of a Tabanca parade; in other words, I anticipated a clearly demarcated plot with a beginning, middle, and an end. Yet Ramonda's performance obeyed the circular logic of Tabanca rather than the linear dramatic structure I had expected. *Tabanca Tradiçon* was a straightforward re-enactment of the major events of a Tabanca festival: the ritualistic theft and return of a Catholic saint icon and an extensive procession wherein a wide array of costumed characters—kings, queens, brides, and soldiers—play drums, blow on conch shells, dance, and engage in call-and-response singing.

Restless with the actors' incessant marching across the stage and the front of the house, many audience members got up and left. As the actors set off on yet another go-round, I heard a nearby Cape Verdean spectator say, *outra vez?* (again?) Those who remained offered only a polite smattering of applause when the actors took their final bows. As Mindelact audiences comprise foreigners and nationals alike, the desertion of spectators seemingly signaled a rejection of Cape Verdean cultural markers not only by an international audience but also by Cape Verdeans themselves. However, since the majority of Mindelact theatre-goers hail from the

city of Mindelo, which hosts the festival, the departing audience members were rejecting the theatrical enactment of a cultural manifestation grounded in a locality not their own, Santiago Island, rather than a symbol of Cape Verdean culture as a whole.

Years of graduate training would later teach me to think about national identity as inherently contested. Reflecting upon my first glimpse of Mindelact, I realized that *Tabanca Tradiçon* had staged this contestation. Partly due to their attendance of the Mindelact Festival, Mindelo theatre audiences have adopted the conventions of the proscenium stage: they arrive on time and sit quietly as the performance unfolds (in fact, the Mindelact Association prides itself on having “trained” its audiences to engage with theatre this way). Yet this does not mesh with the kind of vocal, dynamic, and kinetic interactions that *Tabanca* parades demand of their participants and bystanders. That September evening, the Mindelact Festival demonstrated how embodied subjects perform a “contested” national identity: the Ramonda actors marched noisily around the auditorium as if it were a maze of Santiago streets, while Mindelo spectators protested this disregard for their habitual theatre codes by getting up and leaving.

I chose the Mindelact Festival as the topic for my dissertation in fall 2003, during my first year as a Ph.D. student in theatre. In ensuing coursework on performance theory and cultural globalization, I had ample time to reflect on my experiences at Mindelact 1999 in new ways. I realized that the festival had re-configured Cape Verde’s theatre scene by adding structured performance events, generating island-to-island competition among theatre styles, and providing a venue for Cape Verdean theatre artists to perform the variegated contours of their creolized culture for “outsiders” and “insiders” alike. Further, the festival’s intense media coverage provided an alternate forum for debates about nationhood. I recalled that festival director João Branco, a Portuguese theatre artist, had taken some heat that year for a mainstage program that

featured only two Cape Verdean plays:¹ *Tabanca Tradiçon*, which opened the festival, and his own Mindelo-based theatre group's *Cloun Creolus Dei*, which closed it. In between, spectators saw a host of other Lusophone (Portuguese-language) theatre, including Lisbon's Teatro Meridional's adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* about the male Montague characters, the Brazilian troupe Agitada Gang's folksy rural comedy about birthing a goat, Portugal's Francisco Salgado in a translation of Sam Shepard's *Cowboy Mouth*, and *Museu do Pau Preto*, a play about Black immigrants' experience in Portugal staged by Lisbon actors of Angolan descent. Responding to the local press's critique of the preponderance of non-national theatre groups, Branco announced that seven of the twelve mainstage shows for Mindelact 2000 would be Cape Verdean.² Significantly, this critical shift in balance resulted from a vigorous media dialogue about which theatre groups should take center stage in Cape Verde's most prestigious theatre venue.

As I continued to contextualize the events of Mindelact 1999, I also began to recognize certain occurrences as gestures towards a burgeoning Lusophone transnationalism. In August of 1999, the former Portuguese colony of East Timor, re-colonized by Indonesia in 1975, became a bloody battlefield. After the majority of Timorese subjects had voted for independence from Indonesia, Indonesian and anti-independence Timorese militia retaliated with bellicose tactics that left almost 1,500 East Timorese dead. The Cape Verdean, Portuguese, Brazilian, and Luso-Angolan artists at Mindelact took the suffering of the East Timor branch of the Lusophone international community to heart. Ramonda opened its show with the actors unfolding a large banner requesting a moment of silence for East Timor. The next night Miguel Hurst, director of

¹ The mainstage that year did feature a Cape Verdean dance piece, *Danças de Câncer*, choreographed by António Tavares. The only other Cape Verdean theatre group scheduled to perform, Canizade from Fogo Island, was unable to attend due to a last-minute flight cancellation.

² Constância de Pina, "Teatro de casa enche programa," *A Semana*, July 14, 2000. Available in the Mindelact Documentation Center, #431.

Museu do Pau Preto, made the same request of his audience, while Salgado dedicated *Cowboy Mouth* to East Timor. Branco, the festival director, wore a traditional Timorese scarf for the duration of the festival, wrote about the skirmish's impact on festival participants in a chronicle for a local newspaper,³ and later noted that the last day of Mindelact, September 19th, coincided with the moment in which an international peacekeeping force finally embarked to East Timor.⁴

At Mindelact 1999, the routes of Lusophone cultural interplay, linguistic allegiances, socio-economic dependencies, and political coalitions—lingering consequences of Portuguese imperialist expansion into South America, Africa, and Asia—became mapped onto artists evoking Lusophone solidarity with embodied performances and strategic silences. In this same space, a multitude of Cape Verdean constituencies—the Ramonda actors from Santiago Island, their deserting Mindelense spectators, local journalists up-in-arms about the paucity of national representation on the festival stage, and Mindelact's Portuguese director—raised their dissenting voices in an effort to carve out a specific niche for Cape Verdean national theatre within this site of an emerging Lusophone transnation. In short, the festival staged the “dialectical play between national and transnational allegiances” that is an increasingly crucial function of global performance venues worldwide.⁵ Enabling this dialectic were various vectors of circulation: the influx of performers from Cape Verde's islands and other Lusophone geographical spaces, journalists who transmitted their festival coverage nationally and globally, and flows of funding from Lusophone Ministries of Culture and multinational corporations (evident in the bright yellow Cabo Verde Shell Oil icons imprinted on that year's Mindelact Festival T-shirts).

³ João Branco, “Festa, apesar de tudo,” *O Cidadão*, 17 September 1999. Available in the Mindelact Documentation Center, #402.

⁴ “Mindelenses abraçam teatro,” *Horizonte*, September 23, 1999. Available in the Mindelact Documentation Center, #406.

⁵ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 167.

My objective in this study is to illuminate how an international theatre venue can function as a productive site for artists, spectators, festival personnel, and the media to articulate and debate often conflicting discourses about nationhood, even while these subjects situate that emerging national theatre tradition within transnational collectivities that festivals consolidate. By focusing primarily (but not exclusively) on Cape Verdean performances staged at Mindelact from 2004-06, I take seriously Holledge and Tompkins' claim that the cultural heritage of the host country is what is chiefly accentuated and celebrated by a festival venue.⁶ By choosing a theatre festival in Africa as an object of critical inquiry, I work against the marginalized position often ascribed to the African continent in discourses about culture in global circulation. Lastly, my focus on Lusophone theatre exchange and Portuguese postcolonialism will potentially open up new areas of inquiry about a significant, yet often overlooked, transnational arts community.

This study is also a tribute to the many Cape Verdean performers who welcomed me into their rehearsals over the years, generously gave of their time during interviews, and invited me to participate actively in artistic collaborations. The majority of these artists work long hours on their performances, often into the late evening and on weekends, all the while knowing that their theatre will not yield significant financial compensation. Driving their efforts is a genuine commitment to exploring fully the potential of Cape Verdean theatre to shape new artistic trends and intervene in social and cultural discourse. Conducting ethnographic work with these artists, many of whom also became close friends, has been a continuous lesson in listening attentively to their perspectives and allowing their voices to guide my scholarly analysis.

⁶ Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins, *Women's Intercultural Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 154.

As with all scholarship, this study is a careful balance of commendation and critical appraisal for Mindelact and the theatre artists who perform there. My critiques are given in a constructive spirit and meant to contribute to the already vigorous ongoing debates about Cape Verdean culture happening across the archipelago. My hope is that the study will benefit the theatre community by allowing this multitude of artists further insight into each others' methods and performance philosophies, facilitating new debates by allowing them to ask each other new questions about the purpose and significance of Cape Verdean theatre. My critical voice also at times extends to the very concept of *lusofonia*, the notion of a communal bond among Portuguese-language countries due to a shared linguistic and cultural heritage. Here, I wish to distinguish carefully between the political motivations of governing bodies, who promote this collectivity through official alliances, and the vibrant and productive moments of artistic exchange and intercultural communication that I have witnessed at Mindelact among Cape Verdean, Portuguese, Brazilian, Mozambican, and Angolan performers over the years.

My position as a white American woman conducting research in Cape Verde forced me to confront a number of ethical issues over the years. I became increasingly cognizant of the power imbalances this entailed, especially the irony of writing about the relationship between Cape Verdean theatre and global circulation when I was the one with the economic resources to circulate among Cape Verde, Portugal, and the U.S. frequently during the course of my three-year research period. My efforts to address this situation included aiding local artists in writing proposals for projects that would allow them to circulate to other islands or abroad and, most importantly, taking seriously ethnography's mandate to give voice to otherwise subjugated perspectives. My outsider perspective is informed by a deep personal attachment to the people and culture of Cape Verde, a passion for expressing myself in and listening to others speak the

colorful cadences of Cape Verdean Crioulo, and a rigorous intellectual engagement with the pertinent social issues and theoretical implications of Cape Verdean theatre in circulation.

ABBREVIATIONS

ALUPEC	Alfabeto Unificado para a Escrita do Caboverdiano (Unified Alphabet for Cape Verdean Writing)
CPLP	Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries)
ESTE	Estação Teatral da Beira Interior (Theatre Station of Interior Beira)
GTCCPM	Grupo de Teatro do Centro Cultural Português do Mindelo (Theatre Group of the Mindelo Portuguese Center)
ICIEG	Instituto Caboverdiano para a Igualdade e Equidade de Género (Cape Verdean Institute for Gender Equality and Equity)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MpD	Movimento para Democracia (Movement for Democracy)
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OMCV	Organização das Mulheres do Cabo Verde (Organization of Women of Cape Verde)
OTACA	Oficina de Teatro e Comunicação de Assomada (The Assomada Theatre and Communication Collective)
PAICV	Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde (African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde)
PAIGC	Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde)

DEDICATION

To

The Cape Verdean performers and artists whose stories inform this work

and

Mary McMahan and Ruth Warneke, strong women and matriarchs

and

Mom and Dad, who made me who I am

and

Anne-Marie, Becky, and Regy, siblings and dear friends

and

Kolya, Matthai, and others from their generation yet to come...

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Overview: Circulating Theatre and Transforming National Narratives

“Theatre in Circulation: Performing National Identity on the Global Stage in Cape Verde, West Africa” examines how Cape Verdean theatre artists construct transformative performances of race, gender, language, and colonial history at the Mindelact International Theatre Festival on the Cape Verde Islands. The aim of the study is to understand how international theatre festivals participate in the production and shaping of new social imaginaries about nationhood. Drawing on my sustained ethnographic work with Cape Verdean performers and archival research about the festival, I analyze three trends that featured prominently at Mindelact from 2004 to 2006: dramatizations of oral histories about colonial-era rebellions and drought, theatre and dance performances foregrounding Cape Verdean women’s labor and sexuality, and adaptations of Western plays. I argue that when Cape Verdean artists circulate such theatre to a festival context, they rewrite central narratives about their country’s national identity. By theorizing how festivals operate as mechanisms of circulation, I contribute to a school of globalization studies that is reassessing how cultural production functions in an age dominated by increased circulation of people and finance.

The Mindelact Festival is held for two weeks each September on São Vicente Island, in Mindelo, Cape Verde’s second largest city. It invites Cape Verdean troupes from all over the archipelago to share the mainstage with visiting theatre groups, primarily (but not exclusively) from other Portuguese-language countries like Portugal, Brazil, Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau. The festival receives funding from Cape Verde’s Ministry of Culture and municipal governments, local corporations, non-Cape Verdean governing bodies and cultural

institutes that finance visiting theatre groups' travel to the islands, and Portuguese-based associations fostering Lusophone cultural exchange. Drawing on the islands' complex history with Portuguese colonialism, I show how a festival venue privileging Lusophone theatre is a productive site for performers to interrogate colonialism's persisting legacies of historical bias, restrictive gender roles, and regional formulations of racial identities and linguistic hierarchies.

To analyze the festival context, I draw upon Ric Knowles' interpretive triangle for theatre events that clarifies interactions among the performance text, conditions of production, and conditions of reception.¹ My discussion of each production's social import integrates my own semiotic readings of the performance text, insights collected from ethnographic participation in rehearsals, interviews with artists and spectators, and textual evidence from media articles and the festival's own materials, including posters, programs, and website. My analysis is grounded in a consideration of the rhetorical, financial, and social effects of culture in circulation.

Founded in 1995 by a cluster of artists living in the city of Mindelo, including Portuguese director João Branco and local actor Manuel Estevão, the Mindelact Festival soon led to the establishment of the Mindelact Association, which became an official non-profit organization in 1996. It has since gained a reputation as the principal promoter of theatre arts in Cape Verde. Besides organizing the annual festival, Mindelact helps run Março, Mês do Teatro (March, Theatre Month), a series of performance events organized on each island, which the association founded in 2000. Mindelact also publishes an annual journal devoted to Cape Verdean theatre and sponsors a series of drama anthologies by Cape Verdean authors. The Mindelact Association's general assembly comprises roughly 250 members from theatre and artistic circles all over the archipelago. The assembly meets twice a year to vote on new statutes or initiatives

¹ Ric Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

proposed by João Branco, president of the Mindelact Association, or the general assembly's own executive committee.²

From the Mindelact Association's range of theatre activities, I chose the festival as my object of study because it is a venue wherein Cape Verdean theatre artists stake claims about their country's creolized national identity before an audience encompassing cultural "outsiders" and "insiders." As my central case studies, I have selected primarily Cape Verdean productions staged at Mindelact 2004 to 2006 that fall under the categories of staging history, performing gender and sexuality, and adapting (or "creolizing") plays from the Western canon.³ I chose these genres for a number of reasons. First, they were recurring patterns that I had traced through the three full editions of the festival that I witnessed during my ethnographic study. Thus, they are thematic strands that Cape Verdean theatre groups are demonstrably interested in engaging at the start of a new millennium. Further, they each interrogate different slices of social narratives that contribute to Cape Verdean nationhood: representations of race and colonial authority, gender roles and their relationship to notions of national "authenticity," and the consumption of foreign material inherent to processes of cultural creolization.

The majority of my case studies address theatre productions from the islands boasting the most active theatre scenes, São Vicente and Santiago. Besides being the most populous islands, they are home to Cape Verde's two urban centers: Praia, the capital city, located on Santiago Island in the south of the archipelago, and Mindelo, often considered the country's "culture

² Attendance at assembly meetings is often limited to members who live in Mindelo or are visiting there in November or March, when the meetings are held. When I attended general assembly meetings in 2006 and 2007, there were usually about 60 members present. These were mainly Mindelo theatre artists but also included several regular theatre attendees from Mindelo and people involved in other cultural spheres, such as humanities professors at local institutes of higher learning.

³ The one Cape Verdean production covered here that I did not see in person is *Rei Lear*, performed at Mindelact 2003. For that performance analysis, I rely on a videotape. Also, one of my case studies, *Mãe Preta*, was a Portuguese production that dealt with an oral history from Maio Island in Cape Verde.

capital,” located on the northern island of São Vicente. These are the two islands most regularly and prominently featured at the festival. The Mindelact Association typically schedules at least two mainstage performances by Mindelo theatre groups and reserves at least one slot per year for a Santiago group. None of the other islands has a guaranteed place on the program from year to year. Besides these pragmatic reasons for focusing on Santiago and São Vicente theatre, the two islands also offer the opportunity to study how radically diverse regional identities are cultivated within the same nation space. As I will discuss further, the islands are considered the two “poles” of Cape Verde’s creolized identity, with Santiago tied to the nation’s African heritage and São Vicente linked to its European legacy. Theatre from these two islands makes visible how disparate cultural identities are both constructed and contested through embodied practices.⁴

1.2 Mapping the Terrain

In the remainder of this introduction, I outline a framework for analyzing the interplay among performance, nation formation, and a festival’s specific conditions of cultural circulation.

⁴ This means that other equally compelling Mindelact performances are left out. Those familiar with Cape Verdean theatre will note one glaring omission in my case studies: the Santo Antão Island theatre group Juventude em Marcha, which recently celebrated its 23rd anniversary and whose vastly popular comedic depictions of quotidian Santantonense life and local lore are evident in the packed houses the group plays to across the archipelago and in the commercial sales of DVDs of their best-known plays. See, however, Eunice Ferreira’s review of Mindelact 2004, which covers Juventude em Marcha’s contribution that year, *Preto no Branco*. “Mindelact: the Tenth Annual International Theatre Festival of Mindelo,” *Theatre Journal* 57, no.2 (2005): 272-77. My selection also leaves out productions of original dramatic texts written by established Lusophone playwrights. From Cape Verde, this includes Praia-based writer and musician Mário Lúcio, whose play *Adão e as Sete Pretas de Fuligem*, about racism, homophobia, and the social exclusion of Black Africans in 1970s Portugal, received rave reviews at Mindelact 2001. The most well-known Lusophone plays excluded are two hallmarks of Brazilian theatre staged at Mindelact 2005: Ariano Suassuna’s popular 1955 comedy *O Auto da Compadecida* (The Sympathy Play), performed in Cape Verdean Crioulo by the Mindelo theatre group GTCCPM, and Plínio Marcos’s politically-charged 1966 piece *Dois perdidos numa noite suja* (Two Lost Ones in a Dirty Night), staged by the Mozambican group Galagalazul.

I understand ‘circulation’ as a “cultural process” whereby an interpretive community interacts dynamically with the material factors and social forms that move through it,⁵ including news stories, current events, historical narratives, economic trends, and cultural phenomena. The interpretive collectivity under examination here is the Mindelact performance community. This includes festival participants (past and present, from Cape Verde and elsewhere), spectators (other participating artists and Mindelo theatre-goers), and anyone who engages with festival productions and events at a distance. This last group includes readers of newspaper articles or viewers of televised spots about the festival, as well as those who engage discursively with what they hear about Mindelact or remember from past editions. Moving through this interpretive community are performances that absorb social discourses about colonial history, race, regionalism, and gender roles at the moment of their construction in rehearsal. Artists transform these narratives of Cape Verdean nationhood when they integrate them into theatre productions destined for a festival stage, offering new social frameworks to the interpretive community.

By “transformative,” I mean performances that re-work familiar understandings of key elements of Cape Verdean nationhood. My chapters target theatre productions whose storylines and character representations diverge significantly from prominent social narratives, such as colonial accounts of historical subjects’ agency in organizing agricultural revolts (chapter 2), locally defined labor and sexuality roles for Cape Verdean women (chapter 3), and presumed linguistic hierarchies among local variants of Cape Verdean Crioulo (chapter 4). Theatre artists tactically select and highlight facets of Cape Verde’s creolized culture in performances in order to situate their islands’ local culture within Cape Verde’s still emerging national identity.

⁵ Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma, “Cultures of Circulation: The Imaginations of Modernity,” *Public Culture* 14, no.1 (2002): 191-213, at 192.

Cape Verde's national identity is essentially a "Crioulo" (creole) identity. Cape Verdean society is a product of centuries of African and European peoples and traditions intermingling on the islands. In Cape Verde, "Crioulo" refers to admixture in the islands' populace, cultural manifestations, and language. Cape Verdean Crioulo, a blend of Portuguese and several West African tongues, is spoken in everyday life on the islands in different, yet mutually intelligible, variations. As creolization is also a key term in this study, I discuss it in more depth after introducing some historical parameters.

Nationhood is a particularly vexed issue for an archipelago whose islands bear disparate settlement histories, experiences with slave and colonial labor policies, and cultural geneses. This complex national configuration warrants an understanding of nationhood that moves beyond presumptions of congruency among the political unit, populace, and culture.⁶ Thus, I draw upon Kelly Askew's theorization of nationhood as "a series of continually negotiated relationships between people who share occupancy in a defined geographic, political, or ideological space."⁷ Presumably, what is negotiated among these constituencies are hegemonic social discourses (such as *machismo*, class privilege, or racial identities) as well as the various statutes, rights, limitations, and exclusions enacted by the nation-state, the official governing body. National identities are thus the sum products of these complex negotiations: broadly construed, yet often conflicting, understandings of a people and culture that, like individual

⁶ Here I am referring to Ernest Gellner's generative theory of nationalism as the struggle to obey a principle of congruence, and nationhood as a "willed" collectivity that *feels* homogenous to citizens of a particular nation-state (whether or not it actually is). See Gellner, *Nations and Nationalisms* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), especially chapters 1 and 5. Among those theories that clash with Gellner's in this respect are Homi Bhabha's "Introduction: Narrating the Nation" and "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990), 1-7, 291-322.

⁷ Kelly Askew, *Performing the Nation: Swahili Music and Cultural Politics in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 12.

identities, “wax and wane and undergo significant change.”⁸ This study broadens scholarly conversations on nationhood by theorizing how festival performances participate in waves of transformative social discourses revelatory of a nation’s constant fluctuations and negotiations.

I define “global stage” as any performance venue that functions as a microcosm for the accelerated and pervasive flows of peoples, finance, technologies, ideologies, and media images that, according to Arjun Appadurai, characterize the expanding social imaginaries of our heightened transnational moment.⁹ International theatre festivals epitomize this definition, as they are predicated upon the circulation of bodies of performers from disparate national spaces, funding pouring in from all over the world, intensive media coverage that ensures the festival’s visibility and continuity, and the transmission of new ideologies vis-à-vis performances. Global stages also depend upon the presence of spectators from outside the host country’s nation space. These audience members create the dynamic of “the outside looking in,” which raises the stakes for host country performers invested in articulating national culture through theatre. By virtue of dwelling on small islands, Cape Verdeans, like residents of the Caribbean, already imagine transnationally and watch everyday performances circulating through their local communities. The presence of a theatre stage defining itself as “international” thus intensifies that experience.

1.3 Globalization, Circulation, and Festival: Intertwining Discourses

This study does not, however, limit itself to Appadurai’s conceptual framework for globalization. I take seriously critics who cite his insufficient attention to the forces driving the “global flows” central to his theory of the social imagination.¹⁰ Intercultural theorist Rustom

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ See “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy” in Appadurai’s *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 27-47.

¹⁰ See, for example, Timothy Brennan, *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

Bharucha notes that Appadurai's discussion of the "cultural dimensions" of globalization does not mention regulations by international entities, such as the World Bank and IMF, whose "structural adjustments" to developing economies result in decreased public employment and state assistance with health care and education, thus disempowering the very people they are meant to assist.¹¹ In many ways, Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma redress Appadurai's omission by including the IMF and World Bank in their discussion of the ways that speculative capital and financial derivatives have perpetrated "symbolic violence" on Africa, Latin America, and other places on the periphery of world markets.¹² The authors pinpoint the early 1970s as the period in which the derivatives market surged, signaling a shift away from production-based capital, long tied to national economies, to the circulation-based capital linked to a global market. Arguing that this shift has vital implications for cultural studies, they claim that analyses of contemporary cultural forms must be situated within the specific economic system that produced them.¹³

This claim has been generative among cultural theorists from a variety of disciplines. Brian Edwards argues that Lee and LiPuma's proposal necessitates a thorough "reassessment of social forms—including art, literature, cinema, etc.—that emerge within this new stage [of circulation-based capital]," regardless of where the cultural object is located.¹⁴ In other words, scholars must examine how the intensification of circulating capital and systems of exchange have influenced how cultural production operates around the globe. Margaret Werry has already

¹¹ Rustom Bharucha, *The Politics of Cultural Practice: Thinking through Theatre in an Age of Globalization* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 5; Jibrin Ibrahim, "Notes on Globalization and the Marginalization of Africa," *CODESRIA 3&4* (2002): 3-7, at 5.

¹² Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma, *Financial Derivatives and the Globalization of Risk* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 26-28.

¹³ Lee and LiPuma, "Cultures of Circulation."

¹⁴ Brian T. Edwards, "Marock in Morocco: Reading Moroccan Films in the Age of Circulation," *Journal of North African Studies* 12, no.3 (2007): 287-307, at 289-90.

performed this reassessment on theatre and tourism, arguing that their combined “circulatory momentum” makes them constitutive, rather than representative, of the social and material worlds to which they belong.¹⁵ Although not directly engaging Lee and LiPuma’s work, Laura Edmondson attends to the cultural ramifications of global circulation when she argues that the intervention of international NGOs in child soldier rehabilitation centers in northern Uganda profoundly impacts how those centers’ arts therapy programs “market” trauma.¹⁶

This study reassesses the role of international theatre festivals in what Edwards aptly terms “the age of circulation.”¹⁷ Theatre festivals in Africa are compelling case studies for this task because most of them arose precisely during this age, from the 1970s onwards. This is in contrast to major international theatre festivals in Western spaces, like Edinburgh and Avignon, which were founded just after World War II. Ric Knowles explains how these “fundamentally modernist” venues functioned chiefly as cultural tourist attractions designed to pick up the pieces of weakened theatre traditions after the devastation of war.¹⁸ This is no doubt why Adorno, writing in the 1940s, included European arts festivals in his vitriolic attack on the “culture industry,” calling them mere “gypsy wagons” of national cultures in sheer capitalist ventures.¹⁹

Arguably, international arts festivals in Africa have been more nation-affirming than profit-driven. The pioneering Negro Arts Festival in Dakar (1966) and its reincarnation in Nigeria as FESTAC (Festival of Black Arts and Culture, 1977) were staged in a burst of Pan-Africanist zeal, commemorating a surge of newly independent African countries. They featured a

¹⁵ Margaret Werry, “‘The Greatest Show on Earth’: Political Spectacle, Spectacular Politics, and the American Pacific,” *Theatre Journal* 57, no.3 (2005): 355-82, at 56.

¹⁶ Laura Edmondson, “Marketing Trauma and the Theatre of War in Northern Uganda,” *Theatre Journal* 57, no.3 (2005): 451-74.

¹⁷ Brian T. Edwards, “*Marock* in Morocco.”

¹⁸ Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre*, 181.

¹⁹ Theodor Adorno, “Culture and Administration,” *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J.M. Bernstein (London: Routledge, 1991), 93-113, at 102.

vibrant mix of *jalis* (professional story-tellers) from the Gambia, theatre groups from Guinea and Kenya, Sierra Leone's national dance troupe, and a host of black artists from the Caribbean, North America, and Europe.²⁰ Yet many of the current African theatre festivals—including Ghana's PANAFEST (Pan-African Historic Theatre Festival), Cameroon's festival for ritual-based theatre, and Burkina Faso's festivals for story-telling, theatre for development, and marionettes—arose during Africa's economic crises of the 1980s and 90s, when international financial institutions began imposing structural adjustment programs on African economies drowning under the swell of transnational finance. Thus, they have always run with great financial difficulty, often on the sheer conviction of the need for intercultural exchange.²¹

Theatre festivals in Africa also have much to offer scholarly discussions on circulation because they often nurture new transnational communities, many of which form along linguistic divides established during the colonial era. For example, France's Festival International des Francophonies, held since 1984 in Limoges to celebrate global Francophone theatre, finds its African counterparts in the Ivory Coast's two major theatre festivals, FATF (Festival Africain de Théâtre Francophone) and MASA (Marché des Arts du Spectacle Africain). As these receive substantial funding from French cultural agencies,²² they are powerful examples of France's efforts to consolidate a transnational French-language artistic community.

²⁰ Far from complete, this list is compiled from Martin Banham, ed., *A History of Theatre in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and Don Rubin, ed., *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre*, vol. 3, *Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2001), Paula Ebron, *Performing Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), and the Center for Black and African Arts and Civilization, "FESTAC '77: A History," http://www.cbaac77.com/history_FESTAC.htm (accessed March 19, 2008).

²¹ See François Campana, "The Africa of Festivals: Bringing People Together," trans. Joel Anderson, *Contemporary Theatre Review* 13, no.4 (2003): 48-56, at 54. The Cameroonian festival is called RETIC (Rencontres Théâtrales Internationales du Cameroun). Burkina Faso's three are YELEEN: Festival International de conte et de Musique de Bobo Dioulasso, FITD (Festival International de Théâtre pour le Développement), and FITMO (Festival International de Théâtre et de Marionnettes de Ouagadougou).

²² John Conteh-Morgan, "Francophone Africa South of the Sahara," in Banham, *A History of Theatre in Africa*, 85-137, at 124. Other examples of global Francophone performance-based events are the Rencontres Chorégraphiques de l'Afrique et de l'Océan Indien (Choreographic Encounters of Africa and the Indian Ocean) and

Cape Verde's Mindelact Festival is one of many Lusophone international arts festivals that receive economic and structural support from Portugal-based agencies. As I will discuss, this makes Mindelact, along with its counterparts in Mozambique, Brazil, and Portugal, integral to the circulation of *lusofonia*, the notion of a familial cultural cohesion among countries with Portuguese as an official language. The foregrounding of "fraternity" in this discourse makes Lusophone transnationalism a compelling case study for cultural globalization. Hardt and Negri argue that the shape sovereignty takes today is not imperialism but "Empire," an amorphous, deterritorialized hegemony that is diffused worldwide via "biopolitical production," the material constitution of social life that interweaves political, economic, and cultural factors.²³ In Werry's summation, the modus operandus of Empire is "not paternalism but fraternity, its achievement not possession but circulation."²⁴ Crucially, this means that even marginalized countries such as Portugal, which many regarded as too economically weak to be considered an imperialist power during the colonial age,²⁵ can participate in the maintenance of Empire in the postcolonial era. Festivals such as Mindelact disclose how performances and ideologies circulated in global performance forums may represent one of the cultural components of "biopolitical" production.

Since theatre festivals in Africa are both "nation-affirming" and constitutive of new transnational interpretive communities, they are not the kinds of profit-driven performance venues that make some theatre scholars reticent to view festivals as sites for meaningful

the Jeux de la Francophonie (Francophone Games), which are exclusive to International Francophonie Agency nation-states.

²³ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), xii-xiii.

²⁴ Werry, "'The Greatest Show on Earth,'" 359.

²⁵ Amílcar Cabral, writing in the early 1970s, stated: "The reason that Portugal is not decolonizing now is because she is not an imperialist country, and cannot *neo-colonize*. Her economic infrastructure is such that she cannot compete with other capitalist powers. During all these years of colonialism, Portugal has simply been the gendarme, the intermediary, in the exploitation of our people." *Our People are our Mountains: Amílcar Cabral on the Guinean revolution* (London: Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola & Guiné, 1972), 4.

intercultural exchange.²⁶ Yet as international arts festivals gain currency within scholarly discussions of globalism, other theatre scholars, such as Temple Hauptfleisch and his collaborators, are redoubling their efforts to develop appropriate theoretical frameworks.²⁷ This study contributes to that movement by considering how certain theatre festivals may be products of the neoliberalism and transnationalism that define our current global moment, while resisting, to some extent, the commodity fetishism that accompanies it.

As my focus is on Cape Verdean performers who use festival productions to re-write narratives of nationhood at Mindelact, I draw on theories of circulation that take into account processes of transformation. Dilip Gaonkar and Elizabeth Povinelli build on Lee and LiPuma's theory that circulation enables certain social forms to emerge and become recognizable within specific interpretive communities. They urge scholars to attend to the myriad ways in which cultural forms become dynamically transfigured as they move through various matrices of circulation.²⁸ In this study, the cultural forms under consideration are theatre productions that become transfigured as they circulate from the rehearsal room to the festival stage. What this approach adds to Gaonkar and Povinelli's theory is the notion that the forms themselves, by virtue of their circulation, are also *transformative*, producing a proliferation of interpretive possibilities about Cape Verdean nationhood for spectators and participants alike. Thus, if

²⁶ Patrice Pavis, "Introduction: Towards a Theory of Interculturalism in Theatre?," in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, ed. Pavis (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1-26, at 5; Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre*, 181-82; Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins, *Women's Intercultural Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 151-75. One possible exception to this statement is South Africa's mammoth Grahamstown Arts Festival, which is subsidized by South Africa's Standard Bank. Its prestigious mainstage theatre, dance, and music venues, along with its substantial fringe festival offerings, attract thousands of tourists from outside of the country. For this reason, it approximates highly commercialized festivals such as Edinburgh and Avignon.

²⁷ Hauptfleisch and his co-authors are members of the Theatrical Events working group from the International Federation for Theatre Research. See Temple Hauptfleisch and others, eds., *Festivalising!: Theatrical Events, Politics and Culture* (New York: Rodopi, 2007), as well as the group's spotlight on theatre festivals in *Theatre Research International* 30, no.3 (2005), 237-95.

²⁸ Dilip P. Gaonkar and Elizabeth A. Povinelli, "Technologies of Public Forms: Circulation, Transfiguration, Recognition," *Public Culture* 15, no.3 (2003): 385-97, at 388, 386.

Gaonkar and Povinelli argue that a scholarly emphasis on circulation and transfiguration should displace emphases on meaning and translation,²⁹ I propose that circulation is *constitutive* of the assortment of social “meanings” that festival productions proffer to multi-layered audiences. This process is especially complex within creolized cultures such as Cape Verde.

1.4 Staging Creolization

While the Mindelact Festival stages Cape Verdean theatre artists’ divergent and shifting interpretations of a Crioulo identity, the whole Cape Verdean archipelago has been a staging ground for processes of cultural creolization. In this study, I understand “creolization” not as simply “cultural mixing” but as a historically grounded yet often ongoing encounter between peoples and cultures that is, in Cape Verdean scholar Gabriel Fernandes’s terms, “intrinsically asymmetric.”³⁰ For Fernandes, creolization is “intimately related to colonization and conquest” and thus obeys the relationships of dominance and subordination those processes entail.³¹ Creole subjects who have lost whole segments of their cultural memory mourn that loss and try to retain what remains, even as they exercise a certain freedom in reimagining the “symbolic frontiers” of their various bloodlines and heritages.³² Cape Verdean society is emblematic of the loss and reimagining of roots that Fernandes describes. It is essentially a creation of the slave trade: its genesis traces back to the late 1400s, when Portuguese settlers first began transporting mainland West Africans to the islands. Over the centuries, slavery, dispersion, and miscegenation systematically weakened Crioulo subjects’ memories of their specific African cultures,

²⁹ Ibid., 394.

³⁰ Gabriel Fernandes, *Em Busca da Nação: Notas para uma Reinterpretação do Cabo Verde Crioulo* (Florianópolis, Brazil: UFSC; Praia, Cape Verde: Instituto da Biblioteca Nacional e do Livro, 2006), 55. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Portuguese-language sources are my own.

³¹ Ibid., 57-58. See chapter four for a fuller engagement with the connection between creolization and violence. In particular, that chapter draws on Sidney Mintz’s perspective on creolization in the Caribbean.

³² Ibid., 56-57. In this study, I will use the term “Crioulo” when I talk specifically about Creole subjects in Cape Verde, and “Creole” to refer to a Creole subject in any creolized culture (Cape Verde, the Caribbean, etc.).

languages, and lineages. From this perspective, creolization may be contingent upon European contact and the cultural fusion it produces.³³ Yet in Cape Verde, that contact brought a multitude of West African ethnic groups—including Wolof, Mandinga, and Fula—together on the islands, so that the co-presence and commingling among Africans formed an integral part of the “asymmetric” encounter that characterized creolization there.³⁴

As Fernandes’s definition suggests, creolization is both a historical process and a cultural discourse. When Creole subjects engage reflexively with their social history and legacy, they actively construct a Creole identity. Subjects living in various creolized societies have claimed the Creole identity in disparate ways and for different ends.³⁵ Often, it is a subject position that enacts both reclamation and contestation, as with contemporary Martinican intellectuals Jean Bernabé and others declaring, “Neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians, we proclaim ourselves Creoles.” With this move, they reject both French assimilation, which interpellates them as European, and Negritude, which constructs them as African. Instead, they reclaim the Creole identity and celebrate all of its accompanying ambiguities.³⁶ Cape Verdean intellectuals

³³ Definitions of creolization that hinge upon moments of European contact have raised the suspicion of some scholars wary of roots-based identity formations. See Moustafa Bayoumi, review of *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature*, by Chris Bongie, *African American Review* 35, no.1 (2001): 146-48.

³⁴ Cape Verdean linguist and cultural scholar Dulce Almada Duarte is an example of a creolization theorist who attends to the specific linguistic and cultural contributions of individual West African ethnic heritages to Cape Verde’s Crioulo culture. See Almada Duarte, *Bilinguismo ou Diglossia: As Relações de Força entre o Crioulo e o Português na Sociedade Cabo-verdiana*, 2nd ed. (Praia: Spleen Edições, 2003), especially 55-71. For a fuller discussion of Duarte’s work, see chapter four.

³⁵ For Glissant, a Caribbean subjectivity is intimately linked to a “poetic of relations,” or an expressive and affective engagement with the islands’ cross-cultural context and variegated landscape. Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 159-70. See also Dash’s introduction, xi-xlv, especially xxxviii-xxxix.

³⁶ Bernabé and his co-authors characterize “Créolité” (Creoleness) as “interior vision,” casting one’s eye on one’s own pluralized subjectivity without succumbing to external designations. Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, “In Praise of Creoleness,” trans. Mohamed B. Taleb Khyar, *Callaloo* 13, no.4 (1990): 886-909, at 886 and 890-91. The authors discuss Aimé Césaire and the Negritude movement, which privileged Africa and black civilization in the diasporic identity, on pages 888-89. I return to the “Créolite” authors’ discourse in chapter four.

have made similar moves.³⁷ Writing in 1955, when Cape Verde was firmly under the control of Portugal's fascist government, Gabriel Mariano wrote essays identifying the *mestiço* ("mixed") subject as the "creator" of Cape Verde's Crioulo culture, undermining colonial narratives that gave that role to the Portuguese.³⁸

These examples suggest that twentieth-century and contemporary Creole subjectivities are performative,³⁹ calling themselves into being through discursive engagements with histories of violent encounters and cultural rupture and re-creation. Since Creole subjects characterize that identity differently, it is helpful to consider Stuart Hall's explanation of "articulation." For Hall, this theory entails examining how different ideological positions crystallize into a unifying discourse under certain historical, social, and economic conditions, and concomitantly, asking how such ideologies may or may not become attached to certain political subjects or social groups. Articulation is dialectical: subjects constitute an ideology by espousing it, which they do because they are already constituted by the ideology (they can *see themselves* in it).⁴⁰ This process "bring[s] onto the historical stage" new political positions and social collectivities.⁴¹

On Cape Verde's various "historical stages," Crioulo subjects have become articulated to ideologies emphasizing the African, European, or "in-between" aspects of their syncretic cultural heritage. As I will discuss, these stages include the colonial era, when Portugal's "assimilation"

³⁷ The reclamations of the Creole identity that I cite here are distinct from the kind of apolitical, celebratory discourses of creolization as simply "cultural mixing," which have recently circulated in scholarly circles. One example of this is Ulf Hannerz's oft-cited essay "The World in Creolization," which I discuss in chapter four as a discourse that fails to take into account creolization's historical rooting in violence and domination.

³⁸ Gabriel Mariano, *Cultura Caboverdeana: Ensaios* (Lisbon: Vega, 1991), 39-63. The essay's title, "Do Funco ao Sobrado ou o Mundo que o Mulato Criou," reverses the terms in Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre's influential texts, *Casa-Grande e Senzala* (The Master's House and the Slave Quarters) and *O Mundo que o Português Criou* (The World that the Portuguese Created). Freyre's ideology was appropriated by the Portuguese colonial government as a means of justifying retention of their colonies.

³⁹ I am using performativity here in Austin's sense of an utterance that simultaneously performs an action. John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

⁴⁰ Hall, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," ed. Lawrence Grossberg, *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10 (1986): 45-60, at 53.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

policies characterized Cape Verdeans as “Portuguese,” and Cape Verde’s liberation movement (1963-74), when anti-colonial party leaders sought to “re-Africanize” Cape Verde through a political alliance with Guinea-Bissau. In the postcolonial era, the reclamation of an inherently Crioulo identity often translates into concrete government policies and discourses. For example, the current Prime Minister, José Maria Neves, calls Cape Verde a “bridge between various continents.”⁴² Thus, he actively strengthens Cape Verde’s alliances with both Europe and Africa. He is negotiating a special relationship between Cape Verde and the European Union, while he also supports Cape Verde’s participation in ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States, which facilitates free trade among designated West African nations.⁴³

Government discourses such as these re-formulate Cape Verde’s mid-Atlantic position between Africa, Europe, and South America as an analogue for political, social and cultural “in-betweenness.” Yet the Crioulo identity operates not only at the national level, but at local and regional levels as well. One way in which this “in-between” identity is constituted is through a now hegemonic association of some islands and populations with “Africa” and others with “Europe.” To ensure the continuity of the Crioulo identity, these internal differences must be constantly reiterated in cultural, popular, and intellectual discourses. Consequently, local subjects from all the islands repeatedly affirm the Africanized *badiu* identity, which refers to Santiago Islanders, and its converse, the *sampadjudu* identity, which covers most other islands, including São Vicente.

⁴² José Maria Neves, interview by Catarina Abreu, “Cabo Verde sera uma ponte entre os vários continentes,” *A Semana*, January 12, 2007, 8-9. In this same interview, Neves explains that Cape Verde is also solidifying relationships with the U.S. and NATO, and wants to strengthen similar relationships with Brazil.

⁴³ David White and Peter Wise, “FT Report - Cape Verde 2007,” *Financial Times*, November 13, 2007, 1-6. In Portuguese, the acronym for ECOWAS is CEDEAO (Comunidade Económica de Estados da África Ocidental).

The Mindelact Festival stages these regional claims to disparate cultural lineages. Theatre groups make visible choices to align themselves more closely with “Africa,” “Europe,” or somewhere in between. This study illuminates the choices such performers make at Mindelact, as well as what those choices imply in terms of staging a national identity rooted in a tug-of-war between various continental allegiances. Tejumola Olaniyan argues that when dramatists choose and discard modes of self-representation, they exercise a “performative identity,” which is constantly negotiated and in flux.⁴⁴ I apply that theory to embodied performances at festivals. As performers strategically choose which facets of Cape Verdean history and culture to highlight in their Mindelact productions, they put forward new interpretations of the social narratives that constitute the Crioulo national identity. Spectators negotiate that proposed identity by engaging with what they have seen onstage, resisting, applauding, or otherwise remarking upon it. For example, São Vicente actors often disparage Santiago theatre groups’ dramatizations of colonial history, while Santiago theatre directors often voice a disconnect to Mindelo theatre groups’ adaptations of Western plays. Thus, festival performances reveal that a Crioulo national identity is inherently contested and always under fire.⁴⁵

Theatre artists’ and spectators’ active negotiations with the *badiu* and *sampadjudu* identities in the festival context are important because historical and popular discourses in Cape Verde often translate these regional identities into essentialized racial fixity.⁴⁶ Performance, however, reveals the identities to be cultural constructs, since actors and directors participate in

⁴⁴ Tejumola Olaniyan, *Scars of Conquest/Masks of Resistance: The Invention of Cultural Identities in African, African-American, and Caribbean Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 35-37.

⁴⁵ See my preface for a discussion of *Tabanca Tradiçon* at Mindelact 1999.

⁴⁶ See Kesha Fikes, “Emigration and the Spatial Production of Difference in Cape Verde,” in *Race and Globalization: Transformations in the Cultural Production of Blackness*, ed. Kamari Maxine Clarke and Deborah A. Thomas (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 154-70.

their ongoing construction on the stage. To understand how theatre artists mobilize and re-formulate these regional identities within festival performances, it is first important to understand their historical formation on the islands.

1.5 Contextualizing the Cape Verdean nation

Since this study focuses on Santiago and São Vicente Island productions, as well as the regionalism that colors their reception at Mindelact, my first focus here is on the historical settlement of and colonial policies governing those two islands. I examine the social, economic, and political factors that gave rise to the persisting association of Santiago with Africa and São Vicente with Europe in Cape Verde's Crioulo schema. After discussing the liberation movement and its cultural reverberations, I close with a consideration of a key economic concern central to the contemporary Cape Verdean nation: privatization and the accompanying anxiety about foreign control of national entities, which has analogues in the history of the Mindelact festival.

Cape Verde

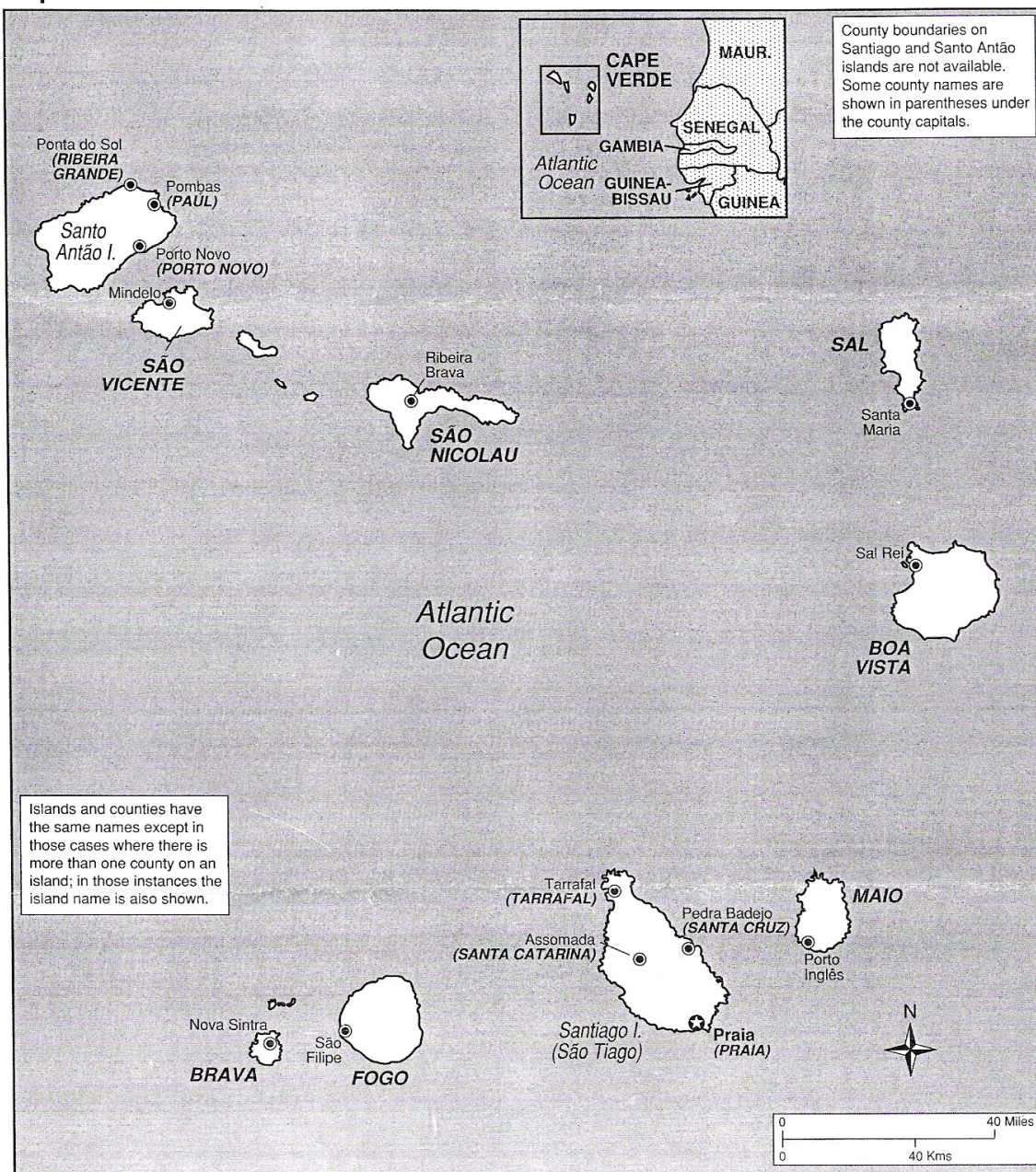


Figure 1: The Cape Verde Islands⁴⁷

⁴⁷ From *Africa on File*, vol. 2 (New York: Facts on File, 1995), 4.14. Copyright © 1995 by Facts On File, Inc, an imprint of Infobase Publishing. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

1.5.1 Slavery, Colonial Policy, and the Birth of Conflicting Regional Identities

Dry, wind-swept, and prone to drought, the Saharan landscape of Cape Verde's ten-island archipelago has long been inhospitable to its historical waves of settlers. Located about 280 miles west of Senegal, Cabo Verde ("Cape Green") was named for its proximity to more lush lands on the West African coast.⁴⁸ First encountered by Portuguese navigators in 1460,⁴⁹ the then-uninhabited islands soon became both settlement and stop-off point in Portugal's burgeoning slave trade. Early Cape Verdean society was feudalistic, with Portuguese *capitães* (captains) presiding over a series of landowners who in turn controlled the large numbers of enslaved West Africans—primarily from the Senegambian and Guinea rivers regions—they transported from the mainland throughout the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. At times numbering up to 14,000, the enslaved people that remained on the islands performed both domestic and plantation labor, while thousands of others were re-exported to New World locations.⁵⁰ The legacy of this feudal system persisted in the large tracts of land on rural Santiago controlled by Portuguese landowners, called *morgados*, who economically exploited their Cape Verdean farm-workers from the nineteenth century up until Cape Verde's independence in 1975. In chapter two, I discuss how a contemporary Santiago theatre group re-enacted and re-imagined local historical subjects' relationship to Portuguese land proprietors in their rural Santiago municipality.

⁴⁸ Richard A. Lobban, *Cape Verde: Crioulo Colony to Independent Nation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 4.

⁴⁹ See António Carreira, *Cabo Verde: Formação e Extinção de uma Sociedade Escravocrata (1460-1878)* (Lisbon: Centro de Estudos da Guiné Portuguesa, 1972), 19-21.

⁵⁰ Lobban, *Cape Verde: Crioulo Colony to Independent Nation*, 23-26.

Historian António Carreira has called Cape Verde a *sociedade escravocrata*, a society built on the institutionalization of slavery.⁵¹ Yet as Carreira details, the islands had vastly different experiences with forced labor.⁵² Since Santiago possessed the most fecund terrain, it hosted the first major settlement and slave trading post at Ribeira Grande (now called *Cidade Velha*, Old City) in the island's interior. The island continued to be the port of entry for newly arrived West Africans throughout the slave trade history. Portuguese settlers on Santiago, unaccompanied by white women, took on black African concubines, engaging in what Cape Verdean anthropologist Mesquitela Lima calls the "historical process of cultural-physical miscegenation" that formed the Cape Verdean Crioulo subject.⁵³ Over the centuries, a complex socio-racial economy solidified on Santiago, encompassing *senhores* (Portuguese whites and a portion of their *mulato* sons), freed blacks and *mulatos*, and black slaves.⁵⁴ As Isabel Rodrigues notes, the male perspective from which Cape Verdean history has been written has left undocumented how exactly enslaved African women workers fit into this social economy, other than sixteenth-century visitors' accounts about Portuguese settlers "preferring" black and *mulata* wives to Portuguese ones because they were healthier and "worked harder." However, what seems clear is that women's sexuality, and particularly their solicitation by Portuguese men, ensured that these disparate racial categories continued.⁵⁵ In chapter three, I discuss how contemporary Santiago women continue to negotiate their labor roles and sexuality through imaginative theatre and dance depictions.

⁵¹ See Carreira, *Cabo Verde: Formação e Extinção de uma Sociedade Escravocrata*, and Deirdre Meintel, *Race, Culture, and Portuguese Colonialism in Cape Verde* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 31-50.

⁵² Carreira, *Cabo Verde: Formação e Extinção de uma Sociedade Escravocrata*, 283-344.

⁵³ Mesquitela Lima, interview by João Lopes Filho, "Conversando com Mesquitela Lima," *ponto & virgula* nos. 10 and 11 (July/October 1984): 17-22, at 18. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #191.

⁵⁴ Carreira, *Cabo Verde: Formação e Extinção de uma Sociedade Escravocrata*, 291.

⁵⁵ Isabel P.B. Fêo Rodrigues, "Islands of Sexuality: Theories and Histories of Creolization in Cape Verde," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 36, no.1 (2003): 83-103, at 95-96.

Anthropologist Kesha Fikes has tracked how a “racialized continuum” took on new political and economic signification as Santiago transitioned from slave society to colonial province, in a process she dubs the “blackening” of the Santiago identity.⁵⁶ Noting that Portuguese officials used the term *vadio* (vagrant or vagabond) to refer broadly to any subjects resisting forced labor in the archipelago or mainland African colonies, Fikes pinpoints the late eighteenth century as a time when travelers and historians began applying a derivation of this term, *badiu*, specifically to Santiago islanders.⁵⁷ Accompanying this shift was the growing association of Santiago subjects with a fixed *negro* identity, while all other islanders were considered *mestiço*, or “mixed,” by Portuguese officials.⁵⁸ Buttressing these associations were the occurrences on Santiago of slave revolts and exoduses to interior mountain regions, where whole communities of Santiaguenses lived in isolation from the white and *mestiço* populace. In the colonizers’ eyes, this rendered them ‘vagrant,’ while their self-sequestering from white settlers led to the popular perception that *badius* maintained folklore, religious practices, and a Crioulo linguistic variant closer to their African roots.⁵⁹ Accompanying this was a racial discourse that figured the *badiu* descendants of escaped slaves to be darker in skin color than those of other islanders who lived in closer contact and intermarried with Portuguese settlers. This popular assumption still holds today: Santiago islanders are considered to occupy the darkest end of Cape Verde’s racial spectrum.

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial labor policy reinforced the “blackening” of the *badiu* identity that Fikes describes. In 1863, the colonial state began imposing forced

⁵⁶ Kesha Fikes, “Santiaguense Cape Verdean Women in Portugal: Labor Rights, Citizenship, and Diasporic Transformation,” (Ph.D. Diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 2000), 16, 20.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 21-23, 8n. Fikes also cites Daniel Pereira, *A Situação da Ilha de Santiago no Primeiro Quartel do Século XVIII* (São Vicente, Cape Verde: Edição do Instituto Caboverdiano do Livro, 1984).

⁵⁸ Fikes, “Santiaguense Cape Verdean Women,” 22.

⁵⁹ Meintel, *Race, Culture, and Portuguese Colonialism*, 141-42.

emigration to Portugal's other West African island colony, São Tomé and Príncipe, located to the south of the Cape Verdean archipelago. Portugal enforced Cape Verdean emigration to São Tomé's cocoa plantations as an economic solution to Cape Verde's severe droughts. This continued well into the next century. Deirdre Meintel notes that *badius* "formed the backbone" of this labor force, probably because they were a poorer population who occupied a "denigrated social category."⁶⁰ Fikes shows how the colonial state exploited Santiaguense's vulnerable social positions through labor conscription laws. An 1899 decree declared that even in the face of extreme drought, islanders had a legal obligation to work for their own livelihoods; failing this, the colonial state could exercise labor constriction.⁶¹ Many poorer farmers' and workers' only recourse was to submit to the harsh conditions of the São Tomé plantations. Yet Fikes notes that recruitment offices for this purpose were established on Santiago but banned in the Barlavento (northernmost) islands. Thus, while poorer Cape Verdeans from all of the islands emigrated to São Tomé, only Santiaguenses were actively recruited for this task.⁶² In São Tomé, Cape Verdean workers joined laborers from Guinea-Bissau and Angola on the large plantations run by physically abusive foremen.⁶³ Migration to São Tomé and joint labor with mainland Africans reinforced popular associations of Santiago islanders with the African continent.

The Santiago "African" identity became so distinct and anomalous during the colonial period precisely because the Portuguese state generally encouraged Cape Verdeans to regard themselves as "assimilated" Portuguese and thus distinct from Africans on mainland Portuguese colonies. This ideology crystallized in 1930, when Portugal's fascist government, the *Estado*

⁶⁰ Meintel, *Race, Culture, and Portuguese Colonialism*, 142.

⁶¹ Fikes, "Santiaguense Cape Verdean Women," 19, citing Carreira, *Cabo Verde: Formação e Extinção de uma Sociedade Escravocrata*.

⁶² Fikes, "Santiaguense Cape Verdean Women," 19-20.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 18-20; António Carreira, *The People of the Cape Verde Island: Exploitation and Emigration*, trans. Christopher Fyfe (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1982), 102-123.

Novo (“New State”), led by António de Oliveira Salazar, passed the Colonial Act, which assigned to most populations in Portuguese Africa the status of *indígenas*, black subjects who failed to acquire the education and “civilization” required for Portuguese citizenship. *Indígenas* could not vote, had limited educational opportunities, and were subject to labor conscription because of “vagrancy” (*vadio*) laws that applied to anyone engaging in subsistence farming. Yet these very social restrictions barred them from attaining *assimilado* status, which depended upon literacy, fluency in Portuguese, and a “European” standard of living.⁶⁴ This practice rendered citizenship subject to cultural hierarchies.⁶⁵ Significantly, Cape Verdeans were accorded *assimilado* status because of supposed “cultural similarities” to the Portuguese, their inhabitation of a land to which they were not indigenous, and their largely *mestiço* populace.⁶⁶ This entitled them to state education, relatively more voting rights, and positions as civil servants and administrators in Cape Verde and elsewhere in Africa.⁶⁷ In reality, however, the vast majority of Cape Verdeans remained illiterate and subject to the same political and economic degradation as *indígenas* in other colonies,⁶⁸ evidenced by *badiu* subjects’ susceptibility to labor conscription.

On São Vicente Island, in the north, historically and socially produced cultural identities developed in markedly different ways. Settled in the mid-1700s, a full two and a half centuries after Santiago, São Vicente soon began to attract free laborers from other islands due to the Mindelo port’s increased activity during the intensification of the slave trade. Many were dock workers or ship crew for British naval companies that accompanied Britain’s founding of a coal

⁶⁴ Meintel, *Race, Culture, and Portuguese Colonialism*, 128-30.

⁶⁵ José Carlos Gomes dos Anjos, *Intelectuais, Literatura e Poder em Cabo Verde* (Porto Alegre, Brazil: UFRGS/IFCH; Praia, Cape Verde: INIPC, 2002), 100-101.

⁶⁶ Fikes, “Santiaguense Cape Verdean Women,” 17-18; Meintel *Race, Culture, and Portuguese Colonialism*, 128, 130.

⁶⁷ Richard A. Lobban and Paul Khalil Saucier, eds., *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cape Verde*, 4th ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 26-27.

⁶⁸ Meintel, *Race, Culture, and Portuguese Colonialism*, 130.

depot in Porto Grande, Mindelo's port, in the 1790s.⁶⁹ Slavery was minimal on São Vicente: census data for 1827 lists only 14 slaves, compared to Santiago's 2,505.⁷⁰ The slaves that did reside there worked in domestic milieus and "'close-contact' farms" much different from Santiago's large agricultural plantations.⁷¹ Moreover, all of these were freed when slavery was abolished in São Vicente in 1857,⁷² six years before Portugal's official decree ending slavery in 1863, and a full 23 years before freed slaves became a reality in the rest of the archipelago (see chapter two). Mindelo's port-centered economy also ensured that Cape Verdean workers there did not endure the kind of labor exploitation experienced by Santiago farmers who worked under *morgado* landowners until 1975.

Today, the term used to delineate the people, culture, and Crioulo variants of all other islands except Santiago is *sampadjudu*. Although not as widely used as *badiu*, the word bears an etymology that is also anchored in colonial labor policy. As the story goes, *sampadjudu* derives from the Portuguese *são p'ra ajudar* ("they're here to help"), a phrase referring to people on other islands who came to Santiago to do the menial labor that "vagrant" *badius* would not.⁷³ This reputation made *sampadjudus* less subject to colonial racism than Santiago islanders. Rather than emigrating in large numbers to São Tomé, São Vicente islanders since the mid-nineteenth century had been emigrating *north* by joining the crews of American whaling boats headed to New England (the genesis of the thriving Cape Verdean diaspora there).⁷⁴ These boats often stopped by São Vicente's neighboring island, São Nicolau, to pick up Barlavento laborers.

⁶⁹ Lobban and Saucier, *Historical Dictionary*, 209.

⁷⁰ Carreira, *Cabo Verde: Formação e Extinção de uma Sociedade Escravocrata*, 420.

⁷¹ Fikes, "Santiaguense Cape Verdean Women," 21.

⁷² Carreira, *Cabo Verde: Formação e Extinção de uma Sociedade Escravocrata*, 421.

⁷³ Jeffrey Hessney, e-mail message to author, March 1, 2008. I heard a similar story from Arsénio Bettencourt during a personal interview on Maio Island, October 6, 2006.

⁷⁴ Fikes, "Santiaguense Cape Verdean Women," 19.

São Vicentian labor history is prominently tied to Europe because of the bustling activity of Mindelo's port in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While Mindelo men worked for the British and Portuguese companies struggling to dominate Porto Grande's coal depot, which re-fueled ships engaging in transatlantic trade, many Mindelo women became prostitutes catering to the British, Italian, German, Brazilian, Portuguese and French sailors who docked there.⁷⁵ The gendered division of nautical labor and sexual commerce gave rise to the lingering stereotype of São Vicente women as hyper-sexual. In chapter three, I discuss a Mindelact production that explicitly focuses on contemporary Mindelense women's sexuality, which the actresses recast as inhabiting the domain of female agency.

José dos Anjos, a Cape Verdean anthropologist, argues that the Mindelo port, which came to symbolize Mindelo's reputation for welcoming disparate nationalities, helped construct São Vicente Island as the heart of Cape Verdean *morabeza*.⁷⁶ This distinctly Crioulo word refers to *mestiço* populations' purported "predisposition" for open and friendly relations with peoples from all cultural backgrounds.⁷⁷ Writing in the 1950s, Mindelense writer and cultural theorist Gabriel Mariano defined *morabeza* as "super-cordiality."⁷⁸ Mariano argued that historically, Cape Verdean subjects absorbed the best aspects of African and European culture to create a uniquely Cape Verdean creolized society.⁷⁹ Dos Anjos argues that intellectual discourses such as these served to reinforce the colonial ideology that the Portuguese promoted a "cordial encounter among races" in its colonies.⁸⁰ This claim was central to Portugal's rationale for retaining its

⁷⁵ For a concise social history of Porto Grande, see António Leão Correia e Silva, *Nos Tempos do Porto Grande do Mindelo* (Praia-Mindelo: Instituto Camões, 2005), 111-135.

⁷⁶ Anjos, *Intelectuais, Literatura e Poder em Cabo Verde*, 108.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁷⁹ See Mariano's essay, "A mestiçagem: seu papel na formação da sociedade caboverdeana" in *Cultura Caboverdeana: Ensaios*, 67-81.

⁸⁰ Anjos, *Intelectuais, Literatura e Poder em Cabo Verde*, 108.

African colonies (renamed “overseas provinces” in 1951) in the face of growing pressure from the United Nations for European countries to withdraw from Africa in the 1950s.⁸¹

In colonial ideology, *mestiço* intellectuals were figured as the converse of *badius*. They exemplified *assimilado* subjects who, by embracing Portuguese education and language, proved worthy of citizenship and demonstrated the “success” of Portugal’s presence in Africa.⁸² As dos Anjos demonstrates, São Vicente islanders epitomized this *mestiço* discourse because the colonial state actively constructed the island as the intellectual center of Cape Verde. Mindelo’s *liceu* (high school), founded in 1917 and later named Gil Eanes,⁸³ was, for decades, the only one in the archipelago. This meant that until 1960, when the government granted Praia a complete secondary curriculum, all Santiago youths seeking to finish high school had to move to São Vicente.⁸⁴ At Gil Eanes, teachers groomed Barlavento intellectuals for university education in the metropole. These factors, dos Anjos argues, unmask how Portugal privileged Mindelo as the “recruitment center” for Cape Verdean intellectuals who could serve as mediators in the colonial process (by working as local administrators, for example).⁸⁵ This intellectual recruitment stands as a stark contrast to the state’s recruitment of São Tomé plantation workers on Santiago.

Dos Anjos describes a socio-cultural process that “whitened” the Mindelense identity, situating it closer to the European end of Cape Verde’s Crioulo schemata. He posits that São Vicente intellectuals were complicit with colonial ideology by positioning themselves as cultural mediators between Europe (the colonial state) and Africa (mainland Africans and their internal representatives, *badius*). He describes the opposition of the *badiu/sampadjudu* identities as a

⁸¹ Ibid., 100.

⁸² Ibid., 100-101.

⁸³ Manuel Nascimento Ramos, *Mindelo D’Outrora*, 2nd ed. (Mindelo: Printed by the author at Gráfico do Mindelo, 2003), 29.

⁸⁴ Francisco Fragoso, personal interview, July 19, 2005. Dr. Fragoso was among those who had to move from Santiago to Mindelo to finish high school. He calls the government’s actions an example of “discrimination.”

⁸⁵ Anjos, 108.

confluence of “racial, regional, and class” distinctions that erected an ideological divide between *badius*, constructed as “less gifted intellectually,” and *mestiços*, considered “closer to ‘European-ness’ and intellectual attributes.”⁸⁶ Seemingly, Barlavento intellectuals’ self-positioning as colonial mediators enacted Frantz Fanon’s description of the process by which colonial subjects internalize the colonizers’ cultural hierarchies: language produces color, which in turn constitutes race (i.e. a black man’s perfect French renders him more “civilized” and thus “whiter”).⁸⁷ In Cape Verde, a range of factors came to signify race: Crioulo variants, command of the Portuguese language, music and dance, class differences, and educational levels.⁸⁸

Symbolically, the *mestiço* discourse became inscribed upon the very skin of São Vicente islanders. Even today, the popular perception is that Mindelenses (and northern islanders in general) are lighter, due to a history of “closer contact” with Portuguese colonizers and “mixing” with the influx of world travelers at the height of the port era. My fieldwork in Mindelo provided anecdotal evidence of this. Several friends emphasized Portuguese forebears when describing their lineages in casual conversation (“my grandmother was as white as you!”),⁸⁹ while one young man constantly called attention to the fact that he was *not* as light as other Mindelenses (“I’m much lighter in the sunlight”). Another oft-repeated cultural discourse that draws the Mindelense identity closer to Europe is the idea that São Vicente Crioulo bears more Portuguese

⁸⁶ Anjos, *Intelectuais, Literatura e Poder em Cabo Verde*, 126. In Portuguese: “[. . .] a população mais Africana, portanto, menos dotada intelectualmente, e aquela das outras ilhas que seriam mais miscegenadas, portanto, mais próximas da europeidade e, portanto, dos atributos intelectuais.”

⁸⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

⁸⁸ See Lobban, *Cape Verde: Crioulo Colony to Independent Nation*, 57.

⁸⁹ While working as a Peace Corps volunteer on Sal Island in the late 1990s, I recall one Mindelense friend’s cynical remark about comments such as this. He said something to the effect of, “Why should we take pride in the fact that Portuguese colonizers violated our women?”

grammar and loan words than *badiu*. There is also a distinct local pride in the creolized English words, like *bisnize* (“business”), that attest to the once pervasive British presence in Mindelo.⁹⁰

1.5.2 The liberation movement and “re-Africanization”

During Cape Verde’s liberation struggle (1963-74), policies pursued by the leader of the movement, Amílcar Cabral, later contributed to the cultural divide between Santiago and São Vicente Islands. Born in Guinea-Bissau to a Guinean mother and Cape Verdean father, Cabral embodied the links between the islands and Portuguese colonies on mainland Africa. After attending high school in Mindelo, Cabral studied agronomy at the University of Lisbon. In Lisbon, Cabral’s discussion of Pan-Africanist theories with other Luso-African intellectuals convinced him of the joint destiny of his two home countries.⁹¹ In 1956, he formed the PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde) with a host of other Guinean and Cape Verdean members, ranging from manual laborers to university graduates.⁹² Both Guinean men and women played leadership roles in village councils.⁹³ One of Cabral’s top advisors was Aristides Pereira, who later became Cape Verde’s first president. In general, Cape Verdean intellectuals played prominent leadership roles in the party. In 1963, the PAIGC party entered into armed combat with Portuguese forces in Guinea-Bissau, where the war was fought.

An organizing theme of Cabral’s political philosophy was “re-Africanization.” For Cabral, this meant Cape Verdean elites and petty bourgeoisie should re-connect with poorer communities and popular cultural traditions in order to redress the cultural alienation provoked

⁹⁰ Mindelo professor and cultural theorist Moacyr Rodrigues gave me a list of such words, generated by acclaimed Cape Verdean composer B. Leza.

⁹¹ Lobban, *Cape Verde: Crioulo Colony to Independent Nation*, 87-88.

⁹² Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde.

⁹³ For more on Guinean women’s role in the PAIGC liberation movement, see Stephanie Urdang, *Fighting Two Colonialisms: Women in Guinea-Bissau* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979).

by the colonial state.⁹⁴ This was a policy the PAIGC party continued to pursue after Cape Verde's independence from Portugal in 1975 (which Cabral did not live to see). Even after it severed ties with Guinea-Bissau in 1980 and became the PAICV (African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde),⁹⁵ the party remained linked to Cabral's Africanist views. This government position was a counter-discourse to colonial ideology, perpetuated through the colonial education system, that African history was insignificant and that Cape Verde's African roots were unimportant.⁹⁶ This counter-discourse gained currency among Cape Verdeans nationwide who supported the liberation movement and engaged with its legacy.

In the post-independence years, the PAICV government's "re-Africanization" agenda took the shape of romanticizing the "Africanity" of the *badiu* culture, which had been so denigrated during the colonial era.⁹⁷ The party sponsored research into and re-organization of Santiago's most emblematic performance modes, *tabanka* street festivals and *batuko* dance, both of which suffered periodic prohibition during the colonial era.⁹⁸ *Tabanka* and *batuko* became the privileged cultural modes to represent the new Cape Verdean nation because they are widely believed to have roots on mainland Africa. Re-Africanization thus cemented Santiago's more African identity, even while celebrating it as integral to Cape Verde's post-independence image.

This Africa-oriented political and national discourse did not uniformly persist, particularly after the PAICV's one-party rule ended in 1991. That year, the opposition party MpD (Movement for Democracy) won in internationally monitored elections.⁹⁹ The MpD, which

⁹⁴ Amílcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 53-65, at 57-58.

⁹⁵ Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde.

⁹⁶ See Lobban, *Cape Verde: Crioulo Colony to Independent Nation*, 61.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ José Maria Semedo and M.R. Turano, *Cabo Verde: O Ciclo Ritual das Festividades da Tabanca* (Praia, Cape Verde: Spleen Edições, 1997), 71; Lobban, *Cape Verde: Crioulo Colony to Independent Nation*, 76.

⁹⁹ Movimento para Democracia.

retained power for ten years and remains a strong political force, defined itself in opposition to the PAICV party's long association with Africanist and socialist influences.¹⁰⁰ The PAICV regained government control during the 2001 elections and remains in power as of this writing.

1.5.3 Regionalism today, offstage and on

Today, *badiu* culture occupies an ambiguous place in the national imagination. Its most emblematic performance modes, such as *batuko* dance, which involves call-and-response singing and corporeal percussion, are still figured as symbols of “national culture.” Santiago *batuko* groups perform for Cape Verdean and tourist audiences alike, and Mindelact's organizers often ask the Santiago theatre group, OTACA (discussed in chapter two),¹⁰¹ to hold lively *batuko* sessions after mainstage performances, presumably so that visiting artists can get a taste for “authentic” Cape Verdean culture. The privileging of *badiu* culture as the heart of a Cape Verdean *national* culture often provokes resentment among other islanders, especially São Vicentians.¹⁰² Further, the folklorization of Santiago culture also facilitates its relegation to “low culture” status in artistic circles. These are perhaps some of the reasons that regional biases against *badiu* culture have been resurrected in recent decades.

There are also economic and political reasons for the persistence of regionalism between Cape Verde's two major islands. Santiago, the largest island in the archipelago, is home to roughly half of the population. Nearly a quarter lives in Praia, the capital city. As the political center of Cape Verde, Praia is home to the highest government branches and all of the country's ministries. Praia is also the economic center, boasting the most employment opportunities in a

¹⁰⁰ See Lobban, *Cape Verde: Crioulo Colony to Independent Nation*, 76.

¹⁰¹ Oficina de Teatro e Comunicação de Assomada (The Assomada Theatre and Communication Collective).

¹⁰² When I lived in Mindelo for several months in 2006 and 2007, occasionally theatre groups there would discuss an international arts or intercultural event to be held in other countries, to which the Cape Verdean Ministry of Culture could send performance groups to participate. I often heard Mindelense artists say, “The Ministry will probably choose some *batuko* or other Santiago group to go.”

national economy dominated by service-oriented professions like transport, commerce, and public services.¹⁰³ De-centralization is thus a major issue, with Mindelenses often expressing discontent with their “second city” status. This is exacerbated by what many perceive as the PAICV government’s pro-Santiago slant.¹⁰⁴

As a large number of Santiago islanders live in rural areas, they do not share in the relative economic power of the city of Praia. Many of those dwelling in the island’s interior rely on subsistence farming or the fishing industry for their livelihoods.¹⁰⁵ These rural communities, such as the Santa Catarina municipality discussed further in chapter two, have correspondingly lower education rates than the urban centers of Praia and Mindelo.¹⁰⁶ These poorer, rural populations are the ones who continue to be most strongly linked with Africa and the *badiu* identity today. For example, when musicologist Susan Hurley-Glowa began her ethnographic study of *batuko* music among women performers in Santiago’s interior, many told her, “So you want to learn about African music!”¹⁰⁷ Since the *badiu* identity continues to be identified with economic impotence and rural areas, it retains its marginalized status in the national imaginary.

Performances by Santiago and São Vicente Island theatre groups evidence strands of the historical and social discourses that have constructed their islands as the “African” and “European” poles of the Crioulo identity. The Mindelact Festival provides numerous examples

¹⁰³ Lobban and Saucier, *Historical Dictionary*, 91.

¹⁰⁴ Frustration over this perceived government bias often surfaces during cultural debates. For example, in early 2007, Mindelo-born musician Tito Paris publicly accused Cape Verdean Minister of Culture, Manuel Veiga, of playing favorites and granting more government money to Santiago musicians. Several national newspapers ran Paris’s statements, with which many Mindelenses immediately sided. ACG, “Tito Paris devolve cheque ao Ministério da Cultura,” *Expresso das Ilhas*, January 31, 2007, 2; João Baptista Ferreira Medina, “Assim não, Senhor Ministro da Cultura!,” *Expresso das Ilhas*, January 31, 2007, 3.

¹⁰⁵ See Lobban and Saucier, *Historical Dictionary*, 205.

¹⁰⁶ From the 2000 census data. *Educação: Censo 2000*: (Praia, Cape Verde: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2001).

¹⁰⁷ Susan Margaret Hurley-Glowa, “Batuko and Funana: Musical Traditions of Santiago, Republic of Cape Verde” (Ph.D. Diss., Brown University, 1997), 175.

of how regional and ethnic identities form in opposition to others.¹⁰⁸ Relevant here is Appadurai's argument that locality is produced when neighborhoods actively "Other" other local spaces in the nation-state. Since Appadurai also argues that locality itself becomes threatened by the amplified human motion and new virtual neighborhoods pervading a globalized world, it is perhaps no surprise that local subjects become increasingly territorial about cultural divides at festivals such as Mindelact, which encompass all those global flows.¹⁰⁹

In chapters two and three, I explore how Santiago-based theatre groups use the subaltern *badiu* identity strategically in order to depict peasant farmers' agency in organizing agricultural strikes and to interrogate gendered labor roles on Santiago. I also examine how Mindelo theatre artists use the festival venue to construct social distance between Mindelo and Santiago culture. At many Mindelact editions, I heard Mindelo actors disparage Santiago productions by saying, "we can't understand *badiu*,"¹¹⁰ or "We're tired of plays about colonialism—we want to see *new* themes from Santiago groups." Curiously, to many Mindelo artists, 400-year-old Shakespeare plays represent "newer" themes than the nation's 40-year-old liberation struggle, as Shakespeare is newer to Cape Verde. As I discuss in chapter four, the prevalence of Mindelo adaptations of plays from the Western canon keeps the association of Mindelo with Europe intact.

Significantly, the Mindelact Festival itself upholds the cultural biases of the *mestiço* discourse through a rhetoric constructing Mindelact as the quintessential performance site that "opens up" to theatre artists and spectators from all over the world. This echoes the notion of *morabeza* ("super-cordiality") and its tie to Mindelo's port culture. For example, one magazine article stated that "tourists from several countries are planning their summer vacation to coincide

¹⁰⁸ Anjos, 80-81.

¹⁰⁹ See "The Production of Locality" in Appadurai's *Modernity at Large*, 178-99.

¹¹⁰ Even though all the different Crioulo variants are mutually intelligible, Mindelo spectators often profess difficulty with rapid-fire *badiu* dialogue onstage.

with [. . .] the Mindelact theatre festival.” That article also quoted festival director João Branco as saying, “Mindelact has placed Cape Verde on the global map of theatre arts.”¹¹¹ Such rhetoric strengthens Mindelo’s cherished reputation as the nation’s most “cosmopolitan” city.

Mindelact thus claims for itself the persona that Cape Verdean intellectuals of the 1950s ascribed to Mindelo: it is “the archipelago’s visiting room” and “a window upon the Atlantic, through which the winds of civilization and progress refresh the islands.”¹¹² In this discourse, “civilization” is perceived as something coming from the *outside* and circulating to Cape Verde. Indeed, Mindelact often boasts that it brings the “best” in world theatre to Cape Verde: for example, Mindelact announced proudly that its 2005 edition would feature French-Brazilian troupe Dos à Deux’s *Saudade em Terras d’Água*, which had won an award at Avignon, “one of the largest [festivals] in the world.”¹¹³ By contrast, Praia, the nation’s capital, does *not* have an international theatre festival, even though local artists have expressed interest in starting one up.¹¹⁴ This feeds the popular perception that Praia theatre remains insular and grounded in the “local.” When placed in dialogue with the two cities’ social histories, disparities between the Mindelo and Praia theatre scenes threaten to replicate the binary equation of “Africa” (Santiago Island) with *stasis* and “Europe” (São Vicente) with *progress* and *movement*.

In many ways, then, the Mindelact Festival reinforces a national discourse predicated upon a dichotomized socio-racial economy residual from colonial policy. This, I argue, is why it

¹¹¹ Kim-Zé Brito, “Festival Mindelact: a festa do teatro cabo-verdiano,” *Fragata* (July/September 2006): 34-37.

¹¹² Manuel Lopes, “Reflexões sobre a Literatura Cabo-verdiana,” *Estudos de Ciências Políticas e Sociais* 22 (Lisbon, 1959): 12, and Júlio Monteiro, Junior, “Gente do Mindelo,” *Cabo Verde – Boletim de Propaganda e Informação* 18 (Praia, March 1951): 1. Both qtd. in Manuel Brito-Semedo, *A Construção da Identidade Nacional: Análise da Imprensa entre 1877 e 1975* (Praia: Instituto da Biblioteca Nacional e do Livro, 2006), 145-56.

¹¹³ “Mindelact 2005 – Os espectáculos da Programação Principal.” <http://mindelact.com/mindelact2005.htm> (accessed March 11, 2008).

¹¹⁴ Both Sabino Baessa, director of the Praia theatre group Fladu Fla (chapter 2) and Princesito, Praia musician and playwright (chapter 3), told me this in casual conversation. Both cited lack of funds as reasons that their efforts have not as yet been successful.

is significant that the performances examined here are *transformative* in nature. While many of them echo and even reify *badiu* and *sampadjudu* identity discourses, they also put them to vastly different uses and to the service of potent social and political statements.

1.5.4 Contemporary Economic Issues: Privatization and its Cultural Analogues

Along with the development and consolidation of regional identities, the economy is another issue central to nation formation. In Cape Verde, privatization has marked the national economy since the early 1990s. Significantly, the symbolic repercussions of privatization and its accompanying social anxiety often translate to the cultural realm. As I will discuss, the Mindelact Festival, run by a Portuguese director and partially financed by Portugal, is an example of a cultural institute that has formed part of this discourse.

While diaspora has long been integral to Cape Verdean society, with remittances from Cape Verdean workers living in the United States, U.S., Portugal, and France contributing substantially to Cape Verde's domestic economy,¹¹⁵ privatization and tourism have recently trumped diaspora in factors important to the national economy. When the MpD gained power in 1991, it liberalized Cape Verdean markets and began privatizing companies in response to urging from the IMF and World Bank.¹¹⁶ The current PAIGC government continues to follow that path as the country moves from "least developed" to "medium-developed" country status, as defined by the UN, in 2008.¹¹⁷ Prime Minister Neves states that the government is following European models for liberalizing the economy in preparation for Cape Verde's special relationship to the European Union, which he hopes will increase European aid for infrastructure (the EU will also help Cape Verde tighten coastal security to crack down on drug trade and illegal immigration

¹¹⁵ White and Wise, "FT Report - Cape Verde 2007," 4.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3; FS, "Cabo Verde: último ano de graduação no grupo de PMA," *Expresso das Ilhas*, June 13, 2007, sec. Nacional: 16.

from mainland Africa to Europe crossing through the archipelago).¹¹⁸ Improved infrastructure and energy supplies are crucial to Cape Verde's growing tourism industry, which had its first boom in the 1990s with Italian companies building hotels on Sal Island's white sand beaches and is undergoing a second wave dominated by British and Spanish investors.¹¹⁹

Privatization has provoked some anxiety among Cape Verdeans. A representative example is TACV Cape Verde Airlines, which the state ceded in early 2007 to Sterling Merchant Finance, a consultant firm hired to strengthen TACV's economic gains in preparation for privatization. Newspapers soon ran articles criticizing French-Canadian Gilles Filiatreault, who, as chief consultant on the project, laid off roughly half of TACV's 800 workers.¹²⁰ When asked whether the IMF or World Bank is pressuring the Cape Verdean government to privatize state-run companies, Cape Verde's Minister of Economy, José Brito, replied that such measures were necessary to strengthen the economy in light of the country's transition to a "middle-developed" country. Brito pointed out that TACV had already saved 10 million dollars that year, while Filiatreault cited as his major success new alliances with Italian, Spanish, and Brazilian airlines, all forged within his first three months at TACV.¹²¹

Among the risks that Lee and LiPuma identify for developing countries struggling to compete in a global market are liberalizing still vulnerable markets and an increased dependency on World Bank loans.¹²² While such factors do impact Cape Verde, I propose two other relevant issues: the symbolic repercussions of privatization, and the economic pitfalls for former colonies

¹¹⁸ White and Wise, "FT Report - Cape Verde 2007," 3-5.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹²⁰ For example, adorning the front page of one issue of *A Semana*, Cape Verde's main newspaper, was a picture of a TACV worker walking away, suitcase in hand, above the headline: "More dismissals at TACV." "Mais despedimentos na TACV," *A Semana*, July 20, 2007, 1.

¹²¹ José Brito, interview by José Vicente Lopes, "Estamos a viver a véspera de um momento histórico na nossa economia," *A Semana*, March 23, 2007, 2-4, at 4; "TACV é um doente em estado crítico," *A Semana*, June 29, 2007, 4.

¹²² Lee and LiPuma, *Financial Derivatives*, 2004.

of financially unstable countries. In the symbolic realm, a representative example is a newspaper article questioning Filiatreault's competence in running a company bearing "the Cape Verdean flag."¹²³ This rhetoric frustrates Filiatreault, who asserts that many Cape Verdeans see TACV Airlines as a social entity rather than a commercial enterprise.¹²⁴ Thus, at stake in Cape Verde's economic "development" is the issue of ownership central to national identity formation. Novelist Germano Almeida articulated this in an editorial about rampant external investment in tourism. Citing an unnamed Frenchman who called Cape Verde "an archipelago for sale," Almeida headlined the question: "Is Cape Verde still ours?"¹²⁵

It is unsurprising that nationalist responses to privatization revolve around tourism and air travel, two modes of circulation at the crux of nationhood in a globalized world. Indeed, many Cape Verdeans find it disquieting that a Spanish corporation, Prointur, now controls tourism in Cape Verde's most resonant vortex of cultural memory: Cidade Velha, Santiago's former slave trading post, currently competing to be a UNESCO world heritage site. One journalist quoted a local source asking, "Can't a business of even this small size [Cidade Velha's six-roomed hotel] stay in Cape Verdean hands?"¹²⁶ Along with issues of national ownership, also at stake are economic pitfalls. In Cape Verde, privatized companies have often fallen into Portuguese hands, which are financially unable to invest the necessary capital and often end up pulling out. Such was the case with Águas de Portugal, which took over Electra, Cape Verde's energy company, in 1999 (Electra is now headed back under state control).¹²⁷

¹²³ "Gilles, o Controverso," *A Semana*, June 29, 2007, 4.

¹²⁴ "TACV é um doente em estado crítico," 4.

¹²⁵ Germano Almeida, "Cabo Verde ainda é nosso?," *A Semana*, May 18, 2007, 6.

¹²⁶ Gláucia Nogueira, "Cidade Velha sob gestão privada," *A Semana*, February 9, 2007, 10-11, at 10.

¹²⁷ White and Wise, "FT Report - Cape Verde 2007," 2; Antão Fortes, interview by Constância de Pina, "Electra está no fio da navalha," *A Semana*, March 9, 2007, 10-13.

Theatre festivals clarify how these social discourses relate to cultural production, since they encompass the melding of state and external funding sources that are also at stake with privatization. In Cape Verde, anxiety about the symbolic effects of privatization finds its cultural analogue in critiques that have been leveled at Mindelact since its inception. In 1996, during the festival's second year, Mindelact held a roundtable in which various people presented reports on Cape Verdean theatre "past, present, and future." Manuel Estevão, a well-known local actor who had co-founded Mindelact with João Branco a year earlier, stated that Mindelo theatre became truly active only in the 1990s with the efforts of Mindelact and Mindelo's Portuguese Cultural Center which Branco then ran. Two former members of the Mindelo theatre group Os Alegres, active since the 1980s, protested that this narrative erased all of Cape Verdean theatre since independence in 1975. One of them implicitly accused Branco of neo-colonialism by contending that it was the *Portuguese* director of the center (Branco) who really drove Mindelact and who was to blame for what was, in his eyes, a slanted account of Cape Verdean theatre.¹²⁸

More recently, Francisco Fragoso, former director of the post-independence troupe Korda Kaoberdi, declared in a 2005 interview that João Branco could not be considered his successor as the leading figure in Cape Verdean theatre since he had not received "the bath of Cape Verdean culture since the cradle." Fragoso stated that a contemporary national theatre did not exist in Cape Verde, discounting both Mindelact and Branco's many "creolizations" of Western plays (see chapter four).¹²⁹ It is almost as if Fragoso and the Os Alegres actors had transformed Almeida's editorial query into, "Is Cape Verdean theatre still ours?"

¹²⁸ "Mindelact abre polémica," *Novo Jornal*, September 25, 1996, sec. Cultura: 15; Alfrio Dias de Pina, "Entre a Festa e a Polémica: O futuro do teatro Cabo-verdiano em debate," *A Semana*, sec. Cultura: 12.

¹²⁹ Francisco Fragoso, interview by António Monteiro, "É difícil olvidar todo o contributo do Korda Kaoberdi [Pt. II]," *Expresso das Ilhas*, February 2, 2005, sec. Cultura: 26. In Portuguese, the quote reads: "É preciso ter recebido, desde o berço, este banho cultural cabo-verdiano."

The accusations pinpoint a certain irony: while Portugal may be weak in financial capital, it is robust in cultural capital, at least in Lusophone countries. Portuguese Cultural Centers are ubiquitous in former colonies. While they do not provide substantial economic support for cultural initiatives, they often give structural aid, such as providing rehearsal space or lending light and sound equipment (which it does for Mindelact). Fragoso remarked that Branco came to Cape Verde with resources already in place, saying, “What *we* would have done for that kind of support.”¹³⁰ At issue is the same concern driving social fears about privatization: what really *belongs* to the nation? In Cape Verde, a treasured saying is “kultura é nos unica riqueza” (culture is our only wealth), an acknowledgment of the country’s sheer lack of natural resources. Thus, the “privatization of culture” is perhaps more worry-inducing than the economic brand.

The accusations of the Os Alegres actors and Fragoso did not go unaddressed. At the 1996 roundtable, former Minister of Culture Leão Lopes warned against xenophobia interfering with theatre.¹³¹ Following Fragoso’s 2005 slight, Mindelact’s website, which Branco edits, became a veritable battle ground. Retorts from theatre artists and cultural authorities from all over the archipelago were posted on-line. One section reproduced an editorial by Mindelense director João Paulo Brito, who asked, “What is Cape Verdean theatre?” Brito concluded that a performance’s “Cape Verdean-ness” lay not in the play text or the person directing it but in its ability to capture the essence and rhythm of the culture. On the television program, *Konbersu Sabi*, Branco told host Matilde Dias that he agreed with Fragoso: there is not *one* national Cape Verdean theatre, but various versions of it on every island.¹³²

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ “Mindelact abre polémica.”

¹³² See João Paulo Brito, “O que é o Teatro Cabo-verdiano? Uma carta de um jovem aflito,” <http://mindelact.com/noticiasArq-18.htm>, and Matilde Dias, “Programa sobre teatro na TCV com ‘emoções à flor da pele,’” <http://mindelact.com/noticiasArq-36.htm> (accessed March 14, 2008).

Behind these various directors' indignation was Fragoso's implication that their theatre was *not Cape Verdean* because of the direct involvement of a Portuguese theatre director, who also runs the Mindelact Festival. The Fragoso-Branco polemic, which I discuss further in chapter four, is emblematic of the contestations and reclamations that the Mindelact Festival stages. The festival is a discursive site wherein the intensive negotiations of nationhood rage. Like the Crioulo identity, Cape Verdean theatre is inherently multi-faceted and always contested.

1.6 Cape Verdean Theatre: Competing Historical Narratives and the Place of Mindelact

Fragoso's 2005 interview carried such weight because of his venerated place in Cape Verdean theatre history. Korda Kaoberdi, which formed in Praia in 1975, was the first troupe of the era to express a commitment to developing a national theatre tradition. Fragoso's published *cadernos* (notebooks) documenting the group's activities ensured that theatre also entered the public domain via the written word. In his *cadernos*, he stresses that Cape Verde's colonizers never allowed a true theatre to emerge. By this he means theatre grounded in "stages and dramatic texts," which he claims did not exist at the time of independence.¹³³ The group thus drew on what they knew, integrating poetry and *batuko* and *tabanka* traditions into their early pieces.¹³⁴ This was in the service of forging a "genuinely Cape Verdean and authentically African" theatre in the absence of any colonial-era theatre traditions.¹³⁵

¹³³ Kwame Kondé (Francisco Fragoso), *Caderno "Korda Kaoberdi": ano de 1979-1980* (Praia, Cape Verde: Imprensa Nacional, 1981), 15. Significantly, itinerant performers who would specialize in brief, comedic sketches did perform on many of the islands during the colonial era. However, presumably because their shows did not work from scripts, they likely did not "qualify" as theatre by Fragoso's definition. See João Branco, *Nação Teatro: História do Teatro em Cabo Verde* (Praia, Cape Verde: Instituto da Biblioteca Nacional e do Livro), 113-14.

¹³⁴ "Rai di Tabanka" means "King of Tabanka" in Crioulo. Tabanka festivals incorporate kings of the countryside and court in their colorful cast of characters. "Preto Toma Tom" is an idiomatic expression that means "preto toma juízo" (literally, a black man who has come to his senses), but Fragoso explained that in the colonial era, it referred to a man who could "counter oppression." Francisco Fragoso, Personal interview, July 24, 2004.

¹³⁵ Kondé, *Caderno "Korda Kaoberdi": ano de 1979-1980*, 16.

João Branco implicitly works against Fragoso's claim that colonial era theatre did not exist in his 2004 book, *Nação Teatro: História do Teatro em Cabo Verde* (Theatre Nation: A History of Theatre in Cape Verde), the first full-length study of its kind. In fact, he devotes the first of his five "acts" (which substitute chapters) to pre-independence theatre. After positing that Catholic clergy, who first came to Cape Verde in 1533, surely included morality plays in their education programs,¹³⁶ Branco then discusses two state-founded theaters in 1860s Praia, which hosted plays enacted by Portuguese and Cape Verdean public servants, as well as touring pieces. His second "act" covers theatre in the immediate post-independence years, while the third highlights the "tranquil revolution" of the 1990s that saw the birth of the Mindelact Association and his own theatre group (sponsored by Mindelo's Portuguese Cultural Center). Branco's final two "acts" discuss Cape Verdean theatre groups' participation in international festivals abroad and new themes in national dramatic texts (both original plays and "creolizations" of "classics").

What distinguishes Fragoso's and Branco's narratives are differing epistemological agendas. As Hayden White reminds us, "a culture writing its own history needs to rank events according to significance." White equates the desire for "closure" in historical narratives with the "demand that sequences of real events be assessed as to their significance as elements of a moral drama."¹³⁷ Here, regionalism and the strategic mapping of one's own theatre accomplishments drive the ranking of historical events. Fragoso makes Praia the birthplace of Cape Verdean theatre (via Korda Kaobderdi's scripted and staged productions) and aligns "genuinely" national theatre with Santiago's cultural manifestations (*tabanka* and *batuko*). Denying the very existence

¹³⁶ Branco, *Nação Teatro*, 74-76. Luís R. Mitras advances the same hypothesis in "Theatre in Portuguese-Speaking African Countries," where he posits that the biblical *auto* plays that Catholic churches staged in São Tomé, Angola, and Mozambique, starting in the sixteenth century, were probably also performed in Cape Verde. See Mitras, "Theatre in Portuguese-speaking African Countries," in Banham, *A History of Theatre in Africa*, 380-404.

¹³⁷ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 10, 21.

of colonial era theatre, Fragoso frames his own contributions as point of origin. By contrast, Branco's narrative makes Mindelo the place where Cape Verdean theatre came to fruition. With its partition into five acts, Branco's book adopts a familiar Western framework: the well-made play (no doubt due to his immersion in Western theatre in Portugal).¹³⁸ Thus, Mindelact's position in the third act renders it a more meaningful event than material in the opening acts, which are mere exposition. Mindelact is figured as the climactic turning point that "revolutionizes" Cape Verdean theatre and lends narrative significance to past and future events.

In choosing Mindelact as the focus of this study, my intention is not to affirm the second narrative. I do not wish to slight the vital contributions made by visionaries working in Cape Verdean theatre before Mindelact began in the 1990s.¹³⁹ Rather, I wish to examine how a festival context allows Cape Verdean performers the space to construct new visions of their country's national identity. Pertinent to this analysis is a consideration of the festival's performance space, audience, funding, linguistic norms, and place in the country's media culture.

1.6.1 The Place of Festival

The performance space of the Mindelact Festival is primarily a proscenium stage. Since 1997, mainstage productions have taken place in the government-funded Mindelo Cultural Center (Centro Cultural do Mindelo, or CCM) in the heart of downtown Mindelo, with an auditorium that seats about 300. Each production typically gets one showing on one night of the two-week run. Accompanying proscenium stages are usually certain theatre conventions from

¹³⁸ I owe this observation to Stefka Mihaylova, who remarked upon the similarities between Branco's book structure and that of the well-made play after discussing one of my other dissertation chapters with me.

¹³⁹ Among these are Nhô Djunga and Sérgio Frusoni, who faced persecution and censure by the Portuguese secret police for their subtly dissident radio dialogues and sketches in 1950s Mindelo, and Fragoso and Horácio Santos in Praia, who enriched Santiaguense oral traditions by placing them center stage in early post-independence theatre, and Mindelense playwright Espírito Santos, whose absurdist style has broken new ground in Cape Verdean drama. See Branco, *Nação Teatro*, 119-25, 146-73.

Western theatre practice, which Mindelact has not escaped. The first concerns the role of audience. When I first attended Mindelact in 1999, when I was then a Peace Corps volunteer in Cape Verde, I was surprised to see spectators arriving before the scheduled time. This had not occurred at performances by my student theatre group on Sal Island; we often started an hour after the announced time, waiting for spectators to trickle in after the Brazilian telenovela ended. Second, I observed how Mindelact spectators generally watched in silence, only applauding or laughing at the “appropriate” times. This was a stark contrast to the lively interjections our Sal spectators would add to our shows, such as “atras di bô!” (look behind you!), to actors onstage.

These are the structural changes that theatre festivals potentially introduce to local performance milieus. I soon learned that the Mindelact Association had “trained” its audiences to behave this way. Volunteers posted at the door to distribute programs close it five minutes after the show’s official start time, allowing no late seating. Branco describes the Mindelo theatre public as having been “won over” by the shows Mindelact has featured over the years, so that they always fill the houses (not always the case in Cape Verde, where live music usually draws larger crowds than theatre).¹⁴⁰ One Mindelo spectator agrees, calling Mindelo audiences “interested, participative, eager for good theatre [. . .], a passionate public.”¹⁴¹ Yet here, participation means attendance and attention, rather than vocalized spectator-actor dialogues.

Spectators’ silence at the theatre potentially relates to the kind of performances that Mindelact privileges. Since the festival’s founding in 1995, Branco has pushed Cape Verdean theatre groups to craft their productions around scripted, memorized, and meticulously rehearsed

¹⁴⁰ Ineida K.F. Brito, “Mindelact: O Teatro Ontem, Hoje e Amanhã,” *O Cidadão*, July 17, 2001, sec. Cultura: 16. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #776.

¹⁴¹ Sónia Morais, “Espectadora Cúmplice,” in *Dez Anos de Teatro*, ed. João Branco (Praia-Mindelo, Cape Verde: Centro Cultural Português, 2003), 31-32, at 32. In Portuguese, the quote reads: “um público de teatro [. . .] interessado, participativo, ávido de bom teatro, [. . .] um público apaixonado.”

texts (a philosophy also espoused by the Mindelo actors who help run the festival). This means doing away with theatre groups' habits of improvising dialogue onstage in plots loosely sketched at rehearsals. Yet it is precisely this kind of "elastic" performance text that, I would argue, facilitates dynamic spectator-actor interaction at sketches staged in more informal venues by local theatre groups across the archipelago. Thus, the festival's demand for scripted performances also conditions the festival audience to listen in relative silence.

Like most festivals, however, Mindelact is more than the mainstage. When I conducted my preliminary interviews with participating Cape Verdean theatre artists in 2004, most of them listed *intercâmbio*, artistic exchange, and workshops as their primary motivations for attending. Cape Verdean performers have opportunities to interact with each other and visiting artists at communal lunches, excursions to night clubs or impromptu parties on the CCM patio, and at workshops on acting, directing, masks, or story-telling, usually led by visiting professional troupes. This enthusiasm for *intercâmbio* coincides with the ways in which directors of other African theatre festivals describe their events as "creation, meeting, and exchange," which redresses the isolation that many artists in Africa experience.¹⁴²

Mindelact also offers ample opportunities for festival culture to spill outdoors. "Festival Off," a more informal venue for newer Cape Verdean theatre groups, takes place on the CCM patio after the mainstage productions and often sparks late-evening celebrations. Mindelact 2004 featured a performance on a moving city bus by the Mindelo theatre group Solaris. That year, Italian performance artist Leo Bassi spontaneously invited the Mindelact crowd to follow him outside after his show and witness his first ocean dip in Africa (he promptly dove off the dock outside to spectators' loud cheering). Moments like these illustrate Ngugi wa Thiongo's

¹⁴² Campana, "The Africa of Festivals," 53.

understanding of performance space as both extending outward to other “shrines of power” in localities and embodying the history of a particular place: “What memories does the space carry and what longings might it generate?”¹⁴³ Located on the waterfront of Porto Grande, the Mindelo Cultural Center was the customs house during the golden days of the Mindelo port. It thus embodies the memory of profits made in Cape Verde flowing back to the Portuguese state.

In many ways, funding for Mindelact reverses that situation. Since 2003, *Cooperação Portuguesa* has been an official sponsor of the festival. Housed under Portugal’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, *Cooperação Portuguesa* provides development support for the five Lusophone African countries and East Timor. Since becoming an association in 1996, Mindelact has solicited funds from a range of national and international entities. After publicly lamenting only sporadic support from Cape Verde’s Ministry of Culture in the early years,¹⁴⁴ Mindelact has managed to sign two-year funding agreements with the Ministry in 2004 and 2007, which cover a good portion of the festival’s operating costs. A vocal public figure, Branco used the media to urge the Cape Verdean government to put into practice the dormant *mecinato* law,¹⁴⁵ which allows national corporations to re-direct a portion of the taxes they would pay to the government to deserving cultural initiatives. In 2006, Mindelact signed a lucrative *mecinato* contract with *Tecnicíl*, the predominant land developer, real estate, and construction company in Cape Verde.

Significantly, the specific funding situation each year determines who is in the Mindelact audience. Half of the spectatorship each night comprises Mindelact’s own team of two to three dozen volunteers as well as the body of theatre artists participating in the festival that year. The

¹⁴³ Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 41.

¹⁴⁴ Teresa Sofia Fortes, “A UNIÃO faz a força,” *A Semana*, March 1, 2002, 24. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #502.

¹⁴⁵ “Mindelact 2001,” *O Cidadão*, September 28, 2001. An open letter from the Mindelact Association. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #498.

presence of Cape Verdean groups from other islands is contingent upon their securing travel funds from their local communities. Despite the media rhetoric about “tourists planning vacations around the Mindelact Festival,” this rarely happens. The international portion of the audience is almost wholly composed of visiting artists, who come only if they can obtain support for their international travel. Thus, for Mindelact 2005, Mozambican and Guinea-Bissau theatre groups could attend because the Instituto Camões (Portuguese Cultural Centers) in those two countries pledged travel money. The economic precariousness of many African nations makes it more difficult for Luso-African artists to attend, as opposed to the handfuls of Brazilian and Portuguese troupes who can secure funds from their local and national governments.

The other half of the Mindelact audience is a multi-generational mix of local residents. These spectators are mostly from a middle- to upper-class background, owing to the specifics of the festival context, including the higher price of theatre tickets. While Praia and Mindelo theatre groups normally charge 200-300 escudos (about three and a half U.S. dollars) when they perform in local neighborhoods (if they charge at all), tickets for the same productions will sell for up to twice that much (400-500 escudos) at Mindelact. Thus, Mindelo spectators are mainly theatre devotees who can afford to spend money on leisure activities. Because of regional biases, these Mindelo spectators turn out in smaller numbers for the Santiago Island productions, which often play to half-full houses. I have observed, however, that the international artists generally try to see all of the national shows on the program, saying that they wish to “soak in” all of the Cape Verdean culture possible during their time on the islands.

This raises the question of language, since many Cape Verdean productions at Mindelact are performed in Crioulo, which is not easily intelligible to other Portuguese speakers. Cape Verdean theatre groups address this problem in different ways. OTACA, from Santiago Island,

often does slow-motion gestural enactments of scenes and the actors try to speak a slower *badiu* than when performing at home (see chapter two). Mindelo theatre groups either perform in Portuguese or a Crioulo inflected with a higher-than-usual degree of purely Portuguese words and structures. This linguistic hybrid, which Branco calls “Shakespearean Crioulo” when used in Shakespeare adaptations, is discussed in depth in chapter four.

In Cape Verde, language has long been at the heart of heated debates about cultural identity. In 1947, Cape Verdean writer Baltasar Lopes wrote an influential article for his literary magazine that argued that Crioulo is almost wholly derived from Portuguese and other Latin languages.¹⁴⁶ Conversely, scholars have noted how PAIGC politics and the re-Africanization agenda persuaded writers and activists of the 1970s to emphasize Crioulo’s African roots and write in Crioulo *fundu*, “deep” Crioulo that is far removed from the Portuguese lexicon.¹⁴⁷ Yet the very notion of written Crioulo is contested, since Portuguese is Cape Verde’s only official language and is thus used in all formal documents. In the 1990s, however, a group of linguists with government connections proposed a standardized form of Crioulo called ALUPEC (see chapter four). Still not officially adopted by the government, ALUPEC has generated controversy because it employs the Santiago Island variant of Crioulo, *badiu*. São Vicente islanders in particular have protested the idea of this variant being taught in schools and spoken in government venues. These complaints are often situated in the wider context of their suspicion of the government’s pro-Santiago Island bias. Chapter four discusses these linguistic concerns in the context of the linguistic fluctuations of Mindelo Shakespeare adaptations.

¹⁴⁶ Baltasar Lopes, “Uma Experiência Românica nos Trópicos,” *Claridade* 5 (1947): 1-10.

¹⁴⁷ David Brookshaw, “Cape Verde,” in *The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa*, ed. Patrick Chabal (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 179-233, at 215; Russell Hamilton, “Cape Verdean Poetry and the P.A.I.G.C.,” in *Artist and Audience: African Literature as a Shared Experience*, ed. Richard K. Priebe and Thomas A. Hale (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1979), 103-25.

Since theatre is an inherently dialogic art, it is perhaps the optimal cultural venue for exploring the complexity of language at stake in issues of national identity. For example, Cape Verdean spectators at Mindelact often express distaste for national productions performed in Portuguese, as was the case with the nearly all-Portuguese language adaptation of *Three Sisters* at Mindelact 2004, discussed in chapter 4. Recently, Cape Verdean scholars have produced a number of provocative theoretical and historical works on the formation of the Crioulo national identity, yet two of the most prominent examples are rooted in the written word: literature and the printing press.¹⁴⁸ The present study argues for the necessity of considering the Cape Verdean stage in an analysis of the linguistic complexities of a creolized national identity.

1.6.2 Mindelact and the Media: Incorporating the Local into the National

Another objective of this study is to examine how a festival mechanism incorporates locally-devised theatre performances into the national imaginary. If, as Appadurai argues, the Olympic Games are a “dialectical play of national and transnational allegiances,”¹⁴⁹ international theatre festivals are a dialectical interlocking of local, national, and transnational linkages. Financially, Mindelact depends on each island’s local municipal government (called *câmaras*) to fund the air or boat fare to Mindelo for theatre artists from their locality who will perform on the mainstage or for Festival “Off.” The Mindelact Association holds out this carrot to *câmaras*: “Don’t you want to see your island represented at Cape Verde’s most important theatre venue?” Often, these local governments will not only provide the airfare but also t-shirts with official logos on them, so that all of the actors can wear them as “uniforms” during Mindelact. Theatre groups take seriously their responsibility to represent their islands’ local culture. An example of

¹⁴⁸ Anjos, *Intelectuais, Literatura e Poder em Cabo Verde*, and Brito-Semedo, *A Construção da Identidade Nacional*.

¹⁴⁹ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 167.

this is the group OTACA, from Santiago Island (see chapter two), which always eagerly agrees to Mindelact's request for the late-night *tocatinas*, where the performers teach festival participants the history and techniques of Santiago *batuko* dance.

Local island culture also makes its way onto the mainstage. The chapters that follow abound with examples of theatre groups foregrounding the nuances of their islands' history, daily life, and language in Mindelact productions. This commitment to performing regional diversity, as well as training others in one's local performance modes, is an example of how theatre festivals promote what Bharucha calls "intraculturalism:" relations between and across communities and regions within the boundaries of the nation-state that reveal the heterogeneity of diverse cultures.¹⁵⁰ This dynamic, I argue, guards against what Knowles sees as the major problem with international arts festivals: that their inherent "placelessness" tends to frame locally specific work as vacuous representation of a (seemingly) homogenous nation to cultural outsiders.¹⁵¹ By contrast, I contend that intracultural episodes occurring in the festival's interstices, betwixt and between programmed events, work together with the local specificity rendered in the official productions to keep regional specificity intact. This onstage/offstage dialectic ensures that local specificity cannot be ignored within international festival venues that, as Knowles rightly observes, threaten to replicate the homogenizing tendencies of globalism.

Mindelact ensures its potency to incorporate these locally grounded performances into an emerging national theatre canon through hyperbolic discourses that assure the national public that the festival represents the best of Cape Verdean theatre and, further, is recognized beyond national borders. The Mindelact Association maintains in media articles and its own promotional materials that it is the premiere theatre event in Cape Verde and all of Lusophone Africa. In

¹⁵⁰ Bharucha, *The Politics of Cultural Practice*, 8.

¹⁵¹ Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre*, 182.

2003, when Mindelact launched mindelact.com, its official website, festival director João Branco announced in *Lusa* on-line, a news page read widely throughout the Lusophone world, that the Mindelact website would be a trove of cultural memory, which is essential for “the most important festival in Lusophone Africa.”¹⁵² Yet during Mindelact 2005, a Cape Verdean on-line source, *Paralelo 14*, seemingly arbitrarily declared Mindelact the most important theatre festival in *all* of Africa.¹⁵³ Cape Verde’s major newspaper, *A Semana*, picked up on this, garnishing a two-page spread about Mindelact 2005 with a huge headline calling Mindelact “O Melhor de África” (The Best of Africa), saying that “by the unanimity of the theatre companies, public and national and international press, Mindelact was considered, without a doubt, the best festival of African theatre.”¹⁵⁴ The Mindelact website appropriated this rhetoric, calling Mindelact, “the principle theatre event in Cape Verde and the most important of all of Lusophone Africa. In 2005, it was considered the most important theatre event on the whole African continent.”¹⁵⁵

What is significant here is how Mindelact participates in the authoring of its own international prestige, which it then self-perpetuates after the Cape Verdean press affirms and, arguably, embellishes it. Supporting *A Semana*’s declaration of Mindelact as the “best” in Africa is a quote from Mozambican actor Elliot Alex, who contends that the vibrant cultural exchange he witnessed at Mindelact is rare on the African continent. The article notes that Alex is one organizer of Mozambique’s theatre festival, implying that he speaks with authority about African

¹⁵² “Cabo Verde: Teatro do país já tem ‘site’ na Internet,” *Lusa on-line*, March 22, 2003. Print-out available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #566.

¹⁵³ Manuel Monteiro and Vladimir Delgado, “Maior Festival Africano de Teatro Arranca Amanhã no Mindelo,” *Paralelo 14*, September 7, 2005. Print-out available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #1145.

¹⁵⁴ Teresa Sofia Fortes, “O Melhor de África,” *A Semana*, September 16, 2005, sec. Kriolidadi: 2-3. In Portuguese, the quote reads: “Por unanimidade das companhias, público e comunicação social nacional e internacional, o Mindelact foi considerado, sem margem para dúvidas, o melhor festival de teatro de África.”

¹⁵⁵ In Portuguese: “É o principal evento teatral de Cabo Verde e actualmente o mais importante acontecimento teatral de toda a África Lusófona. Foi considerado em 2005, o mais importante evento teatral do continente africano.” See “Festival Internacional de Teatro do Mindelo,” http://mindelact.com/mem_mindelact.htm (accessed March 4, 2008).

theatre at large. Yet Mozambique's Festival d'Agosto, which peaked during 2002-03, featured an average of 40 productions from Africa, the wider Lusophone world, and Europe, far eclipsing even Mindelact's most robust editions. This calls into question claims to Mindelact's primacy in Lusophone African theatre festivals, while its absence on a 2003 list of "Main International Theatre Festivals in Africa" (which did include Mozambique's festival) suggests that it lacks even name recognition continent-wide.¹⁵⁶

Woven into the festival's circulatory matrix, these hyperbolic discourses on the global dimensions of Mindelact's cultural prestige enfold locally-specific Cape Verdean productions into the national imaginary about theatre that the festival cultivates and disseminates through digital and print sources. These "mediascapes,"¹⁵⁷ a result of a dialogic interplay between Mindelact's own rhetoric and its magnification in the Cape Verdean press, are a clear example of the media's role in both "shaping national imaginaries" and sculpting a nation's place of prominence in transnational networks produced by "postcolonial cultural politics."¹⁵⁸ Here, the global network in question is Lusophone transnationalism, which plays a key role at Mindelact.

1.7 Portuguese Postcolonialism and *Lusofonia*: Staging the Lusophone Trans-nation

Scholars writing on the Portuguese-speaking world assert that postcolonial frameworks steeped in Anglophone histories fail to capture the nuances of Portuguese colonialism. In a generative essay provocatively titled "Between Prospero and Caliban," Boaventura de Sousa Santos differentiates Portugal from more powerful imperial nations by calling it a "semi-peripheral" country, colonized economically by England from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries even as it was securing its stronghold in Africa. Thus, he calls Portugal a "Calibanized

¹⁵⁶ Campana, "The Africa of Festivals," 54.

¹⁵⁷ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 35.

¹⁵⁸ Faye D. Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin, "Introduction," *Media Worlds*, ed. Ginsburg, Abu-lughod, and Larkin (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 1-36, at 11, 23.

Prospero.”¹⁵⁹ Santos distinguishes the Lusophone colonial condition from Homi Bhabha’s theorization of colonial hybridity. In the Lusophone world, he argues, hybridity does not represent a psychoanalytical concept but a material practice integrated into Portuguese colonialism. For Santos, hybridity represents the physical and cultural contact zone between colonizer and colonized, which manifested itself on the skin of the mulatto subject. He suggests that this negated the need for the colonial mimicry central to Bhabha’s theory.¹⁶⁰

Miscegenation has long been linked with acculturation in discourses about Portuguese colonialism. This has paved the way for the re-birth of colonial possession as “cultural linkages” in the contemporary Lusophone world. Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre’s mid-twentieth-century writings celebrated Portuguese colonizers’ tendencies toward miscegenation, advancing the utopic view that Portugal created “racial democracies” in its colonies.¹⁶¹ Although Freyre’s theories have been widely debunked, they are considered precursors to the current transnational alliance, the CPLP (Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries),¹⁶² which involves the governments of Portugal, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, São Tomé, and East Timor (since 2002). Its goals are to “reinforce the bonds of solidarity and cooperation” that unite Lusophone nations by developing initiatives to advance their economic and social development, to promote and spread the Portuguese language, and to strengthen “the national

¹⁵⁹ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-identity,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 39, no.2 (2002): 9-43. Paulo de Medeiros critiques Santos’s use of an Anglophone (Shakespearean) framework to analyze Portugal’s colonial conditions and proposes that a figure from Portuguese literature, Adamastor, is a more apt metaphor for “voiding” the center. See Paulo de Medeiros, “Voiding the Centre: Notes Towards a Reconfiguration of Postcolonial Studies,” in *Towards a Portuguese Postcolonialism (Lusophone Studies 4)*, ed. Anthony Soares (Bristol: University of Bristol, 2006), 27-46, at 46.

¹⁶⁰ Santos, “Between Prospero and Caliban,” 17.

¹⁶¹ For an excellent overview of the trajectory of Freyre’s writings and their ideological import, see Cláudia Castelo, *O Modo Português de Estar no Mundo: O Luso-tropicalismo e a Ideologia Colonial Portuguesa (1933-1961)* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 1998). Freyre’s major work, *Casa Grande e Senzala*, has been published in English as *The Masters and the Slaves*, trans. Samuel Putnam (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971).

¹⁶² Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa.

and plurinational” cultural identities connecting Lusophone countries.¹⁶³ Central to the last claim is *lusofonia*, the idea that Portuguese-speaking peoples share a familial bond rooted in a common language, colonial history, and culture. Spear-headed by the Portuguese state, the CPLP is meant to counter Anglophone and Francophone hegemony in a global economy.

Scholars have suspected neocolonial intent in Portugal’s investment in the CPLP, calling *lusofonia* Portugal’s answer to its economic and political marginalization in Europe.¹⁶⁴ Others cite the vast cultural disparity among the five African countries of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, and São Tomé, saying that the idea of lumping them together replicates the colonial tendency to “reify [. . .] ‘communities’ that do not exist as essences.”¹⁶⁵ Santos, however, casts a curiously optimistic light on the “failure” of the *Lusofonia* project apparent in the economic weakness and political inefficacy of the CPLP:

Unlike the English and French Prosperos in their respective commonwealths, the Portuguese Prospero has not been able to impose his hegemony. Not only has he contended for hegemony with his former colony—Brazil; he has also been unable to prevent some of the new countries from integrating ‘rival’ language communities, as is the case of Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau [Mozambique entered the British

¹⁶³ From the official CPLP statutes developed at the July 1996 meeting in Lisbon attended by heads of state from all of the (then seven) member nations. Published in the first issue of the CPLP journal. “Declaração Constitutiva da Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa,” *CPLP* 1 (1996): 6-11, at 7. Available at the CIDAC (Centro de Informação e Documentação Anti-Colonial) documentation center in Lisbon.

¹⁶⁴ Omar Ribeiro Thomaz, “Tigres De Papel: Gilberto Freyre, Portugal e os Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa,” in *Trânsitos Coloniais: Diálogos Críticos Luso-Brasileiros*, ed. Clara Cabral (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2002), 39-63; Anthony Soares, “Introduction. From Minho to Timor and Back Again: A Journey of Postcolonial (non)Possession,” in *Towards a Portuguese Postcolonialism (Lusophone Studies 4)*, ed. Soares (Bristol: University of Bristol, 2006), 5-25.

¹⁶⁵ Miguel Vale de Almeida, *An Earth-Colored Sea: “Race,” Culture, and the Politics of Identity in the Postcolonial Portuguese-Speaking World* (New York: Berghahn, 2004), 63. See also Patrick Chabal’s introduction to Chabal, *The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa*, 1-28. Mozambican intellectuals have been particularly resistant to the all-encompassing term “Lusophone.” For example, Orlando Mendes vehemently rejects the idea that the five Portuguese-speaking African countries are united by a common culture simply because they all adopted the same language as their ex-colonizer. See Orlando Mendes, “Lusofonia e luso-africanismo,” *Tempo* 548 (April 1981): 60-61. Available at the CIDAC documentation center in Lisbon.

Commonwealth in 1995; Guinea-Bissau joined *La Francophonie* in 1979]. Since the hegemony of the latter communities has amounted to the legitimization of neocolonialism, the weakness of the Portuguese Prospero opens enormous potentialities for democratic and truly postcolonial relationships.¹⁶⁶

Here, Santos flips the power dynamic of Freyrian doctrine, replacing a commendation of Portugal's colonial legacy with recognition of its postcolonial impotence. However, the end result is the same, and equally dangerous: the coloring of *Lusofonia* with egalitarian promise.

Lusophone artists, especially novelists and musicians, have nevertheless celebrated *Lusofonia* as a conduit for creative collaboration and greater exposure of their work.¹⁶⁷ In the theatre realm, no entity has done more to promote *Lusofonia* than Cena Lusófona ("Lusophone Scene"), a Coimbra-based association started up with funds from Portugal's Ministry of Culture. António Augusto Barros, director of Cena Lusófona, expresses firm support of the CPLP and views the association's promotion of intercultural exchange among Lusophone theatre artists as fundamental to its goals. He stresses that Cena's aim is not to assume a "colonizer's role" and "impose a language" but to celebrate cultural continuities and linguistic diversity among Lusophone nations. As examples, he cites co-productions that Cena has facilitated among Angolan, Portuguese, and Cape Verdean theatre troupes, as well as Crioulo-language plays featured at the intercultural theatre encounters, called *estações* ("stations"), that Cena has organized in Lusophone cities such as Maputo (1995) and Rio de Janeiro (1996).¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Santos, "Between Prospero and Caliban," 35.

¹⁶⁷ For a brief discussion of this phenomenon, see Christina S. McMahon, "Embodying Diaspora: Ambivalence and Utopia in Contemporary Cape Verdean Theatre," *Theatre History Studies* 27 (2007): 110-38, at 124-26. For a specific focus on musicians, see R. Timothy Seiber, "Composing Lusophonia: Multiculturalism and National Identity in Lisbon's 1998 Musical Scene," *Diaspora* 11, no.2 (2002): 163-88.

¹⁶⁸ António Augusto Barros, personal interview, July 22, 2005.

In September 1997, Cape Verde's Mindelact Festival was the chosen venue. Although Mindelact had existed since 1995, its first two editions featured only national troupes. With Cena Lusófona's assistance, Mindelact went global in 1997, changing its name to the Mindelact International Theatre Festival. The program featured a co-production between Cena Lusófona and Mindelo theatre group GTCCPM,¹⁶⁹ a performance by Brazilian television actor Nelson Xavier, Angolan troupe Elinga's historical fantasia *Luís Lopes Sequeira* (see chapter two), and pieces by two other Cape Verdean groups. A Mozambican troupe slotted to perform, Mahamba, did not show. Its absence may get to the core of the problem of framing *Lusofonia* as egalitarian exchange. At a planning meeting held two months prior to the festival, Barros revealed that Cena Lusófona would fund the Portuguese artists' travel. That of the Brazilians would be covered by two Brazilian institutes.¹⁷⁰ As no provisions were made for Mahamba, it is likely that lack of travel funds motivated the group's withdrawal, as was the case with another Mozambican troupe in 2004. Lusophone transnationalism is thus marked by African artists' uneven access to economic resources. As they cannot circulate globally as easily as their Lusophone counterparts elsewhere, *lusofonia* represents a future utopia rather than a contemporary democratic practice.

The Mindelact Association's changing statutes evidence a shifting perspective on the *lusofonia* discourse. Upon its formation in 1996, Mindelact's seven main objectives included "presenting theatre productions by foreign theatre groups, privileging contact with groups coming from Lusophone countries" and "serving as the link between Cape Verdean theatre

¹⁶⁹ Grupo de Teatro do Centro Cultural Português do Mindelo (The Theatre Group of the Mindelo Portuguese Cultural Center).

¹⁷⁰ Conselho Geral Provisorio do Programa Cena Lusofona, "Declaração," July 13, 1997. Notes from a meeting held on Sal Island, Cape Verde. Available in the Mindelact Documentation Center, #890.

practitioners and programs promoting theatre exchanges among Lusophone countries.”¹⁷¹ The former is exactly in line with the CPLP’s advocacy of reinforcing cultural ties among Lusophone nations, while the latter could be construed as directly addressing *Cena Lusófona*. Nearly a decade later, in March 2007, Mindelact approved a revision of its statutes at its general assembly. All references to Lusophone countries were excised. This removal of the explicit focus on Lusophone theatre at the festival was already evident in a 2005 television interview in which Branco said that Mindelact would continue to showcase theatre from Lusophone countries but not limit itself to that linguistic background.¹⁷² That same year, Manuel Estevão, who was then president of Mindelact’s general assembly, told me that he did not support the concept of *lusofonia* because it implied a community “closed off” from the rest of the world. He wanted Mindelact to include a solid infusion of French-, English-, and Spanish-language theatre as well (in fact, Mindelact 2007, featured groups from Argentina and Columbia for the first time).¹⁷³

Theatre festivals like Mindelact stage the postcolonial Lusophone question. They offer concrete examples of how performance contributes to the formation of what Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih call “minor transnationalism,” networks of intercultural exchange among diverse national communities that operate outside of the global economic and political centers of power.¹⁷⁴ As the Lusophone trans-nation encompasses eight countries on the peripheries of global markets (with the possible exception of Brazil), it fits this description. Mindelact provides

¹⁷¹ Ineida K.F. Brito, “O Teatro Ontem, Hoje e Amanhã” (see note 139). In Portuguese, the quote would read: “Promover a apresentação de espectáculos teatrais de grupos estrangeiros no Festival, privilegiando o contacto com os grupos oriundos dos países lusófonoas,” and “servir de elo de ligação entre os agentes teatrais cabo-verdianos e os promotores de intercâmbio teatral entre os países lusófonos.”

¹⁷² João Branco, interview by Hulda Moreira, *Mindelo—Palco das Ilhas*, DVD, documentary by Hulda Moreira (Praia, Cape Verde: RTP África, 2005). Copy generously provided by RTP (Rádio e Televisão de Portugal) África in Lisbon, Portugal.

¹⁷³ Manuel Estevão, personal interview, September 10, 2005.

¹⁷⁴ Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, “Introduction: Thinking through the Minor, Transnationally,” in *Minor Transnationalism*, ed. Lionnet and Shih (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 1-23.

a cogent example of a cultural association that employs the discourse of minor transnationalism only sporadically and to strategic ends. In 1996, Mindelact was campaigning for Cena Lusófona to assist with internationalizing the festival. It is thus no surprise that Mindelact's early statutes were worded in a way that mirrored Cena's own objectives. In 2003, Mindelact once again positioned itself as an explicitly Lusophone theatre festival (see chapter four) in order to take advantage of funds available from Portugal in honor of Mindelo being named "Capital of Lusophone Culture" for that year.¹⁷⁵ Without these monetary initiatives in recent years, Mindelact could re-invent itself as a truly "global" association that does not exclusively privilege one linguistic background.

Mindelact also provides case studies that enable the analysis of persisting power and economic inequities within minor transnational networks. Despite lessening its *lusofonia* rhetoric, it continues to bring numerous Lusophone artists together every year. These encounters inspire new intercultural projects that are still structured by power imbalances residual from colonial structures. In chapter two, for example, I explore how a Cape Verdean woman's oral history circulated to Portugal and back to Mindelact via a Portuguese director's dramatization of it. As it traveled globally with this Portuguese troupe, the story underwent critical changes in race and gender representation. International theatre festivals thus reveal the material and symbolic repercussions of circulation for performers and the embodied subjects they represent.

1.8 Fieldwork Methods

In this study, I attempt to show how ethnographic research firmly grounded in a local site can work in conjunction with theories of global circulation. For example, my fieldwork often meant riding in the back of rickety trucks to collect oral histories from elderly people living in

¹⁷⁵ Proposal and budget for "Capital Lusófona da Cultura 2002/2003." Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #665.

rural settings and then situating that crucial information amidst the myriad transnational vectors that constitute festival settings. This is one answer to George Marcus's call for "mobile" ethnography that traces the circulation of culture and identities across global networks.¹⁷⁶ Since my goal was to understand how Mindelact productions intervened in social narratives in Cape Verde, I investigated their creation in local settings and also evaluated their reception within the festival's wider-reaching interpretive community. This involved a three-pronged approach: interviews, participatory ethnographic work with performers, and archival research.

The research period consisted of two summers and one full year in Cape Verde, along with shorter research trips to Portugal for supplementary interviews and library research. My first two summers in Cape Verde constituted the first research phase. I observed all of the performances at Mindelact 2004 and 2005 and conducted initial interviews with participating Cape Verdean theatre groups. These were group interviews with the actors and director. I adopted a semi-structured format by using a standard set of questions but allowing the artists to expand on any of the topics or introduce new ones.¹⁷⁷ My goal was to discover their performance philosophy, the kind of theatre they performed, their motives for participating in Mindelact, and their perspectives on Cape Verdean national identity. I also interviewed festival director and Mindelact Association president João Branco and Manuel Estevão, then president of the general assembly, in order to learn the specifics of the Mindelact Festival's selection process, operational method, and funding. I also spoke with cultural specialists outside of the Mindelact Festival, such as Mindelo professor Moacyr Rodrigues, who could comment on Mindelact's place in the Cape Verdean theatre community.

¹⁷⁶ George E. Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography," *Ethnography through Thick and Thin*, ed. Marcus (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 79-104.

¹⁷⁷ For an overview of this interview method, see Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 95-116.

This first phase also included some initial ethnographic work at rehearsals with Praia and Mindelo theatre groups preparing for the festival (I had spent three weeks in each city prior to Mindelact 2004 and 2005). At that time, my approach was mainly participant-observation. I joined in the vocal and corporeal warm-ups with the actors at the start of rehearsal, after which I observed the actual rehearsing. I thus gained familiarity with their artistic process and worked toward establishing trust. I allowed the performers to determine the extent of my involvement. I found that theatre artists often perceived my pursuit of a doctoral degree in theatre as evidence that I was also an experienced practitioner. For example, Herlandson Duarte, director of the Mindelo theatre company, Solaris, sometimes asked my opinion on his blocking of scenes for the adaptation of *Midsummer Night's Dream* they were rehearsing in summer 2005 (chapter four). The Santiago group OTACA invited me to act in their Festival "Off" sketch for 2005. As the play was about Cape Verdean emigration to New England, they wanted an American to play a Boston police officer, which I did. In both cases, I let the directors know that while my training was not actually in theatre practice, I could draw on my previous amateur experience with theatre to act as a co-collaborator. Thus, I could accept their invitations to participate while refusing the status of "expert" performer. I adopted this same approach later in the research period when various groups asked me to conduct acting workshops with them.

The initial research phase allowed me to identify recurring themes among Mindelact performances and better understand the artists' approaches to them. After repeating this process for Mindelact 2006, I decided upon the three themes for my research (oral history, labor and sexuality, and adaptation) and selected certain Mindelact productions as my chapter foci.

In September 2006, I began the study's second phase, which was a full research year in Cape Verde. I divided my time between residing in Mindelo and Praia, making shorter trips to

other islands when necessary. I began in-depth ethnographic work with specific theatre groups in order to understand how they had created the performances and to trace their journey to the festival stage. This often entailed active involvement in whatever each group's current project happened to be. This close interaction opened up spaces for further conversation and reflection on the performers' past Mindelact productions. In this second phase, I transitioned to "co-performer witnessing," Dwight Conquergood's term for a way of knowing "grounded in active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection." With this method, proximity is the epistemological point of departure, rather than the imperative to keep an "objective" distance. Viewing objectivity as both untenable and undesirable in the research process, Conquergood calls instead for "copresence, humility, and vulnerability."¹⁷⁸ A co-performer witness's mandate is to pay keen attention to the dynamics of the performance and the ethics of ethnography.

The theatre projects varied. Some groups, such as Finka Pé in Praia and OTACA in Santa Catarina in the interior of Santiago Island, asked me to become directly involved in writing the plays they were developing and also asked me to attend rehearsals and give directing advice. In OTACA's case, I collaborated with the group on a new drama rooted in Santiago history, *Prisão do Tarrafal*, which they then performed at Mindelact 2007. This process afforded me greater insight into the ways they mobilized their "historical imagination" in *Tchom di Morgado* (2004), which I discuss in chapter two. In Praia, I also integrated into the dance school run by Raiz di Polon, whose theatre-dance piece about laboring women features prominently in chapter three. In Mindelo, I played less active roles in the creative process, although I did attend rehearsals and conduct interviews. The theatre group Solaris solicited my collaboration in another way. I helped

¹⁷⁸ Dwight Conquergood, "Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research," *The Drama Review* 46, no.2 (2002): 145-56, at 146, 149.

write funding proposals for their artistic director, Herlandson Duarte, to participate in a three-month professional directing workshop at the Gulbenkian Institute in Lisbon.

Lending my time and energy to these projects was a way to give back to the performers whose work was at the center of my research. I took seriously D. Soyini Madison's insistence that activism, in the sense of making a meaningful difference in another's world, must be at the heart of the ethnographic experience. Madison's notion of "critical ethnography" also entails allowing the voices of the performers to guide the research venture and performance analysis.¹⁷⁹ One interview method was especially fruitful in this regard. As I had videotaped each of the performances I planned to include in my chapters, I often watched the DVDs together with the director or the performers afterward, asking them for their own commentary about what was happening in each moment and why. This process is conveyed fully in my analysis of *Duas Sem Trêas*, the theatre-dance piece, in chapter three, which weaves together excerpts from interviews with dancer Elisabete Fernandes and my field notes from dance class.

In the field, I strove to keep own positionality in mind, especially as I moved into leadership roles in the OTACA and Finka Pé projects. This meant a constant awareness of my own privileged status as a white American woman working on an advanced degree at an American university. It was my responsibility to attend to the power dynamics inherent to this situation and not allow my voice to dominate during our creative sessions. This was also essential during Mindelact 2005 and 2006, when João Branco asked me to lead workshops on adaptation and African theatre, respectively. For those two-day sessions, I opted for round-table discussion and group work formats, so as not to create a teacher-student relationship that might reinforce a binary of "provider" and "receivers" of knowledge. A final way that I gave back

¹⁷⁹ D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Methods, Ethics, and Performance* (London: Sage, 2005).

during my research period was to provide copies of DVDs of performances to the theatre groups I had filmed and to the Mindelact Association, which helped to build up their libraries.

The last component to my method, archival work, helped me to contextualize the performances' reception and the material conditions of circulation. I conducted most of this research at the Mindelact Association's own archive, the Centro de Documentação e Investigação Teatral do Mindelo (The Theatre Documentation and Research Center of Mindelo).¹⁸⁰ The center houses over 1,500 documents, ranging from newspaper and magazine articles about Cape Verdean performance dating from the 1950s to the present day, as well as posters, flyers, tickets and other print media from Cape Verdean theatre performances. This material provided crucial evidence about trends in Cape Verdean theatre history, funding, media rhetoric, and the range of the festival's media coverage abroad. Besides filling out details about each performance, this archival work often prompted new and important interview questions for the artists involved.

1.9 Structure

The remainder of this study is divided into three chapters focusing on the central themes I identified during my fieldwork. Each analyzes two to three Mindelact productions in-depth, making references to other Cape Verdean performances when necessary. When pertinent, I also attempt to situate these performances within the larger field of African theatre, where Lusophone Africa has long occupied a marginalized place.

Chapter two analyzes two Mindelact performances that foreground local oral histories about Cape Verde's colonial era. The first, *Tchom di Morgado*, staged by the Santiago Island theatre group OTACA for Mindelact 2004, tells the story of an early twentieth-century peasant farmers' strike, which was violently suppressed by Portuguese landlords and authorities. The

¹⁸⁰ Hereafter referred to as the Mindelact Documentation Center.

second, *Mãe Preta* (Black Mother), performed by the Portuguese theatre company ESTE at Mindelact 2005,¹⁸¹ dramatizes the oral history of a Cape Verdean woman who lost her baby during the islands' severe drought in 1948. Integrating theories of memory, global circulation, and postcolonial mimesis, the chapter argues that festival productions that blend history with imagination have lasting repercussions on the ways in which a nation remembers its past. By reconfiguring representations of race and colonial authority, the performances “remember” historical subjects' agency and actions differently than in established historical narratives.

Chapter three targets Mindelact performances that foreground Cape Verdean women's labor and sexuality, examining the diverse ways in which women's quotidian lives become linked with national “authenticity.” The first, *Duas Sem Três*, a theatre-dance piece staged by the Praia-based group Raiz di Polon for Mindelact 2004, depicts how two abandoned women find solace in household labor and female companionship. *Maria Badia*, performed for Mindelact 2006, juxtaposes a Santiago woman's solitary field labor with her dynamic fish-selling tactics in an urban market. *Mulheres na Lajinha*, which debuted at Mindelact 2006, depicts a brassy gossip session among four Mindelo women who take pleasure in recounting their sexual exploits. All three performances illuminate the role gender plays in the ongoing social construction of the *badiu* and *sampadjudu* regional identities. I argue that the festival stage offers the actresses and dancers the space to theorize their own daily experiences in ways that challenge hegemonic narratives about gendered labor roles and female sexuality in Cape Verde.

Chapter four centers on Mindelo theatre groups' adaptations of *King Lear*, *Three Sisters* and *Midsummer Night's Dream* for Mindelacts 2003-05. Drawing on Cape Verdean linguist Dulce Almada Duarte's analysis of the differing functions of Portuguese and Crioulo in Cape

¹⁸¹ Estação Teatral da Beira Interior (Theatre Station of Interior Beira).

Verdean society, I construct a Creole spectrum that examines to what degree Crioulo culture is incorporated into the foreign text. I argue that the linguistic interplay between the two languages in Cape Verdean adaptations makes subtle political interventions into narratives about regionalism, relationships with the former metropole, and class divisions. I also explicate how Solaris re-arranged the meta-theatrical codes of *Midsommer* to contest established narratives of theatre history and practice on the islands.

The conclusion synthesizes the themes and issues explored throughout the chapters. It crystallizes my theorization of festival performances as transformative of social discourses and considers both the potential and the limitations of that configuration. The conclusion also raises questions for future research, including theatre festivals' intersections with diaspora communities abroad and the possibilities of expanding links between Cape Verdean and non-Lusophone dramatic traditions in Africa.

CHAPTER TWO

Re-Casting the Colonial Past: The Historical Imagination Onstage at Mindelact¹

2.1 Chapter Introduction

For Cape Verde's 2004 Mindelact International Theatre Festival, the Cape Verdean theatre group OTACA (Oficina de Teatro e Comunicação de Assomada)² dramatized a quashed colonial-era peasant revolt against an exploitative Portuguese landlord on Santiago Island. Rooted in stories the actors heard from their grandparents and great-grandparents, *Tchom di Morgado* ("The Proprietor's Land") forged new historical personas sutured from fragments of oral histories. At Mindelact 2005, the history of Maio Island took the stage. In *Mãe Preta* ("Black Mother"), a white Portuguese actress wearing a black mask portrayed a despairing mother during Cape Verde's 1948 drought. Portuguese playwright Nuno Pino Custódio based *Mãe Preta* on the oral history of Matilde Tavares, whose grandson Ney Tavares had told him the story at Mindelact 2004. Ney Tavares's name did not appear in the festival program or in most media coverage of the show.

In both performances, the mimetic appropriation of the "other" raises critical questions about the ethical use of oral histories and their efficacy in critiquing a colonial past through theatre. While OTACA's reconstruction of the past bolstered nationhood by inventing a new historical hero, its critical revisions to the race and nationality of violent oppressors concealed Cape Verdean involvement in colonial labor exploitation. In *Mãe Preta*, the Portuguese theatre

¹ Parts of this chapter originally appeared as "Mimesis and the Historical Imagination: (Re)Staging History in Cape Verde, West Africa." By Christina S. McMahon. *Theatre Research International*, Volume 33, Issue 01, Mar 2008, pp 20-39. Copyright © International Federation for Theatre Research 2008. Reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press.

² The Assomada Theatre and Communication Collective.

troupe ESTE (Estação Teatral da Beira Interior)³ transformed a historical Cape Verdean woman's troubled past into a tangle of race representations that revealed persisting power inequities in Lusophone cross-cultural exchange.

In this chapter, I draw on these radical revisions of oral histories to theorize the concept of the *historical imagination*. I argue that when performers use the past imaginatively in theatre festival productions, the changes they make to representations of race, colonial authority, and historical subjects' agency have lasting repercussions on the way a nation remembers its past. This is because a festival's prestige, substantial media coverage, rhetorical strategies, and, in most cases, its position as a state-supported venue, create a semblance of authenticity for the history it stages.

At stake are larger postcolonial questions about representing history in Africa, where for years, the European versions were the only ones featured in textbooks. The past has urgent contemporary relevance, since representations of it become sites of political struggles wherein diverse communities cultivate collective identities and stake claims to socio-economic resources.⁴ I identify the Mindelact stage as one such site in Cape Verde. Cape Verdean theatre artists use Mindelact productions to highlight one historical strand of their creolized culture, aiming to situate their island's past in an emerging national identity and claim the cultural capital that performing at the nation's most prestigious theatre venue affords.

In what follows, I draw on theories of memory and subjugated knowledge to offer a framework for approaching the historical imagination in theatre. To apply this paradigm to *Tchom di Morgado* and *Mãe Preta*, I discuss the performances' creation, circulation to the

³ Theatre Station of Interior Beira.

⁴ George C. Bond and Angela Gilliam, "Introduction," in *Social Construction of the Past: Representation as Power*, ed. Bond and Gilliam (New York: Routledge, 1994), 1-22, at 4.

festival stage, and reception. I pay particular attention to the theatre groups' disparate methods for "re-casting" the past. While OTACA created historical personae in the image of its actors, ESTE relied mainly on preconceived notions about black African mothers.

2.2 Performance and the Circulation of Oral History

Relevant to this chapter is Gaonkar and Povinelli's challenge to Appadurai's influential theory of cultural globalization as a "movement of people, commodities, ideas and images from one place to another."⁵ As discussed in my introduction, Gaonkar and Povinelli urge scholars to stop focusing on the *things* that circulate and attend to how circulation itself transfigures cultural texts. Applied to historical dramas staged at theatre festivals, this means examining how local stories are altered when artists circulate them to a festival stage. This enables a critique of how festivals authorize certain historical accounts at the expense of others, as well as an analysis of the tactics African artists employ to reinforce their own versions of colonial history.

Many of the historical archives that inform African performers' work are oral. The stories contained in these living archives are vital to countering prejudicial colonial narratives of history. Cape Verdean intellectuals recognized the critical role of oral history in constructing national identity soon after independence. T.V. da Silva, who ran the Ministry of Culture's "Department of Oral Traditions" from 1982-90, affirms that Cape Verdean cultural identity has been "molded and consolidated" by its rich oral traditions.⁶ Anthropologist João Lopes Filho locates the bulk of those oral traditions in Cape Verde's agricultural and fishing communities. Filho's privileging of the rural is perhaps explained by the fact that those areas typically hold lower literacy rates,

⁵ Dilip P. Gaonkar and Elizabeth A. Povinelli, "Technologies of Public Forms: Circulation, Transfiguration, Recognition," *Public Culture*, 15, no. 3 (2003), 385-97, at 391. The authors respond to Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

⁶ T.V. da Silva, "Tradições Oraís: Antes e Depois da Independência" in *Cabo Verde: Insularidade e Literatura*, ed. Manuel Veiga (Paris: Karthala, 1998), 95-107, at 99.

rendering it “urgent” for researchers to collect and inscribe oral narratives from the “living encyclopedias” of Cape Verdean culture who reside there.⁷

Cape Verde’s Department of Oral Traditions collected enough material to publish 25 lengthy books.⁸ Yet both da Silva and Filho acknowledge the difficulty of capturing in print stories that evolve with each telling. Thus, Filho affirms the importance of embodied acts of knowledge, or what Diana Taylor calls the “repertoire.”⁹ He urges listeners to attend to an oral historian’s corporeal animation, since she will re-live the historical moment through the telling.¹⁰ Extending Filho’s claim, I propose that theatrical dramatizations of Cape Verdean history can *expand* the repertoire. When actors use their bodies imaginatively to portray the postures, colonial confrontations, and acts of courage and despair that mark exploited labor and drought, they help cultivate the “common myths and historical memories” that, according to Anthony Smith, are the cornerstone of national identity.¹¹

Although oral histories’ lifeblood is their revision and re-telling, it is necessary to analyze how they are specifically revised for festival performances. Theatre festivals, even the less profit-driven varieties in Africa, turn local performances into commodities: they assign them higher ticket prices and place them in a program appealing to “elite” theatre-goers. Since a commodity’s value is determined by its ability to be exchanged, careful attention must be paid to objects that diverge from their anticipated pathways of exchange.¹² A global stage is not the

⁷ João Lopes Filho, *Defesa do Património Sócio-Cultural de Cabo Verde* (Lisbon: Biblioteca Ulmeiro, 1985), 82-83.

⁸ Silva, “Tradições Oraís,” 99.

⁹ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

¹⁰ João Lopes Filho, *Cabo Verde: Subsídios para um Levantamento Cultural* (Lisbon: Plátano Editora, 1981), 108-110.

¹¹ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991), 14.

¹² Arjun Appadurai, “Commodities and the Politics of Value” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3-63. Appadurai gives the

intended destination of oral histories normally passed down locally through generations. Thus, their pathways are riskily diverted when they become commodified in a festival context. To investigate this diversion in *Tchom di Morgado* and *Mãe Preta*, I traced the stories' circulation in reverse. After watching the productions, I traveled to Engenhos, the mountainside village where OTACA set its peasant revolt, to interview elderly community members. I visited Maio Island to interview Ney Tavares and his mother Albertina Silva Tavares about the woman whose story inspired *Mãe Preta*, Matilde Tavares. In each case, I tracked how the oral histories diverged from their theatrical representations in their depictions of rural labor, race relations, and colonial authority. I found that oftentimes, the re-shaping of oral history relates to the complex processes of collective memory.

2.3 Staging Subjugated Knowledge: Memory and the Historical Imagination

To theorize this collective memory, I draw upon Sandra Richards's understanding of memory as a "social practice," rather than a "fixed past."¹³ In other words, when we reflect upon a past event, we simultaneously negotiate our own relationship to it, re-constituting the remembered object through our own cognitive and affective engagement. Writing on African-American tourists visiting Ghana's slavery heritage sites, Richards notes that memory functions both as imagination and the desire to revise a traumatic history.¹⁴

example of the theft of a family heirloom: the object's destiny as an inheritance willed to succeeding generations is interrupted when the thief sells it for money.

¹³ Sandra L. Richards, "Who Is This Ancestor? Performing Memory in Ghana's Slave Castle-Dungeons," *The Sage Handbook of Performance Studies*, ed. D. Soyini Madison and Judith Hamera (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006), 489-507, at 490. When discussing memory as social practice, Richards cites Paul Antze and Michael Lambek, eds., *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory* (New York: Routledge, 1996) and Roger I. Simon, Sharon Rosenberg, and Claudia Eppert, "Introduction: Between Hope and Despair: The Pedagogical Encounter of Historical Remembrance," in *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Representation of Historical Trauma*, ed. Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 1-8.

¹⁴ Richards, "Who Is This Ancestor?," 490.

Cape Verdean theatre artists engage in this process when they revisit the trauma of their nation's colonial past. Representing that history onstage contributes to the construction of what Jeffrey Alexander calls "cultural trauma." Alexander defines cultural trauma as a result of collective actors "represent[ing] social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go."¹⁵ Thus, it is an epistemological, interpretive process that speaks to a community's identity claims. Examining how African-Americans from the Civil War to the Civil Rights era constituted cultural trauma through their reflexive engagements with slavery, Ron Eyerman contends that this process depends upon a temporal and spatial distance between the painful event and its mediation through discourse.¹⁶ While Eyerman names mass media as one such discursive channel for constructing cultural trauma, I suggest that theatre groups perform this function by re-imagining history onstage. For example, OTACA's artistic director, Narciso Freire, explains that the group's aim in performing historical dramas is to draw attention to the social history of their municipality, Santa Catarina,¹⁷ home to the most egregious agricultural exploitation during the colonial era. OTACA thus acts as what Alexander, working from Max Weber, calls the "carrier group," or the agents who bring a community's claims of collective trauma to the public sphere.¹⁸

Two different kinds of history are at play in my analysis. First, there are "official" histories produced and disseminated by governments or scholars from the dominant class. These histories take the form of timelines of bedrock events and names of the specific "movers and shakers" behind them. As Bond and Gilliam note, official histories present the past as "enduring

¹⁵ Jeffrey Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, by Jeffrey Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhad Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1-30, at 10.

¹⁶ Ron Eyerman, "Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (see note 13), 60-111, at 62.

¹⁷ This is something that Freire emphasized in nearly every interview I conducted with him.

¹⁸ Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," 11.

and impenetrable,” presumably because they are reinforced through the printed word.

Countering official histories are any number of “folk histories,” whose “disjunctive and fragmented” nature resists placement within a singular linear narrative.¹⁹ These are the histories populating the living archives from which African performers draw. Folk histories are often predicated upon an understanding of past events as cyclical and ever-repeating, rather than singular or monolithic. In Cape Verde, for example, the exploitation of peasant farmers on Santiago was a recurring, daily phenomenon for several centuries, and droughts ended and recommenced in cyclical waves.

Since those who produce folk histories are often excluded from formal education or participation in the public sector, they are the possessors of what Foucault calls “subjugated knowledges,” or epistemologies that are officially disqualified or relegated to a lower rank on social or educational hierarchies. Foucault also calls these various knowledges “local” or “regional,” disparate yet unified in their distinction from the dominant society that marginalizes them. Excavating these knowledges, he asserts, is how “criticism performs its work.”²⁰ Central to Foucault’s thinking are the terms *archeology* and *genealogy*. ‘Archaeology’ is a method of overlaying citations and evidence from both official and subjugated knowledges in order to expose contradictions between them. Critics performing ‘genealogical’ work liberate popular epistemologies from their subordination to state-ratified or scientific discourses, bringing them into tactical play with the social institutions that threaten to repress them.²¹

When African artists stage the subjugated knowledges they excavate from oral archives, they perform this genealogical work. Here, I want to introduce a distinction between the kind of

¹⁹ Bond and Gilliam, “Introduction,” 12.

²⁰ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 82.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

criticism executed by scholars and the kind undertaken by performers. Bond and Gilliam explain that scholars often move from the reclamation of subjugated knowledge that Foucault advocates to the “process of recasting, synthesizing and renewing discarded interpretations of the past.”²² In other words, they reshape marginalized knowledge into discourses illuminating facets of history often overlooked. Performers who dramatize history, however, literally “re-cast” the past by juxtaposing the material bodies of contemporary performers with the figures animating oral histories. This is perhaps what Joseph Roach calls “genealogies of performance,” when performers act as “surrogates” who introduce discontinuities into a succession of historical figures constituting official narratives of the past.²³ Yet by employing the historical imagination in theatre, performers do more than fill in the gaps of cultural memory.²⁴ Rather, they enact a doubling of their historical ancestors through a mimetic engagement with their legacies.

Performers employ a historical imagination when they fuse their own unique perspectives on the past with the collective memory of their communities. Richards states that individuals access communal memory by enacting rituals that “deposit into the body [. . .] constructions of a group identity—be it national, racial, ethnic, or sexual.”²⁵ When actors perform history, they do so in a heightened, self-reflexive way. Animating their bodies with oral histories they have experienced only aurally, they elaborate them with corporeal and verbal improvisations. In other words, they use the reflexivity of their own imaginations to write their communities’ subjugated knowledges into history.

²² Bond and Gilliam, “Introduction,” 10.

²³ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 27.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 80.

²⁵ Sandra L. Richards, “Remembering the Maafa,” *Assaph: Studies in Theatre* 21 (2007): 171-95, at 175.

The fact that performers imagine themselves into other historical epochs is not without its complications. As Richards notes, conceiving of ourselves as surrogates to long-deceased ancestors runs the risk of “displacing the past entirely, planting ourselves center on the stage of the past rather than seeking to negotiate our relationship to that past.”²⁶ This raises the question of memory’s presentist agenda, in that communities often re-assemble fragments of collective memory into configurations that address its own contemporary needs and desires.²⁷ Theatre has an increased risk of dislodging the past because it supplements the psychological substitutions of memory with the material substitutions of embodiment. Therefore, the question of whether or not Cape Verdean theatre artists displace the past as they re-cast it recurs in my analyses. I propose that a productive re-casting of the past occurs when performers can instill marginalized subjects with the agency denied to them in official histories, while a displacement of the past occurs when their own agendas override their excavations of stifled voices in history.

A final concern here is the issue of mimesis. Performances of history are inherently mimetic: they “mime” the past by re-enacting and re-interpreting it. Elin Diamond argues that mimesis can either be understood as an attempt to truthfully represent a model, or as a generative act that improvises new models as it mimes.²⁸ The latter definition is important, since I am arguing that Cape Verdeans introduce new narratives of colonial history through their Mindelact performances. This is because performers critically transform oral history as they circulate it to a festival context. The exigencies of a global stage can profoundly guide the transformations they make. For example, Freire explains that in *Tchom di Morgado*, OTACA used slow-motion choreography in the scene where Bitá, the strike leader, is beaten to death, in order to convey the

²⁶ Richards, “Who is this Ancestor?,” 491.

²⁷ See Eyerman, “Cultural Trauma,” 75.

²⁸ Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theater* (New York: Routledge, 1997), ii.

scene's emotional import to international attendees who do not understand Cape Verdean Crioulo. In his words, "I wrote the play *here* [on Santiago], but I was thinking *there* [Mindelo]."²⁹ In theatre festivals, the historical imagination stretches memories of the past across temporalities to reach future audiences, globalizing memory in the process.

2.4 The Historical Imagination in Cape Verde and Africa at large: A Brief Overview

All over the African continent, post-independence playwrights and performers have dramatized historical figures critical to nation-building. These artists use theatre to dispute the notion that "the colonial encounter with Europe ushered Africa into historical time."³⁰ John Conteh-Morgan describes the 1960s as a period when Francophone dramatists from Senegal, Mali, and Togo habitually resurrected rebellious heroes, such as Soundjata, or potent kings, such as Chaka Zulu, in their plays, erecting a glorious African past that could counteract colonialism's 'civilizing' narrative. He contrasts their "wildly celebratory" use of a pre-colonial African past with Anglophone African playwrights' "critical and metaphorical" stance.³¹ As an example of the latter, he indicates Wole Soyinka's ambiguous depiction of a 1940s Yoruba chief whose failure to complete a suicide ritual portends chaos for his community in *Death and the King's Horseman*. In Kenya, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Githae Mugo penned *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* in 1971, eight years after Kenyan independence. Here, the guerilla leader of the late 1950s Mau-Mau rebellion is a Christ-like figure, subjected to various temptations from European bankers and the African businessmen who collude with them.³² Significantly, Ngugi and Mugo

²⁹ Narciso Freire, personal interview, October 3, 2006.

³⁰ John Conteh-Morgan, "Theatre and Performance of the Nation in Africa," in *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994*, ed. Okwui Enwezor and Chinua Achebe (New York: Prestel, 2001), 303-308, at 303.

³¹ John Conteh-Morgan, *Theatre and Drama in Francophone Africa: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 65-71.

³² Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Githae Mugo, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976).

used an international arts venue to circulate this critique of Kenyan nationalism to a wider audience: *Dedan Kimathi* was an official Kenyan entry for the FESTAC pan-African arts festival in Lagos in 1977.

Lusophone African artists have similarly availed themselves of festival venues to grapple with the legacy of their nation's "heroes." In recent decades, the Mindelact Festival has proved fertile ground for this. Angolan artists, for example, have staged provocative fantasias on their national history that have been received enthusiastically at Mindelact. In 1997, Angolan playwright and director José Mena Abrantes circulated his play *Sequeira R. Luís, ou o Mulato Prodígio* ("Sequeira R. Luís, or the Wondrous Mulatto") to Mindelact. Self-consciously meta-theatrical, the play concerns a seventeenth-century historical figure, Sequeira R. Luís, who had a Portuguese father and Angolan mother. It speculates about his motivations for conspiring with the colonial government to destroy three kingdoms in Angola. The actors staged hypothetical scenarios about Sequeira's love interest, visions of the Virgin Mary, and magical aid from his black mother, leaving unanswered the question: was he a traitor to his people or a visionary who allowed Angola to become a unified nation by doing away with internal divisions?³³

Nearly ten years later, Angola's Miragens Teatro staged *Rostos de Loanda à Luanda* (Faces from Loanda to Luanda) for Mindelact 2006. Centering on a fictional alcoholic amputee visited by ghosts of Angola's past, the play was widely regarded as the surprise hit of the festival.³⁴ After the performance, Mindelact director João Branco declared it "Noite de Angola" (Angola Night) and festival attendees danced to lively Angolan music on the Mindelo Cultural Center's patio with Miragens' dynamic actors who sported Angola's national colors of black,

³³ Luís Mitras, "Staging Angola's Early History: *Sequeira R. Luís or the Wondrous Mulatto* by José Mena Abrantes (1993)," in *African Theatre: Southern Africa*, ed. David Kerr (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2004), 1-10.

³⁴ AM/ES, "Deuses do teatro não abandonaram a ilha do Porto Grande," *Expresso das Ilhas*, September 20, 2006, 29. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #1346.

yellow, and red, and waved Angolan flags. That night, performing history made Angolan nationalism infectious. It is noteworthy that both of these Angolan troupes turned to fiction and fantasy to write their nations into history, implicitly pointing out spaces where the official historical record is lacking.

The reception of Cape Verdean dramatizations of history at Mindelact has been decidedly more ambiguous, due largely to the issues of regionalism between Santiago and São Vicente Islands addressed in my introduction. Many historical dramas staged at Mindelact have been performed by Santiago troupes and are not always enthusiastically received by Mindelo theatre crowds, who tend to view the recycling of colonial history as something that Cape Verdean theatre should move beyond. For example, former Mindelo mayor José Faria, who has been a consistent patron of the Mindelact Festival, claims that São Vicente theatre is “more advanced” than that of other islands, since it is not “stuck” in a phase of rehashing history.³⁵ Perspectives such as Faria’s perhaps derive from the fact that dramatizations of Cape Verdean nation formation have occurred since the earliest post-independence years. For example, Francisco Fragoso’s theatre group Korda Kaoberdi (see chapter one) performed *Storia dum Pobo* (History of a People) in Praia and Mindelo in the late 1970s. That play first depicts Africans living tranquilly on the mainland before their forced removal to the islands, moves to their harsh treatment under slavery, re-enacts peasant uprisings by legendary Santiago figures, and concludes with an homage to Amílcar Cabral.³⁶ When performed for Cape Verde’s independence

³⁵ José Faria, personal interview, October 26, 2007.

³⁶ Kwame Kondé (Francisco Fragoso), *Caderno “Korda Kaoberdi”: ano de 1979-1980* (Praia, Cape Verde: Imprensa Nacional, 1981), 18.

celebrations at Mindelo's Eden Park cinema in 1977, the play earned Korda Kaoberdi a warm standing ovation from Mindelenses.³⁷

Santiago theatre groups' treatment of similar topics at Mindelact has had a distinctly different reception. For Mindelact 2002, the Praia-based group Santa Kultura performed *Caminho para Independência* (The Road to Independence), which followed roughly the same structure as Fragoso's earlier play, as did *Profisia di Krioulo* (The Crioulo Prophecy), performed at Mindelact 2006 by another Praia group, Fladu Fla. These plays depicted slaves being whipped for disobedience and then, jumping ahead to the independence movement of the 1960s and 70s, showed Cabral and his soldiers attacked by the PIDE (Portuguese secret police).³⁸ Yet scenes that were meant to be the most dramatic evoked jeering and laughter from the Mindelact crowd.³⁹ For *Profisia di Krioulo* at Mindelact 2006, I noticed that this emanated mainly from young Mindelo actors in the audience. Mindelo actress Sílvia Lima attributed spectators' reactions to the amateur nature of the acting, technical failures (such as loud crashes backstage) and the play's overtly didactic political tone.⁴⁰

Another common critique of *Profisia di Krioulo* was that Fladu Fla had not properly researched the history it staged. For example, many noted that the slavery scenes came straight out of Brazilian telenovelas: they featured large plantations, a slave master who patrols the grounds wielding a cane and gold pocket-watch, and his elegantly dressed daughter who soon

³⁷ Ibid., 24.

³⁸ Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado (International and State Defense Police).

³⁹ This is evident, for example, in a Cape Verdean documentary on Mindelact 2002, which showed several clips from *Caminho para Independência*. RTC (Rádio e Televisão de Cabo Verde), *Mindelact 2002*, DVD, documentary (Praia, Cape Verde: RTC, 2002). Copy generously provided to the author by Armando Veiga, director of Santa Kultura.

⁴⁰ Sílvia Lima, personal interview, September 13, 2006. Fladu Fla's play calls on the Cape Verdean government to make Crioulo an official language because Cabral had 'prophesied' it.

falls for one of the African slaves.⁴¹ As neither plantations nor Portuguese women were integral parts of Cape Verde's history with slavery, the play read as pure fantasy to many at Mindelact.⁴² Praia spectators, however, turned out in large numbers for *Profisia di Krioulo*'s debut in March 2006 at Praia's National Auditorium, which teemed with enthusiastic audience members (including the President of the Republic, Pedro Pires) during its weekend run.

São Vicente audiences have perhaps not warmed to Santiago history plays because of the two islands' vastly different social histories. Slave labor, peasant revolts, and the *morgado* agricultural system did not feature in Mindelo's history as a port city (chapter one). Since the majority of audience members at Mindelact hail from Mindelo, there is often a visceral disconnect between spectators and a local history specific to Santiago. Yet the Mindelact audience did receive with enthusiasm an original musical about Mindelo's "golden age" as a port city, despite the fact that it received the same kinds of critiques that Fladu Fla's *Profisia di Krioulo* received at the same festival edition (i.e., lack of historical research, actor preparation, and technical finesse).

Performed by the Mindelo theatre group Sarron.com for Mindelact 2006, *Um vez Soncente era sábe* (Once Upon a Time, São Vicente was Nice) was set in the early twentieth century, when Mindelo boasted the first telegraph cable in Africa and city streets bustled with a mix of English, Dutch, and Brazilian sailors and the Mindelo prostitutes they solicited. Like *Profisia di Krioulo*, the show was plagued by technical failures, like microphones turning on and

⁴¹ For example, similar scenarios featured prominently on *Xica da Silva*, a wildly popular Brazilian novela that depicted the passions and ambitions of an eighteenth century *mulata* slave woman. *Xica da Silva* found scores of avid watchers when it aired in Cape Verde in 1998, while I was a Peace Corps volunteer there.

⁴² Jeff Hessney was the first to point out to me the similarities between *Profisia* and the depictions of Brazilian slavery in telenovelas. João Branco also mentioned it to me informally. Writer and director Sabino Baessa, however, intended it to be a careful re-envisioning of Cape Verde's past in which the genesis of the Crioulo people is traced to a consensual sexual relationship between a white woman and black man, rather than forced sexual relations between white slavers and black African women. Sabino Baessa, personal interview, September 28, 2006.

off. The actors had visible difficulty integrating song and dance into their performance, as they lacked training in musical theatre.⁴³ Spectators also noted historical inaccuracies.⁴⁴ The prostitutes live in a Mindelo saloon run by a French “Madame” and wear cabaret-style dresses in bright colors reminiscent not of Mindelo history but, once again, of the Brazilian telenovela (in this case, a string of popular series featuring bordello environments).⁴⁵ Music and dance numbers clearly derived from American musical films, namely *Moulin Rouge*, *Chicago*, *Grease*, and *West Side Story*, leading many to wonder why Mindelo’s own *morna* and *coladeira* traditions did not make it into the score.⁴⁶ Yet despite these criticisms, Mindelo spectators embraced the show because it depicted their local history. In Sílvia Lima’s words, “Anyone from Mindelo is going to adore this theme: the high point of São Vicente’s history, stories we’ve heard from our parents and grandparents.”⁴⁷ In a festival edition where two Cape Verdean history plays received identical strains of criticism, only locality determined whether the production was a critical success (the Mindelo musical) or failure (the Praia ‘prophecy’).

OTACA, however, has had some measure of success with performing Santiago history in Mindelo. After a nearly 14-year absence from Cape Verde’s theatre scene, OTACA made a triumphant comeback at Mindelact 2000 with *Revolta d’Rubom Manel*, based on a celebrated 1910 peasant uprising in Rubom Manel, a small town in the Santa Catarina municipality. The play dramatized the story of Nha Donana, a historical figure who, upon hearing that Portugal had

⁴³ João Paulo Brito, personal interview, September 8, 2006.

⁴⁴ Elisabete Gonçalves and Ludmila Évora, personal interviews, September 9, 2006; Josina Fortes, personal interview, March 3, 2007.

⁴⁵ João Branco highlighted these similarities to telenovela conventions in a personal conversation on September 9, 2006.

⁴⁶ Moacyr Rodrigues, personal interview, February 7, 2007. Rodrigues is a university professor in Mindelo who teaches Cape Verdean literature and culture. Although he did not see the play performed live, he and I watched my DVD of it together during our interview.

⁴⁷ Sílvia Lima, personal interview, September 9, 2006.

become a Republic, began to harvest Santiago's major crop, *purga*,⁴⁸ for her own family rather than her Portuguese landlord. After other Santiago women followed suit, colonial authorities imprisoned them, provoking a popular upheaval that spawned a famous Crioulo phrase ("Men with knives, women with machetes, children throwing rocks")⁴⁹ and inspired a song by renowned Cape Verdean composer Orlando Pantera. Cherished among Santiago islanders as an emblematic example of female heroism in the face of colonial exploitation,⁵⁰ this incident made for exciting historical drama. The show surpassed the expectations of the Mindelact audience, who gave the group a warm standing ovation.⁵¹ Consequently, OTACA was accorded the honor of opening Mindelact 2001, when they performed *Casamento di Modo Antigo* (A Wedding in the Old-Time Tradition).



Figure 2: Carlita Monteiro in OTACA's *Revolta d'Rubom Manel*⁵²

Since 2000, the same year OTACA debuted *Revolta di Rubom Manel*, non-Cape Verdean groups performing at Mindelact have also staged themes central to Cape Verdean history. That year, Pau Preto ("Black Wood"), a Lisbon-based theatre group composed of artists of African

⁴⁸ *Purgeira* plants produce oil used to make soap and to burn in lamps. See Deirdre Meintel, *Race, Culture, and Portuguese Colonialism in Cabo Verde* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 32.

⁴⁹ In Crioulo: "Homi faca, Mudjer Matchado, Mininus Tudo ta Djunta Pedra."

⁵⁰ Abílio Tolentino, "Desculpe, lotação esgotado," *Horizonte*, September 21, 2000. Available in the Mindelact Documentation Center, #0449.

⁵¹ "'Revolta de Rubon Manel,' *O Cidadão*, September 21, 2000. Available in the Mindelact Documentation Center, #453.

⁵² Performed by OTACA for Mindelact 2000. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association. Available on the Mindelact website: http://mindelact.com/mem_mindelact.htm (accessed May 5, 2008).

descent living in Portugal, performed *Cabral*, which speculated about the PIDE conspiracy to assassinate Amílcar Cabral.⁵³ The group's Luso-Angolan artistic director, Miguel Hurst, explained that Cape Verde's independence leader is "an important reference for any citizen of a Portuguese-speaking African country."⁵⁴ Yet Hurst also placed Cabral within a cadre of African leaders, such as Senghor and Mandela, whose actions had world-wide political and social significance.⁵⁵ This sentiment also rang true for Companhia Zenith Art, a Dakar-based Senegalese group who performed yet another Cabral-inspired piece for Mindelact 2002.

As a prominent historical figure, Cabral's appeal to non-Cape Verdean groups is understandable. *Mãe Preta*, however, represented the first time a foreign troupe performed a specifically local Cape Verdean story. The play seemed a natural project for Portuguese theatre artist Nuno Pino Custódio, who had staged a revisionist take on his own country's history for Mindelact 2003 to great critical acclaim.⁵⁶ *Alabad de relato O*, a monologue that Custódio wrote and performed, was inspired by Portugal's famous 1147 recapture of Lisbon from the Moors. However, the story is told from the Moors' perspective in an effort to counter the European narratives of victorious conquest that dominate Portuguese accounts. Custódio played Alabad bin Muhammad Almançor, a twelfth-century Moorish poet whose historical chronicle reveals the trauma he and his loved ones underwent when forced to abandon a city where they had dwelled their whole lives. Here, a white Portuguese actor took on the role of an African "other" in Portuguese history in order to strengthen his historical voice.

⁵³ Etelvino Melo, "A peça 'Cabral...' faz sucesso no Mindelact 2000," *O Cidadão*, September 21, 2000, 6. Available in the Mindelact Documentation Center, #450.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ The reviewer called *Alabad* a show of the "highest quality" and one of the best moments of Mindelact 2003. "Mindelact termina com 'Ruínas,'" *paralelo 14*, September 23, 2003. Print-out available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #699.

Presumably, this was also Custódio's motivation for dramatizing Matilde Tavares's story. Unlike Cabral, whose legacy as freedom-fighter and political theorist is legendary in Africa and beyond, Matilde is an unsung hero of Cape Verdean history who only gained wider visibility through theatre. *Mãe Preta*, which dramatizes her efforts to care for her ailing child during Cape Verde's 1947-48 drought, thus diverges from Cape Verdean plays that fictionalize personas and events from that same period, such as *Fome '47* (The Hunger of '47), performed first in 1979 by the group 12 de Setembro and later by João Branco's theatre group GTCCPM in 1993.⁵⁷ The Mindelo group Novos Amigos (New Friends) also performed a fictional story inspired by the 1940s-era drought for Mindelact 1996.

From the range of historical drama that Mindelact has hosted over the years, I chose *Mãe Preta* and *Tchom di Morgado* as the twin foci for this chapter because both are inspired by local stories traceable through ethnographic work. Performed for two consecutive festival editions (2004 and 2005), they also provide glimpses into how national and non-national troupes construct Cape Verdean history differently for circulation within a festival economy. Taken together, the two case studies illuminate interpretive flows between performers of history and a festival's spectatorship, as well as the power (im)balances that structure how theatre devisers assemble and disseminate data collected from oral historians.

2.5 OTACA: Performing the Memory of Revolt

OTACA seeks to excavate subjugated knowledge by performing the memory of insurrections staged by peasant farmers throughout Santa Catarina's history. The group's engagement with this theme relates to the persisting social marginalization of *badiu*-identified Cape Verdeans, who also bore the brunt of colonial racism in an earlier era (see chapter one).

⁵⁷ This was in fact GTCCPM's debut performance. Interestingly, the group that later built its reputation on adaptations of Western plays (see chapter three), started out by performing Cape Verdean history.

Today, *badiu* communities in Santiago's interior engage largely in vulnerable economic activities, like small-scale farming or construction, and school attendance beyond primary school is lower than on other islands.⁵⁸ Thus, OTACA's performances of peasant revolts draw links between colonial-era labor exploitation and the ongoing economic marginalization of *badiu* populations.

For *Tchom di Morgado*, OTACA's casting choices made that relationship explicit. While the majority of the performers hailed from Assomada, the peri-urban center of Santa Catarina that boasts a large open air market, director Narciso Freire specifically wanted an actor from Engenhos village, the heart of colonial agricultural exploitation, to play the strike leader, Bitá.⁵⁹ By casting Edimilson Sousa, a truck-driver from a poor Engenhos neighborhood, in this role, Freire re-cast the colonial past with an actor who could embody his community's history with labor subjugation. This positioned OTACA as a "carrier group" staking claims to Santa Catarina's collective cultural trauma. Yet as I will discuss, actor portrayals of the Portuguese landowner and his Cape Verdean guard ultimately "displaced" the past in significant ways.

2.5.1 *Tchom di Morgado*, Part I: Mimesis in Reverse

The theatre is filled with the plaintive notes of soulful Cape Verdean *morna* music. A voiceover in Portuguese explains that we are now in the [unspecified] time when the Santiago *camponeses* (farmers) began to revolt against their white proprietors, the *morgados*, for their land rights. Bitá is illuminated on a stump downstage, grasping a hoe and wearing worn work clothes. In an angry barrage of *badiu* Crioulo, he recalls his past sufferings while actors upstage mime them: his father fatally beaten in the Morgado's yard after he is caught trying to "steal" his

⁵⁸ Richard A. Lobban, *Cape Verde: Crioulo Colony to Independent Nation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 62; see results from Cape Verde's 2000 census in *Educação: Censo 2000* (Praia, Cape Verde: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2001).

⁵⁹ Narciso Freire, personal interview, October 3, 2006.

crops back, weeping women bearing his body away, his mother dying from grief. As the flashback ends, Bitá declares that he will no longer cede half his harvest to the *morgado* and will induce others to strike. In the proprietor's office, André, his Cape Verdean guard and spy, reports on the workers' subversion. The two of them enlist the military aid of the local Colonel, whose troops seize Bitá in his fields and drag him to the *morgado*'s house, where he suffers the same fate as his father. After a poignant funeral procession, the voiceover declares that with Cape Verdean independence, farmers proudly took back their lands. Amidst the rapid tempo of *funaná* music, the actors dance onstage to take their bows.

Rhetoric in the festival program constructed Bitá's revolt as historically "authentic." The play summary states that it is "based on facts collected from the elderly of Santiago's interior (especially Engenhos village in Santa Catarina), people with profound knowledge of the disastrous relationships between farmers and the land's proprietors, the *morgados*."⁶⁰ Mindelact further authorized OTACA as "truth-tellers" of Santiago history by providing this sub-heading for the show's title: "the roots and traditions of the largest island of the country, by the group that best knows how to interpret them."⁶¹ This claim rests largely on OTACA's longevity and reputation. Founded in 1979 by Narciso Freire and Luís Garção, OTACA was among the first theatre groups to form after independence and is one of the few remaining from that time.⁶² OTACA has built its reputation on dramatizing Santiago's history, as evidenced by the enthusiastic reception of their play *Revolta d'Rubom Manel* at Mindelact 2000.

The context of the performance, as well as the sincerity of the actors' portrayals, led many audience members to perceive it as a singular historical event. I heard of one spectator

⁶⁰ Mindelact 2004 festival program, 41. Available in the Mindelact Documentation Center.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁶² See João Branco, *Nação Teatro: História do Teatro em Cabo Verde* (Praia, Cape Verde: Instituto da Biblioteca Nacional e do Livro, 2004), 173-80.

claiming to have known the historical Bitá. I also became excited about investigating the play's back story, especially when I visited Santa Catarina in October 2006 and Narciso Freire promised to take me to Bitá's house in Engenhos. The day before, we had visited the town of Rubon Manel to see the monument marking the 1910 revolt OTACA dramatized in *Revolta d'Rubom Manel*. Winding down Santiago's lush mountainside in a rickety truck, I imagined a similar plaque on Bitá's house, which I pictured as a circa 1940s hovel. To my surprise, when we arrived at the house, Freire promptly introduced me to "Bitá's" parents. We were at the home of Edimilson Sousa, the actor who *played* Bitá. Disappointed yet adamant in my quest for background information, I welcomed Freire's idea to interview Edimilson's grandmother and great-uncle, who were sitting outside. Yet they responded with blank stares when I asked about the "historical" Bitá. Freire gently interrupted to explain that *Tchom di Morgado* was a general summary of peasant strikes that occurred in Engenhos in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; OTACA had simply meant to interrogate the "agrarian question." I was stunned. When I had interviewed OTACA in 2004, following their Mindelact performance, I asked about the revolt as if it were a specific historical incident. Neither Freire nor the actors had corrected me.

This ethnographic moment revealed to me that the perspective on history I had brought to the field did not cohere with OTACA's vision in *Tchom di Morgado*. My understanding of history had been shaped by the chronologies and names of singular heroes that fall under the rubric of official history. OTACA, however, conveyed a cyclical pattern of labor abuse endured by a host of farmers over the centuries. Later, Freire told me an anecdote that confirmed this. When he had arrived in Mindelo for Mindelact 2004, João Branco asked him, "Narciso, why are you calling this a debut? I've researched Cape Verdean theatre. You performed *Tchom di*

Morgado in Santa Catarina around 1980.” Freire told Branco, “That was another play, a different story. Morgados were on Santiago for a long time. There isn’t only one *Tchom di Morgado!*”

I realized that this is what Freire wanted me to see by bringing me to Edimilson’s home. The play *is* a true story, but it is a constructed truth the actor weaves from the corpus of stories he has heard from the elderly in his family and community his whole life. Since Edimilson authored that historical truth when he created Bitá’s character, I could only learn it by talking to his personal founts, his grandmother and great-uncle. Although not aware of it, they did know the historical Bitá about whom I had inquired—Edimilson. In plays employing the historical imagination, mimesis often functions in reverse: the historical precedent is created in the image of the actor. In performance, Edimilson “mimes” Bitá into historical existence. This confounds Freddie Rokem’s claim that an actor in a historical drama can be a “hyper-historian,” or a “witness of the [historical] events *vis-à-vis* the spectators,”⁶³ but can never actually become the historical figure, nor does the actor believe this is possible.⁶⁴ On the contrary, the OTACA artists affirm a material connection between Bitá and Edimilson. In fact, they use their names interchangeably (for example, actress Nilda Vaz told me she played “Edimilson’s mother,” rather than Bitá’s mother, in *Tchom di Morgado*).⁶⁵

My interviews in Engenhos shed light on a research process that Freire calls “natural, something we do everyday.”⁶⁶ The OTACA actors’ accumulated knowledge of oral histories informs their performance. While Freire drafts the storylines for plays, actors are free to

⁶³ Freddie Rokem, *Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 25.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

⁶⁵ Nilda Vaz, personal interview, October 3, 2006. All quotes from Crioulo-language interviews are my own translations into English.

⁶⁶ Narciso Freire, personal interview, October 2, 2006.

improvise dialogue and gestures, as long as they keep to the plot.⁶⁷ Edimilson had especially poignant stories from which to draw. His great-uncle, Alvarino Monteiro, emphasizes that Morgados “owned the land even though they never bought it from anyone.”⁶⁸ His grandmother, Amélia Sousa, recalls the Morgado taking half her father’s straw and a fifth of his garden yearly. In the 1950s, the *morgado* Carlos Serra exiled her father, Tomás Moreira (Edimilson’s great-grandfather) from Engenhos because the farmer had filed a complaint at the town hall.⁶⁹ Moreira fled to the mountains.

Monteiro’s and Sousa’s oral narratives corroborate textual accounts of the *morgado* system in Cape Verde. Portugal’s 1836 decree abolishing slavery portended a crisis in the colonial economy. Yet since slavery in Cape Verde officially ended only in 1875, Portuguese settlers on Santiago had nearly 40 years to solidify a land-control system that would enable them to retain control over agriculture. By establishing contracts with *rendeiros* (renters who paid annual fees to sow the land) and *parceiros* (“partners” who ceded fractions of their produce to the proprietors), *morgados* could continue their labor oppression under the guise of employing “free” workers.⁷⁰ This system only ended with independence in 1975. The Santa Catarina municipality, which encompasses Engenhos, was the focal point of colonial agricultural exploitation. There, renters also endured brutal policing by the Morgado’s guards.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Alverino Monteiro and Amélia Sousa, personal interviews, October 2, 2006.

⁶⁹ Manuel Semedo Tavares, who was a guard for Serra at the time, recalls that a group of farmers were exiled in the 1950s for protesting the sharp rise in the cost of renting the *morgado*’s machinery for refining sugar cane. Personal interview, October 2, 2006.

⁷⁰ Cláudio Alves Furtado, *A Transformação das Estruturas Agrárias numa Sociedade em Mudança—Santiago, Cabo Verde* (Praia, Cape Verde: ICL, 1993), 48-58. Yet António Carreira points out that this rent-sharing system actually well predated slavery’s end, since Cape Verdean society had long included freed and escaped slaves who nevertheless lacked the socio-economic power to own land. See Carreira, *Cabo Verde: Formação e Extinção de uma Sociedade Escravocrata (1460-1878)* (Lisbon: Centro de Estudos da Guiné Portuguesa, 1972), 361-91.

⁷¹ Gottfried Stockinger, *Crónicas de Campo II: Ilha de Santiago* (Praia, Cape Verde: ICL, 1992), 7-12.

Engenhos residents maintain that their village bore the brunt of this brutality. They explained that most of the farmers' protests took the form of filing complaints against the Morgados or their guards in the Santa Catarina town hall. However, they also had a vague idea that sometime in the 1800s Engenhos executed a mass armed revolt that may have inspired the more famous 1910 uprising in Rubon Manel.⁷² Freire also had this impression, yet he did not go to the history books to seek it out. Suspicious of prejudicial colonial narratives of Cape Verdean history, Freire has always maintained that the authority of oral histories trumps that of textual accounts.⁷³



Figure 3: Manuel Semedo Tavares stands in front of the old *morgado* house in Engenhos, where he has worked as a guard since 1956.⁷⁴

Senna Barcelos's nineteenth-century accounts of Cape Verde provide details about the Engenhos uprising that lingers in local memory. In 1822, a throng of workers filed a legal

⁷² Alverino Monteiro and Amélia Sousa, personal interviews, October 2, 2006; Crisálida Moreira Correia, personal interview, October 4, 2006.

⁷³ Freire's distrust of the colonial narrative is evident in the written description he gave me of the agrarian abuse that inspired *Tchom di Morgado*. The document abounds with imagery of "savage beasts," which is how, according to Freire, colonial authorities and landlords viewed their black workers.

⁷⁴ Photo by the author.

complaint about the violence and economic abuse of a Colonel in Engenhos. When the government ruled in the Colonel's favor, the workers armed themselves and patrolled the Engenhos borders for months, threatening to kill any colonial representative who tried to enter.⁷⁵ Barcelos, a captain in the Portuguese military, reveals his colonial slant by concluding that a "learned" enemy of the Colonel must have incited the Engenhos workers to revolt,⁷⁶ implying that they lacked the intellectual ability to mobilize themselves. Twentieth-century historians echo this implication. António Carreira assumes that intransigent farmers were "imitating" the behavior of white *degradados*,⁷⁷ Portuguese criminals sentenced to live on the islands.

In this case, the historians' use of the word "imitation" disavows the historical agency of marginalized subjects. OTACA restores that agency by creating the transgressive image of a peasant worker whose motivation for striking comes not from the outside but from his own family's degradation. The memory of his father's death drives Bitá's revolt. Armed with a family history of trouble with land rights, Edimilson could create a historical persona who was a collage of Engenhos farmers who had been subjugated by the *morgado* system over the centuries: the exiled Tomás Moreira, the leaders of the 1822 revolt, and countless others.

The play's opening monologue provides a good example of how Edimilson the actor infused his character, Bitá, with his own perspectives. Freire had scripted Bitá's opening thoughts as private reflections, but through the course of rehearsals, Edimilson decided to pose them as direct addresses to the audience. During the Mindelact performance, Bitá first recounted his family's years of exploitation under the *morgado*, and then looked out into the audience to

⁷⁵ Senna Barcelos, *Subsídios para a História de Cabo Verde e Guiné*, vol. II, parte III, 2nd ed. (Praia, Cape Verde: IBNL 2003), 240-43.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 241.

⁷⁷ Carreira, *Cabo Verde: Formação e Extinção de uma Sociedade Escravocrata*, 362.

ask, “But people, why? Because they’re white? Because they speak Portuguese?”⁷⁸ This rhetorical device urged spectators to grapple with the racial, social, and linguistic factors that together constructed colonial authority. Thus, it invited “the participatory play of the spectator” that Elin Diamond admires in Brecht’s brand of theatrical mimesis.⁷⁹



Figure 4: Edimilson Sousa as “Bitá” in OTACA’s *Tchom di Morgado*⁸⁰

At the apex of his ire, Bitá constructed a provocative pose not unlike a Brechtian *gestus*: “a gesture, a word, an action, a tableau, by which [. . .] the social attitudes encoded in the playtext become visible to the spectator.”⁸¹ Grasping a hoe, a semiotic signifier of labor subjugation, low on the handle, his index finger and posture pointed outward and upward. Disparate body levels suggest other disparities—the labor and class distinctions that buttressed colonial authority, a hoped-for rupture with an oppressive past. Captured on film by Mindelact

⁷⁸ In Crioulo: “Ma genti, pamodi? Pamod es é branco? Pamod es ta papia Potugues?” From OTACA’s unpublished script for *Tchom di Morgado*, generously provided by Narciso Freire.

⁷⁹ Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis*, 48.

⁸⁰ Performed by OTACA for Mindelact 2004. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

⁸¹ Diamond, 52.

photographer João Barbosa, this image became an icon for OTACA's play that featured in a photography exhibit at Mindelact 2005 and in a festival review of Mindelact 2004 in *Theatre Journal*.⁸² A year later, it was splashed across the insert of a major Cape Verdean newspaper for a report on the new monument in Rubom Manel commemorating the 1910 upheaval.⁸³ The article did not mention the fact that the image was actually from OTACA's play, *Tchom di Morgado*, and not their earlier play, *Revolta di Rubom Manel*. Rather, the sub-heading, "the defiant Cape Verdean spirit," indicates that the image of Bita has now come to signify a national, a-temporal memory of revolt. Edimilson's poignant portrayal of an irate farm-worker became incorporated into the national imaginary via the festival's media coverage.



Figure 5: Monument commemorating the 1910 revolt in the town of Rubom Manel, Santiago Island. Photo by the author.

Edimilson's performance also accented features of oral accounts from Engenhos that historical texts conceal. Carreira, Cape Verde's most esteemed historian, claims that after slavery

⁸² Eunice Ferreira, "Mindelact: the Tenth Annual International Theatre Festival of Mindelo," *Theatre Journal* 57, no. 2 (2004): 272-77, at 273.

⁸³ Teresa Sofia Fortes, "Revolta de Rubom Manel: O espírito reivindicativo do Cabo-Verdiano," *A Semana*, September 23, 2005, sec. Kriolidadi: 1-3. Available in the Mindelact Documentation Center, #1087.

ended in 1875, the *morgados*' physical abuse ceased: their guards resorted to verbal threats to farmers, since "renters could no longer be shackled, whipped, or put in solitary confinement."⁸⁴ Yet the elderly in Engenhos speak plainly of these acts.⁸⁵ Of one vicious guard, Pepé, it was said, "If he kills one, he kills six."⁸⁶ OTACA stages what, according to an official history, never happened. In the final scene, Bitá is tied to a wooden post as the Colonel's soldiers brutally whip him. In the midst of the beating, Edimilson began jiggling his rear end as André, the Morgado's guard, swatted at it. This absurd image made spectators laugh. Later, I asked Freire why the group used comedy in a death scene. He explained that guards would taunt renters even when they were whipped. He guessed that Edimilson had used a silly movement to call attention to this. An actress from OTACA, Crisálida Correia, offered a different interpretation. She thought that Edimilson's wagging could be construed as a kind of resistance; in other words, he taunts the guards right back.⁸⁷

Edimilson's contradictory repertoire of gestures transfigures his forebears' oral histories into *gestic* mosaics that refuse to fit into one historical epoch. In the historical imagination, the actor is both the continuation of oral history and, upon leaving the stage and moving forward in his own life, embodies the future possibilities for which past struggles were waged. In our post-show interview after *Mindelact 2004*, Edimilson exclaimed: "You know, I've been thinking. My great-grandparents did not have it easy in that time. Me, a Crioulo myself, if it were that time

⁸⁴ Carreira, *Cabo Verde: Formação e Extinção de uma Sociedade Escravocrata*, 389.

⁸⁵ Yet two of my interviewees, formerly employed by *morgados*, downplayed this violence. For example, when I interviewed Henrique Mendes Correia, who was raised in the *morgado*'s house, his daughter Crisálida Correia was there. When she prompted him to talk about worker beatings, he said, "*O que passa, djá passa!*" (what has passed, has passed). Correia, personal interview, October 4, 2006.

⁸⁶ Alverino Monteiro, Personal interview, October 2, 2006

⁸⁷ Group interview, October 3, 2006. Unfortunately, Edimilson Sousa was away from Santiago at the time of the interview, so I was unable to get his explanation.

again, I *would be* Bitá!”⁸⁸ He punctuated this by raising his index finger just as he had onstage, slipping easily back into Bitá. Actor and legend were fused, and the past was re-cast.

2.5.2 *Tchom di Morgado*, Part II: Displacing the Past



Figure 6: The *morgado* and his guard in OTACA’s *Tchom di Morgado*⁸⁹

Tchom di Morgado also depicted the other strand of mimesis that Diamond identifies: a mimesis that “unravels” the very model it attempts to “double.”⁹⁰ Claudino Moreira, an actor from Assomada, played the Portuguese *Morgado*. He enacted “whiteness” by dressing in a beige Western-style suit and speaking formal Portuguese. This proved daunting for Claudino, who, like many Cape Verdeans, speaks mainly Crioulo in his everyday life. OTACA’s proclivity for ad-libbed dialogue made his task more difficult, since this meant Claudino had to improvise in his second language. Inevitably, he made errors, one of them conspicuous. As he was enlisting the

⁸⁸ Edimilson Sousa, personal interview, September 17, 2004.

⁸⁹ Featured are actors Claudino Moreira, left, and Claudio Correia, right. Performed by OTACA for Mindelact 2004. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

⁹⁰ Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis*, ii.

Colonel's aid in investigating the workers' failure to meet the demands of their leasing contracts, Claudino faltered on the correct gender for the adjective "bad:" he said, "os maus...as más...os maus arrendamentos." This sparked spontaneous audience laughter at the actor's expense. OTACA's decision to have a Cape Verdean actor represent a historical oppressor onstage could have enacted what Homi Bhabha calls colonial mimicry, the repetition of colonial discourse that subverts racial and linguistic hierarchies.⁹¹ Instead, it was the actor who became subverted by the language.

There is, however, another way to view this moment. By displacing a historical figure with his own persona, the actor simultaneously constructed a social critique. Working from Bhabha's definition of colonial mimicry and the slippage it enacts, Harry Elam claims that in theatre, slippage between actor and character is *productive* when race is foregrounded. Elam contends that an actor's negotiations among self, performing subject, and character prod spectators to grapple with historical significations of race. Thus, the text of a black performer's body, "visibly marked and read by the audience as 'black,'" interacts provocatively with the language of the performance text.⁹² Here, Claudino's black body marked him as Cape Verdean, while his speech signified a white Portuguese settler. When his Portuguese "slipped," spectators saw not a colonial proprietor but a black actor from rural Santiago struggling to adlib in Portuguese. This made visible a crucial social reality: the fact that the Portuguese language still wields power over Cape Verdeans today. As Cape Verde's only official language, Portuguese is the language of education, employment, media, and government—institutions not readily

⁹¹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 110-11.

⁹² Harry J. Elam, "The Black Performer and the Performance of Blackness: *The Escape; or, a Leap to Freedom* by William Wells Brown and *No Place To Be Somebody* by Charles Gordone" in *African American Performance and Theater History*, ed. Elam and David Krasner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 288-305, at 289.

accessible to the 25% of Cape Verde's population who are illiterate.⁹³ By “unraveling” the colonial model he mimed, Claudino revealed persisting links among language and authority in postcolonial Cape Verde. While it was at the actor's expense, the audience's laughter signified their recognition of this linguistic dynamic.

OTACA also displaced the past by critically transforming race representations in Engenhos history. In *Tchom di Morgado*, violence against Bitá emanates from the two characters designated Portuguese: the *morgado* and the Colonel. While André, the *morgado*'s Cape Verdean guard, warns Bitá to desist and leads the Colonel's troops to him, actor Claudio Correia portrays him as a coward who merely feigns to have authority. In fact, André is so afraid of Bitá's brawn that he must rehearse what he will say to Bitá in his field, while Bitá, for his part, waves the approaching guard away like a fly. In Engenhos, however, the elderly associate violence less with *morgados* than their Cape Verdean guards, whose names live on in infamy.⁹⁴ Recalls Monteiro, Edimilson's great-uncle, “if my father asked me to do something, I might take my time. If Pepé ordered me to do it, I would run.”⁹⁵ Head guards, or *encarregados*, were often the only visible authority on the Morgado's land, since many Portuguese *morgados* were absent landlords living in Portugal most of the year until harvest time.⁹⁶ Thus, OTACA altered the race and nationality of the adversaries of Engenhos oral histories, locating violence in the *morgados* and Colonels rather than their Cape Verdean guards.

Conditions of circulation impact theatrical choices. Recall that Freire kept the Mindelact context in mind while writing *Tchom di Morgado*. To represent Cape Verdean history to an

⁹³ *Educação: Censo 2000* (see note 56).

⁹⁴ Manuel Semedo Tavares, Alverino Monteiro, and Amélia Sousa, personal interviews, October 2, 2006; Henrique Mendes Correia, personal interview, October 4, 2006.

⁹⁵ Alverino Monteiro, personal interview, October 2, 2006.

⁹⁶ Carreira, *Cabo Verde: Formação e Extinção de uma Sociedade Escravocrata*, 389. Manuel Semedo Tavares affirms that before Carlos Serra arrived in 1947, all of the Portuguese *morgados* in Engenhos were absent landlords. Personal interview, October 2, 2006.

audience unfamiliar with its nuances, it is more straightforward to keep the identity of the colonial oppressor clear. Thus, OTACA restricted the role of oppressors to the Portuguese characters. Perhaps it would have been too ambiguous to depict the Cape Verdean guard as a complicit figure who moves between oppressor and oppressed. Yet the Engenhos oral histories suggest that this is exactly what guards did. In fact, guards often subjected renters to repressive rituals of their own invention.⁹⁷ As Foucault notes, these local, subtle mechanisms of power are what ultimately keep whole disciplinary systems intact. By choosing not to represent the guards' own methods of subjugation, OTACA's performance obscured the processes by which racial and colonial authority is constructed and maintained. Historically, Cape Verdean guards became proprietors themselves by currying favor with employers and earning enough money to buy their own land.⁹⁸ Cloaking themselves in authority by appropriating the policies and wealth of Portuguese *morgados*, they effected their own brand of transformational mimesis.

Much was at stake in OTACA's performance. Freire speaks of the urgency of educating Mindelact audiences about Santa Catarina's rich history—a goal he considers achieved with *Tchom di Morgado*.⁹⁹ Yet OTACA's tendency to stage Santiago history is falling out of favor with urban Mindelo audiences who have come to expect a more Western aesthetic, such as adaptations of *Three Sisters* or *King Lear*. Mindelo theatre artists tell me they are tired of plays with colonial themes, like *Tchom di Morgado*. If OTACA is the “carrier group” staking claims to

⁹⁷ For example, all of my Engenhos interviewees mentioned Pepé's arbitrary rule that the renters had to dress in a suit jacket before they could enter the *morgado*'s house to pay their rent. Since the renters were too poor to own a jacket, Pepé had one that he would “rent” to them at the door so they could enter and pay their land rent.

⁹⁸ Crisálida Correia, personal interview, October 4, 2006. Her father, Henrique Mendes Correia, recalls that most of the proprietors he knew in Santa Catarina were Cape Verdean. Carreira writes that as early as the late seventeenth century, there were black and mulatto proprietors on Santiago. See Carreira, *Cabo Verde: Formação e Extinção de uma Sociedade Escravocrata*, 387. Anjos links the dilution of the *morgados*' authority in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the social ascension of non-white owners of smaller parcels of land. José Carlos Gomes dos Anjos, *Intelectuais, Literatura e Poder em Cabo Verde* (Praia: INIPC, 2002), 47-48.

⁹⁹ Narciso Freire, personal interview, August 13, 2005.

Santa Catarina's cultural trauma, perhaps the largely Mindelense spectatorship at Mindelact is not the ideal audience for its claims. Paradoxically, however, the global stage might be the most powerful place for those claims. As Bond and Gilliam note, discursive struggles over history often resemble property battles, with "claims and counter-claims as to its veracity and its ownership."¹⁰⁰ Since *Tchom di Morgado* is a play about property rights, its thematic is easily extended into other realms. By holding fast to its mission of valorizing Santiago's history, OTACA advocated for its own "property rights" to the festival stage and its place within Cape Verde's theatrical canon. Significantly, at Mindelact 2005, Cape Verdean history returned to the stage, but that time it was a Portuguese troupe spinning the tale.

2.6 ESTE: Performing the Memory of Drought

Maio has long been one of Cape Verde's poorest, least populous, and most insular islands, receiving most of its food and materials from nearby Santiago.¹⁰¹ Because of its punishing, barren landscape, Maio was a penal colony for much of its colonial history. Its insularity made it a veritable jail during drought: hungry islanders watched in despair as ships coming from Santiago bringing relief supplies turned back because of rough seas.¹⁰² Drought in Cape Verde was also marked by colonial neglect: the Portuguese government, perhaps because of its own economic instability, looked on in silence at famines that claimed 15,000 Cape Verdean lives per year, as did the 1947-48 drought.¹⁰³ In Maio alone, 274 islanders died, about

¹⁰⁰ Bond and Gilliam, "Introduction," 17.

¹⁰¹ For centuries, the island's vast salt mines made it a hot spot for ships passing through to Europe and the Americas, but the salt trade declined in the mid-1800s and the economy never recovered. Textual accounts of Maio history are scarce, but see Germano Almeida, *Cabo Verde: Viagem Pela História das Ilhas* (Cape Verde: Ilheu Editora, 2003), 113-128; Meintel, *Race, Culture, and Portuguese Colonialism*, 38-39, 171.

¹⁰² Arsenio Bettencourt and Ney Tavares, personal interviews, October 6, 2006. Bettencourt gave me a thorough verbal account of the island's history, since there is such little published material.

¹⁰³ As a recent editorial in a major Cape Verdean newspaper states: "When we couldn't produce anything because of drought and multitudes of people died, the highest authority of command in these lands, instead of

20% of the population.¹⁰⁴ Yet besides these statistics, little has been written about that desolate time in Maio. Thus, oral histories are the *only* way to access that historical knowledge. One such story held dramatic appeal for Portuguese playwright and director Nuno Pino Custódio.

The story is that of Matilde Tavares, whose infant son died during the 1948 drought despite her attempts to secure food, water, and medicine for him. Ney Tavares, an amateur actor and writer on Maio Island, had written a play about his grandmother's ordeal. Yet Tavares lacked the power and resources to stage Matilde's story at Mindelact. Custódio, however, did not. The result was his company's production of *Mãe Preta*, at Mindelact 2005. Since Tavares and Custódio had met a year earlier at Mindelact 2004, the festival was the site that launched Matilde Tavares's story into global circulation. As Foucault warns, once subjugated knowledges are disinterred and "put into circulation," they run the risk of being re-appropriated by dominant discourses.¹⁰⁵ This was apparent in *Mãe Preta*, where the re-casting of the past constellated around a series of misunderstandings and cultural stereotypes. *Mãe Preta* illustrates the risks of interculturalism within a Lusophone venue in which Portuguese theatre artists still play dominant roles in artistic exchanges. In this case, funding from the former metropole also played a role in the circulation of history. *Instituto Camões*, a Portuguese-government institute, sponsored the production of *Mãe Preta* at Mindelact and ESTE's travel to Cape Verde.

2.6.1 *Mãe Preta*

ordering foodstuffs for the people, ordered them to expand the cemeteries." Firmo Pinto, editorial, *A Semana*, November 10, 2006, 19.

¹⁰⁴ António Carreira, *Cabo Verde: Aspectos Sociais. Secas e Fomes Do Século XX* (Lisbon: Biblioteca Ulmeiro, 1984), 117-18.

¹⁰⁵ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 86.

For Mindelact 2004, Custódio was invited to give a four-day playwriting workshop. One of his students was Ney Tavares, who told Custódio during a break, “I also write plays.”¹⁰⁶ Tavares described his play, *Mudjer Trabadjadera* (Crioulo for “working woman”), about his grandmother’s experience on Maio in 1948, a story his grandmother told him often before her death in 1996. Fascinated, Custódio told Ney that his theatre company would mount it. Although Custódio was not impressed with the script that Tavares later emailed him, he remained enthralled by the story. He resolved to write his own play about the oral history, *Mãe Preta* (Black Mother). After several calls to Tavares to discuss the story’s details, he worked with Portuguese actress Sandra Horta to devise the theatrical concept. In November 2004, just two months after Custódio and Tavares met at Mindelact, a 25-minute children’s version of *Mãe Preta* debuted in primary schools across Fundão, the Portuguese city home to Custódio’s theatre group ESTE. In January 2005, a full-length, revamped production debuted at Lisbon’s Casa de Comédia theater, where it played to a full house and received “effusive applause.”¹⁰⁷ This production soon toured to over 20 cities in Portugal and Spain, among them Coimbra, Salamanca, Setubal, and Tomar. In September 2005, *Mãe Preta* circled back to Cape Verde for Mindelact, where, according to statistics posted on ESTE’s website, *Mãe Preta* played to its largest crowd (335 spectators).¹⁰⁸

Mãe Preta is a one-person show in which Horta plays Filomena, the “black mother,” and a number of secondary characters. The performance opens with the stout figure of Filomena against a canvas backdrop. She sings the Crioulo-language song “Mudjer Trabadjadera” accompanied by onstage musicians. The song, which repeats the phrase “minine na costa”

¹⁰⁶ I have pieced together the following summary of the two men’s interactions from an interview with Custódio on June 11, 2006 and conversations with Tavares during my four-day stay on Maio, October 6-9, 2006.

¹⁰⁷ From ESTE’s website. <http://esteteatro.home.sapo.pt/> (accessed November 9, 2007).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

(“child on my back”), is Tavares’s: he wrote it for his own play and sent a tape recording to Custódio, who did the musical arrangement. Sounds of rain echo as Filomena dreams of ripe corn and peas. Making a boat from paper, she sails it along the ripples of a blue cloth, or *pano*, that she waves over the ground. It becomes a boat approaching with food, which Filomena begs not to turn back. Tracing a square center stage with hurried steps, Filomena arrives at the colonial administrator’s place, where she asks for a job. Horta conveys his “no” by responding dejectedly. Fastening the child, a wooden doll with a black mask matching Horta’s, on her back with her *pano*, she goes to Compadre (godfather) Sabino’s house. Receiving water and flour, she sets home to make porridge. When the child faints after drinking, Filomena dashes to the health center. Emerging from behind the canvas with a beard, Horta plays the nurse who makes wicked asides about his starving patients. He gives the child an injection that wakes him up. On the way back, however, the child reverts to silence. The play ends with Filomena raising his lifeless body above her head, crying, “Ainda estás no sono, pequeno?” (Are you still sleeping, little one?)

Mãe Preta effected a poetic rendering of a troubled time in Cape Verdean history, garnering the production much acclaim in Cape Verde. In his festival review, journalist Eduino Santos gave ESTE four (of five) stars, called the production “beautiful and moving,” and declared Sandra Horta “Best Actress” of the festival because of her homage to “Cape Verdean mothers who prove their courage during difficult times.”¹⁰⁹ Cape Verdean theatre directors called *Mãe Preta* “spectacular” and “one of the best shows ever at Mindelact.”¹¹⁰ Particularly admired was the production’s use of Cape Verdean cultural markers. For example, Horta mimes making a *catchupa* stew, Cape Verde’s national dish. She follows each ingredient (chicken, flour, broth,

¹⁰⁹ Eduino Santos, “Gostos não se discutem, aceitam-se ou não,” *Expresso das Ilhas*, September 21, 2005, 29. Available at the Mindelact Documentaiton Center, #1088.

¹¹⁰ Narciso Freire, personal interview, October 3, 2006, and Herlandson Duarte, personal conversation, September 24, 2006.

corn) with the distinctly *Crioulo* phrase: “Ka tém (don’t have)!” The production’s success was not lost on Tavares, who was proud that Custódio called him to the stage afterwards to acknowledge him as the teller of the oral history that inspired *Mãe Preta*. Later, Tavares told me this was the first time he was publicly “promoted as a writer.”

This reflects Tavares’s understanding that *Mãe Preta* is his play, *Mudjer Trabadjadera*, translated into Portuguese, and not a new play that Custódio wrote. As I have read both texts, it is clear to me that they are two different scripts. *Mãe Preta* is a densely literary, primarily Portuguese-language version that employs abstraction and symbolism.¹¹¹ *Mudjer Trabadjadera* is a succinct, *Crioulo*-language account that uses dramatic realism and a linear narrative. However, Tavares’s claim is not unsubstantiated: Custódio used his song, *Crioulo* phrases from his play, and many plot points. The mother visits the same people, the Administrator, Compadre Sabino, and the nurse, in the same order, even responding similarly when the Administrator hands her a note instead of a job (“My child is not a goat! He cannot eat paper”). Yet these contributions went unacknowledged in the official Mindelact program, which lists Custódio as director, but does not list an author.

Festival director João Branco concedes that this was a grave omission, but explains that ESTE had not included Tavares’s name on the list of contributing artists the group had submitted to Mindelact. Tavares’s name did appear, however, on a separate program that Custódio distributed at Mindelact, for which Tavares was grateful. That program, from *Mãe Preta*’s Portugal tour, lists Tavares as musical composer and explains that the oral history he told Custódio inspired the play. Says Tavares, “at least Nuno’s program gave me my rights.”¹¹²

¹¹¹ The text of *Mãe Preta* is accessible on-line at ESTE’s website: <http://esteteatro.home.sapo.pt>

¹¹² Ney Tavares, personal interview, October 6, 2006.

At Mindelact, “one’s rights” are not about financial gain but cultural capital. Custódio did not earn money from the performance, since ticket sales cover Mindelact’s own expenses, but his artistic prowess was heralded in the media and theatre community. Tavares had sought this acclaim by proposing his own play, *Mudjer Trabadjadera*, for Mindelact 2005. He hoped that chances to perform abroad might follow, perhaps in Portugal.¹¹³ Yet Tavares says that João Branco had told him that as an actor, he was not ready for the mainstage.¹¹⁴ While Tavares could not circulate to Portugal or the Mindelact stage, his grandmother’s story could, but only after it was sifted through the historical imagination of a Portuguese director.

The Mindelact program and Cape Verdean press described *Mãe Preta* as “based on a true account of a woman from Maio Island.”¹¹⁵ This constructs authenticity, “something that represents itself as reliable, trustworthy, and accepted,”¹¹⁶ which disguises the fact that Matilde Tavares’s oral history underwent significant changes as it circulated. One instance occurs at the level of the narrative itself. In *Mãe Preta*, Custódio wanted to capture the story-telling techniques Tavares used to relay Matilde’s story.¹¹⁷ However, he ended up altering the story because not all of the details were clear to him. When Tavares told me Matilde’s story, he said the baby died because the nurse gave him a lethal injection. His mother, Albertina, called it *injeçon di catchor*, a “dog’s shot” not intended for human beings. She says that Maio’s only nurse, a Cape Verdean

¹¹³ Ney Tavares, personal interview, September 16, 2005.

¹¹⁴ In 2004, Tavares had performed in a sketch with a Maio theatre group for Festival Off, an informal festival program that follows the nightly mainstage productions. Branco usually invites the strongest theatre group from Festival Off to perform on the mainstage the following year.

¹¹⁵ Mindelact 2005 program, available at the Mindelact Documentation Center; “Festival Mindelact 2005,” *A Semana*, September 9, 2005, sec. Kriolidadi: 2. A voiceover on Hulda Moreira’s documentary on Mindelact 2005 introduced the segment on *Mãe Preta* with a similar phrase. Moreira, *Mindelo—Palco das Ilhas*, DVD documentary, (Praia, Cape Verde: RTP África, 2005).

¹¹⁶ Sally Ann Ness, *Movement, and Culture: Kinesthetic and Visual Symbolism in a Philippine Community*, (Philadelphia: Philadelphia University Press, 1992), 190.

¹¹⁷ Nuno Custódio, personal interview, June 11, 2006.

working for the colonial state, gave poor people venomous injections just to get rid of them.¹¹⁸ In Tavares's play, stage directions indicate that the shot is injurious, and the nurse's aside is "now you won't bother me again." *Mãe Preta*, however, carries no hint of intentional killing. The child simply dies. This was Custódio's impression of Tavares's oral account: the nurse gives the baby a harmless shot to wake the child up, making him appear healthy so the mother will leave him alone.¹¹⁹ Crucially, when told by a Portuguese playwright, Matilde Tavares's story lacks a colonial adversary. In *Mãe Preta*, the antagonist is drought itself, with no allusion to the state's handling of sickness. In Albertina's telling of her mother's story, the colonial adversary serves a key narrative function: he is the vehicle for moral closure. Of the nurse's sudden death years later, she said, "Jesus punished him," pointing upward to indicate divine retribution.¹²⁰

These divergent understandings of Matilde's story engage vastly different interpretive frameworks. Kristin M. Langellier outlines key distinctions between personal narratives as performance, social process, and political praxis.¹²¹ The first function, performance, recognizes that the story-telling event is always mediated by the designs of the teller, expectations of the listener, and the particular speech communities' norms of narrative traditions.¹²² Albertina performed her mother's narrative when she gestured upward in a clear attempt to impress upon her audience (me, as researcher) the facticity of the nurse's iniquitous act and the resulting moral consequence (his inexplicable passing). Albertina also illustrated how narratives operate as social

¹¹⁸ Albertina Tavares Silva, personal interview, October 7, 2006. Albertina would not tell me the nurse's family name for fear that the family's friends living on Maio would find out and give her trouble.

¹¹⁹ Nuno Custódio, personal interview, June 11, 2006.

¹²⁰ Albertina Tavares Silva, personal interview, October 7, 2006.

¹²¹ Kristin M. Langellier, "Personal Narratives: Perspectives in Theory and Research," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 9, no.4 (1989): 243-76.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 251.

process.¹²³ Her version of events conveys the utter dependency of the poor of her community on local colonial administrators, Portuguese and Cape Verdean alike, with questionable ethics. Beyond transmitting details, her narrative shaped an ideological relationship.

Custódio suppressed this relationship with his alternate ending, the baby dying in his sleep. As Langellier observes, the uses one makes of personal narratives often serves a political interest.¹²⁴ Custódio's reading of the oral history elides an interrogation of the colonial circumstances under which the infant's death occurred. While I do not doubt his assertion that he and Tavares had difficulty understanding each other during their phone conversations (especially since Tavares's Portuguese was perhaps inflected with Crioulo, his mother tongue, which Custódio does not speak),¹²⁵ it is also possible that he heard the story selectively. Allowing himself to be confronted with an intentional killing would entail a witnessing that, in Roger I. Simon's terms, unsettles one's knowledge.¹²⁶ In other words, "hearing" this detail might have had the undesirable effect of accepting his nation's complicity with colonial malpractice, even when it was actually carried out by Cape Verdean employees. This is what Simons calls "unforeseen memory,"¹²⁷ a memory not one's own that nonetheless carries weighty personal implications for the hearer. Witnesses have the ethical responsibility to internalize that external memory, grapple with it, and shape its legacy for the future: one that does not reproduce inequalities of power. Custódio's misunderstanding of Matilde's memories represented a lost opportunity for spectators and artists alike to interrogate Portuguese colonialism and its persisting legacy in Cape Verde.

¹²³ Ibid., 265.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 267.

¹²⁵ Nuno Custódio, personal interview, June 11, 2006.

¹²⁶ Roger I. Simon, *The Touch of the Past: Remembrance, Learning, and Ethics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). My thanks to Sandra L. Richards for pointing me to this source and this angle.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 93.

The most distinct transformations that accompanied the oral history's circulation concern the representation of the Cape Verdean mother. It is here, I would argue, that Custódio displaced the past with his own preconceived notions (or imaginings) of African mothers. First of all, the title "Black Mother" racializes her. Some of my Cape Verdean friends called the title intentional exoticism, since most Cape Verdeans self-identify as "Creole," not black.¹²⁸ Tavares himself objects to it. While his title "working woman" signifies labor, Custódio's title foregrounds race. He believes that this continues a Portuguese colonial tendency to reify difference by constantly referring to Cape Verdeans as *pretos* and *negros* (blacks).

Custódio explains that he chose the title because the play debuted in Portugal, where "black" signifies Africa.¹²⁹ Thus, "authentic" blackness became a "trope manipulated for cultural capital."¹³⁰ In fact, the term "black mother" contrasts sharply with the name Tavares and his siblings grew up calling Matilde. Since their grandmother and mother raised them together, they called Matilde "old mother" and their mother Albertina, "young mother."¹³¹ "Black mother" emphasizes race at the expense of Matilde's astounding parenting abilities: she raised her eight children and Albertina's five over a period spanning Cape Verde's two worst twentieth-century droughts (1941-3; 1947-8).¹³²

Mãe Preta also conceals the back-breaking labor Matilde performed in her life. In *Mãe Preta*, Filomena constantly calls herself a "*mulher sem trabalho*" (woman without work). Yet the

¹²⁸ In a personal conversation on September 24, 2006, filmmaker and cultural promoter Tambla said that "Suffering Mother" or "Mother of All of Us" would have been better choices.

¹²⁹ Nuno Custódio, personal conversation, September 18, 2005. In an interview on June 11, 2006, he explained that Horta originally chose the title "on the level of instinct" and he agreed because it captured the spirit of the piece. He admits that in Cape Verde, the title "black mother" makes as little sense as a Portuguese play entitled "white mother" would if performed in Portugal.

¹³⁰ E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 3-5.

¹³¹ Ney Tavares, personal interview, October 8, 2006.

¹³² Carreira, *Cabo Verde: Aspectos Sociais*, 124.

Matilde of Albertina's memory would rise at dawn every morning and walk to the mountains of Figueira, about four kilometers from her home. There, she would transport rocks on her head to a nearby construction site, all while carrying her baby on her back. Afterwards, Matilde would make three long trips to the Vila, Maio's major town, carrying water to sell at the salt mines.¹³³ While Tavares's script similarly does not include these episodes of Matilde's labor, the title, "working woman," pays homage to it. In *Mãe Preta*, fantasy substitutes work: Filomena visualizes an elaborate banquet, filling her mind with food to quiet her empty belly. Custódio's play, therefore, evidences a certain failure to imagine the lengths to which people went to survive the traumatic experience of drought. Fantasy suggests a passive response to these dire circumstances, while Matilde's oral history depicts a woman with a clear sense of agency who constantly redoubled her efforts to feed her child.

Certain transformations in the representation of the Cape Verdean mother can be attributed to the anti-realist aesthetic Custódio chose for his staging.¹³⁴ For example, actress Sandra Horta moved in a very stylized manner. In an intensely poetic passage early in the play, Filomena dares the elusive rain drops to fall like a tempest, crashing down on the islanders' heads with the weight of their cries and laments. To act out this speculative torrent, she lowers her body in a jerky, mechanical fashion until she is almost on her knees, reciting with each movement: "Here's one drop, *pim!* Here's another, *pim!* Another one, *pim, pim!*" To explain such choices, Custódio reminded me that Horta had to be a consummate story-teller, mobilizing all of her corporeal resources to tell the story.¹³⁵ As a result of her overstated movements, Filomena often drifted into caricature, with the Mindelact audience often responding with

¹³³ Albertina Tavares Silva, personal interview, October 7, 2006.

¹³⁴ Nuno Custódio, personal interview, June 11, 2006.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

surprised laughter (such as with the raindrop moment). This was all right, Custódio contended, because the goal was not to do ethnography but compelling theatre.¹³⁶

Yet actress Sandra Horta does use an ethnographic vocabulary to describe the linguistic aspect of their research process. On a documentary of Mindelact 2005, Horta explains that Custódio's earlier residencies in the country informed their depiction of Cape Verdean characters: "Nuno had been here. He observed people on the street [. . .], their pronunciation when they speak Portuguese [. . .]."¹³⁷ He then coached Horta on that accent. However, Filomena's manner of speaking Portuguese produced a critical disconnect for many regular Mindelact attendees. Certain spectators detected a clichéd rendering of the way Portuguese is spoken in Africa. American spectator Jeff Hessney questioned Filomena's "choppy, badly-spoken 'Angolan' Portuguese," as though the group were deliberately playing into stereotype in their production.¹³⁸ Mindelo actor Elton Carlos Silva remembers that the actress's Portuguese "sounded more Angolan or Mozambican than Cape Verdean." Because of this, he continues, Filomena seemed more like a "mixture of African ethnicities" than a Cape Verdean woman. He said that it was as if "the group had tried to approximate Cape Verde, but did not succeed."¹³⁹

Filomena's physical representation also created a certain disconnect for some spectators. One example of this was the black mask. Made from a thick brown plaster, the mask featured large, raised cheekbones, wide white eyes, and a thick band of red that hung just over Horta's own painted red lips. Tavares noted the same tendency in the black mask that he did in the title 'Black Mother:' it called attention to the racial difference between Filomena and the actress who

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Sandra Horta, interview by Hulda Moreira, *Mindelo—Palco das Ilhas* (see note 112).

¹³⁸ Jeffrey Hessney, e-mail message to the author, December 2006. Festival director João Branco made a similar observation to me in casual conversation in September 2007.

¹³⁹ Elton Carlos Silva, personal interview, March 1, 2007.

portrayed her.¹⁴⁰ For Custódio, however, the black mask is simply a reflection of his training in Commedia Dell’Arte theatre techniques and his belief that character development should happen “from the outside in” rather than the Stanislavskian “inside out.”¹⁴¹



Figure 7: Sandra Horta as Filomena in ESTE’s *Mãe Preta*¹⁴²

Yet the mask is only one facet of the representation of the black female body. Horta’s costume is stuffed in the bosom and buttocks so that her slender figure is transformed into a stout body with a protruding behind. To explain this choice, Custódio refers to the “principle of the opposite:” in theatre, it makes a stronger statement to create an image that contradicts what one wishes to convey. She is starving, but she is plump. There is a drought, but we hear rain falling. There is no food, but she talks of feasts and *catchupa*. Custódio attributes this principle to

¹⁴⁰ Ney Tavares, personal interview, October 8, 2006.

¹⁴¹ Nuno Custódio, personal interview, June 11, 2006.

¹⁴² Performed for Mindelact 2004. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

Hegelian philosophy and Brechtian theatre.¹⁴³ Indeed, it echoes Diamond's synopsis of the Brechtian dialectic as "a 'zigzag' of contradictions."¹⁴⁴

The image of the African mother in *Mãe Preta*, however, begs an engagement with historical associations the West has made between the black female and a full figure. Writing on nineteenth-century European exhibits of Sarah Bartmann, the "Venus Hottentot," Sander Gilman shows how scientists claimed her large buttocks were proof of bestial sexuality, which ranked her near the ape.¹⁴⁵ Large buttocks on black women became an established stereotype. Homi Bhabha defines stereotype as an association that "vacillates between what is always 'in place,' already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated."¹⁴⁶ In Portugal, an image of the African mother as a pear-shaped black woman exists in tourist culture. On the banks of Porto's Douro River, a touristy restaurant called "Filha da Mãe Preta" ("The Black Mother's Daughter") features an image of a black woman who could be Filomena's twin. Epitomizing what bell hooks calls "eating the other,"¹⁴⁷ the restaurant commodifies the "Black Mother" image, offering it up to tourists for *consumption*. This image is anxiously repeated, I argue, in Custódio's production. To depict Filomena, his historical imagination drew largely from an iconography of an African other already known and "in place." Thus, his re-casting of the past substituted cultural stereotype for oral history.

¹⁴³ Nuno Custódio, personal interview, June 11, 2006.

¹⁴⁴ Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis*, 49.

¹⁴⁵ Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 85.

¹⁴⁶ Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 95.

¹⁴⁷ bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 21.



Figure 8: A sign hanging outside the restaurant *Filha da Mãe Preta* (the Black Mother’s Daughter), along the Douro River banks in Porto, Portugal¹⁴⁸

Performing a stereotype can be a productive way to open up an honest dialogue about race as long as those present can openly challenge each other.¹⁴⁹ Presumably, such a dialogue can only happen when the stereotype is recognized as such. Custódio’s ardor for the “principle of the opposite” prevents him from seeing the Black Mother stereotype. Yet Cape Verdean spectators also accepted Horta’s performance and the play itself as realistic representations. Actor Dany Santos from Maio said he recognized his island’s history and culture in what he saw.¹⁵⁰ Mindelo director Herlandson Duarte called the piece “pure,” meaning that Custódio captured a Cape Verdean sentiment so well that it was as if he were Cape Verdean. Duarte even claimed that the mask looked just like the face of a famous Cape Verdean singer.¹⁵¹ Albertina recalls that when watching the DVD of *Mãe Preta*, “I saw the woman with a baby on her back

¹⁴⁸ Photo by the author.

¹⁴⁹ Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness*, 240-41.

¹⁵⁰ Dany Santos, personal interview, September 17, 2005.

¹⁵¹ Herlandson Duarte, personal conversation, September 24, 2006.

and I recognized my mother and began to cry.”¹⁵² I do not suggest that these impressions are wrong. Rather, I contend that the festival mechanism can impede frank evaluations of historical representation, since a veneer of authenticity can paper over critical transformations in the oral history being staged. In *Mãe Preta*, the fact that a Cape Verdean mother’s courageous struggle was celebrated at all struck powerful emotional cords with Cape Verdeans in attendance, particularly mothers.¹⁵³ Undoubtedly, this helped to override, or render irrelevant, some of the distortions produced. Further, the mask as theatrical device produces an abstraction, which perhaps allowed spectators to read any number of associations onto it.¹⁵⁴

Although Custódio’s version of Matilde’s story was the one the Mindelact Festival authorized, this did not leave Tavares without recourse. In two newspaper interviews in Cape Verde, Tavares went on record saying that *Mãe Preta* was his play.¹⁵⁵ I call this “reverse appropriation,” a way to reclaim the oral history he himself could not perform on the festival stage. Tavares went straight to the media to stake out the cultural capital he felt the festival program denied him. He also requested a copy of my DVD of *Mãe Preta* so he could submit it to the Portuguese embassy to boost his application for an artist’s visa to study theatre in Portugal. Reverse appropriation can thus be wielded as a tactic for one’s own global circulation. Tavares’s refusal to be silent about his staging rights to Matilde’s oral history proved fruitful. Festival

¹⁵² Albertina Tavares Silva, personal interview, October 7, 2006.

¹⁵³ In her documentary *Mindelo—Palco das Ilhas* (see note 112), Hulda Moreira observes that *Mãe Preta* “touched Cape Verdean mothers.” After making this comment in her voiceover, she interviews one such spectator who attests to this. In 2006, I asked a regular attendee of Mindelact to talk about the show from 2005 that she remembers most. A mother herself, she said *Mãe Preta* because it dealt with the anguish of losing a child.

¹⁵⁴ My thanks to Sandra L. Richards for pushing me to examine these two angles on misreadings of the production.

¹⁵⁵ “Teatro alastra no Maio,” *A Semana*, 7 October 2005, sec. Kriolidadi: 6. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #1024. Ney Tavares, interview by Pedro Miguel Cardoso, “Quero mergulhar o Maio no teatro,” *A Semana on line*, February 18, 2006.

director João Branco slotted Tavares's production of his original play, *Mudjer Trabadjadera*, for the Mindelact 2007 "off" program.

2.6.2 *Mudjer Trabadjadera*

Jeffrey Alexander argues that claims to cultural trauma can only be successfully made by carrier groups and agents with the resources or authority to "disseminate [. . .] trauma claims."¹⁵⁶ If the Mindelact stage is a site wherein Cape Verdean theatre artists vocalize their claims to a traumatic colonial past, then it is apparent that not all performers have the necessary resources or cultural capital to arrive there. Ney Tavares was one such performer. Arguably, though, his grandmother's story did become transferred into the Cape Verdean national memory of drought via the acclaim *Mãe Preta* earned in Cape Verdean newspaper reviews and in journalist Hulda Moreira's documentary of Mindelact 2005, which aired several times on Cape Verdean channels. Still, *Mãe Preta* was not the story that Tavares wanted to tell about his grandmother.

For Festival "Off" at Mindelact 2007, Tavares finally got the chance to tell that story. I was grateful for the opportunity to see his performance of *Mudjer Trabadjadera*. Earlier that year, at Tavares's request, I had spoken to João Branco and advocated for his place on the "off" program. I felt a responsibility to do this, since, as a researcher who had interviewed both Tavares and Custódio, I had a clear picture of their interactions. I knew that Tavares felt he had not received artistic credit the first time around and that he still wanted to be able to perform his version of the oral history.

At Mindelact 2007, however, I discovered that certain conditions of circulation had resulted in Tavares's play looking very much like Custódio's. As Branco had told Tavares to limit his cast members to two, he had cut five characters from his script. *Mudjer Trabadjadera*

¹⁵⁶ Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," 27.

featured only an actress and an on-stage guitarist, Tavares himself. Thus, the *mise-en-scène* closely resembled that of *Mãe Preta*. Lacking an actor to play the nurse, Tavares also did not represent the intentional killing of the child. Instead, the mother retreated to the hospital (an offstage room) and returned carrying the dead child in her hands. The synopsis in the program read, “o menino acabou por morrer de fome” (the child ends up dying of hunger),¹⁵⁷ similar to how the baby dies in *Mãe Preta*. It is possible that Tavares, faced with the dilemma of cutting his text and cast, arrived at these specific choices through viewing Custódio’s production in 2005. In this case, Matilde’s oral history underwent a double transformation in its two circulations to the Mindelact stage. Yet it was once again framed as “authentic” in the program: “Uma história verdadeira da ilha do Maio” (A true story from Maio Island).¹⁵⁸

The play’s reception was as uneven as that of other Cape Verdean history plays performed for Mindelact. One Cape Verdean spectator, Tambla, commented that the audience perhaps grew restless with the performance’s slow rhythm (interestingly, he noted that the slow pace of the mother’s search for food seemed to harmonize with the pace of life on Maio, a small and relatively quiet island). Yet he also noticed moments when the audience responded in a less than respectful way; for example, they laughed during the closing funeral procession. “The Mindelact public can be cruel towards plays coming here from other islands,” he remarked.¹⁵⁹

One moment that they applauded warmly, however, was when the president of the Maio recreational club, which had sponsored the production, thanked the audience for attending *Mudjer Trabadjadeira*, a play “de autoria Ney Tavares” (of the authorship of Ney Tavares). I glanced down at my Festival Off program, where Tavares’s name was also listed as playwright.

¹⁵⁷ “Mindelact 2007 – Festival Off,” <http://mindelact.com/agenda.htm> (accessed November 10, 2007).

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Tambla, personal interview, September 14, 2007.

For me, the moment resonated with cultural significance, since Tavares was finally receiving recognition for his creative work at Mindelact. Later, Tavares told me that he would be leaving Mindelact “cheio de orgulho” (full of pride) that year. Perhaps the measure of his success was that he had re-cast the past in a way that he believed paid homage to Matilde’s memory.

2.7 Chapter Conclusion

When Gaonkar and Povinelli urge us to consider the matrices of circulation that transfigure cultural texts, they name only discursive methods: coffeehouse chats, novels, and newspapers.¹⁶⁰ However, when performers enact historical narratives, they reveal the body itself to be a matrix of circulation.¹⁶¹ Imagining history theatrically demands that the past take on a material body that will always mark an oral history with substantial transfigurations. As these bodies and stories circulate through diverse spaces, performance venues, and cultural contexts, various artists use their own interpretive strategies to attach them to a vast array of ideological narratives that constitute identity claims. Cultural representations of historical, geographical, or racial “others” are ultimately self-referential; we mime in order to inscribe parallels and mark distances between ourselves and the objects of our mimesis. By scrutinizing the troublesome relationship among performing subject, object of representation, and the theatrical transformation that separates them, we gain a clearer perspective on the ideological minefield upon which performance rests.¹⁶² After all, the vexed debate about who gets to tell history’s story is always haunted by its antithesis: whose story does history tell?

¹⁶⁰ The authors are explicitly referencing Habermas’s theorization of the public sphere and Anderson’s notion of the nation as imagined community. See Gaonkar and Povinelli, “Technologies of Public Forms,” 389-90.

¹⁶¹ My thanks to Daniel Smith for helping me make this theoretical connection.

¹⁶² See the conclusion to Tejumola Olaniyan, *Scars of Conquest / Masks of Resistance: The Invention of Cultural Identities in African, African-American, and Caribbean Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

CHAPTER THREE

Performing the authentic(s): Women's labor and sexuality in the festival arena

3.1 Chapter Introduction

From 2004-06, the Mindelact Festival featured a string of performances that placed Cape Verdean women's labor and sexuality front and center. Spotlighting a cross-section of rural and urban women from Cape Verde's two major population poles, Santiago and São Vicente Islands, the productions illuminated the role of gender in the social construction of the *badiu* and *sampadjudu* regional identities.¹⁶³ At Mindelact 2004, Cape Verde's celebrated dance troupe, Raiz di Polon, staged *Duas Sem Três* ("Two Without Three"), a choreographic fantasia about a Muse of the City and Muse of the Countryside, both of whom lose their virginity early and are later abandoned by lovers and left to the solitude of housework. In *Maria Badia*, performed at Festival "Off" 2006, a Praia actress performed a monologue about the Santiaguense female subject, moving seamlessly from introspective fieldworker to bawdy urban fish-seller. That same year, the Mindelo theatre group GTCCPM¹⁶⁴ staged a seamy version of Mindelense sexuality. In *Mulheres na Lajinha* ("Women at Lajinha Beach"), four female friends discuss "genuinely Cape Verdean" coital positions and gossip ruthlessly about their neighbors' sexual escapades.

Reception theorist Marco di Marinis claims that arousing an audience's attention at the theatre depends upon the successful manipulation of various dialectics: the novel and the known,

¹⁶³ See chapter one for a brief historicization of the *badiu* and *sampadjudu* identities, which are tied to Santiago Island and São Vicente Island, respectively.

¹⁶⁴ Grupo de Teatro do Centro Cultural Português do Mindelo (The Theatre Group of the Mindelo Portuguese Cultural Center).

the strange and the familiar, the unexpected and the predictable.¹⁶⁵ In this chapter, I draw on the three Mindelact performances to ask: What happens when the frustration of spectator expectations turns upon gender role reversal and transformation? What are the implications for the actresses, the female populations they represent, and their society at large? To address these questions, I construct analyses of each performance that draw deeply on insights the actresses and dancers provided in interviews and during my performance-based ethnographic work at dance classes and theatre rehearsals in 2007. I also take into account each performance's "conditions of reception," such as publicity and position on the festival program.¹⁶⁶ Ultimately, I argue that the gender transformations the performers enact are already germinating in their own lives. The festival arena gives them space to theorize their own transformative quotidian practices, which then have the potential to "trickle back" to other women in their communities.

3.2 Theoretical Implications: Women in National Imaginaries and in the Festival Venue

The performances examined in this chapter provide fertile ground for examining the vexed relationship between representations of women and cultural "authenticity." Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis observe that women often serve as the "symbolic figuration" of nations.¹⁶⁷ The festival productions under consideration here illustrate how performance contributes to this symbolic configuration, since the characters are constructed as some version of the "typical" Cape Verdean woman. Dancer Bety Fernandes describes *Duas Sem Três* as the story of the Cape Verdean woman's "way of being" and the suffering she undertakes while waiting for a departed man; actress Célia Varela calls *Maria Badia* a snippet of the quotidian life of a *badia* (the female

¹⁶⁵ Marco De Marinis, "Dramaturgy of the Spectator," trans. Paul Dwyer, *TDR: The Drama Review* 31, no. 2 (1987): 100-114, at 110.

¹⁶⁶ Ric Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁶⁷ Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, "Introduction," *Woman-Nation-State*, ed. Anthias and Yuval-Davis (London: MacMillan, 1989), 1-15, at 9.

form of *badiu*) from Santiago; director João Branco claims that *Mulheres na Lajinha* is an “homage” to Cape Verdean women’s zest for life in spite of the difficulties they encounter in their day-to-day lives.¹⁶⁸ By foregrounding the sexuality of women from Santiago and São Vicente, the performances also illuminate the social processes by which representations of women’s sexual practices become constitutive of ethnic difference (here, the *badiu* and *sampadjudu* identities).¹⁶⁹

By virtue of entering the festival market, the performances beg an engagement with the social and economic implications of circulating notions of African women and “authenticity” to theatre venues comprising national and international spectatorships. Festivals are important sites for evaluating how theatre produces new relationships between gender and “authenticity” in an age of circulation. As I will discuss, these festival productions manage to script alternate narratives to Cape Verde’s cultural codes for labor roles and sexual relationships, even while the festival context may threaten to construct them as mere national representation. Before considering the specifics of the festival context, it is first helpful to review how women are often symbolically figured within national imaginaries.

Anne McClintock argues that nation-states write women into national narratives via “family” metaphors that ultimately disable female agency.¹⁷⁰ In this familiar imagery, the nation may be gendered female, but the “patriarchs” are the ones who safeguard her sanctity. Thus, “patriotism” means entrusting the nation-state’s operation to them while enshrining women as bearers and preparers of future citizens (for women, however, the privileges of citizenship often

¹⁶⁸ Bety Fernandes, personal interviews September 18, 2004 and July 30, 2007; Célia Varela, personal interview, June 4, 2007; João Branco, “Teatralidade em Germano Almeida,” director’s note in the *Mulheres na Lajinha* program for March, Theatre Month 2007. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center.

¹⁶⁹ Anthias and Yuval-Davis, “Introduction,” 10.

¹⁷⁰ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 357.

dangle out of reach).¹⁷¹ McClintock suggests that national iconography often cements women into their role as metaphorical “mothers” of the nation.¹⁷² In Cape Verde, an example of this iconography is the emblem adopted by the government-sponsored Organization of Women of Cape Verde (OMCV).¹⁷³ The image emphasizes the primacy of motherhood in Cape Verdean women’s lives: two ears of corn encircle a mother with a child on her back, a hoe in her right hand, and a book under her left arm.¹⁷⁴ Whether she moves within an agricultural or educational realm (or both), it is the child who “centers” her.

Performance carries spectacular potential to destabilize the gender narratives etched into national iconography. Significantly, six out of the seven women represented in *Duas Sem Três*, *Maria Badia*, and *Mulheres na Lajinha* are emphatically *not* mothers (a character in *Mulheres* even describes how she performs rigorous vaginal irrigations with vinegar after every sex act to prevent pregnancy).¹⁷⁵ Thus, they cannot assume their assigned places in the “nation-state as family” metaphor. De-emphasizing motherhood allows all these performances to isolate and target key variables of the female experience, namely the interplay of socio-economic factors in Cape Verdean women’s labor and sexuality. As reflexive explorations of the relatedness of race,

¹⁷¹ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 358; Deniz Kandiyoti, “Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory*, ed. Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 376-91, at 376-77. An example of this rhetoric is a 1981 speech given by Cape Verde’s then-president Aristides Pereira at a conference on women’s issues. Pereira referred to “the decisive role played by mothers in the education of what tomorrow will be the citizen of our country.” See *OMCV: I Conferência Nacional das Mulheres de Cabo Verde—Documentos* (Praia, Cape Verde: Grafedito, 1981), 11.

¹⁷² McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 378. Her example is a 1913 monument to Afrikaner women who were victims of South Africa’s Anglo-Boer War. Rather than commemorating the women’s militant contributions as fighters, the statue depicts a motionless weeping mother holding a baby, relegating her to a passive role within an emerging Afrikaner nationalism.

¹⁷³ Organização das Mulheres de Cabo Verde.

¹⁷⁴ See the description in *OMCV: I Conferência Nacional*, 85.

¹⁷⁵ One character from *Mulheres na Lajinha*, Adelina, is a mother but she mentions her children only minimally.

class, and gender, they are dynamic, embodied manifestations of the “intersectional” approach called for time and again in feminist research.¹⁷⁶

By focusing on Santiaguense and São Vicentian women, the performances demonstrate how these regional identities and their accompanying racial associations are produced. As the performers enact the quotidian lives of *badias* and *sampadjudas* onstage, they participate in the ongoing historical and social construction of them. By creating new aesthetic paradigms for these women’s labor, as well as new social scripts for their sexualities, they reveal the identities to be in flux and capable of re-definition onstage and off. Black feminist scholars emphasize that it is women’s practical, everyday experience that breeds new theoretical paradigms.¹⁷⁷ This is what Cape Verdean actresses and dancers do when they theatricalize washing clothes, planting seeds, eating lunch, or enacting sexual strategies. Since all of the artists featured in this chapter helped to devise the productions in which they performed at Mindelact, they were not acting out a script written by someone else but actively writing their own. In doing so, they generated multiple, and sometimes conflicting, versions of the “authentic” Cape Verdean woman.

¹⁷⁶ See, for example, Kimberle Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics,” in *Critical Race Feminism*, ed. Adrien Katherine Wing, 2nd ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 23-33, and the following works by bell hooks: *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990); *Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies* (New York: Routledge, 1996); *Where We Stand: Class Matters* (New York: Routledge, 2000). In the realm of postcolonial theory, see T. Minh-ha Trinh, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989) and Sara Suleri, “Women Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition,” in Chrisman and Williams, *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory*, 244-56. In the African context, including Cape Verde, see Fikes, “Santiaguense Cape Verdean Women in Portugal: Labor Rights, Citizenship, and Diasporic Transformation,” (Ph.D. Diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 2000), and “Emigration and the Spatial Production of Difference from Cape Verde,” in *Race and Globalization: Transformations in the Cultural Production of Blackness*, ed. Kamari Maxine Clarke and Deborah A. Thomas (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 154-70; Filomina Chioma Steady, “African Feminism: a Worldwide Perspective,” in *Women in Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, Sharon Harley, and Andrea Benton Rushing (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1987), 3-24.

¹⁷⁷ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics Of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990); hooks, *Yearning*, 48; D. Soyini Madison, “That Was My Occupation: Oral Narrative, Performance, and Black Feminist Thought,” in *Exceptional Spaces: Essays in Performance and History*, ed. Della Pollock (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 319-42, at 319-20.

Centering on the quotidian allowed the dancers and actresses to shift between the “novel” and “known” modes that, according to di Marinis, captures spectatorial attention. They took what was known (household labor, courting rites, market selling) and performed it in novel ways. Also significant was *how* they performed it. Each performance employed different ways of “speaking” Cape Verdean women’s experiences. *Duas Sem Três* used the corporeal language of dance, *Mulheres na Lajinha* depicted women voicing taboo sex-talk, and the market woman in *Maria Badia* took on the socially proscribed role of rapper. Attending to the heteroglossic nature of women’s voices in theatre is critical because “voice” is such an important trope in studies of women’s subjectivity (only think of Spivak’s polemical question, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” and the volumes of critical responses it generated).¹⁷⁸ Like the Black American women writers Mae Henderson discusses, Cape Verdean women in theatre exercise the ability to “speak in tongues,” or transform diverse language forms into public discourse.¹⁷⁹

How might a festival context impact the reception of women’s multivocal performances of the quotidian? Theorists of festival venues might be skeptical of the productions’ transformative potential. Ric Knowles suggests that international arts festivals take locally specific performances and display them as mere national representation, which results in spectators glossing over real differences among theatre pieces emerging from the same national space.¹⁸⁰ Holledge and Tompkins assert that festival milieus create metonymic relationships between a *particular* cultural expression and an entire culture (Kathakali dance, for example, may be advertised or interpreted as “authentically Indian” when it is actually a cultural

¹⁷⁸ Among the many places Gayatri Spivak’s seminal essay has been reprinted is in Chrisman and Williams, *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, 66-111. See also bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston: South End Press, 1989) and Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi, *Gender in African Women’s Writing: Identity, Sexuality, and Difference* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

¹⁷⁹ Mae Gwendolyn Henderson, “Speaking in Tongues: Dialogics, Dialectics and the Black Woman Writer’s Literary Tradition,” in Chrisman and Williams, *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, 257-67.

¹⁸⁰ Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre*, 181-82.

expression specific to Kerala). The authors conclude that “[t]here is no room for the negotiation of identity politics” in the “cultural sign language” that dominates a festival context.¹⁸¹

The problem with both of these arguments is that they presume a monolithic batch of spectators who obediently read productions according to what the festival organizers or media proclaim. As I discussed in the previous chapter, festival rhetoric can indeed be persuasive in its construction of authenticity. Yet this does not mean that resistant, culturally aware spectators will succumb to this rhetorical allure (recall my Cape Verdean friends who read *Mãe Preta* as exoticism rather than a “true story of a woman from Maio Island”). Rather, a festival audience contains layers of national and international spectators, each of whom bring with them a different degree of cultural literacy. Indeed, this is inherent to Knowles’ own methodology: each spectator deploys the “technologies of reception” differently when reading a performance.¹⁸² This allows festival spectators to perceive varying degrees of nuance in representations of the local.

I would further argue that smaller-scale festivals in peripheral spaces potentially have a higher percentage of culturally literate spectators present. Festivals such as Mindelact do not function as global conglomerates churning out packaged culture and attracting a flock of affluent cultural tourists unified only by a “formalist interest in theatre itself.”¹⁸³ Rather, Mindelact’s international spectatorship comprises mainly Lusophone artists who travel along a linguistically specific festival circuit.¹⁸⁴ As the Portuguese-speaking world is small, these spectators typically have some degree of knowledge about the culture of the archipelago even before they arrive.

¹⁸¹ Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins, *Women’s Intercultural Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 158.

¹⁸² Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre*, 18.

¹⁸³ Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre*, 181.

¹⁸⁴ Other arts festivals on this circuit include Rio de Janeiro’s Bienal de Arte, Ciência e Cultura and Porto’s FITEI (Festival Internacional de Teatro de Expressão Ibérica).

Even if these audience members view Cape Verdean culture as homogenous, that misreading is less likely to happen with the bulk of Mindelact's spectators, Cape Verdean artists and regular theatre-goers from Mindelo. Arguably, these spectators bring with them enough cultural literacy to note nuances in local formulations of labor and sexuality.

I also want to take up Holledge and Tompkins's specific concern about women who perform at international arts festivals. The authors argue that female artists often lose control over their own representation within intercultural markets typically dominated by men.¹⁸⁵ Here, I suspect that Holledge and Tompkins put too much stock in festival organizers and media channels and not enough in the performers' agency. For example, the artists I interviewed for this chapter articulated cogent perspectives on the representation of women and their own performing bodies in their respective productions. This demonstrates a certain mastery over that representation and its interpretive possibilities. In various interviews, the actresses and dancers made clear to me that they regarded their performances as transformative of social discourses about women in Cape Verde. Before delving into those transformations, it is first helpful to review key aspects of Cape Verdean women's social conditions.

3.3 The Social Conditions of Gender in Cape Verde

Gender roles speak volumes to women's position within the body politic. "No nation in the world gives women and men the same access to the rights and resources of the nation-state,"¹⁸⁶ states Anne McClintock. This does not mean that women are formally "written out" of nation-states' constitutions. Rather, women often experience what Awam Ampka calls "informal citizenship." Ostensibly granted equal rights, they lack the socio-economic power to negotiate

¹⁸⁵ Holledge and Tompkins, *Women's Intercultural Performance*, 152.

¹⁸⁶ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 353.

their own positions politically.¹⁸⁷ Significantly, Cape Verdean newspaper readers responding to a 2005 on-line poll articulated just that perspective on Cape Verdean women's social positions. The poll asked, "Are Cape Verdean women emancipated?" The response that most readers selected suggested that despite provisions for their rights in the constitution and the many institutions created to safeguard those rights, many women still have not obtained economic independence or juridical protection.¹⁸⁸ In this section, I discuss how in Cape Verde, "informal citizenship" occurs in various realms, among them education, employment, and the home front.

3.3.1 Education, Employment, and the Domestic Sphere

Under Cape Verde's constitution, all citizens have equal rights to education and employment.¹⁸⁹ Yet, as Cape Verdean social worker Ana Maria Morais contends, women and men access those rights unequally.¹⁹⁰ Across the archipelago, illiteracy rates are significantly higher among women. Cape Verdean women represent 70% of the nation's total illiterate population, which, as Morais notes, suggests that many women are not receiving the schooling to which they are entitled.¹⁹¹ Oftentimes, social pressures account for this. For example, Kesha Fikes's ethnographic work in the interior of Santiago Island discusses how the youngest daughters of households are expected to drop out of school to do domestic chores full-time for

¹⁸⁷ Awam Ampka, *Theatre and Postcolonial Desires* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 10. See also Ngugi wa Thiong'o conception of the ways in which states, especially those with autocratic governments, can create conditions for the "psychic confinement" of marginalized subjects. *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 59-60.

¹⁸⁸ This was one of the periodic polls posted by Cape Verde's major on-line newspaper, *A Semana on line*. "A mulher cabo-verdiana é emancipada?," http://www.asemana.cv/article.php3?id_article=10481&langue=CV (accessed March 11, 2008).

¹⁸⁹ See, for example, Felisberto Vieira Lopes, "Direitos Humanos e Democracia: A Constituição e a Garantia dos Direitos Fundamentais," *Direito e Cidadania* Ano III/ II, Número Especial (1999): 23-43.

¹⁹⁰ Ana Maria Lomba de Morais, "A Situação Social da Mulher," *Direito e Cidadania* Ano III/ II, Número Especial (1999): 99-107.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 100. The statistics I cite here are from Cape Verde's 2000 census data, which are more recent than the ones Morais cites. See *Educação: Censo 2000* (Praia: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2001), 74-75.

their mothers or other female relatives.¹⁹² Indeed, gender discrepancy in school attendance on Santiago is reflected in the most recent census data. Nationally, girls are attending school in increasing numbers and at a slightly higher rate than boys (this is true for São Vicente Island, for example). However, the pattern is exactly the opposite on Santiago, both in the urban capital city, Praia, and elsewhere. On Santiago, especially in rural municipalities, young men attend school in much higher numbers than young women.¹⁹³

In terms of Cape Verde's economic scene, Morais notes another gender discrepancy. While women serve as heads of households in 60% of the poorest families in the archipelago, they make up only 29% of the remunerated workforce.¹⁹⁴ This is often because their partners have emigrated to the United States or Europe in search of better employment opportunities, leaving women behind to take care of the house and wait for remittances. In her study of the social situation of women in the surrounding neighborhoods of Praia, Marla Solomon found that women's near exclusive responsibility for running the household was almost universally taken for granted. She also found that the most grueling forms of employment are gendered female. One example is street vending, which entails walking long distances each day with products carried on one's head. One woman reported that if a man were to do this, he would be viewed as feminized.¹⁹⁵ Another example of a female-gendered work task is selling fish at the

¹⁹² Fikes, "Santiaguense Cape Verdean Women," 124-26.

¹⁹³ See *Educação: Censo 2000*, 17-18. Besides Santiago, the only other two islands where boys outnumber girls in current school attendance are Maio and Fogo.

¹⁹⁴ Morais, "A Situação Social da Mulher," 101-2. According to 2000 census data, women make up 40% of the total household heads across the archipelago. *Características Econômicas da População* (Praia: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2001). See also Timothy J. Finan and Helen K. Henderson, "The Logic of Cape Verdean Female-Headed Households: Social Response to Economic Scarcity," *Urban Anthropology* 17 (Spring 1988): 87-103.

¹⁹⁵ Marla Jill Solomon, "'We Can Even Feel that We are Poor, but We Have a Strong and Rich Spirit': Learning from the Lives and Organization of the Women of Tira Chapeu, Cape Verde," (Ph.D. Diss., University of Massachusetts, 1992), 121.

marketplace.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, census data indicates that women across the archipelago far outnumber men in fields such as vending, cattle-raising and dairy work, and paid domestic labor.¹⁹⁷

In some jobs belonging to more formal employment sectors, such as education, public administration, and financial services, women are working in equal or greater proportion than men. Indicators of women gaining ground in the work force and in rates of school attendance resulted in Cape Verde recently moving from a “2” to a “1” rating for civil liberties in Freedom House’s annual survey of Africa’s leading democracies.¹⁹⁸ Yet even employed women continue to experience unequal pay, despite constitutional provisions to the contrary.¹⁹⁹ However, both foreign and national NGOs are pressuring the government to be more effective about enforcing legal dictates on equal pay. In Cape Verde, the most prominent of these is the ICIEG (The Cape Verdean Institute for Gender Equality and Equity).²⁰⁰ Another area of concern is women’s employment in government positions. While nearly half of the country’s judicial magistrates are women, only 11 of 72 seats in the national assembly were held by women, as of 2006.²⁰¹ Women working in the government sector have noted that “cultural restrictions,” rather than formal barriers, impede women’s equitable participation in public offices.²⁰²

In the domestic sphere, many of the challenges women continue to face relate to the country’s *machista* society, meaning that social norms dictate that men take on dominant roles in

¹⁹⁶ See Fikes, “Santiaguense Cape Verdean Women,” chapter three.

¹⁹⁷ See *Características econômicas da População*.

¹⁹⁸ Bruce Baker, “Cape Verde: the most democratic nation in Africa?,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 44, no.4 (2006): 493-511, at 493-4, 502.

¹⁹⁹ See “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2007: Cape Verde,” compiled by the U.S. Department of State and available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100471.htm> (accessed March 31, 2008).

²⁰⁰ Instituto Caboverdiano para a Igualdade e Equidade de Género. This was formerly called ICF, the Institute for the Female Condition (Instituto da Condição Feminina).

²⁰¹ Bruce Baker, “Cape Verde,” 502, 497.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 496.

interactions with women. Cape Verde's primary women's organization, the OMCV, claims that women suffer discrimination in custody and inheritance matters, and domestic violence and sexual abuse are rampant.²⁰³ Another consequence of *machismo* is the informal polygyny that dominates the country, in which men often sustain relationships with multiple women who have borne them children. Solomon's study of women's lives in Tira Chapeu, a poorer neighborhood on the fringe of Praia, is filled with accounts of women who wait months for men to visit and bring money for child-rearing.²⁰⁴ While men such as these make their rounds among numerous partners, women report being "raised to stay in the house" and being called *putas* (whores) if they leave at night, even to attend OMCV meetings or literacy classes.²⁰⁵ Significantly, the issue of women being confined to the home also came up during my interview with Raiz di Polon dancer Bety Fernandes. Fernandes claimed that family responsibilities, boyfriends, and pregnancy can all result in women being "shut in the house" instead of availing themselves of theatre and dance opportunities.²⁰⁶

3.3.2 Migration vs. "Staying Put"

In Cape Verde, emigration has often been characterized as "men who migrate, women who stay."²⁰⁷ The whaling boats stopping at the islands from the nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries recruited mainly male crew members for their navigations to New England, and Cape Verdean men emigrated to Portugal in large numbers in the 1960s and 70s due to labor shortages resulting from Portugal's involvement in colonial wars in Africa. Yet the equation

²⁰³ Richard A. Lobban and Paul Khalil Saucier, eds., *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cape Verde*, 4th ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 243; Baker, "Cape Verde," 501; U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2007: Cape Verde."

²⁰⁴ Solomon, "We Can Even Feel that We are Poor," 125-9.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 198, 273.

²⁰⁶ Bety Fernandes, personal interview, September 18, 2004.

²⁰⁷ See M. Margarida Marques, Rui Santos, and Fernanda Araújo, "Ariadne's Thread: Cape Verdean Women in Transnational Webs," *Global Networks* 1, no.3 (2001): 283-306, at 283.

“men leave, women stay” has not always borne out. Cape Verdean women began joining the waves of emigration to the U.S. in the nineteenth century, and, as discussed in the introductory chapter, women also formed part of the estimated 80, 000 contracted laborers sent to the São Tomé cocoa plantations from 1900-70.²⁰⁸ In the decade after independence, the numbers of female emigrants overtook those of men, but women and men now emigrate in equal numbers.²⁰⁹

Today, Cape Verdean women of all socio-economic classes are on the move. Young women compete for slots at universities in Portugal, Brazil and other Latin American countries, Russia, China, and elsewhere. A host of middle-aged women work as *rabidantes*, petty traders who traverse the many transatlantic routes established throughout Cape Verde’s long history of emigration, traveling to Senegal, Brazil, Portugal, or Holland to buy clothes, shoes, and cosmetics that they re-sell at a profit on the islands (mainly at Praia’s large open-air market, *sucupira*).²¹⁰ Kesha Fikes’s study of the socio-economic status of Santiaguense female fish-sellers in Portugal reveals that these women work at their own legal peril, since they sell on the streets without licenses. Fikes found that for these women, fish-selling was a strategy to avoid being incorporated into the more stigmatized *limpeza* (housecleaning) economy in Lisbon.²¹¹ Indeed, some attribute the feminization of Cape Verdean emigration to a dearth of employment prospects on the islands and a growing market in Portugal, Italy, and Spain for domestic workers.²¹²

²⁰⁸ Laura J. Pires-Hester, “The Emergence of Bilateral Diaspora Ethnicity Among Cape Verdean Americans,” in *African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities*, ed. Isidore Okpewho (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 485-503; Richard A. Lobban and Paul Khalil Saucier, eds., *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cape Verde*, 4th ed., (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 99; António Carreira, *The People of the Cape Verde Islands: Exploitation and Emigration*, trans. Christopher Fyfe (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1982)

²⁰⁹ Lobban and Saucier, *Historical Dictionary*, 99.

²¹⁰ See Marques, Santos, and Araújo, “Ariadne’s Thread.”

²¹¹ Fikes, “Santiaguense Cape Verdean Women in Portugal,” 53-84.

²¹² Lobban and Saucier, *Historical Dictionary*, 243.

The performers discussed in this chapter are also all women who *move*, in a global sense. The dance group Raiz di Polon frequently tours internationally. Before *Duas Sem Três* appeared at Mindelact in 2004, the dancers had already performed it at festivals and dance venues in the U.S., Brazil, Portugal, Germany, the Netherlands, and seventeen African countries.²¹³ While *Mulheres na Lajinha* has not been performed abroad, its actresses are core ensemble members of GTCCPM and have participated in many of the nearly 30 productions the theatre group has performed in Portugal, Spain, France, Brazil, and elsewhere since its founding in 1995. Finally, the actress from *Maria Badia*, Célia Varela, has lived and worked in France and taken a beautician course in Lisbon. She has completed theatre workshops in Portugal and Switzerland.

By contrast, the Cape Verdean women represented in their performances are all anchored to their local settings. Maria Badia's world is her home, her fields, and an urban market; the City and Country Muses of *Duas Sem Três* wait near their own hearths for word from absent lovers; the women of *Mulheres na Lajinha* are inseparable from the Mindelo microcosm that is Lajinha Beach. In reflecting on the productions, I began to wonder why so many women who "move" were portraying women who "stay put." Another salient point is that their characters all take on the sort of labor coded as "feminine" in Cape Verde. The Muses carry firewood on their heads and clean their houses; Maria Badia sells fish at the market; two of the characters in *Mulheres* have been domestic workers in wealthy households in Mindelo. In short, the actresses and dancers all enact lower-class women doing "feminized" labor. This begs the question: is it more *marketable* to portray women tied to the home front? These representations perhaps suggest that familiar notions of "authentic" women workers are more apt to sell tickets, particularly at

²¹³ The African tour was Raiz di Polon's prize for winning a competition at the 5th African and Indian Ocean Choreographic Encounters in Madagascar in 2003.

international venues. However, the very recognizable versions of female laborers onstage make it that much more startling when the characters behave in atypical ways. As I will discuss, the very notion of the “authentic” Cape Verdean woman is something that these performances re-define.

3.4 Performing Santiaguense Women

Both *Duas Sem Três* and *Maria Badia* fall within the Santiago universe. Based in Praia, the Raiz di Polon dance group is widely associated with *badiu* culture. Although the group does not limit itself to its own island’s performance modes, it does draw deeply on explicitly Santiaguense dance forms, two of which, *batuko* and *funaná*, feature prominently in *Duas Sem Três*. Much of the setting evoked in the theatre-dance piece is strikingly rural and suggestive of Santiago’s wide expanses of countryside, particularly scenes where the two women gather firewood. However, the piece shifts in and out of the Santiaguense world as the women segue seamlessly into samba and dances reminiscent of São Vicente culture. Thus, while *Duas Sem Três* largely inhabits the cultural and topographical landscape of Santiago, it refuses the fixed *badia* identity. By contrast, *Maria Badia* explicitly engages this identity. Not only is it inherent to her name, *badia*, but it is apparent in the labor she performs, the mannerisms she adopts, and her description of her phenotype (“black like coal from Guiné”). Although vastly different, *Duas Sem Três* and *Maria Badia* each foreground the social conditions of Santiaguense women.

3.4.1 Santiago Women: Social Conditions and Cultural Associations

As discussed in chapter one, the term *badiu* refers to the people of Santiago Island (the largest and most populous in Cape Verde), the form of Crioulo spoken there, and the islands’ specific cultural manifestations. Both the language (*badiu* Crioulo) and indigenous dance and music forms are considered to be closer to African expression than elsewhere in Cape Verde. As

discussed in my introduction, the “blacker” and “more African” *badiu* identity was produced by a confluence of socio-economic and cultural factors tied to Santiago’s settlement history, the island’s reputation as being the heart of slave revolts and exoduses, colonial labor and emigration policies, and the ways in which Barlavento (northern island) intellectuals and writers represented *badius* as the “African” pole of Cape Verde’s Crioulo culture (see chapter one).

Deirdre Meintel argues that, as a consequence of social stereotyping, *badius* gained reputations throughout the islands as assertive, intensely corporeal, and unafraid of confrontation if their safety, livelihood, or honor were at stake. She notes that widely circulating anecdotes about *badius*’ courageous and clever acts humiliating Portuguese officials rendered them subjects “both opposite to and opposed to ‘Portuguese-ness,’ something disdained and yet, on occasion, admired.”²¹⁴ Thus, in Cape Verde, many of the stereotypes about the physically aggressive and “earthy” African became projected onto the *badiu* persona.

Santiaguense women, or *badias*, equally hold this position in the national imagination. Kesha Fikes argues that popular tales of female-led, colonial-era peasant rebellions on Santiago consolidated the myth of the wily, near savage Santiaguense “negro,” particularly because these tales often feature women wielding machetes or knives.²¹⁵ These representations of women are present, for example, in OTACA’s play *Revolta di Rubom Manel*, a dramatization of a female-initiated mass revolt on Santiago in 1910, discussed in chapter two.²¹⁶ Cape Verdeans on other islands readily engage these stereotypes in their rhetoric about Santiago women. For example, when living in Mindelo, I once complained to a friend of mine about certain men on street

²¹⁴ Deirdre Meintel, *Race, Culture, and Portuguese Colonialism in Cape Verde* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 142.

²¹⁵ Fikes, “Santiaguense Cape Verdean Women,” 24.

²¹⁶ See figure 2 in my second chapter. That image, which features an OTACA actress wielding what looks to be a large stick or weapon, is highlighted on the Mindelact website’s page dedicated to Mindelact 2000 and accompanied the description of OTACA’s play *Tchom di Morgado* in the Mindelact 2004 festival program. This is an example of how images of aggressive Santiaguense women circulate within the theatre community.

corners who would always yell, “*Bo é Mercana* (Are you American)?” as I passed by. My friend joked, “Just say, ‘No, I’m a *badia!*’ and they’ll leave you alone.”

As with many derogatory nomenclatures, *badiu* has been reclaimed as an empowering term of identification for Santiago islanders. Today, many *badius* and *badias* express pride in their reputations as outspoken and assertive individuals unafraid to stand up for themselves.²¹⁷ This is evident, for example, in the portrayal of *Maria Badia* as a brash Santiaguense fieldworker who aggressively confronts a scarecrow when she notices his gaze directed at her crotch. Yet the discursive reclamation of the term *badiu* has not been accompanied by improvements in social and economic structures, especially for women heads of households of the islands’ poorest families and young women in rural areas who attend school in fewer numbers than young men, as discussed earlier. Pertinent here are Fikes’s observations about the prescribed social role for a Santiaguense family’s youngest daughter, which many people from the interior spoke to with great precision and consistency.²¹⁸ As this girl’s main responsibility is assisting her mother or a close female relative with household chores, she rarely leaves the house and often drops out of school early. Keeping her close to home also ensures that she will remain a virgin, and thus be eligible for wifhood. Significantly, the dance-theatre piece to which I turn now, *Duas Sem Três*, illustrates both the societal repercussions for Santiaguense women who overstep those sexual boundaries and the coalitions they form to mitigate them.

²¹⁷ As an example, Narciso Freire, the director of the theatre group OTACA and a *badiu* himself (see chapter two), once told me a local legend about two *badius* from his municipality, Santa Catarina, who both had reputations for being “stubborn, courageous, and firm in their positions.” One of them, Elder Lumbrano, told the other, Xeni Borges, that he was the more valiant of the two. To prove this, he drove to Xeni’s house in a BMW with a .32 pistol on the seat next to him, which he then shoved in the other’s mouth. Xeni, gun barrel in mouth, slapped the other man, because if he were going to die, he did not want to die a coward. This audacious act convinced Elder of Xeni’s valiance and he drove away and never bothered Xeni again. Stories like this, which circulate widely in Santiago localities for years (Freire told me he thought this particular incident happened before Cape Verdean independence), are recounted proudly as emblematic illustrations of Santiago islanders’ fortitude and resistance to personal abuse. Narciso Freire, personal interview, October 3, 2006.

²¹⁸ Fikes, “Santiaguense Cape Verdean Women,” 124-26.

3.4.2 Raiz di Polon: The Aesthetic of Breaking with “Tradition”

Duas Sem Três is based on a poetic text by Santiago musician and writer, Mário Lúcio.²¹⁹

The text describes two nameless Muses, one of the city and the other of the countryside. Their reputation as the most beautiful women on the island spreads from one end to the other, driving men to near insanity. As the Muses grow older, their men go off to war, emigrate, or marry others. They begin to take solace in each other’s company. The title of the piece, “Two Without Three,” hints at why the men did not marry them. In Cape Verde, losing one’s “three” is a euphemism for losing one’s virginity. The two Muses, thus, are not virgins. Most Cape Verdeans would glean the title’s subtext, as well as many Portuguese spectators, since the phrase *perder o três-vintém* means the same thing in Portugal (although it is an archaic expression). Most Portuguese speakers, however, would readily associate the title with the proverb *não há duas sem três* (there’s no two without three), which reflects the superstition that all good or bad things come in “threes.”²²⁰

When *Duas Sem Três* toured in Europe, the economic investment in representing Cape Verdean women as “traditional” was at play. Mark Depputer, the Belgian artistic director of Danças na Cidade (Dances in the City), a cultural institution that organizes an annual dance festival in Lisbon’s Belém Cultural Center, where *Duas Sem Três* debuted in 2002, wrote this explanatory paragraph for the piece’s publicity:

²¹⁹ See the appendix for a reprinting of Mário Lúcio’s Portuguese-language text and Jeffrey Hessney’s English-language translation of it.

²²⁰ This information about the title’s interpretive possibilities among various Portuguese speakers was provided by Raiz’s American manager, Jeffrey Hessney, who toured *Duas Sem Três* with the dancers. He suspected that Brazilian speakers would not glean the title’s virginity subtext, but did not know whether or not other Lusophone Africans would. E-mail message to the author, March 1, 2008. I found it to be true that Cape Verdean spectators generally understand what the title means. After Raiz performed *Duas Sem Três* in Mindelo in February 2006, I asked two Cape Verdean friends (one from Praia’s theatre community and one from Mindelo’s) what they thought the title meant. Both immediately said, “They’re not virgins.”

Women have a special place in Cape Verdean culture. In a country of [male] emigrants, it's the women who maintain traditions and assure their survival and continuation. *Batuko* [dance] is an impressive example of the powerful contribution of the African woman to her continent's culture. From this context arose the idea of transforming the female imaginary into a duet performed by the Raiz di Polon dancers.²²¹

This language falls into the trap of associating men with the mobile aspect of nationhood and women with the “inert, backward-looking” aspect rooted in a nostalgic past.²²² There was ostensibly a financial motive in Deputer's representation of *Duas Sem Três* this way. His institution sponsored the piece's creation by arranging an artistic collaboration among Raiz dancers Bety Fernandes and Rosy Timas and Portuguese choreographer Margarida Mestre, who developed the piece jointly. His institution, *Danças na Cidade*, received 20% of the profits from all of the European bookings it made for *Duas Sem Três*. Deputer thus had a vested interest in marketing the performance to foreign audiences presumably interested in seeing “traditional” Cape Verdean women onstage.²²³

As Deputer's text was reprinted in the Mindelact program, it accompanied the dance piece's circulation to Mindelact 2004. To non-Cape Verdean attendees, it perhaps set up similar expectations for seeing “authentically” Cape Verdean women. For Cape Verdean spectators, it potentially took on another layer of meaning. The text highlights cultural connections between *batuko*, African culture at large, and Cape Verdean women. Since the Raiz di Polon dancers are identified with Santiago, the text reaffirms hegemonic associations of *badias* with “Africanness.”

²²¹ From the Mindelact 2004 program, 49. Available in the Mindelact Documentation Center.

²²² McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 358-59. McClintock notes that Tom Nairn's conception of the nation as “modern Janus,” with one face looking forward and one looking back, takes on a gendered subtext in theoretical applications.

²²³ I am grateful to Jeffrey Hessney, who pointed this out to me after I had asked about Deputer's text. E-mail message to the author, March 1, 2008. “*Danças na Cidade*” has since been re-named “*Alkântara*.”

This range of associations represents what the Mindelact audience *knows*, or presumes to know, about Cape Verdean women (and in particular, *badias*). In other words, the text's placement in the Mindelact program created the conditions for spectators to read the performance as stereotype, or in Bhabha's terms, an association that is "'in place'" and "'already known.'"²²⁴

What unfolds in the performance, however, are a series of shifts to more unfamiliar representations, creating the dialectic between the "novel" and the "known" that di Marinis identifies as key to holding an audience's attention. I focus my performance analysis on three ways in which the piece ventures into unfamiliar terrain: the destabilization of class signifiers, shifts in locality indicated by the women's kinetic adaptation of non-Santiago dances, and new configurations for female-to-female relationships. These moments illuminate how *Duas Sem Três* inhabits the domain of "women and authenticity" even as it breaks all of the rules.

My analysis draws on ethnographic work I conducted with Raiz di Polon at Mindelact 2004, during summer 2005, and over the four months that I integrated into the company's dance school in Praia (from April-July 2007). Over the years, I have witnessed many instances of Raiz bending the "rules" of Cape Verdean dance.²²⁵ Artistic director Manu Preto describes the Raiz aesthetic as taking something traditionally Cape Verdean, whether it is an object or a dance move, and using it in a non-conventional way.²²⁶ Both Preto and dancer Bety Fernandes have contributed to the development of that aesthetic, as they were both founding members of Raiz di Polon (which means "roots of a cottonwood tree") in 1991. Fernandes, in fact, is one of the most

²²⁴ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 95.

²²⁵ For instance, they developed a sequence inspired by *batuko* music in which a ring of dancers encircling company member Luís da Rosa were tethered to him via swaths of white cloth extending outward from his waist. When I asked why they had put a man in the middle of the circle, a position traditionally held by a woman song-leader, Bety Fernandes told me, "This is contemporary dance. We can't follow the rules."

²²⁶ Manu Preto, personal interview, July 30, 2007.

visible women in Cape Verde's artistic scene. She is the only professional female dancer in the country, and she takes on leadership roles in Raiz's dance classes, which the company offers free of charge to adults and children in their dance studio on Praia's plateau, the city center.

During our interviews, Fernandes clearly and compellingly articulated her vision of *Duas Sem Três* and its social import (the other dancer, Rosy Timas, was less accessible to me, as she was studying dance full-time in Lisbon). In what follows, I weave Fernandes's commentary on the dance piece into my description of it. I also integrate insights I gleaned from my ethnographic participation in various dance classes. These insights illustrated to me the cultural significance of certain moments in the performance.

3.4.3 *Duas Sem Três*, Part I—"Espera Informaçõ!" (Wait for information!)

The piece begins in near darkness. Two women stand at opposite corners of the stage, backs to each other. Bending their upper bodies forward and backward in sync, as if blown by the wind, the women take that wind into their bodies and begin a simple, two-toned whistle in harmony with each other. (*Bety*: "*Here we're getting to know each other through the air. Our bodies are saying, 'receive my breath.' We did some research [for the piece] in São Vicente. We went to a place with lots of wind. Our postures represent trees swaying.*")²²⁷

Bety, standing at the upstage right corner, flips around to face Rosy's back, leaping a few steps closer to her. The two begin to sing softly, "Musa, Musa" (Muse). As Lúcio's voice recites lines about "the whims of beauty and the need to compare" in the background, the women enact this with their bodies.²²⁸ Facing each other center stage, they blow noisily in the other's

²²⁷ Bety Fernandes's narrative comes from our two interviews in September 2004 and July 2007. My translations from Crioulo.

²²⁸ All quotes from Lúcio's text are from Jeffrey Hessney's English translation (see appendix), sent to the author in an email message, June 18, 2005. His explanations of the shifts in music and dance genres in *Duas Sem Três* very much aided my understanding of the piece.

direction, whirling their bodies around in response. Turning to the front, they whistle out into the audience, as if inviting them to join the dialogue. Their lower bodies gyrating, they perform how their pubescent bodies are developing, sliding their hands over their breasts and their swinging hips, as they chant lines about adolescence from Lúcio's text.



Figure 9: Elisabete Fernandes and Rosy Timas dance *funaná* in *Duas Sem Três*²²⁹

Suddenly, they remove the identical kerchiefs from their heads. Tossing them high into the air, they explode into *funaná*, a partner dance native to Santiago but typically danced by a male and female couple. Tearing across the stage, they first perform the rapid two-step alone, arms held up waltz-style as if they were dancing with imaginary partners. Next, their bodies join together, first back to back, then Bety dancing behind Rosy with her arms wrapped around her, beating the *funaná* tempo against her stomach. (*Bety*: “*this shows how women call attention to themselves and their bodies, and how men take notice*”). The dance accelerates into a rapid leap-frog-like sequence: one hurdles the other's bent-over body and then shimmies backwards between her legs, over and over. (*Bety*: “*this part shows insistence. The women ‘espera*

²²⁹ Photo by Jorge Gonçalves, courtesy of Raiz di Polon.

informaçõn’ [wait for information (about their men)]. They hear news about the other woman (the other Muse on the island, whose beauty rivals her own). The whole piece represents a time when, for women, your life was lived just for a man and the high point was marrying.”)

The two women then retreat to the back of the stage and lie down next to a pile of branches, one arm extended up to form a silhouette against a sunset background. On a recording, the women’s voices echo the lines: “But, little by little, information began to grow scarce.” Rising to a kneeling position, the women begin to gather the sticks into bunches. Bety picks up a *pano* cloth from the floor and ties it around her waist, as a woman from the countryside would do; Rosy drapes hers around her neck “European-style,” acquiring a more urban air. Balancing the firewood bundles on their heads, they walk toward the front of the stage, turn to the side, and sway forward and backward in sync with each other. [Bety: “Waiting. Anguish. The dry wood represents times of drought in Cape Verde”]. Each woman begins to trace a path around the stage as Lúcio’s voice recites, “with no news, time runs more slowly, and arrives more quickly.”



Figure 10: Bety Fernandes transports firewood in *Duas Sem Três*²³⁰

Bety explained to me more about this first part of the performance as we watched my DVD of *Duas Sem Três* together. She explained, “Men are present in the piece from the beginning to the end, because all of the women’s actions are in response to the presence or absence of or hope for men.”²³¹ While it is clear that the women are waiting anxiously for word from their lovers, what struck me more was the web of kinesthetic communication the women weave with *each other* throughout. Whistling, “leap frog” movements, chanting, and *funaná* dancing are all examples of heteroglossia for the stage. They are stylized ways of “speaking” with a partner. During one particular dance class with Raiz, I learned more about how this corporeal communication functions.

Notes from the Field: April 21, 2007

At class tonight, we took turns walking down the center aisle with a partner who would basically mold or guide our body’s motions by putting a hand on the small of our back, or

²³⁰ Performed by Raiz di Polon for Mindelact 2004. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

²³¹ Bety Fernandes, personal interview, July 30, 2007.

*pushing down to indicate that we should fall to the floor, or giving us a little boost with their hands to indicate that we should spring up. They basically “drove” our bodies to move a certain way. Initially, I had trouble relaxing and figuring out what to do with my body on the spot like that. Then Mano paired up the inexperienced dancers with the experienced ones. He told me to go down the aisle with Nuno [a company member of Raiz]. On one of our turns, I did feel my body go into sync with his, and I even leaned back enough so that he lay back on the floor and I lay on top of him. Nuno did something interesting in between our turns: even while we were waiting in line to go again, he would keep prodding my arm up with his, or giving my shoulders a little nudge, just to test how relaxed and responsive I was. After our last time down the aisle, he turned to me and said, “**espera informação**” (wait for information). I said that, yes, I have a tendency to anticipate how to move my body next, and he said that it’s better to wait for the information his body is giving mine.*

In this example, I was the one “waiting for information” from a man. Nuno told me to follow his indications on how to move. This is perhaps a corporeal enactment of how *machismo* operates in male-to-female relationships in Cape Verde: the male takes on the dominant role. However, there were other kinds of pairings in that class. Sometimes a female student would “drive” a male student’s body, or one female would “drive” another. I began to see Rosy and Bety’s corporeal entanglements in *Duas Sem Três* in the same light. Since they seemed to take turns doing the “driving,” they were in a constant mode of “waiting for information” from each other’s bodies. Thus, in *Duas Sem Três*, “*espera informação*” has a double meaning. On a literal level, it describes women waiting for news from departed men. On a corporeal one, it illustrates two women learning to move in sync with each other. The Muses respond to a newfound female

companion and the messages her body is sending. Their motions gesture toward a burgeoning relationship in which the dominant/subordinate rules of *machismo* do not apply.

Dance theorist Colleen Dunagan explains how corporeal communication may function in performance.²³² As people move through the world, they retain tactile and muscular memories of gestures, movements, and postures, each of which is infused with an affective quality and cognitive perception. An individual's repertoire of motion memory, which is culturally specific, is activated when she observes a dancer embodying any movement in her own corpus. Thus, dancers transmit to each other and spectators alike the abstract concepts that are congealed in their gestures.²³³ In *Duas Sem Três*, the dancers' gestures in the first choreographic sequence embed powerful cultural signifiers of class and gender.

During the "leap frog" sequence, the dizzying repetition of upward and downward movements creates the illusion that the women are giving birth to each other in a perpetual cycle. Their synchronized motions convey the idea of absolute equality: they are inextricable from one another. This binding together intimates the beginnings of gender solidarity across class boundaries. This is possible because class, as an abstract concept, is "made" and "unmade" throughout the piece. When the women toss off their *lenços* (kerchiefs covering their heads) before launching into *funaná*, they cast off an accessory that, when worn outside of the house, can carry the stigma of "low social origins."²³⁴ Later, when one ties the *pano* around her waist and the other around her neck, they reinvent themselves as provincial country woman and cosmopolitan city lady. However, both carry firewood on their heads, a work task linked to rural,

²³² Colleen Dunagan, "Dance, Knowledge, and Power," *Topoi* 24 (2005): 29-41, at 30.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Meintel, *Race, Culture, and Portuguese Colonialism*, 104.

poorer settings. When the semiotic signs of their apparel clash with those of their labor, the two Muses reveal the arbitrary nature of class signifiers.

During the *funaná* sequence, they rework the gender codes of that Santiago dance. Cape Verdean choreographer António Tavares calls *funaná* a “seduction game” wherein the rapid tempo of the side-to-side hip movements interacts playfully with the amount of space between the two dancers,²³⁵ who are typically a man and a woman facing each other with hands clasped together waltz-style at shoulders’ height. In *Duas Sem Três*, the dancers’ improvisations on the *funaná* form is critical. Whereas earlier, they had cupped their breasts and swung their hips for invisible male admirers, here they re-direct their performances of sensuality to each other. Transgressing the gender codes of *funaná*, they entwine their two female bodies together, subverting the signification of the dance form’s Latino influences and *machista* inflections.²³⁶ Bety explained to me that their intention in creating the piece was not necessarily to convey a lesbian relationship but a growing platonic bond between women.²³⁷ Yet I would argue that the entanglement of their two dancing bodies offers same-sex desire as an interpretive possibility for spectators, particularly since the space between them is so minimal. Following Tavares’s conceptualization of *funaná*, this could read as a game of seduction. If so, it is a more egalitarian version than *funaná* conventionally danced, wherein the man typically leads a woman. In this version, the two women lead each other.

How might those transformations in *funaná* have been perceived by a Mindelact crowd? Following Dunagan’s logic, any audience member who had previously danced *funaná* (presumably most of the Cape Verdean spectators) would have specific mind-body associations

²³⁵ António Tavares, “O Corpo nas Danças de Cabo Verde,” *Dá Fala* 3 (Aug-Oct 2005): 27-28.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

²³⁷ Bety Fernandes, personal interview, September 18, 2004.

with the movements. Watching the dance unfold in a female-to-female fashion potentially disrupts the narrative normally mapped onto it, that of a male-to-female *conquista* (“conquering” or “courting”) situation. The story of Cape Verdean men seducing women with a suggestive hip movement is re-written as women using the same corporeal language to solicit each other’s companionship.

If the first part of *Duas Sem Três* charts a trajectory towards body symmetry and harmony, the next sequence moves rapidly to chaos.

3.4.4 *Duas Sem Três*, Part II—“**Bu sta fora di grupo!**” (You’re outside of the group!)

Still carrying firewood on their heads, the women shimmy to center stage in the quick, staccato one-step characteristic of *batuko* dance.²³⁸ *Batuko* is a women’s dance native to Santiago Island that features rapid hip movements. It is considered to be “African” in origin because of the circle that *batukeiras* form around the center soloist, who leads a call-and-response song.²³⁹ In *Duas*, the women perform the cadences of *batuko* without the circular formation. Chanting “*boca d’água a tua*” (your watery mouth), their volume rises with the accelerating tempo of their gyrating hips until they reach the frenetic climax of *batuko*. In the traditional form, this is called *rapica tchabeta*, when the soloist in the center clips her call-and-response to a single phrase and the women surrounding her perform their percussionist beat with increasing celerity.²⁴⁰ In *Duas*, the dancers’ escalating chanting becomes an actual altercation. Their angry confrontation with each other is signaled by accusatory shrieks and frantically gesticulating arms. (*Bety*: “*Here, we’re nearing the end of our lives and we’re filled with emotion. It’s a lament. ‘I didn’t marry. I*

²³⁸ Susan Hurley-Glowa, “Batuko,” in Lobban and Saucier, *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cape Verde*, 33-36, at 34.

²³⁹ Hurley-Glowa, “Batuko and Funana: Musical Traditions of Santiago, Republic of Cape Verde” (Ph.D. Diss., Brown University, 1997), 175.

²⁴⁰ Hurley-Glowa, “Batuko,” in Lobban and Saucier, *Historical Dictionary*, 34.

prepared for that, but it didn't happen.'") The firewood drops to the floor. The lights descend on this chaotic scene as the Mindelact audience cheers and whistles appreciatively.

I experienced a similar movement from harmony to chaos one night in class with Raiz. Significantly, Bety Fernandes played a key role.

Notes from the field: April 26, 2007

*Last night Kaká led an exercise where he divided the class into two groups. He made each group form itself into a cluster, with each person's back against someone else in the group. He instructed us to sense the group's potential source of movement and then to let that movement filter out to our bodies, so that we would start moving together as one. At first I didn't understand the exercise: I thought that I was supposed to do movements that would complement the other movements in the group. Then Kaká came up to me and said, "**bu sta fora di grupo!**" (you're outside of the group) and told me to feel how the others are moving and move with them. At one point, we fell down on top of each other, and Kaká said, "agora, tenta levanta" (try to get up now), so we did, and eventually moved as a cluster all the way over to the far wall. As we sat in a circle later, he explained that this exercise is really important for a dancer: it teaches you to "feel" your partner and respond to him or her, instead of always "proposing" your own ideas.*

Then Bety suggested we go back to the exercise Mano invented a few classes back (where we make groups at each of the four corners and two people from opposite sides take turns either crossing each other in the middle or pirouetting off to the right). She wanted to get a pattern down so that each individual in the group went and then each group together did the switches and crosses with the group across from them. Chaos erupted: everyone started shouting and arguing about how to get it right. We never resolved how to do it. Alfredo turned to me and said, "This is why a police force has only one chief; if there are lots of leaders, you can't get anything

done.” It seemed out of sync with the rest of the rehearsal: if we were supposed to be training group dynamics, why couldn’t we listen to each other about how to make this exercise work?

In class that night, group cohesion devolved into tumult. In proposing a new exercise, and joining in the fray about how to perfect it, Bety used her role as one of Raiz’s leaders to transform the class’s ambience. Dance, I discovered, is equal parts harmony and contestation (like the “scuffle” scene in *Duas*). Shouting is a form of heteroglossia that Bety used onstage (in *Duas*) and offstage (in class). In dance class, it may have had gender implications. Since Bety is the only female among five very vocal core company members, each of whom takes turns leading exercises in class, she may occasionally feel that she needs to shout in order to make her voice heard. In *Duas Sem Três*, shouting expresses the anguish the women feel when they realize they are “outside of the group” (**fora di grupo**) in a societal sense. Since they surrendered their virginity early, they have not gotten married. As Bety suggests in her narrative, this triggers a crisis of self. Yet this chaotic moment is merely the starting point of the piece’s *denouement*, best expressed thematically as “change.” In the final sequence, they find alternate solutions to their life predicament. They begin to form a coalition with each other through the cadences of household labor. As we did in dance class, they learn to move together in a cohesive “cluster.”

Facing front, the Muses recite the lines: “Of me, they used to say that the moon followed my steps. Of me, that I shone more than neon lamps.” (*Bety: “Here, we’re telling our friend what other men have said about us, instead of her hearing it from them.”*) In the distance, we hear the women’s recorded voices singing, “Muda, Muda” (mute). This corresponds with the following lines in Lúcio’s text: “That’s what they call us? Well yes, we have lost that which made people talk about us. Beauty tires and becomes mute.” (*Bety: “This part has two meanings,*

you know. “*Muda*” can mean ‘mute,’ without noise. There’s no more information to receive [about men], so we’re staying quiet. But ‘*muda*’ also means ‘change,’ or a movement from one place to another”). Suddenly, the spotlight shifts stage left, signaling a change in setting. A banana dangles from the ceiling, as Bety drags a wash basin into the light. Rosy follows with a vacuum cleaner as a recording of Lúcio’s song “Tina blues” plays. The mood of the performance becomes playful as Rosy lip syncs the song into the vacuum’s hose. Bety swishes her mop inside the basin in time to the song’s sliding notes.²⁴¹ (Bety: “*First, I go to the city to dance the blues with Rosy.*”) After a couple of minutes, the music abruptly switches to a quicker-paced *coladêra*, a Cape Verdean partner dance that Bety dances with an improvised “stick figure:” a basket hung on top of her mop. Rosy rhythmically dashes a scrub brush against a washboard. (Bety: “*Then Rosy goes to the countryside to dance a coladêra with me.*”)



Figure 11: Timas and Fernandes perform “Tina Blues”²⁴²



Figure 12: Timas in the *coladêra* sequence²⁴³

²⁴¹ The song is Lúcio’s original composition for the piece. In Portuguese, *tina* means “wash bin.”

²⁴² Performed by Raiz di Polon for Mindelact 2004. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

²⁴³ Photo by Jorge Gonçalves, courtesy of Raiz di Polon.

Next, the women reel into a breathless samba, a Brazilian dance adopted by Cape Verdeans for their own Carnival tradition, primarily in Mindelo, on São Vicente Island. As the music halts, they face each other center stage, throw their mops and brooms down but hold onto their baskets. They dance the *kola Son Jon*, a partner dance linked closely to St. John's Day festivities on São Vicente. They first perform the *kola* sequence together, dancing a step to the side, away from their partner, and then swinging inward so that their two bodies bump up against each other. Separating, they dance the *kola* energetically around the stage. In the piece's final moments, the women drag a long piece of white mesh from offstage and wrap it around themselves, connecting their two kneeling bodies. Alternating wild laughter with quiet calm, they repeat the open-ended question, "They didn't marry me because...?" (*Bety*: "*It ends with playfulness. You didn't get married, but you won't die. You'll find a way to be happy.*")

In the various places *Duas Sem Três* has toured, the domestic labor scenes have sparked curiosity in spectators, particularly the symbolic meaning of the dangling banana. Raiz producer Jeffrey Hessney suggests that the banana could represent a half moon (which has ties to female sexuality), a phallus, or any range of things. He recalls that in South Africa, a young man interpreted the banana as a phallic symbol for the male oppression that hovered over the dancers' heads as they performed "arduous" housework.²⁴⁴ Fernandes, however, stressed to me that their intention was not to enter the polemic of male versus female power.²⁴⁵ Indeed, the South African man overlooks a crucial aspect of the labor scenes, one that Eunice Ferreira gleans in her performance review: "the women transformed the mundane chore of carrying firewood into a

²⁴⁴ Jeffrey Hessney, E-mail message to the author, June 17, 2005.

²⁴⁵ Bety Fernandes, personal interview, September 18, 2004.

symbol of grace and beauty, and expressed humor and joy in a battle of household instruments.”²⁴⁶ The key word is ‘transformed,’ and the concept overlooked is female agency.

The scenes refuse the isolation of women’s domestic labor, infusing “work” with playfulness between two friends. The two Muses do not perform their housework in solitude but in solidarity with each other. Thus, they transform the image of the Cape Verdean woman performing *compelled* household labor into that of a woman *choosing* to construct herself as a dancer and a singer within the home. Significantly, this is a choice that Fernandes made offstage. Neither her grandparents, who raised her on São Vicente Island when she was a child, nor her parents, who continued her upbringing on Santiago, would allow her to join local dance groups. In time, she persuaded them. Later on, she gave up her job teaching adult literacy classes when Raiz di Polon began to get world tours. She said to herself, “At this moment in my life, I have to dance.”²⁴⁷ Currently, she is one of the few Cape Verdean performers to make a living exclusively from dance.

The housework sequence also enacts an important correction to the equation that Deputer, in his program notes to *Duas Sem Três*, makes between “maintaining traditions” and “staying put.” As Fernandes explained to me, the Muses perform blues and *coladêra* in each other’s city and rural homes because “taking things to other places” is a way to preserve tradition.²⁴⁸ In other words, *travel*, rather than *staying put*, keeps performance modes alive. At the level of the performance text, the Muses travel only locally, shifting from one spot on the island to another. However, Fernandes and Timas have taken *Duas Sem Três* itself to countries all over the globe. Since the piece is chock full of traditional Cape Verdean dances, whose rules

²⁴⁶ Eunice Ferreira, “Mindelact: the Tenth Annual International Theatre Festival of Mindelo,” *Theatre Journal* 57, no. 2 (2004), 272-77, at 276.

²⁴⁷ Bety Fernandes, personal interview, September 18, 2004.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

and codes are rearranged during the course of the performance, the dancers disseminate the transformed traditions globally as they travel.

A closer look at the performance also reveals that the two Muses are not as tied to their home fronts as they might appear. When the samba and *kola Sonjon* begin, the mood alters noticeably. Lights brighten the stage, and the dances and recorded music suggest that we are now in the world of Mindelo, on São Vicente Island. Whereas the previous dances, *funaná* and *batuko*, hail from Santiago, samba evokes Mindelo's vibrant Carnival celebrations and the *kola Sonjon* is firmly tied to festive processions performed for saints' days on São Vicente and neighboring Santo Antão Island.²⁴⁹ Indeed, when they devised the piece, Timas and Fernandes did research on the dance forms of both Santiago and São Vicente Islands. The piece remains in one national space, but it refuses fixity on either one of Cape Verde's two main cultural poles.

By extension, the Muses' identities refuse the same fixity. They move seamlessly from *batuko* to *kola Sonjon* without any interruption in their characters' stories. This fluid motion resists essentialist discourses about Santiaguense and São Vicentian women: the Muses' stories transcend the borders of these regional identities. This also challenges race representations on the islands. As Keshia Fikes points out, *badiu* and *sampadjudu* racial identities are often represented as "stable" in historical and popular discourses in Cape Verde.²⁵⁰ Yet when the dancers create them onstage by performing a confluence of dance moves from each island, they reveal the identities to be social constructs encompassing a series of cultural signifiers. Rather than enacting "typical" Santiaguense women, the characters embody diverse versions of Cape Verdean "authenticity."

²⁴⁹ See Hurley-Glowa, "Coladera," in Lobban and Saucier, *Historical Dictionary*, 60-61.

²⁵⁰ See Fikes, "Emigration and the Spatial Production of Difference in Cape Verde."

Destabilizing signifiers of *badiu* and *sampadjudu* culture is something that Fernandes does in her own everyday life. However, she does this with linguistic signifiers of the two identities rather than dance moves. In spring 2007, after GTCCPM performed *Mulheres na Lajinha* in Praia, one of the actresses later asked me whether Fernandes was from Mindelo, since she had been speaking São Vicente Crioulo with them after the show. Surprised, as I had only ever heard Fernandes speak *badiu*, I asked her about this at dance class. “That just comes out when I’m talking to people from Mindelo,” she said, referring to her childhood upbringing on São Vicente. Since moving to Santiago, she has adjusted to speaking *badiu*. Both onstage and in her own life, Fernandes demonstrates that signifiers of the *badiu* and *sampadjudu* identities are not essentialized but enacted in everyday life.



Figure 13: Rosy Timas and Bety Fernandes in the final scene of *Duas Sem Três*²⁵¹

The performance’s final example of transformation in cultural norms is the last tableau, which solidifies earlier gestures towards new configurations for female-to-female relationships. When the Muses drape the white mesh around themselves, they “marry each other,” figuratively.

²⁵¹ Photo by Jorge Gonçalves, courtesy of Raiz di Polon.

Here it is helpful to revisit Fernandes's perspective on the representation of desire in the piece. During one talkback session following a performance in London, a woman asked if the Muses are constructed as lesbians in the performance. Fernandes replied that this was not their intent in choreographing it. However, she went on to explain that the performance is meant to address the female universe, which encompasses heterosexual and lesbian women.²⁵² Thus, she does not preclude the possibility of reading same-sex desire in the performance.

Indeed, the visual image creates the space for audience members to imagine a same-sex union. The church wedding that the veil signifies may be implausible, as Cape Verde is a predominantly Catholic country, but the final image could propose a common law union between the two women. In Cape Verde, such unions between men and women, established by years of co-habitation, are much more usual than church weddings, which primarily happen among the middle to upper classes. Therefore, the final tableau potentially challenges the heterosexual dynamic that dominates common law unions on the islands. In this case, the title "Two Without Three" might take on another layer of meaning, that of a lesbian coupling that will not produce a third (a child).²⁵³

Another interpretive possibility for the final tableau is that it proposes a new form of a Cape Verdean "help tie," or a non-familial bond established for the sake of mutual emotional and economic support among individuals. As Marla Solomon indicates, "help ties" are of paramount importance in Cape Verde. The most common example of a "help" tie is a godparent. In Cape Verde, it is crucial to choose an appropriate godparent for one's child, since that person will also bear financial responsibility for the child's well-being.²⁵⁴ The new relationship is often cemented

²⁵² Jeffrey Hessney, e-mail message to the author, March 1, 2008.

²⁵³ I am grateful to Sandra L. Richards, who pointed out this alternate interpretive possibility for the title.

²⁵⁴ See Solomon, "We Can Even Feel that We are Poor," 145-50. "Help ties" is her term.

at the large-scale baptismal party that the godparent throws for the baby, usually at her or his own expense. Perhaps, then, the simulated wedding that closes *Duas* is a new kind of “help-tie” ceremony that binds the two women’s lives together in a mutual pledge of support. Fernandes herself suggested this when she told me that the dance piece documents a historical transition in Cape Verdean women’s self-sufficiency. She explained, “Before, women lived only for men. Now we live for our (female) friends.”²⁵⁵

As I have suggested throughout, Fernandes’s own agency deeply informs the thematic of the piece. By performing *Duas Sem Trêz*, she makes visible the transformative gender and cultural scripts she enacts in her own life. How might this be transmitted during a performance? Dunagan contends that a dancer’s agency is intrinsic to her movements. Identity, as a series of interrelated gender, class, and ethnic signifiers, is the “virtual power” that a dancer transmits to spectators via “virtual gestures” that embody those signs.²⁵⁶ Presumably, these gestures produce new social significations if the dancer has actively transformed certain cultural codes in the midst of her performance. In Fernandes’s perspective, audience members “leave *Duas Sem Trêz* ‘ku corpu reagido’ (with a body that has reacted). They keep something with them in their minds.”²⁵⁷ Thus, in her vision, the dance piece transforms spectators as it transforms social scripts.

3.4.5 *Maria Badia*: Producing Locality and Challenging Social Norms

In contrast to *Duas Sem Trêz*, which performs island-to-island shifts in its portraiture of Cape Verdean women, *Maria Badia* foregrounds the Santiaguense difference. Maria speaks *badiu* Crioulo throughout the play. Evoking historical associations with *badiu* phenotypes (see chapter one), she calls herself *preta cima carbon de Guiné* (black like coal from Guinea-Bissau).

²⁵⁵ Bety Fernandes, personal interview, July 30, 2007.

²⁵⁶ Dunagan, “Dance, Knowledge, and Power,” 38-39.

²⁵⁷ Bety Fernandes, personal interview, July 30, 2007.

In that the actress, Célia Varela, is darker in skin tone, it seems likely that she and her co-creator wrote that line to reinforce a statement that the actress already makes with her body in performance. Maria also manifests social assumptions about the *badiu* personality, as discussed earlier. She is outspoken, confrontational, and bawdy. She performs two hallmarks of Santiago labor, farming and fish-selling. Her regional identity is intrinsic to her very name. ‘Maria,’ the most common first name for females in Cape Verde, coupled with the ethnic signifier ‘badia,’ constructs her as a “typical Cape Verdean woman” deeply immersed in Cape Verde’s most “authentically African culture,” that of Santiago Island. She thus embodies the limiting roles that, according to Anthias and Yuval-Davis, nation-states often assign to women in nationalist discourse: markers of ethnic boundaries, transmitters of national culture, and signifiers of national difference.²⁵⁸

I argue that *Maria Badia* employed the *badia* stereotype strategically in order to interrogate labor patterns in Cape Verde. While non-national spectators at Mindelact perhaps did not recognize the play as a microcosm of *badiu* culture, Cape Verdean spectators surely did. For them, the depictions of Santiaguense labor, language, and personality traits perhaps represented what is “known” about *badiu* culture at the level of stereotype. Yet the performance interrupted those narratives at critical moments. During the initial part of the performance, Maria the Fieldworker’s spontaneous tirade against a scarecrow voiced an important critique of rural male labor. In the last part of the performance, she became Maria the Fishseller. Here, her abrupt transformation into a rapper critiqued gendered performance modes in Cape Verde. These moments enacted the critical shift from “known” to “novel” that engages spectator attention.

²⁵⁸ Anthias and Yuval-Davis, “Introduction,” 7.

Indeed, *Maria Badia* was among the best-received of the short plays performed for Festival Off at Mindelact 2006.²⁵⁹

The artistic collaboration on *Maria Badia*, in fact, came about through an earlier edition of Mindelact. In 2002, Praia-based musician Princesito led a Mindelact workshop on *cultura badia* (badiu culture), which covered musical instruments, rhythm and song styles, and dance from Santiago. Célia Varela's theatre group, Finka Pé, performed at Festival Off that year. At the festival, Varela told Princesito that she wanted him to write a monologue for her to perform. He agreed, but only if she would agree to sing during the show. Shortly thereafter, Varela left to live abroad, but she reminded Princesito of their project upon returning to Praia in 2005. *Maria Badia* was the result. After debuting in Praia in March 2006, *Maria Badia* circulated to Mindelact 2006 at João Branco's invitation. Varela told me that she and Princesito perceived the Mindelact Festival as a way to diffuse *badiu* culture in Mindelo: "*Badias* go to Mindelo all the time to sell their products, but people there don't know what their lives are really like." *Maria Badia*, with its dramatization of Santiaguense daily life, would show them.²⁶⁰ *Maria Badia* illuminates how the Mindelact festival generates new artistic collaborations that, by self-consciously staging locality, contribute to new national imaginaries.

In the remainder of this section, I analyze the performance text and reception conditions of *Maria Badia*. My discussion is informed by interviews with Varela and Princesito and my own involvement with their subsequent artistic collaboration. When I resided in Praia from April-August 2007, the two of them invited me to assist with the script development and

²⁵⁹ This was my general impression after talking informally with a number of the Cape Verdean artists attending that year. An actor from Brava Island, José Domingos, remarked that Festival Off did not really "take off" until the performance of *Maria Badia* on the third night. Indeed, the first two nights featured short sketches from Sal and São Nicolau Island theatre groups. Many spectators regarded those plays as hastily put-together and unoriginal. See Micaela Barbosa's review of the Sal and São Nicolau pieces. Micaela Barbosa, "Sal e S. Nicolau no Off," <http://cenakritika.blogspot.com/2006/09/mindelact-2006-sal-e-s-nicolau-no-off.html> (accessed April 1, 2008).

²⁶⁰ Célia Varela, personal interview, June 4, 2007.

rehearsal of another co-creation, a play called *Praia Mindelo*.²⁶¹ During rehearsals for that play, I became privy to the duo's creative process, which Varela calls *guerra constructiva* (constructive warfare): constant debate about the text, music, and staging, all of which they develop collaboratively. I became particularly interested in the gender dynamic of this exchange and eager to put it into conversation with what happens onstage in *Maria Badia*.

Much like *Duas Sem Três*, *Maria Badia* is a show about women that is, nonetheless, overshadowed by male presence. Yet in *Maria Badia*, this overshadowing happens visually. Princesito remains sitting on a stool behind a scrim for the entire performance, playing a guitar and joining in some of Maria's songs. The lighting on the scrim both illuminates and magnifies his figure, so that a larger-than-life version of the singer looms over the scenes. His songs stage an on-going dialogue with Maria. As she sows seeds during the fieldworker scenes, for example, Princesito intones the show's lively theme song, "Pilonkan." Maria chimes in with the refrain, "Ca mesti homi, não" (No, I don't need a man). When he responds "a mim tambem ca mesti mudjer" (I don't need a woman either), Maria laughs derisively as if in disbelief.

²⁶¹ *Praia Mindelo* is a comedy meant to poke fun at the regional biases that often plague interactions between residents of the two cities.



Figure 14: Célia Varela sells fish while Princesito plays guitar in *Maria Badia*²⁶²

Offstage, Princesito also has a looming presence in the Praia arts scene. While he is a major figure in contemporary Cape Verdean music,²⁶³ Varela is an amateur actress with minimal name recognition on the islands. However, Varela does not allow Princesito to dominate their artistic sessions (much like Maria Badia does not allow the onstage singer to undermine her song). In fact, she often emerges as the victor of their constructive warfare. As I found out during one joint interview with them, the *Maria the Fieldworker* scene showcases an instance in which her artistic license had prevailed over his ideas for staging the scene.

One evening before a rehearsal, Varela, Princesito, and I viewed my DVD of *Maria Badia* at Mindelact. We had arrived at a moment in which Maria stops sowing seeds in her field, picks up her lunch basket, wanders over to a nearby scarecrow, and says to herself, “I think I’ll sit down to eat now.” Princesito remarked that he thought this part was “too introspective.” He said that, in general, Varela had performed all of her quotidian actions in an overly laborious

²⁶² Performed by Finka Pé for Mindelact 2006. Photo by the author.

²⁶³ Princesito is among a cadre of Praia musicians who are pioneering an acoustic guitar style that assumes the rhythms and song patterns of *batuko* (traditionally played solely by corporeal percussion). The “acoustic batuque” movement has received critical acclaim both within and outside of Cape Verde. The most famous example is young Santiaguense singer Tcheka, who has toured widely in France, Portugal, and the U.S.

manner, including eating her lunch, and, later, changing into her fish-seller clothing behind the scrim. Varela disagreed on every count: “of course I took my time eating. I had worked in the field all morning. I was hungry!”²⁶⁴ Princesito responded that in theatre, it is sufficient to hint at a performed action without belaboring the point. Turning to me, he asked, “*é ka sim, Christina?*” (isn’t that right, Christina?) I recognized that he was viewing me as a theatre “expert” who could resolve their artistic dispute. Therefore, I tried to defuse the situation by responding that there were merits to performing quotidian actions in real-time, as Varela had done.

Namely, when labor is performed in real-time, it maintains its sense of drudgery. In the scene, Varela scatters her seeds for several minutes, pacing slowly from one point to the next. This is different from labor that is stylized for entertainment value, as in the playful blues-number vacuuming scene in *Duas Sem Trêz*. Feeling time drag by, the spectator experiences the monotony of Maria’s days in the field along with her. This slow and steady labor creates a visibly introspective mood. Music reinforces Maria’s pensive state. Behind the scrim, Princesito switches from the fast-paced song, “Pilonkan,” to one with a slow tempo. Maria sings, “*Mi n’sta normal, natural/ nha pensamento sta tranquilo*” (I’m normal and natural, my thoughts are tranquil). The song does not invite audience participation; it merely reflects Maria’s private moment. Maria’s lunch, which follows the song, is likewise private. She keeps her food hidden between her two legs, preventing spectators from seeing what she is eating. Here, Maria as an introverted, quiet fieldworker constructs the spectator as a voyeur of her quotidian life.

Varela’s decision to stage introspection during the fieldworker scene is crucial because it ushers in the pivotal moment of the scene: Maria’s abrupt address to the scarecrow. Looking up from her lunch as if suddenly realizing she were being watched, she talks to him as if he were a

²⁶⁴ Our joint screening was a continuation of my interview with Varela on June 4, 2008. All quotes rendered in English are my translation from Crioulo.

real man. Noticing that the scarecrow appears to be gazing at her spread legs, she quickly shuts them and shouts: “There, I closed them! Bad manners! Hey, you want something from me? My thing, you won’t eat!”²⁶⁵ At the word “thing,” Maria points to her crotch. Her explicit gesture and lewd language provoked shocked laughter from the Mindelact audience. Maria’s tranquil labor scene had set up a certain threshold of expectations: we expect the mundane from her, not an absurdist confrontation with a straw man. *Maria Badia* thus shifted from the “predictable” to the “unexpected.”²⁶⁶



Figure 15: Célia Varela confronts the scarecrow in *Maria Badia*²⁶⁷

This was also, however, a shift into the “known,” in the sense that it played into cultural stereotypes. In that instant, Maria is confrontational, loud, and vulgar, much like the standard image of *badius* in the national imaginary. Yet *Maria Badia* uses that stereotype strategically, in that it enables her to make an important social critique about gender. Rising and addressing the scarecrow angrily as “you men these days,” she contrasts his immobility with “the young men of my day, who went to bed at eight and woke up at dawn to take the donkeys to the fields.

²⁶⁵ In Crioulo: “Dja’n fitcha, malcriadu! Bu kre kusa di mi? Nha cusa, bu ka ta kumé!”

²⁶⁶ De Marinis, “Dramaturgy of the Spectator,” 110.

²⁶⁷ Performed by Finka Pé for Mindelact 2006. Photo by the author.

Nowadays, men get up at 6 p.m., watch soap operas, and rob someone if they need money.”²⁶⁸ Maria thus reframes the growing crime rate on Santiago Island, which is much discussed in the press and in everyday conversation, as the result of new patterns of male resistance to hard work. Varela explains that she and Princesito opted to use the stage device of the scarecrow because it would allow Maria to transmit her critique about male rural labor to spectators indirectly and in a spontaneous fashion, rather than relying on direct audience address.²⁶⁹

In the fish-seller scenes, *Maria Badia* puts the *badia* stereotype to a different use. In those scenes, Maria takes on a more charismatic persona. She engages with the audience in an extroverted fashion, openly inviting their participation in the performance. At Mindelact, she constructed the spectators as her potential customers at the market. As the scene begins, Maria enters the stage area from behind the scrim, carrying her basket of fish on her head. She sings “Es Pexi” (This fish), a song that beseeches spectators to buy her fish. While it is an original composition by Princesito, the song’s refrain imitates the sing-song chanting that market sellers in Cape Verde use to attract clients’ attention. Its melody is catchy and the lyrics simple: “*Es pexi (3X), es atum (3X), es cavala (3X)*” (this fish, this tuna, this mackerel). At Mindelact, the audience joined in on the refrain in no time (the Crioulo words’ proximity to Portuguese ones made this possible for other Lusophone artists present, too). This moment was another example of Maria enacting the *known*: a familiar sales interaction that Cape Verdean spectators encounter in everyday life and that visiting spectators can easily identify as belonging to a market milieu.

²⁶⁸ This is a summary of the speech that I took from both the Crioulo-language and Portuguese-language versions of the script that Varela generously provided me. As the actress told me, her actual words followed this general theme but changed slightly at every performance.

²⁶⁹ Célia Varela, personal interview, June 4, 2007.

After focusing spectators' attention completely on her, Maria strikes a sexually suggestive pose that ultimately yields another social critique. When she sets her basket down after the song, her cap falls off her head. Her back to the audience, she bends down to retrieve it in order to show off her backside, casting a sly look at the audience over her shoulder as they respond with catcalls. This gesture was a result of Varela's research among fish-sellers in the open-air market of her home city, Praia. To gather ideas for Maria's character, Varela once approached a fish-seller, a twenty-year-old woman from Tira Chapeu, a poorer neighborhood on Praia's outskirts, and asked about some of her tactics for attracting clients. The young woman told her that she *only* addresses male clients, since they are more likely to respond to suggestive overtures that she incorporates into her sales pitch. She then taught Varela the seductive hip sway that the actress worked into her performance. Thus, what Varela replicates onstage is a young girl courting the male gaze in order to boost sales.

According to Varela and Princesito, this depiction hints at a new kind of market woman in Praia: one whose short skirts, bawdy ripostes, and ever-present bottle of alcohol hint at seedier selling she may be doing on the side (for example, she may be hiding drugs under her skirt, as Varela explains). Here, Maria's explicit sexual gesture exposes troubling labor patterns among Cape Verdean market women. Refusing to tidy up their disreputable side, the performance simultaneously pays homage to their ingenuity at procuring clients. In fact, depicting the fish-seller as salacious allowed the performers to critique the limited employment and financial opportunities available to women in Cape Verde. Later in the scene, Maria turns her back to the audience and puts her hand on her backside. Turning her head around to face them, she says, "In these difficult [economic] times, I just might sell the tail." Ostensibly, Maria is referring to tuna tail, but the double entendre is that she is really talking about selling her own body. Thus, she

frames market women's potential dabbling in prostitution or drug-dealing as a survival strategy that responds to their vulnerable position within Cape Verde's already precarious economy.

In order to expose these disabling social structures and their accompanying labor patterns, *Maria Badia* plays into the *badia* stereotype. Maria's persona represents a composite picture of fish-sellers' local reputations on the island, as described in Kesha Fikes's study of Santiaguense fish-sellers. Fikes found that in the local Santiago imagination, fish-sellers are perceived as lewd, morally questionable, and physically dangerous because they carry with them sharp knives for gutting fish.²⁷⁰ Yet once again, embodying a stereotype of a Santiaguense woman is an example of the actress performing something "known" in order to follow up with a depiction that is "novel."

After performing this familiar version of the Santiaguense fish-seller, Varela heads into more uncharted waters by suddenly transforming into a rapper. Donning shades, she sets her sales pitch to a hip-hop tempo. Again, the tune is catchy and the lyrics easy to learn: *Atun-Atun! Nhôs compra atun!* (Tuna-tuna! Buy my tuna, you all!). At Mindelact, spectators laughed loudly and began clapping to her beat, responding corporally to her performance. Varela identifies this moment as a direct challenge to Cape Verdean social norms. As she explains, "In Cape Verde, rap is shouted by everybody on the streets, but recorded only by men."²⁷¹ In other words, rap as leisure activity may cross gender lines, but only males profit from it in the music industry. Maria, however, uses rap for her own financial gain, albeit outside of a recording studio. Hip-hop becomes another sales tactic for Maria, giving her a competitive edge over fish-sellers who continue to rely solely on sing-song chants. Weaving together labor patterns from actual Cape

²⁷⁰ Fikes, "Santiaguense Cape Verdean Women," 114.

²⁷¹ Célia Varela, personal interview, June 4, 2008.

Verdean fish-sellers and the fantastical innovation of a rapping market woman, *Maria Badia* dares spectators to imagine new social and aesthetic paradigms for laboring women.



Figure 16: Célia Varela as a Rapping Market Woman in *Maria Badia*²⁷²

At Mindelact, Maria’s series of fluctuations between “novel” and “known” created a depiction of a female laborer who resists any static notion of “authenticity.” Within a festival context, however, there are usually spectators who lack the cultural literacy to notice subtle transformations in gender codes or covert social critiques. One such spectator at Mindelact 2006 was Spanish performance artist Enano, who gave a more surface reading of the piece as an energetic depiction of African “authenticity.” Calling *Maria Badia* “full of life,” Enano told Varela that he read it as a depiction of a typical Cape Verdean woman who was also “cheia de africanidade” (filled with ‘africanity’), the spirit and rhythm of Africa.²⁷³ Perhaps unwittingly, he reaffirmed cultural associations of *badiu* culture with the African continent.

Local spectators did read the piece’s nuances, albeit in different ways. Raiz di Polon’s American manager, Jeffrey Hessney, who has lived in Praia for several years and attends

²⁷² Performed by Finka Pé for Mindelact 2006. Photo by the author.

²⁷³ Célia Varela, personal interview, July 19, 2007.

Mindelact annually, criticized the piece for embracing the stereotype of *badius* as “hickish” or simple-minded. He pointed to the scarecrow moment as an example of this, saying that it constructed Maria as too ignorant to distinguish between a “real” and a straw man.²⁷⁴ The Cape Verdean spectators with whom I spoke did not view it this way, but their positions as residents of other islands perhaps made them less apt to identify the representation as stereotype. José Domingos, an actor from Brava Island, praised Varela’s performance and recognized the use of specific dramaturgical devices to hold the audience’s attention (such as Maria’s frequent allusions to a tuna tail recipe, which she withholds until the final moments of the performance).²⁷⁵ Mindelo director Herlandson Duarte commended Varela on her performance and told her that he wanted to work with her on a new staging of *Maria Badia*. In that case, a Mindelact performance sparked the possibility of a new intracultural alliance between a Praia and Mindelo artist.²⁷⁶ This future collaboration promises to meld Duarte’s abstract directing style (see chapter four) with Varela’s innovative depictions of Santiago women. Thus, their new interpretation of *Maria Badia* has the potential to enact further transformations in representations of social and gender norms.²⁷⁷

Another facet of a performance’s reception is its impact on the populations represented onstage. As I was aware that Varela regarded *Maria Badia* to be a piece that reinvents the Santiaguense female laborer, I asked for her perspective on how these transformations might impact local Santiago women. Her face lit up as she told me how she had invited the 20-year-old fish-seller from Tira Chapeu to observe a rehearsal for *Maria Badia*. As Varela recalls, the

²⁷⁴ Jeffrey Hessney, personal conversation, September 2006.

²⁷⁵ José Domingos, personal conversation, June 2007.

²⁷⁶ See Rustom Bharucha, *The Politics of Cultural Practice: Thinking through Theatre in an Age of Globalization* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 8.

²⁷⁷ While the collaboration has yet to happen, neither Varela nor Duarte has abandoned the idea. During my year of fieldwork in Cape Verde, I occasionally brainstormed with them about funding sources that could bring Duarte to Praia to re-stage *Maria Badia*.

young woman remarked that the piece's protagonist had inspired her to start living a fuller life. She described Maria as dynamic and very social, the kind of woman who might go out dancing with friends even after a long day's work. The young woman vowed to begin making time for recreation in her own life, stating that she always remained in her house with her children after a day's work of selling in the market.²⁷⁸ Varela clearly saw this as evidence of *Maria Badia's* ability to impact and transform local populations in Praia.

3.5 GTCCPM: Performing São Vicentian Women

Performed on the mainstage for Mindelact 2006, GTCCPM's *Mulheres na Lajinha* was the São Vicentian counterpoint to *Maria Badia*, staged the same year for Festival Off. Rather than targeting labor, however, the production focused on the sexuality of Mindelo women. The play is an adaptation of the book *O Mar na Lajinha* (The Sea at Lajinha) by Cape Verde's best-known novelist, Germano Almeida. A long-time resident of Mindelo, Almeida is famous for capturing the minutia of Mindelense people, culture, and everyday life in his work.²⁷⁹ The novel recounts anecdotes about a dozen Mindelenses who gather at the city's popular beach, Lajinha, at the crack of dawn, when it is teeming with middle-aged Mindelenses doing calisthenics or taking dips. From the book's panoply of female and male Mindelenses, GTCCPM chose four women to constitute the characters of their adaptation, *Mulheres na Lajinha* (*Women at Lajinha*).

In the play, each woman has a monologue that narrates her sexual coming-of-age. Pantcha is a 55-year-old prostitute. Sulena and Maria, both 40, formerly worked as domestics for upper-class families and later became mistresses of the household heads after the wives left the picture. Adelina, 50, who became pregnant in high school, eventually married the child's father,

²⁷⁸ Célia Varela, personal interview, July 19, 2007.

²⁷⁹ Almeida's most well-known novel, *O Testamento do Sr. Napomuceno da Silva Araújo* (Mindelo: Ilhéu Editora, 1989), is set in Mindelo in the decade immediately following independence. It has been translated into English and was adapted as a film of the same title by the Brazilian cinematographer Francisco Manso in 1997.

Hermindo. Between monologues, the women discuss their favorite sexual positions and gossip mercilessly about the sexual indiscretions of mutual friends. The piece ends with an onstage, mid-swim scuffle between two of the women, after Adelina accuses Sulena of reaching into her husband Hermindo's bathing trunks and grabbing at his crotch (he is not represented in the scene, however).

GTCCPM's director João Branco did the adaptation in collaboration with four of the theatre group's core actresses, Elisabete Gonçalves, Ludmila Évora, Sílvia Lima, and Zenaida Alfama. Each actress constructed her own monologue from snippets about her character in Almeida's novel. All of the intervening episodes were selected from the novel jointly by Branco and the actresses during table work and the rehearsal process. My analysis of the performance draws from an interview with Branco and a group interview with the actresses. Since I have read *O Mar na Lajinha* and interviewed Almeida, I also point out how the embodied performance is distinct from the book and compare Almeida's authorial perspective with that of the adapters. The major difference between the novel and the play is that male characters are not present in the stage adaptation.

My analysis focuses on how the four women onstage tell the stories embedded in *O Mar na Lajinha* in the absence of male characters. In particular, I examine three aspects of this gender dynamic. The first is women voicing the explicitly sexual, at times misogynistic, dialogue that Almeida places in men's mouths in his book. The second is female actresses simulating sexual positions with each other, since men are not present. Last is the final scene, when Pantcha and Maria comment on Adelina's and Sulena's fight, rather than the male onlookers who do so in the novel. All of these changes, I argue, place female agency at the heart of Mindelense sexual relations. Since Almeida is regarded as an authority on Mindelo culture, GTCCPM's tweaking of

his gender codes is tantamount to re-writing a prevailing (male) perspective on female sexuality in Mindelo.

It is important to consider how *Mulheres na Lajinha* transforms images of Mindelense social relations because it had a marked presence on the 2006-07 Mindelo theatre scene. The play was a popular success at both its Mindelact debut and its re-mounting in Mindelo in March 2007. A festival review called the show a “high point” of Mindelact 2006.²⁸⁰ In March, so many Mindelo theatergoers clamored for tickets that GTCCPM added two extra performances to its weekend run. However, some of these Mindelo spectators expressed discomfort at the show’s graphic content and called the characters exaggerated versions of contemporary Mindelo women.²⁸¹

The representation of Mindelo women as salacious is particularly risky in a festival context, where many international attendees catch their first glimpse of Mindelo culture. Indeed, an important reception condition of *Mulheres na Lajinha* was that Mindelact 2006 opened with the musical about Mindelo’s port history, *Um vez Soncente era Sábe*, discussed in chapter two. This production, whose catchiest number was of prostitutes in a brothel proudly singing “Nos é profissional!” (we’re professionals), reinforced historical and cultural linkages between lower-class Mindelense women and sexual commerce (see chapter one). This reputation persists today. Now, Cape Verdeans often discuss the rise of prostitution in Mindelo that has accompanied the city’s influx of European tourists in recent years.

²⁸⁰ “Mindelact – 2006: Um festival de afectos e cumplicidades,” *Expresso das Ilhas*, September 13, 2006, sec: Cultura, 29. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #1281.

²⁸¹ Personal interviews with two female spectators who wished to remain anonymous, March 10 and 16, 2007, and with Josina Fortes, March 2, 2007. Fortes discussed the Mindelact staging with me, while the other two women responded to the March performances.

Mulheres na Lajinha's depiction of Mindelo women as explicitly sexual perhaps triggered this stereotype, something already "known" about São Vicentian women. Yet the performance also introduced something "novel" to this depiction: Mindelo women openly taking pleasure in their engagement with sexual discourse. While this undoubtedly provoked many Mindelo spectators' discomfort, the actresses considered it to be a necessary breach of a local taboo. As I will discuss, they regarded the characters' racy dialogue as a way to bring to the public sphere discursive practices happening only behind "closed doors" in Mindelo.

3.5.1 *Mulheres na Lajinha*, Part 1: "We acted out what was already in their heads!"

While Almeida's novel often features men narrating women's sexual past, the women in the play narrate their own. This introduces new perspectives on the events. For example, in the novel, Duca (a male character) tells the Lajinha group about Pantcha's sexual prowess, stating that her only "defect" is demanding payment in advance.²⁸² In the performance, however, Pantcha announces that "defect" proudly, framing it as a counter-strategy to the "men of today" who, after being well-serviced in bed, refuse to reciprocate. In the same breath, Pantcha boldly stands and challenges all the men at Lajinha to try her out, swearing that she would leave them all panting and breathless. Here, Pantcha makes it clear that she is the mastermind of her own sexual strategies, which she uses to ensure her financial security. Thus, she renders herself manager of her own prostituted body, removing part of the stigma of engaging in the local sex market.

Perhaps the most significant consequence of putting men's dialogue in female mouths comes from the women's discussion of Luizão, an offstage character whom the women address. In the novel, Luizão's misogynist views are scathing. He tells his friend, "Women are beasts,

²⁸² Germano Almeida, *O Mar na Lajinha* (Mindelo: Ilhéu Editora, 2004), 18.

man, woman is the worst race that exists under the sun and moon, just one woman is ten times worse than a sack of vipers.”²⁸³ In Almeida’s book, the narrator explains that behind Luizão’s disgust for women is the fact that both his previous wives have “almost publicly” cuckolded him, while the younger woman with whom he is currently residing is doing much the same.²⁸⁴ Luizão is such a notorious figure that Mindelo theatergoers familiar with Almeida’s novel asked people in the Mindelact Association in advance whether his character would appear in the play.

While Almeida’s narrator describes Luizão’s misfortunes with women sympathetically, onstage the women frame it as his come-uppance for woman-hating. In the midst of a gossip session, they stand at the front of the stage and gaze out over the audience’s heads as if looking out at the ocean. One of them “spots” Luizão and waves. They begin to discuss his unfaithful wives and his new girlfriend’s sexual rendezvous in Praia while she is on business trips there. Simultaneously, they wave and shout pleasantries to him. For example, after quoting Luizão’s conviction that women are beasts, Sulena yells to his distant figure, “Ei, Luizão!” Actress Ludmila Évora, who played Sulena, recalls that one evening a man in the audience playfully called back, “Ale’ m li!” (Here I am). As Branco noted, the young man probably regretted it when he heard how the women subsequently disparage Luizão for allowing his women to “give him horns” (at that point, they all put two fingers to their heads to indicate cuckoldry). Branco suggests that in the stage adaptation, the female characters in Almeida’s novel get to take their revenge on Luizão.²⁸⁵ In the same way, the actresses delivered a stunning rebuke to the young man in the audience who was quick to identify with Luizão’s misogynist views. Since some

²⁸³ “[. . .] mulher é bicho, rapaz, mulher é a pior raça que existe debaixo de sol e da lua, uma única mulher é dez vezes pior que um saco inteiro cheio de víboras.” Almeida, *O Mar na Lajinha*, 233.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

²⁸⁵ João Branco, personal interview, March 21, 2007.

Mindelo spectators had read Almeida's novel before seeing the performance and had expected to see Luizão, they would have been able to perceive this crucial shift in the narrative perspective on misogyny.



Figure 17: Sílvia Lima, Zenaida Alfama, and Ludmila Évora do aerobics in *Mulheres na Lajinha*²⁸⁶

The female characters' vivid discussions of their own and others' sexual exploits raised eyebrows among Mindelo spectators. Josina Fortes, director of the Mindelo Cultural Center, called the language "strong" and criticized GTCCPM for not putting an advisory in the festival program to parents, some of whom had brought young children. Another woman remarked that the dialogue had only a small "percentage" in common with everyday conversation in Mindelo.²⁸⁷ The actresses note, however, that Mindelense society does sanction this kind of sexual discourse if men are voicing it. Gonçalves, who played Maria, claims that the book's dialogue is faithful to conversations that Mindelo men regularly have in bars lining the city's livelier streets, such as Rua de Lisboa. Both in these bars and in Almeida's book, men discuss women in exploitative ways. In the stage adaptation, women speak disparagingly about men's

²⁸⁶ Performed by GTCCPM for Mindelact 2006. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

²⁸⁷ Josina Fortes, personal interview, March 2, 2007; Celena Évora, personal interview, March 10, 2007.

sexual abilities. For Gonçalves, the play demonstrates that women should have their own resources for countering exploitative discourses: “it’s necessary that women have a voice.” The women’s sex talk is thus a commentary on deeply ingrained *machista* attitudes in Cape Verde. Actress Sílvia Lima, who played Adelina, said that the show gave voice to what is normally a social taboo for women: “we acted out what was already in their [spectators’] heads.”²⁸⁸

More importantly, the actresses act out what is occurring in their own lives. The three *Mulheres* actresses who live in Mindelo, Gonçalves, Lima, and Zenaida Alfama, were part of my circle of women friends when I spent seven months in Mindelo doing research. Our nights sitting around Gonçalves’s kitchen table, drinking red wine and swapping tactics for giving men proper “stage directions” to ensure our own sexual satisfaction, could have been part of the *Mulheres na Lajinha* script. The same is true for a comment one of them made at the end of our group interview at a Mindelo pizzeria: “men should have a full month of coursework before they start having sexual relationships: 15 hours of theory, 15 hours of practical application.” As any *Sex and the City* devotee knows,²⁸⁹ talk like this among female friends is not uncommon. As Gonçalves points out, Mindelo women are already having these conversations but Mindelense society is loath to *acknowledge* that fact.²⁹⁰

Arguably, circulating a sexually explicit novel to a stage compelled spectators to acknowledge it. The genre change from novel to theatre introduces a whole different dynamic to the dialogue. While *O Mar na Lajinha* is a novel meant to be read to oneself in private, *Mulheres na Lajinha* is a play in which women utter intimate talk in a public performance venue in the

²⁸⁸ Elisabete Gonçalves and Sílvia Lima, personal interview, March 13, 2007.

²⁸⁹ As my friends in Mindelo knew, since *Sex and the City* re-runs air on Monday nights on Cape Verdean television, with Portuguese subtitles. In fact, we often debated who among us would be Carrie, Miranda, Samantha, and Charlotte if we were on the show.

²⁹⁰ Elisabete Gonçalves, personal interview, March 13, 2007.

presence of male and female spectators. This is perhaps why Almeida's novel did not make waves while the stage version did. For the actresses, placing intimate sex talk in the public domain was an important step towards more egalitarian sex roles in their city.

3.5.2 *Mulheres na Lajinha*, Part II: Simulating Sex and Fights Onstage

The second consequence of staging an all-female version of *O Mar na Lajinha* was that we see women enacting erotic positions with each other. This first occurs early on, when Pantcha tells a story about an adolescent sexual escapade with an older Mindelo shopkeeper. She explains that for awhile, the man would only allow his phallus to graze her, avoiding actual penetration as she was still a minor. Pantcha eventually loses patience with this and aggressively grabs him by the rear, pulling him against her roughly while shouting, "Put it in me, damn it! Put it in me!"²⁹¹ In the novel, Pantcha tells this story to a group of friends at Lajinha identified by the narrator only as "us."²⁹² In the play, Pantcha's audience is Sulena, sitting on a beach chair, and Adelina, jogging nearby. At the story's climax, Pantcha pulls Adelina's body against her and thrusts her pelvis towards her, shouting "put it in me!" This embodied enactment of the story casts Pantcha in the "male" role of seducer, figuring her as a woman possessing more sexual knowledge and prowess than a man. At the same time, it creates a moment of woman-to-woman sexual simulation onstage.

Another example of this sexual simulation comes during one of the highlights of the performance: when the women discuss all of the "genuinely Cape Verdean" positions that could be included in a Cape Verdean kama sutra (they feel this is necessary because "men these days" have no creativity in bed). Sulena describes one position, "airplane in a turbulent zone," like this:

²⁹¹ From GTCCPM's unpublished script for *Mulheres na Lajinha*, generously provided to the author by João Branco. In the script: "metê, porra metê!"

²⁹² See Almeida, *O Mar na Lajinha*, 13.

“Both on foot, the woman swings up on the man [his waist] and hangs from him [. . .]. He holds onto her by the armpits or by the belt, and then up and down, up and down.”²⁹³ While Sulena narrates this, Pantcha runs over to Maria, jumps up and swings her legs around her waist as Maria catches her, and the two of them enact the upward and downward thrusts that Sulena describes. By calling the positions “genuinely Cape Verdean,” the characters voice a discourse of national “authenticity.” The dialogue describes a man and a woman performing the position, which constructs “authentically national” sexual relations as inherently heterosexual. Yet what spectators *see* onstage are two women enacting a “genuinely Cape Verdean” sex act. Visually, then, this moment re-writes dominant social narratives about heteronormativity in Cape Verde.

I asked the actresses to discuss the potential effects these moments might have onstage in Mindelo, where female-to-female erotic relations are still relatively taboo. The women did not see anything unusual in their characters’ tactile interactions. Gonçalves said that female friends in Mindelo are not afraid to touch each other; she has a girl friend who greets her by playfully grabbing her in the crotch.²⁹⁴ After hearing Gonçalves’s story, I suddenly remembered the night I was in the Mindelo Cultural Center viewing an exhibition of paintings by local Mindelo artist, Tchalé Figueira. Cleidy, a young woman taking Branco’s introductory theatre class, led me over to an abstract painting that featured a head seemingly peering upside-down at someone’s crotch: “Christina, do you know what’s going on in this painting?” She then bent down and flipped her head up so that she was gazing up at my crotch. Laughing in shock, I called her “atrevida” (audacious), and watched her repeat this gesture with several of her other girl friends.

²⁹³ In the script: “Ambos de pé, a mulher encavada no homem e dependurada dele [. . .]. Ele segura pelos sovacos ou pela cintura, [. . .] e depois para cima para baixo para cima para baixo.”

²⁹⁴ Elisabete Gonçalves, personal interview, March 13, 2007.

The point is that the moments of sex simulation onstage are not meant to be enactments of same-sex erotica. They are intended as women jokingly engaging with each other as they discuss sexual topics. Discursively, both the novel and the stage adaptation are entrenched in heteronormative frameworks; the “put it in me” line directly refers to heterosexual intercourse. Yet the crucial difference between reading a book and watching a performance onstage is that in the latter situation, we can identify both bodies as sexed and gendered as female, even as they enact man-to-woman sex. Thus, one interpretive possibility for these moments in *Mulheres* is that they function much like the pseudo-wedding that closes *Duas Sem Tres*: they create a space wherein spectators are free to *imagine* sexual relations between women as occurrences subtly woven into the Cape Verdean quotidian reality that both performances represent.

Certain moments in rehearsals suggest that the actresses, too, may have viewed the scenes in this way and therefore felt some anxiety about showing them to the public. For example, they told me that in rehearsals, they had tamed down their re-enactments of the sex positions. For the position called “roasted chicken,” Zenaida Alfama (Pantcha) was originally supposed to lie down on top of Ludmila Évora (Sulena), who lies on her back with her arms and legs flexed like a chicken coming out of the oven. They ultimately decided to have Évora enact the position alone, since otherwise it might be too suggestive.²⁹⁵

If the performance’s stagings of simulated sex act as interpretive spaces where same-sex relations can be imagined into the Cape Verdean quotidian reality, they are perhaps more effective because of their subtlety. When the Mindelo theatre group Solaris performed *Julietas* (Juliets) in March 2005, a direct treatment of a female love story (see chapter four), the Mindelo

²⁹⁵ Group interview, March 13, 2007.

public demonstrated a certain resistance to it. One reviewer criticized the performance because he regarded it to be a “promotion for homosexuality.”²⁹⁶ Thus, framing same-sex erotic moments as simulations of heterosexual activity is perhaps a safer way of packaging the idea in Mindelo.

Another interpretive possibility, however, is that the performance engages the kind of female same-sex play that courts the male gaze. In this scenario, male spectators might imagine that they are controlling the visual frame and have the ability to interrupt the sexually charged interplay and engage with the women themselves. In this case, the performers are constructed as objects of the gaze, rather than women with explicit sexual agency. Both of these interpretive options were among those available to Mindelact spectators.

The onstage, mid-swim fight between Adelina and Sulena, which closes the play, offers similar interpretive options. Both onstage and in the book, the fight scene raises important issues about spectatorship. In the novel, the narrator describes the fight in theatrical terms and debates which characters sitting on the beach had the best sight lines for the performance. Norberto is the first character to notice the altercation because he is perched on a stone wall, which the narrator compares to a *camarote*, a box at the theatre. Norberto laments not bringing his binoculars that day.²⁹⁷ From the sand, Luizão calls the fight like a sports reporter: “Adelina attacks from the left, bringing her arm to Matilde’s ear, [she] avoids it and shoots a right hook to the stomach.”²⁹⁸ Days later, the narrator is still discussing spectator vantage points with other Lajinha-goers, such as an older female professor who was sitting close to Norberto. “Could you see all right from

²⁹⁶ Herlandson Duarte, personal interview, September 7, 2005.

²⁹⁷ The fight scene is on pages 56-67 of Almeida’s book.

²⁹⁸ “Adelina ataca pela esquerda, cruza um braço sobre a orelha da Matilde que se esquiva e lhe atira um directo ao estômago [. . .].” Almeida, *O Mar na Lajinha*, 61.

here?” he asks. She replies, “Optimally. In the morning the sun illuminates the sea directly. It was a great show and, even better, free.”²⁹⁹

What is most intriguing about the fight scene in the novel is that João Branco, the future director of *Mulheres na Lajinha*, is in it. Branco is described as a young Portuguese man still new to Lajinha morning dips. He swims to the shore as the fight begins in order to get a better view, and then grabs his notebook and begins to write frenetically. The narrator laughs at the sight and wonders to himself how Branco is eventually going to stage this. Later, the narrator reflects that Branco must be cursing his luck for not having the photographic memory that he himself has, which allows him simply to glance at a scene like this and then, later, sit calmly and write it all down without missing a single important detail. Thus, embedded in the novel is the possibility of two distinct viewpoints of the fight emerging: that of the fictionalized Branco, who mines the scene for its theatrical potential, and that of the narrator (a fictionalized version of Almeida), who watches it unfold with a novelist’s eye.³⁰⁰

While Branco also stages the fight as a spectatorial event, he undermines the male gaze that dominates the scene in the novel. There is no Norberto wishing for binoculars to increase his voyeuristic pleasure in watching the women fight. Substituting him are Pantcha and Maria, who move out of the water as the fracas begins (much like the young Branco in the novel) and move to the sand so that they can watch it from afar as spectators. Adelina and Sulena remain upstage center immersed in the seascape, created with swaths of aqua cloth stretching horizontally across the stage and billowing blue smocks enveloping each woman. Downstage, Maria sits in a beach

²⁹⁹ “[. . .] daqui via-se bem? Ela responde que sim, optimamente, de manhã o sol está de favor e ilumina o mar directamente, foi sem dúvida um bom espectáculo e ainda por cima de graça.” Almeida, *O Mar na Lajinha*, 161.

³⁰⁰ Supposedly, some version of this fight did occur at Lajinha at one point.

chair calling the fight like it is a soccer game, while Pantcha stands next to her yelling. Both women stare straight out into the audience as if the fight is occurring in the house. Here, Maria and Pantcha are the sole voyeurs of the women's scuffle.



Figure 18: The “Women of Lajinha” swim together just minutes before the fight breaks out³⁰¹

The spectators' commentaries thus come from a distinctly female perspective. Maria professes amazement that this whole scandal is over a “man's sausage roll,” which is abundant in this land and available to any woman who wishes. In the novel, this sentiment comes from either Luizão or the male narrator (whose commentaries blend in this scene),³⁰² who take pleasure in watching the women fight. In Maria's mouth, however, it is reproving: the women are acting in an undignified and unnecessary manner over a man, while the whole play has demonstrated women's total control over their own sexual relations. This tone is a flat-out rejection of the *machismo* dictate that a man should relish the sight of two women fighting over him. Indeed, the novel encourages that very *machista* mentality. The narrator wonders why Hermindo did not

³⁰¹ Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

³⁰² Almeida, *O Mar na Lajinha*, 62.

show more overt pride in the fight between his wife and former lover, which, as he claims, is perfectly “normal” behavior for men.³⁰³

Yet staging the fight scene also renders all of the Mindelact spectators voyeurs of woman-to-woman combat over a man. This flirts dangerously with constructing the kind of “cat fight” that, again, potentially courts the male gaze. Alternatively, perhaps GTCCPM’s decision to stage the fight had less to do with gender and more to do with the popular assumption that everyone likes to see a good fight. Mindelo director Herlandson Duarte seemed to voice this opinion when he criticized *Mulheres na Lajinha*’s facile entertainment values. Duarte told me that he felt as if GTCCPM had said, “Lets give the public exactly what they are asking for.”³⁰⁴

As a spectator myself, I was not so much bothered by the fact that GTCCPM had staged the fight. What did perplex me was that they had *not* staged the motivations behind it. The novel provides the back story, which is that Adelina’s husband had been in love with the other woman when the three of them were in high school together. In the play, Adelina’s monologue merely hints that she knows there is competition for her husband among the “scores of shameless women around here who want to be in my place.”³⁰⁵ I noticed that during some performances, when Lima (as Adelina) delivered this line, she cast a glowering look at Sulena, who responded by rolling her eyes and looking away. Thus, the two actresses sometimes used body language to hint at the back story, but not consistently (at the performance for Mindelact, they did not). I later told Branco how strange the fight seems without any kind of dramatic build up between the two

³⁰³ Almeida, *O Mar na Lajinha*, 214. While living in Mindelo, I even heard stories about men *staging* fights between two women for this reason. For example, a girl friend told me that one night she began receiving flirtatious text messages from a male friend of hers. She responded to them playfully, but not in an overtly encouraging manner. Later that night, he drove his girlfriend over to my friend’s house and sat in the car passively as the woman banged on my friend’s front door, angrily reproached her for sending her boyfriend seductive texts, and threw her against the wall violently. Turning to her friend in shock, she asked, “Aren’t you going to do something about this?” He merely shrugged his shoulders and stayed in the car.

³⁰⁴ Herlandson Duarte, personal interview, September 11, 2007.

³⁰⁵ In the script: “Un sabê direitim ke tem pra li un data de escadaflindra ke graça de estôd na nha lugar.”

women, who otherwise joke good-naturedly with each other throughout the play. After thinking for some time about what had motivated the fight in the play, he laughingly conceded: “the motive was that we wanted to have a fight onstage!”³⁰⁶ It seemed to me that the fight’s entertainment value came at the price of the characters’ dignity. Unmotivated, the fight constructs them as quasi-hysterical women who give up strong bonds of female friendship and deep reserves of dignity over a fleeting moment of flirtation with a man.

Much like *Maria Badia*, *Mulheres na Lajinha* was received very differently by local and international spectators. Actors and directors from other Mindelo theatre groups regarded the performance as sensational for the sake of pleasing the masses in Mindelo and over-reliant on quotidian representations, bringing nothing new to Cape Verdean theatre.³⁰⁷ This also accords with Micaela Barbosa’s review of *Mulheres*, which stated that the play’s rehashing of simplistic female gossip rendered the play unimaginative and a step below the quality theatre the theatre public has come to expect from Branco and GTCCPM.³⁰⁸ Both Barbosa’s review and the Mindelo actors’ reactions suggest that staging the quotidian is an unimaginative dramatic choice that reinforces the status quo rather than shaking it up. Their perspectives correspond to a trend that I have observed among Mindelo theatre artists. They often tend to disparage any Cape Verdean performance smacking of comedy and the quotidian. Sílvia Lima (Adelina) suggests that GTCCPM’s legacy is partly responsible for this phenomenon. She thinks that their group’s long history of adapting Shakespeare, Beckett, and Victor Hugo, or loftier examples of Cape Verdean literature, such as Germano Almeida’s tragic novel, *Os Dois Irmãos* (The Two

³⁰⁶ João Branco, personal interview, March 21, 2007.

³⁰⁷ Post-show interview with Herlandson Duarte, September 11, 2006, and informal conversations with Mindelo actors from various theatre groups during March, Theatre Month 2007.

³⁰⁸ Micaela Barbosa, “Mulheres na Lajinha,” <http://mindelact.com/critica09.htm> (accessed November 28, 2006).

Brothers), has given Mindelense theatre practitioners and spectators certain ideas about what theatre should be: poetic and inherently *different* from everyday life.³⁰⁹

Yet I would argue that this bias prevents theatre artists in Mindelo from recognizing how *Mulheres na Lajinha* may in fact be *reworking* Mindelense social norms. One of these norms pertains to the issue of female sexual pleasure. Almeida's novel indicates that female pleasure is regarded suspiciously by males in some Mindelense circles. When a leading character, Oceano, detects his wife feeling pleasure, rather than pain, during the consummation of their marriage, it sets off a lifetime of suspicion and resentment towards her, since he does not believe that it was her first time.³¹⁰ Thus, the production's unabashed depiction of females reveling in their sexuality is actually a bold staging choice that imaginatively works against normative views of female sexuality in Mindelo.

Interestingly, two international spectators of Mindelact 2006 did not mention sexuality to me at all when I asked them about their impressions of *Mulheres na Lajinha*. Both called the production well done and visually appealing, but suggested that it felt too "European." Angolan actress Liliana Zinga singled out the strong European influence she detected in *Mulheres na Lajinha*'s "text, sensibility, concept, and scenography," concluding that she thought Cape Verdeans needed to start exploring their "own culture" through theatre.³¹¹ Portuguese set designer Pedro de Carvalho called the play the most "European" of all the Cape Verdean theatre he had seen that year. He noted a verbal and aesthetic language that was inherently "occidental" or "European." "I was expecting a more Cape Verdean reading," he concluded.³¹²

³⁰⁹ Sílvia Lima, personal interview, March 13, 2007.

³¹⁰ See Almeida, *O Mar na Lajinha*, 145.

³¹¹ Liliana Zinga, personal conversation, September 15, 2006.

³¹² Pedro de Carvalho, personal interview, September 16, 2006.



Figure 19: Sílvia Lima, Elisabete Gonçalves, Zenaida Alfama, and Ludmila Évora in *Mulheres na Lajinha*³¹³

I wondered what in the performance had cried out “Europe” to them, other than the fact that they knew that Branco had directed it. After all, the play’s dialogue was faithful to what Almeida, a Cape Verdean, had written in his novel. Also, the four Mindelo actresses were just as involved in the adaptation as Branco. One possibility is that the Mindelact 2006 program unwittingly set up an artificial opposition between “African women,” in *Maria Badia*, and “European women,” in *Mulheres na Lajinha*. Perhaps, what signaled the distinction was labor. *Maria Badia* is poor, black (by her own definition), and tireless in her work, whether it is in the fields or selling fish. While most of the *Mulheres* characters do not mention their current professions, we know that they are not exactly upper-crust. Yet the fact that they have the time to come to Lajinha every morning suggests that they represent women from a leisure class with ample time for discussing sexual escapades. Perhaps differing class and labor connotations conjured up one-dimensional visions of “Africa” or “Europe” to the visiting artists.

Casting choices and linguistic factors might have reinforced those class distinctions. Since the actresses in *Mulheres* all have lighter skin tones, they embody the popular perception

³¹³ Performed by GTCCPM for Mindelact 2006. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

of the Mindelo *mestiça* with visible European “roots” (see chapter one). This potentially added a layer of racial signifiers to the Mindelo women’s socio-economic representations. In addition, throughout the play all four actresses speak a mish-mash of São Vicente Crioulo and Portuguese. Branco explains that this was a nod to Almeida’s writing style, which is Portuguese peppered with Crioulo words and expressions.³¹⁴ As Portuguese speakers, Zinga and Carvalho likely understood much more of the play’s dialogue than the *badiu* that Maria Badia speaks. The recognizable fragments of Portuguese in *Mulheres* were perhaps linguistic signifiers of the play’s “European-ness.”

The varying perspectives that international and Cape Verdean spectators brought to two Mindelact 2006 productions, *Mulheres na Lajinha* and *Maria Badia*, suggest that cultural notions about Cape Verdean women and their quotidian realities were already floating signifiers that impacted how different audience members “consumed” the production. While some visiting spectators read only the most conspicuous identity signifiers in the play to propose a surface reading of “Africanness” or “Europeanness,” Cape Verdean spectators commented on nuances of the performances’ themes, representations, and aesthetics. If festival contexts do tend to “coax” spectators to read locally specific productions as vapid cultural representation, these varying spectatorial perspectives suggest that they do not always succeed.

3.6 Conclusion

All three of these performances seek to pay tribute to the Cape Verdean woman. Ultimately, they serve a much more multi-layered function. By projecting women’s labor through cycles of solitude and newly imagined coalitions, and running female sexuality through

³¹⁴ João Branco, personal interview, March 21, 2007. In post-show interviews, I often asked spectators if they thought this was a realistic portrayal of São Vicente speech. Most said it was not, as it had too much Portuguese mixed in.

the wringer of time-worn public perceptions and innovative new iterations, they splinter the very notion of “authenticity” into variegated performances of difference. In the festival arena, Cape Verdean actresses and dancers refuse the role of serving up for multinational audiences the empty national representation that the festival milieu seemingly cultivates. Close attention to their methods, philosophies, and the semiotics of their theatre reveals the myriad interpretive possibilities their performances have to offer.

CHAPTER FOUR

Adaptation and the Nation: Creolizing “Classics” on the Festival Stage

4.1 Chapter Introduction

In 2004, the Cape Verdean newspaper *Expresso das Ilhas* published a review of the archipelago’s cultural highlights for that year. It included the Mindelact Theatre Festival, which had celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2004. Declaring that the festival celebrates the best of Cape Verde’s theatre scene, the reviewer cited a selection of past performances as evidence: “Shakespeare translated into Crioulo in a *King Lear* that Queen Victoria would kiss on the hand; Garcia Lorca would adore seeing *Bernarda* transformed into our “*nha Bernarda*”; Chekhov wouldn’t have trouble recognizing his ‘*Three Sisters*’ on a Mindelo stage.”¹

Demonstrably proud that Cape Verdean theatre groups have performed these “great works,” the reviewer suggests that the adaptations are commendable because the original authors (or Queen Victoria?) would be able to recognize their works in them. This presumes that the measure of a good adaptation is its fidelity to a source text, even if that text undergoes changes during the adaptation process. Cape Verdean groups that perform adaptations see their work in a similar light. Using a model of adaptation that privileges cultural affinities, they seek out foreign texts whose themes resonate with Cape Verdean society in certain ways and then highlight those likenesses in their productions. This suggests that Cape Verdean adaptations are not “canonical counter-discourses,” Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins’s term for adaptations that function as

¹ “Mindelact,” *Expresso das Ilhas*, December 29, 2004. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, # 845.

oppositional texts that destabilize the power structures of the originals.² Notably, much postcolonial scholarship on adaptations, particularly those staged in Africa or the African diaspora, focuses on plays that are both politically-charged and deconstructive of Western texts.³

What cultural work can “non-subversive” adaptations accomplish? In this chapter, I address that question in analyses of Cape Verdean adaptations traced through three editions of Mindelact: *Rei Lear: Nhô Rei já bá cabeça* (*King Lear: The King’s Head has Gone*, 2003), *Três Irmãs* (*Three Sisters*, 2004), and *Sonho de Uma Noite de Verão* (*Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 2005). The productions did not seek to dismantle or critique the hegemony of the Western canon. In fact, the directors regard the plays as venerated examples of “universal” theatre, a term whose biases they did not question during our interviews. I argue, however, that even seemingly pacific adaptations can perform political work. In all cases, the theatre groups’ use of the Western play resulted in subtle critiques of social issues critical to nationhood in Cape Verde. *Rei Lear’s* privileging of São Vicente Crioulo, which was called “our country’s language” in the media, became a counter-discourse to what many Mindelenses perceive as a government bias toward Santiago’s Crioulo variant. The script for *Três Irmãs* employed Crioulo in strategic ways after the Mindelo Portuguese Cultural Center, which sponsored the production, requested a primarily Portuguese-language adaptation. In *Sonho de Uma Noite de Verão*, the group staged Bottom’s

² Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 15.

³ See, for example, Gilbert and Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama*, 15-52; Marvin Carlson’s chapter on “Postcolonial Heteroglossia” in his book *Speaking in Tongues: Language at Play in the Theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 105-49; John Conteh-Morgan, “Antigone in the ‘Land of the Incorruptible’: Sylvain Bemba’s *Noces posthumes de Santigone* (*Black Wedding Candles for Blessed Antigone*),” in *African Drama and Performance*, ed. Conteh-Morgan and Tejumola Olaniyan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 78-87; Poonam Trivedi, “‘It is the bloody business which informs thus...’: Local Politics and Performative Praxis, *Macbeth* in India,” *World-Wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance*, ed. Sonia Massai (New York: Routledge, 2005), 47-54; Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 2006). See also Paul Edwards’s critique of Sanders in “Adaptation: Two Theories,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 27, no.4 (2007): 369-77, at 374-76.

play-within-a-play as an actual tragedy, rather than Shakespeare's farcical rendition of one.

As I will discuss, this advanced a critique of spectatorial preferences and the Mindelact Festival's own authoritative structures. In sum, the productions all enacted transformative perspectives on issues of language and power as they circulated to the festival stage.

Attending to the social function of adaptations staged at international theatre festivals is important since Western canonical plays are such common festival fare. Addressing festivals such as Toronto's DuMaurier World Stage and the Edinburgh festival in Scotland, Ric Knowles notes that the high modernist productions favored there are usually based on "classics or other sources that already have transcultural authority or resonance." Productions chosen from non-Euro-American spaces are often adaptations as well.⁴ Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a festival in any part of the world today not including at least one Western "chestnut" in order to cash in on the cultural cachet and attract important sponsors. In 2007, South Africa's Grahamstown Arts Festival mainstage featured an Orpheus adaptation, while the street theatre boasted a Medea and a Molière. At Mindelact, visiting theatre groups have presented Euro-American classics, such as adaptations of *Waiting for Godot*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Of Mice and Men*, and plays centered on luminaries from Portuguese literature, such as classical poet Camões and late-medieval playwright Gil Vicente.⁵ Cape Verdean adaptations of Western plays often debut at Mindelact, as did all three productions examined here.

Knowles argues that a festival context may de-politicize the social interventionist aspects of adaptations unless the productions use certain formalist devices, such as metatheatre, able to

⁴ Ric Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 183, 188.

⁵ As *Mulheres de Gil Vicente* (2002) and *Talvez Camões* (2004) were both staged by Lisbon-based companies, Companhia Filipe Crawford and Companhia do Chapitô, respectively.

resist the aestheticization that threatens to contain them within festival venues.⁶ In this chapter, I examine both the formalist structures of the productions and the ways in which the directors and actors embedded signifiers of Crioulo culture within the play's content. This attends to how artists' agency can also work to resist the festival context's containment of social critiques. Further, I consider how a festival's reception technologies, primarily media "buzz," can have ambivalent effects on a production's political import. For example, media coverage of both *Rei Lear* and *Sonho de uma Noite de Verão* emphasized their all Crioulo-language scripts. In *Rei Lear*, this emphasis on language helped create the production's political subtext, while in *Sonho*, it potentially drew attention away from the critique of theatre practice in Cape Verde.

The three Cape Verdean adaptations considered here illuminate how the consumption of foreign material impacts national imaginaries. Consumption imagery often dominates cultural discourse in nations self-consciously depicting themselves as products of profoundly "mixed" cultural and historical influences. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Brazilian writers and artists named this ongoing syncretic process "antropofagia," constructing themselves as cannibals "eating up" aspects of Africa, Europe, and the Americas and spitting them out as new cultural formations.⁷ In Cape Verde, cultural consumption is termed "creolization." Journalists have applied a consumption metaphor explicitly to adaptations staged in Mindelo. Citing historian António Correia e Silva's characterization of Mindelo as "omnivorous," Eduino Santos writes, "Here, in Mindelo, we create a synthesis of everything good that is brought to us and transform it into products made in Cape Verde." In this way, Mindelenses "ate" Shakespeare via João

⁶ Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre*, 189-90.

⁷ For a brief discussion of how São Paulo musicians and theatre artists continued the "antropofagia" legacy in the "tropicalismo" movement of the 1960s and 1970s, see Plínio Marcos, interview by Elzbieta Szoka, "The Spirit of Revolution in Contemporary Brazilian Theatre: An Interview with Plínio Marcos," *TDR: The Drama Review* 34, no.1 (1990): 70-83, at 70-71, 4n.

Branco's staging of *Rei Lear*.⁸ In the article, Santos was defending Branco against Cape Verdean theatre director Francisco Fragoso's claim, discussed in chapter one, that Branco's theatre is not Cape Verdean.

Here, Santos reiterates Branco's conviction that plays by Shakespeare and other foreign dramatists *become* Cape Verdean when theatre groups "creolize" them by taking the characters and conflicts of the source texts and re-situating the story spatially and culturally in Cape Verde, adjusting story details in the process. Branco contends that the major way adaptations nationalize foreign texts is by infusing them with the Crioulo language, which instills the piece with new cultural meaning.⁹ He calls these adaptations "creolizations" of classic texts. Since "creolizations" are staged exclusively by Mindelo theatre groups, Santos's focus on the city is not incidental. Mindelo artists' penchant for adapting Western plays is reiterative of discourses constructing Mindelo as a nexus of transcontinental traffic and cultural transmission, which implicitly reference the port city's role in late nineteenth century Cape Verde (see chapter one).

As per Santos's newspaper article, Mindelo enacts its omnivorous work on foreign material "brought" to Cape Verde, and Branco is identified as the "bringer" of Shakespeare (and, presumably, other Western authors) to Mindelo. His group, GTCCPM,¹⁰ has performed the bulk of adaptations staged at Mindelact, including *Rei Lear* and *Três Irmãs*, although the latter was guest-directed by Mindelense director João Paulo Brito. *Sonho de uma Noite de Verão* was translated into Crioulo and staged by Herlandson Duarte, a young graduate of the six-month

⁸ Eduino Santos, "Mindelo 'comeu' João Branco," *Expresso das Ilhas*, March 2, 2005, 25. Another journalist, António Monteiro, asked João Branco if he was "eating" Shakespeare by adapting so many of his plays. See João Branco, interview by António Monteiro, "João Branco na hora do teatro: 'Crioulizamos as obras para torná-las mais nossas,'" *Expresso das Ilhas*, March 9, 2005, sec. Cultura: 28. Both available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #s 1134 and 1102, respectively.

⁹ João Branco, *Nação Teatro: História do Teatro em Cabo Verde* (Praia: IBNL, 2004), 154-55.

¹⁰ Grupo de Teatro do Centro Cultural Português do Mindelo (The Theatre Group of the Mindelo Portuguese Cultural Center).

introductory theatre class that Branco offers yearly in Mindelo. Comprising students high-school-aged and up, the course covers acting techniques, character development, and Western theatre history. Branco's curriculum materials identify Greece as the cradle of "universal" theatre and playwrights like Shakespeare, Molière, and Beckett as "universal" playwrights.¹¹ His coding of the theatre universe as white, occidental, and male, which I will discuss further, demonstrates how Western hegemony continues to be reified and transmitted through pedagogical structures in postcolonial African countries. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that Branco and his students have not staged the kind of radical, deconstructive adaptations often favored in postcolonial scholarship.

Their adaptations are no less illuminative of postcolonial cultural formation for that reason. Indeed, they engage social issues deeply relevant to Cape Verde's colonial history and postcolonial context, such as contemporary language policies in Portuguese cultural centers and debates about which island's Crioulo variant should be privileged in artistic expression. They also raise questions about *which* strands of Cape Verde's complex creolized culture are chosen to represent "nationhood" in the midst of material otherwise "foreign," and to what end. In other words, the adaptations must perform cultural translation, since they are circulated to a global stage before an audience of Cape Verdeans, Lusophone artists from three continents, and other foreigners who lack even the Portuguese language as a common cultural referent.

¹¹ From exam questions on one of the tests Branco administered to his class during the 2006-07 session. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #1521. I also observed Branco's class several times while residing in Mindelo and witnessed how often the class received handouts and instruction on various eras of Western theatre. To try to mitigate this Eurocentric emphasis, I led a session on African theatre one night and handed out a bibliography of plays from various African countries.

4.2 Creolization, Adaptation, and their Place in Cape Verdean Theatre

The Mindelact Festival thus renders quite literally Françoise Lionnet's important query: "How do subaltern Creole cultures become translated into a global context of understanding and, more importantly, what gets lost in the process?"¹² This is a question that recurs in my analysis of the social and political implications of adapters' selective use of semiotic signifiers of Crioulo culture. Crucially, the notion of *loss* is also central to discourses of creolization and of adaptation. Since both concepts are critical to Cape Verdean "creolizations" of Western texts, it is necessary to review some of their theoretical parameters.

4.2.1 Creolization

There is one query seemingly integral to all studies of creolization. What becomes lost when cultures and populations fuse together, and how is it recuperated, if only symbolically? For anthropologist Sidney Mintz, creolization refers to a specific era in Caribbean history that peaked in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when millions of enslaved people from vastly different societies lost whole aspects of cultural institutions under the dominance of a variety of European rulers who valued them only for their labor power in plantation economies.¹³ Writing from a cultural studies perspective on the Francophone Caribbean identity, Jean Bernabé and his co-authors, citing turbulent negotiations played out among European, African, and indigenous peoples in the New World,¹⁴ contend that creolization always implies violence, brutality, and tempestuous interactions among cultures and populations. Pieter Muysken and Norval Smith link this chaos to language, claiming that Creole languages emerge from instances of social and

¹² Françoise Lionnet, "Creole Vernacular Theatre: Transcolonial Translations in Mauritius," *MLN* 118, no.4 (2003): 911-32, at 913.

¹³ Sidney Mintz, "Enduring Substances, Trying Theories: The Caribbean Region as Oikoumene," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2, no.2 (1996): 289-311.

¹⁴ Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, "In Praise of Creoleness," trans. Mohamed B. Taleb Khyar, *Callaloo* 13, no.4 (1990): 886-909, at 891-94.

“linguistic violence,” as relations of dominance and subordination among masters and slaves interrupted both the evolution of languages and their inter-generational transmission.¹⁵

Cape Verdean theorists of creolization echo this preoccupation with loss. Gabriel Fernandes notes that while historically in Cape Verde, a lack of large plantations and the negligible presence of whites bred comparatively more socio-economic opportunities for *mestiços*, creolization still amounted to egregious power imbalances that ruptured the cultural references and weakened the spirits of the black and creole populations.¹⁶ Linguist Dulce Almada Duarte contends that the African slaves that Portuguese traders brought to the Cape Verde islands were more “violated culturally” than those who remained on the continent, because they were cut off from their families, tribes, and traditions, all while having an alien language imposed upon them.¹⁷ In Cape Verde, the historical process of different populations co-habiting and commingling was shrouded in aggressive cultural collision.

Yet theorists of creolization are equally concerned with the processes of cultural re-creation that the forging of new Creole societies entails. Mintz, noting that the term “creole” comes from a Romance root word meaning “raise” or “bring up,” reminds us that its specific definition is “everything born in the New World of Old World parents,” according to usages of the word dating at least 400 years back in the Antilles.¹⁸ Thus, in the Caribbean, descendents of peoples from diverse geographical areas engaged in the “creation and construction of culture out

¹⁵ Pieter Muysken and Norval Smith, “The Study of Pidgins and Creole Languages,” in *Pidgins and Creoles: an Introduction*, ed. Jacques Arends, Muysken, and Smith (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995), 3-14, at 4.

¹⁶ Gabriel Fernandes, *Em Busca da Nação* (Praia: IBNL, 2006), 56-67.

¹⁷ Dulce Almada Duarte, *Bilinguismo ou Diglossia?: As Relações de Força entre o Crioulo e o Português na Sociedade Cabo-Verdiana*, 2nd ed. (Praia, Cape Verde: Spleen Edições, 2003), 83.

¹⁸ Mintz, “Enduring Substances,” 301. Here, Mintz is citing one of the three major definitions of the term “creolization” elucidated by G. Friederici in *Amerikanistisches Worterbuch und Hilfsworterbuch fur den Amerikanisten* (Hamburg: Cram, 1960), 219-20.

of fragmented, violent, and disjunct pasts.”¹⁹ For Jean Bernabé and his coauthors, Créolité (“Creoleness”) means “the world diffracted but recomposed.” This is a process by which French Creole subjects continue to negotiate synthesis and multiplicity in their cultural identities.²⁰

Almada Duarte points to a specific example of cultural re-creation in Cape Verde in her summation of Crioulo language formation on the archipelago. Following historian António Carreira’s findings, Almada Duarte asserts that a “proto-crioulo” had already developed in Cape Verde within the first fifty years of its settlement in the late fifteenth century. She identifies the enslaved West Africans as the primary creators of this language. Forced to acquire a foreign language under harsh labor conditions, they fused words from the Portuguese lexicon with syntaxes from their own languages.²¹ Crioulo then became the language of communication among Portuguese settlers and enslaved Africans. Almada Duarte points to the fact that as early as 1565, there were Wolof and Fula interpreters on the islands. These translators were likely West Africans who had learned Crioulo but retained their mother tongues, and so could mediate between newly arrived Africans and the Portuguese on the islands.²²

A unifying element on the islands, Crioulo became the mother tongue of descendants of both the dominant and dominated classes.²³ In Almada Duarte’s view, the expansion of a “proto-Crioulo” into a fully structured Crioulo language portended an emerging Cape Verdean cultural identity and, eventually, nation. She emphasizes the African contributions to the formation of the Crioulo language and culture, arguing against the many Cape Verdean intellectuals who claim

¹⁹ Mintz, “Enduring Substances,” 302.

²⁰ Bernabé et. al., 892.

²¹ Almada Duarte, *Bilinguismo ou Diglossia?*, 37.

²² Almada Duarte, *Bilinguismo ou Diglossia?*, 97. Here, she is citing António Carreira, *Cabo Verde: Formação e Extinção de uma Sociedade Escravocrata (1460-1878)* (Lisbon: Centro de Estudos da Guiné Portuguesa, 1972), 341.

²³ Almada Duarte, *Bilinguismo ou Diglossia?*, 35.

that the Crioulo identity evidences more European than African influences.²⁴ Listing a series of Crioulo words with identifiable roots in Wolof, Mandinga, and other West African languages, as well as the many grammatical structures that differentiate Crioulo from Portuguese,²⁵ she contends that Crioulo only took on more Portuguese structures with the solidification of the educational system in the nineteenth century. At that time, Portuguese became the sole language of instruction and writing, while Crioulo was confined to the oral domain. One upshot of this linguistic privileging was that Cape Verdeans began to use more specifically Portuguese grammar when they spoke Crioulo, such as gendered forms of nouns and pronouns.²⁶

This is a process that Almada Duarte calls “decreolization,” which she perceives as continuing today. She maintains that one way to preserve Crioulo’s specific linguistic structures is to standardize its written form and include it in school curriculums. She calls on Cape Verdean writers to contribute to this standardization by composing their poems, novels, and short stories in Crioulo, claiming that literature enriches local languages and facilitates their expansion.²⁷ Significantly, she includes theatre in her advocacy for new artistic and literary works in Crioulo that could help eradicate the linguistic hierarchies remaining from Portuguese colonialism. Thus, Crioulo-language theatre is an example of a cultural institution that Cape Verdean subjects can

²⁴ Almada Duarte, *Bilinguismo ou Diglossia?*, 93. Her perspective here is in accordance with Edward K. Brathwaite’s conception of “nation language” in the Anglophone Caribbean. Brathwaite points out the strong influences of African cultural aspects even within English, the imposed language system. See Brathwaite, “Nation Language,” in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995), 309-13, at 311.

²⁵ Almada Duarte, *Bilinguismo ou Diglossia?*, 55-65.

²⁶ Almada Duarte, *Bilinguismo ou Diglossia?*, 54. She partially works from Baltasar Lopes, *O Dialecto Crioulo de Cabo Verde* (Lisbon: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1957), 44.

²⁷ Almada Duarte, *Bilinguismo ou Diglossia?*, 115-17. Here, her thinking coincides with that of other advocates for African literature to be written in African languages, such as Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Mauritian playwright Dev Virahsawmy. See Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Decolonizing the Mind* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1989) and Lionnet, “Creole Vernacular Theatre.” Similar to Ngugi’s perspective on translation, Duarte suggests that Cape Verdean writers can ensure that their Crioulo-language works reach a wider public by translating them into Portuguese.

create to recuperate, if only symbolically, fragments of language and cultural memory that may have become lost during the processes of creolization and decreolization on the islands. Since Crioulo-language adaptations form part of that body of work, it is first helpful to review some conceptual frameworks for adaptation.

4.2.2 Adaptation

As with creolization, symbolic violence is also implicated in theories of adaptation. Kevin Wetmore notes that this cultural aggression can operate in at least two different ways. First, re-working the codes of canonical texts can allow marginalized artists to contest their current socio-political context and subvert the cultural hegemony underlying the constant recycling of Western dramatic texts. This kind of cultural subversion is evident in Gilbert and Tompkins's discussion of postcolonial adaptations as "canonical counter-discourses," cited above, and in Wetmore's own theorization of the Black Dionysus model for adapting Greek tragedy.²⁸

While Cape Verdean adaptations do not follow these "resistance" models of adaptation, they do enact the other kind of symbolic violence that Wetmore discusses. Asserting that adaptation itself constitutes a form of violence, he likens the adaptation of Greek tragedy to a Procrustean bed. Just as Procrustus would sever or stretch the appendages of his houseguests to make them fit his bed, theatre adapters create the illusion of "universality" by lopping off crucial elements of the Greek text or the culture to which it is adapted in order to demonstrate their compatibility.²⁹ In other words, the melding of different cultural schemata always constitutes loss. In my analyses of Cape Verdean adaptations, I attend to how pieces of the Shakespeare or

²⁸ Kevin Wetmore, *Black Dionysus: Greek Tragedy and African American Theatre* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2003), 43-45.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

Chekhov text are lost and substituted with Crioulo cultural signifiers. Yet I also examine how this substitution process enacts cultural loss on another level. Since all of the diverse facets of Cape Verde's cultural heritage will not "fit" into one adaptation, some Crioulo signifiers will always be excluded, or "lopped off," when theatre artists construct the performance and circulate it to the festival stage. To harken back to Lionnet's query, these cultural exclusions are examples of what becomes lost when creolized cultures are translated for global contexts.

Also pertinent to my analysis is Linda Hutcheon's perspective on adaptations as palimpsests. Hutcheon suggests that pleasure in adaptations is primarily activated when the reader or spectator can recognize the work as adapted and is familiar with the source text. That original text then "oscillates" in the individual's memory with the new version she is currently experiencing. This process allows her to "fill in the gaps," or recognize which parts of the original story are not represented in the adaptation. Hutcheon contrasts this kind of "knowing" audience with an "unknowing" one, who is not familiar with the source text and may not even be aware that the work of art she is experiencing *is* an adaptation. While not experiencing the pleasure of "oscillation," an "unknowing" audience member may actually be more apt to embrace the adaptation because she will not be distracted by nostalgia for an "original" text.³⁰

While Hutcheon takes into account all forms of adaptation, including novels, plays, films, and video games, her theory of audiences is especially provocative for art forms such as theatre, which involve groups of spectators experiencing the work collectively. An audience for a theatre adaptation comprises layers of "knowing" and "unknowing" spectators. At Mindelact, many Cape Verdean spectators would fall into the category of "unknowing," as Hutcheon defines it. Since Shakespeare and Chekhov are not on the national high school curriculum, Mindelact is

³⁰ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 120-22.

where theatre-goers often experience their works for the first time. Yet since chunks of the Western texts are “severed” and replaced with Crioulo cultural signifiers, it is more apt to call Cape Verdean spectators a different sort of “knowing audience.” They have the cultural literacy to glean local references that non-national spectators may not. Visiting spectators, in turn, may know the original text but not the Crioulo cultural context. In some sense, Mindelact provides an example of an audience that collapses the distinction that Hutcheon sets up between “knowing” and “unknowing” spectators.

While the era of the Mindelact festival has proved to be the zenith of Cape Verdean adaptations, plays from the Western canon made their way onto Cape Verdean stages before the festival began. Today, varying opinions about *how* they should be performed in Cape Verde, and indeed, whether or not they should be performed at all, accord these plays an uneasy place in Cape Verde’s theatre scene.

4.2.3 Cape Verdean Theatre History and Adaptation

In Africa, postcolonial performances of “classic” Western plays often illuminate how theatre artists negotiate their colonial inheritance. Cape Verde’s colonial education system favored “classic Portuguese literature,”³¹ with students reading plays by Portuguese playwright Almeida Garrett and novels by Eça de Queirós in school.³² In the 1960s, Cape Verdean audiences attended performances of plays by late-medieval playwright Gil Vicente, considered the “father” of Portuguese theatre and the Lusophone equivalent of Shakespeare, when touring Portuguese troupes staged his “discovery” plays as part of the 500th anniversary of Portugal’s

³¹ José Carlos Gomes dos Anjos, *Intelectuais, Literatura e Poder em Cabo Verde* (Praia: NIPC, 2002), 93.

³² In his 1955 essay “Bases para uma Cultura de Cabo Verde” (“Bases for a Cape Verdean Culture”), renowned Cape Verdean author António Aurélio Gonçalves writes that he delighted in reading plays by Garrett and Queirós in school, using Cape Verdean students’ affinity with this genre of literature as evidence that, whatever other influences Cape Verdean culture may evidence, it is “structurally Portuguese.” See Gonçalves, *Ensaio e Outros Escritos* (Praia-Mindelo: Centro Cultural Português, 1998), 124.

arrival in Cape Verde.³³ Vicente's play *Auto de Alma* ("Act of the Soul") received a Cape Verdean staging, also in the 1960s, by students at Mindelo's Escola Técnica. In that same decade, the students also performed García Lorca's play, *A Casa de Bernarda Alba* ("The House of Bernarda Alba") and Chekhov's one-act play *Malefícios de Tabaco* ("The Evils of Tobacco").³⁴

In post-independence Cape Verde, theatre artists tended to move away from the Portuguese playwrights that had received much attention in the colonial era. When Cape Verde's prominent post-independence theatre group, Korda Kaoberdi ("Awaken, Cape Verde") began performing non-Cape Verdean plays in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Gil Vicente was not on the roster. As discussed in chapter one, this Praia-based troupe, led by Praia director Francisco Fragoso, sought to forge a "genuinely" Cape Verdean theatre style by performing original plays based on Cape Verdean history, Santiago dance and street festivals, and Cape Verdean poetry in the immediate post-independence years. Yet in 1977, Fragoso announced that the group would add to their repertoire non-Cape Verdean plays that were "universal, in the sense of their timelessness and aesthetic dimension."³⁵ Subsequently, they performed plays by Brecht and Boal, as well as Euripides's *As Troianas* (*Trojan Women*), the only case of Greek theatre performed on the islands outside of a high school setting.³⁶ Fragoso also directed Ghanaian

³³ "Mário Matos no I Encontro de Agentes Teatrais," speech delivered by Matos at a roundtable discussion held during the Mindelact Festival, September 1996. Recording by the Mindelact Association. Transcript available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #170. Among Gil Vicente's discovery plays is *Auto da Índia* (The India Play, 1509), a comedy about a Portuguese wife who is unfaithful to her husband during his expedition to India. See Gil Vicente, *Three Discovery Plays*, trans. Anthony Lappin (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1997).

³⁴ Branco, *Nação Teatro*, 355; José Hopffer Almada, "O Teatro em Cabo Verde: Breve Historial," *Kultura* (Sept 2001): 201-05. This seems to be a Chekhov play that circulates rather widely in the Lusophone world. According to the program for Mozambique's 2002 Festival d'Agosto, Maputo theatre group Alberto Magassela performed in on the mainstage that year.

³⁵ Kwame Kondé (Francisco Fragoso), *Caderno "Korda Kaoberdi": ano de 1979-1980* (Praia: Imprensa Nacional, 1980), 21.

³⁶ See Branco, *Nação Teatro*, 356-58. In the years immediately preceding independence, Dr. Mário Santos, a Portuguese who taught history and literature at Praia's main high school, organized productions of "classic" plays,

playwright Efua Sutherland's play *Anansegoro, you swore an oath!* Korda Kaoberdi's performance of a play from the African continent is anomalous in Cape Verdean theatre history and highlights Frago's espousal of Cabral's Africanist principles.³⁷

Here it is illuminating to consider the meeting notes from a 1988 roundtable held in Mindelo, wherein a committee of theatre artists advanced a list of objectives for the future of Cape Verdean theatre. The report specifies that artists should make "authentic" theatre in the service of national identity by dramatizing popular festivals, rituals, and historical struggles, but *not exclude* "universal" plays from their performance repertoires. Notably, these theatre thinkers also rely on the discourse of universality to describe canonized works, but they emphasize that such works should undergo a "lucid analysis" and be performed in a "non-colonized way."³⁸ While they do not specify what a "non-colonized" adaptation might entail, it is helpful to think about this concept in relationship to Frago's choice of foreign works to perform. Instead of turning to plays by the Portuguese literati installed on colonial era curricula, his theatre group sought out the revolutionary aesthetics of Brecht and Boal and the more "neutral" choice of a Greek play. Frago's slate of foreign works thus corresponds to trajectories in Anglophone and Francophone Africa, where Shakespeare and Molière were the potent symbols of colonial culture that theatre artists resisted staging in the postcolonial era. In those regions of Africa, post-independence performers also viewed Greek tragedy as a "safer," more decolonized option.³⁹ Frago's inclusion of Efua Sutherland in Korda's performances of "universal" plays also

such as *Medeia*. Branco, *Nação Teatro*, 132-3. For a discussion of Korda Kaoberdi's staging of the Boal play, see Christina S. McMahon, "Globalizing Allegory: Augusto Boal's *A Lua Pequena e a Caminhada Perigosa* in Brazil and Cape Verde," *Latin American Theatre Review* 39, no.1 (2005): 71-93.

³⁷ See my discussion of "re-Africanization" in chapter one.

³⁸ "Mesa Redonda Sobre Teatro em Cabo Verde," April 1988. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #5.

³⁹ Kevin Wetmore, *Athenian Sun in an African Sky: Modern African Adaptations of Classical Greek Tragedy* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2002), 21, 33.

indicates that he does not necessarily view the theatre universe as gendered male, raced white, and of Western origin. In fact, one of his published theatre journals from the early 1980s includes his Portuguese-language translation of Sutherland's play, a whole section devoted to African theatre, and one devoted to Latin American theatre.⁴⁰

This more inclusive definition of "universal" is not shared by all theatre artists in Cape Verde who employ the term. João Branco also describes the canonical Western texts that GTCCPM has adapted as "universal," but that group's roster does reflect a Eurocentric and male-centered perspective. Since Branco considers these adaptations to be examples of "national theatre,"⁴¹ this is one of the subtle ways in which cultural expressions can gender the nation "male." GTCCPM's string of adaptations begins with their 1997 adaptation of Lorca's *A Casa de Nha Bernarda*, which played to a crowd spilling out into the corridors of the Mindelo Cultural Center.⁴² The success of that production led to a host of other "creolizations" over the years. Among them are *Romeu e Julieta* (1998), the first Crioulo-language Shakespeare production, which pitted Mindelo families from two rival neighborhoods against each other; *Médico à Força* (2000), which converted Molière's play about a quack doctor (*Doctor in Spite of Himself*) into a satire of upper-crust Mindelo society; *À Espera da Chuva* ("Waiting for Rain," 2002), which melded Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* with Cape Verdean farmers from Santiago and Santo Antão islands waiting out a drought; *Auto de Holanda* (2002), a re-working of Gil Vicente's *Auto de India* that substituted Cape Verdean emigration to Holland in the 1960s for sixteenth-century

⁴⁰ See the second volume of Kwame Kondé's (Francisco Frago's) theatre journal, *Caderno "Korda Kaoberdi": Rai di Tabanka* (Praia, Cape Verde: Imprensa Nacional, 1980). Frago's Portuguese-language title for Sutherland's play is *Anasegoro, Prestarás Juramento*. He also includes a Portuguese-language translation of Wole Soyinka's preface to *A Dance of the Forest*.

⁴¹ For example, Branco asserts that GTCCPM's 1997 Lorca "inaugurated a new era in national theatre." See Branco, *Nação Teatro*, 359-61. He also includes all of GTCCPM's "creolizations" in the chapter of his book that addresses new directions in Cape Verdean playwriting.

⁴² *Ibid.*

Portuguese navigations to India; and *Rei Lear*.⁴³ It is noteworthy that this list does include a Portuguese “classic” text among more overtly canonical playwrights, such as Shakespeare.

Branco’s use of the word “creolization” to describe these adaptations is in line with the more sanguine connotations attributed to the term in recent scholarly and cultural discourses.⁴⁴ An oft-cited example of this celebratory perspective is Ulf Hannerz’s cultural studies essay “The World in Creolization,” which discusses hybrid artistic expressions and quotidian practices in Nigeria. Hannerz writes that foreign influences do not impoverish local cultures and peoples but endow them with the “technological and symbolic resources for dealing with their own ideas, managing their own culture, in new ways.”⁴⁵ Writing from an anthropological perspective, Sidney Mintz argues that such generalized definitions of creolization as mere “cultural mixing” evacuate the concept of its specific historical rooting in violence, systems of domination, and loss.⁴⁶ Indeed, this is an aspect of creolization that Branco elides in his rationale for theatre adaptations. Rather than highlighting what is *lost*, Branco focuses on what “creolizing” foreign works *adds* to Cape Verdean theatre. Specifically, he asserts that adaptations introduce new aesthetic and thematic references to Cape Verdean theatre.⁴⁷ For Branco, infusing Shakespeare’s dramas with Cape Verde’s Crioulo language and Afro-European worldview allows the tiny

⁴³ Brief glosses of many of these adaptations are found in Branco, *Nação Teatro*, 359-65. João Branco adapted and translate most of the plays, working in collaboration with Cape Verdean theatre historian Mário Matos on *Romeu e Julieta* and Mindelo actor Fonseca Soares on *Rei Lear*. Cape Verdean playwright and actor Francisco Cruz adapted and directed Gil Vicente’s *Auto de India*.

⁴⁴ It appears that Italian director Lamberto Carrezi was the first to call Cape Verdean adaptations “creolizations” in 1993. He was referring to *Sofias*, a co-production with Mindelo actors and a Cape Verdean diaspora group in Italy. Based on the Italian play *Filomena Marturano* by Eduardo de Filippo, *Sofias* opened with a blend of Cape Verdean and Italian mourning rituals. João Branco acted in *Sofias*, and traces of Carrezi’s hybrid aesthetic are evident in many of GTCCPM’s later adaptations. See Alirio Dias de Pina, “Caliban apresenta ‘Sofias,’” *A Semana*, October 11, 1993, 13; “Mindelo em Lisboa no teatro,” *A Semana*, June 17, 1996. Available in the Mindelact Documentation Center, #s 49 and 105.

⁴⁵ Ulf Hannerz, “The World in Creolization,” *Readings in African Popular Culture*, ed. Karin Barber (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 12-17, at 16.

⁴⁶ Mintz, “Enduring Substances,” 302.

⁴⁷ João Branco, personal interview, March 21, 2007.

archipelago, far from influential on a planetary scale, to share in Shakespeare's "universality."⁴⁸ Needless to say, this perspective does not take into account the cultural hegemony dictating that theatre groups in non-Western spaces perform occidental plays, while the reverse situation is hardly ever the case.

Other theatre directors in Cape Verde take oppositional viewpoints to Branco's on adaptations. In particular, his claim that "creolizing" foreign plays renders them "national" has not gone unquestioned. Particularly skeptical are Santiago Island directors who are proponents of "terra-terra" theatre,⁴⁹ which explores the geographic, cultural, and psychological landscape of their own island. Narciso Freire, director of *Tchom di Morgado*, discussed in chapter two, does not see how adaptations link to the Cape Verdean reality, despite employing the Crioulo language. Freire insists that cultural exchange can only occur at Mindelact if each theatre group performs a representative story from its own nation. Since Freire's own performances are rooted specifically in his own Santiago municipality, he is suggesting here that local stories are all integral and, indeed, constitutive facets of a diverse nation space.⁵⁰ Sabino Baessa, director of the Praia group Fladu Fla, echoes Freire's sentiment when he says that Mindelact should be a festival of "stories from around the world," which can only happen if each theatre group tells a story originating from its own country.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Branco, *Nação Teatro*, 355.

⁴⁹ Literally meaning "land-land," this Crioulo expression often applies to *badiu* cultural manifestations on Santiago. See the discussion of *badiu* culture and identity formation in chapter one.

⁵⁰ Narciso Freire, personal interview, August 13, 2005. To illustrate his view on the illogic of Cape Verdean productions of Western plays at Mindelact, Freire offered this hypothetical: "An American group wouldn't come here and do a play about Cape Verde. I would be disappointed if they did. If I knew an American group was coming, I hope that I would see a play about America, so that I could learn about that culture."

⁵¹ Sabino Baessa, personal conversation, September 10, 2006. See the discussion of Fladu Fla's *Profesia di Crioulo* in chapter two. Note that what Freire and Baessa call the artist's responsibility to perform her or his own nation or locality, others might call a purist mentality that reifies cultural boundaries and polarities ("you do 'yours,' and we'll do 'ours'"). See Julie Stone Peters, "Intercultural Performance, Theatre Anthropology, and the Imperialist Critique," *Imperialism and Theatre: Essays on World Theatre, Drama and Performance*, ed. J. Ellen Gainor (New York: Routledge, 1995), 199-213, at 208.

Another objection to GTCCPM's adaptation methods belies a perilous belief in the sanctity of canonical texts. Fragoso argues that Branco "ruins" classic play texts when he re-situates them in a Cape Verdean context."⁵² He explains that when Korda Kaoberdi performed Brecht, they did not infuse his play with Cape Verdean cultural references, since "Brecht is Brecht." By contrast, he calls GTCCPM's *Espera Chuva* so pastiche that it was neither Beckett nor an accurate depiction of Cape Verdean drought (in Fragoso's words, it had "neither foot nor a head").⁵³ Further, Fragoso states that the GTCCPM artists fail to take into account that the Cape Verdean public does not *know* the original plays they adapt, especially complex texts like *Three Sisters*, so that spectators feel lost. Here, he echoes Hutcheon's perspective on the limited pleasure an "unknowing" audience may draw from an adaptation.

In Branco's view, knowing the original texts is not a prerequisite for understanding GTCCPM's adaptations because the group performs cultural translation. For example, *Rei Lear*'s subtitle, *Nhô Rei já bá cabeça* (the king's head has gone), uses a quintessential Crioulo phrase to convey leadership and madness, so that Cape Verdean audiences can grasp the play's theme before even entering the theater. This perspective coincides with the idea that "creolizations" of non-national plays interpellate a different kind of "knowing" spectator, one who readily discerns the Crioulo expressions and cultural markers embedded within foreign material.

4.3 Analytical Framework: A Creole Continuum

The polemics surrounding adaptations in Cape Verde seem to crystallize around the question of possession discussed in chapter one: "what is really *ours*?" For some artists, like the Santiago Island theatre directors, the intrusion of Western playwrights into Cape Verdean theatre

⁵² Francisco Fragoso, personal interview, June 4, 2006.

⁵³ In Portuguese, the idiomatic expression is "uma coisa que não tem pé nem cabeça."

poses a threat to the development of a national theatre. Branco, however, asserts the opposite:

“we creolize works to *make them ours*.”⁵⁴ This, however, depends upon the adapter’s ability to make visible the selection of Crioulo cultural markers placed within the Western text.

To enable speculation about where, and to what degree, culture explicitly identified as Cape Verdean is perceptible to audiences viewing an adaptation, I propose a creole continuum that analyzes how performers build Crioulo cultural signifiers into an adaptation’s *mise-en-scène*. My starting premise is that while all performances are culturally syncretic, adaptations are self-consciously so. Adapters actively choose what to retain, omit, or substitute from the source text, as well as which cultural or contextual additions will fill the gaps in the story made by the omissions. My proposed continuum evaluates the degree of creolization in a production, the form creolization takes (for example, linguistic, corporeal, or musical), and the political, social, and postcolonial implications of creole interventions. My definition of creolization takes into account both the sense of *loss* that occurs when two or more cultures merge (what is excluded from each?) and the accompanying creations of new cultural expressions that symbolically recuperate what is lost.

To create the parameters of this continuum, I draw from Dulce Almada Duarte’s theorization of the interplay between Portuguese and Crioulo in contemporary Cape Verdean society. In the remainder of this section, I first gloss her assessment of Cape Verde’s linguistic predicament and conceptualization of language interplay. I then explain how I apply her linguistic terminology, “detours” and “interferences,” to actual dialogue within Cape Verdean theatre adaptations and extend it to other Crioulo cultural signifiers within the *mise-en-scène*.

⁵⁴ Branco, interview by Monteiro, (see note 8). The title of that article reads, “Crioulizamos as Obras para Torná-las Mais Nossas” (We creolize works to make them more ours).

4.3.1 Diglossia and Linguistic “Interferences” and “Detours”

Both Almada Duarte and Cape Verdean Minister of Culture Manuel Veiga, who is also a linguist, characterize Cape Verdean society as “diglossic” rather than bilingual.⁵⁵ Coined by Charles A. Ferguson in 1959, the term diglossia refers to societies in which two variants of a language operate in a society but are used by speakers for different social situations. This includes postcolonial cultures in which the imperial tongue coexists with a creole version of it.⁵⁶ As Veiga explains it, one language in a diglossic society carries cultural capital and prestige, in that it is used in the media, government, education, most work environments, and nearly all written documents. The other language carries the stigma of being less formal or “lower,” such that the written form is almost nonexistent and the language is primarily used familiarly at home and in the streets with family and friends. In Cape Verde, Portuguese plays the first role and Crioulo, the second. Veiga argues that these clearly delineated linguistic functions are detrimental to Cape Verdean society. Keeping intact structures of power set in place by Portuguese colonialism, they simultaneously devalue the Cape Verdean language central to the country’s national identity. To amend this situation, Veiga recommends that the country move towards true bilingualism.⁵⁷

For Almada Duarte and Veiga, bilingualism in Cape Verde would entail speakers learning both languages well and valorizing them equally. Veiga has been a steadfast advocate for making Crioulo Cape Verde’s second official language and putting into everyday practice ALUPEC, the Crioulo alphabet developed in the early 1990s and approved by the Cape Verdean

⁵⁵ Almada Duarte’s book, *Bilinguismo ou Diglossia?*, poses the question: does Cape Verde represent a bilingual or diglossic society? The essays it contains suggest that it is the latter.

⁵⁶ See Marvin Carlson’s explanation of Ferguson’s theory in *Speaking in Tongues*, 117.

⁵⁷ Manuel Veiga, *A Construção Do Bilinguismo* (Praia, Cape Verde: IBNL, 2004), 10-11.

government in 1998, which would standardize Crioulo in written form.⁵⁸ Veiga has published grammars of Cape Verdean Crioulo designed to facilitate its integration into school curriculums, which he advocates.⁵⁹ Almada Duarte has proposed pedagogical strategies for teaching both Crioulo and Portuguese in grammar, secondary, and post-secondary schools in Cape Verde.⁶⁰

For Almada Duarte, these curriculum adjustments, which the government has yet to approve, would remedy what she sees as one of the most detrimental effects of diglossia: that Cape Verdeans do not learn either language properly, since they are never formally taught Crioulo and they do not get enough practice speaking Portuguese outside of school, the work place, or formal events. This results in language patterns she terms “interferences” and “detours.” Interferences are instances in which Cape Verdeans’ spoken Portuguese is inflected with the grammatical structures of their mother tongue, Crioulo. Thus, Crioulo ‘interferes’ with Portuguese and renders it incorrect.⁶¹ Detours occur when Cape Verdean speakers, mainly intellectuals accustomed to expressing complex ideas in Portuguese, veer off into Portuguese vocabulary and verb forms when speaking Crioulo. This renders their speech “less” Crioulo. Implicit in these terms is a class valence. When she describes detours, Duarte refers explicitly to Cape Verdean university graduates, intellectuals, or literati.⁶² Interferences seemingly apply more to speakers with less educational background or training in Portuguese, such that they cannot distinguish between the two languages. When Duarte discusses interferences, she mainly describes errors Cape Verdean students make when learning Portuguese, such as using double

⁵⁸ Alfabeto Unificado para a Escrita do Caboverdiano (Unified Alphabet for Cape Verdean Writing).

⁵⁹ Manuel Veiga, *O Caboverdiano em 45 Lições* (Praia: INIC, 2002).

⁶⁰ See pages 207-74 of Almada Duarte, *Bilinguismo ou diglossia?*

⁶¹ Almada Duarte, however, did not coin the linguistic term “interference.” Uriel Weinreich first used the term in his 1953 book *Languages in Contact*.

⁶² Almada Duarte, *Bilinguismo ou diglossia?*, 71-72, 114. My Portuguese tutor in Mindelo, Valódio Monteiro, would also describe Cape Verdean politicians as giving interviews or speeches in “Crioulo-ese,” or Portuguese-inflected Crioulo.

negatives in ways that are grammatically correct in Crioulo but incorrect in Portuguese.⁶³ She implies that if these errors go uncorrected, they will persist throughout the speakers' lifetimes.

Detours perhaps need a bit more explanation, since Crioulo does have Portuguese vocabulary and structures intrinsic to it. Crioulo's vocabulary is a mix of archaic Portuguese and loan words from West African languages. Yet even the Portuguese words incorporated into Crioulo are pronounced differently. Thus, giving a Crioulo word its standard Portuguese pronunciation would constitute a detour into Portuguese, as would using a contemporary Portuguese word in place of its archaic equivalent.⁶⁴ Another example of a detour would be transporting a whole Portuguese phrase or grammatical structure into an otherwise Crioulo sentence. Grammatically, Crioulo uses Portuguese verbs but these are always conjugated in the third person and pronounced slightly differently. Crioulo also has its own ways of marking verb tenses and its own set of pronouns. Since Crioulo obeys its own internal logic, it is discernible when a Crioulo sentence suddenly adopts a Portuguese structure or phrasing.⁶⁵

4.3.2 "Detour" and "Interference" Aesthetics

My creole continuum applies Duarte's terminology more broadly to an adaptation's *mise-en-scène*. I theorize two trends in Cape Verdean adaptations, the "aesthetic of the detour" and "aesthetic of the interference," which I situate at either end of the continuum. This analytical

⁶³ Almada Duarte, *Bilinguismo ou diglossia?*, 215-16. The example she provides of an incorrect use of double negatives in Portuguese is "ninguém não entrou," which is a direct translation of Crioulo's use of double negatives, "ninguem ka entra."

⁶⁴ For example, "b'zot" is the pronoun used in informal situations for "you plural" in São Vicente Crioulo. This word likely derives from the archaic Portuguese pronoun expression "vo's outros." Thus, when São Vicente speakers replace "b'zot" with the standard Portuguese pronoun for "you plural," 'vocês,' they detour into Portuguese. Interestingly, "bocês" is the way in which São Vicente speakers express the formal variant of "you plural." This is consistent with Crioulo pronunciation, in which 'b's often replace 'v's. Thus, pronouncing "bocês" as "vocês" is another form a detour might take.

⁶⁵ Almada Duarte gives the following example of a Crioulo sentence that detours entirely into Portuguese: "U ke sta en cauza é nos sobrevivência kómu povu, komu nasãu." This sentence is basically a direct translation of a Portuguese sentence that changes some of the words to reflect a Crioulo pronunciation. In Portuguese, the sentence would read: "O que está em causa é a nossa sobrevivência como povo, como nação." See Almada Duarte, *Bilinguismo ou diglossia?*, 72.

framework examines the degree to which Crioulo cultural signifiers infiltrate a foreign text. Such signifiers may comprise the Crioulo language, including proverbs and idiomatic phrases, as well as corporeal expressions, music forms, or local geographical references. If the Crioulo language and culture represent a discourse perceived as “Cape Verdean” or “national,” while the original play text and instances of Portuguese-language dialogue represent discourses perceived as “not Cape Verdean” or “foreign,” which of them dominate in a given adaptation?⁶⁶

In the aesthetics of the detour, Crioulo culture dominates. An example of this is *Rei Lear*: the war scenes are cut in order to emphasize the inheritance disputes that plague Cape Verdean society, the text is primarily Crioulo-language, the dialogue abounds with idiomatic phrases that reference the body, and the fool uses choreography and gestures to accentuate those idiomatic Crioulo expressions. *Rei Lear* “detours” only occasionally into Portuguese language patterns. In adaptations evidencing an “aesthetic of the interference,” the foreign text, worldview, or Portuguese language dominates. Crioulo cultural markers merely “interfere” in the *mise en scène* from time to time. *Três Irmãs* exemplifies this aesthetic, since the dialogue is chiefly Portuguese and the three Cape Verdean sisters pine for Lisbon, which replaces Moscow as utopic urban space. *Sonho de uma Noite de Verão* falls in between the two aesthetics. While its dialogue is almost entirely Crioulo, the director, Herlandson Duarte, chose not to situate it within a Cape Verdean cultural context. Greek toga robes and rigid columns of light adorned Solaris’s production, rather than the familiar markings of a Cape Verdean landscape.

⁶⁶ This is not unlike the Bakhtinian notion of “passive double-voiced discourse,” wherein two recognizably different discourses visibly interact with each other but one always takes on a more prominent role. See Bakhtin’s essay, “Discourse in the Novel” in M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981). I owe this observation to Gregory Cavanaugh, who uses Bakhtin’s notion of “passive double-voiced discourse” to analyze the interaction between Christian liberation ideology and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Committee’s notion of restorative justice in a South African operatic adaptation of the Chester mystery plays. I attended Cavanaugh’s talk, entitled “Metalinguistic Mysteries,” at the 2007 IFTR Theatre conference in Stellenbosch, South Africa.

It is important to note here that my appropriation of Almada Duarte's terms differs subtly from her linguistic usage of them in key ways. First, detours and interferences do not have the same class valences. The "detour aesthetic" presumes that the majority of the adaptation's dialogue is in Crioulo, which makes it accessible to most Cape Verdean spectators, regardless of their educational backgrounds or socio-economic class. Those with less mastery of Portuguese might have more difficulty following the dialogue of an "interference aesthetic" adaptation, since it is almost wholly Portuguese-language. I also want to shed a different light on the relationship of detours to national identity. Almada Duarte perceives detours as impoverishing the Crioulo language, since they use Portuguese structures to express abstract concepts when Crioulo structures exist that could achieve the same end. For Almada Duarte, detours are examples of "decreolization," which threatens the maintenance of a Cape Verdean identity.⁶⁷ Implicit here is the power dynamic inherent to detours: they demonstrate a continued reliance on the Portuguese language, which replicates the linguistic hegemony of Portuguese colonialism.

My emphasis, however, is on the primacy that a "detour aesthetic" gives to the Crioulo language in performance, even though that Crioulo dialogue may swerve occasionally into Portuguese language patterns. The fact that a Cape Verdean theatre group chooses Crioulo as the primary means of dramatic expression is, as Gilbert and Tompkins argue, a political act in itself that determines an implied audience.⁶⁸ Within the context of Mindelact, Crioulo interpellates a specifically national audience within the larger Lusophone crowd, rendering Cape Verdeans the most capable receivers of the production's meaning, since Crioulo is not easily intelligible to

⁶⁷ See Almada Duarte, *Bilinguismo ou Diglossia?*, 72.

⁶⁸ Gilbert and Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama*, 168.

Portuguese speakers.⁶⁹ Thus, at a theatre festival, the “aesthetic of the detour” may take on a distinctly national nuance.

Drawing from the case studies in this chapter, a creole continuum based on detours and interferences might look like this:

DETOUR AESTHETIC	INTERFERENCE AESTHETIC
I _____ <i>Rei Lear</i> _____ <i>Sonho de uma noite de Verão</i> _____ <i>Três Irmãs</i> _____ I	I _____ <i>Rei Lear</i> _____ <i>Sonho de uma noite de Verão</i> _____ <i>Três Irmãs</i> _____ I
(“More” creole)	(“Less” creole)

The continuum examines how, and to what degree, theatre adapters make Crioulo signifiers perceptible to audiences watching the adaptation unfold. Rooted in the relational connection between *perception* and *reception*, it does not posit one definitive or conclusive semiotic reading of the adaptation. Therefore, it is in line with Gaonkar and Povinelli’s proposal to focus on circulation’s transformative impact on cultural texts, rather than on a particular text’s cultural “meaning” (see chapter one).⁷⁰ In this case, adapters transform a “classic” play by adding in Crioulo cultural nuances before circulating it to a festival stage. Concomitantly, the foreign play text may re-work the codes of Crioulo theatre.

In this continuum, there are no end points designated as “wholly” or “not at all” creole, just gradations of creolization. This defuses the tricky business of identifying cultural “origins,” since the continuum does not place whole cultural sign systems at either end.⁷¹ A continuum

⁶⁹ See Lobban and Saucier, *Historical Dictionary*, 72.

⁷⁰ Dilip P. Gaonkar and Elizabeth A. Povinelli, “Technologies of Public Forms: Circulation, Transfiguration, Recognition,” *Public Culture* 15, no.3 (2003): 385-97.

⁷¹ This is a trap into which other models of creole continuums often fall. Also based on linguistic models of creolization, these other models often rely on notions of the “superstrate” and “basilect.” The superstrate is the language that has contributed the bulk of the creole language’s vocabulary. For example, this would be Portuguese in the case of Cape Verdean Crioulo, French in Haitian Creole, and English in Jamaican *patois*. The basilect form is the variant of creole that is furthest from the superstrate, from which it incorporates comparatively fewer words and

evaluating degrees of creolization recognizes that cultures are inherently constructs comprising a multitude of signifiers. Is Shakespeare bathed in Crioulo cultural valences, as with *Rei Lear*'s "aesthetic of the detour," or does Crioulo culture merely seep into the crevices of the foreign text, as with the "aesthetic of the interference" in *Três Irmãs*? I argue that the aesthetic of the interference works tactically. Crioulo culture sporadically interrupts the "foreign" signifiers that prevail in the adaptation. The aesthetic of the detour functions strategically. Crioulo culture overwhelms the foreign text, fashioning it into social commentary on issues critical to nationhood, such as regionalism, gender, and language hierarchies.⁷²

4.4 *Rei Lear*: Staging the "Detour"

João Branco explains that he chooses plays to adapt that reflect certain cultural affinities with Cape Verdean society. For *Rei Lear*, which he directed for Mindelact 2003,⁷³ that theme was inheritance disputes. In *King Lear*, the eldest daughters use false professions of love to claim Lear's carved up kingdom; in Cape Verde, numerous siblings (often from different mothers)

structures than other variants do. For example, in Cape Verde, *badiu* is the basilect form of Crioulo, since it contains a higher percentage of African-derived words and is the Crioulo variant furthest from the superstrate, Portuguese. Models for cultural creolization based on these linguistic concepts often substitute "superstrate" and "basilect" with notions of two different contributing cultures. For example, Ulf Hannerz's creole continuum locates "First World metropolis" at one pole and "Third World village" at the other, locating creole cultural forms as falling at different registers in between. Such models give the impression that creole societies are mixtures of two homogenous cultures, even if the theorists do not intend them this way. See Ulf Hannerz, *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places* (Florence, KY: Routledge, 1996), 67-8; "The World in Creolization," 16. See also Frank J. Korom, *Hosay Trinidad: Muharram Performances in an Indo-Caribbean Diaspora* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003). Korom uses the linguistic concepts of the "superstrate" and "substrate" to analyze Indian and Caribbean contributions to Hosay festivals staged in Trinidad, which commemorate the martyrdom of Hussein. For Sidney Mintz's critique of cultural models of creolization that base themselves on linguistic analyses of creolization, see "Enduring substances," 301.

⁷² I follow Michel de Certeau's distinction between tactics and strategies. See *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), chapter three. However, my intent is not to rehearse a West/Other binary of power dynamics. In this model, post-colonial Cape Verdean theatre artists (albeit generally elites because of their involvement with theatre) access tactics and strategies alike, whereas a typical postcolonial reading might assign the potency of strategies to Portuguese subjects and guerilla-like tactics to Cape Verdean subjects. I am grateful to Ann Folino-White and Jennifer Tyburczy, whose comments helped me to think through these points.

⁷³ This was before I had started my research on Mindelact, so I have not seen *Rei Lear* performed in person. I have read both the Crioulo-language text and the Portuguese-language translation it adapts, but my analysis of the performance's visual components is based upon a videotape.

often vie for the money and land left behind by a departed father.⁷⁴ Branco and his co-adapter, Mindelo actor Fonseca Soares, who played Lear, cut the play in order to focus on inheritance disputes and their effect on the nuclear family.⁷⁵ In their “Procrustean bed,” what got lopped off was the war (the banished Cordélia is consoled by her friend Kent in the first scene, not the King of France), as well as the sub-plot about Edmund’s sedition. The Fool and Kent became quasi-protagonists, taking on dialogue from deleted characters (Edgar, Edmund, and Gloucester).

Unlike Branco’s previous adaptations, *Rei Lear* was not explicitly situated in Mindelo. Goneril and Regan’s velvet robes and Lear’s gold jewelry and crown create a timeless vision of royalty. The white masks the three sisters hold in front of their faces, Goneril’s medusa-like hairstyle, the eerie rattling tones that accompany scene changes, and the somber stage hues suggest a surreal theatrical motif. Historical epochs were deliberately confounded. The Fool raps his rhymed verses like a modern-day hip-hop artist, while his floppy hat and patchy costume suggest an early modern court jester. Branco calls his artistic direction distinctly Elizabethan: the bare-boned set, which featured a single throne center stage, sought to focus spectators’ attention on the richness of the words, rather than distracting them with visual panache.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ João Branco, personal interview, March 21, 2007. For Mindelact 2004, Sal Island’s theatre group Estrelas de Sul dramatized such a Cape Verdean inheritance dispute among brothers in their mainstage show, *Ka’ de Morte*.

⁷⁵ Branco and Soares worked from a recent Portuguese translation by Álvaro Cunhal, former secretary general of the Portuguese Communist Party. William Shakespeare, *O Rei Lear*, trans. Álvaro Cunhal (Lisbon: Editorial Caminho, 2002).

⁷⁶ João Branco, personal interview, March 21, 2007.



Figure 20: The opening scene from GTCCPM's production of *Rei Lear*⁷⁷

The Crioulo language took center stage in the production, garnering much attention from the press and spectators. The characters speak in the coarse rhythms and consonant-dominated tones that characterize Crioulo spoken in Mindelo, on São Vicente Island. This rendered them unquestionably Cape Verdean, even though key plot points do not fit the islands' history (Cape Verde has never had a king, for example). Yet it was not only the words but the figurative use of them that made the performance "creole." The dialogue abounds with body metaphors, which are common in the Crioulo language. The characters underscore the idiomatic expressions with gestures calling attention to Lear's head, the corporeal signifier of his madness. As a result, *Rei Lear* epitomized the "aesthetic of the detour." Crioulo language and cultural markers superseded signifiers that might be identified as "foreign" (such as Branco's "Elizabethan" stage design). I argue that the production urged audiences to think Shakespeare with the body in a distinctly

⁷⁷ From left to right, Helena Rodrigues (Cordélia), Ludmila Évora (Regan), Fonseca Soares (Lear), and Romilda Évora (Goneril). Performed by GTCCPM for Mindelact 2003. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

creole way, while its sole use of the São Vicente variant of Crioulo delivered a searing commentary on the politics of language in Cape Verde.

I suggest that three strands of media rhetoric impacted *Rei Lear*'s reception at Mindelact. The first concerned language, which the Cape Verdean press foregrounded when they heralded *Rei Lear* as a certain highlight of Mindelact 2003. Headlines and sub-headings read: "King Lear, or Shakespearean Crioulo" and "King Lear, or Shakespeare in our Nation's Language."⁷⁸ Curiously, the nationalist overtones of these articles clashed with the iconography accompanying coverage of GTCCPM's production: a picture of an Anglophone-looking king with a long white beard. This distinctly "un-creolized" King Lear is a visual reminder of Shakespeare's prestigious cultural origins, which journalists accented. One celebrated the fact that Shakespeare, "the best playwright of all time," would be presented in Cape Verde,⁷⁹ while another applauded the translation of "great European classics" into the national tongue.⁸⁰ By emphasizing both the nationalist appeal and cultural cachet of *King Lear*, the press bestowed a large stock of the Mindelact Festival's cultural capital that year on Branco and GTCCPM.

This coalesced with a second media strand. In March 2003, six months before *Rei Lear*'s debut, the Mindelact Association awarded its annual theatre merit prize to Mindelo theatre-goers. In a series of press articles, Branco called Mindelenses the "best [theatre] public ever," praising their sharp critical apparatuses, which he claimed had been formed by witnessing a wide range of performance genres at Mindelact over the years.⁸¹ Following on the heels of an affirmation of Mindelo spectators' "good taste," *Rei Lear*'s pre-performance hype presaged the production's

⁷⁸ TSF, "Rei Lear Ou O Crioulo Shakespeareano," *A Semana*, September 12, 2003; "Teatro para Todos os Gostos," *Expresso das Ilhas*, September 3, 2003, sec. Cultura. One of the sub-headings for the second article reads: "Rei Lear ou Shakespeare na Língua di Terra."

⁷⁹ TSF, "Rei Lear ou O Crioulo Shakespeareano."

⁸⁰ "Teatro para Todos os Gostos."

⁸¹ "Público do Mindelo Distinguido," *A Semana*, March 28, 2003. Branco noted that a number of Mindelo spectators passed through his introductory theatre class, which he said makes them an educated, informed public.

success: it prompted Mindelo's elite theatre-goers to appreciate GTCCPM's adaptation in advance.

Finally, the media stressed that in 2003, Mindelact would feature an unprecedented number of theatre groups from other Lusophone countries in honor of Mindelo being named Capital of Lusophone Culture that year by UCCLA, the Union of Portuguese-Language Capital Cities.⁸² One headline emphasized Mindelact 2003's distinctly "Lusophone flavor."⁸³ This perhaps guided Mindelact's international attendees to regard *Rei Lear* as a facet of Mindelo's own brand of *lusofonia*.⁸⁴ It seems curious, then, that GTCCPM would present a Crioulo-language play that year, rather than cater to the many Portuguese-speaking attendees. Instead, *Rei Lear* made a potent artistic statement about the importance of linguistic diversity within the transnational Lusophone world. Rather than feeling shut out by language, international attendees praised the adaptation. A Portuguese actress declared that Branco's compelling production cured her of the 'trauma' of seeing a horrendous production of *Rei Lear* at Lisbon's National Theater.⁸⁵ Portuguese director and playwright Nuno Custódio said that Crioulo was integral to the show's success, as it made the actors visibly comfortable with the text.⁸⁶

This celebratory discourse about *Rei Lear* must be contextualized within its "aesthetic of the detour." Because Branco and Soares worked from a Portuguese translation of *Lear*, the

⁸² União de Cidades Capitais de Língua Portuguesa. Portuguese journalist Marisa Carvalho included the Mindelact Festival in her overview of the cultural activities planned as part of Mindelo's year-long celebrations of its title. Carvalo, "Mindelo vibra com iniciativas culturais," *áfrica lusófona* (2003), 18-19. In Cape Verde, media articles stressed the heightened Lusophone presence: "Mindelact Terá Forte Presença Lusófona," *Horizonte*, August 22, 2003, Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #588; "Lusofonia no Mindelact," *Jornal Expresso*, August 23, 2003. In actuality, only four Lusophone countries were represented at Mindelact that year: Cape Verde, Brazil, Portugal and São Tomé. An Angolan group slated to perform did not show up.

⁸³ TSF, "Sabor Lusófono: Mindelact," *A Semana*, June 6, 2003, sec. Cultura: 16.

⁸⁴ See discussion of *lusofonia* in chapter one.

⁸⁵ João Branco, personal interview, March 21, 2007.

⁸⁶ Nuno Custódio, interview by Hulda Moreira, *Mindelo—Palco das Ilhas*, DVD, documentary by Hulda Moreira (Praia, Cape Verde: RTP África, 2005). See chapter two for a discussion of Custódio's play *Mãe Preta*, performed at Mindelact 2005.

Crioulo dialogue often veers off into Portuguese structures. For example, in Shakespeare's text, Lear tells the Fool that he will not implore Regan for shelter from the storm by saying, "No, I will be the pattern of all patience; I will say nothing."⁸⁷ The Portuguese-language version from which Branco and Soares worked translates this line directly: "Não, vou ser um modelo de paciência: não direi mais nada."⁸⁸ In their Crioulo-language adaptation, Lear begins with the São Vicente Crioulo structure for "I will be" ("m ti ta ben"), detours into Portuguese to express patience ("ser um modelo de paciência"), then swerves back into a typical Crioulo phrase to pledge to remain silent: "e nha boca ca stá lá!" (literally, "and my mouth isn't there!").⁸⁹ The result is a hybrid cross between Crioulo and Portuguese. Branco describes this kind of dialogue as "Shakespearean Crioulo" because it has "a different sentence structure than what we hear everyday in quotidian life, a different sonority, a more accentuated poetic quality."⁹⁰ To honor the lyricism of Shakespeare's original text, Shakespearean Creole "re-invents Crioulo" and often "creolizes" Portuguese words, as Branco explains it.⁹¹

Recall Lionnet's query about what becomes lost when Creole cultures become translated within a global context. As per Branco's explanation, "Shakespearean Crioulo" is necessarily more Portuguese-sounding. Crucially, a Portuguese-inflected Crioulo is linked to the São Vicente Island variant. Linguist Angela Bartens notes that the frequent mixture of Portuguese and Crioulo on the northern islands stems from speakers' "inability or lack of motivation [. . .] to

⁸⁷ *King Lear*, Act III, sc. ii, l. 37. All Shakespeare citations taken from the *Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare*, ed. Sylvan Barnet (Chicago: HBJ, 1972).

⁸⁸ Shakespeare, *Rei Lear*, trans. Álvaro Cunhal.

⁸⁹ Quotations from the Crioulo-language adaptation are from Branco and Soares's unpublished script, which they graciously shared with me.

⁹⁰ Branco, *Nação Teatro*, 363.

⁹¹ FF, "Cabo Verde: Shakespeare em crioulo pelo grupo do Centro Cultural Português," *Lusa: Agência de Notícias de Portugal*, September 12, 2003, www.lusa.pt/print.asp?id=SIR-5397913. Print-out available in the Mindelact Documentation Center, #807.

distinguish between the two codes.”⁹² Therefore, when *Rei Lear* advertises itself as Shakespeare performed in Cape Verde’s “national language,” it excludes varieties of Cape Verdean Crioulo that, by Branco’s definition, would not fit the bill for “Shakespearean Crioulo.” The most prominent example is the *badiu* form spoken on Santiago Island, since it is more heavily derived from African languages.⁹³ Thus, the very definition of “Shakespearean Crioulo” forecloses the possibility of including the Crioulo most resonant with mainland Africa. Here, the Procrustean bed of adaptation amputated an aspect of Cape Verde’s heritage in order to fit a particular conception of a Shakespearean aesthetic.

When circulated to an international audience, *Rei Lear*’s linguistic exclusions carried political overtones. Recall that in the early 1990s, the Cape Verdean government supported a movement to standardize Cape Verdean Crioulo. When linguists announced they would base the new orthographic system, ALUPEC, on the Santiago variant, São Vicente islanders protested. Manuel Veiga, the current Minister of Culture, justifies the choice of Santiago Crioulo for practical reasons: not only does it contain a greater incidence of letter-sound correlation than São Vicente Crioulo, but it is spoken by over half of Cape Verde’s population.⁹⁴ Discontent Mindelenses suggest that Veiga’s favoring of Santiago Crioulo is part of a larger national trend to locate Santiago Island at the heart of Cape Verdean culture. In a year that Mindelo was hailed as capital of Lusophone culture, *Rei Lear*’s São Vicente-Crioulo text became a theatrical protest to what many see as a pro-Santiago government slant.

⁹² Angela Bartens, “Notes on Componential Diffusion in the Genesis of the Kabuverdianu Cluster,” in *Language Change and Language Contact in Pidgins and Creoles*, ed. John McWhorter (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2000), 35-61, at 40.

⁹³ Most of the Crioulo words that Almada Duarte identifies as having discernible African origins are *badiu*. See Almada Duarte, *Bilinguismo ou Diglossia?*, 57-60. She also maintains that *badiu*, as the basilectal creole form, is more resistant to “contamination” by Portuguese structures, or detours (133). For an explanation of the linguistic terms “basilect” and “superstrate,” see this chapter, note 69.

⁹⁴ Manuel Veiga, *Diskrison Strutural di Lingua Kabuverdianu* (Praia, Cape Verde: Institutu Kabuverdianu di Livru, 1982), 21.

Rei Lear also proved an artistic counterpoint to discourses privileging Santiago Crioulo as the vehicle for Cape Verdean cultural expression. Authors argue that because São Vicente's Crioulo is deficient in vowels, it is less suited for literary expression than Santiago Crioulo's more melodic tones.⁹⁵ *Rei Lear*, however, demonstrated the immense poetic potential of São Vicente Crioulo. Branco states that Shakespeare adaptations give the Crioulo language "an enormous cultural force that, perhaps, folkloric manifestations do not achieve, nowadays, on the stage."⁹⁶ This claim, however, enacts another critical exclusion. It questions which theatrical form puts Crioulo to better cultural and expressive use, setting Shakespeare adaptations above the 'folkloric' festivals and dances that Santiago artists often incorporate into their productions.

Interestingly, however, what Branco and Soares left out of *King Lear*'s story-line made the play unambiguously national in other regards. In their version, Lear is not done in by war but by the storm that has so weakened the elderly king that he can recover neither wits nor health. Here, *Lear* ends not on a Dover battlefield but the makeshift shelter to which the Fool has led Lear during the storm, where Cordélia seeks him out and where they are reconciled. *King Lear*'s colossal body count is reduced to one: Lear himself. The last scene depicts Cordélia weeping over her father's corpse. Whereas in the original, Edmund orders his servant to kill Lear and Cordélia, here the king dies due to his older daughters' egregious neglect.

⁹⁵ Baltasar Lopes, "Prefácio," in Manuel Ferreira, *Aventura Crioula*, 3rd ed. (Lisbon: Plátano Editora, 1985), 13-27, at 26.

⁹⁶ João Branco, interview by António Monteiro (see note 8).



Figure 21: Cordélia and Lear in the last scene of GTCCPM's *Rei Lear*⁹⁷

While Branco says he excised the war simply because they did not need it, this version is truer to Cape Verdean history as a result. The islands have never seen a war. As discussed in chapter one, their independence struggle was waged in Guinea-Bissau and Guinea-Conakry. It has been natural disasters, mainly droughts, that have killed masses of Cape Verdeans, especially the more susceptible elderly population, over the centuries. Recall that GTCCPM nationalized Beckett by substituting the long-awaited Godot with rain that never falls. In *Rei Lear*, a storm stands in for drought. While Nature works in the opposite way, pounding the islands with rain instead of withholding it, the effect, the death of the elderly, is exactly the same. Here, the “aesthetic of the detour” applies to cultural manifestations in the performance text. What dominates in *Rei Lear* is the storm as metonym for natural disaster in Cape Verde, rather than the more foreign notion of battle, which governs Shakespeare’s final scenes.

Rei Lear's creole aesthetic also included a focus on corporeality that linked Crioulo language patterns explicitly to characters' bodies. Many of these text-body connections resonate

⁹⁷ Performed by GTCCPM for Mindelact 2003. From left to right, Helena Rodrigues and Fonseca Soares. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

powerfully with the sub-title, “Nhô Rei já bá cabeça” (the King’s head has gone). In the adaptation, the king constantly frames his madness as a deterioration of his actual head. An example illustrates how this operates. In Shakespeare’s text, Lear’s ominous words before the storm are, “O fool, I shall go mad!”⁹⁸ The Portuguese translation emphasizes his insanity with repetition: “Enlouqueço, bobo, enlouqueço!” (I’m going mad, Fool, I’m going mad!). The Crioulo adaptation transforms this doubling of words into repetition with a difference: “Um ti ta vrá dod, bobo, um ti ta bá cabéça!” (I’m going mad, Fool, my head is going!). The Cape Verdean Lear takes the notion of madness and repeats it differently, as if he were “signifyin’” on Shakespeare with a mind/body connection that is intrinsically Creole.⁹⁹

Perhaps ironically, behind this “signifyin’” is an etymological connection with the African languages that contributed to Crioulo’s formation. Almada Duarte notes that while Crioulo uses a Portuguese word for “head” (Kabésa/Cabeça), Crioulo speakers use the word in a way that Portuguese does not: as a reflexive pronoun referring to one’s self, which also occurs in West African languages like Wolof and Bantu languages from southern Africa. For example, to express suicide in Crioulo, one would say “Maria mata kabésa” (Maria killed her own head).¹⁰⁰ Thus, in the Crioulo *Rei Lear*, the king losing his “head” takes on a shade of meaning that gets at the very core of insanity: Lear is gradually losing his very essence, his own self. The dialogue patterns in *Rei Lear* disclose the impossibility of keeping “Africa” out of the Crioulo equation.

⁹⁸ *King Lear*, II., iv., l. 283.

⁹⁹ See Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹⁰⁰ Almada Duarte, *Bilinguismo ou Diglossia?*, 62.



Figure 22: Lear with Oswaldo and Bobo (the Fool) in GTCCPM's *Rei Lear*¹⁰¹

The kinetic language of the actors reinforce the word-body connection throughout. One illustrative example is the Fool, who uses hip-hop gestures to accentuate Lear's madness. Late in Act I, the Fool disparages Lear for heeding "that lord that counsell'd thee/ To give away thy land."¹⁰² In *Rei Lear*, the Fool announces this section by placing an imaginary crown on Lear's head. Before the rap beat starts, he takes Kent's idle hand and places it, fingers pointing down, over Lear's head as if putting the needle on the record. The rap is a prelude to the Fool's most vivid imagery for Lear's madness. Likening Lear carving up his "crown" (kingdom) to breaking an egg and being left with only the shells, he extends the metaphor to mental health, stating that when Lear did this, he had very little wits in his "crown"(head). In *Rei Lear*, the Fool punctuates this line by placing his hands over Lear's head and miming cutting it open as if performing brain surgery, finally concluding, "Nada, nada!" ("nothing, nothing!" ['I don't see anything?']).

¹⁰¹ From left to right, Anselmo Fortes, Fonseca Soares, and Nuno Delgado. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

¹⁰² *King Lear*, I., iv., 142-3.

Patrice Pavis's theory of adaptation places great stock in the director's and actors' ability to meld text with corporeality. He writes, "theatre translation is never where one expects it to be: not in words, but in gesture, not in the letter, but in the spirit of a culture."¹⁰³ In contrast to the text it adapts, the Crioulo-language *Lear* lends symmetry to word (head/crown), metaphorical meaning (self/sanity), and gesture. Its predominantly Crioulo dialogue, the symbolic function of the storm, and the accentuation of the body in the performance text made it a veritable celebration of a creole theatre aesthetic. This garnered the production acclaim: *Rei Lear* was hailed as the best of Mindelact 2003 and of all Cape Verdean theatre performed that year.¹⁰⁴ Nuno Pino Custódio, the Portuguese director discussed in chapter two, attended Mindelact that year and commended *Rei Lear*'s Crioulo dialogue and the production's sensual feel. He suggested that Cape Verdean actors perform well under these circumstances because of intrinsic differences from Western theatre, which is "more connected to the intellect."¹⁰⁵

Custódio's response illustrates the risks of emphasizing the corporeal aspect of *Rei Lear*, as I have also done here. The danger is reiterating a "West and the Rest" mind/ body binary that is a relic of colonial thinking. Custódio's comment does indeed flirt with that bifurcation. Yet this is different from highlighting the cultural knowledge that an actor's body is capable of transmitting in an adaptation's *mise-en-scene*, which does not necessarily replicate a perilous dichotomous discourse. If we understand the actors to be using their bodies to illuminate something that is inherently cerebral, mental stability, the resulting reading is perhaps a collapse

¹⁰³ Patrice Pavis, "Problems of translation for the stage: interculturalism and post-modern theatre," trans. Loren Kruger, in *The Play out of Context: Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture*, ed. Hanna Scolnicov and Peter Holland (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 25-42, at 42.

¹⁰⁴ TSF, "Qualidade Puxa Qualidade," *A Semana*, September 26, 2003; Santos Spencer, "Teatro Cabo-Verdiano Brilhoso em 2003," www.caboverdeonline.com/contents/Port/2003/G/12/te121903.asp (accessed January 1, 2004).

¹⁰⁵ Nuno Custódio, interview by Hulda Moreira, *Mindelo—Palco das Ilhas* (see note 85).

of the mind/body divide rather than its reification. *Rei Lear* reveals that a creole continuum must read linguistic and kinetic signifiers together to unearth their complex implications.

4.5 Creolizing Naturalism: *Três Irmãs* and the Politics of “Interference”

Shortly after *Rei Lear*'s triumphant debut, Mindelact held a costume parade in which local actors displayed colorful attire from GTCCPM's ten years of theatre productions. Three Mindelo actresses wore long black, white, and blue gowns from a period piece the group had performed in 2001. Standing next to João Branco was João Paulo Brito, Branco's former theatre student who had since gone on to complete a three-year professional acting course at Porto's Academia Contemporânea do Espectáculo (Academy for Contemporary Theatre). After Brito remarked that the three actresses were wearing the very colors designated for the three sisters of Chekhov's famous play, which he had long admired, Branco spontaneously suggested that Brito direct *Three Sisters* for Mindelact 2004. Not having ever directed before, Brito initially declined but ultimately yielded to persuasion. In the 2004 Mindelact program notes, Brito facetiously called his acceptance of Branco's invitation “an act of folly and irresponsibility.”¹⁰⁶

Adaptations of realist plays foreground the need for transformation, since the vision of reality espoused in the original is not always relevant to the target audience. Thus, the adapter must adjust it to the new audience's expectations for reason, plausibility, and representation of the typical.¹⁰⁷ This was imperative for Brito, since the inspiration for his adaptation did not come from the *inside*, as with Branco's use of *King Lear* to highlight cultural affinities with Cape

¹⁰⁶ 2004 Mindelact program, 44. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center.

¹⁰⁷ Brian Richardson identifies these qualities as the major criteria for successful realist drama. Richardson, “Introduction: The Struggle for the Real—Interpretive Conflict, Dramatic Method, and the Paradox of Realism,” in *Realism and the American Dramatic Tradition*, ed. William W. Demastes (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996), 1-17, at 4.

Verde. Rather, Brito's motivation came from the *outside*: his own esteem for *Three Sisters* productions and scene work that he had witnessed as an acting student in Portugal.¹⁰⁸

Brito created affinities between Chekhov's text and Cape Verdean culture then by transforming the story's details. A turn-of-the-century provincial Russian town became 1940s Mindelo, which hosted many Portuguese soldiers during World War II. Russian names gave way to Portuguese equivalents. The Prozorov sisters become the Prado sisters, whose deceased father was a Cape Verdean officer stationed in Portugal but had transferred to Mindelo eleven years earlier. Pining for Moscow became longing for Lisbon, the Cape Verdean sisters' birthplace. The eldest sister, Olga, teaches primary school, while the youngest, Irina, works at the telegraph office, which was then the communications hub of Mindelo's bustling port. Masha's tiresome husband, Faust, teaches at Mindelo's Gil Eanes, at that time the most prestigious secondary school in the country. Bored with Faust's pedantry, Masha soon falls for the visiting Portuguese Lieutenant Vera-Cruz, while her brother André marries Natalia, an unsophisticated local Mindelense girl. As in Chekhov's text, Natalia comes to dominate the household. She finally cuts down the tree in the yard to symbolize her coup. Crioulo cultural markers fitted neatly into the story details. Mindelo's quintessential Carnival song, "Mascrinha," permeated Act II's carnivalesque ambience. Masha sings an early example of Cape Verdean *morna* music, rather than reciting a Pushkin poem. The Prado family offers their guests *grogue*, Cape Verde's local grain alcohol, instead of vodka.

¹⁰⁸ João Paulo Brito, personal interview, May 28, 2007.



Figure 23: Olga, Masha, and Irina in GTCCPM's *Três Irmãs*¹⁰⁹

By translating the world of Chekhov's play, Brito sought to construct *Crioulo naturalism*, a naturalism deriving organically from Cape Verde's unique blend of Euro-African influences. The sub-heading to his director's notes in the festival program, "Procuring Our Naturalism," announced this objective.¹¹⁰ According to Brito, naturalism is particular in that every culture must discover its own. Chekhov's play may resonate on an emotional level with audiences anywhere, but the specific relationships need to reflect a particular society's way of being.¹¹¹

Language was the major obstacle that Brito faced in his quest to cultivate "Crioulo naturalism." His first impulse was to write the dialogue half in Crioulo and half in Portuguese, which would reflect the sisters' bilingual upbringing. As Cape Verdeans' mother tongue, Crioulo is the language characters would naturally use to express the emotional range of Chekhov's story. However, Brito guest-directed *Três Irmãs* for GTCCPM, the official theatre group of

¹⁰⁹ Performed for Mindelact 2004. From left to right, Arlinda Lima, Elisabete Gonçalves, and Ludmila Évora. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

¹¹⁰ 2004 Mindelact program, 44. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center.

¹¹¹ João Paulo Brito, personal interview, May 28, 2007.

Mindelo's Portuguese Cultural Center, which, at least at that time, had a quota for how many Portuguese-language shows its theatre group must perform in a given cycle. Perhaps because an all-Crioulo language *Rei Lear* preceded it, the Center stipulated that the *Três Irmãs* adaptation be at least 75% Portuguese.¹¹² Because of this politic, Brito decided that his adaptation would be "Crioulo, not necessarily in the language, but in the spirit, ambience, rhythm, and interpersonal relationships."¹¹³ To this end, he had definite ideas for the characters' emotional range.

Brito understood the sisters of Chekhov's text as espousing a "very Cape Verdean" sentiment. He explains that their constant reminiscing rings true to the Cape Verdean notion of *sodade*, the nostalgic longing for home that accompanies emigration. The idea of setting the adaptation in 1940s Mindelo came to him right away. As Brito's grandmother had been cook to a Portuguese military family then, his father had transmitted to him his vivid memories of growing up in that environment. This led Brito to imagine a "genuinely Cape Verdean" family who nonetheless had deep ties to Portugal. He chose Lisbon as the site of the sisters' nostalgia because it had to be a bigger city than Mindelo, yet not too far away.¹¹⁴ Brito also augmented the role of the Prado sisters' former nurse, who in this version is a mystic figure from nearby Santo Antão Island who purifies the house with her lantern while the sisters sleep. Brito named her "Marcelina" in homage to his grandmother, who partly inspired the new context.¹¹⁵

Despite these contextual changes, Brito remained faithful to Chekhov's intention by putting character front and center. He asked his actors to flesh out their characters by writing

¹¹² Brito told me this in both of our interviews cited above. He told me that as artistic director of the Mindelo Cultural Center, João Branco had called Brito in Portugal to relay this condition even before he arrived in Cape Verde to start directing *Three Sisters*. However, the Center's director, Ana Cordeiro maintains that the Center has no official language policy for its theatre productions, even though the CCP's overall aim is to promote the Portuguese language. Ana Cordeiro, personal interviews, August 9, 2005 and March 9, 2007.

¹¹³ João Paulo Brito, director's notes, *Três Irmãs*, Mindelact 2004 program, 44. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center.

¹¹⁴ João Paulo Brito, personal interview, August 18, 2004.

¹¹⁵ João Paulo Brito, personal interview, May 28, 2007.

extensive life histories, a Stanislavskian exercise he often did for acting classes in Porto. His cast invented intricate back stories ranging from the fantastical (the old military doctor and family friend, Chantre, is actually Irina's father) to the mundane (Marcelina loves green beans).¹¹⁶

Seemingly, the measure of a successful realist adaptation revolves around the answers to questions such as: Did the equations hold up? Was the spirit of the play maintained, while allowing the Mindelo public to "see itself" in the production? As Brian Richardson notes, realism is not so much a mirror as a synecdochic reconstruction of the world: "a model as such is neither true nor false, but it can be determined to be more or less adequate, accurate, and comprehensive, and one model can be seen to be more effective than another."¹¹⁷ Measuring the aptness of Brito's model for Mindelense society is tricky, since reception evidence is sparse. Unlike *Rei Lear*, which GTCCPM re-mounted several times on various islands from 2003-05, *Três Irmãs* was performed only once and there is hardly any mention of it in the media. Informally, however, the buzz at Mindelact 2004 was that the production fell flat. Spectators' critiques constellated around a number of common themes, including the incompatibility of Chekhov's story with a Cape Verdean reality, the predominance of Portuguese-language dialogue, and the production's slow and tedious rhythm.

Portuguese Cultural Center director Ana Cordeiro opines that the production failed to captivate the theatre public because it could not demonstrate a credible connection between nineteenth-century Russia and 1940s Mindelo.¹¹⁸ In my workshop on adaptation at Mindelact 2005, Mindelo actors said that they could not identify with *Três Irmãs* because the Prado

¹¹⁶ My thanks to actress Maria Auxilia Cruz, who played Marcelina, for sharing her character history with me.

¹¹⁷ Richardson, "Introduction," 3-4.

¹¹⁸ Ana Cordeiro, personal interview, March 9, 2007.

family's predicament, petty quibbles, and romantic woes ran far afield from their reality. While these actors claimed that language had nothing to do with that, students in Nuno Pino Custódio's dramaturgy workshop at Mindelact 2004 linked the play's unnatural feel to the actors' visible discomfort with the Portuguese dialogue.¹¹⁹ Custódio himself critiqued *Três Irmãs* for its stiff Portuguese communication, which blocked the actors from crafting the intimate, sensual Crioulo aesthetic he admired in *Rei Lear*.¹²⁰ Technical failures compounded the productions' problems: that night was among the hottest of the Mindelo summer and the air conditioner at the Mindelo Cultural Center happened to be broken. Uncomfortable spectators could not seem to separate their criticism of the production from their complaints about the stifling heat in the auditorium. An actor from Brava Island could only describe the performance as "dead."¹²¹

I want to nuance these critiques by attributing the critical "unsuccess" of *Três Irmãs* to an excessive reliance on the interference model of creolization, both in terms of the actual language deployed and a hypothetical cultural spectrum. Far from dominating the *mise en scène*, Crioulo culture faded into the background, puncturing the text's foreign worldview only in a smattering of Crioulo words, geographical references to São Vicente and Santo Antão Islands, and Cape Verdean musical interludes, such as Masha's haunting rendition of the morna "Brada Maria" in the final acts. Brito himself calls the production's rhythm "un-Crioulo." His primary error as a director, he says, was unconsciously transporting the slow pace of Chekhov's text, which he had seen replicated in various Portuguese productions, to a Cape Verdean milieu that demanded rapid-fire dialogue rather than extended silences, accelerated action, and intense character

¹¹⁹ Herlandson Duarte, personal conversation, February 2007.

¹²⁰ Nuno Custódio, interview by Hulda Moreira, *Mindelo—Palco das Ilhas* (see note 85).

¹²¹ José Domingos, personal conversation, June 2007.

physicality.¹²² Although performed on a Cape Verdean stage, *Three Sisters* remained an early twentieth-century sitting room drama.



Figure 24: The Prado sisters with their guests in GTCCPM's *Três Irmãs*¹²³

Disputing the idea that realism is an inherently conservative art form, William Demastes argues that dramatic realism allows spectators to put to use critical apparatuses honed in real life, namely their ability to distinguish between “‘real’ behavior” and artifice.¹²⁴ This did not function in *Três Irmãs*, I suggest, because Brito reversed the emigration equation normally associated with Cape Verdean *sodade*. Instead of longing for the islands from a far-away place, Olga, Irina, and Masha are on the islands longing to be far away. The substitution of Lisbon for Moscow is what Pavis calls a “reception adapter,” a familiar cultural reference meant to illuminate an alien aspect of the source text.¹²⁵ Yet such parallels can problematically subsume crucial differences

¹²² João Paulo Brito, personal interview, May 28, 2007.

¹²³ Performed for Mindelact 2004. Standing, left to right: Ludmila Évora, Nelson Rocha, Arlindo Rocha, Elisabete Gonçalves. Sitting, left to right: Zenaida Alfama and Arminda Lima. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

¹²⁴ William Demastes, “Preface: American Dramatic Realisms, Viable Frames of Thought,” in *Realism and the American Dramatic Tradition*, ed. Demastes (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996), ix-xvii, at xiii.

¹²⁵ Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, trans. Loren Kruger (New York: Routledge, 1992), 17.

between the model and its metaphoric application to a new cultural context.¹²⁶ Recall that Chekhov's *Three Sisters* debuted in 1901 for a Russian audience for whom Moscow was home. Lisbon was home, however, only to a portion of the Portuguese artists attending the Mindelact festival in 2004. For the vast majority of *Três Irmãs* spectators, home was Mindelo. In the production, the sisters constantly denigrate Mindelo, creating an inherent mis-identification between spectator and character. Olga counters Lieutenant Vera-Cruz's admiration of the seaside with complaints about Mindelo's hot weather and mosquitoes. Macha claims that the Prados' knowledge of three languages is wasted in "a place like this," leading Vera-Cruz to admire the sisters' intellect, a rarity, he assumes, among the 15,000 "vulgar" residents of the isle.¹²⁷

As theatre scholar Eunice Ferreira notes in her review of *Três Irmãs*, Mindelo's history as a culturally diverse port city makes it a stark contrast to the provincial Russian town the sisters disparage in Chekhov's text.¹²⁸ In the local imagination, Mindelo's mythical cosmopolitanism aligns it more to the Moscow that the Prozorov sisters romanticize. To honor this dynamic, Brito could have set his adaptation *outside* of Cape Verde, perhaps in Angola, where Cape Verdean military were often sent in service of the colonial state. There, the Prado sisters could embody the prototypical Cape Verdean dilemma of *sodade*, "I have to leave, but I want to stay," and Mindelo could retain its status as revered home. Instead, as Ferreira notes, Brito sets up a colonial binary that colors the sisters' idealization of Lisbon at a time when all Cape Verdeans were considered to be Portuguese citizens (see chapter one).¹²⁹ Born in the metropole, the Cape Verdean Irina can only implore Olga, "Lets go to Lisbon! Lets go, I beg you! There's nowhere in

¹²⁶ See Kevin Wetmore's notion of the "Black Orpheus" model for Afro-Greek adaptations in *Black Dionysus*, 14-15, 27.

¹²⁷ From João Paulo Brito's unpublished adaptation of *Três Irmãs*, of which he graciously gave me a copy.

¹²⁸ Eunice Ferreira, "Ser ou Não Ser Crioulo no Palco," *Revista Mindelact* 14-15 (2005): 31-38, at 36.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

the world better than Lisbon.”¹³⁰ When the sisters learn that Vera-Cruz is also from Lisbon, they delight in the fact that he hails from their old neighborhood, Ajuda. Colonial culture dominates both the *mise-en-scène* and the landscape of the sisters’ memories.

I suggest, however, that the production did make effective use of the “interference” model of creolization at key moments. Linguistic code-switches into Crioulo opened up potent opportunities for social critique and intense engagement with identity politics. Here, I expand on Ferreira’s reading of the linguistic interplay in the production. Ferreira focuses on the three unambiguously Cape Verdean characters in her analysis of what Crioulo represents in the adaptation. Marcelina, the elderly nurse, speaks Crioulo throughout, even when delivering the ominous last line about the sisters’ fate: “if they only knew [what they were living for].” Her character’s use of Crioulo endows the language with mysticism, divination, and superstition. Sousa, the uncouth army captain from Mindelo who eventually duels with and kills Irina’s intended, Tolentino, reverts to Crioulo when expressing anger or vulgarity. Ferreira astutely observes that since Sousa is the most aggressive male in the play, as well as the only one who speaks Crioulo, his language patterns “amplify the class difference between those who speak Portuguese and those who do not. In this case, being more Crioulo might implicate a lack of refinement and a propensity toward violence.”¹³¹ Natália, André’s wife, explodes into Crioulo when she reprimands Marcelina but speaks Portuguese with Olga to show that she is on the same intellectual plane.¹³² In this instance, Crioulo represents heightened emotion, while Portuguese constructs social proximity.

¹³⁰ In João Paulo Brito’s script: “Mas vamos para Lisboa! Vamos peço-te! Não há no mundo melhor que Lisboa.”

¹³¹ Eunice Ferreira, “Ser ou Não Ser Crioulo no Palco,” 36.

¹³² *Ibid.*

Perhaps more significant, however, is what Crioulo does *not* express in the play. All of the more cerebral passages—Lt. Vera-Cruz’s musings on the historical significance of their time, Irina’s reflections on the value that hard physical labor bestows on one’s life—are delivered in Portuguese. Contrast this with Mauritian playwright Dev Virahsawmy’s rationale for employing Mauritian Creole in his Shakespeare adaptations: to “infuse this hybrid language with the capabilities and the range integral to other [. . .] ‘literary’ languages; and to use it to express abstract concepts, complex thoughts, affective modes of being, and aesthetic possibilities.”¹³³ Seemingly, since it reserves Crioulo for less “heady” purposes, Brito’s script is not in line with Almada Duarte’s recommendation for using dramatic art to forge new literary and aesthetic structures for the Crioulo language.

Crioulo does, however, express the sisters’ ‘affective modes of being’ in innovative ways. Here is where my reading differs from Ferreira’s. Ferreira critiques the Prado family’s use of Portuguese to express even intimate feelings to each other, since they are a Cape Verdean family by birth and Crioulo expresses the Cape Verdean emotional centre.¹³⁴ Yet Ferreira misses crucial instances of Crioulo in the sisters’ speech, thus overlooking how even brief linguistic code-switching may have a social function. For example, when Masha confesses her love for the married Vera-Cruz to her sisters, she begins in Portuguese but moves to Crioulo when Olga objects. Specifically, she says, “M ta gosta d’el,” which sounds distinctly different than her previous Portuguese phrase, “Eu amo-o.” This unmasks the Prado’s reliance on Portuguese as a façade. Masha can only convince Olga of her love for Vera-Cruz by speaking Crioulo.

In one instant, Masha dramatizes what Manuel Ferreira, in his important book on Crioulo culture, *Aventura Crioula*, claims is the islands’ linguistic legacy. In his view, if Portuguese were

¹³³ Lionnet, “Creole Vernacular Theatre,” 927.

¹³⁴ Eunice Ferreira, “Ser ou Não Ser Crioulo no Palco,” 37.

one day prohibited in Cape Verde, life would go on without interruption. The loss of Crioulo, however, would be an “amputation of disastrous consequences.”¹³⁵ Recall that adaptations function as a Procrustean bed. As the affective “limb” of the Cape Verdean people, Crioulo is lopped off for the majority of the Prado sisters’ intimate speeches. However, Masha’s Crioulo-language declaration of love restores that severed limb, if only momentarily and symbolically. In doing so, she reveals the false consciousness that drives some Cape Verdean elites’ persistent wielding of the Portuguese language, even in the home environment.¹³⁶

Crucially, it was the actress who played Masha, Elisabete Gonçalves, who proposed this code-switch. Although the Portuguese Cultural Center’s linguistic conditions meant that the characters with the bulk of the dialogue should speak mainly Portuguese, Brito allowed his actresses to experiment with code-switching in rehearsals. By choosing this moment for a Crioulo “interference,” Gonçalves followed the principles of naturalism, but within a Creole context. If we imagine the Prado house as a “social laboratory” of elite Cape Verdean society, Olga’s brisk dismissal of Masha’s passion for Vera-Cruz might naturally provoke her to try another tactic, their mother tongue, Crioulo.

Other instances of Crioulo were even stealthier. Ferreira claims that Irina speaks Crioulo only once, when mocking her brother’s crush on Natália, a “m’ nininha d’li d’ Soncente” (little girl from São Vicente), thus marking a social distance from her.¹³⁷ Yet as Brito and I were watching my video of *Três Irmãs* together, he pointed out certain moments in which Irina speaks

¹³⁵ Manuel Ferreira, *Aventura Crioula*, 3rd ed. (Lisbon: Plátano Editora, 1985), 73.

¹³⁶ While this is rare, there are a number of Cape Verdean families who do institute this rule at home. Generally, they are families who have gained some local notoriety for this and are known to be proud of their higher education degrees.

¹³⁷ Eunice Ferreira, “Ser ou Não Ser Crioulo no Palco,” 36.

Crioulo words that are disguised as Portuguese.¹³⁸ For example, when the crass officer Sousa jokes that the Prado's liquor is made of cockroaches, Irena retorts, "Patif." In Portuguese, *patife* means 'scoundrel,' but Irena pronounces it differently, giving it its more barbed nuance in Crioulo, 'disgusting pig.' Later, when Tolentino remarks that Masha's husband is certainly the only person in Mindelo happy to see her lover, Lt. Vera-Cruz, shipping off, Irina responds, "Tambê." In Portuguese, *também* would mean 'you're right' in this context, but Irina pronounces it in Crioulo, which makes it more sarcastic, like 'And why might *that* be?'

I propose that these brief instances of Crioulo "interferences" function as linguistic subterfuge. Subtly code-switching into Crioulo allows Irina to express visceral emotions like cynicism and disgust under the guise that she is actually speaking Portuguese. By disrupting the authority of standard Portuguese, linguistic subterfuge serves a vital postcolonial function.¹³⁹ It reveals Crioulo to be not a corruption of the imperial tongue, but a potent signifying system allowing speakers to voice multiple meanings with a single word.

The sisters' furtive switches to Crioulo tactically intervened in the colonial culture that dominated the *mise-en-scène*. Given the linguistic constraints that the Mindelo Portuguese Cultural Center attached to the *Três Irmãs* adaptation, these brief "interferences" of the Crioulo language were perhaps all that Brito could manage. As I watched the video with him, he continually lamented, "If it were up to me, I would have staged this whole passage in Crioulo." His linguistic dilemma in directing *Três Irmãs* for Mindelact perhaps highlights a critical irony of contemporary African theatre: the fact that European countries continue to exert a measure of control over theatre on the continent, even as their cultural centers allow that theatre to flourish. I

¹³⁸ João Paulo Brito, personal interview, May 6, 2007. He pointed out the first instance of Irina's masked use of Crioulo, and I picked out the second, which he explained further to me.

¹³⁹ See Helen Gilbert's and Joanne Tompkins's discussion of the use of Creole and Pidgin languages in theatre, *Post-Colonial Drama*, 184-85.

suggest, however, that we can read the moments of Crioulo “interferences” as tactical protests against that predicament. Brito conceded that many Cape Verdean spectators would not catch Irina’s momentary switches into Crioulo or their larger significance.¹⁴⁰ Yet I suggest that it *matters* that Brito and the actors knew they were there. The Crioulo “interferences” allowed them to create a Crioulo subtext that informed their conception of the characters, whether or not they succeeded in making those brief markers of Crioulo culture perceptible to the audience.

4.6 *Sonho de Uma Noite de Verão*: “Detours” and “Interferences” as Social Critique

On the Mindelact stage, Shakespeare’s Athenian woods were luminous. Deep blue lighting shrouded the stormy confrontation between Oberon and Titânia, whose sparkling sashes and diadems accentuated the luster of their Crioulo-language repartee. Titânia’s fairies performed graceful synchronized gestures behind her, raising their arms and then sweeping them over the ground as if sanctifying the earth under her feet . The effect was mesmerizing. Cape Verdean journalist Matilde Dias called *Sonho de Uma Noite de Verão* “unquestionably beautiful.”¹⁴¹ After the production, which closed Mindelact 2005, festival director João Branco bounded onto the stage and declared that Cape Verde had gained a prodigious directing talent in nineteen-year-old Herlandson Duarte. Critics of the production targeted an obsession with stage aesthetic, deeming it more fashion show than theatre.¹⁴² Others noted how sculpted every gesture was, detecting a heavy directorial hand. As Dias aptly writes, the director became “the protagonist, relegating the text and acting to a second plane.”¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ João Paulo Brito, personal interview, May 6, 2007.

¹⁴¹ This was an entry on Dias’s widely read blog on Cape Verdean culture, *Lantuna*. Matilde Dias, “Uma Pedra no Charco,” <http://lantuna.blogspot.com/2005/10/uma-pedra-no-charco.html> (accessed August 29, 2007).

¹⁴² Zenaída Alfama and Elisabete Gonçalves, personal interviews, March 13, 2007.

¹⁴³ Dias, “Uma Pedra no Charco.”



Figure 25: Titânia and Oberon confront each other in Solaris's *Sonho de uma Noite de Verão*¹⁴⁴

The Solaris theatre company's adaptation of *Midsummer Night's Dream* functions linguistically on the "detour" plane, since Crioulo dominates the dialogue. However, its *mise en scène* evidences an "interference aesthetic." Neither the stage nor the story line contained overt references to a Cape Verdean context, and the actors were dressed in Grecian attire. This was part of Duarte's agenda to remain as faithful as possible to what he perceived as Shakespeare's own scenic conception.¹⁴⁵ Yet Solaris transformed the play-within-a-play scenes significantly, shaping them into interrogations of contemporary Cape Verdean theatre practices. These scenes "interfered" with the set's Athenian milieu. In sum, Solaris wielded both "detours" and "interferences" as weapons of cultural and social critique.

Perhaps most remarkable about Solaris's *Midsummer Night's Dream* is that it is almost wholly unrecognizable as one of Shakespeare's popular *comedies*. From the gravity of the actors' speeches, to their lethargic motion, to the gloomy piano sonatas haunting scenic interludes, the production bore a dark palette. For example, Shakespeare's text calls for a lusty reconciliation

¹⁴⁴ Performed for Mindelact 2005. From left to right, Cristian Lima, Luci Mota, Luana Jardim, Érika Ramos, and Milanka Vera-Cruz. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

¹⁴⁵ Herlandson Duarte, personal interview, September 7, 2005.

between fairy king and queen, with Oberon whisking Titania off to dance at the palace. In Solaris's version, their reunion is almost mimetic: with palms clasped high, they circle slowly to violin strains. In the final scene at the Duke's court, the servant-class players stage the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisby *as tragedy*. Solaris's play ends on a note of solemnity, not hilarity, as Shakespeare's does. In summer 2005, I happened to be staying at the cultural research center in Mindelo where Solaris was rehearsing. My initial reaction was, "they're missing the point. Bottom's play is supposed to bring down the house."¹⁴⁶

What I came to understand about the final scene was that they were deliberately reading against the grain of the text in order to conflate genres. The group has pointedly refused to do the "low comedy" they perceive Mindelo audiences to crave. Before their March 2005 performance of *Julietas*, a play about the social taboo of two women in love, they warned, "Whoever expects to see a traditional Crioulo comedy, a play that makes people laugh, can forget it, because our show goes in a completely divergent direction."¹⁴⁷ Solaris used their production of *Midsummer* to drive this point home. In their version, Duke Tezéu and his courtier, Filostrato, order the players to stage a comedy for Hérmiã's wedding celebration because the only thing the court

¹⁴⁶ Bleaker productions of *Midsummer Night's Dream* are of course nothing new. Jan Kott's famous 1964 essay "Titania and the Ass's Head," which highlighted themes of masochism, bestiality, and grotesque fantasy, unleashed a series of darker interpretations of the *Dream*, such as Mnouchkine's 1968 production with the Théâtre du Soleil, two East Berlin productions in 1980 set against the backdrop of government intolerance, and Peter Brook's world tour of *Midsummer*, which was directly inspired by Mnouchkine and Kott. Endowing the play-within-the-play with sober undertones has also been done, most recently in William Hoffman's 1999 film version. However, North/South lines of influence cannot be presumed here. Herlandson Duarte had intentionally avoided seeing any film version of *Midsummer* so as not to allow his own directing to be swayed, and Cape Verde's limited research resources precluded him from accessing Kott's essay or other academic materials. See Jan Kott, *Shakespeare our Contemporary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964); Maik Hamburger, "New Concepts of Staging *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Survey* 40 (1988): 51–61; Martin Linzer, "A *Midsummer Night's Dream* in East Germany," trans. Brigitte Kueppers, *TDR: The Drama Review* 25, no.2 (1981): 45–54. I am very much indebted to Jay King, who made me aware of these citations and commented insightfully on my essay under the auspices of the National Identity/National Culture working group for ASTR 2007. King also sent me his excellent unpublished seminar paper on dark productions of *Midsummer*, to which I owe the opening observations in this paragraph.

¹⁴⁷ "Julietas' Ou a Tentação do Pecado pela Companhia Solaris," <http://mindelact.com/noticiasArq-37.htm> (accessed December 26, 2007).

wants to do is “laugh, and laugh, and laugh.” Significantly, the two palace slaves who substitute Peter Quince’s team of craftsmen in this adaptation, do not give it to them. For Dias, the message was clear: Solaris will not be dominated by the public’s demands.¹⁴⁸

Interestingly, Duke Tezú and Filostrato’s demand for a comedy may or may not represent the Mindelo public’s taste. In fact, the Solaris actors never really clarified to me who exactly the court was supposed to represent in the Cape Verdean theatre world. During one interview, Elton Silva, the actor who played Robin, said “The Court is Mindelact.” Nuno Costa, who played the Bottom character, said, “no, the court is the Mindelo public.” Then Milanka Vera-Cruz, who played Titânia, perhaps worried that they were oversimplifying by suggesting one-to-one correspondences, said, “No, Christina, the court is the court.” What is important is that the commentary on comedy preferences was readable in the production. Actor Elton Silva told me that anyone on the inside of the Cape Verdean arts circle would recognize the line “the court just wants to laugh, and laugh, and laugh” as a critique.¹⁴⁹ Thus, multiple interpretations were available to the “knowing audience members” of this particular adaptation, other Cape Verdean theatre artists.

The line about the court wanting to laugh is, in fact, what opens Matilde Dias’s review of the production, cited above. Dias read the scene as a direct critique of Branco’s theatre group, which has given the Mindelo public plenty of “Crioulo comedies.”¹⁵⁰ Duarte does criticize GTCCPM’s creolized “classics” for this reason, particularly *Rei Lear*. He calls Branco’s decision to make the Fool a rapper an easy comedic choice made more facile by actor Nuno Delgado’s tendency to ad lib about current events. For example, during a 2004 staging of *Rei Lear*, Duarte

¹⁴⁸ Dias, “Uma Pedra no Charco.”

¹⁴⁹ Elton Silva, Nuno Costa, and Milanka Vera-Cruz, group interview, March 11, 2008.

¹⁵⁰ See Dias, “Uma Pedra no Charco.”

recalls the Fool crying, “Look, it’s Bin Laden!,” an easy joke which ruined Branco’s otherwise meticulous staging. Yet Duarte says that *Sonho*’s critique is not aimed specifically at GTCCPM but all theatre-goers who equate seeing theatre with “sitting back and laughing” and the Cape Verdean artists who cater to this whim.¹⁵¹ While *Rei Lear*’s debut constellated around a celebration of the festival public’s good taste, Solaris’s adaptation let no one off the hook.

Here, it is illuminating to examine the word that dominates media rhetoric about Solaris’ work: *ousadia* (“bold” or “daring”). After the young actors finished João Branco’s introductory theatre course in June 2004 and formed their own group, Duarte claimed their pillars would be “a qualidade artística e ousadia criativa” (artistic quality and creative daring).¹⁵² The press latched onto the term *ousadia*, applying it to all of Solaris’s subsequent productions, including *Julietas* (“Juliets”) (2005), which merged *Romeo and Juliet* with biblical lore and featured two women kissing (a first in Cape Verdean theatre), bathing in blood, and masturbating with the decapitated head of John the Baptist.¹⁵³ Solaris wants spectators to leave the theatre shaken up.¹⁵⁴ Their summer 2007 piece, *Putrefacto*, nearly overshot that objective. It featured the odor of putrid meat, horrific plastic fetuses dangling over spectators’ heads, and actors biting each other and violating dolls. Recalls Duarte, “No one liked it. Everyone left in shocked silence. The President of Teatrakácia [another Mindelo group] vowed never to see a Solaris show again.”¹⁵⁵

It is clear how the term “daring” would apply to a piece like *Julietas*, which employs abject imagery to interrogate homophobia. It is less obvious how it might address a relatively tame, visually stunning Shakespeare adaptation. This time, festival and media hype focused on

¹⁵¹ Herlandson Duarte, personal interview, August 29, 2007.

¹⁵² “A quebra de uma tradição,” *A Semana*, September 10, 2004, sec. Kriolidadi: 3. Available in the Mindelact Documentation Center, #708.

¹⁵³ Teresa Sofia Fortes, “História das Relações Amorosas,” *A Semana*, March 11, 2005, sec. Kriolidade: 6. Available in the Mindelact Documentation Center, #1105.

¹⁵⁴ Dias, “Uma Pedra no Charco.”

¹⁵⁵ Herlandson Duarte, personal interview, August 29, 2007.

language: “Solaris will commit the bold move of interpreting *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, a consecrated play by William Shakespeare, in Crioulo.”¹⁵⁶ Yet arguably, it is not the *fact* that Solaris performed Shakespeare in Crioulo that makes the adaptation “ousada,” but the *use* to which they put language. In what follows, I examine two aspects of Solaris’s *ousadia* in the production. The first is the intermittent use of Portuguese in the play’s dialogue. The second is the transformation of the play-within-a-play into a critique of Cape Verdean theatre practice and the Mindelact Festival itself.

While Solaris’s script includes its share of subtle detours into Portuguese, as in *Rei Lear*, it also includes full sentence linguistic shifts. Clearly demarcated linguistic shifts in theatre often have a particular ideological intent.¹⁵⁷ In *Sonho*, code-switching often functions to disclose the authoritative discourses potentially embedded in speaking Portuguese. One Solaris actress explained that various characters’ occasional switches into Portuguese functioned as a direct social critique of the ways in which Cape Verdeans often use Portuguese to indicate authority, class status, or educational background.¹⁵⁸

Language fashions the hierarchical structure of the fairy world. Oberon and Robin speak Crioulo to each other, but Oberon uses a formal Portuguese structure for future tense (“há-de,” which loosely translates to “shall”) while Robin, as a lesser fairy, answers back in casual Crioulo. Both Oberon and Titânia switch into full-fledged Portuguese to pull rank. When Titânia confronts the fairy king about his infatuation with the Duke’s betrothed, Hipólita, an indignant Oberon replies: “Como podes tu, que vergonha Titânia, oiá pe nhas crédite ma Hipólita, se bô

¹⁵⁶ Teresa Sofia Fortes, “Mindelact 2005: O Melhor de África,” *A Semana*, September 16, 2005, sec. Kriolidadi: 2-3.

¹⁵⁷ Dee A. Worman, “Drama, Genre and Pragmatics: A Study of the Krio Theatre,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Brandeis University, 1998), 146.

¹⁵⁸ Milanka Vera-Cruz, group interview with Solaris actors, March 11, 2007.

sabê qu'um sabê de bô amor pa Tezeu?"¹⁵⁹ ("How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,/ Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,/ Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?")¹⁶⁰ The first part of his sentence is a clearly marked detour into Portuguese. Here, the shift into Portuguese accentuates how *machismo* functions in Cape Verdean society. Language becomes a weapon for Oberon to assert his male privilege and command. When "proud Titânia" will not curb her tongue after his rebuke ("am not I thy lord?"),¹⁶¹ Oberon resorts to Portuguese to "put her in her place."

For her part, Titânia speaks only Crioulo until she summons the ass-eared Neca Fundos (Bottom) to her love nest. While blinded by the love potion Oberon has placed on her eyelids, Titânia still recognizes Neca Fundos as a slave, so she uses Portuguese to assert her higher social rank. Significantly, when Titânia summons Neca to her alcove, she also speaks Portuguese for the first time to her fairies, commanding them to dance in his wake and feed him apricots. The presence of a slave figure changes her relationship to her female companions. Here, Titânia uses Portuguese to concretize her higher status within her gender, creating a linguistic scaffolding that situates her at the top, her female followers beneath, and Neca Fundos, aptly, at the "bottom."

¹⁵⁹ Crioulo-language quotes are taken from Solaris's unpublished script, which the theatre company generously provided me.

¹⁶⁰ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, II.i.1. 74-76.

¹⁶¹ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, II.i.1. 63.



Figure 26: Neca Fundos with Titânia and her fairies in Solaris’s *Sonho de uma Noite de Verão*¹⁶²

The Solaris artists carefully arranged the linguistic codes of the adaptation so that instances of Portuguese dialogue would indicate command.¹⁶³ However, I noticed some moments wherein social factors other than language determined who was wielding power in a particular scene. One such passage was purely of Solaris’s invention, so that it was an example of dialogue that “interfered” in Shakespeare’s text. When Neca is assured of Titânia’s affections, he commands her fairies to satisfy his every whim, such as hunting down a bee and bringing him its honey. While this is true to Shakespeare’s text, Neca’s next intervention is not. When Titânia orders her fairies to sing him to sleep, Neca cuts her off at the words “my fairies:” “Nhas fada não, nós fada” (not *my* fairies, *our* fairies). Titânia concedes, “Muito bem, nossas fadas cantam o nosso embalar” (“Very well, *our* fairies, sing us a lullaby”).

¹⁶² Performed for Mindelact 2005. Sitting on the throne, Milanka Vera-Cruz; fairies from left to right, Luana Jardim, Luci Mota, and Érika Ramos; lying on the floor, Nuno Costa. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

¹⁶³ The actors and Herlandson Duarte would often explain the codes to me at rehearsal. For example, they pointed out that the slave characters speak more “street Crioulo,” while the Crioulo that the courtly fairies speak is more Portuguese-inflected. They also explained to me that Titânia speaks Portuguese with Neca because he is from the servant class.

According to the linguistic codes that Solaris set up, Portuguese is supposed to accord Titânia authority over Neca. However, Neca overrules her while speaking Crioulo. His corporeal language emphasizes the authority he assumes. At the scene's start, Titânia sits on her throne, while Neca Fundos lies prostrate on the ground before her, with her fairies splayed around him. When he corrects her, he rises to a sitting position, raises his arm, and makes a fist in a gesture of power. In this instance, it is not language that determines authority, but *machismo*. Even though Neca is of an inferior social status and speaks Crioulo, the language marked as "lower" in a diglossic schema, he can overpower Titânia because he has moved into the role of her lover. He can thus assume his male privilege, and language becomes immaterial. Note, in fact, that Titânia is twice overruled: once by Oberon code-switching into Portuguese, and once by Neca chastising her in Crioulo. The common denominator is *machismo* authority in any language. Therefore, this is a subtle moment when the social nuances and linguistic shadings of Cape Verdean culture "interfered" in Shakespeare's text and cast light on gender codes on the islands.

Other social critiques, in the form of new scenes that "interfered" in the Shakespearean text, were more direct. Herlandson Duarte drafted scenes that would expressly address Solaris's theatre philosophy and inserted them into Shakespeare's text, sometimes showing them more than once. At the start of the play, the Duke and Filostrato warn the palace slaves, Neca Fundo and Chico Bico, that if they fail to produce a rollickingly funny comedy for the court wedding, their heads will go to the crocodiles. After the two noblemen depart, Neca exclaims to Chico, "It's always the same! We're always the only ones who show up [for rehearsal]. There's almost no time left and we haven't rehearsed once. At this rate, the show we're going to present is 'the slave in the crocodile's head.' What's worse, that's a tragedy!"¹⁶⁴ Here, Solaris inverts the

¹⁶⁴ These and other English-language citations from Solaris's text are my translation from Crioulo.

Procrustean bed and *adds* a limb to Shakespeare’s text: their critique of Cape Verdean actors continually missing rehearsals or showing up hours late. Solaris was forthright about this in their flyer for Mindelact, which states that their show will “address the values of Cape Verdean theatre, the values of actors [. . .], critiquing theatre itself with theatre.”¹⁶⁵

The slaves repeat this whole block of dialogue in Act II when they meet to rehearse again in the forest. Afterwards, however, they shift into Shakespeare’s dialogue: the inane love scene between Thisby and Pyramus. Neca drops to one knee and tells Tisbe her breath is like an “odious” flower, while Chico stands with a green cloak draped around him like a long dress. Hands clasped high on his chest, Tisbe calls Pirámo “radiant like a rose” with a saccharine voice and beatific smile.



Figure 27: Nuno Costa and Marcos Freitas as the slave characters in Solaris’s *Sonho de uma Noite de Verão*¹⁶⁶

This absurd tableau, one of Solaris’s rare concessions to staging comedy, did indeed make the Mindelact audience laugh. As in Shakespeare’s play, the players repeat the

¹⁶⁵ Solaris, flyer, *Sonho de Uma Noite de Verão*. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #1120.

¹⁶⁶ Performed for Mindelact 2005. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

Thisby/Pyramus love scene when they perform for the court in the final scene. However, Solaris inserts critical differences both from Shakespeare's text and from the slaves' earlier rehearsal in the forest. Visually, the tableau is the same: Neca is on his knees, while Tisbe stands cloaked in a green cape. However, the mood is completely revised. Sober lighting shrouds the scene, while Tisbe and Pirámo deliver their professions of love in somber Portuguese, rather than the playful Crioulo they used while rehearsing in the woods. Duke Tezéu and his court watch in stony silence as Pirámo and Tisbe pierce their chests with a sword in earnest. This is a far cry from Duke Theseus's jovial, mocking commentary that constantly interrupts the lovers' hilarious death scene in the original. Solaris's version transforms Shakespeare's comic ending into high tragedy. Tellingly, the last line in *Sonho* reveals the slaves' punishment for disobeying the court's demand for a comedy. Filostrato menaces, "Your heads are going to the crocodile!," after which the stage goes abruptly dark. It is as if Solaris foresees the stark repercussions of their refusal to perform comedy in Mindelo, such as spectators ceasing to attend their theatre.

In Kevin Wetmore's view, a successful adaptation rearranges the cultural codes of the original play to create a text that speaks to its target spectators, asks them new questions, and addresses pertinent issues.¹⁶⁷ Solaris's new questions are about *audiences themselves*, daring spectators to engage in self-reflection rather than reflecting on their society at large. Naturally, their adaptation ran the risk of alienating spectators rather than provoking critical engagement. Other revisions of Shakespeare's codes delivered a veiled critique of the festival mechanism itself. The choice to depict Neca and Chico as *slaves*, rather than laboring workers, completely alters power relationships in the play. Authority hovers over the rehearsal process in the form of Filostrato and the Duke. After Filostrato warns them not to prepare a tragedy or drama, the Duke

¹⁶⁷ Wetmore, *Athenian Sun in an African Sky*, 13-37.

adds that it better be a comedy, “e bem divertide!” (Crioulo for ‘a very funny one’). In the original text, Quince submits their play to an open contest for performing at the palace. The players rejoice when Bottom announces that their play is *preferred*. In Solaris’s adaptation, the play is *ordered*.

This critical alteration speaks to changes festivals themselves make to a nation’s theatre scene. On the plus side, they provide venues for fledgling theatre groups, like Solaris, to gain national and even international exposure. On the down side, festivals are *not* democracies.¹⁶⁸ Artistic directors make programming decisions based on criteria such as supply and demand or diversity of genre or style. In Cape Verde, this can be prohibitive to many theatre groups. In Mindelact’s early years, festival representatives would go to various islands to watch theatre groups work in order to evaluate quality and appropriateness for the Mindelact stage (just as the Duke does in the adaptation).¹⁶⁹ In some cases, the Mindelact Association would request a performance especially for this purpose. To this day, Mindelact annually calls for formal proposals from national theatre groups wishing to perform on the mainstage. More often than not, however, the artistic director will simply ask a theatre group for a specific play. In Solaris’s case, the actors were assigned to create a 20-minute adaptation of *Midsummer Night’s Dream* as their final project for João Branco’s theatre course in 2004. Branco was so impressed with their work that he immediately asked them to prepare a full production for Mindelact 2005. Later, Duarte hinted to me that if it were up to him, he would have chosen a different play.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Thanks to Lori Baptista, who made this observation after reading an early draft of this chapter.

¹⁶⁹ For example, as a Peace Corps volunteer on Sal island from 1998-2000, I had a student theatre group that wanted to perform at Mindelact. João Branco asked me to stage a performance during a certain weekend when he would be passing through Sal so that he could judge whether or not we were ready to perform at the festival.

¹⁷⁰ Herlandson Duarte, personal interview, September 7, 2005.

Some of the Solaris actors told me in casual conversation that the play they had wanted to perform for Mindelact 2005 was *Julietas*, the more controversial (or “ousada”) one about erotic love between two women. According to them, Branco did not accept this proposal because he said the production was opaque and poorly received by Mindelo audiences at its March 2005 debut. He told them, “You can’t turn your backs to the public.” This anecdote suggests that Mindelo audience preferences are inextricably linked to Mindelact’s processes of selection.

By rearranging the metatheatrical codes of *Midsummer*, Solaris raised critical questions about the difference between soliciting a play and accepting a submission, as well as how a festival’s programming decisions are profoundly influenced by local audience preferences. This, in turn, impacts the liberty theatre groups have in devising performances. In short, rather than asking how a Cape Verdean production could serve Shakespeare’s text, Solaris asked how Shakespeare’s play could articulate their concerns about the future of Cape Verdean theatre.¹⁷¹

4.7 Chapter Conclusion

DETOUR AESTHETIC

I _____ *Rei Lear* _____ *Sonho de uma noite de Verão* _____ *Três Irmãs* _____ I

(“More” Creole)

INTERFERENCE AESTHETIC

(“Less” Creole)

If we revisit the proposed creole continuum, one conclusion seems apparent. The further an adaptation moves toward the detour aesthetic, the more likely it is to be a popular success with national audiences. Presumably, this is because such adaptations are more easily

¹⁷¹ See Ania Loomba, “‘Local-Manufacture Made-in-India Othello Fellows:’ Issues of Race, Hybridity and Location in Post-Colonial Shakespeares,” in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, ed. Loomba and Martin Orkin (New York: Routledge, 1998), 143-63, at 63.

recognizable as “creole,” and thus familiar. However, this does not mean that the tactical use of Crioulo interventions in adaptations further from the detour aesthetic, such as *Sonho* and *Três Irmãs*, are not loaded with social significance for the performers, adapters, and those spectators who perceive the Crioulo “interferences” in the text. In fact, by tracking how those Crioulo interventions function in the performance text, the creole continuum reveal how seemingly innocuous, “unsubversive” adaptations can put creolization to subtle political use.

Interestingly, all three directors did go on to produce overtly political adaptations. In 2005, João Branco fused Polish author Mrozek’s play *At Sea* with dissident newspaper tracts by early twentieth-century Cape Verdean journalist, Eugénio Tavares. Portraying three men adrift on the ocean, the adaptation, *Mar Alto* (“High Sea”), used the metaphor of cannibalism to query three different models of government. 2005 also saw the debut of *Julietas*, Herlandson Duarte’s loose Shakespeare adaptation that took on Cape Verdeans’ social phobias about lesbianism. In 2007, João Paulo Brito put dialogue from Harold Pinter’s *The Dumb Waiter* to vastly different use in *Quem Vai Ser Esta Noite?* (Who’s it going to be tonight?). Two hit women trapped in a room face mounting tension when they receive cryptic messages slid under the door telling them to “cut the diamond.” One finally shoots the other in a fit of hysteria, but discerning spectators will glean that their real target was to be Minister of Culture Manuel Veiga, who famously dubbed Cape Verdean culture a ‘diamond’ to the wide skepticism of artists discontent with government support for the arts.¹⁷²

Significantly, these radical adaptations were performed not at Mindelact but in the national venue, March, Theatre Month, when Cape Verdean artists in Praia and Mindelo perform without outsider eyes peering in. Perhaps the relative “safety” of performing for an almost solely

¹⁷² Teresa Sofia Fortes, “Manuel Veiga: A Cultura é o Diamante de Cabo Verde,” *A Semana*, January 14, 2005, sec. Kriolidadi: 2-3. Available in the Mindelact Documentation Center, #1214.

national audience prodded these CapeVerdean adapters to make bolder political choices. This calls into question my very placement of “adaptation” and “nation” together in a chapter about theatre festival productions. Can adaptations tease out the messiness of nationhood within international venues that seem merely to churn out new versions of old chestnuts? A closer look at terminology affords insight into what such adaptations *do*. Brito, for example, used Pinter’s play but says he could have built the tense ambience in *Quem Vai Ser* around any other similar text. He says, “We need to think of another name for this [besides adaptation].”¹⁷³

One solution may come from within Solaris’s performance text. It is important to note here that during our early interviews, Herlandson Duarte insisted that Solaris’s text was a *translation*, not an *adaptation* of Shakespeare’s play, since the group had deliberately not placed it within a Cape Verdean setting or cultural context. In other words, Duarte had resisted the formula for “creolizing” Shakespeare that Branco promotes. However, I reminded him that they had inserted whole new scenes and dialogue into *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, so that it could not properly be called a direct translation either. Upon further discussion, we agreed that perhaps their production was most aptly termed a “transformation” of Shakespeare’s text. This was a term that I had, in fact, pulled from Solaris’s text. I want to suggest, however, that the conceptual framework it offers can be more broadly applied to Cape Verdean adaptations, and perhaps, to other intercultural adaptations as well.

In Shakespeare’s *Midsummer*, when Robin puts ass ears on Bottom, Quince cries, “thou art translated!”¹⁷⁴ In Solaris’s text, Chico yells, “Êle ta transformóde!” (he is transformed).¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ João Paulo Brito, personal conversation, January 8, 2007.

¹⁷⁴ *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, III.i.1. 118.

¹⁷⁵ Although I did not see the Portuguese-language translation of *Midsummer Night’s Dream* from which Duarte did his adaptation, I would imagine that “translated” is rendered as “transformado” in the Portuguese version of that scene as well.

What does it mean to call an object *transformed* rather than *translated*? In one regard, Bottom is translated to the human equivalent of an ass. Yet he is transformed because Oberon's spell makes Titânia see Bottom differently. Since he is a new object to Titânia, who has never seen Bottom the Weaver or his translated self, she sees only what Oberon *makes* her see with his potion.

This is the crucial difference between merely changing an object and altering how an audience *views* that object. At Mindelact, many Cape Verdean spectators encounter Lear, the Athenians, or Chekhov's sisters for the first time. The terms "adaptation" and "translation" do not sufficiently capture this reception process, since both operate on a model of equivalencies between foreign text and target culture. Because the foreign text is unfamiliar and the parameters of Crioulo culture hotly contested, both sides of this equation may become blurred. Like Titânia, spectators see only a new object transformed by the spell the adapter has cast on it.

Perhaps "transformation" is a more adequate term for adaptations within festival settings. It is also a concept that resonates deeply with theories of circulation. As discussed in chapter one, Gaonkar and Povinelli assert that global flows transfigure social forms that circulate. They also argue, however, that matrices of circulation attempt to mask the fluctuating forms as stable things, or cultural texts whose meanings are easily translated across cultures.¹⁷⁶ Nearly all theatre festivals demand a certain quota of Western "classics," and festival rhetoric may construct the Western text as stable, "universal," and a vehicle for cultural cachet. Yet if, as Gaonkar and Povinelli advise, we steer the scholarly conversation away from "meaning," we might recognize an adapted text not only as transfigured but strategically so. The question then becomes: Why do adaptations "mean" what they do, and at whose behest?

¹⁷⁶ Gaonkar and Povinelli, "Technologies of Public Forms," 386.

Recall Cape Verdean journalist Eduino Santos's statement that consumption nationalizes foreign texts. Calling Mindelo an "omnivorous culture," he says that the city "eats everything that is good and transforms it into something entirely its own." In this way, *King Lear* became Cape Verdean.¹⁷⁷ Yet reception is a more complex animal than this, since each spectator will access an adaptation differently. International spectators familiar with a Shakespeare text may perform the kind of oscillation that Hutcheon describes, constantly flipping back in their minds between the source text and its new iteration. National spectators unfamiliar with the source text, however, will see mainly the transformed version that the adapter, as an Oberon-like figure, wishes them to see. Thus, an adaptation does not *mean* "Cape Verde" in its totality as a nation, but the facets of Crioulo culture the adapter highlights: one island's language variant, an elite family's questionable reliance on Portuguese, a theatre group's pointed critique. As Procrustean beds, adaptations do not amputate at random but carefully select which limbs they wish to retain and/or sever. Spectators' visions of nationhood are always refracted through the adapter's prism, which replaces a text's presumed stability with perpetual transformation.

¹⁷⁷ Eduino Santos, "Mindelo 'comeu' João Branco" (see note 8).

CONCLUSION

This is a cultural transformation. It is not something totally new. It is not something which has a straight, unbroken line of continuity from the past. It is transformation through a reorganization of the elements of a cultural practice, elements which in themselves do not have any necessary political connotations. It is not the individual elements of a discourse that have political or ideological connotations, it is the way those elements are organized together in a new discursive formation.¹

Stuart Hall's explanation of articulation unearths the inherent contingency of ideology: its inner-components, the ways in which it may or may not come to rest on particular social groups, and the conditional links among disparate communities that come to inhabit the same ideological position.² In the above passage, however, his focus is on *re*-articulation, the process by which individuals or constituencies may, over time, detach a particular social institution, such as religion, from its entrenchment in specific socio-economic classes and political structures. These individuals may then reformulate that social institution so that it addresses their own needs and predicaments. Hall's illustrative example is the birth of Rastafarianism in 1930s Jamaica, wherein a multitude of socially and economically marginalized people read the Bible and Christianity in new ways that addressed their own liberation potential, thus reinventing their religious positions, their very language, and themselves as a social group.

¹ Stuart Hall, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," ed. Lawrence Grossberg, *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10 (1986): 45-60, at 54-55.

² *Ibid.*, 53. Here, Hall works from Ernest Laclau's use of articulation in *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*.

Re-articulation, however, is no easy task. Social institutions are deeply rooted in a culture's historical formation and ideological mappings.³ In order for transformation to occur, lots of stars must be aligned and cultural terrain traversed. How is it plausible, then, to discuss *theatre festivals* in terms of cultural transformation? If the moment of performance is always ephemeral, the moment of festival performance is more so. Theatre productions at festivals do not enjoy long runs in a particular community, which might guarantee their considerable exposure there. Even if they attempt to re-write a social narrative, performers know they are up against a cultural script that has taken firm hold in their nation over many epochs. How, then, can we imagine that cultural transformation has indeed taken place after a production has passed?

Consider the image evoked by Cape Verdean journalist Matilde Dias in her review of the Mindelo theatre group Solaris's production of *Sonho de uma Noite de Verão* (Midsummer Night's Dream): "Uma Pedra no Charco" (A Stone in the Puddle). The phrase is widely used to describe anything that makes waves. While a stone cast into a puddle may trouble its waters and transform it temporarily, the ripples eventually subside; they do not take permanent hold in the water. This might suggest that a theatre production's nudge toward cultural transformation is, like the performance itself, destined to fade from sight. Yet Dias's title places primacy in the stone thrown, not the undulations it induces. A puddle is small; there may already be a number of pebbles lying beneath its surface. Therefore, the newly cast stone may shift the configuration of that underlying foundation, which may alter, if only slightly, the shape of the body of water.

We might think of performers as undertaking the task of the stone tossed into the puddle. Even as the ripples recede, the memories of them become incorporated into the actors' bodies

³ Ibid., 54.

and later re-performed in everyday life as well as in subsequent theatre productions.⁴ As Diana Taylor argues, performance does not disappear but persists through “a nonarchival system of transfer,” or repertoires of corporeal knowledge.⁵ By placing primacy on the cultural work actors accomplish, we might shift Hall’s focus on “cultural transformation” (a puddles’ ripples) with a performance’s *transformative* act (the cast stone and its trajectory). Unlike “transformation,” with its connotation of an already completed change, the word “transformative” is an adjective that summons an action, that of re-working, if only subtly, cultural codes.

In this study, my focus has been on the circulation of transformative performances within the Mindelact Theatre Festival’s interpretive community, broadly defined as past and present participants from within and outside of Cape Verde, spectators, and those engaging discursively with the festival from a distance. In order to track the transformative process I have described, it may be helpful to chart some of the “ripples” the productions have set in motion and how they became lodged within the performers themselves, the larger interpretive community, and the nation’s cultural memory.

Matilde Dias’s review of Solaris’s Mindelact 2005 production of *Midsummer* begins with the observation that Shakespeare did not write the line, “*Korte kré ari, ari, ari*” (the court just wants to laugh, and laugh, and laugh), but that Solaris placed it in the mouth of the nobleman, Filostrato, who demanded that the palace slaves perform a comedy for the court’s entertainment.⁶ The slaves opt instead to perform a tragedy. Dias read Solaris’s production as a provocation to

⁴ I owe this observation to Sandra Richards, who pushed me to explore this perspective on transformation. Her responses to this conclusion inform many of the ideas here.

⁵ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), xvii.

⁶ Matilde Dias, “Uma Pedra no Charco,” <http://lantuna.blogspot.com/2005/10/uma-pedra-no-charco.html> (accessed August 29, 2007).

Mindelo audiences and theatre groups and described Solaris’s overall mission as sending a “jolt” through the theatre community. Solaris’s allure, she contends, is in countering the Mindelo theatre group GTCCPM’s “Crioulo comedies”⁷ with their own visually appealing, *ousado* (bold), and not-at-all-innocent productions.

Yet how much provocation did the production accomplish, since the adaptation’s critique from within was less than overt? Dias implies that *Sonho* was a rebuke to GTCCPM’s penchant for staging comedies, which feeds the Mindelo public’s desire for them. Another interpretation, discussed in chapter four, is that the adaptation was a veiled critique of the Mindelact Festival’s authoritative structures. Recall, however, that João Branco, who is both the artistic director of the GTCCPM theatre group and the festival director, warmly congratulated Herlandson Duarte from the Mindelact stage following the production. How “readable” was the critique then, if one of the artists presumably on the receiving end of it did not appear to take notice?



Figure 28: Herlandson Duarte and João Branco after Solaris’s *Sonho de uma Noite de Verã*, Mindelact 2004⁸

⁷ Grupo de Teatro do Centro Cultural Português do Mindelo (The Theatre Group of the Mindelo Portuguese Cultural Center).

⁸ Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

Once cast, the stone remains in the puddle. Solaris remained within the Mindelact interpretive community and altered its configuration. In the summer of 2006, they went public with their critique of Mindelact's selection process. They told the press that they had been the only Mindelo theatre group to receive a letter from Mindelact explaining the procedures for submitting a proposal for the 2006 festival edition, while other Mindelo troupes had been directly invited to participate. In the same article, Branco contended that there was no discrimination involved and that Solaris had already submitted proposals for two performances. Mindelact was under no obligation to accept every theatre group's proposals.⁹ The upshot was that Solaris did not perform at Mindelact 2006, which provoked complaints from many regular festival supporters who consider their productions "edgy" and indispensable to Mindelact.¹⁰

As this incident suggests, theatre festivals operate as nexuses of power. I have suggested throughout this study that the festival stage acts as a legitimizing force, integrating the performances that tread its planks into Cape Verde's national theatre canon in-the-making. What legitimates the festival itself is a potent combination of government sponsorship, outside funding (some of it from the former metropole), and intensive media coverage. In any festival setting, only a handful of people preside over these resources. Thus, any transformative act is imbued with the asymmetric balance of power between artist-performers and artist-administrators. Yet Solaris's case reveals that even theatre artists on the "lower" end of that power scale can use a festival's resources to their own advantage. As discussed in the preface and in chapter four, a festival's programming committee must ultimately bend to the sovereignty of the theatre-going public and the press. Solaris's absence from Mindelact 2006 stirred so much controversy that

⁹ Teresa Sofia Fortes, "Polémica antecipa Mindelact," June 23, 2006, sec. Kriolidade: 8. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #1202.

¹⁰ This was the opinion of the director of the Mindelo Cultural Center, for example. Josina Fortes, personal interview, March 2, 2007.

they received double billing at Mindelact 2007, performing two original plays by the group's resident playwright, Valódia Monteiro: *Martur* on the mainstage, about a suicide bomber on the Gaza strip, and *Psycho* for Festival "Off," a play in which two women hash through phobias of sex, germs, and public places. Neither was a comedy; neither was an adaptation. Notably, *Psycho* was one of the plays that had not been accepted for Mindelact 2006. Thus, their participation in 2007 happened under their own terms.¹¹ Their movement from meta-theatrical critique (2005) to media outcry (2006) to double billing (2007) perhaps represents three arcs in a stone's trajectory into water. Put differently, the three moments form one transformative cycle. In this case, Solaris moved from minimum to considerable control over their own involvement in the festival.

In making a move to consider the "transformative" along with "cultural transformation," I echo Elin Diamond's theorization of performance as both a "doing" and a "thing done." Working from Judith Butler's understanding of performativity as a series of citations and reiterations of social conventions that people undertake to enunciate selfhood, Diamond asserts that the moment when performativity (a doing) enters into an actual performance (a thing done) opens up possibilities for those engaging with the performance to discuss what often goes unaddressed, namely the ideological processes by which gender, race, and other identity frameworks are constructed in everyday life.¹² This idea is particularly applicable to the performances of women's labor and sexuality discussed in chapter three. I have argued that in those cases, the festival arena provided the space for actresses and dancers to theorize their own

¹¹ Solaris's participation in Mindelact 2007 was actually the outcome of a productive compromise with Branco. The group had proposed *Psycho* for the mainstage once again, but Branco told them he wanted only debuts on the mainstage and they had already performed *Psycho* a number of times in Mindelo. Thus, they collectively agreed that Solaris would debut a performance on the mainstage and perform *Psycho* for "Off."

¹² Elin Diamond, "Introduction," in *Performance & Cultural Politics*, ed. Diamond (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1-12, at 4-5.

quotidian practices, or the cultural scripts that they actively re-write in their own lives.

Perhaps, as Diamond suggests, performance allows them to subject their own everyday acts to scrutiny.

Here, it is illuminating to follow the arc of the stone tossed by Célia Varela in *Maria Badia*, performed for Festival “Off” 2006. The process by which she and the show’s co-creator, Princesito, actively negotiated the performance of gender is illustrative of the process Diamond describes. Should Maria sow her fields in a laborious, introspective manner, or merely gesture to the activity? Which series of concrete acts, here performed reflexively rather than as reiterative citations, would best convey the social situatedness of a rural Santiaguense *badia*?¹³ Varela won that particular round of “constructive warfare” in one of their rehearsals, because Maria did indeed perform her field labor in an introspective, slow fashion. During my work with Varela on her theatre group Finka Pé’s next play, *Praia Mindelo*, I observed how her performances are indeed encapsulations of actions and attitudes she undertakes in her own life.

For *Praia Mindelo*, Princesito had outlined a brilliant storyline but never wrote out a script, despite our urging. His own recording career began to pull him further away from our rehearsals. As a result, Varela and I would encourage the actors to improvise scenes based on Princesito’s idea. After awhile, this proved trying. The actors would have heated disagreements about the scenes and we felt that we were making little progress. Finally, Varela and I decided to write it ourselves. One afternoon a week she would come to my apartment and we would sit at my computer and invent dialogue to match the scenes that Princesito had verbally sketched for us. After our final playwriting session, Varela said to me, “Christina, this is what I mean by ‘constructive warfare.’ Princesito gave us a fantastic idea but he put us into a state of confusion,

¹³ The term *badia* refers to a woman from Santiago Island. See chapters one and three for discussions of the historical formation of this regional identity.

a tempest. But we ended with peace, with the text written.”¹⁴ This was Varela’s way of narrating and providing closure to our collaborative endeavor. It proved an example of how she theorizes “constructive warfare” onstage and off.

During that same session, Varela said to me, “Now, we’re going to put *our* names on this script: ‘written by Célia Varela and Christina McMahon, inspired by an idea by Princesito.’” I remembered how she had once told me that she and Princesito developed *Maria Badia* jointly, even though he was identified as the playwright in the play’s publicity.¹⁵ She had mentioned this casually and followed with something to the effect that she had not wanted to make an issue of it. I wondered how much this situation had to do with *machismo*, the social norm that might dictate that Princesito, as not only the male element of their creative collaboration but the artist with more name recognition on the islands, would naturally assume authorship of the play. Varela’s movement from *Maria Badia* to *Praia Mindelo* is again evocative of the stone tossed into the puddle. If *Maria Badia* troubled the waters of how Santiaguense women laborers are portrayed, Varela stored the memory of the ripple in her own self. In this case, the transformative arc was a movement toward assuming her authorial rights to *Praia Mindelo* and bucking *machismo* gender conventions.

In claiming that the actresses and dancers discussed in chapter three infuse their performances with their own quotidian practices, I am suggesting that they do not wholly

¹⁴ Célia Varela, personal conversation, August 13, 2007. In Crioulo: “Cristina, keli ki guerra construtiv. Princesito da-nu um ideia fantastico ma el poi genti na meio confuson, na tempestade. Ma nu termina ku paz, ku texto escritu.”

¹⁵ See Micaela Barbosa, “Maria Badia no CCP Praia,” *A Semana*, March 17, 2006, sec. Kriolidadi: 3. Available at the Mindelact Documentation Center, #1204. *Maria Badia* was also advertised as Princesito’s play in the publicity flyers for its Praia debut. The Festival “Off” program for 2006 did not list any authors for any of the short plays performed.

surrender “self” when onstage.¹⁶ This is perhaps akin to the performance techniques that the OTACA actors deployed in *Tchom di Morgado* (“The Proprietor’s Land”), discussed in chapter two.¹⁷ In that performance, Edimilson Sousa, the actor, became conflated with the colonial-era peasant hero he enacted. If OTACA’s transformative approach to colonial history became incorporated into the actor’s body, it also “rippled” outward to his community.

OTACA’s subsequent performance project, *Prisão do Tarrafal*, offered the opportunity for four elderly men in Achada Falcão, a small rural community in the Santa Catarina municipality, to ensure that their historical voices became heard. Performed on the mainstage for Mindelact 2007, the play centered on Santiago Island’s infamous Tarrafal Prison, which was a Portuguese-run concentration camp for Cape Verdean, Angolan, and Guinean political prisoners during their countries’ wars of liberation. I had proposed the idea to Narciso Freire, OTACA’s director, during a visit in spring 2007, and he had solicited my help in researching and developing the text. As part of this process, Freire, actor Claudio Correia, and I traveled to Achada Falcão to film and interview four men who had been imprisoned for four years in the Tarrafal Prison because of their suspected involvement with the PAIGC party.¹⁸ The men described how, upon their release in 1974 after the camp was liberated, they had been treated as outcasts in their home communities, since people there had understood them to be unsafe subversives.¹⁹ At one moment, one of the men exclaimed, “Bring our stories to the press! Tell them what we went through.” Freire replied that we would tell their stories through theatre.

¹⁶ To use Diamond’s framework, they enunciate “self” through the citational work of gender performativity even in the midst of performance. See Diamond, “Introduction,” 5.

¹⁷ Oficina de Teatro e Comunicação de Assomada (The Assomada Theatre and Communication Collective).

¹⁸ See chapter one for a brief discussion of the PAIGC party’s role in Cape Verde’s anti-colonial war.

¹⁹ Juvêncio da Vega, Luís Furtado, Ananias Cabral, and Arlindo Borges, personal interviews, June 2007.

We allowed this interview to guide our rehearsal process. We named the four main characters in the play after the Achada Falcão men, incorporated their words into our dialogue, and told the cast members playing them about their personalities. Correia chose to portray “Djibensu,” based on one of the men, Juvêncio, because the others had identified him as the “clown” who would tell jokes to lift all of their spirits in the cell. Correia felt a kinship with Juvêncio because he saw himself as that kind of person too. Like Sousa in *Tchom di Morgado*, Correia melded his own personality with the historical figure that inspired his character.



Figure 29: Three prisoners engage in a “rat chase” in OTACA’s *Prisão do Tarrafal*²⁰

By virtue of circulating *Prisão do Tarrafal* to the festival stage, we did take the stories of the Achada Falcão cluster to the press. In our press release, we described the show as a mixture of our imaginations with stories told to us by ex-prisoners. We quoted one of the Achada Falcão prisoners directly (“our battle was a battle of the truth against lies”).²¹ As argued throughout this study, the festival’s media coverage is one of the ways in which Mindelact performances are incorporated into the nation’s cultural memory. Mindelact’s position as a “darling” of the Cape

²⁰ Performed for Mindelact 2007. From left to right, Carlos da Moura, António Tavares, and Adilson Pereira. Photo by João Barbosa, courtesy of the Mindelact Association.

²¹ Luís Furtado, personal interview, June 2007. In Portuguese: “A nossa luta foi uma luta de verdade contra mentiras.” Here, Furtado is referring to the Portuguese state’s designation of the Tarrafal political prisoners as “terrorists.” See “Mindelact 2007 – Programação Principal,” <http://mindelact.com/mindelact2007.htm> (accessed April 13, 2008).

Verdean press, which eagerly reports its every activity, constructs the performances gracing its stage as “newsworthy.” Because our production formed part of the Mindelact program, bits of our re-telling of colonial history became disseminated through the festival’s “mediascapes.”²²

In OTACA’s case, the trajectory of the stone cast into the water was a motion forward. The group’s historical imagination absorbed more oral histories from their local community as they moved from *Tchom di Morgado* to *Prisão do Tarrafal*, so that reservoirs of previously subjugated knowledges became valorized through the act of performance. Yet the direction of transformative acts is not uniformly progressive. As Diamond writes, “A performance, whether it inspires love or loathing, often consolidates cultural or subcultural affiliations, and these affiliations might be as regressive as they are progressive.”²³ In the case of the Portuguese troupe ESTE’s production of *Mãe Preta* (“Black Mother”) for Mindelact 2005,²⁴ discussed in chapter two, the artists consolidated cultural stereotypes of a “black mother” as they circulated a Cape Verdean oral history to the stage.

In ESTE’s situation, Mindelact’s “mediascapes” helped construct a stereotype as historical “authenticity.” Since dozens of Cape Verdean journalists recycled Mindelact’s press release for *Mãe Preta*, the rhetoric that *Mãe Preta* was a “true story about a woman from Maio Island who desperately procures food for her baby” was repeated verbatim in at least ten different on-line and print sources. Repeatability created the impression that the production conveyed a “reliable” historical discourse, especially because it contained a “truth” about motherhood seemingly impervious to questioning. Here, the media rhetoric of historical

²² Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 35. For further discussion of the media rhetoric surrounding the Mindelact Festival, see chapter one.

²³ Diamond, “Introduction,” 5.

²⁴ Estação Teatral da Beira Interior (Theatre Station of Interior Beira).

“authenticity” glossed over the production’s pressing issues of historical and cultural representation. Thus, *Mãe Preta*’s act of transforming Cape Verdean history was perhaps a regression, a step backwards from allowing historical subjects voice in telling their narratives.

This does not mean that the “stone” cast into the puddle by *Mãe Preta* did not shift its configuration. When, for Mindelact 2007, Ney Tavares performed his account of the oral history, *Mudjer Trabadjadera* (“Working Woman”), for Festival “Off,” he presented the Mindelact public with a second version of the same Maio woman’s story with sickness and despair during the same severe drought. This doubling of historical “authenticity” reveals the concept itself to be constructed, contingent, and inherently contested.

Are any of the above examples incidences of “re-articulation,” in Hall’s sense of the word? Were pieces of cultural authority, gender conventions, and colonial history reshaped into “new discursive formations?” This certainly did not happen to the extent that Rastafarians have restructured Christian and biblical doctrine. Yet pieces of each discourse were reorganized through these performers’ circulation to the festival stage and back to their communities. After each stone hit the water, various elements of the Mindelact interpretive community remembered their effects: the festival supporters who protested Solaris’s absence at Mindelact 2006, the *Maria Badia* actress herself, and the Achada Falcão ex-prisoners, who engaged with Mindelact at a distance through OTACA’s enactment of their stories in 2007. A performance, if it has been transformative, does not fade from the collective consciousness after it ends. The ripples may continue to pulsate invisibly through the interpretive community, forming ever-widening circles as they expand outward. Indeed, this image is a reminder that theatre festivals are not the *ending points* of a performance’s circulation, but one of the many points of departure.

This study has also presented a number of future directions for research. Specifically, there are a host of other kinds of circulation that festivals make visible that are ripe with analytical potential. For example, I have not addressed Cape Verde's important relationships with its sizeable diaspora communities in New England, various European countries, and Senegal, to name just a few. Since, as many have argued, Cape Verde's deep-rooted and long-standing diasporic communities helped constitute the Cape Verdean nation,²⁵ diaspora is a facet of Crioulo culture and nationhood that cannot be permanently left out of the equation.

In recent years, Mindelact has staged the return of diaspora artists. In 2002, Burbur, a diaspora theatre group from Porto performed an adaptation of the seminal Cape Verdean novel *Chiquinho* on the mainstage, while in 2005, the Rotterdam-based group 100% Cabo performed at Festival "Off." Included in the latter group were Cape Verdean-Dutch actresses making only their second trip to the islands, so that our group interview was a dynamic mix of Crioulo, English, and Dutch (which they spoke to each other). As Mindelact begins to intersect more with diasporic circles, the venue itself begins to take on a more polyglot character and may perhaps shift further from its anchoring in the Lusophone world. Yet the festival also offers another way of making diasporic connections. Many Cape Verdean theatre groups aspire to perform in diaspora spaces abroad. Some perceive Mindelact as a 'trampoline' to theatre venues in diaspora communities, since groups can gain increased visibility and make vital contacts by participating in the festival.²⁶ The question of how theatre festivals contribute to the formation of national culture in diasporic communities is pertinent not only to Cape Verde, but to any country wherein migration has long been woven into the nation's fibers.

²⁵ Laura J. Pires-Hester, "The Emergence of Bilateral Diaspora Ethnicity Among Cape Verdean Americans," *African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities*, ed. Isidore Okpewho (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 485-503, at 486-87.

²⁶ Personal interviews with Victor Silva, September 9, 2004, and Sabino Baessa, August 6, 2004.

Another area of future research is an investigation into how Cape Verdean theatre may begin to intersect more with theatre on the African continent. When I first began my fieldwork, I was taken aback at the sheer number of adaptations of Western plays and the near absence of mainland African playwrights in the festival program. Cape Verde's isolated position as an archipelago, coupled with its thorny history with Portuguese "assimilation" policies (see chapter one) perhaps accounts for this cultural distance from the African continent. Here is where my own presence as a researcher has begun to shift the contours of the festival scene. At João Branco's request, I led a two-day workshop on African theatre at Mindelact 2006. During the first day, we focused on Nigeria. Due to time limitations, I offered only the broadest strokes of theatre history, covering popular traveling theatre traditions as well as some of the major playwrights and their most emblematic plays. Naturally, this included Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*. As I explained how the British colonial system of indirect rule is manifest in the play, many of the participants noted parallels to Cape Verde's own colonial structures.

After the workshop, an actress from the Solaris theatre company, Milanka Vera-Cruz, approached me and said this sounded like a play the group would like to perform. Herlandson Duarte, the director, quickly became interested as well. We had several group meetings and decided to try to locate help with translation, since the play has not yet been translated into Portuguese. During my months in Mindelo, I worked with a Cape Verdean English teacher on the translation and we made some headway. Solaris remains interested in doing the production and I remain committed to the project.²⁷ In the event that Solaris does perform *Death and the King's Horseman* at Mindelact one day, Cape Verde's movement toward African drama will be via the most canonized work by the most "sacrosanct" African playwright and Nobel laureate.

²⁷ As we are still in the early stages, we have not yet applied for the rights to translate or produce the play, but this is part of our agenda.

This is perhaps in line with the festival's privileging of canonical works, but it does point to the limits of expansion into new intercultural terrain. Are canonical works still the most reliable points of entry into other pools of dramatic texts or performance traditions? The festival context, with its paradoxical combination of steadfast reliance upon familiar theatre formulas and infusion of transformative performance pieces, is perhaps the best testing ground for these vexed questions about circulation and intercultural exchange.

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APPENDIX

Mário Lúcio's original text to *Duas Sem Três*:¹

Os seus verdadeiros nomes jamais ninguém lembrou. Ninguém, nem mesmo elas. Uma era Musa do campo, a outra, a Musa da cidade. Assim quiseram os caprichos da beleza e a necessidade de comparar e de destringir.

De uma e de outra foram-se espalhando novidades à medida em que os corpos se moldavam, os seios se aguçavam, os cabelos voavam e as ancas saracoteavam. Sabiam-no por bocas ávidas de homens dispostos a matar a outra Musa, para que tu a mais bela reines de uma à outra ponta da ilha. Entretanto, ignoravam-se com dedicação e amavam-se com fôlego porque tinham nascido para mais nada saberem senão uma da outra. Mas, as informações começaram a escassear-se, pouco a pouco: foram os homens todos chamados para a guerra, emigraram os mais fortes dos inaptos, e, ao perderem a esperança, os mais fracos casaram.

O tempo sem notícias corre mais lento, chega mais depressa.

E quando, finalmente, cara a cara se deram como se uma e a mesma estivesse ante o espelho, a nova geração à espera da idade da tropa já as conhecia como a Muda da cidade e a Muda do Campo.

Assim nos chamam? Pois, sim, perdemos aquilo por que de nós falavam. A beleza cansa e se emudece.

De mim diziam que a lua me seguia os passos, e que eu atingia a beleza plena nas noites de lua cheia. De mim, que tinha mais brilho que as lâmpadas de néon. Que quando dançava o batuque parecia um pião. Parava eu os pares nas discotecas. De todas as ilhas sabia as danças. Dominava todas as de moda. Parecia uma sereia. Eu, uma atriz de cinema. Olhos de peixe. De bonecas americanas. Amazona. Princesa. Sabia fazer tudo, eu. Tudo por mim faziam. Boca d'água a tua. Com água na boca tu. Às montanhas pela lenha e por grossas pernas ia. Footing pelos jardins. Cochir no pilão para soerguer as mamas. Ah, massagens que me dão. Para os bailes, vestidos de rendas. Vestidos de aluguer. Virgem Maria do presépio na manjedoura. Barbie do natal. Amanhã a Musa vai semear. Sim, amanhã ela vai sambar. Lavar roupas na ribeira. Para não estragar na máquina. A mula ficou noiva. Arranjou um namorado, a puta. A mais bela, ontem na missa. A elegância universitária. Fui pedida em casamento, publicou-se três vezes na igreja, comprei grinalda, véu e aliança portuguesa.

Não casaram comigo porque... não casaram comigo porque...

Mário Lúcio Sousa, Praia 2002

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Jeffrey Hessney's English translation of *Duas Sem Três*²

Their true names no one ever remembered. No one, not even them. One was the Muse of the countryside, the other the Muse of the city. Thus would have it the whims of beauty and the need to compare and disentangle.

News about one or the other spread as their bodies took shape, their breasts began to grow, their hair flew and their hips swung back and forth. They heard it from the avid mouths of men willing to kill the other Muse so that you, the more beautiful of the two, may reign from one end of the island to the other.

Even so, they ignored each other with dedication and loved each other with affected intensity, for they had been born to know nothing more than one another. But, little by little, information began to grow scarce: the men were all called away to war, the strongest of the unfit emigrated, and, when they lost hope, the boys all got married.

With no news, time runs more slowly, and arrives more quickly.

And when, finally, they found themselves face to face as if they stood one and the same before a mirror, the new generation waiting to become old enough to join the army already knew them as the Mute of the city and the Mute of the countryside.

That's what they call us? Well yes, we have lost that which made people talk about us. Beauty tires and becomes mute.

Of me, they used to say that the moon followed my steps, and that I would attain the pinnacle of beauty on the nights of the full moon. Of me, that I shone more than neon lamps. That when I danced batuko I would spin like a top. I would stop the couples in the disco. I knew the dances of all the islands. I mastered all the ones that were in fashion. I seemed a mermaid. I, a movie actress. Fish eyes. Of American dolls. Amazon. Princess. I knew how to do everything, I did. For me, everything was done. Your watery mouth. You, with your mouth watering. On thick legs I would go to the mountains to gather wood. Jogging through the gardens. Pounding with the pestle to firm my breasts. Ah, the massages they give me. For the dances, hand-made dresses. Rented dresses. The Virgin Mary at the manger. Barbie for Christmas. Tomorrow the muse will sow the seeds. Yes, tomorrow she'll dance the samba. Wash clothes in the streambed. So as not to ruin the machine. That mule got engaged. She got herself a boyfriend, the slut. The prettiest girl in church yesterday. University elegance. They asked for my hand in marriage, it was published three times in church, I bought a garland, a veil and a Portuguese wedding ring.

They didn't marry me because... They didn't marry me because...

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