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Decolonising the imagined geographies of 'witchcraft'

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ABSTRACT
Turning my frame of inquiry toward academia, I analyse academic presentations on topics of 'witchcraft' conveyed to majoritygeographer, majority-white and majority-Northern audiences. I argue that (a) the imagined geographies of 'witchcraft' have been central to colonial Othering; (b) 'witchcraft' is often relegated to the academic periphery; (c) 'witchcraft' ontologies are plural, fluid and ambiguous and (d) 'witchcraft' is often defiant of academicisations. Given this milieu, scholars risk reproducing a 'witchcraft' that is Othering, even when/if the scholarship has an anti-colonial orientation. I call for greater attention to the broadening of academic conference exchanges to allow space for pluriform knowledges.

Introduction

Cultural anthropologists have examined the connections between modernity, capitalist accumulation and shifting 'witchcraft' epistemologies, ontologies and practices.[1] Social historians have traced the links between earlier forms of modernity and primitive accumulation (including enslavement and colonialism) and 'witchcraft'.[2] Yet, contemporary considerations of 'witchcraft' within the geographies of development remain few in number, [3] including in post-development geography and feminist decolonial geographies, which might be more inclined to study such topics as potential epistemologies otherwise (against the more normative forms of 'development' that have been thoroughly critiqued by post-development scholars). The relative absence of attention to the occult, 'witchcraft' and sorcery in the sub-discipline requires a thoughtful and multifaceted consideration. This article skims the surface of such an examination as a means to argue that the very existence of this absent focus – compounded by racialised and gendered colonial imagined geographies of sorcery, 'witchcraft' and the occult on the African continent as well as the position of the university within the colonial matrix of power[4] – creates an implicit framework in which contemporary geographers are perpetually at risk of reaffirming colonial and racist tropes when they do engage with such topics. To understand this risk we must unpack the situated-ness of scholars

within a larger implicit framework.
In this article, I draw upon episodes and encounters throughout the last decade of my life and my intellectual, political and emotional commitments to Cameroon as a means to illustrate some of the intricacies and ambiguities of popular epistemologies of 'la sorcellerie',[5] with an attention to the difficulties and potentialities of writing and speaking about la sorcellerie, power, knowledge and poverty in Cameroon in Anglo-Euro-American academic settings when doing so amounts to 'epistemic disobedience'.[6] I offer a series of reflections on experiences delivering concise academic presentations on some epistemologies of 'witchcraft' in two communities – Nanga-Eboko and Kribi – along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline to majority-geographer, majority-white and majority-Northern audiences within a context in which, not only is our scholarship persistently propelled and enclosed within an overarching colonial university system, but:

- Western imagined geographies of 'witchcraft' have been central to a racial system of social classification, in which the idea(s) of 'the native'[7] ('the savage', 'the primitive') as uncivilised, spiritually and culturally impoverished and underdeveloped is first invented and then maintained through imagined geographies of the Other
- 'Witchcraft' is a peripheral topic in the discipline of geography, with academic colleagues often having limited exposure to the interdisciplinary scholarship on the topic[8]
- 'Witchcraft' epistemologies and practices can be plural, fluid, multiform and ambiguous in the same region and sub-region
- 'Witchcraft' can be challenging to describe and is remarkably defiant towards quantification

Through a coalescing and oscillating of these features, epistemologies of 'witchcraft' do not lend to axiomatic or univocal conclusions and assertions, despite an implicit academic landscape that would enforce such readings. This implicit framework creates limitations, paradoxes and possibilities for considerations of 'witchcraft' for scholars working under the umbrella of human geography in Anglo-Euro-American universities. I seek to contribute to the decolonisation of imagined geographies of 'witchcraft' through an articulation of a consciously anti-racist scholarship of 'witchcraft' (a) by examining some imaginaries articulated by a group of Northern-based geographers convened for an academic conference in 2016 and (b) by consciously de-privileging myself as a means of accounting for my geo- and body-politics in projects of knowing. I end with reflections on the need for decolonial communicative practices for knowledges otherwise.

Coloniality, 'witchcraft' and racism

While contemporary scholars of 'witchcraft' have emphasised the misapplication of Eurocentric terms (the occult, sorcery, witchcraft), less emphasised has been the ways in which spiritual Othering has been and continues to be a central feature of the colonial production of knowledge. Spiritual alterity provided the ideological orientation(s) and moral framework(s) for enslavement, colonialism and imperialism, and was deeply enmeshed within both the production of racial hierarchies and the teleos of the 'civilising mission'. Without this important context, my assertions about the perpetual risk of my scholarship to reify racialised (indeed, racist) hierarchies might not compute. It is necessary therefore to provide a brief sketch of this history of the centrality of spiritual Othering in imperial projects.
The demonising of non-Judaeo Christian and non-Enlightenment European epistemologies, often dismissing them as 'mere' forms of 'witchcraft', was central to the expansion of

both capitalism[9] and colonialism – particularly the representation of these practices and belief systems through racial and gendered dismissals.[10] Grosfoguel reminds us that nineteenth-century racial hierarchies were preceded by religious hierarchies, which first deemed the indigenous people of Africa, Asia and the Americas as spiritually inferior due to the 'absence of a Christian soul'. Bonoventura de Sousa Santos[11] and Francis Nyamnjoh[12] argue that 'epistemicide' or the extermination of non-Judeo-Christian knowledges and ways of knowing was foundational to the 'genocidal logic of conquest'.[13]

Before the ideological construction of the 'dark continent' (ca. early 1800s), the cultural texts of Medieval Europe conceived of geographically distant places and people as monstrous, hostile and semi-human. Historians of the period identify the social changes associated with state and Church domination and colonial expansion (including the Norman expeditions, German settlement in the East, the colonisation of Ireland and the Crusades) as central in inciting a mentality of conquest. This mentality of conquest was articulated through Europe's growing intolerance as well as the increasing social persecutions of the period.[14] Freedman explains,

> the organization and expansion of Christian Europe produced by the thirteenth century a mentality of domination and irrational fear of dissent or perceived subversion … This mentality reinforced a political and economic demonstration of power and, in turn, encouraged a discourse about the conquered populations that rendered them inferior, savage, and deserving of subjugation.[15]

During the High Middle Ages (1001–1300), European elite and popular culture(s) began to express 'a series of dark fantasies of perversion and conspiracy' in which the world was a place 'inhabited by hostile and semihuman forces'.[16] During this time, Medieval maps depicted imaginary creatures (often hybrids of serpents, insects and beasts, including the phoenix, dragon, roc bird, firedog and satyr[17]) inhabiting vast geographical swaths of the earth, which were conceived of as inaccessible 'or at least remote space, cut off from Europe by the ocean, the torrid zones, walls (Gog and Magog), or simply virtue of distance'.[18]. This imaginative Othering, while racialised in practice, preceded the advent of the idea of 'race' (the word 'race' was coined in the seventeenth Century[19]). By the nineteenth Century, Europeans had shifted from explorer-missionaries to coloniser-missionaries. Race narratives had become a near-ubiquitous component of colonial epistemologies and '"race" was perceived and upheld as scientific, rational, and coherent. Race provided the set of self-serving ideological values that held together the various political, economic, religious, and sociocultural networks constructed by the European imperialists in nineteenth-century Africa'.[20] The Medieval anxieties and paranoia of 'dark creatures' and 'subhuman species' permeated the pseudo-scientific racial imaginary that perceived Africa as a place of darkness, obscurity, danger, magic/evil and primitivism. The complexities and regional and temporal variety within and across these colonial imaginative geographies cannot be captured sufficiently here. Rather, drawing inspiration from Bhaba's insistence that we refocus our attention on the processes through which such imaginative geographies arise, what is of greater interest here is the emergence of a particular vulgarisation of African magic and occult as 'witchcraft' that reflects a pre-contact imaginary of a Eurocentric world. Discussing 'witchcraft', in this historical context, demands a redirecting/redirection of power.

De/colonial development geographies & la sorcellerie in Cameroon

Development geographies & the spiritual

While the scholarship on the geographies of development has expanded the lens of analysis outside of dominant Anglo-Euro-American-informed epistemological frameworks in the last

three decades, ‘witchcraft’ and ‘sorcery’ have remained on the periphery of geographical considerations of development. This hesitation to engage with non-institutionalised ontologies and epistemologies is not particular to human geography. Theologians, for example, have traced similar tendencies in Christian scholarship, asserting that Christian scholarship has alternated between ‘outright dismissal’, ‘distortion’ and ‘denial’ in regards to African spiritual ontologies and practices.[21] This tendency has been extrapolated to the university more broadly, with Gloria Anzaldúa addressing a dearth of considerations of spirituality within academia and asserting the need for a radical ‘spiritual activism’ that ‘offers a visionary yet experientially based epistemology and ethics’.[22] AnaLouise Keating unearths an ‘academic spirit-phobia’, writing, ‘those of us working in academic settings are trained to rely almost exclusively on rational thought, anti-spiritual forms of logical reasoning, and empirical demonstrations’.[23] Against the tendency in secular American universities to acculturate students to avoid considerations of spirituality in development (even if inadvertently), some development scholars, predominantly anthropologists studying development in the global South, have asserted the importance of contemporary forms of ‘witchcraft’.[24]
For feminist, post-development, postcolonial and decolonial scholars, ‘witchcraft(s)’ offer rich epistemologies for imagining the world. These decolonising frameworks challenge the foundations of capitalism as profoundly violent, racialised and gendered and elucidate non-capitalist ways of knowing, seeing and being.[25] However, such scholarship must be systematically attuned to both an overarching colonial imaginary as well as a tendency to romanticise, appropriate and exotify non-Judeo-Christian and pluriversal spiritualties and epistemologies. [26] This includes an awareness and avoidance of contemporary pop culture representations that present non-dominant epistemologies as forms of idealised resistance. Repositioning African epistemologies like la sorcellerie in proximity to peacefulness, reciprocity and well-being in this context effects a form of Othering: it echoes the discursive and representational ‘Nobel Savage’ of the 18th Century, in which the Other’s statically essentalised incorruptibility and closeness to nature could be instrumentalised to offer solutions to modern industrial problems.[27]

La sorcellerie in Cameroon

While a complete description of my ethnographic work in two communities along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline is outside of the scope of this article, sharing some features of this work might help you to consider, scrutinise and interpret the arguments that I articulate herein. Elsewhere, I have highlighted key dilemmas and opportunities of looking at la sorcellerie in the sub-field of political geography and post-development, including the danger of over-generalising or romanticising epistemologies ‘witchcraft’ as forms of resistance even when they seem to offer articulations of the ways in which powerful actors (in this case, actors responsible for petro-extraction) are necessarily hidden from purview while the violence(s) associated with oil extraction are nonetheless known corporeally and emotionally.[28]

People may offer la sorcellerie, la malchance and la magie as explanation(s) for modern sociopolitical, medical and economic despair. In Nanga-Eboko and Kribi, for example, people would sometimes employ the language of la sorcellerie to describe the shadowy figures of the oil consortium (always local petrol companies, Esso and COTCO, rather than ExxonMobil and Chevron) and government officials. These officials and employees were described as having ‘bad hearts’ and no care for human well-being.[29] In this way, epistemologies of la sorcellerie might challenge powerful actors by either associating their power with malevolent forms of ‘witchcraft’ or by articulating empowering narratives of resistance (for example the

lion-men in southern Chad who were said to have consumed the bodies of consortium workers).[30] Yet, the introduction of large-scale development projects and economic austerity programmes that reduce access to land, threaten livelihoods, intensify socio-economic inequalities and provoke new and old tensions in communities can also trigger accusations of 'witchcraft' among people, which 'further fracture communities'.[31]

A feature of 'witchcraft' seems to be this ambiguity. In the mid-1990s and early 2000s, rumours circulated that several Cameroonian ministers – and even the president himself – might have ascended to power through occult initiations. While popular narratives critique and de-legitimise hegemonic political by interpreting their power as illicit and generated through socially stigmatised acts, in practice politicians are seldom targeted for censorship. In a further demonstration of ambiguity, Cameroonian President Paul Biya, in a rare television appearance (see Figure 1),[32] disparaged those who engaged in a series of countrywide protests against rising food and fuel costs in February 2008 as 'apprentice sorcerers'. Did he decry the protestors as 'apprentice sorcerers' as a means to cast suspicion on their motives for protesting … or to imply that he is the master sorcerer in Cameroon and that all the others are mere apprentices?

Figure 1. Paul Biya's image on a weathered billboard greets travellers at the entrance to a town in eastern Cameroon. Elsewhere I have described the ways in which 'the regime is defined by the relative absence of the leader … who is jokingly 'more outside his country than in it' and who is rarely seen physically or publicly by the people – indeed, Biya does not grant interviews, either domestically or internationally – but [he] exists everywhere in image' (see Murrey, "Thoughts on 30 Years of Biya Presidency in Cameroon," 2012).

Development, la sorcellerie and Social Scientists

While decolonial, postcolonial and post-development scholars might not yet comprehensively consider epistemologies of la sorcellerie, social scientists have been hired and contracted to work with International Financial Institutions and extractive corporations, in endeavours to demonstrate a knowledge of 'local' or 'Indigenous' cultures in the post-1990s increasingly 'culturally sensitive' development and, in the case of oil companies, in the pursuit of a more 'socially responsible' corporate extraction.[33] For this former, this has included, for example, the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge ('IK') within development programming (including, as you will see below, oil-as-development programming). In 1998, the World Bank launched the Indigenous Knowledge for Development Program to 'help learn from community-based knowledge systems and development practices, and to incorporate them into Bank-supported programs'.[34] As part of this initiative, the Bank established an Africa Region's Knowledge and Learning Center, which periodically released IK Notes, or monthly newsletters on forms of 'IK', mostly from the African continent.[35] My review of sixty IK Notes published in the five years from 1998 to 2003 reveals that the word 'magic' appears eleven times in the context of 'TMK' or 'traditional medical knowledge', 'traditional healers', 'magic medicine' and 'mysterious elements'.[36] 'Witchcraft' appears seven times. 'Sorcery' appears five times but always parallel to 'witchcraft' – these terms figure in the context of conflict resolution as well as HIV/AIDs education.[37] A comprehensive consideration of whether this focus on 'Indigenous' knowledge has ever (or even sometimes) led to less destructive development initiatives with more nuanced understandings of pre-existing cultures is outside of the scope of this article.[38] What we might remark for the purposes of our exploration here is the way in which the focus on IK nonetheless perpetuates and reifies an Othering. This Othering is brought about through both the superficial and selective appropriation of 'local' knowledge

(i.e., IK first fits the parameters of development as determined by powerful actors)[39] and, in some instances, the attention to 'local' knowledge facilitates dispossession by domesticating community discontent (i.e., practices and modes of dispossession become more 'culturally sensitive'). Indeed, the employment of social scientists by the oil consortium and World Bank in the design, engineering and implementation of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline was one such a feature of a 'culturally sensitive' oil-as-development project.

The American Anthropologist, Ellen Brown, was contracted by Exxon to consult on the project and to intercede with Chadians on behalf of the oil company. Part of her involvement in the pipeline was as an 'architect of the norms of land seizure and compensation', including 'reassigning a colonial signification to the concept of the bush'[40]; another aspect was to 'deflect NGO criticism'.[41] Of more significance here, though, is the way in which her cultural knowledge of southern Chad was employed to domesticate potential tensions within the community in response to the destruction of spiritually meaningful places during the construction phase of the project. She conducted animal sacrifices to purify these areas prior to their destruction. Although there has been no written academic notice of these sacrifices, they were documented (and often celebrated) in a dozen or so newspapers and journalistic bulletins. Timothy Smith notes in The Washington Post,

> Whenever construction ran into a sacred tree grove, work stopped so the locals could sacrifice a chicken to placate the spirits said to live within the trunks and leaves. Afterward, the bird would be cooked in a stew and fed to the village. After the meal, the entire village would relocate to where they believed the spirits had migrated. Dr. Brown would pay for the sacrificial animal and the villagers' relocation. According to her family, many people called her 'Madam Sacrifice'.[42]

Similarly, Ken Silverstein reports in The Los Angeles Times,

> Sponsoring animal sacrifices was one of the more unorthodox initiatives that the consortium undertook as part of its agreement with the World Bank and Chad … Such sacrifices are common in Chad. They are believed to alleviate illness or dispel bad luck. The animal – usually a chicken but sometimes a goat or cow for a particularly urgent request – has its throat cut while a spirit is invoked and asked for protection. Afterward, the animal is cooked in a sauce for a communal meal.[43]

In such descriptions, there is no questioning of the sufficiency of sacrifice to atone for the magnitude of loss. Although animal sacrifice emerged within 'local' contexts, the significance of land destruction effected by the pipeline (a land mass the size of the Benelux was appropriated along the pipeline corridor) required the performance of dozens and dozens of rare protection and atonement rites in the context of land destruction. These corporatesponsored sacrifices appropriate spiritual practice as a means to prevent outrage and suppress resistance. Moreover, the public celebration of corporate-sponsored spiritual practices furthers colonial tropes and Othering of 'African' people as 'primitive'. By asserting, 'such sacrifices are common in Chad', Chadians are essentialised as practising rites that are disparaged within contemporary Euro-American Judeo-Christian societies. It is also a statement that implicitly heralds the consortium's attention to local ways of life. In these journalistic narrations of animal sacrifice, Chadians are reified as 'native', 'primitive' and 'traditional' – a colonial (re)articulation that implicitly justifies the very insertion of projects like the pipeline as forms of 'development'.

Adopting a decolonial feminist approach, part of my task is to critique the servicing of social science knowledge for imperial and neo-imperial dispossessions, while simultaneously de-linking my scholarship from the colonial matrix of power/knowledge that continually

draws upon our intellectual labour for dominations, appropriations, dispossessions and displacements.

My argument here is that these sorts of simultaneously compounding factors – the colonial inheritance of an Otherness intimately linked to 'witchcraft' disparagement and exotification, the employment of powerful social scientists to work within and amidst oil-as-development projects that instrumentalise a knowledge of 'local' spiritual ontologies to facilitate resource extraction, etc. – create an implicit framework that encourages scholars to either avoid these topics altogether or reify colonial knowledge paradigms when they are addressed.

Academia and 'witchcraft' beyond the impasse

I have so far provided a brief sketch of the racial and colonial contexts of discussions on 'witchcraft' in and from Euro-American universities. Now, I want to consider the communicative form that scholarship on 'witchcraft' has tended to take. Notably, I am not alone in my sense that scholarship on 'witchcraft' in Africa in Euro-American universities is … acutely thorny. Scholars of the topic have described themselves as stumbling, often involuntarily, into the study.[44] They have noted their personal hesitancies in addressing witchcraft, sorcery and magic as well as anxieties of re-establishing Othering stereotypes and discourses, particularly considering the ways in which Othering through 'witchcraft' imaginaries persists.

The reasons to avoid the topic of 'witchcraft' are many. Silvia Federici, on the other hand, wonders, 'whether my concern with this subject [of witchcraft] might not be viewed as an undue interference in matters that can be manipulated to justify imperial agendas'.[45] African/ist scholars, on the other hand, have wondered if academics 'can speak of the indigenous [religions] of Africa in a singular sense of a common tradition' by using a common process of theorising.[46] Fundamentally, Olabimtan wonders if 'the Western scientific tool of inquiry can ultimately grapple with an experience like religion' on the continent.[47] By 'Western scientific tool', Olabimtan refers here particularly to positivist science, which is uncomfortable with efforts to discuss non-observable, non-material epistemologies like 'witchcraft'.

'Witchcraft' calls into questions the Cartesian desire for certainty, truth and visibility.[48] It is not uncommon for blind reviewers in the social sciences to press authors to establish before/after baselines: 'but,' a reviewer might ask, 'did such-and-such sociopolitical or economic phenomenon make witchcraft increase?' Or, reviewers might seek cause-effect analyses of 'witchcraft' in an attempt to render la sorcellerie 'measurable' and therefore 'factual'.

Within this contentious setting, a sort-of impasse has arisen. By this I mean there is now an unspoken scaffolding for Anglophone Euro-American scholarship on 'witchcraft' in which and through which scholars tend to assemble their assessments and engagements. A standardised format and language of preface has emerged. In response to the racialised history of Euro-American scholarship on 'witchcraft', a series of unspoken rules have become the norm. One general trend in the scholarship on witchcraft is to position the work, usually early on in the text, within an acknowledgement of colonial engagements with 'witchcraft'. This alternately includes acknowledgement and/or assessments of:

- The associations between colonial understandings of 'witchcraft' and racialised discourses of 'savagery', 'primitiveness' and 'backwardness';
- The fascination(s) with 'witchcraft' by colonial agents;
- The passing of witchcraft laws by colonial administrations (which alternately stigmatised

practitioners of ‘witchcraft’ and ‘witch-hunting’);
• And, sometimes, possible dialectical relationships between forms of ‘witchcraft’ (ontology, practice, epistemology) and colonial violence and domination.

Scholars often acknowledge the Eurocentric limitations of the terms (witchcraft, sorcery, occult and magic) and highlight the Othering tendencies embedded within such conceptualizations and terminologies. Another common premise is to centralise the modernity of contemporary ‘witchcraft’ – an epistemological orientation that nonetheless seems rooted in prefigurative notions that ‘witchcraft’ is broadly considered to be pre-modern and, therefore, requires invalidation.

Another prominent trend in the scholarships on ‘witchcraft’ is to acknowledge the fluidity and the multiplicity of ‘witchcraft’. Peter Pel highlights the dilemmas of such discussions, most particularly those that give copious attention to the un-know-ability of ‘witchcraft’ and which produce a ‘“language of secrecy” that produces an occult core in order to better ground its own authority, a gesture of power that hides a more profound problem’.[49] While obscurity and secrecy might sometimes have material origins,[50] this emphasis on the un-know-ability of aspects of ‘witchcraft’ is positioned within Euro-American universities against and alongside other, more ‘real’, more ‘knowable’ epistemologies. This situating reinforces an Othering of non-Judeo Christian practices, beliefs and ontologies – even if inadvertently – as ‘irrational’[51] and ‘espistemic[ally] inferior’ within hierarchies of knowledge.[52] More than this, as Pel notes, such a ‘language of secrecy’ might function aesthetically to create enthusiasm and fascination in the reader while (re)asserting the firm authority of the scholar-as-knower in regards to this ‘secret’, ‘mystical’ realm. A realm that is first imagined as immeasurably difficult to grasp (by the scholar) and then opened up for the reader (by the scholar).

While these theoretical orientations are heterogeneous and alternately moving, revealing, powerful and significant, more consideration might be given to our communicative academic frames, tools and disciplinary limitations. So that, while exploring the what(s), how(s) and why(s) of la sorcellerie are important, equally important, but less articulated and deliberated, are the arrangements of our expressive deliveries of engagements with ‘la sorcellerie’. While most social scientists now agree that there is no universal methodology for the acquisition or advancement of knowledge, this pluriversality of form has not been similarly applied to our modes and processes of communicating knowledge. The dominant modes of knowledge transferal – the lecture, the presentation and the written manuscript – might be insufficient for communicating all forms of knowing, even to exclusively academic audiences. Indeed, these forms of communication enforce particular kinds of conformities onto topics like ‘la sorcellerie’.[53] To express decolonial pluriversals – the presence of perpetually emerging, reforming, disappearing, domineering, enhancing, co-existing knowledges and ways of being – surely we need to press for divergent modes of communication (written, oral, aural, embodied, expressive, visual). I do not have the space to explore each mode in depth here. Instead, I will elucidate this awareness by looking closely at exchanges during an academic conference: a setting for knowledge sharing that is both strictly regulated (in terms of implicit expectations for the presentation and material time and space available) but also subjective (each encounter between the audience and the speaker is mediated through the audience’s subjective and prefigurative awareness of the topic at hand – some topics, then, become structured in a framework of un-learning). My analysis positions attendees of (geographical) academic conferences at the fore as a means to consider how our knowledge sharing experience is informed by the other academics in the room. This coming together at an academic

conference is not innocent and is often deeply problematic, including through by (re)concretising racialised knowledge hierarchies. Arturo Escobar writes of anthropology, 'no matter how hard they might try to eliminate or domesticate the ghosts of alterity … the discipline continues to derive its raison d'être from a deeply Western historical and epistemological experience'.[54] Similarly, my unpacking of the epistemological experience of eliciting audiences' imagined geographies of 'witchcraft' at a US geography conference reveals heterogeneous imaginaries, including some of those 'ghosts of alterity' that haunt human geography.

Academic conferences & imagined geographies of 'witchcraft'

I led a discussion during the 11th Annual Critical Geographies Conference at the University of Washington in 2016. My talk was titled, Witchcraft Beyond Dichotomies of 'Otherness'. Speaking about Cameroonian 'witchcrafts' in this venue, I argue, my scholarship is perpetually at risk of echoing alterity. My discussion was informed by a complex interplay of messily intermeshing forces: (a) an audience made up of mostly white, mostly Northern-based geographers, who often have limited prior exposure to the vast scholarship on the topic of 'modern witchcrafts', (b) my own whiteness and North-American, Anglo-ness, (c) the disciplining of scholars in conference venues to discrete periods of time to deliver knowledge, (d) an absence of considerations of people and places in Cameroon and a conventionalisation of 'Africa' as a unified region (at this and other academic conferences). Through the coloniality of being, whiteness has been centred as 'the perspective on and of reality'[55] and the structuring and disciplining of space-time-subjectivities at academic conferences obliges scholars to perform in ways that reify expertise, privilege, knowledge-certainty, whiteness, and more. At the beginning of this particular discussion, I asked the geographers and social scientists – (mostly affiliated with universities in the Pacific North-West of Canada and the US, this was a mixed group of faculty and graduate students) – in attendance to close their eyes, to relax and to clear their minds. I then requested that they imagine 'witchcraft'. I asked these geographers and social scientists to bring an image into their minds that represents or signifies what the word 'witchcraft' denotes for them. I provided no geographical context (i.e. I did not say 'French witchcraft' nor 'Congolese witchcraft'). I then asked that they write down this image on the small slips of paper that I had been circulated.

Two people volunteered to share their images with the group and to galvanise our collective exploration of the topic of 'witchcraft' and/in academia, specifically in the geographies of development. One person offered that she had imagined 'the divine feminine' and another revealed that he had imagined 'rebel knowledge' (see Figure 2). These conceptual frameworks are forms of imagined geographies[56] and reflect divergent understandings of 'witchcraft'. In one, there is a sense of 'witchcraft' as encompassing a godlike or revered form of femininity or womanliness. This language – 'divine' – is celebratory of the phenomenon of 'witchcraft'. On the other hand, 'rebel knowledge' seems to understand 'witchcraft' as a type of knowing that stands in opposition to (or that rebels against) dominant or hegemonic knowledge. While the latter appears to be non-gendered it is nonetheless linked to 'the divine feminine' in the sense that 'the divine feminine' is situated as a rebel form in patriarchal capitalism. Indeed, Silvia Federici's influential work shows how, between 1550 and 1650, control of European peasant women's bodies – control of women's 'rebel bodies'[57] – was essential to the project of early capitalist primitive accumulations.[58]

This encounter illustrates both the breadth of possibility within 'witchcraft' – as a symbol

of the divine, as feminine or relating to womanliness, as a form of knowledge or ontology,

Figure 2. Drawing Inspiration from dual imagined geographies of 'witchcraft': 'the divine feminine' and 'rebel knowledge'. A visual auto-ethnography. Art by author.

as an ontology that stands against dominant knowledge – as well as some thoughtprovoking connections between these two responses. Both 'divine' and 'rebel,' for example, suggest expressive or emotional meaning. In both cases, 'witchcraft' evokes pride – it is a form of power (or counter-power) that imbues the subject with dignity, divinity and pride. A rebel is self-consciously rebellious. A rebel is prideful in defiance of authority. Both the 'divine feminine' and 'rebel knowledge' consciously situate 'witchcraft' within the realm of social empowerment (as godlike and resisting).

These two responses echo the group responses in important ways but they are not a comprehensive reflection of the diversity of the imaginaries of 'witchcraft' in the room. There were 44 total responses. After the conclusion of the conference, I separated the responses into nine analogous clusters. These clusters can roughly be understood as follows: (1) commercial and mainstream Western cultural references; (2) femininity (including both feminine power and fear of women in capitalist societies); (3) 'dark magic' and malevolence; (4) 'Other' wisdom or wisdoms of 'Others'; (5) secrecy; (6) marginality; (7) the natural world; (8) healing and (9) outliers (see Table 1). As you can see in Figure 3, although there are roughly nine clusters of responses, half of the people in the room associated 'witchcraft' with either mainstream commercial images or femininity.

Much like the overlaps between 'rebel knowledge' and 'the divine feminine', there were echoes throughout and across the clusters. For example, the hegemonic Western image of 'the pointy black hat' is a gendered image in as much as it most often adorns a woman's body. This image arose to prominence in the 1710 and 1720 British children's literature, in which an elderly malevolent woman ('the crone') was often depicted as porting a black peaked hat.[59] The hat is not exclusively gendered, however, as illustrated in the Spanish artist, Fancisco Goya's oil canvas, Las Brujas en el Aire or Witches in the Air (dated 1797–1798; see Figure 4). In the painting, three semi-nude male figures hover in the air above a darkly clad and cloaked figure of a man, who has his arms outstretched to ward off evil spirits. The hovering figures hold an open-mouthed nude man and atop the head of each are conical hats of various colours. I have thus included the image under the cluster of 'Westernized images'.

Table 1. Audience members' written responses to the prompt, 'form an image in your mind of witchcraft'.
Note: At the 11th Annual Critical Geographies Conference at the University of Washington in 2016.

Commercial & Mainstream Western References
Femininity (12) Malevolence (6)
The divine feminine (1) 666 (+ upside down Christian cross) (1)
Witch-hunt (3), Female oppression (1)
Boiling pot or 'cauldron' (3) Male fear of women (1) Macumba, Brazilian 'dark magic' (1)
Magic (3) Maternal gathering (1)
Fire (1) Women in community (1) Predatory (1)

Willow, Buffy the Vamp. Slayer (1) Gendered difference (1) Corrupt (1)
Women, violence (1) Death (1)
Wands (1) Magic women (1) Spirit possession (1)
Pointy black hat (1) Gendered violence (1)
Broomstick (1) Caliban and the Witch/ capital
accumulation (3)
Hogwarts (1)
Wisdom(s) (5) Secrecy (4) Outliers (5)
Perception (1) Hidden (1) Game (1)
Other wisdoms (1) Darkness (1) Target (1)
Alternative knowledge (1) Night (2) Strength (1)
Unexplainable events (1) Ceremony (1)
Rebel knowledge (1) Spiritual-ness (1)
Natural world (2) Healing (2) Marginality (3)
Nature (1) Traditional healing (1) Resistance (1)
Traditional theatre (1) Healing alter (1) Social deviant (1)
Alternative (1)

Similarly, one academic at the conference evoked the image of 'Willow' (played by actor, Joss Whedon), a character in the popular American TV series, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, which aired from 1997 to 2003. Willow represents Westernized ideas of 'witches' – but ideas of 'witches' as embodying a dangerous femininity, often one which stands in opposition to the patriarchal norm (in this case, Willow's socially dangerous femininity is compounded by her sexuality because she is also queer). Due to the globalised diffusion of American television series and Hollywood films (and the 'preponderance of stories featuring witchcraft and the supernatural' in the US),[60] the influence of such imagery has a global reach and has come to influence diverse conceptualizations of 'witchcraft' in Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, and beyond.[61] There is a preponderance of filmic and written entertainment narratives that feature, adapt or appropriate 'witchcraft' in fluid and disparate forms (this prevalence of 'witchcraft' occurs within a larger fascination with the paranormal and the magical). As of December 2016, the Internet Movie Database (imdb.com) lists 714 films with the term 'witchcraft' in the title, while the term 'occult' featured 786 times and 'sorcerer' 213 times. Searches for 'psychic' (862), 'wizard' (425) and 'paranormal' (543) revealed similarly sizeable results. The commodification of witchcraft and the occult in popular culture is situated within a larger commodification of violence and fear by global entertainment industries.[62]

These stories are crafted for entertainment rather than education and they often incorporate practices and beliefs that are not 'witchcraft' per se, but which have become symbols of 'witchcraft' nonetheless. These global media commercialisations often merge symbols and practices of 'witchcraft' with voodoo, shamanism, animism, spirit possession, Satanism, broomstick riding, cauldron boiling, Harry Potter, and forms of magic (from card tricks and disappearing objects or oneself) – the list goes on.[63] Such is the variety of these depictions that the term 'witchcraft' brings to mind the words 'magic', 'boiling pot', 'healing', '666' (Biblical reference: 'the number of the beast' or the number referring to the Antichrist in the Book of Revelation) and many others in a room of ostensibly North American-based geographers (see Figure 5). The point of the exercise was not to expose a uniform imaginative of 'witchcraft'; rather I wanted to have some level of interaction with the audience that might allow me to reflect on where they were, imaginatively, when I began speaking about 'witchcraft' and 'la sorcellerie'. Turing the analytical lens to academics can be a decolonising practice. One through which we expose and uncover the performances of knowledge making that occur in our less formal spaces (i.e. academic conference and teaching), where we encounter

each other as speaking bodies. Turning the lens back onto scholars was important for two reasons: (a) for decolonising knowledge and (b) for understanding the imaginative geographies of my audience, which invariably shapes and informs the knowledge sharing practice.

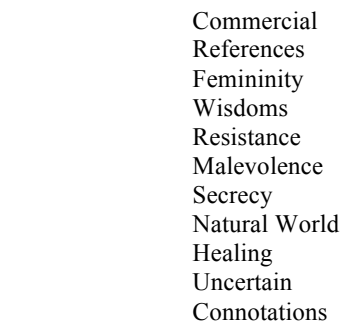

Figure 3. Commercial references and femininity dominate audience members' written responses to the prompt, 'form an image in your mind of witchcraft'. At the 11th Annual Critical Geographies Conference at the University of Washington in 2016.

Figure 4. Las Brujas en el Aire. The gallery description of this oil on canvas reads, 'Witches are sucking the blood out of the body of someone dead or dying'. Francisco de Goya y Lucientes. Las Brujas en el Aire. 1797–1798. Oil on canvas. 31.5 Å~ 43.5 cm. Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain. Source: WikiArt.org – Visual Art Encyclopedia (public domain). Accessed 30 Nov 2016. Permanent link: https://www.wikiart.org/en/ francisco-goya/witches-in-the-air-1798

Decolonising Euro-American 'witchcraft' imaginaries

I asked the 44 social scientists – roughly 'geographers' – to visualise 'witchcraft' as a preface to my discussion of some of the dilemmas of writing about, theorising about and speaking of (at academic venues 'witchcraft'). I wanted to, publically among my peers, address and think through some of the paradoxes, potentialities and problems of being a critical human geographer researching international development in Central Africa while publishing and speaking in academic venues predominantly peopled by colleagues not from and often not familiar with Cameroon. Previous experiences discussing some of the dynamics, complexities, creativities and ambiguities of 'la sorcellerie' in Cameroon had revealed the dilemmas of addressing audiences of geographers and development scholars in venues.

Figure 5. The cauldron, the tree, the belly, the beast. This photomontage brings together fragments of the geographers' imagined geographies of 'witchcraft', as demonstrated during a session at the 11th Annual Critical Geographies Conference in October 2016. Photomontage by author.

Our examinations are often constrained by institutionalised framings and requirements that orient our exchanges. In the case of published academic articles, we face stiff word count limits. In the case of academic conferences, our examinations are confined to 10- to 15-min periods of time, generally within a discipline-specific framework. These limitations impose specific controls on all academic outputs, of course. My assertion here is that densely

multifaceted and sociopolitically charged spiritualties that are so firmly tied to and reflective of colonial racial hierarchies and vulgarisations – like 'witchcraft' – are sometimes uniquely disadvantaged in these restricted, hence restrictive, spaces.

These restrictions can have the unintended consequence of (a) producing a transferable ('sound bite') form of knowledge that becomes 'fixed' and recasts our discussions of 'witchcraft' within an Othering frame (particularly when racialised spiritual Othering in popular imaginaries and mainstream entertainment venues has persisted) and/or (b) further dissuading scholars (development geographers included) from addressing forms of 'witchcraft', la sorcellerie and magic, which are (already) situated at the periphery of the discipline's present canon of knowledge. While human geographers increasingly recognise that considerations of spirituality, religion, emotion and the invisible are critical dimensions of human experience, place-making, socio-economic relations and geographical patterns of life, much of this literature has, of yet, been limited to Euro-American and Latin American areas. While we might be working towards more holistic syntheses of knowledge across and between fields and disciplines, the format of the 12- to 15-min academic paper presentation re-enforces a rigid framework that privileges – even demands – that we structure knowledge into synthesised and segmented parcelised bits that can be communicated precisely because they are situated within a larger imprisoning of streams of knowledge into disparate disciplines and sub-disciplines.[64] Again, there is another danger of conceiving of knowledge as fixed bits of easily transferable or 'capturable' stuff within a wider landscape of academia. Creating and transferring knowledge this way mimics a central feature of colonial knowledge production of the Other: 'fixity'. Homi K. Bhabha explains that 'fixity' in the ideological construction of Otherness has a 'political expediency' and that 'it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition … a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated'.[65] Similarly, Frantz Fanon and Edward Said critiqued the ways in which colonial powers deemed the cultures of the colonised as fixed, unchanging and markedly knowable. Fanon explains:

> … [Colonial] behaviour betrays a determination to objectify, to confine, to imprison, to harden. Phrases such as 'I know them,' 'that's the way they are,' show this maximum objectification successfully achieved. I can think of gestures and thoughts that define these men. [66]

Colonial knowledge is predicated, Said asserted, on a radical realism. In this realism, 'the habit for dealing with questions, objects, qualities and regions deemed Oriental [is to] designate, name, point to, fix … [these aspects considered] to be, reality … The tense they employ is the timeless eternal; they convey an impression of repetition and strength …'[67] Homi Bhabha is critical of Said's reading, arguing for an altered frame for understanding the conceptual power of the Other, not as a fixed form of colonial knowledge/power, but through an understanding of the ambivalence, dynamic and relational construction, 'to the point of stressing a closeness, even unity, of colonizer and colonized in forming a "colonial subject"'.[68] Any successful postcolonial critique, according to Bhabha, must move beyond the assumption of fixity. He writes, 'the point of intervention should shift from the identification of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the processes of subjectification made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse'.[69]

The challenge for scholars who consider 'witchcraft', then, might be to increasingly consider these processes of subjectification. An understanding of such processes would need to be deeply historical, entailing a genealogy of 'witchcraft' within and across colonial encounters. While relations of dominance and oppression are 'normalized and routinized'[70] through

the social rhetoric of images, 'Othering' is an active, subjective process[71] – one for which, Bhabha asserts, there is no 'inevitable' or 'unproblematic reading'. [72] Rather, in intervening, scholars must acknowledge 'the limits of their own field of enunciation' without 'individualis[ing] otherness as the discovery of their own assumptions'. [73]

Quelle chercheuse?

In the poem below, I draw inspiration from an episode walking up the road near Nanga village in 2011 with my life-partner and research partner, Derogy. He filmed portions of my conversations with people along the pipeline and offered new and often transformative insights into my partial readings of Cameroonian life and politics over the last decade. As we walked to a house to visit with a family, a black cat darted out in front of us. Derogy, shrewdly unsettled by the cat's appearance and path, redirected us. We turned around and went to a different house instead, returning only the following day. I use this scene (one of several dozen that I might have chosen) to both (a) elucidate some aspects of the popular epistemologies of la sorcellerie in Cameroon, including those popular idioms and everyday vernaculars that frame understandings of moments and movements that are alternately eerie, unknown, unseen, dangerous, lucky or unlucky as well as to (b) position myself within the landscape – visible in vulnerability. This form of communication offers an occasion, I posit, to consciously de-privilege whiteness as the centre of knowing. This work, while never done and never complete, is effected through (a) a de-privileging myself as the interpreter/knower (leaving moments for readers to decipher or not) as well as (b) a self-acknowledgement of unsteadiness and uncertainty (and a refusal of disembodied scholarship that effaces the author of the text through the 'hubris of the zero-point').

dirt gusts upwards
long shadows under our feet
mouths and noses covered
with our hands
Derogy blinks out toward the road
my eyes centre on the ground
sidestepping uneven grooves
where mud flows dark crimson currents
in rainy season
slivers of flaky cassava spread out and out
whitening tarps and pagnes[74]
drying in the sun
an inky black feline darts out ahead of us
its blunt ribcage
are long fingers encircling the belly
Dero grabs my hand
ça alors … c'est vraiment la malchance[75] he says
pulling me away

people fly the sunset sky on aeroplanes magiques[76]
eat the flesh of avocados mangoes papaya with skins untouched
flip poison capsules into beer bottle mouths
the taxi-driver yelled out
mbom on t'as vendu au village ou quoi[77]
as someone walked out amidst four lanes of zigzagging cars
hé mollah il a failli die-o[78]
my sister in-law told me of an uncle who sold his nephew's body

as the nephew dreamt chez lui in Etoi-Meki[79]
but ton ton walked in Mbandjock – hé[80]
bodies toil on dark plantations
as neighbours so far-far away en mbeng[81]
cook the cassava as it grows in your soil
tchop your water your peanuts your bodies your soil[82]
ndjeum masters of the world[83]
slurping up your insides
we cross a slim timber plank
thick veins line the leaves
sprouting beneath a wooden board
a group of pickins singsong chants[84]near a house of dried clay
and dusty red rooftop
they stop to watch
open-mouthed giggling as I pass
gingiru ratée[85]
albinos ratée[86]
my skin white like cassava drying in the sun
I think of falling
I think of falling
looking up
into the faces looking over the edges of the bank
in the shadows of a roadside ditch
my elbows in sticky soil
a goat grazing near my head
quelle chercheuse-o[87]
the board teeters slightly
ça va he asks
ça va I say
tongue yeasty in the heat
Dero grabs my hand
pulling us away
walking wide of the cat
and tout sa malchance

Decolonising communicative practice

In the last decade or so, radical scholarships from across disciplines have asserted the need to move and extend beyond limited and limiting modes of knowing crafted and maintained under the auspices of 'modernity'. In our search to live otherwise and to think otherwise, 'la sorcellerie' nods to a vernacular amalgamate that, although constituted by and through existing power topographies, nonetheless offers creative imaginaries of alternate value systems, modes of being and modes of seeing. As I have argued here, any engagement with or orientation towards magic or la malchance must be discerningly and consistently conscious of our audiences and our publics, including the prefigurative notions and/or imaginative geographies of 'la sorcellerie'. This awareness need not consign our discussions to the peripheries of conference debates, which would effect a further silencing, truncation and de-privileging of magic, the occult and 'witchcraft'. Instead, additional energies within efforts to decolonise knowledge and to decolonise the university should be directed towards a radical rearrangement of an outmoded conference-style knowledge-sharing paradigm.[88]
The conference mode confounds expressions of dissimilar modes of knowing; it de-privileges hesitancy as well as the expression of multiple subjectivities; it discourages the sort-of subterranean

historical and contextual engagements necessary to move against and beyond colonial knowledge. This is particularly the case for so-called 'early career scholars', whom have yet to achieve the renown and prestige allotted to tenured and highly published scholars and therefore are consigned to rigid time and space controls in academia. Until we realise a radical transformation of the conference format, decolonial scholars are left to attempt transformative expressions through clandestine and often dis-unified formulas.

For me, this entails rethinking through deliberately post-colonial, self-conscious and relational creative communicative praxis as I work to understand the constellations of la sorcellerie, la malchance, le pouvoir and la magie – always with an attention to the ways in which my intellectual projects, much like my corporeal self, is already/always entangled within a dynamic topography of power. Peter Pel wonders, 'So, how should we write about the magic of Africa, that heart of darkness that the successive empires of the Western imagination have tried to contain?'[89] Shrewd to the thickly embedded co-constitutive subjectivities of coloniality and authority as well as our emplacements within shifting historical and contemporary colonial imaginative geographies (which hold occult practices to be pejorative and provincial), decolonial scholars might be firm and brazen in expressing our necessarily humble conceptualizations and disavow realist presuppositions. This is particularly important in neoliberal university venues that might otherwise dismiss out-and-out scholars who emphasise hesitancy, partiality and subjectivity, particularly when they do so through artistic, creative and non-conventional communicative modes.

of lips that open / the silence of speech which believes itself speech and not the muttering loss
of inherited killing silence[90]

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the attendees of the 11th Annual Critical Geographies Conference at the University of Washington for their willingness to open up the space of the conference to a brief discussion of their own imagined geographies of 'witchcraft'. This article and this part of my intellectual journey would have been impossible without the emboldening critiques of Derogy Ndewa.

Notes on contributor

Amber Murrey researches and writes on social change and resistance within structural, development and colonial violence. Her research on oil politics and resistance in Cameroon as well as her collaborative work on the Pan-African resistance legacies and political philosophies of Thomas Sankara is shaped by a decolonial ethic and conviction that scholarship be active, attentive, accessible, decolonising.

Notes

1. For readings of witchcraft, the occult, ritual, capitalist accumulation and modernity in African contexts see Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, Modernity and its Malcontents, 1993; Geschiere, The Modernity of Witchcraft, 1997; Henrietta L. Moore and Todd Sanders, Magical Interpretations, Material Realities, 2001.
2. Shaw, "The Production of Witchcraft"; White, Speaking with Vampires.
3. Earlier geographers, indeed the earliest geographers, centred spirituality in their work, often 'plac[ing] great emphasis on mapping the advance of Christianity around the world, [being] mission-oriented, and … strongly assisted by the Christian Church' (Park, Sacred Worlds, 9). For more on the historical roots of the geographical interest in religion and 'sacred geography' see Chris Park, Sacred Worlds, 2002; Zur Shalev, Sacred Words and Worlds, 2012; David Livingstone, "Science, magic, and religion," 1988; David Livingstone, The Geographical Tradition, 1992; David Matless, "Nature, the modern and the mystic," 1991. Contemporary human geographers are,

again, increasingly considering the role of the sacred, the spiritual and the paranormal in place-making. These serial rediscoveries of topics within and across disciplines in the social science has been termed 'the fractal cycle' by Andrew Abbot (2001) in his Chaos of Disciplines.
4. The colonial matrix of power is a 'racial system of social classification that invented Occidentalism … that created the conditions for Orientalism … remapped the world as first, second and third …' (Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience," 3).
5. I use this term, employed throughout francophone regions of Cameroon, 'la sorcellerie', when referring to popular epistemologies of sorcery, magic, the occult in Cameroon. Against the standard practice in the social sciences, I do not italicise words in languages other than English as doing so effects a linguistic and symbolic Othering.
6. Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience."
7. I explicitly avoid the term 'non-Western' here, which connotes both 'a conceptual space defined by negation, inversion, deficiency, absence' (Comaroff and Commaroff, "Introduction," xii) as well as an artificial binary (West/the rest) that reaffirms the West and whiteness as the centre of being-in-the-world and knowing-the-world.
8. Postcolonial geographers have critiqued a larger trend within the discipline to posit geography's knowledge from the position of a universal 'we' centered in the 'EuroAmerican heartlands', a positioning that is implicitly Eurocentric (see Jazeel, "Between Area and Discipline," 649; see also Sidaway, "Geography, Globalization").
9. Federici demonstrates that witch-hunts were foundational to the plunder of early capitalism, wherein women's bodies were controlled to ensure the reproduction and accumulation of labour. (Federici, Caliban and the Witch. See also Federici, "The Great Caliban.").
10. Grosfoguel demonstrates this through his theorisation of the logic of genocide/epistemicide. For examinations of the persecution of women as 'witches' and primitive accumulation in Europe and colonial America, see Frederici, Caliban and the Witch and Carol F. Karlsen, Devil in the Shape of a Woman.
11. de Sousa Santos, Epistemologies of the South.
12. Nyamnjoh, "From Quibbles to Substance."
13. Grosfoguel, "Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities."
14. Fredman and Bartlett, The Making of Europe.
15. Freedman, 21.
16. Freedman, 18 and 7.
17. Boria, Imaginary Animals.
18. Freedman, "The Medieval Other." 3.
19. Greta Austin, "The Anglo-Saxon Wonders of the East," 26.
20. Wariboko, 13.
21. Maluleke, "African Traditional Religions in Christian," 121.
22. See AnaLouise Keating, "Gloria Anzaldúa's Spiritual Activism," 54.
23. Keating, 55.

24. James Howard Smith's Betwitching Development is a good example of this work. There is a considerable body of literature in related topics and fields, including the scholarships on 'witchcraft' and social change (see Footnote 1) as well as that on the relationships between 'witchcraft' and resource extraction (including Judy Nash's We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us, Kajsa Ekholm Friedman's 'Elves and Witches,' Stephen P. Reyna's 'Constituting Domination/ Constructing Monsters' and Deborah Fahy Bryceson et al.'s "Miner's Magic," to name a few).
25. See, e.g. Quijano, "Coloniality of Power"; Mignolo, Local Histories/Global Designs; Escobar, "Beyond the Third World."
26. Murrey, "Invisible Power, Visible Dispossession."
27. The Nobel Savage was revived in James Cameron's 2009 blockbuster film, Avatar, which is the highest grossing film ever produced. See Schuller, "Avatar and Necolonial Sentimental Cinema."
28. Murrey, Lifescapes of a Pipedream. Murrey, "Witchcraft of a Subterranean Pipeline"; Murrey, "Slow Dissent and the Emotional Geographies of Resistance."

29. Murrey, “Witchcraft of Subterranean Pipeline.”
30. Reyna, “Constituting Domination/Constructing Monsters.”
31. Murrey, “Invisible Power, Visible Dispossession.”
32. For more on Biya’s absentee leadership see Murrey, “Thoughts on 30 Years of Biya Power in Cameroon,” 2012. Pambazuka News. https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/thoughts-30-years-biya-power-cameroon
33. See Jackson, “The Spectacle of Neoclassical Economics,” for an analysis of the role of spectacle in deflecting attention from exploitation ‘on the ground’ in neoliberal extraction projects like the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline.
34. Wolfensohn, “Foreward,” vii.
35. For an analysis of the World Bank’s knowledge projects along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, see Murrey, “Imperial Knowledge, Decolonial Geographies.”
36. IK Notes 30735, “Local Pathways to Global Development,” 177, 244 and 256.
37. Ibid., 40, 41 and 53.
38. Briggs and Sharp, “Indigenous Knowledges and Development.”
39. Ibid.
40. Grovogui and Leonard, “Oiling Tyranny?” 48, 49.
41. Gould and Winters, “An Obsolescing Bargain in Chad,” 14.
42. Timothy R. Smith “Anthropologist Ellen P. Brown Helped Exxon Mobil Preserve African Customs,” 2010. The Washington Post. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/26/AR2010062603963.html
43. Ken Silverstein, “Pipeline’s Profits May Bypass Africans.” The Los Angeles Times, 2003. http://articles.latimes.com/2003/jun/17/nation/na-pipeline17/2
44. Peter Geschiere journeyed to Cameroon to study politics and was initially resistant to studying witchcraft, although it emerged repeatedly in his discussions. Paul Stoller describes his total of preparedness with the Songhay world of magic in Niger, ‘all of my assumptions about the world were uprooted from their foundation of the plain of Western metaphysics. Nothing that I had learned or could learn from within the parameters of anthropological theory could have prepared me’.
45. Federici, “Women, Witch-Hunting and Enclosures,” 11.
46. Olabimtan, “‘Is Africa Incurably Religious?’ A Response,” 322.
47. Ibid.
48. Nyamnjoh, “Delusions of Development.”
49. Pels, 206, emphasis added.
50. For example, when practices and procedures of witchcraft are necessarily enveloped in secret and obscured. This protection of knowledge might reflect divine authority given to a select few, as in the case with the Ejagham people of south-western Cameroon, where the unique form of ideographic writing (one that communicates the knowledge of nsibidi, ‘signs embodying many powers, including the essence of all that is valiant, just, and ordered’) was perfected by titled elders. See Thompson, Flash of the Spirit, 227.
51. Tomaselli, “Virtual Religion, the Fantastic,” 111.

52. Grosfoguel, “Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities,” 74.
53. Consider, e.g. W. Ashby’s concession, ‘If consciousness is the most fundamental fact of all, why is it not used [by scientists]? The answer, in my opinion, is that Science deals, and can deal, only with what one man can demonstrate to another. Vivid though consciousness may be to its possessor, there is as yet no method known by which he can demonstrate his experience to another. And until such a method, or its equivalent, is found, the facts of consciousness cannot be used in scientific method’. Ashby, Design for a Brain, 12.
54. Escobar, “Anthropology & Development.”
55. L. R. Gordon, Disciplinary Decadence, 64.
56. I work from both postcolonial and geographical scholarship on ‘imagined geographies’ as the production/maintenance of meanings/ideas of places. Jen Jack Gieseking explains, ‘It is

a personal, sometimes shared, portrayal of both imagined and real spaces and places that encompass the logic, emotion, power dynamics, and meaning of spaces in their specific time and era. It is consciously and unconsciously produced, reproduced, and reworked by the individual or social group through reiterated actions within the cultural, economic, political, and historical context of that person or group, and, in doing so, this process is formed by and forms individuals and shared identities'. http://jgieseking.org/understanding-the-geographicalimagination/
57. Federici, "Great Caliban … the Rebel Body."
58. Frederici, Caliban and the Witch.
59. Jensen, The Path of the Devil.
60. Thorburn, "Local Going Global," 153.
61. Globalized symbols are appropriated and (re)incorporated locally. See Thorburn, "Local Going Global," for a comparison between US-Hollywood and Nigerian-Nollywood films on the supernatural.
62. Despite an inclination to assert the novelty or the growing prominence of phenomena in the social world, the popular fascination with magic, miracles and the occult is not new and is probably not growing (although the proliferation of pop cultural symbols via technological development is).
63. Tomaselli, "Virtual Religion."
64. See Abbot, Chaos of Disciplines.
65. Bhabha, "The Other Question," 315.
66. Fanon, "Culture and Racism," n.p, emphasis added.
67. Said, Orientalism, 72.
68. Freedman, 12.
69. Bhabha, "The Other Question," 315, emphasis original.
70. Pieterse, White on Black, 12.
71. Freedman, 8.
72. Bhabha, "The Other Question," 315.
73. Bhabha, "The Other Question," 315.
74. Colorful cloth sold by the yard and tailored for women's garments in West and Central Africa.
75. 'That, then… is really bad luck' he says.
76. 'Magical airplanes'.
77. 'My friend, they sold you in the village or what?'
78. 'Ugh, friend, he is almost died'. (Possible implication: does he want to die? Does someone else control his physical being?).
79. 'As the nephew dreamed in his house, in Etoi-Meki [a neighborhood of Yaoundé]'.
80. 'But the uncle walked in Mbandjock [another village] – what!'.
81. 'En mbeng' is Camfranglais for the frontlines as in, where war is waged and one must struggle against a system to earn money, i.e. Europe and North America.
82. 'Tchop' is Kamtok (i.e. Cameroon Pidgin English) for eat (also used in Camfranglais).
83. 'Ndjeum' is Camfranglais for fat or heavy.
84. 'Pickins' is Kamtok for children.

85. 'Gingiru' is a Camfranglais term for an albino person. 'Gingiru ratée' is an insult of a white person as a 'broken or failed albino'.
86. 'Albinos' is French for albino. See previous footnote.
87. 'Quelle chercheuse' is French for 'what researcher?' Used here sardonically.
88. There are problematics of evoking the term 'decolonisation' outside of the formalised return of land to Indigenous people; see Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor". At the risk of being merely metaphorical, I endeavour to use the term forcefully here to critique coloniality and to push myself to create in anti-colonial, anti-racist scholarship that continues the ongoing moves to end colonial ways of knowing and being (including what Tuck and Yang, echoing Malwhinney, call 'colonial moves to innocence').
89. Pels, 206, emphasis added.

90. Nganang, Elobi.

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