

**‘Destiny is not where you are now’: Fashioning
new Pentecostal subjectivities among young
women in Calabar, Nigeria**



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Abstract

‘Destiny is not where you are now’: Fashioning new Pentecostal subjectivities among young women in Calabar, Nigeria

The thesis examines young women’s livelihoods in Calabar, southeastern Nigeria. It discusses how young women aim to realise their believed ‘destinies of greatness’, reconciling aspirations of fortune with present insecurities. Pinpointing a time when the city’s universities were on indefinite strikes, the discussions depict young women’s industriousness as they ‘wait’ amid uncertainty. The thesis focuses explicitly on young women’s engagement with Pentecostalism, the religion encouraging action, timeliness, and knowledge of the self and God. Understanding how young women fashion Pentecostal subjectivities attuned with ideals of urban success, the chapters focus on various ‘sites’ in their lives: church ministries, the home, sewing shops, beauty pageants. The thesis argues that young women believe they can realise future fortune by constantly partaking in acts of self-preparation. However, as action is driven by the competing forces of fear and faith, the acts young women believe will fashion subjectivities conducive to urban success are always gambles.

Illuminating the emic concept of ‘destiny’ – a classic concept in West African Anthropology, denoting personhood and lifecourse (Fortes 1987) – the thesis builds upon recent analyses of how action underpins concepts of hope (Miyazaki 2004), doubt (Pelkmans 2013), and fortune (da Col 2012; Graeber 2012). Illuminating action and futures, the discussion contributes to recent analyses of time, productivity and youth (Honwana 2012; Jeffrey 2010; Masquelier 2013a). By examining the often-ignored category of young women, the thesis develops an understanding of ‘feminine cultures of waiting’. The discussion of how Pentecostal subjectivities are fashioned, which draws different ‘sites’ of young women’s lives together, also furthers analyses of African youth by countering salient narratives of youth in violence (e.g. Vigh 2006). Focusing on young women’s livelihoods, the thesis contributes to an Anthropology of (Pentecostal) Christianity by illustrating how religious rhetoric and practice are carried out and negotiated outside formal church institutions.

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Glossary

AIC	African Initiated Church (also known as African Independent Church).
ARP	Area Rehabilitation Program.
AsFac	A State Fit for a Child.
BBM	BlackBerry Messenger.
BCS	Brotherhood of the Cross & Star, one of Nigeria's most successful AICs and founded in Calabar.
CCQ	Carnival Calabar Queen (pageant).
CMS	Church Missionary Society.
CRUTECH	Cross River University of Technology, Cross River's state-run university.
DCC	Destiny's Child Center, an orphanage run by the First Lady of Cross River State's Office.
DP	'Display picture' on BlackBerry Messenger Service.
FGM	Female genital mutilation.
IMF	International Monetary Fund.
JAMB	Joint Admissions & Matriculation Board, being admitted to the university course of choice is contingent on this exam.
LGA	Local Government Area.
MACA	Mothers Against Child Abandonment, a charitable organisation founded by the First Lady of Cross River State.
MBGN	Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria.
NEPA	National Electric Power Authority (popularly known by Nigerians as 'Never Expect Power Always').
NRM	New Religious Movement.
NYSC	National Youth Service Corps. A scheme started in the 1970s to unify Nigeria. Graduates embark on a year's service in a state other than that of their university of origin.
PDP	People's Democratic Party.

POWER	Partnership Opportunities for Women Empowerment Realization.
UniCal	University of Calabar, Cross River's federal-run university.
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.
WAEC	West African Examination Council, the acronym refers to exams taken in the final year of high school.

Prologue

Waiting:

'Faith without works is dead' (James 2:20 NKJV)

Are you waiting for God to do something in your life?

One thing we all have learned is that waiting should not be a passive thing. When we're waiting the correct way, we're on the lookout. We talk like what we are believing for is going to happen. We act like it's going to happen. We're making preparations.

It's just like when you're expecting someone for dinner, you don't wait til they show up before you decide to start cooking. Most likely you start early in the day. You make sure the house is clean, you go to the grocery store, and maybe you buy some flowers for the table. You make preparations because you're expecting someone.

Well, that's the attitude we need to have while we're waiting for God's promises to come to pass. Put your faith to work. Prepare for the answer to come. Keep standing, keep believing, and keep hoping because your answer is on the way!

A PRAYER FOR TODAY

Father God, I choose to put actions behind my faith today. I trust that You are at work in my life. I will wait the right way – with expectancy – knowing that my faith in You opens the door for Your hand to move in my life in Jesus' name. Amen.

- BlackBerry broadcast received 12/6/12, Calabar

Introduction

Less than a month into my doctoral fieldwork, an incident occurred at UniCal, one of Calabar's two universities, which impacted deeply on my informants' lives for the remainder of my fieldwork. As I had heard, armed robbers raided one of the student hostels on campus one Friday night, taking students' mobile phones and shooting a boy who would not give up his handset. The campus medical centre apparently would not come out to the hostel, leaving students to carry the injured boy to the clinic themselves. Yet when they reached the medical centre, the staff supposedly refused to treat the boy. Pointing the finger to campus cultist activity, the school administration allegedly did not want to engage in the incident. Angered, students rioted on campus, smashing windows and burning cars. When the injured student gave up the fight for life early on the Saturday morning, the students staged a protest. With increased anger, their initially peaceful demonstration towards the university's administration quickly escalated into further destruction.

My informants acknowledged that they did not know how much was true concerning the allegations made towards the university. What was certain was that student anger had already been simmering with regard to campus security and university finances. School fees had recently been raised by 10,000 naira – covering teaching facilities, the students initially saw the benefits of the increment. However, sentiments changed later that year when a deadline was imposed for students to either pay or forfeit admission. This put financial pressure on the students, who previously only had to pay fees when they wanted

to receive their certificate of graduation. While many students did pay, an additional 3,000 naira fine was issued for late payments. Feeling exploited, the students set aside a day in Student Week – Bonfire Night – to stage a protest. However, university administration cancelled Bonfire Night, leaving the students unable to express their concerns. Although their voices were heard through the violent riots that ensued, the students had turned on themselves. The death of a fellow student aside, each student was fined 10,000 naira to cover damages, student hostels were vacated, university administration threatened to remove the Student Union, and the campus closed indefinitely.

I start with this dramatic incident as a backdrop to this thesis: to draw out young people's concerns and frustrations in the lead-up to my arrival in Calabar, and to contextualise young women's activities throughout my fieldwork. The violence of that Friday night and Saturday morning is not to be seen as an exemplar of youth in Calabar. Yet, it cannot be denied that the destruction caused by a small minority of students expresses many of the concerns held by the majority of young people in Calabar. The riots may have lasted a few hours but young people's frustrations with their current situations, and fears towards their futures continued. Rather than dwelling on the short-lived violence, this thesis focuses on young women's livelihoods in Calabar to examine how young people 'cope' with their predicaments through peaceful and ingenious techniques of endurance.

After the riots, with students sent home, Calabar became noticeably quieter. Those students who lived in Calabar enjoyed the initial respite, yet, as the weeks rolled on, they became increasingly frustrated with the lack of opportunities. My

friends sighed; while boys could ‘hustle’ elsewhere, all they could do was ‘eat, sleep and get fat’. In reality, I watched as they did the small things they could to alleviate boredom: work on their spirituality, take up courses in sewing or baking, travel to Ghana to buy clothes to sell, jump on any opportunity to model or be an usher at the city’s events, or just network on their mobile phones at home. My friends dropped these activities instantly when UniCal suddenly resumed for end-of-year exams. Coinciding with a national university strike, UniCal had been closed for some six months. Used to enduring long periods of waiting – to get school admission, during strikes, to graduate and go for Youth Service (NYSC) – my friends were resigned to the fact that this was what happened. I sympathised with their frustrations, yet I was also impressed with how they did not dwell on current precarious realities. While appearing in limbo, their progression in the hands of others, young women often talk of very different futures.

This thesis examines how, amid a context of insecurity, young women remain optimistic for the future by believing in their ‘destinies of greatness’. Central to the discussion is the idea of time, where the future is not separate from but imagined, engineered and worked towards through the lived experiences of the present. The thesis argues that young women engage in constant acts in the present as a means to self-fashion and prepare the self for future possibilities and success. Such acts are driven by the competing forces of fear and faith, and their repetition and diversification renew hope for the future. Focusing on a specific point in time when many found themselves waiting for school to resume, the discussions draw across different scenarios to highlight how religious

activity, staying in the house, making clothes, contesting in beauty pageants became strategies for young women to alleviate present difficulties and encourage future success.

Youthscapes: Power and Time

This opening vignette highlighting dependency, frustration and boredom echoes other analyses of African youth. Illuminating young people as political agents for change, Honwana (2012) also sets the scene for her volume through portrayals of youth demonstrations in London,¹ Paris, Tunisia and Mozambique. Drawing the experiences of young Africans together with those of other young people across the world, we find a common disjuncture between youth's expectations and realities. For Honwana (2012), youth are in crisis yet are far from idle as they wait for their futures to be realised. Crucially, this 'crisis of youth' is exacerbated in Africa, where the 'dominant line of cleavage [...] has become generation' (Comaroff & Comaroff 2006:284). In understanding the African context, we must not only acknowledge the sheer numbers of young people on the continent – nearly half the African population is under the age of sixteen (Cole & Durham 2007:5) – but also understand the societal processes and structures of power that magnify and perpetuate youth's marginalisation.

Earlier analyses tended to portray African youth as ambivalent forces, simultaneously destructive and dangerous, yet creative and innovative (cf.

¹ Interestingly, the London riots of August 2011 occurred just before UniCal's closure. I remember students and lecturers at UniCal, who had seen news coverage of the London scenes, asking me with astonishment what was happening in my country. A few days later, the UniCal riots broke out, echoing the voices of young people in London. While we must pay attention to the local, the specific reasons for youth's frustrations and actions, Honwana (2012) is right to draw attention to the current global predicament of youth.

Abbink & van Kessel 2005; Honwana & de Boeck 2005). In analyses of West African youth, this ambivalent characterisation is portrayed in the civil wars that played out across the region through the closing of the 20th century (e.g. Kaplan 1994; Peters & Richards 1998; Vigh 2006). Yet this Janus-like depiction of youth is unhelpful in ignoring the more creative means of youth as they navigate the margins of society, negating an understanding of gender, and failing to understand why and how youth *can* have shifting and ambiguous identities in the postcolony. To understand the category of youth, it is helpful to call on Durham's (2000) concept of 'social shifter'. Borrowing from linguistics, Durham (2000) recognises the relational aspect of this social category and asks us to identify emic conceptions of 'youth' and 'power' in our analyses. Hence, by grounding youth firmly in their social terrain, illuminating the historical structures that give rise to present predicaments (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff 2006), our analyses are better positioned to follow Honwana (2012), to understand how youth do act and attempt to realise aspirations.

To unravel youth's predicament, we must understand the workings of power in the African state. Where 'criminality with violence [...] has become endemic to the postcolonial condition' (Comaroff & Comaroff 2006:7), the African postcolony has become almost synonymous with terms such as kleptocracy, neopatrimonialism, clientalism and prebendalism. Often regarded as indigenous modes of governance, such criminal activities take on more sinister guises in the contemporary world (Comaroff & Comaroff 2006). The failed Nigerian general election of 1993 exemplifies the precarious process of securing power in the postcolony. As Apter (1999) writes, these elections questioned the legitimacy of

the state's power, not because they were rigged but because they simply failed to happen. By 1993, the self-appointed military president, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida (known as IBB) had governed Nigeria for eight years. In this time Nigeria had gone from being a middle-income country to one of the poorest in Africa, and the hope of returning civilian democracy from military rule had been deferred numerous times since 1990.

While his ruling regime had been marked by kleptocracy, the weeks after the failed 1993 elections also lacked any concept of 'good governance'. Sensing his political demise, IBB attempted to buy support, enticing various political leaders with billions of naira. No coalition was formed, leading IBB to stand down from presidency. In understanding IBB's rule, we may draw on Obadare & Adebaniwa's (2010) analysis of how society relates to the abject and excessive Nigerian state. It is here that the postcolonial state is more than just sinister (Comaroff & Comaroff 2006), disordered (Chabal & Daloz 1999) or exercising the efficient governmentality of biopolitics (Marshall 2009). The Nigerian state is a site of morbidity, with sovereignty revolving around death (cf. Bataille 1991) and the postcolony becoming an abyss of violence and loss of life (cf. Quayson 2003). Governing life and death in a public performance, the state displays its 'inherent homicidal' power (Obadare & Adebaniwa 2010:17) – a somewhat more extreme version of Mbembe's depiction of the postcolony as a 'figure of brutality' (2006:153). Reminiscent of Agamben and Schmitt's analyses, where the state becomes so powerful it exists *outside* the law (cf. Hansen & Stepputat 2005), the lines of inclusion and exclusion are rendered ambiguous.

If Obadare & Adebani's (2010) pathologic interpretation of the Nigerian postcolony places extreme raw power in the hands of the state, it also dislocates the individual from the locus of power. What it means to be a Nigerian citizen is becoming increasingly ambiguous (Adebani & Obadare 2010), rendering disengagement of state and society. Following Mbembe's (1992) concept of 'necropolitics', citizens find themselves in a state of 'half-death' or 'half-life'. Where politics masquerade as 'war' rather than as sovereignty, Mbembe (1992) argues that subjects are denied freedom, incapable of self-understanding and self-representation. In 'war', subjects are unable to choose life or death, creating worlds of the 'living dead' and illuminating a problem of 'becoming'. Obadare & Adebani (2010) go on to argue how lack of modalities and social instrumentalities on the part of the citizen further throw the concept of 'state' to disarray. This not only disputes identity but also security: what greater insecurity exists than the power of the sovereign state to arbitrarily flout the very laws of protection that it stands to uphold?

We may ask what this actually means for Nigerians managing to survive each day. Smith's (2007) monograph allows us to understand how corruption is so engrained in Nigeria that the art of '419', the name coming from the legal code denoting fraudulent activity, applies to both politician scamming his nation and student sending opportunistic emails. Where the postcolony is built upon an economy of 'dirty tricks' (Bayart et al. 1999), we can understand how ambivalence towards the workings of power arises, where corruption, sharing wealth with one's people, presents a double-edged sword of appeasing the included and incensing the excluded. This speaks to Apter's (1999, 2005)

analysis of corruption and 'fast wealth', highlighting how such duplicitous activity feeds into a larger crisis of representation in Nigeria.

In August 1993, IBB declared that he would stand down from presidency. Tears supposedly rolled down his cheeks, but were edited from the final television broadcast, making it unclear as to whether IBB produced 'crocodile tears' or tears of remorse, or whether he even cried at all (Apter 1999). Such radical instability of the sign renders a culture of 'smoke and mirrors', where Nigerians are unsure of what is real, encouraging great epistemological and ontological uncertainty. Furthermore, this crisis of representation cultivates and is compounded by other crises: of identity and belonging, of security, of infrastructure, of spirituality and the occult. Extrapolating Obadare & Adebaniwa's (2010) analysis of the postcolony, we find that brutality arises not only through the ambivalence to the workings of power, but also through the fragility and opportunistic nature of securing power.

Obadare & Adebaniwa's (2010) analysis is captivating, yet it remains difficult to see how some people can in fact connect with the loci of power. As such, we may draw on Chabal & Daloz who regard African states as 'no more than a décor, a pseudo-Western façade masking the realities of deeply personalised political relations' (1999:16). Illuminating the inability to understand the African postcolony in framings of 'western' politics, Chabal & Daloz (1999) present three models of the African state: the 'transplanted' (e.g. Reno 1998), the 'neo-patrimonial' (e.g. Blundo & Olivier de Sardan 2006), and the 'hybrid' (e.g. Bayart 2009). Illuminating historical processes, the political effects of combining 'western' norms prescribed during colonial rule and traditional African social

systems, the 'hybrid state' perspective offers a particularly useful framework for understanding African power relations. Rather than regarding disorder as tantamount to an inherent irrationality, this model considers a 'political instrumentalisation of disorder' in the postcolony. Arguing that disorder is part of how politics 'works', Chabal & Daloz (1999) shy away from the Comaroffs' (2006) dramatic framing of lawlessness and criminality.

While Chabal & Daloz (1999) can be critiqued for their generalisation of the African continent, and for omitting both northern countries and South Africa from their analysis, their analytical framework is useful for understanding how youth access power. The African state is regarded as informal and personal, rendering it not only weak in a Weberian sense but also vacuous (Chabal & Daloz 1999). 'African societies are essentially plural, fragmented and above all, organised along vertical lines' (ibid.:20). We are reminded of Bayart's (2009) 'rhizome state', in which the relationship between wealth and power is ably encapsulated in the concept of 'the politics of the belly'. Patrimonialism, implying cleavages of gender and generation, is not just about wealth, accumulating power through consumption, but also about politics. 'A man of power who is able to amass and redistribute wealth becomes a "man of honour"' (Bayart 2009:242).

Drawing on the *longue durée* and emic conceptions of power, Bayart (2009) illustrates how the vertical networks of traditional patron-client relationships manifest as contemporary power relations. Crucially, this patrimonialism has disenfranchised youth from the loci of power in the postcolony. Without power, youth are unable to 'grow old' or govern their futures (Abbink 2005) – youth

perpetuate their subordination, existing in a 'cultural moratorium' (Erikson 1968). Hence, amid disorder, the 'crisis of youth' is a 'crisis of becoming' (cf. Mbembe 2001).² Yet patronage is also crucial for youth's survival. In a system where everyone is out to get as much as they can, 'little men', faced with destitution, actively participate in the 'world of networks', seizing opportunities amid the historically ingrained inequalities of the postcolony. Hence, where Bayart (2009) argues that society's margins become important sites of productivity, compounding the frenetic nature of the African state, he highlights a certain ambivalence to power that resounds in the postcolony.

Youth's ambiguous relationship to patrimonial networks of power is ably encapsulated in Vigh's (2006) analysis of the Aguentas during Guinea Bissau's civil war. Using the trope of 'social navigation', the trials of youth amid uncertain social, economic and political milieux are depicted particularly well through one informant, Mbuli, who had to seize opportunities as they arose in order to survive. Before the war, Mbuli was frustrated by the lack of job opportunities, leaving him willing to sign up to the Aguentas when war broke out. The Aguentas were not victorious in the war and, although Mbuli escaped with his life, belonging to the losing side made securing patrimonial networks difficult. However, when the opposing Junta were defeated at the next post-war elections, Mbuli's circumstances changed and his political connections secured him a job. The way in which Vigh (2006) combines Bourdieu's (1977) analysis of social structures with de Certeau's (1984) analysis of tactical agency is particularly insightful for how youth encompass both 'geographies of exclusion and inclusion'

² As Mbembe notes, 'Underlying the problem of arbitrariness and tyranny... lies the problem of freedom from servitude and the possibility of the autonomous African subject' (2001:14).

(Honwana & de Boeck 2005:1). To employ de Certeau (1984), the 'rhizome state' (Bayart 2009) is the space of the powerful that society's 'little man' must use and manipulate, operating 'blow by blow' in an opportunistic fashion without the ability to plan into the future.

While Vigh's (2006) 'social navigation' helpfully incorporates de Certeau's (1984) concepts of time and space into an analysis of youth in the postcolony, the emphasis on social networks that explains where youth are coming from can be extended to understand youth's aspirations and where they hope to get to. The idea of how society's 'little men' operate on an ever-changing social terrain is helpful to understanding how young women in Calabar acted during UniCal's closure as they anticipated better futures. Focusing on how young women partake in a variety of different activities in order to prepare themselves for success, this thesis highlights the ways in which young women must constantly position themselves in society's shifting terrain, utilising various networks, in order to maximise future potential. In examining the fears and faiths young women have in seeking guidance from pastors, interacting with other young women, and connecting to pageantry's networks of feminine power, for instance, the thesis advances understanding of young women's involvement in postcolonial patronage networks.

To further understand young women's experiences during UniCal's closure, Honwana (2012) offers a useful analytical framework by moving away from youth in conflict to focus on how young people's everyday actions are rendering them political agents for change. Stating that youth across Africa are in a period

of 'waithood',³ a transitional life stage that incorporates roles such as buying houses, participating in civil society, gaining education, Honwana (2012) argues that these struggles hinder youth's ability to 'grow up' and thus reconfigure adulthood. Honwana (2012) develops analyses of youth's 'crisis of becoming', which focus on power relations, by incorporating a temporal element. 'Waithood', as a condition of 'modernity', simultaneously expands and constrains youth's horizons – youth are presented with increased opportunities but are faced by higher barriers to success. Yet Honwana's (2012) analysis of 'waithood' is most successful by illustrating how youth are far from idle as they 'wait'. During this liminal period, young people are partaking in a multitude of activities – from migration to Europe, to engaging in informal economies and intimate relationships – negotiating risk and exploitation in a bid to survive.

Honwana (2012) helpfully illuminates the unpredictable situations youth find themselves in, and draws on the ways African youth survive day-to-day challenges. Youth's actions are articulated in the phrases '*desenrascar a vida*' ('eke out a living') in Mozambique, '*débrouillage*' ('making do') in Senegal and Tunisia, and 'just getting by' in South Africa (ibid.:4). Where Honwana (2012) reminds us that 'waithood' affects youth differently across Africa, this thesis examines how (and for what) young women in Calabar are 'waiting'. In Calabar, the daily struggles of youth are enunciated in the phrase 'to manage'. 'Managing' money, opportunities and connections is a skill needed not just to survive but also to succeed. Young women in Calabar do not count what little they have but look for ways of covering up shortcomings and making things go further. Yet in

³ The term 'waithood' was originally used by Dhillon & Yousef (2007) and Singerman (2007) with regard to youth in the Middle East and North Africa.

Calabar, young people do not only talk about ‘managing’ circumstances but also about ‘preparing’ themselves. There is the understanding that no amount of knowledge or number of skills is redundant. Regardless of today’s predicament, tomorrow could transform potential into real opportunity.

The discussions presented here build upon Honwana’s (2012) use of ‘waithood’ to understand how young women’s activities not only allow them to survive the present but also evoke and provide means for attaining a particular vision of future success and political autonomy. Hence, this thesis explicitly ties into other analyses of youth, time, expectations and productivity (e.g. Jeffrey 2010; Masquelier 2013a; Weiss 2009). For instance, in Jeffrey’s (2010) study of unemployed educated young men in India, the term ‘timepass’ articulates how waiting, far from redundant time, can be a process of social change. Asking whether people prioritise long-term over short-term goals in situations of rapid change, Jeffrey (2010) is helpful for raising and complicating the concept of time in youth studies. Where youth’s expectations may not necessarily have uniform temporalities, we may ask how young women in Calabar conceptualise the imminent and distant futures. Are short- and long-term goals necessarily supportive of one another?

Where Crapanzano (2004) argues the methods for reaching the future are more interesting than how it is imagined, this thesis focuses on the acts young women take to prepare themselves for the future. Studies of African youth have a bias towards understanding masculinities – either in war (e.g. Vigh 2006) or in waiting (e.g. Masquelier 2013a) – and this thesis furthers analyses of how youth negotiate present realities and future aspirations by paying particular attention

to 'feminine cultures of waiting' (cf. Jeffrey 2010). The discussion examines how ideas of respectability come out through the particular negotiations young women must make between ideas of personal future success and autonomy and commitments to family, church and potential spouses. Where this thesis draws out young women's fears and faiths in their actions, it also complicates the analyses of waiting by highlighting conceptions of risk, gambles, and contingent losses and gains.

Focusing on African Femininities

In Nigeria, a highly conservative, patriarchal and gerontocratic country, young women know all too well that their voices remain unheard. Perhaps Nigerian women's struggles are best summed up by the postcolony's recent controversy over child brides. In July 2013, the Nigerian Senate voted on a bill to make eighteen the minimum age for a girl to marry. However, attempts to amend the law were pulled by one senator known, himself, to have married girls younger than eighteen. Arguing that the amendment would contradict Shariah law with regard to a girl being 'of age', Senator Sani Ahmed Yerima rallied support of thirty-four other senators – enough support to stop the bill from being passed. The ruling sparked public outcry across the nation, with the hashtag #ChildNotBride being posted across media sites, Nollywood actresses and Nigerian beauty queens speaking out against girl marriages, and people questioning the silence of Nigeria's First Lady. While the public's dissent raised awareness of some of the iniquity in Nigerian society, the focus was more on the rights of the girl child rather than questioning how such a decision could have

been made. The fact remains that a small number of Big Men ruled the plight of millions of girls.

The marginalisation of young women in Nigeria raises questions as to how to represent this group within anthropology. Since the 1970s, amid Feminist and Marxist movements within the Social Sciences more generally, anthropology has recognised a crisis of representation concerning women in ethnographies (Moore 1988). Edwin Ardener's (1975) theory of 'muted groups' became important for highlighting the two-fold misrepresentation of women within the discipline: firstly, by men being more like the (often male) researchers; and, secondly, women becoming 'muted' by their lack of participation in research. Within West African anthropology, the difficulties of finding female informants willing to divulge their personal stories, as Utas (2005) found out researching women's involvement during and after Liberia's civil war, have led to ethnographies which either identify women's lives through the whole culture, privileging account-keeping over personal narrative (e.g. Kaberry 1952), or focus on the oral history of one informant (e.g. Chernoff 2003; Smith 1954).

While anthropology has tried to understand women in juxtaposition to men, part of anthropology's recognition of female voices has also been to evaluate relations *between* men and women. Ortner's (1974) structuralist analysis most famously investigated this, arguing that women are subordinate to men in every culture due to women being identified with something that is universally devalued: nature. While Ortner (1974) presents a compelling argument, there is a need to look at the specifics of West African personhood construction to truly understand relations between men and women. In West African society, gender

is not necessarily ascribed at birth but is performed and imbued with much symbolism (cf. Amadiume 1987). Where the person is understood as constantly being in a process of becoming, initiations into secret societies have traditionally been important for performing gendered roles across West Africa (e.g. Ferme 2001). However, initiations to traditional gendered societies are being shaped by urban life and visions of particular modernities (cf. Ferme 1994). The following discussions examine the acts young women must carry out to prepare themselves for the future, and their fears and faiths inherent in becoming recognisably respectable and successful urban dwellers. Central to understanding young women's livelihoods is questioning the acts deemed suitable for singles anticipating marriage.

Concerning relations between men and women, West African cultures emphasise gender complementarity, articulated in the Cameroonian idiom 'Men own the land, women own the crops' (Kaberry 1952:34; cf. Soothill 2007). Where traditional West African gender roles indicate emic conceptions of power, this thesis raises questions as to whether gender empowerment is the same as 'western' notions of gender equality. In conceptualising gendered power relations, we may draw on Mahmood's (2005) account of a female Islamic piety movement in Cairo, where women actively choose to wear a veil in order to mould themselves as autonomous (religious) subjects. Where many consider the veil a symbol of female subordination, Mahmood's (2005) focus on female agency makes us question notions of authority, resistance and freedom in our gendered analyses. Much of the following discussion draws out the ways in which young women in Calabar do exert agency, and the focus on moulding

respectable subjectivities raises questions as to what values young women hold as being integral to attaining future success.

In representing African young women, it is also necessary to outline those constituting this study. While the chapters examine the various ways in which young women prepare themselves for the future by drawing across different aspects of their urban lives – from churches and the home, to sewing shops and beauty pageants – the discussions illuminate the experiences of one group. These young women were all single, and all (privately) negotiating relationships with men as they looked towards marriage. The vast majority were studying or recent graduates anticipating NYSC, but a few were still trying to enter the haphazard university system. They had grown up in Calabar or other cities and large towns – certainly none were from rural areas, although all knew their fathers' villages where they were 'from'. These young women performed a particular urban cultural code: they wore skinny jeans, regularly 'made' their hair, never left home without make-up, moved around the city in taxis (preferably private cars, never buses), and always carried a charger to maintain precious mobile phone battery, for instance. It proved difficult to tell how wealthy their family backgrounds were because these girls styled themselves to appear part of an emerging and highly aspirational class.

My informants were also all Christian. Regularly attending church once (if not two or three times) a week, staying spiritually strong was considered fundamental to successful living. Not all were Pentecostal – many were Catholic, Presbyterian, Anglican; few attended AICs – but the majority had attended Pentecostal programmes at some point. If not, they were still familiar with the

Pentecostal movement, which has recently flourished in Calabar, as elsewhere in Nigeria (Marshall 1999, 2009). Pentecostalism is shaping Calabar's other Christianities – for instance, by introducing lively worship songs to compete with Pentecostalism's emphasis on ministering through music. Yet, as the final chapter depicts the Carnival Calabar Queen pageant as a 'divine initiative' of Cross River's fervently Pentecostal First Lady, Pentecostalism is also moulding Calabar's urban life more broadly. Hence, this thesis is not an account of a Pentecostal church, or even Calabar's more general Pentecostal movement, but examines how Pentecostalism shapes young women's lives. For instance, where Soothill (2007) focuses on church practice to examine how Pentecostalism empowers Ghanaian women spiritually, this discussion also highlights how young women interact with the movement outside church settings. The thesis examines how young women pick certain aspects of Pentecostalism – both rhetorical and practical – which they regard as helpful for preparing in their future aspirations.

While youth studies tend to ignore young women, very few examine youth's engagement with religion.⁴ Cole presents one recent ethnography of young women's involvement with Pentecostalism in urban Madagascar, examining generational transitions through the 'many small steps young people take as they move from childhood to adulthood' (2010:xi). While Cole (2010) argues that these adaptations to the social world concern personal change, she employs the trope of *jeune* to examine how youth interacts with society more broadly.

⁴ See Marshall (1991) for Nigerian youth's employment of Pentecostal practices as means of spiritual empowerment to challenge political marginalisation; Janson (2013) for how a new Islamic movement impacts on youth's sense of identity amid Gambia's neo-liberal reforms.

Acknowledging that *jeune* obscures the ambivalences of youth's actions, the author maintains that it helpfully articulates youth on the edge of social boundaries, pushing for change. The ethnography contrasts two lifestyles: the materially- and sexually-oriented *jeune*, and the spiritually strong woman. As Cole explains, Pentecostalism 'provides the clearest contrast with the life strategy associated with *jeunes*, who seek salvation through foreign alliances in the sexual economy' (2010:152).

Cole (2010) helpfully illuminates Pentecostalism's attraction as providing alternative means of reaching existing goals (ibid.:176). Yet the analytical categories remain problematic for reifying two strategies women use to realise futures. Where Cole (2010) links Pentecostalism with the more mature woman, this thesis highlights that, in practice, sexuality, spirituality and materiality are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For instance, in discussions of The Brook Church, with its iPad-touting congregation, material wealth is contingent on managing one's life according to God's Word and trusting His timeliness. Furthermore, we find the same girls following Cole's (2010) contrasting life strategies simultaneously, picking between them (amongst other strategies) to navigate different moments of Calabar life.

In understanding young women's interaction with Pentecostalism, it is helpful to draw on recent analyses in the anthropology of Christianity focusing on how the movement shapes ideas of personhood. Coleman (2011) is helpful for framing the Christian journey in the trope of negotiation, rather than linear progression, to express changing notions of identity, agency and personhood. Where the Pentecostal journey encourages individualism, dividual aspects of the person –

contingent on sociality and morality – are renegotiated. Hence, analyses highlight how Pentecostalism influences personal and community identity in diaspora (van Dijk 1997); through religious acts of judgement (Daswani 2011); and in public performance of confession (Pype 2011). Pype (2011), in particular, illustrates how the Christian person becomes simultaneously visible and vulnerable to change through interaction with others. The Christian subject is highly uncertain; it is fragile, mutable and ephemeral. We may ask how Pentecostalism enables young women to negotiate personal ambition with obligations to others, especially with regards to careers and marriage.⁵ For instance, where Bochow & van Dijk (2012) employ the Foucauldian concept of ‘heterotopia’ (cf. Hetherington 1997) to understand the new spaces Pentecostalism opens up for young women, we may question how the movement allows this group to negotiate seemingly contradictory ideas of success and dependence.

The following ethnography cuts across different aspects of young women’s lives to argue that young women do not choose one route to realise future goals, as Cole’s (2010) categories imply, but constantly negotiate various paths as they maximise potential success. Indeed, where young women choose paths they hope will help them attain their believed ‘God-given destinies’, it is impossible to separate spirituality from ideas of life-course, personhood and identity. Where Pentecostalism is far from uniform even in Calabar, the first three chapters explicitly highlight how young women must discern whether it is God speaking,

⁵ See special issue of *Journal of Religion in Africa* 43, which focuses on Pentecostalism’s popularity amongst young women in light of how the movement imparts new ideas for relationships, sexuality, health and reproduction.

and whether such religious practices will mould subjectivities conducive to success. Yet Pentecostal subjectivities are also constantly moulded outside church in other areas of the city, and the final three chapters examine how young women negotiate these incongruous identities. Where Nigerian urban life is fraught with contradictions, the discussions draw out an anxiety underlying the quest to fashion the self as successful. As the thesis argues, actions taken to prepare for the future are always driven by the competing influences of fear and faith.

‘Destinies of Greatness’

The notion of destiny resounds throughout Calabar life, evoking people’s ambitions of forward progression and expectations for the future. The State Government’s slogan of ‘Destination Cross River’ exemplifies the idea of temporal and spatial navigation. Insinuating a designated place at which to arrive, the slogan sets Cross River apart from the rest of Nigeria: the journey’s end is a place of excellence, a ‘platform’ to do great things and to which others can aspire to reach. Such sentiments were the foundations of Governor Liyel Imoke’s campaign to regain office in the 2012 state elections. ‘Fulfilling the Destiny’ was the PDP candidate’s campaign, run by the aptly named ‘Destiny Group’, to reform social, political and governmental sectors, to promote accountability and transparency in Cross River’s development. Furthermore, as Chapter Six explores, the idea of nurturing the future and alleviating present troubles resounds in the First Lady’s commitment to helping children reach their full potential in life.

These visions of the future, ways of mediating expectations with present realities, are matched in the ways people talk about themselves. In Calabar, young women understand destiny as realising purpose in life; destiny underpins notions of personhood, identity and life-course. Encapsulated in the phrase 'forward ever, backward never', young women acknowledge the need to continually 'work' on themselves in order to attain their rightful fortune. Gaining a university degree, learning skills, running a business and entering networks for upward social mobility constitute some of the ways young women develop the self in order to pertain to a certain cultural logic of success. The city is of course pertinent to this success, allowing young women to eschew an image of being 'local' (a derogative Pidgin term denoting 'the village' and accompanying notions of community, tradition and myopic futures) and claim they 'have arrived' in Nigeria. Yet where young women must still perform community obligations – for instance, through 'Traditional Marriage' rites – the discussion highlights the problems of reifying city life, of conceptualising 'modernity' as excluding village 'tradition' (cf. Geschiere et al. 2008).

The belief in and depiction of destiny in Calabar is reminiscent of Fortes' (1987) classic anthropological analysis of the Tallensi's understanding of life-course and personhood. While the Tallensi of Ghana progress through life in a 'moral career', building their personhood through social obligations, such as marriage or having children, they hold the belief of destiny, that human existence and activity is supernaturally determined, at least partly, by commitments made before birth. Destiny, for the Tallensi, is not necessarily benevolent but is always unknown and unavoidable. Stating that the Tallensi person's destiny is linked to that of his

kin, Fortes (1987) draws attention to the need to understand West African conceptions of personhood and relatedness in ideas of fate and future. Ideas of the relational, composite, unbounded and processual person are central here in understanding how, in personal growth and development, the person identifies, incorporates and interacts with other human and non-human beings. Furthermore, by discussing how the Tallensi 'cope' with destiny through making sacrifices to ancestors, Fortes (1987) reminds us that destiny does not just happen but is manipulated through dialogue with its determining supernatural forces. Hence, Fortes' (1987) emphasis on personhood and ritual action offers some initial insights into how young women in Calabar expect and encourage 'destinies of greatness' through managing a relationship with a Christian God.

Crucially, in understanding how destiny is such an integral part of West African worldviews – especially towards relatedness and religious ideologies – Fortes (1987) is helpful for linking the concept to the idea of uncertainty. Indeed, as the above has emphasised – and following discussions will draw out – life for young women in urban Nigeria is fraught with physical, economic, political, spiritual and epistemological uncertainties. Undoubtedly, there are windfalls to be made in the postcolony, but young women face greater uncertainties gaining access to patriarchal power. Yet, as Berthomé et al. (2012) argue, uncertainty is not necessarily problematic in view of how people are able to both navigate opacity and use it to their advantage in forging relationships and creating opportunities. Therefore the concept of destiny is helpful to understanding how young women view and use strategies to manage their social worlds.

Where destiny can be either good or bad (Fortes 1987), we must understand how ideas of conceptualising and ways of overcoming the future are linked to notions of fortune and misfortune. Indeed, Evans-Pritchard's (1937) analysis of Zande witchcraft as a 'natural philosophy', a certain logic the Azande use to understand unfortunate events, is an excellent example of how misfortune is linked to both limits of human knowledge and methods of overcoming such limits (e.g. by using oracles). However, concepts linked to auspiciousness, such as fortune, luck and chance, have been paid less attention within anthropology (da Col 2012), yet are just as useful for understanding how societies understand contingency and uncertainty in daily life (da Col & Humphrey 2012).

Where young women hold expectations of 'destinies of greatness', working towards such futures by constantly working on the self, this thesis seeks to broaden the conceptual framework of destiny by drawing from analyses of fortune.⁶ By conceptualising fortune, anthropology returns to its core concerns of 'ontology, causation, relatedness, materiality, morality and temporality' (da Col & Humphrey 2012:v). For instance, da Col (2012) highlights how terms such as fortune, luck and chance explain the sources of vitality as lying outside human intention. Inconsistency can be understood as a string of events mastered by an alterity. Hence fortune is an alternative economy, which humans must manipulate by connecting to the governing sources of vitality. Central to this 'cosmoeconomics' (ibid.:10) are not only the concepts of value and production but also those of risk, possibilities and gambles.

⁶ See special issues of *Social Analysis* 56 (1 and 2) concerned with analyses of fortune, luck and chance.

Graeber (2012) helpfully draws out these ideas of how humans attempt to connect to sources of vitality in his analysis of how luck presents conflicts of performativity and inevitability. Terms such as fate and luck are not mystical but are merely pragmatic means to comprehend ambiguities and the limits of human knowledge. They are ‘technologies of the future’, which help people negotiate uncertain possibilities and unfulfilled potentials (Graeber 2012:39).⁷ Similarly, destiny is a way of conceptualising an unknown future. Yet, as Graeber (2012) notes, the concept is self-contradictory in nature; it is a misnomer to consider that societies believing in destiny are fatalistic, just waiting for the inevitable. In reality, societies that use such concepts often have complex and elaborate methods of altering the future, ways of encouraging fortune and avoiding misfortune. As such, Graeber (2012) draws great attention to the performative aspect inherent in societies’ understanding of fortune and the belief in the ability to change destinies. Recalling the Tallensi’s (Fortes 1987) use of rituals, the methods used to overcome uncertainty and dissolve present opacity can be far from transparent.

The term destiny raises questions of temporality: how is the uncertain future mediated in the present? Where the concept of destiny is very much rooted in present circumstance and current activity, we are reminded of Crapanzano’s (2004) understanding of how people imagine the future. For Crapanzano (2004), the process of how the future is imagined is far more analytically helpful than the product of imagination, especially as futures are built on present experience and,

⁷ Similarly, da Col & Humphrey (2012) use the term ‘technologies of anticipation’.

as 'fuzzy horizons', are never fully reified.⁸ Hence, in examining how young women expect to attain 'destinies of greatness', the thesis highlights how they look to a future that is consistently 'out there' to overcome present insecurities. Where destiny is governed by the spiritual other, it is a way young women can comprehend life's incongruities and unexplainable events. Yet it also allows the individual to manipulate future possibilities, both how they are imagined and realised. Destinies are not separate from the present but part and parcel of young women's lived experience. The discussions focus on how young women engage in Pentecostalism, style themselves, and create (patronage) networks as techniques to moulding new subjectivities that place them in fortune's path and hence manipulate future possibilities.

Contingent on uncertain presents, unknown futures and insecure actions, the concept of destiny illuminates risk. Following Caplan (2000), few have researched risk since Douglas and Wildavsky (1982), Beck (1992[1986]) and Giddens (1991). The two sociologists, Beck (1992[1986]) and Giddens (1991), link heightened risk with modernisation, where social worlds have become completely ordered by risk. As Giddens (1999:29) later adds, a negative view to risk remains unhelpful: active risk taking is necessary for dynamic and forward-looking societies. While Douglas & Wildavsky (1982) had little dialogue with the sociologists' debates, they contribute to this idea of risk-taking by questioning how people decide which risks to face and which to avoid. As the authors argue, risk perception is governed by societal structures.⁹ While we may question how

⁸ See Weiss (2009) on aspirations as deferred fantasies among young men in Tanzania.

⁹ Douglas & Wildavsky (1982) work gave rise to Culture Theory. Although important in the work of anthropology and risk (cf. Caplan 2000), it has received much criticism for, amongst other

such a theory gives rise to changes in risk perception, Douglas & Wildavsky's (1982; cf. Caplan 2000) notion of risk being driven by fear leads to interesting questions as to how people value and prioritise actions, and how people simply 'cope'.

This thesis takes these questions as a point of departure for asking how young women in Calabar decide which actions will prepare them for future success. Where their social, physical and spiritual worlds are already uncertain, the discussion illuminates states of mind – discerning, trusting and knowing. Hence, in understanding destiny, this thesis questions how young women can navigate fear and keep faith in the future. For instance, drawing attention to agency and temporality, Miyazaki (2004) outlines how hope is beyond a sentiment of optimism: hope is a method of knowledge formation. Focusing on the Suvavou efforts to reclaim their ancestral land, Miyazaki (2004) argues that hope is not passive but requires mechanisms for action. For instance, Fijian church rituals are one method for reforming relationships with God, where the constant engagement with religious action gives rise to new temporal and agential strategies where one hopes for God's affirmative answer. While hope can disappoint (cf. Benjamin 1992 [1968]; Bloch 1986 [1959]; Rorty 1999), Miyazaki's (2004) emphasis on method explains how action perpetuates moments of hope.¹⁰

things, reducing risk to metaphor (Kaprow 1985) and sociological conservatism influenced by Durkheim (Beidelman 1993), and negating individual agency (Adams 1995).

¹⁰ As preached at Outpouring Assemblies, Sunday 8th July 2012: 'Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But *when* the desire comes, *it is* a tree of life.' Proverbs 13:12 (NKJV). The question was then posed: who is deferring your hope and destiny?

Conversely, in understanding agency and temporality in limits to knowledge, Pelkmans (2013) asks how 'doubt' influences how people find and lose confidence in things. For Pelkmans (2013), doubt raises both ontological and practical questions, it articulates not only what is to be considered but also what actions should be done about it. Doubt conjures possibilities of alternatives and hence can be fleeting and highly unstable. Yet, rather than a crippling condition, encouraging inactivity, Pelkmans' (2013) analysis of doubt is useful for talking about destiny through his emphasis on doubt's potential to enable. Hence, Miyazaki's (2004) and Pelkmans' (2013) emphasis on action and temporality speaks very much to discernment in Christianity, the understanding that questioning the presence of God is built in the worshipper's religious experience and actions rather than passivity. As Pelkmans (2013:2) asks, where belief and disbelief implicate one another, what cycles of doubt people amid uncertainty undergo in establishing (if only ephemeral) truths? In Calabar, where securing destinies is a risky process, and actions are driven by the competing forces of fear and faith, we may similarly ask what 'cycles of faith' do young women experience in trying to reach their believed 'destinies of greatness'? How and in what (or whom) do young women gain faith? How is faith lost? Such questions are posed in examining how young women prepare themselves for the future by engaging in activities that continually work on the self.

Managing Uncertainty

Focusing on how young women employ the term destiny to envisage and encourage future success, the discussion develops recent understandings of strategies and coping mechanisms employed by people living amid uncertainty.

As Haram & Yamba (2009) acknowledge, uncertainty is not endemic to the continent but, where the fabric of society and power networks have been eroded over recent times, uncertainty has unfortunately become a perennial experience for many Africans. While the authors ask whether uncertainty is a condition of modernity, the following discussion draws attention to how some forms of uncertainty, such as witchcraft, have persisted over the *longue durée*. We must examine how historically engrained cultural logics either reproduce or enable uncertainty to prevail (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff 2006).¹¹ Yet Haram & Yamba (2009) do raise interesting questions as to whether uncertainty is non-recurrent. Where uncertainty and insecurity pervade all aspects of Nigerian life, it is helpful to draw on Vigh's (2006, 2008) understanding of 'crisis as context', where actions accumulate out of and feed back into crisis in a way that reconfigures rather than dissolves society's terrain. Hence, concerning how young women act in order to maximise future potential, we see that crisis is not an aberration of social norms but becomes the context for decision-making and mechanisms for coping.¹²

Religion is one means for Africans to cope amid uncertainty (Haram & Yamba 2009; cf. Christiansen 2009; Chitando 2009; Meyer 1992). For instance, writing about Nigeria, Adogame (2010) highlights how religion has become an important medium through which many Nigerians come to understand the world around them. Speaking in parables or using religious mantra can strike up religious

¹¹ In Haram & Yamba's (2009) volume, Sanders (2009) argues that witchcraft accusations in South Africa have arisen out of neoliberal economic reforms, whereas Myhre (2009) highlights how witchcraft amongst the Chagga of Tanzania is a belief that extends over the *longue durée*.

¹² See also Lubkemann's (2008) analysis of forced migration in Mozambique's civil war. We must pay attention to the ways in which social structures, opportunities and decisions are moulded by permanently insecure and uncertain environs.

sympathies and dispel insecurities, most notably in the way religion calls upon the force of a divine 'other' (ibid.). However, where ritual and social space in the postcolony have become contested arenas, 'religion has engendered ambivalences of peace and violence, cohesion and conflict, functionality and dysfunctionality' (Adogame 2010:479). While Calabar is removed from the Muslim-Christian tensions and violent clashes that blight Nigeria's middle belt, the plurality of Calabar's religious landscape questions the extent to which religion is dispelling or compounding 'spiritual insecurity' (Ashforth 2001, 2005).¹³ Drawing on the *longue durée*, the discussions highlight how specific religious rituals may either provide religious conviction or raise fears of the unknown. Yet, as this thesis argues, Pentecostal subjects are not only shaped within formal religious institutions, and the discussions raise questions as to how young women negotiate fear and faith in the actions that they hope will mould them into respectable urbanites, encouraging future success.

More specifically, the discussions presented here further understandings of how Pentecostalism allows people to manage uncertainty. Where Chitando (2009) argues that charismatic Pentecostalism alleviates symptoms of uncertainty in Zimbabwe by providing solace, this thesis looks to the very mechanisms of the movement – religious rhetoric and practice – to fully understand how Pentecostalism can have propensity to comfort. We may also question what form this solace takes: is it merely spiritual, or also social or financial support? Is optimism asserted through positive outlook or practical knowledge? Does

¹³ While Muslim-Christian tensions are common in Nigeria, increasing in light of Islamic insurgence in the north, it should be noted that inter-faith relations are not always tense. For instance, in Lagos, it is not just communities that are inter-faith but also families, reducing religious tensions (cf. Janson 2012).

worship soothe and sympathise with present predicaments or invigorate and spur on action? Crucially, we may ask how Pentecostalism aids worshippers' lived experiences in the ways in which it interacts with or counters forces creating uncertain realities.

Presenting very different analyses of the recent rise of Pentecostalism in West Africa, Marshall (2009) and Piot (2010) offer helpful insights by explaining Pentecostalism's popularity through the way in which it entwines with politics and counters failing states. For instance, where Togolese sovereignty is failing, Piot (2010) draws attention to how Pentecostalism and NGOs fill gaps in the fabric of the state.¹⁴ Through their emphasis on performance, these institutions create new biopolitics to 'repair' Togolese society. Pentecostalism does not only provide in its emphasis on the body – the creation of affect, which changes the worshipper through religious experience (ibid.:67-8) – but also in its rehearsing of future aspirations. Where both rural and urban areas suffer their own crises of power, Pentecostalism 'offers a sense of possibility and agency' (ibid.:103). The movement's emphasis on prosperity, divine immanence and global outreach, enable a mode of looking to a better future. Hence, where Pentecostal analyses draw attention to rupture from the past (Robbins 2004; Marshall 2009; Meyer 1992, 1998), Piot's (2010:20) analytical focus on disjointed temporalities is helpful for understanding how young women's future imaginaries are created and worked towards in the present.

¹⁴ Robbins (2009) argues that part of Pentecostalism's popularity is due to its ability to fill in where other institutions fail to provide.

Writing about Nigeria's current Pentecostal fervour, Marshall (2009) frames the movement as a 'political spirituality'. Pentecostalism blurs the lines of politics, economics and spirituality, so that it takes on 'an ambivalent form of political theology' (ibid.:206), where humanity alone is insufficient to redeem Nigeria from its past. Significantly, Pentecostalism arises at a specific point in Nigerian history, where the movement's focus on the individual challenges prevailing epistemological and ontology insecurity. Central here is the image of rebirth, promising a clean break from the past and a 'new dawn' for *both* Nigerian and nation. Where performance and the body are central to the Pentecostal project, Marshall (2009) goes further than Piot's (2010) rather fuzzy focus on biopolitics to underpin how religious acts constitute religious subjects. In her loosely Foucauldian framework of subjectification, Marshall's (2009) 'techniques of the religious subject' highlight the reworking of the self through processes of interiority. From prayer to dress and comportment (Marshall 1991; 2009), the worshipper self-fashions and creates new spheres of power ready to challenge politics through spirituality.

In examining how young women in Calabar manage uncertain realities, this thesis builds upon the analyses of Piot (2010) and Marshall (2009) by examining how Pentecostalism creates new temporalities, allowing them to envisage and work towards better futures in the present. Both have focused on notions of performance and the body, but the discussion draws on Marshall's (2009) analytical framework to highlight how religious acts constitute new subjects. Crucial to the discussion is not only how acts of the self create new subjectivities that allude to Pentecostal success but how the processes of interiority allow

young women to view themselves differently. Where the acts that prepare young women for success are driven by fear and faith, the changing perceptions of the self are central to understanding how Pentecostalism moulds young women's present realities and future aspirations.

Calabar in Context

Tucked in the far southeast corner of Nigeria, Calabar (capital of Cross River State) distances itself from many of the troubles that blight the postcolony. Contrasting with accounts of Boko Haram insurgency in the North and ongoing oil feuds in other southern delta states, Cross River is nicknamed 'The People's Paradise'. The stereotype is that, while Lagos man hustles 24-7, Calabar man is content if he can get enough money to eat that day. Although proud of their environs, residents acknowledge frustration over the lack of opportunities such calmness brings. To most, Cross River is a 'civil service state', and Calabar a 'student town'. Money supposedly comes easier in Lagos, Port Harcourt and Abuja, encouraging people to travel out of Calabar frequently for business. Interestingly, we can identify Calabar's accommodation to others and less intense approach to capitalist economies over the *longue durée*.

Through the 18th and 19th centuries, Calabar played an important role in the Atlantic slave trade, palm oil industry and Christian mission in Nigeria (cf. Ajayi 1965; Duke 1956; Jones 1963). Its original settlers, the Efik (meaning 'the displaced people'), arrived at Creek Town (Old Calabar) after having been pushed out of their home at Idua near Uruan further along the Cross River (Stride & Ifeka 1971). During this time, the area was thoroughly engaged with the Atlantic slave trade and palm oil trades, with villages ruled by traditional

forms of governance. Traditionally, villages were divided by lineage, with elders wielding the most power and authority – villages comprised wards, which were further split into a ‘house system’ based on extended family. Old Calabar was ruled by the Ekpe Society, which only wealthy freemen could buy their way into. The Ijo city states, such as Kalabari, also had a secret society, known as Ekine (Jones 1963; Stride & Ifeka 1971). However, unlike the Ekpe Society, Ekine was never a form of government.¹⁵

As trade with Europe and the Atlantic continued through the 18th century, power centralised along the coastal zones. The traditional kingdoms evolved into city-states ruled by commerce rather than traditional forms of governance (Jones 1963).¹⁶ A ‘canoe house system’ emerged – where the number of canoes a house owned denoted its wealth and status, traditional descent patterns and power relations became redundant. Under this new system, slaves and low-status freemen could also rise to positions of authority so long as they were wealthy enough. However, retaining the political function of the Ekpe Society, Old Calabar developed differently from the Ijo city-states and adopted the ‘canoe house system’ much later in the 19th century (Stride & Ifeka 1971).¹⁷ Where power continued to be determined by descent and lineage, Old Calabar owed to a different ethos from the Ijo trading hubs.

By 1840, the slave trade in the region had stopped. Increased palm oil trade affected the city-states, and more European traders settled (Jones 1963).

¹⁵ The Ekine Society varied between Ijo city-states, and did not exist in Bonny (Jones 1963).

¹⁶ See Peel (2000a) for a comparison of Yoruba city-states with those of the delta region.

¹⁷ G.I. Jones (1963) notes how the names of chiefs of houses in Old Calabar remained much more consistent through the 18th and 19th centuries than those of the Ijo Bonny and Kalabari. These names indicate the community structure during the trading period.

Europeans also started to found missions in the region. With the Scottish Presbyterian Church finding Old Calabar more welcoming than other city-states, the city developed a Christian identity, although not without struggle from traditional rulers (cf. Ajayi 1965; Chapter 1). It is this strong Christian foundation which has likened the city to a 'church industry' (Hackett 1989:1), and which continues to encourage the expansion of multiple religious institutions. With missionaries settling in Calabar, founding schools (cf. Chapter 1) and encouraging other colonial infrastructure (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff 1991) the city developed and became the first capital of Nigeria.¹⁸ These links with 'outside' have shaped Calabar's ethos but also speak to Bayart's (2000, 2009) concept of extraversion, the idea that Africa's relationship with the wider world is not one of subjugation but has historically been an exchange between Africans and outsiders.

Interesting, past inclinations to accommodate others peacefully resound in today's cosmopolitan city. While the four major ethnic groups are Efik, Efut, Qua and Ibibio, Calabar has attracted many people from elsewhere in Cross River State and further afield in Nigeria. Most of my informants had grown up in Calabar but, with villages being elsewhere, were not 'from' Calabar – indeed, ideas of identity shaped by urban and village imaginaries and social relations runs throughout this thesis. Today's Calabar is split into two distinct Local Government Areas (LGA): Calabar South and Calabar Municipal. Calabar South comprises of the old trading towns, such as Duke Town and Henshaw Town

¹⁸ Calabar was the central administrative hub of the Oil Rivers Protectorate, established in 1884 (confirmed at the Berlin Conference in 1885). It was renamed to Niger Coast Protectorate in 1893, finally becoming the Southern Nigeria Protectorate in 1900 after merging with the chartered territories of the Royal Niger Company.

(Creek Town lies in neighbouring Odukpani LGA). Located next to Calabar River, the LGA is generally poorer than Calabar Municipal, with more precarious infrastructure and higher rates of crime encouraging residents to seek informal methods of law enforcement, such as hiring 'area boys'. By contrast, Calabar Municipal is home to the State Government Offices, sought-after housing estates (e.g. Federal Housing and State Housing), popular fast-food restaurants and exclusive hotels. Calabar Municipal, considered the desirable part of town and place to be seen, continues to develop.

The developments of Calabar Municipal can be largely attributed to the former State Governor, Donald Duke, who held office between 1999 and 2007. His plans envisaged a 'clean and green' Calabar, a Nigerian city that would be recognised. One of Duke's projects was to develop Tinapa, a business and leisure resort just outside the city. Designed to be the Dubai of West Africa, and associated with Calabar Free Trade Zone, Tinapa was a multi-billion naira project to catapult Calabar into global business markets. In reality, while the hotel is used for conferences and the water park has become the epitome of leisure pursuit amongst the city's young people, Tinapa's shopping outlets remain mostly empty, the vast car parks are bare and the Nollywood studios are seldom used.¹⁹ However, the idea of Tinapa is a powerful statement both of Calabar linking to the rest of the world and of great potential lying in wait on the edge of the city.

Perhaps one of Duke's most successful developments for the city has been the Carnival Calabar. This annual festival transforms the city in the month of

¹⁹ Abubakar's (2011) article in the *Daily Trust*, 'Tinapa is Dying', outlines the dwindling state of the resort.

December. As rainy season finally comes to a close, Calabar comes alive with tourists, international musicians, a 24-hour 'Christmas Village' comprising of bars and shows, and other free and paid events around the city. The actual day of the Carnival sees five bands – comprising thousands of revellers – competing along a 12km route around four main streets in Calabar Municipal. With recent themes such as 'Endless Possibilities' and 'A New Dawn', the event epitomises the city's vision to look to the future. Dubbed 'Africa's Biggest Street Party', the Carnival puts Calabar on the world stage, continuing its historical tendency to foster links with 'outside'. Along with sites such as Obudu Mountain Resort in the north of the state, the Carnival sells Cross River State as the nation's tourist destination.

Methodology

This thesis draws on 15 months' ethnographic fieldwork in Calabar (June-July 2010, August 2011-September 2012, and December 2012). It focuses on various urban sites popular with young women. Participant observation was carried out at two Pentecostal churches and one non-denominational fellowship (I sporadically visited other Christian movements), a sewing shop, a beauty pageant, and by 'hanging out' with young women at home and around the city. This was bolstered with in-depth semi-structured interviews of young women and pastors. Key informants were interviewed a number of times, building up life histories. Video and photo elicitation proved a useful research tool, especially with regard to church activities. Throughout the fieldwork, I also collected church fliers, photographed banners advertising church programmes, and kept cut-outs of relevant articles from national and local newspapers. Archival work

of church movements in the area was also undertaken in the National Archives (Calabar).

Calabar's paradisaic image amid national uncertainty coloured my fieldwork. Framing my methodologies, I ask: what does it mean to research people living amid chronic insecurity? Specifically, for the anthropologist who wants to move from 'outsider' to 'insider', this points to ways of knowing. Anthropologists have tended to write about secrecy and trust in the field (e.g. Dresch 2000), and while these questions were integral to my fieldwork, I found one question more pressing: how to gain anthropological knowledge when my informants, living amid ontological and epistemological insecurity, were often unsure or without answers? Where things often went unsaid or could not be explained, I found participant observation integral to learning about young women's urban livelihoods. Yet in the instances where I did not only participate but actively learned the skills of my informants, the discussion highlights how bodily practice also uncovers cultural 'logic'. While Stoller (1997; cf. Stoller & Olkes 1987) links apprenticeship to embodied knowledge, Hsu (2006) helps us think how the anthropologist learning skills constitutes participant experience.

UniCal's indefinite closure impacted on my fieldwork but what was initially worrying became an anthropological blessing. No longer an observer on the outside, I, too, had been plunged into the mists of uncertainty and anticipation. I found living in a Nigerian city with precarious infrastructure a steep learning curve. Not being in control of NEPA, mobile networks, traffic or the impressive Calabar rains made reaching my informants challenging. As I struggled to achieve daily research goals, I realised I was embroiled in the same insecurity

that coloured my informants' lives. Optimistically, I still planned each week, but I also learned to take the unexpected rather than strive to achieve set targets. To just go with things and see what turned up each day was invaluable practical knowledge.

My original plan was to meet groups of young women on campus, understanding how church activities influenced their daily lives. With UniCal shut, I had to find new strategies for meeting young women. I quickly realised my informants were quite solitary and I often heard the phrase, 'I don't keep friends'. This was problematic but I soon found that buying a BlackBerry (I already had a mobile phone) was crucial for networking (cf. Chapter 4). Owning *the* Nigerian status symbol, I was becoming an 'insider' and, crucially, the BlackBerry Messenger service allowed me to get to know my informants better and also to see how young women did relate with one another. While mobile phones raise questions as to where fieldwork sites actually are (e.g. Nisbett 2006 on cybercafés), how they facilitate interaction between anthropologist and informant could be argued as being a participant experience. As I learned how ask the right questions, to chat with and manage contacts, I was being included in the politics of secrecy, concealment and membership that Archambault (2013) argues enables young Mozambicans to confront uncertainty.

Issues of friendship are explored further in Chapter 4 but it is important to explain how my own positionality helped me find informants. Where trust is fragile, girls worry about gossip and competition from supposed friends but, as an 'outsider', I was removed from this competition. Being an *oyibo* (foreigner) also made me a beneficial person to know because I had links to 'outside', the

place where my informants aspire to reach. I soon found I was collecting many 'besties', which was taxing on my mobile phone but fantastic for research. Moreover, as a young woman it was easy for me to build rapport with my informants as I was not wholly removed from the gender and generational gaps they experienced. This is ably expressed in strangers' perceptions of me. Assuming I was 19 and living with my parents in Nigeria, people were generally shocked when I said I was 25, came to Calabar alone and was doing a PhD at Oxford. Their frequently asked question, 'how far have you gone with your school project?' made me feel as if I was just a 'small girl' doing a project on young women and the church. While I hope my research is more impactful than their assumptions, I realise that my research presence was perceived as unthreatening, allowing me to access certain areas.

At the start of fieldwork, with UniCal shut, I decided to base myself at a church. I spent the first few weeks visiting a number of Pentecostal ministries, which gave much insight into the city's plural churchscape. As friends insisted I would suffer 'spiritual confusion' from hopping from church to church, I made The Brook Church my 'home church' (cf. Chapter 2). I attended two services a week (Sunday and Wednesday evening), as well as extra programmes. I took the Foundation Course as a means to become a church member – an invaluable step to knowing church members and becoming an 'insider'. After six months at The Brook Church, I struggled with the decision of either joining a 'working group', to fully immerse myself in the workings of the church, or to move to another church. I chose the latter, primarily because I felt that a comparison of churches would be insightful, especially with regard to numbers of youth in the church and social

class. The remaining fieldwork months were spent at Outpouring Assemblies,²⁰ where I attended Sunday and Midweek Services as well as the Tuesday youth service. Throughout fieldwork I also carried out research at End-Time Warriors, a prayer-based fellowship. With other church commitments, I sporadically attended their services (Monday and Thursday evenings, Saturday mornings), and concentrated my energy on understanding their Wednesday Faith Clinic (cf. Chapter 3).

Where church has spiritual rather than social cohesion (cf. Soothill 2007), there was an interesting transition from ‘insider’ to ‘outsider’ (cf. Harris 2006 on researching church communities). How to belong in a context where young women appeared reluctant to fully trust one another beyond being a spiritual family? Faith and belief were central here, and I was honest about not being Born Again. Explaining that I was a member of the Church of England (nominally, this is true) satisfied those fearing I was an atheist and ably explained why I did not pray in tongues. As everyone was so keen for me to ‘give my life to Christ’, I never closed my mind to the possibility of becoming Born Again (I still remain open minded). As I wanted to feel part of the church, I sat with the main congregation, allowing me to pay attention to other worshippers. Where bodily experience is so important to religion (cf. Csordas 1997), I hoped that sitting amid the spiritual action would aid my understanding of Pentecostal worship. While I did find some praise and worship powerful, my ‘stubborn spirit’ was never moved enough to collapse when someone laid hands on me. I wish I had

²⁰ While I had intended to choose two completely unconnected churches, I found out that Mama (Pastor’s wife) at Outpouring Assemblies had been a member of The Brook Church (cf. Chapter 2). Out of all the hundreds of churches in Calabar, it seemed rather serendipitous that I should pick two with such a link.

been able to experience this phenomenon, but my own beliefs always meant I was observing and never fully experiencing spirituality.

As church did not provide a cohesive group of young women (only individuals), I looked elsewhere to find out how Pentecostal subjectivities played out in young women's lives. Meeting so many young women with an interest in pageantry, modelling and fashion, it was sensible to research this interest. Carrying out research on the Carnival Calabar Queen (CCQ) pageant camp two years running (2011 and 2012), I was granted 'access all areas', allowing me get to know the camp format, the contestants and organisers. Sadly there was only time to do very short interviews with the contestants and, ahead of the competition night, their answers were pretty formulaic. However, this camp experience was bolstered by in-depth interviews of past queens, and also of contestants of other pageants. Outside camp, with no prize in view, these conversations were more 'honest'.

I spent six months at one popular sewing shop, spending the final three months as apprentice. I consider my methodologies to have gone further than participant observation, and agree with Hsu (2006) in how learning practical knowledge is a participant experience. Finally, I really understood what it meant and felt like to be a tailor – to experience really is to understand the stresses of finding design ideas, peddling at a machine all day and entering Watt Market. While the girls had already said I was one of them in the shop, being an apprentice firmly secured this accolade, moving me further to 'insider' status. Furthermore, the girls in this shop were sisters and family friends, allowing them to speak freely in my presence. This was a contrast from my other informant interactions, although

some of my solitary informants also spent time as apprentices in this shop. In fact, many of my informants crossed paths at this popular shop, either being customers, apprentices or simply acquaintances who came to visit. Hence, the sewing shop and beauty pageant camps became crucial for seeing how young women did interact with each other.

The rest of the time was divided between interviewing and just 'hanging out' with key informants. Admittedly, I found great difficulty in actually recording interviews, especially where young women are incredibly busy (going to school when not on strike, running a business, doing housework, looking after family, attending church, travelling). Yet I also found that young women had aversion to being recorded. Feeling that they did not know the 'right' answers that I wanted to hear, they would often tell me that I should speak to a more authoritative figure (e.g. their pastor or grandma). Where I did manage to secure an initial interview – usually in the daytime in the quiet garden of Big Munch, one of Calabar's premier sit-outs – I felt that content of interview was less useful than act of interviewing. Unless an informant really opened up, which was dependent on their personality, the answers were incredibly generic, and it was interesting how girls from the same church would repeat the same phrases. The interview was often the start of reciprocal social obligations, a ticket to friendship. Amid insecurity, where truth and trust are difficult to decipher, I learned the most through just 'hanging out' with friends, my key informants. Outside the interview setting, my informants answered my incessant questions more freely. As they opened up about their personal lives, they asked me for advice about certain issues – and offered me advice – thereby allowing me to better understand the

concerns of Calabar's young women. Importantly, 'hanging out' allowed me to find out what girls actually did, rather than hear about what they professed to do.²¹

Learning the language is of course considered good fieldwork practice in order to reveal the world of the 'other'.²² While I started learning Efik on arrival in Calabar, it became apparent that lessons were not too helpful. Where there are so many languages in Nigeria, I found that my informants, who were mostly Cross Riverians but not all 'from' Calabar, all had a different mother dialect. I was able to survive in the cosmopolitan city perfectly well with English, which evolved somewhat to 'Nigerian English' over the course of my fieldwork. Failing to learn Efik, I also failed to pick up extensive Pidgin (broken English). While girls did speak Pidgin with one another, they refused to speak Pidgin to me. Seeing Pidgin as not the 'proper' way of speaking (too 'local'), my informants invariably put on their best British or American accents when in my company. Instead of anthropologist moving from 'outsider' to 'insider', my informants appeared to become 'outsiders' as they 'formed' (a Pidgin word meaning to pretend one has more authority than one really does). Amid the insecurity of knowing people's true identities, this was an interesting fact in itself.

What social scientists may call a 'snowballing' of informants, my Nigerian friends may call God's plan for my research. During my first visit to Calabar, I remember

²¹ Incidentally, this was always different from what other girls supposedly did. On a number of occasions, people (usually older men) advised me that, if I wanted to know what girls did, I should ask the girls' friends.

²² I find the Efik proverb that Miller (2009) uses at the beginning of his monograph both thought provoking and in keeping with the anthropological method. *Òbúb mbùmè ókùp ùsèm* – 'He who asks questions hears (or learns) the language, or gets interpretations.'

one bishop telling me that it was not by chance that a worker at the guest house I had been staying at, his church member, had insisted we meet. I ended up carrying out research at his wife's ministry and will be forever thankful for that initial meeting. As fieldwork rolled on and I got to know girls from around Calabar, the unforeseen networks between my informants became apparent. Although my fieldwork is multi-sited within Calabar, the same informants feature across various research sites. Amid insecurity, my research practice mirrored my informants' life strategies: to keep diversifying knowledge and trades in order to succeed.

Outline

This thesis examines how young women's belief in their 'destinies of greatness' helps them manage present life amid precarious situations and maintain hope for future success. It argues that the constant actions young women engage in prepare them for the future through the ways in which they fashion new subjectivities pertaining to a certain urban Pentecostal cultural logic of success. Young women are shown to engage in a variety of different acts simultaneously as means to maximise future potential, hence the chapters draw across a number of familiar urban scenarios. Through the discussions we see that perceived future fortune is not only envisaged and encouraged through activities in the present but that such actions are always gambles, simultaneously driven by the faith in success and the fear of failure.

The first three chapters focus on church movements, grounding young women's faith and fears that spiritual encounters will secure future success. Chapter One, 'Calabar's Spiritual Landscape', contextualises the city's contemporary

churchscape. Focusing on the New Religious Movements that have grown up in the city over the *longue durée*, it draws attention to agency, continuity, plurality and insecurity inherent in religious experience in Calabar. As the discussion highlights, new churches offer as many spiritual dangers as promises, setting the scene for how young women must endure risk in religious experience, negotiating fear and faith in their quest for success.

Chapter Two, 'Sisters' Talk', draws from a church programme for single women to explicitly highlight how the Pentecostal movement moulds new subjectivities. Focusing on marriage preparation, the chapter highlights how the future is envisaged and encouraged in the present by fashioning the self according to a Pentecostal image of respectability and success. Time is central to the discussion of faith: The Brook Church preaches that success comes through constant fashioning of the self, living according to God's Word and trust in God's 'divine timing'. Chapter Three, 'Edima's Deliverance', focuses on an altogether different religious encounter. Examining one young woman's deliverance at a prayer ministry, the chapter highlights how young women sometimes lose faith in the future and feel they need 'spiritual boosts' to encourage success. Where the previous chapter highlights Pentecostalism's emphasis on the individual, this deliverance illuminates religious intercession. Crucially, while young women may feel they need others' spiritual guidance, the discussion highlights that it also compounds fears of the unknown spiritual other.

'In the House' begins the second section that looks at how these religious subjectivities are negotiated outside formal church institutions. Drawing on the time young women spend alone at home apparently doing nothing, the chapter

focuses explicitly on ideas of time, waiting and productivity. While young women engage in acts such as watching films and chatting on their mobiles, the chapter pays particular attention to how they negotiate fear and faith in other people. Chapter Five, focuses on young women's engagement with sewing shops as means to style the self as successful and respectable. Where the discussion highlights fashion and class, it draws attention to the tensions inherent in young women's desires to show off their uniqueness. The discussion highlights how being unique and getting noticed is to negotiate the faith of success coming through others' admiration and the fear of others' jealousy or disapproval.

These ideas of respectability, style, class and feminine beauty are pinpointed in the final chapter focusing on the Carnival Calabar Queen pageant. Examining how pageantry not only moulds young women to a vision of urban (Christian) female respectability but also leads to opportunities of patronage for the winners, the chapter highlights how entering pageantry has potential for completely changing young women's lives for the better. However, amid Nigeria's insecurities, pageantry also presents risks and false promises that need to be negotiated. Hence, Chapter Six explicitly articulates the thesis' focus on self-fashioning, how the possibilities for fabulous success are constantly shadowed by the likelihood for disappointment, and young women's negotiations of fear and faith as they manage life amid uncertainty.

1. Calabar's Spiritual Landscape

It is impossible to miss God's presence in Calabar. A church exists on almost every street; from barn-like structures to purposely-designed buildings, in private compounds or rented space, churches come in many guises. Where God is not symbolised by a building, small signs on residential compound walls indicate that churches, prayer houses or home fellowships are hidden inside. God also features on the brightly-coloured posters and banners advertising special church programmes, a palimpsest of spiritual stories as new replace old, faded by Calabar's elements. Most encircle roundabouts and line main roads, but some posters creep along less frequented streets. In the mixed layout of the city, God is present amidst the houses, shops, street vendors and services that interrupt each other along the long roads, the 'villages', that constitute Calabar's urban sprawl. Perhaps the only area immune from church extroversion is the small, predominantly Hausa (Muslim) area of Bogobiri.

Moving about the city, people punctuate this spiritual landscape. As everyone heads to church on Sunday mornings, the usually busy roads clear. Taxi drivers must also occasionally stop their trade to worship and church-goers amble along the roads in their best clothes – men in suits and women sometimes with heads covered, but all with Bible in hand. Wednesday evenings are also impossible for moving about the city in a taxi, the most common mode of public transport, but this time for the opposite reason: roads come to a standstill and shared taxis are packed well-beyond their limits as people go from places of work to places of worship. Bibles in hand, worshippers line kerbsides, trying in vain to 'pick'

passing taxis. These are the church week's busiest times, but you can be sure there will be a gathering of worshippers somewhere in the city at any given time.

Calabar's residents notice all this. People know the various churches; they hear stories about different pastors; they recognise others' places of worship from their dress code, or perhaps a more telling sticker on a Bible or car windscreen. Even the taxi drivers I knew could identify my own church members, pointing them out to me as we passed them in the street. Where the physical realm is determined by the spiritual, people must recognise, read and understand the spiritual landscape of the city in which they live. This I learned at the start of my doctoral fieldwork, when I spent time getting to know the city with a young woman, Talent, with whom I had made friends the previous year on a shorter visit to Calabar. As we drove round town, usually just doing rather mundane tasks as I settled in, we talked extensively about the sights we passed. As with many Nigerians, she had strong opinions about church life.

Talent's father was a Bishop at The Zion Temple Ministries, an 'Orthodox' church – it was Talent who first explained to me that while Pentecostal doctrine was 'free', 'Orthodox' churches (including missionary establishments and AICs) followed an expected liturgy. Currently living at home, she worshipped at her father's church. While she enjoyed the church because it was family, she described how it did not stir her spirit so much because of the aged congregation, older-style worship songs and unfulfilling Bible study. As such, Talent identified her 'home church' as being Royal Citizens Ministries, a popular Pentecostal church on the other side of Calabar. Having not visited her 'home church' for some time due to transport costs, she was unsure if she wanted to

return because no one had checked up on her. Although unhappy with the lack of social and financial support, Talent missed the spiritual lift she found with Royal Citizens. At this time, Talent was also starting a business and securing a scholarship to a Malaysian university. Believing this called for heightened spirituality, Talent was keen to try out new Pentecostal churches with me.

This chapter discusses how young women, such as Talent, make sense of Calabar's competitive church scene as they aim for success as singles. The chapter is informed by my own navigation of the city's churches and streets, and by the many conversations that I had with close friends, informants and even strangers about the religious institutions and practices that intersect with the wider spiritual world. Having a lively conversation with the young women in the sewing shop – the dangerous and enigmatic spiritual realm was a favourite topic – Diana put an end to the conversation by simply stating, 'If there's a world you can see, there must be one you cannot see.'

In Calabar, the hidden powers of the spiritual realm are believed to inform the visible world. Indeed, analysing African religion and politics, Ellis & ter Haar assert that scholars 'often failed to consider a central element of religious belief, namely the perception that the invisible world is real' (2004:17). While it is important to recognise the belief in the predetermining nature of the spiritual realm, in understanding how young women make sense of the world, it is analytically more helpful to consider how the relationship between the two realms develops, the techniques of harnessing or destroying spiritual powers. Calabar's 'spiritual-scape' must be read by highlighting relationships (between people and with spirits) which are created at certain physical places around and

beyond the city, asking why, when and how religious subjectivities are created, moulded and repaired.

This chapter provides the context for subsequent discussions of how young women envisage and prepare for their believed 'destinies of greatness'. Where the thesis argues that young women constantly engage in acts that constitute new subjectivities they believe will encourage fortune, the chapter gives the basis for understanding how Calabar's bustling churchscape impacts on young women's religious acts of the self. As we see, young women do not only have faith in a the determining spiritual 'other', but also in the wide variety of religious practices with which they can engage to manipulate their futures (cf. da Col 2012; Graeber 2012). Crucially, where young women's hope for the future is maintained through the competing forces of fear and faith in their actions, the chapter draws on the uncertainties, risks and gambles they must navigate in the city's religious plurality.

The chapter begins with a historical approach to understanding Calabar's spiritual landscape. Central to this discussion of the missionary encounter are the ideas of agency and choice in religious conversion (cf. Peel 2000b, 2002), and also the notion that cultural continuities give rise to religious syncretism. In Calabar, this is highlighted in the perpetuating beliefs of a highly plural and powerful spiritual realm. The second section builds on this historical approach by bringing in analyses of New Religious Movements (NRMs; cf. Fernandez 1978, 1982; Hackett 1989) to understand the developments of Calabar's diverse religious landscape throughout the 20th century. The themes of agency, power and the exchange between religious and social or political ideas are again

highlighted, yet this section also alludes to an emerging insecurity in the conflict of Calabar's religious symbols. The third section brings us to the present-day Pentecostal scene. Focusing on church programmes, the section highlights the fluid nature of Calabar's religious scene, and highlights similarities rather than difference between Pentecostal and more established churches. Drawing on this contextual backdrop, the final section turns explicitly to young women's religious experiences through the rhetoric of 'fake churches'. Expanding notions of 'spiritual insecurity' (Ashforth 2001, 2005), the discussion highlights the perceived risks and gains of worshipping with others.

Missionary Encounters

'Christianity has allegedly been among the most effective agents of change in Africa' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991:7). Using the encounter between European missions and the Tswana of South Africa in the 19th century as an exemplar, the Comaroffs (1991) argue that early missionary ventures in Africa introduced not only a new religion to the continent but also European economics, ideologies and social mores. For the Comaroffs (1991; cf. Mudimbe 1988), missionaries were fundamental for instigating change in how Africans thought and also their awareness of colonial rule. Citing Fanon (1967), the Comaroffs (1991) play greatly on the idea of subjection, of a single transformation that has simultaneously venerated European 'civilisation' and ideology, and enslaved African minds. As they describe, the missionary encounter was, 'A long battle for the possession of salient signs and symbols, a bitter, drawn out contest of conscience and consciousness' (ibid.:4).

The European aim to change Africans' ideology, and the involvement in capitalism and culture was evident in Nigeria's mid-19th century missionary encounter. Inspired by a Wesleyan revival in Britain, these missionaries despised ritual, dancing and ostentatious ceremonies, and were also deeply rooted in the anti-slavery movement (Ajayi 1965) – the latter ideology especially significant for their reception and impact in the trade-oriented Niger Delta. Where the Comaroffs (1991) argue that this was an imposition of European culture onto the African 'other', the following illustrates that this encounter was very much a dialogue and negotiation between two cultures. Remembering African agency and the historical landscape that informs the reception of new religions is essential for understanding current religious change (cf. Peel 2000b, 2002).

Transforming African minds, education played an integral part in the missionary encounter. Preaching the Bible and turning Africans into 'people of the Book' (cf. Engelke 2007; Kirsch 2008) was not just aimed to instigate religious change but also to teach new politics and morals. Missionaries – and later educated Africans – considered secular education a failure because it allowed 'traditional' belief to continue. Interestingly, the European mission in Nigeria therefore took a different line from the Fulani *jihad* that swept northern regions in the early 19th century, and which permitted the coexistence of 'traditional' local customs with a new Islamic religion (Ayandele 1966). The next chapter further explores how missionary education created new social categories, identities and networks (cf. Bastian 2000). Focusing on Calabar, this chapter illuminates how education was a negotiation between Africans and Europeans, both parties having demands on the other and expressing concerns for the communities involved.

The failed attempts of Portuguese Christians in the 15th century aside, Europeans first established missionaries in southeastern Nigeria in the mid-19th century. In 1846, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, led by the Rev Hope Waddell, became the first mission in Calabar. At this time, Calabar was one of the city-states that had developed in southeastern Nigeria out of the slave and palm oil trades (cf. Stride & Ifeka 1971). Efik people had enjoyed a long interaction with Europeans, and had built social institutions, such as their house system, around trade.²³ As Ayandele notes, 'The Efik of Old Calabar seemed more accommodating to European civilisation and, to the superficial observer, a blend of the European and indigenous was developing' (1966:3). Trade had also centralised power within the city-states – an important condition for how the missionaries were received. Indeed, when Waddell first arrived in Calabar, he found that European trade had instigated the growth of three main towns: Creek Town, Old Town and Duke Town. Furthermore, Creek Town and Duke Town – governed by Eyo Honesty and Eyamba V, respectively – were competing for palm oil trade (Ajayi 1965).

Missionary success in Calabar relied on the reception by the traditional chiefs, who vied for missionary attention not out of religious concerns but to enhance their own communities' political and social situations (Ayandele 1966). While welcoming the missions, the elite were sceptical about the need for a new religion. Eyo Honesty, in particular, is noted for his wariness towards total Christianisation, fearing a neglect of Efik customs (Ayandele 1966). Waddell's

²³ In other city-states, such as Bonny, the Atlantic trade encouraged even more mercantile forms of social organisation. For instance, Bonny's 'canoe house system' allowed people with new-found wealth from trade to gain social and political prominence, whereas in Calabar the traditional elite still presided (Stride & Ifeka 1971; cf. Latham 1972).

original aim of completely converting the Efik within nine years went unachieved.²⁴ Yet, unlike in Bonny, where Waddell's missionary attempts lasted only a couple of weeks, Calabar remained an environment conducive to a mission (Ajayi 1965). In understanding why Calabar's mission was successful, paving the way for the city's current religious identity, we must recognise African agency and the historical backdrop on which religious conversion played out.

Against this mercantile scene, the early missionaries not only wanted to educate Efik people but it is argued that the Efik, placing value in European ways, expected education from the missionaries (Ayandele 1966). The Scottish missionaries founded the Hope Waddell Training Institution in Calabar in 1895. As with other missionary training colleges in Nigeria, it was designed to allow its best students to find jobs outside of the mission. Later, missions led education in Calabar through primary and secondary schools. Besides formal schooling, early missions also had success with translating the Efik language.²⁵ While missionaries elsewhere in Nigeria engaged with Yoruba, Hausa and Kanuri languages (Ajayi 1965), the focus on Efik, a much smaller language, is testament to how Calabar's missionaries were received and to the local population's demands. Hence, in Calabar, the missionary encounter was informed by pre-existing Atlantic trading systems, and helped maintain the importance placed on economic, social and political links with others beyond Nigerian shores.

²⁴ Highlighting the difficulties in converting the local population, the Presbyterian's first baptism was in 1853 (Hackett 1989).

²⁵ In 1849, Waddell and Edgerley published *'Vocabulary of the Efik Language'*. Later, the Rev Hugh Goldie became renowned for his *'Principles of Efik Grammar & Specimens of the Language'* (1862). Goldie published *'Efik Dictionary'*, *'Efik Grammar in Efik'*, and *'Efik Grammar in English'* all in 1874 (cf. Ajayi 1965).

Arguably one of the most important individuals during this early missionary encounter was Mary Slessor, a missionary from Dundee. Slessor arrived in Calabar in the 1870s, bringing new energy to the Presbyterian mission that had found difficulties in fully converting the Efik. Heading north towards Okoyong, Slessor made her own missionary path beyond the Calabar mission. However, she was no less significant in terms of educating the local populations. Slessor discouraged the practising of the 'poison ordeal' (discussed below) and also urged against human sacrifices at funerals (cf. Proctor 2000). Slessor became most famous through her role in stopping the practice of killing twins, traditionally considered unnatural in Efik culture. Today, a number of statues depicting Slessor holding a pair of twins pay homage to Calabar's 'white Queen'.

In Slessor's story, we once again critique the Comaroffs' (1991) argument for assuming Africans lacked agency in the missionary endeavour. While Slessor imparted European social mores, this was inherently a symbiosis of European and Nigerian wills. Slessor became well respected and trusted amongst both the Efik people and the British officials in Nigeria (Proctor 2000). For instance, becoming highly esteemed amongst the Okoyong people, she exercised judicial roles before moving to live with the Ibibio in Ikot Obong. Impressing the High Commissioner, who identified her knowledge and involvement in local affairs, she later became Permanent Vice President of the Native Court (Proctor 2000). It is not difficult to see why Hackett describes Slessor as an 'eccentric and charismatic female missionary' (1989:68). Furthermore, Slessor is an important figure in the shaping of gendered religious identities in Calabar. Slessor's link to

twins upholds the narrative of nurturing female missionary.²⁶ Conversely, her involvement in judicial systems certifies her as a strong-willed individual acting against the patriarchy of both missionary and Efik culture (cf. Bowie 1993). However remembered, a certain legacy lives on in Calabar for the capacity of women to be important religious figureheads, a role now encouraged by the Pentecostal doctrine (cf. Offiong 2003; Soothill 2007).

In understanding how Christianity became ingrained in Calabar, we must go beyond an analysis of missionary encounter informed by trade dialogue between Efik elite and Europeans to consider religious change as a choice made by individual believers. Peel's (2000b) volume on the Yoruba during the early missionary encounter in southwestern Nigeria is a useful point of departure for investigating how Christianity was first received and experienced by individuals. In his Afrocentric approach, Peel illuminates African agency by pointing out that the missionary encounter was not just Europeans imposing Christianity on the African 'other' but, rather, it was a process of 'inculturation' (2000b:215). Firstly, in that some Yoruba must become Christian before the religion becomes Yoruba. Secondly, and more pertinent to understanding why individuals choose new religions, conversion is a trajectory that must be framed in the converts' reasoning. Hence, Peel (2000b) pays attention to the experiences and circumstances of individuals before conversion, arguing that such backgrounds not only inform conversion but also are carried on in converts' subsequent religious experiences. Furthermore, identifying factors giving rise to religious

²⁶ Writing about the Dominican Sisters role in Nigeria, Salamone (1987) argues that female missionaries' lack of authority and lower status encouraged them to become more preoccupied with people's needs rather than the mission foremost as an institution.

change, Peel (2000b) reminds us that conversion is a historical process, occurring over a period of time and at specific historical moments.

Traditional Yoruba religion was concerned with *alafia* (Peel 2000b), a condition of earthly well-being assuring protection, good health and guidance in life. Stating that Yoruba religious experience was a search for power, Peel (2000b) argues that conversion to Christianity involved a weighing up of the benefits and drawbacks of identifying with a new religion.²⁷ Yoruba recognised that the ‘white man’s religion’ could be reconciled with their understandings of *alafia*, and conversion had the benefits of accessing power. However, disadvantages of conversion manifested as consequences of breaking social ties. The marginalised, those with less to lose in social status, were among the early converts to Christianity. For instance, returned slaves were amongst the first ‘inquirers’ at mission stations because they had few social ties to negotiate with and much social clout to gain through a new Christian identity. Importantly, in identifying which Yoruba were attracted to Christianity, Peel (2000b) illuminates how both age and gender constitute axes of conversion. At an analytical level, at least, these two factors can be considered both together and separately in understanding how the conversion period panned out.

Writing specifically about the gendered experiences of Yoruba religion, Peel (2002) elaborates on how gender not only informed traditional Yoruba religious beliefs and practices, but also dictated how Christianity was received differently by men and women. Traditionally, Yoruba women worshipped multiple *orisa*

²⁷ See Pratten (2007a) for a similar analysis of early converts to the Qua Iboe Mission in southeastern Nigeria.

deities or had an *Ori* (personal deity), whereas men participated in the male Yoruba cult of *Ifa*. The first wave of Christian conversion was more popular amongst men, who were less tied to the *orisa*. Women were less likely to abandon their personal deities in favour of a foreign Christian God. However, women were more responsive to the second wave of conversation because full church membership was non-negotiable with the male prestige tied to *Ifa*. As above, conversion is a balance of losses and gains for the individual believer. Hence, by illuminating individuals' agency, we pave the way for later discussions on how religious practices are gambles individuals undertake in the hope to improve current circumstances (cf. da Col 2012; Graeber 2012).

Considering the intersections of gender and age, Peel (2000b) highlights how conversion is not just a dialogue between personal losses and gains, or between missionary and Yoruba, but also between different groups of Yoruba. While women were perhaps not interested in early conversion to Christianity in view of their personal relationships with the *orisa*, Peel (2000b) notes how young women avoided conversion not out of a lack of interest but because they were unable to make choices. Young women considered worshipping the *orisa* as a vital social obligation for successful family reproduction. These young women, who concerned *alafia* with fertility, eschewed conversion in fear of persecution from the *babalawo*, the (male) priests of *Ifa* who respected Christianity but preferred young women to worship the *orisa*.

We might infer similarities here between the Yoruba *babalawos*' and the Efik chiefs' desires to preserve traditional values in the face of an emerging Christianity in their respective communities. Tensions exist between personal

religious experience and communal ideas of respectability and social reproduction. As subsequent chapters highlight, the past inflects young women's religious experiences today: fathers often dictate places of worship (e.g. Chapter 3), and girls' desires to connect to a global community create tensions with local communities (e.g. Chapter 5). Religious choice is therefore shown to be contingent on power cleavages designated by gender and age. Interestingly, Peel (2002) argues that as women did finally convert and become more prominent in the church, it took on some characteristics of the *orisa* cults, facilitating social networks and answering medico-spiritual needs. Here we see how women's previous encounters with their *orisa* informed how they experienced Christianity.

Questions of agency aside, it is also important to consider what happened to the belief in traditional local gods in the transformation of African minds. Central to traditional Efik cosmology is the notion of the soul, which is understood to be linked to an animal, *ukpong unam*, chosen by Eka Abasi (mother god) and denoting an individual's personality (Hackett 1989). Great importance is attributed to the soul; the tenet both resounds in various traditional religious institutions and spiritual manifestations, and has given rise to the belief in a highly plural spiritual realm. The Efik belief in the soul hence follows more general African religious thought, where a highly powerful spiritual realm determines the visible world of the living.

Traditional Efik religion supports the idea of one Supreme Being, Abasi, who lives in the sky and dictates life, death and justice. Abasi was not worshipped directly but through *Ndem Efik*, a pantheon of lesser water spirits (Offiong 2001).

This indicates a bustling spiritual realm populated by deities of varying political and religious importance. The seven areas of Efikland are each supposedly governed by one water spirit, such as Anansa at Old Town (Obutong), Esiet Ebom at Henshaw Town, and Akpa Uyok at Creek Town (Akak 2004). There are also 'bush mermaids', such as Ekpenyong (male) and Ekanem (female) who are marked by the two tallest trees in the sacred forest in Efikland. Some of these deities, such as Anansa and Ekpenyong, gained more importance than others, suggesting henotheism amongst the Efik (Hackett 1989).²⁸ Interestingly, this idea of spirits governing various areas of Calabar resounds in the Europeans' understanding of 'Mission Land'. The missionaries understood their Mission House as a sanctuary, welcoming in any Efik person who had broken with their traditional laws and obligations (Ayandele 1966).

As well as the *Ndem Efik*, spiritual power also lay in the secret Ekpe Society. This traditional leopard-spirit cult is understood to have derived from the Efik cult of *Nyana Yaka* or *Mkpe*, which presided around the time the Efik people migrated along the Cross River to the present site of Calabar (Akak 1982; Hackett 1989). *Ekpe*, meaning leopard in Efik, was understood as an enigmatic spiritual being from the forest. Only initiated cult members could see and capture the *ekpe*, and likewise could only perform the society's rituals. It is said that when the *ekpe* was captured and brought into the community as part of traditional ceremonies, it would let out a roar. While everyone could hear it, only those initiated could locate the sound.

²⁸ Hackett (1989:179-181) acknowledges how the *Ndem* deities wax and wane in popularity. Their 'official' importance is marked by whether they are recognised during libation rituals at traditional ceremonies. Today, Ekpenyong and Anansa remain amongst the better-known deities.

Traditionally, the Ekpe Society was a social, religious and political institution. The cult held a judicial role in Efik society, enforcing law and order (Hackett 1989). For instance, the *Ekpe* messenger, a masquerade character named *Idem Ikwo*, would announce his arrival in town with a bell tied to his waist, instilling fear by whipping the uninitiated. Highlighting *Ekpe's* religious aspect, the ancestors were central to the secret society's beliefs and customs. However, the Ekpe Society evolved to keep up with intensifying trade from the middle of the 18th century. As such, the society took on more authority and became impressive in its judicial and disciplinary roles, collecting debts, controlling trade and persecuting those who broke the law. As Hackett (1989) notes, the society's success was rooted in its ability to adapt with trade and economic developments.²⁹ This was demonstrated by the fact that anyone, regardless of lineage, could join the society as long as initiation fees could be covered.

Witchcraft (*ifot*) is another Efik spiritual belief, which traditionally had two manifestations. *Afia ifot* (white witchcraft) was understood to offer protection, while *obubit* (black witchcraft) caused destruction. From various accounts, witchcraft appeared an ambiguous force. It was supposedly conducted mostly at night, when witches were believed to transform into animals such as owls and bats, or insects such as cockroaches and moths. The source of *ifot* substance also remains unknown. As with other African understandings (cf. Evans-Pritchard

²⁹ Conversely, the *Ndem Efik*, spirits governing the water, lost importance because fishing became less important to the Efik economy (Latham 1972; Hackett 1989).

1937), the Efik associated witchcraft with the stomach as it could be communicated through eating food.³⁰

While G. I. Jones notes that the Efik traditionally associated witchcraft activity with agnates and women married into the family (1970; cf. Latham 1972), Hackett (1989) notes that witchcraft was traditionally free from gender bias. In the face of such uncertainty, the Efik had devised means of protecting themselves from attack or of finding out whether someone was guilty of witchcraft. *Abia-idiongs* (witch doctors) were called on to divine guilty people or to provide remedies to spiritual afflictions. The *esere* bean was typically used as a 'poison ordeal' to detect witches. Once ingested, this bean was supposedly poisonous only to witches, causing death as it touched the *ifot* in the accused's stomach (Latham 1972; Hackett 1989; Proctor 2000).³¹

Latham's (1972) analysis of witchcraft accusations in Old Calabar in the late 18th and 19th centuries explores the uncertainty surrounding witchcraft beliefs. Echoing analyses of witchcraft from the 20th century (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff 1993; Geschiere 1997), Latham (1972) notes that, as individuals accrued wealth through Atlantic trades, traditional social structures became threatened, giving rise to witchcraft accusations. The author posits that witchcraft accusations amongst the Efik were a covert mechanism for relieving tensions during a period of rapid economic expansion and social change. For instance, in 1871, amidst a period which saw the rise of new elite in Old Calabar wards, Archibong II called

³⁰ Linking witchcraft with other Efik spiritual beliefs, the gall-bladder of the leopard was *ifot* (Jeffreys 1966; Hackett 1989).

³¹ The *esere* bean became known elsewhere as the Calabar bean, linking the city to the belief in witchcraft (Hackett 1989). Mary Slessor was also known for discouraging this 'poison ordeal' (Proctor 2000). A Treaty with the British in 1878 signalled the abolition of the 'poison ordeal' (Latham 1972).

on *abia-idiongs* to identify the cause of his illness. The *abia-idiongs* agreed that it was one of Archibong II's servants behind the witchcraft. Interestingly, Latham (1972) points out how witchcraft accusations were not as important in other city-states, such as Bonny or New Calabar, because these other Delta communities had broken down traditional lineage structures and developed a 'canoe house system' (cf. Stride & Ifeka 1971). Witchcraft accusations had less significance where new-found economic prestige from Atlantic trade did not conflict with traditional hierarchies.

Crucially, beliefs in *Ndem*, *Ekpe* and witchcraft continue today, constituting Calabar's bustling spiritual realm and highlighting the difficulty in reifying such beliefs as 'traditional'. In understanding how such beliefs coincide with Christianity, we can draw again on missionary analyses. Horton (1971) argues that the success of the missions was due to pre-existing African cosmologies, which constituted a two-tier model of deities. This microcosm and macrocosm distinction in traditional African religions led to two types of deities with different powers and means of interaction. At the microcosm, local deities were worshipped directly and gave spiritual help for local matters. At the macrocosm, there was the belief in an ultimate supreme being, usually the creator-figure whose power corresponded to the wider world. In the Efik case, we can see a distinction between the almighty Abasi and local marine spirits, such as Anansa.

For Horton (1971) the missionary success was how the encounter linked Africans to a wider world, giving rise for the need to access spiritual powers in the macrocosm. Horton (1971) suggests that, in a process of translation, the existence of an almighty being in traditional African cosmology facilitated the

easy adoption of a Christian God. As Christianity spread, answering Africans' spiritual needs, the author proposes that the African microcosm weakened and local deities waned in importance. As such, the beliefs in local deities would eventually become a relic of a past age. While Horton's (1971) analysis of an expanded worldview introduced by the missionaries is questionable in coastal Nigeria, where communities, such as the Efik, already had an understanding and interaction with a wider world through the Atlantic trade routes, his analysis is also problematic for considering the persistence of beliefs in local deities and witchcraft alongside Christianity.

In her monograph of the German missionary encounter amongst the Ewe in Ghana, Meyer (1999) draws on Horton's (1971) framework of translation to understand how a new Christian God could be adopted into African cosmology. However, Meyer's (1999) analysis is more helpful in understanding how, rather than dwindling, the belief in lesser local deities can persist alongside Christianity. Drawing on Fabian's (1969, 1971) analysis of historical continuities in religious conversion, Meyer (1999) proposes that in order for the Ewe to understand Christianity, the missionaries had to translate their message into the local language. As such, local deities became demonised and understood as the Devil, enabling their persistence in the minds of Christian Ewe. As Meyer argues, 'Paradoxical strategies of both vernacularisation and diabolisation have contributed to local appropriations of Christianity on the borderline of the old and the new religions' (1999:xviii). By focusing on linguistics, Meyer (1999) presents a powerful argument for understanding how missionaries transformed African minds, and again critiques the Comaroffs (1991) by acknowledging that a

new Christian language arose out of collaborative communication between missionaries and Africans.

Drawing parallels with Meyer's (1999) account, we see how Christianity was received by the Efik. The existence of a Supreme Being in Efik cosmology enabled the new Christian God to be known as Abasi. This new Christian God did not replace deities but became incorporated into the existing *Ndem Efik* pantheon. As discussed later (cf. Chapter 3), the belief in the existence in water spirits is still very much alive today in Calabar. While Pentecostalism encourages the understanding that marine deities are Satan's helpers – ambivalent characters that 'disturb' individuals – rumours circulate of individuals having accrued power and good fortune from worshipping such spirits. Similarly, witchcraft and the Ekpe Society became associated with Satan under a new Christianity in Calabar.³² Christianity has not reduced Calabar's plural spiritual landscape to one of monotheism but has allowed for the persistence of multiple spirits to co-exist. Christians in Calabar acknowledge that witches and water spirits exist but say that they do not 'believe' in them – where belief corresponds to efficacy rather than existence of spiritual power, Christians worship God because they understand Him to be more powerful than other spirits.

Meyer (1999) also reminds us that the persistence of local deities goes beyond the vernacular: the belief in powers that pose real threats necessitates remedial action, spiritual protection often not offered by missionary churches. Indeed, in

³² Hackett notes how Christians were fearful of the Ekpe Society, while *Ekpe* members did not believe their cult went against Christian values – 'no anti-Christian activities are performed in *Ekpe*, on the contrary it encourages a strong sense of brotherhood and communal welfare' (1989:183).

Onitsha in 1890, one Presbyterian missionary suggested that the Church could help in the divination of witches and also exorcise demonic spirits. This caused much outrage amongst other missionaries adamant that witchcraft did not exist, and created much confusion amongst African converts (Ajayi 1965). Linking to how people amid uncertainty understand, encourage or avoid fortune and misfortune (cf. da Col & Humphrey 2012), we must acknowledge that the belief in a highly plural spiritual realm encourages the development of multiple spiritual institutions to protect and give remedial action from spiritual encounters.

This historical backdrop presents Calabar as a city with an intense Christian identity, and highlights some important points that inform the following discussion on its more recent religious movements. Firstly, shown in the discussions of both the Efik reception of missionaries and Yoruba women's Christian encounters (cf. Peel 2000b, 2002), the discussion has illuminated the centrality of agency in religious experience. Secondly, we see that Christianity did not replace traditional Efik beliefs but became incorporated into an already busy spiritual arena (cf. Meyer 1999). These two notions of agency and continuations of traditional religion highlight how Christianity in Calabar has evolved (and continues to evolve) into a highly plural religious movement. Drawing on this idea of plurality, the next section highlights the spiritual ambiguities that inform Calabar's contemporary 'religious-scape'. As such, the discussion gives further context to how the religious actions young women partake in to encourage future fortune are constant negotiations of their fears and faith in the spiritual realm.

Religious Plurality

1881 marked the advent of Calabar's religious diversity when a disagreement between two missionaries engendered the first split within a religious institution (Hackett 1989). Providing a basis for considering the city's religious diversity, Hackett's volume *Religion in Calabar* presents Calabar as a 'city of Church industry' (1989:1). Aiming to 'produce a comprehensive inventory of religious institutions in Calabar' (1989:8), as means of gauging religious activity amongst its residents, Hackett catalogues various religious movements that have been introduced, developed in, and exported out of the city.

Drawing on Fernandez's (1982) analysis of *Bwiti*, a syncretic Christian movement amongst the Fang of Gabon, Hackett (1989) advocates a historical approach to understanding Calabar's emerging religious practices. Highlighting the intersections of macro- and microcosmogenies, Fernandez (1982) helpfully reminds us that we must look at the intrinsic relationship a society has with the wider world, to look to the 'grassroots' processes that facilitate the rise of NRMs. In Calabar's case, we must ask how colonialism, independence or economic turmoil affects local worldviews. Illuminating an 'argument of symbols' occurring between old and new religious forms, Fernandez (1982) explains how, amid a changing world, values are translated and incorporated into converts' new religious identities. This idea is reiterated in Sundkler's (1948) assertion that NRMs are often just 'new wine in old wineskins'.

Where power struggles (between new and old beliefs) are hence intrinsic to the emergence of NRMs, Fernandez's (1982) analysis of *Bwiti* also reminds us that, despite waxing and waning in popularity, new movements do not necessarily

replace older religions. This notion helps explain Calabar's busy religious landscape, in which church schisms pinpoint NRMs born out of and in retaliation to existing ones, and hence where there is much interdependence and competition. Revisiting Peel's (2000b) Africanist approach, we must also remember that there is much agency in the making of religion, bringing local conceptions to Christianity. It is these notions of power and agency in religious practice that are highlighted through the next examples of NRMs that have occurred through the 20th century in Calabar, influencing the city's current religious landscape.

By the turn of the 20th century, missionaries had fallen out within mission churches, Africans were founding their own churches, and new religious movements were coming to the city from outside. For instance, A.A. Obadina, a member of the United Native African Church in Calabar, founded his own church to rival the Presbyterian mission (Hackett 1989:95). Also, with incoming traders from northern Nigeria, a small Hausa community settled in Calabar, and by 1918 had built a mosque on Calabar Road (ibid.:96). Yet it was the influx of religious movements from Europe, such as the Salvation Army and a small mission along the Qua Iboe River, which is especially noteworthy concerning religious plurality and its consequences.³³ Coming to Calabar during a time of increasing political opposition and competition in the light of new economic prestige (cf. Pratten 2007a), these new Christian movements played an important part in religious revivalism, citing a change in Calabar's spiritual ambience.

³³ Hackett classes the Salvation Army as 'the first of the imported or exogenous groups to evangelise in the area' (1989:96). The Salvation Army began evangelising in 1903 in Calabar, although a station was officially founded in 1928.

The Spirit Movement that ignited Ibibioland in the late 1920s was one significant religious development in the region. Occurring in Calabar's northwest hinterlands, it left deep imprints on the city's spiritual landscape (cf. Abasiattai 1989; Hackett 1989). The Spirit Movement can be traced back to the Qua Iboe Mission, which was founded in the late 1880s by an Irishman named Samuel Bill at Ibeno in Ibibioland (cf. Abasiattai 1989; Pratten 2007a). Returning to Nigeria at the turn of the 20th century, Bill found the Ibeno community in the middle of a small-pox outbreak, and the mission impoverished both spiritually and financially. Hoping for spiritual renewal, Bill started a weekly Saturday night prayer meeting. These meetings eventually stopped when a revival did not come to the mission. However, around the time of the First World War, a religious revival had spread across Igboland, with the Garrick Braide movement and the Christ Army Church having success with their basis of confessions and faith healing (cf. Pratten 2007a). Another revival movement happened elsewhere in 1922 but this time much further afield, overseas in Ulster. Against the backdrop of changing events within and outside Nigeria, the Qua Iboe Mission could only pray that this spiritual fervour would reach them too.

Prayers were answered some five years later when, in August 1927, the Spirit Movement hit Ibibioland. Starting at Itu, where John Westgarth was stationed, the movement had spread to Uyo and Ikot Ekpene Districts by the end of the same year (Pratten 2007a). Although its roots were in the Qua Iboe Mission, the Spirit Movement looked very different, privileging visions, prophecy, spirit possession, speaking in tongues, public confessions and nighttime prayers. Somatic experience was hence foregrounded in the movement, and followers

became known as the 'shakers' in light of their, often violent, manifestations during spirit possession.³⁴ Becoming popular with young men and women, this religious revivalism rebelled against traditional order, spirituality and hierarchy. Chiefs and *idions* were targeted and made to convert, and suspected witches were accused of their alleged crimes. The movement only lasted three years but in this time it garnered hundreds of adherents.

Far from being peaceful, the Spirit Movement met much opposition from local chiefs and colonial authorities. By November 1927 some 34 serious assaults and 4 murders had been recorded, 11 members of the movement had been convicted of murder charges and 3 had been executed (Jeffreys 1935-6:102). The movement became ambiguous in the eyes of community authorities, who likened its violence to ancestral masquerades (*ekpo*) – incidentally, one of the traditional institutions the movement was rampaging against (Pratten 2007a).³⁵ Adding to the ambiguity of this spiritual revival, speculations as to how the Spirit Movement came about were far from clear-cut. While, at the time, some linked it to the introduction of a new tax – a reaction to governance – others traced the movement to new religious books that had come across the Atlantic (Westgarth 1946). Furthermore, Westgarth, himself, was implicated in the emergence of the movement. Wanting to believe in the movement's divine instigation, Westgarth felt conflicted as to whether he should condemn the 'shakers', encouraging

³⁴ The 'shakers' were known locally as *mbon sibirit nkek idem* or people who shake with the spirit (Pratten 2007a).

³⁵ Although the movement was Christian and in contradiction to traditional religion, components of the movement are highly syncretic. For instance, the Holy Spirit was understood to live in church altars, which became shrines (*idem*). Female followers also wore *mpkatat* (*selaginella*) leaves to protect themselves against malevolent spirits (Pratten 2007a).

colonial authorities to accuse him of distributing religious pamphlets encouraging occult worship (cf. Pratten 2007a).

Asking how we can analyse, interpret and write about such historical events, Pratten (2007a) identifies the Spirit Movement both in terms of a quest for power and a witch-finding movement. In the former, marginalised Ibibio could enhance themselves through the Holy Spirit and newly established religious links across the Atlantic. In the latter, the movement was a reaction to the newfound economic wealth of those who challenged traditional political and spiritual hierarchies. Hence, Pratten (2007a) suggests the Spirit Movement was a reaction to a changing Ibibio world, as a way of mediating old and new forms of sociality and power. As such, we are reminded of Fernandez's (1982) analysis of NRMs, where followers to a new religion wish to increase their spiritual power in order to influence, partake in or contest the unfolding events around them.

Crucially, through syncretism, NRMs often bear little resemblance to the movements out of which they developed (Fernandez 1982). Indeed, by 1930, its initial Qua Iboe link was of little relevance to the Spirit Movement's broader trajectories (Pratten 2007a). It is such that we can understand how religious pluralism arises, and why NRMs gain prominence and harbour so much potential for social change. Illustrated elsewhere across Africa, NRMs are powerful by being different from the *status quo*. Jean Comaroff (1985) notes how the power of Tshidi Zionism in South Africa lay in its 'otherness', while Fields' (1985) highlights the Central African Watchtower movement as going against *both* colonial and traditional identities (cf. Pratten 2007a). It is this 'otherness' in NRMs, I argue, that while symbolising potentiality and diversifying the religious

landscape, also gives rise to insecurity through their unknown religious practices.

While not making this explicit link between NRMs and increased insecurity, Pratten (2007a) does offer a useful analytical framework to understand spiritual events shrouded in uncertainty. Contrary to Latham's (1972) emphasis on the social and economic functions of witchcraft accusations, Pratten (2007a) forefronts spirituality by drawing on de Certeau's (1992, 2000) analysis of mysticism. NRMs can arise out of societal change in how 'de Certeau links mysticism to a social critique of this new system in two senses – as an expression of the marginalised, and as an ontology that eludes the powerful' (Pratten 2007a:63). As the author argues, de Certeau's (1992, 2000) interpretation of mysticism is so convincing because it cannot be refuted by logic or words. For instance, in the Spirit Movement, we see a spiritual space carved out away from that of colonialism, a space creating its own historical order; in prayers and spirit possession, we see potentiality, understood only in the bodies of the movement's followers. Such questions of representing the mystical, getting away from a scientific gaze and understanding the somatic experience, are revisited in Chapter 3. Where uncertainty plays a central role in the attraction, efficacy and rebuttal of spiritual power (cf. Arens & Karp 1989), Pratten (2007a) reminds us to pay attention to individuals' spiritual experiences.

Although a discrete event occurring mainly in Calabar's hinterlands, the Spirit Movement sparked religious revival in mission churches and encouraged a number of other spiritual uprisings. Firstly, other spiritual movements formed, with some becoming independent churches. One example is the Obere Okaimé

Christian Mission – founded in 1927, it retains the essence of the Spirit Movement in its divinely revealed language and writings (Abasiattai 1989; cf. Hackett 1989). Secondly, another witch-hunt arose in the 1930s, a time of economic depression. We are again reminded of Latham’s (1972) analytical lens for understanding the emergence of witchcraft accusations. Yet this new witchcraft scare is important for highlighting developments in the church’s response to indigenous beliefs in the wake of the Spirit Movement. As Hackett (1989) notes, the Apostolic Church, a British-led Pentecostal movement arriving in Calabar in the early 1930s, enjoyed success after it *admitted* to witchcraft’s existence and therefore spoke to the spiritual needs of Calabar’s residents.³⁶

Illustrating the merging of Christian and indigenous beliefs within the church, these two examples mark the era that saw the emergence of a new type of religious movement in Calabar: AICs (African Initiated Churches).³⁷ AICs denote religious movements founded by Africans for Africans,³⁸ although Mbon (1991a) highlights some of the churches’ international reach to dispute the latter claim. The Brotherhood of the Cross and Star (BCS) is one such AIC that should be explored here by dint of being one of Nigeria’s largest and most well-known churches and because its roots lie in Calabar (Hackett 1989:186).³⁹ In tune with how churches grow in Calabar today, the BCS started humbly as a prayer and

³⁶ The Apostolic Church arrived in Lagos in 1931. It moved to Calabar by 1932, although only started evangelising properly by 1933. The first Apostolic meeting was advertised by a poster proclaiming, ‘There is witchcraft’ (Hackett 1989:100).

³⁷ Also referred to as African Independent Churches (e.g. Pauw 1995).

³⁸ Mbon (1991a) draws a relationship between AICs and ethnic identity. Peel (1968) writes about the birth and significance of the Aladura church amongst the Yoruba. Hermoine Harris’ (2006) monograph looks at Yoruba religious practices in Diaspora, focusing on the Nigerian Cherubim and Seraphim Church in London.

³⁹ Mbon (1991b) claims that at the time of writing, the BCS was not only Nigeria’s fastest-growing NRM but also the country’s most controversial.

Bible-study group, meeting just twice a week. Early church members were mainly women and children (Mbon 1991b), reiterating the above discussions of agency and choice of the disempowered in conversion (cf. Peel 2000b; Pratten 2007a). The church was formally founded in 1964 and has since expanded across Nigeria and also internationally. As the BCS claim, it is more than just a church; it is the New Kingdom, a Brotherhood.

The BCS attracted many looking for spiritual solutions to spiritual problems (Mbon 1991b). Unlike other spiritual churches, the BCS endorses abstemious worship style, foregoing the use of candles, incense or other rituals. Indeed, members of the Brotherhood wear long white gowns and go barefoot to church. Such ascetic practices do not detract from the inherently spiritual nature of the church, whose central teachings are love (*ima*) and power (*obudu*), translating as the power of the Holy Spirit. The church's founder, Olumba Olumba Obu, perhaps best demonstrates the BCS' spirituality. Known colloquially as OOO, Obu is considered the reincarnation of Christ, the personification of the Holy Spirit and God himself. Drawing on Weber's understanding of charisma, Mbon (1991a) acknowledges the power of charismatic leaders in religious movements, and Obu encapsulates this beguiling power and mystique. Such is the magnitude of Obu's charisma that posters advertised the leader's appearance at a BCS programme in Calabar around the time I started my doctoral fieldwork, some years after his alleged death.⁴⁰ Where charisma seems to be linked to spiritual power and

⁴⁰ Members of the Brotherhood insist their leader still lives. 'Olumba Olumba long dead, followers are being deceived – former avid follower' (Roti 2012) published in *Information Nigeria* is one such media article echoing the rumours and allegations surrounding the leader's death.

authority, the movement's pastors boast spiritual gifts enabling them to heal, dream, prophesy and have visions.

Following Fernandez's (1982) analysis of NRMs to understand the success of the BCS – the intersection of micro- and macrocosmogenies – we must remember that its formative years coincide with a time of much change, potentiality and uncertainty in Nigeria. The BCS developed during the time of Nigerian independence, and its official founding came just three years before the Biafran civil war, which devastated the southeast of the country from 1967-1970 (cf. Falola & Heaton 2008). Focusing on Obu's accusations that colonial greed caused Nigeria's economic demise, Mbon (1991b) highlights the nationalistic tendencies of the BCS and AICs more generally. Yet Mbon (1991b) is right to comment that, rather than being a nationalist movement, the BCS is a religious movement responding to national concerns. Applying identity theory to AICs, Mbon argues that 'the members of these movements are consciously or unconsciously engaged in the task of seeking individual as well as collective identity' (1991a:7) – interestingly, such an idea of identity and renewal through religion is revisited by Marshall (2009) in her analysis of more recent Nigerian Pentecostalism.

In understanding the rise of AICs, Mbon (1991a) urges us to look beyond the relationship between Nigerians and colonialism to religious experience itself. As NRMs, AICs may arise in times of economic, social or political struggles, and gain popularity by allowing Nigerians more meaningful religious experiences (Mbon 1991a). Following the belief that power resides in the spiritual realm, AICs' emphasis on pneumatology, speaking in tongues and spiritual healing allows Africans to worship a Christian God through African traditional religious

practices (Mbon 1991a). Mbon's (1991a) analysis is a powerful persuasion to why AICs gained such prominence since the mid-20th century in both Calabar and the wider Christian-Nigeria. Thus, where this chapter goes on to understand young women's religious experiences in Calabar as means to encouraging fortune, Mbon's (1991a) helps us understand how young women maintain faith in religious actions which they can recognise as manipulating the spiritual realm, the force behind auspicious and inauspicious events (cf. da Col 2012).

One might also take Mbon's (1991b) assertion that it was Obu's pragmatism that made the BCS stand out among AICs; in tune with current affairs, his worldly advice spoke to the spiritual – a resonant idea in the techniques of current Pentecostal fervour sweeping Nigeria (cf. Marshall 2009). Furthermore, illuminating the proposed commonalities between AICs and more global Pentecostal movements, it is worth mentioning Maxwell's (1999) historical analysis of Christian Independency. Examining the southern African Pentecostal movement in the early 20th century, Maxwell (1999) argues that scholars have tended to privilege European Christianities over African religious traditions in their analyses of syncretic movements. Emphasising similarities rather than differences in origins and characteristics, Maxwell's (1999) historical analysis reminds us that, while a global movement, Pentecostalism has the propensity to traverse borders before (and after) moulding to the local. As such, Christian movements that started with European missionaries could easily adopt African prophetic tendencies and have the potential to develop further, integrating with other religious movements.

The above discussion highlights how, in understanding Calabar's Christian identity (cf. Hackett 1989), we must pay attention to how the local links to a wider changing world (Fernandez 1982), to power relations (Fernandez 1982; Pratten 2007a), and to charisma and African identity (Mbon 1991a) in outlining the developments of Calabar's NRMs. Speaking of Calabar's religious pluralism, Hackett (1989) argues that, despite the diversity, the churches resemble one another and carry out similar functions. At a superficial level, one cannot disagree, but the above discussion has highlighted that religious pluralism gives rise to much uncertainty. Shown in the Spirit Movement's resemblance to *ekpo* (cf. Pratten 2007a) or in the Brotherhood's monastic habits (cf. Hackett 1989; Mbon 1991b), we must look beyond appearance or function to focus on religious experience in understanding why new religious movements gain prominence. Focusing on the worshippers' experiences, we are better placed to understand how young women navigate Calabar's cacophonous churchscape, illuminating how they reconcile their fears and faiths that keep them engaging in religious activities in order to prepare themselves for future fortune.

The Church Marketplace

Throughout my fieldwork, the myriad posters lining the city's streets that advertised church programmes intrigued me greatly. These posters denoted a spatial aspect to Calabar's religious plurality, mapping out the city's religious discourses and practices. Yet they also implied a temporal dimension to successfully navigating this churchscape. Special programmes cropped up at specific periods of enhanced spiritual activity – either when people were in danger of suffering spiritual afflictions or when the power of the Holy Spirit was

considered at its strongest. Commencing my fieldwork in August, a significant point in the year before the onset of the Pentecostal 'Mber Months' (September to December),⁴¹ extra programmes were advertised everywhere in time for the closing of the year and a time of increased need for God's help.

Conversely, the programmes that fell around Easter – known as Resurrection Sunday in Pentecostal churches – focused on harnessing the perceived increased power of the Holy Spirit that resulted in Christ's resurrection. Beginning-of-the-month programmes were also popular, denoting the need to see in the new with God's help – interestingly, rhetoric always focused to the future, and past struggles were not dwelled upon.⁴² 31st December marks the most significant date in the Pentecostal church calendar. Known as 'Cross Over Night', even those who forget church the rest of the year remember to see in the promises of the New Year with God.⁴³ Finally, imposed on this Pentecostal year is another temporality: 'singlehood'. Indeed, many of the programmes cater for singles, giving spiritual advice to those who are trying to 'prepare' themselves for marriage (cf. Chapter 2).

Advertising churches' spiritual services, these religious posters denote the beliefs and fears surrounding the city's spiritual landscape. They illuminate the general understanding of the world beyond what is seen: the power of ancestral

⁴¹ This period is traditionally understood as a time of heightened spiritual activity e.g. a time for masquerades (cf. Pratten 2007b). We once again see how the Pentecostal church is translating traditional cosmology into a Christian framework of rhetoric and action (cf. Meyer 1999).

⁴² It is common to send New Month text messages to friends, wishing them God's help in the coming days. One New Month text I received from one female friend read as follows: 'Dis month I decree dat d ground u walk on shal produce blesins, d sky abv u shal release favor n d brez ard u shal blow Peace.Evrytin wil work in ur favor.'

⁴³ As with New Month texts, an SMS I received to see in the New Year read as: 'In d year 2012,u shall b a quintessence of possibilities, nd extraordinary advantages... ur reloaded 4 God's glory...welcome 2 2012.'

curses and the potency of witchcraft attacks (cf. Chapter 3). Meyer (1998) suggests such traditional beliefs, instead of being dispelled by Christianity, are merely perpetuated by Pentecostal rhetoric. In Calabar, as discussed above, the belief in the power of previous generations' and witches' covenants has always been present, manifesting themselves at certain points in time (cf. Latham 1972; Pratten 2007a). However, as these posters illustrate, it is the Pentecostal movement that is explicitly merging Christian religious rhetoric and action with traditional beliefs *within* the church.



Figure 1. Examples of posters advertising (predominantly Pentecostal) church programmes in Calabar. (Photo: Gilbert 2012)

Starting my fieldwork, I did not need Talent to notice the competition between churches but I did need her to help me understand it – especially, to shed light on how young women make sense of Calabar's spiritual landscape. Initially, to the undiscerning eye, these posters appear to advertise the same thing: just another church service. Yet Talent taught me the need to read between the lines to know

how a programme could help discern and attain future fortune. Each programme specialises in religious practices (prayers, deliverances, praise and worship) or spiritual guidance (Bible study and prophecies). As young women engage in these religious practices, they prepare for the future. Where Miyazaki (2004) argues that hope is renewed through constant action, we see that young women's faith in forthcoming fortune is maintained by constantly identifying themselves with God through diverse religious acts of the self.

'Look out for how the programme is tagged,' Talent said, 'it will tell you the package in store for you.' As she explained, she would only attend a programme if it sounded 'interesting'. By this she meant if she could learn something new that would help her progress in life, a reminder of how religious techniques are central to processes of personhood and the future. Integral to receiving all due benefits of this 'package' are pastors, whose faces, printed large on posters, sell these programmes. Yet the pastors' faces also highlight the ambivalence expressed towards them, their promises and the church: the fine line between needing a powerful 'anointed man of God', and being blessed by someone with another power just cashing in on other people's insecurities. As Talent expressed, she hated it when pastors' faces took up the majority of the posters, as if they were celebrities and more important than God.

It is not just when driving around town that one is visually bombarded with the ministerial marketplace (cf. Hackett 1989), with churches all eager to sell you their latest and most successful spiritual aids. Walking down the city's main streets, it is not unusual to have a paper flier thrust before you by someone eager to invite you to their church's forthcoming programme. Standing at hotel

reception desks or at the counters of the city's popular fast-food restaurants, one also finds a colourful array of fliers. Even sitting in shared taxis, it is typical that someone has left a pile of fliers on the dashboard for other clients to pick up. These fliers, as with the roadside banners, will usually show a picture of the pastors ministering, allowing people to identify the powers behind the programme. The programme's tagline is also given, telling the prospective worshipper what spiritual lift is in store for them. Yet these fliers also have space on their reverse to detail recent testimonies of the ministry: illness cured, new job secured, child born, marriage this year. Furthermore, that this flier has passed from the church member's hand to your own, adds a personal and persuasive touch.

Even more personal and persuasive were the invitations from friends to join them to church. This was initially a blessing – Talent was especially helpful in introducing me to Royal Citizens Ministries, her father's church, and to other occasional places of worship. But as I settled into my own 'home church', I found turning down these invitations became increasingly awkward – a sentiment shared by many young women. Throughout my fieldwork I also found that I would frequently receive invitations by text messages from unknown churches, although I was never sure whether someone had taken note of my number or if this was a city-wide spamming to a whole mobile network. While Calabar has always had a busy church scene (cf. Hackett 1989), this intense evangelism is of course a part of the Pentecostal project (cf. Mate 2002).

My Father! My Father!!

FATHER'S HOUSE INT'L CHURCH

PRESENTS

Covenant Sunday

THEME: THE

Storm is Over

DATE: Sunday 13th May, 2012

TIME: 9.00 AM. Prompt.

@ MAIN BOWL,
Cultural Centre Complex, Calabar.

With God's Prophet
GOODHEART VAL ALOYSIUS
Prophet of Signs & Wonders

For prophetic prayers & enquiries call:
08037625278, 08056366653, 08064437244

FATHER'S HOUSE MEDIA - 08037940105

The End-Time Warriors Ministry Inc.
(An Inter-denominational Deliverance Fellowship)

PRESENTS

One Month Encounter with the Holy Ghost

Theme: "AUGUST VISITOR"

Date: Every Monday and Saturday in the month of August.
Time: Mondays 5p.m.; Saturdays 6:30am
Venue: The End Time Warriors Int'l Revival Centre
105 MCC Road, Calabar.

MINISTERING:
Evang. Mrs.
Mercy Okom
& other anointed Ministers

EXPECTATIONS

Salvation	Healing
Restoration	Deliverance
Impartation of Gifts	General Breakthrough
Baptism in the Holy Ghost	and Lots More!

It's a Divine Visitation. Don't Miss It!

Figure 2. Two examples of fliers advertising special programmes. Potential worshippers look out for the person ministering the programme, the theme and the spiritual guidance on offer.

These posters advertising church programmes are a highly visual reminder of the city's competing religious doctrines, discourses and practices. Despite the continuing role of mission churches, AICs and traditional religious beliefs, the introduction and growth of the Pentecostal movement has played a tremendous role in shaping Calabar's religious landscape over the past couple of decades (cf. Offiong 2003). Pentecostal churches have diversified the city's 'religious-scape', especially where the movement lacks uniformity. Its popularity has also necessitated older-established churches to pay attention to the movement's features (e.g. its charismatic worship, music, programmes and gender roles) in order to compete for worshippers. As Gifford asserts, 'Pentecostalism is undoubtedly the salient sector of African Christianity today' (1998:33). Where much of the literature on Pentecostalism focuses on the continuity:rupture dichotomy (e.g. Meyer 1998; Robbins 2004; Marshall 2009; Engelke 2010), Meyer (2004) presents a useful analytical framework for understanding the rise of Calabar's Pentecostal movement. Arguing that the rise of Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches (PCCs) is not just an empirical shift in African Christianity but also a *theoretical* shift in how anthropology has come to define these African churches, Meyer (2004) recognises continuity and change by placing Pentecostalism in relation to other religious movements.

This approach is useful for understanding Calabar's diverse Pentecostal movement with regard to the interchange between older AICs and newer Pentecostal churches, and again draws upon Maxwell's (1999) analysis of Christian Independency. Firstly, many 'Orthodox' churches have adapted charismatic characteristics in line with the Pentecostal movement. For instance,

one Catholic Church I visited in Calabar South conducted its morning Mass in Efik, rigorously following the set bulletin. After the Reverend Father left the church, a congregant came forward to lead an inter-denominational charismatic fellowship – lasting the whole day, it included everything from glossolalia, testimonies, prophesy, laying of hands, to purifying and protecting worshippers with anointing oil and water.⁴⁴

Secondly, many of Calabar's newer Pentecostal churches resemble the neo-Pentecostal tradition from America (cf. Martin 1990) but they are in fact wholly Nigerian ministries, either home-grown in Calabar (e.g. The Brook Church) or imported from other cities (e.g. Christ Embassy from Lagos). Crucially, the various developments from mission churches alongside the local adaptations of Pentecostal doctrine denote a plethora of churches with varying trajectories and missions, and highlight the complexities of using strict typologies.

Furthermore, these Pentecostal churches, as with earlier schisms between religious movements, are linked to one another with respect to pastors breaking away to found new Pentecostal ministries (cf. Hackett 1989). It was by chance towards the end of my fieldwork that I found out my second 'home church', Outpouring Assemblies, had a strong link to my first 'home church', The Brook Church. As I took the life history of Pastor Tonye, the founder and head pastor at Outpouring Assemblies, I learned how he met his wife, Mama, when she was a member of his congregation. On their engagement, Pastor Tonye decided he wanted his fiancée to worship at another church so that he was not marrying

⁴⁴ That sachets of Pure Water – hawked and sold nationwide for 10 naira each – were used to cleanse the congregation, delightfully brings new meanings to the brand name, and also highlights how religious movements imbue spirituality into seemingly mundane items.

from within his ministry. Admiring Pastor Ose, Pastor Tonye sent Mama to The Brook Church. Hearing this, it made sense why I had always heard inflections of Pastor Ose's preaching (namely of kingship in life) in Mama's sermons.

Where spiritual gifts are highly esteemed, the interstices of AICs (e.g. Brotherhood of the Cross & Star), older-style Pentecostal churches (e.g. Deeper Life), and the vast number of newer Pentecostal churches (e.g. Winners Chapel) form a blurry triangulation of spirituality. Dress code aside, it is not always easy to differentiate between church 'types'. Hence, Meyer (2004) offers a useful critique to Hackett's (1989) survey-approach, which rigidly presents religious experience in its institutional categorisations. Taking Fernandez's (1978) argument that anthropological studies of AICs have tended to impose 'western' categories rather than reveal anything about these movements, Meyer (2004) warns us against regarding Pentecostalism as merely usurping AICs.

It is difficult to distinguish PCCs as a totally new phenomenon – while some South African churches practising glossolalia have been cast by scholars as AICs, other AICs have redefined *themselves* as PCCs (Meyer 2004). Linking back to Mbon's (1991a) insistence on African identity in NRMs in Nigeria, Meyer (2004) asks us to regard Christianity as entering a new stage in Africa, which has led to the problematising of terms such as 'African' and 'indigenous' in our analyses. Furthermore, in the development of Calabar's Pentecostal movement, and its effects on the city's other religious movements, we must be wary of seeing Pentecostalism only changing African culture and recognise a realignment occurring within Christianity itself (Engelke 2010).

Where this section has highlighted historical continuities concerning religious plurality and fluidity, we may ask how the blurred boundaries of Calabar's Christian movements impact on young women's religious experiences as they envisage future success. As one Catholic woman exclaimed, 'We are *all* Born Again here!' Contrary to literature explicitly linking Pentecostal identity with being Born Again (e.g. Meyer 1998; Robbins 2004), in Calabar I found that even those who identified with 'Orthodox' churches also claimed to be Born Again. The insistence on spiritual rebirth, 'giving one's life to Christ', points to a fervent religiosity, the need for intense religious experiences and a hyper-spiritual vigilance. The wealth of churches as well as the transactional approach to religious experience reiterates the understanding that, amid uncertainty, people believe in the determining forces of a spiritual 'other' to understand fortunate and unfortunate events (da Col 2012). Hence, where the Pentecostal church is advertising answers to spiritual concerns, young women can maintain faith in overcoming spiritual concerns and encouraging auspicious events through constant religious activity (cf. Miyazaki 2004). However, we must be wary that the ambiguous Pentecostal movement only generates faith. The following section complicates the discussion, highlighting the inherent gambles young women undertake as they engage with religion to work on the self and encourage future fortune.

'Fake Churches'

In understanding young women's religious experiences, we must understand how beliefs in the powerful and ambivalent spiritual realm intersect with Pentecostal discourse. Where above discussions highlighted traditional deities

attached to certain areas of Efikland, we find this spiritual cartography echoed in the present-day understandings that different areas of town pertain to different religious activity. For instance, Calabar's urban area has an undoubtedly Christian identity, which is perpetually contrasted with ideas of traditional institutions and spiritual activity in the village – from chiefs pouring libations and 'Traditional Marriages', to witchcraft and traditional healers. While this speaks to Meyer's (1998) distinction between village tradition and urban modernity encouraged by Pentecostal rhetoric of breaking with the past and its associated institutions,⁴⁵ Calabar's two distinct LGAs (Calabar Municipal and Calabar South) complicate notions of a clear-cut Christian urban modernity (cf. Geschiere et al. 2008).

Hosting government offices, the route of the Carnival, boutiques and fast-food restaurants, Calabar Municipal is considered to have respectable churches. By contrast, Calabar South is older, poorer and with less developed infrastructure. Close to the city's two universities and with cheaper accommodation, the large student community encourages many respectable Pentecostal churches in the area – one only needs to drive down Edibe Edibe to find four Redeemed Christian Churches of God in a row.⁴⁶ Yet the religious identity of Calabar South is highly ambiguous. Where Calabar Municipal is the place to be seen, Calabar South connotes the hidden, especially when one ventures 'right inside'. Rumours circulate regarding the prayer houses and the spiritual churches, or the activities

⁴⁵ In a service about destiny at Outpouring Assemblies, Mama preached, 'You have not come here with village mentality – a meagre mentality. Receive your city tonight!' (Sermon from Wednesday 13th June 2012).

⁴⁶ A mission statement from the 1990s highlights the Redeemed Christian Church of God aims of having a parish at five-minute walk interspersions (Adeboye 2012).

that occur beside Calabar River – all with the common theme of ambiguous spiritual activity occurring at night. Nighttime is believed to be the time for spiritual activity (a time for attack and for spiritual strengthening), yet in this fluid ‘religious-scape’, darkness also provides the perfect cover for people not wanting to admit to partaking in certain spiritual activities.

Where the village is associated with traditional (political and spiritual) powers, which deny progress in life, and Calabar South owns to a highly ambiguous spirituality, Calabar Municipal’s image of capitalist modernity, of a place connected to the world, is not without its spiritual uncertainties. Calabar is commonly described as being the ‘headquarters of occult activity’ – the birthplace of religious groups such as The Brotherhood of the Cross & Star; the location of spiritual groups such as Eckankar and AMORC; a centre for witchcraft and marine deities; and, its recent Carnival revelry illuminates the city for some as the embodiment of immorality. The latter, especially, speaks to the understanding that the emergence of capitalist modernity, with its rising cash economies and expanding international markets, breeds much uncertainty that is understood through spiritual discourse (Meyer 2008).

During my fieldwork, the hidden dangers of capitalist modernity were epitomised in the ‘Illuminati’ discourse, the allegedly satanic cult whose membership reportedly boasts internationally-acclaimed music stars, such as Beyoncé, Jay-Z and Rihanna.⁴⁷ Young Nigerians greatly admire these stars, yet

⁴⁷ The ‘Illuminati’ discourse in Nigeria has been bred by documentaries on the international music industry. *‘Illuminati – The Music Industry Exposed’* (Khan 2010) is one documentary sold in Nigerian DVD shops and found on You-Tube. Young Nigerians often talk about ‘Illuminati’ in

ambivalence surrounds how they talk about these celebrities. As my friends pointed out, many of the 'Illuminati' musicians started their careers singing in churches but, once discovered by international record labels, apparently sold their souls to the Devil in order to become millionaires. The stars' Faustian transactions, their reported allegiance to the occult, are characterised through their lyrics, their hand gestures that supposedly allude to satanic code, and their erotic music videos. Such ambivalence allowed a friend to show me the carefully saved pictures and videos on her BlackBerry of her idol, Beyoncé, only to point out a few minutes later all the star's (as she believed) occult dealings. While the 'Illuminati' discourse, originating from outside Nigeria and targeting the US, is clearly a crusade against perceived immorality, young Nigerians add a distinct spiritual layer to this moral battle. It is such that the sentiment prevails that nowhere is safe from diabolic activities and one must keep constant spiritual vigilance.

These uncertainties speak directly to Ashforth's (2001, 2005) conception of 'spiritual insecurity'. Outlining the uncertain and dangerous environs of Soweto, South Africa, Ashforth (2001, 2005) argues that troubled relations and unexplained misfortunes manifest in 'spiritual insecurity' – specifically for Soweto, this manifests as witchcraft accusations. Amid the township's extreme poverty, anyone who has 'bitterness of the heart' can be a witch. 'Spiritual insecurity' arises from a two-fold epistemological bind where one neither knows a witch's motive nor their methods. Ashforth (2001, 2005) highlights the need to draw on higher powers in order to dispel these feelings of unease with the

conjunction with Church of Satan, an unrelated movement started in America that celebrates the carnal being.

spiritual realm. It is such that the church becomes key to displacing 'spiritual insecurity', as people call on the Holy Spirit for protection. Although Ashforth (2001, 2005) does not overemphasise the link between Pentecostalism and the occult, what we can take away from his analysis is the prevalence of insecurities in challenging postcolonial life, and that these feelings manifest in real actions.

Calabar's burgeoning Pentecostal movement, with its special programmes emphasising spiritual gifts, stands as testament to Ashforth's (2001, 2005) understanding that the Holy Spirit is considered the higher power to dispel spiritual uncertainties. Yet, illustrated in Pentecostal 'assignments', the use of spiritual gifts for guidance is also highly ambiguous. These 'assignments' can be understood as spiritual exercises conducted or directed by pastors to correct spiritual problems, which manifest as real problems in the physical realm. For instance, if a young woman wants to marry a certain young man, she might be instructed to take two photos (one of herself, the other of her suitor) to her pastor, who will bind the photos together and pray for the couple's union. The pastor may also expect payment for these spiritual services.

I always considered 'assignments' reminiscent of practices I had heard of in controversial prayer houses or 'the village'. I was assured there was a great difference: despite appearance, 'assignments' harnessed the power of a Christian God.⁴⁸ Such ambiguous Pentecostal 'assignments' speak to Fernandez's (1982) 'argument of symbols', where ideas are often transposed and imbued with different meanings in new religions. Interestingly, while these 'assignments' do

⁴⁸ How traditional rituals are imbued with Christian meanings is demonstrated in Werbner's (2011) study of Apostolic street prophets in Botswana's capital, who want to know all the traditional esoteric knowledge in order to be able successfully find witches.

exist, churches do not openly advertise them.⁴⁹ The rumours that circulate of the great works of anointed men of God add to the mystery and allure, but also raise questions regarding the source of spiritual power, especially when the payment is large or the miracle controversial. Hence, much uncertainty arises from these 'arguments of symbols' (Fernandez 1982), where meaning is easily contested and reinterpreted. Developing Ashforth's (2001, 2005) 'spiritual insecurity', we see that the plethora of churches in Calabar, with their blurring of differences and similarities, actually perpetuates and creates more spiritual uncertainty.

Smith's (2001) account of the 1996 Owerri riots is one example of how, amid the insecurities of Nigerian postcolonial life, the Pentecostal church is often embroiled in allegations of immoral and even occult activities. As Smith (2001) notes, Owerri had become increasingly violent at the start of the 1990s, with a series of child kidnappings giving rise to much anxiety. The pinnacle of these insecurities was reached one evening when local television broadcast images of a man carrying the freshly severed head of a child. Riots ensued, with the town's *nouveaux riches* being targeted amid rumours of their activity in kidnappings and ritual murders. In the way that Smith (2001) presents these events as arising from the moral failure of these young '419' men for not distributing their newfound wealth, we are once again reminded of Latham's (1972) analysis of occult accusations arising at times of economic uncertainty.

⁴⁹ For instance, I heard out about such spiritual services at The Brook Church when a friend (a member of another church) relayed hearsay to me about how a woman had conceived a child through Pastor Ose's spiritual help. Instructed by Pastor Ose to bring a baby's dress, Pastor Ose blessed the item of clothing and prayed that the woman would conceive.

As events unfolded in Owerri, the suspected burned corpse of 'Damaco', one of the city's *nouveaux riches*, was found. News spread of human skulls and 'human meat pepper soup' being found in Overcomers Christian Mission, the Pentecostal church where 'Damaco' had worshipped. With blame spreading, the Overcomers Christian Mission, the home of its pastor (accused of being on the '419' payroll) and other Pentecostal churches and religious homes were torched. Popular and press accounts framed the riots as 'religious cleansing' – the child's head was named 'The Arrow of God', giving the riots a spiritual message (Smith 2001). Yet it is interesting that these riots render the Pentecostal movement highly ambiguous. While creating a moral compass for postcolony's iniquities, the Pentecostal church was also the *target* of religious cleansing. Smith (2001) once again draws on reciprocal relations and obligations in understanding how pastors can be accused of satanic activity by failing to share their wealth. In Calabar, while there was the understanding that a successful and respectable church would exude wealth (in its buildings, for instance), there was a fine line between a congregation giving money in tribute to a powerful 'man of God' and a pastor with illicit powers 'eating' his congregation's money. There is always an uneasy tension between the Pentecostal rhetoric of individualism and traditional understandings of patronage.

While Smith's (2001) account ably exposes this ambivalence to certain Pentecostal churches and their pastors through its understanding of corruption and unfulfilled patronage obligations, it is important to highlight that people understand and talk about these moral failures within the church through a rhetoric of the spiritual. For instance, one friend candidly told me how a young

woman had gone to her pastor for prayers to overcome spiritual problems. The problems persisted and, dissatisfied with her pastor, the woman went to her village to seek the spiritual advice of her traditional healer. On entering the village, she saw her pastor exiting the traditional healer's home, saying, 'Oh, thank you, these people have believed in me. Thank you, your medicine worked for me'. My friend laughed incredulously as she recounted this line, although she did not comment, to my surprise, on the fact that this young woman was also seeking counsel in the village. Where belief in other spiritual powers persists – where, in the bid to locate fortune, some believe a need to call on other spiritual powers – this was simply to be expected. The unexpected behaviour, my friend stressed, was that the pastor had deceived his congregation by calling on a spirit other than God.

Where people worry that supposedly 'anointed men of God' use illicit powers, worshippers believe that attending certain churches is risky. People talk about 'fake churches', believing practices to be aided by illicit powers.⁵⁰ Going to such churches, as with attending too many different churches, is believed to cause 'spiritual confusion' and thus a lack of progression in life. This discourse has generated genuine fear but it is important to stress that, amid the city's religious marketplace, people still attend the supposedly controversial churches. While some class such churchgoers as 'miracle chasers' wanting instant answers to their spiritual afflictions, others claim to attend such churches casually just out of

⁵⁰ The 'True Life Story' of 'How a fake prophet ruined my marriage' (*The Nation*, 17/3/12, p.40; and *The Nation*, 24/3/12, p.40) is just one example of the tales that people like to tell each other about the dangers of visiting an unknown church – in this case a spiritual church. What is highlighted is not just the immorality of the 'man of God' out to rob others – a common criticism of 'Prosperity Doctrine' Pastors – but how the person who put trust in this spiritualist is left high and dry unable to see their secure future clearly.

curiosity – while retaining distance, they remain hopeful for a spiritual breakthrough. Where young women seek spiritual guidance in the hope of encouraging future fortune, we are reminded that such practices are always gambles (cf. Graeber 2012). Where there is always a risk that church involvement can do more harm than good, it is interesting to ask how young women do reconcile their fears and faith in deciding where to worship.

The fear of ‘fake churches’ in Calabar is pinpointed in one particular church: Demonstration Chapel. The Calabar branch was led by Val Aloysius, a young pastor proclaiming to be the ‘Prophet of Signs and Wonders’.⁵¹ Each month or so, the church would host a programme in the city’s Cultural Centre, encouraging people from other churches to attend and bear witness to the pastor’s prophetic powers. Although not everyone wanted to concern themselves with the ministry, for fear of Aloysius’ powers coming from the force other than God, everyone was familiar with the church, which was commonly known as ‘My Father! My Father!!’ after Aloysius’ much-used catchphrase. Many stories circulated about what went on during these programmes, fuelled by testimonies on church fliers and the church’s slot on the local television channel. Most of the stories focused on the pastor’s tendency to identify people in the congregation by calling out personal information from their phone numbers to bank account details, before prophesying to them. It was this sleight of hand as to how he attained people’s details that caused such controversy, and which threw his prophesy into question.

⁵¹ Marshall (1991) highlights how rising through ranks within Pentecostalism is contingent on ‘spiritual power’ and not age or wealth. However, in practice, suspicion arises when someone so young does attain such a high position within the church – people question, where is the power from?

While many of my friends advised me to stay away from Aloysius' church – some, perplexed by Aloysius' powers, even forbade me to watch his television show – some had attended the programmes out of curiosity. Eagerly telling me about the exciting programme she had just attended, one friend recounted how Aloysius had called a man and his girlfriend to the front of the church, only to reveal that the man had another girlfriend elsewhere. Aloysius continued to tell the man that the absent girlfriend was not meant for him, God's plan was for him to marry the girl standing in front of him. Hearing this story, my first thoughts went to the girlfriend standing on stage: was she not outraged to find out her boyfriend was cheating on her? My friend failed to acknowledge this, instead emphasising how the girl was actually very happy after these revelations because God had consecrated her relationship. Where young women engage with religious practices, creating new Pentecostal subjectivities in preparation of future fortune, we see how prophecy is a spiritual technique used to manipulate the future (cf. Graeber 2012). It is not without risks but, having faith in Aloysius, the girl believed she had secured her future: she knew her husband-to-be.

Reiterating a commonly held belief amongst my informants, my friend was open-minded to the prophecy, suggesting 'if you believe in it, it will work for you'. Interestingly, amid Calabar's uncertain 'spiritual-scape', there is also the understanding that 'just because you don't believe in it, doesn't mean it can't be your downfall'. Acknowledging the risks in unknown churches, young women often say a prayer on entering new churches, asking God to give them a sign if the powers behind the church were not of His own. Hence, despite the believed risks, young women are able to overcome rumours and maintain faith that

attendance at a particular church will aid future fortune. Where da Col (2012) argues that belief in a determining spiritual other gives continuity to seemingly unconnected events, how young women decide whether a church speaks to their personal beliefs (through prayer) also highlights the importance of continuity in the conceptions of fortune. Young women maintain faith in religious practices through a constant engagement in action (cf. Miyazaki 2004), which further builds confidence in their personal beliefs and knowledge of what works (and feels right) for them. It is this inner knowledge of the self, the looking to one's heart, that allows young women to navigate the spiritual landscape successfully.

Finally, examining how young women maintain faith in certain churches, it is helpful to draw on Werbner's (2011) analysis of Batswana street prophets to understand the centrality of other people in religious experience. Writing about 'holy hustlers', young men who have found fame on the streets of Gabarone through their ability to open up to others, combining compassion and determination in curing spiritual afflictions, Werbner (2011:12) exposes African notions of the partible person to understand how religious experience is both subjective and intersubjective. Arguing that the prophets' empathy towards their patients highlights a new understanding of religious charisma, Werbner (2011:1; cf. Mbon 1991a) illustrates religious leaders' centrality in understanding how people consider religious experiences effective. Where the prophets' practices often resemble traditional witch-finding rituals, religious experiences often negate clarity. Concerning young women's aspirations, we may infer that such mysticism renews hope for success through the competing notions of faith in charisma and fear in the unknown religious action.

Indeed, as Aloysius illustrates, some Calabar pastors are extremely (in)famous, but even the less well-known exude charisma and garner respect from church members. Pastors are usually referred to as Papa or Daddy, connoting the respect these leaders attract but also denoting them as spiritual guardians. Likewise, their wives are often known as Mama or Mummy. Focusing on informal economic governance and class formation going on in Nigerian NRMs such as Pentecostalism, Meagher (2009) highlights Weberian tendencies in the interaction between religious leaders and followers. While Meagher (2009) is helpful in highlighting how converts seek social progression through education and acquiring skills from spiritual leaders – some of Calabar's Pentecostal programmes are framed in a more business-oriented capacity – her analysis fails to put belief at the centre of religious experience and the popularity surrounding pastors. As such, we see the benefits of following Werbner's (2011) illumination of emic conceptions of personhood and religious belief in understanding how young women balance out fears and faiths as they engage with religious activities to manipulate their futures (cf. da Col 2012; Graeber 2012).

The following two chapters draw on these ideas more explicitly concerning young women's interactions with religious leaders. Here, I expand Werbner's (2011) notion of intersubjective religious experience to understand how young women understand the wider church. As my friends expressed, church was primarily a spiritual family and not necessarily a place to make friends – a point echoed by Soothill (2007), where Ghanaian Pentecostal churches depict spiritual community rather than social solidarity. As such, I found that many people do not hang around after services end. Fearing gossip, my friends acknowledged the

need to be wary of opening up to people and the dangers of jealousy (cf. Chapter 4; Geschiere 2013).

My impression of the lack of sociality within churches was reiterated by a Nigerian pastor, freshly-returned from the UK, who expressed surprise that British churches put on social occasions, such as coffee, for congregants after services. Mbon (1991a) emphasises the role religious institutions have in forming individuals' identities, drawing on ideas of welfare, self-confidence and human fellowship. While identifying with a group is undoubtedly important, I propose a more nuanced understanding of church solidarity. Young women's confidence that good worship with others will encourage future fortune comes through spiritual communication rather than social welfare. This reiterates the belief that amid uncertainty, people believe in a determining 'other' to make sense of seemingly incongruous events (cf. da Col 2012).

Following this idea of intersubjective religious experience, church programmes are considered successful not just because they might go on throughout the night – the hours just after midnight are associated with heightened spiritual activity – but also because they attract large gatherings of people. The programmes often include special guest pastors, which young women liked as it broke the monotony of their usual pastor and sometimes gave new Biblical insights.⁵² Guest comedians and praise singers are also there for entertainment – important for lifting spirits and making a more conducive environment for connecting with the Holy Spirit. Indeed, highlighting the ability of one famous Nigerian singer,

⁵² In understanding how guest pastors add to new Pentecostal subjectivities, Pearce (2012) argues that the emerging networks of elite pastors and the circulation of their religious teachings creates cultural capital.

Frank Edwards, to raise people's spirits, one friend described how even God would need to stand up on hearing the man sing praise and worship. The atmosphere in these programmes is usually more 'charged' than in normal services, encouraging more fervent prayer, more exuberant praise, more powerful miracles.

Such ideas of empathy and the partible person (Werbner 2011:12) are central to young women's belief that worship with others is a gamble. While it is necessary to keep social distance to protect the self, collective worship is believed more effective for harnessing the power of the Holy Spirit. Young women often spoke of feeling 'depressed' and unable to 'lift their hearts' to God in private prayer (cf. Chapter 3); being surrounded by others was means to achieve spiritual breakthroughs. Where da Col (2012) reminds us that people put faith in the spiritual 'other' in locating fortune, young women must feel that they are 'flying in the Spirit' in order to believe they are preparing for future fortune, working towards envisaged 'destinies of greatness'. Such activities are always risky, and young women maintain faith in future fortune by constantly engaging in religious activity (such as attending multiple programmes) to renew hope (cf. Miyazaki 2004). Yet, as they work on their religious selves, young women must also look inwards to maintain confidence, deciding whether they 'feel' the Holy Spirit and whether the church speaks to their personal beliefs.

Conclusion

Calabar is undoubtedly a 'city of church industry' (Hackett 1989:1), where the belief in a highly plural and powerful spiritual realm has encouraged a plethora of religious institutions. Taking a historical approach, the discussion has

highlighted the centrality of agency in formation, continuation and the possible demise or adaptation of NRMs. Explicitly highlighted in Peel's (2000b, 2002) examination of Yoruba missionary encounters, and reiterated throughout, individual choice is paramount in the rise of NRMs. Yet Peel (2000b, 2002) also illuminates the importance of paying attention to how historical and contemporary backdrops inform the reception of new religions. Firstly, we can understand who these converts are and their reasons for seeking religious change. Secondly, we can recognise religious movements adapting, their converts able to create highly syncretic movements.

In Calabar, this has played out in the plethora of religious institutions (cf. Hackett 1989) and also in the coeval Christian and occult landscapes (cf. Meyer 1999), which compete with each other as they inform worshippers' religious experiences. This duality of good and evil speaks directly to the literature on Pentecostalism, where the movement has diabolised 'traditional' religious beliefs (catering for associated spiritual afflictions) and insisted on the importance of becoming Born Again (cf. Meyer 1992, 1998, 1999). Yet the above discussion has also problematised this understanding: firstly, in that Born Againism's implied rupture from the past is in fact elusive, ephemeral and an impossible reality to sustain (cf. Marshall 2009); and, secondly, in that not only Pentecostals in Calabar see the merits of 'giving their life to Christ'. This signals an intense religiosity in the city, where people not only believe in the supreme power of God but also believe that fortune comes through constantly religious acts that work on the Born Again identity.

Indeed, for young women envisaging their futures, such ideas are integral to understanding how they maintain faith that their expected 'God-given destinies' will be realised. Where da Col (2012) highlights how ideas of fortune, luck and serendipity are often expressed through the idea of a determining 'other', and Graeber (2012; cf. Fortes 1987) recognises how societies believing in destiny continually try to manipulate the future, we see how young women's religious acts are in fact bids to encourage future fortune by identifying the self with God. Yet Calabar's religious plurality has also highlighted how such acts which try to overcome uncertainty can actually perpetuate insecurities. As such, the acts that are hoped to encourage future fortune are always gambles (cf. Graeber 2012), driven by the co-existing sentiments of fear and faith. As the discussions have drawn out, young women maintain faith and overcome disappointment through constant actions (cf. Miyazaki 2004) but also through knowing themselves. As the following chapters go on to discuss, this gamble for future fortune is not only about the belief in harnessing God's (over illicit) spiritual power but also about the ability to fit in with expected ideas of respectability and success.

2. Sisters' Talk

'Make a date with me by 6pm tmrw in Church for Sisters' Talk & get the understanding you need to transition. Pastor Ose.' Having heard about this event in church notices for a few weeks, this text message was the final reminder to attend The Brook Church's special programme. The church had already held an event for single men, and now it was the chance for the single women to receive Pastor's guidance on how to prepare for marriage. The Sisters' Talk programme exemplified how The Brook Church's doctrine should play out in young women's lives.

Returning to church only a few hours after morning service, I knew I should be on time because Pastor liked to start things promptly. Whereas Sunday and Midweek Services started with praise and worship, allowing people to trickle in at their convenience over the first hour, evening programmes usually had prompt starting and finishing times. Following church protocol, young women, who volunteer as ushers for the church, greeted worshippers at the door before showing them down the aisle. As usual, seats were filled from the front and worshippers were moved along so that no chair was left empty. Gathered only in the front few rows of white plastic chairs that filled the large church building, this was a much more intimate meeting than usual Service.

Looking around, I estimated that some sixty young women, mostly of student age but a few in their late-twenties and thirties, had come to hear Pastor's counsel. However, I realised I did not recognise most of these young women. It was a puzzle I asked other church members to solve for me: where did all these young

women who dominated the Midweek Service and programmes come from? I rarely saw so many at Sunday Service, which was predominantly young families, young couples and, in my estimation, quite a number of young men. Agreeing that they had also noticed how these well-dressed young women came out of the woodwork for Midweek Service, my friends suggested that these girls lived at home and attended their parents' church on Sundays, or perhaps they were students who, living near the universities across town, could not afford transport money to regularly attend The Brook Church.

At 6pm, just after the media crew had finished setting up their recording equipment – all Brook services could be bought on CDs – the programme began. As usual, a member of the Armour Bearers' department (Pastor's Personal Assistants) came to the front to give an opening Bible passage. Reading us Proverbs 4:1-4, the young woman reminded us to listen to God's Word to provide understanding, keeping it in our hearts to live through His commandments daily. After receiving The Word, prayers were led by a few members of the music department, Streams of Grace. Instructed to lift up hands and open hearts to the Lord, the congregation began to pray. With their palms faced up to the ceiling and their eyes shut, the young women's bodies slowly swayed a little as they focused and began to speak in tongues. The murmur crescendoed, although the prayers remained calm – not even a couple of minutes passed before the band started up their keyboards and drums. With the words projected onto the wall above the stage, Streams of Grace led a couple of international praise-and-worship songs designed to encourage the Spirit to start its work in the church. Despite our small number, the church suddenly came

alive as everyone sang enthusiastically, raising their arms up for the Lord and inviting the Spirit in.

With the mood now lifted and a sense of focus in the church, Pastor Ose – dressed in traditional tailored clothes, rather than the crisp suit he had worn earlier that day – came to the front to present the programme’s topic: True Womanhood. For close to an hour, Pastor talked to us calmly, repeating certain phrases here and there to ensure we understood him. Every so often, he interjected his lesson with, ‘Hallelujah’ – his deliberate pronunciation of the ‘j’ had become his catchphrase. We responded with, ‘Praise the Lord!’ Such exchanges brought the gathering together once more, signalling that we were following him. Occasionally we were told to repeat certain phrases, such as, ‘As a woman, I preserve life!’ The young women sat quietly, following The Word in their Bibles, on their BlackBerries or from the projection on the wall. As with usual Service, the young women took notes of Pastor’s message in jotter pads, eager not to miss points that they could revise later in their own private prayer-time.

Starting with Bible passages from Genesis, Pastor Ose defined womanhood as something to be celebrated: woman was made in God’s image and created to complement man. Pastor Ose emphasised how each one of the young women in the room should be viewing themselves: defined not by worldly backgrounds but by God. A woman needs to have a good *self*-definition in order to demonstrate God’s glory and vision. According to The Brook Church, this self-definition depends on one’s heart. Considered the source of woman’s spiritual strength, the heart renders her prayers powerful. Yet it is also easily corruptible by enemies

ready to cause confusion and misfortune. To maintain spiritual strength, Pastor Ose encourages women to let the Word of God inform their hearts, allowing them to discern true purpose in life. Where losing a bearing of oneself inside means losing a bearing on auspicious relationships, young women must realise their self-worth and purpose to question what kind of value relationships add.

Listening to Pastor Ose speak in his calm yet authoritative voice, I thought this could have been a life-coaching meeting.⁵³ While this was a talk for singles preparing for marriage, the focus was very much on the individual self, discarding the negative and focusing on the positive that these young women should see in themselves. The only advice on how to meet a suitable husband was to prepare by allowing one's heart to know God and to trust His vision for their lives, however illogical it appeared at first. Pastor Ose summed this up by closing with 1 Corinthians 2:9-10:

But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

After Pastor had delivered his message, there were some minutes dedicated to questions. These were a mixture of personal anecdotes and more hypothetical queries stemming from Pastor's message. Highlighting the need to embed oneself in God's Word to alleviate fears engendered by the unknown spiritual realm (cf. Ashforth 2001, 2005), one young woman questioned whether a dream was indicative of her future. In her dream, she had encountered a lady who

⁵³ Soothill (2007) goes so far as saying that Ghanaian Pentecostal talks are Christianity 'Oprah-style'. While such an analogy might go too far in connoting secular spectacle, her analysis is helpful in highlighting how "feeling good" and "positive thinking" take centre stage' (ibid.:70).

cursed her, saying that she would never marry.⁵⁴ To be protected by the Spirit, the young woman responded to the lady in her dream with the Word of God. Although the lady disappeared, the young woman admitted to still being scared – would she ever marry? Pastor Ose allayed her fears by reminding her that blessing is stronger than curse; there is no need to be fearful when God is in your life.

Another young woman's question called for spiritual guidance for a more pragmatic problem. Explaining how her suitor was a Catholic, this young woman asked Pastor's advice on whether her marriage would work. Pastor reminded her that values were important to relationships: a husband and wife needed to be working towards the same goals. Another woman worried that God would not forgive her after having already consummated her relationship. Pastor told her that God would forgive but asked the young woman to define what sort of relationship she had.

Finally, a question was raised concerning destiny: did marriage stop a woman from finding her God-given purpose in life? Pastor Ose was adamant that marriage did not stop God's vision but that a woman must know herself, find her purpose first, and marry according to it. Giving an example, Pastor told us about a 'very wonderful sister' in the church who was really going places and had plans to marry a top lawyer. The young woman had told Pastor how fantastic the man was, although she admitted that there was one problem: he was not impressed

⁵⁴ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of dreams. While African Anthropology has failed to engage with an analysis of dreams (cf. Jedrej & Shaw 1992), Nigerians read much significance from dreams. As the soul is understood as detached from the body (cf. Pratten 2007b), dreams have prophetic value.

by her dreams of having a successful career. The man wanted his wife to be in the kitchen, not climbing the career ladder. Pastor pointed out that, although the man appeared to be a perfect suitor, he was in fact not right for the woman because he did not support her God-given purpose.

Such a spiritual conundrum informs this chapter: how does Pentecostalism help young women negotiate individual and marriage aspirations? Indeed, standing out in Calabar, strangers would often come up to me and ask what I was doing in Nigeria. Giving a simplified synopsis of my research, I would answer that I was researching young women and Pentecostalism, and why young women were moving away from the 'Orthodox' churches. Interested by the topic, people were invariably very keen to give their own opinions. Invariably, these strangers would tell me – rather frankly – that young women went to Pentecostal churches because they were looking for husbands. 'Watch the girls all dressed-up at the front, dancing for God and looking pious,' I was instructed, 'they are wanting to be noticed!' When I first heard this response, I brushed it off as pure cynicism. Informed by intellectualist literature, I was sure there was a more 'meaningful' spiritual answer (cf. Marshall 2009). Admittedly, I became intent on proving these strangers wrong.

As I spent increasingly more time with girls in and outside church, the answer to Pentecostalism's popularity amongst young women became less clear-cut. Marriage undoubtedly holds much spiritual and social significance in Nigerian society – my female friends were all eager to get married, and I was there as they tried to work out men's intentions, announced engagements, and celebrated 'Traditional Marriages' and 'white weddings'. Yet, as I discussed and attended

Pentecostal churches with my friends (either members or occasional worshippers), I started to understand that, for young women, worshipping at Pentecostal churches was more about individual improvement and personal relationships (not least, with God). As the opening vignette illustrates, while marriage is one important goal, it is not the *only* goal in God's vision for young women.

Writing about upwardly mobile single women in South Africa, Frahm-Arp (2012) highlights how this group often face contradicting spiritual and social pressures concerning career and marriage. Pentecostalism has gained popularity by creating new spaces for women to negotiate single life with the Christian-calling of marriage, giving the understanding that successful careers are not detrimental to either marriage prospects or spirituality. This message resonates through the Sisters' Talk, where The Brook Church creates new spaces for Christian feminine ideals – crucially, in relation to new masculine ideals (cf. Frahm-Arp 2012). It is imperative that young women prepare themselves as individuals as they await their 'God-given destinies' – preparing spiritually, academically, in business, in their appearance. Conservative parental pressures aside, young women consider being single as a time of freedom, allowing them to 'make' themselves the best they can be (on their terms). Almost in an economy of marriage, the more young women prepare as singles, the more suitors need to match them in order to increase their personal value.⁵⁵ Hence, the time spent as 'Youth' in the church is not one of idleness but of much activity (cf. Honwana 2012) – young women are

⁵⁵ See Bourdieu (1976) on marriage strategies.

industriously 'making' themselves, aligning themselves with their believed 'righteous' futures and setting criteria for marriage.

The chapter delves deeper into the teachings of The Brook Church to discuss how the Word of God informs how young women imagine and realise their future aspirations, their believed 'destinies of greatness'. As outlined in the opening vignette, implicit here are the antagonisms between the future as an individual project and aspirations (and expectations) of marriage. Where this thesis argues that young women maintain faith in future fortune (and overcome present fears) through constant acts of self-preparation (cf. Miyazaki 2004), this chapter argues that young women's constant acts of the religious self fashion new Pentecostal subjectivities that not only pertain to a certain 'cultural logic of success', but also build self-confidence by believing God's Word as truth and looking inwards to identify the inner self with this truth. As we see, God's Word is not only a promise of greatness in life, but it is also the compass by which young women follow to reach their believed purpose.

Discussing the popularity and importance of the Pentecostal movement among Calabar's young women, this chapter follows Marshall's (2009) loose employment of a Foucauldian framework in her wider exploration of the Nigerian Pentecostal movement.⁵⁶ The discussion highlights the merits of utilising Foucault's (1977) framework of totalising power to understand God's Word as an all-encompassing discourse by which young women live to encourage fortune. While major theories of power (e.g. Bourdieu 1977; Foucault

⁵⁶ See Marshall's (2009) introductory chapter for a deeper exploration of Foucault's 'productive' and 'rare' power.

1977, 1998) are problematic in not allowing either for historical change or for denying agency, Foucault's (1977, 1998) offerings for understanding how power 'works' is useful in view of the emphasis on the body – the docile body inscribed with meaning – and on the centrality of the self in this inscription. Furthermore, this power is productive – contrary to Goffman's (1987) rather macabre analysis of 'mortification' and 'self-mortification' in his 'total institution' – Foucault (1977, 1998) offers us a framework for understanding not how the subject is dehumanised through subscription to a discourse but how a new subjectivity is being (constantly) created.

The chapter begins by situating The Brook Church within broader Pentecostal analyses, focusing on Marshall's (2009) analytical framework. Drawing out ideas of personal (spiritual) growth in being Born Again and of connecting to a global community, the discussion lays the foundation for understanding how Pentecostal rhetoric and practice creates new subjectivities and allows young women to conceptualise fortune. The second section examines The Brook Church's doctrine and church history to understand how faith in the future is encouraged through church rhetoric. As we see in Pastor Ose's testimonial life story, timeliness and faith in God are essential for personal (and collective) Pentecostal projects. The third section leads on from this discussion and, highlighting education in Pentecostalism (cf. Berliner & Sarro 2007), breaks the Foucauldian framework down to examine how new subjectivities are being learned (and performed). The final section focuses on the centrality of the Bible as a confidence builder, in discourse and in action. Uniting ideas of The Word as truth (cf. Engelke 2007; Kirsch 2008) and the subjective Pentecostal experience

(of gaining self-confidence), this final section develops Marshall's (2009) framing of how Pentecostal subjects are created by examining how the worshipper's feelings are central to how faith in future fortune is maintained amid uncertain realities. Understanding how young women conceptualise future 'greatness' through The Brook Church, we find the ethnography continually illuminates positivity and possibilities in life, detracting from the insecurities in which young women endure.

Preparing Pentecostal Subjectivities

One of Calabar's many Pentecostal churches, The Brook Church became my 'home church' for over six months during my doctoral research. As many of my informants acknowledged, there is something 'unique' about The Brook Church – indeed, Pastor Ose had earned a reputation for integrity and having a powerful presence of God. With its ethos of 'On purpose, manifesting *Zoe*', The Brook Church is dedicated to excellence, intention and aspiration in life, and preparation of the self through God.⁵⁷ Hence, it is believed that giving one's life to Christ at or becoming a member of The Brook Church points to an eternal and bountiful life through Christ. The church was not only going places but its congregation was also being elevated to new levels – in all areas of spiritual and social life.

This was perhaps best demonstrated through a list of motivational bullet points the congregation recited together at the beginning of every church service. This

⁵⁷ In the Gospel of John, the Greek word *Zoe* refers to eternal life of immeasurable quality. This is opposed to *Psuche*, denoting the earthly life. The Bible passage frequently used to illustrate *Zoe* comes from John 10:10, 'The thief comes only to steal and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.' (NIV)

ritual was introduced at the first church service of 2012, when ushers gave out glossy pieces of card with the 'Confessions for 2012' professionally printed on them. From then on, we were encouraged to read from these cards, although the Confessions were also projected onto the wall for everyone to follow in unison. There was something immensely powerful about a congregation reciting the Confessions in unison, culminating in a forceful, '*Surely I will* arrive at God's destination for my life!' These Confessions were not just statements of faith but were prophecies.

Speaking about impromptu prophecy, Csordas' (1997) work on the phenomenology of ritual language is useful for understanding how repeating statements such as the Confessions impacts on the individual and collective alike. Drawing attention to the embodied experience of language, Csordas (1997) suggests that the 'I' in prophecy is so powerful because it allows the speaker to believe the 'divine other' is speaking to them directly – an important argument for understanding how prophecy allows worshippers to connect with the spiritual 'other' believed to determine fortune and misfortune (cf. da Col 2012). These Confessions help young women maintain faith in future fortune through the way in which their repetitive nature renews hope through action (cf. Miyazaki 2004), yet also in the way in which such religious acts focus inwards on the individual, constantly reconfirming an auspicious relationship with God.

CONFESSIONS FOR 2012.

- I am the temple of God's unlimited Spirit, reloaded for Glory and created for mighty works of grace.
- I was born for dominion and headship in life.
- I am the planting of the Lord and the righteousness of God in Christ.
- I am fruitful and highly productive.
- As a branch in the vine does not struggle to be fruitful. So I bear fruit and achieve results with ease in all aspects of my life.
- Daily my horn of influence and authority is anointed with fresh oil.
- I engage the mind of Christ in me, for answers to any challenge that confronts me.
- I walk in the fullness of God, experiencing grace upon grace daily.
- I influence lives with the grace of God, everywhere I go.
- I am focused on the living hope provided for me by the blood of the Lamb in Christ.
- As I give voice to the word of God, I receive the ministry of angels assigned to me now.
- Surely I will arrive at God's destination for my life.



Figure 3. Photocopy of the Confessions card, which was handed out to worshippers at The Brook Church.

Despite the congregation's cohesive voice, reciting the Confessions was inherently a project for the individual. While some church members were high-

profile (businessmen or State Government officials), most were not,⁵⁸ but certainly all were subject to the insecurities of the Nigerian postcolony (cf. Obadare & Adebani 2010). Yet these Confessions are not the words of fear, desperation, or asking for God's protection,⁵⁹ but of assurance and confidence. There is no mention in the Confessions of current struggles, only of God's divine plan for the individual – the only strategy of breaching the gulf between what is and what God decrees is through the process of identifying the self in Christ.⁶⁰ Hence, while analyses of insecurity in the African postcolony have focused on fear (e.g. Ashforth 2001, 2005), on chronic social fatigue and youth in despair (e.g. Vigh 2006, 2008), indeed, on the very problems of becoming a subject (Mbembe & Roitman 1995), analyses have failed to register that instability also creates opportunities for upward progression that arise seemingly from nowhere, and (potentially) allows the individual to fashion themselves as they choose. As such, the following advances discussions on how the Pentecostal project of individualism critiques young women's past and present failures (Marshall 2009) and gives hope for the future (Piot 2010).

Indeed, Pentecostalism has flourished in Nigeria since the 1970s. Marshall (2009) offers both a critical and helpful analytical framework for this individual project for success, providing a starting point for understanding young women's engagement with Calabar's Pentecostal movement. Arguing that Pentecostal

⁵⁸ Literature has tended to link the Pentecostal movement in Africa with upwardly mobile classes, e.g. Marshall 1991; Meyer 1998; van Dijk 1998.

⁵⁹ Compare with Chapter 3, where young women attend fellowships to carry out offensive 'spiritual warfare' to overcome fears of malevolent forces.

⁶⁰ While The Brook Church does focus on the individual's destination, this was summed up brilliantly in a phrase often repeated by the pastors of Outpouring Assemblies: 'Destiny is not where you are now but where you are getting to. Destiny is not who you are now but who you are going to be.'

rhetoric and practice emerge out of and in answer to an 'epistemological, normative and ontological insecurity of life in urban postcolonial Nigeria' (ibid.:2; cf. Adogame 2010; Obadare & Adebaniwi 2010), Marshall helpfully contextualises the burgeoning religious movement against the country's political, cultural and historical backdrop. In Marshall's (2009) intellectualist analysis, the Nigerian Pentecostal movement is a 'political spirituality', reconciling the postcolony's secular and spiritual shortcomings.⁶¹

Crucially, the movement is striving for a particular vision of modernity through Messianic action. In a bid for individual and collective renewal, Pentecostalism eschews the postcolony's challenges of corruption and fraudulent behaviour, the legacy of the oil industry's boom-and-bust eras, the current threats of Islamic extremists. Indeed, this context is important to remember when understanding the religious lexicon and practice of Calabar's populous churchscape (cf. Hackett 1989). While Calabar prides itself on its progressive State Government, being removed from oil politics and safe from the grips of Boko Haram, its much-referenced tagline as 'The People's Paradise' removes the city from, yet simultaneously reinserts it in the wider context of, an unravelling scene of national insecurity. Where Piot (2010) draws attention to how Pentecostal rhetoric mixes temporalities, escaping the past and looking to the future, we find that Calabar's Pentecostal movement also gives rise to new imaginations of hope for the individual, city and postcolony.

⁶¹ See Cole (2010) for a comparison of intellectualist and instrumentalist frameworks of understanding the rise of Pentecostalism in Africa. Juxtaposed against Marshall (2009), Gifford's (1998) instrumentalist analysis is important for understanding other work on African Christianity but problematic in its regard for viewing religion merely as a political and economic tool.

Echoing analyses highlighting the polysemy of 'modernity' in Africa (Geschiere et al. 2008), Pentecostal analyses portray a rather incongruous notion of modernity. The popularity of the Pentecostal movement in Africa has understood modernity as a 'break with the past' (Meyer 1998; cf. van Dijk 1998), a departure from tradition (Mate 2002), realignment within the global Christian church (Engelke 2010) and a millennial political project for the individual and nation (Marshall 2009). As this chapter highlights, The Brook Church's notions of modernity are encapsulated in ideas of success as linked to the global. We may consider social networks, where young women look to 'outside' (Nigeria) to accumulate social capital, appearing to have 'arrived' in a country of possibilities and forward-vision. Inserting oneself onto the world stage, widening networks in the bid to create new opportunities for forward progression, we recognise how Nigerian Pentecostal subjectivities give importance to global capitalism (cf. Gifford 1998). This of course speaks to Nigeria's history, playing a significant role in colonial and postcolonial global exchanges and trading (cf. Falola & Heaton 2008). As the following highlights, individuals must engage with The Brook Church's global outreach – its business-talk and consumerism (cf. Marshall 2009), for instance – in order to demonstrate a certain 'cultural logic of success' and fit into an aspirational class.

Just as The Brook Church recites its Confessions before every service to renew the mind, re-birth is a central tenet of the religious movement (e.g. Meyer 1992; Marshall-Fratani 1998). Identifying as Born Again, one renounces a previous life. Engaging with a thoroughly global religious movement such as Pentecostalism (cf. Martin 1990; Engelke 2010) offers Nigerians a powerful critique of

traditional religious and political modes of thought and action. Yet where Marshall (2009) argues that this rupture from the past is of central importance for the success of the Pentecostal project of modernity, others have paid more attention to how the movement facilitates continuities of history and culture.⁶²

For instance, Meyer (1998; cf. Maxwell 1998) explicitly highlights how the Pentecostal discourse rearticulates traditional religion as diabolic and a drawback to envisioned modernity. Indeed, developing discussions from the previous chapter, it is necessary to recognise the continuities in individuals' religious experiences, how the Pentecostal present is negotiated with sinful pasts and righteous futures. As one friend, Victoria (a member of PowerCity Church), explained, being Born Again was about 'spiritual growth', not so much rupture from the past but building up knowledge for success: 'You begin to worship in the church where you gave your life to Christ. Your spiritual life begins to grow because you were taught things in the Bible, things that happen in the Bible and that will encourage you to an extent.' As the next chapter argues, such continuities in personal religious experiences are imperative to how individuals understand their biographies (dictated by relationships with spirits) and hence their expectations of future fortune.

In recognising the nuances of individual Pentecostal churches, it is interesting to note that, in carving out a new modernity for the worshipper, the 'Confessions for 2012' never explicitly engage with past errors but focus only on assured future success. Yet in its process of heuristically rearticulating, renegotiating and redefining categories, Pentecostalism is entwined in continuous struggles and

⁶² See Robbins (2004) for an analysis of rupture in the Pentecostal movement.

contestations of power and meaning (Marshall 2009) – complete rupture from the past becomes an illusion. Indeed, the altar calls that Pastor Ose announces towards the end of each service bear witness to this. Asking those touched by his message to come forward and be blessed, Pastor Ose is conferring these worshippers with a new Christian life. Yet, as the worshippers are led behind to the church office to be met by the prayer team and to meet properly with Pastor, they are not completely removed from the contexts of their previous lives but must now renegotiate them to live in accordance with God's Word.

One interesting facet of the Born Again spiritual journey is the tension between being made in God's image of perfection, and being a less than perfect human being. The rhetoric of Pentecostal churches in Calabar, such as that of The Brook Church, is popular because of its emphasis on a divine perfection that allows the believer to transcend this world (and its challenges). Being perfect is central to the successful Pentecostal 'political spirituality' (cf. Marshall 2009), where identifying with Christ allows one to command others with authority, where knowing the Holy Spirit defeats one's enemies, and where being blessed with God's grace gives rise to unlimited potential for success. Indeed, the act of reciting the 'Confessions for 2012' as a congregation attempts to reify this God-like perfection in the church members. Where Marshall (2009) argues this to be a Pentecostal technique of 'making believe', we may consider how repeating such acts allow young women to find faith in future fortune and overcome fears of failure.

However, running alongside divine perfection is the acceptance of imperfection. As Children of God, Pentecostals can be considered righteous but there is also an

understanding of the growth of the Christian through God – as Victoria suggests, one’s spiritual life matures the closer one becomes to God. For instance, Pentecostal pastors are known to tell anecdotes that reveal the weaknesses of their own human flesh or perhaps times of spiritual confusion. Indeed, Pastor Ose is quick to acknowledge his sins before he gave his life to Christ in a Pentecostal church in Owerri. As my informants acknowledged, that Pentecostal pastors show their human weaknesses makes them more likeable and easier to relate with, as well as setting an example for achievement through knowing God.

While ‘the past’ is central to worshippers’ experiences, questioning whether Pentecostal practice is a complete break from tradition (Marshall 2009) or a rearticulation of it (Meyer 1998) is less analytically helpful than understanding the moments out of which new Pentecostal subjectivities emerge. Indeed, The Brook Church’s doctrine of *Zoe* is less about breaking from the past and more about looking forward and realising one’s future aspirations through God. Following Coleman’s (2011) assertion that the Christian journey is one of negotiation rather than linear trajectory, we may ask what decisions, risks and gambles young women make as they attempt to fashion Pentecostal subjectivities conducive to future fortune. Indeed, Pentecostal success cannot be divorced from notions of anxiety.

While the image of rupture in Pentecostal modernity is problematic because becoming Born Again is never accomplished but a continuous project of personal growth, Marshall’s (2009) analytical framework is helpful in unwrapping the movement’s attraction for young women. Calling on Foucault’s (1998) process of subjectification, Marshall (2009) explicitly draws on conceptions of power and

interiority as Pentecostals (re-)make themselves. Adopting new Pentecostal techniques of the self, worshippers change their religious convictions, their appearance, their actions and modes of expression, yet they also create a new political space for themselves (Marshall 1991, 2009). By highlighting both rhetoric and the performative aspects of religious belief, Marshall has coined the term 'religions of the subject' (2009:10). The following discussion draws on Marshall's (2009) framework of subjectification to show how religious action creates new Pentecostal subjectivities, new political autonomies overcoming present difficulties and encouraging future fortune. As the following argues, constantly engaging in these religious acts maintains young women's faith in their futures through God (cf. Miyazaki 2004) and also builds self-confidence as they re-identify themselves with Christ. As such, we may recognise Pentecostalism as a religion for the future (cf. Piot 2010).

While drawing on Marshall's (2009) analytical framework to understand how Pentecostalism grants young women a new political and spiritual arena of 'greatness', as it were, the following discussion is also a critique of Marshall's omission of any 'thick' description that has informed her philosophical analysis.⁶³ As Marshall (2009) recognises, there is not one Nigerian Pentecostalism but several, and The Brook Church is just one medium through which young women's spiritual and political needs are being answered in Calabar. While Marshall (2009) illuminates the image of the invading army

⁶³ Marshall (2009) is sceptical of the anthropological project and its tendencies to understand local appropriations of more global phenomena. While Marshall (2009) argues that Pentecostalism is powerful because it is a global project, allowing Nigerians to rupture from the past as they remove themselves from the local, I argue that attention still needs to be paid to the local – to different geographic places and social situations, but also to gender and generation – to understand how this link to the global is playing out.

against the wickedness of Satan,⁶⁴ we see in the following ethnographic description that The Brook Church focuses more on the ultimate and unwavering power of God, only ever implicitly citing the destruction and confusion of the Devil.

‘On Purpose, Manifesting Zoe’

In understanding how The Brook Church encourages the formation of new subjectivities, altering young women’s perceptions of their present and future selves, it is necessary to examine its doctrine. The church’s history exemplifies this, explicitly focusing on positive divine power, determination for and anticipation of future success, and the benefits of a personal relationship with God. The Brook Church was founded by Pastor Ose in 2002, although he had a vision for the church some eighteen months prior to this while he was a pastor at one of the Calabar branches of Christ Chapel International Church. Indeed, when Pastor Ose told me his personal history of reaching his current position as a well-respected pastor, I was struck by his patience of venturing into new projects only when the time felt right.

Originating from outside Calabar, Pastor Ose had not known Christ all his life – as he described, he was ‘born a sinner’. It was while he lived and did business in Port Harcourt in the early 1990s that he decided he would like to start going to church. As he explained, ‘I needed to get my bearings correctly.’ Saying he was

⁶⁴ See Chapter 3, ‘Edima’s Deliverance’, for an example of a ministry where the wickedness of the Devil and his helpers is ever present and needs to be aggressively attacked through prayer and the Word. Other churches in Calabar that focus on the Devil, such as Liberty Gospel Foundation Ministries (its founder, Helen Ukpabio, famous for castigating children for being witches), are popular because they promise protection from the Devil, yet are also dismissed, especially by young women, for dwelling too much on traditional (diabolic) beliefs.

not invited but just went to a church he had noticed near his house, Pastor Ose admitted he was instantly struck by the message and answered the altar call. After 'giving his life to Christ' that first day at Christ Chapel International Church, his spiritual journey began, which saw him being given responsibilities in the church by the head pastor. Fulfilling these duties well, he was asked to move to Owerri to become an auxiliary pastor. After a short while another opening came up, and he was moved to Calabar. While the Calabar position was supposed to be temporary, Pastor Ose explained that his congregation made a protest to the head pastor, requesting to keep him. On this recommendation, Pastor Ose stayed in Calabar, continuing his position at the Christ Chapel International Church for a few more years.

On 24th August 2001 at precisely 2.40pm, Pastor Ose experienced a revelation. Reading a book on pneumatology in his room, he found himself sobbing on the ground and praying in tongues. By the time he managed to get up, some time later, he had the urge to pen the following, which became the foundations of The Brook Church:

Whenever you teach the way of the spirit, you will always sense an unusual anointing. Intense worship, praying in tongues, fasting and praying will increase the anointing on you. Creative manifestations will happen whenever the anointing is at its peak in your life. Amazing manifestation of increase will occur. Creative abilities will be your major, empowering men in their own generation. Healing the minds of people will be your speciality, bringing directions to many lives. Contact with you will bring multiple changes and increase productivity. Your hunger and craving for Me must increase. You must bring action to bear on the creative function that is upon you. Information is necessary for it levels out every form of uncertainty. Everything you have heard of Me is true and I can and am willing to do them through you, creating miracles where they never existed before and through your hand and your voice, I will make them happen.

It is not uncommon for pastors to tell of divine revelations in dreams and trances whereby they have been informed of their abilities to preach and guide others, or instructed to found a church (cf. Werbner 2011). Yet reading this passage, we can learn much about the church ethos – there is never an instance of doubt or fear, simply an assertion of the almighty works produced *only* through God. Furthermore, that Pastor Ose was keen for me to note the date and time of this revelation speaks much to the church’s understanding of time management – both of the self, as I later explore, and of faith in ‘divine timing’. As the discussion goes on to explain, these ideas of surety and timeliness are essential for how The Brook Church’s doctrine allows young women to maintain hope for ‘better’ futures.

The first meeting for The Brook Church in 2002 was held in one of Calabar’s premier hotels,⁶⁵ already hinting at Pastor Ose’s good reputation and social capital (cf. Meagher 2009). Coincidentally next to UniCal’s medical student hostel, the first church venue has shaped the church membership in such a way that there has not only always been a strong student fellowship, but that now, a decade on, many of the members are practising doctors or professionals, and members generally have or aspire to having status (cf. Marshall 1991). After relocating to another hotel, then renting an event hall, the church finally moved into its permanent church site in May 2007. Current membership is in the region

⁶⁵ In the 1990s, the Redeemed Christian Church of God appropriated new public spaces, such as cinema halls and hotels, creating ‘model parishes’ in more affluent areas in order to raise the social status of congregations. Arguing that we need to consider the change in usage of these buildings as temporary, Adeboye (2012) focuses on the tensions created through the Pentecostal movement appropriating these “sinful” spaces. However, Adeboye’s (2012) analysis fails to register the prestige attached to certain hotels. It is significant that The Brook Church should begin life in one of the top hotels in Calabar, reiterating E.A. Adeboye’s visions of a Redeemed congregation of educated professionals, political figures and entrepreneurs (Adeboye & Mfon 2004).

of 800 people, although its special programmes can attract close to a thousand worshippers, calling for the need to add extra marquees outside and a plan to expand the buildings in the future.

Despite its popularity and good reputation in the city, The Brook Church's expansion has been slow. Its second branch was founded in Owerri in 2011, and by the end of my fieldwork in 2012, there were plans to start four additional branches in Calabar. The main reason for this was that, as a 'discipling church', Pastor Ose wanted these additional branches to be led by pastors grown from the Brook Church, so that they had already imbibed the church's doctrine and ethos before reaching out to others. While the church services had been recorded and sold on CDs for some time, plans were also underway to broadcast on radio and satellite television, as well as stream services on the internet. It has taken time and patience for the church to start reaching out to the world, and this has been very deliberate. Speaking about the church, Pastor Ose explained, 'I never wanted to run without a direction. I never wanted to run without any sense of destination.'

The building is one of the most notable things about the church and has also become an emblem of the church's ethos, not to mention a testimony to God's work. As my informants acknowledged, the large church building provides a very conducive environment for worship thanks to its well-built structure, light and airy interior decorated with lilac walls and tiled floor, and, most importantly, large air-conditioning units that block out Calabar's heat and humidity – this was one of the most comfortable churches I attended in Calabar. While this has attracted a certain middle-class and aspirational set of people, the building's

location in an as yet unfinished development, which was until recently bush, has also had a role to play in selecting its congregation.

On the edge of Calabar Municipality, The Brook Church is not easy to get to. It is far from any shared-taxi route and, before the church finally completed tarring the road leading from the main road, even chartered taxis were reluctant to drive down the long, puddle-filled mud track that constantly shifted with the heavy rains. Although the church offers a shuttle bus that picks church members up at convenient points in the city before service, its location has given the church some exclusivity: members either need their own transport or can afford a more expensive taxi-ride. Despite the logistical problems of getting to church, it was miraculous how many people did keep coming – as the pastors noted, a testament of God’s faithfulness to the church.

Indeed, while sitting in a stationary queue of cars – on more than one occasion teetering at a precarious angle - as I tried to get into the church car park, I wondered why I, too, did not just choose a more convenient church to research, and what was it that kept me coming back. Firstly, during my first week of doctoral fieldwork in Calabar, it seemed everyone I met - from an immigration official, to a friend helping me settle in - was a member of the church and, in the Nigerian fashion, invited me along to their Sunday Service. Given the hundreds of churches in the city, this introduction had always appeared quite serendipitous, yet it highlighted the church’s popularity - if this was *the* place to worship, the church must be answering people’s spiritual needs in a particular way.

Secondly, I stayed with The Brook Church in view of its message. The first Sunday Service I attended was introduced by the Children’s Church, who,

zealously mimicking Pastor Ose in their role-play, preached, 'God can do anything for you; everyday you need to trust God.' Following this, Pastor Ose took to the stage and continued with his own message entitled, 'Winning with Grace'. While the church exuded wealth in its structure, its clever branding, the pastors' iPads, its well-dressed congregation, it was not explicitly speaking about prosperity (cf. Gifford 1998). Pastor spoke of behaviour but he was not delivering the righteousness doctrine of the Deeper Life Bible Church (cf. Marshall 1991; Ojo 1988). Neither was he focusing only on miracles, although God was acknowledged as the only being capable of doing the miraculous. While Marshall (2009) outlines the antagonistic interaction between the 'holiness' or 'righteousness' and the 'prosperity' doctrines, the teachings of The Brook Church underscore not only the multiple doctrinal interpretations within Nigerian Pentecostalism but possibly point towards the emergence of a new recognisable trend focusing on the positive: the qualification of having headship, and the knowledge that, 'With God, all things are possible'.

Reiterating The Brook Church's ethos, I suggest that the church imparts a 'doctrine of *Zoe*'. This, as *Zoe* suggests, is an inherently life-affirming message, which illuminates the bountiful existence the Pentecostal subject is entitled to enjoy and command (as a leader). While the 'prosperity doctrine' undoubtedly harbours the same sentiments of entitlement and abundance through Christ, I argue that *Zoe* differs in its emphasis on eternal life as opposed to life on this earth (*Psuche*). This eternal life must be understood not so much as life after death but as the synchronic, immortal spiritual life that shapes Calabar's cosmos. *Zoe* also has interesting links with the idea of destiny, especially when

considering the Christian (Pentecostal) journey as temporal and involving 'growth' of the person, and with the idea of God as the source of vitality that determines auspicious events (cf. da Col & Humphrey 2012).

As Pastor Ose's personal history highlights and resounding in the church's business-like outlook, the doctrine of *Zoe* is very much about direction and management of the self. As such, we may see how the church's discourses and practices, focusing on the self, illuminate the fashioning of new religious subjects (cf. Marshall 2009). Yet while the discourse undoubtedly gives hope and looks to the future through its rhetoric (and belief) of God's 'divine timing' and plans for the individual, it is necessary to go further in understanding how religious experiences at The Brook Church allow young women to maintain faith in forthcoming fortune. Where Miyazaki (2004) illuminates how hope is renewed through constant action, we may see how faith in the future is maintained – even raised – by following the Born Again journey for 'spiritual growth'. Where Victoria highlighted learning and the Bible as central to this journey of faith, the following section goes on to expand how young women maintain faith and allay fears through Pentecostal practice.

'Come drink at the Brook'

As the Brook's history highlights, the church is synonymous with a positive mindset and an aspirational (and almost exclusive) class. The following discussion focuses on how this new class, exuding a particular 'cultural logic of success' with which young women want to identify in their quest for fortune, is being created. While acknowledging the plurality of subjectivities created across postcolonial Africa (Werbner 2002), Marshall's (2009) loosely Foucauldian

framework is helpful for understanding how religion produces new ideas of the self by focusing on interiority, techniques of the self and productive power. The following ethnographic examples draw on Marshall's (2009) framework of subjectification to understand young women's constant religious acts – from attending Foundation Classes to being on time to church – mould new subjectivities, encouraging new perceptions of the present (and future) self. Through the examples, we see that the creation of these new subjectivities is not just about power but also about morality, desire and politics (Werbner 2002) – concepts entwined in how young women overcome uncertainty and look to 'futures of greatness'.

Where young women's Pentecostal engagement engenders new subjectivities, religious experience is arguably a learning process (cf. Berliner & Sarro 2007). The Pentecostal movement is full of programmes to advise people on certain themes (e.g. 'singlehood', business or 'generational curses') or at certain times of intensified spiritual activity (e.g. Mber Months or Cross-Over Night). Where Berliner & Sarro argue that 'acquiring religion is not merely a cold-blooded technical process of cognitive downloading' (2007:10), this discussion focuses not only on the information learned, but also the subconscious methods of and instances in which religious education arises. Berliner & Sarro's (2007) exploration of the cognitive functions of religious learning is especially helpful for furthering Marshall's (2009) analysis of religious subjectivities and engaging with Csordas (1997) to see how young women change their self-perceptions as they engage with religious acts fashioning new subjectivities.

Where Houseman (2007) argues that the relationships (between both humans and spirits) inherent in rituals are more important than the practices, this discussion highlights the need to pay attention to The Brook Church community in order to understand how young women 'learn' the church's doctrine. Although Houseman's (2007) analysis of rituals for first menses illuminates participants understanding 'exceptional' rituals, the following highlights how empathy is still central to understanding how young women understand more mundane and repetitive Pentecostal practices – their admiration for Pastor Ose, their interaction with Church Counsellors, and working groups as 'peer groups' are all integral to helping self-definition. Furthermore, considering relationships within the church is essential for understanding how young women do achieve to fashion subjectivities perceived respectable and successful (by others).

The Brook Church's Foundation Classes, allowing one to become a full member of the church and to serve as a church worker, exemplifies how Pentecostal practice forges new subjectivities. Towards the end of every service, first-time worshippers are asked to raise their hands to identify themselves, before being asked to stand up for a formal welcoming into the church family. A few members of Streams of Grace come up to the stage to sing the lively Brook Church song (words projected onto the wall for everyone to join in), while ushers walk round to shake newcomers' hands and give them a welcome pack in a large white envelope. Those seated around the standing newcomers also take this opportunity to greet the new worshippers. While most Pentecostal churches do welcome newcomers each service by asking them to identify themselves and giving them a welcome pack – church fliers, magazines, a contact detail form –

The Brook Church's welcome was so warm and energetic that it was difficult not to feel special and instantly part of the church family, as the song illustrates:

God has a plan for you
That's why He brought you here, today
So glad you came
We love you
You should be a part of *Zoe*,
Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah
So we say welcome to the brook
And we pray God's purpose for *you*
Here in The Brook Church
We are manifesting *Zoe*
We say
You should be a part of *Zoe*
Today

Feeling a part of The Brook family is only the first step in becoming a member. After being welcomed, newcomers are asked to see Pastor Ose after service, where they are welcomed again and encouraged to start the Foundation Classes. It is only through attending all eight classes, meeting with Pastor Ose again in the final week in a question and answer session about The Brook Church, and then taking an exam – as incentive, the first in the class receiving 5,000 naira – that one is able to become a full church member eligible to join a working group. Just as Pastor Ose states that he wants his pastors for the new church branches to be 'brought up' in The Brook Church, learning the church's doctrine is imperative not only for categorical membership but for the *acting* out of the church doctrine in service to God (singing in the choir, serving as an usher, cleaning the church, for instance). Doctrine is imparted, imbibed by the individual and incorporated into their actions – not only to answer spiritual problems (cf. Marshall 2009) but also, as shall be discussed, to continue the education process by evangelising others through action (cf. Berliner & Sarro 2007).

The Foundation Classes are a cleverly constructed process of self-realisation, learning how to understand one's place in God's kingdom, to identify oneself through God, and to live by the Word of God. Seeing the classes as a way of moving from 'outsider' to 'insider' in the church, I completed the course. The course is laid out so that one completes it in small groups led by the same member of the church's counselling department. The counsellor is there to answer any questions both during and outside class – my counsellor, Israel, gave me his phone number in case I should need guidance between services. My group included a mother and her teenage daughter, a couple of young men, an older man, a couple of young women, and myself. Incidentally, the two young women, Kosi and Debbie, became my closest friends at The Brook Church. Revisiting Houseman's (2007) emphasis on empathy in religious education, joining the Foundation Class was an integral part of belonging in the church – I was surprised by how many people not only noticed but also congratulated me on starting the course, welcoming me further into the church family.

Clustered in small groups around the church, the Foundation Course took place after each Sunday Service. Each week followed a different topic, culminating in a firm understanding of what it means to be Born Again and a Brook Church member. Israel took us through the printed handouts, delegating Bible passages to his pupils to read out before asking us what we understood by the message. Each class had a succinct focus, although the Bible passages detailed to illustrate the message were usually extensive.

Focusing on Christian identity, the first couple of classes taught how being Born Again erases all sin,⁶⁶ and, identifying with Christ, bestows a 'dual citizenship' on earth and with God.⁶⁷ In understanding Pentecostalism's envisaged modernity (cf. Marshall 2009), The Brook Church's lexicon of 'dual citizenship' is imperative for understanding authority, rights and entitlements – the Born Again is no longer akin to Mbembe & Roitman's (1995) struggling subject but holds a citizenship of divine access by knowing God. As we were taught, 'Your level of identification determines your strength and personality as a believer in Christ.' Where da Col (2012) reminds us that fortune is determined by the spiritual 'other', we see how, as with the Confessions, the more one identifies with God, the more The Brook Church believes one's entitlements to be.

Subsequent lessons focused on means of exercising these entitlements. Prayer, the breath of the 'spirit man' (similar to one's conscience), was taught not as a request for God's help but as *confirmation* of God's work already done. Understanding how to fulfil destinies, we were taught to *internalise* the Holy Spirit; the following week focused on this internalisation through the explanation that 'Gifts of the Spirit' were not conduct but *part of* the worshipper. The final weeks focused on knowing Christ in order to command authority and bring triumph in life.⁶⁸ Hence, in understanding how religious education helps young women look to future fortune, we see how the Foundation Classes

⁶⁶ It is interesting that The Brook Church frame Adam's sin as 'spiritual death'. Hence, being Born Again is a re-birth of the spirit and a rejuvenation of ensuing entitlements.

⁶⁷ A 'foundation scripture' for the second Foundation Class: 'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.' (1 John 4:17, KJV)

⁶⁸ A passage from the second Foundation Class: 'Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.' (2 Corinthians 2:14, KJV)

constantly mould new subjectivities through religious action – as Miyazaki (2004) argues, such repetitive action maintains hope and defers disappointment. Empathy, going through this learning process with others and under the guidance of a Counsellor, is central for maintaining faith (cf. Houseman 2007). However, the processes of internalisation, encouraging self-realisation, are most crucial in understanding how young women maintain faith: amid uncertainty, constantly (re)considering oneself as triumphant is a means to allaying fears of failure and the unknown.

Hence, Pentecostal education is about self-identifying and being identified as belonging to a successful community. Where the Bible was the ‘essence of white might’ (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991:229) in early missionary encounters, education is arguably well established in African Christianity.⁶⁹ Just as the introduction of Christianity transformed the African worldview, creating a world beyond the village and local cosmology (Horton 1971), so too can we argue that young women joining Pentecostal churches in Calabar transform their worldview by inserting themselves into a truly global community. Fostering links with a world community is nothing new in religious change, yet Pentecostalism’s project of modernity distances itself from ‘Orthodox’ churches in its sheer rapidity of growth and intensity of connectedness – televangelism and movies, for instance (cf. Meyer 2002, 2006). As churches, such as The Brook Church, connect themselves to the world by streaming services online or broadcasting on satellite television, we understand the individual and collective project for modernity (cf. Marshall 2009) as not just Nigerian Pentecostals buying into a

⁶⁹ Following Mudimbe, Christian missions converted ‘African minds and space’ (1988:48).

global religious market but exporting themselves, their beliefs, and thoroughly revolutionising it, creating a highly successful transnational Nigerian Pentecostal community (cf. Marshall-Fratani 1998; for a discussion of Ghanaian Pentecostalism in the Netherlands, see van Dijk 1997).⁷⁰

Religious education does not only insert people into new social networks but in so doing, creates new categories of people (e.g. Bastian 2000; Peel 2000b, 2002).⁷¹ We can draw parallels between young women becoming members of The Brook Church, indoctrinated in the Foundation Class to follow certain modes of conduct, and young female converts in Onitsha, Nigeria, between 1880 and 1929. Amongst Igbo young women, Bastian (2000) argues that converting to Christianity created a new category of personhood, the *ndi kris*, which removed the young women from 'traditional' Igbo social ties and encouraged the formation of new social networks and realities. While highlighting categories of person is helpful in understanding how joining The Brook Church changes their social realities, thereby giving rise to new opportunities to encourage fortune, we need to go back to Marshall's (2009) framework of subjectification and interiority to fully understand how these categories are created. Joining The Brook Church is not just about being categorically recognised by others but it is foremost about renewing one's mind in Christ, looking inwards and identifying

⁷⁰ Indeed, two of Nigeria's largest Pentecostal churches, The Redeemed Christian Church of God and Living Faith Church Worldwide (Winners Chapel), are highly global enterprises with church branches, schools, universities, online broadcasting. The intensity and outreach of the global community is no more apparent than on social networking sites such as Facebook, where 'Liking' the pages of the ministries' founders (E.A. Adeboye and David Oyedepo, respectively) allows anyone to connect, share daily prayers and Bible readings, and interact with other Pentecostals (not necessarily church members) worldwide.

⁷¹ See Peel (2000b, 2002) for an analysis of conversion to Christianity amongst the Yoruba. Peel's analysis is especially useful for highlighting agency of the worshipper, and reminds us (missionary) Christian education is not just a wholesale introduction of new categories of person and social relations but the changing of pre-existing ones – the synthesising of old to create new.

oneself in order to reach new possibilities. Just as the Sisters' Talk highlights the importance of the heart and finding one's own direction in life, the Foundation Classes are understood as being 'membership for God's direction' – one needs to learn how to self-identify through Christ, be able to communicate with God and live by The Word to follow God's divine-plan.

One anecdote Pastor Ose would proudly relate about the impact of his 'discipling' church bears witness to this idea of successful living through Christ. As the story goes, an unknown man walked into the church and asked to see Pastor Ose. When the two were introduced, the stranger explained that he owned a business and had recently been very impressed with one of his employees. This particular employee would work with utmost integrity – the man could trust the young woman completely. On finding out that his employee worshipped at The Brook Church, the man was intrigued to find out what sort of 'Man of God' was in charge of the church – what was the pastor teaching and doing to create such a dependable employee? As the story unfolds, the man was again impressed on meeting Pastor Ose – identifying Pastor and the The Brook Church as the source of integrity, the man announced that he will employ a further five people from the church.

As we see in this anecdote, it is not only how the individual employee behaved but also how the man assumed that all Brook Church members would act in a similar manner that suggests how Pentecostal churches are moulding individuals and giving rise to new possibilities through action. As Marshall (2009) reminds us, this project of modernity is both for the individual and collective alike, and Pastor Ose's anecdote serves the notion that moulding subjectivities inside the

church impacts on wider Nigerian society as these new Pentecostal individuals go about their daily lives. Indeed, contemporary new religious movements in Africa have been linked to the creation of jobs and to shifts in local and global economies, especially where such religions carve out new moral attitudes (cf. Meagher 2009; see also Gifford 1998). For instance, Maxwell (1998) highlights how Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe has encouraged new reverent and accountable ethics, which allow worshippers to successfully engage in global capitalist institutions.

In understanding how religious movements not only give rise to Weberian operations of power and modernisation, but also exist outside the postcolonial state (Meagher 2009), such analyses negate any understanding of how this process is playing out for individual believers. Focusing on subjectivity and interiority allows us to see how The Brook Church's teachings of renewing the mind in Christ in order to create opportunities places individual agency, religious and spiritual experience at the centre of analysis. Furthermore, while integration into a modern economy is one goal (cf. Meagher 2009), the importance that The Brook Church (as well as wider Calabar society) places on the predetermining characteristic of the spiritual realm draws attention to how global Pentecostalism entwines with local cosmologies. As such, attention needs to be paid to the emic constructions and understandings of the Pentecostal techniques used to integrate into a modern economy.

In understanding how individuals impact on a national collective, we must also look beyond the explicit teachings of the church (such as the Foundation Classes) to the more subtle techniques of power that mould individuals. One way in which

we might understand the employee's reliable work ethic is how The Brook Church values were imbibed through the very performance of worship. In a country famed for 'African Timing' and where church services are known to go on for all hours of the day and night, The Brook Church strives for strict time management. Indeed, church services were short – no more than three hours on a Sunday – and ran like clockwork. A certain amount of time was dedicated to praise and worship, to notices, to prayer, to Pastor's message and to 'Seed Time' (offering). Occasionally things would run over, especially when more people than anticipated answered an Altar Call to receive prayers and blessings from Pastor and his wife, but things would more or less run on time. I remember attending one wedding when the bride, on arriving late to the church, was rebuked by Pastor Ose in front of the whole congregation for her poor time management. No longer was this bride's prerogative to be late – what sort of message was she showing God if she was willing to turn up late to her marriage?

As Pastor Ose explained, good time keeping is important because he wants people to be aware that they do not live their lives in church. Neither should being a Christian end at the closing of a church service (cf. Mate 2002). This calls for the merging of church and secular lives, with the emphasis on not only changing the self through The Word but also by going out and evangelising through behaviour and actions. My informants appreciated that Pentecostal pastors were generally considerate about time management, acknowledging their lives beyond church – The Brook Church (as with other Pentecostal churches) holds a shorter Business Service before Sunday Service, enabling people to worship before work. Furthermore, my informants recognised how

church made them aware of their own timekeeping. Where we see the very performance of worship moulding new subjectivities (cf. Marshall 2009), we see that such subjectivities live on outside church, shaping other spheres of life. Pentecostal churches are constantly renewing young women's faith in prosperous futures and allaying their fears of failure through the merging of secular and church life.

Hence, we see how new subjectivities are being formed not only through explicit teachings but how knowledge is imparted and imbibed by the individual through the very performance of worshipping in church (cf. Marshall 2009). Nowhere was this more obvious for young women than in how they dressed to attend The Brook Church. While the more liberal doctrine of the Pentecostal movement allows women to wear what they feel comfortable in (cf. Marshall 1991) – the movement's emphasis on God knowing one's true heart removes the focus from women's bodies and ceases the need to cover heads and wear skirts – in practice, young women subscribed to a certain uniform accepted by other church members.⁷²

Young women in The Brook Church were always immaculately dressed. Sunday Service was punctuated with high heels, smart dresses, corporate skirt-suits – young women rarely wore traditional Ankara, unless in a 'western'-style cut such as a pencil-skirt.⁷³ Midweek Service and programmes were more casual,

⁷² Some older Pentecostal churches, such as Deeper Life Bible Church, still dictate that women cover their heads and wear skirts (cf. Marshall 1991). Likewise, some inter-denominational fellowships, such as End-Time Warriors, also mandate stricter dress codes for women (cf. Chapter 3).

⁷³ Ankara was celebrated one Sunday each month when all church members wore traditional attire. However, young women avoid wearing the traditional wrapper and *gele* (headscarf), which they associate with older women – although they can wear a *gele*, young women have

although no less stylish: young women wore skinny jeans, tight-fitting t-shirts or short-sleeved blouses, leather ‘slippers’ (sandals) adorned with diamanté and other embellishments. In line with the church ethos, looking good is imperative, and the girls were all made-up and heavily accessorised. Furthermore, as heads did not need to be covered, young women could show off their long braids and sleek weave-ons – where ‘making’ long hair denotes wealth and being a citizen of the modern city, it was extremely rare to see a natural ‘low-cut’. Just as Meyer (1998) draws a sharp distinction between village tradition and Pentecostal modernity, church fashions are closely entwined with community and how future possibilities are envisaged. Just as Ankara outfits epitomise the traditional and the local, skinny jeans and skirt-suits intersect with the highly modern and the global. Fitting into The Brook Church is about performing a recognised ‘cultural logic of success’ (cf. Chapter 5; Newell 2012).

As my informants willingly acknowledged, attending The Brook Church taught them how to dress well. Informants noted the stylish outfits of the choir, which changed each week and required the choir members to own an extensive wardrobe. They also admired the business-like look of Pastor’s Personal Assistants, who sat at the front during service in their smart suits. Both these working groups were far from being just ‘somehow’, an expression connoting a lack of togetherness and hence myopic future possibilities. These church members – already shown as being spiritually strong through their service to God in working groups – were examples to be followed in encouraging fortune.

reserved it for after marriage. Ankara was also used for special celebrations: newly-wed couples wear matching print on their thanksgiving (the Sunday after their white wedding), as do the parents at their baby’s dedication. As such, Ankara – especially matching *aso ebi* (literally ‘house material’ in Yoruba) - was worn to show unity, church family, and traditional community values.

Yet my informants also acknowledged the influence of other church members, particularly when their dress-sense fell below the mark of acceptability – skirt too short, jeans hanging too low, hair made in too many colours, too many colourful accessories, for instance. While the sleek business-wear connotes the triumphs of capitalist modernity, those young women who miss the mark in what they wear, drawing attention to a sexualised body, demonstrate the dangers of capitalist modernity (cf. Meyer 2008). Hence, while fashioning new Pentecostal subjectivities and performing a ‘cultural logic of success’ maintains young women’s hope for future fortune, their actions are never free from fear. Where much anxiety surrounds how young women style themselves as successful (cf. Chapter 5), there was a certain way of dressing that they bought into to connote the success and affluence that they hoped to emulate (and hoped others perceived they had already reached) in other areas of their lives. As individuals ‘check themselves’, noting and following the examples of successful church members, we see how the congregation becomes a panopticon, to reiterate this chapter’s employment of Foucault (1977).

Focusing on religious education, this section has illustrated how The Brook Church’s Foundation Classes form new subjectivities conducive to success. We are reminded of Miyazaki’s (2004) analysis of hope, where repetitive religious action displaces disappointment and allows the worshipper to renew focus on future gains. However, the discussion has also highlighted that it is the internalisation of such religious actions that is arguably most successful in allowing young women to overcome present realities and maintain faith in (their ‘entitled’) better futures. Pentecostal acts do not only mould subjectivities for

others to recognise but are fundamentally about an alignment in the individual's self-perception – as Marshall (2009) argues, the processes of interiority. Where the discussion highlights that there are in fact anxieties and risks in performing the Pentecostal 'cultural logic of success', young women overcome fears of others' disapproval by looking inwards to their hearts and identifying the self through Christ. Hence, where Marshall's (2009) analysis negates an understanding of how worshippers feel, the final section goes on to discuss Pentecostal notions of confidence and self-worth.

Confidence in The Word

Along with its Confessions, The Brook Church also recited four Bible passages at the beginning of every church service (see Appendix 1). Purposefully chosen by Pastor Ose to demonstrate the church's ethos and doctrine, these passages attest to the unwavering possibilities and ultimate protection of God. This certainty through God and sole focus on the positive is notable in the verses from Psalm 90 and 2 Corinthians. However, the other two Psalms (91 in full, and the first few verses of 27) are interesting in that they situate the believer amid insecurity; acknowledging the existence of enemies who create doubts, fears and uncertainties, and where *only* God ensures safety. This final section identifies how the Word of God encourages confidence – as providing truth and surety amid the postcolony's radical ontological insecurity (cf. Marshall 2009), and also for giving young women self-confidence. Both meanings of confidence, I argue, are integral to understanding how young women create new subjectivities through identification with Christ, and how they view and realise their futures.

What was interesting about the recitation of Biblical passages was how the congregation was told to 'personalise' each verse. For example, pronouns were changed to the first person, so that everyone recited, 'Surely He shall deliver *me* from the snare of the fowler...' Another personalisation of the text was to substitute words, such as 'adder' or 'cobra' replacing 'serpent'. Being unfamiliar with the Bible passages when I first attended The Brook Church, I found something quite confusing about being unable to follow the Assistant Pastor who led the congregation. Until I could confidently say whatever word came to mind, I felt an inadequacy in expressing what I wanted to say and an inability to keep up with others around me. It seemed that while everyone was reciting the same passage in unison, the church was simultaneously divided by a cacophony of synonyms. Speaking with my informants, these feelings were not too dissimilar from young women perceiving an inadequacy in their own prayers as they listened to others speaking in tongues. While previous discussions have built up the idea of finding confidence through a relationship with God, again we see young women experience anxieties as to whether their personal communication is effective (cf. Chapter 3).

Revisiting Csordas' (1997) analysis of the phenomenology of ritual language, we can understand how prophecy 'works' very much as an embodied experience. Arguing that we have dual-subjectivities – we are agents simultaneously able to listen and to speak – Csordas (1997) reminds us that prophecy, as experiencing revelations, is about discerning both when to speak and when to listen. Just as I struggled for some time to recite the Bible passages before I found confidence in alternative words I could use, we see that the power of prophecy comes very

much from a somatic feeling, not far from feeling self-confident. As Csordas states, 'power is grounded in the phenomenology of prophetic inspiration, composition, speaking, and hearing' (1997:237). Furthermore, where charisma is located not in the person but in the performance (Csordas 1997), confidence in production and reception is of great importance to effective prophecy.

Following the earlier discussion that the 'I' in the Confessions allows the speaker to believe the 'divine other' is speaking to them (Csordas 1997), we can go further here in understanding how pronouns are used in prophecy. Delving into linguistics, Csordas (1997) highlights how pronouns are both indexical and rhetorical in identifying relationships. Hence, being told to 'personalise' the four Biblical passages is a highly individualised project. This is not just about claiming the prophecy – members of congregations will call out 'Amen' if they wish to lay claim to a prophecy their pastor has just spoken – but of the believer almost *creating* the prophecy for themselves. Just as the Pentecostal movement is a project for the individual (cf. Marshall 2009), encouraging close relationships with God through speaking in tongues and private Bible study, we could argue that Pentecostals are taught to be their own prophets. Amid radical insecurity, what better way for the worshipper to overcome uncertainty and decipher destinies – to believe in forthcoming fortune – than to connect directly to God themselves?

The emphasis on prophesy in Pentecostalism speaks very much to Mbon's (1991a) argument that NRMs gain popularity because they answer Africans' spiritual problems through African traditional religious practice. Yet The Brook Church's insistence on the self, the worshipper's lack of necessity to seek out

prophets, problematises the role of the charismatic leader, such as Pastor Ose. The internalising of action, the self-identification with God, and the development of personal communication within Pentecostalism create the idea of the self-sufficient worshipper. However, where the Foundation Classes highlighted the need for empathy to make sense of religious practices (cf. Houseman 2007), and the following chapter highlights young women's need for extra spiritual guidance, ideas of the anxieties of effective religious practices again emerge. Where Pelkmans (2013) highlights how doubt not only gives rise to action but comes in 'cycles', we may question what leads young women to both doubt or have faith in their communication with God, to fear failure or to believe in future fortune.

In understanding fear and faith in discernment and self-prophecy, we may look to the importance of the Bible passages. Following my earlier discussion, I critique Csordas' (1997) argument that the content of prophecy is of little importance. It is significant that Bible passages are used as personal prophecies, and should be examined when considering the phenomenology of prophecy as the believer experiencing revelation. Aside from the ambience, the sense of unity and security that the exercise of reciting Bible passages invoked in the church, one reason why these four Bible passages were so powerful was due to how Christian Nigerians understand the Bible as utmost truth in the world. As the Word of God, Christians believe the Bible attests to what has been, what is and what will come to pass. As I was frequently told in various conversations and scenarios throughout my fieldwork, everything in the Bible has already happened, and, just as God knows all destinies, we are now in the End Times (cf.

Marshall 2009; Piot 2010; Chapter 3) awaiting God's command. Amid the postcolony's ontological insecurities, regarding written text as unchanging truth is extremely powerful. Put simply, it creates confidence in meaning.

Two monographs that we can compare to draw out the themes of truth and significance in the written-text are Kirsch's (2008) *Spirits and Letters* and Engelke's (2007) *A Problem of Presence*. For Kirsch (2008), studying charismatic churches in Zambia, the material Bible is of central importance. 'Church-goers are widely described as 'book people' in sub-Saharan Africa, an allusion to the central role of the Bible for Christian identity and self-representation' (ibid.:45). Questioning the common Weberian assumption that written text and bureaucracy must oppose charisma, Kirsch's (2008) analysis offers a useful point of departure for understanding how quoting the Bible entwines with power, authority and intention. Just as in Calabar, where people are always ready to quote Bible verses or cite parables, Kirsch (2008) notes how Biblical text as everyday parlance in Zambia make Bible passages idioms of Christian outlook and conduct. For Kirsch (2008), Christian identity comes from how these idioms often mask the speaker's intentionality as well as ideological differences within a community, highlighting a collective Christian network based on shared knowledge and common semiotics. However, I argue that while citing Bible passages does allow one to identify with a Christian collective, it is less about masking intentionality and more about renewing one's mind in Christ – Bible passages are used as an individual project of the religious subject.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ As Marshall (1991) argues, the Pentecostal community is born out of a shared experience of 'giving your life to Christ.'

While Kirsch (2008) links the Bible to encouraging a Christian collective – the Bible’s perceived truth encourages authority and hides individual intentionality – Engelke (2007) argues that for a small Christian movement in Zimbabwe, the written text impedes a Christian identity. The Friday Masowe Apostolics pride themselves on having a ‘live and direct’ relationship with God because they do not read the Bible. For the Friday Apostolics, the Bible is only *one* version of the truth, a political tool of subjugation imposed by missionaries (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff 1991; Mudimbe 1988). As one Friday Apostolic elder explains, ‘History is written by the victors, and there is this problem with the Bible. It is a record of what the Europeans want others to know’ (Engelke 2007:5). While there is not, on the whole,⁷⁵ the same suspicion or animosity towards Christian missionaries in Calabar as among the Friday Apostolics (cf. Chapter 1), Engelke’s (2007) analysis is helpful for understanding how (textual knowledge) is linked to power. In Calabar, where Europeans introduced the Bible only because the missionaries concerned believed it to be a creation of the Holy Spirit, we can understand how Biblical text becomes perceived as utmost truth in the world. Hence, for The Brook Church, reciting Biblical passages at the beginning of the church service does foster a Christian community (cf. Kirsch 2008) but it is foremost about identifying oneself, renewing one’s mind, with God through His written truth.

With this understanding of why the embodied actions undertaken by the Pentecostal subject are so powerful – where the spiritual precedes the physical realm, actions and communicating to God were understood as a *fait accompli* at

⁷⁵ See Mbon (1991b) for an analysis of AICs, notably through the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star, as a nationalist Nigerian movement. While such AICs that reject the missionary past do exist in Calabar, they make up a small part of the city’s contemporary churchscape.

The Brook Church – it is interesting to examine how this makes young women feel. Catching my friends briefly after church or chatting to friends in more relaxed situations, I came across a recurring sentiment that young women often felt ‘depressed’ and that going to church – communication with God – was the only thing that could lift their mood. While they had been taught individual prayer and Bible study, sometimes their spirits were so low that they had to receive spiritual guidance from an ‘anointed Man of God’, or at least to be surrounded by others to be able to lift their prayers and voices to God.

On asking one informant, Ema, how her Pentecostal church, Living Faith (Winners Chapel), helped her live her daily life, she explained how church was the only thing that would relieve her of the depressed thoughts she was recently experiencing. While I had expected a less abstract answer – anticipating her to talk about breakthroughs in academics or careers, for example – I was also surprised to learn she was feeling this way.⁷⁶ Ema was a popular young woman who was always busy and seemed happy. She came from a comfortable background, had a permanent job (that paid more often than not), a good education and really seemed to be going places, making the right sort of connections in town. From talking to her, perhaps the only conflict in her life was with her parents, who were very strict and whose former membership of the Deeper Life Bible Church still coloured their expectations of their children’s behaviour.

⁷⁶ See Chapter 3, ‘Edima’s Deliverance’, for a comparison of when and how different Pentecostal techniques are used by young women.

As she described these feelings that she had recently been experiencing, she explained how she would start to feel better on Saturday evenings in the knowledge that she would be going to church the following morning. This surprised me because we had just been talking about how she had been having trouble getting to like Living Faith. Contrary to many young women who personally choose Pentecostal churches after breaking away from their (usually 'Orthodox') family church, Ema, still living at home, had her choice of church dictated by her father, who had decided to leave their previous family church and worship at Living Faith. While her former and current churches are both Pentecostal, they have quite different doctrines, especially in their dress regulations for women. Coming to Living Faith for the first time in a skirt and with her hair covered, Ema expressed her shock as she worshipped alongside people in skinny jeans, short skirts, with coloured hair, even dreadlocks (cf. Marshall 1991). Knowing that she had to get used to this new church, she focused on the good and realised that that was The Word.

Ema located this feeling of solace in knowing she would soon receive The Word. At Winners Chapel, The Word really spoke to her because of the way that the Pastor, who, as she described, could be 'funky' at times, made it applicable to her life and made it easy to understand. Delving deep into The Word was often the first thing young women said that they liked most about Pentecostal churches, giving them confidence in how to live their lives.⁷⁷ While this speaks to Chitando's (2009) argument for how religion helps people cope amid uncertainty because it provides solace, it is also necessary to see how learning,

⁷⁷ One of the Redeemed Christian Church of God's weekly services is tagged 'Digging Deep'.

internalising and living by The Word is a technique young women employ to create new subjectivities that actively work towards future fortune.

The study of emotions has generally been neglected in the literature on Pentecostalism where analyses have either focused on conversion discourse (e.g. Meyer 1998; Robbins 2004), bodily techniques (e.g. Marshall 1991, 2009) or how the movement links to global modernity (e.g. Gifford 1998). Where literature has touched on emotions, the analyses have tended to be based in the rhetoric of the church-institution. For instance, following the themes in the opening vignette, van de Kamp (2011) highlights how Pentecostal churches in Mozambique teach young women how to manage their emotions in the bid for successful relationships and encouraging marriage proposals. However, van de Kamp (2011) negates an understanding of how these young women do actually feel. Perhaps the most satisfactory analysis that incorporates feelings comes from Soothill's (2007) study of Ghanaian Pentecostalism, where 'feeling good' is fervently encouraged in church services. Soothill (2007) details the women's meetings where church members give support by telling how much they love each other. This analysis is very much grounded in rhetoric of women *in* the church institution, and helps serve the understanding in Ghanaian society that women prefer charismatic churches because they are naturally more emotional than men – incidentally, a sentiment that resounds in Calabar.

Yet it is important to question how attending Pentecostal programmes makes young women feel before and after, not just during acts of worship. While Ema talks of the solace she gets from knowing she will hear The Word, we should not assume that her church, Living Faith, talks explicitly about comfort or

consolation. Indeed, Living Faith, as with The Brook Church, talks very much about identifying oneself as a leader in life, capable of doing anything through God. Perhaps the clue for how Ema gains confidence comes in how, throughout my conversation with her, she constantly pitted outward appearance (both in the modest dress of Deeper Life Church and in the almost disrespectful fashions of the youth in Living Faith) against her inner heart.

As Ema described the different outfits she could wear to church, she acknowledged that she could reconcile wearing trousers because she knew her own heart was good and only God was to judge her. This was a message that young women often picked up on: the Pentecostal doctrine allowed them to express their individuality in the knowledge that God recognised their true hearts. Just as Pastor Ose focuses on the heart as the origin of ‘true womanhood’, we see how the elements of the Pentecostal movement discussed above – the renewal of mind and identification through Christ as a technique of self-fashioning (cf. Marshall 2009), the acknowledgement of the Bible as utmost truth – gives young women confidence to be themselves and to follow their individual dreams for the future. While the above discussions have highlighted the anxieties surrounding Pentecostal practice and identity, believing in the self builds young women’s confidence in their relationship with God and, through identification with the determining ‘other’ (cf. da Col 2012), with future fortune.

Finally, in highlighting how the Pentecostal word-based ministries of Calabar encourage confidence in young women, it is worth noting this rhetoric of self-belief coincides with new opportunities within the church. While literature has acknowledged how the Pentecostal movement does not discriminate on grounds

of age or gender, thereby allowing women to have ‘unlimited opportunities to rise to the highest status in the movement’ (Offiong 2003:189; cf. Soothill 2007), it has again mostly failed to address how these new opportunities make young women feel about themselves. In The Brook Church young women are encouraged to join working groups. This is central to the Pentecostal project of fostering a close relationship with God, where God-given talents are developed through service to God.⁷⁸ For instance, joining Streams of Grace is popular because young women get a sense of fulfilment from ministering to others.⁷⁹ Anthropological literature on Pentecostalism is yet to address the role of God-given talents in the making of new religious subjectivities – where ‘skills’ are said to be learned and acquired, ‘talents’ are understood to be conferred by God and innate in an individual, and as such must be developed throughout the Pentecostal journey. However, it could be useful to draw on Csordas’ (1997) analysis of prophecy in view of his focus on embodiment and the understanding of the ‘divine other’ communicating with an individual. Just as prophesying in the first person fosters a closer relationship with God, so too does developing one’s unique and divinely innate talent. As Victoria explained about the feelings of self-worth she received through leading her choir:

I used to be a very shy person. I sing but I never had the opportunity to sing out and to minister to people’s lives.... I was never bold but PowerCity gave me [opportunities].... I got conscious that I had something inside of me that could bless people’s lives positively, and I also got given the chance to unleash that. So even when I made mistakes, I was given opportunities to keep doing it until I became perfect.

⁷⁸ ‘Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.’ (1 Corinthians 10:31, KJV)

⁷⁹ ‘Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.’ (Romans 12:11, NIV).

Indeed, I was always surprised when my informants confided that they had been very shy before they joined working groups in church. It is such that focusing on and developing one's God-given talents not only encourages self-worth and a sense of being unique, but young women are further encouraged when they receive praise. But singing on stage as part of Streams of Grace is also desirable because of the 'fame' and respect young women feel they earn. Joining Pastor's Personal Assistants is attractive because, as my informants pointed out, they could learn new skills and etiquette that would be useful for future employment. It would also give them the chance to work alongside church members who already had established careers. Such roles in the Pentecostal church are important because young women are either excluded from them in 'Orthodox' churches by dint of being female, or excluded from similar roles in wider society because, amid fierce competition, they either lack a patron or the right exposure (cf. Meagher 2009).

As the above has highlighted, the Pentecostal project allows young women to overcome anxieties of the present and maintain faith in future fortune by building their self-confidence. This comes through repetitive religious acts such as prophecy, where belief in The Word as utmost truth (cf. Engelke 2007; Kirsch 2008) shapes young women's understanding of their entitlements in life and where the act itself identifies the individual with the divine 'other' (cf. Csordas 2007). Yet, this confidence in God is compounded by the opportunities opened up to young women that not only appear to give them equality with men (cf. Mate 2002; Offiong 2003; Soothill 2007) but also allow them to re-identify with

God in the very performance of such opportunities. Hence, we see that young women overcome fears and maintain faith that God will deliver by looking inwards and believing in the Pentecostal identity that they continually work on.

Conclusion

Where young women in Calabar believe in 'destinies of greatness' as a way of looking towards 'better' futures and to manage the insecurities of present realities, this chapter has focused on how their engagement with word-based Pentecostal churches allows them to envisage and work towards future fortune. Illuminating the Foucauldian process of subjectification (cf. Marshall 2009), the chapter has argued that young women's ongoing engagement with the Pentecostal movement helps them maintain faith in the future through repeating religious acts of the self that overcome disappointment and despair (cf. Miyazaki 2004). In such repetitive religious action, we see the individual undergo 'spiritual growth' through (continually) being Born Again. Indeed, this plays out in The Brook Church's doctrine of *Zoe*, the life-affirming message of eternal abundance. The discussion has hence favoured continuities in personal religious experience over ideas of rupture (cf. Marshall 2009; Meyer 1998; Robbins 2004), in showing how Pentecostal subjectivities reconcile ideas of future fortune with past and present struggles.

At the centre of this discussion of fortune is the religious subject. Where the chapter draws on how religion is learned (cf. Berliner & Sarro 2007), we see that the Pentecostal project is fundamentally an education of the self. Individuals imbibe religious rhetoric and action, building their spiritual lives in such a way that they internalise acts and learn to look inwards. While young women find

confidence in God through the belief that His Word is truth, they are also shown to find confidence in themselves through the self-realisation and identification with Christ. Yet the identification with Pentecostal success – Calabar’s emerging aspirational class – is also central to ‘cultural logics of success’. The Pentecostal project is hence a project of autobiographical enlargement, allowing young women to deny fear of their surroundings and maintain faith in their future entitlements.

As Bochow & van Dijk (2012) argue, Pentecostalism creates Foucauldian heterotopias, alternative spaces that give rise to new individual and relational ethics, roles and identities. Pentecostal churches open up new spaces for young women to work on themselves as individuals but also to reorder relationships with others (e.g. generational, gendered, patronage). Where the authors focus on healthcare and sex education, this chapter illuminates the possibility for how new ideas of the self and states of mind are just as important as creating new possibilities for young women. Furthermore, where Frahm-Arp (2012) highlights how these spaces allow young women to reconcile individual success as singles with enriched spirituality, this chapter has highlighted how this Pentecostal process also plays out in the imagination of the future. Pentecostal rhetoric and practice allow young women to work on themselves, to envisage personal future fortune, and to seek a marriage that will support this personal vision of success. As subsequent chapters develop, young women consider the time of ‘singlehood’ as allowing freedom to work on their personal biography before a suitable marriage.

Finally, where this chapter illuminated the individual in young women's Pentecostal experiences, it hinted at a little-addressed dilemma in Pentecostalism between the individual and the need for others.⁸⁰ Indeed, the chapter highlighted the centrality of others in religious experience, not least in empathy (cf. Houseman 2007; Werbner 2011). Indeed, there are also times when young women actively seek out others in religious experience – ruptures, as it were, in the continuous personal relationship individuals build with God. Where Pelkmans (2013) questions how actions give rise to 'cycles of doubt', and where Miyazaki (2004) argues that hope is replenished through action, we may question how young women do maintain (or lose) faith in religious practices. Focusing on one young woman's deliverance, the next chapter goes on to explore how confidence in the future is both restored and lost through various practices and through collective religious experiences.

⁸⁰ See the special issue of *Journal of Religion in Africa* **42** (2012) for a collection of papers that address the individual:dividual antimony.

3. Edima's Deliverance

In one corner of the church, Edima sat in a small circle with three Prayer Warriors. As with the older female church workers who sat on the white plastic chairs next to her, Edima had tied a scarf to cover her head, and wore a modest blouse and skirt. She had only just entered the main church building after having waited all morning by the church office to speak with the ministry's founder and leader, Evangelist Mercy Okom. One of the Prayer Warriors now held the small piece of white paper that Okom had given her patient: a deliverance prescription to alleviate the spiritual concerns that had brought Edima to End-Time Warriors today. Elsewhere in the church – a large semi-permanent structure, with striped canvas for walls and wooden beams supporting a corrugated iron roof – other deliverances were being carried out. A couple of small children lay face-down in one corner while Prayer Warriors prayed round them. In another corner, Prayer Warriors were encircling a middle-aged woman, pooling their spiritual gifts to battle against the manifesting spirit that made her body contort violently. As the small groups of Warriors worked, noise of clapping, singing and stilted 'Amens' filled the air.

Head bent downwards and hands in her lap, Edima was praying for herself. As she rocked slightly backwards and forwards, the Prayer Warriors concluded her prayer points with a short 'Amen! Amen!' The prayers gradually became more heated and, after ten minutes, Edima was standing up, determinedly repeating the prayer points: 'I reject you!' 'I destroy you!' 'I accept one Father!' 'I reject witchcraft!' 'I destroy covenants!' 'I renounce you!' The Prayer Warriors had also

risen to their feet and had joined her in more heated prayer. Their hand gestures suggested they were throwing 'Holy Ghost fire' at Edima's body and, as they spoke in tongues, their sound of 'wa-ka-ka-ka!' reverberated around the church. Asking Edima to remove her shoes, one Prayer Warrior poured anointing oil from a small plastic cooking oil bottle around Edima. Creating a spiritual ring of fire in the earth, she delineated the spiritual space to be targeted, protecting both the Warriors and strengthening Edima from the spirit they believed to be troubling her. Prayers had broken into song, with the Warriors chanting 'Go! We command you!' and Edima singing 'I surrender! I surrender!'

As one Prayer Warrior removed Edima's headscarf and put anointing oil through her hair, more Warriors, clapping and speaking in tongues, joined the group. The commotion around Edima had caught the attention of an older female Prayer Warrior across the church. Looking agitated, this Warrior pointed to the doors and to the open area above the canvas walls. 'Satan, I command you and your helpers to leave! You are not welcome here!' Her voice continued to boom, 'Husbands in the water are commanded to fall!' Against this, Edima quietly cried, 'Let Jesus have mercy.' Coming over to the group, the Warrior directed her questions to Edima: 'Do you *love* God?' She continued, 'God gives you life but you destroy what God does.' As Edima knelt on the floor before falling to her hands, the Warrior continued to tell her that she needed to take God into her life.

Forty minutes into the deliverance, Edima was standing again and joined by her elder brother. After repeatedly saying 'I let you go free!' and the Warriors praying that blessings should return to the family, the young man left with as little explanation as when he had arrived at the deliverance scene. Edima was

now tearing imaginary shackles from her wrists while the Prayer Warriors motioned as if throwing more 'Holy Ghost fire' on her body. 'I pour fire in the name of Jesus! I pour fire!' the small group shouted. It was now that, amid this commotion, more oil was poured in Edima's mouth and she started to move dramatically. Her head pointed downwards, she walked backwards and started to spin around. Reaching the middle of the church, with the Warriors still praying and encircling her, she collapsed and lay motionless on the ground. A few minutes after this spiritual climax, Edima was once again subdued, seated with the Prayer Warriors and praying for herself. Over an hour had passed and she looked exhausted. After cleaning the oil from her face with her handkerchief and re-tying her headscarf, she left the church.

I found Edima waiting once more outside the church office. Having watched the whole deliverance, I was eager to ask how she found her tiring ordeal. 'Really good,' she said smiling. Her short response failed to satisfy my curiosity and merely added to the enigma that surrounded the preceding interaction between her, the Prayer Warriors, the Holy Spirit, her brother and a supposedly malign spirit. Indeed, various anthropological analyses of spirit possession reflect the ambiguities inherent in deliverances. Functionalist approaches have framed human involvement with spirits in terms of problem-solving exercises (e.g. Crapanzano 1973; Lewis 1971, 1986). For instance, in his account of the Moroccan Hamadsha, Crapanzano (1973) takes a psychoanalytic view to understanding *jinni* spirit possession in young men (the possession leading to convulsions and paralysis). Where young men are subservient to their elders, Crapanzano (1973) argues that to be struck by *jinn* is indicative of a crisis of

male identity. The remedy is to partake in collective rituals, such as ecstatic dance, where the possessed is no longer excluded from community but supported by friends, family and the Hamadsha (Crapanzano 1973:215).

Meaning-centred approaches have furthered anthropological analyses by illuminating the symbolic, aesthetic and embodied aspects of spirit possession (e.g. Boddy 1989, 1994; Csordas 1987; Lambek 1981, 2003; Masquelier 2001). Focusing on lived experience, these approaches view the interaction between humans and spirits as articulating the complexities of everyday life and thereby allow for different interpretations of reality. Such approaches are more helpful than earlier functionalist frameworks by going beyond spirit possession as a simple remedial dialogue to highlight how human-spirit interactions are part of a wider cultural system. For instance, writing about the 'art of living with spirits', Lambek (2003) draws attention away from the ritual and temporary states of trance to focus on how spirit voices entwine with Malagasy-speaking spirit mediums over time. Where such dialogues alter personal and communal biographies, Lambek's (2003) analysis challenges 'western' notions of personhood and moral agency. For the author, human-spirit interaction becomes part of a complex and ongoing process of communication, acting as a spiritual dialogue and as a 'creative expression' for human morality in the way in which such events become points of reflection, interrogation and edification for both possessed and non-possessed (ibid.:41).

While the discussions presented in this chapter highlight deliverance as a means to address problems – how Edima was given a 'prescription' speaks to the Warriors' own ideas of deliverance as remedial action – the discussion follows

this more meaning-centred approach. Drawing on the idea of human-spirit interactions as lived experiences beyond those of just spirit mediums (cf. Lambek 2003), the discussion illuminates how young women in Calabar perceive themselves to be in constant dialogue with the predetermining spiritual realm. Deliverances are shown to be techniques to manipulate these dialogues, and in so doing alter perceptions of the self. Where this thesis is concerned with how young women imagine and attain their believed 'God-given destinies', such a focus is reminiscent of the Tallensi's conceptions of personhood, where people must connect to the spiritual realm in order to manipulate not only the present but also future self (cf. Fortes 1987).

For instance, drawing the focus on African young woman, van de Kamp (2011) examines how deliverances in Brazilian Pentecostal churches in Maputo express the anxieties and uncertainties of contemporary urban life. At a time when young women are gaining certain freedoms – to become financially independent and to gain university education, for instance – they are increasingly turning to Pentecostalism as a means to take control of their lives. For young women, Pentecostal deliverance can divorce them from the 'spirit spouses' hindering their success. Drawing on continuity analyses of Pentecostalism to highlight how the movement allows individuals to come to terms with their social worlds (critiquing 'traditional' culture and articulating the contradictions of modernity), van de Kamp (2011:511) argues that deliverance, as the embodiment of 'spiritual warfare', is far from comforting but inherently violent. The author hence queries whether this Mozambican form of spirit possession articulates resistance (cf. Boddy 1989; Lewis 1971; Masquelier 2001). Rather, where young

women must actively take ownership of their bodies to win battles with the troubling spirit world, van de Kamp (2011:525) posits the need to understand how individuals actively 'do' religion. Following analyses of how religious subjects are created through action (e.g. Mahmood 2005; Marshall 2009), van de Kamp (2011) helps us question how deliverance in Calabar is a means young women choose to manipulate their futures.

Yet examining how young women 'do' religion, discussing the fears and faiths that drive the religious acts they undertake in their quest for future success, an understanding of deliverances needs to go beyond the interaction between human and its possessive spirit. As apparent in Edima's case, we need to pay attention to the interactions between deliverances' various human participants. Michel de Certeau's (2000) historical account of the possessions that took hold of Loudun, France, in the early 17th century is a helpful departing point for drawing out the mysticisms and enigmas of the deliverance process. For de Certeau (2000:52), the 'discourse of possession' is not decided by the absent diabolic spirit, although he is central to the experience, but develops through the act of reading the possessed's body. While some know the language of possession unconsciously, others become 'observers, examiners and contenders' (ibid.:41). The exorcism drama unfolds: only the examiners can make the possession intelligible, refining the discourse through words and actions until the sorcerer is revealed. Such a discourse is not without error – only a death will validate the drama as a *discours veritable* – and hence de Certeau (2000) highlights how mysticism gives rise to both the challenges and believed successes of exorcism. Such mysticism presents epistemological queries as to how one knows for sure.

In the exorcism theatre, to use de Certeau's (2000) imagery, who authorises the script and decides the drama should unfold in such a way? The following discussion does not dwell on this question but goes beyond to examine what these encounters with spiritual 'experts' mean for young women's spiritual lives and broader lived experiences.

Focusing on the unfolding dialogue constituting this type of religious experience, we may draw on Werbner's (2011) recent ethnography of Apostolic street prophets to better understand the relationships between religious experts and their patients, those suffering the yet-to-be-defined spiritual ailment. Focusing on young men who have found fame as prophets in Gabarone, Werbner (2011) uses the term 'holy hustling' to present an alternative perspective of charisma (cf. Weber 1948). Where the 'charismatic endures and suffers momentarily in place of another', Werbner (2011:2) characterises the prophets as heroes, simultaneously empathetic and self-willed. At the centre of the argument for finding alternative framings of religious charisma is the person, problematised in African Christianity in the way in which it is 'individual and, alternatively, dividual, partible, and permeated by others' emotions and shared substances' (ibid.:12). Where the author illuminates the need for (and contradictions of) human interaction for heightened spiritual encounters, we see how religious experience has great potential to change one's awareness of the self and others. Hence, while de Certeau (2000) raises questions as to interpretation and authority of knowledge, Werbner (2011) advances ideas of the uncertainties of religious experience through the idea that the person is simultaneously vulnerable and susceptible to (spiritual) victories and dangers.

The following discussion situates itself between these analyses, illuminating the deliverance process as an enigmatic and unstable technique young women choose to manipulate dialogues with the spiritual realm, hence altering perceptions of the self and the future. Where this thesis argues that young women prepare for future fortune by constantly engaging in diverse acts to fashion Pentecostal subjectivities conducive to success, the following discussion explicitly illuminates young women's agency in religious practice – furthering the previous chapter, this chapter unveils the reality of young women's religious experiences as being diverse, and sometimes opportunistic and ephemeral. Young women actively seek out religious 'experts' and esoteric religious practices deemed more powerful than private prayer in order to ensure they maintain on a perceived righteous life-course. Yet such religious choices also present the understanding that preparations for the future are constantly driven by the competing forces of fear and faith. While the unknown religious practices are perceived to be powerful and hence effective for cutting conversations with malevolent spirits, such mysticism can give rise to much doubt and fear. This chapter focuses on emic notions of 'marine marriage' and deliverance to understand young women's understandings of the self, entitlements and relationships to others. The discussion highlights how young women must negotiate uncertainty in the quest for future fortune by looking inwards, choosing religious acts that build rather than undermine self-confidence. The discussion highlights both young women's agency in religious experience and the constant conflicts the Christian journey presents.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the End Times rhetoric, drawing on how emic conceptions of dialogues with Calabar's marine spirits have now been diabolised. Focusing on 'marine marriage', this section illuminates ideas of the self bound to the spiritual world and hence the pervasive fear that unknown spirits can change personal identities and futures. The second section focuses on how this fear makes young women feel the need to work on their relationship with God, connecting with the Holy Spirit in order to fight other spirits wishing to trap them in the spiritual realm. Focusing on Pentecostal prayer practices, the discussion highlights the ambiguities and anxieties of practising 'effective' prayer. The third section moves on to discuss the belief that sometimes young women feel their efforts are not enough and others are needed in order to fight malevolent forces. Illuminating the mystic and esoteric practices of the Warriors as religious 'experts', the discussion highlights how young women put faith in others. The final section contradicts this, showing how enigmatic deliverances can jeopardise faith. Identifying young women's perceptions after deliverance, the section highlights uncertain religious practices as gambles for future success. Where the previous chapter highlighted the optimism and can-do attitude of the Pentecostal movement, this chapter draws out the underlining fears and great uncertainties that trouble young women's futures aspirations.

End Times and the Occult

Edima's deliverance took place at End-Time Warriors, a prayer-based ministry in Calabar Municipality. Although non-denominational, End-Time borrows extensively from charismatic Pentecostal practices. Its founder, Evangelist Mercy Okom, was originally a Methodist but came to Pentecostalism after 'giving her

life to Christ' at Deeper Life Bible Church. Her husband, Bishop Okom, also runs his own Pentecostal church (Global Impact Ministries), as well as being a UniCal lecturer and radio-show host. The Okoms are a well-respected couple in Calabar. As a ministry, End-Time offers various programmes throughout the week. Deliverance Service takes place on Monday evenings, which includes time for worship (song), for prayer and for listening to The Word. Warfare Training happens on Saturday mornings, which is dedicated to working on 'aggressive prayer'. Wednesday mornings are given over to the Faith Clinic, where congregants may come for 'spiritual cleansing' and deliverances. Evangelist Okom, affectionately known as Mummy, is also always reachable by mobile phone for those needing immediate spiritual advice – indeed, she is in much demand and her phone rarely stops ringing apart from when she switches it off for some much-needed rest. Without a Sunday service, End-Time shares many congregants with Global Impact and draws in many other worshippers from various churches around Calabar.

As its name suggests, End-Time Warriors acknowledges the wickedness and persistence of satanic forces in our current End Times, and seeks to overcome such forces through 'spiritual warfare'. Talking about her ministry, Mummy explained:

We see the Pentecostal Church becoming very cold.... The Pentecostal Church is almost going Orthodox: we are following routines, we are not just setting the fire burning.... You realise that the Devil is becoming. The Devil is modernised, his kingdom is well organised, and, day by day, he is being uplifted to fight the Church.... So the Church should also do something, to be like an army and to be ready to fight fire with fire.

Although the End Times narrative prevails across West African Pentecostalism (cf. Marshall 2009; Piot 2010), Mummy insinuates how End-Time emphasises it much more explicitly than Calabar's other Pentecostal ministries. Where the End Times narrative not only preaches the oncoming rapture but also the need to prepare oneself for the unknown time of judgement, it 'serves to condition congregants into an openness to a radical/millennialist orientation toward time and the everyday' (Piot 2010:66). As Mummy explained, this is the time to actively fight against 'our enemy and not to sit on our hands and be like, "Oh God, fight for us!"' Influenced by Mummy's Deeper Life background of extreme 'holiness' (cf. Marshall 1991:22-3), End-Time pays particular attention to preaching morality and purity. Where morality is expressed in terms of spirituality, the ministry hones the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit to discern, correct and protect against spiritual problems (cf. Hackett 2008; Meyer 2008). Indeed, Mummy refers to herself as 'the visionary' of the ministry, alluding to the spiritual gift she realised in herself when she was a small girl. The ministry workers – members picked and trained by Okom – are aptly named Prayer Warriors in view of their strength in 'spiritual warfare'.

While the methods of this 'spiritual warfare' are discussed later in the chapter, here it is necessary to draw out End-Time's reasoning for encouraging such aggressive religious experiences. Where Mummy explains that the Devil is 'well organised' she refers to the ministry's belief in the increasing number of malevolent spirits that cause chaos, confusion and distress. As with a more general belief in Calabar, End-Time identifies these 'satanic helpers' as witches and the marine deities associated with traditional beliefs in *Ndem Efik* (cf.

Chapter 1). Where 'witchcraftcy' is always bad – associated with misfortunes such as the total collapse of a business, severe illness or death – marine spirits are traditionally ambivalent deities. They are charged with the power to grant fortunes, yet they are also known to 'disturb' people and to prevent progression in life unless a sacrifice is made. Following earlier discussions (cf. Chapter 1), it is difficult reifying certain beliefs as 'traditional'. In Calabar, past religious beliefs continue, compounding today's plural 'religious-scape'. Where these have entwined with other religious movements, such as Pentecostalism, they have not been discarded but, rather, have been rearticulated as diabolic (cf. Fabian 1969, 1971; Meyer 1992, 1999). As the discussion highlights, such continuities and the ways in which certain ministries have rearticulated particular beliefs gives rise to much uncertainty. Where Meyer (1999:xviii) argues that the 'vernacularisation' and 'diabolisation' of local deities within the Christian church has transformed the minds of its converts, the discussion goes further to draw out how such strategies give rise to much fear. In understanding how young women conceptualise future fortune, such fear not only changes the perception of self but also is shown to encourage action.

Literature on the belief in mermaid spirits in West Africa draws specific attention to the worship of Mami Wata (e.g. Drewal 1988a, 1988b, 2008; Gore & Nevdomsky 1997; Gore 1998; Meyer 2008; Salmons 1977). Meaning 'mother of water' in Pidgin, Mami Wata is an equivocal marine deity. Ambivalence stems from the deity's capricious disposition and also from how Mami Wata, as a global phenomenon with local variations and articulations, cannot be reduced to one congruent being. Despite her ambiguity (indeed Mami Wata is not gender-

specific), there are some common themes in Mami Wata worship: she is characterised by long, flowing hair and fair skin; supposedly has an ethereal beauty; and is understood to bestow wealth, children and prestige to her devotees (Drewal 2008). Much of the literature comes from art history and focuses on the shrines devotees have created to worship the marine deity. Her characteristics of wealth and beauty reappear through the ways in which devotees decorate and adorn their shrines with mirrors (also symbolising the threshold between spiritual and physical realms), jewellery and beauty items. Art History ably highlights here the agency of devotees by situating them within temporal and spatial flows of cultural artefacts which they can pick and choose in making their own Mami Wata cult (cf. Anderson & Peek 2002; Gore & Nevadomsky 1997).

Studies of Mami Wata within social anthropology remain few but are highly useful for framing the water spirit's rise in popularity amid the excitement and apprehension of emerging West African modernities (cf. Comaroff & Comaroff 1993). Mami Wata, with her mysterious underwater world which supposedly looks exactly like our own, and her ability to bestow riches to her worshippers, has become a medium for understanding the desires and dangers of rising cash economies and the circulation of lavish commodities (Frank 1995, Wendl 2001, Bastian 2008, Meyer 2008). Furthermore, amid West Africa's polyphonous modernities, the wealth and beauty of Mami Wata has transcended the moral to become a spiritual affliction, with Pentecostal rhetoric diabolising the mermaid spirit and reminding Christians of the pervasive wickedness of Satan and his helpers (Hackett 2008, Meyer 2008). What we can take from these analyses is

that it is her highly composite nature, traversing time and place and acting in mysterious ways, that gives Mami Wata such power (Drewal 2008; cf. Arens & Karp 1989).

While I did not hear people talk about Mami Wata,⁸¹ mermaid stories made endless references to beauty, fertility, seduction, and ambiguous powers and dispositions. One marine deity plays a significant role in Calabar's culture and everyday lived experiences: Anansa. Based at Obutong (Old Town), an area of Efikland that looks out across the Calabar River, Anansa is one of the principal Efik deities and is said to protect Calabar and its environs. Indeed, in Efik she is often referred to as *Anansa Ikang Obutong* (Anansa the light of Obutong). During my fieldwork people told me various stories about Anansa: from how she apparently saved Calabar during the Biafran War;⁸² to how, annoyed by light disturbing her dwelling place, she blew bulbs on one side of the U. J. Esuene Stadium when it first opened (this side now remains in darkness to appease her); how workers close the windows of the UniCem factory everyday at noon as she patrols the grounds; and how she supposedly killed a Nollywood actress who, against the film director's advice, entered Calabar River during menstruation. Following other mermaid spirit beliefs, Anansa is an ambivalent figure displaying whimsical benevolence or wrath. Yet the stories about Anansa

⁸¹ As Drewal (2008) speculates, Mami Wata might be absent from some cultures, such as Yoruba, here there is already a long tradition of marine deities. However, Hackett (2008) does write about *Mami Wata* in Calabar (although it was a Ghanaian who first mentioned the name to her, and her article alludes more to mermaid spirits in general). Arguing that mermaid spirits have had a long history among the Efik, Coote & Salmons (2008) give an interesting speculation as to the links between Efik mermaids and *Mami Wata* through their investigation of mermaid images on brassware.

⁸² Coote & Salmons (2008:265) note how it was not Anansa but the Atabriyan shrine at Oron that protected Calabar during the Biafran War by stopping the Nigerian warship NNS Obudu from attacking Calabar. I argue that such possible misinformation surrounding tales of Anansa merely highlights her popularity and perceived power in Calabar.

articulate an immensely powerful being and one who has garnered much reverence amongst Calabar's residents. How Calabar's Nigerian Naval base was named after her (NNS Anansa but now NNS Victory) bears witness to Anansa's importance (cf. Hackett 1989).⁸³

Where most of my informants professed 'not to know too much' about mermaids, it seemed that Anansa became an umbrella term for marine spirit. All my informants knew that the spiritual realm was populated by many (demonic) spirits, yet they did not like talking or speculating too much about the specifics – whether out of fear of the spiritual unknown or because knowing too much about traditional beliefs went against church rhetoric, I was unable to ascertain. Referring to the popular stories served as a way for my informants to acknowledge spiritual forces affecting Calabar without dwelling too much on the 'unmentionable'. We may draw similarities with White's (2000) account of colonial East Africa, where the author argues popular vampire stories acted as idioms for the anxieties associated with European medical practices. As White (2000:89) states, oral accounts do not report events but reveal the ideas, meanings and powers characterising people's thoughts and actions – rumours' truth is less important than what they represent. As such, Calabar's mermaid stories become common currency for spiritual concerns, connoting people's apprehensions in successfully navigating the uncertainties of Nigerian life.

While the dangers (and illicit successes) of Calabar life are reified through the image of the formidable Anansa, it is important to go beyond White's (2000)

⁸³ Two well-known pastors in Calabar, Pastors Theodore Effiong and Effraim Effiong launched a crusade against the Nigerian Navy making reference to the 'diabolic' Anansa. It was reported that the former governor of Cross River State, Donald Duke, wanted to keep the name NNS Anansa.

idiom analysis to stress how much people really believe in such stories, and how belief encourages them to partake in real actions that they hope will overturn misfortune. As da Col (2012) argues, believing in a spiritual other allows people to come to terms with seemingly unconnected (fortunate and unfortunate) events in the way in which it places agency with an 'alterity'. Yet, as Graeber's (2012) analysis of performativity and fortune reminds us, people in Calabar also acknowledge their own agency in trying to dialogue with and manipulate the actions of the Marine Kingdom that they believe affect their own lives. Indeed, End-Time pays great attention to breaking the spiritual affliction of 'marine marriage' – a type of spirit possession where the marine spirit wants to claim rights to the person's property, rights and destiny (cf. Bastian 1997).⁸⁴ 'Marine marriage' can either be known or unknown (cf. Gifford 2001) but there are certain phenomena that indicate a covenant made with the Marine Kingdom. As a member of End-Time (her mother also a Prayer Warrior), one of my key informants, Florence, was able to explain:

You might be having a bad dream. You might be seeing yourself flying and you might think, 'Ok, it's just a normal thing' and you might not know you are possessed.... Sometimes you might see yourself having a ring.... Sometimes you might see yourself with children in the dream. You just see yourself. And then when it gets to marriage, you might not be able to have children in the outside world because you have children in the water.... You might be asking yourself, 'What is the problem?' and you might not know that they are the ones taking your womb in the Kingdom of Darkness.

Dreams are highly significant in Nigerian culture. Believed to be windows to the spiritual realm, they supposedly indicate what happens in the physical realm (cf.

⁸⁴ Indeed, marriage in Pentecostal churches in Calabar is usually understood as a 'covenant', signalling the binding of husband and wife in the spiritual realm.

Lévy-Bruhl 1923).⁸⁵ Significantly, dreams in West African cosmology illuminate the soul detached from the body (Pratten 2007b:41). While African anthropology has failed to engage fully in the analysis of dreams (see Jedrej & Shaw 1992), some few studies link dreams to personal identity in religious change (McKenzie 1992, on early Yoruba conversion), personal identity in conversion (Curley 1992, on conversion to a Cameroonian AIC), and validating church leadership by highlighting divine communication (Charsley 1992). Drawing on such analyses, we may understand young women's dreams, in which they see themselves doing various actions, as dialogues with the spiritual realm, creating personal biographies that not only inform young women of their own sense of identity but also alert young women to the potential impediments to future fortune. Such dialogues raise fears and encourage young women to partake in actions believed to re-identify themselves on a Christian path to fortune.

Furthering how dialogues with marine spirits create personal biographies, we may understand how 'marine marriage' is believed to occur. A common circumstance for 'marine marriage' occurs when those wanting children make a sacrifice to a marine deity. By blessing a couple with a child, the mermaid spirit is understood to 'marry' the child, retaining a link throughout its life and influencing personal affairs. Children born under these circumstances are known in Efik as *Ndito Ndem*, 'children of the Deity' (Akak 1982). As Christians understand it, the marine spouse 'disturbs' and causes problems, thus depriving the person of their 'God-given destiny'. For instance, people married to the

⁸⁵ Highlighting the incongruence between Annang and colonial epistemological ways of knowing, Pratten's (2007b:211-2) analysis of dreams used as evidence problematises interpretations of intention and action surrounding the man-leopard murders in colonial Nigeria.

Marine Kingdom are supposed to have the same ethereal beauty of a mermaid, yet despite this they find they will never receive marriage proposals. Out of jealousy, the marine spouse will cause the person to have fits of rage or other abnormal social behaviour, scaring off potential suitors. Fantastic stories circulate – often including snakes and dream-like sequences – of someone knowing they have a marine spouse but being unable to break the covenant, despite visiting many churches.

It is also believed that people can be ‘disturbed’ by the Marine Kingdom for unknown reasons. Firstly, marine possession is understood as a ‘generational curse’, stemming from covenants one’s ancestors made with traditional deities. Such a curse is capable of travelling down bloodlines if the covenant remains unbroken. As Mummy explained, ‘We Africans, we have this background of idol worshipping. And so you find that many of the problems [...] have ancestral roots.’ She continued:

[When people] enter into a covenant... they want power, they want fame. The Devil will now demand the unborn destinies of them. They unknowingly, ignorantly will say, ‘Eh, take everything! After all, I am not seeing the child, I do not know how the child is going to look like’.... So when you are now born, you are trying to know the Lord. *Chai!* You have given your life to Christ but those destinies are working against you. You want to force ahead, you see yourself dragging back.... Those powers are claiming unclaimed claims in your life: ‘Oh, your forefathers dedicated you to me, so you can’t belong to Jesus. You belong to me!’

As such, people understand themselves to inherit the spiritual shortcomings of their ancestors who, in a Faustian manner, worshipped the now diabolic marine deities, trading personal (and family) liberty for short-term favours. For instance, it is not unusual to hear of stories where a family is cursed in such a

way that the firstborn will always die in a particular manner, that no child can win a place at university, or that a particular illness will recur when family members reach a certain age. The unknown past is a serious threat to people, giving rise to many fears to present lived experiences and hence the future. As Florence explained:

It pushes you back, it doesn't push you forward. You don't see your star. Maybe you are destined to be bright but because of those things now that are holding you back – like your background might be fighting and you don't really know, you understand? And you see yourself walking from one place to another, just turning around. The Marine Kingdom, they like to turn you around. They just try to destroy your destiny.

Names are also understood to invite marine spirits to 'disturb' people, being regarded as linking people to their ancestral heritage, 'tribal' or clan background. Young women often expressed distain towards names associated with traditional Efik spirits, such as Ekpenyong, Ekanem and Ekpe (Okom 2009:46-51),⁸⁶ explaining that they could not imagine why some people would want to name their child after the Devil. Under traditional Efik belief, those named Ekpenyong or Ekanem are said to be born into the *Usan Ndem*, the sacrificial plate of the deities (Akak 1982). Where names act as dialogues with the spiritual realm, nothing can cause harm to those born into the *Usan Ndem* if they continue to worship *Ndem*. Yet for Christians, such names are believed to realign the name bearer with satanic powers (cf. Meyer 1999), manifesting in real misfortune. For instance, one friend told of a girl she knew called Ekpenyong. The girl was beautiful, with fair skin and sleepy eyes – I was assured that it was easy to think

⁸⁶ In Efik, the name Ekpenyong is derived from *Ekpe* (leopard) and *enyong* (above); Ekanem is a conjoining of *Eka* (mother) and *Ndem* (Deity); Ekpe refers to the Ekpe Cult, the highest traditional institution of the Efiks (Akak 1982).

she really was a mermaid. However, the girl was having difficulties and one day disappeared from school. She returned a few weeks later going by a different name. Saying that 'the spirits were following her', she explained her new name would put an end to her misfortune.

As with dreams, naming practices in Nigeria illuminate the soul as detached from the body. Depicting the person as malleable, ascribing a new name confers a new soul, identity and character (see Fardon 1990, for names conferring soul, linking child to patrimony amongst the Chamba; Ferme 2001, for names as masking a 'double' amongst the Mende of Sierra Leone; Pratten 2007b, for understandings of the soul, *ukpon*, amongst the Annang of Nigeria). Indeed, it is not uncommon for churches to ascribe new names to people during deliverances. Perceived as the archetype of empowered womanhood in view of her faith in God and strength to face and overcome life's challenges (cf. Soothill 2007:115), Esther is one name commonly given to young women in church.⁸⁷ Pentecostal naming practices are believed to confer more fortunate identities and life-courses by identifying the soul with God. Hence, where destinies do not just occur but are manipulated through communication with the spiritual realm (cf. Fortes 1987; Graeber 2012), we start to see how Pentecostal techniques of self-fashioning are

⁸⁷ In the Bible story, Esther is without a father or mother but is chosen by her beauty to become queen to King Xerxes. After being honoured by the king, Haman is angered when Mordecai, a Jew, fails to kneel down to him. Haman plots to kill all the Jews in the kingdom, and Mordecai calls on the new queen to persuade the king to intervene. Secretly a Jew, herself, Esther fasts and shows faith in God, courage and intelligence by waiting for events to unfold before telling the king of Haman's plan. It is no surprise that Esther is a popular name for young women in Nigeria, signifying trust in God and female strength to overcome great troubles. Furthermore, it signifies that one's background does not dictate one's future. The name Esther holds the meaning 'star' in Persian. Esther was also known as Hadassah, Hebrew for 'myrtle' and signifying her hidden strength.

believed to encourage fortune by breaking certain dialogues with the spiritual realm and realigning personal biographies with God.

Secondly, marine possession can follow an unknown initiation. Just as Mami Wata has been linked to beauty and modern commodities (Wendl 2001; Meyer 2008), End-Time warned of young women being initiated through jewellery, make-up, clothing or hair extensions. Conversely, the young women I knew did not agree that such items were always indicative of any spiritual debasement – young women regard looking stylish as both imperative for and indicative of future success (cf. Chapters 5 & 6). However, they did express concerns regarding knowing an item's origin. Where showing generosity is considered pivotal in friendship (cf. Chapter 4), it is common for young women to buy small gifts, or to 'dash' unwanted possessions to others. Young women acknowledged that accepting such gifts was risky as, potentially imbued with curses, such gifts could forge bonds with the Marine Kingdom. Modern commodities have become such a part of daily life that they are no longer viewed as the afflictions Wendl (2001) suggests. Rather, as Meyer (2008) remarks on urban Ghana, having traversed the (Mami Wata) cult to quotidian life, such items are overtly desired yet express concealed fears. Following Meyer (2008), I emphasise that the understanding of the hidden dangers of marine spirits imbued in everyday commodities, as well as their ambivalent mechanisms, highlights the real fear in Calabar of both the pervasiveness and the cunning of diabolic forces. Where young women give a short prayer after receiving small gifts in order to avoid dialogues with unknown spirits, the fear that spirits change personal biographies culminates in constant actions to try to ensure fortune granted by God.

It is this belief in a highly populated and dangerous spiritual realm that informs the following discussions on how and why young women put faith in particular Pentecostal practices – and only at particular ministries – as means to ensure fortune. Where belief refers to efficacy of power rather than existence, Christians in Calabar state that mermaids do exist but that God has the higher power and authority. As such, where appeasing mermaid spirits with sacrifices is now regarded as worshipping Satan, Pentecostal practices provide a legitimate method within a Christian framework of ending ‘disturbances’ caused by mermaids. This follows Onyinah (2002), who argues that deliverance ministries in Ghana have replaced the anti-witchcraft shrines and exorcisms carried out in traditional African cultures. Yet although the discussions reinforce how Pentecostal churches perpetuate ‘traditional’ beliefs (cf. Meyer 1992, 1998), it pays attention to how the juxtaposition of different temporalities within Pentecostalism (cf. Piot 2010:129) generates new ideas of self. Where the past is believed to still play out in the present, Pentecostal narratives offer young women a framework for understanding and changing their perceived identities, personal biographies, and hence their envisaged futures. Crucially, as the following draws out, young women engage in constant Pentecostal acts to prepare the self for perceived future greatness in the way in which these religious acts are believed to break feared dialogues with the Marine Kingdom and build faith in communication with a protecting Holy Spirit.

‘Spiritual boosts’

When I met Edima at End-Time she was an aspiring student. Having had ‘problems’ with her WAEC, she was still trying for university admission almost

two years after finishing high school. She spent most of her time at home revising – and, when her father was out, secretly watching American TV series (her favourite being *Nikita*). Since childhood, Edima's ambition was to be a lawyer. Describing it as a 'passion' in her, she explained how she wanted to make sure that there was justice and protection for the most vulnerable, making sure that everyone had their rights 'as a human and as a Nigerian'. As with many young women studying social work, law and politics, Edima showed a genuine concern for the betterment of society, as well as the belief that one day she would be in a position to make a valuable difference (cf. Chapter 6). While she explained her plans to study Law outside Calabar (and then a Masters abroad in International Relations), it was evident her relationship with her parents was influencing her decisions. As she explained, going to university away from home and extended family would grant her freedoms currently denied from her under her father's roof.

As she spoke of her future, her eyes lit up when she declared that she actually dreamed of being a famous actress. While she admitted that this ambition would not be as welcomed by her parents – Law, along with vocational degrees such as Accountancy and Medicine, is considered to bring kudos, status and good salaries – she was still hopeful that one day she would make it in Nollywood. Indeed, she was already using church as a legitimate way of indulging her passion by being an active member of the drama department at a weekly youth fellowship she attended. Hence, while this chapter illuminates the ways in which ministries offer all-important spiritual guidance for fashioning religious subjectivities, it must be noted that church activities are also perceived to realign personal

biographies with the spiritual realm by developing 'God-given talents', networking with other Christians for future opportunities, and lifting spirits through entertainment (cf. Kirsch 2011). In spite of present frustrations at home, Edima was confident that she was to 'be successful' as she worked towards her two ambitions.

Edima acknowledged that her spiritual life was central to her fulfilling these ambitions. As the daughter of an Assemblies of God pastor, Edima's place of worship was non-negotiable. She was committed to her father's church, playing a key role in the choir and often leading praise and worship. While she liked her father's church, she admitted that the worship did not stir her spirit as much as at other Pentecostal churches she had visited on occasion. Indeed, she became much more enthusiastic when speaking about one particular Pentecostal church in Lagos, Realm of Glory International, which had impressed her in view of its numbers of white people, the praise songs that were so international she did not even know them, and its lively youth scene. Compared with Assemblies of God (a Pentecostal church that displays more 'Orthodox' tendencies), Edima declared Realm of Glory as '*very, very modern... the worship is awesome. Everything is just so wonderful!*' (original emphasis). For Edima, a church like Realm of Glory really allowed her to express herself, be entertained and build her spiritual life. We are reminded of how some other types of Pentecostal ministries – especially those perceived more modern and international – impact on young women's self-confidence, altering their perceptions of self, entitlements, future possibilities and relationships with others (cf. Chapter 2).

While Edima could attend churches such as Realm of Glory when she was out of town, in Calabar she was attending fellowships (End-Time and a youth fellowship) to help with her spiritual life. For Edima, fellowships did not contradict obligations to her father's church. As with her choice of university education, Edima's fellowship attendance highlights how young women do employ agency to navigate the restrictive spheres of patriarchy and conservatism for their own benefits (cf. Vigh 2006). Crucially, Edima considered fellowships important for imagining and realising her future aspirations in view of how they edified her, teaching spiritual tools needed to combat malevolent spirits, and giving time in which to practise these skills, hone her inherent 'God-given gifts' and concentrate on spirituality. Other young women also acknowledged that attending fellowship outside church was essential for giving an extra 'spiritual boost'. As Florence explained about her church, Goldcity: 'I go there to worship God. I just go there on Sunday.' For Florence, church was for thanking God and listening to her pastor use his 'gift of prosperity', to teach her 'the ways of life' and encourage her to always 'aim to get higher'. Conversely, Florence saw End-Time as a chance to ground herself deeper in the Word of God and build her spiritual life through Mummy's 'gift for prayer'. Stating that End-Time strengthened her against misfortune, she added: 'I feel that there is this coverage I have when I go to End-Time.'

Perhaps unsurprisingly, young women's fellowship attendance tended to coincide with specific moments in their lives. As the following chapter discusses, strengthening spirituality was an important activity for girls waiting at home, not only in view of the amount of free time they had but also as a means of working

on the self and renewing hope for changing circumstances through action. Times to be extra prayerful and spiritually vigilant were usually times when young women were on the look-out for new opportunities. For instance, my friend Mercy, who first introduced me to End-Time, explained how the ministry helped her at a time when she was looking for a 'spiritual breakthrough in terms of finance'. When Mercy joined End-Time, she did not have anything going and so was working on establishing a project which would bring her and a friend lots of money. Encountering problem after problem with the project, the two friends decided that they needed God's help in determining what was going wrong and so went from church to church on a quest for answers. While reluctant to admit whether the prayers had helped with her specific project, Mercy saw her spiritual life grow through End-Time's prayers and stuck with the ministry.

Where this thesis examines 'feminine cultures of waiting' (cf. Jeffrey 2010), young women's attendance at various fellowships on top of commitments to their 'home church' gives rise to some interesting ideas of how they conceptualise time and productivity through religious activity. Revisiting The Brook Church's doctrine (cf. Chapter 2), we are reminded that worshippers are entitled to a bountiful eternal life through their identification with Christ. Living by The Word, worshippers self-fashion their morals, comportment and aesthetics, and are taught not to rush but to take direction in life. Where they must trust in God's 'divine timing', the constant acts of the self made to identify with Christ renew faith in future fortune (cf. Miyazaki 2004). At first, fellowship-attendance appears to contradict Pastor Ose's preaching of patience and planning in the way in which young women attend at times when they need

instant answers or are desperate to overcome struggles. Yet as young women see it, apart from those who frequently change churches without grounding themselves in The Word – those deemed ‘miracle chasers’ – fellowships do not contradict trust in God’s ‘divine timing’. Rather, young women attend fellowships for ‘spiritual warfare’, to dialogue with other spirits, which they believe may be denying them from receiving their entitlements from God.

As this highlights, young women believe that the world is a dangerous place, riven with malevolent forces that cause much confusion in their lives. Yet this ‘spiritual warfare’, fighting against demonic spirits and building the spiritual ‘strongman’ with the Holy Spirit, is not without its own difficulties or uncertainties. As a prayer-based ministry, End-Time engages in ‘spiritual warfare’ through ‘aggressive prayer’ and speaking in tongues.⁸⁸ As such, young women attend when they feel like their prayer-life is lacking. The emphasis on inciting the presence of the Holy Spirit in prayer is particularly significant for discovering and unlocking one’s believed destiny and fortune entitled by God because the Holy Spirit is considered a revealer of truth. While End-Time has weekly programmes allowing worshippers to pray with others in a spiritually charged atmosphere, its Prayer Warriors also intercede for its members.

As young women acknowledged, speaking in tongues proficiently takes practice, especially if one has grown up in an ‘Orthodox’ church accustomed to more

⁸⁸ ‘Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house’ (Matthew 12:29, KJV). End-Time makes reference to the ‘Ancestral Strongman’, as a figure from the past who represents the Devil (Okom 2011:100). The ‘Ancestral Strongman’ guards a family’s covenants with the help of ‘familiar spirits’ (those who know the family’s affairs well). However, elsewhere people used ‘strongman’ more generally to refer to a demon hindering progress, such as spirits of depression, of laziness or of pride.

reserved prayer. Indeed, many young women expressed concern that they were not speaking in tongues properly. Their perceived inability to employ tongues raised fears of broken and inefficient dialogue with the Holy Spirit and hence did not renew faith that this religious act would encourage future fortune (cf. Miyazaki 2004). Rather, it raised feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, especially when they heard the lucid sounds of their church members who were just able to 'flow in the spirit'. This highlights a more general concern in Calabar's churches about how one knows for sure when someone is speaking in tongues. When is it 'real' and a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, and when is it just a babble? It was a question I often posed to my informants, and, with no simple answer, was a question that was often asked back to me.

It is also a question tackled by Luhrmann (2007) in her cognitive analysis of how American charismatic Christians learn to 'hear' God in prayer. Where prayer aims to develop a relationship with God through dialogue, Luhrmann (2007) argues that individuals must learn the acts of absorption and discernment. Absorption practices aim to distract the mind and distort agency by distancing the individual from reality and illuminating their imagination. Following this focus on internal phenomena, the worshipper practices discernment, learning to distinguish between God's dialogue and their own thoughts. According to Luhrmann (2007:89), this includes various tests such as asking whether it is something the worshipper would say anyway, whether it is likely to be something God would say, whether another worshipper can corroborate it through their own prayer dialogues, and whether it fosters peaceful feelings. While the following discussion highlights how End-Time's prayers encourage an

almost trance-like state, removing the worshipper from their surroundings, we see End-Time congregants following different methods from Luhrmann's (2007) discernment in deciding whether God is present. The worshipper is not so much discerning God's presence through words but knowing they are victorious in 'spiritual warfare' through bodily experience. As Florence explained:

When you know the real speaking in tongues, you will feel it. There is this goosebumps that will come out of your body. You will feel it. You will know that, yes, this thing is actually coming out from God. I can't just say that you start praying and you start speaking in tongues. It looks like you're getting mad or something. It feels funny.

Insinuating an ambiguity in how a 'real' dialogue with God actually feels, Florence also illuminates an uncertainty towards the mechanisms of speaking in tongues. Where young women decide whether God is answering their prayers in order to maintain hope in achieving future aspirations, rather than focusing on cognitive ways of knowing (e.g. Luhrmann 2007), it is more helpful to consider how they practise the performance of prayers. We are reminded of van de Kamp's (2011) analysis of young women in Maputo, who learn to take ownership of their bodies in 'spiritual warfare' in order to break with the 'spirit spouses' supposedly holding them back in life. As the author notes, 'In the formation of the born-again subject, which entails an ever-increasing experience of the Holy Spirit through ritual practices, performances and bodily techniques, women learn to interpret and frame bodily experiences and to use their body in novel ways' (ibid.:512). Hence, where young women engage in uncertain acts to overcome the more general uncertainties of their lived experiences, we see how religious acts do not necessarily make it easier to discern God. Rather, these acts

encourage future fortune by conditioning the body to be ready for when a chance dialogue with God should occur.

Young women are particularly attracted to practising their prayers under the spiritual guidance of End-Time because of its emphasis on 'aggressive prayer' (cf. Hackett 2003:65). The essence of 'aggressive prayer' is to focus on 'prayer points', repeating them over and over out loud, in order to incite the presence of the Holy Spirit – such focused repetition, removing the individual from their reality, is reminiscent of the above-noted 'absorption hypothesis' (Luhrmann 2007; Luhrmann et al. 2010). 'Aggressive prayer' is a major part of 'spiritual warfare', calling on the Holy Spirit for protection, strengthening one's relationship with God, and fighting against Satan and his helpers. Indeed, 'prayer points' are usually aimed at diabolic forces, such as 'Fire on my enemy!' and 'Send it back to sender!' On concentrating on these short phrases, one finds oneself getting into a rhythm of prayer, which is usually aided by clapping, the beating up and down of a fist or perhaps of an outstretched hand to indicate the throwing of 'Holy Ghost fire'. These prayers go on for some time, allowing people to focus intensively on the 'prayer point' and to call on the Holy Spirit to touch them. As the name suggests, 'aggressive prayer' does not foster serenity. Indeed, probably the most well-known church in Calabar for 'aggressive prayer' is Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministry, which set out very clearly defined 'prayer points' for its members to follow, and whose staccato prayers permeated well beyond the church walls when service is in full-swing.

With the shouting and waving of hands, the church becomes abuzz with charged energy, and it is not uncommon for people to let out a scream, to collapse on the

floor as if unconscious or to suddenly tear across the church, pushing chairs over as they go. While most young women I spoke to were uncertain precisely as to why people 'erupt' in such a way, some explained their own experiences due to being so overwhelmed by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Young women also understood this manifestation as the Holy Ghost fighting with a demon inside the person, although they never explained their own experiences in this way. Interestingly, those who do manifest in church are oblivious of their movements – believed to be fighting in the spiritual, they are unconscious of their actions in the physical realm. During prayers I felt that those yet to manifest, aware of the intensifying 'spiritual warfare' around them, became increasingly anxious to be 'filled with the Spirit' and started to pray with more determination. Such anxiety again highlights how ways of 'knowing' the spirit are integral to religious experience, which, by being deemed effective dialogue with God, encourages confidence in the self and future fortune.

While Luhrmann (2007) questions worshippers' discernment, Kirsch (2014:34) furthers understandings of how religious actors interact with the spiritual realm by outlining a sociology of the Holy Spirit. Drawing from his research in Zambian charismatic churches, Kirsch focuses on how the Holy Spirit moves through 'socio-spatial communities... constituted by human beings and their interactions with spiritual entities' (2014:34). In Christianity, the Holy Spirit is not only characterised by its ability to do the extraordinary but also by its ability to *move* in extraordinary ways. As the author notes, the Holy Spirit's morphology is dynamic, shifting shapes and in constant flux and motion. In the ways in which it enters and leaves people as it chooses, the Holy Spirit appears to move not from

one fixed geographical point to another but amplifies itself from micro- to macro-scales (ibid.:37).

Drawing on how the unbounded nature of the Holy Spirit attaches itself to humans, Kirsch's (2014) 'self-multiplication' characterisation of the Holy Spirit outlines how the spirit moves through worshippers in a church setting. As the author notes, the Holy Spirit 'self-multiplies' in the way in which it will initially touch a church elder, before travelling to other elders, and then occasionally moving to selected members of the church 'laity'. As Kirsch (2008, 2014) outlines, these are the 'logistics of the Holy Spirit', where leaders enable the worshipper to have a close interaction with God. Crucially, it is the unknown directions and unpredictable iterations of the Spirit's 'self-multiplication' that help us understand how the End-Time services become so feverish. Indeed, during 'aggressive prayer' sessions, Mummy stands on the stage facing the front of the congregation. Having prepared for the service through prayers with her Warriors beforehand, she is already filled with the Spirit. As she starts to pray and speak in tongues, the atmosphere becomes more charged. One of the Warriors or perhaps a member of the choir may manifest the Spirit first. However, it is just as likely that this will be a member of the congregation.

As people start to manifest in the church, Mummy knows exactly when to pray in tongues louder (encouraging more excitement) or to shout 'Amen! Amen!' to hush the congregation. At first, one might think that this is showmanship, the ability to control the mood and draw attention to certain people at the right time. However, while this is undoubtedly entertainment (cf. Kirsch 2014:45), it does not detract from the belief in spiritual activity: Mummy's timed actions are

informed by her spiritual gift of visionary. Where the spirit moves in different ways (ibid.:36), End-Time illustrates how religious leaders and congregants often manifest the Spirit differently. Mummy's ability to work the crowd gives confidence that the Spirit is really at work at End-Time. Yet the unknown character of the Holy Spirit also allows us to see how worshippers do keep faith that, amid the commotion, the Spirit will touch them. Where there is always the possibility of the Spirit entering them, and the subsequent dialogue changing their personal biographies, young women alleviate fear and keep faith in future fortune by repeatedly engaging in 'aggressive prayer'. Their repeated religious acts fashion new subjectivities, making worshippers more receptive to the possibility of communicating with the Holy Spirit. It is a risk – young women must harness the chance of communication with God – but one where disappointment of not being touched by the Spirit merely gives rise to more possibilities (cf. Miyazaki 2004).

Hence, drawing on discussions in Chapter One, where Calabar's 'church industry' (Hackett 1989:1) has given way to a competitive religious marketplace, we see how young woman actively choose to attend ministries whose spiritual specialisms – prosperity, prayer, miracles, prophesy, for instance – are believed beneficial to encouraging future fortune by offering different ways in which to mould the religious self. Crucially, where church builds spirituality by fashioning the self through preaching life management and thanking God, fellowships, such as End-Time, boost spirituality by fashioning the self through the religious techniques that dialogue directly with a protecting Holy Spirit and troubling malevolent spirits. Hence, the spiritual gifts associated with fellowships are not

to contradict church teaching or even to dispute the efficacy of church's praise and worship. Rather, as Miyazaki (2004) and Pelkmans (2013) remind us about states of doubt and hope being entwined with action, young women use fellowships as techniques to dispel fear and maintain faith in future fortune by increasing, repeating and diversifying acts constituting the religious self. Crucially, it is the internalising of such acts, the changing perception of self, which engenders this confidence in future fortune.

The Faith Clinic

While the prayers learned through End-Time's services are essential for worshippers to develop a personal relationship with God, it is believed that sometimes this is not enough to ensure fortune. As Mummy explained, 'I left Deeper Life because they just felt that you could pray by faith and things can be corrected.... Sometimes, you come to realise that even though you are Born Again, your background has a way of drawing you back.' To counter this, End-Time holds a weekly Faith Clinic, carrying out deliverances as means to break 'spiritual bondage' (Okom 2009). This follows the understanding that people feel they sometimes need the spiritual guidance of an 'anointed man of God', a religious leader with closer bonds to the Holy Spirit, to both interpret and interrupt the dialogues with the spiritual realm that may be affecting their lived experience. Where End-Time believes in the imminence of satanic forces, the Clinic doors are open to all members. Prayer Warriors informed me that it is especially popular with young women wanting to find a husband, highlighting both the expectations put on young women by older generations and also the ministry's belief in the problems caused by 'marriage'. However, at the

times when I visited, I was always surprised by the wide variety of people seeking deliverance – it was not age-, gender- or church-specific.

It was on one visit to the Faith Clinic that I met Edima. Sitting with her in the ‘waiting room’ – a large, dark room to the side of Mummy’s office – she explained how she had recently joined End-Time to work on her prayer life and had now come for her first ever deliverance. Indeed, End-Time stipulate that one has to attend its services for four weeks prior to deliverance, acknowledging the persistent dangers of satanic forces, and the need to be truly grounded in prayer and The Word in order to prevent ‘backsliding’. Having prepared herself over the past weeks, Edima had now been waiting since the early hours of the morning to be seen by the ministry. Indeed, it was normal for people to wait patiently, sometimes for many hours, with the faith that Mummy and her Warriors would correct the spiritual problems hindering their lives. Some watch past End-Time services playing on the television in the corner of the room. The camera focused on Mummy’s face as she preaches during service, this is a testimony to the spiritual works of the ministry. Others read books written by Okom, such as *Understanding Deliverance* (2009) or *Deliverance from Evil Covenants* (2011). These books were always available at the ministry to be bought for a small fee, although they were sometimes given away to first-timers during service.

Sitting at the wooden desk in the middle of the room was Brother Timothy, one of the few male workers in the ministry. Welcoming people, he gives them a form to fill in for an initial assessment of the spiritual affliction that had brought them for deliverance (cf. Meyer 1998). As Mummy explained, spiritual counselling is very much like going to the doctor for a physical ailment: an assessment of

symptoms has to be made before an effective cure can be found. Finally being called out by Brother Timothy, Edima sat opposite him at the desk and proceeded to tell him, in hushed tones so that the crowded room would not hear, why she had come to End-Time. It is here that Brother Timothy makes initial notes, which are handed on to Mummy. Brother Timothy also gives some spiritual counselling, such as handing out one of Mummy's published books – I noticed Edima had been holding a copy of *Understanding Deliverance* (Okom 2009). Following some more waiting time, Edima was shown to see Mummy in her office. As Edima explained later, it was here that she told Mummy: 'I need a breakthrough in my academics.' Edima did not mention what else she talked about with Mummy behind the closed door but she emerged some time later holding a piece of paper with a list of words – instructions from Mummy, guiding the Prayer Warriors on Edima's problem and the rectifying prayers.

Where End-Time regards deliverance as a powerful spiritual tool for re-aligning personal biographies with God, we see how deliverance is part of the Pentecostal praxis and rhetoric that allow for the persistence of 'traditional' beliefs and explain life's misfortunes (cf. Meyer 1992, 1999). Indeed, existing analyses link Pentecostal deliverances to the anxieties of contemporary life. For instance, writing about the growing numbers of street children in Kinshasa, de Boeck (2009) illuminates how family struggles signal the breakdown of inter-generational relations. Parents blaming misfortune on their children, label them as witches and cast them out of the house. As de Boeck (2009:131) argues, this is a new kind of witchcraft that breaks from that talked of in village settings. Indeed, such a phenomenon is also on the rise in Calabar: children, perceived to

be closer to the spiritual realm because their personhood is less developed (cf. Ferme 2001; Gottlieb 1998), were once supposed to be able to see witches but are now accused of *being* witches. Arguing that this must be understood as part of a much larger and more complex picture, where uncertain life changes signal new family relations, networks of care, and notions of victimhood and agency, de Boeck (2009) draws attention to how churches are becoming central in mediating these family disputes. Where children are often subjected to violent spiritual practices, such analyses focus on deliverance as a means for remedying children's supposedly wayward and unexpected behaviour (de Boeck 2009; la Fontaine 2009).

While such analyses do well to highlight deliverance as means to counter the growing uncertainties of life, their focus on inter-generational tensions negates an understanding of how the individual sees spirits and religious rituals to affect their own lived experiences. Examining the individual's experiences of deliverance is particularly important concerning beliefs in troubling mermaid spirits, which, unlike witchcraft, are perceived to affect both personal and family biographies. Indeed, a Prayer Warrior told me that Edima's mother had encouraged Edima to come to End-Time because she was 'tearing the house apart', and, from Edima's own explanations about home life, it was evident there were intergenerational tensions. However, it is important to examine Edima's own reasons for attending deliverance, or at least how she came to understand the need to undergo the spiritual practice. As such, we are better placed to understand how young women put faith in deliverance as a means to encourage future fortune in the way it breaks certain dialogues with the spiritual realm.

Also linking Pentecostal deliverance to uncertainty and the persistence of 'traditional' beliefs, Meyer (2008) argues that Pentecostal deliverances create an arena for the expression of marine spirits in Ghanaian society. Drawing attention to the performative aspect of deliverance, Meyer (2008) argues that people enjoy talking about the deliverances they have seen in churches, relishing in the fantastic and unexplainable. It is similar in Calabar, where one of my friends' favourite topics of conversation was the spiritual wonders they had heard about, witnessed in church or seen on TV. For instance, one friend would often tell of how she saw a deliverance of a girl where the spirit spoke to the pastor in a deep, male voice, after which the girl's eyes rolled up to the sky and her head rotated 360 degrees. It was not so much the degree by which the girl's head rotated that impressed me, but the excited speech and graphic actions with which my friend used to tell the story. Such notions of fantasy draw again on White's (2000) argument that rumours can act as idioms to express fear and social anxieties. Yet, where young women really believe these stories – and for their potential effects on their own lived experiences – they also express wonder and faith put in certain ministries.

Where Meyer (2008) argues that the creation of this forum for spiritual concerns is more important than the claim that Pentecostal churches *can* deliver people from spiritual problems, I argue the necessity to still understand the importance people place on deliverances' perceived efficacy. In Calabar's competitive 'religious market' (cf. Hackett 1989), there is a strong need for people to witness the claims churches make in order for people to assess the legitimacy of religious

establishments.⁸⁹ It is significant that the most sensational manifestations of spirits are the ones that people talk about the most frequently and enthusiastically. A pastor who can control a highly disobedient and insolent spirit earns much respect as a powerful 'anointed man of God'. The deliverance performance (the manifestation of the spirit) speaks volumes for the 'powers' behind a ministry,⁹⁰ an important concern for people living amid 'spiritual insecurity' (cf. Ashforth 2001, 2005). Hence, in understanding how young women put faith in deliverance as a means to prepare the self for future fortune, it is necessary to go one step further than Meyer's (2008) analysis to ask how the deliverance performance raises and dispels fears within this forum created by Pentecostal churches.

This is why End-Time is well-known for its deliverances: Mummy and her Warriors are perceived to undertake effective 'spiritual warfare' through the various and sometimes extreme ways in which spirits manifest in the bodies of their patients. As Mummy proudly told me, people come from places as far away as Lagos who, having had no luck with deliverances at other churches, seek spiritual refuge in her ministry. It is reminiscent of Werbner's (2011) Apostolic 'holy hustlers', who have found fame on the streets of Gabarone in light of their superlative religious charisma, the ways in which they are able to open themselves up to others' pain and yet be firm in their diagnoses and methods for overcoming patients' spiritual afflictions. Werbner (2011) not only highlights

⁸⁹ It is interesting to note that in 2004, Nigeria's National Broadcasting Commission prohibited the airing of miracles on televangelism shows that were not 'provable and believable' (Borzello 2004).

⁹⁰ Nollywood has become an almost satirical forum in which the 'powers' behind churches are discussed through graphic imagery and special effects as 'anointed men of God' do battle with (or utilise) powerful, wicked spirits.

how people seek out specialists to heal them but also how these perceived experts' esoteric practices often raise controversies. The Apostolics' practices that bear resemblances to more 'traditional' witch-finding methods can heighten rather than dispel patients' anxieties. Interestingly, End-Time's perceived Christian legitimacy is secured through its triangulation of deliverance and 'aggressive prayer' with readings of The Word as God's truth (cf. Kirsch 2007; Luhrmann 2007).

Indeed, revisiting the opening vignette, we see how the Prayer Warriors' spiritual gifts played a fundamental part of Edima's religious experience. The deliverance started with Edima praying alone in order to open herself up to the Holy Spirit and to ask for forgiveness. As Florence explained, for spiritual practices to be successful 'you have to open up your spirit. Be free. You have to want the spirit of God'. Being able to know that Edima's prayers were not enough, the initial small group of Prayer Warriors interceded for her, helping her to dialogue with the spiritual realm by calling on the Holy Spirit for protection and guidance. It was such that the Prayer Warriors took over, pooling their individual 'spiritual gifts' of prayer, vision and prophecy in order to win the 'spiritual battle' with the spirit that they believed to be troubling Edima. Indeed, seeing that Edima's spirit was 'stubborn' because her body remained quiet, more Prayer Warriors came over to the small group to support the 'spiritual warfare'. Watching the whole ritual, it appeared an incongruous performance, with each Prayer Warrior acting independently around Edima. Some prayed, some sang, some clapped, some shouted to the open air. Of course, I could not see what they

could see in the spiritual realm informing what was in fact a highly cooperative and strategised spiritual battle.

Just as de Certeau (2000:90) reminds us that the body becomes a 'diabolic atlas' for the possessed at Loudun, End-Time reads the body through discernment to know what actions are necessary to make the body 'speak' and to 'confess' (ibid.:127).⁹¹ There are a variety of known actions that signify the correction of specific spiritual afflictions. For instance, the tearing of spiritual rags from a person's body is to signify that the person will no longer be poor; tearing shackles from the ankles corrects the problems of someone who is not progressing in life; and removing spiritual binds from wrists is to stop whatever the person touches in life from failing. As with traditional African witchcraft beliefs, the stomach is also highly significant as a physical site of spiritual affliction (cf. Evans-Pritchard 1937), and the Warriors often use their hands to symbolically tear something out of a patient's body. Only the Warriors, seeing in the spiritual, are able to recognise which parts of their patients' bodies should be targeted in order to battle with troubling spirits. The Warriors never appear to disagree with one another but their ongoing performance narrows down the focus on the body, finally locating the exact dwelling place of the spirit. Furthermore, they support each other with their different 'spiritual gifts': one may pray to support another's prophecy.

Yet the Warriors, acknowledging the strength of occult forces, also use other means to call on the Holy Spirit during this 'spiritual warfare'. With their arms

⁹¹ 'The visible body becomes, in practice, the very legibility of history' (de Certeau 2000:45). The diabolic spirit makes marks on the body, ready to be identified later during deliverance.

outreached, bent at the elbows and with palms open to the patient's body, the Warriors throw 'Holy Ghost fire' in a direct retaliation to the Marine Kingdom. It is believed to make the unwanted spirit uncomfortable, encouraging it to leave its human host. Similarly, End-Time uses anointing oil: an essence of the Holy Spirit, it is placed on areas of the patient to cleanse the body of spiritual afflictions. Oil is usually rubbed through the hair, believed to be a mermaid's favoured dwelling place. However, where spirits are perceived 'stubborn', as with Edima, oil is poured into the patient's mouth. Physically filling the patient with the essence of God, the Holy Spirit can work from the inside, making the body hot and unfavourable for the unwanted spirit. In Edima's case, it was only when the anointing oil was poured into her mouth that the spirit inside her began to manifest violently, spinning her around the church before she fell to the ground in a seemingly lifeless heap. Whereas before she had been standing still, her exaggerated and violent bodily movements signalled the climax of the spiritual battle, and her limp body on the floor of the church denoted the Holy Spirit's triumph.

As one Warrior said afterwards, it was a shame I did not witness the spirit speak – it is common for the spirit to use their human host to vociferate or gesticulate to the Warriors. As with de Certeau's (2000) understanding of the diabolic confessional, this dialogue allows the Warriors to ask what the spirit wants from its human host, and also allows the spirit to show its personality. For instance, a young, fashionable mermaid spirit might demonstrate its vanity and beauty by parading up and down the church, strutting its stuff as if on a catwalk. Where dialogue and performance are important for understanding the spirit, the

Warriors' 'spiritual gifts' are crucial for an effective deliverance. It is through these ways of controlling and reifying the spirit in the patient's body, which legitimise the Warriors' practices.

Hence, the deliverance performance does not only create an arena for people to talk about spiritual concerns (Meyer 2008) but also allows them to evaluate methods for overcoming these concerns. While the deliverance performance is highly enigmatic, understood only by the religious 'experts' (cf. de Certeau 2000; Werbner 2011), we see how the mystic mechanisms that make spirits manifest are integral to how people regard 'experts' powerful enough to dialogue with powerful spirits. It is this regard which allows young women to put faith in the power of the religious 'expert' to help them break any (unknown) bonds with satanic spirits, which, compromising their Christian identity, may be jeopardising their futures. Hence, where fear and faith in the future encourage young women to constantly engage in actions to prepare the self for their envisaged future, deliverance is not only another method of self-fashioning but also highlights how young women sometimes need to call on the help of others.

Religious Gambles

As with people who suddenly let out a scream and collapse during prayer sessions in service, or those who fall when a pastor 'lays hands on them', I was always highly intrigued as to what it actually felt like to undergo deliverance. While I never experienced such somatic experiences, young women could rarely recall their own experiences to me – indeed, Edima was surprised when I recounted her deliverance back to her. The most common explanation was that

they had just felt so overwhelmed by the presence of the Holy Spirit.⁹² Young women acknowledged that they felt different afterwards – sometimes they were tired, sometimes happy, sometimes as if a weight had been lifted from them – yet there was no uniform experience. Interestingly, revisiting van de Kamp's (2011) analysis of the violence of 'spiritual warfare', deliverance never seemed to be a particularly good experience. As Florence described:

My own, it was terrible *sha!*... The woman asked me not to bathe that day, that I should let the oil really work on me – because they had put oil on my body... and there are some spirits that are very tough and they need to be beaten.... So, definitely, you feel very tired but after some days you get relieved.

Although Florence had faith that the 'chains between [her] and the Marine Kingdom' were broken in view of how her body had felt, she went on to highlight how the aftermath of the deliverance is suffused with as much uncertainty as the deliverance itself. Highlighting her anxieties, Florence added: 'The only thing that can keep you going is to keep praying. Keep praying and fasting and reading the Word of God.' Indeed, Pentecostals believe a spirit can return after deliverance with seven even stronger spirits.⁹³ Where there is much need to remain spiritually vigilant, Edima was given Bible passages to read after her deliverance

⁹² Others in archives and current anthropological debates have noted how worshippers can unconsciously undertake violent acts whilst being moved by the Holy Spirit. Police correspondence in Calabar from the 1930s details how 'people collected at a meeting work themselves up into a state of religious mania... while in this state the native loses all fear and is capable for any deed of violence if the spirit moves him that way' (Campbell 1931). Correspondence from the Divisional Officer of Enyong District in the late 1920s details 'The Spirit Movement', detailing confusing and violent behaviour of some members of a Qua Iboe congregation as they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Pratten (2007a), juxtaposing 'The Spirit Movement' with colonial authority in the region, argues the movement's quest for spiritual power was in a Christian framework that drew on traditional understandings of healing and security (cf. Abasiattai 1989). Van de Kamp (2011) also emphasises the violence exerted on the body associated with spiritual renewal in the Pentecostal rituals in modern-day Mozambique.

⁹³ 'Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.' Matthew 12:45 (KJV)

to maintain spiritual strength. While she did not disclose the passages to me, I assume they were similar to ones the Warriors had preached to me to explain deliverance: those stressing human spirit as corruptible by the Devil (e.g. Genesis 3:1-24), those emphasising Satan's wicked mission (e.g. John 10:10), and those illuminating the need for Jesus (e.g. Luke 10:19). Hence, where de Certeau's (2000) and Werbner's (2011) analyses highlight the perceived need for others to help discern and combat spiritual afflictions, we may see how this not only encourages faith in the mystical but also raises real fear after deliverance when the patient is once again alone in fighting demonic spirits. As Pelkmans (2013) argues about states of doubt, this fear of the ever-present occult is far from crippling. Rather, fear encourages young women to keep engaging in (still potentially uncertain) religious acts to destroy certain dialogues with the spiritual realm, thereby renewing faith in future success (cf. Miyazaki 2004).

Yet the time after the deliverance can also be confusing for young women when they do not understand what went on during their deliverance. Unaware of any satanic bonds in the spiritual realm, the acts of religious 'experts', whose authority discerns a certain 'truth', can seem unintelligible. This was the case with Edima, who had explained to me before the deliverance that she had come for intercessory prayers so that 'certain things would change in my life'. As with other young women who, unsurprisingly, never admitted to knowing of any demonic affliction prior to their own deliverance, Edima merely considered deliverance as a more powerful medium to harness the Holy Spirit. What was central to Edima's explanation – and to other young women's – was that deliverance would help her reach her 'God-given destiny'. It was a method of

preparing for a more fortunate future they envisaged for themselves in the way in which it manipulated dialogues in the spiritual realm that are believed to affect personal biographies and life-courses.

After her deliverance, chatting with another young woman and catching her breath, Edima admitted, 'I didn't even know I had done most of the things they [the Prayer Warriors] said that I had done!' While at the time she was able to brush off the Warriors' remarks with a giggle, a week later Edima had had time to reflect on her deliverance and was visibly upset by the Warriors' accusations of her supposed diabolic acts:

[The Warrior said] that I look humble but I am evil. I should lose my mother, I should lose my father, I should equally lose her.... So, you know, right inside I was so confused. I don't see myself as that kind of person. My father is a pastor – I don't see how I should lose him and give him back his rights, you know?

Edima was confused not only as to what the Warriors meant but also as to why they had said such upsetting things. Not being able to make sense of her experience, Edima did not see how the deliverance had helped her prepare herself for her future 'academic breakthrough'. Hence, while the discussion has already reiterated Werbner's (2011) understanding of the power of 'intersubjective' religious experience, the author's conceptualization of religious charisma as the ability for religious 'experts' to empathise with their patients, here we see that this experience can be risky. As Edima's case highlights, young women do not always hold the same beliefs as the religious experts, which, far from renewing faith, can leave the patient in self-doubt. As Edima continued:

[End-Time] say I should come back for deliverance but I've not been able to bring myself to go back there. Actually, my prayer partner

calls me. She tells me that I should not get angry, that those are the things of the spirit. I should not get angry. I should just continue to pray. You know, in my own way I have been praying, I always ask that His vision for my life should come to pass. So she also said I should choose between life and sanity, and death. I choose life. You know, I prayed.

Where Werbner (2011:41) draws attention to how the 'holy hustlers' must convince their sometimes doubting patients, 'artfully dodging' in order to reveal the patient's story, we must draw attention to how such confusing acts encourage accusations of religious 'bluffs' and 'fakery'. Amid the plurality of Calabar's churchscape, the allegation of 'fake churches' (cf. Chapter 1; Meyer 2008) raises genuine fears regarding some religious 'experts'. Their religious acts are not just harmless 'bluffs' but, believed to be undertaken with occult powers, are considered to cause real problems. Young women worry about visiting these alleged churches, scared that a pastor laying hands on their heads may rob them of their destinies by potentially creating an unwanted dialogue with a spirit other than God. Where concepts such as fate, fortune and destiny highlight the need for acts that manipulate determining forces (cf. da Col 2012; Graeber 2012), we see that how young women seek out religious 'experts' to help them overcome spiritual afflictions is always a gamble. While young women hope for the chance of renewed confidence in their Christian identity and hence personal (future) biography, there is always the risk that they may leave the experience in self-doubt.

As Edima continued to explain her confusion, we see again how this quest for future fortune, driven by the competitive forces of fear and faith, encourages young women into further action (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013). While

Edima wanted to avoid another deliverance, she still wanted to keep attending End-Time's Monday night Warfare Training service in order to continue building her prayer life. While this reiterates the End Times doctrine – the belief in pervasive satanic spirits creating misfortune in people's lived experience – it also draws attention back to young women's agency as they fashion new subjectivities through religious experience (cf. Mahmood 2005; van de Kamp 2011). Where fear and faith in the future drive young women to keep engaging in religious acts, we see that young women pick and choose which spiritual practices they do partake in. In trying to attain their believed destinies, we are reminded that young women do not necessarily buy into the whole doctrine of a ministry but work with those tenets and acts that speak to them and hence renew their confidence in their present and future identities.

Conclusion

Where this thesis seeks to understand how young women negotiate the uncertainties of the present to work towards their believed 'destinies of greatness', this chapter has highlighted how spiritual counsel at ministries such as End-Time are means to work on the self, fashioning Pentecostal subjectivities believed to encourage fortune. Where this discussion has thus shown how emic conceptions of destiny (cf. Fortes 1987) have entwined with Pentecostal practice, the discussion also draws out the fears and faith young women have in the movement. Pentecostalism's rhetoric of the End Times engenders great fears surrounding the malevolent, powerful and unstoppable forces causing personal and societal iniquities. Yet Pentecostal practices provide faith in overcoming adversity and offer new ideas of personhood, entitlements and relationships.

Where Miyazaki (2004) argues that hope is renewed through constant acts – the repetition eliminating disappointment – young women are shown to maintain faith in receiving their perceived Christian entitlements and overcoming satanic spirits by constantly working on their Pentecostal selves. However, where the chapter has highlighted young women’s agency and religious diversity, we may further Miyazaki’s (2004) analysis of Christian rituals to argue that it is not only repetition but diversity that renews hope for ‘better’ futures.

Focusing on the belief in ‘marine marriage’, this chapter has discussed how young women fashion Pentecostal subjectivities (and encourage future fortune) by engaging in techniques they consider to manipulate personal relationships and dialogues with the spiritual realm. As such, we see deliverance not just as remedial but, taking a more meaning-centred approach, to understand it as constituting ideas of the self and others (cf. Lambek 2003). Examining how young women ‘do’ religion (cf. Mahmood 2005; van de Kamp 2011), the chapter has highlighted how young women consider working on their prayer-life and undergoing deliverance to (re)align their personal identities with a providing Christian God. Strengthening communication with the Holy Spirit, such acts build confidence in the self by being understood to end any personal communications with the Marine Kingdom. Yet where these acts constitute ‘spiritual warfare’, the discussion furthers van de Kamp’s (2011) analysis of the violence of Pentecostal practice by illuminating the inherent risk in engaging in such battles that aim to control malevolent spiritual agents.

Indeed, a major focus of this chapter has been the risk in seeking the spiritual counsel of religious ‘experts’. Where ‘spiritual warfare’ necessitates strength and

confidence in discerning the spirit, young women are shown to doubt their own spiritual abilities and put faith in those of others. As such, the discussion has furthered Werbner's (2011) understanding of religious charisma by focusing on the 'patient' rather than 'expert'. As we see, this need for those who are able to 'see' and understand the devices of the spiritual realm is also ridden with much fear of mysticism and the unknown. Where the spiritual realm is considered highly powerful yet ambiguous, the religious acts young women partake in to manipulate spiritual dialogues are always gambles for success. The discussion has highlighted how young women are often unsure of the acts that are supposed to call on the Holy Spirit. Where young women negotiate doubts, risks and uncertainties in their religious practices, they are shown to look inwards to see if the practice feels 'right' and speaks to their personal beliefs. Crucially, this understanding illuminates their agency in religious experience, picking and choosing acts that build rather than undermine self-confidence. Where the next chapters examine how Pentecostal subjectivities are negotiated away from the church, this understanding of building self-confidence is crucial for young women overcoming the anxieties of succeeding in urban Nigeria.

4. In the House

Entering the compound from the main road via the landlady's shop, I went down the small alley to the 'self-contained' room Nkeiru rented. As usual, my friend – I always knew her as NK rather than Nkeiru – was sitting on the double mattress that covered most of the floor. To the left was a tiny kitchen, and a 'wrapper' veiled a small shower-room to the back. Clothes hung on a rail above the bed, shoes were stored in a rack on the wall, a generator sat ready next to the door, and a TV and DVD player took pride of place beneath the window that looked out onto the alley. Having become close friends, I spent a lot of time with NK in her room just 'hanging out'. When NEPA 'brought light', we would watch DVDs – anything from pirated Hollywood films and American TV series, to Nollywood films. When NEPA 'took light', we would just chat, waiting for electricity to return.

The previous week, NK had taken me to buy DVDs in Watt Market. The shop girl had shown us the latest Nollywood films – *Sex in the Church* and *Holy Harlots* – and NK had encouraged me to buy them. Recognising the actors on the cardboard sleeves, she commented that they would be comedies about church life. Admittedly, I had been sceptical about the films, but NK had been right – I accredit much of my Nollywood knowledge to NK, who kindly explained all cultural references and made sure I did not lose track of the plots that usually ramble over four parts. As I entered her 'self-contained' on this occasion to watch the DVDs, I saw she had a visitor. NK was usually alone in her house but would occasionally be joined by Esta (her landlady's daughter) or by Grace (a close

university friend and fellow Igbo 'sister'). Introducing us to one another, she described the young man as her church member. They had been watching a DVD, enjoying NEPA's burst of electricity. Joining them, I sat on the edge of the mattress in front of the TV screen.

I had returned to watch the remaining Nollywood film: *BlackBerry Babes* (and its sequel, *Return of the BlackBerry Babes*). It was a recent release and, although NK had already seen it, she had been keen for me to buy it. Most of my friends knew the film, not just because it included Tonto Dikeh, one of the most famous Nigerian actresses, but also because it was, as many Nollywood films are, a comic commentary on Nigerian life. Indeed, after the opening credits that depicted the highways of Lagos, setting the scene for social mobility and the high-life, the first scene depicts a glamorous young woman browsing a shop floor and eyeing up an older male customer. NK got increasingly more excited as the scene played on and told me to watch very carefully so as not to miss any important details. Following my friend's instructions, it became apparent that this film depicted the desperate things girls will do to get a BlackBerry, echoing the stories my friends told about other girls during my time in Calabar.

As the film's plotline unfolded, NK and her friend gave running commentary. While the group of characters on campus, looking incredibly stylish and arguing about the latest BlackBerry handset, looked a plausible scenario, NK's friend laughed. 'Girls like that don't ever show on campus!' he remarked. Equally, as we watched an almost farcical scene of one girl framing her lecturer in a hotel room with other girls, taking photos of the scandal on her BlackBerry, NK seemed nonplussed. Apparently a similar story had circulated the Internet about a

lecturer from Enugu found in an equally compromising position. We laughed at the fat girl in the film who spoke in Pidgin and could not comprehend the importance of owning a BlackBerry. While this comic character was portrayed as unpopular, we agreed her lack of pretence made her likeable and wondered if she had the most sense. We watched as the characters became envious of one another, competing for the richest men and the latest handsets – were these girls really in power or did the men have the last laugh?

Before the film ended, NEPA ‘took light’. It was getting dark outside, NK’s church member had already left and NK had fallen asleep. I waited in the darkening room for a while, comparing the antics of the girls in the film with the seemingly slower-paced lives many of my friends in Calabar. It was difficult for me to tell what really went on. Where so much in Calabar is known but goes unsaid, my research of young women’s livelihoods was a slow process uncovering and understanding the ‘public secrets’ (Taussig 1999) that constitute the fabric of urban life in the postcolony. The more time I spent with NK and my other friends, the more I understood but the more I felt was yet to be unveiled.

These understandings of concealment and revelation amid uncertainty inform this chapter’s discussions of young women’s time spent alone in the house. Where this thesis argues that young women engage in constant acts to prepare the self for their much hoped-for ‘destinies of greatness’, this chapter illuminates how young women use the time spent in the house to fashion subjectivities conducive to urban success and ideas of feminine respectability. The previous chapters explicitly highlighted how young women find faith in future fortune by moulding religious subjectivities through repeated and varied engagement with

Pentecostalism (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013). This chapter advances these discussions by highlighting the challenges young women face to maintain faith through God and their Pentecostal identities. As this thesis argues, the acts young women make to prepare the self for the future are driven by fear and faith: they are gambles for success. Where the previous chapter highlighted the fears young women hold of dialogues with malevolent spirits denying them their expected entitlements in life, this chapter takes a particular focus on the fears young women hold regarding others' malicious intentions to deny them fortune.

This chapter develops recent analyses of temporalities of youth (Honwana 2012; Jeffrey 2010; Masquelier 2013a) to focus on 'feminine cultures of waiting' and draw out how waiting is not just about productivity in the present but used as a strategy to prepare for better futures. The chapter begins with a discussion of these recent analyses, highlighting notions of productivity and affect to frame young women's time spent in the house in Calabar. The second section discusses why young women claim to spend time alone. Furthering the notion of affect, the discussion highlights the gambles young women undertake as they seek to make friends with other young women: close relationships with others are necessary but trusting others comes with the risk of treachery (cf. Geschiere 2013). The third section focuses on gifts and exchange, understanding young women's fears in friendships and opening the discussion up to their relationships with men. This section draws on young women's gambles as they fashion themselves as respectable, successful urbanites: the (material) gains of relationships with men, and the risks of compromising one's Pentecostal image. The final two sections focus on how young women prepare the self for the future through more discreet

practices in the house: watching films and chatting on mobile phones. Drawing on previous discussions of young women's fear in friendships, this discussion examines how fantasy, as means for creating distance, maintains young women's faith in the realisation of better futures.

'Eating, sleeping and getting fat'

When I first met NK in the summer of 2010, she was studying Accountancy at UniCal and had recently started baking and selling cakes on her compound. By the time I returned to Calabar for doctoral fieldwork a year later, she had finished her studies. She had travelled periodically to family in Port Harcourt but she had otherwise spent the months in her rented room in Calabar. In her late twenties, her long-term goal was to get married and settle down. While she assured me she was still working on this, as I rounded off my doctoral fieldwork at the end of 2012, she was just trying to find a job and get money. Despite having finished her final-year exams two years previously, she was still waiting for her results to be released – results that would allow her to officially apply for jobs in offices or banks. Spending most of her time at home, she continued her baking business and occasionally sold office supplies.

NK's time spent at home was not unusual. UniCal's closure at the start of my fieldwork had meant that the majority of young women I met were waiting for something. Even without university strikes, young women were often waiting to get university admission. It was not uncommon to hear of 'problems' with JAMB exams or aptitude tests (cf. Chapter 3). Given admission to courses they had not chosen, some friends had deferred studies to try again for the right course the following year. Similarly, students waited after final exams to complete

'clearance' in order to obtain their certificates. My friends spoke of the stress of standing in long lines of students as they cleared their names from university departments – a process that dragged out and became more stressful when 'issues' arose. Then there was the inevitable wait graduates endured after university to be mobilised for NYSC. Anticipating unpredictable horizons is unavoidable for the majority of young women in Calabar, not only because the young depend on haphazard systems but also because urban youth are expected to gain degrees. As one young woman expressed, 'If you don't go to university, your parents look at you as if you're an alien – like you're not even a proper person!' For the majority of young women in Calabar, there appears to be no other option but to endure the wait.

How anticipation has become almost a rite of passage for Calabar's youth speaks directly to Honwana's (2012) recent analysis of youth in 'waithood'. Furthering literature on African youth's 'crisis of becoming' (cf. Abbink & van Kessel 2005; Honwana & de Boeck 2005), Honwana's (2012) analysis depicts youth excluded from adulthood as they lack economic or social capital to complete transitional life stages. Instead, youth across Africa remain in limbo. 'Waithood' is dynamic in the way that it reconfigures adulthood on the continent, and also in the way that, during this liminal period, youth are far from idle (Honwana 2012). As they wait for adulthood, young people partake in a multitude of activities (from youth demonstrations in Tunis to young Senegalese risking all by journeying to Europe), being employed in informal economies (from working in *Chapa-Cem* taxis in Maputo to baking and selling cakes in a South African market) and reconfiguring intimate relationships (from putting off marriage to finding sugar

daddies and sugar mummies). Honwana's (2012) analysis helpfully illuminates the current triumphs and troubles of young Africans' livelihoods: youth have more opportunities yet face great competition from others; they are better connected to the world yet are easily exploited; they are better skilled yet their expectations mean they overlook possibilities.

The idea that youth take on a wide variety of activities to get by resounds throughout this thesis – working on spirituality, learning skills, contesting in pageants – yet it is also helpful to further Honwana's (2012) argument to look at what young women are doing when they are not engaged in activities, when they are seemingly doing nothing. Telling me that CRUTECH had been on strike every year of her studies, one friend sighed as she described her boredom in Calabar. She explained how her classmates who could stay with family in Lagos were fortunate. It was easy to find a job in Lagos, and she looked wistful as she admitted that working in a factory for 7,000 naira a month was better than just sleeping in the house. She lamented the situation in Calabar, 'Can you imagine getting a job when there aren't even enough for graduates?' Interestingly, it did not seem the lack of money that bothered her – 7,000 may barely cover monthly transport costs to and from work – but the fact that she had been doing nothing. Where 'an idle mind is the Devil's workshop', my friends saw the need to be busy, to have 'something going'. My friends' ennui and disgust at their situation

was summed up when they described themselves at home just 'eating, sleeping and getting fat'.⁹⁴

In actuality, this time at home was not inactive and without duty. I was constantly amazed by the household duties my female friends were obliged to undertake (cf. Guyer 1981, 1991). Young women were expected to cook for the family, fetch water, clean the house, wash clothes, go to the market, look after younger siblings, watch family shops – all time-consuming activities that my friends did without questioning, and chores they would still be required to carry out even if they did have jobs. Yet when these chores were finally done, my friends held concerns that the little time they did have for themselves in the house was not being put to good use. Girls would use their free time to chat on their phones, watch DVDs and, when these activities were limited by NEPA, mobile credit or signal, they slept. Where faith in auspicious futures relies on the need to constantly work on the self, to prepare the self for the unexpected, my friends had fears that their time in the house was hindering their future possibilities.

Writing about unemployed middle-class young men in urban India, Jeffrey (2010) offers a useful analysis to better understand youth's act of waiting. Unable to find jobs to match their level of education, these men choose to do nothing in a period known as 'timepass'. While it may be debatable whether young women in Calabar do choose to wait – waiting is the unwanted and unavoidable consequence of choosing university education – Jeffrey's (2010)

⁹⁴ See chapters 5 and 6 for discussions of how young women view body shape to be linked to emerging ideas of urban feminine beauty, success and cosmopolitanism. Although Efik culture traditionally favours fatter women, most of my friends desired to be slim.

analysis helps us conceptualise how doing nothing can be a form of social mobilisation. 'Timepass' raises questions as to whether, in situations of rapid change, people prioritise long-term over short-term goals. Jeffrey's (2010) analysis is most useful for making us think about how young women living amid uncertainty in Calabar talk about time and their futures – both how they conceptualise distant and imminent prospects, and the actions they believe they need to employ to attain these futures (cf. Crapanzano 2004). For instance, describing her time since leaving UniCal, NK said frankly, 'It's not been smooth.' She laughed nervously, adding, 'But I thank God. At least I am alive and I am strong!' Her answer insinuated her fear in waiting but also that faith in her accomplishments and auspicious future lay with God.

Stating that 'through their relationship with temporality, luck and fortune unfold the nature of events encountered during the course of social activities', da Col (2012:3) urges us to problematise notions of agency and responsibility in auspicious events. Where the author argues that conceptions of fortune are hence implicated in the understanding of an 'other' (ibid.:5), we may see how young women look to God and use terms such as 'divine timing' and 'divine intervention' to maintain hope in realising better futures. As the previous chapters illustrate, spirituality is a central part of young women's waiting and conceptualisation of time and fortune. Time in the house was integral to working on spirituality through private prayer, revising church notes (cf. Chapter 2), reading Bibles or the Daily Manna,⁹⁵ watching pastors on TV, and listening to

⁹⁵ 'Our Daily Manna' is a devotional book that is sold at bookstands (such as outside fast-food restaurants) throughout the city. It gives a daily lesson, as well as accompanying scriptures and

praise-and-worship music on mobile phones. Building spirituality and strengthening personal relationships with God (the divine 'other') helps overcome ennui through the hope that fortunate activities will be delivered soon, crucially in the way in which hope is continually renewed, and fear dispelled, through (religious) action (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013). Yet, beyond how faith is maintained through subjectivities pertaining to religious vigilance, working on spirituality is also practical in the way in which these religious techniques mould new subjectivities of socially recognised success (cf. Marshall 2009).

Spirituality aside, it is also interesting to consider how other activities young women take up in the house can also be techniques to prepare the self for the future. Watching DVDs and 'gisting' (chatting in a vague and joking manner) on mobile phones are two particular examples of the pragmatic activities young women engage with to create possibilities and encourage fortune. We may draw on Masquelier's (2013a) analysis of young male Nigériens' participation in *fadas*, or conversation groups, to see how waiting can actually be productive time. Developing Jeffrey's (2010) 'culture of masculine waiting', Masquelier (2013a) helpfully critiques Honwana's (2012) analysis to examine different temporalities of waiting. In Niger, graduates' frustrations arise due to both the lack of opportunities after the 1980s' neo-liberal policies and the way in which university has pitched youth's aspirations at a level that makes it difficult for them to pursue other prospects (Masquelier 2013a; cf. Honwana 2012; Jeffrey 2010). Rather than taking up jobs for which they are over-qualified, many urban

prayer points. Families usually read the daily lesson together as part of their early morning devotional time.

young men decide to join *fadas*. Meeting in sheds, under porches or on street benches, young men spend their extensive free time talking about their realities and aspirations, mixing laughter with pity, and (importantly) drinking tea. While they appear to be doing nothing, just waiting for their expected futures, Masquelier (2013a) argues that this is actually fertile time.

Masquelier's (2013a) analysis is attractive in her conceptualisation of time management, the idea that young men, unable to realise long-term goals, find accomplishment fulfilling small tasks such as making tea. It is this idea that is developed further on in this chapter, understanding how young women use mobile phones and DVDs as a productive use of time in the house. Yet, Masquelier (2013a) hints at another interesting idea that is helpful for understanding youth's temporalities, the idea of self-fashioning through particular activities. How tea drinking, participating in *fadas*, is not associated with elders articulates youth claiming time for themselves. While this chapter explicitly develops this idea, the discussion also critiques those of Masquelier (2013a), Jeffrey (2010) and Honwana (2012) to focus specifically on young women and to uncover the activities and aspirations (the hopes and fears for the future) imbued in a 'feminine culture of waiting'. Already, we are presented with the distinction that young men come together in public (cf. Jeffrey 2010; Masquelier 2013a), whereas young women in Calabar profess to being alone in the house. Where Masquelier illuminates how being inclusive helps men overcome 'loneliness, boredom and despair' (2013a:479), indulging in an 'economy of affect' (Richard & Rudnyckij 2009), the discussion examines the

types of sociality young women associate with being beneficial or detrimental to attaining their futures of greatness.

'I don't keep friends'

A couple of days later, I visited NK again to finish watching *BlackBerry Babes*. There had been no 'light' for a while but, despite the fuel crisis in Calabar that had seen black market fuel prices almost quadruple on standard rates, NK was willing to put on her generator. As the generator started up, the fan in her room began to rotate and the phone that had been optimistically connected to an extension socket suddenly lit up as it started charging. Hearing the generator, Esta burst into NK's room unannounced and, with phone in hand, headed straight to the extension lead that lay on the floor. While NK did often have company from some of the other young people on her compound – usually helping each other out with charging electrical appliances – she claimed to prefer staying on her own and not really letting people 'know her place' (meaning to visit her home). Indeed, it was a sentiment echoed by many young women I met who professed to not 'keep friends'. Contrary to analyses of 'masculine culture of waiting' (Jeffrey 2010; Masquelier 2013a), where young men come together in public areas, young women in Calabar were usually in private arenas and claimed to be alone. We therefore need to reconceptualise the analytical framework of youth, time, sociality and productivity to understand how young women ensure future success while they wait.

I was somewhat confused by girls' assertion that they preferred to keep to themselves. When every young woman I had met carried a mobile phone (or two) and most had asked for my number in order to keep in touch, it was natural

to wonder who the many other contacts were on their phones. Furthermore, while NK did not have a lot of visitors to her house, the reality was that she was not always alone. Raising this issue of friendship, one friend explained that these young women were reflecting what they had learned in church. Indeed, as I spent more time in church and spoke to various pastors, I repeatedly heard the same line: 'Show me your friends and I'll tell you who you are'. Just as The Brook Church tells young women to renew their minds in God in order to command a bountiful life (Chapter 2), and Edima's deliverance illustrated how severing links with mermaids is believed to turn personal biographies round for the better (Chapter 3), this line illuminates the idea that identification with others is integral to the understanding of the self. Friends help constitute the (Christian) person (cf. Aguilar 1999; Bell & Coleman 1999; Carrier 1999; Course 2010), raising questions not only of personal character but, where the Pentecostal movement is highly image-conscious, of class formation associated with success and respectability.

Introducing a volume of anthropological perspectives on friendship, Killick & Desai (2010) question what (or who) a friend actually is. While examples from their volume render the term difficult to define, 'friend' also seemed highly mutable and ambiguous within Calabar. Although young women proclaimed that they did not keep friends or let people 'know their place', I was often introduced to other young people they knew when out in town or heard stories about people they described as their friends. The term became more confusing when I was introduced to young men they knew – I was often left wondering whether they were just a friend or a boyfriend. Furthermore, close family friends, church

members, people from the same village, or cousins were often referred to as sisters, brothers or even as one's 'person'.⁹⁶ Hence, in understanding who a friend is, and why young women claim to not have any, it is more helpful to examine the themes of enquiry that friendship raises. As Bell & Coleman (1999:2) identify, friendship raises questions as to agency, emotion, creativity and the self.

This idea of self-fashioning, how identifying with others develops notions of the self, is integral to understanding how and why young women locate faith and fear in others. As Killick & Desai argue, 'Friendship is... as much about potentiality as it is about being, as oriented to the future as it is to the past' (2010:11). We are reminded of the need for the powerful and powerless alike to be connected to others for survival in the postcolony (cf. Bayart 2009). However, where young women fear their futures being taken away by malevolent others (cf. Chapter 1, 3), choosing to stay alone becomes a technique to encourage auspicious possibilities in the future. It must be emphasised that this is firstly a way of speaking – by denying their connections, young women fashion an image for themselves – but it is also about protecting the self and one's relationships from being sabotaged by others. As I continually found out throughout my time in Calabar, young women often claimed to stay on their own because they had had a close friendship come to an end. Occasionally, close friendships ended or became strained because one of the girls got married. Newfound responsibilities towards a house and husband often meant that friendships could not maintain the same intensity as before, especially when the married friend moved away.

⁹⁶ Friendship is often distinguished as a relationship contrasting kinship (Killick & Desai 2010).

More often, I heard stories of girls having fallen out with another girl with whom they had been extremely close – an experience often causing much pain and anger.

While I heard many stories of friendships gone sour throughout my time in Calabar, Kosi's story was particularly shocking. Joining The Brook Church around the same time, Kosi and I became friends through the Foundation Class. Her older sister had been a member of the church for some time, and Kosi had decided to leave her former church (Winners Chapel) to join her sister in view of how The Brook Church had recently helped her. I had always known that Kosi had previously been gravely ill but it was not until some months after I met her that she finally disclosed why she had had to spend so much time in hospital. Telling of her illness, her story went back a couple of years earlier to her time as an undergraduate in a neighbouring state. She described how she had allowed her best friend to live with her in her student digs. At the end of one vacation, on returning to university after visiting family in Calabar, Kosi found her 'self-contained' room empty. All her clothes had been taken and her friend had also disappeared. Kosi told me how she confronted her friend, who, without remorse, admitted to having packed all the clothes and taken them to her parents' place in Port Harcourt. While she did not know why her friend would steal all her clothes without asking, Kosi forgave her friend and welcomed her back into her house.

Over the following months, Kosi began to get sick with stomach aches, which worsened over time until she started coughing up blood and had to be admitted to hospital. Solemnly she described, 'It was bad. It was painful at times. At times, I almost went twice but God was faithful...' The next part of the story was equally

difficult for Kosi to repeat. While she was seriously ill, a revelation came out. A friend had been looking through the mobile phone of Kosi's roommate and had come across a video the girl had taken of herself holding up some rat poison. Speaking to the camera, the girl apparently explained that she had poisoned Kosi: she was going to catch Kosi unaware; Kosi would no longer be around. Kosi could not understand why her friend had harboured these sentiments – it was so painful, she wanted to forget the story for the rest of her life – but she speculated, 'Maybe she thought that I was going to scandalise her, like other girls on campus used to do. That she's a thief, so she needed to wipe me out of the equation.' As Kosi went on to explain, she had no more to do with the girl after this experience and was naturally wary of getting close to another friend in the future.

I remember that I was unable to believe Kosi's story at first – rather nonchalantly, others would tell me that these things happened. Yet it does present some interesting, if horrific, ideas about young women's experiences and expectations of close friendships in Calabar, both how they are formed and maintained. For instance, while my friends revealed the joy brought and pain caused by past friendships, it appeared that young women did long for one very close friend, a 'bestie' or a 'BFF', with whom they could give freely to, share problems and entrust with their secrets. As one friend spoke of another girl with whom she had been very close, they were like 'kindred spirits'. Where friendship is related to emic conceptions of personhood (cf. Aguilar 1999; Bell & Coleman 1999; Carrier 1999; Course 2010), we must pay attention to how West African understandings of the relational, composite and processual person influences ideas and consequences of friendship. The 'kindred spirit' is perhaps the best

example of the idea that close friendships are not only considered so closely bonded that two people become alike but also that they are not supposed to be fleeting.

Affection has been more commonly associated with 'western' friendships between autonomous individuals (cf. Carrier 1999), yet it is a useful concept to understand how relationships are created and maintained when personhood is partible and mutable. Writing about intersubjective religious experience of street prophets in Botswana, Werbner (2011) highlights the importance of empathy in the prophets' social relations. In order to locate their patients' spiritual afflictions and know how to cure them, prophets must be able to feel their patients' pain (Werbner 2011). In the previous chapter, we saw how empathising with others during religious experience helps young women overcome malevolent forces in light of how one person (i.e. the Prayer Warrior) simultaneously opens themselves up to guide another (i.e. Edima). Yet it is also a useful idea with regard to understanding how young women view their closest friends. The idea of the 'kindred spirit' implies how good friends are so close that, their spirits entwined, they are able to support each other by not only sharing pain but also happiness. Yet, as Werbner (2011) highlights, there are always hidden dangers in this intersubjective experience. Where one has faith that the other will support them, there is always the fear of opening one's spirit up to attack. Hence, when pastors warn that there is a danger in having too many friends, they are not only warning of being associated with people who will tarnish one's image. They also warn of the consequences of empathising – to follow Werbner (2011) – with too many people, which, far from being

supportive, renders the spirit vulnerable when social obligations cannot be fulfilled.

While Werbner (2011) helps us think directly about the person, Geschiere (2013) raises similar issues to help us conceptualise how close relationships are considered and play out in everyday life. Furthering his earlier analyses of the pervasiveness of witchcraft in the modern age (Geschiere 1997), the author examines intimacy and trust in (anti-)social relationships across Africa. Countering the commonly held view that intimacy is a positive act of solidarity (cf. Giddens 1992), Geschiere (2013) argues that intimacy, proximity to others, actually encourages fear as well as trust. Drawing on his earlier argument that witchcraft is 'the dark side of kinship', Geschiere (1997, 2013) regards kinship as being socially constructed so that 'the house', the site of proximity, is opened up to include friends, co-workers and neighbours. As such, we can understand the fears raised through friendships and why young women are reluctant to let too many people 'know their place'. As NK explained, there is a higher danger of being (spiritually) attacked by people who know things about you than by those kept at a distance:

Like there's this saying in our dialect, 'It's only the rats inside a house that will go outside and tell the rats outside, "Come in, there is fish."' You get? The one outside will never know there is fish in this house but it's the one inside that will say, 'Come! Come and party!'

Where 'seeds of destruction are hidden inside social relations... even though these are vital for human undertaking' (Geschiere 2013:xv), we are led to question how we can reconcile the ever present conflicts of safety and danger. The inescapable notions of treachery, fear and horror in close relationships that

Geschiere (2013) ably brings out are echoed in Kosi's experience. As my friend spoke of how the insidious poisoning ravaged her body, her words could have easily stood for the deterioration of her past friendship: 'the poison, it acted slowly. Days after days it was building up inside me. If it was this kind of fast poison, it would have killed me there and then.' Yet the potential horrors of Geschiere's (2013) intimacy also resonate more generally in one phrase I often heard in Calabar: 'A person may laugh with you but inside their heart is black'. Admittedly, I found this a rather chilling phrase, not only because of the grotesque imagery but because it presents the idea of inability to know another's true feelings. Where close relationships raise fears, young women also require faith that another does not have malevolent intentions, faith that another does not want to sabotage their futures. It is through stories such as Kosi's that we understand why young women preferred to stay on their own, or at least to conceal their close friends, as a technique for protecting their futures.

Yet Kosi's story also illuminates where young women do find trust in an 'other'. Where church preaches the dangers of revealing one's heart to others,⁹⁷ young women are told to put their trust in an ever-faithful God, who always gives and has only benevolent intentions. As Kosi described her heinous ordeal, she spoke of her gratitude to God manifested through the prayers of her mother (her family's 'prayer warrior'), The Brook Church (rather than Winners Chapel) for their spiritual and financial support, and the prayers of one American televangelist who her mother contacted. Interestingly, although she intimated

⁹⁷ Young women in Calabar are all too familiar with this Bible passage regarding the self, God and others: 'Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.' Matthew 7:6 (NKJV)

that she had sought the most respected pastors and spiritually blessed to aid her, she explained that her testimony was not to these people but to God. As she explained, 'It was more about God. Not really the people visiting me but if God hadn't been by my side, I don't think anything would have worked out.' Linking young women's understandings of friendship and fortune back to spirituality, we see that the fear of jealousy, competition and bitterness is simply not present in young women's relationship with God. Young women believe that strengthening their relationship with God through religious practice encourages fortune by connecting to the spiritual 'other' (cf. da Col 2012), and that the need to constantly engage in religious practice maintains hope in the way in which it brings one closer to God and dispels doubt and disappointment (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013).

Furthermore, having a close friendship with God is believed a pragmatic means of encouraging fortune by self-fashioning a respectable Christian identity. As my friends admitted that it was 'not their place to be everywhere', they insinuated a fear of being seen in various parts of Calabar. Such questions of respectability are linked back to youth's aspirations and temporalities in Jeffrey's (2010) analysis of Indian young men. While young men hung out on the streets during their time waiting, young women are excluded from Jeffrey's (2010) analytical framework of 'timepass' because they were expected to follow reputable pastimes in the privacy of the house. As Jeffrey writes, 'Timepass was a privilege of gender' (2010:77): Indian society imagined men to be detached and wayward, and young women to be obedient and hard working. Shedding light on young women's activities in the home, this chapter therefore challenges Jeffrey's (2010) focus on

‘masculine cultures of waiting’ to illuminate the ways in which young women also engage in various activities while they wait as means of social mobilisation by preparing the self for the realisation of future aspirations.

Where young women must negotiate the highly patriarchal and conservative Nigerian society with personal aspirations, staying in the house was a technique to safeguard future selves, overcoming fears of earning a ‘bad’ reputation and of others’ malicious intentions. Where young women claim to be alone, it is difficult to draw parallels with the ideas of sociality and affect that arise in Masquelier’s analysis of ‘masculine sites of conviviality’ (2013a:479), where young men come together to reconcile present realities with future aspirations. Yet Masquelier (2013a:472) makes a persuasive argument for the young men trying to overcome present struggles, how conversations with others in similar positions help overcome despair and, with the little means they have, make life ‘purposeful’. As this chapter later discusses, we need to reconceptualise how, in preparing for future fortune, young women do negotiate the need for others (to maintain faith) with the fear of proximity to others (cf. Geschiere 2013).

Gifts and Intimacy

In further understanding young women’s fears and faiths in forming, maintaining and avoiding close relationships with others, we may draw on ideas of exchange (Aguilar 1999; Course 2010; Mauss 1990), equality and debt (Killick & Desai 2010) in friendships. For young women in Calabar, giving freely is part of enjoying friendship. Young women often bought small items of jewellery or make-up from the market as gifts, gave others off-cuts of materials they had used to make clothes, or donated clothes that they either no longer wanted or thought

would look better on another.⁹⁸ I was struck by young women's generosity, especially when they did not have much themselves. Giving was a part of life in Calabar and was echoed in the way my student friends would freely give money to beggars, friends in need and, of course, to their churches. Where people do not always have the means to give back, it was not always expected that a gift would be reciprocated immediately. Rather, the act of giving indebted the recipient to the giver. The understanding was that it was always better to give – in the words of one Big Man, 'The giving hand is always on top.' Yet sometimes resentment did grow when friends did not reciprocate gifts over time. The friend's malice aside, Kosi was so upset by her friend's actions because she had given so freely to her. While Kosi had not expected material items in return, she had expected loyalty.

Where most analyses of exchange focus on giving and obligations for reciprocity (cf. Mauss 1990), Durham (1995) pays attention to the importance of the request for a gift. In Botswana, asking for a gift is not a shameful act but a part of everyday sociality, which can either be granted or denied (Durham 1995). Botswana are not considered autonomous, individual agents, and they must constantly redefine themselves as such through the possibility of denying requests for gifts. By making us think about the act of asking, and how denying requests asserts individuality rather than conferring dividuality, Durham (1995) helps us understand how young women feel let down by friendships. As the following highlights, asking for gifts is also common in Calabar. However, unlike with Durham's (1995) analysis, there is the expectation that the request will always be granted, or at least the expectation that the person being asked will

⁹⁸ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the fears young women have regarding the hidden dangers of accepting gifts from others.

say that they will do something. As with the words of the Calabar Big Man, to deny a request would be to lose the upper hand in a relationship. Amid insecurity, where people need to rely on others, it is always better to accept a request for something (i.e. to give) in order to establish a social connection, to create and maintain individualities.

Hence, while friendship necessitates acts of giving, there is also the expectation that true friendships also entail acts of asking. 'I like your bag' or 'dash me your shoes' are common requests young women may make to each other, with friendship being conferred by the item being given freely. Similarly, requests for the other person to spend their money by taking the asker out to fast-food restaurants, for instance, was also common. More extravagant requests – from requesting Guinness Malt at 100 naira over a Coke at 60 naira, to asking for someone's expensive new belonging – signal that the asker is identifying a close relationship with the other person. Such exchanges are reminiscent of Bohannan's classic analyses of 'spheres of exchange' amongst the Tiv of Nigeria (Bohannan 1955), where exchangeable items are classified under three concentric spheres: the lowest being subsistence items, the middle being prestige items, and the highest valued being women for marriage. Exchanges within discrete spheres (conveyances) were understood as morally neutral, whereas exchanges between spheres (conversion) were considered morally charged.

While Bohannan's model has been little explored since the 1950s or put to other African societies, Piot (1991) uses the Kabre of Togo's gift economy – where people are linked to things – to argue that Bohannan's model deserves further

thought. For the Kabre, the concepts of kinship and exchange are grounded in the emic understanding that people are formed through 'the production, exchange and consumption of things' (ibid.:410). Where people are valued more highly than things, gifts are constantly transformed into relationships. However, while the Kabre do have 'spheres of exchange', the exchanges within the spheres do have social consequences by establishing relationships (Piot 1991:411). We may draw on Piot's (1991) analysis, where Kabre aim to move up the 'spheres of exchange' to consolidate a friendship (*ikpanture*), to understand how young women in Calabar give and make requests as means to forging relationships necessary for successful living.

However, where the Kabre aim to establish an 'equal, unbreakable and enduring' friendship, we may develop Piot's (1991:412) analysis to understand the risks young women must take as they negotiate friendship. While receiving gifts is evidence of friendship, requests for gifts are always risky. The person being asked must decide whether it is a genuine insinuation of reciprocal obligations or someone just trying to push their luck. Refusing such a request would be detrimental to the (potential) friendship (cf. Durham 1995; Mauss 1990), and young women must put faith in other people and overcome fears of 'phoney' friendship – conversely, as requester, they must also sometimes push their luck. Of course, my friends did not always have the means to give freely, especially to more extravagant requests, and there were ways of getting round obligations to give. For instance, 'go buy me chicken and rice' may be answered with 'there's no problem – give me money for transport'. Instead of refusing, the request was turned back on the asker. Alternatively, social obligations may never be fulfilled

because of bad traffic, heavy rain, lack of electricity, failed mobile networks, lack of credit – the plausible excuses of urban life. These forms of exchange signalled the presence of trust in a friendship – of gifts being granted and reciprocated, and of excuses being legitimate. While closer relationships bred more trust, they also had the potential for more hurt and anger when one side felt let down by the other (cf. Geschiere 2013).

In explaining why young women sometimes feel let down by other young women, the above also offers insights into their relationships with men. My friends often said, they preferred being friends with guys because there was not the same kind of jealousy or competition as with girls, lessening the risks associated with proximity (cf. Geschiere 2013). Moreover, my friends liked guys' pragmatism and ability to help them out with problems. This help could be advice free from malicious intentions, but it also insinuated the financial aid offered by men. As well as being more in a position than other young women to give money, guys were also there to offer free transport in their cars. Where travelling and being seen in a (hopefully air-conditioned) private car is infinitely better for one's social standing than taking an over-crowded taxi (or worse, a bus), keeping friendships with men is important for young women fostering an image of a successful urbanite.

Recent analyses of young women's relationships to men in Africa draw heavily on the idea of gift economies, not least to the exchange of sex for money and material items (e.g. Cole 2009; Honwana 2012; Hunter 2009; Smith 2009). For instance, Honwana (2012) highlights how young people's intimate relationships with older, wealthier people have become a symptom of African youth's time of

‘waithood’. Where this chapter focuses on young women, we may further Honwana’s (2012) analysis to ask how girls’ engagement with sugar daddies differs from young men’s involvement with sugar mummies. More helpful in understanding young women’s relationships with men is the volume *Love in Africa* (Cole & Thomas 2009), a collection of historical and contemporary analyses of young Africans’ experiences of intimacy and money. Arguing that materiality and emotions are mutually constitutive, Cole & Thomas (2009) highlight that gifts between men and women do not merely symbolise but actively produce ‘emotionally charged’ relationships. While culture shapes the meaning of money, emerging economies also affect love. For instance, Hunter (2009) argues that economic instability in South Africa has encouraged women to value men’s ability to support the family financially. Yet high unemployment has meant that settling down is difficult for men. Where women now have multiple sexual partners as they seek relationships that provide (and are therefore loving), Hunter (2009) highlights how local notions of love and money have exacerbated the AIDS pandemic.

Cole (2009) takes a historical perspective to understand how culturally engrained concepts of love, money and intimacy continue to play out in contemporary Tamatave. The Malagasy word *fitiavina* traditionally denoted a relationship constituted by both materiality and morality, in which gift exchange and labour distribution were reciprocal. Exchange, affect, power and sex are hence closely entwined for women in urban Madagascar so that ‘loving money and loving men are inseparable’ (Cole 2009:122). As missionary values and capitalist economies were introduced over the 20th century, young Malagasy

began to realign their conceptions of *fitiavina* according to ‘western’ ideals of love separate from money. Trapped by the desire for consumer goods, young women seek out wealthy foreign men in clubs and cafés in the quest for the ‘three C’s’ (cash, cell phones, cars) in order to fulfil traditional ideas of a loving relationship (Cole 2009:127; Hunter 2009).⁹⁹ Yet young women (and men) also now nurture the idea of a ‘clean *fitiavina*’: a loving relationship free from material support.

Drawing on the above discussion of ‘spheres of exchange’ (Bohannon 1955; Piot 1991), we see that materiality and affect are closely entwined in Calabar. Young women believe that a good husband should provide for his wife (cf. Hunter 2009). Yet as this chapter later discusses, young women’s conceptions of love and romance are also changing, most notably through ideals introduced through foreign TV and film. While this chapter focuses more on trust rather than material wealth in relationships between men and women, Cole’s (2009) and Hunter’s (2009) analyses are helpful in highlighting the anxieties of young women trying to become adults in rapidly evolving urban landscapes: the (health and social) risks of entering into sexual relationships with men, and the gamble between appearing successful by having romance or displaying material wealth.

In Calabar, young women’s relationships with men are perhaps best epitomised by the BlackBerry. Drawing on the opening vignette, the BlackBerry is not just any phone but an instantly recognisable symbol of urban ‘modernity’, street-cred and success. The owner exudes wealth in owning the handset – the latest

⁹⁹ In Senegal, young women desire the ‘three-V’s’ (*villa, virement bancaire, voiture*) (Nyamnjoh 2005), while Pype (forthcoming) outlines how girls in Kinshasa chase different men to fulfil the requisites of *chic-choc-chèque* (clothes, sex, school fees).

handset at the time of my fieldwork, Bold 5, cost almost 100,000 naira – and also in the ability to subscribe to BlackBerry Internet Services (a monthly charge varying from 1,500 to 3,000 naira). There is also status in owning the latest handset in order to compete with one's peers. While BlackBerry had just been introduced on the Nigerian market during my first trip to Calabar in 2010, by the end of my doctoral fieldwork the handsets were widely available. A 'fairly used' handset could be bought for 15,000 naira and networks had introduced cheaper weekly data subscriptions. BlackBerry became prolific – most of my friends owned one – but prestige still lay in owning the latest and most expensive model. There was also the uneasy fact that most of the girls on the street who flaunted a BlackBerry could afford neither the handset nor subscriptions.

There was the understanding that girls could only afford a BlackBerry through their relationships with men. Indeed, Nollywood has depicted how girls go in search of the richest men in Lagos, turning Al-Hajjis into 'uncles' who will cater for their every need. While there are notably few rich Al-Hajji's in Calabar, the understanding is that young women still receive gifts from richer men and other women's husbands. It is a concept encapsulated in the term 'runs girl': a highly fashionable, usually educated, urban young woman who rinses men's pockets in order to style herself and keep ahead of the game. The success of the 'runs girl' is to show others how generous her 'uncle' is – her classic ruse is to invite other girls along to restaurants and to watch her 'uncle' pay for all or face humiliation. Demanding (the latest) BlackBerry, school fees, clothes, nails and hair extensions, these 'runs girls' are self-fashioning and conforming to Nigerian ideas of being 'exposed' and far from being 'local' (see Figure 1.). Indeed, another term

in Pidgin for a 'runs girl' is 'aristo', a slightly tongue-in-cheek term that nonetheless signifies the idea of social mobility through gifts from, and association with, more established others.¹⁰⁰ Yet it remains rather ironic that, while they style themselves as successful urban singles, looking to attract suitably rich marriage prospects (cf. Chapter 2), they are actually relying on men.

Such ideas speak very much to those of Cole (2009), Hunter (2009) and Chernoff (2003), how young women exchange their bodies for money and material items. Yet we must also be wary of reifying the types of relationships that involve gifts between men and young women. Analyses such as Cole (2009) and Hunter (2009) focus too much on how gifts and money are linked to love and sex, and as subversive exchanges between married men and poorer younger women. These analyses also suggest that girls always go looking for exchanges of gifts and money, or they draw sharp distinctions as to who these girls who accept gifts actually are – they appear as club-goers rather than church-goers, for instance (cf. Cole 2009, 2010; Hunter 2009; Smith 2009). While Chernoff's (2003) tales of Hawa, the Ghanaian bargirl also draw on subversion, the portrayal of Hawa as a girl having to use wit and guile to conjure (if short-lived) fortune from hapless circumstances, is helpful for understanding how young women in Calabar do not necessarily go out looking for opportunities but, seeing the potential for future fortune, seize them as they arise.

¹⁰⁰ 'Aristo' is also used to refer to the richer men these 'runs girls' are dating, although I only ever heard the term in reference to girls.



Figure 4. Simbi was a character in a book series my friends read at school. The picture has been edited for a BlackBerry 'display picture' and illustrates how the 'runs girl' has become a cultural stereotype.

The reality in Calabar is that situations are often complicated and fluid. While a lot of the time gifts are exchanged for sex, it is not always the case. It is also not the case that girls always chase men, and my friends told of stories of men stopping them in the street or even following them in cars. Visibly irritated by these events, my friends were resigned to the fact young women in Nigeria had to 'endure'. Inherently patriarchal relations were also demonstrated through gifts that men gave without my friends having entered sexual relationships with them. My friends were aware that gifts from men likely came with expectations – spelling dangers of becoming indebted to the men (cf. Killick & Desai 2010) – but they identified their ability to 'post' the man places in order to avoid both his

advances and compromising themselves. As one friend explained how she had received money and even a BlackBerry from male friends, 'I can't be having sex with everybody who's nice to me.'

Writing about married couples' views of extramarital affairs, Smith (2009) offers a more nuanced perspective on the ideas of sex and gift exchange in urban southern Nigeria. For Smith's (2009) Igbo informants, women were aware of married men's infidelity through stories they heard about other women's husbands. These threats to married women came from educated, fashionable young women who keep sugar daddies as part of an image of 'modern femininity' (Smith 2009). Whether the men are actually part of young women's ideal urban femininity, as the author suggests, or rather just means to reach a particular image of success and status, Smith (2009) helps explain how relationships between men and young women are integral to ideas of self-fashioning. Indeed, the author goes so far as to highlight how urban masculinities also emerge alongside these urban femininities. For Igbo men partaking in extramarital affairs, being able to look after women was part of their masculine identity. Hence, through ideas of self-fashioning and emerging urban femininities and masculinities, we also see how gendered power relations are created and maintained through gift economies.

Focusing on the idea of how young women fashion themselves in accordance with a particular image of urban success, we may also seek a more nuanced understanding of who these young women receiving gifts from men actually are. Self-fashioning speaks less about where these young women are coming from and alludes more to an ideal to be worked towards. While the literature that

speaks to the exchanges of sex and gifts draw on the idea that the young women involved are usually poor (cf. Cole 2009; Honwana 2012; Hunter 2009), this is not always the case in Calabar – girls from wealthier backgrounds also see the benefits from men's gifts. Moreover, current literature presents some unhelpful explanations for how these intimate gift economies are negotiated with religious beliefs and identities. Where analyses such as Cole (2009), Honwana (2012) or Hunter's (2009) negate an awareness of the role Christianity has in young women's lives, Cole's (2010) later work draws a sharp distinction between those girls who give themselves to men and those who save themselves for (or are redeemed by) God. Hence, by drawing on how relationships are not just constituted by material gifts (cf. Piot 1991, Cole 2009) but actually mould new (urban) subjectivities, we may see how engaging in relationships with men is a method of preparing the self for future fortune by fashioning the self according to urban ideas of success. However, as the following highlights, where intimacy compromises Pentecostal values, young women must discreetly manage such risky relationships in order to avoid misfortune.

In Calabar, the confluence of young women being (or appearing) spiritually strong and their relationships with men is altogether ambiguous. While Pentecostal churches, such as The Brook Church, preach abstinence to singles (Chapter 2; cf. Cole 2010) – one of Pastor Ose's mottos is 'no ringy, no dinky', and brides-to-be must take a pregnancy test the day before their wedding – people acknowledge that the girls who profess to being righteous are sometimes far from it. Indeed, popular Nollywood comedies such as *Holy Harlots* and *Sex in the Church* exemplify how Nigerians perceive the (im)moralities of religious

ministries – the Pentecostal movement, with its lack of uniformity, is a particular target of moral scrutiny (cf. Smith 2001). Such perceived immoral or hypocritical behaviour within the church is perfectly encapsulated through a story told by my friend Mercy:

When I did my Youth Service, I had this girl, she was a good girl, she was a Christian and she used to go to a Pentecostal church. She met a high profile politician – that was when Nigeria just had the democracy – and he was a Muslim, and he picked her up in her car.... So she came from a struggling home and this guy promised her so many wonderful things if she would date him. And she eventually agreed – and she was a Christian, you understand?...

And when she dated him, he moved her out of her parents' house. Her new house was fabulous – he rented an apartment for her.... She was always travelling abroad. In a small space of time, she managed to transform her family. And you know what? Every time she would go abroad, she would come back and testify – does that make sense? It doesn't! A testimony in a church is like, 'Oh, God did this for me. I want to thank God for this'.... Some of the more enlightened or the spiritually conscious members... knew that she was benefiting from somebody because she wasn't working....

Now, in that circumstance, you see other young women in the church... from similar backgrounds who want to be holy but are compromising their morals, you understand? 'Who am I keeping myself for by being holy and then I am suffering in poverty? If this girl can come and testify and God is blessing her with one Al-Hajji who is giving her money, why can't I date one Al-Hajji that's bothering me at home?' So there is a struggle for young girls in the Pentecostal church in Nigeria, it's not all straightforward.

Every time I heard this story, Mercy always stressed how Christian her friend was. The church testimonies indicated the girl's desire to be spiritually strong and her faith in God's ability to deliver fortune in her life, the material signs of which came through her Al-Hajji lover. As Mercy's closing line highlights: young women in the church struggle. Pentecostalism preaches them to be both righteous and successful. Yet, especially where there is much competition in

urban Nigeria, young women must make constant gambles in fashioning an identity which displays God's work in their lives.

Re-visiting the ideas of 'divine timing', we are presented with the tension between faith in waiting for fortune to arrive and fear that, by waiting, one appears unbled and unfavoured. Young women must constantly negotiate the risks of being righteous and falling behind one's peers with the risks of being caught making the wrong associations and compromising their Christian identity. Where forging relationships with men presents different dangers from those with other girls, young women must use different techniques to conceal such liaisons and maintain their respectability. It is interesting that the Pentecostal church, with its platform for acknowledging personal success, not only creates anxieties for young women but also provides techniques for disguising subversive behaviour (such as testimonies). While we should not detract from young women's belief in God's faithfulness, it is useful to again draw on Chernoff (2003) to highlight young women's guile as they undertake constant gambles to portray a certain image – simultaneously driven by the faith of success and the fear of failure – to maintain hope in their believed due fortune (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013).

'Nollywood na life!'

Young women are far from passive as they stay in the house to protect themselves from others' malicious intentions. TVs and DVD players are staple fixtures in homes across Calabar, allowing young women to while away hours watching DVDs. Just as with the tea-drinking rituals of Masquelier's *fadas*, watching films in the house during these periods of inactivity is important to

young women in the way that films do not 'kill time so much as they enliven it' (2013a:486). The video shops around the markets are packed full of cheap DVDs packaged in card envelopes, facilitating a wide range and constant supply of home entertainment. As Masquelier (2013a) notes of tea drinking, fulfilling these small accomplishments is an important act of time management for youth unable to govern their long-term goals. While this is an attractive argument, it also raises questions as to how young women conceptualise accomplishment amid uncertainty. My friends' experiences – and even my own – of living in a Nigerian city highlight how nothing can be expected or taken for granted. It is not always possible to watch a DVD in its entirety. NEPA can 'take light' any time and, when the city has a fuel shortage, the generator may not be put on.

While DVDs make the house more enjoyable, there was an interesting distinction between young women's perceptions of Nigerian and foreign films. Some of my friends did enjoy Nollywood films, but many argued that they were silly with bad special effects and predictable storylines. However, as the opening vignette highlights, Nollywood films do provide a space for young women to both laugh at, comment on and complain about life in the postcolony (cf. Larkin 2000; Masquelier 2013a; Meyer 2002). As Meyer (2002) argues about media in Ghana, local films have become popular through their ability to feed into society's structures of feeling – an idea that rings true of Nollywood (and Ghanaian) films in Nigeria. The films' Manichean dualism, where good will triumph over the powers of darkness, speaks to Pentecostal discourse and, as viewers often interact with one another (as well as shouting at the characters on screen), the films are likened to morality plays (cf. Meyer 2002). Yet it is these films' new

styles of representation, speaking to Pentecostal patterns of consumption and visions of modernity (cf. Marshall 2009), which Meyer (2002) highlights as being most significant to the films' popularity. Where the city is a vision of modernity, these films allow viewers to 'mimetically travel in modern space', connecting the local and global (Meyer 2002:82; cf. Larkin 1998).



Figure 5. A plethora of Nollywood films can be bought cheaply from shops around Calabar's markets. Arranged in stacks, NK knew which films were worth watching by the film's title and actors depicted on the DVD sleeves. (Photo: Gilbert 2011)

Such visions of urban modernity and understandings of good winning through resound in *Okon Lagos*, a recent and popular Nollywood film at the time of my fieldwork. The film depicts the unfortunate endeavours of an Ibibio hunter trying to make it in Lagos. Knowing only Akwa Ibom village life and speaking no English (the film provides English subtitles for Okon's dialogue), Okon is the 'local' man

with 'village mentality'. Arriving in Lagos, he is visibly scared of city life as he struggles to cross the busy highway. He stands out as 'fresh fish' to the merciless Lagosian hustlers and, within minutes, has lost everything (including his Ankara clothes) on a bus to armed robbers. Watching *Okon Lagos* on various occasions, the different audiences never failed to identify Okon's goodwill compared with the dangers and treachery of Lagos-life. However, my friends' sympathies for Okon were overridden with ridicule for the character's inability to survive in the fast-paced Nigerian city. *Okon Lagos* is a comedy, with the villager being the butt of all jokes – my friends often had fun imitating the Nollywood actor's well-known facial expressions denoting confusion and dumbfoundedness. Interestingly, while Nollywood does still push visions of urban modernity (cf. Meyer 2002), it is interesting that young women watching these films in their urban homes do not so much buy into the fantasies of urban life but confirm their own lives as such by being able to ridicule characters who lack the cultural knowledge to survive the city.

Over the decade or so since Meyer's (2002) analysis, both the Nigerian film industry and urban (and rural) patterns of consumption and ways of living have moved on considerably. For my friends, living in Calabar and with access to their own villages and other Nigerian cities (other West African countries and, for the most privileged, Europe or the US), the 'mimetic travel' that Meyer (2002; cf. Larkin 1998) writes of seems less integral to their Nollywood experience. Nollywood did not depict aspirations but people acknowledge that 'Nollywood na life' (Pidgin for 'Nollywood is life'). While watching Nigerian films alleviated boredom, my friends thought these films could not tell them more than they

already knew. As Esta replied when I asked if she liked Nollywood films, 'Yes, I do – that's my problem.' She explained that her new husband did not like her watching them because she would not learn anything. 'And it's true,' she added, 'what am I going to learn? What do I get from these films? What's the point in watching something that you know is going on anyway?' While Nollywood films did alleviate boredom and spark conversation (cf. Larkin 2000; Meyer 2002), they did not help young women overcome fears of their current situations or provide hope for a different future.

On the contrary, all my informants loved Hollywood films, which can be bought as cheaply as a couple of hundred naira for a compilation DVD of 15 or so pirated films. My friends would watch anything: from romantic comedies to violent Mexican serials about drug gangs, from Disney and children's cartoons to popular up-to-date American and British TV series (such as *Glee*, *Game of Thrones* and *Hustle*). They admired the visual aesthetics and claimed that the plots kept them in suspense. These DVDs gave a different sort of entertainment from Nollywood in the way in which they were always 'interesting' and shed light on something new. For instance, where Nollywood films either portrayed love as a village saga, associated with spiritual entrapments, or riddled with deceit and games in the city, Hollywood offered a vision of romantic love. My friends would often admit to wanting to marry a 'white man', saying that the male Hollywood characters were better than Nigerian men at looking after their women. Following earlier discussions of intimacy and gifts, Nigerian young women regarded Hollywood romance and care towards women as being grounded in emotion rather than money (cf. Cole 2009; Hunter 2009).

This is not to say that my friends thought that they would marry men akin to Hollywood characters but foreign films did provide young women in Calabar with new ways of conceptualising romantic relationships and hope for what could be. As one friend said, foreign films had raised her expectations of love. Such an idea speaks to Fair's (2009) analysis of Hindi films, which provide a discursive space for young people in Zanzibar to talk about love and intimacy; to Larkin's (1997) argument that Bollywood films gain popularity in northern Nigeria because they provide a 'parallel modernity' countering both 'western' culture and Hausa tradition; and to Masquelier's (2009) examination of how *feuilletons* in Niger offer youth a new ideal of romantic love to change their visions of the future. In Calabar, foreign films open up new discursive arenas for young women to learn and talk about relationships outside the family (such as advice given by female family members before a 'Traditional Marriage') and the church, which in talking about marriage centres on the individual rather than romantic relationships (cf. Chapter 2). However, the emergence of such discursive arenas does not necessarily mean that young women's newfound expectations are directly challenging the above-outlined patriarchal relations that they rely on. Hence, it is necessary to go further than merely identifying these new conceptualisations of love to illuminate the processes by which young women can reconceptualise their futures through engaging with these films.

Just as Meyer (2002; cf. Larkin 1998) writes about 'mimetic travel' for Ghanaian films of a decade ago, these 'western' productions transport young women to a world beyond what they know. While my friends were stuck at home doing nothing, they could discover places, people and new ideas. These films provided

a way of being 'exposed' (the desirable quality of knowing beyond life in the postcolony) without actually having been 'outside' (Nigeria). Furthermore, whereas Nollywood films were associated with a sense of sociality and social commentary (cf. Meyer 2002), Hollywood was a project for the individual, which young women could follow without others being around. It is interesting that while young women learn traits deemed successful in urban Nigeria, they may never get the opportunity to use such knowledge (for instance, they may never have a Hollywood-style romance). Hence, 'travelling' to other places through Hollywood, seeking fortune through entertainment and education, encapsulates not just pragmatic preparation of the self but also fantasy. Writing about youth's modes of popular culture in urban Tanzania, Weiss (2009) argues how styling the self through barber and sewing shops signifies a means of fantasy to allow young people both view and participate with the global. While the following chapter develops Weiss' (2009) analysis more explicitly, we may see here how watching foreign DVDs allows young women to fashion subjectivities associated with success by learning foreign values.

Weiss (2009) is right to argue that we need to place youth's aspirations in the context of evolving local-global relations, yet we also need to consider how aspirations, fantasies and conceptions of time arise in contexts of uncertainty (cf. Haram & Yamba 2009). Foreign films, such as Hollywood romances, provide hope for young women's futures because they portray a world radically different from the insecurities of life in the postcolony. My friends already knew that being with God helps overcome uncertainty and so Nollywood's morality did not provide hope (cf. Meyer 2002), but foreign films with trust in friendships,

romance and the law did provide faith for the future. Hence, watching foreign films was a means for preparing the self for the future by being aware of foreign values – knowledge associated with the ‘exposed’ successful Nigerian. Yet while young women have faith that learning a certain cultural logic encourages fortune, such preparations of the self are never without risks. Firstly, unable to use such knowledge identifying them with success, their fortune remains a fantasy. Secondly, Hollywood fans living amid uncertainty recognise the hidden dangers of the film industry and the art of celebrity. For instance, the Illuminati rumours that spread through Calabar, detailing the alleged satanic acts of famous celebrities (cf. Chapter 1), highlight the ambivalences of capitalist consumerism and the tensions it creates with Christian subjectivities (cf. Meyer 2008). Hence, there is always the need to stay spiritually vigilant in order to become ‘exposed’ without losing oneself to the immoralities and spiritual compromises that are believed to make one miss one’s rightful destiny.

Gisting and Pinging

While young women watched DVDs alone in their houses, they were constantly connecting to others on their mobile phones. Illustrated in Esta running to charge her phone at NK’s house, the mobile has become an important means for sociality and productivity in young women’s time of waiting (cf. Masquelier 2013a). As I sat with NK in her room, she would often chat to friends in Calabar and elsewhere via voice calls, text messages or 2go, a social network platform (similar to WhatsApp or Facebook messenger) allowing people subscribed to a data package to message each other for free. This final section discusses how young women use their mobile phones to produce and control new social

worlds. Without time and aims, these mobile social worlds are not only about productivity but also provide entertainment and affect (cf. Masquelier 2013a). As the examples highlight, such fantasy produced through mobile communication allows young women to perceive themselves differently and provides means to navigating the uncertainties of Calabar's social sphere.

Writing about young people's use of mobile phone communication in Mozambique, Archambault (2013) gives a nuanced understanding of the power of the mobile phone to stay in touch with others by illuminating the politics of concealment. Linking mobile phone usage to wider discussions of uncertainty, Archambault (2013) helpfully discusses how mobile communication is a means of social navigation. As the author writes, 'Everyday life involves seeking a balance between displaying enough without revealing too much, between accessing social status and deflecting envy, and between having a good time and preserving respectability, while embellishing reality, often through concealment' (ibid.:88). It is such that the mobile phone becomes central to young Mozambicans' successful navigation of their social environs. Being the owner of a mobile handset is to hold the key to another world unseen by others, a hidden realm where young people are able to disguise their acts of communication (Archambault 2013). Crucially, the discretion of the mobile phone allows one to manage relationships. For instance, people who have mobile phones are understood to have *visão* – literally, 'vision', although the term refers to an ambiguous quality by which one lives successfully – and are therefore perceived as being better able to manage romantic relationships involving gifts (Archambault 2013). Hence, central to managing connections through these

styles of communication are the ideas of maintaining respectability, accumulating contacts and controlling intimate relationships.

Drawing on the above discussions of how young women fear close friendships (cf. Geschiere 2013) and how gifts (from men) help girls buy into a certain image of urban success, Archambault's (2013) analyses are helpful for understanding how young women in Calabar use mobile phones to realise better futures. Indeed, concealment is central to the idea of minimising risk and maximising fortune. For Archambault (2013), such concealment is important for easing social relations and reinstating social norms. For instance, elsewhere, Archambault (2009) draws on her own experience of negotiating her conflicting roles of fieldworker and wife to discuss how mobile communication facilitates discretion and enables one to follow appropriate social etiquette and emic conceptions of respect. The author later discusses ideas of concealment with regard to intimate relationships, where mobile phones may aid infidelity (Archambault 2011) and help redefine social identities and experiences (Archambault 2013). The latter is particularly important to understanding how young women in Calabar negotiate their Christian identity with friendships and more intimate relationships with men, how they can appear virtuous while 'working on' far from righteous relationships. Yet, where Archambault (2013) frames concealment more in terms of preserving social norms and showing respect for others, I take the concept further.

Amid the uncertain urban environs, where one does not know another's true intentions, the concealment and discretion associated with mobiles enable one to simultaneously connect to people who may be beneficial in the future and

protect oneself from another's malice and jealousy. Where young women feared letting others 'know their place', mobile phones were integral to how young women kept in touch with others, while maintaining distance (cf. Geschiere 2013). Mobile communication does not only imply physical distance but also creates a different style of communication that negates needing to disclose private information. For instance, it is common for people just to call briefly to check up on others. While I initially found this custom annoying – the callers often did not have anything to say – I came to realise its benefits. Calling to ask after someone was a way of creating social proximity free from fear. While a caring caller must ask the right questions – 'Have you eaten?' or 'Is there light?' for instance – the receiver should always thank the person profusely for the call.

Sending text messages wishing good fortune and prosperity on someone – especially at the beginning of each month – is another way the mobile phone can be used to keep in touch with others, renew social relations, while keeping a certain distance. These text messages usually made Biblical references. Just as Kirsch (2007) describes how church clergy speak in parables to conceal themselves and identify with God, text messages that contained biblical verses or prayers also showed one's good intentions by identifying with a Christian community. The following two text messages I received from friends indicate such good wishes, encouraging close friendship, without revealing oneself:

DECEMBER 4U: D= Dominion, E=Extraordinary, C=Celebrity,
E=Excelent, M=Miraculus, B=Blessed, E=Elivated, R=Remembered
by God. U've Dominion ova evrytin dz mont,Hapy Dec.

Gud morning dear & how r u. Ur enemy shall fall into their own traps.
Their heads shall go 4 u to stay alive. Feasting shall be ur name. Do
have a nice day.

Following earlier discussions highlighting the importance of giving in creating and renewing relationships (cf. Piot 1991; Cole 2009; Hunter 2009), we may view how these seemingly impersonal calls and text messages are exchanges to both symbolise and produce relationships. Writing about teenagers' texting habits in a 'western' context, Taylor & Harper (2003) argue that text messages are gifts: teenagers find value in the digitalised messages that they exchange in a ceremonial performance to negotiate social relationships. As such, the authors argue that texts are more than just words but show a commitment to the friendship (ibid.:275). These ideas are useful when considering what happens when people do not reciprocate the text message gifts. While earlier discussions highlight young women's pain and anger at failed friendships, the lack of reciprocal messages does not generate the same social anxieties (particularly when everyone understands the limitations of electricity, credit and signal). Interestingly, where someone eventually bumps into another who has not responded to calls or messages, it is custom to mention the lack of response in order to remind the other of their debt. Hence, phone communication creates affect and renewing relationships that could be useful in the future while freeing young women from the fear of others' proximity.

Such ideas of exchange and concealment in phone relationships are also apparent in young people's style of conversing. Young people often 'gist' when they chat on their phones, making jokes so that the conversation continues through entertainment rather than dwelling on the revelation of others' personal information. For instance, I remember one time NK received a phone call from a

friend she had not spoken to in a while. Her friend was Muslim and it happened that it was Sallah. After asking how he was, NK quickly asked, 'Where is my ram?' Claiming that he must be eating something as she could hear his jaws move independently from his speech, NK continued to ask for her share of the feast. 'Where is my ram? Bluetooth my ram now! My Bluetooth is on – Bluetooth it now!' NK continued to joke. While her friend, who was somewhere 'at the end of Nigeria', maintained that sending food via Bluetooth would not work, it appeared that 'gisting' allowed people to ask for gifts, to extend friendship, without running the risk of feeling let down by others when the request did not materialise. It is these forms of affect and entertainment, which are central to understanding how young women not only alleviate boredom in the house but also manage contacts discreetly in order to prepare for possible future fortune.

Where people not only rely on contacts but take care to maintain these distant relationships, concealment as a way of protecting the self is also demonstrated in the way in which people store mobile phone numbers. While collecting people's numbers is important for preparing for the future by maximising possibilities, numbers would rarely be listed under the contact's real name. Sometimes, where people meet in the street and exchange numbers in order just to chat once in a while, this may be because the real name is not known. Indeed, NK described how she would store acquaintances' numbers by their first name and where she had met them, such as in a taxi or at a certain junction in town. Other times, names were changed to show endearment. However, most of the time, numbers were stored under pseudonyms in order to protect the contact's identity. For

instance, young women may store family members or boyfriends as 'dearest' or 'my love', although some names appeared even better disguised.

As Esta explained, you should always store important numbers under a different name to guard against others' wicked intentions. For instance, there were a number of stories of people being phoned to say that a loved one had been in a fatal road accident, only for it to come out later that the mobile phone had been stolen and that the loved one was in fact alive. Mostly, young women worried that, where another would steal a useful contact, the loss of a mobile phone number could signal the loss of potential fortune. As the unnamed author of one Nigerian blog, *Chronicles of a Runs Girl*, states, 'Of the many assets girls amass – shoes, bags, gold, lecturers – phone numbers are the most valuable.'¹⁰¹ As the author goes on to describe, girls collect phone numbers for different needs, with the most valuable phone numbers belonging to the richest men. Hence, while the concealment associated with mobile communication is important, as Archambault (2013) suggests, enabling young women to manage contacts, to foster relationships that belie their outward appearance and Christian morals, concealment is also important for protecting self-interests. Out of the public sphere and further concealed by pseudonyms, young women's careful management of contacts is integral to eschewing others' jealousy and encouraging future possibilities and material wealth.

¹⁰¹ *Chronicles of a Runs Girl* is a satirical blog detailing the adventures of one girl and her friends and 'best enemies' in Lagos. It appears, to me, the most honest account of (very normal) urban young women in Nigeria, boldly stating the adventures people know go on but do not say. Available: <http://www.wazobiareport.com/the-unedited-series/Chronicles-of-a-Runs-Girl/Part-2-A-girls-best-enemies>. Accessed: 1/3/14.

While mobile phones were undoubtedly important to young women's sociality and productivity in the house (cf. Masquelier 2013a), it was the BlackBerry, in particular, that enabled young women to reach new levels of sociality. The BlackBerry was highly desirable because it was a status symbol (cf. Pype 2013), but young people also assured me that it was actually a very useful thing to have because it allowed them to keep in touch with their friends for free via BBM. While BBM is a social network platform akin to 2go and WhatsApp, it is regarded as more exclusive because one can only connect with others who are fortunate enough to own a BlackBerry. Just as the BlackBerry handset is integral to young women fashioning themselves as successful urban singles, BBM is also a tool for self-fashioning in the ways in which it allows young women to connect to others and to give themselves a new persona, a pseudo-identity which creates distance and hence alleviates fear in social interaction (cf. Geschiere 2013).

This is perhaps best illustrated through my own experiences of grappling with BBM. Arriving in Calabar with only the most basic Nokia torchlight,¹⁰² I was perpetually told by young people to buy a BlackBerry so that we could keep in touch more easily. I finally gave in and allowed my friend, Ema, to help me buy a handset from a reputable shop on Marian – where I only wanted to buy the cheapest handset, Ema ensured that I remained cool by buying a white version rather than the standard black casing. Ema was also kind enough to help me set the phone up, and instantly opened BBM to create a profile for me. It was then that I learned that I could not possibly just have my own name as my display

¹⁰² Where mobile networks and electricity often fail, the most savvy young women will be connected to two networks, and to back up their BlackBerry with basic Nokia that is unlikely to need much charging.

name – too boring – I needed to come up with a pseudonym. While I deflected Ema's attempts to use embarrassing nicknames, we finally decided on 'Juju'. I watched as Ema then started to add lots of emoticons and symbols to my name – when I protested, she showed me her contact list and said that this was what was normal, I needed to make myself unique. Having decided on my name, Ema added her cousin and some others she considered to have good BBM-chat to my contact list – people I had never met – and told me, 'Ping people! Go have fun!'

It was such that I learned how young women view BBM as a space to connect with others without actually having to know them, or without having to let others know you. While you can type normal messages, you can also get others' attention by 'pinging' them – the word 'PING!!!' shows as an alert. It took me some time to get to understand how 'pinging' people actually worked – I was never sure what people wanted to chat about. However, as I acquired more contacts, I came to discover that BBM was the perfect way to spend time 'gisting' with others, talking and joking about anything but reality. As one friend said, she did not mind having strangers add her as a contact, but if she started chatting and found out that they were boring, she would delete them. Hence, where 'gisting' is integral to how young women understand productivity and sociality as they wait (cf. Masquelier 2013a), we may also seek to understand how BBM facilitates this in the way in which it creates another reality for young women stuck in their houses. Where Hollywood films allow young women to 'mimetically travel' (Larkin 1998; Meyer 2002), BBM allows young women to be transported to another place, alleviating ennui and feelings of despair through affect. This idea is echoed in Archambault's (2012) analysis of how young people

overcome frustrations of mobility through storytelling, travelling while physically going nowhere.

Yet what I found particularly fascinating about BBM was its ability to allow people to reveal things about the self and to identify with others. For instance, while people did not generally change their pseudonym, they frequently changed their 'DP' ('display picture') and 'PM' ('personal message') throughout the day. My female friends' PMs were usually related to how they currently felt or referred to something that had happened to them. PMs were generally vague, not too revealing, and could facilitate an equally abstract conversation. As the following examples illustrate, PMs were often moralistic or testimonies for God's work:

Tough Times never last. But. Tough. People. Do

Isn't all dat dance wit u r ur friendz, some r waiting 4 ur dwnfall.

Even in my hard times n sad moment, there is 1 who ♥s me.. Jesus

Outstanding success if my birthright!!! [Dancing icon] Happy new month...

Just as with PMs, DPs were used to fashion an image of the self without revealing personal information, thus sparking conversation. As Boyd & Heer write about people changing their online profiles on the social networking site Friendster, 'By altering their Profiles to engage with others, participants are setting the stage for conversation' (2006:5). DPs often depicted ideas of success – a 'selfie' of girls sitting in the passenger seat of a private car was a popular illustration of social mobility. Yet central to how people used DPs to fashion an image of the self was how they used them to identify to others (including God). For example, it is

normal on BBM to use someone else's photo as one's DP to mark the other's birthday. Admittedly, I was incredibly touched when it was my birthday to see my contact list fill up with pictures others had saved of me over time. As one friend explained, my contacts had done this to show their connection to me and to identify me as 'their person'.

While young women do not admit to their connections in public, it appeared that BBM created a new social world in which young women could generate affect and display loyalty free from fear. Engaging in mobile communication was a means of preparing the self for the future through the modes of affect and entertainment necessary to make young women feel good and maintain hope for future fortune. While the creation of such social worlds allows young women to conceal their true identity and be whoever they want to be – the constant performance of which renews their hope for fortune (cf. Miyazaki 2004) – its distance from reality eludes the potential horrors of intimacy (cf. Geschiere 2013).

Conclusion

Building upon recent analyses of youth's temporalities (Honwana 2012; Jeffrey 2010; Masquelier 2013a), this chapter has argued that young women's activity during times of waiting is not just about overcoming the ennui and despair of the present but about working on the self and looking to more auspicious futures. Such preparations of the self are linked to Pentecostal rhetoric and ideas of aligning the self with God. For instance, people not only regard idleness as being an affliction of the Devil, but we are reminded of how The Brook Church taught people to have, and work towards, plans for the future, keeping faith that God

will deliver in time. Hence, following this thesis' argument that young women hope to overcome present uncertainties and realise believed 'destinies of greatness' by constantly working on the self, this chapter has argued how young women's time spent waiting is a strategy encouraging future fortune. The chapter has furthered Miyazaki's (2004) argument that hope is maintained through repetitive action, by illustrating that young women renew hope through other acts of the self that are not necessarily religious but support Pentecostal ideas of urban success. However, this thesis argues that such preparations are constantly driven by both faith and fear. Drawing on emic conceptions of relational personhood, the chapter has highlighted the underlying tension between faith in the self and fear in others' intent and ability to sabotage one's success. Young women must hence undertake constant gambles, displaying and hiding certain aspects of the self – identifying and denying links with others – as they navigate the uncertain path to future fortune.

Countering analyses of youth that focus on 'masculine cultures of waiting' (Jeffrey 2010; Masquelier 2013a), this chapter has sought to bring understanding of 'feminine cultures of waiting'. While young men are understood to come together, relieving boredom through affect (Masquelier 2013a), the discussions of young women's time spent (apparently) alone have highlighted a need to reconceptualise young women's modes of generating affect and sociality. Young women's isolation from others is a strategy to protect the self and preserve an image of respectability, chastity and obedience to family and Christian values. Yet this chapter has also highlighted a contradiction for young women fashioning an image of urban respectability: the need to display material

success and the need to deny association with men who can provide such material wealth. People in the Pentecostal church generally accept that most people are immoral some of the time rather than some people being immoral most of the time, and young women must maintain faith in their outward appearance by constantly fashioning a Christian identity. As Mercy's story of a girl testifying about her wealth accrued from her Al-Hajji lover, the relationship between young women's religious identity and their actual activities is highly ambiguous – the belief in God's will also gives rise to some unorthodox understandings for how fortune is delivered.

The chapter has discussed how young women do manage their relationships with others while preparing for future fortune. Watching Hollywood rather than Nollywood films is a way of educating the self through 'mimetic travel' (cf. Meyer 2002; Larkin 1998), a means of fashioning the self to an ideal of urban 'enlightenment' without having to travel. Mobile phones are also integral to this experience, where young women can enjoy relationships with others which are free from the social obligations – and hence trust and disappointment of 'real' friendships. This is much about creating new social worlds, where young women can gain support and knowledge from others to overcome present struggles. Previous chapters argued preparations for the future alter young women's self-perception, and we may understand how these 'safe' social worlds generate new ideas of self-worth and give young women another method of working on their personal biography. As such, the chapter has drawn on the idea of fantasy for maintaining faith in the future, a disconnect between imagination and reality, between self-perception and real identity, between what young women say they

do and what they really do. These ideas of disconnect are developed in the next chapter, which highlights young women's anxieties as they attempt to style themselves as successful urbanites, gaining respect and fame, through fashion.

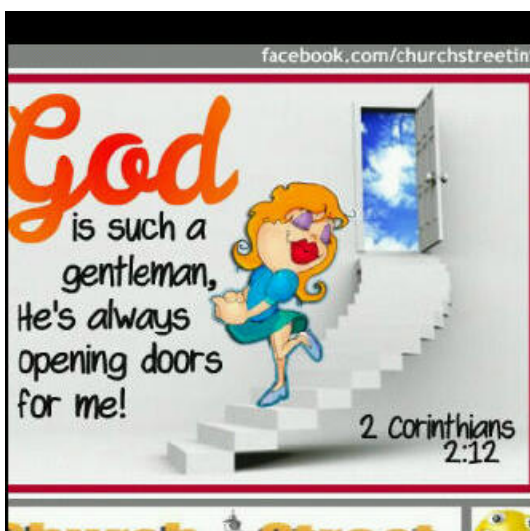
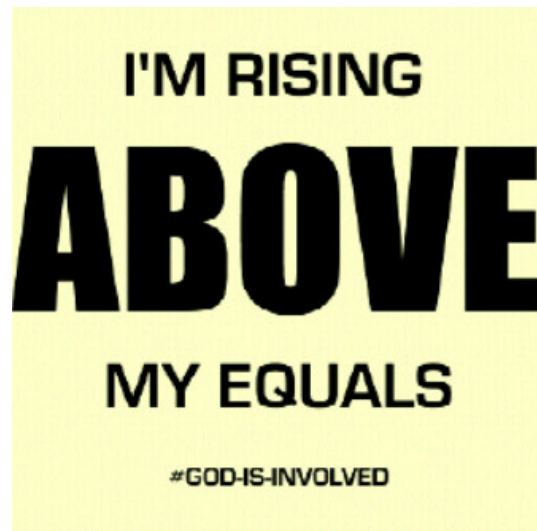
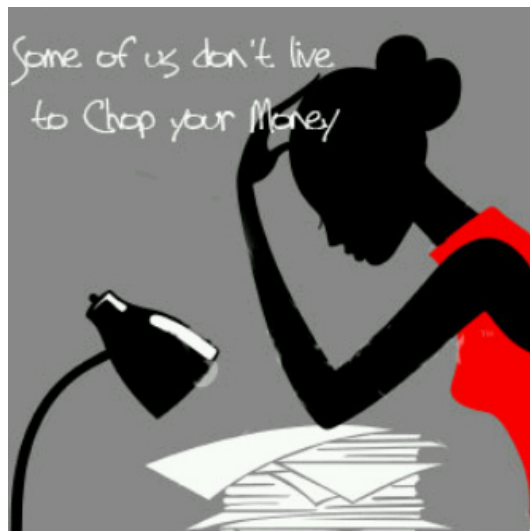


Figure 6. Examples of BlackBerry 'display pictures'. These were changed frequently to shape one's BBM identity, spark conversation and give rise to new forms of sociality.

5. Sewing Shops

The day of the fashion shoot had finally arrived. With nervousness and excitement, Judith and the other young women from her sewing shop packed up clothes and accessories and headed to the venue at one of Calabar's premier hotels. As a hotel room was quickly transformed into a dressing area, the girls got to work. Judith put the finishing touches to her creations, which were being modelled by Edith, a former apprentice from the shop. Shaping the garments to Edith's body, Judith ensured they fitted properly in order to do justice to both clothes and the model. Roseline, Judith's youngest sister, was in charge of make-up and was reapplying Edith's own make-up with bolder colours for the cameras. The bed had been transformed into an ironing board, and Diana, Judith's sewing assistant, was eliminating all creases and perfecting the outfits. Sitting quietly, Maggie, who had a small business selling accessories shipped from the UK, sorted through plastic bags packed with jewellery, trying to find the perfect piece to complete her sister's designs.

Having established a successful business in Calabar designing and sewing clothes, Judith had been invited to feature in one of Nigeria's glossy women's magazines in a special issue dedicated to influential women in Cross River. At first Judith had not been too sure of what to expect or what the magazine editors required. Then, as the date of the shoot was postponed numerous times, Judith had begun to expect it not to happen at all. Eventually, Judith had sat back and said that she would just let the magazine call her when they were in town. If it happened, it happened. If not, she would sell the clothes she had created

especially for the shoot to her customers in Calabar. I remember I had initially asked many questions – the shoot was undoubtedly a great opportunity. However, when Judith had few answers, I realised that this was another instance of the uncertain waiting that young women endured in Calabar.

Judith had come up with a number of outfits to reflect her reputation for making fashionable ‘western’ style clothes and bridal wear in Calabar. The long gowns, pencil skirts and ‘tube tops’, and shorter party dresses that Judith had created demonstrated the talent and craftsmanship that went into her fashion label, Just Judy’s. I had watched this creative process over the weeks prior to the shoot when Judith had trawled the shops at Watt Market that sold ‘sample fabrics’ (off-cuts from factory-made clothes). She had spent more hours than usual searching for the perfect material for what she had in mind, or trying to create a style to match a material she could not resist buying. It was clearly an exciting process for Judith, who enthusiastically showed off her purchases when she returned to the shop, wrapping the fabric round her and showing us how she planned to transform a piece of material into a show-stopping outfit. Slowly, the piles of ‘sample fabrics’ – jersey materials, printed cottons, linens, lace and chiffons – that burst out of the shop’s cupboards reappeared in different guises on the clothes rail in Judith’s showroom.

Now, in the hotel room, Judith showed her designs to the fashion stylist and magazine editor who had flown in from Lagos. Laying the outfits on the bed, the stylist decided which ones to include in the shoot: a flowing mint-coloured short dress; a short, orange puffball dress with colourful jewelled embellishments; a skin-tight yellow pencil skirt matched with a flowery fitted ‘tube top’; a long

evening gown with a bold printed skirt; a black long-sleeved knee-length dress made out of shiny material; and a pair of loose-fitting black culottes put together with a lacy yellow top. All designs were finished off with Maggie's accessories and vertiginous heels the girls had collected especially for the shoot. The designs clearly demonstrated Judith's ability to come up with unique pieces from a variety of materials. Moreover, the styles were incredibly fashionable, mimicking recent trends circulating not only Calabar but also international fashion catwalks.

It was not just Judith's inspiration for the outfits that spoke to the global fashion industry but also the way in which they were being displayed in the magazine. With Edith finally made up, we watched as she worked the camera, contorting her body into the various poses that resembled the fashion shoots of international fashion magazines. This interplay between the local and the global speaks to the work of Nuttall (2004), who argues how visual forms around Johannesburg, such as billboards, constitute notions of emerging urban identities and reveal the post-Apartheid city as a participant in the global circuits of culture. Reading these urban sights as texts, Nuttall (2004) highlights how the city becomes a language both articulating youth's aspirations (their future imaginaries) and concealing South African urban reality. Crucially, this juxtaposition of signs, the entwining of the local and the global in the urbanscape, points to processes of personhood. As Nuttall (2004:431) argues, youth's consumption of these visual forms enables them to remodel themselves as 'single beings' in the public domain. Indeed, as I watched the whole fashion shoot in process – from Judith's designs through to Edith's posing – I was

witnessing these young women 'make' themselves as 'modern' individuals in urban society. As Edith modelled for the camera, and as the other girls snapped her on their BlackBerries to document the day and circulate the photos to their BBM contacts, the whole fashion shoot appeared a celebration of the self and success, a quest to be unique and a 'showcasing' of talent.

The following discussion draws out these ideas of consumption, class, modernity, and individualism to understand how sewing shops encourage and enable the emergence of a particular feminine urban identity in Calabar. Such themes are underpinned by literature on fashion and dress. Simmel's (1957) classic account of fashion remains popular within the anthropology of fashion in view of the sociologist's analysis of class, wealth, imitation and social equalisation. For Simmel (1957), fashion is always in process; the masses copy the style of the elite, who must constantly change their style in order to stay ahead. While 'western' notions of class prove difficult translating to African society, underpinned by vertical networks (cf. Bayart 2009), Simmel (1957) remains useful for thinking about how fashion sets one group apart from another. The following discussion highlights how fashion allows young women to situate themselves in Calabar society. Through consumption, adorning themselves and displaying wealth (cf. Veblen 1953), young women are granted access to a certain aspirational class. This chapter questions Simmel's (1957) argument that fashion (as imitation) signals a lack of personal freedom, by examining emerging feminine subjectivities and changing notions of the self. Choosing to act a certain way, negotiating dress sense with self-development, spirituality, and community,

young women in Calabar demonstrate individual agency and raise questions regarding resistance (cf. Mahmood 2005).

Literature on African fashion has drawn from and developed the earlier works of Simmel (1957) and Veblen (1953) to examine more broadly how dress and style help constitute self- and personhood. While little attention has been paid to African fashion (Allman 2004), the literature that does exist has had a tendency to draw on Turner's (1980) concept of the 'social skin' from Amazonian anthropology to understand how African fashion stands as a mediator of subjective and collective experience. While we must remember that the individual's and collective's experiences of fashion do not necessarily have to be in support of one another – dress can set people apart just as easily as it unites – dress is shown to be integral to how the individual positions themselves in society. Indeed, dress owns the ability to confer 'identity, status and rank, protest, power, and so much more' (Hansen 2013:2). Drawing the study of fashion away from sociology (cf. Simmel 1957; Veblen 1953) and into more anthropological realms, Hansen (2013) argues how clothes demonstrate agency and constitute experience for the individual, and are as much about materiality as about embodied experience (cf. Entwistle 2000). In understanding how fashion constitutes personhood, recent literature has framed African fashion through the lenses of consumption (Hansen & Madison 2013), power (Bastian 2013), exchange (Allman 2004).

Gondola's (1999) account of *les sapeurs*, the urban Congolese youth whose thirst for foreign designer labels leads them to embark on a literal, corporeal and psychological migration to Europe, is helpful for allowing us to think about how

youth's employment of fashion is entwined with aspirations, means of becoming, and methods for the individual to associate with an envisaged 'modernity'. For Gondola (1999), the *sapeur* evolves from dreamer to traveller, using dress both to overcome geography and to forge a new identity. *La sape* (dress) distinguishes the individual from the rest of society, forming a class and acting as a political statement directed towards the authoritarian African state and the West. While the young women in this chapter are still yet to fulfil their dreams of travelling 'outside', to be 'enlightened' by Europe or the US, Gondola (1999) is helpful for showing (through the migration routes and foreign labels) how the interstices of local and global are found in fashion, and how the individual becomes a site of expression and resistance. Indeed, as Gondola (1999) draws on Fabian's (1978) analysis of popular culture, we are brought back to Nuttall's (2004) analysis of how the signs of the African urban landscape enable youth to 'make' themselves and how, amid the encounter of local and global, young people strive for aspirations amid a tough reality.

This chapter discusses how fashion is integral to young women's ideas of selfhood, articulating and encouraging aspirations. Where this thesis argues that young women in Calabar have faith in overcoming present struggles and realising better futures by making constant acts of preparation to the self, this chapter pinpoints how engagement with sewing shops allows young women to work on their inner and outer selves, fashioning subjectivities conducive to successful living in the postcolonial city. From the apprenticeship and business of the sewing shop, to styling the self according to the belief in one's uniqueness, the discussions emphasise young women's agency, consuming fashion to

envisage new ideas of the self and prepare the self for fortunate opportunities. Reiterating this thesis' argument that the mutually-inclusive forces of faith and fear always drive such acts of preparation (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013), this chapter focuses on the idea of respectability for single urban young women. Central here is how young women must negotiate their desires to connect to the global, articulating a 'cultural logic of urban success' through individual style and comportment, while remembering their local roots and community obligations. Styling the self is a constant gamble for success, and young women acknowledge the risks of getting it 'wrong' and thus 'missing' fortune (cf. da Col 2012; Graeber 2012). As such, the discussions draw out what it means to be 'modern' for young women in Calabar, highlighting how the global is expressed through the local (cf. Geschiere et al. 2008), and illuminating the anxieties of becoming in urban Nigeria.

The opening discussion situates sewing shops as sites of style for young women in broader analyses of youth's aspirations in urban Africa (cf. Masquelier 2013b; Weiss 2009), emphasising the 'disconnect' (Ferguson 1999) young women experience between the global and local. The second section looks at sewing apprenticeship and business to illustrate how young women desire to constantly learn new skills in preparation for future possibilities. The section highlights how young women make themselves available for fortunate opportunities, and draws out emic ideas of feminine respectability young women must obey in order to encourage success. The third section continues this discussion of feminine respectability by examining the tensions young women find in Pentecostal rhetoric: the needs of 'showcasing' uniqueness and material success

with modesty. Drawing on earlier discussions, this section reiterates how Pentecostalism encourages both feelings of self-worth and anxieties of getting it 'right'. The fourth section looks to the process of making clothes, examining young women's ideas of 'real' and 'fake' in forming an urban class. The chapter concludes by drawing these themes of respectability, urbanity and individuality together in a discussion of how girls style themselves for marriage. Drawing out how young women express urban success, this section questions understandings of African 'modernity'. The themes of faith, fear and fantasy run throughout the chapter as young women reconcile global and local, individual and community, 'singlehood' and marriage, and uniqueness with modesty as they look to better futures.

Just Judy's

The invitation to feature in one of Nigeria's high-end glossy magazines came as an accolade for Judith. Yet while she was hailed as an up-and-coming talent in Calabar, pitched alongside Cross River's most eminent female public figures, it must be noted that Judith's involvement in fashion was far from new. Her business had taken time, patience and perseverance to develop, and her interest in fashion had, as she stated, 'always been there'. Judith had created her first wedding dress at the age of 11 – using a mosquito net, she had transformed another girl into a bride for a mock wedding performed by her siblings and neighbourhood playmates. Later, in her final year of high school, she started sewing on a machine, learning small things from her mother who would sew for her own enjoyment in the house. As Judith described how she had always had an 'excitement for dresses, for flashy things and all like that', she knew that she

would always have ended up in fashion, because being creative was her 'kind of person'.

With the initial lessons from her mother, Judith gradually improved her sewing. Starting with more 'traditional' Nigerian styles – skirts and blouses made in Ankara material – she taught herself more complex designs by studying the 'ready-made' ('western') clothes she owned to see how they were cut and put together. While she started out just sewing for herself and her younger siblings, Judith remembered how she got her first customer within a year of starting to sew:

The first person that I ever sewed for... was my neighbour actually. She just came and said, 'Ahn, there was this dress.' I said, 'Man, I don't sew for people. I just sew for my sisters.' She said that I should just help – that she had seen my things – that I should just try. That was 2002. So I now sewed for her. Before I knew it, her friends saw the dress and her friend was like, 'Ahn! Who made this dress for you?' She brought her and that was how I started... Gradually, gradually, I collected from one person to the other.

It was from here that she became increasingly busy with sewing, turning her love for fashion into a small business, which she ran from her bedroom. By 2007 her business had expanded to bridal trains after she had been inspired by the wedding dress her best friend had ordered from Scotland. Judith told of her excitement of how she had reproduced the dress so well that her friend had accused her of 'photocopying' it, and how, as others saw her creations being worn, she received commissions to make more wedding dresses. With her business becoming successful and well known in Calabar, Judith organised her own fashion show, where she was spotted by someone who worked on DCC, the First Lady's annual charitable fashion show (held for her orphanage, Destiny's

Child Center). Being invited to partake in the DCC show in 2011 gave Judith more exposure, marking an important year for her business. By the time I had met Judith in February 2012, some ten years after she had first started making clothes for others, she had moved her business from her bedroom to a shop, and had taken on apprentices.

Sewing shops, as sites of productivity and sociality, hold an important place in Calabar's urban landscape. The majority are found around the market areas, especially Watt Market, Calabar's largest market selling the largest variety of materials and sewing accessories. Usually housing one or two peddle sewing machines and run by an older 'madam' (shops in one tailoring section of Watt Market were run by men), these shops tend to be small. The ones inside the market are usually poorly lit and decorated with both clients' unused materials on wooden tables and the clothes that are ready for collection hung on the walls. By comparison, Judith's shop was bright, airy and situated above a web-design shop in a quiet and sought-after residential part of town. The sewing room, brightened up with one pink wall, was crammed with seven sewing machines. A TV was mounted on the wall in one corner, a wealth of DVDs piled up beneath it. To the side, another room, decorated with intricately embellished wedding gowns, doubled as a showroom and changing room. This was a space of not just creativity and style but also of activity, populated by apprentices, clients and other young women who visited for company. Following the previous discussions of young women's reluctance to let others 'know their place', the shop became a thoroughfare for permissible sociality between school, home, church and the market.

In understanding Judith's story outlining the growth of her business, and to open up the discussion of how participating in sewing apprenticeships enables young women to fashion subjectivities conducive to successful urban living, it is necessary to draw on discussions of 'modernity' that have recently taken place in anthropology and African studies. As Geschiere et al. (2008) outline, the term 'modernity' is highly ambiguous with regard to Africa and analyses of African societies. While newly independent African countries displayed optimism for 'modernisation' and 'modernity' in the 1960s and 1970s, the disappointing realities (notably of Structural Adjustment Policies) emerged towards the end of the century. While the failures of the IMF economic reforms have been all too apparent, we must question the notion that Africa 'lags behind', and get away from employing Habermasian 'tradition': 'modernity' binaries or Rostow-esque teleological discourses of 'development' (cf. Geschiere et al. 2008). Central to understanding how the concept of 'modernity' can be employed in analyses of Africa is to look to the specifics of the local (cf. Englund & Leach 2000; Geschiere et al. 2008). For instance, some have looked to cultural specifics to show how 'alternative', 'local', 'parallel' and 'multiple' modernities exist counter to the West (e.g. Larkin 1997; Piot 1999).

Ferguson (1999) offers one particularly attractive analysis of 'modernity' in view of his framework for showing how global and local interact. Illuminating the abject experiences of Zambian urban life, Ferguson (1999) articulates the discrepancies between Africa and elsewhere as a 'disconnect'. However, rather than viewing the continent as cut off from the wider world, Ferguson (1999:238) argues that 'disconnection' insinuates a form of relation. As we acknowledge

how globalisation differentiates locales in the process of drawing them together, we must pay attention to multiplicities and non-linear trajectories in the social transformation of Africa (Ferguson 1999). Indeed, recent analyses have shown how urban realities play host to a hive of activity, productivity and 'kaleidoscopic' identities (de Boeck & Plissart 2006); how 'traditional' cultural tendencies are perpetuated rather than quashed by capitalism (Comaroff & Comaroff 1993; Geschiere 1997); and how growing spiritual fervour for global religions, such as Pentecostalism, encourage distinct modernities that can redeem the nation (Marshall 2009) and counter state rhetoric (Meyer 1998).

I further this concept in discussing how young women attempt to 'make' themselves as successful urban individuals through sewing shops. While the development discourse is still highly important to urban Nigerians (cf. Geschiere et al. 2008) – young women strive to have 'arrived' rather than be 'local', and to be 'on point' rather than 'anyhow' in their fashions – the following discussion pays particular attention to how global forms are articulated (and to what means) at the local. Focusing on young men's preoccupation with fashion in urban Niger, Masquelier (2013b) argues how global fashion is articulated at the local by showing how the consumption of fashion (namely global brand names) is a tool young Africans use to cope with social exclusion. As Masquelier (2013b) notes, dress has a semiotic power, distinguishing people from one another. Being fashionable, wearing desirable branded clothes, is one way in which young Nigériens can feel included by garnering 'respect, approbation, and envy from others' (ibid.:150). Illuminating these terms valued by youth, Masquelier's (2013b) analysis is helpful for understanding how fashion allows youth not just

to position themselves within their own immediate environs but also to engage with the global. Furthermore, Masquelier (2013b) is helpful in giving a framework for how a class connoting success may develop amongst urban African youth. Wearing brand names displays these young men's aspirations to others, illuminating Nigérien youth's desires to be simultaneously distanced from the rural and connected to the wider world.

Yet, as Masquelier (2013b) highlights, the financial constraints that lead to these young men buying imitation goods illuminate the ever-present disjuncture between Niger and the world beyond. This is undoubtedly an important point for understanding how youth in (notably urban) Africa contend with their present realities and hold certain hopes for the future, and one which is developed further in conjunction with ideas of self-fashioning in Weiss's (2009) analysis of young men's aspirations in urban Tanzania. Paying great attention to the economic situation in Tanzania, where urban youth suffer the effects of the state's neo-liberal reforms, young men have appropriated barbershops as productive spaces, giving them a 'chance', 'opportunity' or 'place' in society (Weiss 2009:9). As with Masquelier (2013b), Weiss (2009) draws heavily on processes of self-fashioning enabled by these barbershops, where watching films or being fashionable allows youth to participate in the wider world. This analysis is particularly helpful by emphasising the ideas of value and sociality that are fostered through these urban spaces:

Such sites in Arusha seem unambiguously to proclaim the contemporary efflorescence of popular culture as an array of practices and performances through which Tanzanians establish their place in an explicitly global and spectacular flow of images, objects, and persons. In the modes of fantasy that constitute their popular culture exemplified by such microinstitutions, urban

Tanzanians imaginatively articulate and act on a world remade.
(Weiss 2009:2)

The themes illuminated in Weiss's (2009) barbershops are reminiscent of Judith's sewing shop. The 'western' style clothes being made, the fashion magazines and BlackBerries used to 'browse' fashion websites, and the foreign DVDs – North and South American series, British TV-shows, and Hollywood (never Nollywood) films – played in the background when NEPA allowed, all hinted towards the ideas of performance and circulating ideas of value and sociality. Judith's shop was a site these young women were claiming for themselves, not only taking in ideas but giving back and participating with others elsewhere. Yet as we watched numerous episodes of *Project Runway*, an American reality TV-show for aspiring fashion designers, and Judith told of her own dreams to 'travel out' to complete a fashion course in Paris in order to expand her business horizons, the sewing shop also presented another idea foregrounded by Weiss (2009): fantasy.

While Judith's success-to-date set her apart from many young women in Calabar, illustrating how youth can find opportunities amid the uncertainty of the Nigerian postcolony (cf. Obadare & Adebani 2010), her dreams of travelling abroad appeared irreconcilable with her current business and her own upcoming wedding. Weiss's (2009) analysis helps us think about the sewing shop as a space appropriated by young people to participate in the wider world and shape future imaginaries, yet we must go further to understand how dress, as a particular way of self-styling, enables young women to project and realise their future aspirations. While Judith's shop illuminates the ever-present tension

between the real constraints experienced by young women and the unlimited products of their imaginations (cf. Masquelier 2013b; Nuttall 2004; Weiss 2009), it also speaks to the how urban single young women must negotiate competing discourses of success, such as domestic and personal success (cf. Frahm-Arp 2012). For instance, the young women in Judith's shop were reasonably well connected in Calabar society, yet they were still all too well aware of their struggles. As they acknowledged their financial problems, troubles with university, spiritual concerns (cf. Ashforth 2001, 2005) and tensions with parents, for instance, we may ask how their aspirations and fantasies for the future were actually maintained.

In asking how young women's employment of fashion allows them to negotiate fears and faith in the future, the following discussion develops this above notion of urban success as linked to the outside world (cf. Ferguson 1999; Masquelier 2013b; Weiss 2009). As with Crapazano's (2004) understanding of the future, which remains a fuzzy horizon always in the process of becoming, young women's aspirations appeared somewhat intangible. Despite this, young women spoke of certainty when they described their futures; they were sure that fortune would arrive. The following illustrates how, renewing faith in fortune and dispelling fears of failure, young women constantly work on the self in preparation for what could come (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013). Where the above highlights the desires to connect to the global in order to appear successful and articulate aspirations, the following focuses on what problems this poses for young women, examining how this group strive towards respectability, fame and success.

Keeping Busy, Doing Business

I was first introduced to Judith through Florence. Just out of university, Florence was back living in her parents' house in Calabar and waiting to be mobilised for NYSC. As I sat with Florence in her parents' parlour, she told me of her boredom at home and how she wanted to use the time to do something beneficial (cf. Chapter 4). With her love for modelling, Florence had always had an interest in fashion and wanted to develop her fashion career. In fact, as she anticipated Youth Service, Florence spoke of how she would be posted to Lagos in order to work in the fashion industry there – while graduates can rarely choose their NYSC posting, Florence brushed fears of uncertainty aside and had faith God would answer her prayers. In the mean time, as she waited in Calabar, Florence had found out about Judith's apprenticeship from a friend. As she told me of her plans to pay the 40,000 naira for Judith's 3-month design course, she explained how an apprenticeship would enable her to leave the house, alleviate her boredom and, importantly, give her a useful skill for her future.

Drawing on the discussions of the temporalities of youth presented in the previous chapter, young women's sewing apprenticeships speak very much to ideas of waiting and productivity (cf. Honwana 2012; Jeffrey 2010; Masquelier 2013a). Developing Honwana's (2012) analysis that young people are far from idle as they wait for adulthood, we are reminded that young women in Calabar engage in activities in a constant bid to prepare for the future, negotiating their faith and fears in a gamble for success. While the previous chapter illuminated young women's activities in the house, this section presents the idea that when money does come, young women invest it in learning practical skills to keep

busy, escape ennui and encourage fortune. Foremost, these skills speak directly to ideas of self-fashioning. Young women gain knowledge to develop future business prospects, with sewing apprenticeships, in particular, enabling young women to design and make clothes for themselves cheaply in order to change their appearance and dress for success (cf. Bastian 2013; Hansen & Madison 2013). The discussion goes on to complicate this understanding of learning new skills to encourage future success by focusing more explicitly on the formation of feminine urban subjectivities.

Just as Florence had decided to take up an apprenticeship as a means to temporarily remove herself from her parents' house, the other young women in Judith's shop were also looking to get out of the house and keep busy during periods of waiting. While sewing apprenticeships seemed an incredibly popular pursuit for young women in Calabar, other young women I knew had also used their free time to take courses in computer skills, interior decorating, beading, cake baking and make-up. All of these skills could encourage opportunities to make money – from running a small business to creating a larger enterprise. Other friends who did not have as much money were always keen to pay a small amount (a few thousand naira) for the various business seminars that were run across town – Pentecostal churches, such as Winners Chapel and The Brook Church, would also put these business seminars on for their church members. Young women often spoke of the need to 'have something going', which was not just about keeping busy to alleviate boredom (cf. Masquelier 2013a) but also about a constant need to develop the self in anticipation of the future.

Writing about the informal shoe and garment production in Aba (began under colonial rule), Meagher (2010) examines the development of sewing apprenticeships in southern Nigeria. By the 1970s, the tailors had specialised in the production of certain clothes. Central to the production process was the apprenticeship, which lasted roughly two and a half years and endowed the apprentice with skills, knowledge of supply, access to networks and socialisation to garment production business ethics (Meagher 2010).¹⁰³ Occasionally, the apprentice would also be supplied with capital and a production space to start up their own business (Meagher 2010; cf. Forrest 1994). While young women in Judith's shop spoke of learning a skill for themselves, Meagher's (2010) analysis is helpful for highlighting the processes of socialisation and the implicit vertical networks of patronage that govern postcolonial society (cf. Bayart 2009). Judith's short apprenticeship equipped the apprentice with sewing skills, and participation in the shop was integral to the apprentices learning not only how to dress but also the right codes of conduct to fashion themselves as part of Calabar's aspirational class of young women.

In asking how learning new skills is part of 'feminine cultures of waiting', rather than just for youth or young men (cf. Honwana 2012; Jeffrey 2010; Masquelier 2013a), Meagher (2010) is also helpful for highlighting how apprenticeships and informal economies own to gender differences. In Aba, both men and women partake in the garment production trade. However, where women often find difficulties in business due to domestic responsibilities or access to capital,

¹⁰³ While Judith's apprenticeship lasted 3 months, most of the apprenticeships on offer in the sewing shops around Watt Market lasted for 2 years.

informal labour holds many more advantages.¹⁰⁴ It is such that Meagher (2010) helps us think about not only female labour amid uncertain political and economic environments but, going further, we may also unravel how young women, trapped by gendered and gerontocratic power cleavages, benefit from the informal structures that allow them to build businesses in accordance with their own time and economic constraints. Indeed, as the girls in the shop acknowledged, learning how to sew was a means of self progression, a technique the girls hoped would help them to overcome the broader generational tensions of the postcolony that they feared jeopardised their futures.

Most of Judith's apprentices were waiting to finish university. Where the formal education system in Nigeria envelops young people in a constant struggle – and where few jobs are available to those who do graduate (cf. Honwana 2012; Jeffrey 2010; Masquelier 2013a) – it is not surprising that apprenticeships are so important for young women as a way of keeping busy, gaining knowledge, expertise and another type of qualification. Where young women held fears regarding their formal education, worrying that they were being held back in their attempt to graduate and move forward in society, they found faith in other educational outlets in preparation for the future. In understanding how young women had faith in apprenticeships, we must look further than just comparing formal and informal education (cf. Lave 2011) to understand how learning skills maintains faith in future success, and dispels fears of failure, through the constant process of learning as a means of self-fashioning. Just as Masquelier

¹⁰⁴ See Rabine (2002:39) for notes on the gendered profession of tailoring. Traditionally, only men were allowed to do paid labour in Senegal, although Rabine (2002) notes how female couturiers existed at least as far back as in the 1950s. These female tailors would work and receive customers at home.

(2013a) highlights how Nigérien *fadas* enable young men to talk about their futures away from intergenerational tensions in the way in which tea drinking is not associated with elders, we may understand how young women claim time for themselves by paying for courses and short-term apprenticeships.

Yet, amid uncertainty in the Nigerian postcolony (cf. Obadare & Adebani 2010; Haram & Yamba 2009), how young women claim time for themselves is not without its difficulties. In Calabar, young women must await indefinite future horizons and negotiate future plans with flexibility in the present. While the students in Judith's shop were trying to use the time off school to their advantage, the sudden call-off to the UniCal strike, leading to imminent end-of-year exams and projects, meant that many of the apprentices never 'graduated' from the sewing shop. Although they came back to the shop to ask Judith to teach them new styles in their spare time, their school studies were too demanding for them to be, in Judith's words, 'serious' about sewing. While they were clearly disappointed that they had had to abandon the sewing shop, what was interesting was the emphasis placed on 'graduating' from the apprenticeship (cf. Meagher 2010). Juxtaposed against the difficult formal education system, where young people spend months – sometimes years – waiting to graduate, receive certificates and be fully qualified to enter formal employment, young people still held faith in being a 'graduate' of something, signifying a certain level of expertise and authority.

Despite the difficulties of making plans, young women in Calabar kept preparing for the future. They were always keen to learn new skills even when they were not in the position to use them straight away. As one friend told me, it was

always useful to know how to sew, just in case the need to make her own clothes or the opportunity to create a business ever arose. Finishing her studies at UniCal at the time of her apprenticeship, she was looking forward to NYSC before possible postgraduate study abroad. She was not expecting needing to know how to sew in the immediate future but she realised that she may be left waiting in her parents' house for a few months, or may want to start a business from home later in life when she had her own family. Interestingly, as my single friend spoke of the possibilities of married life, being confined to the house to raise children, she reiterated the need to have something going for herself, to keep working on her individual self in preparation for the future. Hence, while the constant need to work on the self to reach future aspirations is not a process confined solely to single women in Nigeria, we must pay attention to the negotiations that are particular to urban female 'singlehood' (cf. Frahm-Arp 2012).

In understanding how single young women in Calabar seek to learn new skills as preparation of the self for how they imagine their futures, we may look to how this group negotiate short- and long-term goals during uncertain times of waiting (cf. Jeffrey 2010:4). Where these young women were already quite well connected in terms of education and family, learning skills was not an end in itself but merely a means to an end. These attitudes to waiting were aired particularly well by Diana, Judith's shop assistant. An Accountancy graduate, Diana (and her young daughter) still lived at home. She took up sewing as she waited to return to university to study her original choice of degree, Economics – fortunately, Diana's father could afford to support this second degree. Diana spoke of her competing plans during her time waiting:

It was last week that I found out that they [UniCal] are not offering [Economics]. I just have to work on getting my [Accountancy] results, and I have registered for the ICAN [Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria] class because I don't want to be idle. The sewing is not an end, it's a means. I don't want to be getting too focused on the means. I want to focus on the end.

Crucially, learning skills was not an instant way of breaching perceived disconnect between current predicaments and imagined futures of security and success. Rather, young women saw future success being encouraged by constantly working on themselves in the present – through the acquisition of skills, keeping busy and partaking in appropriate pastimes. Yet we must understand that the projects young women in Calabar take on in the short-term are as much gambles as investments for the future (cf. da Col 2012; Graeber 2012). Indeed, taking Diana as an example, her short-time projects of sewing and the ICAN classes were to prepare her for the future but did not necessarily lead her to her dream of being an Economics graduate. While young women had hope in the future through their engagement with constant activity, perpetuating the 'cycles of faith' as they took up new ventures (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013), they also held fears that these current activities would prolong the present, rendering their futures similar to their current situations. It was a concern expressed by Diana as she focused on her return to academia, 'You just have to do something and not get stuck on the means.' Short- and long-term goals were not always in harmony with one another but young women held the belief that keeping busy, being flexible and diversifying skills in the present prepared them for long-term success and fortune.

In understanding how apprenticeships play out in the 'feminine cultures of waiting' (cf. Jeffrey 2010), we also need to seek a more nuanced understanding of young women's livelihoods and hence to go beyond an analysis of economics and business (cf. Meagher 2010). Central to understanding how young women 'make' themselves in their time of waiting is how they are fashioning new feminine subjectivities. These emerging urban identities are projects of individualism but link to the relational self, encouraging new identities in accordance with parental and marital pressures through the understanding that success is linked to notions of respectability. In Calabar, sewing was an acceptable pastime for young women and the location of Judith's shop was also an appropriate place for young women to spend time. Indeed, before Florence had started the apprenticeship, her mother had visited Judith's shop, highlighting the parental constraints young women from reasonably well-connected families must negotiate. Yet notions of respectability were more complicated than being seen in the right area of town. It was interesting that as my friends always spoke of the need to do something for themselves, the emphasis was on being successful, garnering respect and admiration in their own rights. Running parallel to this was the general understanding, especially within the Pentecostal churches, that a respectable daughter or wife was a woman who had something going for them, such as a successful business.

Such understandings of how training and learning new skills feed into notions of feminine respectability can be found throughout the *longue durée* in southern Nigeria. Writing about early female Christian converts in southeastern Nigeria, Bastian (2000) examines the teaching of missionary schools, such as the Girls'

Training School in Umudioka, to illuminate the emergence of new forms of personhood among young Igbo women. Teaching Christian beliefs and homemaking skills, the CMS missionaries encouraged a new category of person, the *ndi kris* (the Christian people), to be based on European gender categories. Chapter 1 has discussed how this missionary encounter changed female subjectivities in the early 20th century, helping young women challenge traditional gender and generational relations; here, it is necessary to highlight how religious practices also encouraged the formation of a new elite Christian class. As Bastian (2000) writes, converted wives were considered part of Christian male prestige. While families sent their daughters to such Christian institutions in the hope to increase bridewealth and social connections, fiancés also saw the attraction in sending their future wives to be trained as Christian housewives.

While young women in Calabar had faith in future success by developing their individual selves, Bastian's (2000) account is helpful for illuminating the concepts of respectability, class formation and social reproduction that simultaneously liberate and constrain young Nigerian women. By focusing on how young women 'make' themselves for the future in relation to family (and hence marital) obligations – how they form new urban feminine subjectivities – we are better placed to understand how short- and long-term goals can be mediated even when, as Diana's case exemplifies, they appear divergent. As this section has highlighted, young women in Calabar prepared for unknown futures by learning as many skills as possible, a technique to ensure personal success when unknown events arise. Where Miyazaki (2004) argues that hope is

renewed through repeating acts, this section has also highlighted how young women keep faith in being ready for future fortune by both repeating and diversifying preparations of the self. Where skills may never be used, learning them is always a gamble (cf. da Col 2012; Graeber 2012). However, unpicking 'feminine cultures of waiting' (cf. Jeffrey 2010), young women also look beyond pragmatic skills to find faith in apprenticeships as moulding subjectivities of feminine respectability and hence opening possibilities for social mobility. Developing 'feminine cultures of waiting' (cf. Jeffrey 2010), this discussion has gone beyond illustrating activity as a strategy to highlight how ideas of respectability are just as important for overcoming present struggles and looking to better futures during times of waiting. Identifying tensions between fashion and church, the next section continues this discussion of feminine respectability.

Faith and Fashion

As with other sewing shops in Calabar, Judith's shop was overflowing with colourful textiles. Plastic bags stuffed full of fabrics toppled out of the cupboards in the sewing room, and off-cuts of materials and half-made garments piled up on the floor as the working day progressed – a testament to the shop's popularity and productivity. Compared with the majority of sewing shops found around Watt Market, usually owned by older 'madams' and catering for more 'traditional' styles of dress, Judith's shop had become highly sought-after amongst a certain class of aspirational young women in Calabar. While Calabar girls may not have as much money as the stylish young women of Lagos, Abuja or Port Harcourt, they were still highly image-conscious and would use whatever means they had to look good. As Diana described, 'Calabar girls are red lipstick';

meticulous attention was paid to make-up, groomed hair (preferably long Brazilian ‘weave-ons’), polished nails, stylish clothes and accessories (from imported ‘western’ jewellery to the latest BlackBerry handset).

Central to the popularity of Judith’s shop was her focus on making ‘western’ style clothes – as she explained, young women in Calabar loved wearing ‘English’ clothes. While wearing ‘western’ style clothes allows young women to aspire to a place in the world beyond Calabar, it must also be noted that this link to ‘outside’ is nothing new or specific to young women in the city. Illustrating how the global circulation and exchange of fashion ideas are both long engrained in African history and indicative of African agency (cf. Allman 2004; Hansen & Madison 2013), the traditional Efik costume incorporates elements of ‘English’ style – as people sometimes joked to me, the Efik were ‘more English than the “whites”’. Efik men wear white shirts; beaded black waistcoats, flat caps and shoes; an Ankara ‘wrapper’ and matching scarf (*okpomkpom*); and complete the outfit with a walking stick. Efik women wear *oyoyos*, long dresses known more colloquially as ‘Elizabethan gowns’ (according to my informants, in view of the shape of the full-bodied skirt resembling British women’s past fashions).

While being well-dressed and incorporating styles from elsewhere is not particular to young women, it is important to pay attention to the specific ways in which young women employ certain types of fashion in order to harness power, display agency and indicate social status in the present (e.g. Bastian 2013; Kirby 2013), and as a means of preparing the self for the future. The discussion so far has highlighted how future success is contingent on the formation of respectable urban feminine subjectivities. This section develops this

notion of respectability and how young women develop themselves in relation to others by focusing on the styles of clothes they choose for themselves. Central to the discussion of how young women perpetuate faith in the future (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013) is the negotiation of fashion and Calabar's emerging Christian (Pentecostal) identities.

Regarding 'western' clothes as the essence of being fashionable and dictating a certain class of urban success, the shop's apprentices were eager to learn how to make pencil skirts, fitted jackets and trousers. Usually coming to work in the shop in skinny jeans, fitted tops or short dresses, they bought cheap and fashionable 'sample fabrics' to make their own 'English' style clothes – at the time of my own apprenticeship, chiffon for 300 naira a yard was the most popularly used material. Furthermore, young women preferred not to make 'traditional' outfits out of Ankara material, considering wax-print to be too 'churchy'. If the girls were to make 'traditional' dress, they explained how they preferred the 'cheekier' brands of wax-print, such as Da Viva or Woodin (often with more contemporary designs). It was such that while young women did wear more 'traditional' outfits for church or 'Traditional Marriages' – and always designed these outfits to show off their figures and style – they did not consider them as part of everyday urban life, fearing that others would not acknowledge that they had really 'arrived' as urban citizens (cf. Newell 2012).

Literature on youth livelihoods in Africa has only briefly mentioned young women's style of dress in conjunction with urban sexualities. For instance, Smith (2009) draws attention to how the young women who seek out sugar daddies in southeastern Nigeria are not always the poorest in society but quite often fairly

well-educated and highly fashion-conscious. These young women use dress to subscribe to one kind of urban femininity (Smith 2009), which is not only counter to emerging urban masculinities but, more often than not, financed by men. Similarly, Cole highlights how young women in urban Tamatave, Madagascar, 'use clothing to attract the men who embody the futures they aspire to' (2010:110). As *jeunes*, these young women are a performative category, indicating the future of Tamatave society as they mould their social world around them. It is such that Cole (2010) goes further than Smith's (2009) analysis of young women's employment of fashion, seeking to understand not only young women's present identities but also their future trajectories. However, as with Smith (2009), Cole's account (2010) remains problematic for reifying a connection between the consumption of fashion with the immorality of young women. For instance, as *jeunes* use fashion to adorn their bodies in order to engage with a sexual economy, they stand in stark contrast to the older women who have chosen the (Pentecostal) church for salvation and future security (Cole 2010).

In understanding young women's engagement with fashion as a means for encouraging fortune in the future, we must move away from this binary view of fashion-conscious immorality versus spiritual salvation (cf. Cole 2010). Indeed, the young women I spoke to in Calabar did not regard being fashionable as being problematic for their spiritual lives – a view similarly held by young Nigérien men who do not consider fashionable clothes to be an indictment of their Muslim beliefs (cf. Masquelier 2013b). Where the Pentecostal church in Calabar preaches that God judges people by their hearts and not their appearance – and more

importantly, that *only* God can judge – young women explained that they had renewed confidence in themselves (cf. Hendrickson 1996). For instance, where the ‘Orthodox’ churches – and also some older-style Pentecostal churches such as Deeper Life (cf. Marshall 1991) – dictate that young women must wear skirts and cover their heads in church, the newer-style Pentecostal churches allow women to wear what they feel most comfortable in.¹⁰⁵ As one friend explained, after moving from a Pentecostal church preaching the ‘holiness doctrine’ to Winners Chapel, she felt more ‘at peace’ worshipping in church because she knew it was only her heart that could be judged:

I don’t feel bad if I have to wear [clothes banned in her former church]... Ok, like what happened yesterday, we had service in the evening and I had to go for rehearsals [for her Carnival band]. So I was in *shorts*, ok? And let’s say a t-shirt as well. So I was like, ‘Oh my God, I have to go to church!’ But I could just run into church with no inhibitions.... I came to church to worship God and so no one is going to look at what I wear.

In further understanding how young women felt that their love for being fashionable did not necessarily contradict their spiritual lives, we must unravel how Pentecostal preaching perpetuates hope for future fortune (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013). Pentecostal processes of interiority – the focus on the heart and ideas of self-fashioning (cf. Marshall 1991, 2009) – gave young women confidence through strengthening their relationship with God and knowing only He could judge them. For instance, in the two Pentecostal churches I attended, references were continually made to how the individual worshipper was set

¹⁰⁵ Looking over the *longue durée*, Byfield’s (2004) analysis of women’s clothes from 19th century to post-World War II Nigeria highlights how fashions not only speak to socioeconomic opportunities and divisions in society but are also developed in accordance with the introduction of new Gods and values.

apart from others. The Brook Church (cf. Chapter 2) explained the worshipper's elevated status through the idea of 'headship' in life. It follows that the worshipper is able to command others and exercise kingly authority because of one's Christian identity having been made in the image of God. Similarly, Outpouring Assemblies also used the image of kingship,¹⁰⁶ yet paid more attention to how the individual differentiates from others by marking a turning point in family history. Demonstrating a Christian identity, the worshipper ends 'family altars', the covenants ancestors made with diabolic spirits (cf. Chapter 3). Breaking from the past (cf. Meyer 1998), the individual simultaneously welcomes divine success and stands out from the majority. By distancing the individual from others and focusing on the inner-self, young women received an understanding of the importance of being a unique human being – a unique person who should be celebrated. Just as young women find confidence in developing their God-given talents (cf. Chapter 2), fashion is a way in which they can express their uniqueness and their individuality.

It is, by extension, a reason why young women loved modelling. Back at Judith's fashion shoot for the glossy magazine, Roseline had explained how she had also wanted to model her sister's designs but had stepped aside for Edith, who was 'crazy about modelling'. As with many of the young women I had got to know in Calabar, both Roseline and Edith went to modelling rehearsals on Sunday afternoons, where they would practise their walks and poses.¹⁰⁷ As these aspiring models explained, these weekly rehearsals allowed them to develop

¹⁰⁶ This was present in Mama's preaching as she was formerly a member of The Brook Church.

¹⁰⁷ Modelling was not just an aspiration of young women. Young men also attended these rehearsals.

their 'passion for fashion' (a phrase young women often used to describe their keen interest in flashy things and looking good). Young women's enthusiasm for modelling was not just about show-off fashionable clothes but also about 'showcasing' themselves. As Florence stated, 'I love modelling! I love that thing! Modelling – being a model – being unique in your own way.' Yet the abundant rehearsals and annual DCC show aside, there are few actual modelling opportunities in Calabar – markedly so compared with Lagos. Where few of the young women claiming to be models actually find themselves landing paid contracts, we are reminded of the 'disconnect' these young women experience between what is and what could be (cf. Ferguson 1999; Masquelier 2013b; Weiss 2009). Where it appears aspirations are always in the process of unfolding, never completely attained, we must draw attention to the processes of interiority – finding confidence in the self and being unique – to understand how young women do keep faith that their fortune will be delivered (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013).

While young women found spiritual confidence, and hence faith that God would deliver their righteous futures, through this focus on their hearts, they also acknowledged some tensions. Complicating the notion of what it means to be a respectable Christian young woman in terms of parental and marital relations (cf. Bastian 2000), it appeared that people did still judge others by what they wore. Hence, self-fashioning as successful individuals is a spiritual gamble. For instance, Debbie, a young woman I met at The Brook Church, raised the issue of other girls' dress on a number of occasions. While she enjoyed the freedom The Brook Church allowed her to dress however she desired, permitting her to wear

smart pencil skirts or jeans, jewellery, make-up and to show off her long braids, she commented on how others sometimes took this too far. When young women were too provocative in their dress sense, she questioned their intentions in church:

I don't think God looks at what you wear. I don't think that because if God thinks that, pastors wouldn't allow people to wear whatever they like. But, you know, primitive people [the 'Orthodox' churches] – they say you have to tie your hair [cover your head], look so holy when you go to church. Like Deeper Life: you can't wear earrings; your clothes must be so tidy.

It's your heart that we are talking about. If your heart can be clean in the presence of God, what else should matter? But when you take your dressing as a priority, it's not really about it because it's like you're worshipping whatever you're wearing [instead of God]. Like those girls who are wearing long nails. They are just looking for compliments. That's wrong.

Literature on Pentecostalism draws links between capitalist consumption and perceived immoral and spiritual corruption (cf. Meyer 2008), highlighting the fears the Pentecostal church has over its worshippers' lifestyle choices and the pervasiveness of occult powers. In understanding how this impacts on young women in Calabar as they 'make' themselves as successful urbanites, it is helpful to draw on Pye (2013) to highlight how young women must negotiate spiritual and social success in the city. Focusing on the popularity of mobile phones in Kinshasa, Pye (2013) makes links between technology and ideas of personhood. Where mobile phones are integral to managing social relations to succeed in the urban environment – not just through phone calls but through ideas of handsets as gifts and status symbols – the author pays particular attention to sexuality, intimacy and womanhood. What is interesting is how young women are faced with tensions between consumption of status symbols

and the church rhetoric that prioritises spirituality. As Pype (2013) illustrates, young Kinoise are sandwiched between the desire to own the latest mobile phone (as with Nigeria, preferably a BlackBerry) and church rhetoric spelling the dangers of focusing on material wealth. As Pype (2013) argues for the need to pay more attention to 'connectivity' in our concepts of personhood, she ably highlights the anxieties of becoming for young women in urban Africa. We may understand that young women in Calabar face many challenges as they fashion themselves as successful and respectable Christians. Faced with competing notions of success through being materially fashionable and being respectable spiritually vigilant, young women negotiate perceptibly conflicting identities, undertaking constant gambles for fortune (cf. da Col 2012; Graeber 2012).

Interestingly, concerning dress and fashion, the anxieties of becoming Pype (2013) highlights are not only instigated by the spiritual and religious ideals but are actually heightened by Pentecostal doctrine in Calabar. While young women do not have to subscribe to a certain dress code in Pentecostalism, some Pentecostal churches, such as Redeemed Christian Church of God and Winners Chapel, insist that their female church workers (such as choir members or ushers) *should* wear skirts when they are serving in church. Such mandates echo the doctrines of the 'Orthodox' churches, which correlate female modesty (covering heads and wearing skirts) with heightened spirituality. Hence, young women are presented with the conflicting discourses even within Pentecostal churches: God judges your heart rather than your appearance, yet those who are considered spiritually blessed (the church workers) display modesty. It is such that these competing discourses highlight how the interstices of fashion and

spirituality for young women are highly ambiguous (cf. Cole 2010). While young women do find faith in the future by dressing well, feeling confident about their looks and believing only God can judge them, their fears of being perceived as a 'backslider' (an abomination of respectability) are expressed in the way in which they judge others.

Furthering how young women fashion subjectivities to encourage future success, this section has developed the notion of respectability (cf. Bastian 2000). As young women follow Pentecostal doctrine dictating that God only looks to the heart, they have confidence in dressing in fashionable clothes deemed immoral by 'Orthodox' churches. While this shows previous analyses of young women's fashion as problematic in their juxtaposition of female spirituality and immorality (cf. Cole 2010; Smith 2009), we find that young women are confronted with conflicting discourses as they strive to display uniqueness to maintain confidence in the self. As such, Pype's (2013) analysis is helpful for highlighting the social anxieties of becoming in urban Africa, the negotiations young women must make as they relate to other people in order to maintain respectability. The following section continues this idea of the anxieties and fears inherent in how young women fashion urban subjectivities. Central to this process of self-fashioning a successful and respectable outward appearance in accordance with the inner self (celebrating uniqueness) is not just the styles of clothes young women choose to wear but their actual personal involvement in the making of these garments that confer identity, set them apart from others (cf. Gondola 1999) and demonstrate where they want to be in life (cf. Bastian 2013; Masquelier 2013b).

Imitation and Inspiration

For young women in Calabar seeking to be fashionable and ‘on point’, it is not just the style of clothes that matters but where the garments of clothes have come from. Despite being a large urban centre, young women often complained that buying clothes was difficult in Calabar. Compared with other Nigerian cities – most notably, Lagos – Calabar provided only a small choice in terms of style, quality and price. Where young women bought clothes from friends who had travelled to Ghana or Lagos (where products are often cheaper), Watt Market (rarely the smaller markets that provided less choice), or from boutiques along the side of Watt Market or Marian, they had certain terms to describe the value of the type of product bought.

The most desired clothes were the ‘real thing’, those that had been imported from ‘outside’ (such as from UK high-street stores). While these were incredibly expensive for most young women – a garment at 27,000 naira could easily be a whole month’s salary – the ‘real thing’ were understood to be superior quality to most other commodities. Next best was second-hand, known as *okrika* (also a town in southern Nigeria). *Okrika* was also understood to be of good quality and if one bought ‘fairly used’, could often pass off as the ‘real thing’.¹⁰⁸ Following *okrika* was ‘China-made’ – the products connoting cheaper value and worse quality than the ‘real thing’ but still a viable option for purchase. Finally, after ‘China-made’ came ‘Aba-made’, denoting the products that are made in Nigeria and sold in Aba, a Nigerian town known for its large market. ‘Aba-made’ clothes

¹⁰⁸ The girls in the sewing shop reported that it was custom for boutiques in Lagos to wash *okrika*, perfume and package them very well in order to sell them off as the ‘real thing’. Similarly, the girls laughed at how Lagosian students would pretend their market-bought *okrika* had been bought in a boutique.

are not only cheap but of poor quality, and young women would try to avoid buying them (or at least admitting to buying them). Where the previous discussions have focused on the characteristics of emerging feminine subjectivities, this section focuses more on the material aspects of dress as young women strive to fashion successful urban identities. Furthermore, where the previous sections have highlighted the negotiations young women must make concerning gender, generation and spirituality, this section highlights how young women 'make' themselves in relation to their female peers. Central to the discussion is the understanding of class formation in the urban arena, drawing in earlier discussions of African 'modernity' (cf. Geschiere et al. 2008).

The categories used to describe different types of clothes speak to more general ideas of the market economy in Nigeria. Writing about commodities and prices in Yoruba markets, Guyer (2004) raises questions as to how people compare and give value to commodities. Not only do we need to ask how one ascertains whether one product is better than another but we also need to qualify the criteria by which consumers and sellers alike make their judgements. As the author writes, there are two main considerations made in the Yoruba market: to buy 'original' or 'fake', and to buy 'new' or '*tokunbo*' (second-hand). These binaries highlight the price differentials in the marketplace, with 'original' and 'new' being more expensive than 'fake' or '*tokunbo*'. Yet they also illuminate ideas regarding the life of the product: its origins and life expectancy. As Guyer (2004) notes, 'fake' products in Nigeria are not necessarily out to deceive the consumer – an honest tradesman may even ask consumers whether they would prefer to purchase a fake – but are understood to have been made elsewhere

(such as in Taiwan, China or Nigeria), denote a poorer quality and are likely to be less durable. Furthermore, the acceptance of 'fake' products has encouraged a certain multiplicity in the marketplace, the approval of alternatives.

Such ideas are of course important when considering how young women choose what clothes to buy. Where most of my informants were students or out of formal employment, they did not have extensive funds and hence knew both the price and value of everything (a common trait amongst Nigerians more generally). For most young women I knew in Calabar, buying *okrika* was desirable because it provided (at least the perception of) a better quality item at a fraction of the price (cf. Guyer 2004). Yet, where choice of fashion dictates ideas of power and agency (cf. Hansen & Madison 2013), we must also develop Guyer's (2004) analysis of value to ask how second-hand clothes enable young women to alter their perceptions of themselves, to emulate a particular identity owning to urban success. Explaining why young women in Calabar place such importance on fashion and looking good, Diana developed her answer to offer some insight into the value young women place in second-hand and 'original' clothes:

There is this thing about class. Everybody wants to be known as the classy girl, the one who wears the latest clothes or the one who wears the UK tops. UK this, UK that – they are always the best things.... You either have the money to go to a very expensive boutique where they have the good quality UK things, or you go to the boutiques that deal in the Aba-made clothes. So, most times, when girls dress, they want people to know that it's quality made clothes, it's not Aba. Because, even me, I do it!

You are walking down the road and you get this one [girl] who is really walking. She's ok and she's feeling very swish, and you are just like, 'What's that on her back top?!' [Laughs] Nobody wants to dress like the next person because we have this thing: if it's plenty, it's Aba.

In Diana's explanation, we are presented with the idea that young women associate clothes that are made 'outside' Nigeria with elevated social status. This resonates with Guyer's (2004) analysis of commodities, and also speaks to the analyses of African fashion that link the circulation of clothes and style to ideas of self-fashioning as attempted to participate in the wider world (e.g. Masquelier 2013b). As Diana laughed at how someone's status can be instantly deflated when being found out their UK-made clothes are in fact 'Aba-made', we are presented with the ideas of class, respect, jealousy and fear that Newell (2012) draws out in his analysis of the urban Ivoirian penchant for 'bluffing'. Writing about unemployed young men in Abidjan, Newell (2012) argues that these *bluffeurs* take pride in wearing counterfeit designer labels (*griffes colés*). This new class of person, the *nouchi*, demonstrates 'the superior person one would embody all the time if one had the money for it' (ibid.:1). Where there is prestige to belonging abroad (to be a *bengiste*), Newell (2012) draws on ideas of mimesis to understand the elevation of social status through wearing (foreign) branded clothes and how people understand belonging (cf. Ferguson 1999; Taussig 1993). As such, Newell's (2012) employment of mimesis, the links to the world beyond Africa, helps us understand how young Africans conceptualise and go about forming urban classes linked to social prestige and aspiration.

At the heart of Newell's (2012) analysis is the aim to question anthropology's preoccupation with 'modernity', the juxtaposition of 'the West and the Rest'. Unfortunately, in his argument that 'modernity' is itself a bluff, re-casting the 'modernity' and 'traditional' dichotomy, Newell (2012) runs the risk of reifying the characteristics of these terms (cf. Geschiere et al. 2008). Yet Newell (2012)

does aim to complicate our understanding of 'modernity' in Africa. For instance, Newell (2012) highlights how the act of the bluff pervades Ivoirian society to the extent that people fear that meaning has disintegrated in Côte d'Ivoire. This stands in contrast to Apter's (2005) analysis of the Nigerian art of the ruse, where ruses instil fear as they give rise to polysemy.

Newell's (2012) analysis is most useful to this discussion in how he illuminates performance. Where Abidjan residents are all too aware of the real economy, the importance of the bluff is not in appearance but in the actual act of illusion (Newell 2012). Indeed, as the author argues, bluffing elevates one's status partly due to the fact that there is social significance in the performance, differentiating a class of urban citizen from migrants and rural dwellers and displaying an aptitude for a certain cultural logic. Crucially, the flip side of this performance is that the individual fears their ruse being uncovered, and hence their urban identity dispelled. Although we must acknowledge the Nigerian conceptions of 'fake' and 'original' (cf. Guyer 2004), Newell's (2012) analysis is helpful for understanding how young women in Calabar have both faith and fear that dressing in imported clothes prepares them for their futures in the way in which it denotes a certain status. On the one hand, they are displaying a cultural logic of being a successful urbanite, yet on the other they always run the risk of others' jealousy or being found out. Hence, the performance of looking the part is always a gamble (cf. da Col 2012; Graeber 2012), which can encourage instant future fortune or social demise.

Indeed, these ideas of mimesis and emerging urban class as sleight of hand (cf. Newell 2012) is recognisable amongst Calabar's young women. As the young

women I knew tried to dress their best all the time, they were trying to emulate a class in order to encourage opportunities associated with their aspired status. For instance, being fortunate enough to fly to Lagos instead of travelling by bus, one informant made sure she had put together the perfect outfit that was not only 'on point' but would make her look as if she belonged in the class of Nigerians who could afford airfares. As young women acknowledged, you never know whom you could bump into who could offer you a job or an opportunity based on your appearance (your perceived wealth, class and ability to look after yourself). There was hence the idea that, where respectability was entwined with being of a certain class, young women needed to look the part in order to attract others of that class. Hence, following Newell's (2012) ideas of performance, Calabar's aspirational class is as much about emulation of what its members strive for as current reality.

Yet it is in Diana's closing remarks that we see how young women in Calabar further understand how respect (and respectability) and heightened social status are earned. Wearing imported clothes (either 'original' or *okrika*) elevates one's social status not just because they are made 'outside', are better quality or more expensive but because they are 'unique'. In the quest to get ahead in Calabar society, young women place a lot of emphasis on not only looking good but, crucially, not looking like everyone else. While young women take delight and feel good in wearing more expensive imported clothes, there is always the fear that someone else is also partaking in the exact same ruse to garner respect from others. As one young woman commented: 'you can buy a top for 5k in a boutique and then walk down the road and see someone selling *plantain* wearing

it. No, I can't do that!' (original emphasis). Insinuating the interstices of style and perceived class, we are presented with the art of emulation and hence young women's fears inherent in their quest to look part of a certain class connoting success.

It is an idea that is picked up in Hansen's (2003) analysis of new and second-hand clothes in Zambia. Focusing on the social life (and death) of the object, Hansen (2003) provides a more nuanced approach to studying the circulation of clothes which travel from 'western' charity shops to African markets. Where Zambian women desire to be unique, second-hand clothes (*salaula*) are highly valued, owing to exclusivity in the fact that no one else will be wearing the same design. Arguing that looking stylish is not only about reaching an end-goal of (a desired) elevated social status but about actual performance of the present self, Hansen (2003) ably illustrates how feeling good about oneself is central to young women's conceptions of being fashionable – a point echoed in Diana's comments on style. Yet Hansen's (2003:308) analysis is also helpful in the way in which she develops the understanding of value, where clothes are 'squeezed' of their worth as they are worn in different situations and by different people, transforming both social life and the social lives of the garments. Hence, Hansen (2003) reminds us that part of young women in Calabar using fashion to fit with notions of success and respectability is not just what the 'western' styles stand for – the desire of youth to participate in the wider world, for instance (cf. Masquelier 2013b; Newell 2012) – but the actual materiality of the garment.



Figure 7. Where young women strive to be unique, *okrika* (second-hand clothes) enable them to stand out from others. Using guile to pick out fashionable pieces, young women can garner respect and admiration from others, encouraging future success. (Picture used by an informant on BBM).

We can carry forward Hansen's (2003) notion of the materiality of the unique garment to understand how young women use the skills learned through sewing apprenticeships to clothe themselves as successful urbanites. While young women put faith in foreign clothes to look unique, there are always fears of others buying something similar and compromising how one reaches one's believed rightful destiny. Where financial restrictions, the need to be unique and to display one's true self play a role in young women's choice of fashions in Calabar, sewing shops have gained much popularity even over second-hand clothes. As one of the girls from the shop explained the reasons for making her own clothes over buying, 'Number one: you save more money. Number two: you

get exactly what you want. Number three: for those who don't want to wear whatever the next person is wearing, at least you'll know that – *ehn!* – what you made for yourself is *unique!*" (original emphasis). Hence, making one's own clothes was a less risky gamble for success, a mode of self-fashionable to encourage future fortune, in the way in which it ensured the wearer could display and celebrate their inner self without others encroaching on their uniqueness and thus impinging on their personal purpose and trajectory for success in life.

Yet there was an inherent paradox in making one's own clothes: in order to look unique, young women were constantly copying other people's styles. In order to make a fashionable design, it was necessary to 'browse' online, take inspiration from fashion magazines or take photos of other people's clothes for the tailor to replicate them. As Judith explained, 'To make good designs, you need to take inspiration from others. You cannot be your own island.' This understanding of course fits with broader ideas of dress as presented by Simmel (1957), where imitation is the fundamental driving force of fashion and elite classes. Regarding African tailors, Kirby (2013) highlights how tailors in Dakar must strive to be innovative in order to elevate clients' social status, yet their creativity must comply with accepted norms of style. Hence, we are again presented with the anxieties of becoming for urban young women, where the quest to appear of a certain social standing is fraught with social negotiations regarding respectability and displaying one's inner self.



Figure 8. Young women often post pictures on BBM of themselves in their Sunday best. One Sunday Roseline realises her two friends have also designed clothes from the same star-print Ankara material and makes this collage for her BlackBerry DP.

Where being unique holds so much importance, young women's designs were never exact copies of the garment they imitated. Young women enjoyed customising designs in order to display their own tastes. For instance, finding a picture of a dress in a magazine, a young woman may feel the need to change the colour of the dress, change the length of the skirt, or substitute the sleeves for that of another dress. In understanding the significance of making clothes which take inspiration from others' clothes, we can draw on Mbembe's (2001) notion of how images gain power not just as copies of the original but as the two (image

and original) become located in one another.¹⁰⁹ Just as with masquerades (cf. Newell 2012; Picton 1990; Tonkin 1979), making imitation clothes is just as much a performance as it is a reality. Hence, young women in Calabar who make fashionable 'western' style clothes elevate their status and feel good in the process by looking the part and earning kudos and respect in the fact that they 'showcase' someone's God-given talents in an original creative design.

While the constant designing of clothes enabled young women to celebrate their perceived uniqueness, this means of emulating a certain aspirational class was not without its risks. Just as young women took aspects of style from others in order to encourage their own fortune, they were all too aware that other young women could be inspired by their style. Dressing for success was a double-edged sword: young women wanted to be admired for the clothes they made and wore; equally, they feared others stealing their personal style. For instance, being allowed to use the shop's sewing machines to make money as she awaited her NYSC, Rosaline posted photos of herself in her latest creations on her BlackBerry DP. This display was both a celebration of herself and also a tactic to encourage more business – other young women seeing her latest designs would often quickly put in orders for the designs. Young women in the shop spoke of how proud and excited they were when someone commented on an item of clothing they had made, and this recognition of their talent was crucial for elevating their social status among their peers. However, too much admiration could lead to others trying to be like them, to harness their prestige. This was demonstrated in one of Roseline's clients who would always ask Roseline to make the exact same

¹⁰⁹ Newell (2012) develops this point in his analysis of how imitation goods in Abidjan gain social power.

item of clothes that she had just made for herself. While Roseline welcomed the money from the other young woman, she felt the pressure from someone wanting to imitate her.

Earlier discussions of the anxieties of becoming for young women in Calabar have highlighted the tensions of gender, generation and the church concerning fashioning respectable Christian subjectivities. Here we are presented with the anxieties young women have concerning other girls. Where young women strive to belong to an aspirational urban class, in which success is contingent on 'showcasing' unique 'western' style, they rely on one another in order to know the boundaries of acceptability and respectability (cf. Kirby 2013). Yet, where young women do appear to rely on others for social mobility, they are also presented with certain risks. Newell's (2012) account demonstrates how social status can be raised and deflated instantly through the (un)successful performance of 'bluffing'. The discussion has also developed the idea of the fear young women have in others stealing their style, negotiating the uniqueness integral to their social status. Hence, styling the self in order to look successful and therefore encourage further fortune is always a gamble (cf. da Col 2012; Graeber 2012). Young women maintain faith that they are working towards their futures of fortune by constantly making new clothes to keep fashionable, negotiating tensions between uniqueness and respectability.



Figure 9. 'Showcasing' designs is important for encouraging business, admiration and respect from one's peers. Here, Roseline has made a collage of pictures of herself to display her designs to others on BlackBerry Messenger Service. Yet 'showcasing' uniqueness also has its risks. As Diana explained, '[Wearing unique clothes is] very important. At least until you snap it and put it on DP and somebody steals the style, [laughs] which is very rampant!'

Weddings, Prestige and the Self

Dressing a certain way according to their inner selves, young women perform in the present who they should become and where they should be going in life (cf. Hansen 2003). Such a performance draws on ideals of the unique and 'enlightened' self (of being 'outside' Nigeria), and connotes a successful and respectable class of urbanite able to achieve future success. These notions of urban success, the mediations of the individual and community, are perhaps best exemplified in young women's expectations of marriage ceremonies. In Nigeria,

it is custom to have two or three marriage ceremonies (depending on wealth): the court wedding, the 'Traditional Marriage' (or 'TM') and the 'white wedding'. While the court outing holds official civic purposes, and the 'white wedding' is significant as a spiritual solemnisation, the 'Traditional Marriage' is regarded as the most important marker of conjugality. Held in the girl's paternal village, the 'Traditional Marriage' stands for community in view of the chiefs pouring libations; the completion of the bride price; and the father handing over his daughter in public, drinking from the same cup as his new son-in-law in a display of unity. Hence, young women view the 'Traditional Marriage' as being more for family and their village than for them (see Charsley 1991 for importance of weddings for individual and community; Edwards 1989 for weddings as rites of passage).

Yet it is the dress at the 'Traditional Marriage' that is one of the most notable markers of community ties. The bride herself has no choice in what she wears – apart from choosing the colour combination for the ceremony – and enters the marriage wearing the maiden's costume from her village before changing into the costume from her husband's village. Furthermore, the guests at the wedding get outfits made out of the Ankara materials chosen by the couple. These fabrics known as *aso-ebi* (literally 'house material' in Yoruba) allow people to identify members of the bride's family, groom's family and their friends. While young women attending 'Traditional Marriages' still put a lot of effort into making sure they are looking fashionable – there is a preference for more figure-hugging or 'English' style designs – the *aso-ebi* and 'uniforms' speak directly to ideas of belonging, and declaring support and allegiance to community.

Conversely, young women consider the 'white wedding' to be the bride's day. Usually held in the girl's family church, young women attending these weddings do not have to wear *aso-ebi* but can choose whatever they wish to wear. At the weddings I attended, young female guests were keen to make eye-catching outfits, such as shorter figure-hugging dresses or long, flowing chiffon dresses. It seemed that the 'white wedding' was a time to show off and be admired, and this was especially so for the bride. Where young women loved sequins, beads and adornments, wedding dresses were always ostentatious.¹¹⁰ As the girls in the shop explained, the more beads and embellishments the better as this demonstrated one's wealth. We may draw on Simmel's (1950; cf. Newell 2012) analysis of adornment, which, just as with the secrecy of masking and concealment (cf. Picton 1990; Ferme 2001), enlarges the social actor and simultaneously suggests the possibility of another world and alterations to the social. Of course, it must be noted that flamboyance and the display of wealth are not only considered necessary for 'white weddings' but are the general etiquette for social events such as weddings and funerals in Nigeria, where lavishness denotes power and elevated social status (cf. Smith 2004). However, what we see in young women's perceptions of the 'white wedding' is how cultural logics of power, prestige and adornment are being redefined to focus more on the individual rather than community cohesion.

It follows that, in designing the perfect wedding dress, a young woman will want to have a unique design that no one has seen before. Specialising in wedding

¹¹⁰ Traditionally in Nigeria, beads are associated with regal prestige (Pemberton 2008).

trains, Judith's shop bore witness to the agonies of brides wanting to make the perfect dress. As Judith explained:

Traditional Nigerian wedding style is very flamboyant. We like colours a lot... A typical wedding here – a typical white wedding here – no matter *how* simple, it's still not simple. Sure you understand? And the brides are very particular about their dresses... As in, a bride will not want to wear just a 'dropping' dress. Most brides want to wear a ball dress here because they feel that it's very flamboyant and big, and according to what most brides tell me, they will tell me that they might never wear a ball dress in their life but they can easily wear a 'dropping' dress – an a-line dress... The white wedding is for bride and then the Traditional is for everyone now. That's why the bride is very particular about the wedding. If you watch a bride planning for the wedding, she's not really so clear about the Traditional Marriage. But the white – she is always so – everything must be perfect!

Of course, the tendency for a bride to want absolute perfection on her wedding day or the emerging significance of the 'white wedding' is by no means particular to young women in Calabar. For instance, analyses of Japan have highlighted how the 'white wedding' is being produced by wedding manufacturers, where the invention of a tradition is driven by commercial and economic motivations (cf. Goldstein-Gidoni 2000, 2001; Edwards 1989). As Goldstein-Gidoni (2000, 2001) argues, the invention of the contemporary Japanese 'white wedding', complete with its nostalgia both for 'real' Japanese culture and 'authentic' 'western' wedding motifs can be explained by the country's quest for cultural identity. While religious rather than cultural motivations drive the popularity of 'white weddings' in Nigeria, Goldstein-Gidoni (2000, 2001) does help us see how these social events are the locus of local-global interactions, especially in terms of consumption and class formation.

Indeed, young women in Calabar can be regarded as both manufacturers and consumers, defining a new class of successful, spiritually-sound urbanite. Flicking through the 'western' bridal magazines that lay around Judith's shop or 'browsing' online for wedding dress designs, Judith's clients demonstrated how 'white weddings' enable urban young women to aspire and participate in the wider world (cf. Masquelier 2013b; Weiss 2009). There are other aspects of the 'white wedding' that young women strive for in order to place themselves amongst an emerging urban elite. The reception venue is not on the family compound but is usually in a hotel; the chairman is not usually an elder but as well-connected a public figure as possible; rather than a cultural dance troupe, the entertainment will likely be a band, DJ or comedian; and the food is not served by (younger) female members of the family but by professional caterers. Having a 'white wedding' that ticks all these boxes shows one's ability to demonstrate a certain cultural logic of urban success (cf. Newell 2012).

It is not just about looking the part which is central to this method of self-fashioning – the symbiotic process of being drawn into an idealised global 'modernity' and distancing oneself from the limited possibilities of 'the village'. Central to getting ahead in urban life and encouraging future fortune are the denotations of individuality and community found in the styles of dress. Where the 'Traditional Marriage' was about identifying with others, the 'white wedding' was about instating individuality, garnering admiration and respect for the self, and breaking with community ties and obligations (and instead making covenants with God). Importantly, we should not see this vision of urban success as an outright rejection of 'village tradition'. Young women still saw the value of

their 'Traditional Marriage' and even spoke proudly of the event when explaining their own villages' customs to me. As such, fulfilling community obligations through the 'Traditional Marriage' is still part and parcel of being a successful, respectable urbanite. However, we can view the 'white wedding' as a space – facilitated especially by the Pentecostal church in view of its ideas of successful urbanity – which young women can claim for themselves (cf. Bochow & van Dijk 2012). As young women draw attention to themselves during the 'white wedding' they are using these emerging urban femininities of respect and admiration to challenge more traditional patriarchal relations.

This process of self-fashioning as successful urbanites (focusing on the unique individual) was not without its risks. While looking good and wearing 'western' style clothes was a marker of urban success, there was always the danger of going too far and encouraging accusations of 'forming'. To 'form' is a derogative phrase in Pidgin insinuating that someone is trying to boast more authority (and hence demanding more respect) than is due. The typical example of girls 'forming' is faking of an American or British accent for others, setting themselves apart from their peers who prefer to speak Pidgin (or at least Nigerian English). Being accused of 'forming' is to be accused of forgetting one's roots, to think that one is better than those around them. It is an issue similarly raised by Newell (2012) in his analysis of Abidjan's young male *bluffeurs*, who run the risk of perilous repercussions if they appear too good at carrying off the art of the 'fake', the very method of their social success. As Newell (2012) states, displaying an abundance of wealth could be construed as an individual not sharing and thus distancing themselves from their community. Hence, the modes of self-

fashionable young women employ as preparation for the future, their means of encouraging success, are always gambles in the constant tensions between striving for individuality and community expectations.

Conclusion

Focusing on sewing shops as sites of skills and style, this chapter has discussed how young women's engagement with sewing encourages new ideas of the present and future self. Where this thesis argues young women's constant acts of the self maintains their faith in forthcoming fortune (cf. Miyazaki 2004) and dispels fears of failure (cf. Pelkmans 2013), young women hope to realise aspirations by learning new skills, doing business and styling the self in sewing shops. Yet these acts young women undertake in order to prepare for the future – to be ready to turn opportunities into fortune – are always gambles for success (cf. da Col 2012; Graeber 2012). The discussions reiterate the tensions that run through previous chapters: the anxieties young women have of appearing successful at the risk of compromising their Christian identity. Yet this chapter has also highlighted another gamble: short- and long-term goals do not always appear in keeping with one another, and young women must maintain hope that working on present success leads to future fortune.

The discussions have highlighted how ideas of success are linked to identifying with 'outside' (Nigeria), the ability to show cosmopolitanism through style, knowledge and comportment. Young women both consume and make clothes in order to situate themselves in global circuits. This chapter has furthered analyses of youth's consumption as articulating aspirations (cf. Gondola 1999; Masquelier 2013b; Nuttall 2004) to argue that to be 'modern' in Calabar is not

only to look to the global: one must also respect one's roots, village community and traditional values. Being a successful 'modern' and cosmopolitan urbanite is a careful balance of responsibilities for young women. Where Nuttall (2004) reads consumption in the postcolonial African city as text, this chapter has highlighted that young women's attempts to connect to the global is also much about performance (cf. Newell 2012). They must know how and when to wear 'western' or Ankara styles, how to imitate 'western' clothes, how to incorporate aspects of others' style into their own. Gondola writes that public cultures 'represent spaces of flight and refuge, places of dreamlike reincarnation of the self and the social group' (1999:24), and this chapter highlighted that fantasy is not only in the imagination but driving and constituting young women's performance as they prepare for success.

This chapter has also developed analyses of youth's style (cf. Gondola 1999; Masquelier 2013b) to ask what is particular about young women's employment of fashion as means to alter perceptions of the self and imagine futures. Where much of the chapter has focused on the formation of an aspirational urban class, the discussion furthers classic analyses of fashion (cf. Simmel 1957) to highlight how respectability is central to young women's understanding of success and social mobility. Being respectable denotes the ability to negotiate unique style with community expectations, combine Christian morals and modesty with emic ideas of flamboyance, forefront individuality while respecting community obligations. Crucially, for young women, such ideas of respectability and success are entwined with social reproduction. Hence, as young women style themselves as successful singles, working towards their personal aspirations, there is an

ever-present tension with marriage expectations (and aspirations). Where marriage is not young women's *only* goal, they must keep faith that the acts they undertake in the present will simultaneously prepare them for marriage and personal success. The next chapter focuses on young women competing in beauty pageants to further explore these tensions between the successes of 'singlehood' and marriage.

6. Beauty Pageants

11pm. The stage lights came up and the expectant audience, who had been assembling themselves over the past few hours, finally hushed. Striding purposefully in time to the beat of Beyoncé's *Single Ladies*, thirty contestants paraded out onto the stage. In short gold sequined dresses, red high-heels and matching red hairpieces, they looked identical and could only be differentiated by the royal blue sashes placed across their shoulders. As the current contestants assembled themselves onto the stage in alphabetical order according to the Cross River tourist sites they represented, the former queens walked on behind. The stage was showcasing a continuum of Cross Riverian feminine beauty, grace and ambition. The competition to find the next Carnival Calabar Queen had begun.

The stage emptied before the contestants reappeared to introduce themselves individually. Walking down the centre of the stage, they demonstrated grace and poise. As each walked, a video profile played on the screens to the side of the stage. These profile shots had been taken throughout the two-week camp that had been held leading up to the competition night, and showed the girls in various locations around Cross River State. As they stood in front of sites such as Obudu Mountain Resort or Agbokim Waterfalls – the tourist sites the winner would represent – each contestant introduced herself in the uniform manner: who they represented (their sash name), their own name, what they studied and at which university, and their hobbies. Showing that they were well-rounded individuals, the contestants described their love for acting, singing, travelling,

swimming, dancing and volunteering (and even a passion for ‘taking photos of myself’).

Two well-known hosts came onto the stage to welcome the audience, introduce the judges (who included a former queen), and start the night’s events. While the evening was geared to finding the next queen who would represent Cross River for a year, working with the State’s First Lady and representing the State tourist board, it was also one of the most popular evening events held annually for the Carnival Calabar, a month-long festival at the end of the year. An empty Nollywood studio at Tinapa had been decorated with swathes of black and white material, transformed into a classy venue for the event. Tables, going for 100,000 naira each, took up the front half of the event’s space. These were usually given to the Carnival sponsors, or bought by companies and wealthy individuals. Cheaper, individually sold seats were found at the back of the studio. With the contest broken up by performances from a popular Cross Riverian comedian and various dance troupes, this was an evening of entertainment.

The contest itself was also included a variety of acts. While the first runway walk and profiling videos had introduced the contestants’ beauty, the acts that followed delved deeper into revealing each contestant’s character and intellect. Changing into a second costume of ‘traditional attire’, the contestants each explained the cultural significance of their choice of dress. While many of the girls chose the maiden’s costume from their villages, some chose that of the Efik to impress the judges with their cultural knowledge of Calabar. Five contestants had come up with their own ‘creative attire’, inspired by ‘traditional’ dress and ideals of African femininity. Contrasting with this, the third costumes were long

evening gowns made especially for the contest by Vlisco, the highly sought-after Dutch wax fabric. Highlighting another aspect of the ideal Cross Riverian young woman, these expensive and stylish gowns were worn for the rest of the evening.

Judged on poise, intellect and best cultural representation, the Top 10 went through to the next stage: the showcasing of talents. Popular talents were singing, acting and public speaking, with the contestants choosing to theme their act around the issues of womanhood and HIV awareness (issues linked to Her Excellency's Office). One contestant was more inventive, demonstrating her love for fashion by turning a yard of material into three costumes fit for a Carnival Calabar Queen: a pair of shorts and a sarong top for Cross River's tourist sites, and a cocktail dress for an official event. From these talents, the judges whittled the contestants down to the Top 5, who were each posed one question: if you found out you have just one week to live, what would you do? Who would you choose for the Nobel Peace prize? Can you briefly describe your experience of the contest so far? If you win, what would you do with the car? If the judges were stuck in a burning building, who would you save?

At 3am, the Top 5 stood nervously on the stage as the judges made their choices. The First Lady, Her Excellency, came to the stage and made a speech, thanking the sponsors. Explaining her work, she told how she was carrying out God's vision. As we had been told earlier in the evening, the pageant was a 'divine initiative', borne out of emotions. It was Her Excellency's love for the young and her pain of seeing their 'destinies cut short' (their lack of life prospects) that inspired her to create a pageant where a young woman could influence others. Then, announcing the winner, and the 1st and 2nd Princesses, it was made known

who would be carrying out God's vision for the following year as she reigned as the Carnival Calabar Queen. As the outgoing queen paraded the stage once more, handing over her crown to her successor, she gave her advice: 'be graceful, patient, ever prayerful without ceasing'.

The spectacle of the contest night epitomises pageantry, pinpointing power struggles in the production, consumption and rejection of cultural meanings (cf. Cohen et al. 1996). Literature on pageants remains sparse, with its focus on femininity, sexuality and beauty either being considered 'fun' and of little academic clout (cf. Banet-Weiser 1999) or problematic for feminist scholars (cf. Watson & Martin 2004). The few analyses that do exist tend to focus on contests of power through their illumination of beauty pageants as sites for showcasing ideals of gender and the nation (e.g. Banet-Weiser 1999; Cohen et al. 1996; Schulz 2000; Watson & Martin 2004). It is such that the ideals, morals and values of a community are made visible on the pageant stage and reified by the winning contestant, the crowned community representative. Yet, as these values are revealed, they are also made open to challenges and reinterpretation from others. Hence, while beauty pageants put forth the notion of a standard ideal of beauty, they also raise questions as to who decides this ideal and how it is maintained. As Cohen et al. note, 'Struggles over beauty contests are also struggles over the power to control and contain the meaning mapped on the bodies of competitors' (1996:9). In understanding how beauty pageants work, how visions of feminine beauty are created, it is necessary to examine the juxtaposition of the visible stage and hidden goings-on backstage.

Feminist debates explore how pageantry construes and represents gendered ideals. For instance, church groups and women's rights lobbyists have attacked the Miss America pageant since its conception in the 1920s (cf. Banet-Weiser 1999; Cohen et al. 1996). While the 1968 protest against the pageant exemplified feminist discourse at the time – women as sexualised commodities – subsequent condemnations raised issues of race and body image (cf. Cohen et al. 1996; Douglas 1994). Such debates have spread elsewhere, such as the threat to cancel Cordoba's 'Queen of the Patios' pageant in 1981, soon after Spain's transition to democratic rule (Sanders & Pinks 1996). In this new political era, the debate highlighted the country's more general political stance on issues such as gender equality and abortion. As the authors note, opponents drew on the pageant's origins as a celebration of beautiful Cordoban women, arguing that the pageant only focused on feminine aesthetics. However, supporters claimed the pageant articulated local feminine identity (as much moral as aesthetic) and did not see the contradiction between feminist discourse and their pageant. Sanders & Pinks' (1996) analysis highlights how feminist debates are often complex and call for a need for anthropological analyses to examine local differences. We must question how pageants fit into local politics, understanding how organisers view pageants to promote feminine beauty as moral as well as aesthetic (cf. Lavendo 1996).

Complicating feminist critiques, it is also interesting to move away from dynamics of organisers and opponents to focus on contestants. While few analyses have actually examined contestants, Moskalenko's (1996) reflective piece on her own win at Moscow Beauty 1989 places pageantry in local politics

to highlight girls' motives for contesting. Moscow Beauty opened up new avenues for how women were viewed after Perestroika. While organisers were looking for a typical Moscow beauty, Moskalenko (1996), a student at the time, describes how she was surrounded by a great variety of girls. What united the contestants were their motivations: pageantry was a way of getting noticed and for feeling important. While the author's inside knowledge portrays who these contestants are, and also the discrepancies of pageantry ideology and reality, her subjective account fails to answer how contestants did (or did not) benefit from their pageant experiences. As this chapter highlights, there is a need to pay attention to how contestants view pageantry, their gains and losses. Where 'contestants never fully achieve the idealised role they are performing' (Cohen et al. 1996:9), focusing on contestants complicates an understanding of how gendered ideals are created by inserting other agencies into the contests of power.

For instance, Lavendo (1996) and Banet-Weiser (1999) offer different analytical frameworks to debunk illusions of contestants' false consciousness. Writing about the Minnesota Community Queen Pageant, Lavendo (1996) argues the need to understand local conceptions of difference by highlighting how organisers, contestants and outsiders may view a pageant differently. Organisers and contestants, adamant that the pageant is not a beauty contest, highlight moral ideals, girls' accomplishments and the pageant's scholarship programme. Employing Bakhtin's (1981) theory of intentional and organic hybridity, Lavendo (1996:32) regards beauty pageants as 'dialogic hybrids'. Where organisers draw from a variety of sources of inspiration – crossing debutante presentations with

beauty contests – contestants’ views also give rise to a number of possible interpretations and outcomes for the pageant. While contestants are chosen and sponsored by a small business community, Lavendo (1996:45) argues that we should not dismiss contestants’ ‘imaginative agency’ in their participation. Unfortunately, the author does not go on to detail how contestants have used pageantry differently.

Banet-Weiser (1999) offers a more persuasive argument for contestants’ agency with her performative approach to understanding the production of gender in the Miss America pageant (cf. Watson & Martin 2004). Following the argument that pageants denote a combined discourse on nation- and womanhood, Banet-Weiser (1999) nuances her argument by asking what types of subjects pageantry produces. Drawing on Butler (1990), the author demonstrates how gender is not just produced by dominant discourses but is actively (re)produced through the contestants’ very performances, marked by their excessive make-up, honed bodies and disciplined deportment. Where the gendered body is a creation and enactment of power rather than a site of passivity on which power imposes (Foucault 1998), the author allows us to question male dominance in the pageantry world, overlooking a simplistic relationship between women and commodities, and raising questions as to why young women may want to compete in pageants. Such an analytical framework is attractive in highlighting not only contestants’ agencies but also how contestants are moulded by and change throughout the pageantry process. As such, this chapter pays attention to the performance of gender (Butler 1990) in understanding how young women use pageantry.

Finally, drawing our analytical focus to the African postcolony, Schulz (2000) draws out themes of power, gender and nation in her account of Mali's Miss ORTM pageant. While the Miss ORTM pageant has allegedly become more popular than Independence Day in Mali, pageantry is not merely national entertainment but articulates the politics and structures of power of the postcolony. Focusing on the broadcasting of Miss ORTM, Schulz (2000) draws attention to the promotion and consumption of a new standard of Malian beauty. The small elite driving new conceptions of beauty is shown to encourage emerging urban ideals of slim girls reminiscent of the 'western' fashion industry, ignoring the majority of the Malian population. As such, Schulz (2000) ably highlights the need to view the global pageantry world through a local lens, showing how (new) standards of beauty are not imposed by 'western' culture but adopted and encouraged by certain groups at the local level for particular gains and outcomes. Hence, while Lavendo (1996) and Banet-Weiser (1999) offer some useful questions as to who decides what these feminine subjectivities look like and how they are being (re)produced, Schulz (2000) reminds us to look to the local, illuminating both emerging ideas of beauty and the emic structures of power in which such ideas are formed and promoted. Furthering Schulz's (2000) analysis, Nigerian pageants are shown to encourage new feminine subjectivities, and also the formation of a new urban class of respectability and success (cf. Chapter 5).

Developing this thesis' concern for how young women use the time of 'singlehood' to prepare for their futures, this chapter focuses on beauty pageants as sites where young women can remove themselves from current difficulties

and maximise the potential of future opportunities. Furthering literature on pageants, the discussion explicitly highlights the performance of gender (cf. Butler 1990), asking how new notions of femininity are produced by pageants and deployed by young women. Central to the argument is how young women use pageantry to challenge cleavages in gender and generation. Reiterating this thesis' examination of hope for the future, we see young women maintain faith in forthcoming fortune through constant acts (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013) to perform ideal feminine subjectivities and alter perceptions of the self. Prizes have potential to transform lives, yet tension always exists in how such potential is converted into actual gains. This is a complicated process: pageantry is rarely without scandal (cf. Cohen et al. 1996), and Nigerian pageantry is wrought with contradictions. Where the truth is difficult to discern in the postcolony, much importance is placed on the art of representation (cf. Apter 1999, 2005). Hence, the constant acts young women perform in order to prepare for the future are always gambles (cf. da Col 2012; Graeber 2012). As this chapter highlights, young women must negotiate risks and keep trying in order to overcome the inequalities of the present and potential failings of the future.

The chapter begins with an overview of the Carnival Calabar Queen pageant (CCQ hereafter), tying the pageant to women's roles in wider Nigerian society. Framing the chapter through the image of the First Lady, the discussion highlights how women can gain power and influence in the postcolony through performing certain (Christian) feminine subjectivities. The second section focuses on the pageant camp to highlight how these new subjectivities of success are moulded. Central here is the idea of camp as a liminal period, rendering

pageants a rite of passage in how gendered ideals are performed and reproduced. The third section examines how contestants and winners view pageantry. The discussion highlights the tensions between contestants' agency and the illusions of the postcolony. The final section compares three examples of young women's experiences to further an analysis of agency and performance in understanding how young women can benefit from pageantry.

Carnival Calabar Queen

Born out of a vision of the First Lady of Cross River State, Her Excellency Obioma Imoke, the quest to crown a Carnival Calabar Queen began in 2007. Her husband, Senator Liyel Imoke, had been elected as State Governor that year, continuing the Cross River PDP legacy he founded with Donald Duke and Gershom Bassey. Taking office from Duke, Imoke continued the dream of rendering Cross River a model state for Nigeria. While Duke's administration is remembered with a mixture of pride and ambivalence for its lavish spending, which not only transformed Calabar as a city but left the State in heavy debt, Imoke is regarded as a leader with humility, a man there to serve his people.¹¹¹

Seeing it her place to support her husband as he carried out his mission of serving Cross River's most needy, Her Excellency founded POWER (Partnership Opportunities for Women Empowerment Realization) the year her husband came to office. Aiming to help Cross Riverian women meet their basic needs, POWER speaks to Her Excellency's belief that women's empowerment also benefits husbands and children. The following year, Her Excellency founded

¹¹¹ Imoke's 20th year of service was commemorated in the launching of a biography, *Born to Serve* (Chigbo & Barrett 2011).

asFac (A State Fit for a Child), buttressing the State policies to provide free hospital services for young children.¹¹² Furthering her support of children, Her Excellency also founded an orphanage, Destiny's Child Center (DCC). Giving the DCC children the Imoke name, the Governor and First Lady model themselves as guardians of the State, privileging family commitments and purpose of life-course. Yet while Cross River is characterised as progressive and forward thinking, the colloquial acronym Come-And-Live-And-Be-At-Rest denoting the State's optimism, these initiatives also highlight the harsh and uncertain reality of life for many Nigerians (cf. Haram & Yamba 2009; Odabare & Adebaniwi 2010). As recent analyses highlight, hope cannot be divorced from an understanding of despair, a realisation of a troubled present and need for action to make way for a different future (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Yarrow 2011).

Indeed, it is young women who are one of the most vulnerable groups, and who are targeted by another of Her Excellency's charities, MACA (Mothers Against Child Abandonment). MACA's exemplary story of the corpse of a day-old baby found in a dustbin illuminates young women's struggles as they experience the double-bind of gender and generation in the postcolony. As MACA recognises, young women face challenges from men – strangers, family members, supposed lovers – and are not always able to negotiate their rights, with many young women being raped, affected by sexual abuse and unaware of the consequences of unprotected sex. Such challenges are mostly dealt with in silence, yet they are also heightened when the girl falls pregnant. It is not just a single young woman's financial insecurity which raises fears regarding pregnancy but also the tensions

¹¹² Project Hope provides free healthcare to pregnant women and children under five. The initiative accompanies Project Comfort, which targets the State's most vulnerable households.

it creates within the family. Following previous discussions of respectability and Christian values for daughters navigating 'singlehood' (cf. Chapter 5; Bastian 2000), unwanted pregnancy compromises a young woman's present image and has potential to mar future possibilities.

MACA supports young women through its two refuge centres. One refuge is for young women – typically from the most marginalised communities, they are teenagers and women in their twenties, although some have been as young as nine. In a secret location, these young women are looked after away from society's gaze and vices, given medical care and taught valuable skills to help them generate incomes. It is expected that with this help, the girls should be able to become independent and go on to live respectable and successful lives, without having to revisit the refuge. To help them to succeed in life, to navigate the concerns of a conservative society, the young women are also given the choice of giving their babies up (it is understood that the vast majority do). The babies are then looked after in the second refuge, along with other abandoned babies, until they are adopted.¹¹³

Where MACA can only directly help a handful of young women's lives in such a way, the charity also aims to reach out to other young women in Cross River through awareness programmes. Believing that girls would be more receptive to another young woman's advice, Her Excellency created a pageant to find an ambassador for her charitable work. The crowned winner, the Carnival Calabar

¹¹³ Following scandals surrounding adoption agencies in Nigeria, where babies are allegedly born by marginalised and vulnerable young women solely for adoption or trafficked out of Nigeria illegally, the First's Lady's organisation has not gone without scrutiny. For instance, one BBC article draws attention to the confusion of young mothers in the refuge who feel pressurised to give up their newborn babies (Ross 2012).

Queen, plays a significant role as a peer educator, visiting schools and acting as role model for young women in Cross River State. The Queen also mentors the girls in the refuge, acting as confidant and teaching them skills such as beading and baking. Explaining why having queens as peer educators works, one CCQ organiser said: '[the girls] are excited to see a *queen*.... Being a queen has a double advantage because it's like, "Oh, she's a queen *and* she will listen to us"' (original emphasis). As such, CCQ encourages ideals of femininity that will primarily support the First Lady's projects but also be compatible with promoting State tourism.

Understanding how CCQ is organised, we must situate the pageant within the postcolony's networks of power. Analyses have highlighted the criminal (Comaroff & Comaroff 2006), abject (Obadare & Adebaniwi 2010) and disordered (Chabal & Daloz 1999) nature of the African state. While this chapter reiterates the insecurities and inequalities of the Nigerian postcolony, it is helpful to examine how politics work along 'deeply personalised political relations' (Chabal & Daloz 1999:16). We may identify how Bayart's (2009) 'rhizome state' plays a role, where vertical networks of patronage structure society. Those in power accrue and share their wealth, gaining further support. Crucially, this patrimonialism has disenfranchised youth and women from the loci of power in the postcolony. This gerontocratic male rule not only traps youth in a habitual 'crisis of becoming' (cf. Abbink 2005; Erikson 1968; Mbembe 2001), but also renders young women, in particular, invisible and mute (cf. Ardener 1975).

Despite the image of the phallus, male virility, situated at the centre of the African postcolony's workings of power (Mbembe 2001), some women can gain

power. Questioning the assumption that women play no role in the African postcolony, only experiencing discrimination and injustice (cf. Chazan 1989), Mama (1995) draws attention to the successes of Nigerian First Ladies. As Mama's (1995) 'First Lady Phenomenon' highlights, these women have the capacity to become powerful leaders through their husbands' offices, using government resources to become activists for worthy causes in order to secure more power and votes. The First Lady figure is epitomised by Maryam Babangida, who started campaigning for women's rights after her husband became President in 1985.¹¹⁴ As Maryam Babangida's projects took off, she demonstrated how the public figure of the First Lady plays a crucial part in the campaigns of men running for power in the postcolony. Framing her argument through the trope of 'femocracy', Mama (1995) questions whether women's rights can improve in the postcolony when its female political figures are not voted in but gain power through the popularity of their husbands. First Ladies are undoubtedly powerful in view of their access to wealth, people and resources. Yet how their projects fall within the remit of their husbands' administrations raises questions as to whether even the most powerful women in the postcolony can completely challenge patriarchy.

Mama's (1995) analysis of First Ladies emphasises how they are using their husband's power for their own gains. Yet in understanding the complex image of the First Lady – the inherent tensions of patronage and care – it is interesting to unravel the ways in which First Ladies are able to secure power and respect from their supporters. Highlighting the importance of the act of representation in

¹¹⁴ Maryam Babangida's 'Better Life for Rural Women Program' was initiated in 1987 (Mama 1995).

the postcolony, we may draw on Obioma Imoke's own words to show her reasons for carrying out her charitable projects. Triangulated at the centre of her charitable work is her love for God, her husband, and children. The First Lady embodies Christian understandings that it is the woman's role to pray for the family and nation (cf. Soothill 2007; Mate 2002). Where previous chapters have drawn on the ideas of young women fashioning respectable Christian subjectivities in order to encourage success, the First Lady is shown to gain support through carrying out her (Pentecostal) Christian duties as wife. Raising questions as to gendered power relations in the performance of religious subjectivities, we must problematise our 'western' conception that women's empowerment comes through gender equality.

For instance, analysing Ghanaian Pentecostalism, Soothill (2007) draws links between the supporting role of the spiritually strong wife and West African gender complementarity (cf. Amadiume 1987). Taking a different analytical stance, Mate (2002) argues Pentecostalism's emphasis on wives' roles as spiritual sustenance merely perpetuates men's political and social domination. Finally, Mahmood's (2005) analysis of Muslim women's piety groups in Cairo is particularly helpful for reconceptualising ideas of empowerment, agency and resistance in women's lived experiences of patriarchy. Through lessons of how to act, comport and desire, women in these movements serve Islamic principles and, through the Foucauldian process of subjectification, develop new notions of the self (Mahmood 2005). While these Islamic principles render the women subordinate to men, Mahmood (2005) argues that this does not mean Muslim women are without agency. Showing how women's prayers for their husbands,

families and the nation constitute empowerment, Mahmood (2005) puts religious belief at the centre of enquiry to question women's freedom and resistance. While the lavish outfits and entourages of First Ladies, or even the figure-hugging outfits of Nigerian pageant contestants, are a far cry from the modesty and concealment (and in 'western' eyes repression) of Muslim women's veils, Mahmood (2005) demonstrates how women *choose* to play certain roles in their respective cultures through (religious) action and styling the body. Such ideas are carried forward in this chapter in discussing how young women view success through pageantry.

Rather than understanding how First Ladies empower themselves with charitable works through analyses of political relations and access to wealth (cf. Mama 1995), we can also understand how First Ladies gain power by performing local visions of feminine success and respectability. Where the image of the spiritually strong and nurturing woman is juxtaposed against the disordered patriarchal state (cf. Bayart 2009; Chabal & Daloz 1999), we see how powerful networks of women can emerge in Nigeria through their charitable works for society's marginalised.¹¹⁵ As such, they are thanked and venerated by other women (and men) and become role models for younger women, eager to emulate the same success. As Victoria, Miss Biase 2010,¹¹⁶ explained:

¹¹⁵ In June 2012, Sarah Brown, wife of the former British Prime Minister, visited Her Excellency's initiatives in Calabar. Such international partnerships, the links to 'outside', enhance First Ladies' success and respectability (see 'Obioma Liyel Imoke and Sarah Brown Unite against Deprivation' in *Nigerian Chronicle*, 6-12th June 2012 p.1-2).

¹¹⁶ Victoria came a runner-up in her first pageant, Miss Teen Cross River State, which she entered at the age of 16. She then entered Miss Face of UniCal and came first runner-up. Her next pageant was Miss Most Prestigious Girl in Cross River, in which she came second runner-up. The first time she entered Miss Biase (her LGA), she came third and so decided to contest for CCQ but did not

One of the reasons why a lot of young girls want to work with NGOs in Cross River is because our First Lady is like a visioner. She likes this whole NGO thing.... She's always volunteering, either for women or for children. Most of the young girls want to be like her. They feel that she has a good heart – you know, that she's good – and a lot of us have her as a role model.... Most of the jobs we do, it's not because of the money, it's because of the love, the drive. Seeing that the person who is at the head of affairs is really pushing this thing, we want to be recognised and to help her.

Many young women I knew did aspire to work in NGOs, studied social work, or liked to spend their birthdays giving donations and cutting cake at orphanages. In Calabar, a class of urban young woman emerges, whose success comes not just through rhetoric but also acts of care. Furthermore, where this is a performance and assertion of the cultural knowledge needed for success and respectability (cf. Newell 2012), carrying out charitable work for society's marginalised distances young women from their own potentially difficult backgrounds. Writing about NGO workers in Ghana, Yarrow (2011) argues that, rather than African development articulating the hijacking of resources by elites or projects merely covering up deep societal inequalities, development organisations have become a pivotal part of African reality. Illuminating the tensions and contradictions of development, we must move away from focusing on stereotypes of the 'white man's burden' (cf. Stirrat 2008) and understand how Africans are coming to terms with their own realities. As Yarrow (2011; cf. Miyazaki 2004) argues, where Ghanaians look to a 'better' future, their conceptions of future hope are entwined with notions of present despair, giving rise to action. Hence, Afro-pessimistic analyses highlighting elite strategies (cf. Bayart 2009; Chabal & Daloz 1999) fail to account for the moral and ideological intricacies of African

even make Top 5. With her CCQ experience she contested again in Miss Biase and won in 2010. She entered CCQ for a second time in 2011.

development. Recognising current suffering, young women are attracted to NGO work in view of its ideology of care and development as a way of addressing the future.

One way of demonstrating these acts of care to others and the future, embodying ideal Nigerian femininity, is by becoming a beauty queen. Pageants have become highly popularised in Nigeria as spectacles, and as means for creating an ambassador and role model for certain communities (cf. Cohen et al. 1996). For instance, at the national level, Miss Nigeria, started as a photo competition in the *Daily Times* in 1957, and Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria (MBGN) create ambassadors for the nation, sending their winners to compete in international contests such as Miss Universe. As with CCQ, pageants such as Miss Cross River seek to find representatives for their State's interests. This is also mirrored at the LGA level. Yet the fascination and veneration for pageant queens has also spread to other communities, such as commercial enterprises (Glo Mobile's Miss Rock 'N' Rule), universities (faculty, university and NYSC camps), churches (Miss PowerCity Church, Calabar), community events (Miss Leboku for the New Yam Festival in Yakurr, Cross River), and charitable and societal causes (Face of Amnesty, a cause for Niger Delta militants). Reminiscent of the Miss World formula of 'beauty with a purpose', Nigerian beauty queens acquire fame and respect, their crown and title granting them the social capital (and thus allowing them access to economic capital) to carry out charitable projects.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Trying to overcome criticism for appearing outdated, the Miss World organisation founded a charity, 'Beauty with a Purpose' in 1972. Aiming to help children around the world, the charity relies on its contestants to carry out charitable projects in their own countries. Miss World's reign is also spent travelling the world in order to carry out charitable work. While Nigerian

Unsurprisingly, their worthy actions – and also their pageantry scandals – are heavily documented in newspapers and other media.

While pageant winners are propelled to the upper echelons of Nigerian society, it is interesting to ask where these girls start out. Nigerian pageants generally require entrants to be university students or graduates. Following the previous chapter's discussion of young women's thrift at styling themselves according to urban logics of success, being a university student is not indicative of family background. Where emphasis lies in performance and the art of representation (cf. Apter 2005; Newell 2012), it is impossible to tell whether contestants are already very well connected, are from middle-class families, or from quite impoverished circumstances. Unfortunately, it is a fact that it is easy for girls to exchange sex for money in order to get school fees and buy material items to look the part of pageant contestant (cf. Chapter 4). However, young women do appear to have a way of working these supposedly 'free and fair' pageant networks. Girls often start at smaller pageants (such as university or their LGA) before moving to more prestigious pageants (such as CCQ or Miss Cross River). With pageantry experience – having acquired skills, knowledge of the system, confidence and contacts – pageant winners aim for the most coveted prizes: the Miss Nigeria and MBGN crowns. Hence, as this chapter goes on to detail, while there are undoubtedly scandals and girls are crowned because of who they know, young women must learn to demonstrate certain cultural logics if they are to benefit from pageantry.

pageantry follows this model, the conservative society means that it is not commonplace for pageants to have swimsuit contests akin to the more international pageants.



Figure 10. Her Excellency (centre in green) and the most senior members of her office pose with contestants during the CCQ camp, depicting the networks of female patronage girls hope to benefit from. (Photo: Gilbert 2011)

Hence, in understanding how young women use pageantry as a means to encourage future fortune, this section has shown the need to locate beauty queens within the broader structures governing Nigerian society. Where Nigerian political power is predominantly male (cf. Mbembe 2001), rendering women voiceless, we may question women's powerlessness and subordination as they choose to mould themselves as respectable Christian female subjects. Inherent here is the ideal of the praying woman (cf. Mate 2002; Soothill 2007), who encompasses conceptions of care and hope for the future (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Yarrow 2011). Hence, by partaking in pageantry with its links to charity, young women mould subjectivities of urban success through acts of care, and by inserting themselves into powerful networks of women carrying out work for women in the postcolony. It is through these new subjectivities of success that

young women believe they can challenge fears of patriarchy and have faith in encouraging future opportunities. The next section focuses on how these subjectivities are created through the pageant camp.

'Grace and Beauty'

A major Carnival Calabar spectacle, much planning goes into CCQ each year. Towards the closing of the year, the pageant starts its advertising campaign. While a radio advertisement encourages girls to 'pick' a form for 5,000 naira to be in with a chance for a life-changing experience, organisers and those previously involved with the pageant post fliers on social media platforms such as Facebook and BBM to persuade their contacts to contest. Where Nigerian society operates through personal relations, the latter appears a highly successful means of attracting contestants. For instance, one year, a large number of contestants had been persuaded to compete by their mutual friend, the then-reigning Queen (incidentally, all girls were Igbo). Although pageants are open to all, the contestants are often from a network of urban young women whose performance of particular cultural knowledge renders them upwardly mobile.

Auditions, which see close to 100 girls compete for the 30 places, are held in Calabar, Lagos and Abuja. CCQ requires entrants to be 18-25 years of age, single, a citizen of Nigeria, and a university student or graduate, and audition judges look for appearance, poise, knowledge of MACA and Cross River, and compassion and eloquence. It must be noted that all the pageant contestants I met were city-dwellers. Some spoke of difficult childhoods and the continuing responsibilities of looking after younger siblings. Others were from more comfortable homes;

illustrated in the sad news of one contestant's father dying in the hands of his kidnappers shortly after the contest, they are no less removed from the insecurities of the postcolony. It was often difficult to distinguish backgrounds in the light of girls' consistent ability to display a 'cultural knowledge of urban success' through their stylish clothes, comportment and care for others (cf. Chapter 5; Newell 2012). Organisers capitalise on this cultural knowledge, looking for girls who show potential for being 'pruned' during camp.

While literature focuses on how pageants are sites of forming communities' ideals of feminine beauty (cf. Banet-Weiser 1999; Cohen et al. 1996), little attention has been paid to how camps mould new femininities. Leading up to the CCQ contest night, the two-week long camp is central to the grooming process to find a new queen and ambassador for MACA. Arriving at Channelview, one of the most exclusive hotels in Calabar the pageant's mantra of 'grace and beauty' plays out: contestants are made-up and attend a two-day workshop held by UNICEF (partnered with Her Excellency's Office). After this, the girls move to Surefoot American International School (another of the First Lady's initiatives) where they stay in seclusion. With BlackBerries confiscated, they rehearse acting, dancing and catwalking skills for the competition night. They also visit Calabar's tourist attractions and learn about Cross River and Her Excellency's initiatives. As a spectacle for the Carnival Calabar, the entire camp and contest is filmed by a production company, and later aired on the local television station and posted on Internet sites.

With the pageant's aims of reifying feminine ideals, the camp is a phase for socialising young women. Indeed, the camp can be viewed as a rite of passage as

in van Gennep's (1960) classic anthropological account. As van Gennep writes, 'Transition from group to group and from one social situation to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence, so that a man's life comes to be made up of a succession of stages' (1960:5). In the camp environment, the contestants undergo isolation before their reinsertion into public society. The camp prepares the contestants, turning them into feminine subjects exuding success, beauty and respectability, thus conferring a new social status and altering the individual's relation to the group (cf. van Gennep 1960). As the following highlights, the contestant's new social status is marked foremost by how they continue the performance of the ideal feminine subject they have come to embody (cf. Butler 1990). In the context of social and economic insecurity, where contestants must conceal unfavourable backgrounds, the constant performance of highly stylised selves becomes increasingly important for future success.

Focusing on the UNICEF conference part of the CCQ camp, we can see that, the whole camp is not just concerned with the contest finale, finding a winning contestant who exemplifies a certain ideal, but it is also about moulding more long-term visions of feminine beauty, respectability and success. The two-day event is primarily an educative exercise, designed to equip the girls with facts about HIV and AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, and the complications of teenage pregnancies and abortions (illegal in Nigeria). Contestants partake in group work, where they practise their presentation, problem-solving and communication skills. Addressing scenarios about teenage pregnancies, the style and subject matters of such exercises are a far cry from those usually found

within the Nigerian education system. As one contestant reflecting on her camp experience told me, 'The UNICEF part, we loved. I learned stuff I didn't even know. I learned so much.' With the conference aiming to make the girls 'better agents for change', the interests of UNICEF and the First Lady's Office lie beyond the pageant winner and seek to create a network of peer educators to tackle young women's problems where formal institutions fail to do so.

For the contestants, too, while they are undoubtedly focusing on the 2-million naira prize money and car (although few rarely admit this during camp, instead focusing on their respect for Her Excellency), the UNICEF conference is more than just a means of knowing the right answers for the competition night but regarded as preparation for life outside the pageant world. Where many of the contestants are already involved in NGO work, CCQ is a means for them to develop their passions and to work on respectable ventures. As one CCQ contestant explained:¹¹⁸

[Being a peer educator] was the reason why I came to contest for CCQ. I have this friend, and she was in my class last year, and she was first runner-up in this beauty pageant. She told me about CCQ. She told me that it was not just about the beauty, the class or anything. It's about your heart, you know. You have this passion for children – if you have this place to take care of children and stuff like that, you know, you could actually get to the pageant. So I was like, what the heck, I will give it a try. If I have the opportunity to be a peer educator, I know I will affect the lives of young people positively.

During camp, visits to MACA's refuges and the DCC orphanage allow the contestants to learn about the First Lady's charitable works and demonstrate

¹¹⁸ Sherry, a graduate from Imo State University, entered CCQ 2011 as she awaited her NYSC. It was her fourth pageant and she was placed in the Top 5. She entered her first pageant in 2007 at an international trade fair for advocacy and came third runner-up. In 2008 she was crowned Miss Why Not? After reigning for a year, she entered Miss Adandiigbo 2010 (a pageant celebrating Ibgo womanhood) and came first runner-up.

their compassion for women and children by giving donations (such as toilet paper, Indomie noodles, nappies, money). At the girls' refuge centre, with the cameras put away to preserve the centre's confidentiality, the contestants meet the pregnant young women who are currently being looked after by Her Excellency. The matron explains the work carried out, identifying God as the refuge's ultimate protector. The contestants are there to inspire the refuge girls by showing care and acting as role models. Again, God is central in this conception of care to encourage better futures (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Yarrow 2011), exemplified in how one contestant comforted a pregnant girl with the words 'Anything is possible with God!' Yet the visit to the shelter is also a way of educating the contestants about premarital sex and the problems surrounding unwanted pregnancy. As the matron warned the contestants, 'God has made a man for you, just be patient.' Hence, the visit articulates Christian ideals for single young women: to trust that God's plan for a husband will come to pass (cf. Chapter 2).

Where CCQ began with a prayer from the First Lady, spirituality is paramount to the ideal of the caring feminine subjectivity. God is foremost throughout the camp – from prayers ending the UNICEF conference or blessing the DCC orphans, to girls encouraging each other with the phrase 'Try your best and let God decide the rest'. Much more than just nurturing Nigerian religiosity, the camp is also a period for explicitly moulding Christian subjectivities. Each day starts with morning devotion – a spiritual time young women usually hold daily with their families – and Sunday morning is reserved for a service held in camp. Yet one particular example of how religious subjectivities are explicitly forged is shown

in an 'inspirational talk' given by a Pentecostal pastor. Ministering at a church in a sought-after part of Calabar, Pastor Imoh was invited to speak to the girls by one of the pageant organisers, one of his congregants. Briefly introducing himself and his wife, he described his life as accountant and pastor and explained the different ways in which God motivates him to be successful. Pastor Imoh continued his inspirational message by leading prayers and singing, demonstrating how religious subjects are made through action (cf. Berliner & Sarro 2007; Mahmood 2005; Marshall 2009). Interestingly, CCQ has seen one Muslim contestant (from Kwara State). While the organisers are open to the idea of different faiths attending camp, all contestants must carry out the same activities that are designed for moulding (arguably Pentecostal) Christian subjectivities.

Moulding 'from the inside', contestants receive an etiquette skills booklet instructing on matters such as 'strategies for effective leadership' and 'emotional intelligence'. The girls are expected to know the booklet by the end of the camp, and they often use any spare moments for revision. The girls also partake in an etiquette skills workshop at the camp, organised by two women (smartly dressed in 'corporate wear') who run their own training programme. Being given scenarios such as hosting a cocktail or dinner party, the girls are put into groups and are expected to set out props correctly and look after pretend guests in an attentive manner. It is notable that the contestants are clueless about these social functions, which are a more akin to 'western' upper class than Nigerian norms. Where most Nigerians eat soup and garri with their hands, it is no surprise that the girls cannot lay a table for a three-course meal. Also, where men usually lead

in public groups, the contestants struggle with the task of greeting people and engaging in polite small talk. Such etiquette training highlights the importance placed on being 'exposed' and knowing 'outside' Nigeria as being conducive to not just respectability and social mobility but for being a leader in society. However, such training also highlights how beauty pageants mould feminine ideals that are not necessarily in line with reality (Sanders & Pink 1999:59).

While CCQ advocates moral and intellectual feminine beauty, aesthetics are by no means of secondary importance. Make-up artists stand by, making sure that girls' faces are perfected by foundation, colourful eyeshadows, blush and lip gloss, and nails are manicured in bold colours. Expected to take pride in their appearance and be made up in public, the contestants must touch up their own make-up throughout the day – chaperones and 'Grandma' make frequent inspections. The camp moulds contestants along ideals of beauty emerging across urban Nigeria. Most notable is the contestants' uniform hair, which is professionally made at the beginning of camp. The contestants are fixed with long wavy black 'weave-ons', in line with urban girls' preference for sleek 'western' style hair – while length denotes wealth, the material (real 'Brazilian' or 'Peruvian' versus synthetic) also marks status. Hair always looks pristine for the start of camp, and the girls must look after their 'weave-ons' (by wearing hair nets when sleeping, for instance) in order to stay looking groomed until the competition night. Skin colour is also an index of beauty, and Nigerian girls, preferring lighter skin tones, generally try to stay out of the sun, rub in white face powder for protection, and use skin-lightening moisturising creams. Unsurprisingly, the camp was representative of this general trend, although

there was not an abnormally high number of very fair girls. While the most 'fair' girls may have been considered more beautiful, they were not necessarily favourites to win unless they could also exude inner 'grace and beauty'. Hence, ideals of beauty appeared intricately bound to a performance of certain cultural logics of inner beauty and outward grooming (cf. Butler 1990).

Dress, too, is a central part of camp life. The contestants are provided with a couple of t-shirts, which they must look after throughout the two-week camp by washing and airing them in their dormitories. Along with skinny jeans, heels and sashes, girls wear this uniform around camp and on visits. Contestants are sent a list of clothes to buy before camp, detailing different types of high heels and dress styles. This list is the source of much stress for the contestants. Where products in markets are ever shifting (cf. Chapter 5), many girls arrive in camp missing some items. 'Grandma' scrutinises all hemlines, straps and other small details to discern whether they are suitable to be used in 'profiling shots' for the contest night. Often, girls do not know what constitutes 'corporate wear' and bring something too casual, or are not sure of the difference between 'cocktail dress' and 'evening gown'. Many of the girls arrive with fashionable figure-hugging and revealing clothes, and are often told that they are not suitable in view of too much flesh or bra straps showing. Although clothes should show off the contestant's figure, they should remain respectable. As the girls are not allowed to leave camp, 'Grandma' collects contestants' money and goes to Watt Market to buy any remaining items of clothes needed.

This is an expensive part of the pageant for the contestants, and the girls complain that they could easily spend up to 100,000 naira on the list – especially

when Aba-made clothes are not considered acceptable (cf. Chapter 5). As girls contest in more pageants, they build up a wardrobe, as well as knowledge on what passes as acceptable 'corporate', 'evening' or 'cocktail' attire. Where the art of representation is so important for concealing one's background and pertaining to a certain potential linked to the success of pageantry, girls must constantly learn and enact these dress codes. Hence, despite camp's seclusion from the outside world, this 'backstage' area of the contest, with its strict adherence to style and being made up, demonstrates how feminine subjectivities are constantly moulded through performance (cf. Butler 1990).

While much of the literature focuses on how pageantry creates an image of ideal femininity for a spectacle (cf. Sanders & Pink 1996), we may follow Lavendo (1996) to view CCQ as actually moulding new feminine subjectivities for Calabar life beyond the pageant. The camp provides contestants with 'the final lessons in social life... instructions on poise, on self-presentation and good grooming, on good manners, on getting along with other members of a small town middle class' (Lavendo 1996:34). Yet in the Nigerian context, we may also add that these pageant camps are integral for giving girls the chance of entering patronage networks, which could provide new opportunities. The First Lady aside, the camp is run by influential women, such as 'Grandma', Ms. Enuma Chigbo (a media consultant), Vivian Anani (a Cross Riverian Nollywood actress), Dr. Regina Ejemot-Nwadiaro (from UNICEF), as well as former contestants and married women acting as the chaperones. Camp also gives a chance to be noticed by dance and modelling instructors and by the international pageant directors who always fly in at the last minute from Jamaica. The constant grooming of

comportment, spirituality and appearance shows how the camp is designed to mould respectable, single, urban women: upwardly mobile and well-connected, educated, engaged in charitable works (and other activities such as business), God-fearing, and stylish.



Figure 11. Cameras follow the contestants' every move during a visit to the Destiny's Child Center. While the visit epitomises the ideals of caring, God-fearing and stylish young women, it is interesting that many of the contestants are moved by the orphanage experience and their compassion is informed by their own hardships or difficult childhoods. (Photo: Gilbert 2012)

Paying attention to the local, we should also look beyond how CCQ ties in with other pageants to also consider the pageant's cultural continuities regarding teaching young women how to become respectable feminine subjects in Calabar society. Traditionally, Efik girls, on reaching the age of fourteen or fifteen, would enter seclusion in the 'fattening room' (*ufok nkuho*) to prepare for womanhood (Akak 1982; Kingsley 1975). The girl would remain in the 'fattening room' for a year or even up to two years, in which time she would be waited upon by maids,

and only allowed to eat, sleep and rest. The amount of time in the 'fattening room' was contingent on the family's wealth, with longer periods of seclusion denoting wealthy parents and encouraging higher bride prices. During seclusion, the girl's body would also be covered in white chalk (*Ndom*) and massaged with ground roots to keep soft (Akak 1982). Being fattened in accordance with the traditional Efik standard of beauty, the girl would inevitably become known as 'fattened woman' (*Nkuho*). On leaving the 'fattening room', the girl would be ready for marriage – the husband-to-be should have presented the girl's family with clothes and other items for the seclusion in order to fulfil marriage obligations. Traditionally, this practice was as much an initiation as about aesthetic beauty. The *mbodi* (bride fattening) process usually took place alongside Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The importance of female circumcision follows from the belief that a baby will die if its head should touch its mother's uncut clitoris during birth. By the 1980s, *mbodi* process had evolved significantly, with girls not only receiving advice about womanhood and marriage from female relatives but also being given lessons in domesticity (Akak 1982).

During my fieldwork, I did not hear of anyone undergoing the *mbodi* rites, although informants said that a variation still went on where 'traditional' women come to the girl's house rather than the girl going to a 'fattening house'. Where my friends were sure the (now banned) FGM practice was no longer done in these reformed *mbodi* rites, FGM remains a big issue in rural Cross River. Writing about female initiations in a Kenyan community, Moore (2011) shows how changing practices illuminate the continuation rather than rejection of gendered

socialisation programmes. In Marakwet, World Vision, a Christian development advocacy, have contested 'traditional' female initiation rites. Where FGM has been the source of political contention in Kenya, World Vision instated an Area Rehabilitation Program (ARP) to replace the 'traditional' girls' initiation house (*kapkore*) and coming-out ceremony (*kibuno*). The ARP focuses on socialising girls for Marakwet society but advocates against FGM, teaching 'positive cultural values and meanings, but without the "cut"' (Moore 2011:44). Moore (2011) helpfully highlights the continuing value of socialisation programmes, and how local religious groups contest 'tradition' and shape new gendered ideals. Indeed, developing the work of the early missionaries (cf. Bastian 2000; Peel 2000b, 2002), it is the church (particularly Pentecostalism) that is now playing a significant role in imparting ideals of femininity and marriage in Calabar (cf. Chapter 2; Bochow & van Dijk 2012; Mate 2002).¹¹⁹ As such, we may also see how pageants such as CCQ, with their emphasis on equipping young women with etiquette skills and religious fervour, also replace more 'traditional' initiation programmes.

Where 'traditional' conceptions of feminine beauty in Cross River are intricately linked to the 'fattening room' rituals, it is interesting to consider how pageants, such as CCQ, promote new ideals of aesthetic beauty. In urban Nigeria, young women now equate being slim with being beautiful. These evolving ideals create a complex story where being fat is still equated with nourishment and wealth,

¹¹⁹ Most recently, the traditional Efik practice has been the focus of a reality television show filmed by EbonyLife TV in Calabar (aired in January 2014). Bringing together six girls from different parts of Africa, the show gives modern spin on the 'fattening room', focusing on topics such as ideal womanhood and finding true love. (See article in *The Sun* available: <http://sunnewsonline.com/new/trending/here-come-ladies-from-the-fattening-room>. Accessed 13/1/14).

yet owing to 'western' ideals of being slim fits with desires of being 'exposed' and knowing 'outside'. As such, during the camp, where the contestants enjoy eating three good meals a day – much more food than many girls would normally eat – the organisers voiced concerns that the contestants were starting to put on weight. The changing perception of body size amongst urban African women is an issue raised by Schulz (2000) in her analysis of a Malian pageant. However, where Schulz (2000) argues that beauty ideals, driven by a small elite, fit with urban ideals and exclude the majority of Malian women, the case in Calabar appears more complex.

In Calabar, it must be highlighted that 'traditional' feminine beauty was not only linked to being 'fat' but also about the process of marriage, to undergo the rituals of seclusion and have the bride price completed. Hence, in considering how pageants such as CCQ promote new ideals of beauty, we must not only look to body size but also to the contestants' marital status. The grooming of contestants undoubtedly raises these girls' prospects of marrying a well-connected man – highlighting the elevated social status of queens, contestants say a 'small boy' (unconnected youth) cannot simply approach a queen on the street. Yet the emphasis on these queens is that they are (or must appear) completely single. As a peer educator preaching abstinence to other young women, the Carnival Calabar Queen cannot be seen involved with any man. Hence, how pageants promote slim single young women is not necessarily changing actual body shapes – many young women are naturally slim – but highlighting how this social group is now considered beautiful, able to garner admiration from others without (yet) being married. This idea of the respectable independent single

woman also maps onto the rural:urban divide, in the way in which the postcolonial city is alive with potentiality (cf. Simone 2011) whereas 'the village' is bound by community obligation and 'tradition'. Urban girls consider themselves more 'enlightened', 'exposed' and with more opportunities: they are 'on point'. Speaking derogatively, they consider rural demeanour as 'local' and stereotype village feminine aesthetics as being akin to the more shapely bodies of the 'cultural dancers' hired for 'Traditional Marriages'. Hence, being slim is more complicated than simply mapping on to 'western' body shape ideals (cf. Schulz 2000) but also tied to ideas of independence by countering marriage and 'the village'.

In understanding how standards of feminine beauty and respectability, linked to ideas of social reproduction, may evolve over time, we may draw on Ferme's (1994) analysis of the changing initiation practices of the Sande, the female society of the Mende of Sierra Leone. Focusing on the process of religious syncretism, Ferme's (1994) account details how one elder, 'Alhaji Airplane', designed to change the Sande initiation after being exposed to new ideals of Muslim femininity during his pilgrimage to Mecca. Meanwhile, in the village in Sierra Leone, the initiation process faced challenges from Sande elders holding different social values and also from urban girls waiting to be initiated. Ferme (1994) ably shows how ideals and practices are not essential to an isolated community but, firstly, influenced by global processes and, secondly, always under scrutiny and reformation from different actors navigating the axes of power and authority to benefit their own interests. Just with the complex

perceptions of body size in Calabar, Ferme (1994) highlights how ideals are rarely clear-cut and shaped by many influences.

As such, both Moore (2011) and Ferme (1994) enable us to draw links between the 'fattening rooms' and the First Lady's pageant as a means for socialising young women. Both highlight how perceptions of gender ideals and the practices that shape these subjectivities change over time, yet, playing again on the idea of performed genders (cf. Butler 1990), there appears a need for communities to maintain some sort of initiation in order to recognise gendered subjectivities coming into being. Ferme (1994) is also helpful for allowing us to distinguish the different interests and agencies of those partaking in the pageant. For the First Lady's Office (including UNICEF), the desire is to groom respectable young women who will encourage their peers. For the girls, the desire to compete in a pageant is primarily for their own benefit and part and parcel of a 'feminine culture of waiting' (cf. Jeffrey 2010). Not only is the pageant an escape from the boredom of the house when university is on strike (cf. Chapter 4) but it is also a means of learning new skills (presentation, catwalking, etiquette, for instance) to mould new subjectivities of respectability and success.

Furthermore, drawing on the idea of the camp as a rite of passage (cf. van Gennep), a liminal site for creating ideal feminine subjectivities for Calabar society, we may also consider the processes by which the contestants do feel that they change. Taking the contestants out of their daily lives for a fortnight, the CCQ camp is, quite simply, a break from reality. As such, the majority of contestants remember it as being the most fun part of the whole pageant experience. The CCQ pageants I attended were held at a boarding school,

although previous years had been hosted at Amber Hotel, Tinapa – somewhere most young women would never normally get a chance to experience. Former contestants reminisce about the amount of food they were given and the lack of household chores, as well as the cameras that constantly followed them, the make-up artists at the ready, and the gazes of others when they went on excursions around Calabar. Furthermore, where young women are usually suspicious of other young women (cf. Chapter 4), the girls often spoke fondly of their pageant chaperones and ‘sisters’ (each female chaperone is in charge of three or four contestants), with whom they shared a room, advice and encouragement for the competition. Although the endless rehearsals, organisers shouting orders, and the pressure of the upcoming contest night undoubtedly meant that the contestants often exclaimed how ‘stressful’ it all was, the camp also removed the girls from their usual difficult circumstances.

Indeed, describing how camp contrasted with her usual home life, Victoria described how ‘CCQ was really like a fairytale’ and a place where ‘you feel important’ – at these comments, the other two former queens present in the conversation voiced their agreement. As Victoria added:

You know, when you pick a form for a pageant, you are a queen whether you have won or not. Now, in camp, they treat all of you as queens because they don’t know who is going to emerge queen, so all of you are prospective queens in the making.... You don’t know whose father is a minister or a commissioner, so they *have* to treat you right. [Original emphasis]

What is significant in the camp experience is how everyone is made equal. While some contestants are from privileged families, some, such as Victoria, come from broken homes and are doing what they can to find a way forward in life.

However, during camp, normal social identities are erased through the contestants' performance of particular femininities associated with beauty queens (cf. Butler 1990). Hence, it is important to highlight the importance of liminality in how the camp moulds new gendered subjectivities. Just as Moore highlights how the Christian ARP in Kenya takes girls out of their usual social setting in order to 'forge new bonds, identities and aspirations' (2011:48), the CCQ camp is also a time when social norms are altered in order to create new social statuses. Of course, it is interesting to ask what happens to these new social identities when the liminal period of camp comes to a close, when all but one contestant returns to normal life. Interestingly, while former contestants acknowledge that they remain mute in Nigerian society (cf. Ardener (1975), they also speak of a new-found confidence and self-worth after taking part in camp. As one former CCQ contestant explained, 'After [CCQ] I think that I had gained confidence because I could talk more and I could relate to people better.' This contestant did not win on her first attempt but her growing self-belief led her to re-enter the next year, when the audition panellists recognised that something about her had changed. While she only reached the Top 5 in her second CCQ contest, she had gained the confidence to go in for Miss Nigeria 2013, where she once again reached Top 5.

Drawing continuities from more 'traditional' female initiations in Calabar, this section has shown the pageant camp as a liminal site, a rite of passage, where new female subjectivities are moulded. The discussion has illustrated how young women demonstrate respectability through performance (cf. Butler 1990). Where pageantry has the ability to transform young women's lives, the camp

manufactures a façade of success through the teaching of etiquette, comportment, encouragement of compassion, and emphasis on aesthetics. Furthermore, illuminating the camp as a break from reality, we see how young women are able to find confidence in themselves through the disintegration of societal norms previously rendering them voiceless. While this break from reality is only temporary, the skills that young women have learned during the camp give them confidence in their future endeavours. As the examples have shown, contestants find faith in themselves through this process of learning cultural knowledge of success. The following goes on to build up the picture of how pageantry prepares young women for future success by examining young women's perceptions of contests (the benefits and difficulties).

'Platforms' and Networks

To further understand young women's ideas of success through pageantry, it is interesting to examine their reasons for contesting (Banet-Weiser 1999:22). As contestants repeatedly told me, pageantry was a 'platform' to reach to better things. The camp is a place to learn new skills, meet peers and become known by influential people. The prizes – substantial amounts of money, cars, laptops, foreign travel, free clothes – can instantly 'make' the winners and runners-up, giving the cultural knowledge to become successful urban individuals (cf. Chapter 5; Newell 2012), and are regarded as investments for the future. It is not uncommon for winners to invest prize money in business in order to make more money (anything from retail to real estate); and pertaining to a certain image of successful urbanite encourages further success and admiration from others. Where many single young women live in much financial and social insecurity, the

stakes for winning are high. As one CCQ organiser recalled about the girls auditioning, 'Some of them are desperate. They are desperate to get out of the situation that they are in.'

Unfortunately, contestants' high hopes concerning prizes were juxtaposed by former queens' complaints of how the 'package' they received was not as advertised: cars never materialised, trips abroad were postponed or destinations changed (sometimes due to visa issues), monthly instalments of prize money were either greatly reduced or were non-existent. Acknowledging how business works along vertical lines of patronage, one young woman told of her 'fake pageant' experience, explaining how prizes cannot always be given because, often, those who have promised to support projects are not actually in the position to give money. She emphasised the injustice in how organisers remake empty promises each year to hopeful contestants whilst remaining indebted to previous winners. Others were less forgiving and believed organisers 'chopped' money. Some girls also felt that their prizes were kept from them out of bitterness either because they had been the pageant 'outsider' or because they were not willing to 'compromise' themselves. Such failures and disappointments of the pageantry world speak directly to analyses of the corruption, duplicity and illusion pervading the Nigerian postcolony (cf. Apter 1999, 2005; Smith 2007), with crowns not always able to remove young women from the mercies of fraud and fakery.

Young women view the winner's title as the most attractive and lucrative part of pageantry, opening doors to seemingly infinite opportunities. Contestants viewed being a 'Miss' as making it easier to ask others to patronise their business

or charitable ventures. Girls also considered a title on their résumé as making visa and passport applications more successful. This perception that titles raise social capital stems from the importance placed on people being both accountable and recognised by others. Yet, young women view this 'platform', the social elevation that pageantry enables, as not only a means of extracting themselves from current difficulties but also as a place where they can be heard by others. It was during a focus group with three veteran pageant winners that young women's desire to be heard struck me most. These three young women were sassy, clever, highly ambitious and able to speak their minds on the more controversial sides of Nigerian society. At first glance, with their titles, stylish clothes and cars, they appeared far removed from Nigeria's most marginalised. Yet, despite their privileges, the conversation was littered with the references to collective struggles of women in the postcolony. As Victoria and Nikita explained, pageantry enabled them to overcome being 'second fiddles in Nigeria':

V: They feel, for you to win a pageant, means that you are not only pretty physically but that you have something upstairs. So, they will regard you, they know you have something to say – you're a queen – but, other than pageantry, it is *hard* for women to be heard. Even in politics. You know, some men still have the notion that a woman's place is in the kitchen – and probably the bedroom! – so when a woman comes up and is like, 'I have something to say, I have something to say!' – 'What do you possibly have to say?'

N: 'What do you have to say? What are you doing here? There's *kiit-chiin!* – don't forget!' – You know?

V: But when you're a queen and they see you out there – you know, all beautiful and intelligent – and you say something, and they are like, 'Wow, this is a queen!' – Even if you do not have anything to say! [Original emphasis].

As with missing prizes, winners' experiences were often very different from contestants' beliefs that a crown creates an instant platform for respect and

authority. Expected to raise funds for pet projects, queens must write proposals and visit businessmen. They are often asked for sexual favours to be in for the chance of being patronised. Nikita explained queens' frustrations at not being able to carry out projects and the lack of respect men displayed for them:

When we sit on the throne as queens, people think we have it all rosy. All rosy. They don't know the challenges we are facing. In Nigeria, [as] a typical Nigerian queen that doesn't want to compromise, you are facing a lot of challenges. The major thing that faces us is that men want to sleep with us.... All they want to do is sleep with you. All they want to do.

Following Nikita's remarks, queens appear just as disempowered as other young women they try to help through their charitable projects, raising questions as to whether winning a crown does challenge patriarchy. Yet beauty queens face 'challenges' not only because men expect to be able to have their way but also because some young women do actually use men to win pageants. Young women will be bought forms by men – uncles, 'uncles' or 'friends' – and it sometimes transpires that those who win are linked to influential Big Men.¹²⁰ The entwining of beauty pageants and Big Men is a complex story, and much that goes on remains unsaid and shrouded in much speculation.

For instance, explaining how she stepped on toes as she tried to collect money for her charitable project, one former queen said, 'I was turning these men down and making them see that this was not what the pageant was about. It does take

120 For instance, a pageant scandal sent rumours flying across newspapers and social media sites in 2012 (e.g. James 2012). Isabella Ayuk, the then reigning Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria, was disqualified at the Miss World pageant after it emerged she exceeded the age limits of both pageants. While Miss World did not let her compete, it was claimed that the organisers of MBGN (the feeder pageant for Miss World) always knew Ayuk's real age but let her compete because of her links to the Deputy Speaker at the House of Representatives in Abuja, and another influential businessman.

strength.... And a lot of queens were doing these things. They were dating people in government. I wanted to stand out. I wanted to be different.' Where young women did consider winning a crown as being given a voice, in spite of not being respected as equals by men, we need to question our understandings of female empowerment through gender equality (cf. Soothill 2007; Mate 2002). While men's requests disappointed them, this was also considered just the way things worked in Nigeria. Significantly, queens viewed their ability to say 'no' and to play the 'enduring' woman, knowing they had other options, as the thing that differentiated them from more marginalised women.

The contradictions of pageantry are product of and replenish the disorder of the postcolony (cf. Mbembe 2001; Obadare & Adebaniwi 2010), creating both opportunities and problems for young women. Vigh's (2006) framework of 'social navigation', combining Bourdieu's (1977) analysis of social structures with de Certeau's (1984) analysis of tactical agency, is helpful for understanding how young women are bound by the irregularities of the postcolony and how they must use this unpredictable space to their own advantage. The employment of de Certeau's (1984) concepts of time and space is particularly helpful for asking how young women, inserting themselves into patrimonial networks, navigate their 'feminine cultures of waiting' (cf. Jeffrey 2010). Yet in tying pageantry back into how young women work towards their 'God-given destinies', it is interesting to question why they do keep contesting in pageants when they know the likelihood of failure. After explaining her experiences of

unfulfilled promises and men's expectations, Noela (CCQ 1st Princess 2009)¹²¹ explained:

You know, in this country, girls – let me not just say girls, everyone is positive with the hope that things will get better. 'Probably this time around, they won't cheat me.' But, *oya*, it's not always like that. It's just what keeps us going. You can't say that they won't give it to me so I won't go. Most people don't just enter a pageant for the prize. Most people actually go there to meet people, and they want to see if doors of opportunity will open for them.

Amid uncertainty, girls must keep faith in fortune being delivered. This hope is not only a sentiment displaying future optimism but also an acknowledgement of present struggle (Yarrow 2011:2). Differentiating the present from the future, young women must partake in constant action to maintain faith in better futures (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013). As the title of 'Miss' confers, such acts undertaken through pageantry are direct workings of the self, maintaining belief in ever-approaching horizons (cf. Crapanzano 2004) by altering both one's relation to others and also one's self-perception. Yet contestants are all too aware of the pitfalls of pageantry – as such, they are bound by the struggles they seek to alleviate through their charitable projects – and such preparations of the self are always gambles for success. Driven by faith for what could be and fear of failure, young women believe constant action necessary to unlock the pageantry's potential. While this section examined how young women consider the networks pageantry opens up as more beneficial than the material prizes, the

¹²¹ Noela entered her first pageant, Miss Heartland (Imo State), when she was 19. She then competed in Miss African Queen, Miss Campus (at her university) and finally CCQ in 2009. I met her on the CCQ 2012 camp, when she had returned to act as a chaperone. At the time she was a serving her NYSC, although she also ran her own production company (aided with her prize money from CCQ). She also 'grooms' girls wanting to contest in pageants.

final section goes on to compare three queens' stories, highlighting the various and unexpected ways in which young women can benefit from pageantry.

'Come and try and change me!'

Blessing was studying at UniCal when she entered Miss Cross River 2004. Her background is one of reasonable comfort – her mother a Presbyterian reverend, her father a retired civil servant, and her uncle is a one-time governor of Cross River (although, she does not publicly flaunt such connections). Unlike the majority of aspiring queens I spoke to, Blessing only entered the pageant for fun during a university vacation. Acknowledging how her parents were very strict, she contested in secret, leaving the house each morning to attend the camp. On winning, she of course had to tell her parents, whose concerns that 'nothing good comes out of pageantry' were allayed when they witnessed Blessing's growing responsibilities. As she explained, with the crown came the job as head of an NGO, Miss Cross River Social Development Initiative, and a duty to carry out a pet-project. Blessing chose to tackle child trafficking – at the time, a big concern in Yakurr, her LGA in central Cross River. During her reign, she was mentored by a female manager, and attended programmes and workshops to give presentations. Unlike many queens who are only promised travel, Blessing's work as queen took her to Ghana, and to Kenya for a youth leadership summit. Blessing explained:

I had a serious life and I didn't know that Miss Cross River was such a serious thing. I did work three years intensively. We had to do a lot. We worked with the former President elect's daughter, who is Hafsat Abiola. She came from Harvard and after her mum and – her parents died, and they died because of poor leadership in Nigeria – she came and decided to talk to young women about leadership in Nigeria. So she has an initiative called KIND – Kudirat Initiative for Democracy – so I enrolled for a year, and working with her was very tremendous.

They talked to women about HIV and AIDS, government and leadership, what women should stand for, that women should take place in the leadership of our country – you know, and not let men put us down and all that. It was very, very educative.... I met a couple of people who helped my project come to pass. I met the SA to the President then on Child Trafficking, and the former Vice-President's wife, Atika Abubakar. She had an outfit called WOTCLEF – it was a programme that helped trafficked children, especially those who had been trafficked outside Nigeria.

Blessing admitted her role as queen was hard work. Constantly in the public's gaze, she felt her identity evolve – eventually, she said she 'lost the Blessing and it was now just Miss Cross River'. As a role model, she was not allowed to go out to certain places, see some friends, to drink or behave in certain ways. 'That was tough. It was not so funny,' she added sombrely. Blessing highlights the frustrations of beauty queens traversing the networks of others as they attempt to acquire their own status (cf. Vigh 2006). In order to be successful, beauty queens must constantly perform an ideal of feminine beauty and respectability (cf. Butler 1990), to maintain the image they learned in camp.

Blessing's reign was undoubtedly successful – the pageant did not run again but she kept the crown for three years. Working as a beauty queen equipped Blessing with skills for her CV and introduced her to influential people and peer networks, of whom she is able to call on today. Her position to help her own people in Yakurr (cf. Smith 2004) and ability to travel exemplifies how her crown created the capacity for her to be a patron in society. Furthermore, Blessing's subsequent MA gained in the UK, her burgeoning catering service (winning contracts for government functions) and fashion business, her plans to build an environmental NGO, and her job working for a State Government agency – and, as Blessing was quick to point out to me, her marriage – are demonstrative of

how young women can use pageantry to open doors. Of course, Blessing did have connections and was unlikely to suffer as she made her way in her early twenties. However, regardless of her background, the Miss Cross River crown inserted Blessing into new networks of powerful women. It is by acting in these female patronage networks, performing feminine ideals through charitable acts (cf. Butler 1990), which promotes the skills, confidence and 'cultural knowledge' young women need to go on to be successful in society.

The second, and more complex story comes from Christabel, who I met through CCQ. I first interviewed her during camp. It was her first pageant and, at 18, she described herself as 'naïve'. She had been encouraged to enter by a friend in view of her love for children. As she spoke of how she wanted to reach out to others through pageantry, she briefly touched on her own story of her parents' divorce. In her own words, she knew what it was like to feel 'so low' and 'suffering from rejection', and entered CQQ 'to make sure [the children] know they are loved'. As Christabel explained, she also wanted to work on Her Excellency's 'wonderful project' to advocate abstinence – claiming to be a virgin, this was something she really believed in. Christabel said of the contest: 'Should I call it a competition? I don't think so. It's a *dare* – from the whole world, from my situation. It's a dare, like, come and try and change me!' (original emphasis). Hence, young women's desire to help others often stems from knowing what hardship feels like, reminding us how hope for the future is channelled through despair of the present (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Yarrow 2011).

Some months later, Christabel had joined The Brook Church. She gave a follow-up interview and elaborated on her pageantry 'dare'. It turned out that three

years prior to CCQ, she had relocated to Calabar with her mother and younger siblings. Her father was absent, and, as the eldest daughter, Christabel became responsible for supporting her family. A Microbiology student at UniCal, she regarded university as just something everyone must do; her real passion lay in entertainment, acting and modelling. On seeing a poster in the market advertising CCQ, Christabel saw the opportunities to provide for her family: 'I wasn't actually thinking far. I was actually just thinking about getting money to take care of my family. I want them to have just a normal life. Not this suffering – no food, no clothes, no that.' She did not get into the Top 10, although this meant she could stay and provide for her family. Indeed, she had calculated that the second prize was best, allowing her 'to take the money and go'. However, it turned out the experience was to be more successful than she was to imagine. Following CCQ, she secured lucrative modelling contracts through her Lagos-based agent. While she put her luck down to God's faithfulness, she also explained how pageantry 'just hypes you'. Her billboard campaigns for large Nigerian brands paid her in the region of 500,000 naira, enough money for her to pay a couple of years' rent on a family home in Calabar.

Christabel spoke proudly of her new-found independence and ability to provide for her family. She stated how she wanted to work hard and to have her own money so that men would respect her. It transpired that this had not always been the case and before CCQ, she had been sitting in the house waiting for her ex-boyfriend to bring money. Christabel had been in a relationship with one of Calabar's most eligible bachelors for a couple of years. Justifying her story, she said, 'I just needed someone very old and *rich* – I was very young and penniless!'

(original emphasis). While he had provided for her family, he had also taken care of the expenses for CCQ – she estimated he had given her 150,000 naira for the list of clothes alone. As she revealed about the relationship:

It was not actually because I loved him in the first place. It was before I started modelling. This whole stuff had been happening – my dad and my mum’s stuff. You know, I just found he was available. Like there were so many guys that were available but I knew that I had to give up this [romantic] stuff for one person who I knew could take care of my family and all that.... And why I actually broke up with him was that I am not ready to get married any time soon and he wants to. And apart from that, like, I can take care of my family now and I don’t need you to tell me, control my life and tell me this and that and that because you pay my bills and all that trash.... I can’t stay and watch my siblings go hungry and all that. It helps now I can take care of myself.

While Christabel’s story differs from that of Blessing’s, hers is no less successful. Christabel highlights the great burdens of responsibility that many young women suffer. As she talked, she painted a somewhat incongruous story to me: she wanted to work really hard in order to earn respect from men; she believed a man should always pay for all his girlfriend’s needs; she would never lower herself to sleep with a man for a prize. As such, her story highlights the complexities of exchange, dependence and respect that are inherent in young women’s relationships with men. In desperate situations, young women often feel like there is no other option than to make sacrifices, and it is often difficult to know young women’s real motivations and actions. Yet pageantry is beneficial to young women in the way it gives them an identity, enabling them to get jobs through the performance of an admired female beauty (cf. Butler 1990). Crucially, it is the money that transformed Christabel’s life, enabling her to become financially independent.

The third story of Nikita highlights the ways in which young women work the prizes for their own benefit, milking the system to maximise on pageants' disorganisation and shortcomings. As Nikita explained, 'The thing about Nigerian pageants, even if they don't package it well, when you sit on the throne, you can actually do something better with it.' After being crowned Miss UniCal 2009, Nikita was dissatisfied with her prize (a television, some money and a year's free accommodation in the campus hostel) and realised there was so much potential and capital to be unlocked in the crown.

So, when I sat down as Miss UniCal, I said, 'I can't just sit here and do nothing!' Being Miss University of Calabar – there is so much money inside that place! I have to get my own share and do something about this. [Other two queens present giggle] So the first thing I did was – funnily enough, the university has been there since 1975, and I was so surprised to hear that a queen will sit as Miss UniCal without a letterhead. No letterhead! And I was like, how was she corresponding with the world? With the school community and all of that? So, the first thing I did was, I had my letterhead...

I now wrote to school about it – 'I want to do this and this.' The VC was surprised. He had to comment, 'There is no project in school for anything to be done by Miss UniCal.'

I said, 'I'm here o! And I want to do something about it, so you must hear me out!' So, he approved it, gave me money. I did the project successfully.... I did so many projects as Miss UniCal, so many projects, and thanks to the VC who gave out money at that time. But there were so many queens before me and even after me who have sat down and stood up without doing anything.

Nikita displays this tendency to seize opportunities in other areas of her life. As she explained, before pageantry she was just a normal student with aspirations of going into politics. Pageantry was a 'platform for something higher'. Speaking of how she viewed her crown: 'If you're somebody, like I said, who really knows what you want to do with your life and you're given an opportunity, it really helps to get focused. To me, it's like, you make *good* use of it' (original emphasis).

Winning Miss UniCal – her first pageant – gave her confidence and courage to go ahead, to keep looking for opportunities and trying for better things. The same year she went in for Miss University Nigeria. Competing against 150 reigning queens from state, federal and private universities, she came 2nd Runner-Up. After this, Nikita entered CCQ but was not placed. The first time she entered Miss Niger Delta, a pageant for the nine delta states, she came 1st Runner-Up. She won the subsequent year in 2011.

When I met her she was completing her studies and waiting for her NYSC, after which she planned to study for a Criminology masters in Ukraine (the UK was preferable but too expensive). She was also cautiously working out the intentions of a certain young man (as with most girls, she kept this relationship quiet). In the meantime, while she waited for plans of study and marriage to come into fruition (cf. Jeffrey 2010; Masquelier 2013a), she was enjoying her reign as Miss Niger Delta. The pageant was more influential and more fun than the others she had contested in, including bigger prizes (an allowance, an all expenses paid trip anywhere in the world, a car). While she had been severely disappointed that not all the prizes materialised – her car sat parked in Bayelsa State until someone paid their share of the pageant expenses – Nikita's story highlights how young women can work pageants, hopeful of increasingly more lucrative prospects. From her Miss UniCal reign, Nikita was inserted into a network of past Miss Niger Deltas. As she explained, the previous eleven queens would 'gist' with her and talk about their experiences. Hence, while Nikita's story highlights how young women can use pageantry to work through increasingly

influential patronage networks – from university peers to state governors – it also shows how networks of influential young women are emerging.

Blessing, Christabel and Nikita present three very different stories. Their differing backgrounds, contests and achievements highlight the lack of uniformity in Nigerian pageantry. Following Lavendo's dismissal of contestants' false consciousness in pageantry, it also highlights young women's 'imaginative agency' (1996:45). Yet common strands can be drawn from the three stories to better understand how young women do use pageantry to work towards better futures. Firstly, regardless of background, pageantry inserts young women into influential networks of patronage, allowing them to garner respect and authority, the social capital needed to succeed outside of their family connections or relationships with men. Interestingly, pageants seem to provide new networks of female patronage. Both the involvement of older female patrons (such as First Ladies) and the ever-extending networks of winners speak to the hope young women place in empowering women and changing Nigeria for the better (cf. Yarrow 2011).

Secondly, and following on from earlier discussions of the CCQ camp, we are presented with the idea of the performance of gendered subjectivities (cf. Butler 1990). In order to be successful, to benefit from the situation, the stories demonstrate the need to look the part of the caring female. Yet they also illustrate the need for constant (and often hard) work. Being a beauty queen may give rise to many opportunities but the three queens highlight that success is not just given out freely. The queens' constant display of action is not only a way of renewing faith in the future (cf. Miyazaki 2004) but also about being seen as

respectable in Calabar society, 'to have something going' (cf. Chapter 5). As such, the queens emphasise that success always involves a compromise, that hope for better things is always informed by present fears and struggles (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013; Yarrow 2011).

Conclusion

Understanding how young women engage with pageantry as a means of preparing for future success, this chapter has focused on the performance of gender (cf. Butler 1990) to highlight how new ideals of urban Christian femininity are produced, contested and used by young women. Developing the examination of young women's faith in fortune, this chapter illustrated how constant performance is necessary to not only maintain gendered ideals but also to renew hope and overcome fears for what could be (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013). Working on the inner and outer self, young women make themselves available to opportunities that have potential to change their situation. Through processes of interiority constituting the performance of new subjectivities (Foucault 1998), they realise confidence in themselves. However, the discussion illuminated the difficulty in discerning truth in Nigeria. Developing analyses of the art of representation (Apter 1999, 2005), this performance becomes increasingly more pertinent to encouraging fortune. Maintaining ideals promoted by pageants, such as CCQ, girls must negotiate their ability to gain through the art of the fake with the potential to be duped by others.

The chapter furthered analyses of pageants at the interface of gender and the nation (Banet-Weiser 1999; Cohen et al. 1996; Schulz 2000; Watson & Martin

2004), highlighting the complexities of how young women use pageantry to challenge societal structures of gender and generation. The analysis juxtaposed organisers' visions of femininity against how young women navigate these ideals to ameliorate their situations. In Nigerian pageantry, women's empowerment is not necessarily synonymous with gender equality (cf. Mahmood 2005; Mate 2002; Soothill 2007). While crowns appear to increase young women's agency in view of increased opportunities presented to them, queens are never fully removed from the struggles of the girls they seek to inspire. Furthermore, while contestants recognise the power structures causing young women's invisibility, silencing and inability to 'grow up' in the postcolony (Abbink 2005; Erikson 1968; Mbembe 2001), they buy into these powers rather than countering them in their quest to fight for women's causes. Highlighting contestants' and queens' agency, the chapter nuanced understandings of young women's resistance to power: pageantry increases self-worth and opportunities; it may not radically overturn gender divides but gives young women hope for change in their ability to say 'no'.

Finally, with the camp highlighted as a transitional life stage for girls becoming ideal feminine subjects (cf. van Gennep 1960), the chapter furthered this thesis' discussion of 'singlehood' as a time of preparation. Drawing continuities between the images of Miss World, Nigerian First Ladies and beauty queens: queens must be 'exposed', well-connected, urban, well-groomed, God-fearing and caring towards others. Following previous chapters' discussions of spirituality, respectability, styling the self and consumption, these beauty queens come to encompass visions of Nigerian modernity (cf. Marshall 2009). Crucially, this

chapter reiterates the tension between independence and marriage expectations during 'singlehood'. Beauty pageants have created new forms of female patronage that challenge marriage and patriarchy, giving women respect and admiration in society. Yet young women increase their marriage expectations by working such networks. 'Singlehood' is hence a time to make the self to one's full potential before accepting a spouse who will continue to support one's personal ambitions. Hence, on being asked which of the judges she would save from a burning building, the contestant correctly answered: the former Carnival Calabar Queen because she will go on to do good work for Nigeria.

Conclusion

From my arrival in Calabar, people continually asked whether I would be around for Carnival. The event appeared to epitomise Calabar life, although different groups focused on what this actually meant. End-Time Warriors asked me to stay away from the event altogether. In their eyes, the sexualised Carnival dancers embodied the immoralities and dangers associated with the Marine Kingdom. Most people did not dwell on the speculations that mermaids, ready to lead people astray, roamed the streets during December; Carnival was simply a chance to celebrate. With rainy season ending and Christmas approaching, it was seen as something the State Government gave back to its people. For the young women I knew, reconciling spiritual concerns with their belief that God knew their true hearts, Carnival was a time to get out of the house, 'catch fun' and be seen by others.

Five competitive bands interpreted the theme for 2011: 'Endless Possibilities'. The sheer scale of 'Africa's Biggest Street Party' aside, I was struck by its imagination. Revellers danced to the official Carnival songs recorded by famous Nigerian artists, with each band expressing various dimensions of the theme. Dancers celebrated potential for 'our wealth', 'oil and gas' and 'palm produce', and held aspirations for 'healthcare', 'sports recreation' and 'information technology'. The Carnival represented the expectations people held for Nigeria's prosperous future. Cross River – already 'The People's Paradise' – was hailed the 'Home of Possibilities'. Aside from a tongue-in-cheek presentation for the possibilities of 'civil war', the nation's current concerns were forgotten – only a

couple of days before on Christmas Day, Boko Haram had bombed churches in the north; a few of days later, the removal of a fuel subsidy put Nigeria into a two-week lockdown. Through exuberance and spectacle, the ideas of being 'exposed' to 'outside', and the displays of class, success and respect, Calabar was enveloped in optimism for the future.

Destiny: Fear, Faith and the Future

This thesis examines how young women in Calabar envisage the future, their methods for mediating present circumstances with their aspirations and expectations for what is to come. As with the Carnival scene, the preceding chapters paint a picture of optimism, and the discussion is concerned with how young women can remain hopeful amid uncertain and precarious living conditions. While current African Studies scholarship focuses on Afro-pessimism (e.g. Bayart 2009; Chabal & Daloz 1999; de Boeck & Plissart 2006; Obadare & Adebaniwi 2010), this thesis goes beyond analyses of the state to question how particularly marginalised actors can live in and make sense of such worlds. Examining the temporalities of young women's livelihoods, highlighting gender discrepancies, this thesis broadens analyses of the African 'crisis of youth' (e.g. Abbink & van Kessel 2005; Honwana & de Boeck 2005) and furthers recent analyses of youth's creativity, productivity and time (Jeffrey 2010; Honwana 2012; Masquelier 2013a). Furthermore, where recent studies of African Christianity prioritise young women (e.g. *Journal of Religion in Africa* (42) 2012), and where youth studies tend to either ignore or over-simplify religion in accounts of young women's lives (e.g. Cole 2010), this thesis synthesises the two fields. Young women in Calabar are increasingly turning to Pentecostalism for

spiritual guidance. This thesis highlights both the importance and complexities of how religious experience entwines with the trajectories of young women's livelihoods.

Focusing on young women's belief in their 'destinies of greatness', the thesis argues that, amid insecurity, young women remain optimistic for the future by making constant preparations in the present. Where the spiritual realm is understood to determine the physical realm, and where Pentecostalism increasingly informs other religious movements and shapes Calabar life, the thesis examines how Pentecostalism helps young women coin aspirations, remain optimistic and prepare for auspicious opportunities. Furthering Marshall's (2009) analysis of how Pentecostalism readies religious subjects for an oncoming Nigerian 'modernity', the preparations young women make are workings on and of the self, techniques to form new subjectivities embodying perceived success. As young women understand, success comes through making the right associations (identifying only with God in the spiritual realm, and entering patronage networks in society), and the performance of a cultural logic of respectability (God-fearing, stylish, 'exposed', well-connected, financially independent, aspirational). Through constant acts of styling the spiritual and physical self, young women perform and thereby come to represent their desired future selves. Crucially, for young women, the internalisation of these small acts – the processes of interiority associated with new subjectivities – encourages new feelings of self-worth. However, such optimism for future aspirations is constantly being informed by fear, not only of present circumstances but also of failing to prepare properly. The future is always imagined and realised through

the competitive relationship between fear and faith that drives young women into action.

Examining how young women 'grow up' in Nigeria, this thesis explicitly concerns itself with personhood and the development of the individual in relation to (human and non-human) others. The thesis broadened the West African notion of 'destiny' both ethnographically and conceptually. The discussion draws similarities with Fortes' (1987) classic account of the Tallensi's 'moral career', the life-course Tallensi must follow in order to be recognised as a person. Central to the idea of becoming a person, a social being, is about honouring community values of respectability and reproduction. As such, the chapters draw together the expectations of feminine ideals made of young women, which they must follow in order to embody community expectations. Young women understand life to be a constant preparation for reaching a higher status where they can be recognised as successful by others.

The thesis also develops Fortes' (1987) understanding that 'destiny' does not just happen but must always be manipulated through interaction with the spiritual realm, through dialogue with the believed determining forces. Drawing on the Pentecostal employment of 'destiny' in Calabar, the thesis highlights how the concept retains importance in how Nigerians understand the world around them, and also the emerging ways in which they believe they can manipulate what should happen in their lives. As Christians believe, only God bestows greatness to His followers – those struggling in life, marred by short-lived fortune or consistent misfortune, are understood not to be following God's path. Christians understand they must constantly engage with the spiritual realm to

keep on their righteous path. For instance, they must employ the Pentecostal practices of prayer, praise and worship, deliverance, using 'talents' and the techniques of aesthetically styling the religious self. Hence, the thesis illuminates how global religious movements, such as Pentecostalism, are being mapped onto emic conceptions of both spiritual and life forces. The Pentecostal fervour for 'spiritual warfare' is not just about breaking with the past (cf. Hackett 2003; Marshall 2009) but about battling with the forces believed to take hold of lives and dictate futures.

The discussion expands the conceptual framework of 'destiny' by unravelling the reasons why the term does make sense to those living in the Nigerian postcolony. Where young women, in particular, live amid great insecurity and are not always able to negotiate their rights, the belief in 'destiny' is a way of coming to terms with the failures, unexplainable circumstances and hardships of life. Equally, the concept also explains fortune, the serendipitous events that encourage people to believe that the postcolony is a place of possibilities. Crucially, it is through the ways in which destiny itself is uncertain and unknown (Fortes 1987) that allows young women to remain optimistic that their difficult circumstances will change for the better. The future-oriented destiny allows young women to focus somewhere other than their present struggles, to allay current fears and remain optimistic that, by manipulating spiritual forces, fortune may come at any time.

Hence, the thesis' focus on how young women constantly work on the religious self in order to attain their 'God-given destinies', their believed better futures, speaks directly to analyses of hope (e.g. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013; Yarrow

2011), and luck, fate and fortune (e.g. da Col 2012; Graeber 2012). Young women keep faith in the future precisely because it is always indecipherable, fuzzy and coming into being (cf. Crapanzano 2004). It is an uncertain horizon, which gives rise to hope through constant manipulations and acts of the self (cf. Miyazaki 2004; Pelkmans 2013). Yet such acts can be jeopardised by (human and non-human) others, rendering young women's actions constant gambles of success (cf. da Col 2012; Graeber 2012). While young women may hold concerns for their present circumstances, fears may also be raised that their remedial actions may not be successful.

Preparing for Greatness

Critiquing current analyses of youth and time that tend to focus on how young men use 'waiting' as a form of social mobilisation (Honwana 2012; Jeffrey 2010; Masquelier 2013a), the discussion examines how young women in Calabar conceptualise time, waiting and productivity. As the chapters highlight, young women's 'waithood' is a future-oriented period for working on spiritually- and socially-informed ideals of feminine respectability. Appearing stylish, remaining spiritually vigilant through private prayer and church attendance, running a business, and making the right associations are some of the techniques single young women employ to mould the self in preparation for the future. This thesis' chapters are arranged to draw attention to the complexities of how Pentecostalism informs young women's aspirations and present activities as they anticipate what could be. The first three chapters focus on young women's experiences of the Pentecostal movement, yet the final three chapters develop current literature on the individual in African Pentecostalism (e.g. Meyer 1998;

Marshall 2009; Bochow & van Dijk 2012) to illustrate how Pentecostal subjectivities are also formed outside formal church institutions. Emphasising how acts of future preparation are driven by fear and faith, the chapters highlight how young women must constantly negotiate Pentecostal ideals with actions that may counter the ethic (yet sometimes aid the representation) of their desired 'subjectivities of success'.

The first chapter draws on the *longue durée* to contextualise Calabar's contemporary religious landscape. From early missionary successes of converting young women, to youth's engagement with the 1920s Spirit Movement and with the BCS in the decades since national independence, marginalised groups sought new religious experiences to acquire power and overcome oppression. Yet while new religious experiences are a means of challenging dominant power structures – for instance, bypassing 'traditional' political institutions (Peel 2000b, 2002), or employing alternative forms of power (Marshall 1991) and charisma (Mbon 1991b) – the chapter emphasises that there are always risks. New religious rhetoric and practices do not replace but merely rearticulate those of the past, encouraging coeval Christian and occult landscapes (cf. Meyer 1999). As such, Calabar's polyphonous churchscape is seen to perpetuate the 'spiritual insecurity' (cf. Ashforth 2001, 2005) it seeks to dispel. Pentecostalism's lack of uniformity has contributed immensely to this insecurity, encouraging rumours of 'fake churches' whose powers (reified in doctrine and practices) destroy rather than bestow destinies. Hence, highlighting agency, continuity, insecurity and plurality as the strands constituting the fabric of Calabar's spiritual (and social) life, the chapter explicitly informs the following

two religious chapters. Yet it also presents more general ideas for how young women understand the spiritual realm to dictate their futures, and how, employing agency, they must negotiate fears and faiths in their (religious) actions as they try to manipulate and attain their 'God-given destinies'.

Chapter Two focuses explicitly on how young women can build faith and confidence in the future through the Pentecostal movement. 'Sisters' Talk' examines one church's teachings and practices for marriage preparation to illuminate the ways in which Pentecostalism shapes young women's conceptions of time, waiting, productivity and affect. Framed in a Foucauldian framework of subjectification (Foucault 1998; Marshall 2009), the chapter argues that following The Brook Church's life-affirming doctrine of *Zoe* builds young women's faith in the future through the partaking of religious acts that focus on the individual and timeliness of action. Acts constituting the Pentecostal subject include prayer, praise and worship but also dress, comportment and employment of 'talents'. Where worshippers must trust in God's timing, faith is renewed through repeating such acts. While the chapter highlights the methods for how religious subjects find faith amid insecurity – the internalising of action and the instant identification with the divine 'other' – the discussion also lays foundations for the thesis' concerns with aspirations, class and respectability. As a popular church exuding wealth, young women build faith in the future by self-fashioning themselves to meet church expectations. Yet specifically for single young women, success comes through developing a personal relationship with God – the understanding of knowing one's inner self – before planning in accordance to one's personal aspirations. This knowledge of the self is revealed

and reified through continual Pentecostal acts of worship. The chapter argues that the Pentecostal movement builds young women's faith through ongoing religious acts that explicitly identify the worshipper with success. Hence, the chapter presents tensions between the individual and collective responsibilities, future and immediate success, and independence ('singlehood') and dependence ('marriage').

Chapter Three discusses what happens when the confidence Pentecostalism encourages in the self and preparations for the future is lost. 'Edima's Deliverance' focuses on one young woman's experience at a prayer ministry to examine the complexities and contradictions of Pentecostalism's emphasis on the individual's relationship with God and 'divine timing'. Sometimes, faith is ruptured and young women feel the need to look to others to receive extra 'spiritual boosts' and guidance to manipulate their destinies and hence renew faith in their aspirations through action. Yet amid the spiritual insecurities of Calabar's churchscape, where ministries hold often-conflicting doctrines, the chapter highlights the risks young women feel they must take. Visiting different ministries is a gamble for spiritual renewal, where faith is replenished through the diversification of action but where fears are raised as to the worshipper being vulnerable to unknown powers (manifesting in unfamiliar doctrines and religious acts). Crucially, the discussion highlights young women's agency in religious experience through the way in which they do not necessarily buy into all parts of a ministry's doctrine; rather, they pick what resonates with their personal beliefs. Hence, the chapter reasserts the argument that faith in the

future is maintained through not only the diverse and multiple acts to prepare the self but also through the need to look inwards for confidence.

Chapter Four, 'In the House', frames the thesis' second section examining how feminine subjectivities are negotiated and further moulded outside of formal religious institutions. Where many young women in Calabar are at home apparently alone and doing nothing, the chapter examines the tensions between Pentecostal rhetoric and young women's actual experiences of productivity, waiting and managing expectations of fortune. The chapter maintains the argument that young women sustain hope in the future through their constant and diverse preparations of the self, by focusing on relationships they maintain with others. Already with the understanding that only God can be trusted, the chapter acknowledges that social relationships are in fact necessary – both for affect and aid – but they must be managed with care. Tensions exist between the faith put in a (seemingly) compassionate other and the fear of another's intent to sabotage one's future. Yet tensions also exist between young women maintaining faith that fortune will (eventually) come through God, and the (instant) ease of representing such fortune through the exchange of sex and money with men. Where social relationships are a necessary risk, the discussion illustrates the techniques young women employ while stuck at home to either reveal or conceal certain aspects of the self. For instance, the discussion reveals mobile phones as a necessary medium for creating proximity and affect while maintaining distance from others; and Hollywood films as a way of 'enlightening' oneself to 'outside' Nigeria, as a means of learning a cultural capital of success. As such, the chapter highlights how preparations of the self are still carried out when young women

are apparently doing nothing, but also how the self is constantly moulded by inherently risky relationships with others.

Chapter Five develops the concept of how young women prepare themselves for the future by examining their engagement with sewing shops as explicit techniques to style the self. Framing the analysis in more general discussions of fashion and class, the chapter draws out tensions between the need to be recognised as respectable and the need to assert uniqueness in order to stay ahead of the crowd and garner admiration. Young women must style themselves to perform membership of this class of respectable urban dweller in order to represent (and thereby encourage future) success. This includes learning skills but also honing urbane aesthetics that reassert (but sometimes compromise) Pentecostal preferences for foreign tastes ('western' clothes, accessories and long 'weave-ons', for instance). By highlighting how global fashion has been articulated through a local lens – emic conceptions of success as linked to the 'enlightened' urbanite – the chapter also seeks to complicate understandings of African modernity. Where 'traditional' Efik dress is labelled as 'English' and where 'Traditional Marriage' in the village compound remain part and parcel of urban respectability, the spatial and temporal components of what it means to be 'modern', 'enlightened' and successful are intermingled. The process of keeping faith through the constant performance of a recognised cultural logic of success is inherently risky – of being accused of either being a fake, or of over performing and forgetting one's roots. Young women must make constant gambles in how they assert their perceived uniqueness while fitting in with the expectations of others.

The final chapter draws the preceding chapters together by examining spirituality, feminine beauty and respectability, class, and future aspirations inherent in young women's involvement in pageantry. The chapter reiterates the thesis' argument by highlighting how contesting in pageantry is a means for young women to prepare for the future by working on the self. Highlighting the First Lady as the epitome of successful and powerful femininity in the postcolony, the chapter emphasises how young women desire to style themselves as God-fearing and caring, and how pageantry creates a path for doing so. Not only does winning a title (becoming a 'Miss') change the self by demanding that young women comport and style themselves in a certain way, propelling them into more influential networks and unlocks new doors of opportunity, but the very process of competing is littered with techniques of fashioning new subjectivities conducive to success in postcolonial urban life. For instance, the camp is seen as a rite of passage, organised by respected female members of the community in order to socialise young women, imparting knowing on spirituality, sociality and style. However, alongside these processes of moulding new subjectivities run the chaotic workings of the postcolony. Pageantry is a gamble, and young women must navigate its opportunities and traps. It is because of these insecurities that the art of representation becomes increasingly important for how young women maintain hope. Hence, taking a more sociological view of how young women engage with pageantry, the concluding chapter illustrates the importance of image in how young women overcome current struggles by performing feminine ideals and in doing so, being acknowledged by others, put themselves in the way of further opportunities.

Hope at the Axes of Time, Anxiety and Possibility

Examining how young women in Calabar use their time waiting in uncertain circumstances to prepare themselves for future opportunities, this thesis' themes of faith, fear and the future engage with anthropological analyses of hope. Through the constant acts of the religious subject, the means to style Pentecostal subjectivities representing ideas of (urban) success, the thesis illuminates hope not as a sentiment of optimism but as a technique for identifying the self and realising what could be. Focusing on processes of personhood – young women's *modus operandi* for living, as it were – the thesis develops Miyazaki's exploration of the philosophies of Bloch, Benjamin and Rorty to illuminate 'hope as a method of radical temporal reorientation of knowledge' (2004:5). Crucially, rather than linking hope to past disappointments, the discussions build up the idea that hope is primarily a future-oriented project, where actions are driven by fear of failure (of furthering present struggles) and faith in success (of radical change for the better). Such ideas of hope as a process of knowing, becoming and acting speak to broader topics of the tensions of individualism and community, religious faith, and how people can make sense of life amid radical insecurity.

From worshipping at Pentecostal ministries, to being busy in the house, styling the self through sewing shops and contesting in beauty pageants, the thesis illuminates how single young women in Calabar anticipate certain futures and engage in constant action as they do so. The thesis builds upon literature on youth, time and productivity (Honwana 2012; Jeffrey 2010; Masquelier 2013a), attempting to further understandings of young women's activities in a period of

social limbo. Youth's activity as they wait does not only serve to overcome ennui, generate affect and incomes for survival, but is also about overlooking present struggles towards better futures. As such, the thesis' discussions speak to much broader ideas of the anxieties of young people trying to 'become' in Africa – but also to other parts of the world where youth find themselves marginalised by polarising political, social and economic processes.

Crucially, exploring the emic term of 'singlehood', the discussions highlight how young women's time of 'waithood' is as much about anticipating marriage as it is about being single. Young women must continually work on the self in order to maximise individual potential and also opportunities for marriage. As such, we may ask to what extent this is particular to a 'feminine culture of waiting' or whether we must further analyses of 'masculine cultures of waiting' (cf. Jeffrey 2010; Masquelier 2013a) to understand how youth's anxieties of becoming go beyond individual survival and hold implications for ideas of social mobility through marriage. It is useful to question whether the time of youth stops at marriage or whether individuals still experience the same struggles as they try to fulfil marital roles, and whether such struggles are gender specific. We may hence highlight the need to investigate the category of youth not in isolation but in terms of generational tensions (cf. Durham 2000; Cole 2010) – those between existing generations and those engendered by the real and imagined hurdles young people face in the continual process of becoming.

Highlighting the importance of fashioning the self in accordance with emic community values of respectability, the thesis highlights the continuing relevance of anthropological concepts such as van Gennep's (1960) 'rites of

passage' and Fortes' (1987) 'moral career' in understanding how the individual can 'grow up', contribute and be recognised as part of a wider community. Where young women in Calabar no longer have to undergo seclusion in 'fattening houses' but must instead graduate from university, be God-fearing, be stylish and have a business to be perceived as respectable, the discussions also highlight the need to pay attention to evolving community values (cf. Ferme 1994; Moore 2011). Focusing on young women's experiences of the expectations imposed on them, the discussions take a nuanced approach to understanding how changing ideologies and practices impact on social reproduction. Where young women in Calabar may not be certain of *how* they should 'become' or lack the support to do so, the thesis highlights the anxieties of young people and contributes to youth studies by illustrating how hope as a technique of action allows young women to (constantly) overcome concerns about 'growing up'. The preparations of the self that young women carry out underscores youth's self-reliance and, where acts sometimes appear as stabs in the dark, reiterates the fears young women hold towards failure, where the inability to be recognised as respectable dictates an inability to 'grow up' and escape current situations.

Exploring how the individual 'becomes', the thesis not only illuminates tensions between the individual and community with regard to achieving life stages but also in the individual's reliance on other people as they hope for better futures. Youth studies have done well to highlight how lacking political support (and participation) contributes to youth's marginalisation (e.g. Honwana & de Boeck 2005), yet they have paid much less attention to youth's social anxieties. Drawing on Geschiere's (2013) analysis of trust and intimacy, the discussions

illuminate the understanding that social relationships are uncertain and even dangerous yet also utterly necessary for survival amid economic, political and physical uncertainty. Young women need others for affect and aid; yet, as they seek to forge relationships to help them work towards future goals they risk treachery and being subject to others' malicious intentions. In Nigerian society, underpinned by patronage networks and emic conceptions of the relational person, the need for others raises many anxieties: not least, questions regarding whether another will aid one's personal progression.

It also raises anxieties as to how individuals can emerge in a setting that values community. For instance, young women acknowledge Pentecostalism's emphasis on the worshipper's uniqueness as a marker of success, yet they are also subject to others' jealousy and others' accusations of forgetting one's roots when they do project their own individuality. We may ask how hope is not only a project for the individual but also one that is continually informed by the individual's relationship with others. As such, we raise broader analytical questions of agency and affect in the understanding of how hope is maintained. The constant actions young women make to prepare for the future are driven by faith in success but also fear of failure caused by an uncontrollable event or another's intent – hence, preparations for the future are always gambles. Furthermore, highlighting the tensions between individualism and community, we may also question the notion of solidarity. Amid uncertainty, a collective hope for a better future does not necessary insinuate cooperative individuals. Rather, the discussions show much fragmentation, feeding into broader discussions of agency and contestations of power with regard to social reproduction.

While human relationships are risky, the discussions highlight the importance of religion for those living amid uncertainty, not just as means for providing solace (cf. Chitando 2009) or spiritual aid (cf. Ashforth 2001, 2005) but as a technique for actively working on the self to create future opportunities. The discussions hence build upon current analyses that explain Pentecostalism's popularity in terms of the constant process of breaking with the past (cf. Marshall 2009; Meyer 1992; Robbins 2004), to highlight how Pentecostal experience in Calabar is also heavily characterised by expressions for the future (cf. Piot 2010). Indeed, how being Born Again is not just confined to Pentecostals illuminates the need for spiritual vigilance in Calabar, and insinuates that it is not only a spiritual rupture that attracts people to the religion. Where the global movement has entwined with the local, Pentecostal language is both assertive and forward-looking. For instance, The Brook Church's 'Confessions for 2012' give no doubt that the worshipper is all things they claim to be (a leader, productive, fruitful).

Yet the movement's practices are also central to understanding how Pentecostalism encourages hope for the future. The emphasis on developing spiritual gifts highlights how hope is created through engaging with believed determining life forces. It hence raises broader questions for how people conceptualise productivity, agency and (mis)fortune (cf. da Col & Humphrey 2012), and speaks to more universal ideas of how people (especially those living amid uncertainty) believe in an 'other' to both make sense of the world around them and allow for a re-imagining of reality. Of course, such practices also produce anxieties, and worshippers must trust in God's 'divine timing' and believe that they are dialoguing only with the Holy Spirit. Hence, where religious

acts are constantly driven by faith in connecting to believed 'life forces' and fears of inefficacy, we may draw links between analyses of hope and discernment in religious experience. 'Knowing' God is a not just about watching spiritual manifestations travel through a religious gathering (cf. Kirsch 2014), or about cognitive process (cf. Luhrmann 2007) but also about renewing faith that God is there through constant religious acts that engage with believed determining forces (cf. Miyazaki 2004). Yet a central theme throughout is how faith in religious action comes through building belief in the self, bringing a more nuanced understanding for how religion aids ideas of personhood not just through rituals and community roles but also through self-awareness and emotions. As such, we see that maintaining hope for better futures is intricately entwined with stability and assurance in one's self-identity.

Framing Pentecostalism as a religion for the future, the discussion draws attention to analyses of African 'modernity' (cf. Geschiere et al. 2008). As analyses highlight, Pentecostalism spells out one type of 'modernity' (cf. Marshall 2009; Meyer 1998), which removes worshippers from the past, 'tradition' and insecurity, and reinserts them in a global spiritual brotherhood. Indeed, the movement's focus on material wealth, international connections and business-talk are highly apparent in Calabar's Pentecostal scene – it is, after all, one of the reasons for The Brook Church's popularity – yet the discussion also complicates the ideas that Pentecostal aesthetic is merely in tune with capitalist consumerism. As the chapters highlight, ideas of cosmopolitan success encouraged by Pentecostalism also pay homage to Nigerian 'tradition': the expectation for urban young women to have a 'Traditional Marriage' as well as a

‘white wedding’; the use of *aso-ebi* and Ankara uniforms to identify families and new couples in church thanksgivings; the display of ‘traditional attire’ during the pageant contest night. While the cultural logic of success is to display capitalist consumerism, it is also to remember one’s roots. Focusing on personhood, we see how Calabar’s Pentecostal ‘modernity’ is not about forgetting the past but rather about negotiating different aspects of the self (cf. Coleman 2011). It is a process that undoubtedly creates many anxieties, and hence feeds into analyses of the hidden dangers of Pentecostalism (cf. Meyer 2008; Hackett 2008). Focusing on how religion provides a framework for looking to a different future while retaining cultural roots, the thesis engages with more general issues of how people navigate radically changing worlds, informed by global economic, political, social and religious processes.

Hence, focusing on action as a means for preparing the self for better futures, this thesis intersects analyses of how people manage life amid uncertainty (cf. Haram & Yamba 2009). The discussions look beyond analyses of the failings of the African state (e.g. Adebani & Obadare 2010; Chabal & Daloz 1999) to focus on the experiences of actors navigating a society underpinned by radical social, political, economic, spiritual and epistemological insecurities. On the one hand the discussion presents the overarching narrative that insecurity paints an image of paralysis, trapping young women in an indefinite period of waiting. On the other hand, the thesis continually highlights the diverse and constant acts young women do make. Furthermore, we find the understanding that insecurity can give rise to unlimited potential. Indeed, the discussion illuminates the belief in a world where ‘all things are possible’, where the lack of regulation does enable

some to find an opening in seemingly dire situations – and for others to keep trying to maintain the hope that they too can find such luck.

As Mbembe (2001) argues, the plurality of the postcolony gives rise to further plurality, where uncertainty creates problems of ‘becoming’ for the African subject. Hence, the thesis engages with analyses of insecure livelihoods to speak more broadly to life strategies. Amid insecurity, people may not necessarily be trying to create order. Rather, drawing on Apter’s (2005) analysis of polysemy in the postcolony, the idea of multiple interpretations signalling a crisis of meaning, we see that young women are not countering the insecurities of the postcolony but buy into them in their quest for future success through multiple acts of faith: the Pentecostal programme may give spiritual renewal needed to focus on the future; the deliverance may break Satanic curses previously causing confusion or failure; someone may mistake the clothes one makes as being UK-made and offer a job opportunity; the 5,000 naira pageant form may turn into a 2million naira prize and a life-changing experience.

Finally, it is interesting to ask how people project such optimism for their personal endeavours onto the nation’s future. During my fieldwork, a question pervaded social media sites: ‘which way Nigeria?’ The title of a 1980s song by Sonny Okosun, a famous Nigerian musician, the words connote a realisation that present circumstances must change but also uncertainty for what this change would be. Nigeria may be heading for a fork: will it choose the route for improvement or decline? Or the path may split into a multitude of options, all of varying degrees of prosperity or failure. Or perhaps some may feel that there are no clear paths at all. Such uncertainty gives rise to multiple imaginings for the

future, the possibilities for benefice or detriment encouraging both fear and faith. Yet where there is still the possibility for greatness, people can still prepare for such a future, and hence keep faith that one day the ever-distant future may become reality.

Appendix 1

Delving into the semantics of the Bible passages recited at the start of every Brook Church service would be interesting but unfortunately detract from the discussion of the fashioning of Pentecostal selves. However, I include the passages because, imagining an 800-strong Pentecostal corps standing to attention and reciting together, I find them immensely powerful.

Psalm 91, Safety of Abiding in the Presence of God (NKJV)

91 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

²I will say of the Lord, "*He is my refuge and my fortress;*
My God, in Him I will trust."

³Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler
And from the perilous pestilence.

⁴He shall cover you with His feathers,
And under His wings you shall take refuge;
His truth *shall be your* shield and buckler.

⁵You shall not be afraid of the terror by night,
Nor of the arrow *that* flies by day,

⁶*Nor* of the pestilence *that* walks in darkness,
Nor of the destruction *that* lays waste at noonday.

⁷A thousand may fall at your side,
And ten thousand at your right hand;
But it shall not come near you.

⁸Only with your eyes shall you look,
And see the reward of the wicked.

⁹Because you have made the Lord, *who is my refuge,*
Even the Most High, your dwelling place,

¹⁰No evil shall befall you,
Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;

¹¹For He shall give His angels charge over you,
To keep you in all your ways.

¹²In *their* hands they shall bear you up,
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.

¹³You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra,
The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.

¹⁴“Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him;
I will set him on high, because he has known My name.

¹⁵He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I *will be* with him in trouble;
I will deliver him and honor him.

¹⁶With long life I will satisfy him,
And show him My salvation.”

Psalm 90:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us,
And establish the work of our hands for us;
Yes, establish the work of our hands.

Psalm 27:1-3 (NKJV)

27 The Lord *is* my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The Lord *is* the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid?

²When the wicked came against me
To eat up my flesh,
My enemies and foes,
They stumbled and fell.

³Though an army may encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear;
Though war may rise against me,
In this I *will be* confident.

2 Corinthians 9:8 (AMP)

⁸And God is able to make all grace (every favour and earthly blessing) come to you in abundance, so that you may always *and* under all circumstances *and* whatever the need be self-sufficient [possessing enough to require no aid or support and furnished in abundance for every good work and charitable donation].

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