

Elizabeth Harney

The Densities of Modernism

In October 2008, painter Iba N'Diaye died quietly in Paris at the age of eighty. For many scholars engaged with writing histories of modernism on the African continent and in its diasporas, his passing served as an urgent reminder of the disappearance of a pioneering generation, whose experiences and contributions need documentation. Perhaps this sense of urgency was also tinged with a touch of melancholy, a suspicion that, at the time of his death, the art world lacked sufficient insight not only to acknowledge the importance of his work but also to digest the broader implications of a career that so elegantly upended received histories of modernisms here and there, now and then. Indeed, in the emerging literature on African visual modernisms, N'Diaye is seen as an anomaly—an artist who did not follow the prescribed path of a nationalist aesthetic. In the standard histories of European modernism, N'Diaye's African identity makes him ineligible as a central figure. His practice is most often understood as derivative, his talent, in the end, an aberration.

N'Diaye achieved a fine measure of success during his lifetime, enjoying accolades and retro-

spectives in Europe and in his home country of Senegal. The most recent retrospective took place at Dak'Art: Biennale de l'Art Africain Contemporain in the spring before his death.¹ Despite such recognition, the literature surrounding his work suggests a continual unease with the framing mechanisms available to "contain" his art. Originally from Saint-Louis, the capital of what was then known as French West Africa, N'Diaye began his artistic career by creating posters for the local cinema and then pursued his studies in fine arts in Montpellier and at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris. He subsequently apprenticed in the sculpture studios of Ossip Zadkine and Pierre Coutin, also in Paris. As a modern artist in post-war Paris, N'Diaye was associated with Le Groupe de la Ruche, known for its dislike of abstraction. He found inspiration and sustenance in the glorious histories of European painting traditions, often citing Francisco Goya, Rembrandt, and Diego Velázquez as key to his work. His admiration for these artists took the form of repeated, pointed intellectual interrogation. Techniques of drawing were central to his practice. His greatest works were grouped in series that emerged from long, intense investigations of subject matter and experimentations with media.²

N'Diaye was also an artist with roots in empire. He was heir to the circles of the colonial intellectuals of the early twentieth century who negotiated modernity's "hidden face" in interwar Paris and in the cafés of colonial Senegal. These cosmopolitans produced counterdiscourses of modernism—in literature and the visual arts—and crafted new notions of subjectivity based on anticolonial activities and shared senses of black consciousness.³

Even though he played a central part in the founding of a national art school in Senegal after the country's independence, the widespread engagements of many colonial and postcolonial artists with the legacies of European primitivism—whether couched as nationalist or ethnic reclamations of heritage or as synthesizing, modernization projects—were of little concern to him. While many in the art world linked his contemporary works to those of the African art traditions canonized in Parisian galleries, flea markets, and collections, N'Diaye bluntly insisted: "As for the formal relationship which may exist between my art and the visual arts of the African continent, I didn't research them in a systematic manner. I studied African sculpture just as I did Roman and Gothic and European sculpture: by drawing it when I saw it in the museums."⁴

Perhaps unprepared for or unwilling to deal with the complexities, multiple references, and freedoms breached by N'Diaye's practices, many

writers over the years have characterized him as an artist somehow "caught" between cultures: Senegalese (or often more generally African) and European. N'Diaye was seen as struggling with two very different and ultimately irreconcilable cultural worlds, brought on him through the violence of colonialism. This liminal status was made slightly more palatable in the era of multiculturalist exhibitions and postcolonial theory, in which "in-betweenness" became a marker of trendy "hybridity."⁵

For his part, N'Diaye had little time for the inadequacies and prejudices of his critics. His response to their discussions was always measured and clear. He wanted his work to be considered as typical of an individual entangled in and formed by the *mélange* of twentieth-century life: "I think that everyone is hybrid. Nobody, no matter what civilization, can say that his originality is simply an originality of place. Originality goes beyond original provenance, thanks to the acquisition from and contact with others. There is, therefore, always a mixing. The mixing is a universal part of being human."⁶

More recently, curators such as Okwui Enwezor have honored N'Diaye's "insistence that artistic community must first be constituted on the basis of artistic discourse" rather than identity.⁷ Enwezor has advocated for a formalist reading of N'Diaye's work, noting, "Despite his indisputable credentials as one of Africa's most important and gifted painters of his generation, N'Diaye is an artist. or, to be more precise, a painter first before he is an African or Senegalese artist."⁸

This postidentitarian stance is refreshing but may have the unfortunate effect of limiting the lessons that N'Diaye's work and experiences can provide in the discussions of multiple, cosmopolitan, or polycentric modernities (that occupy me here). His work and its uneasy place within the discursive frameworks of art history and the lineages of art making require and indeed encourage new and capacious models of scholarship. Rather than simply enveloping him within or isolating him from a "school" or movement, these approaches must enable a focus both on the varied ways of "belonging to the modern" and on the densities and cartographies of modern cultural life.⁹

Art historian and curator Susan Vogel was one of the first to relay the news of N'Diaye's passing. As a close friend and longtime collaborator of the artist, Vogel has done perhaps more than any other historian of her generation to bring N'Diaye's works into the realm of an African arts scholarship that had shown limited interest in an artist with so little connection to

the Africa of the imagination.¹⁰ For the most part, scholars of her generation ignored N'Diaye's work, in particular, and histories of modernism, in general, in their quest to document and legitimize the "traditional." Many would have passed through Paris over the years, working in the storerooms and archives of the Musée de l'Homme, making their acquaintances with this talented painter, who happened not only to be in charge of some of the research materials in the museum but also to be married to curator Francine N'Diaye. Where, one must ask, was his work within these scholars' frame of reference? How could they continue to speak of an Africa of precolonial, authentic traditions while disavowing the modern artist in their midst?¹¹ And how was the modernity of the colonial period in Africa, into which he was born, stubbornly overlooked?

These questions gain greater poignancy in light of the frequency with which they may be applied to the careers of modernists from the former colonial spheres, many of whom lived or trained for substantial periods of time within the metropole. Two examples come immediately to mind, but there are countless others. In writing about the reception of the work of South African modernist Ernest Mancoba, Rasheed Araeen notes angrily:

All the writing that I have read about him says that he was an important member of the historically important movement of modernism, CoBrA, but he was ignored and his historical achievement thus undermined. But nobody has rationalised this ignorance in the light of the Eurocentric philosophy of modernism. If Mancoba was ignored and excluded from history because his work was a threat to the Eurocentric historical trajectory and genealogy of mainstream modernism, why do we expect the West to recognise Mancoba's—and for that matter other African artists'—achievement?¹²

In a well-known caustic essay, Olu Oguibe confronts these legacies with a scathing critique of Thomas McEvilley's interview of New York mixed-media artist Ouattara, on the occasion of the first African pavilion at the 1990 Venice Biennale. As the interviewer repeatedly chooses a line of questioning that ultimately primitivizes his subject, Oguibe imagines Ouattara's thought process:

He recognizes, albeit painfully, that the terrain he occupies, the terrain to which he is perpetually consigned, in which he is confined, is one under surveillance, where every utterance, every gesture, carries with it implications of enormous weight for himself as an African art-

ist, and for his practice. And even more importantly he recognizes this terrain as an outpost, a location on the peripheries of the principalities that the critic represents—a border post at which McEvilley is the border official. This is the locality of the African artist dealing with the West, irrespective of her domicile.¹³

Though these artists worked decades apart from each other in the centers of art power, their mere presence served to disrupt the ideological formations supporting the narrative of modernism—most specifically, its claims to universalism and purity, with its reliance on imagined temporal and spatial distancings from “others.” Araeen continues, “Even if we produce a scholarship by which Africa can claim the achievement of artists like Mancoba, and use their achievement as an example to construct a modern identity for Africa, it will not be sufficient to claim their place within the mainstream history of modernism.”¹⁴ Perhaps Araeen’s frustration could be allayed were he to follow his own advice and shift his efforts away from merely finding a place for these artists within the monologue of European modernism to focusing, instead, on their global attitudes and steadfastly dialogical modernist practices. While he has reason to lament the continuing Eurocentrism of modernism’s stories within the art world, his commentary ignores a large and vibrant field of scholarship on polycentric modernities that has matured since the mid-1990s with writings by Edward Said, Simon Gikandi, and most pointedly, the work of Timothy Mitchell from 2000.

Of course, issues of place, space, and temporality have been central concerns of postcolonial theory, allowing scholars to unpack the metanarratives of “naturalized” center-periphery relationships and to reconceptualize the complex historical and cultural exchanges of the modern era. James Clifford, Stuart Hall, and Kobena Mercer, among others, have profitably studied these counterhegemonic, translation practices as behaviors that typify critical or discrepant cosmopolitanisms.¹⁵ In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said discusses the “voyages in” and the “hybrid cultural work” of third world intellectuals and artists who were engaged in “the conscious effort to enter into the discourse of Europe and the West, to mix with it, transform it, to make it acknowledge marginalized or suppressed or forgotten histories.”¹⁶ While these approaches help us address the spatial positioning of the diaspora, they may not, in the end, provide the key to understanding the relationships between pluralist modernities in Europe and sites and moments of modernity in other parts of the globe.

Winifred

Genealogies and Cartographies: Modernity as Global Design?

The history of modernism is not just a narrative of various movements and their main agents but represents a body of philosophical ideas that underpin and legitimize its Eurocentricity. These ideas go back to the philosophy of history and its subjectivity formulated and rationalized by European thinkers. We can expose and criticize this philosophy and show how it served the ideology of colonialism, but this will not take us too far.¹⁷

Ironically, Araeen's frustration with European myopia causes him to ask the wrong questions about these silenced histories and terrains of artistic practice. While one might never be able to disarm the policed borders of Europe's modernity, certainly one can ask how modernity and modernisms were imagined, experienced, adopted, or shunned in multiple locations. How are they characterized? Could they be both hegemonic and enabling? Are there palpable differences between "parallel," "alternative," or "polycentric" modernities, or are these distinctions just semantic? Finally, will a better theoretical framework addressing modernity's histories ultimately enable us to better understand our shared humanity?¹⁸

Tracing the genealogy and "tenses" of European modernity is a first step toward unpacking more complicated narratives. In his edited volume, *Questions of Modernity*, Timothy Mitchell unravels the logics of temporality and spatiality that supported the linearity of European modernism and determined its entanglements within a global framework. He notes, "The discipline of historical time reorganizes discordant geographies into a universal modernity."¹⁹

Essentially this book seeks to complicate the histories of Western modernity, denying the "originality and coherence of its claims" ("Stage," 16). Contributors explore how various forms of managing, subjectivity, and self-identity; uses of space, power, and vision; and developments of social formations were constituted outside of European borders and manifested "in reticulations of exchange and production encircling the world" (ibid., 2). They lay bare the remarkable manner in which the metanarrative of European modernity (and art history's telling of modernism) was able to trivialize and marginalize others by simply "presenting them as variations," establishing "the concept of a universal history, in relation to which all local histories—delayed, displaced, blocked, or rearranged—receive their meaning" (ibid., 9). As Mitchell notes, "At issue, then, is whether one can find a way to theorize the question of modernity that relocates it within a global context and, at the same time, enables that context to complicate, rather

than simply reverse, the narrative logic of modernization" (ibid., 7). Initial efforts to situate modernity as a set of global histories, appearing in localized forms and engaging in critical acts of reversal, co-optation, and resistance,²⁰ ultimately left in place assumptions of a universal, singular form of modernism to which all "other" (parallel or alternative) modernisms were compared through measures of difference, variation, or lack.²¹

Heeding Mitchell's findings, theorists have sought to circumvent the supremacy of European spatiotemporal paradigms. They have either expanded on or encouraged less rigid historical markers, identifying various "moments" of modernity that are linked to localized dynamics, or they have drawn attention to measures of modernity that deal with its constitution and/or character as it arises in multiple places and eras.²² The former emphasis might include writings by Kobena Mercer, who characterizes "modernism as a multiple time-space continuum,"²³ bearing in mind the interconnectedness of global engagements with ideas of the modern. The editors of *Art since 1900*, a shockingly Eurocentric look at twentieth-century art history, disingenuously trumpet an approach that acknowledges the "diverse cultural space-times" of modernity.²⁴ In numerous publications, Walter D. Mignolo has encouraged us to think about the covalence of modernity and coloniality, the continuing relevance of the relations of coloniality in our era, and the pressing need to break the postcolonial emphasis on center/periphery axes in order to allow a south-south dialogue about trans-modern histories.²⁵

Susan Stanford Friedman calls for an understanding of "planetary modernity" "that can be both precise enough to be useful and yet capacious enough to encompass the divergent articulations of modernity in various geohistorical locations." Asking, "What, after all, is modernity? Does the term *modernity* lose specificity in being broadened beyond its conventional meaning, of what happened in the West after 1500 (for example, capitalism, nation-state formation, imperialism, Enlightenment, Industrialization, et cetera)," Friedman seeks not only to fracture the time-space paradigm but also to trace modernity's constitutive traits.²⁶

Perhaps the paradigmatic shift needed here is that similar to the one affected by Benedict Anderson when addressing another highly problematic term, *nationalism*. Anderson was able to break open the debate on measures of historical authenticity simply by insisting that "communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined."²⁷ Could we read Friedman's suggestion as a similar opportunity? She urges us "to move beyond a nominal" definition (a nam-

ing of modernity at certain coordinates in time and space) and toward a “relational” model that “regards modernity as a major rupture from what came beforehand in different locations.”²⁸ She continues, “I suggest that modernity involves a powerful vortex of historical conditions that coalesce to produce sharp ruptures from the past that range widely across various sectors of a given society. The velocity, acceleration, and dynamism of shattering change across a wide spectrum of societal institutions are key components of modernity.”²⁹

I would caution, however, that this common reading of modernity as a product of rupture, or sudden and violent change, might not be broad enough to address the vexed, contingent, and multiple moments and geographies of the modern. It seems crucial to temper this reading by equally acknowledging the significance of slow or creeping forms of modernity—less dramatic, quotidian negotiations of subjectivity, identity, and senses of contemporaneity that are vital to lived experiences and the building of habitus.³⁰ On the other hand, there is also a danger that Friedman’s relational approach, although admirable for its loosening of time frames, could minimize the violence of colonialism and lessen the role that global capitalism has played in creating these ruptures.

Partha Mitter’s work on modernisms in India also aims to shift our emphasis beyond space-time dynamics toward the mechanisms of modernity itself.³¹ Mitter regards appropriative and hybridizing practices as constitutive of modernity at large.³² Although he reaches for a “truly global” modernism, he is careful to note, “multiple local possibilities illuminate the global processes of modernity more effectively than a grand globalizing narrative.”³³ His text acknowledges those artists who seemingly adopt foreign models without obvious intent to deform or critique, without clear connections to a model of avant-gardism. How might one handle these kinds of artistic pursuits? Should one dismiss them as “blind” mimicry, accommodationism, or naïveté? Is one obliged to assign them a politics of resistance?

A Case for African Modernisms?

Art historian and curator Chika Okeke-Agulu writes of the urgent need to map the art history of twentieth-century Africa. He has made both empirical and theoretical contributions to what he confidently calls an emerging “discipline of modern African art history.”³⁴ While lamenting the absences

in past scholarship, he nonetheless points to a "vigorous growth in the field" of study.³⁵ These comments belie a momentous and contentious shift in the fields of African and modernist art history.³⁶ As noted, this shift involves a rethinking of modernity's histories but also, ironically, an adoption of or reliance on some of its most prevailing mechanisms and forms, such as the archive, the narrative, and the interlocutor. The continuing appeal of these tools would seem to suggest an extension of rather than a break from earlier modernist models of representation, art historical scholarship, and processes of canon formation.³⁷ But here archive building and narrative writing is problematized, used to complicate the structural conditions of modernity itself rather than support them. In Okeke-Agulu's terms, "It is clear enough that the ignored modernist era, with all its debates, confusions and vigor, represents a crucial juncture that can help us put the more contemporary art, with its insistent hybridization, its stylistic and conceptual complexities, but also its origins and trajectories, in proper perspective."³⁸ While seemingly vague, Okeke-Agulu's comments point to a concerted set of projects that address past offenses and carefully set about constructing new narratives for and about Africa's modernity. In particular, Enwezor has called repeatedly for a "critical biography" of Africa and for an amassing of an "archive," through concerted efforts to "salvage" or "recover" the lost moments of modernity that Eurocentric scholarship had all but erased.³⁹

Leaving aside the nagging issues of a "continental" frame and the sense that there is yet another mapping of Africa under way, these discussions beg the question of procedure. This work needs to address how to set about writing new narratives in light of the European modernist epistemologies that underlie art historical practice and African art studies. Are the tools and frames discussed above viable for the creation of a canon of comparative African modernisms? These are difficult issues, the resolutions to which are often only hinted at, left largely unaddressed, or deemed too varied to allow consensus.

Okeke-Agulu provides us with at least one reason for these efforts. With an overdue and much-needed focus on the modern, he hopes to identify the "origins and trajectories" of contemporary practice. Tracing these origins, however, is no easy feat, as one must constantly negotiate ingrained assumptions within the literature about the nature of traditions and their connections to either a precolonial or an ahistorical vision of Africa. In the cases of artists who have consciously mined the past and articulated their connec-

tions to it, these paths may seem obvious, though rather than straightforward progressions, they are always contingent and often circuitous affairs. For many others, these developments are less identifiable and perhaps purposely left unsaid. Furthermore, the traits that Okeke-Agulu assigns to the contemporary—hybridity and stylistic and conceptual complexity—could usefully, of course, be equally applied to modernist practices.

When Okeke-Agulu speaks of an ignored “modernist era,” its invocation should be understood as situational and local. As I will suggest, in the case of Senegal, the temporality for aesthetic modernity is linked directly to the immediate post-independence era and to the terrain of the nation. As one of the best-documented histories of modernism on the African continent, Senegal’s story is “overdetermined” by an approach that assumes “modern artistic subjectivity is linked to political independence . . . [and that] the notion of artistic freedom was antithetical to the ethos of colonialism.”⁴⁰ While certainly true to some degree, this assertion may be limiting, as it stems from a scenario of rupture (suggested by Friedman) and, as such, cannot take into account the densities of modernism at work in early-twentieth-century colonial Africa. In the case of Senegal, if we are prepared to see the moment of nationalism as but one of modernity’s many “stagings,” we may be able to better obtain a picture of the overlapping as well as succeeding moments of modernity; its imbrication with colonialism, notions of citizenship, and subjectivity; and its continuing legacies within the art world.

The École de Dakar: A Moment of Modernism

During the heady era of decolonization and independence, many intellectuals in Africa and elsewhere in the colonial world would engage in nostalgic reconstructions or reimaginings of mythic, precolonial traditions to counteract the negatives of colonial experiences and to assert cultural pride and uniqueness.⁴¹ Frantz Fanon understood these choices best:

The native intellectual, who decides to give battle to colonial lies, fights on the field of the whole continent. The past is given back its value. Culture, extracted from the past to be displayed in all its splendor, is not necessarily that of his own country. Colonialism, which has not bothered to put too fine a point on its efforts, has never ceased to maintain that the Negro is savage; and for the colonist, the Negro was neither an Angolan nor a Nigerian, for he simply spoke of “the

Negro." . . . The Negro, never so much a Negro as since he has been dominated by the whites, when he decides to prove that he has a culture and to behave like a cultured person, comes to realize that history points out a well-defined path to him: he must demonstrate that a Negro culture exists.⁴²

In the case of 1960s Senegal, a vibrant, state-funded art system helped produce an École de Dakar. Understood as an art movement that promoted new senses of modernist (and artistic) subjectivity and pride in both nation and race, the école's iconography drew heavily on invented and appropriated pan-African imagery. This school's aesthetic choices, with its nods to modernist primitivism, was initially dismissed as derivative until postcolonial critics, who read it as ambiguous, ironic, and politically resistant, salvaged it.

The aesthetic agenda of the emerging École de Dakar was linked specifically to the philosophical writings of Senegal's first president, poet, and intellectual, Léopold Sédar Senghor. Senghor was a central figure within Négritude, a literary and philosophical movement started by a group of young black students from the French colonies who had come to Paris in the 1930s and discovered that, despite their French colonial upbringing and their command of the language and culture, they were seen and treated as outsiders in the metropole. As one of its primary architects, Senghor, while a student and then a young deputy to the National Assembly of France, sought to reignite pride in African cultural subjectivity and to engineer a philosophy to which all blacks, in Africa and throughout its diaspora, could look to revitalize their shared "soul."⁴³ He wrote of a "négritude of the sources," by which he referred to an assumed set of precolonial conditions when Africans lived in harmony with their world, in what he romantically labeled the "kingdom of childhood."⁴⁴

As a quintessentially modernist project, Négritude formed part of a moment ripe with emancipatory and subversive possibilities and one enabled by a marked disillusionment with European civilization and Enlightenment rationalism as well as anticolonist activism. Négritude held promise as a powerful counter-discourse, developed partly through a process of appropriation and rearticulation of earlier European ideas about Africa and its peoples and partly as an exercise in remembering, inventing, or re-constructing African history, myth, religions, and languages.⁴⁵

Central to Senghor's theories of belonging was a belief that black peoples had a profound and essential "spiritual association with African culture,"⁴⁶

Thiongo

mythos of négritude

one that was unaffected by the vicissitudes of history. Keeping in mind the works of European anthropologists and sociologists—Maurice Delafosse, Leo Frobenius, Placide Tempels, and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl—Senghor and his colleagues saw the possibility of rewriting the history of African peoples, making it relevant to contemporary political struggles.⁴⁷ Senghor later reflected on the process of cultural awakening during those first few years in Paris:

I have to stress over and over again that it was also Europe, that it was France which saved us . . . especially by teaching us the values of Black Africa. It will be remembered that the First World War had, in the view of the most lucid minds in Europe, marked some degree of bankruptcy of civilization, i.e. their civilization, through its absurdity as well as the spiritual and material ruins in its wake. . . . Their criticism became radical and extolled the rehabilitation of intuitive reason and of the collective soul, of archetypal images arising from the abysmal depths of the heart, from the dark regions of the groin and the womb.⁴⁸

In order to craft a holistic vision of the black race, Senghor set out to systematically document or identify the values, social institutions, and epistemologies of “traditional” African cultures to which he believed the black soul or *âme nègre* was inextricably linked.⁴⁹ But Senghor also repeatedly encouraged acts of appropriation, famously asserting, “*assimiler, pas être assimilés!*” (assimilate, do not be assimilated!). So while he declared, “We must remain Negroes . . . Negro-Africans. . . . we must drink each day from the gushing springs of rhythm and the image-symbol of love and faith,” he also insisted, “a civilization would stagnate and die if it were not vivified by the power of cultural spirit; its style crystallizes into vacant forms, into formulae, if it does not borrow from others.”⁵⁰ He engaged and mastered anthropological literature and European philosophical writings on links between nationalism and identity.

For example, in his writings on an *esthétique négro-africaine*, Senghor co-opted a figure at the heart of the modernist movement, Pablo Picasso, using him as a model for École de Dakar artists. In a piece called “Picasso en Nigritie,” Senghor pointed to the painter’s ability to combine a respect for his roots in Andalusia with opportunities to learn and borrow from a diverse array of sources.⁵¹ In so doing, Senghor spoke of this modernist icon not simply as a master but as a fellow artist whose lessons the president’s artists could heed.

To many, the cultural productions that emerged under Senghor's patronage in a newly independent Senegal were disturbing visual objectifications of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, a blind adoption of the Other's ideas of oneself.⁵² Highlighting the paradoxical nature of the Négritude project, Michael Lambert asks, "How do Négritude writers return to a land which existed only in the collective imagination of the West?"⁵³ We now know of course that Senghor was far from alone in his measured adoption and clever translation of metropolitan discourses. Said writes extensively about

the work of intellectuals from the colonial or peripheral regions who wrote in an "imperial" language, who felt themselves organically related to the mass resistance to empire, and who set themselves the revisionist, critical task of dealing frontally with the metropolitan culture, using the techniques, discourses, and weapons of scholarship and criticism once reserved exclusively for the European. Their work is, on its merits, only apparently dependent (and by no means parasitic) on mainstream Western discourses; the result of its originality and creativity has been the transformation of the very terrain of the disciplines.⁵⁴

The critiques of Négritude are too numerous to fully cite here. A few of the best known will suffice to trace the healthy debate that it aroused in intellectual circles. While Wole Soyinka's famous quip that a tiger does not need to declare its tigritude was perhaps most cited, others such as Stanislaus Spero Adotevi were equally damning, noting, "the capital error of this older Négritude, the great sin of Négritude in general was to have been, at the outset, inverted love. It was to have believed, even before its birth, in universality, when the universe was forbidden it."⁵⁵

In his analysis of V. Y. Mudimbe's reading of Négritude, Manthia Diawara asserts, "The *négritude* poets, even as they sang about the 'total sum of black values' and denounced European ethnocentrism, were reasserting the superiority of the West over Africa."⁵⁶ He further argues, "Senghor's assimilationist discourse, far from making the African the European's equal, and therefore, uncolonizable, participates in a universalist concept of man that posits Western man as the model and the African as its aberration."⁵⁷

I have argued elsewhere that despite the elitist or indeed self-primitivizing character of the project of Négritude, one needed to move beyond simple explanations of mimicry to those that could acknowledge the common dis-

cursive universe inhabited by oppressed and oppressor in colonial-modern Senegal. This atmosphere led to ongoing critical practices of translation and adaptation and the eventual flowering of Senghor's nationalist project.⁵⁸ I agree with Abiola Irele's reading of Senghor's racially based rhetoric as a "counter-myth" to European hegemonic theories and therefore a rejection of a Gobinist or Darwinian notion of a hierarchy of races.⁵⁹ Chinua Achebe adds: "When Wole Soyinka made the now famous attempt to dismiss the Négritude movement by pointing out that a tiger does not talk tigrity, Senghor . . . made an adequate reply, namely that the tiger does not talk. Perhaps, on account of its breathtaking simplicity, the depth of meaning of that answer was lost on many people. The Negro speaks! And talking is a measure of his humanity."⁶⁰

Now, with the growing discourse on global modernisms, one could break away from the familiar binary structures of colonialism, reverse discourses, and resistance narratives to suggest more fluid approaches to modernist subjectivity as well as shifting "tenses" for the modern. I suspect that N'Diaye's story could be the necessary wedge that could open up standardized histories of the modern in Senegal.

Institutions and Canons of Modernity

In 1960, Senghor assumed the presidency and immediately erected an elaborate institutional and ideological framework through which to imagine ways of belonging to the modern. He envisioned Négritude not only as a theory of racial belonging for black people worldwide but also as a cultural rallying point with which to begin the crucial postcolonial process of nationalist affirmation.⁶¹ With considerable political finesse, the new president utilized Négritude as the language of exchange, creating cultural policy and official state rhetoric to overlay (and consequently underplay) the complexities of Senegalese colonial history, its pressing post-independence socioeconomic concerns, and his ever-present political rivalries with a unifying identity-discourse. The initial efficacy and hegemony of these "new" shared narratives were not lessened by their invented, imagined status.

Interpretations of the École de Dakar have tended to emphasize the manner in which the ideological tenets of Négritude determined its iconographic parameters and how the formal characteristics of European modernism informed its stylistic attributes. "Beaux arts" assumed the symbol of "fine art" in a modernizing Senegal.

Senghor built an art academy, a music conservatory, schools of dance, of architecture and urban design, a tapestry center, and a drama academy.⁶² Through state patronage and personal mentoring, he nurtured a generation of Senegalese artists, showering them with scholarships, prizes, and praise. While Senghor's patronage clearly established an impressive infrastructure for the arts, it was the resultant shared "imaginary" that was most enduring. Indeed, Senghorian patronage invented not simply an artistic canon but also a new social category with its own rhetoric, forms of capital, and power relations. Within this burgeoning art world, the artist assumed a variety of contradictory roles and definitions, serving as ambassador in the international arena, as seer, as documentarian, as representative within the new national space, as court "lap-dog,"⁶³ and as the quintessential male, modernist, cursed, and misunderstood genius.

As the term *École de Dakar* gained currency and popular usage, it glossed over the realities of the individuals confined within it. Not surprisingly, critics dubbed many of the artists of this period as "dupes" or "pawns" of a powerful ideologue and state.⁶⁴ Indeed, the stultifying effect that the institutionalization of Négritude had on the artistic output was, in some instances, painfully obvious. As Soyinka lamented, "One of the unfortunate by-products of Négritude [was] the abysmal angst of low achievement."⁶⁵ And yet, the negotiations of pan-Africanism, the rethinking of local histories, and the borrowing of lexicons from Parisian modernisms as well as from American (African American) visual cultures are endlessly complex.

The seat of visual arts instruction in Senegal was at the *École des Arts du Senegal*. Created in 1960, it followed the template of a number of art schools operating in Africa in the era of decolonization and independence, emphasizing the formal training found in European academies. However, Dakar's school differed significantly in terms of both its methodological breadth and its ideological flavor. In 1960, the instruction in the école was markedly divided. Papa Ibra Tall, a strong supporter of the ideas of Négritude, returned from France to create Section de Recherches en Arts Plastiques Nègres (Section for Research in Black Plastic Arts).⁶⁶ In his teachings, he particularly emphasized the use of "identifiable" African subject matter and sought to deemphasize the impact of Western education on his students, claiming, "When one leaves the European schools of fine arts, one spends the next ten years of life trying to undo these learned habits . . . One has to do exactly the opposite of classical education."⁶⁷

Tall spent his youth on scholarships to the French art schools and in the heart of discussions concerning Négritude, reading the works of Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas, Senghor, Birago Diop, and Alioune Diop and providing illustrations for many of their writings within the pages of *Présence Africaine*.⁶⁸ His immersion in the metropolitan-based Négritude movement prepared him well for the role that Senghor would ask him to play at the art school and then, soon after, as director of a tapestry school. Tall explains the process through which he pursued an aesthetic informed by the spirit of Négritude writings:

So, at the time it was a question of creating, for myself, an artistic language that seemed to me to belong to Africa and to Senegal. I concluded that art is universal but that it was necessary for there to be particularities that one had to transcend to achieve this universality. So I thought that I couldn't imitate what the French were doing. I was completely outside of that tradition. Therefore, I thought that it was necessary for me to construct a completely new language. I was inspired by the theory of Négritude that, back then, you must recall, was unique. Wole Soyinka didn't yet exist and the other theoreticians of the day were economic theoreticians—Nkrumah had an economic theory, not cultural. So, those of us who wanted to create something autonomous, belonging to and reflecting just us, had little to inspire us but Négritude. . . . What interested me in finding a kind of authenticity was not to create pure decoration but to create a language of visual forms which defined me for myself.⁶⁹

In keeping with the humanist proclivity of Senghorian Négritude, Tall approached the fashioning of this new language and identity by playing generously with universalisms and particularisms, often narrating tales of local cultural heroes with a pan-African visual vocabulary, in European oils or dyed, imported wool. The flatness of his compositions, strong outlining, rich colors, and manipulation of forms within the frame could certainly lead European critics to find modernist influences there. His search for a unique voice did not rely simply on a "return to sources" but indicated an understanding of how a carefully constructed, polyvalent visual language could help him craft his own notions of modernism. That he saw this synthesized language as "new" is key to our understanding of a practice that might otherwise, through the heavy layers of history, seem colonized. Tall, it must be emphasized, was one of the few of this new generation of young

artists at work in Dakar who had actually read the Négritude writings of his mentor. Others worked with a more general understanding of the spirit of the moment, interested in renewals of lost heritage, emerging senses of citizenship, and calls for modernization.

In 1965, at the behest of Senghor, Tall founded a tapestry school known as Manufacture Sénégalaise des Arts Décoratifs. This new institution took the tapestry-making school in Aubusson, France, as its model but used what Tall believed to be authentic African themes, colors, and designs.⁷⁰ The school encouraged highly decorative creations, featuring intricate, brightly colored rhythmical patterns and stylized figures, all occupying a shallow space. The tapestries featured scenes of daily life and the marketplace, explored the relationship between the sexes, documented indigenous flora and fauna, memorialized the masks and sculptures of "traditional" Africa, celebrated the heroes of precolonial history, and chronicled local myths. The vibrant works were intended to embody an *esthétique négro-africaine*, and they served as the flagship of the École de Dakar. It was in the production, consumption, interpretation, and distribution of these objects that one saw most clearly Senghor's art world in motion.⁷¹

In 1960, the école recruited another prominent figure when President Senghor invited French mathematician and amateur artist Pierre Lods to contribute his teaching skills and ideas to Tall's department. In 1951, Lods had established the well-known Poto-Poto school of painting in Brazzaville in the former French Congo.⁷² Senghor first met Lods at the Black Artists and Writers Congress in Rome (1959), where the Frenchman gave a speech about his teaching methods, claiming a hands-off approach. Lods's students remember him for his teaching method of "dire rien" (saying nothing).⁷³ Lods became a key personality at the art school while maintaining a separate atelier at his home through which he influenced a whole generation of modern artists.⁷⁴

N'Diaye returned from study in France in 1959 to direct the second section of the new École des Arts, called Section des Arts Plastiques, or simply, fine arts. N'Diaye's section modeled itself on a European art academy, drawing on the academic experiences of its director. Despite the commonly repeated belief that N'Diaye left disillusioned and as an outsider, a kind of martyr to the high-stakes game of cultural authenticity, it is, in fact, possible to argue that his impact was lasting. N'Diaye was, in many ways, central to the Négritude story. He was part of an elite cadre of young Senegalese intellectuals who had the support of the president. Despite his agenda

to emancipate N'Diaye from the shackles of identity scholarship, Enwezor also notes:

Négritude, for Ndiaye's generation, fashioned a dialectic of creative struggle, which allowed artists to free themselves of the inferiority complex imposed by colonial domination. It would not do then to see Ndiaye outside the theoretical horizon, which Negritude claimed for itself as essentially a modernist project par excellence. . . . Ndiaye himself would agree that Senghor's intellectual example through Negritude was not only unavoidable in his growth in terms of understanding his own status as an artist, but also an invaluable asset.⁷⁵

N'Diaye's career remained of much interest to the broader Senegalese art world, even after his permanent relocation to Paris. His impact was not as easy to measure as that of figures who remained within Senghor's system. However, in addition to the talented artists who studied directly with him, such as Djibril Ndiaye or Mor Faye, others would cite him as a model for their own practices—Fodé Camara is the most obvious example.

In 1966, Senghor created the Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres, an extravagant forum from which to launch onto the world stage the cultural productions emerging from this art world and to advocate a black cultural renaissance that superseded nationalist frames. A key component of this affair was a large exhibition of contemporary arts, *Tendances et Confrontations*, organized by N'Diaye. This exhibition would later come to be seen as an important precursor to the current Dak'Art biennials.

On the occasion of the festival, Senghor seemed to leave little doubt as to the place that Négritude held in public discourse, asserting, "In short, the reason why we have shouldered the incredible responsibility of organizing this festival is the defense and celebration of Négritude."⁷⁶ In 1974, the widely touted traveling exhibition, *Art Sénégalais d'Aujourd'hui*, embarked on a worldwide tour, premiering at the Grand Palais in Paris. *Art Sénégalais d'Aujourd'hui* showcased the Senegalese state collection amassed from the annual state-sponsored salons. Featuring the works of thirty-three artists, this show visited twenty additional venues over the next ten years, reaching as far as Brazil, Finland, and Japan.⁷⁷ The consequences of such a long-lasting exhibition of cultural patrimony on the world stage were significant. The exhibition's contents made an enduring impression abroad and served to reinforce the link between state and artist at home. Not surprisingly, the same critiques of self-othering that dogged the creative writing and philo-

sophical treatises associated with Négritude were leveled at the arts school, thought to be its visual embodiment. Many of these critiques gave little agency to the artists involved or credit to the subversive characteristics of the artwork they created.

Returning to Papa Ibra Tall's ruminations on Négritude, modernism, and identity, we see that while Tall is willing to come to terms with the modes of valuing "primitive" arts within the art and culture systems of the West, he approaches these histories with irony and regards his practices of hybridity as powerful, political acts.⁷⁸ Moreover, if readings of the École de Dakar's primitivism could move beyond reprimands and disappointments with the presumably pat examples of traditional Africa employed, critics would see that a number of the most interesting works illustrated modernist reflections or reworkings of local visual histories. For example, Abdoulaye Ndiaye's enormous tapestry, *Bamba and Lat Dior* (1973), depicted a famous meeting between the founder of the Mouride Muslim brotherhood in Senegal, Amadou Bamba, and the man considered one of the last great Wolof warriors, Lat Dior. This meeting took place immediately before the 1886 battle at Dekkile, when Dior was killed by French troops. Similarly, Amadou Ly produced a powerful tapestry depicting Wolof philosopher Kocc Barma, another local cultural hero in the fight against French colonization. The popularity and strength of these figures is based on pre-colonial social systems and suggest the glories of the past age when the *ceddo*, the cavalry, ruled much of the Cap-Vert area. These depictions are sensitive and carefully managed—comments on the fabric of Senegalese life—taking great care with attributes of dress and demeanor. Their efficacy comes from their visual legibility—enabling the stories of these nationalist heroes (for a young and diverse nation) to appeal to broad audiences at home and overseas.

Senghor's patronage—and by extension, this moment in Senegalese modernism—supported a much more varied set of practices than the école model was able to encompass. For example, painter Alpha Wouallid Diallo set about creating heavy, colorful oil paintings of key historical moments in Senegalese colonial history.⁷⁹ Ousmane Sow sculpted distinctive, monumental, and profoundly humanist figures that would lead him to international fame in the 1990s, and Djibril Ndiaye and Guibril André Diop both pursued careers characterized by the sensitive working and reworking of recycled materials.⁸⁰ There is room in this story of modernism.

Even though Négritude's institutionalization occurred in the 1960s, its

seeds were planted many years before in the cosmopolitan colonial spaces of Senegal's four *communes* (long-established, urban coastal centers), Saint-Louis, Dakar, Rufisque, and Gorée, and during the interwar years in Paris. Although James Clifford, Janet Vaillant, V. Y. Mudimbe, and many others have identified the moments of cross-fertilization at work in Paris that readied the way for Négritude to emerge, their insights failed to produce more encompassing considerations of modernity's global faces.⁸¹ These views needed to take into account modernist sensibilities that overlapped, echoed, took on local concern, and varied in colonial modern Africa, on the isles of the Caribbean, or in the streets of Chicago and Harlem.

The temporal arguments of models of alternative/polycentric modernities allow us to see that the conflation of the strong rhetoric of 1960s nationalism with modernism in Senegal is extremely misleading. It is just one moment in a series of relational moments of a polyvalent modernity within Senegal. Senegalese modernism begins in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the self-consciousness and modernist imaginaries that characterized the hybrid cultural spaces of the four communes and held sway in Paris, in the age of negrophilia.⁸² Saint-Louis, along with Senegal's three other communes, was the only site where the French colonial administration seriously attempted to apply a policy of assimilation through administrative and educational means. The populace of these four cities had full political participation in the French Chamber of Deputies as early as 1848, as well as French citizenship.⁸³ Writing about the links between emergent nationalisms and literature in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, David Murphy notes: "to view Senegalese culture and history in terms of a struggle between (African) tradition and (European/Western) modernity, as certain critics have unquestioningly done, is to deny their true complexity in which islam [sic], race, ethnicity, class, gender, as well as the legacy of colonialism, all have a part to play."⁸⁴

Early, pre-École de Dakar paintings created either in informal ateliers held in the homes of creoles or colonial administrators or in the streets (advertisements for the cinema are but one example, early depictions of Sufi saints another) are yet to be studied in any concerted way.⁸⁵ The vibrant studio practices of early colonial modern photographers such as Mama Casset, who served a growing, self-consciously modern, and urbane populace, represent important precursors to the discussions of subjectivity and citizenship in the post-independence era. The complex interactions among Creole populations, Muslim entrepreneurs, and French colonials and the

visualities they created and understood have not been addressed by scholars. How might the healthy practices of glass painters, whose importance increased after French attempts to ban Islamic literature, lead us to discussions that could complicate past readings of the space-time coordinates and axes of local modernities?

So we find ourselves back at N'Diaye's childhood movie houses—sites that formed a seemingly inconsequential, charming detail of his biography, one that is repeated faithfully with little reflection. What kinds of visual modernities operated in and around these movie houses and their advertisements in Saint-Louis? Were they not addressed to an inquisitive, self-conscious public, engaged for several generations in sophisticated trade networks, supportive of a heated politics of identity and citizenship, mindful of the advantages and challenges of the hybrid nature of modernity? What led a young N'Diaye to pick up a paintbrush in service of the cinema? The fabric of this local modernity surely gave N'Diaye the sense of self and independence needed to pursue his creative career, seeking to insert himself into the lineages of European painting practices to which he did not have immediate cultural affinity. One can hear this story of urban modernity in his oft-quoted words to his young students, but only if one is prepared to listen closely to it and to read it with the knowledge of situated, multiple modernities:

Notably to my young colleagues, I would give several words of advice: be on guard against those who insist that you must be "Africans" before being painters or sculptors, for those who, in the name of authenticity, which remains to be defined, continue to want to preserve you in an exotic garden. . . . the majority of us do not come from traditional artistic families, . . . but rather, we are sons of African cities, which were created, for the most part, in the colonial era, and were crucibles of an original culture, in which, according to the country, foreign or indigenous cultural contributions dominate. We are both the sons and creators of this culture, which so disturbs those nostalgic for the Africa of the "noble savage." It is in this role that you have a very great responsibility: to make our profession legitimate in the eyes of our fellow countrymen, and in those of men from all the continents (under whose attentive or anxious gaze Africa is more than ever placed), making us masters of techniques which alone will permit us to overtake the period of infantile imagery, to renew ourselves

and to give us the courage to advance the iconographic themes of contemporary Africa, "a shattered continent," more now than ever a victim, but whose artists must contribute to giving a future image of the continent which, liberated from biased images, will elaborate a new "Africanity."⁸⁶

As we study the textures of individual lives, as we begin to recognize the shared dreams and defeats involved in the processes of belonging and becoming, we see our historical lens blurring and searching simultaneously to broaden and narrow focus. We can thus operate with the knowledge that modernities and their articulations are dense, opaque matters, irrevocably intertwined and unstable. Surely N'Diaye's anomalous status in the literature indicates its limits, not his own. Friedman's ideas of rupture now seem inapplicable to both N'Diaye's engagements with the long-standing, slow processes of modernization and cosmopolitanism in Saint-Louis and to his straightforward choice to embark on a long-lasting dialogue, on his terms, with European painting traditions that hold great promise for his craft. His modernities entail "overlap and interdependence that cannot theoretically be described as only the reactive assertion of a separate colonial or native identity."⁸⁷

N'Diaye's participation in multiple modernities has made it difficult to place him in standard historical narratives of "African modernism." Far from being anomalous, he is, in fact, emblematic of the diversity and the density of modernity's stories.

Notes

- 1 In 1996, the Museum Paleis Lange Voorhout in The Hague hosted Iba N'Diaye: Painter between Continents, an exhibition organized by Franz Kaiser, head curator at the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag. In January 2000, Dak'Art: Biennale de l'Art Africain Contemporain honored N'Diaye with a retrospective. Iba N'Diaye: L'Oeuvre de Modernité: Une Retrospective au Retour du Peintre Prodigue was organized by curator Florence Alexis, who also wrote the accompanying catalog, *Iba N'Diaye: L'oeuvre de modernité: Une retrospective au retour du peintre prodigue* (Dakar: Ministry of Culture, 1998).
- 2 These would include his *Jazz* and *Tahaski* series.
- 3 In his work on the space-time parameters of modernism and globalization, Walter D. Mignolo sees "coloniality as the darker side of modernity." He insists, "Coloniality, in other words, is the hidden face of modernity and its very condition of possibility." Walter Mignolo, "The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism," *Public Culture* 12.3 (2000): 722–23. Mignolo's work and that of his colleagues such as Enrique Dussel working on "critical border thinking" and models of "transmoder-

- nity" in the Latin American context shift the axis of discussion away from "Habermas's project, where what needs to be done is to fulfill the incomplete and unfinished project of modernity" to transmodernity, with which they hope to "fulfill the 20th century's unfinished and incomplete project of decolonization. Instead of a single modernity centred in Europe and imposed as a global design to the rest of the world, Dussel argues for a multiplicity of decolonial critical responses to Eurocentred modernity from the subaltern cultures and epistemic location of colonized people around the world." Ramón Grosfoguel, "Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality: Decolonizing Political Economy and Postcolonial Studies," *Eurozine*, July 2008, www.eurozine.com/articles/2008-07-04-grosfoguel-en.html (accessed February 3, 2009).
- 4 Iba N'Diaye, testimonial, in *Perspectives: Angles on African Art*, ed. Center for African Art (New York: Center for African Art, 1987), 163.
 - 5 For a critical discussion of notions of hybridity, see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); Avtar Brah and Annie Coombes, eds., *Hybridity and Its Discontents: Politics, Science, Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Nikos Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization, and Hybridity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); Ella Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial,'" *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 99–113; and Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995).
 - 6 Iba N'Diaye, "Entretien avec Franz Kaiser (Paris: August 1991)," for the Rhizome exhibition; reprinted in Ousmane Sow Huchard, ed., *Iba N'Diaye: "Peindre est se souvenir"* (Saint-Maur, France: NEAS-Sépia, 1994), 65; my translation.
 - 7 Okwui Enwezor, "Assimilate, but Don't Be Assimilated: Iba Ndiaye at the Crossroads of Modern Art," in *Iba Ndiaye: Peintre entre continents*, ed. Okwui Enwezor and Franz W. Kaiser (Paris: Adam Biro, 2002), 1–63.
 - 8 *Ibid.*, 8.
 - 9 Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2000), 146. See also Saloni Mathur, "Response: Belonging to Modernism," *Art Bulletin* 90.4 (December 2008): 559.
 - 10 Susan Vogel organized the exhibition *Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art*, at the Center for African Art in New York in 1991.
 - 11 In the heyday of coverage of modern artists in early volumes of the journal *African Arts*, N'Diaye was featured primarily in relation to histories of École de Dakar.
 - 12 Rasheed Araeen, "Modernity, Modernism, and Africa's Place in the History of Art of Our Age," *Third Text* 19.4 (July 2005): 414.
 - 13 Olu Oguibe, "Art, Identity, Boundaries: Postmodernism and Contemporary African Art," in *Reading the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to Marketplace*, ed. Okwui Enwezor and Olu Oguibe (London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 1999), 16–30, 17–18. See also Thomas McEvelley, *Fusion: West African Artists at the Venice Biennale* (New York: Museum for African Art, 1994).
 - 14 Araeen, "Modernity, Modernism," 414.
 - 15 James Clifford, "Mixed Feelings," in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 362–70; Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*,

- ed. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 233–46; Ifi-khar Dadi, "Rethinking Calligraphic Modernism," in *Discrepant Abstraction*, ed. Kobena Mercer (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 94–115; and Kobena Mercer, ed., *Cosmopolitan Modernisms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).
- 16 Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1993), 260, 295.
 - 17 Araceli, "Modernity, Modernism," 414.
 - 18 Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, "On Alternative Modernities," in *Alternative Modernities*, ed. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 1–23; R. Radhakrishnan, "Derivative Discourses and the Problem of Signification," *European Legacy* 7.6 (2002): 783–96; Simon Gikandi, *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Charles W. Pollard, *New World Modernisms: T. S. Eliot, Derek Walcott, and Kamau Brathwaite* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004); and Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel, eds., *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, and Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).
 - 19 Timothy Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity," in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. Timothy Mitchell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 8; hereafter cited parenthetically by page number as "Stage."
 - 20 Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *October* 28 (1984): 125–33.
 - 21 See Mitchell, *Questions of Modernity*.
 - 22 Saloni Mathur, "The Wide Margins of the Century," review of *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*, by Geeta Kapur, *Art Journal* 61.2 (Summer 2002): 98–100.
 - 23 Kobena Mercer, "Modernism as a Multiple Time Space Continuum," in *Discrepant Abstraction*, 22.
 - 24 Hal Foster et al., eds., *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005), 618.
 - 25 See, e.g., Mignolo, "The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis."
 - 26 Susan Stanford Friedman, "Periodizing Modernism: Postcolonial Modernities and the Space/Time Borders of Modernist Studies," *Modernism/Modernity* 13.3 (2006): 432.
 - 27 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 6.
 - 28 Friedman, "Periodizing Modernism," 426.
 - 29 *Ibid.*, 433.
 - 30 Friedman's refreshing approach to the space-time conundrums of modernity takes a rather alarming turn as she seizes on the term *cannibalism*—she talks about a kind of cultural cannibalism that involves the ingestion of the other in a process of transformation that affects both the cannibal and the cannibalized. *Ibid.*, 431.
 - 31 Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850–1922: Occidental Orientalisms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Partha Mitter, "Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery," *Art Bulletin* 90.4 (December 2008): 531–48; and Partha Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1922–1947* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007). Mitter's work, like that of others before him, addresses the ironies evident in practices of consent, appropriation, reversal, and translation or what he calls uses of "critical primitivism" in the works of

- Indian modern artists. Mitter's recent text in the *Art Bulletin* attempts to negate long-held assumptions that European modernists alone were able to appropriate artistic forms (like raw materials) without jeopardizing their creative originality or succumbing to mere influence. His arguments echo Houston Baker's discussions of "deformations of mastery," Homi Bhabha's thoughts on ambivalent and ambiguous acts of mimicry, or indeed my own discussions of strategic essentialisms and self-primitivizing within the works of the École de Dakar in Senegal. See Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man; Elizabeth Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960-1994* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Anthony Kwame Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (London: Methuen, 1992); and Houston A. Baker Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 49-52.
- 32 These arguments recall similar critical discussions on European modernist primitivism in the work of scholars such as Simon Gikandi and Patricia Leighton. See Simon Gikandi, "Picasso, Africa, and the Schemata of Difference," *Modernism/Modernity* 10.3 (2003): 455-480; Patricia Leighton, "Colonialism, l'art nègre, and *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*," in *Picasso's Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, ed. Christopher Green (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 77-103; Carole Sweeney, "La Revue nègre, Nègrophilie, Modernity, and Colonialism in Inter-War France," in *Journal of Romance Studies* 1.2 (Summer 2001): 1-14; Carole Sweeney, "Black Woman/Colonial Body," in *From Fetish to Subject: Race, Modernism and Primitivism, 1919-1935* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 55-70.
- 33 Partha Mitter, "Decentering Modernism," 541.
- 34 Chika Okeke-Agulu, "The Challenge of the Modern: An Introduction," *African Arts* 39.1 (Spring 2006): 14.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 For an overview of this shift, see especially Frederick Lamp, "First Word," and responses to it: Frederick Lamp, "Africa Centered," *African Arts* 32.1 (Spring 1999): 1-10; Suzanne Preston Blier et al., "Replies to Lamp's First Word," *African Arts* 32.2 (Summer 1999): 9-10, 85-86, 87; and Mike McGovern, "More on Lamp's 'First Word,'" *African Arts* 32.3 (Autumn 1999): 9, 85.
- 37 Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997).
- 38 Okeke-Agulu, "The Challenge of the Modern," 14-15.
- 39 Okwui Enwezor, *Snap Judgments: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography* (Göttingen, Germany: Steidl, 2006), published in conjunction with the exhibition organized by the International Center of Photography, New York, March 10-May 28, 2006. See also Okwui Enwezor, ed., *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994* (Munich: Prestel, 2001).
- 40 Chika Okeke-Agulu, "Modern Art in Africa," in *The Short Century*, 29. Okeke-Agulu is not alone in this assertion. Though no doubt true, the situating of modernity in the era of nationalism suggests a shorter (and later) time frame than may be desirable for telling broader stories of relational modernities.
- 41 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963); Appiah, *In My Father's House*; and Chinua Achebe, *Hopes and Impediments* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990).

- 42 It is this pan-African vision that Frantz Fanon ridicules in his chapter "On National Culture," in *The Wretched of the Earth*, 211–12.
- 43 Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o makes a similar point in *Decolonising the Mind*: "Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others. For colonialism this involved two aspects of the same process: the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture, their art, dances, religions, history, geography, education, orature and literature, and the conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser." Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986), 16.
- 44 "We could not come back to the situation of yesteryear, to the negritude of the sources. . . . To be truly ourselves, we ought to embody the negro-african culture in the realities of the Twentieth Century." Léopold Sédar Senghor quoted in Oladele Taiwo, *An Introduction to West African Literature* (London: Nelson, 1967), 45. For the "kingdom of childhood," see Léopold Sédar Senghor, "De la liberté de l'âme ou éloge du métissage," in *Liberté 1: Négritude et humanisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964), 99.
- 45 For a discussion of black nationalist connections to European nationalist theory and rhetoric, see Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), 187–96.
- 46 Abiola Irele, "Negritude: A Philosophy of African Being," *Nigeria Magazine*, nos. 122–23, 1977, 1–13, 4.
- 47 Leo Frobenius, *Histoire de la civilisation africaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1936); Maurice Delafosse, *Les nègres* (Paris: Editions Rieder, 1927); Maurice Delafosse, "L'art ancien dans l'Afrique occidentale," in *Renaissance de l'art français et industries de luxe* (Paris: n.p., 1923); Maurice Delafosse, *Haut-Sénégal-Niger* (Paris: E. Larose, 1912); Placide Tempels, *La philosophie bantoue* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1947); and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *La Mentalité primitive* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1922).
- 48 Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Pierre Teilhard de Chardin et la politique africaine," in *Africa in Prose*, ed. O. R. Dathorne and Willfried Feuser (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1969), 341.
- 49 "Paradoxically, it was the French who forced us first to seek and then to reveal ourselves to ourselves. . . . Very early we had attested in ourselves the failure of assimilation: we had been able to assimilate French language and mathematics, but we weren't able to slough off either our black skin or our black soul. Thus we were led in search of a passionate quest for a Holy Grail: our collective soul." Léopold Sédar Senghor, as quoted in Irving Leonard Markovitz, *Léopold Sédar Senghor and the Politics of Négritude* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 52.
- 50 Léopold Sédar Senghor, "The Foundations of Africanité or Négritude and Arabité," in *Présence africaine*, trans. Mercer Cook (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1971), 44; Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Le problème de la culture," in *Liberté 1: Négritude et humanisme* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1964), 96.
- 51 Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Picasso en nigritie" (speech given at Picasso exhibition, Dakar, April 1972); also in Clémentine Deliss, ed., *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa: An Exhibition* (Paris: Flammarion, 1995), 228–30.
- 52 Albert Franklin, "La negritude: Réalité ou mystification," *Présence Africaine* 14 (1952):

- 287–303; Cheikh Anta Diop, *Nations nègres et culture* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1955); Marcien Towa, *Léopold Sédar Senghor: Négritude ou servitude?* (Yaoundé, Cameroon: Editions Clé, 1971); Stanislaus Adotevi, *Négritude et Négrologues* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1972); Paul Hountondji, *Sur "la philosophie africaine"* (Paris: Maspéro, 1977); Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature, and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); and Appiah, *In My Father's House*.
- 53 Michael Lambert, "From Citizenship to Négritude: 'Making Difference' in Elite Ideologies of Colonized Francophone West Africa," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35.2 (April 1993): 250.
- 54 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 293.
- 55 Soyinka first used this quip at the 1962 African Writers Conference in Kampala and elaborated on it two years later in Berlin. See Janheinz Jahn, *Neo-African Literature*, trans. Oliver Coburn and Ursula Lehrburger (New York: Grove, 1968), 266. See also African Cultural Festival, *African Culture: Algiers Symposium* (Algiers: Société nationale d'édition et de diffusion, 1969), 86–87.
- 56 Manthia Diawara, "Reading Africa through Foucault: V. Y. Mudimbe's Reaffirmation of the Subject," *October* 55 (1990): 79–92.
- 57 Ibid., 190.
- 58 Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow*.
- 59 Irele, "Négritude."
- 60 Chinua Achebe, "Impediments to Dialogue between North and South," in *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 24.
- 61 Eric Hobsbawm has commented on these relations to the past, writing, "It is clear that plenty of political institutions, ideological movements and groups—not least in nationalism—were so unprecedented that even historic continuity had to be invented, for example by creating an ancient past beyond effective historical continuity, either by semi-fiction . . . or by forgery It is also clear that entirely new symbols and devices came into existence as part of national movements and states, such as the national anthem . . . , the national flag . . . , or the personification of 'the nation' in symbol or image." Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 7.
- 62 Senghor founded the following institutions: 1961 Maison des Arts; 1961–71 École des Arts du Sénégal; 1971–77 Institut National des Arts du Sénégal; 1977–present École nationale des beaux arts.
- 63 Clementine Deliss, "A Man, a Moon, a Fruit, a Smile, a Tear—El Sy: An Artist's Vision and Practice," *Atlantica Internacional Revista de Arte y Pensamiento* 10 (June 1995): 227.
- 64 Bernard Pataux, "Senegalese Art Today," *African Arts* 8.1 (Autumn 1974): 26–31, 56–59, 87; Ima Ebong, "Négritude: Between Mask and Flag," in *Africa Explores*, 198–209; and Jean Kennedy, *New Currents, Ancient Rivers: Contemporary African Artists in a Generation of Change* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992).
- 65 Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature, and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 131.
- 66 *Arts plastiques* is the general French term for the fine art of painting and sculpture.
- 67 Papa Ibra Tall, quoted in "Tapisseries de Thiès," *African Arts* 3.2 (Winter 1970): 61.
- 68 "When I was a student in Paris I was sort of an errand boy for the Négritude giants, Sen-

- ghor, Aime Césaire, and C.L.R. James. They inspired me into exploring with my own ideas." Papa Ibra Tall as quoted in Kojo Fosú, *20th Century Art of Africa* (Zaria, Nigeria: Gaskiya, 1986), 142.
- 69 Papa Ibra Tall. interview by the author, Thiès, Senegal, April 1994.
- 70 Fosú, *20th Century Art of Africa*, 150–53.
- 71 The U.S. government's patronage of abstract expressionism as nationalistic propaganda abroad could be usefully compared with Senghor's nationalist and pan-Africanist ideologies. See Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); and John Tagg, "American Power and American Painting: The Development of Vanguard Painting in the United States Since 1945," *Praxis* 1.2 (Winter 1976): 654.
- 72 Lods's students' paintings were well received in Europe. See Deliss, *Seven Stories*, for further information on the Poto-Poto school.
- 73 However, Lods practiced a form of pedagogy with very specific aims in mind: "I let them work on their own, without schedule or guidance. My part was to provide material—paper, paints, brushes—but I left them to work out their own techniques. . . . Sometimes, too, we read African proverbs that I had collected, or legends and poems written by African authors. . . . I surrounded my student painters with traditional African objects, and in the grounds I grew a large variety of native plants." Pierre Lods quoted in Marshall Mount, *African Art: The Years since 1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 85.
- 74 Those listed as Lods's disciples include, among others, Amadou Bá, Ansoumana Die-dhiou, Ibou Diouf, Ousmane Faye, Mohammadou M'Baye (later called ZUI.U), brothers Seni and Kré M'Baye, Modou Niang, Maodo Niang, Madema Guèye, Ousseyou Ly, Seynabou Sakho, Amadou Sow, and Chérif Thiam.
- 75 Okwui Enwezor, "Assimilate, but Don't Be Assimilated," 7.
- 76 Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Ce que je crois," in *Seven Stories*, 224.
- 77 According to M. N'Gom, former head of the commission responsible for exhibitions abroad, the president himself had the final say in the selection process. M. N'Gom, interview with author, Dakar, Senegal, March 1994.
- 78 Similar artistic strategies that employ irony as a powerful form of critique in postcolonial settings may be found in the works of Cherokee artist Jimmie Durham and African American installation artist Fred Wilson. See Jimmie Durham and Jean Fisher, *A Certain Lack of Coherence: Writings on Art and Cultural Politics* (London: Kala Press, 1993); Fred Wilson, *Mining the Museum: An Installation*, ed. Lisa G. Corrin (Baltimore, MD: Contemporary, 1994); and Fred Wilson, "The Silent Message of the Museum," in *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts*, ed. Jean Fisher (London: Kala Press, 1994), 152–60.
- 79 See a recent discussion of Diallo's work in Joanna Grabski, "Painting Fiction/Painting History: Modernist Pioneers at Senegal's *Ecole des Arts*," *African Arts* 39.1 (Spring 2006): 38–49.
- 80 For a larger discussion of N'Diaye's and Diop's work, see Harney, "After the Avant-Garde," in *In Senghor's Shadow*.
- 81 James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Surrealism," in *The Predicament of Culture: Twenti-*