



# Europe in Africa and Africa in Europe: Rethinking postcolonial space, cultural encounters and hybridity

**José Lingna Nafafé**

*University of Birmingham, UK*

## **Abstract**

European encounters fostered in the early modern period with West Africa have provided us with interesting frameworks from which to engage in the construction of difference, race within Western European space and with terms for rethinking European identity that transcend the cosmopolitan and colonial pretensions. Drawing on early historical records, especially the Portuguese experience in West Africa, this article seeks to contest standard historical sociological tropes of European identity. First, creolization and hybridity are to challenge the essentialism which has been deployed by Hegel to defend colonial interests. Second, it engages with the critiques levelled at Hegel's eurocentrism, universalism and teleology. Particular use is made of Susan Buck-Morss's work on Hegel, Sybille Fischer's critique of Buck-Morss' work. Third, it interrogates the principle of the dialectic with Hegel's Europe engagement with its Others; using Levinas' work as a critique of Hegel's dialectic, which represents alternative, that is less violent and non-dominant.

## **Keywords**

creolization, hybridity, identity, linteraction, modernity

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## **Corresponding author:**

José Lingna Nafafé, Political Science and International Studies, The University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT, UK

Email: J.Lingnanafafe@bham.ac.uk

in ways that transcend the cosmopolitan and colonial pretensions prevalent in academic literature (Cabral, 1969; Fanon, 1986, 1990; Amin, 1989; Thiong'o, 1986; Said, 1993; Shohat and Stam, 1994; Dyer, 1989; Hawthorne, 2010). Drawing on early historical records of these encounters, especially the Portuguese experience in West Africa, this article seeks to contest standard historical sociological tropes of European identity (Gray, 1999: 140–54; see also Thornton, 1979: 253–64). West Africa constitutes an ideal site for our analysis: not only did it possess the longest-functioning slave trade in the Old World, but also the longest-standing colonial enterprises in Africa (Cabral, 1980).

Our particular geographical focus will be on the West African region known as the Upper Guinea Coast, i.e., the region colonized by Portugal at the end of the fifteenth century (Rodney, 1790). Concrete historical examples from the Lusophone or Portuguese-speaking world of West Africa will be used to open up a debate about European identity and the representation of its Others, particularly Africans or in Morrison's terminology 'Absolute Others' (Morrison, 1993; see also Cabral, 1973). These accumulated narratives are used to critically engage with Hegel's epistemology in relation to modern European identity as it was shaped by post-medieval encounters between Europeans and Africans. These narratives will enable us to rethink this relationship in terms of creolization and hybridity rather than in terms of Hegel's universalizing dialectic. Both creolization and hybridity are used in this article to critique the ideology of superiority, unified Western identity and the given notion of 'natural' cultural norm, one that underscores the centrality of the centre and its perceived margin, as a model of normative actions (Holm and Incanha, 2009: 218–74). The contestation is that creolization as a process unsettles and undoes the settled identity. Hybridity, too, is viewed in this article as a combination of traits rather than a stance towards maintaining the essence of identity (Couto, 1993: 381–9). Both essence and hybridity are inseparable; they allow scope for dialogue and possibilities for positing diversity (Peperzak et al., 1996).

First, creolization and hybridity are used in the article to challenge and to negate the essentialism which has been deployed by Hegel in order to defend Western colonial interests. This essentialism works by positing a binary distinction between 'us' and 'them', and 'self' and 'other'. It works through the Hegelian tropes of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The use of creolization and hybridity will enable us to transcend Hegel's master–servant oppositional logic and recover the identity claims that his framework silences. Second, the article will engage with some of the critiques levelled at Hegel's eurocentrism, universalism and teleology. Particular use will be made of Susan Buck-Morss's work on 'Hegel and Haiti', Sybille Fischer's 'Modernity Disavowed' and the latter's critique of Buck-Morss' work (Fischer, 2004; Buck-Morss, 2009: 837). The contention of the article is that Hegel's epistemology should not be differentiated from his narrative; rather, both should be seen as interconnected, regardless of the continued debate surrounding them (Bernaconi, 1998: 41–63; Buck-Morss, 2009: 48). Third, the article will interrogate the principle of the dialectic with Hegel's Europe's engagement with its Others, and propose an inclusive understanding of creolization and hybridity in the Euro-Africa relationship. It uses Levinas' work as a critique of Hegel's dialectical model, which represents an alternative, hybrid understanding of epistemological claims, another interjectory of intersubjectivity, that is less violent and non-dominant (Lévinas, 1985).

## Creolization and Hybridity

The term *Creole* has changed its meaning over time. Etymologically, the word Creole derives from the Latin *creare*, meaning ‘to ‘beget’ or ‘create’. In the earliest contact between Portugal and West Africa, it was used to refer to the language that was born out of the interaction between Portuguese mercantile settlers who resided among the natives in Guinea-Bissau soon after the first contact in 1446. It was in some of the old commercial towns and market centres in Guinea-Bissau such as São Domingos, Cacheu, São Filipe, and Geba, that Creole, as a language, emerged among these settlers (Lingna Nafafé, 2006: 172; see also Hawthorne, 2010). The use of Creole as a language was captured by Lemos Coelho. Writing towards the end of seventeenth century, he alludes to Portuguese Creole spoken in the region of Guinea-Bissau (Lemos Coelho, 1684: 153). It is likely that the term had been in circulation long before it came to be written down in the seventeenth century.

The term ‘Creole’ also acquired other meanings. Between 1632 and 1643, *Creole* – *Crioulo* or *Criolo* in archaic Portuguese – had come to signify a mixed-race person. Over time, argues Corominas, the term was applied also to a white man or woman originating from the colonies (Corominas, 1934: 944; Lingna Nafafé, 2006: 171–3). This is similar to the definition of ‘creole’ offered by Ashcroft ‘a white (man) of European descent, born and raised in a tropical colony. The meaning was later extended to include indigenous natives and others of non-European origin’ (Ashcroft, 1998: 57). In Brazil, it was used to refer to an African male born in the country, or to a slave who was ‘born in the house of the master’ (Corominas, 1934: 944). Sometimes it was used to refer to the animal, especially the young one. What can be said about Creole is that it has a variety of meanings depending on the context and region in which it is being used historically. Brathwaite elaborates on the multiple usage of the concept:

[I]n Peru the word was used to refer to people of Spanish descent who were born in the New World. In Brazil, the term was applied to Negro slaves born locally. In Louisiana, the term was applied to the white franco-phone population, while in New Orleans it applied to mulattoes. In Sierra Leone, ‘creole’ refers to descendants of former New World slaves, Maroons and ‘Black Poor’ . . . in Trinidad, it refers principally to the black descendants of slaves to distinguish them from East Indian immigrants. (Brathwaite, 1974: 10)

It is in this context of European encounter that creolization as a process of cultural interactions, exchange and intermixing with non-European people, and West Africans in particular, that the critique of Hegel’s dialectic is paramount. It must be said from the outset that creolization and hybridity are not identical concepts; they refer to different relationalities that are crucial for our interrogation of Hegel’s dialectic in the sense of understanding European identities and its intersectionality, as that which is accountable for multifaceted strands and inevitably nonetheless, a compromised one. Creolization and hybridity emerged in the period of European expansion and their social application began earlier than Hegel’s philosophical engagement (Young, 1995). They are products of European cultural expansion and are in this article a prerequisite for questioning Hegel’s essentialist model of slave and master dialectic. For Brathwaite, creolization implies this sense of no-man’s land, a ‘way of seeing the society, not in terms of white

and black, master and slave, in separate nuclear units, but as contributory parts of a whole' (Brathwaite, 1971: 307). In the Jamaican case, creolization was a catalyst for intersectionality, both European and Jamaican identities were shaped beyond their normal boundaries and there was a homogenization of identity positions and 'juxtaposition of master and slave, élite and labourer, in a culturally heterogeneous relationship' (Brathwaite, 1971: xvi).

In his analysis of the impact of European interaction in the Caribbean, Glissant argues for creolization as a form of recognition through the struggles of representation of the others, particularly the case of Caribbean, predicated on 'the basic symptom of the cross-cultural contact that is creolization' (Glissant, 1989: 140). Glissant's contestation is for a performative creolization which is embedded in the narratives of the Western encounters with the non-Western world. This performative creolization has resisted pure identity claims and thus, 'the idea of creolization demonstrates that henceforth it is no longer valid to glorify "unique" origins that the race safeguards and prolongs. In Western tradition, genealogical descent guarantees racial exclusivity, just as Genesis legitimizes genealogy' (Glissant, 1989: 140).

Glissant saw, 'creolization as an idea means the negation of creolization as a category ... which the human imagination has always wished to deny or disguise (in Western tradition)' (Glissant, 1989: 141). The performative creolization undermines the subjectivity of the master and makes his identity position 'unattainable'. For Glissant, the relationship of master and slave continues also to produce silence and abjuration of relationality and intersubjectivity in the Western philosophical tradition. The conundrum of creolization as a struggle for recognition and the contingent relationship of master and slave challenge Hegel's essentialist and epistemological claims. For Glissant, any essentialist discourse about the unique subjectivity of the West is flawed; on the contrary, Western identity should be seen as relational and dependent on its impurity, hence the non-self.

Hybridity is a mutable term which can take many different forms and has cultural, political and linguistic aspects. For this reason it has become a contested term depending on one's ontological and epistemological position (Shcroft et al., 2003). As Ashcroft writes: 'Hybridity commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization. As used in horticulture, the term refers to the cross-breeding of two species by grafting or cross-pollination to form a third, "hybrid" species' (Ashcroft, 1998: 118).

Young contests the use of the term in the postcolonial theorizing, primarily on ground of its origin that links it with European expansion and the history of miscegenation in the nineteenth century (Young, 1995: 6–9). His challenge does not arise from hybridity as a process which destabilizes and blurs cultural boundaries of fixity, but in the history of the term which has been a negative one in connoting Eurocentrism; legitimating Western social and cultural privileges (Young, 1995: 97–8, 102). It is an implicitly a stance which questions, as it were, Hegel's narratives and fundamentally the essence of European identity. Young's argument is anthropocentric in the sense that he is challenging Eurocentric discourse which separates centre from periphery, and posits the superiority of the West vis-à-vis the non-Western. He argues that by using hybridity we maintain a sense of status quo and remain locked in the past. To use the term hybridity would be to claim the

ideology of the colonial past, an ideology which postcolonial discourse seeks to dismantle. On one hand, argues Young, hybridity comes to stand for the violence of the past that issues from the forced relationship based on a power imbalance (Young, 1995: 16, 145–50). However, to allow such a rationale is to imply that Europeans have always assumed positions of power in their relations with Others. (Edward Said's concept of orientalism seems to be guilty of this assumption, too (Said, 1978).) There is, however, another way of understanding hybridity that does not entail this sense of violence. This is the view taken by Lingna Nafafé (2007) which explores an example of hybridity based on mutual consent that was forged from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries between merchants (called *lançados* and *tangomãos*) and West Africans (Lingna Nafafé, 2007). Lingna Nafafé places the relationship between the West and West Africans on an equal footing, in which violence is acquiesced.

For Bhabha, the concept of hybridity provides a theoretical basis for political resistance in a postcolonial situation that seeks to displace the dominant power, and subvert the authority of the centre. Bhabha contends that postcolonial discourse mimics the dominant discourse and this produces a new cultural form that is appropriated by the dominant as well as the dominated. Hybridity is thus an 'interstitial passage between fixed identifications which opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (Bhabha, 1994: 4). According to Bhabha, the encounter between Europe and the others has created an inseparable bond, the dominant and the dominated live not so much in isolation, but in the field of interconnectedness. As such, both can express their identity by constantly borrowing from each other. As a result, what is created from this process, as far as the colonizer and the colonized are concerned, is the 'third space of enunciation', which is unclaimable; a no-man's-land, so to speak, in which difference can be realized (Bhabha, 1994: 37). He asserts that: 'Mimicry conceals no presence or identity behind its mask . . . the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority' (Bhabha, 1994: 88).

In essence, Bhabha is arguing for the use of the term and tracing its history as a source for inclusion and political engagement in the metropolitan Europe. In this case, no identity can make claims for an authentic and original space, i.e., an essence. Hybridity is viewed as a claim for unsettling unified identity claim. It also opens up the possibility for thinking about the impurity of the blood line or the myth of purity of blood, hence identity. It questions the exclusionary claims in Hegel's dialectic for a separation between self and master and between colonizer and colonized. It is an attempt to open constructive dialogue between self and the other which transcends Hegel's dialectic *thesis*, *antithesis* and *synthesis* tropes. Its application is fundamental for theorizing hybridity and creolization in the context of the European encounter with others.

## Portuguese Post-Medieval Experience in West Africa

Narratives of post-medieval encounters between Europeans and West Africans carry with them the weight of discourses of intersubjectivity, be they from the official line or from the mercantile community. For example, non-official discourses raise some fundamental and broad questions on issues of identity, creolization, hybridity and how both continents re-negotiated space and, in turn, how this renegotiation shaped the socio-political,

economic and cultural landscape and the social histories of Africa and Europe (Almada, 1594: 77; Andrade, 1965: 102–3; Lingna Nafafé, 2007; see also Dapper, 1686: 245; Donelha, 1625: fol. 176 v. and fol. 177; Hair, 1967; Brooks, 1993; Mark, 2003). In Europe, the contact of post-Second World War migration produced the discourse of multiculturalism, including the debate on ‘difference’ and ethnicity. In Africa, it produced especially the discourses of creolization and hybridity. These discourses are not, of course, mutually exclusive.

The encounter between Europe and Africa opens a new horizon for understanding the complexity of human interaction and identity positions between the two continents. It also provides us with a critical tool for engaging and re-evaluating these complexities, and for arguing that the imposition of Western cultural and political discourses on West Africa that became familiar during the expansion and the colonization of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries should not be seen as part of the earlier expansionist philosophy that dominated Hegel’s discourse on Africa. Portuguese post-medieval encounter with West Africa should, arguably, be seen a process of infiltration, rather than as a process of imposition, in which West African culture assumed a position of dialogue. Consequently, one highly significant relationship that developed from this first encounter was explicitly that of cultural reciprocity (Silva, 1985; see Ustorf, 1992: 196). These discourses led to the eventual creolization of societies, not in terms of *thesis* and *antithesis* alone, but *syntheses*, or Creole in our case. Western and Guinean cultures were regarded as being on an equal footing (Lingna Nafafé, 2007: 133–40). The master’s discourse in terms of subjectivity took on a new configuration in the relationship and was undermined by the West Africans’ example. These Europeans were *lançados* or *tangomãos* – Portuguese, French, Jews, English, Spanish, etc. From the fifteenth century, some of them were the Creole ‘who went completely native, stripping off their clothes, tattooing their bodies, speaking the local languages, and even joining in fetishistic rites and celebrations, were termed tangos-mãos, or lançados’ (Boxer, 1969: 31). Commenting on the situation in 1602, Father Guerreiro wrote:

Tangomãos or Lançados . . . are some sort of people, although they are natives of Portugal and Christian by religion or through baptism, however they live in such a way as if they were not one thing or the other. For many of them walk in nudity, so that they can fit in and cohabit with the heathens of the land that they deal with. (Guerreiro, 1930: 400–1)

Writing over a century later, the slave trader turned vicar, John Newton, offered his own eyewitness account of the situation that prevailed in the region where he used to do business:

There is a significant phrase frequently used in those parts, that such a white man is grown black. It does not intend an alteration of complexion, but disposition. I have known several, who, settling in Africa after the age of thirty or forty, have at that time of life been gradually assimilated to the tempers, customs, and ceremonies of the natives, so far as to prefer that country to England. (Newton, 1880: 13, 15; see also Good, 2000: 447–64)

André de Faro’s narrative cites the case of a Portuguese, *tangomão*, a learned nobleman, living in a valley in the hills of Sierra Leone who married nine African women. He had

presumably been there since the age of 30, because at this time he was in his fifties (Silveira, 1945: 77). He was found by a Franciscan missionary and was a well-known figure. Faro states that:

[H]e said to me that he was a son of Portugal who had been living at the foot of that Sierra, in a place closely concealed and very remote for more than twenty years, in order that no one should know about him. He lived there according to the gentiles' law of the land and had nine wives and many children. (Silveira, 1945: 77)

In the middle of the sixteenth century, Almada reported a case of a Portuguese *tangomão* in Guinea who was given a name of *Ganagoga* by the Beafada people (Almada, 1594: Chapter 2, fol. 16v). He later married a princess from the court of Grand-Fulo. His Portuguese name was Fuão Ferreira. He was in the service of a member of the African ruling class, the Duke of Casão at the River Gambia:

This Portuguese lançado went to the Kingdom of Grand-Fulo by the order of the Duke of Casão, who was a powerful Negro who lived in this port by the River Gambia called Casão. He sent him [Ferreira] by his order with his people. And in the Court of Grand-Fulo he married his daughter of whom he had a daughter. (Almada, 1594: Chapter 2, fol. 16v)

This account of the creolization of *tangomãos* in Guinean society, and in the region more generally, provides evidence in support of our case. This kind of relationship undermines the master and slave paradigm and it interrogates the premise of the dialectic in Hegel's philosophy. It provides us with a lens to re-read Hegel's Eurocentric claims and demonstrate the flawed nature of his essentialism. In so doing, it enables us to recover the inter-subjective relation that is silenced by Hegel in his attempt to maintain a dominant European identity.

Hegel's approach failed to resolve the tensions between Western and non-Western discourses. As Ustorf writes: '[He] stops his analysis at this point, and makes his famous U-turn to "absolute knowledge"' (Ustorf, 1992: 204). His response to African representation was guided by travellers' literature orientation rather than a cultural perception of the Africans. Bernaconi challenges the reliability of Hegel's appropriation of African sources and calls for a rigorous re-reading of his writing to overcome his stringent politics of exclusion. He states:

Hegel's self-serving of what would otherwise have been clear counter-examples to his discussion of Africa is certainly of importance in any assessment of his work, as well as in any history of the European understanding of Africa . . . First, what sources did Hegel use and how faithfully does his account reflect them? This would serve to address the question as to whether there is any evidence of distortion, perhaps even systematic distortion, in Hegel's presentation of Africa. One must also ask, of course, whether there were other important sources that Hegel might reasonably have used and that he failed to use. This is not only a question about whether Hegel's account reflected the best knowledge of the day but also a question of the principle of selection, both of his sources and his chief objects of interest. (Bernaconi, 1998: 43)

It seems reasonable to assume that Hegel was acquainted with a good deal of the literature about Africa and Africans, but selected only those that facilitated the representation of Africa that he wished to present. His narrative about Africa is full of bold assertions (Jibree, 1956: 99); and his description about the African character is interwoven with popular Eurocentric discourses. In Bernaconi's terms, 'Hegel presented his diatribe against Africans, leading him to distort the travel literature at his disposal . . . Hegel clearly believed that the comparison of the reports of Cavazzi and Bowdich would lead to the same conclusion' (Bernaconi, 1998: 60). In agreement with Bernaconi's thesis, it begs the question of how Hegel appropriates the sources available to him at the time. Cavazzi's writing must surely have brought to his attention Lusophone African contact and their relationship with Europeans in modern-day Angola (Thornton, 1979: 253–64). There is a similarity here in the relationship that existed between West African Kings and Portugal and the relationship between the Kings of Congo and the Vatican and Portugal itself in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Diogo Cão landed in Congo in 1483. Soon after *Mani-Congo*, Lord of Congo, became a Christian.<sup>1</sup> The relationship between Portugal and Congo began as a story of friendship and alliance. Within a few years of this visit to Mbanza, Davidson writes:

'Royal brothers' of Portugal and Congo were writing letters to each other which were couched in terms of complete equality of status. Emissaries went back and forth between them. Relations were then established between Mbanza and the Vatican. A son of the Mani-Congo was appointed in Rome itself as bishop of his country. (Davidson, 1961: 116; 117–18; see also Hastings, 1998: 145–59)

This historical consciousness and recognition from both sides question the struggle for recognition as a given in Hegelian dialectic. In 1604, the Kings of Congo sent Antonio (Negrita) Emmanuel Ne Vunda (1570–1608) to the Vatican as an ambassador. He later died there, and his bust is found inside the Baptistery of Santa Maria Maggiore, Italy, Rome. Mendonça da Silva followed in the footsteps of Antonio Negrita and went to Rome in the latter part of seventeenth century. Mendonça da Silva was a leading proponent of the abolition of slavery in Portugal, Europe and the Americas. From 1681–84 he was in Rome on a diplomatic mission to obtain support from Pope Innocent XI for the abolition of slavery (Vatican Archives, 1645–1685, see also Gray, 1999: 140–54).

Fundamentally, there is an epistemological question about Hegel's writing on Africa and his representation of the continent. Travel documents of the time need to be read with some degree of suspicion, bearing in mind their Eurocentric tendency to represent Africa negatively. As Bernaconi writes '...[T]here was a predisposition on the part of travellers to tell of practices that would feed the curiosity and prejudices of the reading public at home' (Bernaconi, 1998: 46). In 1794, Wadstrom wrote an influential work, *An Essay on Colonization, Particularly Applied to the Western Coast of Africa*. In this work, 'the chief objects of his enquiry and observation in Africa were the character of the natives, and the evils they suffer from the slave-trade, the produce of the country, and above all, how far it seemed capable of improvement and of colonization' (Wadstrom, 1794: ii). The work presents a positive description of Africa and of African character and



culture. After its publication, it was distributed around the world including Germany (Wadstrom, 1794, 'a list').

Hegel's own unwillingness to acknowledge the extent to which Western identity has been shaped by the non-Western world seems to have undermined the credibility of his philosophical narratives. At the time that he was writing, the work of Jerome Münzer – written in Portuguese – concerning the West African Coast was available in the Munich library, Germany (Münzer, 1494: fols. 280–8). Münzer was a German medical doctor who had visited Portugal in 1494, and had direct contact with the Portuguese Royal family, particularly Dom John II, King of Portugal (Lingna Nafafé, 2007: 23–4, 54, 57, 64–5). There was no mention of this work by Hegel. On epistemological grounds, the transformations between the stages of Western dominance and their various narrative interpretations, viz., the epistemic shifts in Western understandings of African history, can, arguably, be seen to represent the effects of contingent political realities, both discursive and material, more than representing a passage from ignorance to knowledge or from falsehood to truth.

### **Critique of Hegel's Eurocentrism, Universalism and Teleology**

While Hegel may represent what largely could be seen as Europe's subjective position in relation to the Others, there are those such as Levinas who offer a different view and propose a revision of European self-consciousness. I will return later to examine his work as a critical reading of Hegel.<sup>2</sup> The question one might ask is: what is Europe? This is a huge question, but we are not going to enter that debate here. I will focus on Europe both as racial discourse and as a Eurocentric claim relating to its Others. It is this discourse that has often overshadowed our previous debate. Europe came to know its own subjectivity through its encounters with Others. Not only did it gain knowledge of Self, but it also established its distinctive identity (Strath, 2002: 483–98). Europe was not only shaped in its political and philosophical dimension in relation to the rest of the world, but was also created by it. In the same vein, Africa was 'invented' or represented in a different light (Mudimbe, 1988; Mengara, 2001).

Hegel made it clear that the relationship between the West and Africa was to be based on a binary opposition of the 'master and slave' type (Hegel, 1910). The master, the 'European Self', comes to 'full-consciousness' via conquest and domination of the Others, that is, by being recognized as self-consciousness by its Others.

Creolization, in this debate, questions what from the outset is viewed as an authentic institutional normative practice that has been taken for granted. It also challenges the exclusionary boundaries that had been legitimized by philosophical statements, cultural beliefs and ideologies. The use of creolization provides scope for disclosing the marginalized and the excluded and enabling them to be recognized as part of 'Self'. However, Hegel's argument has turned this debate into a closure in so far as European identity is concerned, anachronistically in what could be equated in Cottle's terms – the 'Others' – when referring to those ethnic minorities in European cities who have become 'ontologically disenfranchised from humanity' (Cottle, 2000: 1).

Hegel's penchant for closure rather than for an openness that acknowledges the inclusive nature of the Western modernity project and its continuity with the past, casts

doubt on his epistemology. It is in these flaws in his scholarship that lead some of his critics to question his narratives, in particular the relationship between master and slave. As Bell recently stated: 'Twentieth and twenty-first century theorists, having given up on the purposeful unfolding of history, view the relation of master and slave as a distorted and unsatisfactory relationship of domination and subjection' (Bell, 2004: 100). Buck-Morss took her critique further by questioning Hegel's silence on the Haitian revolution, which she believes is pivotal for understanding the master-slave paradigm. For Buck-Morss, Western modernity is informed by contradictory impulses, including that of the Haitian revolution from which Hegel took his example. Buck-Morss places the development of Hegel's master-slave narrative within the Haitian revolution towards the end of seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It was this early historical account of slave revolt that influenced Hegel's dialectical principle (see Scott, 2010: 152–62). In Buck-Morss' terms, 'the Haitian Revolution was the crucible, the trial by fire for the ideals of the French Enlightenment. And every European who was part of the bourgeois reading public knew it' (Buck-Morss, 2009: 837). Hegel was aware of the Haitian revolt which was to shape European modernity and identity. Buck-Morss says: 'In the German-language press, *Minerva's* coverage was special. Already in 1794, two years after its founding, it had established its reputation as the best of its genre of political journals' (Buck-Morss, 2009: 842).

Hegel needed both to give his philosophical reason a signifier and, to be properly European and yet at the same time to maintain the other as its foundational 'disavowal'. According to Buck-Morss, coverage of the Haitian revolution was published in the *Minerva* journal, which Hegel read on regular basis. Buck-Morss states:

*Minerva* was 'the most important political journal of the turn of the century' both in terms of quality of content, written by regular correspondents, and the quality of readers, among whom were some of the most influential people in Germany. And – need I keep it from you any longer? – another regular reader of *Minerva*, as we know from his published letters, was the philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. (Buck-Morss, 2009: 842)

In contrast to Hegel's philosophical delineation of modernity as a specifically Western project, Buck-Morss seeks to articulate a European sense of self that would include an extra-European, that recognizes the contribution of the non-Western world in shaping Western identity and modernity. She argues that Hegel knew about the Haitian revolution and that the metaphor of master and slave is not ancient or Platonic as we have been led to believe (Buck-Morss, 2009: 843).

The contention of Buck-Morss's statement is that Hegel's narrative contains within it an overlapping identity position which disrupts the essentialism of the Western modernity project, a view which prevents fixity of representation of the non-Western world. Buck-Morss argues that the omission of the slave revolt at the time by the philosophers of the Enlightenment would be more difficult to sustain epistemologically than its disclosure:

We are left with only two alternatives. Either Hegel was the blindest of all the blind philosophers of freedom in Enlightenment Europe . . . or Hegel knew about real slaves revolting successfully against real masters, and he elaborated his dialectic of lordship and bondage deliberately within this contemporary context. (Buck-Morss, 2009: 844)

Buck-Morss's argument raises questions about Hegel's philosophical position in relation to the others, which demonstrates Hegel's epistemological flaws in his willingness to maintain a binary framework and his reticence in allowing the scope for openness towards an inclusive narration of the non-Western influence on modernity. The outcome is that European identity remains foreclosed. Buck-Morss's contention is that Hegel adopts a range of ideological positions in his deployment of the master and slave dialectic and his representation of the contours of Western identity to exclude an extra-European cultural and political influence and contribution.

Hybridity and creolization interrogate and expand Hegel's circumscribed philosophical stance and attempt to free and open up to improvisations all possible discourses where inclusion is rebuffed. Take, for instance, the struggle for self-recognition and the demand for identity and justice. Both terms stand as a critique of Hegel's informed epistemic direction of Western modernity and identity debate. They make evident and visible an accumulative colonial past which functions not only as fissures within European space, but as reminders of the impossibility of making a complete break with the colonial past. As Buck-Morss writes:

Eighteenth-century Europeans were thinking about the Haitian Revolution precisely because it challenged the racism of many of their preconceptions. One did not have to have been a supporter of the slave revolution to recognize its central significance to the political discourse. (2009: 845)

Fischer is in agreement with Buck-Morss's thesis that Hegel was partly aware of the slave revolt in Haiti from reading reports about the Caribbean. She considers it 'extravagant to think that he didn't know' (Ulysse, 2005:70) and writes:

Probably we'll never be able to prove that Hegel was thinking of Haiti when he couched one of the central passages of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in terms of bondage, or more specifically, as a violent conflict between a master and a slave, which moreover is won by the slave. This in itself is significant since it goes directly against the kind of Eurocentric provincialism – philosophical and otherwise. (Ulysse, 2005: 70)

Fischer argues that thinkers of the Enlightenment ought to allow scope for an inclusive interpretation of Western modernity that takes seriously the context of the non-Western's contribution when looking at culture and the issues that shaped it, and that contribution should be placed in a holistic historical perspective. She contends that a better way of understanding the modernity project is to grasp this intersection of the relationship between Europe and the non-Western World. From this perspective, the understanding of modernity in its global context transcends European boundaries.

Fischer, however, remains critical of Buck-Morss's work at the level of praxis and at the existential level of Hegel's thesis. For Fischer, Western modernity in Hegel's perspective is representational. Colonial encounters with the reality of others require a response and praxis which lead to liberation and recognition. However, Hegel's representation is locked into a notion of 'disavowal' that posits certainty and completion.

At the same time 'disavowal' carries with it the potential to acknowledge an incompleteness that allows a real inclusion of what is denied. She raises other difficult questions:

But there is another question, and that one is more tricky: how does this change our understanding of Hegel? Even if Hegel is thinking about Saint Domingue, does he really narrate – even endorse – the slave revolution? Buck-Morss seems to think so. I am far more skeptical. (Ulysse, 2005:70)

Fischer concludes her argument by interrogating the praxis of Hegel's recognition of the slave's attempts at emancipation. Fischer argues that the Haitian revolution and what it entailed were greeted with silence by Western philosophers. For Fischer, Hegel's narratives show this mode of restrictive silence, an attempt to exert control over the freedom of slaves, hence abjuration:

Buck-Morss herself says that Hegel falls into silence and obscurity at the end of the master–slave dialectic. Well, that sounds an awful lot like what just about everybody else did when it came to the slave revolution in the Caribbean – they retreated into disavowal. Hegel knows, and at the same time behaves as if he did not. (Ulysse, 2005: 70)

For Fischer, the principle of modernity was a rejection of the political, social and moral domination and its imposition on the others. As such, modernity called for recognition and inclusion of the others, which allow the scope for participation. As a principle it must assume the total consciousness of belonging to a family of human race. Notwithstanding, it made no space for the inclusion of the non-Western, and sought instead to maintain an ideology of superiority which reduced the others to a silence and subordinated position (Ulysse, 2005: 69–73).

Inclusion and recognition that lead to shared values and discussions about modernity become misleading when they entail narratives that preempt real involvement of the others and with less interest in their present situation. To speak of the modernity project and its achievements, one must pay attention to current reality, otherwise one is in danger of falling into Hegel's flaws of exacerbating the dissonance between the Western and non-Western world. Modernity is not only concerned with the performances of a past age, but also with current issues of difference and inclusion. Fischer acknowledges the contribution made by Buck-Morss and her critique of Hegel's epistemological relations with the Haitian revolution, however, this engagement offers little opportunity for a possible alternative, intersubjective relation between the West and non-Western world. Let us return to Levinas for some suggestions of how this might be achieved.

## Levinas' Critique of Hegel's' Dialectical Model

In *Ethics and Infinity*, Levinas interrogates the conditions under which solidarity with the other can be achieved while eschewing a dominant intersubjective position in the relationship. In other words, he seeks to recover a space for recognition in the dialectical

logic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. For Levinas, meeting face-to-face with the Other is a non-symmetrical relationship. On this he is in agreement with Hegel; however, he seeks to take the debate beyond Hegel. Levinas' approach questions the self-consciousness – Europe and its relations with Others. Indeed, the enormity of the shift in his attitude to the Others represents a significant break with Hegel, that is to say, his work represents the emergence of a new discourse, different from the problematic of asymmetrical tension engendered by the dialectic. 'The face speaks. It speaks, it is in this that it renders possible and begins all discourse' (Lévinas, 1985). Levinas' argument about the face of the Others demonstrates the relationship that exists between Europe, the self and the Others. Not only the encounter, but also Europe's responsibility for the Others is fundamental here to help explain the Europe–Africa relationship, a 'responsibility for the Other, being-for-other'; responsibility as a general feature of relationships (Lévinas, 1985: 52).

In Levinas's thinking, unlike Hegel's, there is a place and a space for the Others. This is the space/place of responsibility:

to my mind the Infinite comes in the signifyingness of the face. The face signifies the Infinite. It never appears as a theme, but in this ethical signifyingness of the face ... I am responsible; one is never quits with regard to Other. (Lévinas, 1985: 105)

Lévinas is interrogating not only the Western self-consciousness which is by no means the only kind of self-consciousness there is, historically conditioned and geographically limited, but also its ideological presuppositions:

Levinas's starting point was also a departure, namely a departure from totalitarianism or what he called the 'occidental obsession with systems', stretching from Aristotle to Heidegger. What Levinas wanted was different – [he] takes the religious and philosophical struggles of European history very seriously. (Ustorf, 1992: 205)

In our terms, pre-colonial encounters produce inter-human relationships – Creole, which entails more nuances and complexity of multiple discourses that move beyond the Hegelian rigid self-consciousness of *thesis*, *antithesis* and *synthesis* motion. In the context of the encounters, Creole stands for multiple discourses which question and disrupt the fixities of the local self-consciousnesses; and because of the fluidity of new discourses, they too are interrogated and their boundaries are opened up by the self-consciousnesses. It is what Levinas calls the 'irruption of the other' into self-consciousness. These multiple discourses refuse to die and they are an integral part of the symmetries. The implication of this in Levinas' term is ethical, viz., the response: 'here I am' (Lévinas, 1985: 106). As he writes, 'Metaphysics, transcendence, the welcoming of the Other by the Same, of the Other by Me, is concretely produced as the calling into question of the Same by the Other, that is, as the ethics that accomplish the critical essence of knowledge' (Lévinas, 1969: 33). The difference, however, is that in Levinas' terms there are no dominants in the process of Creolization, in other words, there are no masters involved.

## Conclusion

Creolization challenges the fixity of national boundaries, it emphasizes the cultural plan rather than cultural superiority between nations and ethnic groupings, be they Europeans or Africans. The use of creolization allows the scope for disclosing the marginalized and the excluded to become intrinsically recognized as the 'Self'. Hybridity for Bhabha entails a negation of Hegel's dialectic which could be said to be essentially binary in nature. The rationale of the dialectic does not provide the possibilities for hybridizing 'us' and 'them', their differences or similarities. In other words, Hegel's oppositional logic remains a dominant principle, which seeks to homogenize the resistant voice of the other and deny them a platform for survival.

Hybridity and creolization are processes that entail a mixing of varied cultural elements which in turn produce new meanings and, in the case of West Africa, new identities biologically and culturally (Havik, 2004; Lingna Nafafé, 2007: 65–91). This mixing came as a result of the encounter between European merchants and African people in Cape Verde and along the West coast of Africa (Green, 2009: 157–66). In Moore-Gilbert's expression: 'this is the space in which the question of modernity emerges as a form of interrogation' (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 177). In agreement with Bhabha, Moore-Gilbert argues for an understanding of modern identity space that requires an understanding of the histories of slavery, and colonial space as constitutive for the construction of the Western 'self'. Hegel's epistemological position seemed to have disregarded these narratives of history, preferring instead to use his philosophical discourse to position the West in an advantageous relation vis-à-vis the non-Western world. By negating the others's contribution to history and progress, the process of modernity is represented in binary relation of backward versus modern, enlightened versus unenlightened, civilised versus savage, nation versus tribe, place versus 'non-place', etc.

In Bhabha's analysis, colonial experience not only produced domination and exploitation, but also cultural relations that were unstable, which provided no basis for subject position. Colonial space provides ground for negotiation (Bhabha, 1994: 38). It was a process which provided the basis for creating new identity (Bhabha, 1994: 1–2). Hybridity is in this sense a form of disruption and dismantling of the dominant claim made by Hegel's historical narratives, and the provision of an alternative historicity which interrogates history and how it has been perceived (Bhabha, 1994: 36–7).

Despite the apparent flaws in Bhabha's deployment of the concept which lead to an oversimplification of the social relations which arise from class and gender differences, while hybridity, etymologically having roots in biology, has arisen, primarily, as subaltern voice to speak against national essentialisms. In this context, hybridity contests Hegel's universalizing teleology. Modernity became an absent value from the non-Western world which needs to be introduced. As Moore-Gilbert states: 'The emergence of modernity – as an ideology of beginning, modernity as the new – the template of this "non-place" becomes the colonial space' (Moore-Gilbert et al., 1997: 177). 'The relationship between colonizer and colonized is more complex, nuanced and politically ambiguous' (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 33). The use of the concept of hybridity raises intriguing questions about the effectiveness of philosophical discourses about the slave and

master relationship that Hegel posits as emanating from the period of modern colonial history.

## Notes

1. Mani is a title and not a name.
2. On the work of Emmanuel Lévinas, here I am very indebted to W. Ustorf.

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## About the author

**José Lingna Nafafé** did his BD degree at London University, an MPhil and PhD at Birmingham. He previously lectured in the School of Education and taught in the Theology Department at Birmingham University, before moving to Cultural Studies and Sociology Department in 2002, and to

the European Research Institute at Birmingham in 2007. He currently is a lecturer in the Political Science and International Studies Department. His current academic interests embrace five inter-related areas: 'Europe in Africa' and 'Africa in Europe' — Europe and Africa relations; asylum-seekers and refugees in postcolonial society; postcolonial theories and representation; slavery and labour; the relations between postcolonial theory and sociology.