Rastas on the Road to Healing:

Plant-Human Mobilities in Cape Town, South Africa

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract

Drawing on two months of deep ethnographic fieldwork consisting of informal conversations, recorded life history interviews, and participant observation, this dissertation employs a central theme of mobility to trace the processes through which individuals first come to engage with Rastafari and medicinal plants in Cape Town, South Africa, along with the movements through which they develop their knowledge and skill in relation to plant-medicines and healing. In doing so, the work develops an understanding of ganja (*Cannabis sativa*) as a catalytic link or connector between people, other medicinal plants, and transformation. Furthermore, plant-human assemblages are followed as they move across local and regional boundaries, with an examination of the implications these movements have for the health of people and ecosystems. On their transformational journeys, herbalists increase their plant knowledge, expand their secondary language capacity, learn to navigate multiple modes of transport, gain physical stamina and knowledge of the body, establish trade networks and build customer bases; all of which contribute to the authority and healing abilities of an herbalist.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

People and plants in Cape Town

The present work has been carried out at a point of swelling importance for the plants and people of Cape Town. Located at the south-western tip of South Africa, Cape Town's population of approximately 3.7 million human inhabitants – a figure currently rising by about 50,000 people per year with many of them being migrants from the Eastern Cape – dwells amongst the floral splendor of the Cape Floristic Region (CFR) (City of Cape Town 2010: 9-10). Composed of some 9,000 vascular plant species, of which roughly 70% are endemic, the CFR is a biodiversity hotspot of international renown (Goldblatt and Manning 2002). Within the City of Cape Town, an area of 2,487km^2 where approximately 3,000 indigenous plant species are found, the flora of the CFR is managed by conservation agencies representing the national (South African National Parks), provincial (Cape Nature) and city level. Many of the conservation reserves operated by these agencies are located in close proximity to densely populated and economically marginalized[1] human settlements or townships. Faced with daily struggles in pursuit of survival and aspirations to a better life, some township residents utilise their knowledge of, and access to, natural resources to secure a livelihood. Such resources with value for trade in the informal economy of Cape Town include flowers, firewood and medicine. These consumptive expressions of plant engagement are often in direct contradiction to the preservational policies of local conservation agencies and officials, making plants the convergence point for conflicts inevitably flavoured by contestations over class, ethnicity, history, and politics.

While it is difficult to accurately quantify the demand for plant medicines, Petersen (2013) has documented 250 plant species being traded in the informal economy of the City of Cape Town. Of those, 129 are being harvested from within the boundaries of the City for use as medicine, with the vast majority originating in the City's 24 formally protected areas. Rastafari herbalists or bush doctors are amongst the primary actors involved in the harvesting of plant-medicines in the City of

1: Statistics for the Cape Flats and Mitchell's Plain, areas covering a combined 175.76km^2 to the east of Table Mountain and home to approximately 900,000 people, place the unemployment rate at ~30%. The 2001 census reported only 3.9% of adults (20+) living in Mitchell's Plain to have attained a postmatric diploma or degree. The corresponding figure for the Cape Flats in 2011 was 9.6% (Information and Knowledge Management Department 2005; Strategic Development Information and GIS Department 2013). Poverty, relatively high unemployment, rapid population increase and limited access to formal employment opportunities have all contributed to the expansion of a cash-based informal economy. Petersen (2013) has documented the role of natural resources in the informal economy of Cape Town.

Cape Town. The number of Rastas relying on the trade in medicinal plants for all or part of their livelihood has grown dramatically since the early-1980s when only a handful existed in the Western Cape[2]. Today, Petersen estimates over 1,000 Rastas of Western Cape origin to be engaged in the local medicinal plant trade. The reasons for this increased involvement are highly complex and due to far more than simple economics. Further complicating Rasta involvement in the harvest and trade of medicinal plants are their activities in the consumption and sale of *Cannabis sativa* (ganja/marijuana), which are illegal in the eyes of the State and punished as such.

Conceptualizing mobility

Africa is on the move, yet the near ubiquity of mobility in the daily lives of Africans is often overshadowed by large-scale human displacements resulting from civil wars, drought and famine. An emphasis on the traumatic dimensions of such events has led to a dominant evaluation within the social sciences of mobility as disruptive and destructive. However, beyond these regional migrations, people are engaged in forms of movement and practices of modulating connectivity which weave together a myriad of infrastructures, technologies, histories, and identities. As argued by de Bruijn, van Dijk and Foeken (2001: 3), mobility 'influences people's choices, produces specific decision-making processes and leads to the formation of certain social institutions. In short it transforms lives'. More than simply implicating movements through geographical space, mobility as an analytical category operates on multiple scales and dimensions, encompassing personal, social, political and temporal movement and working to erode dichotomies of urban-rural and local-global. In addition to people, an astounding number of goods, plants, animals, and other objects, ideas, and constructs are also on the move. Far from being sedentary, as is the characteristic of their general growth form, plants are highly mobile through the imaginings, livelihoods,

2: Personal communication with Neville van Schalkwyk on 23 June 2012.

ecologies, and pharmacies of humanity. All of these instances illustrate the multiple ways in which plants are woven along the paths of our lives. It is in the light of such interconnected movements that this dissertation aims to explore plant-human relationships and the transformative potentials they render accessible.

Plant-human transformations

A careful attention to human interactions with plants allows a powerful entry-point into analysing negotiations of agency, ethnicity, boundaries and power as they unfold in the daily activities of plant-human assemblages. In this dissertation I argue that Rastas, many of whom are young men from marginalized communities in the Cape Flats area of Cape Town, are mobilising relationships with plants which extend them beyond the confines of the township environment, often characterized by gangsterism and ill health as the result of alcohol, cigarette, and synthetic drug abuse and poor diets high in sugar and processed food. In pursuing this line of argument, I conceptualize transformation as a processual shift to a new way of being in the world, predicated on a novel organising paradigm and the establishment of interpersonal and environmental connections which recreate the self. Through their movements for plant-medicines, aspiring Rasta herbalists move away from old patterns of being in order to articulate and perform new identities and practices based on a holistic understanding of health and wellbeing, as well as an awareness and appreciation of creation and God. On their transformational journeys, herbalists increase their plant knowledge, expand their secondary language capacity, learn to navigate multiple modes of transport, gain physical stamina and knowledge of the body, establish trade networks and build customer bases; all of which contribute to the authority and healing abilities of a herbalist. Beyond this, Rastas are building communities and integrating the traumas of their past in order to pursue positive and generative action, aiming to heal themselves and those around them. In addition to their personal development, Rasta herbalists are mobilising a counter-modern environmentality which challenges the authority of State power and is keenly aware of the historical continuity of colonial oppression and control over land and natural resources in the Western Cape. All of these processes indicate that Rasta herbalist identities and medicinal plants are interdependent, co-performing one another and generating potential transformations for individuals and ecosystems.

Filling the 'gap' in the literature: plant-medicines and people in motion

The ethnobotanical and anthropological literature dealing with the movements of people and medicinal plants within South Africa is sparse. While a number of studies have been conducted into

the trade in medicinal plants, particularly in large market contexts such as those in the Eastern Cape (Cocks and Dold 2000), Gauteng (Williams et al. 2007), Limpopo and Mpumalanga (Botha et al. 2004), KwaZulu-Natal (Mander 1998), and Cape Town (Petersen 2013), there is a near-complete absence of a qualitative interrogation of plants and people in motion between places of harvest and retail. Researchers commonly cite vast trade networks spanning local, regional, and national boundaries (e.g. Shackleton 2009), increasingly seeking to quantify the 'hidden economy' of trade in medicinal plants (e.g. Cunningham 1989, 1991; Mander et al. 2007), and speaking of the movement of medicinal plants almost entirely in terms of transport between regions of harvest and markets (e.g. Williams et al. 2000). Kepe (2003), dealing specifically with the cultivation and trade of cannabis, also speaks of networks in the transportation of harvested plant material from areas of production in Pondoland to urban markets. Once again, the dynamics of plant-human movement between these areas is explored in little detail, save for the risks associated with transporting cannabis to markets and the negative impact this has on villagers' willingness to transport it themselves, resulting in reduced profits as the risk and transportation responsibility are handed over to traders (612). This lacuna in the literature is understandable since considerable trust and time are required to enable researchers to travel with participants who are involved in the medicinal plant trade, particularly when cannabis is involved. By documenting the unfolding relations of plants and people in motion, this dissertation aims to take steps toward a filling of the gap in the South African literature covering plant-human relations while working towards an understanding of plant-medicine as process.

Structure of the dissertation

The second chapter offers a discussion and overview of the literature on plant-human relations in the Western Cape, ethnobotany, and the new mobilities paradigm, while chapter 3 details my approach to fieldwork and the methodology employed in the research project.

In chapter 4, I focus on life histories and stories to trace the developmental processes through which my participants came to engage with Rastafari and medicinal plants. In doing so, the chapter works to highlight the role of ganja and plant-medicines in catalysing transformational journeys and shifting individual identities. Drawing on an Ingoldian model of place and movement, I argue that the Rasta identity-complex and ganja bring potential herbalists into increased proximity with medicinal plants and the mountainous landscapes where they grow, thus serving as a vehicle for the construction of novel practises and performances. Movement is identified as the key to herbalist

becomings, allowing them to disengage temporarily with sedentary life in the ghettoes and articulate an alternative lifeway aimed towards the proliferation of life and healing. These examinations serve to set the scene for discussions of plant-human assemblages in motion, which forms the core focus of chapter 5.

Following on from the contextual framing of Rasta herbalist journeys to plants and new environments in chapter 4, chapter 5 deepens this understanding by offering a historical overview of the movements of people and plants in Cape Town since the 1600s. The dual-livelihood strategy of selling medicinal plants and ganja is then explored and serves as an entry-point for analysing the role of both in driving inter-regional travel and trade. In addition, the ways in which these long-distance movements contribute to the authority and healing abilities of Rasta herbalists is discussed in detail. Once again, mobility forms the key thread running through the chapter and informs the question: How do plants shape the way people move? This question leads to a tracing of the means by which herbalists leverage available transportation modalities, along with the ways in which plant-medicines influence, and are influenced by, these forms of movement. The chapter argues that Rasta-transportation-telecommunication assemblages are vital to the activities of herbalists and are resulting in the transgression of boundaries and shifting patterns of medicinal plant availability and consumption in both the Eastern and Western Cape provinces of South Africa. Elements of precarity and danger, stemming from the State, theft, and personal injury, are animated as herbalists move with medicinal plants and ganja. I argue that such precarity threatens to destabilize movements and necessitates adaptive responses on behalf of the Rastas involved.

While chapter 5 travelled with Rasta-plant-human assemblages as far as the Eastern Cape, the final chapter returns to Cape Town to explore issues around conservation, protected areas, indigeneity, and sustainability. The chapter extends the political dimension of the dissertation by placing Rasta herbalist activities within a context of scientific representation, government conservation efforts, and claims to Khoisan[3] descendance. In doing so, Rasta herbalist perspectives on restrictions against the access of particular areas and the harvesting of particular plants are examined. These perspectives lead into a discussion of the dynamic nature of plant-medicines and the implications of plant-human mobilities for patterns of plant use and the health of local ecosystems.

3: This term is used by contemporary authors to refer to two indigenous groupings simultaneously: the Khoi-khoi, whose primary sustenance activities occurred in the form of herding and pastoralism, and the San peoples who relied on hunting and gathering (Boonzaier et a1. 1996; Cohen 2008: Deaconet et al. 2004).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Western Cape Rasta-plant literature

The last decade has seen the emergence of academic interest in Rastafari herbalists or bushdoctors (*bossiedoktors*) within the Western Cape, along with their use, trade, and knowledge of medicinal plants. The first major work of this kind was a doctoral thesis produced by Philander (2010) in which she documented the 'emergent ethnomedicine' of Rasta bushdoctors, offering an extensive overview of Rastafari in the Western Cape while exploring the interface between ethnobotany and medical anthropology and producing an ethnobotanical inventory of 181 medicinal plant species and their uses. In delineating the stages of medicinal-plant knowledge and skill accumulation, Philander differentiates between bushdoctors and other Rastas who collect or trade herbs, stating: 'one may not have the goal of becoming a bush doctor to be a collector; this may represent a temporary phase used to secure a livelihood' (104). Philander portrays the bushdoctor identity as the 'final stage' of Rasta-plant development and describes the duties of a bushdoctor as including 'collecting plant materials, diagnosing illness in patients, preparing and prescribing herbal remedies, patient care and teaching youths about medicinal plants' (107). She describes bushdoctors as a homogenous, predominantly middle-aged group of coloured males who employ sustainable harvesting techniques and work towards the healing of people and the land (15, 110)[4]. Two further publications resulted from this research (Aston Philander 2011, 2012).

Further literature pertaining directly to Rastafari and medicinal plants in the Western Cape includes a masters dissertation and published article by Olivier (2012, 2013) on bushdoctors and institutional nature conservation in the Boland area. Olivier argues that '*bossiedokters* reveal a substantially different way of being-with-nature in comparison to historically produced dominant conceptions of nature' and traces the interactions between the Kaapse Bossiedoktors, a group of Rasta indigenous healers and herbalists, and nature conservation officials from CapeNature Conservation Board (2013: 361-362). Other research involving Rasta herbalists and medicinal plants in the Western Cape include a masters dissertation by Nzue (2009), aiming 'to quantify the plant species used for medicinal purposes by local communities in the Cape Peninsula and the surrounding areas' (iii); a

4: While I document similar phases of development to Philander in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, I found such delineations of bushdoctor identity to be problematic, due in large part to the contrasting heterogeneity of the Rastas I met who worked with medicinal plants in some way. Not wanting to collapse those differences, I have instead opted to write about Rasta herbalists as individuals who self-identify as followers of Rastafari and are actively-engaged in relationships with medicinal plants and the expansion of their knowledge regarding those plants. In this framing, 'bushdoctor' serves as an ideal-type category which may be sought after but not always achieved in all circumstances.

French article exploring the healing role of plants and unifying properties of ganja in the phytotherapeutic practices of Rastafari in Cape Town by Laplante (2009); a compendium of local, wild-harvested species for the informal economic trade in Cape Town, documenting 250 medicinal plant species, by Petersen et al. (2012); and a value-chain analysis of the informal trade of plant-medicines in Cape Town, contained within the PhD thesis of Petersen (2013). Research on various aspects of the Rastafari movement not directly related to the use and trade of medicinal plants include the experience of Rastafari children in South Africa by Bain (2003), a history of the Rastafari movement pre and post-Apartheid by Chawane (2012), and the significance of the use of ganja as a religious ritual in South Africa by Pretorius (2006).

Ethnobotany and ethnobiology

The study of the relations between people and plants, which is the subject of this dissertation, is generally referred to as ethnobotany. The term entails a number of varied definitions and multiple disciplinary interpretations, including those of chemistry, anthropology, botany, conservation, pharmacology, and geography. Originally offered by John Harshberger in 1896 as a term delineating 'a specific field of botany and plant uses' (Gerique 2006, 1), ethnobotany was defined as 'the use of plants by aboriginal peoples' (Cotton 1996). A more recent definition was offered by Jones (1941, *in* Hamilton et al. 2003) who stated ethnobotany to be 'the discipline concerned with the interactions between people and plants'. Ethnobotany is generally considered to be a component of the more comprehensive field of ethnobiology: the scientific and humanistic study of the dynamic and complex set of relationships among peoples, biota, and environments, both past and present (Stepp 2005: 211; Ethnobiology Working Group 2003).

While the gaze of ethnobotany has fallen on indigenous groups living in rural areas for much of its history, the discipline has developed to study plant-human relations in urban contexts and previously-overlooked geographical regions and sites, often as the result of attention to large-scale human migration and the effects these movements have on ethnobotanical knowledge and skill (for examples of urban ethnobotany see: Balick and Lee 2001; Ceuterick et al. 2008, 2011; Leitão et al. 2009; Pardo de Santayana et al. 2010; Quave et al. 2012). Pulications dealing explicitly with plant knowledge and migration include Alexiades (2009), Nesheim et al. (2006), Pieroni and Vandebroek (2007), Volpato et al. (2009). Recent examples of South African ethnobotanical research with an urban focus include Aston Philander et al. (2011) on medicinal plant knowledge amongst school children in Cape Town, some of whom were recent migrants; Cocks and Dold (2006) on the role

medicinal plants in urban 'cultural' practices in the Eastern Cape; Petersen (2013) on the informal trade in wild harvested medicines in Cape Town; and Williams et al. (1997) on the urban trade in medicinal plants on the Witwatersrand. Urban contexts have proven to be fertile grounds for studying the 'creation, transmission, transformation and erosion' of plant-related knowledge (Heckler 2009: 9).

Botanical inventories and the 'Linnean grid'

The mainstay of the data collection toolkit for ethnobotany and ethnobiology more generally has been the list. While descriptive studies documenting the knowledge of indigenous groups have been heralded for providing the raw data necessary for conducting cross-cultural studies and answering theoretical questions pertaining to medicinal plant use – along with being instrumental in shifting the dominant anthropological perspective, prevalent prior to the mid-1950s (Zent 2009: 22-23), that such peoples held impoverished understandings of the world around them – ethnobotanical inventories have been widely-criticised for extracting data from situated contexts of use and flattening it into the 'Linnean grid' (Ellen 1996: 457; Ellen 2006: S4; Etkin 1988: 24; Waldstein and Adams 2006). This bias towards the discrete categorisation of knowledge, extracted from the ecological contexts in which it lives, was driven by the cognitive and linguistic frameworks which dominated early ethnoscientific studies and aimed to generate emic perspectives of indigenous 'cultures' through the elicitation of local taxonomies (Berlin et al. 1966; Conklin 1954; Stepp 2005). As a result, 'there is a vast literature on medicinal plants that provides long lists of local names equated to Linnaean species names, and their usage; often given in a colloquial language' (Hsu 2010: 1). South African medicinal plant publications dominated by the Linnean categorisation of plant species and including little, if any, situated conceptions of their use-patterns include Palmer (1985), Petersen et al. (2012), Roberts (1990), Smith (1966), van Wyk et al. (2013), van Wyk and Gericke (2007), and Watt and Breyer-Brandwijk (1932).

Quantitative ethnobiological/ethnobotanical studies

Moving beyond the primarily descriptive and qualitative accounts characterizing the early development of the field, contemporary ethnobiologists and ethnobotanists have increasingly pursued quantitative data collection and analytical techniques in an effort to enhance the rigour of their research and findings (Gerique 2006; Phillips 1996). This shift in strategy progressed largely as the result of research into 'how knowledge of the local environment contributed to human adaptation' (Reyes-García et al. 2007: 190), which began in earnest during the 1990s and led to a

proliferation of quantitative ethnobotanical studies (Alexiades and Sheldon 1996; Balee 1994; Phillips and Gentry 1993a, 1993b; Phillips et al. 1994). Along with the rise in popularity and development of quantitative techniques has been an attention to people as the primary units of analysis in ethnobotanical research. These shifts have been driven by efforts to understand 'the factors that predict individual-level variation in knowledge of the natural environment or of the benefits provided by this knowledge', and have resulted in studies aiming to measure individual variances in ethnobotanical knowledge based on demographic, social, and economic characteristics (Reyes-García et al. 2007: 183). Much of the conceptual groundwork resulting in an attention to individual knowledge variation emerged from anthropological studies which, beginning in the 1960s, highlighted the patterning of intra-cultural knowledge and eroded presumptions of group homogeneity (Furbee and Benfer 1983; Mathews 1983; Reyes-García et al. 2007; Sankoff 1971; Wallace 1961)

The genealogical model of knowledge transmission

Much of the research into ethnobotanical learning and knowledge transmission is predicated on a model, commonly held within mainstream science, which views human beings as genetic inheritors of 'a suite of capacities' allowing for development of the organism through the accumulation of 'cultural content' (Ingold 2011: 156-157). Ingold, in critiquing what he refers to as the genealogical model of knowledge transmission, notes that cultural content is viewed in much the same way as genetic code, whereby the information that is passed down from one generation to the next, be it encoded in genes or words and symbols, is imported into environmental engagements and leads to a developmental expression in the form of a phenotypic trait or particular behaviour within an individual. A person, encountering a situation, draws on their cultural knowledge and undergoes an elective process in choosing how to apply that knowledge to their engagement with the environment they find themselves in, which may include humans, machines, plants, maps, or animals. 'To the extent that knowledge is passed down the line from ancestors, it *cannot* have its immediate source in the knower's experience of inhabiting particular places or their surroundings' (Ingold 2011: 157). Rather, each component apprehended in the environment must first be classified before it can be evaluated according to the cultural content, itself a sort of categorical system. This process of conceptual identification begins with the most general categorisation and leads up towards more highly specific and nuanced classification. Such a process of refined classification is akin to the use of a biological key to identify species, the resulting knowledge from which Ingold describes as vertically integrated (2011: 158). Indeed, the efforts of ethnobotanists to catalogue plant species

according to the Linnaean grid, elicit local taxonomic systems, and quantify the knowledge of individuals can all be seen as evidence of the genealogical model of knowledge transmission at work.

Stories and process

While I certainly cannot deny the importance of such work to the discipline of ethnobotany and the development of our understanding of plant-human relations, I concur with Ingold when he states 'that the genealogical model offers an inadequate and unrealistic account of how human beings come to know what they do', and wonder what new insights might be gained if we were to approach knowledge as storied, rather than classificatory (2011: 159). In a classificatory approach, components of the environment are split, isolated from the context in which they occur, and identified against a cognitive system of representation. In contrast, a storied approach identifies environmental components by paying primary attention to the relations and context in which they are embedded. When the characters making up a story are extracted and isolated, their relations with other characters having been severed, their completeness is compromised – as is the coherence of the story and remaining characters. Thus, the storied approach is grounded in an apprehension of the relational constitution of phenomena and a subsequent attention to practice and process. 'For the things of this world *are* their stories, identified not by fixed attributes but by their paths of movement in an unfolding field of relations' (Ingold 2011: 160). It is with an awareness of a storied approach - a primary attention to process, relationality, development, and movement – that I have undertaken this research project and endeavoured to write the dissertation that follows. Tracing lines of movement in many flavours, such as those laid down across life-times, over geographic distance, or across ethnic boundaries, has been the principal means by which I have sought to advance a relational understanding of Rasta-herbalist-plant assemblages, the development of knowledge amongst herbalists, and the co-performance of plants and people. This approach represents a shift away from the quantitative focus within ethnobotany, typified by techniques such as free listing, pile sorting, and the triad test, in favour of qualitative renderings achieved through participant-observation and interviews (Berlin 2005; Reyes-García et al. 2007; Ross 2005). In adopting a processual approach, this work forms part of a wider developmental phase within ethnobiological research over the past decade which seeks to explore the dynamic aspects of indigenous knowledge such as creation, transmission, transformation, conservation, and loss (Zent 2009: 45).

The Mobilities paradigm

The first decade of the 21st Century has seen the emergence of mobilities theory across the social sciences, with research in social anthropology, transport studies, human geography, science and technology studies (STS), among others, involving 'the combined movements of people, objects and information in all of their complex relational dynamics' (Sheller 2011: 1). Drawing on both the spatial and material turns within the social sciences, and having drawn initial impetus from the work of Georg Simmel on 'proximity, distance and movement in the modern city' (Jensen 2006: 146; Simmel 1997; Urry 2007: 20), the mobilities paradigm has arisen out of a critique of 'static' social science, typified by sedentarism and the previously-prevailing notions of 'societies' as fixed geospatial entities playing host to bounded 'cultures' (Sheller 2011; Sheller and Urry 2006: 209-210). Rather than simply privileging flows of people, ideas, and materials, researchers operating within the mobilities paradigm are just as concerned with stasis and immobility, dwellings and moorings, in aiming to trace 'the power of discourses, practices and infrastructures' in facilitating, impeding, slowing, and quickening mobilities (Sheller 2011: 2). Thus, greatly informed by anthropological research into migration and diasporas (e.g. Basch et al. 1994; Joseph 1999; Ong, 1999; Ong and Nonini 1997), along with postcolonial critiques of bounded categories such as race, nation and community (e.g. Ifekwunigwe 1999; Kaplan and Grewal 1994), mobilities researchers are keenly aware of the inequalities shaping the movement of people and place power relations at the centre of their critical thinking (Sheller 2011; Sheller and Urry 2006). Much of the work on movement within anthropology has been framed within models of circulation (e.g. Appadurai 1986). In elaborating and critiquing the history of circulation models within anthropology, which served to erect and sustain dichotomies of urban-rural and South-North through centre-periphery frameworks, Tsing argues 'that we can study the landscape of circulation as well as the flow', asking: 'How are people, cultures, and things remade as they travel?' (Tsing 1999: 346-347). Such an approach allows theorists to rethink concepts such as place, identity and ethnicity as open-ended and on-going performances involving people, materials, technologies and information (Cresswell 2002).

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, I offer a detailed overview of the people, plants, and places which collectively came to inform my research into Rastafari herbalism in Cape Town. Along with introductory descriptions of the research sites and participants, I document the processes and methods through which I conducted fieldwork and navigated my experiences as a plant-enthusiast and researcher. Detailed information appears concerning the various types of evidence collected as part of my fieldwork and I reflect on my own positionality and relationship to the subject.

Aim and objectives

The main objective of my project was to understand the processes through which Rastafari herbalists in Cape Town fashion their lives and livelihoods in partnership with medicinal plants. I wanted to explore the factors leading people to engage with plants and healing in post-Apartheid South Africa, along with the novel arrangements of knowledge and experience generated in such plant-human relationships. I was also particularly interested in tracing the associations of health, medicine, and plants – seeking to gain insight into how a plant becomes a medicine and the role of that medicine in promoting healing of individual body-minds and wider systems of social relations and communities. These questions betray reflections of my own inner journey for meaning as I became increasingly fascinated by medicinal plants and sought to integrate them more intimately into my own life.

Personal journey to medicinal plants and research topic

I moved to Cape Town from Durban in February 2012 to pursue a master's degree in social anthropology, having spent the previous five years in Michigan, USA where I completed a Bachelor of Science in cultural anthropology. During those formative years I developed an interest in medicinal plants and healing, catalysed by my particular fascination with shamanism, consciousness, and entheogenic plants. My sojourn in America offered me a fresh perspective from which to apprehend both my life and South Africa, the country of my birth and up-bringing. I had decided long before my relocation to Cape Town that any further study would necessarily involve medicinal plants. I intended to use the opportunity to expand my understanding of life in South Africa by travelling within the country and learning more about the diverse experiences of the people who make their home in this place. In reflecting on those times, as I do now, I catch

glimpses of the genesis of my own developmental journey to health, wholeness, and healing.

My most vivid recollection of the first weeks I spent in Cape Town is dominated by the sheer beauty and viscerality of Table Mountain. Clutching the rear handles of a scooter while my childhood friend Stefano propelled us buzzing through the suburb of Claremont, I couldn't help but stare in dumb amazement at the rocky creature which rose raw from the pine-forested hills below. I can recall a giddy sense of amazement, not quite believing my own eyes, and wondering how all the other humans meandering about the suburb weren't similarly transfixed. With time the force of that apprehension diminished to be gradually replaced by a deep respect for the mountain as I came to form a personal relationship with it, slowly becoming knotted into the meshwork of humans, plants, and animals for whom the centre-piece of Cape Town's landscape forms so much more than a mere geological feature.

Setting foot on the campus of the University of Cape Town, itself perched upon the eastern slope of Table Mountain, I embraced the formalities of registration and soon made my interests in medicinal plant research known to several professors within the disciplines of Social Anthropology and Botany. I met with Timm Hofman who suggested I contact Leif Petersen, a social researcher who had conducted detailed research on the informal economy of plant and animals species in Cape Town. Based on his knowledge and experience of the various user-groups of plant and animal resources in the city, Leif suggested the most critical area of research lay in the relationships of plant-medicines and Rasta herbalists or bush doctors – a predominantly male group of plant harvesters and healers who claim adherence to the Rastafari life philosophy. According to Dr. Petersen, Rasta herbalists of Western Cape origin were of particular interest since his research showed them to be most active in the harvest of medicinal plants within and around Cape Town, many of which are endemic and threatened due to habitat loss and degradation resulting from agricultural landscape transformations and rapid urbanisation.

First engagements with Rasta herbalists and Cape plant-medicines

Leif agreed to assist me in finding research participants and on the morning of 10 May, 2012 we set off from Muizenberg by bicycle, cycling through the informal settlement of Overcome Heights before arriving outside a fenced-off garden occupying a corner plot of land in the Vrygrond area. It was there that I first met the Elder, a middle-aged Rasta and self-proclaimed bush doctor who manages a medicinal and indigenous plant garden and nursery. The garden sits across the road from a newly-constructed soccer complex; a spiked metal fence separating the verdant grass from the

dusty streets beyond. We arrived to find the Elder hitting the chain-link gate with the palm of his hand as a black pitbull barked aggressively from inside. Tracksuit pants and a hoodie clothed his lightly-built frame, a dense beard reached down from his chin and long black dreads hung unrestricted down his back. He told us that the dog was vicious but had to be left there in order to protect the garden since no one was currently staying in the bungalow – a wooden shed approximately 2mx4m that stood within the fence.

Having calmed the dog and removed the padlock and chain from the fence, we entered the garden and were welcomed by a riot of plant forms emerging from the hard, sandy ground. Along with the bungalow, the garden space included a compost heap, a rusted shipping container, a nursery section with green shade-cloth covering, and a green water tank. Leif and the Elder caught up briefly, with the Elder explaining that he had recently returned from the Northern Cape where he is establishing a farm. After a brief introduction, I explained my interests to him, along with the basic idea I had for my research project at that stage, and asked if he would be willing to assist. I felt a surge of nervous anticipation in the pause before his response, sensing the importance of the moment for the trajectory of my research journey. After some questioning and consideration, the Elder voiced his support for my project with a wide smile. He invited me to visit the garden the following day and said that he would look after me and introduce me to other Rastas, stressing that his work with plants was his destiny from God and that humanity must be united.

Buoyed by my meeting of the Elder and having noted an absence of garden-related research in the South African literature on Rastas and herbalists more generally, along with a focus on wild-harvesting practices and conservation issues, I set out to develop a research proposal centring on gardens as a kind of third space - set apart from markets and harvesting areas - in which to explore everyday interconnections of plants, people, health, and environment. However, this focus on gardens became untenable as I soon realized that the Elder was a busy man, frequently travelling to the Northern Cape on business, and that the continued functioning of the garden as an active social space largely pivoted under the influence of his immediate presence. This early frustration - echoed in other ethnographies featuring highly-mobile participants, such as that of the Amazonian Nahua by Conrad Feather (2009: 73) - forced me to adapt my approach and begin seeking alternative research sites.

Thus, on 27 June, 2012, I visited a Rasta stall in a bustling southern suburb of Claremont in Cape Town with the hope of finding new avenues through which to pursue my research interests. I had

first stumbled across the stall many months earlier as I travelled through the area to visit a friend and had stopped to chat to the owner about the plants he had on display. The stall, run by a Rasta named Jacob, sat inconspicuously on the pavement along a bustling section of high street in an area dominated by car dealerships, high-end fashion outlets, well-dressed business people, and the piercing cries of "*Cape Town! Kaap te Cape Town!"* from gaatjies[5] passing in minibus taxis. Fluorescent and painted signs mounted on the building above the stall advertised a drinking establishment, well-known among local late-night revellers for its cheap drink specials, and a popular adult entertainment chain located on the second floor. Yellow rectangles painted on the pavement demarcated street-trading locations and the space alongside Jacob's stall was occupied by a cart run by a Somali man trading in newspapers, cigarettes, snack foods, and the occasional joke.

Jacob's stall consisted of a metal frame covered on four sides by black and green shade-cloth which created a covered floorspace measuring roughly 2.5m x 2m. Beneath this simple shelter, held secure in the tempestuous south-easterly winds by a white plastic bucket filled with rocks and tied to a support beam on the southern side of the stall, a wooden door sat balanced on two stacks of black plastic milk crates. Atop this makeshift table, covered by a plastic table cloth, lay an assortment of plant forms - roots, rhizomes, bulbs, and leaves – along with crocheted tams, Rasta-themed plastic ash trays, and clear glass pipes. Jacob sat on a low-slung yellow beach chair, his back to the northern wall of the structure, where I often found him reading, crocheting, or calling out to passers-by with friendly greetings. After several short introductory visits during which I quizzed him on the founding principles of the Rastafarian religion and philosophy, along with the history of the movement and his own involvement, Jacob reached beneath the table and handed me a white plastic bucket before inviting me to sit. This series of actions brought with them a feeling of increased comfort in the place and came to be repeated many times in the months that followed as I made increasingly frequent visits to hang out with Jacob and the other humans, plants, and nonhumans who huddled in his stall.

Wishing to engage with more herbalists and extend the lessons I had learned from Jacob, I climbed aboard a taxi into town on Monday, 21 January, 2013 and walked through the bustling city centre. Having traced a rough circuit around the major arteries of the downtown area, I passed City Hall and entered the Grand Parade, a public square which lies adjacent to a major transportation hub and

5: *Gaatjie* is an Afrikaans term used to refer to a person (usually male) who works aboard a minibus taxi and whose role as an intermediary between the driver and passengers includes shouting out the taxi's destination to pedestrians, collecting and counting fares, and informing the driver where to stop for disembarking passengers.

is watched over by the northern face of Table Mountain. Walking through the market, I saw a group of three Rastas in their twenties, two of whom I identified as *sakmanne*[6], in front of a large cloth which had been spread out on the floor between neighbouring stalls and teemed with plant forms. The area, commonly known as the Parade, accommodated a market from Monday to Saturday and featured sales and services ranging from telephone calls to football jerseys, handbags, makeup, and much more. I approached one of the *sakmanne*, a young man with light brown eyes and short dreadlocks, and entered into a discussion of plants with him – using the knowledge I had gained from my previous months of fieldwork to inquire about the potency of specific herbs and their various applications. During the conversation I learned that the young men knew the Elder well, having grown up in the same area and been mentored by him during their teen years and beyond. They had also been intimately involved with the garden and were responsible for caring for it when the Elder was away. I expressed my interest in learning more about Rasta and the herbs and offered my assistance with the garden activities. Then, while scanning the array of roots, bulbs, rhizomes, barks, and leaves arranged in neat piles across the purple cloth lying on the brick floor, my eyes locked onto a pure white root approximately 15cm's in length and tapered on either end. 'Oh, *uvuma-omphlope*[7]!' I exclaimed, instantly excited by my first physical meeting of a plant I had previously known only in books and pictures found on the Internet. Upon hearing this, Simon - the *sakman* I was chatting with – seemed to hesitate for a moment in disbelief before crying out to his friends: 'He just said *uvuma-omphlope!*' He hopped around excitedly and told me that he had never met anyone who knew what it was besides Xhosa people. The commotion led to quizzical glances from surrounding stall owners and their clients. Matthew, the second *sakman,* stood up from the large concrete sphere he had been sitting on, removed his bulbous blue headphones, and walked over to join us, sharing with me that he had gotten it at the market in Durban. After discussing the plant in more detail we exchanged phone numbers and I told Simon that I would give him a call. Over the next four months I returned to the stall often, sharing in the cadence of the market and meeting a great deal of Rastas and plants.

6: A *sakman*, also known as a sack-cloth Rasta, is an individual who sacrifices popular styles of dress in favour of garments of burlap sack. Each outfit is handmade and unique, usually consists of a lower garment – such as a wrap or trousers, a shirt or vest and a jacket for winter. In addition, *sakmanne* do not wear shoes and remain barefoot even during the bitingly cold Cape winter months. The garments are not washed – absorbing sweat and dirt – and are burned in a rite of purification when the sakman 'leaves sak' to return to 'normal' clothes. The wearing of sak, along with cycle of sak, fire, ash, and purification, is considered a deeply meditative practice.

7: *Uvuma-omphlope* is the isiXhosa and isiZulu name used to refer to *Synaptolepis kirkii.* The plant is primarily used as an emetic (Van Wyk et al. 2013: 282) to clear mucuous from the body, with the aim of enhancing clarity of non-ordinary vision and perception (pers. Comm. Mr. Jean-Francois Sobiecki).

Building relationships

During the course of my fieldwork I exercised what I've come to think of as a slow approach. I realized early on in the process of making contacts, building relationships, and seeking new knowledge that my aim of contributing to a deeper understanding of plant-human relations would require a prolonged engagement with actors and issues. This stemmed in part from the reservation I sensed in my participants. Many of the members of the Rasta community I met in Cape Town were no strangers to the power of law-enforcement and were understandably vigilant and suspicious in the face of questions from individuals they had only recently met, especially when their provenance and motivations had not yet been fully established. Perhaps this is part of the reason many of my participants insisted that I first learn about Rasta and become schooled in the philosophical framework before pursuing knowledge about the plants. Having grown up in Durban with hardly any interactions with Rasta, I had to absorb and understand a great deal about the history of the Rastafari religion and the context of its spread through Cape Town during Apartheid. In practice, this meant that my introductory weeks of fieldwork involved a gradual increase in the length and frequency of my visits to spend time with my participants at their stalls, during which I asked many questions about Rasta and drew on the personal experience of those I spoke with in order to understand some of the workings of the religion in everyday practice. I endeavoured to engage participants in an initial period of receptivity through which I tried to allow the events of daily life to direct the flow of conversations and exchanges. Of course, this approach is not unique and plays out in many processes during which one aims to get to know others and their life circumstances more closely. I was both the questioner and the questioned, receiving many queries about the university and my project, my parents and childhood, my daily life in Cape Town, amongst many others. In referring to these introductory stages of ethnobotanical fieldwork, Cunningham notes that they constitute a learning period for both sides and that the researcher is carefully observed by participants who judge his or her character, motivations, and intentions. He adds that support for the project being undertaken 'is influenced by the social survey methods beings used, and the approach and attitude of the researcher, whether local or not' (2001: 15). To be sure, I would not have accumulated the same intimacy of experiences and connections had I carried out my fieldwork in a concentrated burst of 8 weeks as opposed to the 12 months over which I pieced together my understandings.

Fieldwork as practise and performance

Another factor in my prolonged field engagement was the frequent travel of my participants and the variability of some of their operating hours, along with my own commitments and time constraints outside of research. Conducting fieldwork, being enrolled in courses, adjusting to life in a new city, and tending to the myriad other responsibilities and deadlines that come with adulthood demanded flexibility and discipline. Along with the flux of my participants' own lives, this meant that my engagement with 'the field' and the practice of being a fieldworker was not always consistent over time. In addition, the project represented my first full adoption of the role of participant observer and I often found myself questioning my own capacities and competences. At times, these self-doubts hindered the freedom with which I was able to work yet also fostered a humility with which I interacted with participants and carried out my research. As Bernard has noted, 'participant observation is not an attitude or an epistemological commitment or a way of life. It's a craft. As with all crafts, becoming a skilled artisan at participant observation takes practice' (1995 : 344). It was with practice and through the patience and willingness of my participants that I grew in confidence and skill as a researcher and came to evaluate my progress on its own terms, rather than through comparison with my peers or under the self-imposed pressure of failing to impress my professors. I came to learn and acknowledge that moments of adversity and personal struggle ultimately strengthened my ability to draw important anthropological insights and that '*doing* ethnography is inevitably intertwined with the rather subjective and deeply human *being* in the field' (Collins and Gallinat, 2010 : 2 [emphasis in original]). In conveying the difficulties I faced at times during my fieldwork, I am acting on the advice of James who suggests 'we should demystify this image of ourselves and our method, and take a humbler approach to the hard work necessary 'in the field' to provide those analytical accounts of human life and experience which might outlast in their significance the emotional ups and downs of the author producing them' (2000 : 90).

Apprentice-mentor relationships

While I did not realize it at the outset, my engagement as a fieldworker came to take on a form of apprenticeship, with my key informants becoming mentors in the ways of plants and life. I was schooled in the founding precepts of Rastafari; the tastes, textures, colours, and smells of plants; conventions of healer-patient interaction; and methods of travel, among many other skills and knowings. This is a second factor in my adoption of a slow approach to fieldwork, since the apprentice-mentor relationship is one in which knowledge and experience are shared in an iterative yet fragmented procession stemming from the events of situated moments of engagement rather than from a predetermined syllabus of instruction. The mentor does not simply hand information to

the apprentice but rather proceeds by way of frequent evaluation, monitoring the student's capacity and rate of learning, the responsibility with which they apply shared knowledge, and their willingness to make sacrifices in pursuit of further understanding. The market stall became a classroom and a stage where these subtle interactions and evaluations played out. I was expected both to listen carefully when information was shared with me and to put that knowledge into practice when called upon by customers or my mentors. These responsibilities heightened the importance of being a good student and observing participant, since an error such as the incorrect identification of a plant, evaluation of an illness or knowledge of the effects of a preparation reflected on both my own abilities and those of my mentor(s). Over time, these processes become the ground of shared admiration and respect between myself and my key participants.

Date collection and participants

Fieldnotes formed the core of the evidence collected during my fieldwork. Notes were written in notebooks during periods of participant-observation and were typed into digital documents upon leaving fieldsites each day. Details were added to each document in an iterative process over a number of days as unrecorded events, conversations, and experiences came to mind. These notes were supplemented by informal interviews with my four key participants, the Elder, Jacob, Matthew and Simon, and were carefully transcribed and stored in digital documents. All digital documents and recordings were encrypted and password-protected using TrueCrypt software. Key participants were selected based on variations in their age, length of engagement with Rasta and medicinal plants, and relative mobility. The Elder was in his early-50's, had 30 years of experience with Rasta and medicinal plants, and was highly mobile – predominantly between Cape Town and the area surrounding Port Knolloth in the Northern Cape. Jacob was in his 40's, had been Rasta for 10 years and working with herbs for approximately 6 years. He had run a stall for 5 years and was not highly mobile outside of Cape Town, trading or purchasing many herbs from other Rastas. Matthew and Simon were in their late-20s and had also been Rasta for about 10 years, having worked with a couple herbs throughout that period but having greatly increased their knowledge over the last 2 to 3 years. They were the most mobile of all my participants, regularly travelling within and outside of the Western Cape to harvest and trade plant-medicines. All participants are referred to using pseudonyms throughout this text. I have chosen this as a way to respect the privacy of the individuals I spoke with and to help ensure that my writings about their activities and stories do not result in harm or other negative repercussions.

A notable omission in my cohort of key participants, and indeed throughout much of this dissertation, is the presence of women Rastafari. While my participants sometimes referenced female family members whose interactions with plants had influenced their own engagements with herbalism – a mother who traded cut flowers or a grandmother who knew and used the herbs - I did not meet or even hear about any women Rastas who were actively engaged in harvesting or trading plants. Young Rasta women occasionally visited the stalls of my participants to purchase plant-medicines, discuss and debate political issues, or to share in coversation more generally, yet none were herbalists and visits by male Rastas were far more numerous. For this reason, the collected data and dissertation are very much focused on the experiences of male Rasta herbalists. One notable exception was Catherine (introduced in the 'Precarities of travel' section in Chapter 5) who spent many hours sitting at the stall with Matthew, Simon and I. She showed a keen interest in the medicinal plants and their effects, often marvelling at the expertise of Matthew and Simon, and even brought a notebook along one day to write down the various names of the plants and their uses – a process which mirrored my own. While she did not aspire to be a herbalist, her active interest in learning was exceptional.

The interviews were conducted with the intention of understanding the life histories and contexts of participants' involvement with plant medicines and healing. In adopting an informal, unstructured approach, the stories, anecdotes, and aspirations of participants were allowed to play a guiding role in the trajectory of the recorded conversations – all of which were conducted at the garden or at the two stalls. Later interviews utilised a semi-structured approach to further explore themes that had emerged out of my fieldnotes and unstructured interviews. These themes included factors leading young men to engage with Rasta and medicinal plants; plant-partnerships as a livelihood strategy; the contribution of market stalls to the co-performance of herbalists and plant-medicines; and conceptions of health and illness.

Fieldsites

Fig. 1: Matthew and Simon's 'stall' at the Grand Parade in Cape Town.

Selecting the stalls as my primary fieldsites did entail certain limitations. For example, the home life of myself and my participants was not widely discussed. As a result, I did not develop a complete understanding of the circumstances of life away from the stall such as living arrangements and family relations. However, 'there is no such thing as completeness in fieldwork' (James 2000: 75) and I believe the stalls provided a rich space in which to learn more about plant-human engagements, as well as topics of human and environmental health and illness. Activities in the garden and two stalls were extended through recreational visits with participants to the mountains surrounding Cape Town and on one occasion to a Rasta dancehall. The recreational mountain visits involved trips to a park located in the foothills of Table Mountain where we would hike to a secluded waterfall and bathe, often meeting up with other Rastas at the waterfall or on our way there. These impromptu social gatherings were usually accompanied by the sharing of food, drink, and ganja, with passionate conversations and debates arising around topics such as democracy, Apartheid, God and ethnicity.

Mobile methods

A further two trips were made to harvest specific plant medicines. One of these outings was a day-trip south of Cape Town to harvest uMathunga (*Haemanthus sp.*) while the second was a three-day journey to Knysna to harvest red carrot (*Bulbine latifolia*). These trips are dealt with in detail in Chapter 4 and represent my engagement with research methods 'on the move' (Urry 2007: 39). Urry, in outlining various means of researching highly mobile people and materials, writes of 'travelling with people, as a form of sustained engagement within their worldview' (2007: 40). The various trips I undertook with my participants allowed me to draw on such methods as we travelled by foot, taxi, train, and truck across multiple routes. I believe this approach was vital to my research into the movements of people and plants and was enhanced by my own means of travel within the city. Owning neither a car or bicycle, walking and travel by taxi or other forms of public transport have been my principle modes of travel during my time spent in Cape Town. Travel by car is a relatively insular and private experience, where direct contact with other bodies, languages, and opinions is largely restricted by sheets of glass and metal. In contrast, public transport often entails an intimacy of connection with the lives of others, as bodies press together on narrow taxi benches and one cannot help overhearing the conversations of those with whom one holds temporary proximity. These ways of moving, which shape so much of daily life, were extremely beneficial in developing an understanding of people and plants in motion, an understanding that I feel would have been poorer had I owned and travelled in a car.

Plant knowledge

I have refrained from including lists of plant species, along with their local names and medicinal uses, choosing instead to only reference particular plants as they appear in relation to the people and places I write about from my experiences and the stories of my participants. Additionally, I follow Cohen (2008) in choosing to withhold information concerning common names and species names of plants that do not already appear in the published literature. I have chosen this approach for two main reasons: First, my participants developed their medicinal plant knowledge over many years and often through great personal sacrifice. They were generous in sharing their understandings of plant-medicines yet I do not feel it would be appropriate for me to hand-on that information wholesale, nor to extract the knowledge from the relations in which it operates. The second reason involves methods. With no formal training in ethnobotanical data collection methods, and lacking the time to collect large amounts of quantitative data, I chose not to conduct a rigorous inventory of

herbalists stocks. Plants appearing in the text have been cross-referenced with the help of a number of Rasta herbalists and have been further identified to genus or species level with the aid of the medicinal plant literature.

Ethical considerations

Throughout my research and fieldwork I have acted to ensure compliance with the University of Cape Town's codes of conduct and ethics for researchers involving human subjects, along with the ethical guidelines detailed by Anthropology Southern Africa (ASA, 2005). Both sets of considerations grant utmost importance to the rights of research participants, including their right to remain anonymous. Therefore, pseudonyms have been employed throughout the study in order to protect the identities of my research participants. I endeavoured to treat participants with respect throughout the research process and have developed bonds which continue to grow in strength at the time of writing. Upon meeting a potential participant and beginning my research I was careful to explain the aims of my research project, ask for and obtain verbal consent before conducting research, and detail the ways in which their information would be shared. Many participants were very interested in the process, having wanted to collate their own written accounts of plant medicines and Rasta. I acknowledge the vulnerability of research participants and have withheld all information which may impinge on their rights or endanger them in any way.

Chapter 4: Becoming Rasta and mobilising plant-human relationships

Introduction

In this chapter I aim to trace the developmental processes, events, humans and nonhumans through which, and with which, the participants in my study came to engage with Rastafari and medicinal plants. Through a focus on individual life trajectories I hope to illuminate the mobilities and immobilities through which the transformational capacities of Rasta and a life devoted to working the herbs are engaged, activated, and stabilized, along with the role played by ganja as a link, connector, and catalyst. Equally important in adopting this analytical gaze is a careful attention to the precarities and ruptures which threaten to destabilize the efforts of aspiring herbalists as they move away from old patterns of being in order to articulate and perform new identities and practices. Transformations are contexualized through a brief discussion of life in the ghettoes and the generative alternatives which become possible when people move out of diseased environments and form relationships with mountains and the plants that live there. The chapter also works, to borrow the words of Ingold, 'to enliven culture by stressing its creativity and open-endedness, and its relational constitution as an interweaving of stories rather than a received and totalising system of classification' (2011: 142).

Engaging with Rastafari

As I began my fieldwork and efforts to learn about medicinal plant-human relations in Cape Town, I was encouraged to learn more about the Rasta philosophy and 'culture' by the herbalists I spoke with. While concluding my first interview with the Elder at his lush community garden in Vrygrond, I asked his assistance with introducing me to more bush doctors. He responded: 'It's not about...it's about, basically, about the Rastafarian culture also, not just bush doctors'. This led me to pay closer attention to the ways in which herbalists first engaged meaningfully with Rasta and the subsequent impact this had on their lives.

While a comprehensive discussion of the history, philosophy and growth of Rastafari is outside the scope of this dissertation, a brief outlining of these topics will help to contextualize and localize the lives and stories of the Rasta herbalists discussed within. Named after the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I whose coronation as 'Ras Tafari, Lord of Lords, King of Kings, the Conquering Lion of Judah' occurred on 2 November 1930, the Rastafarian movement has become a truly global

phenomenon (Akhell 1992; Bain 2003: 33). With roots firmly grounded in Pan-Africanist thinking on the island of Jamaica in the early 1930s, the Rasta religion and philosophy has spread far beyond the West Indies, largely as a result of the emergence of Jamaican Reggae onto the international pop music scene in the mid-1970s (Bain 2003; Savishinsky 1994: 19). This sonically-driven expansion occurred in parallel with the geographical scattering of Jamaican citizens whose movements were often motivated by political or economic reasons and carried them to parts of Africa, the Americas, northern Europe, Britain, New Zealand and elsewhere (Yawney 1994: 75-76).

The global seeding of Rastafari philosophy has resulted in the growth of an incredible array of socially and ideologically heterogenous manifestations, making it very difficult to generalize between the 'highly decentralised, informal and autonomous' groups involved (Smith 1994). That being said, it is possible to identify a thread of resonance in the practices and collective consciousness of Rastas around the world. Commonly underlined by an acute awareness of suffering, exploitation and alienation as a result of colonialsm, 'the messages expounded by the Rastafari promote love and respect for all living things and emphasize the paramount importance of human dignity and self-respect' (Philander 2010: 69; Savishinsky 1994: 19). However, 'above all else they speak of freedom from spiritual, psychological as well as physical slavery and oppression' (Savishinsky 1994: 19). The elements of Rastafari philosophy I encountered most often during my fieldwork, and which I was encouraged to consider, were the importance of self-reliance, communication, and togetherness in responding to the slavery enacted by governments and hegemonic financial institutions (Bain 2003).

The arrival and dissemination of Rastafari in South Africa occurred in the 1970s through Reggae music, some of which was directly critical of the Apartheid Regime, and missionary visits to the country by Rastafari Elders (Bain 2003: 45; Kroll 2000: 31-32). Artists such as Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, who sang ‘We Must Fight Against Apartheid’, both publicly supported the cause of black people in southern Africa. Their songs and voices contributed to the international Anti-Apartheid protest while simultaneously serving to spread the core values of Rasta philosophy within South Africa (Campbell 1985: 45-50). While the exact history and growth of Rastafari in South Africa is unclear, Bain (2003) and Yawney (2002) identify Kimberley in the Northern Cape province as the first site of Rasta practice within South Africa. Philander (2010: 70) adds that 'the first mention of Rastafari in South Africa was in the late 1970’s, when a Rasta was killed in Uitenhage during an Anti-apartheid strike'. She goes on to reference a booklet published by a University of Zululand professor in the same time period which puts the number of Rastafari in

South Africa at 'no more than a few hundred' (Philander 2010: 70). At this time, it is impossible to assertain the number of practising Rastafari in South Africa, particularly due to the plasticity of Rasta as an identity. However, Bain (2003: 42) claims an approximate figure of 15,000 South African Rastafari, stating that 'they are very diverse, encompassing mainly coloured but also black Africans and whites', and found predominantly in the Western, Eastern and Northern Cape provinces.

It is within, and out of, this historical and philosophical context that the lives, actions and stories of my participants are best understood. Before continuing, I feel it important to note that the Rasta herbalists I met and spoke with over the course of my research - who form a minor subset of the Rasta collective based in the Western Cape - cannot be described as a homogenous collective whose knowledge and skill emerged out a prescribed set of beliefs and activities. Rather, each individual has navigated unique life circumstances and pathways in their engagement with Rasta and medicinal plants.

Ganja as connector

One sunny Saturday morning, while sitting on a low wooden bench in his garden, the Elder related his personal history of involvement with herbs and shared how, 32 years ago, he and a friend had gone in search of ganja after enjoying a few beers at a local dance club:

> Elder: So we went to this Rasta to buy the stop[8]. But when I come there I just hear Reggae music. You know I come from a different kind of music mos now. But now I hear just Reggae music, and I knock there and somebody open and say “Come inside”. So I went there in the yard and I stand there and I see, “Joh!” It's dark, you just see Rastas there. That yard is full of Rastas.
>
> Andrew: Really?
>
> Elder: So I thought to myself, “But where does all this people come from?” [Whispering] And the *music*. And the mood. It was like, like for me it was like another world I stepped into. Totally...
>
> Andrew: OK, that you had no idea it was there even.
>
> Elder: Totally another world I stepped into. But it *was* my destiny. Because that same night...I never left that yard. I said to my friend, “No, you can go. A stop roek nou hier [unclear] ek staan”. Smoke mixed[9] that time, make, ask for one Rasta he got a pipe

8: A 'stop' refers to a joints worth of ganja (*Cannabis sativa)*.

9: References to smoking 'mix' or 'mixed' means that tobacco has been added to the ganja.

there, shared a cup[10] with me. And I stand there and I said to myself, [whispering] "*This* is what I want". Mind you the next day I got a guitar in my hand and a red, gold and green jersey on [shared laughter]. And I said to myself, "*Now* I'm a Rasta" [shared laughter]. That is the next day. I mean, surely, to me, it was mystic. I changed overnight. I stopped drinking wine. I stopped smoking cigarette. I left everything in one night. And it's not easy hey, for a person to stop smoking cigarette is not a joke. And I stopped doing everything in one night: cigarettes, drugs, wine, disco. I said to myself, "Now I move with the Rastas". And we used to go sleep in the bush. We sleep on car seats and that, but you must just remember hey, that time I had a good job. I was working at SafMarine at that time.

Andrew: So that makes it even more of a change that you made, you know?

Elder: I mean, yeah. I could have slept in my mother's house and *no*, I sleep among the Rastafarians there. On the car seats, on *anything* that you can put your head onto you know? We just sleep together in one place and it was, it was a new birth for me. It was really something that I cannot until this time explain to you what really happened to me. It was, it was...I became a new person.

One of the most striking elements of the Elder's story of transformation, catalysed by an intimate exposure to Rasta, Reggae music and ganja, is the immediate impact of the encounter on his consumptive bodily practices and mobility. The experience was so powerful that he left behind cigarettes, drugs, wine, and disco – all in one night. In addition, his experiences that night led to a shift in the Elder's patterns of movement and dwelling, leaving his mother's house to 'move with the Rastas' and 'sleep in the bush', even though he held a relatively well-paid job with SafMarine at the time. The role of ganja in precipitating such connections and transformations was echoed by Jacob in his explanation of how he first came to be involved in the consciousness of Rasta:

Jacob: Basically, ya. You would smoke some ganja, you know, in the ghettoes. But that time it was like with cigarettes mixed, neh? So we was mixing the ganja. That was in...ya [thinking] in matric, when I finished. So I was mixing it with cigarettes and I think that was the time when I got in touch with Rasta. Cause when you go buy ganja, you had to go buy ganja by the Rasta.

Andrew: So you were exposed to them and then you, kind of, became more friendly with them and then you thought that maybe this was something you would be interested in?

Jacob: Ummm...no thoughts at that time hey. Of being Rasta or *nothing.* At *that* time, when I was starting, no, no thoughts of Rasta. It was always just for...for fun, ya. But when I became Rasta uhhh...it's more when you become conscious of what you using.

10: A 'cup' can refer to an empty pipe (commonly made of glass or stone) or one prepared with ganja or ganja and tobacco.

> Your body. Consciousness, ya. Like a cigarette would be cancerous so I would leave cigarettes, just smoke ganja. I would *leave* alcohol cause alcohol is a destruction to mankind.

Jacob's story differs from the Elder's in that the interactions he describes with Rastas did not lead to an immediate shift in his assumed identity and actions. Rather than connecting his adoption of Rasta as a signifier of his identity with a discreet moment, Jacob describes a process of becoming more aware of his body and the effects that various substances like tobacco and alcohol had on it.

During another conversation at his covered stall along a stretch of bustling high-street in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town, he told me that ganja was 'his first link with the Rastafari' and related how his consumption of the plant led him to question the dwelling place and nature of God:

> Jacob: *Ganja*. That was the link. Because as soon as I had to [forefinger and thumb pressed together and brought towards the lips – simulating taking a puff of a joint while making a short, sharp inhalation] after that, things just come hey.
>
> Andrew: Really?
>
> Jacob: Ya, you know I used to sit in the streets and I'm *high* on the ganja and then, I would see a woman coming out of a place where they sell wine. And a little baby was grabbing here onto her [leaning towards me and grabbing the bottom-right corner of my jacket in his hand before giving 3 or 4 downward tugs]. You see. After that, I was always asking myself "Where is God?". I would look up in the sky [looking upward and around] and I see hey but, I see just clouds there you know? So, when people teach us that God is in the sky, it's a *lie* you know? Because God, if you don't see God in people, and respect people, you don't know who God is.

Once again, ganja is described as an important link or catalyst in the formation of new understandings, in this case the result of reflections stemming from externally-directed attention and awareness. Jacob's shift in conscious perception allowed him to find God, not as a disembodied entity floating in the sky – as he had been taught, but in the people around him. The understanding that God is the lifeforce which dwells in humans and all beings forms a vital principle of Rastafari philosophy and has important implications for how one interacts with people.

Starting a new life

The engagements of my participants with the Rasta philosophy resulted in a number of shifts and reconfigurations of their movements and practices. As Jacob said to me: 'When you become Rasta you get a new life'. In terms of diet and consumptive bodily practises, meat, alcohol, and tobacco

gave way to a vegetarian diet and the smoking of clean ganja. In addition, transitions to Rasta resulted in increased interactions with the mountain and environments characterized by sparse or absent human habitation and a proliferation of plant and other biotic lifeforms. While these changes were almost always communicated in a positive light, the adoption of a new life founded on Rasta also entailed the precipitation of tensions and conflict within familial, inter-personal, and institutional relationships. For Matthew, the difficulties of integrating a new way of life into existing family and school relationships led him to break from expectations and accept heightened responsibility for himself while seeking a new dwelling elsewhere:

> Andrew: So you were mentioning earlier that it was tough for you when you were becoming Rasta, when you were like 16/17 and that your family wasn't so accepting.
>
> Matthew: Uh un. Because, you see, they want mos me to follow like them, you see? Go to church with them and stuff like that, you see. Now I see with my own way of life, you see. So I must fend for myself, you see. Even if you are Rasta now, become like a man because you are a man, individual, by yourself, you see. But it was tough you see, even go my family, even now I must tell my family 'You mustn't cook now that for me, you mustn't cook now that for me'. How can I tell them that? And I'm not working you see. So it's tough you see? So I was go stay there by another Rasta, nearby area. Drop-out of school.
>
> Andrew: Where were you in school at that time?
>
> Matthew: I was in school ya. I was in school but then my hair's growing thicker now [chuckling] you see? So everybody was see now what is happening now, you see. Lifestyle is changing, my whole life is changing now you see. Everything. Just getting a new vibe, you see? Just different from all the other children, all the other kids, you see. Ya.
>
> Andrew: And did you end up going back to stay with your parents after that?
>
> Matthew: Nuh un, I'm long gone now my friend.
>
> Andrew: So did their feelings stay kind of the same between now and then?
>
> Matthew: Uh un, it's not the same this day. They accept me more you see, cause I don't bring trouble and stuff like that. I don't go to jail a lot [for ganja], you see. Just at home and they don't hear bad things about me. Just cool, hear nothing about me, just selling the herbs you see.

Matthew's story portrays the sacrifices he had to make while adopting a new way of life and also serves to highlight the deeply individual challenges of accepting a collective identity without

support from family and friends. On one occasion, while visiting a popular Asian food restaurant in Cape Town with Matthew, Simon, and Mark – a visiting Rasta herbalist from the Eastern Cape, the stares of a teenage boy prompted Mark to say: 'He want to join the tribe'. Simon responded and told the boy: 'Jy moet alles los' – communicating the gravity of sacrifice required to embrace Rasta and a life working the herbs. Another element of Matthew's life-transformation, common to many Rastas I spoke with and got to know over the course of my fieldwork, is the centrality of ganja in the adoption of a new way of life and the resulting restrictions this entailed for movement and access to formal employment. Almost all of my participants had spent time in jail as a result of their relationships with the plant, leaving many with a criminal record and requiring novel means of securing income. It is within these turbulent conditions that new pathways and practices are engineered as Rastas seek livelihoods and lifestyles that allow them to establish and maintain a new way of life.

Pathways to plant-human relationships

While many of my participants had been exposed to the practice of drinking plant medicines during their upbringing, often through their mothers or grandmothers, increased interaction with Rasta-ganja assemblages offered opportunities to develop further knowledge about medicinal plants. This was the case for John, a very friendly Rasta herbalist who had been selling herbs[11] at a stall for about 7 years and was trading outside a popular grocery store when I met him. He explained to me that when he 'started moving with the Rastas', after high school, he would join them on trips to the mountain and spend time with them when they were trading herbs. It was through this contact that he began to learn more about herbs and what they were useful for. One of the first herbs he learned about from the Rastas was aloe[12]. John explained that at the time they were using aloe for their dreads and skin. He also learned about the benefits of ganja ash as a treatment for pimples and as a general skin cleanser. When he knew a few herbs, friends would ask him for some herbs to treat an ailment and he began to sell and trade – gradually increasing the amount he sold. Someone would tell him “The people over there need this” or “Are asking for this” so he would travel there to sell to them. Eventually he was travelling a lot to sell to different people so he thought: 'Why don't I just set up a stall with my things so people can come and buy?' Everytime he

11: 'Herbs' (*kruie* in Afrikaans) was commonly used to refer to medicinal plants by my participants and I use it throughout my dissertation to the same effect.

12: I am unsure of which species of aloe John was referring to since the term is used to refer to all members of the genus. Likely candidates are *Aloe vera*, *Aloe arborescens,* and *Aloe ferox* (well known locally as a laxative and treatment for stomach ailments.

visited a bush doctor he would want to know what the different herbs were and what they were used for: “I can't *not* know”, he told me with a big smile and captivating blue eyes, “I had a passion”.

During our conversation John reiterated the role described by Jacob of ganja and Rasta in exposing people to other medicinal plants, saying that he believes more people are using herbs now in Cape Town than before. He explained that ganja acts as an attractor and 'opens you up to use other herbs', before offering a scenario to illustrate: You go to see the Rasta for ganja, and maybe after many visits you have a headache, so then you ask the Rasta [herbalist] if he has something for your headache and you learn from that.

Mobility, environment, and knowledge

John's description of the processes through which he learned more about medicinal plants and their uses identifies three key components in his development as a herbalist: mobility, place (or environment), and willingness (or intention). His interactions with other Rastas entailed his movement with them to the mountain and an exposure to their practices involving medicinal plants, resulting in his establishment of use-relationships with plants such as aloe and a desire to expand his knowledge. Matthew, a herbalist with just over a decade of experience, offered me his insight into these processes as we sat next to his stall at the Parade Market in Cape Town. Motioning to Table Mountain, which stretched across our vision and was foregrounded by the clock tower of city hall, he said:

> How can I tell it now? Maybe your goal is to climb this mountain, to climb finished without rope and stuff like that, you see. But each day you're going to climb a little bit higher, and you're going to mark it with something, you're not going to climb it out, you see? Just make a mark every day. It's the same as the herbs. The same as herbs you see. It's mos your willingness, you see? You *want to* learn that something. The same like a job, but without that boss, you need that boss to see what you doing. But for herbs it's only your willingness, you see, and no pressure, and you can go far my friend.

While their individual stories and the meanings attributed to them differ greatly, the triad of mobility, place, and willingness is apparent in the developmental journeys of all my key participants. For the Elder, the journey to the mountain and subsequent development of plant knowledge and skill was acutely precipitated by his vision of becoming a bush doctor, a vision which was to change the course of his life completely:

Elder: But what happened in my life is, for me it's also, I really cannot fathom it. You understand? Because I was earning a lot of money but at that time I did practice this culture, Rastafarian culture. I'm a Rastafarian for 30 years now. From now to 30 years back. If you can look at that. And so I said to myself, not to myself. Basically what happened really, I just got up one morning and it flashed through my mind that I should work with herbs. Because I have seen bush doctors around and there wasn't many bush doctors at that time, 30 years back.

Andrew: So that's the beginning of the 1980's?

Elder: Ya, so there was about 2 or 3 bush doctors in Cape Town. But I met one of them and through that, I think a month or so after that, I just wake up and said to myself: "Hey I must sell herbs". But I know *nothing* about herbs. *Nothin* at all I tell you. I haven't worked with herbs yet. But it occurs to me, I said to myself: "Nah I need to go to Stellenbosch. I know there's Rastas there. And that is close to that mountain so I can go get herbs in that mountain". So I buy me a ticket, got on the train. In Cape Town, I buy me a ticket again to Stellenbosch. But as I come to the ticket box I meet this Rasta. Actually he was here this morning, coming to buy *dassiepis*[13] here by me. I meet him now. He's been a bush doctor for the last 10 years before I became a bush doctor. So, you know, I say it's not *luck,* it is through the grace of God that I met him, because my intention was to go to Rastas not knowing what I'm gonna go do there *but I'm gonna go fetch herbs in the mountain.* I know not which herbs I'm gonna go fetch but I want to be a bush doctor neh. Got him, I ask him: "Where you going now?" He said: "Nah", he's going to Stellenbosch to pick herbs. [Andrew laughs]. I said: "Nah, I'm going with you! [Shared laughter] I wanna see what's going on". I don't tell him my vision or dat, I just say: "No, I'm gonna go with you. We can go pick together". Cus I had this vision about, you know, I need to go *fetch herbs*. We go to Stellenbosch, I go pick herbs. For that particular date, only that day. The next time I went all by myself. Cus I just wanted to know where the herbs is cus I've still got a few pages by that same Rasta, about 7 pages on the herbs purposes.

Once again, we see in the Elder's story the importance of mobility – facilitated in this case by the Western Cape's rail system, the mountain, and an intention and willingness to learn, in his introductory development as a herbalist. The passage illustrates the importance of intention and the manifestation of that intention through physical movement, namely travel, by which the Elder began on the path to becoming a bush doctor. The fetching of herbs in the mountain is given as the primary goal and motivation, rather than an accumulation of knowledge about the herbs. Having connected with the Rasta bush doctor in Stellenbosch, who served as an introductory agent to the mountain environment and medicinal plants, the Elder received a few pages with information about various herbs and used these as a core of knowledge that could be built on through experience.

13: *Dassiepis* is an Afrikaans word used to describe the dried concretion of hyrax urine, or hyraceum, which has a long history of medicinal use by the Khoi (van Wyk and Gericke, 2007: 130-131).

In describing their engagements with Rasta and plants, herbalists portray the mountain as a place of learning and self-development which holds an energy distinct from that of urban residential environments. Theorists with backgrounds in anthropology, geography, and sociology, in advancing and exploring the mobilities paradigm, have emphasized that 'mobile, embodied practices are central to how we experience the world' (Cresswell and Merriman, 2011: 5). In addition, they argue for the role of movement as a vital means of engaging with human and nonhuman elements of the environment. These engagements entail a process which holds potential for transforming the self, body, and one's perspective, which may lead to shifts in the ways a person relates to the world and their immediate surroundings (Alexiades, 2009: 17). The stories told to me by Rasta herbalists evoke just such elements in the transformative process of becoming Rasta and subsequently forming and strengthening their relationships with medicinal plants, the environments where they are found growing, and with other humans encountered along the way who share plant knowledge. During one of my interviews with Matthew at his market stall, a young male sangoma[14] from the Eastern Cape came to visit – testing Matthew's knowledge with questions and also offering some of his own experience and knowledge of plants in return. Matthew soon became impatient, cutting the young man off as he described how he had come to inherit healing abilities from his deceased sangoma grandparents:

> My friend, my friend, I know about these stuff my friend. We know, we know about these stuff my friend, we know. If I work with this...that's why I tell you, I work in Eastern Cape, and I work in Northern Cape, and I work in Cape Town, so I know my friend. I know a bit of everything my friend. That's why I work with these stuff. I know these stuff my friend, you see? That's why I work with medicine. And where ever I go, people they give me the knowledge, you see. They say that is for this, this is for that. *Not because I sit still, you see? Because I move, I make myself active, you see? Through my willingness, you see* (my emphasis).

In theorizing place, movement, and knowledge, Ingold contends that 'lives are led not inside places but through, around, to and from them, from and to places elsewhere', and uses the term *wayfaring* to describe 'the embodied experience of this perambulatory movement' (2011: 148). The knowledge and experience Matthew describes having gained in his rebuttal of the young man was not accumulated in discreet, closed-off places. Rather, it is along his lines of movement, intersecting

14: Sangomas are black African traditional healers operating in South Africa who draw their healing authority from their connection to the ancestors. By acting as a medium through which ancestral spirits speak and act, the sangoma defines illnesses and divines the circumstances of the illness in a cultural context (Truter 2007). The will of the ancesters is also expressed in the harvesting and plant procurement activities of sangomas, with individuals being instructed through dreams, visions or other signs as to the plants to be used to treat patients and the specific locations from which they must be harvested or obtained.

along the way with those of so many other humans, plants, and other nonhumans, that his embodied practical knowledge has been shaped. To move is to learn. Or, in the words of Ingold, 'far from being ancillary to the point-to-point collection of data to be passed up for subsequent processing into knowledge, movement is itself the inhabitant's way of knowing' (2011: 154). Knowledge and experience are generated through ongoing developmental processes of becoming, activated through movement, and involve reiterative practices which co-produce both bodies and places (Butler, 1990; Butler, 1996; Cresswell, 2002). Matthew was able to translate his willingness into movement and develop himself, his knowledge, and experience as a result. The role of mobility, immobility, dwellings and moorings in processes of learning and the performances of people, places, and plants will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Apprentice-mentor partnerships

Another pattern which emerges when comparing the Elder's knowledge acquisition process with that expressed by my other participants is the importance of apprentice-mentor partnerships. Simon and Matthew, close friends and business partners sharing a stall based at the Parade Market in Cape Town, grew up in Retreat and knew the Elder through a soccer team he had established for youths in his community. They came to be involved with medicinal plants through the counsel and guidance of the Elder – a process which mirrors the Elder's own trajectory toward medicinal plant knowledge. In the case of Simon, the establishment of an apprentice-mentor relationship with the Elder was precipitated by a sickness episode during his teenage years which was subsequently successfully treated through the use of medicinal plants. Sitting on the stone slab floor of the market one quiet Monday morning, alongside the cloth and array of plant-parts that constituted their stall, Simon described how he had begun to learn about medicinal plants and healing:

> Simon: Bless. It started when I and I[15] actually had this sickness upon I and I, and when I and I started getting sicker and sicker. So the man was I and I advise, and the man was I and I leader to nature, you see. So the time when I and I was going to put I and I-self on medication and pills and things, the I would direct the I to medicine and put I and I upon his level: this is that one, this is used for that, how to use this, you see? So I personally start using it on myself, so I come found that this is a real thing that the people out there don't know about, you see? If it can help one, it can help many. It's just it need to be break by the brain-cycle you see? So I actually just did what I have today. Cause I'm a witness for what I've experienced, I just display what I'm about. Rastafari.

15: This is an example of the use of a Rastafari dialect known as I-tesvar (Philander 2010: 48). I and I is an expression to totalize the concept of oneness and can refer to 'me' or 'you and me'. The term is a reference at once to both the eye, or individual person, and the I, God or Jah. 'I and I is an expression to totalize the concept of oneness. I and I as being the oneness of two persons. So God is within all of us and we're one people in fact' (Cashmore 1983: 67).

> Andrew: I see, OK. And so how did, did you first go out with him to...how did you get involved with first harvesting and learning what things? Cause it's one step for him to say: “OK, you know, this is this one”. But to then take the next step you must learn...
>
> Simon: Yes I. I found the man. The I was the footstep, and even I and I was willing and able to learn. So whenever the I was on a mission or a journey for medicine, then I and I was able and willing you see? At that time, I and I was just helping the Elder.

Having learned of the efficacy of medicinal plants through his own experience, Simon came to trust in their healing potential and gradually increased his knowledge through his willingness to move with the Elder when he went on harvesting trips. Simon's account describes his initial desire to pursue pharmaceutical treatment and his lack of consideration for plant medicine alternatives. However, having experienced a return to good health through the use of medicinal plants, they developed to become an integral part of his identity and set of practices. Not only did the Elder serve as a transmitter of plant knowledge in terms of their use and preparation, he became a vector for Simon's exposure and engagement with 'nature'. Once Simon knew how to identity a few medicinal plants and where they could be harvested, the Elder would send him out to gather herbs when he needed them – offering money in return. Matthew explained the impact of the process to me: 'But even before I was working the herbs, a table, like we would fetch the medicine you see. Even that was making us stronger, you see?'.

While driving one night with the Elder in his car on our way to the Burning Spear, a Rasta dancehall and gathering place, I asked him if he had any pupils that he had been teaching over the years. He replied that he did, but that his teaching occurred in the form of an informal apprenticeship and that it wasn't like attending school or a university where there is a formal structure and specific classes. Rather, apprentices learn from established bush doctors or herbalists and supplement their knowledge from other sources such as customers, books and their own experience. This was the case with Simon and Matthew who, after having been taught about a few plants and paid by the Elder for fetching herbs he needed, found it necessary to pursue new pathways for learning and supporting themselves when other youths effectively began fulfilling their supply role:

> Matthew: Because even the Elder did have some youths, even the youths that did come by our places – we take them to the Elder, not even take them to the Elder, we just go to

the Elder, social[16] some stuff with the Elder or sell some stuff to the Elder. So these youths see the Elder was take out some stuff, so now they take our job you see [laughing] they do it you see? So we must now find something else to do, you see. Cause now the Elder don't want David root (*Cissampelos capensis*[17]), he don't want white storm[18], he don't want red storm[19], he have a lot. Now the youths are finding for him, you see? Now we have to find some other ways of survival now, you see. We have to make a stand now. That's how it started.

Andrew: So you had to find a different way. OK.

Matthew: You can't like mos fight each other, you see. So it's better to work with the youths there in our area, you see? Give them also something that they can also make something, you see? That's also how we started.

Andrew: OK.

Matthew: So we can't fight them, you see. There are other ways of surviving, you see. The youths are robbing the people, stealing from other people, you see, so we can't chase them.

Andrew: OK.

Matthew: So we must just have that balancing.

Matthew's description illustrates how the apprentice-mentor relationship can provide pathways for personal and economic upliftment through a sharing of knowledge and practices involving medicinal plants. Apprentices benefit by increasing their knowledge and experience while receiving small amounts of money, food, or ganja in return. Mentors, on the other hand, are able to secure plant medicines cheaply and devote the time they would have spent harvesting on other activities. In the case of Matthew and Simon, with many youth from their neighbourhood in need of support, competition and an awareness of others' needs resulted in them pursuing alternative means of generating an income – in their case, by starting a medicinal plant stand. These unfoldings highlight a pattern which was common amongst many of the herbalists I spoke with and can be simplified into four phases: apprentice, harvester, trader, and healer. Philander has identified similar stages in

16: Social in this context means to trade without money and often refers to the trade of plants for plants.

17: *Cissampelos capensis;* Known as David root (Eng) and *dawidjiewortel* (Afrikaans) (van Wyk *et al.,* 2009). I also heard this plant refered to as brown storm and *maysake* (isiXhosa).

18: Identified as *Thesium disciflorum* by Philander (2010). Also refered to as *slaws-omphlope* (isiXhosa). I was unable to verify this identification.

19: Identified as *Gallanium tomentosum* by Philander (2010). I believe her identification of the plant may represent a spelling error and should read '*Galium tomentosum*' (Foden and Potter 2005). I was unable to verify this identification.

outlining the development of bush doctors in her doctoral thesis, drawing connections between engagements with Rasta and medicinal plants: “The conversion of a Rasta can be likened to the development of an apprentice for a bush doctor. The progression of both in this case [is] described in three stages, initiation or inception of Rasta ideals, apprenticeship or collection phase and the *livity* of a bush doctor” (2010: 101).

I often witnessed and heard about such informal relationships of youth support during my fieldwork. During a harvesting trip to Rheenendal and Knysna, Simon, Jacob and I sat by a fire in the two-roomed bungalow of our local Rasta hosts. Two teenage boys entered the bungalow, having walked along the path dividing the residential area of Rheenendal from the forest below, and delivered Peter (our host) a sack of wild ginger[20]. After they had left, Peter spoke passionately about the willingness of the youngsters – a quality he admired – and said that they help by bringing him herbs in exchange for small amounts of ganja or food. On another occasion, while sharing a meal under the shade of the bus stop near Simon and Matthew's stall in Cape Town, I listened as Simon and two visiting sakmanne chatted about Rude Boys[21], people wearing sakcloth purely to sell ganja, and the youngsters in their communities. Simon told me about a young boy who lived in his area and whom he used to support in exchange for plant medicines: “I really feel for that youth. I used to buy garlic from him even though I could get it for free from Joshua”. He explained that the boy is no longer harvesting plant medicine and is now involved with the gangs. I could see in Simon's downturned face and softly-spoken words that this hurt him. Such events point to the precarity and delicacy of the development of potential herbalists through apprentice-mentor relationships. This is particularly the case when coupled with the daily grind of poverty and life in areas where gangsterism, violence, and drug abuse are often pervasive and persuasive.

Sickness in the ghetto

During our conversations, Jacob sometimes spoke of the sickness and disease in the ghetto – a kind of collective illness which had come to infect the environment and people living there, arising out of inequalities enforced by Apartheid and exacerbated by poor diets, drug and alcohol abuse, poverty, and a lack of infrastructure for children to learn and play safely. While recounting his childhood, Jacob shared the effect this had on him and other children:

> Jacob: Ya more the good things, it's like, you can't remember, you know? But those bad things *stick* to your brain. Growing up in the ghettoes was *rough* man. You had to also

20: Unidentified.

21: Rude boy, or rudies, is used to refer to gangsters generally.

be, want to be like a superman you know. Like to be like Steve Austin[22], you know, you want to be tough. Because you don't want to be pushed around by no one. People were always pushing one another.

On another occasion, we talked about the negative influence of drugs on the lives of people and the health of their communities:

Jacob: You know in the ghettos there's problems my brother. There in our ghettos, there where we stay, there's plenty problems. If the people must know the problems in the ghettos, like the number one problem there is *drugs*.

Andrew: Drugs. Like tik[23]?

Jacob: That one!

Andrew: Tik's bad.

Jacob: It's the baddest drug we've ever seen man.

Andrew: That's what I hear, all over the world it's a problem right now. New Zealand, Australia, ya.

Jacob: OK?! Yoh that's a bad drug man! My brother, that youth, that child, he has no more love in him. You will, you hear people raping their mothers.

Andrew: *What?!*

Jacob*:* You hear how the people rape the children. It's worse than ever before man. Because they don't have no more love, once they use tik, it's like their spirit is dead. *Totally* dead. You know? And that's one of the baddest problems that we have to fight. The only way is by planting marijuana and making it legal man. If the youths can just have marijuana without saying, not the youths...not children. Because, why we say so, you can't just give children ganja. Ganja is not for people just...ganja's a medicine. Ganja's for stress. You got too much stress, if you've got pains that you can't deal with: marijuana! Understand? Marijuana's not something you must abuse always. You understand? You add *things* to it...no! You understand?

Jacob's stories express the negative impacts of sickness and social disfunction on children as they grow up in the ghettoes and are influenced by these aspects of their environment. Tik is identified as an unprecedented destroyer of the human spirit and one's capacity to love – a total annihilation of what it means to be human and the antithesis of life. It is in the face of such powerfully-destructive

22: An American actor and wrestler who featured in WWF (World Wrestling Federation) and WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc.) television shows, broadcast on public television in South Africa, and particularly popular as a no-nonsense antihero in the 1990s (Austin et al. 2012).

23: Methamphetamine.

and insidious sickness that children and other people must struggle to survive, find meaning, and seek a better life for themselves and their family. Jacob's call to combat the sickness of drug abuse and other problems in the ghetto by planting and legalising ganja reflects the positive role of the plant in his own life. It was through ganja that he came to be involved in Rasta and gradually developed an awareness of himself, his body and his position within society, along with practises and plants with which steps could be taken towards healing and wholeness.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have developed an argument for the transformative power of the ganja-Rasta-mountain-herbs assemblage in the lives of my participants. By paying careful attention to their life histories and stories, I have attempted to trace the processes through which Rasta herbalists first come to assume a Rasta identity and the subsequent pathways leading to their increased interest and engagement with mountains, the medicinal plants which grow there, and healing. I have shown the importance of willingness, movement, and environment in the development of knowledge and experience, along with the role of apprentice-mentor partnerships in supporting and advancing potential herbalists. By partnering with the cannabis plant and moving with Rastas, my participants were able to engage in new sets of practices and mobilities which took them out of the ghetto and into the mountains. Through these processes, they came to learn about medicinal plants and become more aware of the health of themselves, their bodies, and the people and places around them. In doing so, Rasta herbalists resisted the prescribed movements and moorings of school and work (formal employment) and sedentary life in the ghettoes, articulating an alternative lifeway aimed towards the proliferation of life and healing.

In the next chapter I address flows of people and plants on a regional scale, describing the ways in which Rasta herbalists move with and for medicinal plants and the effects these mobilities have in shifting plant-human landscapes and the meanings attributed to plant-medicines.

Chapter 5: Routes and roots

Introduction

Of all the factors leading to the development of knowledge and skill amongst the Rasta herbalists I spoke with, none was as vital as travel. Long-distance movements to harvest and trade medicinal plants, along with ganja, were identified as central drivers of herbalist becomings. It is through these journeys that herbalists increase their plant knowledge, expand their secondary language capacity, learn to navigate multiple modes of transport, gain physical stamina and knowledge of the body, establish trade networks and build customer bases; all of which contribute to the authority and healing abilities of a herbalist. In addition, relationships with medicinal plants serve as a form of resistance against the impositions and mechanisms of control enacted by the State over the movements, bodies, and practices of Rastas. As I will argue in this chapter, the mobilities of herbalists are intimately interwoven into the processes through which plants become medicines and are inscribed with multiple meanings. Heightened flows and circulations of people and plants, primarily between the Eastern and Western Cape provinces, are shifting plant-human landscapes. Rather than representing novel, purely contemporary phenomena, these movements of people and plants are the continuation of hundreds and thousands of years of migration, trade, displacement, and adaptation through which ethnic and political boundaries come to be transgressed, destabilized, and reinforced.

Historical overview

Before exploring the relationships of Rasta herbalists and plant-medicines through an examination of their inter-regional mobilities, it is first necessary to place these movements in a wider context of historical flows and place-making practices. Tim Cresswell, in exploring the co-constitutive performance of bodies and places, reminds us that 'presence and becoming cannot be understood outside of history'. Since 'we exist in time, […] an analysis of “being-in-the-world” will always be unsatisfactory if it is not historicized' (2002: 23). Therefore, I offer a brief historical overview of colonial activity and Apartheid in South Africa.

The city of Cape Town, currently home to approximately 3.7 million human inhabitants (Strategic Development Information and GIS Department 2012), is itself a product of hundreds of years of flows and circulations of humans, plants, goods, resources, ideas and information. These movements along multiple paths have all contributed to the establishment, transgression,

dissolution, and reconfiguration of boundaries – geographical, political, social and ecological (Alexiades, 2009: 26). The Dutch East India Company, a powerful force in the transportation of goods, people, and political aspirations in the 17th Century, sent a small group of ships to the south-western tip of Africa in 1652 to establish a revictualling station at the Cape. Led by Jan van Riebeeck, the group initially constructed the Fort de Goede Hoop alongside the Fresh River – today the site of the Grand Parade in Cape Town – to serve as part of an infrastructure capable of provisioning ships travelling between Europe and Asia (Besteman, 2008). The Fort was used up until 1674, at which time the Cape Town Castle came to be occupied (Abrahams, 1993).

Prior to the arrival of the Dutch settler contingent, the Cape area was inhabited by the indigenous Khoisan, evidenced by stone artefacts found in archaeological digs beneath and around the Fort. A day register kept at the time of van Riebeeck's occupation of the Cape indicates that some of the Khoisan arrived at the Fort in October of 1652 and supplied meat to the Dutch group through the barter of their cattle and sheep. However, peaceful relations were not to last and, in 1657, the Dutch East India company allowed some of their employees to move out of the Fort area and become free settlers. This led to bitter protests from the Khoisan living nearby and prompted a war with the Dutch beginning in 1659. Once the war had reached its conclusion the Dutch asserted their dominance in the area and gradually absorbed the Khoisan livestock, pastures, and labour while subjugating the Khoisan chiefs and their followers to Dutch law (Abrahams, 1993; Adhikar, 2010). The available workforce of the Dutch was bolstered by the importation of slaves from Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka (previously Ceylon), and other parts of Africa, whose primary role was to build port infrastructure and agriculture (Besteman, 2008). A British parliamentary committee, speaking in 1836 on actions taken against the Khoisan following the arrival of Van Riebeck in the Cape, stated that “The system of oppression thus begun never slackened till...the small remnant left were reduced to abject bondage” (Elphick, 1985: 253).

The British took control of the Cape from the Dutch in 1795 and the slave trade in foreign labour was subsequently ended in 1807. 'By 1820 [colonial cape society] included at least three major groups: newer English immigrants, who retained their cultural and linguistic distinction from the Dutch settlers; the earliest Dutch-speaking settlers and their descendants, who now called themselves Afrikaners; and former slaves, who together with surviving Khoi were officially known as the Cape Coloured and constituted the largest and most diverse segment of the population' (Besteman, 2008: 4-5). Colonial European parties continued their expansion throughout southern Africa and by 1870 the vast majority of land currently acknowledged as modern South Africa was

controlled by four white-dominated states. These states continued to exploit the available black migrant labour force, most notably for work at the developing diamond and gold mining operations in the interior of the country.

Following British defeat of the Afrikaners in the South African War of 1899-1902, the Union of South Africa was established as a self-governing British dominion based on the amalgamation of the previous four South African colonies. 'The union government, under the political sway of the mining and rural farming interests, continued to expand the policies of racial segregation and hierarchy' (Besteman, 2008: 5). Primary among the effects of these policies were the confinement of the majority African population to ever-smaller areas of land along with the tight control of land ownership and human movement – effectively establishing a reserve of cheap labour for use by projects of colonial expansion. Despite the formation of black political organisations in the early-20th Century, most notably the African National Congress (ANC) in 1912, African populations in the country continued to face restrictions supported by white South Africans. These restrictions were taken further after the establishment of the National Party and the genesis of the Apartheid system in 1948, leading to a period of increased legislation being enacted to stamp out black political participation. Racial classifications determined and enforced by the state decided 'where one could live, travel, and work, how much one could earn, the subjects one could study, and whom one could marry' (Besteman, 2008: 6). Forcible relocations of black, coloured, and Indian people within cities and towns, rendered legal by the passing of the Group Areas Act of 1950, led to the development of large and overcrowded townships throughout South Africa. The movements and freedoms of non-white populations within South Africa were further restricted and controlled through the restructuring of African reserves into “Homelands” or “Bantustans” and the requirement that workers outside of the Homelands carry passes (Besteman, 2008).

In the face of continued racial segregation and oppression the ANC adopted the Freedom Charter as a doctrine of equal rights in 1955 and struggled against the ruling Apartheid government through non-violent and violent means over the ensuing decades, even following their outlawing in the 1960's. This resistance led to the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela and other influential black political leaders, along with increased strikes and protests continuing throughout the 1970's and 80's, sparking international outcries over civil rights abuses by the South African government. As the economic situation in South Africa declined due to economic, political and cultural sanctions against SA, which were the result of pressure from the anti-apartheid movement, an increasingly desperate National Party government 'repeatedly declared states of emergency between 1984 and

1986, outlawed the UDF [United Democratic Front], created secret death squads that murdered activist leaders, and utilized a range of tyrannical laws and practices to arrest, detain, interrogate, and torture thousands of people' (Besteman, 2008: 8). Following a stroke in 1989, F. W. de Klerk replaced P. W. Botha - initiating a cascade of events and discussions leading to a lifting of the ban on outlawed political parties, the freedom of Nelson Mandela in 1990, the cessation of Apartheid laws, and the gradual transition to democracy which culminated in the holding of the first national democratic election in 1994 (Besteman, 2008).

While many South Africans held massive hope for the ability of democracy to bring equality, prosperity, and freedom to the people, the adoption of neoliberal economic policies by the ANC government has largely rendered these dreams intangible. 'Analysts argue that the ANC's decision to adopt, in the words of journalist Allister Sparks, “an unvarnished free market program, directly in line with the neo-liberal agenda” perpetuated and widened rather than narrowed inequality during democracy's first decade' (Besteman, 2008: 11). At the same time, the abolition of Apartheid laws restricting and controlling the mobilities and rhythms of movement of non-white South Africans opened up new potentials for migration aimed at securing employment, along with enhanced access to education, healthcare, and infrastructure. These shifting patterns of movement have already produced significant changes in the demographic landscape of Cape Town, with the population growing by approximately 850,000 people between 2001 and 2011 – an increase of 29.3% (Strategic Development Information and GIS Department 2012). Bekker (2001-2002), in analysing the migratory linkages between Cape Town and the Eastern Cape, argues that the end of Apartheid led to a transition from primarily circulatory migration, involving the temporary movement of individuals from rural to urban areas and back home upon completion of seasonal labour, to a process characterized by uni-directional migration of individuals and families hoping to secure permanent residence in urban centres. As a result, townships and informal settlements both in and around Cape Town have increased substantially in the past two decades, with up to 13,000 migrants arriving from the Eastern Cape each month (Poswa and Levy, 2006). As I will argue, these historically emergent flows and migrations are resulting in shifting patterns of plant-human relations in Cape Town, as evidenced in the lives and stories of Rasta herbalists.

Expansion of movements for ganja and medicines

In the early years of their development as herbalists, the individuals I spoke with noted that their initial movements and journeys for medicinal plants were primarily made to areas within the Western Cape, and with a relative proximity to Cape Town and their areas of dwelling. Building on

a foundational knowledge of medicinal plants, their uses and preparations, as well as locations for harvest – all developed primarily through apprentice-mentor relationships – herbalists expanded their networks of contacts and customers by moving, often on foot. The Elder described this phase of his development, echoing the experience of John from Chapter 3:

> But I'm learning. And I went door to door. Here in Steenberg. I went to Oceanview. I went to Hout Bay. I went to different places. For 3, 4 years I sell herbs.

The Elder's movements for his first few years of selling herbs preceded his establishment of a stall in a fixed location. In these early stages, aspiring herbalists move between home, harvesting locations, customers' homes, the stalls and dwellings of established herbalists, and dancehalls and Rasta festivals – all of which serve to enhance the accessibility of information and plant-medicines. Jacob described the role of social gatherings and dancehalls in the trade of plants between herbalists:

> Andrew: Do you have to travel quite a lot, when you, when you're going for different specific herbs that you have in mind?
>
> Jacob: No what happens is that, uhhh...by the dancehall we keep, it's a place where we make music and people come different places, the Rastas come from. So different bush doctors come with their medicine that they pick in their area where they stay like Robertson, George, Knysna, Atlantis. Atlantis we get the garlic (*Tulbaghia sp.*), Eastern Cape we get the African potato (*Hypoxis sp.*) from, George and that areas we get red carrot (*Bulbine latifolia*) from. Sweet root (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), buchu (*Agathosma sp.*), Stellenbos areas, you know, just around us. The brothers come Friday night, we all come there where we skank and then we'll pack the herbs out there and then we that don't have access to these places, we would buy by them now what we *need* on our tables, to give to the nation.

While purchases and trades with other Rasta herbalists are a means of gaining access to plants that only grow in far-off locations, the greatest financial gains stand to be made by those who are able to expand their range of travel and access – thereby opening possibilities for trade on a larger scale. In the case of herbalists based in Cape Town and nearby areas of the Western Cape, ganja and the demand for plant-medicines of Eastern Cape origin from the migrant population are the primary drivers behind expanded travel. Indeed, the trade in the two – plant-medicines and ganja – are deeply connected and formed the basis of a dual-livelihood strategy for all of the Rasta herbalists I encountered and communicated with during my study.

Dual-livelihood strategy of medicinal plants and ganja

While the documentation of healer income derived from medicinal plants and ganja was not a component of my study, it was clear from my time spent at market stalls and in conversation with herbalists that the relative contribution of the two varies greatly between individuals. For some, ganja was the primary source of income – with other medicinal plants serving as a secondary component, while for others – usually with much larger selections of plant-medicines on offer – ganja sales were secondary. This connection has been underplayed in previous research on Rasta herbalists, with Philander (2010) leaving the sale of cannabis 'relatively unexplored' (113) and stating that she 'never saw this plant being sold or traded to customers' (202-203). In a later publication on Western Cape Rasta bush medicine, based on her dissertation research, Philander (2011) writes: 'It was clear that the Rastafari "holy herb," *Cannabis sativa* was being consumed, traded, and sold but it was not displayed for sale with the other medicinals and therefore was excluded from this study' (579). Petersen, in a value chain analysis of the trade in wild harvested medicinal plants in Cape Town, writes that up to 90% of trade at Rasta herbalist stalls may be attributed to the sale of cannabis – based on reports from participants (2013). From the sales I recorded at one of my participant's stalls, ganja accounted for 17 out of 21 sales (~81%), with prices ranging from R60 to R160 per gram based on quality and customer. Based on my observations, the diverse clientele ranged in age from their early-20s to 60s and included students and businessmen of both local and international provenance. In contrast, recorded sales at another stall with a much larger selection of plant-parts were exclusively comprised of other medicinal plants (46/46). While ganja sales certainly contributed to the income of the owner of this stall, they were conducted in other places and contexts and I regularly observed individuals being turned away or vaguely directed to other areas where they might find someone to sell them the ganja they were looking for.

History of use and trade of Cannabis sativa in Africa

The trade in cannabis has a long history in Africa, stretching for at least six centuries, with the plant believed to have been introduced to Egypt from India and Persia - either by Arab traders or as a result of the migration of mystics from Syria in the mid-twelfth Century (Kepe 2003; Du Toit 1976). While the exact means and mechanisms of diffusion throughout the continent are unclear, du Toit notes that 'cannabis has always spread due to the contact of peoples' – as opposed to dispersal by wind or birds - and that the plant no-doubt moved along existing routes of regional trade, gradually travelling down the eastern regions of Africa (1976: 20). The plant eventually reached South West Africa and came to form a valuable currency in extensive east-west trade during the 1800s, with

widespread use among the Khoikhoi, San, and Bantu-speaking groups. Of particular relevance to the current study is that cannabis was in common use by the Khoikhoi and San and was introduced to the Dutch settlers upon their arrival in the Cape. In fact, 'the earliest use of the term “dagga” occurs in the diary of Jan van Riebeeck in 1658 (spelled “daccha”)' and is believed to be the derivation of a Khoikhoi term !amaXa-b meaning “green tobacco” (du Toit 1976: 23). The importance of the east-west trade of cannabis is still evident today, particularly in the flows of people and plants between the Eastern Cape, an area of major cannabis production, and Cape Town.

Cannabis as a driver of travel

The experiences of two of my participants serve to illustrate the role of ganja in driving travel, particularly more expansive movements which saw them leaving the boundaries of the Western Cape. During one of my visits to Jacob's stall, I took out an Acacia fieldguide I had loaned from the library and Jacob began looking through it. The map at the front of the book spontaneously became a highly effective tool for tracing and sharing knowledge and stories about South Africa. Jacob told me that he had been as far as Port St. Johns in the Eastern Cape, the entirety of which he described as 'beautiful!'. Pointing first at Cape Town and then Port St. Johns, he said: 'Ganja took me from here to *here'*. He went on to explain that the vast majority of his travels in South Africa have been in the Eastern Cape and expressed a desire to visit Joburg, a place he had not been to previously. On another occasion, while sharing lunch with Simon near his stall in Cape Town, the conversation turned to Mark – a herbalist who lives in Kirkwood, Eastern Cape, and who is highly regarded amongst the Cape Town Rastas who know him for his vast knowledge of medicinal plants. Simon told me that he had first met Mark while selling at his stall in Cape Town and had travelled back with him to the Eastern Cape where they had sold big bags of ganja together, covering great distances by foot to avoid the dangers associated with automotive travel. Simon had been impressed by Mark's discipline and determination when he told him: 'Right, now we're going to work!'. Together they made many thousands of Rands through the sale of the ganja and, in doing so, founded a friendship which would continue to grow over subsequent years as both parties played host to the other and facilitated access to the medicinal plants growing in their respective regions.

Inter-regional trade in plant-medicines

Expansions in inter-regional travel were also driven by the demand for plant-medicines originating in eastern areas of the Western Cape such as George and Knysna, as well as the Eastern Cape, and stemmed in particular from Eastern Cape migrants living in Cape Town. When he was visiting Cape Town from the Eastern Cape to sell herbs and gather plant-medicines from the area before returning

to his wife and three children, I took the opportunity to ask Mark about the transfer of herbs between the Western and Eastern Cape. I told him that I knew that herbs from the Eastern Cape were brought into the Western Cape because they were in demand by Eastern Cape migrants and didn't grow locally, but wondered if the opposite was also true; that herbs found only in the Western Cape were in demand in the Eastern Cape. He responded with an emphatic 'Yes!' and said that there are some very important medicines from the Western Cape that he needs to treat people at home in the Eastern Cape, noting mathunga (*Haemanthus sp.*), wild garlic (*Tulbaghia sp.*), kaneelbol (*Pelargonium sp.*), and bitterbos (*Chironia baccifera*) in particular.

On another occasion, Matthew related to me the ways in which this demand had shaped their movements as he and Simon attempted to expand their business, along with the shifting patterns of plant-human relations and popularity of particular plant-medicines as a result of accumulated east-west flows of people and plants:

> Matthew: It was mainly just garlic[24], mainly garlic, ya.
>
> Andrew: Was the big one before[25]?
>
> Matthew: Ya, garlic. If you did have garlic and buchu, you a herbalist. Ya.
>
> Andrew: And do you think more people in the Eastern Cape know about garlic now?
>
> Matthew: That know now? Ya. It's mostly people that move, you see. People come move from that side here then they seek maybe African Potato, stuff like this you see, then we have to try and get them this stuff, you see? Because we sell this stuff and there's even going to be something for us even see. More in our pockets, you see? So that's why we did want to make a big move, you see?
>
> Andrew: To build the...
>
> Matthew: Just to build nice relations with our customers, you see? Cause now a customer see 'yeah, here some herbs from that side', they feel at home. They don't have to do a lot, you see? They don't even have to wait for holidays, even to move that side again to go holiday even when something happen maybe, they only go to the Eastern Cape only at funeral times, at death times. But we do it more often, you see? We do it maybe like two times a month, maybe we do it two times in four months, we go down, you see?

24: Referring to wild garlic, also commonly known as mountain garlic. Tulbaghia sp.

25: Here I'm asking about which medicines were previously the most popular. 'The big one' means the most popular plant, or one among the most popular plants.

Andrew: So then they don't have to travel.

Matthew: Ya, they don't have to take out a lot of money even to go there, see? Just for red carrot or a African potato.

Andrew: So then once they know you've got, they can come back.

Matthew: True, ya. And most of the old people they love it, you see. Maybe they haven't been a *long* time, they haven't been to East London, they feel *glad* just to see the stuff. Some people *bite* the herbs, you see, they *smell* it, they just want to feel that environment, feel the air, taste the air, you see?

In Matthew's description we see the traces of a concomitant rise in popularity of endemic Western Cape medicinal plants and demand within Cape Town for plant-medicines of Eastern Cape origin. Migrants from the Eastern Cape, many of whom are accustomed to purchasing plant-medicines from street vendors in order to treat themselves or family members, are encountering Western Cape medicinals such as wild garlic and buchu and being counselled on their use by Rasta herbalists. When customers come to the stall looking for a particular plant that is unavailable, astute and knowledgeable herbalists will ask for more details regarding the ailment to be treated and will then recommend a single plant-medicine or mix of medicines enacting the desired effect. Likewise, customers who grew up in the Western Cape and are already familiar with local medicines come to learn of, and sometimes use, Eastern Cape equivalents. By travelling frequently between the Western and Eastern Cape for plant-medicines, Rasta herbalists are facilitating the treatment of Eastern Cape migrants with medicines they are familiar with and, in the process, catalysing the dissemination of knowledge and use-patterns of plant-medicines not previously known in Cape Town. These processes highlight that the use of plant-medicines, far from being purely 'traditional' and static, is dynamic, especially when operating in contexts of dense urban habitation with large-scale migration and the knotting and interweaving of diverse lines of individual knowledge and use-patterns related to plants. Rather than being 'a remnant of the past or 'ancient knowledge'', knowledge of plant-medicines 'is constantly adjusting as a person, community, society or landscape changes' (Heckler 2009: 9). In addition, such unfoldings argue against the classification of distinct pharmacopoeias or ethnomedical systems founded on the delineation of ethnic and geographic boundaries by showing that people are flexible in their treatment-seeking behaviours and that the use of plant-medicine is open-ended.

Plant-medicines, perception, and wellbeing

An additional component of Matthew's explanation, brought to life in the last entry of the above

conversation, is the multi-dimensional property of medicinal plants. He describes the way people sometimes interact with the herbs when they come to the stall, extending their engagement with the plant-form beyond the visual faculty by touching, biting, and smelling the medicines. This was particularly so in the case of Xhosa migrants I observed interacting with plant-medicines at the stall. Beyond serving as a means of ensuring correct identification through a reliance on multiple senses, a technique I was encouraged to employ during my informal apprenticeship at the stalls I frequented, this behaviour catalyses a non-local perceptual event in the consciousness of the customer. In other words, the plant becomes a vehicle through which memories and recollections are awakened and retrieved, such as those of a particular environment where an individual grew up or of family members with whom they shared plant relationships. 'Often a sort of nostalgic value is attributed to such remedies, as they embody an affiliation with the homecountry', or in this case, home landscape (Ceuterick et al. 2011: 33; Stone et al. 2005). These associations illicit an emotional response in the customer which may itself go a long way towards promoting a return to wellbeing and improved health, even without the actual ingestion of a plant-medicine. This idea has been insightfully articulated in the work of Cohen who, in exploring the relationship of medicinal plants, the environments where they grow, and the humans interacting with them, argues for a symmetry in healing power attributed to both the embodied experience of being in the *veld* (bush or 'natural' landscape) and that of plant-medicines:

> Understood as an aspect of an ecological context, and not simply as disconnected objects, medicines, and the healing potential they possess, are bound up with peoples' knowledge of and experiences in the landscape, and their on going relationship to God (Cohen 2008: 68).

Rasta networks and gatekeepers

The relationship and partnership of Simon, Matthew, and Mark highlights the way in which Rasta functions as a vehicle for movement and the role of herbalists who serve as hosts and gatekeepers in facilitating long-range regional trade. Not only do Rasta contacts in distant locations serve as partners in mutually-beneficial business relations, as evidenced in the above example, they offer free accommodation, assistance with navigation, and expert knowledge of local plant-medicines and harvest locations. Rather than simply trading with other Rasta herbalists based at markets in Port Elizabeth and other urban centres of the Eastern Cape, Simon and Matthew were able to harvest plants themselves in the Eastern Cape with the help and guidance of Mark who grew up in the area and knew it intimately through his own accumulated movements, knowledge and experience. Direct

harvesting of plants, as opposed to exchange or purchase, allows herbalists to generate increased profits when retailing the obtained plant-medicines at their own stalls. The reciprocity evident in relationships between herbalists is encouraged by notions of oneness and cooperation which form an integral part of the Rasta philosophy. By working together, herbalists derive mutual benefit and serve to uplift themselves and their brethren both financially and in terms of personal growth and development. Likewise, the freedom of movement of herbalists is enhanced and explained by a notion of universality of place derived from the Rasta philosophy. Paul, a Rasta who had moved to Cape Town from Duncan Village in the Eastern Cape and had identified with the religion for 27 years, spoke of his movements:

> Me I go up and down. You know a Rasta mos, any place is for you, because it's Ethiopia, you see? I can go anywhere. I can go sit in Durban, I can go sit in Gauteng and see I-and-I. This land is belong to God.

Cellphones and connectivity

In addition to reliance on transportation infrastructures to facilitate their movements for plant-medicines, Rasta herbalists rely heavily on cellphones and related telecommunication infrastructures. Cellphones allow individual herbalists to maintain communication with networks of local and distant contacts for the purposes of co-ordinating movements, trades and sales of ganja or medicinal plants, harvesting, accommodation, and the transfer of money. The technology integrates seamlessly with a major tenet of Rasta philosophy, namely the vital importance of communication and unity. Simon's attachment to his cellphone was flexible, often selling it when he and Matthew needed cash and subsequently purchasing a second-hand replacement when funds were available again. During one of Matthew's trips to the Eastern Cape with Mark, Simon relied on the national money transfer service of a large grocery-store chain to send cash to Matthew – a service requiring cellphones to send a PIN number allowing access of the funds by the receiver. The cash allowed Matthew and Mark to purchase food and pay taxi fares when they fell on hard times due to slow days of sales in Port Elizabeth or inactivity resulting from days of heavy rain. Cellphones were also a key way of maintaining contact with customers, such as sangomas from the area who often arranged wholesale purchases of the plant-medicines they required – many of which do not grow in the Western Cape.

Long-distance trucking and the leakages of plant-medicines

The participants in my study who were engaged in frequent travel between Cape Town and the Eastern Cape for plant-medicines and ganja relied on a combination of transportation modalities in

order to minimize costs and avoid contact with police. While the inter-regional trade and sale of ganja may provide a relatively lucrative income supplementation as part of a dual-livelihood strategy, it also opens herbalists up to potential dangers from law enforcement agents and from theft by other people. Hitchhiking on trucks formed the backbone of long-range travel for my participants since they were plentiful, transporting goods between the Western and Eastern Capes; cheap when compared with formal transport options such as buses; and spacious, allowing herbalists to transport their large and often very heavy hiking packs of plant-medicines. Matthew shared these processes with me as we sat on the stone ground behind his stall, our backs to the wall for support. It was a Monday morning and the market was slow, giving me a chance to inquire about various plants and where they grow. During our interview, Matthew explained how he had developed himself through travel, learning of and trading plants from distant areas, along with the ways in which travel was performed:

> Matthew: Buchu (*Agathosma sp.*) I've been working with ages, buchu and mountain garlic (*Tulbaghia sp.*) I've worked ages with it, more than 10 years, more than 11 years.
>
> Andrew: Wow. Really?
>
> Matthew: Ya, I work buchu and mountain garlic. David root (*Cissampelos capensis*), white storm, red storm, even the kalmoes (*Acorus calamus*), I know it all these years. Even the love root[26], I know it all these years, you see?
>
> Andrew: OK, because it's around.
>
> Matthew: It's around, you see? Mountain celery (*Peucedanum polyactinum*). I've been working mostly leaves, for say three years back now, two years back. It's different barks and roots have come through now, you see?
>
> Andrew: And that was because you?
>
> Matthew: Travel. I started travelling and developed myself, you see?
>
> Andrew: And how did you, when you travelled back, did you end up coming with the trucks as well?
>
> Matthew: Ya, we come with the trucks as well. Because that's our [laughs] source of transport you see, trucks, ya we hike.
>
> Andrew: And do the drivers expect something, like some money or?

26: Identified by Philander as Stoebe fusca (2011: 179).

Matthew: Ya money ya, they expect money. But some of them are nice, you see? You can just feel that energy when they are nice then you don't take out money at all, you just talk now, you just talk. You talk of what you have, what you do, then you give them a carrot – a red carrot, or you give them African potato or mountain garlic or buchu, or what you have. But you must explain, you see, because some of them don't know herbs. You just tell them, like – maybe red carrot – now you told them, 'I know driver you ride a lot so you need something now for the back, you see? I can give you something for the back, it will also sort out your kidneys, take out the pain and stuff like that, you see? And will work on your manhood as well, you see?'. He say 'What? What? What Rasta? What? What?'. I say 'red carrot'. 'Oh I did heard about that, my friend was talking about that. Now what is that now for Rasta?'. I have to explain. It all take our time, you see, and it's more time for him – so he don't get in trouble, maybe make accidents, fall asleep behind the wheel maybe something like that. You see?

Andrew: OK, OK. And I'm sure it gets a bit lonely for them sometimes when they're on the road a long time.

Matthew: Ya, maybe seven hours, eight hours, and they are alone in the truck, you see? Only the driver.

Andrew: So it's good to have a bit of company.

Matthew: Ya, those money some of them ask, and they don't ask us a lot of money. Maybe there's other people also hiking, neh? Now I did get in maybe at Knysna, ya I was riding irie, maybe he gonna stop now George. Not so but there's also people standing that side on George, on the main road, women, men, women and children, you see? They stand and hike, maybe to – just the area is just maybe George to Mossel Baai, from Mossel Baai maybe to the places around the main road. Off the N2.

Andrew: And they just stand there with a R20 or a R50?

Matthew: Stand with R50, stand with R100. Ya sometimes the driver says it's R100, take R100. Maybe I did only give him R50 from PE or Cape Town, he ask more from the other people. Because he also look now I don't work and stuff like that you see? So he ask me less money now, you see. And because I'm also, I'm talking also now you see, and he's talking with me, and he feel nice to talk with me even. He can make fun as well you see [laughing]. I don't feel bothered about that, he's making fun of me, you see? Because he's don't know nothing, you see. If someone's making fun of you, you see, joke a lot or stuff like that, you see?

Andrew: At least then as well, when you leave that guy he knows more.

Matthew: He knows more ya. Even when he pick up the next sakman or the man is on a hike spot, you see, maybe he will feel free even with the ease you see, he will stop.

Andrew: Be more willing to help.

Matthew: Ya, ya.

At the beginning of the segment of conversation, Matthew explains that he had been working with locally-available plants for many years before moving on to work with plants from further afield. In addition, he notes an important shift in the plant parts he was predominantly working with: from leaves to roots and barks[27]. Hitchhiking with trucks is described as sometimes being mutually-beneficial since the herbalist benefits from a cheap ride while the driver has someone to keep him company and receives additional income in the form of a negotiated payment from the Rasta. Crucially, the plant-medicines medicines are not merely being transported – tucked neatly away in a bag and forgotten. Rather, there are leakages along the paths of movement of the herbalist, leakages in the form of plant-medicines and the smells associated with them, knowledge of the use of various medicines such as the red carrot, and information about Rasta, herbalists, and their ways of life. The importance of movement and the processes occurring along those lines of movement, such as the sharing of stories, knowledge, and uses of plant-medicines, are highlighted by Appadurai in his musings on commodities: 'All efforts at defining commodities are doomed to sterility unless they illuminate commodities in motion' (1986: 16). Jacob once told me that he had been travelling in a taxi with a sack full of wild garlic when some of the Xhosa passengers he was riding with began to hold their noses and complain about the smell. The people were familiar with the use of plant-medicines but had not grown up in the Western Cape and were unaccustomed to the pungent odour of that particular plant. Jacob removed one of the bulbs from his bag, explaining to them that the plant is highly-effective in the treatment of colds and flu, along with other infections in the body. One of the passengers was interested and he ended up making a sale.

Multi-modal transport

I was able to experience the processes involved in long-distance travel for plant-medicines when I joined Simon, David – a close friend of Simon and Rasta herbalist based in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town, and two visiting herbalists from Rheenendal near Knysna in the Western Cape. The two young herbalists had travelled to Cape Town to sell and gather herbs but had been taken under the care of Simon when their local Rasta contact had failed to offer them adequate accommodation and harvesting opportunities. This left the two in a precarious position: far from home and without any money to travel back to Rheenendal. When I asked what had happened, Simon cited poverty as the reason their host was unable to offer them the necessary assistance. He had stepped in, helping the two gather local medicinal plants and offering to pay for their return home in exchange for many of

27: The reasons behind this shift are discussed in the concluding chapter.

the red carrots they had brought with them, along with accommodation and harvesting help upon arrival in Rheenendal. Simon had invited me to join the party and originally envisioned a week-long trip which would take us as far as Kirkwood in the Eastern Cape. However, due to the additional costs associated with travelling in partnership with the two herbalists it was decided that we would instead embark on a short, three-day trip as far as Knysna, with the primary goal of harvesting red carrot – an extremely popular and important medicine.

I hopped onto a taxi to town on the morning of our planned departure, equal parts nervous and excited, having never come close to hitchhiking in all my years growing up in South Africa. I had packed as lightly as possible since I knew that there was a good chance I would be required to assist with carrying herbs on our return. I met Matthew at the stall he shared with Simon at the market in Cape Town and shared a pizza with him while we waited for Simon's arrival. Matthew's easy-going character and warm smile helped ease my nerves and I was extremely grateful for his presence. Contacting us via cellphone, Simon told Matthew that I should buy a train ticket at the nearby station and meet them there. Once the five of us were gathered together, we boarded a train for Somerset West. Rather than simply serving as transportation, the train car became the stage of an intense debate about politics, democracy, Rasta, ganja, bodies and health, when a middle-aged Xhosa man engaged Simon in conversation; an exchange which soon drew the attention and occasional interjection of at least 50 of our fellow passengers who couldn't help their curiosity and crowded around to witness the scene. While a complete description of the event would prove too lengthy for the purposes of this dissertation, an outline of the topics of conversation will serve to illustrate that what happens along the lines of movement of herbalists and plant-medicines is just as important in developing and contesting their meaning and value as are the activities which occur at places of departure and arrival, namely harvesting and trading.

Contestations over politics and health

After mocking Rastas for their following of Emperor Haille Selassie, the man went on to speak about Apartheid and democracy, claiming that it was because of democracy that Rastas had increased freedom. Simon responded strongly that he wanted nothing to do with democracy and government. The man then brought up ganja, referring to the marches on City Hall for the legalization of the plant, to which Simon replied enthusiastically that he doesn't take part in those marches, adding: “You won't see me there!” This topic led into a broad discussion of ganja, meat and health, with the man railing against ganja and claiming that it was destroying Simon and

David's brains, making them stupid. With barely concealed outrage, Simon replied that ganja is a medicine and doesn't cause brain damage, after which he pointed to the man's portly belly and called it a graveyard – adding that he is sick from all the meat he eats. He continued by telling the man that alcohol was far more destructive and that it, like cigarettes, are legal – even though they cause so much death. The man said that if the train driver had been smoking ganja then he would crash the train and we would be dead. David shouted back: 'You are ignorant! Lots of people smoke ganja! I *know* train drivers who smoke ganja.' At his point a coloured woman in her 50s spoke up from the rear of the circle of on-lookers: “I smoke ganja!” This was greeted by cheers and applause by many of the people in the train car, especially Simon and Mark. After a while Simon gave up the discussion with the man: 'Leave him, he's just trying to be clever but he doesn't want to listen'. With the main action over, people on the train began talking amongst themselves again. Simon and David received quiet encouragement and support from a few others on the train, mostly coloured men who said they also smoked ganja or had at one point and that it was not bad like the man was suggesting.

Hitchhiking

After disembarking at the Somerset West train station in darkness, we set out in search of a taxi and were fortunate to find an off-duty taxi driver at a petrol station who drove us to an informal settlement in Sir Lowry's Pass for free. There we met with Simon's Rasta contact and relaxed quietly around a fire outside his friend's dancehall for about two hours before continuing on foot to the N2 highway. While relieving themselves in the bushes beside the highway, the two Rheenendal herbalists encountered a patch of rhinobush (*Elytropappus rhinocerotis*) and took the opportunity to harvest some. Meanwhile, Simon and David stood on the side of the highway and waved at passing trucks and bakkies, hoping to catch their attention and secure a ride. It wasn't long before a white bakkie pulled over and we dashed up the highway to negotiate a ride. R170 was the price agreed on and the five of us jumped into the back of the bakkie, huddling together against the freezing night air as the vehicle raced towards Knysna. After about four and a half hours, having covered approximately 450km, I awoke just before 3am to learn that we had reached our destination. To my surprise, the driver of the bakkie happened to live very nearby to our host's house and had dropped us off just outside the gate. Much relieved and happy to have reached our destination, we settled into the two-room shack for a night of peaceful sleep, waking the next day to cook breakfast before hitching another ride to the nearby mountains and traversing the hazardous cliffs of a river valley on foot to harvest red carrot (see figures 2 and 3).

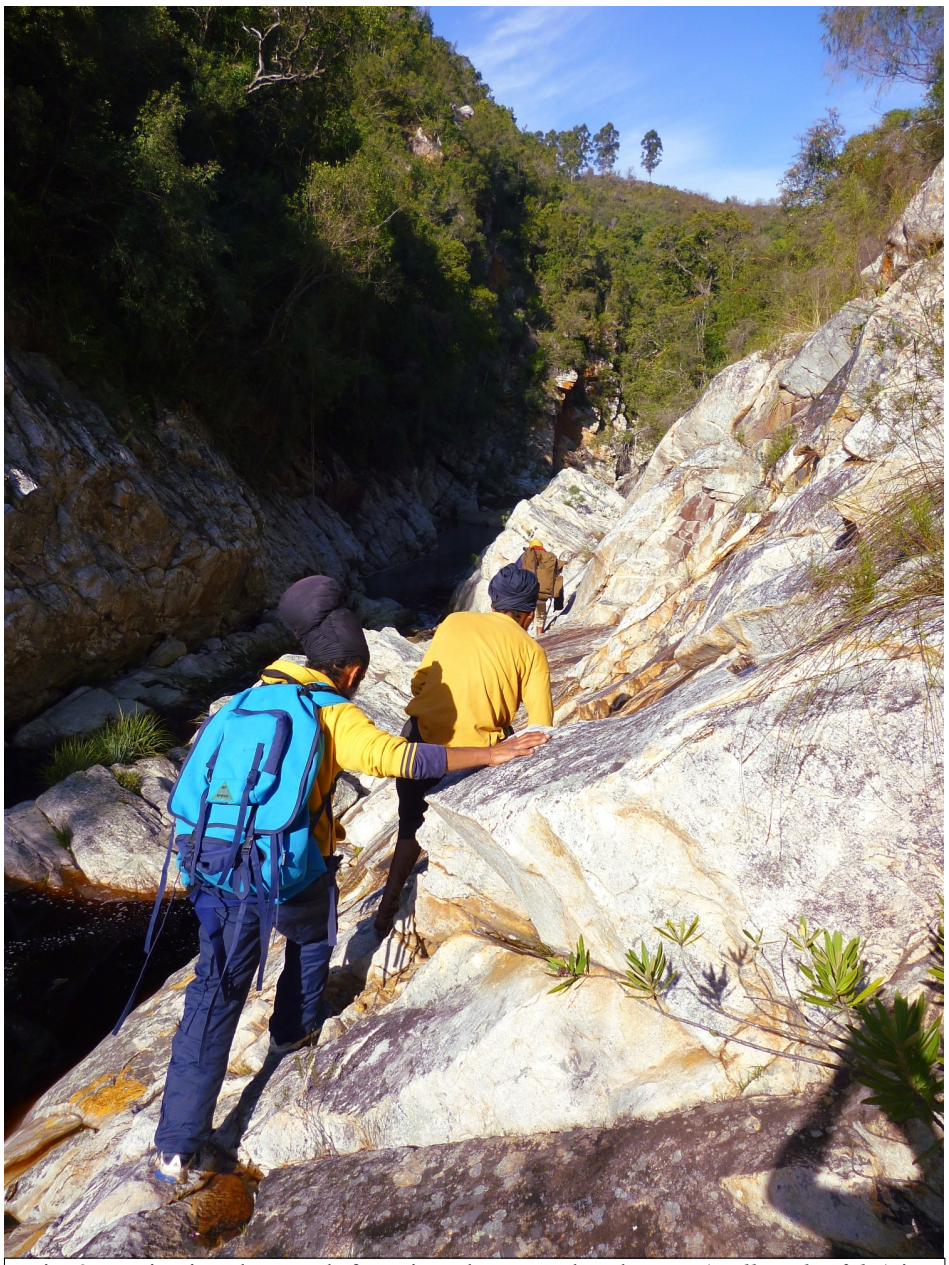

Fig. 2: Navigating sheer rock-faces in order to reach red carrot (*Bulbine latifolia*) in Rheenendal.

Danger and sacrifice of harvesting

The activity brought the previous assertions of my participants regarding the sacrifice inherent in their activities as herbalists into stark focus. With all of us except David barefoot (I had begun the descent into the valley with shoes but quickly abandoned them out of fear the inadequate grip of the soles would cause me to fall on the slippery boulders lining the river) we carefully made our way downriver in search of the red carrot which grows on the south-facing cliffs. With no neatly-constructed paths to navigate, we were forced to manoeuvre along sheer rock-faces – many

of which fell over 10 metres to the sharp rocks below – before entering a dense thicket of thorn trees and climbing even higher to reach the cliffs where red carrots deemed to be of sufficient size to harvest were located. As Peter, one of the Rheenendal herbalists in our party, would later assert with much gravity: 'This is life over death!' Indeed, with no cellphone signal or help to be found nearby, one small misstep could result in the serious injury, if not death, of a harvester. The exercise was a powerful bonding experience, with our group having to work together at all stages of the journey to ensure a successful harvest and the safe return of ourselves and our incredibly heavy packs of plants. This experience also provided me with an additional perspective from which to interpret the tensions and arguments I often witnessed between my participants and potential customers at their stalls. Individuals seeking plant-medicines would often complain that the price being asked was too high, to which the herbalist would respond that a great deal of resources, individual sacrifice and danger were involved in obtaining the medicines.

Precarities of travel

On the third day of our trip, having taken a taxi into Kynsna, Simon, David and I met with other Rasta herbalists in a popular trading and transportation area before catching a free ride to George with a middle-aged man and his daughter. From there, we hitched a ride from the side of the N2 highway with an informal taxi, with the driver stopping frequently to pick up and drop off various passengers. The trip ended in conflict as the driver became angry when he demanded R200 payment for our fare – an amount we were unable to pay. After threatening to kick us out on the side of the highway many times, he eventually dropped us off in Delft near Cape Town. Upon exiting the minivan, Simon become extremely ill, complaining that he had a splitting headache and vomiting violently as he struggled to carry his heavy bag of red carrots which must have easily exceeded 35 kilograms. We soon caught a taxi to the central station in Cape Town and bid one another farewell before heading our different ways to get home. When I called Simon the next day to enquire about his health, he told me that he had washed with *skilpad*[28] (a plant-medicine used to cleanse the body of spiritual wickedness and impurity) after arriving home that night and immediately felt much better. He attributed the acute bout of illness to the driver of the minivan, saying that he believed the man was also a 'doctor' and had attacked him using plant-medicines due to our failure to pay the full amount.

28: Skilpad is the Afrikaans name used to refer to the fleshy tuber of plants in the Dioscorea genus, known as wild yam in English (Philander 2010; van Wyk et al. 2013: 120-121).

The dangers associated with travel are heightened when ganja is involved. During my fieldwork I heard of two Rasta herbalists, friends of Matthew and Simon who live in their area, who were robbed by a driver while returning from the Eastern Cape and subsequently left on the side of the N2 highway. Simon, who related the incident to me, speculated that the driver, inferring from the time of year and direction of travel of the Rastas, had suspected them of carrying ganja. While they only had enough ganja 'for a few cups', the driver stole the cannabis along with their money and other medicinal plants.

Fig. 3: John and Simon pushing through dense foliage to reach the red carrot (*Bulbine latifolia*) populations located higher up on the cliff.

In another incident, not directly involving trucks, Catherine - a female friend of some of my participants - was arrested for the possession of cannabis in Knysna during a trip to trade

plant-medicines with other Rastas based there. She was visibly shaken by the experience, having spent two days in a jail she described as being 'not even fit for a dog'. The arrest left her with a criminal record and threats of forced relocation to stay with relatives in Port Elizabeth from her Cape Town family members. Being responsible for her 17 year-old brother since the recent passing of her mother, she worried about how he would cope without her while she was away. I felt great regret for her and her circumstances, knowing that she was not involved in the trade of cannabis and had always been a positive and friendly person who aspired to develop her artistic and dress-making talents as a means of supporting herself. Her experience serves as a stark reminder of the dangers Rastas face as a result of their relationship with a plant that has been deemed illegal by the State, along with the repercussions of criminal charges associated with ganja and the ways in which they shape and constrain the mobilities of human lives.

Illegality of cannabis, State control, and resistance

Rather than serving as a means of rehabilitation, the arrest of Rastas for possession and consumption of cannabis merely serves to further alienate and marginalize individuals whose socio-economic opportunities are already precarious due to the legacy of Apartheid. Thus, individuals who may have faced challenges in securing employment are left with a criminal record and excluded even further from opportunities within the formal economy. The tragedy of this situation is rendered all the more cutting when one considers that cannabis was in use as a medicine in the region long before South Africa was established as a legal entity. While the abolition of Apartheid may have struck the death knell of forced racial segregation and the dissolution of geographical boundaries demarcating allowed areas of habitation and movement for South Africans, it is clear that the exercise of control – along with the severe punishment of those who dare to resist – is still very much at play in the bodies of Rastas who choose to consume cannabis.

Foucault, in writing on power, has highlighted discipline as one mechanism of power enacted by the State through which it seeks to shape and constrain the behavioural patterns of individuals. By deeming the consumption of cannabis illegal and criminalizing those who are guilty of transgression due to their relationship with the plant, the South African State enrolls in a process of objectivization of the subject by dividing Rastas from others: criminals and non-criminals. Foucault sees the application of a criminal identity by the State as a form of subjugation through which power is exercised and individuals are confined to movements within fixed boundaries (1982).

One issue with using Foucault to probe power relations in this case is the general lack of a

normative dimension to his analysis of power, which 'stresses the productive and constitutive characteristics of power' (Robinson 1997: 371-372; Foucault 1986: 242). This leads Robinson to suggest, in expanding Foucault's analysis power, that relations may be characterized as dominative, exploitative, or emancipatory (1997: 371). Furthermore, Robinson contends, 'it seems historically appropriate to link the techniques and strategies of power elaborated by the racial state in South Africa with a concept of domination' (Robinson 1997: 372). The post-Apartheid State can be said to have largely moved to a position of individual and population control via productive bio-power strategies, yet the case of Rastas' persecution and punishment for the consumption of cannabis points to strategies of control Foucault considered to be exemplifiers of 'pre-modern regimes' which 'function[ed] through repression and prohibition' (Vaughan 1991: 8).

While Rasta and ganja consumption may act as a form of resistance against power enacted by the State, they simultaneously trigger the application of those very mechanisms of power against individuals. These impositions are evident in the case of Catherine, highlighted above, along with many other Rastas I met during my study whose identification as criminals by the State resulted in their exclusion from consideration for particular employment opportunities. The trade in medicinal plants, operating in the informal economy, is a means by which subjugated Rastas respond to the impositions of the State and pursue a livelihood while attempting to heal the psyches and bodies of themselves and the nation[29]. A quote from an interview with Matthew serves to illustrate this resistance in process:

> But how can I stay out of trouble, I walk everytime I have ganja on me, because of my way of life, you see? So I'm going to be in trouble everytime, you see with police and stuff like that. So it's better then to stick with something then the police won't come as often and on me, you see, search me and stuff like that. For the two years I haven't been searched or taken to a police station. […] But the herbs, because I'm working now herbs it's much better now you see, not even the policeman don't want to search me no more. They just say 'Rasta' [greeting], you see, so I don't know – maybe it's like a spiritual part on these herbs as well, you see. Even, I didn't even know a lot of herbs, maybe a year and a half back, I didn't even know a lot of herbs you see? But I'm one of the biggest doctors here in Cape Town, you see?

Conclusion

In this chapter I have highlighted the role of an increased demand for plant-medicines of Eastern Cape origin, along with the dual-livelihood strategy of cannabis and medicinal plant

29: Further discussion of Rasta herbalist perspectives on protected areas and harvesting controls appears in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

trade in driving the expansion of Rasta herbalist movements beyond proximal harvesting locations in Cape Town. In doing so, the means by which herbalists leverage available transportation modalities has been explored, along with the ways in which plant-medicines influence, and are influenced by, these forms of movement. I have argued that Rasta-transportation-telecommunication assemblages are vital to the activities of herbalists and have resulted in shifting patterns of medicinal plant availability and consumption in both the Eastern and Western Cape. Far from representing an easy path to profit, the processes through which herbalists obtain and transport ganja and plant-medicines are fraught with precarity and danger, often entailing great sacrifice and necessitating adaptive responses on behalf of the Rastas involved. Finally, I have drawn on Foucault in introducing an avenue to analyze the exertion of State control over the movements of Rastas as a result of their relationships with the cannabis plant, arguing that the marginalization enacted through these processes of domination are resisted by herbalists through the trade in medicinal plants.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Introduction

The South African literature on medicinal plants and the people who use them has largely failed to engage with the transformational capacities of plant-human relationships. In working towards a processual understanding of the developmental journeys navigated by Rasta herbalists, this dissertation has drawn on the new mobilities paradigm to document plants and people in motion with one another. Engagements with Rastafari and medicinal plants, often catalyzed by ganja (*Cannabis sativa*), offer opportunities for young men in Cape Town to move outside the confines of the densely-populated and marginalized neighbourhoods where they live and pursue relationships with plants and non-humans in reserves and mountain environments. I argue that these relationships, in addition to forming a dual-livelihood strategy for Rasta herbalists based on the trade of plant-medicines and ganja, result in transformations of both plants and people. To move is to know, and to move through novel environments is to change. However, such paths are not without precarity and danger, and aspiring herbalists must navigate situations in which their movements are slowed, impeded, redirected, or stopped completely. Further complicating matters is that the movements of Rasta herbalists and their harvesting practices in particular do not occur in a vacuum. Rather, such practices and transformations in Cape Town play out alongside, and often in direct conflict with, a conservation strategy founded on the preservation of plant species, habitat conservation, and limitations on the direct use of resources in formally protected areas. This chapter serves to extend a relational understanding of plant-human movements in Cape Town and trace some of the potential implications of mobility for people and plant-medicines.

Protected areas, representation, and modeling

Protected areas are the mainstay of modern conservations efforts and are established with the ideal goal of representing all species within a given geographical area (Rodrigues et al. 2004; Margules and Pressey 2000). However, conservation areas in the Cape Floristic Region (CFR) - an area covering approximately 90,000km^2 of the southwestern tip of Africa and playing host to some 9000 species of vascular plants – do not adequately represent and conserve the region's biodiversity (Goldblatt and Manning 2000; Myers et al. 2000; Rebelo 1997). Cape Town and the greater CFR are not unique in this respect, with conservation areas throughout South Africa having often been restricted to establishment on land deemed unsuitable for agriculture (Rouget et al. 2003). Thus, geographically fixed protected areas have become increasingly isolated as a result of habitat

destruction (Peters and Myers 1991). Compounding these issues of biodiversity representation and conservation are possible species range shifts resulting from environmental change, with species potentially moving out of protected areas as regional climatic conditions change over time (Hannah et al. 2007). Such movements have been identified by ecological researchers and have accelerated efforts to generate future trend predictions based on statistical modeling (Root et al. 2003). Such modeling aims to determine the percentage of species represented within existing protected areas under future scenarios, as well as to assist in the identification of areas to bring under conservation to enhance future species representation (Hannah et al. 2007).

People, protected areas and sustainable resource use

While protected areas and the use of statistical modeling in the face of climate change will undoubtedly prove vital to efforts toward conserving biodiversity in Cape Town and across the rest of the globe, both are predicated on a Cartesian logic that appears blind to the complexities of human entanglements with plants. Plants move, humans move, and humans move with plants, yet distribution and dispersal models have yet to attain the complexity to include the impacts of these plant-human assemblages in their equations. Where, then, is the consideration of people and their relationships with plants within the protected areas framework? This question has been widely and fiercely debated since the acceleration of global expansion of protected areas began in the 1980s. Arising from conservation conventions such as the 1982 World Parks Convention in Bali and the Rio Summit a decade later, the increased establishment of protected areas brought with it attempts to address the concerns of local communities and their resource needs (Naughton-Treves et al. 2005: 221-222). These developments have resulted in a more people-centered paradigm for parks, with many attempts having been made to manage sustainable harvesting from protected areas. However, considerable debate remains 'regarding the relative weight of social and economic objectives versus biodiversity goals in protected area management' (Naughton-Treves et al. 2005: 221). As Cunningham rightly points out, 'sustainable management of wild plant use by people depends as much upon an understanding of the biological component as it does on the social and economic aspects of wild plant use. Without an understanding of ecological, political and socio-economic factors, plans for sustainable use are likely to fail' (2001: 5). Compounding these conservation obstacles is the fact that sustainable resource use programs in protected areas, especially in areas vulnerable to exploitation and with high diversity of species, are extremely management intensive and difficult to establish and maintain with the tight budgetary constraints of many conservation departments (Cunningham 2001: 5). Finally, the contribution of protected areas

to local livelihoods through resource use is difficult to quantify, further complicating matters (Naughton-Treves et al. 2005).

Rasta herbalist perspectives on protected areas

The demarcation of protected areas and a 'fences and fines' approach to enforcement of restrictions against the harvest of plants was viewed by many of my participants as a direct continuation of colonial occupation; a line stretching back to the arrival of the Dutch and their subsequent oppression of the indigenous Khoisan. Matthew offered me his understanding of the history of Dutch-Khoisan relations in Cape Town, explaining that Jan van Riebeck and his men had been very sick upon arriving at the Cape and were subsequently treated and healed with plant-medicines by the local Khoisan:

> After that, a lot of shooting start. They kill the Khoisan people now, you see. The Khoisan people must show them now these herbs, which was healing them. Because a lot of people was dying on sea now, you see? And they want this stuff. And those Khoisan people didn't want to help them, now the Khoisan people see they are killing the people so we must now help them. Going to make the people extinct now, you see? So now they're showing them. That's why most of the places here in Cape Town is in camp, you see? You can't pick a lot of herbs here in Cape Town, you will go to jail very quickly here in Cape Town, you see. These are places that is not, um, nature reserve – you will still go to jail you see.

To Matthew and many of my other Rasta participants who trace their origins to the Khoisan, the imposition of controls regarding the harvesting of plant-medicines and access to the areas where they grow is a continuation of the oppression of their Khoisan ancestors. The State has become a temporal extension of the power exerted by the Dutch colonists over the indigenous people and local nature, with local conservation officials holding control over people's access to plant resources. Khoisan descendant claims and Cape-Dutch-Khoi stories, along with practices relating to medicinal plants, are contributing to the performance of a set of place-based identities by Rasta herbalists in Cape Town (Cresswell 2002). I believe the conflict with local nature conservation institutions and individuals can be further understood as a clash of epistemological frameworks held by Rastas and the dominant ethos of the conservation sector. Protected areas are founded on an epistemological foundation which views plants as static members of a population. In this framework, plant forms correlate with taxonomic identities which live in databases, journal articles,

and books. Physical boundaries are mapped around plants to limit human contact and conserve species by maintaining their presence within the confines of the protected area. The movement of plants, whether through climate change or harvest by humans, is a threat to the stability of this statically-emplaced system and harvesting therefore takes on negative connotations. Rasta herbalists, on the other hand, hold consumptive relationships with plants that are in contradiction with the dominant conservation ethos in the Western Cape. Mobile Rasta herbalists transgress imposed boundaries and interface with plant forms through harvest, a performance of its own entailing travel and precarity - as discussed in Chapter 4, and the assemblage may grow to span vast distances. It is precisely through its movement that a plant is able to become a medicine and be consumed or utilized by a person or animal. The medicine is in the movement. Jacob offered his thoughts on the role of Rasta herbalists in the movements of plants: 'For us, we're just instruments of God ne? Ya, we just distribute because we're the hands of God now'. Plants are considered part of Creation, and all Creation flows from God. Through their harvesting activities, Rastas engage with the offerings of God – plants in this example – and render them mobile through their movements, thus bringing healing to the people of Cape Town and South Africa.

Harvesting and sustainability

Rastas who harvest sustainably argue from their experience that plants grow stronger and faster after harvesting. Jacob framed these activities as assisting the plant by relieving it of pressure:

> Cause you not gonna just *destroy,* you know? You just gonna relieve that tree from the pressure that it has. Because you know what happens with trees, they grow, they bloom, you know? They give *flowers*. So when it's that time, after the flowering, you need to reap, you know? That fruits. So that the tree can feel, eh fresh again.

Of course, not all individuals involved in the harvest of medicinal plants do so sustainably, with many harvesting excessively due to greed, ignorance, or economic necessity. The presence of conservation officials and regulations against harvesting were also mentioned to me by participants as compounding the negative actions of harvesters who 'just want to be fast' in order to avoid detection. Such individuals are primarily motivated by profit, the value in the plant-medicine, and not a holistic engagement with healing or the environments where plants grow. As a result, some of my participants claim having seen the greatest impacts of such harvesting activity in areas that are located closest to densely-populated and marginalized areas. These practices stand in contrast to those taught to me by Matthew during our harvesting trip in the Muizenberg area. He stressed that when you find medicinal plants, before beginning any harvesting, you must first explore the area to

evaluate the size of the population and individual plants growing there. Larger plants are often located uphill from the first individuals sighted and by exploring the surrounding landscape one can distribute the impact of ones harvesting evenly across the population, helping to ensure the continued presence and growth of plants comprising the local population. In addition, care must be taken to leave the land in a healthy condition by filling in holes that may result from harvesting, not harvesting young/small/immature plants, and distributing any processed plant material over the area so that it may decompose and return nutrients to the ground. Herbalists conducting such practices do so because they recognise the role they play in ensuring the continued presence of plant-medicines. Not only do herbalists rely on this continued presence to ensure their livelihoods, but also to assist people in healing their ailments and striving for enhanced wellbeing.

Dynamic medicines and shifting plant-human landscapes

This dissertation has argued that plant-human relations are influenced by historical, political, economic and social processes. In the case of Cape Town, the historical ripples formed by the colonisation of the Cape by the Dutch in the second half of the 20th Century, along with the dissolution of the Apartheid regime and a newfound freeing-up of movement for many black South Africans, have had powerful effects on patterns of plant use and plant-human movement. The proliferation of Rasta herbalists over the past three decades has stimulated renewed vigour in local interactions of plants and people. Research into the medicinal plant knowledge in the Western Cape in the 1980's and 1990's focused on elderly 'coloured' people and found that, although significant indigenous plant knowledge existed, it was in need of documentation to help prevent the loss of important knowledge – particularly in urban areas where people mostly purchased their plant-medicines from traders (Ferreira 1987; Ferreira et al. 1996). Rasta herbalists have effectively stepped into this role as carriers of indigenous plant knowledge, having begun 'to gather medicinal plant knowledge from elderly people during the late 1970's' (Aston Philander 2011: 579). However, the practices and transformations of Rasta herbalists evince more than a simple transfer of knowledge from one Cape generation to the next. Instead, through the complex exchanges and interactions resulting from human migration, urbanization, and the movement of plants and humans, the embodied medicinal plant knowledge of Rasta herbalists in Cape Town has become a multi-vectored mosaic of various South African and European pharmacopoeias. The co-performance of Rasta herbalists and medicinal plants in Cape Town has taken on increased political significance in the light of Khoisan descendency claims and the critique of local conservation strategies through a historical lens of colonial oppression and land control. Such

processes have been examined in this dissertation through a central framing theme of mobility, primarily in terms of the movements of people and plants between the Western and Eastern Cape provinces of South Africa, to argue that the use of plant-medicines is dynamic and has important implications for both people and plants.

Implications for people and plants

The movements of people are serving to multiply the meanings of plants in Cape Town by weaving new threads of knowledge, use, and understanding through the dense meshworks of the city. In a general sense, such processes were implicated by my participants through reference to the shift in popularity of particular plants and plant-parts over the course of their engagement with the local trade in plant-medicines. For instance, Matthew noted that when he started as a herbalist, wild garlic (*Tulbaghia sp.*) and buchu (*Agathosma sp.*) were the predominant medicinal plants traded in Cape Town and that he primarily traded leaves:

> Matthew: I've been working mostly leaves for, say, three years back now, two years back. It's different barks and roots have come through now, you see?
>
> Andrew: And that was because?
>
> Matthew: Travel. I started travelling and developed myself, you see?

Matthew's increased trade in barks and roots has been driven both by his movements outside of Cape Town and the Western Cape, as well as the migration of people from the Eastern Cape who are familiar with the use of these plant parts. Such shifts show that the movements of plants and people may also potentially result in profound changes in local ecosytems and landscapes. For example, while on a harvesting trip to Muizenberg, a beach-side suburb south of Cape Town city centre, Matthew explained that he and Simon had been taught about the use of the leaves of various medicinal herbs by the Elder, but that they had learned about the use of the roots of the same plants themselves because 'that's what the people know and want'. This shift was exemplified as Matthew used a simple digging stick to harvest the short rhizome and fleshy roots of *Anemone vesicatoria*. Having been taught about the use of the leaves of the plant, known in Afrikaans as katjidrieblaar, Matthew now harvested the root and rhizome for sale to Eastern Cape migrants who know the plant by its isiZulu/isiXhosa name, umvuthuza (Van Wyk et al. 2013: 44). Such multiplications in local uses of plants hold profound implications for the future health and persistence of medicinal plant species in Cape Town and the broader Western Cape. In addition, these processes appear likely to continue as local Rasta herbalists expand their knowledge of medicinal plants of local and Eastern

Cape provenance, both through their own movements and those of other migrants and travellers who carry patterns of use and knowledge with them. Future research into plant-human relations in Cape Town would do well to document and trace specific instances of shifting patterns in the use of local plants in terms of the implications for people and plants.

Fig. 4: Matthew using a digging-stick to harvest the root and rhizome of umvuthuza/katjidrieblaar (*Anemone vesicatoria*).

Conclusion

By documenting the unfolding relations of plants and people in motion, this dissertation has aimed to take steps toward a filling of the gap in the South African literature covering plant-human relations while working towards an understanding of plant-medicine as process. Based on a total of two months of deep ethnographic fieldwork conducted over the course of one year, with a focus on the stories and development of Rasta herbalists in Cape Town, this

dissertation has shown that the practices and knowledge associated with plant-medicines are dynamic and have important implications for the heath of both people and plants, particularly in urban areas with pronounced poverty and social marginalization. In concrete terms, the work has traced the inter-regional travels of Rasta-herbalist-plant-ganja assemblages and examined the role of movement and environment in allowing individuals to pursue novel constructions of self and identity. In addition, the precarities and dangers of such movement have been shown to be integral to the navigations of aspiring and practising herbalists while threatening to impede, slow, or redirect the momentum of their lives. I have argued that to move is to know, and that the authority and healing ability of a herbalist grows in concert with their accumulation of experience through movement. Furthermore, the examinations of Rasta herbalist becomings in this dissertation have shown that plants are woven into, and out of, historical and political processes and that they can be interpreted and analysed as convergence points for contestations over ethnicity, land, and power. These arguments have been framed with reference to the development of ethnobotany as a discipline, with the work as a whole finding theoretical and methodological grounding in the new mobilities paradigm. By maintaining a primary focus on people, plants, ideas, and objects in motion, static conceptions of identity and place are opened-up, allowing a paradigm of performance to inform understandings of socio-techno-environmental processes. Given the rate of urban expansion in Cape Town, along with that of so many other cities across the world, it is becoming increasingly important to pursue innovative and ecologically-contextualized approaches to ensure the future health of people, plants, and wider ecosystems. It is my sincerest hope that this dissertation will serve as a contribution to such endeavours.

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