# INTRODUCTION

It is 2001 and I am at a concert at the Brixton Academy given by the Congolese pop star Koffi Olomide. The concert is, as ever, extremely late in starting. The audience is extraordinary; gold leaf biker jackets, beautifully tailored suits in four colours with Andy Warhol screen-prints, fur coats, knee-high crocodile skin boots and kilts. Later on, one after another of these well-dressed men – there are few women in the audience – comes on stage and presses bank notes on to the sweating forehead of Koffi, the lead singer. This is not small change. Most of the notes are fifties and each patron slaps down at least four or five notes, some patrons handing over more than a thousand pounds. As I would later learn, such prestations, called *mabanga*, are part of a wider system – the focus of this book – in which music, reputation and control of social reproduction are negotiated in an economy of prestige that links Europe and Kinshasa.

Towards the end of the 1970s, the Zaïrian state (since 1997 once again the Democratic Republic of Congo – DRC) [1] began a downward slide from which it would not recover. A collapse in commodity prices, inflation, structural adjustment and predation by the elite destroyed the formal sectors of the economy. The society began to reorganize itself into a more diffuse set of political arrangements that, though they remained authoritarian and violent, were based on much more personalized and informal kinds of clientelism.

These violent social changes also relate to the title of this book, *Breaking Rocks*, a phrase that has recurred in the region throughout the precolonial, colonial and postcolonial worlds. I believe that the various usages of the phrase – meaning initially violent chief, then leviathan colonial state, then, as a verb, in its current meaning as the act of aggressively wresting a living from a hostile world – illustrate some of the implications of these shifting political economies and how they are experienced by people, and exhibited in action and in cultural production (see Chapter 2). Be that as it may, as living standards

collapsed in Zaïre and hard currency income became crucial, a tide of migration quickened.

Europe has long had an economic importance for the Congolese that is also quasi-mystical. In a song he wrote in 1969, 'Mokolo Nakokufa' ('The Day I Die', Ley 1970/1997), the singer Tabu Ley imagines various members of society at the moment of death. While the prostitute thinks of her wig and the drunkard of his glass of beer, the rich man thinks of the children he has sent to Europe. Wyatt MacGaffey (1986) suggests that in the late nineteenth century, Bakongo peoples thought Europeans were Kaolin-covered ancestors, returned from the land of the dead, while in contemporary 'confessions' of witchcraft, children have recounted travelling to Europe in aeroplanes made from the bones of their sacrificial victims (De Boeck and Plissart 2004).

From the 1980s, the *parisien*, the *mikiliste* and the *sapeur* became conspicuous figures in the urban culture of Kinshasa. For the young, designer clothes, strongly associated with a pilgrimage to Europe, became a mark of access to the metropole and a source of prestige that circulated as a quasi-currency. Returning, these pilgrims made prestations of clothes to musicians, in exchange for which their names were mentioned on records. This patronage, or *mabanga*, created a cast of celebrities based in Europe who 'performed' at concerts, with recorded music telling those back in Kinshasa of the good life they were leading, while prestations made by members of this cast became the stuff of legend. Before the decade was out, cash had become a more common form of payment for a mention on a record, with a set of roughly established prices. New production techniques allowed more names to be included or added and, throughout the 1990s, younger sections of the political elite, migrants to London and diamond dealers operating out of Angola or the interior all began to 'buy into' this system of prestige, until records became a kind of strange social almanac.

## Conceiving the Study

At the outset of this project, I knew a certain amount about Congolese music from a fan's point of view. From a theoretical angle, I had an interest in Marxism. This pointed to a study that considered how aesthetic production and political economy intersected. A passing acquaintance with the performance of contemporary Congolese music reveals the importance of *mabanga*. Reading Waterman's (1990)

ethnography of Nigerian *Jújù* music also pointed me in the direction of music patronage as a useful focal point around which to undertake an ethnographic study.

I conjectured that focusing on patronage payments would allow me to make connections between political economy and aesthetics, and also between cultural producers and audiences. I had already picked up from my MA dissertation (Trapido 2005) that the list of patrons was fairly 'interesting' – combining a collection of petty criminals, fraudsters and gangsters in the diaspora with diamond dealers and senior politicians in Kinshasa. It seemed apparent that a focus on patronage would also mean a focus on the individuals who made patrimonial payments. Thus, it appeared evident that biographical methods would be important in the study and that a major research aim would be to find life histories for a representative sample of the most significant patrons. Conversations with a number of Congolese informants, notably several members of Wenge BCBG (one of the most popular *orchestres* in the DRC), who were in London for an extended period in 2005–06, convinced me that Paris was the most important site for patronage and was, along with Kinshasa, the centre of the Congolese recording industry. This determined the choices of Paris and Kinshasa as the main field sites (see below).

Understanding the motivation for patronage also meant comprehending something of the haunts and habits of the wider audience in which patrons moved and from whence they emerged. If patronage was paying for prestige, an interest in patrons implied an understanding of the different sorts of audiences that they wanted to impress, including the various kinds of 'retinue' in Kinshasa. It was evident that Europe-based patrons were bestowing their patronage predominantly upon musicians who could give them maximum exposure in the Congolese capital. In addition, a significant number of patrons were based in Kinshasa. All this persuaded me that it would be necessary to include a substantial period of fieldwork in Kinshasa.

## Methods

The various methods used in this study have been employed within an overall context of participant observation. 'Hanging out' was by far the most important method I used. Nevertheless, during the period of fieldwork, I also conducted over seventy interviews.

The themes of the interviews varied. A large number were general life-history interviews with patrons. Many of these concerned subjects

related to *mayuya* – various kinds of illegal practices undertaken in the diaspora, such as prostitution, human trafficking, drug dealing, the trade in bad cheques or the marketing of stolen clothing. Many were with musicians and combined life histories with some questioning on the subject of patronage. Others were about diamond dealing and the migration to Lunda Norte in Angola. Several were conducted with members of *mutualités* – female rotating credit associations – and were on the subject of these societies (and, in a rather circumspect way, the courtesans who participate in them). Numerous interviews were conducted with music producers about their productions. More were with arrangers and studio engineers. I made an effort to conduct interviews in various parts of Kinshasa, trying to select informants with different educational profiles in Limeté, Lemba and Masina. In Limeté I interviewed *shege* – street children. Broadly, these were group interviews on the subject of music patrons and, in particular, on the interviewees' experiences with and attitudes towards patrons based in Europe.

A second kind of semistructured interview (or interview-like practice) was organized around music. I would play a piece of music and elicit both translations and comments from one or several informants about what a song meant and how they interpreted it. Such song interviews were helpful in several ways. First, it was a useful way of building my Lingala vocabulary as songs were translated for me. Once my Lingala became proficient enough for me to get the gist of songs for myself, the interviews became important as one way to gain contextual understandings of Congolese popular music. What a song 'says' and what it 'means' are often very different, and the meanings I imputed to songs were often somewhat removed from the senses given by informants, even where I had been correct about the words in a literal sense. Finally, these sessions helped me to gain an overview of which patrons were associated with particular *orchestres* and, from further questioning, to get a rough idea as to who these patrons were and where they lived. These discussions – there were many such – provided a steady flow of field notes and entries in my journal.

It has been said of interviews that they impose the researcher's concerns on the subject of the interview (Coplan 1997: 29). While this was surely a factor at times, I frequently encountered the opposite problem. Many of my interviewees interpreted the interview form via the filter of music television in Kinshasa. Once a recording device was turned on, they would employ the highly rhetorical forms of speech used in such interviews: lying extravagantly,

praising themselves and their comrades in exaggerated fashion, and – ignoring my introductory spiel about anonymity – exhorting the *bana Kin* (people from Kinshasa) to mark well what they had to say. Often they would ask me to play back the interview and would want to do it again if they felt they had not expressed themselves with sufficient aplomb.

As a researcher, the information I gleaned from these interviews was not what I had expected. My primary interest became – in place of facts about lives or careers – the forms of rhetoric they contained, and the emic understanding of the media and of audience that such performances revealed.

But, as I say, interviews were never more than an adjunct to participant observation. On many subjects, such as patronage payments, extended observation led me to conclusions substantially different from those I would have reached through verbal reports alone. Likewise, my best information about music and other media was gleaned in informal settings – from conversation about songs, for example, and observation of their effects as they were played in a bar. On occasions I have included extended reports from interviews, but this does not imply that greater weight is given to the interview form (or verbatim transcripts) in comparison with other kinds of evidence. Rather, this simply presents the most tangible form of evidence for readers who were not there. In fact, I tended to accord rather less importance to formal interviews – only believing this kind of 'on the record' verbal report if it was substantiated by other evidence. Most of the time, interviews were simply an excuse for meeting people or for being in certain places. Often people would start talking in earnest only once the recorder was switched off and I would never have obtained the extensive data about clandestine practices contained in the book had I been primarily reliant on this kind of formal, recorded conversation.

The research for this book was conducted in the languages that predominate in Kinshasa and in the Congolese communities in Western Europe – French and Lingala, languages in which I am a proficient, though obviously non-native, speaker. Lingala is a western Bantu language. Initially a lingua franca along the middle Congo River, the language has become the primary language of Kinshasa and is the main communication vehicle for the western DRC.[2] Lingala is also strongly associated with Congolese music. The association with music accounts for the fact that Lingala is understood by a large number of people in the in the east of the DRC, where Swahili is the main lingua franca. At first, my Lingala was poor and I used it as a sideline that

convinced informants of my interest in all things Congolese. About halfway through the project, I gained sufficient mastery of the language to conduct interviews and exchanges entirely in Lingala and from then on it was probably the main vehicle for research communication. No research assistants were employed for this project.

Much discussion has been engendered in the social sciences by the question of the perspective or 'positionality' of the ethnographer. While such discussions are often posed as 'critiques of Western rationality' or some such, in fact, they exemplify all the most problematic aspects of this tradition. Founded in Descartes' obsession with defeating scepticism as a precondition of knowledge – the endemic confusion of epistemology and ontology to which this leads causes scholarship to veer drunkenly between positivist certainties and sceptical panic attacks. Better to start with a more plausible assumption – that we are all fallible and we have all got an angle, but if we try our best to be scrupulous and rigorous, we can probably know something. Somewhat related to this, I make reference to my presence when relevant, but I have deliberately avoided the common ethnographic convention of putting myself into the frame at every juncture or making myself the centre of ethnographic narration. Problems about my position as a researcher will not be solved by hand-wringing or ostentatious markers of my presence; let the reader judge what I have written unimpeded by such get-out clauses.

## Samples and Sites

The considerations discussed above established the kinds of samples I was interested in – I would be trying to obtain information about the people who paid to be cited on record and the financial backers of musical productions. I would also be trying to obtain information about the various people, from musicians and arrangers to studio engineers, who were involved in making music. And I would be trying to find information about wider audiences, both those in Paris and those in Kinshasa.

I had several friends in London who put me in touch with relatives in Paris. There I ate meals, attended concerts and drank in *ngandas* (Congolese bars) with this outer circle of contacts, trusting that they would put me in touch with various musicians and producers. Reliance on this kind of snowball/chain referral sample initially proved slow going. When I did make contact with a musician, a patron or a producer, finding ways of sustaining these relationships

towards prolonged 'hanging out' was a further challenge. Then my efforts were taken in hand by a key informant, Rameses, who listened to my aims and suggested a strategy for achieving them.

His first piece of advice was that I should stop sounding humble – people would be impressed by the idea of the University of London, he said, and my target informants did not go in for diffidence, so I should sound more certain of my credentials and of the importance of my research. His second piece of advice was that I should buy a video camera. The people involved in *mabanga* were show-offs, he pointed out, and would see no point in downsizing themselves to a little Dictaphone. 'Get a video camera and they will fight to be interviewed', he said. Third, he told me that if I wanted to meet musicians and patrons, then I should get to know the arrangers of Congolese music. There were only three main ones in Paris, he said, and all the musicians and patrons passed through them. 'If they let you hang out with them you can meet everybody', he stated. 'Sec Biddens [one of the major arrangers in Paris] is *mon vieux* [my elder]. I will introduce you to him. Can you come now?' We got onto the Metro and went to a studio in Saint-Denis.

Studios for Congolese music are remarkably social spaces and proved to be very good places to conduct participant observation. Patrons came and went, journalists arrived, famous courtesans dropped by, musicians gossiped and, when they left the studio, most of them were generous enough to take me along with them on their various journeys. With the exception of Wenge BCBG, whom I met in London and again in Kinshasa, all of the most popular Congolese *orchestres* passed through Paris-based studios when I was there, and the studios also gave me excellent access to the considerable number of musicians who had at some point in the past defected from one of these large *orchestres* during a tour of Paris. Such renegades and rejects were particularly valuable – they had less of a stake in keeping up appearances, but they still knew a great deal about what went on. That said, like everyone else, they too had their angle and I tried to assess their insights critically. Most of the major Paris-based patrons and producers passed through the various studios I attended. At times they were so crowded with patrons that movement was difficult.

In Paris the major studios where I conducted fieldwork were Studio Harry Son in Pantin and Studio Marcadet in Saint-Denis. Studio Marcadet was particularly popular with Congolese musicians, stayed open all night and had several rehearsal spaces upstairs where people would hang out. The area known as the *pleine*

in Saint-Denis also had several Congolese shops and bars nearby, and a number of dope peddlers who were doing a roaring trade. The studios were also spaces where various other transactions took place. Studios in Kinshasa were less crowded with patrons, but these were still useful places to make contacts. I made several visits to Studio N'diaye and the studios of the ICA and spent significant periods hanging out in Studio M'eko.

As I grew to understand my topic better, my conception of what would represent a good sample changed somewhat. I became more sensitive to differences in class and ethnicity and how these affected patronage and musical allegiances more generally. Thus, after about six months, I became aware that informants with origins in the province of Bandundu, and from outlying districts of Kinshasa such as Tshangu, were under-represented in my study given their importance in the history of patronage I was beginning to construct. I also became aware of an absence of female informants and I made a sustained effort to interview more women. Issues of how gender is thought about locally – and how this conception relates to music – are also discussed in depth in Chapter 7.

As my research progressed, I also became increasingly aware of the importance of journalists and of television networks in Kinshasa in the diffusion of music. I therefore conducted several interviews with Congolese media professionals while in Paris. In Kinshasa I gave this considerable attention and took much trouble to establish good contacts with executives, journalists and crew working in television. In several other ways the focus of my research in Kinshasa was somewhat different from my fieldwork in Paris. I was interested in gathering material from various types of Kinois about their attitude to music patrons. Especially interesting to me was to gather their impressions of the 'potlatch returns' to Kinshasa, which seemed to command so much space in the collective imagination.

Another patronage-related topic that offered a sharp contrast to Paris was the preponderance of diamond dealers and political patrons based in Kinshasa. I was able to find several informants who had been in northern Angola in the 1990s and could provide considerable amounts of information about diamond dealing and music patronage. On the subject of politician-patrons, I asked informants quite extensive questions in an informal context and wrote these up in a heavily coded fashion. This may have been rather melodramatic on my part, as several informants spontaneously recounted long and possibly compromising anecdotes to tape about particular politicians, and did not perceive this as a risky thing to do.

*Paris*

France has the largest population of DRC migrants in Europe, estimated at 90,000 in 2003, of whom approximately half were registered irregularly, if at all (Bazenguissa-Ganga 2005).[3] Anecdotal evidence gathered during my research suggests that considerable numbers of Congolese nationals may have claimed asylum on Angolan documents and that there are also significant numbers of Lingalaphone Angolans present in France. The overwhelming majority of these migrants live in the Île-de-France (the greater Paris region). Perhaps the most important omission in this figure is the very large number of naturalized and second-generation Lingala speakers. The legal prohibition in France on gathering ethnic information through the census makes arriving at figures for this population difficult, but I certainly came across Lingalaphone French nationals very frequently.

Unlike migrations from other parts of Francophone Africa to France, this migration is overwhelmingly from urban areas. Despite Congo's huge Swahili-speaking population and the decade of turbulence in the east, the community in France (and in the rest of Europe) appears to be overwhelmingly Lingalaphone, with proximate origins in Kinshasa. Congolese migrants have high levels of formal education relative to other Sub-Saharan migrants (Bazenguissa-Ganga 2005). Yet the employment profile of this group is predominantly in the low-pay sector. Bazenguissa-Ganga (2005) states that approximately two-thirds of Congolese migrants in the Île-de-France work in low-skill sectors such as security and deliveries, while about a quarter are involved in some form of entrepreneurial activity. Qualitative data (Tipo-Tipo 1995; Bazenguissa-Ganga and MacGaffey 2000; Bazenguissa-Ganga 2005) tend to show that Congolese migrants in Europe also have a fairly high level of involvement in criminal activities, especially in identity fraud, drug dealing and prostitution.

Perhaps the most visible areas of Congolese presence in Paris – in terms of a wider population – are in the north of Paris proper. One such area is Château d'Eau, where several Congolese hairdressers and two shops involved in the production and distribution of Congolese music can be found. Large numbers of Congolese go to the area to hang out and it is popular with musicians, for whom sociability is particularly important. Also prominent is Château Rouge, where a significant number of Congolese and other Africans run shops selling specialist foodstuffs, music, telecommunications or some mix of the three. In addition, there are several shops run by Lebanese that cater to a Congolese market. On Saturday, Château Rouge also contains

an illegal street market, which sells large amounts of fake and stolen designer goods. Several *ngandas* – Congolese bars – are to be found in the area. The real heart of Congolese Paris, however, lies elsewhere.

Since the 1990s, most Congolese migrants have settled beyond the *périphérique* (ring road) that divides Paris from the *banlieue*, with the highest concentrations found in the Département of Seine Saint-Denis, followed by Val-d'Oise and Val-de-Marne. Paris itself is the fourth-largest area, followed by Essonne (Bazenguissa-Ganga and MacGaffey 2000). Parts of Saint-Denis – the *pleine*, for example, or the area around the station – have very high concentrations of Congolese shops, restaurants, churches, nightclubs and other businesses. In summer, several outdoor areas in this zone operate as informal nightclubs and barbecue sites, while dilapidated conference centres and warehouses in Saint-Denis and other northern suburbs act as venues for the majority of pop concerts, large funeral wakes (*matanga*) and other diaspora events. Most of the studios used regularly by Congolese musicians – like Studio Marcadet and Studio Harry Son – are found to the north or northwest of Paris proper. These northern suburbs, above all Saint-Denis, formed the geographical focus of my Paris fieldwork.

### *London*

The Congolese community in the UK is considerably smaller and more recent than that found in France. It is predominantly based in London, and Tottenham and Croydon appear to be the areas with the highest concentrations. Arriving from the 1990s, the community is often said to number thirty thousand to forty thousand. This figure is derived from an International Organization for Migration report (2006) and I strongly suspect it suffers from 'Nigerian census syndrome' in that 'community and religious leaders' were asked to assist in the mapping exercise and may have felt it was in their interests to present the community as more numerous than is really the case.[4] The Home Office estimate is twenty thousand, though it probably has incentives for keeping the figures down, and, again, this figure would exclude the 'cultural' Congolese with EU citizenship, along with the sizeable number of quasi-Angolans. Once again, the community appears to be overwhelmingly Lingalaphone with proximate origins in Kinshasa (International Organization for Migration 2006). The increase in London's Congolese community has clearly coincided with a period of intensifying economic and political insecurity in the DRC. Nevertheless, there is considerable anecdotal evidence

(see Chapter 6; Tipo-Tipo 1995) that a large section of the community came to Britain clandestinely from France and Belgium rather than directly from the DRC. While it is only the third-largest Congolese community in Europe, in certain respects the London-based migrants – *bana Londres* – punch above their weight in terms of their impact on the Kinois. Until recently this was because of their reputation as big spenders (and big users of magical devices, '*fétiche*'), but now, increasingly perhaps, it is because of the preponderance of militant anti-Kabila nationalism within the community (see Chapter 5).

### *Kinshasa*

Situated near the navigable limits of the Congo River, the area where Kinshasa now stands has long been a centre of trade and dense human populations (Gondola 1997a). Nevertheless, the city in its present incarnation was a creation of the Belgians. Today thought to house seven to ten million people, it is the third-largest city in Africa.[5] While there are some pockets of affluence, Kinshasa is, in the main, a very poor city. Fifty per cent of Kinois eat only once a day and 25 per cent eat only once every two days (Trefon 2004). Rates of malnutrition in the poorest areas are around 18.3 per cent, with infant malnutrition at 40 per cent. In the poorest parts of the city, average incomes range between thirty and forty US dollars a month and, in areas like eastern Kinshasa, up to 40 per cent of the population's primary occupation is subsistence agriculture (Tollens 2004). The poor data available tend to indicate that there were modest improvements in the indicators of poverty in the years 2000–07, but (despite vigorous gross domestic product (GDP) growth) since then, these indicators may have begun to get worse again from 2007 (Tshimanga Mbuyi 2012). The Kinois have been resilient in the face of economic collapse. Malnutrition, bad as it is, is not as bad as one would expect given the low household income levels, which probably reflects the high degree of social solidarity displayed by ordinary Kinois (Trefon 2004a).

Kinshasa is also a boundlessly theatrical and sensual city (Biaya 1996; De Boeck and Plissart 2004), whose inhabitants define their identity around their ability to have a good time and the sophistication with which they pursue this aim. The Kinois compare their city to Europe – *Kinshasa poto muindo* (Kinshasa, black Europe) – and contrast themselves with the *villageois* or *mbokatier* (country bumpkins from the interior). Along with Brazzaville, the city is the birthplace of the *Rumba Congolaise*, Africa's greatest music.

## Theoretical Bearings, Thinking about Popular Music

In my opening statement I described the economic decline and violent social change that characterized the later years of the post-independence state in Congo-Zaire. It is the argument of this book that popular music was important in this transformation. The question of why it was so important will be dealt with in due course, but first we must clear the way by defining the object of study.

Congolese popular music comes from Kinshasa, a big city, and, like popular music elsewhere, relies on sophisticated technologies of reproduction and dissemination. It also serves a mass or popular audience. In this sense it can justifiably be called popular (Fabian 1997). Yet, as Barber (1997a) notes for Africa more generally, there is much about this audience that is likely to be unfamiliar to the outsider. Such audiences have rarely, if ever, been a 'public' in a Habermasian sense – a body whose members are addressed as formally equivalent, devoid of distinctions with regard to status or personal qualities (Habermas 1992). The notion of a popular audience also implies the notion of 'popular culture', and here again we should not assume too much familiarity. Barber (1987, 1997b) makes another insightful contribution when she notes (contra Fabian 1997) that African popular culture should not be opposed to 'elite culture'. This is because in African contexts, social distinction is most often structured around differential access to a common field of ritual, expression and performance, rather than around the differences in taste between social groups. Sometimes this common 'field' is highly contested (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993), but as Mbembe (1992) describes, apparently savage and obscene satire can indicate processes of accommodation or at least mutual nullification between rulers and 'target populations'. Furthermore, as Meintjes (2003) shows in her study of *Mbaqanga* musicians in Johannesburg studios, the attitudes of popular cultural producers to the technologies they use may be starkly unfamiliar.

Linked to this problematic sense of 'the popular' is the idea that modern mediated cultural forms rely on mass consumption as their primary source of finance – in the case of music, the assumption being that this is either directly via purchase of discs and tickets or indirectly via advertising aimed at mass consumers. Again, Africanist anthropology tells a different story. Waterman's pioneering analysis of *Jújù* music (1990) showed that modern forms of popular music in Nigeria were heavily reliant on patronage and that this was not some throwback to a premodern age, but a set of economic practices very much rooted in the exigencies and inequalities of contemporary

Nigerian life. One could also make parallels with Larkin's (2008) take on the Nigerian film industry or with the approach to radio taken by Fardon and Furniss (2000), where it is made clear that 'liberalized' broadcasting in Africa is very often an endeavour involving extensive clientelistic ties.

Alongside the different structure of the audience/producer relationship in large parts of Africa, there also appears to be a different relationship to the political. It is the case in much of Africa that popular musicians are clearly linked to, or even part of, particular political and economic factions in a way that would be unfamiliar to Western audiences (for example, Ewens 1994; McNeill 2012). Because of this, as Lara Allen (2004) notes in her review of the capacious literature, 'popular music in Africa has become a major site for thinking through politics'.

I cannot do justice to this literature here, but would point to two broad tendencies within its abundance that I draw upon in this book. One is to look at the links between African music and politics using frameworks such as 'identity', 'resistance' or 'hegemony' (for example, Turino 2000; Meintjies 2003; Nyamnjoh and Fokwang 2005). The strength of these works is that they show how popular music relates to broader political frameworks. At the other end of the spectrum are studies concerned with music and dance in Africa, which draw more on literature concerned with 'the body' – with movement, the senses and the emotions. This work has shed light on the subjectivities that have shaped urban life in contemporary Africa (for example, Stoller 1984, 1995; Warnier 2004, 2007; Mbembe 2006; Engelke 2007). I draw on both these tendencies, making use of my personal take on Marxism to integrate such approaches into a broader sense of music as an ideological element within wider political and economic forces. Marx seems to be slightly less *persona non grata* now than when I first started thinking about this book, before the 2007–08 financial crisis, but many readers will still dismiss Marxist arguments *a priori*. Others will tend to associate Marxist theories of culture and music with the kind of arguments made by Adorno and the Frankfurt School, arguments that in fact I reject almost completely. So I think it may be helpful lay out what I do mean.

## Marxism

I am not interested in defending Marx the individual writing in the middle of the nineteenth century. By Marxism I mean rather

an intellectual tradition, one that connects what men produce and how they think; where thought and production are seen as part of a complex whole. This interrelation is also a process of conflict, as the interests of classes – groups of people with different 'relationships to the means of production' (roughly speaking, different positions in a nexus of ownership relations) – rub up against each other. This is too vague for many true believers, while for others it will be labelled 'economic determinism'. In my discipline – anthropology – numerous objections have come from those who stress forms of cultural relativism and emphasize consumption over production. Such complex arguments cannot be dealt with in detail here, but I would make two points.

First, understanding any group of people, *especially* in terms of meaning and feeling, always involves thinking clearly about their means of subsistence – consider the importance of bread in Christianity or of cows in Hinduism. There is not, as some anthropologists once argued (for example, Harris 1974), a simple relationship between calories and culture, but absence and abundance, hunger and satiation are everywhere phenomenological data of the highest importance. While this may be an obvious point, it is one that well-fed people forget surprisingly often.

This brings me to my second, more controversial point, which is that differences in how life is produced do offer a kind of 'way in' to the meaning of big epochal differences – a starting point for thinking about, say, the differences in societal patterns between Europe in the twentieth and fourteenth centuries or between metropolitan and rural China. In particular, a new kind of marriage between money capital and production comes into existence in Western Europe between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries (Brenner 1977; Kalb 2013) – this is the capitalist mode of production. Capitalism is a new kind of social imperative, where the market is not just used, but becomes embedded in essential provisioning and where a retreat into self-provisioning, even in times of difficulty, quickly becomes impossible.

This is significant because I believe that for much of the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, capitalism was *not* dominant in Kinshasa. The way that people behaved and the forms of cultural production that took place cannot be understood without understanding this *epochal* shift, from the kind of rentier capitalism that characterized Congo/Zaire of the 1960s and 1970s to something much less familiar.

Under such conditions of epochal change, prevailing attitudes to all sorts of apparently unrelated things – the conception of the person, the forms of class division, the importance of adornment, the kinds of

ritual thought necessary, how wealth is stored – all change in fundamental ways. Some of these changed attitudes in Congo/Zaire seem, by the 1990s, to contain many parallels with precolonial social dynamics and conceptions of the world. This makes for a strong temptation to explain unfamiliar practices via recourse to a notion of ancient and persistent cultural difference.

Certainly there are continuities with the precolonial world, but looked at closely, we can also see a series of irreparable breaks with that past. Some of the most unfamiliar forms of social behaviour described in this book were recent phenomena. To take just one example, artisanal Congolese diamond miners in the 1990s re-created logics of sharing, dispersal and success that drew on precolonial worldviews. But, as De Boeck (1998) makes clear, this was not because they nurtured some ancient and undying cultural flame from their ancestors. Rather, it was because in the situation of violence, financial collapse and fragmented sovereignty in which they found themselves, some of the imperatives of an earlier epoch *made more sense* than the capitalist ones – banking, wage labour, etc. – that they had grown up with. Thinking in epochal terms allows us to avoid a slide into notions of implacable cultural difference or cultural primordialism.

Arguing against the notion of a qualitative epochal difference between capitalist and noncapitalist modes of production, quite a few anthropologists have pointed out that money, markets and instrumental behaviour are often ancient (e.g. Bloch and Parry 1989; Graeber 2011). But this is a refutation of an argument I am not making and it has little force here. The 'cash nexus' does not control everything and it is probably true that 'the market' still 'floats' on a sea of solidarity (Graeber 2011), but this does not cancel out the fact that, under capitalism, without the 'boat' of the market, the people drown.

This kind of Marxism, which links epochal differences to the 'mode of production', is often said to represent a 'bad' Marx – evolutionist, mechanist, positivist and functionalist. This is contrasted unfavourably with the Marx supposedly exemplified by works like *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Marx 1852/1970), which concentrates on contingency and consciousness. Inasmuch as Marxism retains any acceptability within the academy today, it is generally this second Marx that is endorsed. But I believe this is a false division where the frequent, highly misleading appeals to Marxian textual authority made on all sides illustrate the rabbinical nature of the debate: if the dead guy with the beard said it, it must be right. And the tone of such arguments has set up a series of pointless and overly rancorous oppositions. This way of thinking has caused us to utterly abandon

some very interesting thinkers and attribute a monopoly of wisdom to others. Louis Althusser and Gerry Cohen, E.P. Thompson and Ellen Meiksins-Wood all have moments of absurdity, yet all of them have something interesting and important to teach us.

But I cannot simply sit on the fence in this manner. In particular, many have argued that social class is a historically specific phenomenon that is of little use in understanding anything outside Europe or before the eighteenth century. This book is opposed to such a view – I think that social class is vital to understanding the dynamics of society in Kinshasa. In this I draw on the accounts of social class in precolonial Central Africa produced by the anthropologists Pierre-Philippe Rey and Georges Dupré, who argued that in the more stratified parts of precolonial West-Central Africa, above all on the lower Congo, a class of 'elders' was dominant (Rey 1971; Dupré and Rey 1980). This dominance was based in their rights over the labour of others – slaves of both sexes, most women and male 'cadets' – dependants who were held in various states of social immaturity. These elders appeared to have no very strong control of the means of production – land was plentiful and the chief factor of production was the labour of the young. They nevertheless managed to enforce their dominance via their control over 'social reproduction'. This was effected through exchanges in prestige goods. Such exchanges determined the destinies of slaves, women and cadets, and were pivotal in allocating labour between corporate groups. The prestige goods were obtained from European merchants at the coast in return for various commodities – including slaves, ivory and rubber – through chains of exchange monopolized by elders. Thus, via 'articulating' between the 'capitalist mode of production' and their own 'lineage mode', the elders were also able to control the surpluses others produced, extracting tribute or labour from subaltern groups by manipulating an ideology of descent and holding out the promise of social advancement to a select few.

Such works became the subject of a furious polemic (see Trapido 2016 for a detailed discussion), but I would urge the reader to take time and to make up her own mind – these works have been insulted much more often than they have been read. Nor were Dupré and Rey responsible for what others did with their ideas during their brief moment of popularity. Whatever E.P. Thompson (1978) may have said about 'Althusser's progeny', these scholars produced very empirically detailed and historically informed monographs that have been sympathetically received by other regional specialists (for example, Guyer 1993; MacGaffey 2000).

This is not to say that I have uncritically adopted their theoretical matrix. As I argue in more detail below, Dupré and Rey probably overestimated the stability of precolonial forms of social stratification and overstressed the idea of 'the lineage'. This was at the expense of other, much wilder, more unstable exchanges, which were tied to a network of funerary, jural and therapeutic ritual (see the section entitled 'Potlatch' below). And, whatever its previous status, in the contemporary context the lineage is no longer the locus of significant social power. But with the collapse of the centralized state controlled by post-independence ruling classes, a new class – what I term a 'gatekeeper class' – was able to maintain some grip on production via its (very partial) control of certain quite precise forms of exchange.

## Ideology and Aesthetics

The origins of the kind of theory I sketched earlier, which stresses the role of production in the creation of value, can be traced back to Adam Smith. Smith held that certain kinds of labour – mining, shipbuilding, carpentry and farming – created a need for more labour, while other kinds of labour – 'men of letters of all kinds; players, buffoons, musicians' – 'perished in the instant of its production' (Smith in Buchan 2007: 106). Buchan points out that Smith, a highly cultivated man, did not regard such forms of labour as useless, but he had little way of accounting for them within his system of ideas. Marx, whose philosophy was heavily indebted to Smith, also held ideas of productive and unproductive labour, but this need not detain us here. More relevant are Marx's ideas of ideology and social reproduction. Men produce 'stuff', but they also produce ideas, practices and ways of feeling. These ideas, practices and ways of feeling combine in systematic ways – known as ideology – to reproduce, or sometimes to change, the existing social arrangements.

A great deal of ideology is simply performed as part of everyday actions – in how we dress, walk about or organize our living spaces, we reproduce a set of understandings of the world (Bourdieu 1977). But I believe that social arrangements cannot rely on such everyday ideology alone. These kinds of everyday performances rely on more specialized and spectacular forms of production. And it is here where there is something implied by Smith's account that is missing, at least in the later writings of Marx'. Ideological productions are a form of *labour* and reproducing the organization of production involves ideological *work.* And it is here that, perhaps, Marx's earlier writings

about ideology (Marx and Engels 1846/1998) (where the ruling class produce and reproduce ideology just as they produce other goods) and his later writings on value do not entirely join up. The later Marx argued that under a set of productive relationships, it is possible to calculate the 'socially necessary labour time' it will take to produce a certain good or service. Yet while such socially necessary labour time can be attributed to the building of a ship or growing cassava, does it apply to what we might term 'ideological labour'?

There is plenty of quantifiable labour time involved in training a photographer or a Congolese guitarist, and the production of aesthetic 'goods' clearly requires as much work as anything else. Nevertheless, it is surely the case that two equally well-trained individuals given equal time at a guitar or behind a lens will not produce works of equal (or even similar) value. Marx (1867/1961: 44) suggests a difference between 'simple average labour' and 'skilled labour', but the difference is purely quantitative – skilled labour is just 'simple labour multiplied'. Yet the idea that, say, twenty or even five hundred moderately good photographers produce one Cartier-Bresson, or that one hundred good guitarists are half a Franco Luambo is patently absurd, and even with less brilliant cultural producers, notions of equivalence are problematic in the extreme. It is obvious that the same kinds of thought experiment apply to all artists, and in this book I work with the assumption that it is also true of a much wider group of cultural producers – from newspapermen to sports stars and, of course, musicians.

The formulation that Marx offers in *Capital* relies on a division between use value and exchange value, a divide that he maps onto the divide between precapitalist and capitalist modes of production. Broadly speaking, we can say that use value represents the particular, the qualitative and the sensuous (see Adorno 2002; Swain 2012). Exchange value meanwhile represents the abstract, the quantifiable and the instrumental – value as a 'means to an end'. There are many reasons to be wary of this kind of juxtaposition (for example, Parry 1986 Bloch and Parry 1989), but at this stage I want to draw attention to just one of these, namely the implausibility of Marx's views on exchange value when applied to ideological labour.

The chief ideological effect charted in *Capital* is fetishism. According to Marx, fetishism is created not by conscious efforts by the powerful, but by the abstract nature of productive relations under capitalism – it is this distancing that makes the worker see value as something outside of himself. Writers like Adorno (2002) or Lukacs (1923/1967), who tried to apply Marx's views on fetishism to the sphere of culture,

argued that modern consumers are unfeeling drones, who fake sensuous pleasure in culture, while in reality getting some sort of disembodied, distracted and utterly instrumental satisfaction from a fetish of the price that cultural commodities cost.[6] Establishing whether people do or do not really experience emotion is always problematic, and even the mildest empirical strictures are liable to be labelled positivism in this context. But there *is* a wealth of literature showing that distracted and highly instrumental forms of reception were/are common in a variety of early modern and non-Western sources, and, if anything, it is the fixed and disinterested contemplation of Adorno's 'structural listeners' that is a product of industrial modernity (see Freedberg 1989; Muir 1997; Pinney 2001). Certainly, music-saturated ritual was invariably a means to therapeutic or political ends in the Central African tradition (MacGaffey 2000).

I argue that ideological labour defies Marx's division of value in that it is always about the particular and the sensuous, but it is also always instrumental. Making us all treat Nike trainers or shares in Lloyds Bank as valuable independent of the social labour that produced them is not primarily a byproduct of long-distance social relations, but rather the result of energetic and costly ideological work. Some of this work is known as advertising, the news, architecture,[7] etc. Such sensuous labour is necessary to sustaining any and all forms of power in every conceivable set of productive relations. If such particular and qualitative forms of labour underwrite all social arrangements, then another of Marx's projects in *Capital* – the possibility of assigning values to the individual products of labour in terms of their socially necessary labour time – seems remote, even in principle. This is not at all to abandon Marx's basic insight about a necessary link between material production, value and ideology. In any society, those who produce ideological labour will need to obtain food and clothing and a hundred other things, things whose value is connected to the productivity of labour in quite a straightforward way.

What this means is that, more often than not, control over the material circumstances of the ideological *labourer* allows the ruling classes to dominate ideological production, just as they dominate other forms of production. This is not to rule out the role of social distance posited by Marx in *Capital* – it is just to give causal primacy to a rather simpler and more intuitive principle: that he who pays the piper calls the tune. This brings us back to the dialectic – wider relations of production will enable the wealthy to commission ideological productions, which will, all things being equal, play an important role in reproducing the relations of production.

One last point needs to be made about my take on aesthetics. By characterising music as a form of ideological labour, we have argued that art is necessarily caught up in wider politics and history. Many critics will go further still and assess the aesthetic merit of a work of art according to its perceived political character. This is surely a mistake. Scholars who follow this line of thought are left with one of two options. Either they must convince themselves about the politics of the artists they like, arguing that Balzac or Bach, say, were somehow 'progressive', disposing ingeniously of strong evidence to the contrary. Adorno (2002) and Lukacs (1937/1981) present examples of this kind of judgement. Or, like Berger (1975) or Carey (1992), they must bite the bullet and consign vast swathes of cultural patrimony to the fire, an act that surely denies the evidence provided by our senses about the real impact that such works have. Instead of tying ourselves in knots in this manner, why not just admit that all sorts of brilliant art was intended to espouse views that we do not like and that its artistic value has something to do with the emotions it inspires, and not with the political views that those emotions are meant to serve? This is a somewhat disturbing view – one that suggests that there is no necessary relationship between the beautiful and the good – but who arrives at being an adult without learning this? I love Congolese music and believe it to be a great art form, but I do not fool myself that this means it is wholesome.

## The Political Economy of Collapse and the Role of Music

The resources that supported the post-independence ruling class in the DRC – above all the industrial exploitation of copper, cobalt and diamonds – all required important 'on-shore' investments in wider industrial infrastructure and, in the context of wider turmoil, these industrial complexes eventually collapsed. The musicians' business model folded with them, since consumer demand and industrial reproduction, on which musicians had relied, also atrophied. As the structures of the bureaucratic state withered, so too did the infrastructure of royalty collection. For most of the period under discussion, the DRC's ruling class had to forgo rents from industrial enclaves (see, for example, Ansoms and Marysse 2011). This makes it a case apart, even within the region. Thus, while much of post-independence Africa, at least until very recently, has been characterized by limited and unsatisfactory forms of development, from the

mid 1970s onwards, the DRC became uncoupled from the dynamics of capitalism in a much more fundamental way. For much of the period under discussion, there was no tension between maintaining coercive control of the 'gates' through which production from industrial enclaves passed and encouraging broader productivity because productivity was not an option.

In this context, wage labour has essentially disappeared. Salaries are largely fictions, covering a system of rights in people that much more resembles premodern social arrangements. Consumer demand is essentially nonexistent, there is no banking system, basic infrastructure such as roads between the major cities does not exist, and basic functions of the modern state such as the census have not been carried out for three decades and, indeed, are resisted by local politicians. The story of this book is, in part, about the decline of this 'industrial enclave' type of state into a different and even less productive social formation, where the elaborate long-distance, large-scale handouts of what is often called the 'neo-patrimonial' state were replaced by a much more emaciated patronage economy based on simple personal handouts.

Music led the way, as musical troupes abandoned capitalist strategies and began to cluster around various well-connected 'gatekeepers'. As the industrial enclaves collapsed, much of the rent taken by political elites was thus, as in the early colonial and precolonial past, dependent on exactions from artisanal miners and the peasantry. In place of the pyramid-like enclave state, a collection of larger and smaller social units came to intersect with one another, 'distributed in a chain of parcellized sovereignties throughout the social formation' (Anderson 1974b: 19). In this situation, small, quasi-familial social cells – the diamond-mining crew, the gang, the prayer group, the rent-seeking cell within the decimated bureaucracy or the musical *orchestre* – become the primary economic unit.

Under this set of arrangements, the ruling class's dominance was not, as it had been a generation earlier (and as is generally the case under capitalism), tied to increases in productive power. At the same time, links to the capitalist outside world – above all to Western Europe – remained vital to reproducing social dominance. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the world of music, where travel to Paris became the *sine qua non* of popular success. In this context a class of gatekeepers, with some resemblance to precolonial 'elders' – then as now a kind of class relationship conceptualized in terms of relative seniority – extract surpluses from relatively small social units (Meillasoux 1960), linking with other units in chains of

exchange that reach beyond Central Africa. As in the past, power is strongly tied to the ability of this class to connect to an outside world where economic relations are managed in a different way (Dupré and Rey 1980). Gatekeepers achieve this power via a series of rights and obligations in subordinates that do not correspond well with ideas of 'free labour' or the wage contract – as we shall see in the appropriations that the *président d'orchestre* makes on his musicians. As capitalism ceased to be dominant, social forms emerged with strong resonances with precolonial political-economic dynamics.

## Potlatch: The Trade Interface between Capitalist and Non-capitalist

Under capitalism, accumulation is stored as money in the market via the banking system. These 'systems of credit and debit which underlie capitalism' (Guyer 1995: 9) have their equivalents in non-capitalist modes of production – but here the primary way in which wealth is conceptualized and stored is in *people* – via notions of rank, via rights in other people and via various kinds of aesthetic sensibility that value the crowds that honour or the adornments that enhance powerful persons. Forms of money are present – indeed, they are often vital – but they are better seen as an element of, or adjunct to, the value of the person. Marx says that, in the capitalist mode of production, capital appears to be 'money that begets money' (1867/1961: 155); in many non-capitalist modes of production, the equivalent of capital might be persons who appear to beget people, drawing them into their social presence on a temporary or more permanent basis.

By the eighteenth century, African social formations were strongly involved with global markets, but they had not become capitalist. Rather, they appear to have become locked into a different dynamic, reinforced by European merchants, where individual prosperity – conceived of as rights in people and theatrical dispersals of wealth over retinue – became dependent on aggregate impoverishment – via exporting, or pushing beyond breaking point, the means of production – be they human, as in the case of the slave trade, or ecological, as in the case of the rubber and ivory trades that were hugely important in the nineteenth century. This exploitation ultimately allowed for a kind of 'extended primitive accumulation' in Europe and America, with pillage in Central Africa allowing colonists to control large areas of territory in the Americas and to provide infusions of

capital to Europe during the frequent reversals of the early Industrial Revolution (Blackburn 1997).

In Africa something different happened. As the material base on which power relied became undermined, a paradox emerged. The more retinues came to see that power was weak, the more those who aspired to authority were required to make expensive theatrical gestures stating that it was not so. These gestures served to state that rulers and aspirant rulers were still in control and still connected to the (often sinister) metaphysical sources of abundance. In Central Africa music was particularly crucial to this – music is strongly associated with the dead and praise singing, and trance states acquired via dancing were very strongly implicated in making associations between authority and the legitimating dead (Laman 1953–68; MacGaffey 2000). A ritual nexus with funerals at the centre became the sight of massive expenditure, with gunpowder, huge music ensembles, libations of palm wine and mountains of imported goods becoming a *passage obligé* for aspirant rulers. In sum, the trade interface gave impetus to a particular kind of theatre. In this theatre earlier ideas – which had framed wealth and authority in terms of the accumulation of prestige and of followers – then became yoked to ever more extreme forms of ritual escalation.

In his famous account of exchange, Marcel Mauss used a type ritual common to the Indians of the northwest coast of America, known in some places as the 'potlatch', to represent what he believed to be an entire category of archaic exchange. Many people, including many anthropologists, have come to believe that the term 'potlatch' relates to the destruction of property or 'fighting with property'. But both Mauss and ethnographic sources make it very clear that destruction was just one (rather unusual) possibility and, in a Central African context, the word has been applied, with great insight, to forms of ceremonial distribution found in the region (De Boeck 1998; De Heusch 2002). Mauss, like most of his contemporaries, saw this in evolutionary terms. To study the potlatch was to take a glimpse into our own deep past, the first stirrings of the impulse that would lead eventually to the modern contract (Parry 1986). But more recent works imply that the northwest American potlatch, at least in the form described by Western travellers and anthropologists, cannot be looked at in isolation from the dynamics of European expansion (Wolf 1997: 191–4).

While the central role accorded to concepts of prestige and 'wealth in people' pre-dated contact with Europeans, it seems likely that the fervid pitch and theatrical intensity of potlatching was driven by the dynamics of the trade interface between noncapitalist and capitalist

modes of production. As in Africa, this dynamic included an increase in disease and also the inherent instability of meeting the insatiable demand from harvesting wild products (see Ringel 1979; Donald 1997: 232, 280; Wolf 1997; Roth 2002). As in the African case, many of the items of wealth distributed or destroyed during the potlatch – blankets, strips of copper taken from the side of ships and so on – were European trade goods, obtained in return for furs (Donald 1997: 32). As in the classic accounts of Mauss or Veblen, I use the term 'potlatch' to refer to a wider category of wild exchange. Unlike in those accounts, the term does not for me connote an archaic remnant, but rather a particular form of modernity – that is to say, the potlatch was the product of the increased connectedness and turbulence that human societies have undergone since the sixteenth century.

## Foucault and Weber in Africa

In recent times the subjectivity of the African 'gatekeeper' figures discussed above has been analysed in a way that could be described as Weberian (e.g. Chabal and Daloz 1999; Warnier 2007) or Foucauldian (Mbembe 1992; Bayart 1993; Bayart and Warnier 2004). Such writing links the dynamics of dispersal to the subjectivity of individual success – shining, eating, the 'politics of the belly', the hilarity and obscenity of the *commandement* and so on. A link is also made between the successful individual and the 'occult' in a modern setting. As in the past, diurnal 'eating' – securing and distributing resources – are imaginatively linked to the nocturnal 'eating' of witchcraft – often conceived in Central Africa as a form of mystical cannibalism, where power is accumulated by absorbing the life force of others (see, for example, Rowlands and Warnier 1988; Geschiere 1997). All this concentration on the person of the *patrimoine* leads Fabian (1990) – and also Benedict Anderson (1990) in a non-African context – to argue that under 'traditional authority', power is seen as a substance, held in large quantities within the person of the powerful. Coming from a different theoretical tradition, works by Jane Guyer and Karin Barber have drawn on the anthropological canon, and in particular Kopytoff's influential discussion of how things and people pass through various value registers, attaining, at the top end, a total 'singularity'. All of these works, which draw out the subjectivity of power in the region, are extremely relevant to an analysis of *présidents d'orchestres* and of music patrons, who display many of these attributes. Guyer's work,

which pays particular attention to how valuations of people and things interact, has been particularly important to this study.

But while all the above authors are aware that there is a dark side to all this 'shining', the subjectivity of success is not, I believe, interrogated sufficiently. Many of the works listed above adopt a cynical tone about power, but they lack a framework for relating the conditions of material life to ideological productions. Because of this, all of them reproduce many elements of the local dominant class's own self-representation. The first consequence of this is that the *necessary* relations between the 'shining' of some and the alienation of others are not brought out.

All these works take extravagance and largesse at face value as the essential facts about African economic relations. According to this kind of argument, the African big man embodies a kind of anti-Protestant ethic, where the particular strength of imperatives to dissipate surpluses – as largesse given to extended retinues – explains the failure of accumulation on the continent. This sounds convincing, but in fact it cannot be true. As we will discuss in Chapter 8, the evidence shows that capital flight as a percentage of GDP is higher in Africa than in other parts of the world, and this is part of a deeper historical trajectory where individual success depends on exporting the means of production. Capital flight is crucial because it fatally undermines the story about institutions particularly geared to patrimonial dispersal – money stashed in the British Virgin Islands has, by definition, resisted the clamour of large social networks for redistribution, and African leaders would appear more, not less, effective at resisting these demands than their equivalents in other parts of the world. The relevance of largesse then is not primarily about its real economic effects, but rather its ideological ramifications. The theatre of prestations, where music is a crucial element, is just that – theatre.

## Theatre and Alienation

This notion of social success as a dynamic art form and of various retinues as a necessary audience invites the use of theatre as a useful explanatory metaphor, and I use the terms 'theatre' and 'theatrical' throughout this book. The extravagant investment in theatrical dispersal – in musicians, forms of dress and spectacle – is important precisely *because* in reality patronage networks are really emaciated. This is about creating a fetish around the person of the patron, promoting the illusion that the patron is generative – creating the value that he

distributes – and hiding the fact that the wealth he distributes over a retinue is but a fraction of the wealth he appropriates; the majority of his wealth being exported in one form or another, in line with the potlatch dynamic we noted above. This takes us into the realm of what Marx called alienation.

For Marx, alienation involved the people coming to see the value of goods as something external to themselves. In other words, part of denying access to value is a denial of the idea that ordinary people were involved in creating value. As Patterson (1982) shows us, in unequal societies, it is not just goods that are divided unequally, but also honour. In this context I want to suggest that honour is generally related to the perceived capacity to produce value – to be dishonoured is to be considered worthless, while 'honour' is strongly linked to the notion of the person as generative of value.

Thus, notions of honour and 'generation' allow the appropriation of goods and the labour that produced them, but they are also themselves the first, and probably the greatest, kind of alienation – an alienation of the sense that one is capable of producing value; a theft not simply of labour, but of *amour propre*. The psychological stresses of such forms of alienation are, I believe, quite staggering – and their effects, above all on young men, are one of the great social forces in history. This is especially relevant to our investigation of the Congolese *mikiliste*, who spend extraordinary sums on clothes and music patronage to try and overcome their status as 'empty men' (see Chapter 6).

It is this matrix of interests that I shall examine in detail through popular music and the forms of patronage and performance linked to it. Apart from being beautiful and fascinating, popular music is a good place to study this for several other reasons. From the way in which the *orchestre* is organized, we can gain an understanding of the various systems of rights in people and forms of alienation that typify the area under consideration. In the emotions inspired by music and dress, we begin to recognize the subjectivities that underpin local forms of accumulation.

In the copyright system we encounter the hall of mirrors that surrounds economic activity in the post-independence state. In the criminal economy of migrants to Europe, an economy closely connected with popular music, we come across young urbanites striving to overcome their status as 'worthless persons'. In understanding music as a form of ideological labour, we see how the gatekeeper 'transforms force into right and obedience into duty' (Rousseau 1762/2006:

9) by appropriating the extraordinary labours of cultural producers and associating them with his person.

## Notes

1. Called the Belgian Congo until independence in 1960, the state was known as the Democratic Republic of Congo between 1965 and 1971. It was then renamed Zaire by Mobutu. When Mobutu was overthrown in 1997 it was re-renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo.
2. Kinois Lingala – which abounds in neologisms, mixes vocabulary from French and other languages freely, has a relatively simple grammar and is only moderately tonal – is often said by scholars and by the Kinois themselves to be a bastard form, compared unfavourably to the real 'Lingala ya Makanza', associated with 'bangala' speakers further up the river. This is, it appears, a misconception. The original Lingala was a kind of pigeon Bobangi, Bobangi being a riverine language originating on the Ubangi tributary, with some status as a lingua franca before the arrival of the Belgians. Belgian missionaries, who wrongly assumed it was related to the languages of 'the bangala' – itself an imaginary ethnolinguistic amalgam – considered it a debased form and tried to ennoble it with purifying infusions from various Bantu languages of the middle river. This more complex language was then taught in schools above Kinshasa and took some root in the area of the middle river – roughly in the area between Mbandaka and Kisangani. But the Kinshasa form is probably older and closer to the natural creole language that grew from Bobangi. Kinshasa Lingala is the language of music and it is in this form that the language continues to spread in Central Africa.
3. The community is supplemented by approximately 50,000 legal and illegal migrants from Congo-Brazzaville (Bazenguissa-Ganga 2005).
4. I got this impression from individuals who had participated and from the International Organization for Migration report itself, which includes recommendations for 'outreach activities'.
5. After Cairo and Lagos. There has been no census since 1983, but extrapolation from the register of electors conducted in 2006 indicated that the city was nearer ten million than the six to seven million routinely quoted. The city is projected to overtake Cairo around 2015 and Lagos around 2025 as Africa's largest city with a population of sixteen million (see UN-HABITAT 2008).
6. 'People do not dance or listen "from sensuality" and sensuality is certainly not satisfied, but the gestures of sensuality are imitated' (Adorno 2002: 309) or 'The consumer is really worshipping the money he has paid for the ticket … he has literally "made" the success which he reifies … but he has not made it by liking the concert but by buying the ticket.' (ibid.: 297). This is a line that even Adorno cannot keep up, arguing at other points that culture industry music provides debased but real forms of emotional catharsis to the working man (ibid.: 462).
7. Marble atriums for the bank being rather like gold teeth for the drug dealer.