Última versão entregue à revista. Para citar, consultar o original: 2013 [2008] “Home and Overseas: the Janus Faces of Cape Verdean Identity”, *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 17, 1, 84-104 em <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/520332>

Title Page

Home and Overseas: the Janus Faces of Cape Verdean Identity

Elizabeth Pilar Challinor

Home and overseas: the Janus face of Cape Verdean identity*

Abstract

Cape Verde's history of colonial neglect, drought, famine and forced migration, coupled with its arid climate, poor resource base, and dependence upon foreign aid has turned migration into a structural survival strategy. Cape Verdean identity is thus marked by a collective looking forward towards other geographical locations where relatives and friends have made a new home and a collective looking backwards – to relatives and friends left behind in what becomes an imaginary and desired homeland. Wherever Cape Verdeans are located, their identity claims are conditioned by this double-sided gaze: looking outwards towards the influences of other locations and of the external categorizations Cape Verdeans are subjected to by others and looking inwards towards a more intimate “homing” space of memory, meaning and self-ascription. The paper examines these processes through a discussion of the challenges posed to young Cape Verdeans pursuing education in northern Portugal and examines how identity claims are constructed through nation, citizenship and personhood elucidating the ways in which these may become intertwined in processes of diasporization and of creolization. Cape Verde offers a paradigmatic case for distinguishing between *creolization* and *creoleness* since an analytical usage of the concept ‘creole’ may be used to deconstruct normative interpretations of the term Creole in social and political practice.

Key words: Cape Verde, Migration, Portugal, Students, Identity

Cape Verde, a small archipelago situated in the Atlantic Ocean with a local population which commonly describes itself as Creole and an emigrant population often referred to as the “diaspora”, constitutes a compelling case for researching processes of diaspora and

creolization, which, according to Cohen (2008, 109) “tend in opposite directions, the one to a recovery of a past identity in reconstituting a transnational link, the other to a severance of past identities in the interests of establishing a new cultural and social identity”. The purpose of my analysis is to explore what light the specificities of the Cape Verdean case - and more specifically the case of Cape Verdean students in Portugal - may shed upon our understanding of these processes.

The first observation to be made is the need to distinguish between the use of analytical and normative concepts. As a theory, some analysts situate creolization - understood as a process of community formation - in a specific historical period where the islands of Cape Verde played a major role: that of colonial slavery (see Vergès this volume). Theories of creolization have also been employed in the literature to refer to more general processes of cultural intermingling, associating creolization with what Brubaker (1994) calls “soft constructionism”. This has led some authors to question whether the theoretical currency of the concept has been devalued (see Chivallon and Vergès this volume). Notwithstanding these differences of theoretical perspective, the focus of my analysis will be to make a sharp distinction between analytical and normative concepts. In common day usage, the meaning of a concept is constructed by its social context. The term “Diaspora”, for example, is mostly used in Cape Verde by the state to encourage elite Cape Verdeans resident abroad to retain socio-economic ties with the homeland and the lower classes of Cape Verdean emigrants do not tend to identify themselves with this term. In Portugal, the term Creole refers to the Cape Verdean language spoken by Cape Verdean immigrants; in Cape Verde it is also used to refer to Cape Verdean national identity and culture and in Brazil “it carries the negative connotation of lower class ‘Black’ identification and does not have the Spanish American meaning of either mestizo or that of people of European ancestry born in the Americas” (Vale de Almeida 2007, 2). This wide range of normative meanings for the term Creole contrasts

with the ways in which the idea of creolization has been used as an analytical tool to deconstruct essentialist notions of cultural purity, authenticity and homogeneity.

The second observation that follows on from this is that in the case of Cape Verde, we are thus presented with a curious situation in which an analytical usage of the concept ‘Creole’ may be used to deconstruct normative, nationalistic and essentialist interpretations of the term Creole in social and political practice. Given that it was the local Cape Verdean elite who theorized the national Creole project (Fernandes 2002), it is not difficult to see how the analytical and normative usages may easily become conflated. In order to establish boundaries, it is consequently useful to think of creolization as a process which may or may not produce *crioulidade* (creoleness) understood not only as an object or “discourse of identity” (Vale de Almeida 2004, 304) but also as a performance (Vasconcelos 2007). Moreover, seen from this perspective, *crioulidade* is more closely associated with diaspora processes that tend towards recovering familiar identities than with processes of creolization which result in the forging of new identities. Distinguishing *crioulidade* from creolization also frees up the analytical concept so that it can be used to address a wider range of issues that stem from the cultural politics of Cape Verdean identity.

What is often overlooked when processes of creolization are conflated with notions of Cape Verdean “creoleness” is “the projective character of creolization as a form of surpassing nationalism, ethnic exclusivism and racism” (Vale de Almeida 2007, 34). To examine Cape Verdean creolization processes in the Portuguese context consequently requires not only addressing “race” and nation, but also citizenship and personhood. It means going beyond discursive, singular conceptions of identity to focus on how issues of class (Batalha 2008) and material wellbeing shape individuals’ identity claims.

The idea of a single, unique identity, implicit in the concept of *crioulidade* should thus be examined as an identity claim: a normative concept which should not blind us, as analysts,

to the existence of plural belongings and identities which “cut across each other” (Sen 2006, 16). The establishment of new cultural and social identities does not therefore necessarily preclude the possibility of simultaneously maintaining familiar identities since processes of creolization and diaspora may become intertwined (Cohen 2007) to produce, in the case of Cape Verde, cultural performances of “*crioulidade*”. For example, Cape Verdean emigrants who invest in the traditional values and practices of their homeland may do so in such a way that they reproduce local traditions whilst simultaneously imbuing them with new meanings (Trajano Filho 2005).

When plural meanings and identities are acknowledged, questions then arise regarding what role do reasoning and choice play (Sen 2006) in deciding which identity should be given precedence? How much freedom do people have to make their identity claims? What opportunities and barriers do they encounter? When they sense they have developed a new sense of belonging, how do those around them respond to this? Is a diasporic identity that looks back to the homeland, cultivated by choice or as a reaction to a sense of being excluded in the host society? The paper attempts to address some of these questions through a discussion of the challenges posed to young Cape Verdeans pursuing education in northern Portugal.

The data is based on two phases of fieldwork. The first phase spans two and a half years (from April 2008 to January 2011) of intermittent periods of fieldwork in the northern town of Porto, amidst university and vocational college students. The second phase was initiated in April 2012 in a smaller coastal town - which received an influx of Cape Verdean students in local vocational training courses in 2008. The second phase also included two weeks fieldwork (September 2012) in the island of Santiago in Cape Verde, interviewing state officials and students’ relatives. The names of all individuals have been changed.

The Janus Face of Cape Verdean Identity

In order to frame my analysis, I have taken inspiration from Janus, the Roman God of beginnings and transitions who is usually depicted with two heads facing opposite directions that allow him to look simultaneously towards the future and back into the past. Janus serves as an appropriate symbol for examining Cape Verdean manifestations of social identities in which past, present and future are constantly (re)negotiated at the threshold between Cape Verde's African and European cultural heritages.

As a society born from unequal encounters between European settlers and African slaves, much has already been written about the tensions in Cape Verdean cultural politics between African and European identifications and affiliations (Meintel, 1984, Lobban 1995, Fernandes 2002). Depending on the different cultural and political perspectives adopted, social actors in Cape Verde may consider affiliations with Africa as a source of identification to be cultivated or dismissed. The cultural and literary movement *Claridade*, for example, that emerged in the late colonial period to defend the Cape Verdean Creole language and culture and which promoted a distinct Cape Verdean Creole identity - *caboverdianidade* –gave greater emphasis to European rather than African roots (Brookshaw 1996, 207). Amílcar Cabral, the leader of the struggle for the independence of Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau from Portuguese colonial rule, believed in the need for a “re-Africanization of the minds” of Cape Verde's intellectual elite, so that they could connect with the majority of the rural uneducated population in the struggle for national independence (Idahosa 2002, 36).

The debate regarding the relative influences of African and European cultures is deeply implicated in the pragmatics of material wellbeing. Creolization in Cape Verde occurred within the context of colonial relations of domination, “conviviality” (Mbembe 2001) and resistance. The frequently cited words of Amílcar Cabral suggest that in the

struggle for independence, practical interest (Bourdieu 1990) was also at play. “Always keep in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone’s head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace...” (quoted in Davidson 1969, 38).

The pragmatics of securing material wellbeing was also at the heart of Cape Verde’s long history of migration to numerous destinations which constitutes a structural characteristic of Cape Verdean society. Migration began during the colonial period in response to the islands’ frequent droughts and poor natural resource base that provoked cycles of prolonged and widespread famine which the colonial authorities did little to prevent (Bigman 1993) and it continued after independence due to the country’s continuing arid climate and dependence upon foreign aid. The emigrant population now consequently outnumbered the local populationⁱ, a large percentage of which depends upon remittances sent to them by relatives from abroad. Wherever Cape Verdeans are located, be it in the Cape Verde islands or abroad, their sense of social identity is thus shaped by the interpenetration or interdependence of “here” with “there”, of their immediate locality with the plural destinations that they are linked to through the transnational circulation of goods, money and people which was also at the heart of the constitution of Cape Verdean society.

It is at this general level of analysis that Cape Verdeans are often described as Creole. Yet, as shall become evident below, what is meant by this term depends upon the eye of the beholder.

Creolization and *Crioulidade*: Standing at the Threshold

During fieldwork in September 2012, I was sitting in a café in the capital, Praia, trying to catch the attention of a waiter whose T-shirt read on the back “100% Creole”. Upon a first reading, this seemed like an oxymoron to me since it appeared to constitute an affirmation of

an essentialised identity which conveyed the opposite message to the notion dominant in the literature on creolization as mixed and hybrid: one of dilution through blending with other groups that destabilizes the idea of authenticity (Hall 1996; Hannerz 1992; Gilroy 1993).

Needless to say that this notion of creolization characterizes the very history of Cape Verde: an uninhabited archipelago upon discovery in the mid-fifteenth century with no indigenous culture. The geo-strategic location of the archipelago on the trade winds route was Portugal's main motive for encouraging settlement, eventually turning Cape Verde into a logistical maritime support base and an entrepôt in the booming slave trade between West Africa, Europe and the Americas. Cape Verdean Creole society is thus often described as the result of the "mixing" of slaves – brought to Cape Verde from the African mainland - with their Portuguese slave owners. This occurred through the development of intimate relations between colonizer and colonised which diluted social boundaries, breaking down the rigid division between "whites" and "blacks" as individuals were born to African mothers and to Portuguese fathers, commonly described as Creole. Illegal commercial activities then began to operate through inter-class "alliances" between Creoles, freed slaves, small rural landowners, the clergy and treasury officials, providing the necessary opportunities for socio-economic advancement amidst the lower classes. So although skin colour initially defined everyone's position on the social scale, this changed as an intermediate class rose in society, consisting of Creoles and of freed slaves (Carreira 1983).

From this historical perspective, no fixed line can be drawn to separate "authentic" cultural "roots" from external influences. Relevant here is Gilroy's critique of the essentialism of African perspectives which advocate a return to "authentic" cultural roots unsullied by colonial contact. His concept of a "Black Atlantic" culture counterbalances a focus on "roots" with a focus on "routes" which conceptualises identity as a "process of movement and mediation" (1993, 19). Notwithstanding the relevance of this critique, it does not eliminate the

social life of identities as “categories of practice” (Brubaker 2004). For example, the ‘socioeconomic whitening’ of the new intermediate class that rose in Cape Verdean society during the colonial period produced new social divisions between those who had inherited or earned the “white” status and those who were too poor to be considered to be “white”. In 1729, the explorer -adventurer William Dampier wrote that all Cape Verdeans were black but that if anyone should call them so they would be furious and claim that they were white Portuguese (quoted in Fernandes 2002:48). Even in present day Cape Verde, not all Cape Verdeans identify themselves as blacks and ancestors to the slaves. The selective narratives of creolization discussed by Rodrigues (2003, 95) reveal a Eurocentric return to Portuguese “roots” in Cape Verdean accounts of family history which place Portuguese grandfathers at the centre, as if they constituted the starting point of their lineages.

If, from a historical analytical perspective, it may be difficult to draw the line between “internal” and “external” influences, this is not the case from the perspective of the social actor in present day Cape Verde, where it is common to hear conversations bemoaning the negative effects of external influences. For example, the increase in urban crime levels is attributed to the repatriation of Cape Verdean descendents whose ancestors migrated to the United States and their influence upon urban youth culture. “Thugs”, as they are commonly referred to in Cape Verde, believed to be one of the main causes of increased urban violence, emulating the street life of black youth from north American ghettos have been given growing media and governmental attention which, according to Wilson Lima (2011), obfuscates the structural violence of increased social inequalities in Cape Verdean society. Migrants from mainland Africa have also become scapegoats in the popular imaginary, to account for increased violence and since they are often poor and undocumented they are seen as more of a threat than as a potential human resource for national development. African migrants are commonly referred to as *mandjako*; although this is the name of a West African ethnic group,

the term has been generalized to refer to mainland African immigrants in a derogatory manner (Marcelino 2011).

Seen within this context, to claim to be “100% Creole” may thus be interpreted as an example of “creoleness”; identity as a normative concept or a category of practice (Brubaker 2004) that conflates nation with culture. Yet, by the time the waiter had turned around to face me, the writing on the front of his t-shirt required me to complicate my analysis. It turned out that the phrase did not refer to a person, to the wearer of the t-shirt, but rather to a local beer brand – Strela – marketed as “100% Creole”. In other words, this was not an imported beer; it was a local, national (read authentic) product. The front of the t-shirt read “I am a Strela supporter, what about you?”ⁱⁱ This catchy phrase marketed the beer through an evocative play on words that apart from appealing to national sentiments, calls to mind identifications with Portuguese football teams – many of which are also composed of second generation Cape Verdean players - since supporters of Porto, for example, are designated as “Portistas”, supporters of Benfica as “Benfiquistas”, and supporters of Sporting as ‘sportinguistas’. So whilst the advertisement advocates locality and authenticity through national identity, it does so whilst simultaneously evoking continuous associations with Portugal: the drinkers of Strela beer are ‘strelistas’. Here we see how creolization and creoleness become intertwined. Moreover, given that Portuguese football became a phenomenon of the masses throughout the whole of the Portuguese empire which was never associated with colonial rule and that currently three out of the twenty-two football members of the national team are of Cape Verdean origin, it is not surprising that Cape Verdeans experience Portuguese football as part of their Creole identityⁱⁱⁱ.

To claim to be Creole is thus an identity claim amongst other claims such as the football team one supports, political allegiances to one party or another, regional identifications – *badiu* and *sampajudu* - based on island and the variant of Creole spoken^{iv},

more local identifications based on the village one lives in. Whichever one of these claims is given prominence will depend upon the circumstances in which they are activated. Regional differences between the *badiu* and *sampajudu* islands, for example, often merge into a single claim of national identity for Cape Verdeans living abroad.

Whilst having lunch in Valério's household - a student who had returned from Portugal to live with his family, in the capital Praia - there was a video on the television of a group of women singing and drumming with a large Cape Verdean flag behind them. Valério commented to me that he could tell they were emigrants because "if they were in Cape Verde, they wouldn't need the flag." Identity claims are contingent and context specific: what makes sense in one setting may not make sense in another and may also vary according to the dynamics of a given situation.

The Identity Claims of Cape Verdeans in Portugal

Cape Verdeans in Portugal can be roughly divided into three main groups: an elite minority, born and educated during the last decades of colonial rule; immigrant labourers who began to migrate to Portugal in search of work in the 1960s and their descendents (Batalha 2008) and more recently students who came to pursue secondary and higher education under the cover of bi-lateral agreements with Portugal.

The elite minority emerged from the colonial policy of educating a limited number of Cape Verdeans as part of a strategy of divide and rule in which the cultural and political status of "honorary white" or *assimilado* was assigned to Cape Verdeans on the grounds that they were culturally closer to Portugal than to Africa. Many Cape Verdeans were consequently recruited as administrators and petty officials in other parts of the empire, where native

Portuguese preferred not to go and when Cape Verde became independent in 1975, some chose to live in Portugal (Lobban 1995, Batalha 2008).

If, in the Cape Verdean context, to be called “white” or “black” has not always corresponded to the colour of a person’s skin ~since it also became a form of designating social status - this is not the case in modern day Portugal, where the Cape Verdean special status as Portuguese has been dissolved by the process of accession to the EEC in which citizen and migrant emerged as distinctive, disconnected black and white figures (Fikes 2009). The case discussed below brings to light the complex and contingent nature of identity claims for Cape Verdean students living in Portugal.

To simultaneously be and not to be black

Most of my research has been specifically focused on the experiences of student mothers in northern Portugal (see Challinor 2011, 2012a). The incidence described below at a Cape Verdean child’s fifth birthday party I attended (in Porto, in September 2012) elucidates the ways in which “blackness” is simultaneously acknowledged and denied.

The child’s mother Katia gave paper and pencils to the children present to draw pictures of their parents. Julia, the daughter of a white Portuguese woman and a black Cape Verdean man who were separated from each other, asked someone to pass her a black pencil to draw her father. Maria, one of the Cape Verdean mothers present reacted immediately. “What did you say? Who told you that? He is not black, he is brown”. The light skinned mestizo child remained silent. “I am going to tell your dad that you said he is black and he won’t give you a present for Christmas.” She then added, “Your father is black, I know, but you shouldn’t say that. You should say, “my father is beautiful, he is brown””.

Later on during the party, when the birthday girl was handing out slices of cake, Julia wanted to take a piece to her mother and Maria said in a loud voice ‘she doesn’t need any, she is very fat’.

When Julia’s mother came to stand nearby, Maria told her what her daughter had said and the Portuguese woman replied defensively “Well, he is black”. Maria shook her head, replying that that was not the point and commented that none of the other children present [whose fathers were also black] had asked for a black pencil.

At the end of the party, I asked Maria, in private, if she felt that the Portuguese word *negro* was better. She shrugged her shoulders and suggested “brown”. Then she added, “He is black, I know, but it is not what you say, it is how you say it. With that kind of mentality, if that is how she educates her daughter, she is likely to call someone ‘black’ when she sees them walking in the street”.

The freedom a person has to choose a particular social identity is always conditioned, to some degree, by the limitations imposed by one’s own body which serves as an external marker for the “other”. A number of students believed that they were discriminated against in Portugal due to their skin colour. Pedro, for example, told me that black drivers were more likely to be stopped by the police. Another student who was applying for a place on a vocational training course sent me a text message saying that there were over sixty candidates and since she was the only black candidate, she didn’t have much of a chance of being selected.

I have discussed elsewhere (Challinor 2012b) how the phenotypical signs of “race”, such as the colour of a person’s skin, function as “involuntary embodiments of identification” which do not always correspond to an individual’s sense of self. As the incidence in the party above clearly indicates, much depends upon how, in what context and by whom these identifications are activated. Maria’s rather spiteful comment to the child that her mother was

already too fat to eat cake also drew on the body and constituted an attempt to equate fatness with skin colour as an example of another arbitrary way of labelling human beings. She was harsh on the child, but Maria was quick to recognize that issues of citizenship were at stake; by making a connection between how Julia arbitrarily labelled her own father to how she may treat black people in general. A similar point is made by Sen when he states that “Even when a categorization is arbitrary or capricious, once they are articulated and recognized in terms of dividing lines, the groups thus classified acquire derivative relevance...and this can be a plausible enough basis for identities on both sides of the separating line” (2006, 27).

Yet, given Julia’s tender age, it is likely that she was more confused than enlightened by Maria’s contradictory message of simultaneously acknowledging and denying the colour of her father’s skin. From the child’s purely observational standpoint, her father was black and her mother was white. The point Maria was trying to make - that there was no need to afford priority to these arbitrary characteristics – echoes the words of Sen (2006, 38) that people are able to exercise a relative degree of freedom “regarding what *priority* to give to the various identities” they may have. This case demonstrates the Janus face of identity at work: looking outwards towards the external categorizations Cape Verdeans are subjected to by others and inwards, towards a more intimate space of meaning and self-ascription. Conscious that the parents were no longer on speaking terms, Maria was appealing to a more personal, affective dimension of the child’s relationship to her father, rather than to a distanced, external one of categorization. Maria realised that in this context for the child to call her father “black” could be an echo of her mother’s words, charged with racist connotations.

Could it be argued that Maria’s response revealed an inferiority complex, echoing the kinds of claims recorded by Dampier in the eighteenth century? I suggest that it reveals awareness that to be called “black” can mean different things in different contexts and her

message to the child is to be constantly on guard, to be aware of the different routes her black roots may take her.

To call somebody black is not automatically considered to be an insult; embodied racialised identifications may be played with, within the safe confines of friendship (Challinor 2012b). It is not the word itself, but rather the context within which it is used, including tone and body language that conveys the ultimate meaning. In the logics of other situational contexts, to be called “white” could also be an insult. For example, criticizing the tendency of Cape Verdeans to set themselves apart from the Portuguese, some Cape Verdean students told me that anybody who managed to socialize more with Portuguese students was called “white” – intended as an insult - by their Cape Verdean classmates.

In other words, an equally important aspect of Cape Verdean identity which in some contexts may override “race” and physical appearance is how a person behaves. Vasconcelos (2007, 11) argues that in Cape Verde, to be Creole, is also determined by what a person does. He claims that whites, blacks and mestizos may all be Creole whilst simultaneously being white, black and mestizo and even a foreigner may become Creole by speaking the language, eating the local food and singing or dancing to local music. I too found when socializing with Cape Verdean students that my familiarity with local culture caused some to claim that I was Cape Verdean. Creoleness is thus not only an identity discourse, but also an embodied practice which, as we shall see below, may also be subject to moral evaluation.

Cultural morality and the exemplary citizen

Integration into Portuguese society often emerged as a topic of conversation that approached the issue of cultural difference as a matter of cultural morality and exemplary citizenship. The

case of Inês, discussed below, examines the justifications given by a Cape Verdean university student for the lack of integration with Portuguese students.

Inês, interviewed in Cape Verde, had gone to study for a degree in sociology in Porto in 1999 in the Faculty of Letters and returned to Cape Verde in 2007 where she found a job in a bank. The subject of her degree dissertation was on Cape Verdean students in Porto and the cultural differences between Portuguese and Cape Verdeans. She claimed that the Portuguese were not as hospitable as they were in Cape Verde and that as foreign students they had expected to be more welcomed. “They wait for the Portuguese to approach them because that it is how it is done in Cape Verde. They become disappointed and give up”. Inês was alluding to the Cape Verdean culture of *morabeza* – which may be loosely translated as hospitality or conviviality but which has gained its own special meaning as a particular Cape Verdean trait borne of the Creole’s singular capacity to socialize and intermingle. The term has been appropriated by hotels and agencies in the tourist industry in Cape Verde to promote the idea of a unique form of Cape Verdean hospitality which Inês found wanting in Portuguese society.

When Inês arrived in Portugal in 1999, she came with ten other students and at that time there were few Cape Verdeans in Porto. Inês recalls how people used to stare at them when they got on buses because they weren’t used to seeing Africans. In their class they didn’t feel welcome and so tended to stick together. They tried to talk but felt that their classmates were not “open” and so the Cape Verdeans sat on one side and the Portuguese on the other. She said this was “unpleasant” but they had each other. The teachers commented that they didn’t feel comfortable with this “racial” division in the classroom. Outside of their class they were able to make Portuguese friends; it was just more a problem in the classroom. I asked if they spoke Creole with each other and Inês commented that this was a problem.

If at an individual level, Cape Verdeans were able to communicate with the Portuguese students, group dynamics produced racialised divisions that arose, in part, from the divergent cultural moralities of expected behaviour. The staff of one vocational training college I spoke with complained of the apparent “ingratitude” of Cape Verdean students who failed to turn up for the free meals provided in the college canteen in the evening or when they did appear left most of the food on their plates. The students I spoke with explained that their accommodation was far from the college and that they found it hard to walk there in cold rainy weather and they also admitted to not being accustomed to the food.

Racialised divisions also arose from the comfort of speaking one’s own language. Although Portuguese is the official language in Cape Verde, taught in school, students, from rural areas in particular, were still far more comfortable speaking Creole. The issue of the students’ tendency to speak in Creole was also raised by a president of the local council of the island of Santiago, during his visits to vocational training colleges in northern Portugal in December 2009, where he met with the Cape Verdean students and spoke with the college directors and teaching staff. The president told the Cape Verdean students that they should make an effort to speak in Portuguese. In his talks, the president also gave the students advice on how to behave as exemplary citizens as the following description of one of these talks exemplifies.

The president asked if a person walked past one of them and did this – and he demonstrated with his own body the act of brushing past someone and touching them with his shoulder – how would they react? There was a murmur throughout the audience, some students pulled faces and one person called out “Watch out!” “Wrong!” exclaimed the president. “You should say ‘sorry’”. There was a look of surprise and defiance on the faces of some of the students, one of which exclaimed “What?” in a tone of indignation. “Yes, because if you are the one to say ‘sorry’, that person will feel bad and will not do it again. And this

word hurts more. It wounds the heart. Instead of choosing an aggressive word, go for an educational, a pedagogical word”.

The message the council president chose to transmit to the students was that even in a situation of potential aggression they still had some choice regarding how to react since they could decide how much significance to afford the incidence. The bodily gesture he described could easily serve as a trigger for racial conflict (Desai 1999) but the president was trying to make the students aware that they were always free to downplay its significance and that to say ‘sorry’ was not a matter of defeat or humiliation but rather, it was to choose to occupy the higher moral ground of exemplary citizenship. It signified defying the division that had emerged in the social imaginary of Portuguese society between Portuguese European citizens and African migrants (Fikes 2009).

Valério, the student who had returned home, told me, while we were chatting before lunch, that in general Cape Verdeans are proud and don’t like to apologize. As his account of the following incidence illustrates, Valério saw himself as an exemplary citizen:

The other day I trod on a woman’s foot in the street by accident and I didn’t notice. She called out, ‘soft floor’ but I didn’t hear. So she called out after me again, angrily and I turned back and apologized profusely. She wasn’t expecting me to apologize and her facial expression immediately softened. She was probably expecting me to say “Put your foot on top of your head”, [in other words, get out of my way].

By distancing himself from Cape Verdeans as someone humble and polite enough to apologize, Valério was presumably attributing these superior moral characteristics to himself as a consequence of having lived in Portugal. At the end of the meal, no fruit was served and Valério said to me that he presumed that I must find this strange; he himself found it difficult,

being used to eating fruit at mealtimes in Portugal. Valério had recently married a Portuguese woman who was due to join him once their second child had been born; however, his identification with Portuguese culture did not signify a rejection of Cape Verdean mores. At the table, I was the only person to be given a knife and fork and Valério explained to me that in Cape Verde, they were more comfortable eating with spoons.

Setting himself apart from the average Cape Verdean, Valério also distanced himself from emigrants. During the meal, when another video clip appeared on the television of three African women dancing, the family began to discuss whether they could tell from the women's body movements if they were from Cape Verde or from the Antilles islands. Behind their undulating bodies there was a man sitting on a chair and when he stood up and walked forward to sing, his open jacket displayed a long gold chain on a bare chest. "This is typical of immigrants," commented Valério in a tone of indignation "Why doesn't he wear a shirt?" Valério went on to comment that you can always tell immigrants by the way they dress - lots of gold and complicated attires. His sister nodded in agreement. "Here in Cape Verde, I dress simply: a shirt, trousers, flip flops...I don't need to look fancy".

Emigrants who return to Cape Verde are also known for dressing extravagantly and as Trajano Filho (2005) points out, the sharp contrast between their ostentatious visibility and the arid aesthetics of the islands renders them the subject of ridicule and critique. Valério's adherence to a combination of "authentic" Cape Verdean simplicity with exemplary European street manners situated him on the threshold between Cape Verdean and Portuguese cultures, simultaneously looking in both directions. Whilst this could be analyzed as an indication of creolization processes at work, if we examine his position within the context of Cape Verdean history then we could argue that it constitutes a renewal of creoleness – since the combining of Cape Verdean and Portuguese mores provides historical continuity to the very processes that led to the emergence of Cape Verdean Creole culture in the first place.

Valério's Janus-faced position also calls to mind the marketing strategy of Strela beer discussed above, which combined notions of Cape Verdean authenticity with an appeal to the everyday Cape Verdean complicities with Portuguese football teams that permeate social life in Cape Verde.

When I shared this observation regarding Strela beer with the president of the local council of the island of Santiago in Cape Verde, his response was to comment upon how such a marketing strategy was encouraging young people to drink alcohol. The current lack of education, training and work opportunities for youth (Martins and Fortes 2011) in Cape Verde justifies the president's concerns and his comment also has a sobering effect upon making celebratory analyses of hybrid or creolized manifestations of social identity, severed from the material conditions of people's lives. The threshold where Cape Verdean students in Portugal found themselves - (re)negotiating past, present and future - was not only conditioned by the tensions between Cape Verde's African and European cultural heritages but also and perhaps more pressingly, by their physical separation from homeland, family and loved ones. The following section examines the tensions generated in the effort to reconcile the pursuit of material advancement with emotional needs for attachment and belonging.

To go or to stay, to stay or to return: these are the questions

Cape Verde is difficult to explain. It has three resources: wind, rocks and people. But they are all futile if they are not made use of. The people are the most important resource of all because with training they can transform the rocks and the wind into riches for the development of Cape Verde.

I heard variations of this statement made on several occasions in December 2009 by the president of the local council of the island of Santiago, referred to above, during visits to vocational training colleges in northern Portugal. His depiction of Cape Verde echoes the words of the Cape Verdean writer, Eugénio Tavares, (1867-1930) who believed that Cape Verde's arid climate and poor resource base rendered independence an impossible dream: "For Cape Verde? For these poor and abandoned rocks thrown up in the sea - independence? What sense is there in that? God have pity on thoughtless men!" (quoted in Davidson, 1989:46).

Yet, ever since independence was attained in 1975, the president told the staff in one of his visits to a vocational college, Portugal had greatly assisted Cape Verde in educating its workforce. There were now fifty-three secondary-schools offering pre-university education whereas before independence there were only two^v. There were now seven universities, six of which were private; however, this did not satisfy demand. More than seventy-five per cent of the population, he told the wide-eyed staff, was less than twenty-five years old. The largest portion of the state's budget was spent on education: training people to transform the rocks and the wind into riches for the country's development.

Following independence, Portugal and Cape Verde signed a bi-lateral agreement in 1976 for cooperation in education and vocational training, enabling some Cape Verdean citizens to obtain places and grants to study in public and private educational and vocational training institutes in Portugal. This cooperation has continued until the present day with adjustments made in new agreements signed in 1997 and in 2003.

The majority of students I interviewed came to study in vocational training colleges which had established their own protocols with local councils in Cape Verde to receive quotas of students, who, once resident in Portugal, were entitled to subsidies funded by the European Union Operational Programme for Human Potential (POPH) which began to operate in

Portugal in 2007. Financed mostly by the European Social Fund, one of the aims of the programme is to invest in the education and qualification of the resident population. Cape Verdeans who could not otherwise afford to study abroad were thus also able to study in Portugal. It was the student's responsibility to pay for their plane fares and many families had to borrow money or sell livestock to pay for their children's fares.

Although the president's words cited above suggest that the education and training of Cape Verdeans abroad constitutes a future investment in the development of Cape Verde, the same president commented to me, nearly three years later, in September 2012, during an interview conducted in Cape Verde, that around ninety per cent of the students never actually return. An official from another local council in Santiago Island which also sent students to study in Portugal told me that if they returned en masse at the end of their studies, Cape Verde would be unable to absorb them all. Unemployment in Cape Verde constitutes a contributing factor in the decision not to return.

The motivation for the enrollment of Cape Verdeans in vocational training courses in Portugal was often less about learning new "ideas" – about things in peoples' heads, to paraphrase Amílcar Cabral's words cited above - than about taking the opportunity to leave Cape Verde, often in difficult conditions with a view to improving their prospects for the future.

At the end of their courses, the students are only allowed to renew their residence permits if they continue their studies into higher education; otherwise they are legally required to return to Cape Verde. In practice, however, this law is difficult to enforce since students change residence and the immigration authorities have difficulties in tracking them down. When they can provide documental evidence that they have either a work contract, earning the minimum wage or are pursuing some kind of training or education, many students

manage to renew their permits. Renewal of the residence permit consequently constitutes a common motivation for enrollment in a new course at the end of a student's studies.

The effects of the current economic adjustment programme for Portugal, such as increased unemployment and cuts in welfare, has nonetheless rendered Portugal a less desirable country of residence for Cape Verdeans who have finished their studies. Those who have relatives or work opportunities in other European countries have set their eyes upon moving to Holland for example, or in another case, to France from where they have then moved on to Switzerland. A number of students interviewed were hoping to eventually make it to the United States to join relatives there. Those who lacked these transnational connections, did not manage to enroll upon a new training course, could not afford to pursue their studies to university level and were unable to find employment, failed to renew their residence permits and became irregular migrants, living off under paid odd jobs when they could find them and the social assistance of migrant relatives, mostly resident in Lisbon.

Many students have stories to tell regarding the difficulties they experienced adapting to the Portuguese climate, food, language and way of life. Living for the first time away from home and having to learn to budget with their small subsidies constituted a considerable challenge. Ever since 2008, when the first Cape Verdeans came to study in the vocational schools of the small coastal towns in Northern Portugal, the cafés and restaurants employed the students during the summer vacation period, when they swelled with tourists. Hours were long and wages low but since the students' subsidies were suspended during the summer months they either had to take up these jobs or go to live with relatives resident in Lisbon, often in crowded conditions, to look for work until the beginning of the following school year. The end of the course always constituted a time of tense decision making, since students had to decide whether or not to return to Cape Verde. Evaluating their current situation and

considering their options, placed the students at the threshold between past, present and future.

Although the desire to leave Cape Verde is not restricted to the need for material well-being, in many cases I encountered, the original motivation to study abroad was influenced by vague notions that life would automatically be better. The difficulties encountered in Portugal, rendered Cape Verde more appealing; however, to return home to depend upon their families would constitute a waste of their families initial investments and would also be detrimental to their social prestige. The pressure to achieve estranged the students from their homeland where they feared people would judge them as failures if they returned empty handed.

Laura had finished her technical training course in tourism in July 2012. Ideally, she wanted to find full time employment and to continue her studies but her mother could not afford to pay for higher education and she was now unemployed. “I don’t want to return to Cape Verde like this” she told me. I asked if “like this” signified without a higher grade of education or a job. She nodded her head in agreement and added that her time in Portugal had been “a waste of three years”. She came to Portugal with her secondary schooling almost completed, having only failed two subjects - Geography and English. But in Portugal she had started all over again – repeating the last three years of schooling. She never realized it would be so difficult. When the opportunity arose she thought it would just be good to get out of Cape Verde: many came, she added, simply because they want to leave Cape Verde. Now she was prepared to take any job that guaranteed her a minimum wage. Although Laura was considering the option of returning to Cape Verde, there was another reason why she did not want to: Laura knew that this would imply the end of the relationship with her boyfriend - referred to in Cape Verdean Creole as *pai di fidju*, the literal translation of which is “father of child.” The common usage of this term, instead of boyfriend or partner, reflects the ambiguity and instability of Cape Verdean conjugal relations, which are not usually expected to last for a

lifetime or to be exclusive; monogamy and marriage are often seen as unattainable ideals which from the women's perspective men fail to live up to (Akesson, Carling, Drotbohm 2012). In Laura's case, however, her *pai di fidju* wanted them to stay together as a family. Laura had consequently managed to enroll in a new post secondary education course on hotel management in a nearby town which was a grade below higher education and would give her a technological specialization diploma. More importantly, however, she was hoping that it would satisfy the immigration authorities sufficiently to prompt them to renew her residence permit.

Manuel came to study in Porto in 2005 and finished in 2008 after which he worked in cafés in Porto. He had interrupted his secondary education in Cape Verde because he had found it hard to reconcile school with his daily agricultural chores. He used to work in the fields every day, producing manioc, sugar cane, and tending to his mother's goats and cows whilst she was working selling in the market. In the eighth year he stopped going to school for a month but his mother made him go back and he stuck it out until the eleventh year when he refused to continue because, he claimed, it was too tiring with all the agricultural work he had to do too. Manuel never developed the habit of studying, was not used to reading books or learning things by heart. Yet, despite this lack of motivation, he always managed to pass the tests and exams. When he applied for a place in a vocational college to study accountancy in Portugal, his mother sold all of their animals. The money was used to pay for his travel, for books and accommodation in Portugal whilst waiting to receive the POPH subsidy he was entitled to. Manuel's intention never was to study; just to use the opportunity to find work in Portugal. He thought it would be easy but soon discovered that this was not the case. He also found out that if he abandoned his studies, his residence permit would not be renewed so he decided to see the course through to the end, although he admitted that he was never a dedicated student which was reflected in his grades that were just high enough to pull

through. In the first year, Manuel tried to find work in France, where his sister lived, but then decided to come back because he would be illegal there once his residence permit expired.

The way Manuel compared his present situation with that of friends and family left behind in Cape Verde, together with his multiple projections for potential future projects in Cape Verde and Portugal, provides an example of how the Janus faced renegotiating that takes place between past, present and future constitutes a balancing act between securing material and emotional wellbeing.

In 2010 Manuel returned to Cape Verde for a visit and noted that his half brother had already built himself a house, had a wife who was pregnant and was employed. His school friends from the same year had stayed in Cape Verde had done better than him; one was a policeman, another had become a member of parliament, others had gone on to do a degree. He felt that he had wasted his time by coming to Portugal. Manuel told me that now there were lots of vocational courses available in Cape Verde as well as degrees because there were lots of universalities – none of this was on offer in 2005. So he concluded it was only worth coming to study to Portugal to qualify for a Masters or a PhD. During his visit to Cape Verde, people questioned Manuel when he claimed that it was better to stay in Cape Verde, why he did not choose to return? “But I want to return with something”, he told me, so for the meantime he intended to remain in Portugal. Manuel was contemplating business ideas for Cape Verde and Portugal. In Cape Verde he was working on the idea of selling agricultural products in rural areas, so that farmers would not have to go to the capital in Praia. In Portugal he had entered into partnership with a Cape Verdean friend to open an African hairdressers in Lisbon and he was also considering becoming involved in Cape Verdean party politics in Portugal with the hope that this may lead to a political career in the future in Cape Verde. He and his partner had also opened their own café in northern Portugal. Manuel was also now eligible to acquire Portuguese nationality. He commented that it was good to be able to find

work and to travel - there were so many countries he wanted to see, but he did not feel at all Portuguese. “When it comes through, I will not tell anyone that I am Portuguese. I will still be Cape Verdean”.

Manuel’s attitude towards the acquisition of Portuguese nationality reveals a double-sided gaze: looking outwards towards the expediency of Portuguese nationality which opened up more possibilities for Manuel as well as inwards, towards a more personal space of meaning and diasporic self-ascription. In contrast to Valério’s emotionally engaged form of belonging, discussed above, in which both Cape Verdean and Portuguese mores became implicated in his sense of self, Manuel viewed Portuguese citizenship as a detached form of belonging that did not alter his sense of being Cape Verdean. Manuel consequently invested his emotions in cultivating *crioulidade* - a diasporic rather than creolized consciousness.

Conclusion

The Cape Verdean migrant condition is influenced by a collective looking forward towards other geographical locations where relatives and friends have made a new home and a collective looking backwards – to relatives and friends left behind where the potential of return is forever present. The figure of Janus who is unable to look in a single direction serves as a valuable symbol for the Cape Verdean migrant condition characterized by the interpenetration of past present and future, “here” and “there”, elucidating how processes of creolization and diaspora become mutually implicated in each other.

The ethnography discussed above has brought to life the complex and contingent nature of identifications which ranged from emotionally engaged to detached forms of belonging in which nation, citizenship and personhood became intertwined. The inner space of self-ascription often came up against external challenges such as the perceived activation of

involuntary embodiments of identification with their potentially racist effects; group pressure to be loyal to diasporic identifications and the perceived pressure from the homeland to succeed which mitigated against returning in times of need. Yet, reasoning and choice also play a role since the meaning of a label and even an insult can fall within the power of the receiver. “People call me “black”, commented Manuel one day while we sat in his café chatting, “But I don’t take offence – black is black. Even if they say ‘black’ to insult me, I am not insulted. Black is just black”. “The locals call our café *café di preto*” (the blacks’ café) added his partner with a smile.

If, as I have tried to demonstrate in this article, identity claims are contingent and context specific then the questions that also need to be asked are whether the social analysts’ investigations of creolization and diaspora processes contribute towards the solidification of essentialised identities such as that of *crioulidade* and, to what degree such investigations may obfuscate the role played by less visible forms of identification and belonging? The Janus face of Cape Verdean identity also requires the researcher to be wary of only looking in one direction.

• I would like to thank Olivia Sheringham and Robin Cohen for inviting me to participate in such stimulating debates and João Vasconcelos, Filipe Martins and Lorenzo Bordanaro for their insightful contributions. The research was funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT).

ⁱ The local population, according to the 2010 census, is 491.875 (INE 2010) whilst estimates made in 1998 by the former emigrant support institute (IAPE) for the total emigrant population were 518.180.

ⁱⁱ Ami é strelista. E bô?

ⁱⁱⁱ Personal communication by João Vasconcelos.

^{iv} *Badiu* is used to refer to the Cape Verdeans originated from the leeward islands which have a stronger African influence and *sampajudu* to designate the Cape Verdeans from the windward islands.

^v One of the secondary schools that had existed before independence, referred to by the president, was Liceu Gil Eanes: the first secondary school established, not only in the archipelago, but in the whole of the Portuguese Empire. It was here where the leader of the joint-liberation struggle, Amílcar Cabral, was educated, before training as an agronomist in Portugal between 1945 and 1952 (Chabal, 1983).

References

- Äkesson, Lisa; Carling, Jorgen. and Drotbohm, Heike. 2012. "Mobility, Moralities and Motherhood: Navigating the Contingencies of Cape Verdean Lives", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38, (2): 237-260.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bigman, Laura. 1993. *History and Hunger in West Africa: Food Production and Entitlement in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde*. London: Greenwood Press.
- Brookshaw, David. 1996. "Cape Verde". In *The Post-Colonial Literature in Lusophone Africa*, edited by Patrick Chabal, 179-233. London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers.
- Brubaker, Roger. 2004. *Ethnicity Without Groups*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Carreira, António. 1983. *Migrações nas Ilhas de Cabo Verde*, Praia: Instituto Cabo-verdeano do Livro.
- Chabal, Patrick. 1983. *Amilcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and People's war*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Challinor, Elizabeth 2011. "Cape Verdean Migrants and Extended Mothering". In *Mothering: Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by Michelle Walks and Naomi McPherson, 196-208. Bradford, ON: Demeter Press.
- . 2012a. "(Ir)responsible mothers? Cape Verdeans and Portuguese Social Care", *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care*, 8 (1): 12-21.
- . 2012b. "Researching ethnicity, identity, subjectivity: anything but the four lettered word", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 35 (9): 1558-1576.
- Cohen, Robin 2008. "Creolization and Diaspora – the Cultural Politics of Divergence and some Convergence". In *Opportunity Structures in Diaspora Relations*:

- Comparisons in Contemporary Multi-Level Politics of Diaspora and Transnational Identity*, edited by Gloria Totoricagüena Reno, 85-112. Nevada, Centre for Basque Studies: University of Nevada Press.
- Davidson, Basil. 1989. *The Fortunate Isles: A Study in African Transformation*, London: Century Hutchinson Limited.
- Desai, Philly. 1999. 'Spaces of Identity, Cultures of Conflict: the Development of New British Asian Masculinities', PhD dissertation, Goldsmith College, University of London.
- Fernandes, Gabriel. 2002. *A Diluição da África: uma Interpretação da Saga Identitária Cabo-verdiana no Panorama Político (Pós)colonial*, Florianópolis: Editora da UFSC.
- Fikes, Keshia. 2009. *Managing African Portugal: The Citizen-Migrant Distinction*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Gilroy, Paul. 1993. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, London: Verso.
- Hall, Stuart. 1996. "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?" In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, 1-17. London: Sage Publications.
- Hannerz, Ulf. 1992. *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*, New York: Colomblial University Press.
- Idahosa, Pablo, L., E. 2002. "Going to the People: Amílcar Cabral's Materialist Theory and Practice of Culture and Ethnicity", *Lusotopie*, 2:29-58.
- Lobban, Richard. 1995. *Cape Verde: Crioulo Colony to Independent Nation*, Oxford: Westview Press.
- Marcelino, Pedro, F. 2011. *The New Migration Paradigm of Transitional African Space: Inculsion, Exclusion, Liminality and Economic Competition in transit*

- countries: a case study on the Cape Verde Islands*, Saarbrücken: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Martins, Filipe and Fortes, Celeste. 2011. "Para Além da Crise: Jovens, Mulheres e Relações Familiares em Cabo Verde", *(Con)textos. Revista d'Antropologia I Investigació Social* 5: 13-29.
- Mbembe, Achille. 2001. *On the Postcolony*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Meintel, Deirdre. 1984. *Race, Culture and Portuguese Colonialism in Cabo Verde*, Syracuse, New York: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University.
- Sen, Amartya. 2006. *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, London: Allen Lane/Penguin Books.
- Rodrigues, Isabel, P.B.F. 2003. *Islands of Sexuality: Theories and Histories of Creolization in Cape Verde. International Journal of African Historical Studies* 36 (1): 83-103.
- Trajano Filho, Wilson. 2005. *A Sociabilidade da Diáspora: o Retorno*. Série Antropológica 380, Brasília.
- Vale de Almeida, Miguel. 2007. "From Miscegenation to Creole Identity: Portuguese Colonialism, Brazil, Cape Verde." In *Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory*, edited by Charles Stewart Walnut Creek, 108-132. CA: Left Coast Press.
- . 2004. *Outros destinos: Ensaios de Antropologia e Cidadania*, Porto: Campo das Letras – Editores S. A.
- Vasconcelos, João. 2007. *Filhos da Terra ou Lamarck em Cabo Verde*. Paper presented at the III Congress of the Portuguese Association for Anthropology, "Afinidade e Diferença" in Lisbon, 6-8 April 2006.

Wilson Lima, Redy. 2011. “Desigualdades sociais e violência juvenil urbana: o caso dos *thugs*”, paper given at the West African Peace Initiative Cape Verde conference, Praia, 12-14 December 2011.