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Josué Guébo's Arrival as a Poet of the "Second Independence" Movement: Integrating West African Oral Traditions, *Zouglou* Conscience, and Césaire's Surrealism

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Abstract

Josué Guébo has emerged as a leading voice in Afro-francophone poetry. With the succession of seven poetry collections published between 2009 and 2016, Guébo has quickly risen to prominence. His emergence as a leading voice in African poetry was signalled by the 2014 Tchicaya U Tam'si Award for African Poetry, which he received for his collection *Songe à Lampedusa*. All of his collections have been written in the context of ethnic conflict, civil war, and political uncertainty. His poetry's principle thematic concern has been reckoning with the impacts and sources of such instability—in the Ivory Coast, but in other African nations as well. Kleptocratic regimes and ethnocultural tensions are often cited as the sources of instability and political violence. However, Guébo proposes a less tangible origin: "the aggression of Western economic systems." Stressing that the globalising market system drove many African nations into ineradicable debt, Guébo addresses the neoliberal condition in a way that the generation of Afro-francophone writers before him—has not. This article analyses Guébo's artistic influences that provided him with the tools necessary to confront the logic of neocolonial governance, an abstracted structure that instigates very real violence.

Keywords: Africa, Afro-francophone, Josué Guébo, Neoliberal, Poetry

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Over the last several years, Josué Guébo has emerged as a leading voice in Afro-francophone poetry. With the succession of seven poetry collections published between 2009 and 2016, Guébo has sharply risen to prominence. Moreover, his emergence as a leading voice in African poetry was signalled by the 2014 Tchicaya U Tam'si Award for African Poetry, which he received for his collection *Songe à Lampedusa / Think of Lampedusa*. His collections have been written in the context of ethnic conflict, civil war, and political uncertainty in the Ivory Coast. His poetry's principle thematic concern has been reckoning with the impacts and sources of such instability—in the Ivory Coast and other African nations. Guébo himself identifies this tendency in four of his first five collections; “In my books *Gold has never been a metal*, *Journal of doubt*, *My country, tonight*, and *Think of Lampedusa*, I call for the dignity and liberty of African people, who I believe are victims of the aggression of Western economic systems, to be respected” (my trans.; Guébo, *Pour une...*, 2017).

The poet aligns himself with an anti-colonial tradition central to African literature, but he also signals a significant shift in perspective. The contest at hand is not about territorial sovereignty, nor about establishing national identities, nor about creating visions of African subjectivity in the context of post-colonial liberation. These concerns are, ultimately, circumscribed by an economic enclosure. Former colonial powers, which we might designate geographically as the Global North, geopolitically as the G-7, or ideologically as the West, have now institutionalised an abstract form of indirect governance: moneylending, or, to state it more appropriately, large-scale debt bondage.

The economic principles that have guided globalisation—namely, applying neoliberalism's *laissez-faire* capitalism to “developing” nations to provide foreign investors with access to labour and resources—have made the concession of independence by former colonisers largely a rhetorical gesture. Many former colonies are again—or still—under the thumb of the “invisible hand.” In the Ivory Coast, as in many other former colonies, economic liberalisation has been enforced by loan conditions set by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), typically in the form

of Structural Adjustment Programs. Austerity measures, such as ending government subsidies for education, as well as the forced privatisation of communal land and state-owned enterprises, including power and water, have resulted, in many countries, in what former chief economist at the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz, refers to as the "IMF riots" (Palast 2001).

Economist Demba Moussa Dembele explains that loans from the World Bank and the IMF only exacerbated financial distress for African nations. "African countries are getting very little, in terms of new loans, except to pay back old debts." Dembele elaborates:

Between 1980 and 2000, Sub-Saharan African countries had paid more than \$240 billion as debt service, that is, about four times the amount of their debt in 1980. Yet, despite this financial haemorrhage, SSA still owes almost four times what it [sic] owed more than twenty years ago! One of the most striking illustrations of this apparent paradox is the case of the Nigerian debt. In 1978, the country had borrowed \$5 billion. By 2000, it had reimbursed \$16 billion but still owed \$31 billion, according to President Obasanjo. (Dembele 2004)

At a 2005 G-8 summit, this debt servicing was addressed. The G-8 nations, which direct the World Bank and IMF agenda, agreed to cancel USD \$40 billion worth of debt (Africa's total debt was \$300 billion). Qualifying nations were first required to complete the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. This required HIPC's to open economies further and liberalise trade (eliminating, for instance, import tariffs, which were a principal source of revenue for many countries), as well as to curb corruption and maintain good governance (which meant, effectively, to protect and prioritise investor interests). Buoyed by high commodity prices, most countries experienced temporary relief. While these economic interventions may seem like an issue of the past, according to Standard & Poor's 2018 assessment, the HIPC initiative has failed in at least 11 countries, where debt levels have returned to pre-crisis levels (Redfern 2018).

These interventions, particularly the Structural Adjustment Programs, have been well-studied and, as Stiglitz and others state, have demonstrably failed—at least if the goals are to boost economic solvency and encourage

stability in participating African nations. It is easy to be sceptical that those are, in fact, the goals, considering that these are creditor-led programs, and former G-8 creditors are undoubtedly profiting. As editors of the anthology *Hard Work, Hard Times: Global Volatility and African Subjectivities* write in their introduction, liberalisation policies designed to integrate global markets by creating “unobstructed passage for commodities and flows of capital” are often “unevenly applied” (Makhulu et al. 2010, p. 4). Additionally, migration for workers from African countries, often in pursuit of this outflowing capital, is obstructed. As Arundhati Roy succinctly explains: “The freer global capital becomes, the harder national borders become” (Roy 2019). This is the reality currently faced by migrants who try to enter Europe by crossing the Mediterranean, a crisis that Guébo addresses with *Songe à Lampedusa / Think of Lampedusa*. For many African countries, the effect of the “unevenly applied” deregulatory policies attached to the World Bank and IMF loans has forced national markets to cede sovereign control. And this—reestablishing control of labour and resources in former colonies—seems to be the real goal of G-8 nations. Even if this manipulation of the “invisible hand” is now evident, these neocolonial structures are, at this point, firmly in place, and many Heavily Indebted Poor Countries are back at the doors of the World Bank and the IMF.

Having been already organised by colonisers to produce commodities for export, Sub-Saharan African countries experienced the benefits of a global market that had not yet adjusted to new geopolitical dynamics following independence in the 1960s. The newly liberated states were swept into a global market and the short boom period for agricultural products that followed. A decline in the prices of agricultural commodities, however, quickly crippled these new national economies, and this is the crisis that, as the Western narrative goes, obligated the international community to intervene. While there may have been conditions that prompted the economic interventions, Vijay Prashad explains that these conditions were also the result of decisions made by G-7 nations. The recalibration of the global market following the post-independence boom correlates directly with the decline in trade value for agricultural products. This “decline in

terms of trade in the 1980s is not mystical," writes Prashad. "It occurred for a variety of reasons. Agriculture in the G-7 states posed a significant problem, as these states both subsidized production and used costly fertilizers and irrigation systems to enhance productivity" (Prashad 2007, p. 227). Advantages former colonies might have in terms of natural growing conditions were offset by technological advances and subsidies in G-7 nations. Prashad adds that multinational companies aligned with G-7 interests fomented competition between former colonies, further depressing prices. Prashad presents the origin of an economic dependency that, in the case of the Ivory Coast, would lead directly to the decade of ethnic violence and civil wars that erupted in 2000.

Following a collapse in cocoa prices (the Ivory Coast produces about forty per cent of the world's cocoa), the Ivory Coast implemented an IMF Structural Adjustment Program in 1989. In an economy forced by IMF mandate to liberalise, austerity measures and competition for dwindling resources led to frustration and widespread poverty—generic IMF riot conditions. In the Ivory Coast, many Ivorians were compelled to seek land for subsistence living, which created land tenure disputes.

But where the international media covered the Ivory Coast's economic pressures, coverage focused on the inadequacies of resource management. The narrative of necessary intervention was accompanied by that of *les bourgeoisie d'affaires*, the political bourgeoisie. These were African big men who lived as lavishly as other global elites. While other global elites often benefitted from policies or preferential contracts that allowed them to siphon public resources at home and abroad legally, no such artifice was staged in the African context. The images of kleptocratic African leaders in nations that lacked a middle class to dull the optics of wealth inequality, leaders portrayed in shocking proximity to the impoverishment resulting from such corruption (rather than, say, alongside the international financiers with whom they cooperated)—these images supported a sensational, if simplified, story. Undoubtedly, *ces grands types* were responsible for the shrinkage of aid and investment funds as money trickled toward development projects. How G-7 nations managed commodity pricing in the

first place and how that impacted countries such as the Ivory Coast was rarely discussed. As the Ivory Coast fragmented, the international media trained its eyes on the bloodshed and the country's cultural fault lines.

In 1999, on Christmas Eve, the military took over the Ivorian government. Following a post-*coup* presidential election in 2000, ethnic violence escalated en route to a civil war that lasted from 2002 to 2007. International coverage pitted the more Christian south against the dominantly Muslim north. These characterisations are accurate but attributing the violence to religious differences oversimplifies the conflict. In 2000's post-*coup* presidential election the main northern candidate, Alassane Ouattara, was disallowed from running by a constitutional revision. For many in the north, this was seen as a move by the government, seated in the south, and historically run by southerners, to exclude him because he was a northerner. Officially, Ouattara could not demonstrate that he had lived in the Ivory Coast for the five years prior to his candidacy, which the constitutional revision required. But also bound in his residency status was his international resumé. Having obtained an undergraduate, a Masters, and a Doctorate degree from universities in the United States, Ouattara is sometimes called Alassane the American by his detractors. Working as an economist for the IMF, Ouattara was posted within the Ivorian government in 1990, the year after the IMF implemented its Structural Adjustment Program for the Ivory Coast. Ouattara was installed as the Prime Minister, a position that the President was compelled to create for him. As the aging President's health failed, Ouattara ran the government for stretches, facing widespread strikes. He responded to university students' and faculty protests of the de facto single-party political system with overwhelming force. In 1994, Ouattara assumed the office of Deputy Managing Director at the IMF and, opponents speculated, he was abroad more than he was in the Ivory Coast.

The disallowance of Ouattara's candidacy in the 2000 election left little viable opposition to the main southern candidate, Laurent Gbagbo, who had been faculty at the country's main university, had created the country's first opposition party in 1982, had lost in the first multi-party presidential election

in 1990, and had been imprisoned as a protest organiser in 1992. With the violence that followed the *coup d'état* in 1999, international news organisations hustled to understand the country's ethnic, religious, and political dimensions. But the division of the country according to ethnic and religious affiliations, while often presented as the result of quarrels over national identity, is more suitably explained by economic pressure. In a region of West Africa organised into nation-states by coloniser France, in a country containing upwards of sixty ethnic groups, with an array of religious and spiritual beliefs, this plurality had cohabitated for generations. So why did the country implode? Josué Guébo's answer: because Ivorians, like other Africans, have been "victims of the aggression of Western economic systems."

Gbagbo assumed the Ivorian presidency after the disputed 2000 election, casting his presidency as a "second independence" movement. He portrayed the movement as a populist reclamation, a reprieve from the kleptocrats who had profited from collaborating with international agencies such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Gbagbo's populist message resonated, especially with the many southerners who had moved to cities looking for work, and with those from the south who saw the fertile southern land as part of their ethnic inheritance, land that had been leased, sold, or transferred informally as agricultural production had been expanded for exportation. But the need to appease a base that demanded immediate material gains led to the xenophobic aspect of Gbagbo's campaign, the implicit authorisation to expel "foreigners" who did not have autochthonous claims to the land.

Gbagbo maintained the presidency through the north-south civil war that followed, and through a reconciliation period that culminated in a presidential election at the end of the decade. In the 2010 election, Ouattara was now an eligible candidate and appeared to win by a slim margin in an election that the international community validated. Gbagbo contested the results and refused to leave office, leading to a second civil war that lasted several months as rebel forces from the north fought to remove Gbagbo on behalf of Ouattara. Gbagbo was defended by loyalist government forces.

United Nation (UN) and French military forces intervened, attacking the presidential palace in the de facto capital, Abidjan, and removing Gbagbo, who was extradited to the International Criminal Court (ICC) on charges of human rights abuses. He became the first head of state extradited by the ICC and was charged with murder, persecution, rape and other sexual violence actions carried out by the police, the military, and street militias. While the court decided in 2013 that it could not sufficiently prosecute his charges, it did not release his case, and in 2015, following the Ivorian presidential election that retained Ouattara, the court recommenced its efforts to prosecute Gbagbo. He was acquitted and released on February 5, 2019.

Simon Gikandi explains the insufficiency of the first independence movement, which provided many colonial states sovereignty in the 1960s, this way:

rarely do we confront the essential historical fact that with rare exceptions, African states were invented at the conference of Berlin [in 1884 and 1885], that they were essentially colonial structures, and that even in postcoloniality, they did not have legitimacy. Painful and violent as they may be, the civil strife taking place in many African countries is an attempt to reconfigure the map drawn at Berlin. (Gikandi 2010, p. xv)

Guébo's collection *Carnet de doute / Journal of doubt* [my translation], published in 2011, signals his sympathy with Gbagbo's proposal for a second independence movement, though not with the xenophobic nativism that came to accompany it. Bypassing nationality as an authoritative identity, Guébo appeals for the recognition of kinship between ethnic groups. Assessing that "All men are brothers," he then lists ethnicities that are not only from within the Ivory Coast, such as the Gouro, but also the Tchaman in the south, who have their roots in what is now Ghana, and groups beyond Ivorian borders, such as the Bambara, who inhabit territory to the north in neighbouring Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso (my trans.; p. 37). Guébo ranges to Cameroon, naming the Bamiléké, and even to France, identifying the Bretons. His collection suggests that the nation-state model is, perhaps, punitive beyond Africa, an obstacle to actual *fraternité*.

The penultimate poem in *Carnet de doute / Journal of doubt* returns to a passage that Guébo first presents mid-way through the collection of serial lyrics:

Les guerres de nos pères
Nous somment
Aux aires neuves
Réécrivent
Aux encres de nos temps
La forme
De nos armes
Aujourd'hui
Quitter le quai
De décennies
Avariées
Lunes
 De partis-uniques
Lunes
 De partis-revenus

(The wars of our fathers
Add us
To new realms
Rewrite
With the ink from our times
The shape
Of our weapons
Today
Leave that platform
Of Decades
Damaged
Moons
 Of single-parties
Moons
Of the party-of-returns) (my trans.; Guébo, *Carnet de doute*, 2011, p. 35)

Here Guébo is playing with the words “*partis-unique*” and “*partis-revenu*.” *Partis-unique* refers to a single-party political system, where the ruling party simply imposes its will. But the word “*partis*” also suggests the verb “*partir*,” to leave or to depart. In this way, *partis-unique* includes the notion of a one-way ticket—as in, to leave for a singular destination, on a journey without return, to a dead-end. *Partis-revenu* is an invented word. In *partis-revenu*, the word “*revenu*” refers to revenue or income, as in politicians aligned less by ideology than by the shared belief that politics is a way to make money. “*Partis*” again suggests the verb “*partir*,” to leave or to depart. And “*revenu*” can be a conjugated form of the verb “*revenir*,” to come back. In this way, *partis-revenu* additionally implies a political coterie that always finds its way back to power, and a political fate that goes round and round.

For Guébo, this second independence movement is overdue. Particularly in his collection *Mon pays, ce soir / My country, tonight*, published after *Carnet de doute / Journal of doubt* but also in 2011, Guébo meditates on the wars of his fathers and proposes a generational evolution in that struggle to truly and finally sever colonial attachments. *Mon pays, ce soir / My country, tonight* is a direct response to the French and UN military intervention following the 2010 election. Guébo portrays the UN as a snaking, sexually predatory water. Guébo uses the term *l'eau nue*, which translates literally as “bare water” or “naked water,” but also has the homonymic association to O.N.U., which is the acronym for *Organisation des Nations Unies*—or, in English, the UN.

L'eau nue

Plotting its course

Far from the suffering

Of my people

L'eau nue

Gliding into

Its guest bed

Pic-

Nicking

Or rather playing

Snatch

Grab

Along sidewalks (Guébo, *My country, tonight*, 2016, p. 17)

Guébo portrays the UN as a prostitute promising a good fuck. In the following passage he uses the phrase “tossing its scarf,” which is an Ivorian-French idiom—an *Ivoirisme*. It refers to the act of indicating one’s for-pay sexual availability by dropping a scarf in front of a passer-by.

Tossing its scarf

Promise of deep drilling

Amid the informants

Their carnival of scandals

L'eau nue dampens

My most slender

Faith

In the world’s

Trusts (Guébo, *My country, tonight*, 2016, p. 19)

The sexual innuendo, the promise of deep drilling, alludes to oil exploration. In *Carnet de doute / Journal of doubt*, Guébo writes, “We don’t celebrate / The emergence of black gold” (my trans.; p. 5). Oil discovery makes the country a target. He eschews this investor attraction, and the inevitable ecological, social, and cultural degradation that accompanies oil extraction in Africa. The UN practices the interventionist agenda on behalf of international agencies. It extends the colonial offer: pleasure, ease, abundance for collaborators.

While Guébo is interested in the questions of national identity that have tormented the Ivory Coast, he addresses questions of ethnic difference by expanding the political discourse. When asked in a December 2011 interview what he made of the post-electoral crisis in the Ivory Coast, Guébo replied:

There is no post-election crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. What we saw unroll before us is the logical result of a secular harassment ... and we have no right to ignore what takes place, these concerns about the question of our self-determination. I do not deny the fact that Côte d'Ivoire is in the grip of some contradictions but I say that some minor questions here are overblown to hide the essential problem. All African countries will have to one day revisit the problem of their relationship to the West. (my trans.; Grah 2012)

For Guébo, the violence must be addressed as part of a broader geopolitical negotiation.

In *Mon pays, ce soir / My country, tonight*, Guébo invokes the martyrs from “the wars of our fathers”—Thomas Sankara, Patrice Émery Lumumba, Ruben Um Nyobé, Félix-Roland Moumié, each an African revolutionary leader who fought for their nation’s self-determination. Each was assassinated by or with direct assistance from Western powers. Through these martyrs he is speaking of Gbagbo and his extradition to the International Criminal Court, though Guébo never names Gbagbo in *Mon pays, ce soir / My country, tonight*. “You do not invoke someone who is alive but not with you—as a form of protection,” Guébo explains (my trans.; Guébo, pers. comm., 2016 26 Feb.). Ouattara won a virtually uncontested presidential election in 2015 while Gbagbo continued to be held in The Hague. Ouattara is currently trying to position the Ivory Coast to become one of the continent’s largest oil producers (Mieu and Bax 2014). For Guébo, the international institutions that govern based on economic profit, such as the IMF, World Bank, and WTO, with the UN and ICC as their mediators, are effectively an international single-party system, a *partis-uniques*—a *partis-revenus*, a party of returns....

Guébo’s contest with the neocolonial condition—a continually cinching economic enclosure—draws from a vibrant anti-colonial tradition in African poetics. Tracing the evolution of this anti-colonial mode in Afro-francophone poetics will reveal how Guébo has comtemporised the tradition.

Emerging from the students and intellectuals who had gathered in Paris from French colonies in the 1930s and '40s, the Négritude movement is often identified as the beginning of Afro-francophone literature's contest with European colonisers. There are, of course, an abundance of myths and histories in African oral forms that portray cultural conflicts prior to European encounters (and the accompanying separation of African arts into coloniser language designations such as Anglo-, Franco-, and Luso-)—the Ozidi Saga of the Ijo in the Niger Delta, which chronicles a succession of fights between the hero Ozidi and opponents who threaten the kingship of the city-state of Orua, is a well-known example (Okpewho 2004, p. 63). The founding story for the Baoulé, situated in what is now the eastern Ivory Coast, recounts the sacrifice that Queen Pokou was forced to make following a power struggle within the Ashanti empire. While Négritude's poetic renderings were not the first to address liberation in African states, they were the first positioned toward European audiences and reading practices.

Rendering the inhumanity of colonial oppression and proposing an emancipated future for black colonial subjects required a style that would be legible to French readers. To forward the movement's political goals, Négritude's poets developed a written expression out of the European Romantic tradition, in which a singular personality controls the perspective, framing it for an unknown and removed reader. This is in contrast to the polyphonic speaker of African oral traditions, for example, who inhabits and performs a plurality of personalities and voices, often for live audiences in settings directly connected to the text being presented.

With the interpolation of Surrealism, Romanticism's detached individualistic perspective yielded to something slightly more pluralistic. From beyond the poet's conscious thought process, images of a supposedly universal nature arrive. Still, even for Négritude poets influenced by Surrealism, the Négritude aesthetic assigned the responsibility of describing a black cultural collective rather than writing from within the local cultural spaces that make up that collective. And the language-art forms that already existed in those locales were marginalised because they were too foreign to appeal to French readers.

Following the initial decolonisation of the 1960s, the black universalist agenda of the Négritude movement became outmoded as the newly independent nation-states struggled to establish unique national identities. Afro-francophone poets often explored the evolving conditions—what did it mean to be a subject in their respective polities? What were the domestic realities of a life lived amid the contortions of independence? Early attempts to move away from Négritude poetics succeeded in terms of theme more than style—that “African gallicism of *négritude*,” as Robert Fraser describes it, carried forward (Fraser 1986, p. 276).

In the 1970s and '80s, as African poetry reported the varying experiences of African subjectivity in the post-colony, poets developed increasingly idiosyncratic styles. Much of the writing leading into this period has been characterised as testimonial literature. In his introduction to the translation of Véronique Tadjo's 1985 poetry collection *Latérite / Red Earth*, F. Abiola Irele writes, “there can be no question that our recent history imposed an especial burden upon our poetry, obliging it to serve as a testimony of our experience of domination and of the ensuing trauma of the post-colony” (Irele, p. ix). Irele makes this note in order to mark a transition in Afro-francophone poetry, and African poetry more broadly. The poetry of the '80s and '90s moves away from any obligation to explicitly engage socio-political dynamics. The traumas of the post-colony are not forgotten, but morality plays out within the affective terrain of the individual, incrementally and by subtle gestures.

Working to expunge its “gallicism,” the Afro-francophone literary community developed expressions that were increasingly free from European genre conventions. The Ivory Coast's relative political stability made its largest city, Abidjan, a West African centre for artistic development. As literary artists gathered in Abidjan during the '80s and '90s, the integration of oral traditions, particularly, disrupted Western genre distinctions. Cameroonian writer and artist, Werewere Liking, who settled in Abidjan in 1978, describes her own genre-defiant style this way:

In the speech arts of my people, we do not have these separate categories between what is ‘a story’, or ‘a novel’, or ‘a song’, or ‘a

drama'. Our texts, such as the Mvet or the N'dinga, or the simple or lyrical narratives, or the poems, include everything. Many levels of language are available for the oral artist: from dialogue, he can move directly to a lyrical passage, and as swiftly into a prosaic or narrative passage. Everything is mixed — that's what the oral text is for us. (Osofisan 1996).

Bernard Zadi Zaourou, along with fellow Ivorian poets, Niagoran Porquet, Joachim Bohui Dali, and Jean-Marie Adiaffi, energised Abidjan's literary scene with adaptations of oral texts. Bohui Dali's 1988 poetry collection, *Maiéto pour Zékia / Maiéto for Zékia* [my translation], for example, is a recasting of a myth from the Bété ethnic group. Zaourou, himself, had translated the story into an experimental theatre piece, a play that he titled *La guerre des femmes / The Women's War* [my translation]. The story is sometimes a funeral oration, sometimes a war song. Bohui Dali adds a central character named Zékia, which is an anagram for Zikéi, a name the author assigns to himself as the speaker. Zékia, incidentally, is also the Bété name for a chameleon, a creature of transformation and adaptation. With the speaker, Zikéi, the poet creates a voice through which he is able to transform the oral form's polyphony into a book-length lyric utterance. Zaourou and Bohui Dali are, according to Guébo, important models for his own use of oral conventions (my trans.; Guébo, pers. comm., 2016 26 Feb).

To be clear, even as these literary artists were part of a movement that sought to decolonise African literature, their French counterparts continued their support. Afro-francophone literary scholar Lilyan Kesteloot, for example, who was there, offers hers: "This is a true 'school' with which French scholars are associated" (Kesteloot and Mitsch 1993, p. 9).

Zaourou, a dramatist, poet, and public intellectual, was the figure around whom this "school" convoked. According to Tadjó, who counted him as a friend and mentor, Zaourou orchestrated efforts to reimagine cultural and political life in the Ivory Coast. Within walking distance of the main university, which is now called the University of Félix Houphouët-Boigny, in the neighbourhood of Saint Jean, ideas and aspirations were connected, grown, and broadcast.

When the first president of Ivory Coast, Houphouët-Boigny was in power, free speech was controlled. But you could find Zadi Zaourou with gatherers at Le Christophoro *maquis*. It was an open space where everyone had a chance to talk. He was a leader of opinions. He'd also taught people who later on became professors. In the '80s and '90s, he was close to Laurent Gbagbo. (my trans.; Tadjó, pers. comm., 2015 7 Dec.)

At the *maquis*, which is an informal restaurant, often a patio space with a roof secured on posts for shade or for cover from passing monsoons, artists and scholars brought the past and the future into conversation.

Guébo was a young student in the '90s, and the literary adaptation of West African oral forms was a lively influence. He attended the *Lycée Cours Secondaire Protestant* in 1990, a high school directly adjacent to the University of Félix Houphouët-Boigny, and he matriculated into the university in 1993, where this lineage of decolonial poetics trained his aesthetic approach. The characteristics of the oral forms are immediately evident in his work.

Guébo's light touch on the page suggests an orator's sensibility. Lines are often a single word, and they are rarely more than six or seven words. Punctuation is scant; his collections are typically comprised of untitled serial poems that make one extended utterance, in the vein of Bohui Dalí's *Maiéto pour Zékia / Maiéto for Zékia*. Guébo periodically turns directly to his audience: "Arrest / Deportation / Where is the slightest ounce / Of justice?" (*My country, tonight*, 2016, p. 39). Words seem to touch down only momentarily before they lift back up to his audience.

Guébo also slides from orator to storyteller, weaving allegorical dramas between proclamations—like Liking, he refuses to separate between story, song, or drama in his speech arts. In Guébo's brief allegories, he transforms the UN into a predatory water, a water that sneaks, rapes, and rains down destruction in *Mon pays, ce soir / My country, tonight*. Later in that collection he portrays collaborators, Africans who have been and who are seduced by the colonisers' promises of affluence and power, as belonging to the house of roundworms; he invents a lineage for the "Pimp-procurer / Assistant to slave round-ups" (*My country, tonight*, 2016, p. 61). This

manoeuvre—to create brief allegorical dramas—is most pronounced in *Songe à Lampedusa / Think of Lampedusa*, which responds to the 2013 shipwreck that killed 366 Africans attempting to secretly migrate across the Mediterranean to Europe (“Mapping Mediterranean migration” 2014).

In *Songe à Lampedusa / Think of Lampedusa*, the sun, the winds, the waves, the oil spilled, the flames, and even life itself are transformed into actors. In a memorable three poem sequence alluding to the dynamics of race and nationality, Guébo pits white bread, which should be protected behind glass but is floating in the sea—“It is a blessed bread not one sliced into”—against the black water of an oil spill, which, without a visa, is not even recognisable to the sky (*Think of Lampedusa*, 2017, p. 14). The oil spill advances eating whole pieces of white bread. But the bread does not like this nibbling at its side. “The bread begins shouting out / that it opposes such a race of teeth” (*Think of Lampedusa*, 2017, p. 12). Represented metonymically by the preciously displayed white bread, the boulangerie, iconic in the quaint, monochromatic European imaginary, refuses to accommodate refugees marked by racial difference.

While these decolonial literary practices—particularly the adoption of West African oral forms—conditioned his aesthetic approach, Guébo’s political conscience took shape as he came of age in what Yacouba Konate calls “Génération Zouglou.” Guébo participated in university protests up to and through his matriculation into the University of Félix Houphouët-Boigny in 1993. Protestors continually demanded a multi-party system, which was permitted in 1990, though this permission did little to reform the existing power dynamic. Student protests for better living conditions became highly charged and were regularly suppressed by the police. These university protests followed strikes across most sectors during the late ‘80s over reduced services, wage freezes, and corruption. Out of this charged atmosphere a musical style emerged to amplify the political resistance: *zouglou*.

With its socio-political engagement, its vernacular language, and its unadorned musical style, *zouglou* is sometimes compared to the rap music that emerged in the US during the ‘80s. Jean Dérive and Marie-Clémence

Adom note that *zouglou* evolved from another genre, *woyo*, or “easy ambiance,” which originated with high schoolers in Abidjan at sporting events; it was then adopted by university students (Dérive and Adom 2011, p. 22). In contrast to the Alpha Blondy-led *reggae* scene, which had situated Abidjan as the third *reggae* capital after Kingston and London, *zouglou* was homegrown. Its *alloukou* rhythms are sourced from the Bété, which is one of the largest ethnic groups in the country (McGovern 2010, p. 75). Percussion is consistent but not intended to be overtly performative. A keyboard often provides the main instrumental variations. Perhaps *zouglou*'s most identifiable characteristic is its polyvocality. One singer is supported by a group that accompanies with vocal harmonies. Adom identifies *zouglou* as a “genre of neo-orality” (Dérive and Adom 2011, p. 21).

Zouglou lyrics tell tales of the underclass, often featuring the humour of street encounters. Artists tease newbies fresh to the city as well as posturing big men. “1er [Premier] Gaou” was released by the band Magic System in 1999 and became an international smash hit. The song tells the story of a broke youth whose girlfriend leaves him for a man with money. Once the former beau is a successful singer, the girl wants him back, but, as the chorus explains: “Et on dit premier gaou n'est pas gaou oh / C'est deuxième gaou qui est niata oh ah.” “I’m not an idiot for being fooled once, but fool me twice...” Songs describe the unending hustle of city life, and the humour is often an indirect reckoning with demoralising social conditions. *Zouglou* artists express exhaustion with political promises and frustration with the politicians who live above the fray. “The wives of presidents / They take their baskets to go to the market in Paris / Madame the president’s wife / There’s a market in Agbata / You remember president / It was the marches that brought you into power / So president / Don’t forbid the marches” (Dérive and Adom 2011, p. 33). This is from the song “President” by Yodé and Siro, from their 2001 album *Antilaléca*. They are offering newly elected president Gbagbo some advice—remember where you come from. These local markets should be able to provide enough for all of us.

Zouglou's socio-economic commentary also pivots on the language incorporated by *zouglou* artists: *nouchi*. *Nouchi* is the slang that developed, explains Simon Akindes,

as a medium of communication among illiterate labourers, house servants, shop attendants, and other low-rank workers with little or no formal education, and people originating from Burkina Faso. [I]t has grown into an urban language nationwide that does not abide by the rules of French grammar, and it incorporates words, sentence structures, images, and forms of expression from local languages. More and more popular songs, plays and comedies, written by literate and illiterate artists alike, use *Nouchi* for its spontaneity and to reach larger audiences. (Akindes 2002, p. 92)

Nouchi was originally called "Moussa's French" in the Ivory Coast. The phrase came from a comic, "chronique de Moussa," that appeared in an Ivorian journal, *Ivoire Dimanche*, in the '80s. In the Ivory Coast, French is nearly always a second or third language—regularly a person will speak his or her ethnic language and, then, very often, *Dioula*, a market language from the north. *Dioula* is closely related to *Bambara*, the language spoken by the ethnic group called the *Bambara*, centred in Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso, that Guébo lists in the earlier passage from *Carnet de doute*—"All men are brothers". *Nouchi* incorporates expressions from a variety of ethnic languages, as Akindes notes. With *zouglou's* popularity, *nouchi* itself came to provide a sort of collective representation. Considering the exploitation of ethnic, religious, and geographic differences that resulted in civil war, Adom proposes that *nouchi* be viewed as emblematic of the broader socio-political history that unifies Ivorians (Dérive and Adom 2011, p. 24).

In his essay, "Génération Zouglou," Konate writes that *zouglou* came to indicate "a vector of the new conscience that the urban youth assumed in their role as cultural actors" (my trans.; Konate 2002, pp. 781, 782). It is within the context of this "new conscience" that Guébo's poetry gained definition. Having won a Radio France International writing competition in 1998, Guébo then won a poetry contest hosted by the Ivorian Writers

Association in 2000. His poem “Noel, un fusil nous est né” mocks the military following 1999’s Christmas Eve coup. Though he did not necessarily support the deposed president, Henri Konan Bédié, Guébo, as part of the student movements of the ‘90s, had fought to achieve a multi-party democratic system. This transfer of power ignored such democratic principles. The poem asserts that the General who is the country’s new leader is no saviour. Guébo’s title plays with the language of the bible’s New Testament passages announcing Jesus’s birth: *un fils nous est né, un sauveur nous est donné* (“a son is born to us, a saviour is given to us”; my trans.). Guébo teases the likeness of the word *fils* (son) to the word *fusil* (gun) to announce with his title: “Christmas, a gun is born to us” [my translation].

Guébo is rather ambivalent about the relationship between his poetry and *zouglou* proper. “Ensemble, mais pas complice”—that is Guébo’s own assessment (Guébo, pers. comm., 2016 26 Feb). The two are, broadly, simpatico. His poetics, though not derivative of *zouglou* aesthetically, are shaped by the same social, political, and cultural forces that shaped *zouglou* music. Guébo’s audiences are definitely different from *zouglou*’s. His poetry works in a less vernacular register. And, to be a bit cynical, perhaps, *zouglou*’s folk register keeps its complaints local, aimed at Ivorian society and politics; it courts French and international audiences in a way that Guébo’s poetry does not. *Zouglou* proved to be an international sensation. But Guébo’s work extends criticism to a market system that provincialises the despair underlying the harmonics and brash humour of *zouglou* music.

While Guébo’s poems do not use *nouchi* directly, his commitment to local constructions of language is apparent. His *Ivoirismes* disrupt the semantic expectations of conventional French. These idioms have meanings that are unique to Ivorian usage. Remember the earlier selection from *Mon pays, ce soir / My country, tonight*, in which Guébo uses an *Ivoirisme* to portray the UN as indicating it’s for-pay availability by dropping a scarf in front of passers-by. Taking another example from *Mon pays, ce soir / My country, tonight*, Guébo uses the phrase *couper le cœur*, which translates literally as “to cut the heart.” This idiom, for Ivorians, means to receive a fright or a shock.

And when considering Guébo's allegorical dramas, and their often absurdist or whimsical natures, it is easy to see the playfulness as the effect of passing his formative years in the company of "generation *zouglou*," with its ethos of teasing corruption and despair. Though, this play is often present in oral traditions, as well—and, certainly, *zouglou* itself, as a "genre of neo-orality," has extracted many of its characteristics from the oral traditions. Tricksters, fools, and clowns provide lessons and entertainment across West African folktales. Guébo's work, though, especially through its absurdist tendencies, has a darker humour—it is sharper and more methodical than *zouglou's* pop sensibility. And while his poems often feel as if they are speaking from the page, Guébo manipulates the written expression in order to heighten the effect of his allegorical dramas. The dramas become a type of absurdist theatre. He disorients readers and allows his unconventional imagery to take centre stage. The performance values of West African oral traditions and Guébo's placement within the politically charged "generation *zouglou*" drive his poetics. But this dark, absurdist humour and his disruption of the medium itself, the written word, point toward another influence, Surrealism—and, more specifically, the Surrealism of Aimé Césaire....

For French Surrealists in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s, opening poetic forms was a part of their defence of social and political freedoms. The Surrealists moved away from the positivism that had repressed the play of thought and engineered the technology of World War I's mass slaughters. Surrealists de-emphasised the importance of empirical certainty, soliciting the irrational and the unexpected, inviting imagery that was less marked by historical connotation. They privileged imagery that would not yield to a single or definite interpretation but that, instead, left readers stranded, in wonder, disarmed, and alert.

While French Surrealists explored the capacity of the French language to adapt to a changing European modernity, Aimé Césaire, one of the architects of the Négritude movement, fashioned a Surrealist poetics particular to black colonial conditions.

How to use colonial languages to represent non-European perspectives—the uniquely African beliefs, desires, and experiences—was

crucial for Négritude poets, and, as Evie Shockley explains, Césaire found Surrealism compatible:

[Césaire] develops his sense of the liberatory power of unconventional language and images, in the first instance, from his reading of the very poets who also initially inspired the founders of surrealism—Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Apollinaire, and Lautréamont—as much as from his acquaintance with surrealist writing itself (Césaire, “Poetry” 233-36, 239; Gregson Davis 14). Having determined, in the process of writing his transformative poem *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal / Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, how he could use such poetics in his effort “to bend French” for the purpose of articulating negritude, a few years later Césaire asserts the compatibility of the politics of his (black) aesthetics and the politics of the surrealist movement (Rosello 52; Arnold 88-89). (Shockley 2011, p. 175)

Colin Dayan, who translated Césaire’s 1946 collection, *Les armes miraculeuses / The Miraculous Weapons*, notes the ways in which Césaire hacks into the French language’s origins, drawing on Greek and Latin. Césaire resurrects archaic words, grafts together new words, and brings obscure scientific terms into the poetic vocabulary (Dayan 2008). And Clayton Eshleman, explaining the complexity of translating Césaire’s poems, describes what he calls “Césairean syntax” (Eshleman 1983, p. 25). Discussing the poem, “Your Hair,” Eshleman explains how, for instance, Césaire leaves subjects and objects in ambiguous relation. In “Your Hair”

...the mistress’ hair is compared by means of the slightly archaic “dirait-on pas (“wouldn’t you have taken it for”) to a beautiful tree, then to “the invincible and spacious cockcrowing,” itself ready to depart for some witch’s Sabbath. The modifier of the tree (“Bombarded by lateritic blood”) and that of the cockcrowing (“already in invincible departure”) precede the things they respectively modify, each time suspending the meaning to the next line. (Eshleman 1983, p. 25)

Eshleman explains that modifying clauses estrange as equally as they clarify. Furrowing through the substrate of the French language, Césaire alters it with his word inventions and juxtapositions, while, syntactically, his lines defer semantic resolution.

Many of Césaire's strategies for disfiguring the French language are visible in Guébo's work. Again, recall the neologisms, the multiple entendres, the homonymic associations, and the *Ivoirismes* with which Guébo bends the French language. While some of this is inevitably motivated by having grown up in a generation that developed *nouchi*, which disfigures the French language beyond comprehension for continental French speakers, Guébo is also very purposeful about how the language plays on the page. His structural disruptions are akin to "Césairean syntax." Guébo's short lines and lack of punctuation create lyric fragments that pile on or fall from a single subject, such that phrases delay resolution. They work by "calling other pieces into confidence / each word grabs the shoulder strap / of the word to come" (Guébo, *Think of Lampedusa*, 2017, p. 20). As with Césaire, subjects and objects might be left, at least briefly, in ambiguous relation.

This passage, from *Songe à Lampedusa / Think of Lampedusa*, is one extended transformation, the wave becoming the eyelash of the "you" who proves to be the occasion for the passage.

And the wave will no longer keep its shape
And the shore would no longer be sand
But electricity
Phosphorescent
All the phosphor
From the zenith to the angle
Optimal
Geometry
Complete geometry of the senses
Rewritten
In the length of just one
Of your eyelashes (my trans; Guébo, *Songe à Lampedusa*, 2014, p. 7)

The lines float in relation to one another. Even if the eyelashes confirm a source of association for the preceding lines, the objects in those lines have made their own connections; the fragments are re-shaped along the way. The wave, the shore, the sand that becomes electricity, then the phosphor—before becoming the eyelash they have spawned a lively and enigmatic landscape.

Guébo's lyric fragments often arrive at some semantic destination where the scene comes into focus but the ambiguity, the digressions, and the clamour within its construction still hum. In Surrealist fashion, dramas may conclude through the intensity of the image more than through any semantic resolution. In *Songe à Lampedusa / Think of Lampedusa*, Guébo constructs a drama in which the speaker arrives to a market where the solstices are shopping at the market stalls and where "friendship instructs the one hand / to draw in the other of day" (*Think of Lampedusa*, 2017, p. 57). The speaker is, at this point, dead. Yet speech goes on: "A new material would spin the cotton of new adventures / and the language that it speaks / would turn its maxims seven times in the palace of dawn" (*Think of Lampedusa*, 2017, p. 57). In this final line, Guébo combines a French proverb with a trope that has been developed across the collection. The proverb, "turn the tongue seven times," might equate to the maxim "think before you speak." The trope of dawn is used to conceptualise an event horizon for Africa, a dialectical turn that will bring Africa into a position of prominence within the global community. Additionally, "palace" is an established metaphor for the mouth. Thus, the "palace of dawn" hints that the mouth verges on opening. The passage suggests that after long being silenced Africa is awakening, and it brings a new texture and language of experience to the international forum—or, we might say in neoliberal parlance, to the marketplace of ideas. While such references can help produce a rational explanation, the last lines resolve the scene largely through the surreal intensity of its image.

The fragments circulate and scuttle any familiar semantic logic. Phrases operate collectively, individually, and in competition with one another. The images are spotlighted. A tableau builds elliptically. This is how

Guébo's absurdist theatre is staged. Meaning through the language comes slowly into focus, but, even then, the traces of other meanings linger. Césaire's linguistic outgrowths often mutate an image within the space of a line. But Guébo's breathier, more weightless language unfolds the image as a panorama over the course of several lines.

As semantic definition may build elliptically in Guébo's poems, and as poems may construct dramas that flare into Surrealist imagery, readers benefit by attaching themselves to the rhythms, the cadences of the formations. Rhythms begin to offer their own sense, such that meaning stands as something felt—meaning is made by language but not reduced to interpretation. Eshleman explains that in Césaire's work the "percussive effects," which "are definitely influenced by African dances," eventually make readers receptive to a logic that does not require semantic certainty. These rhythmic effects "affect us somewhat like a mantra technique designed to weaken the resistance of the intellect. The accelerated repetition of some words or phrases often permit an entry into the poem other than the rational one" (Eshleman 1983, p. 13). One would not mistake Guébo's lines for Césaire's. Impacted by the oral tradition's focus on performed speech, Guébo's words are not affixed to the page in the way that Césaire's densely clustered syllabics seem to grow from the page. But Guébo's short lines and repetitions certainly pop with that percussive effect. The scant punctuation across his collections lends emphasis to the rhythms created by his short lines.

While Guébo's absurdist conceits, the delays in arriving at a semantic destination, the arresting imagery, and his lines' percussive effects could be attributed to a broader poetic inheritance, Guébo confirms his kinship to Césaire. Confronting the limits of the first independence movement, Guébo invites Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal / Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* to haunt his collection *Carnet de doute / Journal of doubt*. *Carnet* could also translate as *Notebook*, just as *Cahier* could translate as *Journal*. Césaire's collection signals the shift in consciousness of the black colonial subject that precipitated the first decolonial movement. And in his own "notebook," Guébo's commentary on the struggle of Ivorian, African,

and even, perhaps, Breton subjects within the globalised marketplace intends to mark another threshold in the decolonial struggle. Published months before the second Ivorian civil war, the *Carnet de doute's / Journal of doubt's* suggestion of another confrontation with European intervention proved, at least, locally true.

Returning to this passage from Guébo's *Carnet de doute / Journal of doubt*—

The wars of our fathers

Add us

To new realms

Rewrite

With the ink from our times

The shape

Of our weapons (my trans.; Guébo, *Carnet de doute*, 2011, p. 35)

—it seems clear that “*nos armes*” (“our weapons”), whose shape is rewritten in “the ink from our times,” alludes to the title of Césaire’s collection *Les armes miraculeuses / The Miraculous Weapons*. Dayan reports that Césaire “meant the ‘miraculous weapons’ to be arms for the struggle against colonialism, as well as, in and of themselves, poetic annunciation” (Dayan 2008). Guébo pays homage to his revolutionary and literary forebearer while calling for the revision of the tools and the targets in the decolonial struggle. The wars of Guébo’s fathers have brought Africans into a new realm, where the colonisers wield new weaponry: inescapable debt. The ink of poetic annunciation has been drained into wet signatures on the lines of debilitating loan agreements, but Guébo intends to reshape this weapon yet again....

Inevitably, Guébo’s writing manoeuvres are not entirely formed by one influence or the other. The overlap in terms of rhythmic sensibility does not necessarily mark Césaire as Guébo’s exclusive predecessor so much as highlight their common inspiration—the drumbeats that often enliven and give form to ceremonies in many African cultures. And Adom notes that Guébo’s most direct relationship to zouglou is not actually in his texts. It is, instead, his near real-time responses to socio-political crises, as seen with his

2011 collections *Carnet de Doute / Journal of doubt* and *Mon pays, ce soir / My country, tonight* and 2014's *Songe à Lampedusa / Think of Lampedusa* (Adom, pers. comm. 2015 19 Nov). The way Guébo's speech seems to elevate off of the page, syntactically refusing to be pinned down, buoyed by incantatory rhythms, and moving across various language registers, implies West African oral forms—the influences of literary traditions as well as the “neo-orality” of *zouglou*—but also the free play of thought espoused by Surrealists. Certainly, though, the absurdist conceits behind his brief allegorical dramas as well as the manipulation of French to create new meanings within the language, or to distribute meaning across semantic boundaries, reveal an allegiance to Surrealist principles. Surrealists hoped to bypass a consciousness beset with the demands to make sense of a world that was failing to provide rational outcomes. Guébo confronts a similar dilemma. How, after all, does one approach ethnic violence as a topic for poetry? How does one address the droves of overcrowded rafts sinking in the Mediterranean—what Guébo calls the “seasonal suicide epidemic” (Guébo, *Songe à Lampedusa*, 2014, p. 10)? How does one write poetry during what the Secretary-General of the UN, António Guterres has called “a paradigm change, an unchecked slide into an era in which the scale of global forced displacement as well as the response required is now clearly dwarfing anything seen before” (UNHCR 2015)?

Guébo has integrated a set of artistic influences that enables him to approach the absurd logic (the non-sense) and abstract figures (the international bookkeepers and their calculations) that underwrite neocolonial governance. He renders the relationship between the economics of neoliberalism and the localised violence in African nations such as the Ivory Coast. Even while he makes his address with an orator's sensibility, he disfigures the French language, which is its own abstract system of governance, complicit with the economic oversight of neocolonialism. Guébo's poetry proposes agency for “African subjects [who] seek a future outside the prison house of late capitalism,” as Simon Gikandi phrases it (Gikandi 2010, p. xvi). Part of Guébo's ability to so directly confront the sources and impacts of the abstract single-party system of the neoliberal

regime comes from the fact that he is its product in a way that the generation of Afro-francophone writers before him is not.

Critics often note that accounts of African subjectivity are made from a distance. Often, Euro-American metropolitan intellectuals play the role of gatekeeper (as I am doing here) and, even if unintentionally, control what accounts are available. There are, of course, many African writers writing from “First World” perspectives as well. African subjectivity should not be restricted to the accounts of lives on the continent. As Alain Mabanckou and others have pointed out, there is no singular or universal African subject position (Mabanckou and Nicholson-Smith 2011, pp. 75-87). But for those living on the continent, such international perspectives may seem adjunct to the quotidian struggles for a future on African soil. Axelle Karera, discussing Achille Mbembe’s 2010 book, *Sortir de la grande nuit: Essai sur l’Afrique décolonisée / Out of the Long Night: Essays on Decolonised Africa* [my translation], characterises Mbembe as attempting to write Africa from Africa (Karera 2013, p. 229). Guébo, too, is engaged in this endeavour.

Though, again, Guébo is not necessarily writing Africa for non-Africans. He has described his audience as literate Ivorians and the young who are being educated, as well as the Afro-francophone literary community (Guébo, pers. comm., 2016 26 Feb). He is certainly part of an educated class with a keen cosmopolitan awareness, but his work is grounded in the Ivorian, and an African continental, context. “I am not proud when someone tells me that I am good at French,” he says. “I have to speak it to show that I can” (my trans.; Guébo, pers. comm., 2016 26 Feb). In *Songe à Lampedusa / Think of Lampedusa*, considering the home abandoned as one attempts to migrate to Europe, land of the coloniser, Guébo includes an appropriate refrain in his native language, Dida: “*Sè ni mon-ni gougouli / Sè non houn hoo*” (“You hurt me in a way that I would never expect from you”) (Guébo, *Songe à Lampedusa*, 2014, p. 24; *Think of Lampedusa*, 2017, p. 21).

Coming of age in the ‘90s as the impacts of a globalising market system led to protests and political instability in the Ivory Coast, Guébo matured as a writer in the following decade while ethnic violence and civil wars dominated life in the country. Conversations about reconciliation and

stability revolved around the question of national identity. But for Guébo this question is a distraction—any second independence movement must find or restore a transnational solidarity that has been disrupted by a globalising market system that induces competition between “Third World” communities. National identity, it seems, is another ill-fitting Western genre, a distinction meant to rationalise a tiered system of economic distribution and to privilege one form of modernity over another. Guébo pursues the colonial impulse into its increasingly abstracted terrain, where he confronts “the aggression of Western economic systems.” He derides the language of “support” and “self-reliance” proposed by interventionists, terms that bolster the G-8’s economic enclosures, terms that need to be rewritten.

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