

Rethinking Négritude: Aimé Césaire & Léopold Sédar Senghor and the Imagination of a
Global Postcoloniality

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ABSTRACT

Rethinking Negritude: Aimé Césaire & Léopold Sédar Senghor and the Imagination of a Global Postcoloniality

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This dissertation calls into question the critique that has depicted the Francophone literary movement known as Negritude as a sole vehicle of black essentialism. By looking at recently published anthologies, archival documents, and lesser-known texts from 1935 to 1966, I show that in addition to the discourse on a fixed ‘blackness’ engraved in the neologism ‘Negritude,’ there is another set of discourses that forces us to rethink the movement as a philosophy of becoming. In particular, this dissertation stages the year 1948, when Jean-Paul Sartre gave Negritude its fame with the publication of his influential essay “Black Orpheus,” as a pivot for the definition of the movement as well as its reception. Since 1948, most of the critical engagement with Negritude has happened either through a reading of Sartre’s essay or the limited corpus that was available at the time. I thus argue that, by reading a broader range of the poets of Negritude’s literary and cultural production, one gets a sense that their vindication of Blackness is not only an essentialized invocation of a romanticized past, it is also an imagined unity within an evolving postcoloniality.

This dissertation covers three areas within which this constantly reimagined unity is staged, from the youthful local publications of Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor from 1935 to 1948, to their mature global interactions as statesmen in Dakar, Fort-de-France, Paris and Rome from 1948 to 1966. First, it looks at language and analyzes the relation of the poets to French.

While the choice to adopt the idiom of the former colonizer has been criticized by merely every reader of Negritude, I show that they used French as a tool enabling violation, negotiating their relation to the metropole as well as other colonies. Second, it interrogates the often overlooked concept of *métissage* as common element for colonized subjects. With particular attention to problems of translation, I analyze how the poets used *métissage* as a political and ethical concept in order to reach to the African diaspora without referring to Europe as the unavoidable mediator. Third, it focuses on the First World Festival of Negro Arts held in Dakar in 1966 as instrument for political practice. By investigating extensive documentation on the Festival's organization, especially the influential role and presence of the United States, I show that art was used as a political tool to stage postcolonial unity in an otherwise global and competitive diversity.

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May the reader enjoy reading these pages as much as I have enjoyed writing them.

To My Mother,
Her courage, strength, and resilience,
With ineffable love, profound respect and infinite admiration,
Without whom neither these words nor the one who wrote them could have seen the light of day.

INTRODUCTION

Negritude is dead. Long live Negritude!

It is easy to determine with precision the date of birth of the word *négritude*: Paris, May 1935, *L'Étudiant Noir*.¹ But with the death of Aimé Césaire in April 2008, arguably the last of the three “fathers” of Negritude and the poet who coined the word, can we retrospectively question what it came to be associated with: a movement vindicating an essentialized Blackness? Considering the long trajectory of an idea that lasted more than half a century, as well as the manifold writings, digressions, and sometimes contradictory routes that its alleged creators, Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor, took, can Negritude tell us a more convoluted story: not only of a pre-conditioned Black-being but also of an unconditioned Black-becoming? One way to address this question is to ask whether it is dead or has survived its creators and its critics.

On the one hand, if it has not, we owe to one of the major francophone literary movements of the twentieth century to analyze its hopes and shortcomings, to learn from the mistakes of its practitioners, to understand the compromise its actors had to make and rethink how we, who have inherited their work, must pay our dues to Negritude and take it from there. On the other hand, if the movement has survived its creators, then we must investigate the conditions under which Negritude’s discourse first arose, how it has transformed in and adapted to a world in constant movement, question the foundations upon which it rests and that make its message still relevant, and finally, ask who has appropriated it in our contemporaneity—and how.

¹ The word first appears in print in the third issue of the journal *L'Étudiant Noir*, in an article by Aimé Césaire titled “*Nègreries: conscience raciale et révolution sociale*,” p. 2. The article has been published anew in *Les Temps Modernes* No. 676 (2013/5), pp. 249-251. Edward O. Ako goes as far as claiming that Negritude did not exist as a movement until Lilyan Kesteloot defined and popularized it. See “‘*L'Étudiant Noir*’ and the Myth of the Genesis of the Negritude Movement,” *Research in African Literatures* Vol. 15, No. 3 (1984), pp. 341-53.

This dissertation represents the first step to such questioning. It takes an in-depth look at the seminal writings and lesser-known texts of its supporters, as well as a concurrent and reactive criticism, in order to offer a new reading that argues for a movement that continuously undergoes ideological transformation rather than solely vindicates a petrified essence of black-being. Accordingly, I look at a range of texts, from the early writings published in the short-lived local newspaper *L'Étudiant Noir* in 1935 to the mature discourses pronounced in the global-targeting *First World Festival of Negro Arts* in 1966, and consider the movement in an intellectual progression that would eventually span over world-changing decades: World War II, Independence, Civil Rights. I follow the development of the writings and practices of two of its major spokesmen, Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor, and show how these authors, remarkably perceptive of the world in which they lived, help us uncover a nascent image of globality as it is grasped in the (ex-)colonies. I thus argue that one of the most critical legacies of the poets of Negritude is their invitation to rethink the relation between colonies and metropole, challenge an imposed choice between total assimilation or national independence, and theorize a globality radiating from a vindicated margin onto crumbling centers. To an extent, this re-reading has been undertaken in history and anthropology with recent scholarship on Negritude's experimentation with innovative visions in the postwar world: decolonization without independence, assimilation without anti-colonialism.² In this dissertation, I will build upon such work not only by reading francophone and anglophone literatures, I will also take a comparative approach that looks at moments of articulation when these literatures are woven together.

² For instance, the recent publication of Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), as well as Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014). Brent H. Edwards also attends to the pre-history of Negritude and its relation to the Harlem Renaissance, in *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

Négritude was a movement of men whose literary production was predominantly about men. The exception is Ousmane Sembène's *God's Bits of Wood* (born in 1923, a generation after Senghor and Césaire). In the novel about the Dakar–Niger Railway general strike of 1947, he emphasized the pivotal role of women both in the outcome of the strike and in the transformation of the colonizer-colonized relationship between 1945 and 1960. I will discuss Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's focus on the empty space of ungrievable women in the discussion of *A Season in the Congo*.³ I hope to discuss the gendering of Négritude in future work.

One of the common criticisms made against Négritude is its attention to the past of colonized peoples, often understood as a dialectical response to its distortion by the colonizers.⁴ As Fanon famously writes in *The Wretched of the Earth*, where the colonial power singlehandedly depicted Africa as an idiosyncratic space with, at best, a shameful and barbaric past, at worst, no past at all, the colonized intellectual vindicated the reclaiming of an idea of the past “in all its dignity, glory, and solemnity.”⁵ Fanon's analysis of this gesture as a psycho-affective reaction and relation to the “perverted logic” of colonialism also reveals the strategic nature of this peculiar dwelling that petrifies an “African essence” into a romanticized yet

³ Ousmane Sembène, *God's Bits of Wood*, trans. Francis Price (London: Heinemann, 1962); originally published as *Les petits bouts de bois de Dieu* (Paris: Le Livre Contemporain, 1960). See also Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Postcolonialism in France,” *Romanic Review* Vol. 104. 1-2 (May–November 2014), pp. 223-242.

⁴ Such has been, for instance, the accusation of Wole Soyinka in *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in *Decolonising the Mind* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1981), Stanislas Adotevi in *Négritude et négrologues* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1972), Marcien Towa in *Léopold Sédar Senghor: Négritude ou servitude* (Yaoundé: Éditions CLE, 1971), and more recently, Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant in *Éloge de la créolité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989). Frantz Fanon's argument, as I am about to show, is more subtle—starting with a thorough reading of the poetry of Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, René Depestre, and Mayotte Capécia in *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Seuil, 1952) over against its Western reception in general and Sartre's 1948 “Black Orpheus” in particular, up until a critique of Négritude in the chapter “On National culture” in *Les damnés de la Terre* (Paris: Maspéro, 1961).

⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), pp. 148-49 (translation modified). Fanon was of course writing in 1960 Algeria, celebrating not the victory of newly independent nation-states ready to embrace political responsibilities and the hopes of Pan-Africanism, but fighting for his life and that of medical patients in the midst of a violent war that would rage for another year after his death.

unifying past. This dissertation thus attends to the conditions under which this strategic dwelling in the past is staged—conditions that can only be comprehended by reading a body of literary and political texts that expands beyond just the famous essays that gave Negritude its fame. Where Senghor’s essay “What the Black Man Contributes”—that contains the (in)famous statement “Emotion is negro as reason is hellenic”—is often read as a sign of the poet’s vindication of a racial essentialism at the core of black being, few read another essay entitled “The Cultural Problem in French West Africa,”⁶ written two years before, where bilingualism is laid out as a basis for a decolonization project to be carried out from above (envisioning political power to implement it in a nationalized school system) and from below (building upon an unsystematized grass-root diversity of African mother-tongues). Even fewer read the texts published after 1960, such as “Problematics of Negritude,” where President Senghor reconsiders the fixed and timeless template definition of Negritude as “the sum total of the values of civilization of the Black world” from the vantage point of its historical ties to Harlem Renaissance writers and to a new generation or post-independence postcolonial thinkers, bringing attention to the movement’s development over time.⁷ Finally, almost no one writes about Senghor’s linguistic policy where the head of state uses the full political power of the state to govern the matrix of African languages, not in an imagined African past, but in a real post-colonial Senegal (e.g., decrees governing the grammatization of Wolof, Fula, Malinke;

⁶ Léopold Sédar Senghor, “Le problème culturel en A.O.F” in *Liberté I* (Paris: Seuil, 1963), pp. 11-21. The essay has not been translated in English and is only available in the now out-of-print publication.

⁷ Léopold Sédar Senghor, “Problématique de la Négritude” in *Liberté III* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), p.272. Senghor includes W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, James Weldon Johnson, Sterling Brown, Frank Marshall Davis, and Mercer Cook in the genealogical reconstruction of Negritude’s ideology. He names Tchicaya U Tam’si, Wole Soyinka, Es’kia Mphahlele as examples of a new generation of intellectuals, whom the poets of Negritude are now in conversation with.

movies censored not for their political content but for the wrong orthography of their titles).⁸ Aimé Césaire's corpus too exhibits a heterogeneity that deserves to be read more closely. Where the *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* has become the hallmark of the poeticized vindication of a romanticized past praising "those who invented neither powder nor compass / those who could harness neither steam nor electricity / those who explored neither the seas nor the sky," the more philosophical essay "Poetry and Knowledge," written just five years after the *Notebook* foregrounds poetic writing as a means to activate the readerly imagination and confront the double bind between the universality of a "Negro-ness" and the particularity of "Blackness-es" and where to reflect, perhaps, on the historicity of the postcolonial subject.⁹ Yet again, when the Mayor of Fort-de-France returns to the opposition between the universal and the particular in a rarely commented upon paper entitled "Geneva and the Black World," given in 1978, the centrality of a shared past (real or imagined) amongst formerly colonized peoples is questioned through the lack of the means with which to reclaim it: a "major" language.¹⁰

Reading Césaire's and Senghor's progressive transformation of the argument for a shared African past, i.e., tracking the debates and writings that informed their thoughts throughout their long literary and political careers, I aim to nuance the claim that the poets of Negritude were simply falling prey to an essentialist discourse they have often been accused of purporting, or

⁸ See, among others, "Lettre au Premier Ministre relative à la revue mensuelle *Kaddu*" and "Le dynamisme de l'éducation sénégalaise - visite officielle à la région de Diourbel," in the posthumous publication of Senghor's last essays, *Éducation et Culture* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 2013), respectively pp. 60-77 and 153-60.

⁹ Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1956 [1939]); *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, trans. Albert J. Arnold and Clayton Eshelman (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2013). XX; "Poésie et connaissance," in *Aimé Césaire: poésie, théâtre, essais et discours* (Paris: CNRS, 2013), pp. 1373-95; "Poetry and Cognition" in *Aimé Césaire: Lyric and Dramatic Poetry*, trans. Clayton Eshelman and Annette Smith (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 1990).

¹⁰ Césaire's argument builds upon Deleuze's revision of Kafka's notion of "minor" literature, that he defines as the literature of a minority group who writes in the language of the "majority." The end of the first chapter of this dissertation attends to Césaire's critical reading of Deleuze.

solely developing an anti-colonial narrative that, as Fanon also denounces, risks to legitimize by reversal the centrality of the colonizer who *de facto* unifies otherwise inalterable differences.¹¹

Another approach that has often been overlooked by supporters and critics of Negritude alike is that in order to undo the centre-periphery relation that France held with its colonies, the poets of Negritude also attempted to inscribe their liberation fight beyond just African decolonizations and within the larger racial struggle of peoples on a global scale: on the continent as well as the diaspora—sometimes even reaching to Latin America and South Asia.¹² As Literature Nobel Prize winner and long-time critic of the movement, Wole Soyinka, writes in *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness*, Negritude was “more than race vindication: it was to serve as a bridge into other cultures and racial propositions—*Arabité, mélanité, francité, lusophonité*, etc,—as well as a tool for the retrieval of dispersed black races anywhere in the world—from India to Australasia.”¹³ In order to build bridges that were not simply added onto roadmaps already drawn by the former colonizers, it was necessary for the poets of Negritude to engage in a double project: to decentralize the hitherto privileged reference to France in

¹¹ “The only common denominator between the blacks from Chicago and the Nigerians or Tanganyikans was that they all defined themselves in relation to the whites,” in *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 153. The argument is also made by Jean-Paul Sartre in regards to language. As he writes in “Black Orpheus:” “The colonist rises between the colonials to be the eternal mediator; he is there, always there, even though absent, in the most secret councils.” Jean-Paul Sartre, *Black Orpheus*, trans. S. W. Allen, in *Présence Africaine*, No. 10/11 (1951), p. 228.

¹² Césaire’s positioning of the Caribbean within the geography of the greater American continent, imagining something akin to a “Caribbean Region” able to communicate with Central and Latin America and counterbalancing the influence of the United States, is particularly striking. I briefly attend to this hope in my discussion of the historical background of “Poetry and Knowledge” in the first chapter. In the second chapter, I also attend to the Latin American references in Senghor’s appropriation of the concept of *métissage* as well as the hopes brought at the time by the Bandung Conference of 1956. Finally, it is helpful to read further than the two poets, and find such reference in another proponent of Negritude, Cheikh Anta Diop. In *Black Africa: The Economic and Cultural Basis for a Federated State*, trans. Harold J. Salemson (Westport, CT: Africa Worldpress Edition, 1987), Diop writes: “If the goal [of Western countries to channel the national liberation movement towards nonsocialistic forms] were to be reached, the former colonial powers and the United States might stop worrying. Black Africa would be not Balkanized (...) but South-Americanized,” p. 16.

¹³ Wole Soyinka, *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 157.

henceforth postcolonial discourses; to find a common denominator between peoples from the continent and the diaspora that would not rest solely upon colonialism. It is indeed true that the relation between the poets of Negritude and the Hexagon is often ambivalent, if not contradictory. Senghor has repeatedly been presented as the example of what a successful colonial assimilation looks like (even though he led Senegal to independence), while Césaire is also remembered from having completely and successfully assimilated Martinique into the Hexagon (even though he quasi-singlehandedly negotiated greater autonomy within the French regional system in 1981).¹⁴ In the early years of the movement, it is possible to find in the writings of the young students statements such as “To Old Europe, we [Africans] want to bring new elements of humanity,”¹⁵ highlighting the centrality of the colonizer’s continent as recipient of “African” contributions. Looking at the incredible wealth of poetry, dramas, essays, interviews, and policies written by the Negritude poets over half a century, however, one begins to get a sense of a delicate shaping of an unavoidable complicity between the former colonizer and its former colonies. As this generation of Pan-African postcolonial undoubtedly knew, the end of the age of colonialism was to bring not the end of the colonial problem, but its global transformation. What Soyinka has termed “Senghor’s muse of forgiveness,” a forgiving or foregoing of colonial violence conditioned by a harmonization of antithetical values, signals a desire not to dwell on the past but to focus on the present. This is perhaps nowhere more visible than in the setting up of “world” meetings that the proponents of Negritude organized or took part in the decades both

¹⁴ One needs only to look at Ngũgĩ’s mockery of Senghor’s “anointment” by the French *Académie Française* in *Decolonising the Mind*, op. cit. (p. 19), or the criticism against Césaire (in particular, coming from the Creolist movement) regarding the law of departmentalization.

¹⁵ Senghor, “L’Humanisme et nous: « René Maran »,” in *L’Étudiant Noir*, No. 1 (March 1935), p. 3. An original of the first issue of *L’Étudiant noir* is to be found in the *Centre des Archives d’Outre-Mer*, Aix-en-Provence, Archives Nationales, France. SLOTFOM V, Box 21.(FR ANOM 4005 COL 21). All translations are mine.

preceding and following independence. In 1956, Alioune Diop, a friend of Senghor, founder of the publishing house *Présence Africaine* and affiliate of the Negritude movement, organized the *First World Congress of Negro Writers and Artists*. Held in the majestic Descartes amphitheater of the Sorbonne University in Paris, the congress gathered intellectuals from French West Africa, French Equatorial Africa, Haiti, Martinique, and perhaps most importantly, the United States. There, the incredible variety of papers ranging from “The Tonal Structure of Yoruba Poetry” to “Segregation and Desegregation in the United States,” although given at the heart of a colonial power, addressed not a metropolitan audience but a conversation amongst “peoples of color” about the means to achieve a hoped “unity within diversity.”¹⁶ Neither limiting their frame of reference to Africa nor responding to or seeking recognition from France, the poets of Negritude debated with African-American writers not on the existence of an esoteric connection buried by centuries of oppression, but on the necessity to agree on a historical platform where political and cultural partnerships could be developed. As Brent Edwards surmises, part of Aimé Césaire’s speech at the congress, “Culture and Colonization,” vindicates the existence and continuing relevance of a Negro-African civilization (including the various cultures of countries in Africa as well as the cultures of the diaspora) in an attempt to invoke diasporic culture “not in an elegiac tone (as an original unity that had been forever lost) but as a broad genealogy of practices with coherence and resilience.”¹⁷ An analysis of closed-door debates that followed public lectures shows that, as the event took place, the congress became the site of a rather discordant view on

¹⁶ The complete proceeding of the Congress was published in a special issue of *Présence Africaine*, no. XXIV-XXV (1956). “The Tonal Structure of Yoruba Poetry” was a paper given by E. L. Lasebikan, and according to a footnote in the proceeding, was accompanied by a drum performance; “Segregation and Desegregation in the United States” was a communication given by William Fontaine. The expression “unity within diversity” is present in some of Senghor’s influential essays, such as “L’esthétique négro-africaine” in *Liberté I* (Paris: Seuil, 1964), p. 212.

¹⁷ Brent H. Edwards, “Introduction: Césaire in 1956,” *Social Text*, no. 103 (Summer 2010), p. 118.

what exactly united or could unite black peoples worldwide. There was a compelling agreement on the fact that such unity was needed, but it remained on a carefully staged level of appearance: “I want to speak as carefully as I can. Well, maybe I should start, since we are in closed session—that’s why I was concerned about it being closed session—and I wanted to speak frankly,” Richard Wright stated in his response to Senghor’s paper given earlier that day on “The Spirit of Civilization of the Laws of Negro-African Culture.”¹⁸ The discordance as well as the appearance of a unity would carry to the *Second World Congress of Negro Writers and Artists*, held in Rome in 1959, where no debate would be allowed to follow the papers. Hence, Frantz Fanon gave a paper and left right away. Léopold Sédar Senghor and Sékou Touré participated *in absentia* and had their communication read. Aimé Césaire’s speech was half shorter than in Paris. Nevertheless, Césaire’s paper acutely summarized the dilemma within which these intellectuals were caught at the dawn of independence. No matter their divergence, decolonization was a crucial national moment for the political future of African states, yet it also had to promote cultural self-affirmation and go beyond local identity politics and even continental outlook. Already warning, before post-colonialism, against neo-colonialism and “balkanization,” Césaire invited his audience to take a more global perspective:

Let us think about racial struggles in Central America or Latin America, to take only that example, and we will see that it is about a heritage or survival of colonialism in those very countries that gained independence a hundred and fifty years ago.¹⁹

¹⁸ In *Présence Africaine*, No. XXIV-XXV, p. 67-68.

¹⁹ Aimé Césaire, “L’homme de culture et ses responsabilités,” in *Aimé Césaire: poésie, théâtre, essais et discours* (Paris: CNRS, 2013), pp. 1555. Translation is mine. Césaire attributes the word “balkanization” to Senghor, possibly referring to an article published in 1956, “Balkanisation ou fédération,” in *Liberté II* (Paris: Seuil, 1971), pp. 180-83.

Concerned with the long-term social and political consequences of decolonization, the poet of Martinique appealed to the politician but to the “man of culture” to be the influential harbinger of a national consciousness to create anew, yet whose responsibility was also to prevent nationalisms and tribalisms from hindering political and economic unity.²⁰

This is the last aspect of Negritude’s philosophy that this dissertation will attend to—one that has often been misunderstood and overlooked. The primacy that Césaire and Senghor give to the cultural over the political is not a naive dismissal of the reality of economic inequalities and of the social conditions of underdeveloped colonies that would carry through decolonization. Rather, by staging decolonization and liberation as primarily cultural gestures, the poets of Negritude exhort a different kind of practice of freedom based on what Césaire calls, in 1959, a “re-appropriation of values”—or what Fanon defines, in an altogether different context and argument in 1961, as a literary gesture that “calls everything into question.”²¹ In this dissertation, what I am interested in is the relation between the poets’ thinking of an ever elusive “cultural” foundation to their uncompromising political goals and the politicization of cultural practices almost as soon as they became politically involved with their respective communities. I argue that, in the texts I read and the cultural events I investigate, there is a paradoxical moment where the cultural practices of postcolonial subjects are simultaneously imagined as an affirmation of “historical initiative” freed from and uncorrupted by colonial ideological production, and as a collective in need of a steering and guiding of this regained initiative by the ideological

²⁰ In that sense, Césaire’s invitation is not altogether different from Kwame Nkrumah’s argument for an African “Union” that would recognize national differences, as he developed in *Africa Must Unite*, published only in 1963.

²¹ Césaire, “L’homme de culture et ses responsabilités,” op. cit., p. 1555. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, op. cit., p. 163. Fanon’s statement is part of the chapter “On National Culture” which, incidentally, is an extensive revision of the argument in the paper he had given in 1959 at the same *Second World Congress of Negro Writers and Artists* where Césaire asks for a “reevaluation of all values.”

knowledge of a postcolonial vanguard. Again, there is, especially in the early writings of the Negritude poets, an undeniable essentialism that posits the existence of a pre-existing cultural matrix common to all Negro subjects that was buried by the advent of slavery and colonialism. For the poets of Negritude, that pre-existing cultural matrix has survived in various art forms—music, poetry, sculpture, visual arts, etc—that can be readily accessed and somehow unearthed. This is why the most prominent readers and critics of Negritude, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, through a faithful reading of those early texts, have presented the movement as a nostalgic “return” to a buried source from where a “Negro-being” would erupt once the road and the means to access it would be created. In an influential essay titled “Black Orpheus” written as a preface to Senghor’s *Anthology of Negro and Malagasy Poetry in French* that put the writings of the Negritude poets on the map of worldly movements, Sartre thus eloquently states: “the Negro who vindicates his negritude (...) hopes to find the black Essence in the wells of his soul.”²² Hopelessly, in later essays such as “De la négritude,” written in 1969, Senghor’s defense of Negritude remains sometimes rooted in an essentialist vocabulary that seems to fit Sartre’s statement: “Let us admit that we thematize Negritude with black skin. And this is true. (...) For it remains that the example comes from Mother-Africa: from Africa as the source.” A couple lines down, Senghor outbids his earlier claims: “Objectively, Negritude is (...), as the Germans say, a *Weltanschauung*, a *Da-sein*, quite specifically, a *Neger-sein*, that is to say, “Black being.” In the same essay however, Senghor offers to define Negritude from another standpoint: “A negritude that, in the years 1931-1935, we formulated as project. That Negritude *is* project and action.”²³

²² Jean-Paul Sartre, *Black Orpheus*, p. 224.

²³ Léopold Sédar Senghor, “De la négritude,” in *Liberté V* (Paris: Seuil, 1993), p. 17.

Looking back on the trajectory of the project and the word as well as its controversial reception, particularly in anglophone circles, Senghor invites his readers and critics to reconsider Negritude from the historical context within which it arose: “In the 1930s, and in spite of the esteem and respect we had for Étienne Léro and his school, we were only *responding* to their thesis [that presented race vindication as a revolutionary class struggle] that led to confuse culture and politics, specifically to subordinate the cultural to the political when we believed that it had to be the opposite.”²⁴ In sum, Negritude, as it appeared in the interwar period, was both the creation of a linguistic neologism by young students who desired to affirmatively sabotage the use of the word “Negro” in French as well as orientalized images the word was associated with, and the response to an already existing debate on the conditions under which colonial peoples were to develop the means of their emancipation or extirpation from colonialism. The contradictions that seem to plague the writings of Léopold Sédar Senghor—and Aimé Césaire—are neither a cause nor a consequence of a youthful identity politics or an essentialist unexamined culturalism upon which Negritude is based. Rather, I argue these contradictory statements *constitute* Negritude as a dynamic space where, to paraphrase Césaire and Fanon, one can hope to re-appropriate values and call everything into question. What I show for Senghor is thus also valid for Césaire.²⁵

In one his first articles published in March 1935 in *L'Étudiant Noir*, the poet indeed calls for a

²⁴ Léopold Sédar Senghor, “La négritude, comme culture des peuples noirs, ne saurait être dépassée,” in *Liberté V*, op. cit., p.105. Étienne Léro, born in Lamentin, Martinique, and a fellow student of Senghor in Paris, founded the journal *Légitime Défense* along with René Ménéil and Auguste Thésée in 1932. The journal, that claimed to follow the ideology of Surrealism, of Harlem Renaissance poets, and of Marx’s dialectical materialism, only published one issue, and argued against any form of partnership or “assimilationism” between Martinique and France. In an article whose title echoes a famous essay by Marx, “Misère d’une poésie,” Léro argued both for the existence of a culture and history, in Martinique, different from those of France, while negating the existence of a “Martinique” identity or specificity. See the reedition of *Légitime Défense* (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1997), with a preface by René Ménéil.

²⁵ This dissertation does not attend to, although it makes reference to, the writings of other Negritude practitioners, such as Léon-Gontran Damas or Cheikh Anta Diop. I will analyze the existence, in those author’s texts, of a similar contradiction as foundation, in subsequent work.

complete break from the political and ideological influence of an old “Western civilization”—though not quite for decolonialization; but the means to achieve the break rest upon a theme familiar to the poet: an enigmatic “rediscovery of the primacy of the self.”²⁶ In the third issue of the journal, published in June 1935, the word *négritude* appears for the first time as the cultural repository of an untapped racial memory. In 1970, interviewed by Lucien Attoun on the cultural and political reach of his theater and its connection to Negritude, Césaire, not unlike Senghor, also recalls that the word was conceived in the specific historical conditions of colonial oppression in which Africa had been completely erased from the world map.²⁷ Unexpectedly, yet unambiguously, he adds: “[Senghor] tended to construct *négritude* as an essentialism, as though there were a black essence, a black soul.”²⁸ For the poet from Martinique, there is an “African culture” that has “survived the vicissitudes of history, survived in the United States and the Caribbean.” Notwithstanding the generalized and elusive aspect of a criticizable vindication of an “African culture,” Césaire builds a difference between a *négritude* that eulogizes fixity, essence and being, and one that extols survival, adaptation and becoming throughout history. In so doing, however, he resonates with Senghor’s twofold description of *négritude* as an objective “Black-being” and a subjective project—of what Souleymane Bachir Diagne has termed

²⁶ Aimé Césaire, “Nègreries: jeunesse noire et assimilation,” in *L’Étudiant noir 1* (June 1935), 3.

²⁷ Aimé Césaire, Interview by Lucien Attoun in “Aimé Césaire et le théâtre nègre” *Le Théâtre 1* (1970), pp. 99-116. For an analysis of the “unresolved dualism” present in the entire corpus of Césaire’s use of the word “négritude,” see Albert James Arnold, “Césaire is Dead: Long Live Césaire! Recuperations and Reparations,” *French Politics, Culture & Society*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Winter 2009), pp. 9-18.

²⁸ Albert James Arnold, “Césaire is Dead: Long Live Césaire! Recuperations and Reparations,” p. 104. One could also contrast to Césaire’s ambiguous reference to his “beliefs” in Jungian “primordial images” and “collective unconscious,” content throughout his literary and political career, from the 1944 essay “Poetry and Knowledge” to the 1987 *Discourse on Negritude*. I attend to this particular reference in the second part of the first chapter of this dissertation.

Négritude's "philosophy of becoming."²⁹ By reading the often essentialist early essays of *L'Étudiant Noir* in the historical context of the interwar over against the more complex late writings of the Négritude poets who, in the meantime, also became major actors on the post-war and post-colonial political scene, this dissertation aims to foreground the necessity of an ambivalent discourse due not only to the inevitable development of a long intellectual trajectory, but also to the different audience of young poets praising an idealized "culture" and of mature statesmen burdened by political responsibilities and compromises between the demands of global politics and promises made to their local electorate.

A further word of explanation is needed at this point. My main argument is that Négritude is not only an essentialist narrative of an idealized construction of black-being, it is also an existentialist discourse on black-becoming that invites a critical approach to the conditions under which appropriation and transformation can take place. I build my argument upon the opposition between essence and existence that undoubtedly resonates with Sartre for a specific reason. Sartre was the first major critic of Négritude. When the philosopher published "Black Orpheus" in 1948, the preface to Senghor's *Anthology of Negro and Malagasy Poetry in French* soon

²⁹ Souleymane Bachir Diagne has theorized the influence of vitalist philosophy for a Négritude read from a such vantage point, in "La Négritude comme mouvement et comme devenir," in *Rue Descartes* 4/2014, No. 83, pp. 50-61. Abiola Irele, critically analyzing Sartre's ambiguity in "Black Orpheus," also writes that Négritude "is not a *state* (...) it is a *Becoming*," in "A Defense of Négritude: A Propos of Black Orpheus" in *Transition*, No. 50 (Oct., 1975), p. 41. Donna V. Jones and Cheikh Ahmadou Thiam have recently published monographs that follow this re-reading of Négritude. See Donna V. Jones, *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy: Négritude, Vitalism and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012) and Cheikh Ahmadou Thiam, *Return to the Kingdom of Childhood* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2014). In the most recent issue of PMLA, Simon Gikandi also briefly alluded to the problems associated with reading Négritude solely from its existing essentialist discourse. See "Another Way in the World," *PMLA*, 131.5 (2016), p. 1193-94.

became a pre-reading to the movement, set the tone for subsequent analyses and criticisms.³⁰ Frantz Fanon, to offer but one example, in *Peau noire, masques blancs*, analyzes and criticizes the writings of the Negritude poets not only by solely quoting the texts found in Senghor's *Anthology*, he also analyzes and criticizes them over against Sartre's preface, eloquently concluding on Negritude after Sartre: "When I read that page [by Sartre: 'Negritude is the root of its own destruction, it is a transition and not a conclusion, a means and not an ultimate end'], I felt that I had been robbed of my last chance."³¹ But it should be remembered that at the time of Sartre's publication in 1948, there were only a few essays that constituted a "Negritude" corpus. Césaire was known for his poetry that included the *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* (1939) and *The Miraculous Weapons* (1946).³² Senghor too mainly published poetry, such as the compendium *Chants d'ombre* (1945), in addition to a few essays, "The Cultural Problem in French West Africa" (1937), "What the Black Man Contributes" (1939), and "Views on Black Africa: Assimilate Without Being Assimilated" (1945).³³ As for Léon-Gontran Damas, whose work this dissertation does not delve into, the poet from Guyana published a virulent essay against Lévy-Bruhl, *Return from Guyana* (1938), as well as an *Anthologie des poètes*

³⁰ The reception and influence of Sartre's preface on subsequent readings of and critical writings on Negritude has been thoroughly analyzed by Lilyan Kesteloot in "L'après-guerre, l'Anthologie de Senghor et la préface de Sartre," in *Ethiopiennes*, No. 61, Dakar, 1998. Following Sartre's death in 1980, Daniel Maximin published a piece in *Le Nouvel Observateur* in which he praised *Black Orpheus* as "a key study for the generation of independence." See Daniel Maximin, "Sartre à l'écoute des sauvages," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, May 5, 1980, p. 63. In his influential monograph *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), Valentin Y. Mudimbe also notices that "Sartre 'transformed negritude into a major political event and a philosophical criticism of colonialism'" (p. 83).

³¹ In *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Seuil, 1952), p. 107; *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Grove Press, 1967), p. 101. The quote is from "Black Orpheus," op cit., p. 244 [Fr., p. XL].

³² There are also, the two articles the poet published in the journal he created, *L'Étudiant Noir*, in 1935. From 1941 to 1945, Césaire was the editor of a journal he also founded, *Tropiques*, in which he and Suzanne Césaire published articles on poetry. In the twelfth issue, for instance, one finds a partial text of "Poetry and Knowledge" that he gave as a lecture in Haiti in 1944. The future play *And the Dogs Were Silent* was published as a long poem within the compendium *The Miraculous Weapons*.

³³ I thoroughly analyze these essays in the first and second chapter of this dissertation.

d'expression française (1947), overshadowed by Senghor's *Anthology*—perhaps because of the latter's preface by as prominent a figure as Sartre. Yet, already in 1937, Senghor articulated the relation between blackness and culture as complementary rather than opposed, transforming rather than fixed, contingent rather than predictable. For instance, defending public schooling and the training of the mind, he argued against uniformity for “a certain elasticity, a certain liberty, and a greater spirit of initiative” for both student and teacher, or as he called it in reference to Alain Locke, the “new negro,” before to argue for bilingualism.³⁴ Undeniably, there are dubious claims in Senghor's essay that cannot be accepted at face-value: the belief in the superiority of written over oral literatures; the compartmentalization of European languages for scientific discourses and Indigenous idioms for artistic creation. But one cannot not read the footnote, added in 1963 for the reedition of the article in the first volume of the series *Liberté*, that states: “Today, I have altered [these] all too cursory judgements.”³⁵

One thread of my argument is that even as they try to capture what is veridical or unverifiable about the *négritude* of the peoples they write about, Césaire and Senghor become unavoidably involved in the paradox of the relation between particularity and universality. Indeed, this is perhaps nowhere more visible than in two occurrences: Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*, published concurrently to Sartre's essay in 1948; and Senghor's *First World Festival on Negro Arts*, organized in 1966.³⁶ When the *Discourse* is first published in 1948 as a

³⁴ Léopold Sédar Senghor, “Le problème culturel en A.O.F.,” in *Liberté I* (Paris: Seuil, 1963), p. 15-17.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁶ The last chapter of this dissertation is entirely devoted to the latter event, adding the result of a lengthy archival research in the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York (NYPL). I only attend to *Discourse on Colonialism* in passing, in part because it has already been analyzed at length, including, but not limited to, the comprehensive genetic introduction by Daniel Delas in *Aimé Césaire: poésie, théâtre, essais et discours* (Paris: CNRS, 2013), pp. 1443-1447.

short eleven-page pamphlet titled “The Impossible Contact,” the argument resonates with Sartre’s vision that Negritude particular fight is soon to be subsumed under the more universal class struggle and a proletarian revolution. Here is Sartre: “At a blow the subjective, existential, ethnic notion of Negritude « passes » as Hegel would say, into the objective, positive, exact notion of the proletariat.”³⁷ As is well-known, Césaire develops the argument according to which colonialism and nazism both rest upon a racism that can only be fought by a socio-political revolution that resonates with the early works of Marx that the poets read in the library of the National Assembly where they have just been elected. Here is Césaire: “They talk to me about civilization, I talk about proletarianization.”³⁸ Just as Sartre, in 1948 “Black Orpheus” defines Negritude as no more than an essentialism on the path of its own destruction because of its particularism, the word “Negritude” is nowhere to be found in the first version of the *Discourse on Colonialism* published just two months after Sartre’s preface.³⁹ In the second and major reworking of the piece, then published as a nearly fifty-page essay in 1949, Césaire’s argument is developed twofold. On the one hand, the congressman from Martinique continues to multiply the examples around the globe: to Vietnam and Oceania, he adds Indochina, Madagascar, and Congo. The conclusion clearly universalizes the fight and the marxist reference present in “Black Orpheus:”

³⁷ Sartre, “Black Orpheus,” op. cit., p. 244 [Fr., p. XL].

³⁸ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972) p. 44. The comparison between Colonialism and Nazism had already been formulated in the hundredth anniversary of the abolition of slavery, a speech titled “Commémoration du centenaries de l’abolition de l’esclavage,” given at the Sorbonne on April 27, 1948. The text was fully published in the third volume of *Œuvres Complètes* (Fort-de-France: Désormeaux, 1976), pp. 403-416. It is now also available in *Aimé Césaire: poésie, théâtre, essais et discours*, pp. 1420-1426.

³⁹ “The Impossible Contact” is published in the journal *Chemins du monde*, No. 5-6, July 1948, pp. 105-112. According to Kora Véron and Thomas A. Hale, in the exhaustive *Les Écrits d’Aimé Césaire* (Paris: Champion, 2013), Senghor’s *Anthologie* was published in April 1948.

It is a matter of the Revolution—the one which, until such time as there is classless society, will substitute for the narrow tyranny of a dehumanized bourgeoisie the preponderance of the only class that still has a *universal* mission, because it suffers in its flesh from all the wrongs of history, from all the *universal* wrongs: the proletariat.⁴⁰

On the other hand, where the introduction had, in 1948, focused on a contact between civilizations denied by colonization with no territorial adjective, the new introductory paragraph specifically accuses the “European civilization” at the same time as it states that “the problem of the proletariat is a colonial problem.” “Europe is indefensible,” writes Césaire. Other changes to the second reworking of the piece highlight the addition of a myriad of quotations that incriminate French humanists Jules Romain and Ernest Renan, while poeticizing a proletarian revolution by quoting French surrealist poet Lautréamont. Meanwhile, Placide Tempels’s *Bantu Philosophy* as well as the African ethnographic work of Leo Frobenius are used as springboards not only for an incrimination of colonialism but also for a vindication of the complexity and sophistication of pre-colonial—what he calls “ante-capitalist”—African societies. Finally, in the last version of 1955 that we read today, two names are added and staged in quasi-opposition. French intellectual Roger Caillois, whose prose against Lévi-Strauss’s cultural relativism and defense of a scientific and moral superiority of Europe over the rest of world, is heavily attacked. African intellectual Cheikh Anta Diop, whose newly published work *Nations nègres et culture*, is required reading and praised as the instrumental means for an upcoming “awakening of Africa.” In sum, as Césaire, in one of his most read pages, attempts to separate the historical condition of

⁴⁰ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, op. cit., p. 78. Emphasis is mine.

black peoples from an essentialist blackness characteristic of Negritude, he ultimately does not escape the particularity of Africa (or the French Antilles) and its relation to France, even as he desires to inscribe the fight onto the terrain of an alleged universalist class struggle.

This dissertation follows this ambivalent—and at times, contradictory—position from three different angles: language, métissage, arts and politics. Each of these angles presents a case in point to understand the framework that gives rise to these contradictions, reveal how they work and how they can be or have been affirmatively sabotaged, and offer to read them as constituting the interaction between discourse and politics. Hence, this dissertation starts with the primary means of Negritude’s discourse: language. It looks at language and analyzes the relation of the poets to French and Francophonie. While the choice to adopt the idiom of the former colonizer has long been criticized, I show that they used French as a tool enabling violation, negotiating their relation to the metropole as well as other colonies. Second, it interrogates the often overlooked concept of *métissage*. With particular attention to problems of translation, I analyze how the poets used *métissage* as a political and ethical concept in order to reach to the African diaspora, and especially African-America, without referring to Europe as the unavoidable mediator. Third, it focuses on the *First World Festival of Negro Arts* held in Dakar in 1966 as an instrument for cultural and political practice. By investigating an extensive documentation on the Festival’s organization, especially the influential role and presence of the United States, I show that art was used as a political tool to stage postcolonial unity in an otherwise global and competitive diversity.

CHAPTER I - NEGRITUDE & LANGUAGE

Introduction

In an article whose title—"Problematics of Negritude"—sets forth the plurality of predicaments inherent to the word itself, Senghor defines Negritude as the *sum total of the values of civilization of the Black world*.⁴¹ Every word of the definition breaks Negritude down into a multitude of equally far-reaching problems—not the least of which being the word "civilization." What sum? What values? What civilization? The article, originally presented as a paper given at a conference on Negritude in Dakar in 1971, offers to recount the history from the coining of the word by Aimé Césaire as a grammatical neologism in the early 30s, to the concept that takes its roots in the Harlem Renaissance and reaches the generational conflict between Pan-African and post-independence post-colonials.⁴² Senghor's paper as a whole abstracts Negritude from a fixed timeless template and purports to call attention to its polygenesis and development over time.

⁴¹ Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Problématique de la Négritude" in *Liberté III* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), p.272. Translation is mine. The word "problématique" as a noun, in French, involves a plurality of problems. The ensemble of these problems constitutes a "problématique."

⁴² Senghor includes W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, James Weldon Johnson, Sterling Brown, Frank Marshall Davis, Mercer Cook and many others in the former. He names Tchicaya U Tam'si, Wole Soyinka, Es'kia Mphahlele in the latter. On the blur that surrounds what Negritude meant for Césaire, Senghor, Damas, Nardal, and others, see the pioneering work of Lylian Kesteloot, *Histoire de la littérature Nègro-Africaine* (Paris: Khartala, 1986). A different narrative is given by Edward O. Ako, who goes as far as claiming that Negritude did not exist as a movement until Kesteloot defined and popularized it. See "'L'Étudiant Noir' and the Myth of the Genesis of the Negritude Movement" in *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1984), 341-353. In a similar vein, Brent Edwards notices the gendered story behind the early years of Negritude, quoting Paulette Nardal on how she and other women intellectuals were part of the conversations at the time, yet remained unacknowledged in print or in words by the forerunners of the movement. See Brent H. Edwards, *The practice of diaspora: literature, translation, and the rise of Black internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

It presents a word that serves as the opening to a reflection on Black consciousness and identity. However, by giving it a definition, Senghor falls into the aporia of the problem of definition: no sooner does he start defining the word than the concept becomes what the author sought to avoid: to be fixed and outdated. This is, perhaps, one of the reasons behind the different approach taken by Aimé Césaire, who prefers to regard it as “a way of living history” rather than as “a metaphysics,”⁴³ and cautiously abstains from defining either the word or the concept. For Maryse Condé, the difference of approach between Césaire and Senghor to Negritude rests upon an experience of Africa that is antithetic to the two poets. Writing from Martinique, what Césaire sees as an exile from both the land and the wealth of languages of the continent that prevents him from accessing the mythical past, real or imagined, Senghor finds it at his feet and in his privileged family life. Yet, it is striking that both appeal to something akin to an *ur-text* to their different stance on Negritude: the writings of German ethnographer Leo Frobenius on Africa. Why the need for this reference?

After all, Césaire admits that Senghor “awoke the African in [him], the fundamental negro. [He] became better conscious of [him]self. Through Senghor, [he had] the impression that [he] discovered Africa”.⁴⁴ Notwithstanding the paradox that his “consciousness of himself” came from a fellow student whom he had just met, Frobenius’s ethnographic writings seems to be the antithesis of the fundamentally psychological and unverifiable experience that his conversations

⁴³ Césaire publicizes these views in the *Discours sur la Négritude*, a paper given at the University of Miami in 1987, today printed together with the *Discours sur le colonialisme* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 2011), p. 82. As Abiola Irele writes in “Negritude-Literature and Ideology:” “No other member of the movement has elaborated negritude so fully as Senghor. As a matter of fact, Césaire himself prefers to regard negritude as a historical stand, as an attitude, rather than as a comprehensive system.” In *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Dec., 1965), p. 517, fn. Irele’s source is a private interview with the author. Also quoted in Maryse Condé, *Profil d’une œuvre : Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (Paris: Hatier, 1978), pp. 50-51.

⁴⁴ Jacqueline Leiner, *Aimé Césaire, le terreau primordial*, vol 2 (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2003), p. 32-33.

with Senghor provided him with. Similarly, Senghor's experience is the lived environment of his home, land, and family. What he reads in Frobenius can only be the pale and distant scientific description of scenes that exist in his imaginative memory. As he writes:

When I read the first pages of *History of African Civilization* by Leo Frobenius, I relived my childhood in the kingdom of Sine, even though it was under a protectorate. I relived, among other scenes, the visit of King Loumba Ndofoène Diouf to my father where all feelings were noble, all manners were polite, all words [parole] beautiful.⁴⁵

The difference is not only that of a different childhood or environment—after all, the two poets coin the word in the same Paris of the interwar period. Rather, the greater history of Martinique and Senegal—the former deprived of the plurality of mother-tongues, the latter having managed to keep, to a greater or lesser extent, a wealth of languages that are both private and public—survives in those differences and cannot be summed up in a definition. Negritude is both a point of convergence and a point of departure for two larger-than-life characters. Not shying away from the incongruity he finds himself in, Senghor invites intertextuality and indeed quotes... a

⁴⁵ In “*Problématique de la Negritude*”, p. 277. Translation is mine. Frobenius's *Kulturgeschichte Afrikas* appeared in French translation in 1936, that is, one year after the word Negritude was first coined by Césaire in *L'Étudiant Noir*. Though the German ethnographer is celebrated by Suzanne Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Theophile Obenga, Cheikh Anta Diop, and other African intellectuals for his integrity and his research on the continent, his early work that was not entirely exempt from his patent eurocentrism, as can be seen from his doctrine of Hamitic Circles or his paternalistic *Childhood of man; a popular account of the lives, customs and thoughts of the primitive races*, is often dismissed by the proponents of Negritude. In his Nobel lecture given on December 8, 1986, Wole Soyinka—a fierce critic of Negritude—remarks with irony: “Not content with being a racial slanderer, one who did not hesitate to denigrate, in such uncompromisingly nihilistic terms, the ancestral fount of the black races, Frobenius was also a notorious plunderer, one of a long line of European archeological raiders (...). Yet, is it not amazing that Frobenius is today still honored by black institutions, black leaders, and scholars?” In “Wole Soyinka - Nobel Lecture: This Past Must Address Its Present”. Nobelprize.org. Nobel Media AB 2014. Web. 23 Aug 2016. <http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1986/soyinka-lecture.html>. More recently, the critical work of Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs has called attention to Frobenius's apology for German nationalism (and how can a study of Africa help Germany overcome its interwar political and cultural crisis) in the very *History of African Civilization* that Senghor read (on page 30). See Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs, *Leo Frobenius, Anthropologe, Forschungsreisender, Abenteurer* (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer, 1998), [*Leo Frobenius: Anthropologue, explorateur, aventurier*; trans. Catherine and Marie-Pierre Emery (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999)].

definition by Césaire: “Negritude is the simple acknowledgement of the fact of being Black, and the acceptance of this fact, of our Black destiny, of our history and our culture.”⁴⁶ No sooner is this other definition given than Senghor leads us somewhere else: between the *fact* and the *acknowledgment of the fact* of being Black. Subsequently, the movement is redefined as an oscillation between objectivity (the ‘fact’) and subjectivity (its ‘acknowledgement’), with “being Black” placed at the center of the movement rather than fixed at the top. Neither Senghor nor Césaire denies the origin of their intellectual trajectory: the word Negritude is undoubtedly French.⁴⁷ For the originators of the movement, the word stands for a concept that must be developed beyond the search for a suffix to the root “*Nègre*.” It then opens the possibility to approach Negritude not as a definition of “being-black” but as a question about the meaning of “becoming-black.” This chapter aims to show, in texts from both Senghor and Césaire, some well-known and some less read, that Negritude emphasizes a philosophy of becoming as much as a philosophy of being.

Anchored in France as much as in French, yet exceeding the Hexagon to reach Senegal and Martinique in *Francophonie*, the question of the translation of Negritude into another language challenges its claim to really reach those who are not Francophone.⁴⁸ What would it

⁴⁶ “Problématique de la Négritude,” *Op. cit.*, p. 270. In the absence of translation, this and subsequent English quotes are mine. Senghor is quoting Césaire without reference, but these words can be found throughout, from the first issue of *L’Étudiant Noir* in 1935, as well as in Lilyian Kesteloot, *Entretien avec Aimé Césaire*, pp. 113-114.

⁴⁷ Most of Negritude’s critics start from that predicate. One need only look at Ngugi Wa Thiong’o famous line about Senghor’s “anointment” by the French *Académie* in *Decolonising the Mind* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1981), p. 19. Frantz Fanon also points out the limits of French as an instrument made unavoidable by the use of Sartrian philosophy, in the fifth chapter, of *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Seuil, 1952) [*Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1967)], “L’expérience vécue du Noir,” especially p. 107. Wole Soyinka, on the other hand, criticizes Negritude for its narrow and essentializing focus on “Black consciousness.” See, among other references, *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁴⁸ “Problématique de la Négritude,” p. 269. Senghor often refers to his French linguistics professors at the Sorbonne, Ferdinand Brunot and Marcel Cohen, and grounds the formation of the word in the prescriptive orthodoxy of French classics *Le Petit Robert*, *Le Bon Usage du Français*, as well as a study by the University of Strasbourg.

mean, for instance, to translate Negritude into an African language? Is that even desirable? Césaire, from his Antillean perspective, acknowledges the obstacle: “There is a real problem of language in the Antilles; for an African, it is less acute than for an inhabitant of Martinique. What language to use? An African can, so to speak, use his dialect, but we have no language.”⁴⁹ Senghor, located on the continent, attempts to read and translate Negritude in one of the six national languages of Senegal. He turns to Puular, a language that he speaks but is not his mother-tongue, to see if he can find a concept that englobes both objectivity and subjectivity in a construction that resembles the ending of the francophone word Negritude. If Latin had allowed the grammarian to subvert French and choose between two neologisms, *Negr-itude* and *negr-ité*, the poet-president shows that this is not only the privilege of French linguistic history. Indeed, this history almost invites subversion. As he tells his readers, there exist two words in Puular, *pul-aa-gu* and *pul-aa-gal*, that form a parallel between the sense of an objective negritude in the former and a subjective one in the latter. Senghor makes no definite conclusion and the digression precedes a “more serious” return to European philology.⁵⁰ Fanon’s criticism of Senghor resides precisely in those eye-catching statements that leaves intact the hierarchy of the “color prejudice.”⁵¹ Negritude is always fighting a losing battle: “Every hand was a losing hand

⁴⁹ Interview with François Beloux, “Un poète politique: Aimé Césaire” in *Magazine littéraire* No. 34, Nov. 1969. However, in another interview published by Jean Mazel in 1975, Césaire claims a—real of imagined—survival of Wolof syntax in his native Créole. See *Présence du Monde Noir* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1975), p. 160. This dismissal of créole as a full-fledged language of Martinique and Guadeloupe is what formed the basis of the Créolists and their attack on Césaire’s Negritude. Maryse Condé or Edouard Glissant, situated at the point of articulation between Negritude and Créolité, arguing in the Francophone world for something that is sometimes referred to as Antillanité, admit to the limits of Créole while making it a full part of Caribbean identity. See Edouard Glissant, *Le Discourse Antilles* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981) [*Caribbean Discourse*, trans. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989)]; Maryse Condé *The Journey of a Caribbean Writer* (London: Seagull Books, 2014).

⁵⁰ “Problématique de la Négritude,” *Op. cit.*, p. 272. After the paragraph devoted to finding the concepts in Puular, Senghor introduces the next two paragraphs where he refers to English, Arabic and French by a “Plus sérieusement” (more seriously) and a “Plus sérieusement encore” (even more seriously).

⁵¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1967), p. 89 [p. 95.]

for me.” When Sartre defines the movement as an “anti-racist racism” that can only be a preliminary flight in the dialectic towards the real battle of the world proletariat, Fanon concedes that the battle is lost.⁵² Yet the war is not over: “So I took up my negritude, and with tears in my eyes, I put its machinery together again.”⁵³ In the first part of this chapter, I aim to show what being francophone meant for two authors evolving in two different contexts, Aimé Césaire in Martinique and Léopold Sédar Senghor in Senegal. I also show how Sartre’s preface short-circuited their differences to read Negritude as an essentialist movement, henceforth foreclosing a reading that emphasized black-becoming at least as much as black-being.⁵⁴

Aimé Césaire often claimed that the condition of the diasporic subject does not allow for the same relation to the land or the language as that of the indigenous inhabitants. For Césaire, Negritude then becomes both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, it is an instrument of poetry (but also of drama and philosophy) to reimagine, at the level of the poet or its reader, a connection between the subject and his or her land and language. From the *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* to *I, Laminary*, a complex and subverted vocabulary and syntax, as well as

⁵² Ibid., p.101 [p. 107].

⁵³ Ibid., p. 112 [p. 106] Souleymane Bachir Diagne has termed Sartre’s preface a “death kiss” in *Léopold Sédar Senghor: l’art africain comme philosophie* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2007), p. 10. Abiola Irele has pointed to Sartre’s ambiguity, who also writes that Negritude “is not a *state* (...) it is a *Becoming*,” in “A Defense of Negritude: A Propos of Black Orpheus” in *Transition*, No. 50 (Oct., 1975), p. 41.

⁵⁴ Recent scholarship, from Gary Wilder to Souleymane Bachir Diagne, has engaged in this forward-looking reading of Negritude, over against a generation of critics who followed the same line of thought as that of Sartre’s preface that gave the movement its fame. Gary Wilder has written about an alternate vision of the world where Césaire and Senghor imagine new types of transcontinental political association in forms of decentralized democratic federation in *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013). Souleymane Bachir Diagne and Donna V. Jones have theorized the influence of vitalist philosophy for a Negritude read from a resolutely anti-essentialist vantage point. See Souleymane Bachir Diagne, “La Negritude comme mouvement et comme devenir,” in *Rue Descartes* 4/2014, No. 83, pp. 50-61; Donna V. Jones, *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy: Negritude, Vitalism and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Cheikh Ahmadou Thiam and Séverine Kodjo-Grandvaux have situated Negritude in the debate on the plurality of “African philosophies” that challenges the use of territorial ontologies, in both Francophone and Anglophone scholarship. See Cheikh Ahmadou Thiam, *Return to the Kingdom of Childhood* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2014); Severine Kodjo-Grandvaux, *Philosophies africaines* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 2013). See Michelle Wright, *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

themes such as the earth, the vegetation, and the sea, form the core of Césaire’s poetic language. On the other hand, it is a word to abstain from in one’s attempt to become free from a frame of reference that is undeniably and particularly French. In “Poetry and Knowledge,” a lecture given at the *International Congress of Philosophy* in Haiti in 1944, Césaire steps into the language of philosophy and sets aside the word *Négritude* while attempting to reach the universal through an unconscious tapping into what he calls “the totality of the world.” The time of a philosophical conference, Césaire stages his communication on (and experience in) poetry without references to the particularity of his Negritude. By itself, the practice of poetry gives no answer to the present state of affairs. For the poet, it offers a promise in the mode of to-come if it is treated as an end, activating the readerly imagination. Thirty years later, in another little-known address entitled “Geneva and the Black World” given in 1978 at the occasion of the “transfiguration” of *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*⁵⁵ into a cantata, Césaire still seeks the universal but, this time, from the vital impulse and the particulars of a “recharged and dynamic language.” While human beings can never forget their mother-tongue, they must also remain engaged with the reality of the world and attend to languages that are not their own. Because the limit of our words is also the limit of our languages, at a time when Negritude is claimed to face its twilight, Césaire is still at work in questioning the foundation of a looking-forward poetic language. The second part of this chapter traces Césaire’s vision of Negritude as a philosophy of becoming in these two pivotal, yet often overlooked, essays.

⁵⁵ Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1956 [1939]); *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, trans. Albert J. Arnold and Clayton Eshelman (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2013).

I. What Language?

A. From a Philosophy of Bilingualism to a Politics of Languages

It is no stretch of the imagination to say that Negritude's engagement with the thinking of language choice at the dawn of independence builds upon a conundrum with its main medium: French and its colonial heritage. Rather than limiting the problem to postcolonial countries in general—and Senegal in particular—Senghor opts to look at a brief history of the French language itself, and provides us with an analogy between the emergence of Francophonie following independence and the nationalization of French in France. In 1548, Joachim du Bellay wrote his *Défense et illustration de la langue française* to bolster the recent making of the language as the official idiom of the state.⁵⁶ Sixteenth-century French was the language of a nation in becoming and so were its speakers. Yet, the modern speaker of French has outgrown the borders of the Hexagon. In 1966, Léopold Sédar Senghor considers it essential to work towards an idea that takes roots in that history and yet departs from it to fit the larger project of Francophonie: “L'essentiel est (...) qu'ensemble, nous travaillons à la *Défense et expansion de la langue*

⁵⁶ As is well-known, the establishment of French as the administrative and official language of the state occurs on September 6th, 1539, with the *Ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts*. It declares the obligation for the laws to be communicated to the people in the French mother-tongue. The references to the history of the French language and its controversies are innumerable. Senghor probably follows the work of two of his linguistics professors at the Sorbonne: Marcel Cohen, *Histoire d'une langue: le français* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1967); and Ferdinand Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1966). Jacques Derrida has criticized the political emphasis of Marcel Cohen's and Ferdinand Brunot's readings of that history, pointing to the intertwining of historical circumstances and political agenda within which a natural/national language is caught, as well as the mutual reinforcement of natural/national language and philosophical discourse. See “La Philosophie dans sa langue nationale,” in *Du droit à la philosophie* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), pp. 283-309.

française.”⁵⁷ Removing French from the status of “national language” of Senegal and reinscribing it as its “official language,” Senghor hopes to break ground for a successful cooperation between French-speakers in Senegal and French-speakers in all the countries gathered under the politico-cultural banner of *La Francophonie*.⁵⁸ The Francophone, which the practitioner of Negritude must become, must take on this new task and lead French to a new maturity, in a similar vein as that of the poets of the French Renaissance:

Read again the poets of the 16th century: of a French language still in its maturing youth before she reached its maturity. The great poets of the time (...): Maurice Scève and Louise Labbé, Joachim du Bellay and Pierre de Ronsard, Agrippa d'Aubigné as well as François de Malherbe.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Léopold Sédar Senghor, “La Francophonie comme culture,” in *Liberté III* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), p. 89. The relation between French as the official language of Senegal and the creation of the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* is, for Senghor, almost undistinguishable. Yet, the history of French in Senegal is centuries-old, as was its limited access to an urban elite through schools and public administration—and mostly in the Four Communes established in 1872. Hence, at the dawn of independence, some study show a rate of literacy not higher than 25% (e.g. in A. Sylla, *L’Ecole future pour qui?* (Dakar: ENDA, 1987), but also *L’Expansion du Wolof au Sénégal* (Dakar: CLAD XI, 1966) and Louis Verrière, *La Population du Sénégal: aspects quantitatifs* (Dakar: Faculté de Droit et des Sciences Économiques de l’Université de Dakar, 1965)). In the recently published collection of his late articles and speeches, Senghor recognizes that true bilingualism with French only touched a minority. See “Colloque sur les relations entre les langues négro-africaines et le français,” in *Education and Culture* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 2013), p. 123. For the broader history of French in Senegal from 1830 to 1960, see Gabriel Manessy, “Le Français en Afrique Noire: faits et hypothèses,” (Paris: Champion, 1979), pp. 333-362; and Michael Crowder, *Senegal: A Study of French Assimilation Policy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

⁵⁸ From the beginning to the end of his presidency, Senghor has been consistent with this particular program, as evidenced by the recently published collection of speeches and articles on culture and education from 1963 to 1987, Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Éducation et culture* (Paris: Fondation Léopold Sédar Senghor - Présence Africaine, 2014). This hope, as well as the role of the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*, has been widely criticized for not attending to the economic and political conditions that bind nation-states (see Gabriel Martin, “Francophone Africa in the Context of Franco-African Relations,” in *Africa in World Politics*, ed. John W. Harbeson and Donald Rothchild. 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995); Pierre-Jean Schrader, “From Berlin 1884 to 1989: Foreign Assistance and French, American and Japanese Competition in Francophone Africa,” in *Journal of Modern African Studies* 33, No. 4 (1996), pp. 539-567; and more recently, “The ties that bind,” in *The Economist*, Oct. 19th, 2012).

⁵⁹ “La Francophonie comme culture,” in *Liberté III*, p. 84.

To be sure, the political conditions under which these highly educated poets of Negritude wrote cannot be forgotten, nor can we not notice that they represent only the elite of the population, educated in the metropole—their mastery of the Surrealist style testifies to this fact. In other words, both the engagement of Renaissance poets with French as a language-in-becoming and Senghor's hope for a poetry of Negritude through which the postcolonial subject may use French anew, are top-down enterprises. Yet, to notice that Senghor includes in the list of his sixteenth-century references both Ronsard and Malherbe, two poets with two radically opposed views of how to use French, may stress that he is not arguing for a direct line from the French Renaissance to Postcolonial Francophone Africa.⁶⁰ Rather, there is an internal instability in sixteenth century French poetry that unfolds in the specific conjuncture of the European transition to modernity, and that opens a series of questions that can inform the problem to which Senghor wants to draw our attention: that French in West Africa at the dawn of independence is both a foreign element and a native language.

Malherbe is one of the most prominent reformers of the French language, known for the rules he imposed on the language—such as the proscription of provincialisms and other prohibitions of innovations outside the norms (e.g., the play with hemistichs caesura, the use of monosyllables, asymmetric rhymes, etc). In order to free the new language from what he called 'barbarisms' (e.g.: Latinisms and provincialisms), Malherbe developed straight rules of writing.

⁶⁰ One of the most comprehensive treatments of the differences between such figures as Ronsard (as proponent of a group of poets who used the absence of linguistic orthodoxy) and Malherbe (as one of the most loyal servant to the royal power) is to be found in F. Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française*, Vol. 3 (Paris: Armard Colin, 1966). However, some studies have pointed out the limits of Brunot's work, that focuses on a very short timespan in the two poet's literary career and inscribes it in the larger frame of the political ideology that associates French and France. Hence, R. Lebegue has argued for a Ronsardian period in Malherbe's youth in *Cahier des Annales de Normandie*, Volume 9, 1977, No. 1 pp. 8-20, while R. Katz has emphasized Malherbe's positive criticism of Ronsard in *Ronsard's French Critics: 1585-1828* (Paris: Droz, 1966), p. 69 and passim.

Quite literally, he developed an orthography: a stabilized system of spelling. By contrast, Ronsard vindicates the unequivocal “musicality” of poetry that continuously adapts to its medium through a constant breaking of norms, and legitimizes “barbarisms” or uses them as parenthetical distractions. The early poetry of Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor attempts to reject orthodoxy of the language. They aim at bending the language to their needs rather than being bent by it. The adoption of neologisms, the first one being *Negritude* itself, illustrates such an attempt. Negritude is not a change in style-adoption but a change in language-appropriation, directly responding to the situation of the colonial before decolonization that Fanon describes.⁶¹ Forging nouns, forging names, or simply choosing words that appear foreign to almost any reader of Césaire’s poetry is a reminder that for the one forced into diglossia (the situation of coexistence between two languages of unequal perceived values), all words are foreign. Does that mean that, therefore, all words are equal? The confluence (and not the influence) of Surrealism with Negritude—that both Césaire and Senghor concede—shows that the movement hopes to forge a new generation of poets and writers able to make a new culture rather than consuming that of others, to make their own language rather than adopting that of others. When Césaire insists that he must name all Martinique things and call them by their names, what he asks from the reader of his otherwise hermetic poetry, is to develop a chosen bilingualism.⁶²

⁶¹ Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Seuil, 1952), p. 14; *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles L. Markmann (London: Grove Press, 1967), p. 9: “Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country.”

⁶² See Georges N’Gal in *Aimé Césaire, un homme à la recherche d’une patrie*, p. 143. In an interview published in *Le Monde* on December 6th 1981, reprinted in part in *Les Écrits d’Aimé Césaire*, op. cit., p. 552, Césaire argues for a chosen bilingualism: between Creole and French as languages of Martinique, both equally public, but fulfilling different functions. The influence of Mallarmé, whose poetry also attempts to emancipate language from its own instrumentality, pervades Césaire’s poetry throughout the pre-World War II period. A full analysis is beyond the scope of this chapter. It is noticeable that this statement appears in the early 80s when the Créolists start to gain a momentum. Yet, nowhere in their *Éloge de la créolité / In Praise of Creoleness*, written in both French and English, do they mention Césaire’s conspicuous shift from a rejection to Créole to the possibility of his equality with French.

Yet, Césaire is all too aware that to become bilingual takes time and practice. In the meantime, clarity and submission of expression to thought must be the common goal for Negritude writers. They must develop a grammar and an orthography that adapt to a multitude of styles and allow to push the limits of a French language hitherto imposed from above and from outside. This immersion in French that completely surrenders to its rules (grammar, syntax, orthography) to be able to redefine them differently, has however backfired. On the one hand, as Maryse Condé writes, few indigenous Martiniquais recognize or are able to follow Césaire's syntax and word-choice.⁶³ On the other, the Creolist movement represented by Patrick Chamoiseau and Jean Bernabé use this preciousness to accuse Césaire of not knowing *Créole* and thus to remain a tool of the metropole.⁶⁴ It is true that the poet had argued that no poetry can be written in that language:

There must be a grammar and an orthography. Creole is only an oral language that, still, remains unfixed. (...) Yet, a creole written *à la française* cannot be understood, one must first read it out loud, to reverberate it to the ear.⁶⁵

Beyond orthography and orthodoxy of syntax, Senghor also aims to submit the words to the suggestive potential of the free play of rhythms and sounds: alliterations, anaphoras, etc (a technique particularly suited to poetry). Freeing himself from the chronological progression that defines each step as an improvement towards a universal from above, Senghor simultaneously contrasts a poem by Ronsard with one by Césaire. Here is Ronsard:

⁶³ Maryse Condé, *Profil d'une œuvre: Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Paris: Hatier, 1978), p. 54.

⁶⁴ It is also to be said that, in their *Éloge de la créolité*, the three main figures of the movement (Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant) recognize Césaire as a precursor to créolité so long as one forgoes a reading of the poet through the lense of Negritude and its connection, through and with Senghor, to Negro-Africa. See Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, *Éloge de la créolité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989).

⁶⁵ Interview in the re-edition of *Tropiques* (1978), p. XI. Translation is mine.

Toute ma Muse, ma Charité
Ma Toute où mon Penser habite,
Toute mon cœur, toute mon rien,
Toute ma maitresse Marie,
Toute ma douce tromperie
Toute mon mal, toute mon bien.⁶⁶

Here is Césaire:

à même le fleuve de sang de terre / bareback on the river of blood of earth
à même le sang de sole brisé / on the blood of broken sun
à même le sang d'un cent de clous de soleil / on the blood of a hundred sun nails
à même le sang du suicide des bêtes à feu / on the blood of the suicide of fire beasts
à même le sang de cendre, le sang de sol le sang des sangs d'amour /
on the blood of an ember the blood of salt the blood of bloods of love
à même le sang incendié d'oiseau feu / on the fire bird inflamed blood ⁶⁷

The use of anaphoras and alliterations in the poetry of both Ronsard and Césaire throws an almost uncontrolled series of words and images at the reader. If there is no ambivalence in the

⁶⁶ From *Le Second Livre des Amours de Marie* (XXV), quoted in Senghor, "La Francophonie comme culture," in *Liberté III* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), p. 84. Definitive French edition is "La Pléiade," edited by Jean Céard, Daniel Ménager and Michel Simonin (Paris: Gallimard, 1993). For an English translation, see *Poems of Pierre de Ronsard*, trans. Nicholas Kilmer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). Translation modified.

⁶⁷ Aimé Césaire, "Tam Tam 1", from *Les Armes miraculeuses*, quoted in Léopold Sédar Senghor, "La Francophonie comme culture," in *Liberté III* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), p. 85. The original French edition is *Les armes miraculeuses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946). For an English translation, see Aimé Césaire, *The Collected Poetry*, trans. Clayton Eshelman and Annette Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 135. Césaire's use of poetic techniques resonates with Jakobson's famous statement: "The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination," in "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics" in *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1960), p. 350.

meaning of the words, there is a multivalence in the relation between their sound and rhythm (as a result of the anaphoras, assonance and alliteration), that defies common sense in a way that would be familiar to the Surrealists—known for breaking the rules—who influenced Negritude. But Césaire is not only interested in breaking the rules by means of figuration. What he wishes is to submit them to his poetic imagination in the hope of revealing something hidden and personal. A look at the words, sound, and rhythm, shows that, far from being in a random rhythm, they are carefully mastered: in six verses, the anaphora “à même le...” is repeated six times, while the word “sang” appears nine times, two of which are spelled differently (“cent” and “sangs”). Repetition with a difference leads the writer and his reader to both an impromptu development and a controlled deviation. As in Jazz, rhythm leads the musician and his listener to both an improvisation that blossoms from within and a carefully crafted relation to the other that gives clues to seize the end of the ‘solo.’ Here, ‘rhythm’ is the architecture that allows for a deviation from the straight line while the poet also grounds himself in the sound of the language with its visual variations, as in “sang,” “sangs” and “cent.” Perhaps this is what Césaire means when he chooses to keep *créole* as his oral mother-tongue, choosing to push the limits of the written language, playing on the overdetermination of the vocabulary.⁶⁸ Doubtless, there is also, for Césaire, the historical conditions that gave birth to *créole*, a language that slaves—coming from

⁶⁸ I used the word “overdetermination” in its casual sense of something that is determined in more than one way or with more conditions than are necessary. I am aware that the word is historically borrowed from two existing disciplines: linguistics and psychoanalysis. In Saussure, the linguistic signs are *surdéterminés* because they operate in a structural relation with other signs. In Freud, the notion of *Überdeterminierung* describes the unconscious as a “thought factory” on the analogy of an inexhaustibly productive team of weavers. Althusser uses the term to describe the internal law of the functioning of the social machinery, as it appears through the effects of the contradictions in practices constituting the social formation: “This reflection of the conditions of existence of the contradiction within itself, this reflection of the structure articulated in dominance that constitutes the unity of the complex whole within each contradiction, this is the most profound characteristic of the Marxist dialectic, the one I have tried recently to encapsulate in the concept of ‘overdetermination.’” In *Pour Marx* (Paris: Maspero, 1965), p. 212 [*For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Penguin, 1969), p. 206].

different African places—crafted in a situation of diglossia with French.⁶⁹ To bring the situation to a bilingualism that one can only hope would be more egalitarian, Césaire chooses not solely to keep the written structure of the French language, but also to challenge the nuances of its syntax.

Though they often come from a different perspective about the place and use of the French language, both Senghor and Césaire firmly argue against the idea of putting French at a higher status than that of African languages or Créoles. Yet, they seem to be in agreement on the view that sees grammar and writing (i.e., French) as a refinement from the orality of créole and African languages in general. Indeed, in one of his first and rarely read articles, *Le problème culturel en AOF*, originally given as a communication to the Chamber of Commerce of Dakar in 1937, Senghor argues for all scientific work (among other works about which he remains vague) to be written in French, leaving “the literary genre that expresses the genius of the Negro race: poetry, theater, tale” to indigenous languages.⁷⁰ Undeniably, Senghor makes a distinction between the reach of orality and the jurisdiction of written language—the latter documenting a culture that rises above the simple curiosity for the colonial discipline of ethnography. Similar to Césaire’s claim that a written créole, at that point, is not understandable, Senghor seems to consider the non-transcription of Senegalese languages such as Wolof or Sereer as an obstacle to

⁶⁹ This is the way in which Césaire chooses to explain the emergence of créole. See *Tropiques* (1978), p. XI; and “Rencontre avec Aimé Césaire,” in Jean-Michel Dijan, *Léopold Sédar Senghor: genèse d’un imaginaire francophone* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), pp .229-230.

⁷⁰ In *Liberté 1*, pp. 11-21. That particular passage is from p. 19. Although Senghor gave the speech in 1937, it appears nowhere in print before the publication of the first volume of *Liberté* in 1960, entitled “Négritude et Humanisme.” As of today, the article has not been translated. It is also interesting to note that Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o, often mocking Senghor’s love for the French language, also notices that part of English’s influence in the former colonies stems from its global presence in the fields of science and technology. While Ngũgĩ does offer a vindication of indigenous mother-tongues in literary creation and intellectual production, his argument is akin to a supplementing (both as addition and replacement), rather than a compartmentalization, of English with Swahili, Gikuyu and other African languages. See *Decolonising the Mind* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1981), particularly chapter 3, as well as *Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), especially chapter 1 “The English Master and the Colonial Bondsman.”

express the grammar-like language of “rational” science. I argue that one must go beyond that statement to try to understand how, in the same speech, Senghor can call for a full bilingualism whereby future citizens of independent Senegal would live fully in French and in Wolof, in Sereer, or any other indigenous mother-tongues. Is Senghor contradicting himself? To be sure, one sees that in a footnote written in 1963 when the text appears in print, Senghor recognizes he changed his views. The speech itself argues for full bilingualism on the basis of a *movement* from what the citizen has access to, i.e., an infrastructure pervaded by French at all levels, to where the citizen will be tomorrow (“où il sera engagé demain”), i.e., a time when French will be fully postcolonial, optional, and adapted to the situation. From this moment of interrogation of black identity (past, present and future), Senghor starts thinking in a way that, far from fixing an originary essence for Negro-Africans that tells them how to *be* (e.g, French-speaking or Wolof speaking, science-writing or literature-telling, etc), emphasizes the process by which, through education and culture in the two languages, French and any one of the African mother-tongues, they will *become* free, never ceasing to redefine their native ground and foreign contributions. In 1945, Senghor continues to revise his judgement, and in one of his longest articles, *Vues sur l’Afrique Noire ou assimiler, non être assimilé*, he develops the notion of the modification of the *greffe française* [French graft]⁷¹ to chart a “long education” for a continuously emerging process of constant and open-ended reformulations, contradictions, and transformations. Undeniably, Senghor remains anchored in an ethnological knowledge of Africa

⁷¹ In *Liberté I*, pp. 39-70. I extend my analysis of what Senghor calls *greffe* in my discussion on *métissage* in the second chapter of this dissertation. In *Limited Inc* (Paris: Galilee, 1990), Derrida develops the relation between language and the concept of graft, arguing that, no more than a parasite, the act of grafting is foreign to the body that it is grafted onto, “always haunting it” (154). If we read young Senghor in the light of late Derrida, French always already haunts the development of an imaginary “authentic” black-africanness, which concurs with his post-independence statement according to which French is part of African history despite its being colonial. See “La Francophonie comme culture,” *op. cit.*, p. 81.

that must be composed of two different European disciplines, a written and an oral one: “Ethnography and Linguistics.”⁷² Yet, let us note that Senghor does not take the disciplines at face-value. In other words, he does not promote a reading of ethnographic treatises about Africa written by Europeans in general and the French in particular to help Africans with a knowledge of Africa that has remained “oral.” Rather, he re-defines the “rigorous and scientific discipline” of ethnography as a tool for the doctrine of assimilation specific to the “expression of French rationalism.”⁷³ Doing so, Senghor already—albeit mildly—points out to the limits, in France and in French, of a discipline that is self-defined as objective and forgoes the subjective aspect of its study. Recently, Vincent Debaene has shown the particularity of the French ethnological tradition to be caught in a contradictory response to its discipline, between science and literature.⁷⁴ On the one hand, the French anthropologist, returning from fieldwork, writes a “scientific treatise” that presents his or her “findings” objectively. On the other, the anthropologist also feels compelled to write a literary work that acknowledges the subjectivity of its narration (e.g. Claude Lévi-Strauss writes both *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* and *Tristes Tropiques*; Michel Leiris also writes a scientific study on Dogon language and *L’Afrique Fantôme*, but in reverse order, starting with the literary work and moving onto the scientific study). Ultimately, the anthropologist realizes there cannot be any return to the origin, a fact that Césaire seems to have internalized and expressed poetically throughout the *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*. Contrary to the title of the work and the event that led to its writing that suggest Césaire would find back the

⁷² In *Liberté 1*, p. 66.

⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 41.

⁷⁴ Vincent Debaene, *L’adieu au voyage* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010) [*Far Afield, French Anthropology between Science and Literature* trans. Justin Izzo (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013)].

beauty of his native land,⁷⁵ what he finds upon his return is the opposite of a romanticized place: ugliness, misery and despair. Not choosing one side over the other and not justifying one side against the other, the poet assumes both alternatives insofar as they are “his.” In the famous lines of the *Notebook*, the poet ironically defines:

those who invented neither powder nor compass

those who could harness neither steam nor electricity

those who explored neither the seas nor the sky

Neither claiming ownership of rational progress nor rejecting it to vindicate a romanticized golden-age pre-colonial time, the poet instrumentalizes what the colonial stamped with the seal of negativity. Different interpretations have been given to those lines, particularly, in response to Sartre’s reading in *Black Orpheus* that interpret them as a “claim of non-technicalness.” In her *Histoire de la littérature négro-africaine*, Lilyan Kesteloot stands against Sartre and understands them as the “objective and sad recognition of a real situation,” while Mbwil Ngal gives yet another explanation: “a source of richness that makes the world livable.”⁷⁶ The problem and danger that are brought to light by Césaire’s lines and their subsequent interpretations are inseparable from the singular position of the Caribbean over against Africa as a colonial territory.

⁷⁵ Césaire has often recalled the story that led to the writing of the *Notebook*. See, among others, an interview with Jacqueline Leiner, *Aimé Césaire, le terreau primordial*, *op cit.* p. 136. “C’est vraiment un phénomène de hasard objectif... Je portais cette œuvre en moi, je voulais l’écrire et j’arrive en Yougoslavie, chez mon ami Guberina. On me donne une chambre, j’ouvre la fenêtre, et je vois en face de moi, à l’horizon, une île, une petite île. Je demande à mon ami Guberina: «Mais comment donc s’appelle cette île?» Il me dit: « Elle s’appelle Martinska ». J’éclate de rire et je dis: «Martinska, ça signifie quoi?» - « Ça signifie l’île de Saint-Martin». Eh bien, qu’est-ce que c’est que la Martinique, ce n’est pas autre chose que l’île de Saint-Martin. Par conséquent je retrouvais ma Martinique, où que j’aie, je retrouvais ma Martinique.”

⁷⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Black Orpheus*, trans. S. W. Allen, in *Présence Africaine*, No. 10/11 (1951), p. 236; Lilyan Kesteloot, *Histoire de la littérature négro-africaine*, (Paris: Khartala, 2001), p. 137; Mbwil Ngal, *Aimé Césaire, un homme à la recherche d’une patrie* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1994), p. 122. Ngal seems to point out to an early criticism of the entanglement between the literary articulation of an imagined glorious past necessary for epistemological performance of blackness, and the pragmatic demands of a people that the political practice of Césaire and Senghor—both public servants and political statesmen—have to attend to in a world ever more globalized.

How not to give in and accept to live in a civilization (of powder and compass, steam and electricity, etc) that is not his, while not preaching an impossible return to a golden-aged past? Perhaps, not only by avoiding to give in to the hierarchical scale of civilization given and legitimized by, for instance, the use of such a European discipline as ethnology, but also by entering the European text itself so as to uncover its biases such as the written over the oral. Rather than reproducing the logic of colonial knowledge-production by reversing a binary opposition between rational (written) progress and sentimental (oral) memory, as Sartre does in his interpretation of Césaire's line in the *Notebook*, Negritude may perhaps be read as addressing the entanglement between so-called objective rationalism and its subjective expression in a language. Hence, even in the most vocal attacks against colonial knowledge-production in the *Discourse on Colonialism*, Césaire shows the bad faith of "colonial rationalism" that strategically misinterprets the rationalist's bedside book: Descartes's *Discourse on Method*. Indeed, as the poet writes in an often overlooked sentence, one must pay attention to

...their barbaric repudiation, for the sake of the cause, of Descartes' statement, the charter of universalism, that 'reason is found whole and entire in each man,' and that 'where individuals of the same species are concerned, there may be degrees in respect of their accidental qualities, but not in respect of their forms, or natures'."⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1955), p. 23; *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972) p. 56.

The passage, that Césaire includes only in the last-written-version of the *Discourse*, in 1955, is given to the reader without reference. Indeed, Descartes’s sentence is to be found in the very first paragraph of his *Discourse*, and as such, should be recognized by anyone who believes in—or claims to ground him or herself in—Cartesian rationalism. In the same vein, in 1956, Senghor evokes Descartes’s double-sidedness of reason without reference, not to return to a dated moment in the history of rationality, but to show how the history of reason has always been interwoven with the language it was expressed in, such as the dual nature of the French word *raison* whose inner contradictions must be played out or elaborated.⁷⁸ The (in)famous alexandrine “*l’émotion est nègre, comme la raison hellène*”⁷⁹ is but an illustration of the dual nature of the word *raison*: “‘Emotion’ means ‘intuitive reason,’ as does the word *soul* for Negro-Americans, and ‘reason’, the European reason, is ‘discursive,’” writes Senghor.⁸⁰ Descartes, as precursor of the Enlightenment, writes philosophy in the strict tradition of writing philosophical treatises, but the language of philosophy within which he steps is deliberately existentially impoverished. It cannot, however make the human being existentially impoverished,

⁷⁸ Léopold Sédar Senghor, “L’esthétique négro-africaine,” in *Liberté I*, pp. 202-217. This contradiction is a moment of transgression that readers can inhabit and that relates, perhaps, to the tradition of doubt in the European Enlightenment as it begins to advocate for the universal. I thank Etienne Balibar for suggesting this relation and for sharing his paper “L’idée de ‘nouvelles Lumières’ et les contradictions de l’universalisme” in a private communication. Those ideas are developed in the essay “Quelle universalité des Lumières?” published in 2005 in *Le Bottin des Lumières*, ed. Nadine Descendre, Ville de Nancy/Communauté urbaine du Grand Nancy. Balibar positions himself along with Derrida’s late work on the two aporias of exemplarity and of liberty and equality, as in *Voyous* (Paris: Galilee, 2002). On the different interpretation of the role of contradictions in Enlightenment thought, see Paul De Man, “Kant and Schiller” in *Aesthetic Ideology*, edited with an introduction by Andrzej Warminski (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); also, Diana K. Reese, *Reproducing Enlightenment* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009)

⁷⁹ Léopold Sédar Senghor, “Ce que l’homme noir apporte,” in *Liberté I*, p. 24.

⁸⁰ Léopold Sédar Senghor, “Problématique de la Négritude” in *Liberté III*, (Paris: Seuil, 1977), p. 283.

but the *Discourse on Method* proposes that human becoming enters philosophical writing as one enters grammatical writing.⁸¹

What one begins to see, is that Senghor is not advocating Descartes as role-model for a rationalism that stands for a modernizing process, with grammar as its linguistic illustration. Rather, in the reading of Descartes (as well as other writers who reflected upon the limits of language appropriation and practiced the challenge of stylistic adoption, such as—but not limited to—Pascal), Senghor finds an ally whom he can use to show that the language—French—within which a particular philosophical discourse occurs—rationalism—offers one access to humanism. Hence Senghor can praise, albeit sometimes too emphatically, the precision and clarity of Descartes’s writing as he praises French: its vocabulary, morphology, syntax, grammar, etc. Yet, in the conclusion of a paper presented at the Second Congress of Black Artists and Writers held in Rome in March 1959, that aimed to show the conditions under which he could think of a new “Negro-African Civilization,” Senghor is adamant that French writing cannot be opposed to a Negro-African orality. Reacting against an article by Maurice Houis on the future rise of a “Negro Humanism,”⁸² Senghor writes:

⁸¹ This idea resonates with Jacques Derrida’s response to Foucault’s argument that madness, sleep or dream cannot be taken seriously as a grounds for doubt. For Foucault, it is the exclusion of madness leads Descartes to the grammatical cogito which arbitrarily self-assure the philosopher of its own rationality. In “Cogito and the History of Madness,” Derrida responded that, far from excluding madness, the passage and its allusion to dreams not to be put to aside to its relation to madness. Rather, it reassures Descartes of the normative operations of his language and his existential questioning. In Derrida’s words it amounts to “the hyperbolic exasperation of the hypothesis of madness.” See *Writing and Difference*, trans Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1978), p. 61 and passim; *L’écriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967), p. 79.

⁸² Maurice Houis, “Préalables à un humanisme nègre,” in *Esprit*, No. 267, Nov. 1958, pp. 571-594. Houis’s argument is that a ‘true’ African culture must take root in its oral tradition. Any literary work that “does not take its sources in ‘oral literature’,” he writes, cannot be part of the “intellectual movement of Negro Africa.” Houis goes on to advise African writers: “Africans will move from the feeling of culture to the analysis of culture only if they are receptive to the anthropological sciences” (p. 537). Houis’s thesis resides in the oral-written opposition, as it was theorized in the 50s and 60s with the works of, among others, Walter J. Ong (*Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, 1958), Marshall McLuhan (*The Gutenberg Galaxy*, 1962), and Jack Goody (*Literacy in Traditional Societies*, 1968).

Orality is not only of language; but of all the Negro-African cultural manifestations, orality is one of their common aspects. (...) The problem is less simple than what M. Houis believes. He can only see codification; if fixing through writing offers some advantages, those advantages can be bothersome Writing is synonym of abstraction, and so doing, *impoverishment*.⁸³

It should be noticed that these remarks on the status of orality, literacy, tradition, and modernity, are not only uttered at the dawn of independence, but also, simultaneously, in the context of an intense academic discussion in France on the role of the human sciences—inclusive of the humanities and social sciences. In particular, the end of the fifties marks both the decline of Sartre's existentialism and the rise of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism with its primacy of the model of language.⁸⁴ For both anti-colonial and anti-imperial reasons, and in the context of the questioning of the human sciences, French cannot be the solution to the double bind of language at the dawn of independence, though it can be transformed. In adopting the already existing term "Franco-*phone*" as opposed to redefining it as *Franco-lingual* or even using the anglicism "*parlant-français*," Senghor still resides in the conflictual relation between the rational, grammatical, and syntactic language that French stands for, and the flexible, moving, and imaginative musical style that the poets of Negritude have wanted to fold French into. How can we explain the apparent contradiction between the wish to overcome artificial binary

⁸³ Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Éléments constitutifs d'une civilisation négro-africaine" in *Liberté I*, p. 285. Translation is mine. The French plays on a chiasmus: "la fixation par l'écriture, si elle offre certains avantages, n'en fait pas des avantages certains." The original communication was published in *Présence Africaine*, No. 24-25 (1959), 249-279 (the aforementioned quote is on p. 278).

⁸⁴ François Dosse, *Histoire du Structuralisme* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991).

oppositions coming straight from colonial domination and its legacy, and the elaboration of a discourse that assuredly valorizes one side of the binary?

The recently published collection of texts and papers on education and culture that the first President of Senegal wrote and gave, shows a project of transcription of the six national languages (Wolof, Fula, Sereer, Jola, Mandinka, Soninke) that follows an ideal of writing mirroring French. The whole arsenal that the French language (upon which Francophonie is based) has at its disposal, i.e., an elaborate syntax, morphology, and vocabulary, makes French, in Senghor's view, especially appropriate for the communication of sciences and techniques. In a paper entitled "Colloque sur les relations entre les langues négro-Africaines et le français," given in Dakar in March 1976, Senghor details proudly how it is by decree and under his personal supervision that official commissions have regulated the ordering of words ("*découpage des mots*"), first in Wolof and Sereer, then in Fula, and how, within a three-year deadline, a similar outcome for the three other national languages should occur: Jola, Mandinka and Soninke.⁸⁵ One organization in particular is fully deployed by Senghor in applied research for linguistic revolution, the Center of Applied Linguistics of Dakar (*Centre de linguistique appliquée de Dakar*, or CLAD), in a way that seems reminiscent of the early history of French as the language

⁸⁵ See "Colloque sur les relations entre les langues négro-africaines et le français," in *Education and Culture* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 2013), p. 127. Senghor gives more information to the decree of 1971 that promulgates a single alphabet for the six national languages in another communication given two years later: "Le dynamisme de l'éducation sénégalaise - visite officielle à la région de Diourbel," pp. 153-160.

of the state of France.⁸⁶ Indeed, just as the *Académie française* felt compelled to use its political authority to criticize Corneille's first major tragedy, *Le Cid*, on the basis of his wrong use of French syntax and semantic as soon as it was created, so also did Senghor feel the need to use his presidential authority to act in the culturo-linguistic domain, as is shown by the now published letter to his prime minister *à propos* the correct spelling used in a journal. In a similar instance, the first President of Senegal censored Ousmane Sembène's film, *Ceddo*, not because of its content depicting the conflicts between the Islamic and Christian religions and ethnic and traditional beliefs, but because of a disagreement on the orthography of the movie title.⁸⁷ In this relationship between the French language and the transcription of Senegalese languages, Senghor hopes to establish a new dynamic: between choice and complementarity. Indeed, the word "choice" appears more than a dozen times in the speech, vindicating a move from a relation defined by Césaire as that of diglossia to a full-fledge bilingualism. Referencing his 1937 article where he already argued for a bilingual education, Senghor now defines French as no longer a

⁸⁶ Indeed, insofar as language in Senegal is concerned, CLAD is to found a method for French as a secondary language "targeting mass education." See *Education and Culture*, p. 117. The top-down political and cultural regulation of the French language is especially powerful in the beginning period ranging from 1539 to 1635—the *Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts* and the *Académie Française*—a period Derrida adroitly titles: "From Law to Philosophy." Jacques Derrida, "S'il y a lieu de traduire," in *Du Droit à la Philosophie* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), pp. 283-309. For references to the early history of the regulation of French as state language, see Ferdinand Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française des origines à nos jours*. (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1911), especially volumes II to IV; also Marcel Cohen, *Histoire d'une langue. Le Français* (Paris: Colin, 1947), pp. 150-164; Renée Balibar, *L'institution du français. Essai sur le colinguisme des Carolingiens à la République* (Paris: P.U.F, 1985), p. 44-50. Also, Bernard Cerquiglini, *La naissance du français* (Paris: P.U.F, 2007 [1991]); Renée Balibar and Dominique Laporte, *Le Français National* (Paris: Hachette, 1974).

⁸⁷ Senghor, "Lettre au Premier Ministre relative à la revue mensuelle *Kaddu*," in *Éducation and Culture*, pp. 60-77. In the postface to the volume, Souleymane Bachir Diagne recalls the other instance where President Senghor used his political authority to censor Ousmane Sembène's movie (See pp. 340-341). The incident was also reported by Vincent Canby, in "Film: 'Ceddo,' a Pageant From Sembène's Africa: Stately Power Struggle," in *The New York Times*, 17 February 1978. On Corneille's difficulty with the *Académie Française* and the question of language, see, as primary sources, the *Letter de Pélisson à Corneille*, reproduced in the notice to *Le Cid* in *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), p. 1458, as well as Georges de Scudéry, *Observations sur le Cid*, also in *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), p. 793 and passim. For secondary sources, see the introduction to the Pléiade edition by Pierre Lièvre: "Relation contenant l'histoire de l'Académie Française;" and George Couton, *Corneille et la Fronde* (Paris. P.U.F, 1951); Gustave Lanson, *Corneille* (Paris: Hachette, 1898). It is revealing that Senghor would declare Corneille to be, together with Victor Hugo, the favorite poet of his teens. See "*Jeunesse de Victor Hugo*" (1952) in *Liberté I*, p. 126.

sole medium of communication imposed from the colonial administration above, but as an object of study freely chosen from below.⁸⁸ Furthermore, just as Césaire used elements of his native créole to push the limits of the French syntax and bend it to his own linguistic choices, Senghor enters the grammar of the language and redefines it for a new becoming: Francophonie. Francophonie is an instrument where “reciprocal fecundation” between French and other languages can unfold. For instance, adapting general French to the particular situation of each language group, e.g., the “Wolophone,”⁸⁹ in a way that enables violation.⁹⁰ Is that to say that this situation is always tied to a particular linguistic group and thus cannot be generalized? In the context of post-independence Senegal, the specificities of recently grammaticized languages seem to outweigh the generalities. Yet, Senghor’s example only aims to show that there may be generalizable aspects of the problems identified here. What Senghor wants to see coming to life is a certain imagination of common cultural traits between the peoples whose languages, or relationship to languages, allow such unraveling. Aiming at reconquering identity and dignity, Negritude faces a challenge: the vision of a shared set of values for the fifty countries of the continent—let alone the African diaspora—over against the limits of one’s knowledge and experience to the language and culture one evolves in.

⁸⁸ Senghor, *Éducation and Culture*, p. 128. Senghor also writes, perhaps more controversially, that French remains a powerful medium of liaison between the manifold of countries in Africa. Nevertheless, he recognizes that this particular linguistic infrastructure, insofar as it bears the traces and constitutes a living legacy of colonization, can be deplored. See pp. 125-126.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 127. At the end of his communication, Senghor adds that the complementary he envisions between French and other languages and that he calls Francophonie, is an experience that opens new possibilities inasmuch as it faces limits. To this end, he points out to different experiences in Cameroon, Congo, and Mauritius.

⁹⁰ I borrow the term from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, as she uses it, for instance, in “Righting Wrongs” in *Other Asias* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. 15.

The idea of a monolithic ‘Africanity’ in being and language, metonymically coming in opposition to a French coming out of the French possessions unacknowledged, cannot be accepted as anthropological or historical evidence. If anything, research in ethnomusicology or anthropology, while sharing the hopes for a common feat Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o use across the continent, has put the idea at odds with the multiplicity, multi-ethnicity and multilingualism of Africa. The creation of a vast body of poetry, drama, and philosophical reflections, however, stemming from a “theorized” unity of a factual plurality is perhaps the most astounding achievement of Negritude. Senghor’s Francophonie is therefore neither a correction of nor a solution to French. Rather, it is a way to attend to that movement from one language to another. Francophone literature enriches not French literature but the larger realm of the literary. In so doing, it aims to break sterile oppositions not by synthesizing them under one umbrella of universalism, but by integrating all the differences wholly in universality. Perhaps, as Césaire would remark years later, there would have been a way to begin this vision without falling into neo-imperialism: to vindicate not one Francophony in the singular, but Francophonies, in the plural.⁹¹

⁹¹ Jean-Michel Dijan, *Léopold Sédar Senghor: genèse d’un imaginaire francophone* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), p.232. The interview printed at the end of the book, entitled “rencontre avec Aimé Césaire,” was held in Fort-de-France in the Fall 2005.

B. Existence and Essence

The understanding and goal of Francophonie was one of the major points of contention between Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire.⁹² Yet, it is also a strength that unites them regardless of their historical and geographical differences. What is it that unites them indeed? Quoting black poets who wrote in French outside of the Hexagon, Jean-Paul Sartre's preface to Senghor's *An Anthology of the New Negro and Malagasy Poetry in French* written in 1948, argues that Negritude was one unitary movement. If the preface gave Negritude its world fame and generated articles, dissertations and books on the subject, its criticism remained—with the notable exception of Fanon's discussion—at the margin. Admittedly, little has been written on the

⁹² Césaire explains his doubts about the project of Francophonie in Jean-Michel Djian, *Léopold Sédar Senghor: génèse d'un imaginaire francophone* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), p. 232-233. There is a vast body of literature that engages with the challenges and hopes raised by the building of the international organization, starting in the sixties. In *La francophonie: histoire, problématique et perspectives* (Montréal: Guérin Littérature, 1987), a book that includes a preface by L. S. Senghor, Michel Tétu remarks that more than 20 years after its foundation, it still looks for a non-hexagonal common culture and that, perhaps, a "popular Francophony" is needed—though there is no indication as to what that would look like. A similar argument is made by Jean-Marc Léger in *La francophonie: grand dessein, grande ambiguïté* (Paris: Nathan, 1987). On the other hand, scholars have also speculated that the failure of De Gaulle's project of the *Communauté franco-africaine* (1958) partly explains his reservation toward the idea of *La francophonie* initiated by leaders of newly (or soon to be) independent African nation-states such as Léopold Sédar Senghor and Habib Bourguiba. See Frédéric Turpin, "1958, la Communauté franco-africaine : un projet de puissance entre héritage de la IV^e République et conceptions gaulliennes," in: *Outre-mers - Revue d'Histoire*, No. 358-359 (2008), 45-58; also, Cécile Vigouroux, "Francophonie," in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 42 (2013), 379-398.

reception of Sartre's preface since its publication.⁹³ Can this discrepancy between fame and silence inform our reading of Negritude's poets—or Sartre—and their relation to French?

As the French philosopher defines it, Negritude is “a certain quality common to the thoughts and to the behaviors [*conduites*] of Negroes.”⁹⁴ Though the expression is in the plural, Sartre uses the rhetoric of a singular “black being” or essence to show how the poets of Negritude, in his reading, use such a notion in response to its assertion by white colonists who had used it as a justification for their oppressive practices. However, the philosopher does not use the rhetoric just because the ones he reads seem to have done so in the first place. He stages it as an opposition that is ultimately sublimated into the larger fight of the proletariat where, in theory, ‘color’ would not matter. In *Black Orpheus*, however instrumentalized it is, the “black essence” Sartre reads in the poets of Negritude is a racial premise for ‘real’ liberation from class oppression. As Frantz Fanon duly remarks in *Black Skin, White Masks*, at the end of *Black Orpheus*, Sartre writes that “Negritude is the root of its own destruction, it is a transition and not a conclusion, a means and not an ultimate end.” The “ethnic idea of negritude ‘passes,’ as Hegel

⁹³ The most comprehensive treatments of this reception that I am aware of, are by Lilyan Kesteloot, “L’après-guerre, l’Anthologie de Senghor et la préface de Sartre,” in *Ethiopiennes*, No. 61, Dakar, 1998; and Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *Léopold Sédar Senghor: l’art africain comme philosophie* (Paris: Riveneuve, 2007), pp. 18-26. There is also Albert Franklin, “Réflexions sur ‘Orphée noir,’” *Présence Africaine* 14 (Nov. 1952), pp. 287–303. Following Sartre’s death in 1980, Daniel Maximin published a piece in *Le Nouvel Observateur* in which he praised *Black Orpheus* as “a key study for the generation of independence.” See Daniel Maximin, “Sartre à l’écoute des sauvages,” *Le Nouvel Observateur*, May 5, 1980, p. 63. Valentin Y. Mudimbe also notices that “Sartre ‘transformed negritude into a major political event and a philosophical criticism of colonialism,’” in *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 83. After its publication, Senghor always simultaneously takes the two sides of an acknowledgement of Sartre’s enterprise and a rejection of the controversial formulas—as he does, for instance in “Sorbonne et Négritude,” in *Liberté I*, p. 316: “Sartre n’a pas tout à fait raison quand dans *Orphée Noir*, il définit la Negritude « un racisme anti-raciste »; il a sûrement raison quand il la présente comme « une certaine attitude affective à l’égard du monde ».”

⁹⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Black Orpheus*, trans. S. Allen, in *Présence Africaine*, No. 10/11 (1951), p. 224 (hereafter cited as BO). Jean Paul Sartre, *Orphée Noir*, preface to Senghor, *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* (Paris: P.U.F, 1948), p. XV (hereafter given in brackets).

puts it, into the objective, positive, exact idea of proletariat.”⁹⁵ “When I read that page, I felt that I had been robbed of my last chance,” writes Fanon. How could the philosopher of existentialism, that “friend of colored peoples,”⁹⁶ who popularized mottos such as “existence precedes essence” or “one is condemned to be free,” write a piece that both gives its fame to Negritude and, as Fanon writes, stabs it in the back?

As Sartre explains in his well-known 1946 lecture, “Existentialism is a humanism,” Existentialism posits that nothing precedes existence and that existence precedes essence, which means that no human being appears on the stage of the world with a set of pre-defined features, leaving them the burden to be free to build a model of what ‘essence’ they are going to be.⁹⁷ In other words, human beings are free to invent who they will become. Indeed, the absence of any pre-existing definition stands for a total freedom that demands to fabricate one’s essence. In the case of Negritude, then, an existentialist approach would, in theory, condemn any practitioner of Negritude to be free to question his or her ‘essence’ and to look at the world from his or her world—to paraphrase W. E. B. Du Bois—without the veil. As is well-known, Du Bois’s metaphor, developed in the first chapter of *The Souls of Black Folk*, is a literary figure more than a sociological category. Hence, as Brent Edwards writes, it does not simply contrast two different visions (a black and a white one), but plays on the ambiguity that makes double consciousness both “a deprivation (an inability to see oneself except ‘through the eyes of others’) and a gift (an endowment of ‘second sight’, that seems to allow a deeper or redoubled comprehension of the

⁹⁵ Quoted in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Grove Press, 1967), p. 101 (hereafter cited as BSWM). Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Seuil, 1952), p. 107 (hereafter given in brackets). The quote is from BO, p. 244 [Fr., p. XL].

⁹⁶ BSWM, p. 102 [Fr., p. 108].

⁹⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, trans. Carol Macomber (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007 [1946]), p. 20. Jean-Paul Sartre, *L’existentialisme est un humanisme* (Paris: Nagel, 1946), p. 101.

complexities of “this American world’).⁹⁸ I argue that Du Bois’s metaphor of the veil and its staging of black and white agency, as well as the notion of double consciousness, bears some resemblance to Sartre’s later staging of the encounter between the poetry of Negritude and a certain Western discourse on oppression and exploitation developed in *Black Orpheus*, even before its publication.⁹⁹

Indeed, in the unpublished manuscript of the preface, Sartre acknowledged that the situation of a black man in Senegal was not comparable to the situation of a white man in France (and neither was it similar to the situation of colonials, such as Césaire or Senghor, who had studied in elite institutions such as the Sorbonne or the *École Normale Supérieure* in metropolitan France before returning to their native lands).¹⁰⁰ In the unpublished paragraph that highlights the negativity of black poetry, here instrumentalized with the intended goal to “negate the negation” and question a “dialectical and mystical return to the origin,” Sartre writes:

⁹⁸ Brent Edwards, ‘introduction’ to Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, p. xiv. Edwards’s quotes are from Chapter 1, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” p. 8, where Du Bois introduces his readers to both the notions of the “veil” and “double consciousness.” Charles Lemert has also analyzed the veil as “an essential aspect of the communications between those divided,” in “A Classic from the Other Side of the Veil: Du Bois’s “Souls of Black Folk,” *The Sociological Quarterly* Vol. 35, No. 3 (Aug., 1994), pp. 386-387.

⁹⁹ This is perhaps concomitant with contemporary criticism of the relationship between American pragmatism and French existentialism at the time of the reception of *Black Orpheus* in the early fifties. Scholars have connected Du Bois’s use of the notion of “double consciousness” to the “new psychology” of his former teacher at Harvard, William James. See Brent Edwards, ‘introduction’ to Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. xi; Dickson D. Bruce Jr, “W .E .B. Du Bois and the notion of double consciousness,” in *American Literature* 64/2, June 1992, pp. 299-309. Both James’s pragmatism and Sartre’s existentialism, for all their differences, concur that existence precedes essence, and that human existence is grounded on experience. See Sidney Hook, “Pragmatism and Existentialism,” in *The Antioch Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Summer, 1959), pp. 159-160; Joachim H. Seyppel, “A Comparative Study of Truth in Existentialism and Pragmatism,” in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 50, No. 8 (Apr. 9, 1953), p. 229; Julius Seelye Bixler, “The Existentialists and William James,” in *The American Scholar*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Winter, 1958-59), p. 83.

¹⁰⁰ Sartre’s original manuscript of *Orphée Noir* is kept as microfilm in the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, site Richelieu (NAF 18249; microfilm 3461; don 33995). The text of this document is very similar to the version published as the preface to Senghor’s *Anthology* in 1948, and re-printed in *Situations III* (Paris: Seuil, 1949). It is composed of 37 pages. I attend here to one of the few dissimilarities between the manuscript and the text of 1948.

The situation of the black, his original “rift” [*déchirure*], the ambiguity of the concepts that he uses, place him under the obligation to regain his existentialist integrity as a Negro or, if one prefers, the original purity of his existence, by a progressive asceticism, beyond the world of discourse.

Yet, in the published version, the expression “ambiguity of the concepts” has been replaced by a different vocabulary that leaves no more room for contingency, and stages the “black man” directly in confrontation with the “alienation” brought about by a foreign thinking that is clearly—though implicitly—white. We, readers of the published preface, read:

The situation of the black, his original “rift,” the alienation which a foreign thinking imposes upon him under the name of assimilation, places him under the obligation to regain his existentialist integrity as a Negro or, if one prefers, the original purity of his existence, by a progressive asceticism, beyond the world of discourse.¹⁰¹

In her recent work on Sartre’s “unfinished projects,” Paige Arthur attends to the philosopher’s project of a theory of the ontological conditions of oppression, and reads the rewriting of the ambiguity of a person’s situation into the general alienation brought about by it, as a philosophical move from Existentialism toward Marxism.¹⁰² Not making a claim about his

¹⁰¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, Manuscript for *Orphée noir*, Microfilm 3461, p. 30. BO, p. 230 (Fr., p. XXIII).

¹⁰² Paige Arthur, *Unfinished Projects, Decolonization and the Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* (London: Verso, 2010), pp. 35-36. Though she cites John Matthews’s translation of Sartre’s *Between Existentialism and Marxism* (New York: Pantheon, 1974), originally published in *Situations VIII* and *IX*, and the work of Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre and Marxist Existentialism: The Test Case of Collective Responsibility* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), Arthur does not provide further analysis of the relationship between the two movements.

general philosophical moves, I contend that perhaps what Sartre learned from the poets he prefaced was how these particular authors used art and poetry as a way to inform or support their political cause because at that time, they had (almost) nothing else. Though Senghor's *Anthologie* is a collection gathering sixteen authors, only three of them—Léon Damas, Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor himself—account for nearly half the book. Recalling that, not only were these three poets the “founding fathers” of Negritude, but also recently elected congressmen of the French Parliament, I surmise that they knew that in literary writing as in political practice, they could only aim at the post-colonial through the kind of colonization that would require them to work from within the very system that oppressed them.¹⁰³

More than twenty years before Sartre's preface, W. E. B. Du Bois had highlighted, in an essay entitled “The Negro Mind Reaches Out,” the different situations of colonial subjects in what he termed the “shadows” of Portugal, Spain, France, etc. Du Bois gave the example of a black *député* from Guadeloupe, emancipated slave elected in 1914, Achille René-Boisneuf:¹⁰⁴

His voice rings in Parliament. He made the American soldiers keep
their hands off the Senegalese. He made the governor of Congo
apologize and explain. He made Poincaré issue that extraordinary

¹⁰³ Both Senghor and Césaire were elected *députés* in the *Assemblée Nationale* in October 1945, Damas was voted in January 1948. See the official database of the *Assemblée*, <http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/recherche>. In his most recent work, Gary Wilder shows that it is from within their position as elected officials in the French Parliament that the poets would first develop their demand not for political independence but for something akin to a “Federalism.” See *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

¹⁰⁴ W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Negro Mind Reaches Out,” in Alan Locke (ed.), *The New Negro* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1925), p. 397. Gayatri Spivak, quoting the Du Bois essay, notices that Frantz Fanon was born in Martinique the next year. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 100. We could also mention the first elected black congressman coming from Africa, Blaise Diagne (Senegal), already in 1914. See Amady Dieng, *Blaise Diagne, premier député africain* (Paris: Editions Chaka, 1990).

warning against American prejudice. Is Boisneuf an exception or a prophecy?

What Du Bois had started in that essay of 1925 was a move away from the “aristocracy of the race” and the “Talented Tenth” he had written about in *The Souls of Black Folk*.¹⁰⁵ In his monumental *Black Reconstruction*, written ten years after “The Negro Mind Reaches Out” but still more than a decade before Sartre’s *Black Orpheus*, Du Bois would go a step further to analyze the intertwinement of race and class—or more specifically, the way in which racism was used by capitalists to advance their grip on both land and workers that had suddenly entered the larger map of a “truly” democratic *United States of America*. As he wrote, the “anomaly” of slavery did not arise out of a set of new conditions; it was embedded in the system that established the so-called democratic nation. It was therefore from *within* that system that the anomaly was to be worked *out*, using the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments even though it meant wrestling with danger of parliamentary structure—i.e., that if freedmen could vote for their implementation at the state level, former slave owners or carpetbaggers could also vote against it

¹⁰⁵ The expression “Talented Tenth” appears only once in *The Souls of Black Folk*, in Chapter VI, “Of The Training Of Black Men.” Previously, Du Bois had written about it in an eponymous article: “The Talented Tenth,” published in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today* (New York: James Pott & Co., 1903), pp. 33-75. The influence of Booker T. Washington is palpable throughout the chapter even though it intends to be a critique of the man as well as his “Tuskegee Machine,” so as to give voice to “a class of Negroes who cannot agree with Mr. Washington.” See *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 40 and 74. Much later, in 1948, Du Bois will offer a self-critique of his use of the notion, arguing that race had to be thought with class. See Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth Memorial Address,” in Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Cornel West (ed.), *The Future of the Race* (New York: Knopf, 1996), p. 162, also acknowledged in Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), p. 193.

or worse, they could vote for the re-implementation of black codes.¹⁰⁶ At the same time, what happened in America cannot be conflated with the situation of other oppressed groups elsewhere. In a chapter that borrows the Marxian concept of “primitive accumulation” and relocates it in the American context, arguing that America provided a free land that Europe could no longer provide because of the expropriation of the worker from the soil, Du Bois rhetorically stages a missed moment for a true unity between blacks and whites *as* workers:¹⁰⁷

The worker in America saw a chance to increase his wage and regulate his conditions of employment much greater than in Europe.

The Trade Unions could have a material backing that they could not have in Germany, France or England. This thought, *curiously enough*, instead of increasing the sympathy for the slave turned it directly into rivalry and enmity.

Over against the role of capitalists and the financiers in keeping this union from happening, Du Bois goes into great detail to show that the situation of the white worker (also termed the ‘poor white’) and the black slave (whom he redefines as a ‘black worker’), though psychologically different, can be economically compared without any identitarian adjectives. The enabling of the comparison without the racial component allows Du Bois to stage the failure of what

¹⁰⁶ See *Black Reconstruction*, p. 19. Du Bois attends to this danger, specific to very structure of democracy to welcome anyone, particularly in Chapter XIII, “The Dual For Labor Control in Border and Frontier,” looking at parliamentary debates. A short look at the history of the implementation of the three “reconstruction amendments” shows that the problem did not stop with the Civil War, the Reconstruction period, not even the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. For instance, Mississippi ratified the 13th amendment only in 1995. See, among many references: Michael Vorenberg, *Final freedom: the Civil War, the abolition of slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Alexander Tsesis, *The Thirteenth Amendment and American freedom: a legal history* (New York: New York University Press, 2004). A major companion to Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction* is Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

¹⁰⁷ W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: Free Press, 1935), p. 19. Emphasis is mine.

he later terms the “missed moment” for democracy, when blacks and whites could have come together.¹⁰⁸ For Du Bois, abolitionist capital came through this failure. Hence, the two laborers, black and white, are as intertwined in their fight as they are in the text within which they are written: the first paragraph of Chapter II on the “White Worker” is a direct duplicate of Chapter I on the “Black Worker.”¹⁰⁹

The direct opposition between blacks and whites is staged through the metaphor of sight in the very first paragraph of Sartre’s *Black Orpheus*. Though the opening sentence is a question about the faculty of speech: “What were you hoping for, when you removed the gag that was keeping these Black mouths shut? That they would sing your praises?,” the answer is given in the form of an affirmation on the faculty of sight: “Here are black men standing, looking at us, and I hope that you—like me—will feel the shock of being seen.”¹¹⁰ Sartre drives home the point that to look is to exist, and in the case of peoples who have been looked at for centuries, to look is also to question what kind of existence there must be. The initial gaze is that by which, before language, one domesticates existence. To be sure, there is something narcissistic about Sartre’s emphasis on the initial gaze. Here, one (Negro) gaze is staged as a response to an other (White) gaze that robbed the former of his subjective centrality and turned him into a de-centered object.

¹⁰⁸ It is the failure of that moment that opened the door for “abolitionist capital” to come through. Du Bois attends to the role of capitalists and financiers in the chapter appropriately called “Looking Forward,” indeed looking forward to the moment when the common class interests of four different sets of people—the freed Negro, the Southern white, and the Northern skilled and common laborer—will unite. Du Bois, *op. cit.*, p. 216. In regards to the economic similarities and psychological differences between the ‘poor white’ and the ‘black slave,’ see p. 9: “There was in 1863 a real meaning to slavery different from that we may apply to the laborer today. It was in part “psychological.”

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6 and p. 16. “The opportunity for real and new democracy in America was broad. Political power at first was, as usual, confined to property holders and an aristocracy of birth and learning. But it was never securely based on land. Land was free and both land and property were possible to nearly every thrifty worker. Schools began early to multiply and open their doors even to the poor laborer. Birth began to count for less and less and America became to the world a land of economic opportunity. So the world came to America, even before the Revolution, and afterwards during the nineteenth century, nineteen million immigrants entered the United States.”

¹¹⁰ BO, p. 219, [Fr., p. IX.] Translation modified.

In *Black Orpheus*, Sartre thus intensifies the relation between gazer and gazed, but legitimizes by reversal an already defined hierarchical relation. The opening of the preface narrates an unavoidable turn: the one who was looked upon now looks, and the one who was looking is now looked upon. Yet, this turn is a revolution only in the sense of an orbit of one object around another that does not change the place of the center. Logically and rhetorically, the end of the preface narrates an impossible return: “a tension between a nostalgic past where the black man does not really fit, and a future where Negritude will yield to new values.”¹¹¹ In short, everyone is back to square one. Negritude poetry, according to Sartre, bears the trace of this impossible return, and thus the poet, acknowledging the impossibility, must become one with Negritude: “triumph of Narcissism,” looking into oneself for the “pride of one’s color.”¹¹² Can one say, as Francis Abiola Irele does, that the definition is indeed narcissistic—but absolutely and necessarily so?¹¹³ Reacting against the robbing of one’s identity, ethnicity and language, Frantz Fanon denounces the intellectualization of the initial gaze and attempts to leave Negritude a perpetual movement that Sartre foreclosed: “I do not know; but I say that he who looks into my eyes for anything but a perpetual question will have to lose his sight.”¹¹⁴ With every quote of poetry, predominantly taken from Fanon’s compatriot, Césaire, the philosopher did nothing else but to fix a pre-existing meaning of black consciousness, waiting to be searched, and once found, to be let go in the name of the subordination of Negritude’s fight to the proletarian struggle.

¹¹¹ BO, p. 246, [Fr., p. XLIII].

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Quoted in Senghor, “Négritude et modernité”, in *Liberté III*, p. 216.

¹¹⁴ BSWM, p. 18. [Fr., p. 23].

Fanon's criticism did not intend to argue that Sartre had been all wrong about Negritude, or that Negritude needed to be understood as an original vindication altogether different from the Marxist route that Sartre had seemingly taken. Indeed, the subtlety of Fanon's reading comes through when one compares the original with the English translation of *Black Skin, White Masks*. Where the translation reads that Sartre's mistake was "not only to seek the source of the source but in a certain sense to block that source," therefore implying that, for Fanon, there would still be the real possibility of a return to the source [of black experience], the original French is more subtle and uses the verb "*tarir*." Literally, *tarir* means to "dry up," like a river. To follow up the metaphor, what is lost by the translation of the verb *tarir* into the verb *to block*, is an image of a slow movement inherent to Negritude's becoming. In the conclusion of the essay, Sartre had himself inscribed the metaphor:

Will the source of poetry dry up? Or will the great black river, in spite of everything, color the sea into which it pours itself? It does not matter: Every age has its own poetry (...) Today let us hail the turn of history that will make it possible for the black men to utter 'the great Negro cry with a force that will shake the pillars of the world' (Césaire).¹¹⁵

As Sartre wrote, the future of a Negritude going beyond Negritude, literally pouring itself into something else, "[did] not matter." It had to stand where it was, in accordance with the poetry of its own age, itself defined for Negritude by its source: the meaning of a pre-existing black-being. To close the metaphor, one must recognize that Sartre left open a particular kind of historical

¹¹⁵ BO, p. 247, [Fr., p. XLIV]

becoming: the great black river (metonym for the collective of black peoples) only has to pour into the larger sea (of workers against capitalists). For Sartre, the movement by which the practitioner of Negritude narcissistically focuses on self-development had to be preemptively foreclosed in order not to compete with something “more” universal: the proletariat.¹¹⁶

Sartre’s takeaway message in *Black Orpheus* is thus very different from Du Bois’s ending of *Black Reconstruction*. In the latter, Du Bois sees the task of the historian—“posing as scientist”—not to interpret ideas—which is the task of “the philosopher or the prophet”—but to reveal facts through a long and painstaking unearthing of records and documents.¹¹⁷ For the historian, those facts recall a failed moment where a true democracy ‘could have been’ implemented. Beyond being accurate in his use of Marxist theory (as shows the criticism surrounding his controversial use of the term “general strike” to qualify Negroes leaving plantations *en masse*), Du Bois’s goal was to use Marxian concepts to provide an original interpretation of the black worker’s relation to industrial capitalism. The generalization of the idea of a ruling-class effort to suppress the working class—black and white—i.e., the relation between racism and its economic foundations, ends not in an *Aufheben*-like proletarian revolution, but eventually becomes an “arraignment of American historians and an indictment of their

¹¹⁶ It should be noted that, though the first version of the concluding paragraph of Césaire’s *Discourse on colonialism* (1948) ended on a general statement on the hope of the end of colonization, the second and third versions of the *Discourse* (respectively, 1950 and 1955) resonate with Sartre’s conclusion in *Black Orpheus*. Both ended with a word that conspicuously refer to the Marxist revolution: “the proletariat.” For the genetic assembling and notes on the three versions of the text, see the work of Daniel Delas in *Aimé Césaire: Poésie, Théâtre, Essais et Discours*, ed. Albert James Arnold (Paris: C.N.R.S. 2013), pp. 1443-1476.

¹¹⁷ For instance, as Du Bois writes: “None who has not read page by page the *Congressional Globe*, especially the sessions of the 39th Congress, can possibly have an idea of what the problems of Reconstruction facing the United States were in 1865-65.” (p. 723). Yet this work may not be altogether doable for everyone. As Du Bois notes: “it is almost impossible for a first-class Negro student to get a chance for research or to get finished work in print.” Amidst difficulties, Du Bois’s work remains a re-interpretation of the facts that were available to him at the time, and as David Levering Lewis writes after Herbert Aptheker in his introduction to the book: “the mistaken details are less egregious than hearsay in the profession has led many to suppose” (p. xv).

ideals.”¹¹⁸ In the former, Sartre points to a singular “black experience” as the foundation of a black consciousness, taking its roots—as he reads in the poetry of Negritude—from the memory of forms of suffering and alienation from slavery and colonialism. The posing of one essential “black experience,” which Fanon reacts against by emphasizing Black “experiences” in the plural, may have been for the philosopher—who, in that regard, is not as bound to the kinds of “scientific facts” that Du Bois sought—a strategic move embedded in a twofold effort. First, a counter to an imposed universalism coming specifically from Europe—a contradiction in terms that Sartre discloses when he defines the continent as “a mere geographical accident, almost an island which Asia pushes out to sea.”¹¹⁹ Second, a grounding into the present situation of black poets writing in French, only to say that, in the future, situation, history, and experience will no longer matter. It imagines a seized moment where a true humanism ‘will have been’ implemented. Its conclusion is that of a literary preface to an anthology by Léopold Sédar Senghor on Negro poets (understood in the broadest sense of colonized peoples, in and outside of the African continent) writing in French, and as such, could not perform in the same way as the 500-page historical monograph that is *Black Reconstruction*. Hence, although Sartre concludes with a subsuming of the conditions of black peoples under the exploitation of all “other” groups, he still seeks the controversy by arguing that those “other” groups do not use poetic language as the *New Negro and Malagasy [poets] in French*—otherwise known as Negritude poets—do, because they are not in a position of negating the very culture that has oppressed them in order to

¹¹⁸ *Black Reconstruction*, p. 725.

¹¹⁹ BO, p. 220 (Fr., p. X). This strategic peripheral definition of Europe would indeed be consistent with the optimistic horizon of his defense of humanism in the lecture *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (1946), in which both political and existential liberation had to work together. Negritude, in this case, represented a moment on the path toward such realization of this liberation.

affirm themselves. In that particular stage that Negritude steps in, the role of the French language becomes an ambiguous cornerstone: an alienating yet unavoidable force for those who use it:

Blacks rediscover themselves only on the terrain full of the traps
which white men have set for them. The colonist rises between the
colonials to be the eternal mediator; he is there, always there, even
though absent, in the most secret councils.¹²⁰

Language, then, in Sartre's analysis of its use by the poets of Negritude, can only be the place of a "rift" [*déchirure*] of which poetry is the privileged instrument of expression. Under these conditions, it remains for one to ask: what is left to do? To the sentence that Sartre opened his essay with, "What were you hoping for, when you removed the gag that was keeping these Black mouths shut?," should one choose to move along the path laid out by the philosopher, one would be forced to realize the necessary double bind at the core of Negritude's poetry: "It does not matter." Paraphrasing Frantz Fanon, indeed every hand was a losing hand. For the poets of Negritude, or those who might have wanted to walk in their footsteps, what was there left to say? That would explain why Senghor always took the two sides of an acknowledgement of the enterprise and the rejection of shortcuts and other controversial formulas simultaneously. In a conference entitled "Sorbonne et Négritude," the poet of Senegal stages Sartre's Negritude not so much as an opposition but rather as an aporia.¹²¹ Facing an irresolvable internal contradiction in a text that was expected to present it as a solution, perhaps Césaire's answer was as valid a response: a polite ignoring. Even though the poet is doubtless the most quoted reference in the

¹²⁰ BO, p. 226 [Fr., p. XVIII].

¹²¹ "Sorbonne et Négritude," in *Liberté I*, pp. 316-317: "Sartre n'a pas tout à fait raison quand dans *Orphée Noir*, il définit la Négritude « un racisme anti-raciste »; il a sûrement raison quand il la présente comme « une certaine attitude affective à l'égard du monde »."

text and the one to whom Sartre gives the last word, nowhere does he comment on *Black Orpheus*. A few months after Sartre's preface, the poet publishes his *Discourse on Colonialism*.¹²²

Perhaps, then, rather than focusing on a certain discourse on Negritude through the controversial piece that put the movement on a world map, I think it relevant to read Negritude "before" Sartre's preface. To do so will show that, before being defined and fixed by one of the most vocal Western philosophers of the century, Negritude was an idea that ran away from its definition. I surmise that the authors themselves did not know in advance what it was that they were about to create, and even after having created the word, they never stopped redefining it. Even when Senghor offers, at last, a history of the word in a lecture given in 1973, it is from the distance of the third person singular that he speaks about "those black students (...) solidly trained in Classics"¹²³ who created Negritude, before engaging in a digression that exhibits a masterfully playful command of the language, and almost pedantically:

[Those students] knew that the words "Black" and "Negro" were doubles, that the former was popularly crafted [from French], while the latter was eruditely formed from Portuguese, that both came from the Latin *niger*, and that in so doing, Latin formed numerous words: *Nigredo* forming "noiceur" (blackness), *nigro* or *nigreo* forming "être noir" (to be black), *nigrefacio* forming "rendre noir" (to make black),

¹²² *Black Orpheus* is published in April 1948. The first version of the *Discourse on colonialism* appears in July 1948. The third chapter of this dissertation will attend to the history and contextualization of the well-known literary pamphlet, and/in its relation with Césaire's political project (and problems) at the time: the implementation of the *Loi de départementalisation* of March 16, 1946, that came into effect only after December 31, 1947.

¹²³ "Encore de la Négritude, ou Négritude, Nègrerie, et Nigritie," p. 466.

nigrefio ou *nigresco* forming “devenir noir” (to become black),
nigrico forming “tirer sur le noir” (to lean on blackness), *nigritia* or
nigrities forming “noirceur” (blackness), etc.

In a way, all these elaborate word presentations never leave the literary world where Negritude is always a concept in becoming. There is no intention to go from the page to the world or to expect any consequence in a reality where the literary movement would “do” something. What is rhetorically done in the text, in a way that resonates with the linguistics experiments of the Surrealists in the 20s that “those students” read, is the staging of an artificial endeavor, admittedly more intellectual than popular—as shows the choice of an “eruditely formed” word *nègre*—upholding that changes in the verbal text do not result necessarily in performative changes. Rather, the conclusion of Senghor’s conference seems to imply an opposite dynamic. Unexpected changes in the performance of the word in the world result in contingent changes in the verbal text: “we made other words as we felt the need for them: *négrisme* to designate [Sartre’s] ‘anti-racist racism,’ for example.”¹²⁴ To begin with the artificial making of the originary word, Negritude was to supplement the vocabulary of the only language that Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor had in common: French. In sum, Negritude is a word that stood in for both a lack and a replacement: a lack of a word to outline the conditions of the colored peoples in all of the French colonies; a replacement of the word “Negro” that had

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 469. The “anti-racist racism” is one of Sartre’s famous tags in *Black Orpheus*, p. 244 [Fr., p. XL].

acquired a pejorative meaning as it transitioned from a substantive to an adjective.¹²⁵ Yet, looking at the history of the word Negritude as such, it becomes clear that the authors themselves were uneasy about the crafting of the word in the very language that had either forgotten them or fixed their conditions in pejorative terms. Senghor himself does not claim ownership of the grammatical coinage, even as he becomes the first black student to succeed in the *agrégation de grammaire*. He always attributes the genesis of the word to Césaire. In a spirit of an “Imitation of Christ,” he often publicly claims—in a paraphrase of the New Testament that would doubtless be familiar to the very devout poet—that: “We must render unto Césaire the things that are Césaire’s.”¹²⁶ As far as Césaire is concerned, the alleged creator of the word never quite explained the thought-process that led to the creation of the neologism, famously distancing himself with the word throughout most of his career. From the *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* to the *Discourse on Negritude*, the poet is more prone to define the word as what it is not than at what it can be.¹²⁷ Perhaps, this is where the difference between the use of the language in Césaire’s works differs most clearly from Senghor’s. In 1945, the poet is writing

¹²⁵ In “Encore de la Négritude, ou Négritude, Nègrerie, et Nigritie” in *Liberté III*, p. 466. The lecture is given for an award ceremony in Addis-Abeba on November 3, 1973. I therefore use the word *supplément* in the same meaning that Jacques Derrida gives it in *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016); Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1966). In that text, Derrida is explicitly referring to a reading of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s use of the word as both a hole in the whole (*supplémenter*) and a substitute (*suppléer*). In Part II of *Of Grammatology*, the supplement is recognized as dangerous because it reaches to the incalculable (see pp. 153-178).

¹²⁶ In the essay on the movement, “Qu’est-ce que la Négritude?” that Senghor writes in 1966, one reads at the very beginning: “Commençons par rendre à Césaire ce qui est à Césaire. Car c’est le poète et dramaturge martiniquais qui a forgé le mot dans les années 1930.” In *Liberté I*, p. 90. The expression is found in Matthew 22:2, “Il faut rendre à César ce qui appartient à César et à Dieu ce qui appartient à Dieu” translated as the command: “Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s, and unto God that which is God’s.” (King James translation).

¹²⁷ In the *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* of 1939, p. 71: “My negritude is not a stone, its deafness hurled / against the clamour of the day, / my negritude is not a speck of dead water on the / dead eye of the earth, / my negritude is neither a tower nor a cathedral / it thrusts into the red flesh of the earth / it thrusts into the livid flesh of the sky.” In the *Discourse on Negritude* of 1987, p. 82: “Negritude, in my eyes, is not a philosophy. / Negritude is not a metaphysics. / Negritude is not a pretentious conception of the universe.”

from a place that is about to become a full *département* of the French Republic. A citizen with both all associated rights in theory and loopholes in practice, the inhabitant of the now *Départements d'outre-mer* (DOM) cannot really fit as a member of the African diaspora.¹²⁸ Nested in what seems to be a geographical loophole, a 'third' category pushes through political narratives and poetic writing. For Césaire, this third category must, for a time, do away with Negritude.

II. Negritude without negritude

From the interwar period when the poets of Negritude study in the metropole, to the years following World War II when they write and act as public servants in their places of birth, self-determination and an intuition of a post-colonial world to come become more than hope: they become material for a counter-discourse to the dominant vindication of rationalism or universalism. Yet, instead of finding one united counter-discourse, Negritude is divided. In particular, I have shown earlier how the question of language is necessarily approached differently by the poet of Senegal and the poet of Martinique. For the former, a comprehensive political plan for bilingualism education is laid out by the young Senghor before he even gets a

¹²⁸ For instance, the DOM will have to wait in early 1990s to see a full equality in Social Security benefits as well as a raise in the "national" SMIC (Minimum Salary for Growth Insertion) in an effort to bridge the gap between the metropole and the overseas regions. See "Rattrapage du SMIC dans les DOM au 1er janvier 1996" in *Les Echos*, Dec. 21, 1995, as well as Jean-Louis Capitolin, "Outre-mer 1995." in *Annuaire des collectivités locales*, Vol. 16, (1996) pp. 237-261. For an official document, see the "Projet de loi de finances pour 1996 : départements et territoires d'outre-mer (aspects sociaux)" by the Senate, published on June 4, 2016, detailing not only what was done but what, as for 1996, remained to do.

political duty.¹²⁹ For the latter, bilingualism cannot be as precisely devised. Which two languages indeed can the poet of Martinique (and further down, the inhabitants of the French overseas territories) own? In the wake of Negritude's hopes, Césaire always claims an 'African' source in imagery as well as in language, hyphenating his unchosen background (e.g., receiving a French education) and his acknowledged desires (e.g., reaching an "African" culture). In a statement about the making of a language appropriate to his play, *A Season in the Congo*, he writes: "I have wanted to make an African French."¹³⁰ Yet, in another—retroactive—statement about his poetry, he admits: "I wanted to make an Antillean French."¹³¹ Notwithstanding the use of the French *imparfait* that implies that Césaire had, eventually, given up the idea, it becomes clear that for the poet there was always more than one language under consideration. On the one hand, he had ruled out *créole* as a language for emancipation. Not only did it lack adequate grammar and orthography, as I showed earlier, but it also bore the stigma of a language created and owned by a local bourgeoisie that, in Césaire's view, denied its African sources promoted by Negritude to

¹²⁹ Until 1945, Senghor is Professor of French and Classics in Tours and Paris, far from the political arena and its strategic alliances. Back in Africa, the Catholic Senghor is propelled into the legislative elections of 1945 and forms an unexpected alliance with the Muslim Mamadou Dia, with whom he wins and envisions a "Senegalese Social Contract." Yet it is already in 1937 that he writes *Le problème culturel en AOF* where he argues for bilingual reforms and education. See Donald Cruise O'Brien, "Le contrat social sénégalais à l'épreuve", in *Politique africaine*, 45, 9-20; also Souleymane Bachir Diagne, "Religion and the Public Sphere in Senegal: The Evolution of a Project of Modernity," in *Crediting God. Sovereignty & Religion in the Age of Global Capitalism*, ed. Miguel Vatter (New York, Fordham University Press, 2011).

¹³⁰ "J'ai voulu faire un français africain." Translation is mine. The sentence is extracted from *Le Monde* on October 7th 1967, in which Césaire talks about the premiere of his play in Brussels.

¹³¹ "Je voulais faire un français antillais." In "Entretien avec Aimé Césaire", in René Depestre, *Bonjour et adieu à la négritude* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1980), pp. 67-81. Also in Raphael Confiant, *Aimé Césaire, une traversée paradoxale du siècle* (Paris: Stock, 1993), pp. 135-136.

resemble a metropolitan French perceived as a tool for upward mobility.¹³² On the other hand, the poet also seems to rule out the homogeneity of the French language. The idiosyncratic French of the metropole is staged in opposition to two antagonist idioms: the non-metropolitan French with all its plurality (e.g., “Caribbean,” “African,” etc) and *Créole* as a language that, for all its flaws, is desired to be the remnant of the links with Africa. For the Caribbean writer, the linguistic problem to tamper with is closer to diglossia than bilingualism.¹³³ It is not limited to French or Créole—considered not as a patchwork of remnants of African languages and an assimilation of the language of the colonizer, but as a language in its own right that has become independent from its sources. Under these conditions, for the writer neither recognized in the Hexagon nor rooted in the continent where he claims ancestry, Negritude seems to remain the site of an aporia between the general conceptualization of a “Negro-ness” beyond languages, and

¹³² In 1961, in an “Entretien avec Aimé Césaire,” the poet goes as far as confessing that: “Adolescent, c’est surtout contre cette bourgeoisie qu’était dirigée ma révolte. La langue même [créole] me déplaisait.” See *Afrique* (Paris), No. 5, Oct. 1961, pp. 64-67. In 1966, in another “Entretien avec Aimé Césaire,” published only two years later, the poet answers a question on the heterogeneity of Negritude: “Aux Etats-Unis, aux Antilles françaises, ou au Brésil, la bourgeoisie noire assimilée a rejeté cette négritude.” See “Aimé Césaire. An interview with an Architect of Negritude,” *Negro Digest*, May 1968, pp. 53-61. In April 1994, in yet another “Entretien avec Aimé Césaire” published in *Le Monde*, Césaire admits that “il y a à l’égard de l’Afrique un ressentiment qu’il faudrait analyser.” This statement certainly resonates with the second and third chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*, where Frantz Fanon, as a psychiatrist, analyzes the “overcompensation” of the Black and the mulatto towards the white colonizer: “The first has only one possibility and one concern: to turn white. The second wants not only to turn white but also to avoid slipping back.” (p. 38). For Fanon, more than a question of class that is the main concern for Césaire, the relation also obeys a powerful gender dynamic: “Since he is the master and more simply the male, the white man can allow himself the luxury of sleeping with many women.” (p. 32fn).

¹³³ Maryse Condé, *Op. Cit.*, p. 20 and 53. This idea is developed in *Heremakhonon* where the main character, Véronique, reaches Africa and is firsthand confronted with the discrepancy between her “feeling African” and the incapability to understand “their” idiom. In the French Antilles, the literary and cultural movement of *créolité* appears in the 1980s, in opposition to Négritude, elaborated most notably by Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé, and Raphaël Confiant, later joined by Edouard Glissant. See *Eloge de la créolité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989). As Maryse Condé shows, Césaire never considered “créole” as a language capable of literary expression because of its historical links with the slave trade and the need for a communication tool between slaves. Lambert Felix-Prudent, on the other hand, argues for a poetic contribution to the *langue martiniquaise*. See “Aimé Césaire: contribution poétique à la construction de la langue martiniquaise,” in *Aimé Césaire à l’œuvre*, pp. 21-45. See also Annie Dyck, “le langage césairien, approche d’une écriture polyglossique,” 1988, p. 7.

the particular articulation of local linguistic situations beyond ‘a Blackness.’¹³⁴ The aporia constitutes the core of Césaire’s philosophical essay “Poetry and Knowledge,” given at the *International Congress of Philosophy* held in Haiti in September 1944. In that communication, the word *Négritude* is nowhere to be found—leaving space for what seems to be a universalist approach to the meaning of poetry in general and its relation to an equally general—yet abstract—“knowledge.”

A. *Poetry and knowledge*

It is revealing that the English translation of this little-known essay offers two options for the French word *connaissance*: knowledge or cognition.¹³⁵ A quick etymological glance at the two words in English shows a more confined semantic in the latter—either in the Renaissance context of discussions on theories of knowledge or its more recent anchor in the “cognitive sciences—” than in the former. In addition, not only is the origin of the noun difficult to determine because of its wide array of meanings, its relationship to the verb seems also to broaden its

¹³⁴ In the now well-known *Lettre à Maurice Thorez*, this aporia is declared to be the poet’s main reason for leaving the Communist party: “Provincialisme? Non pas. Je ne m’enterre pas dans un particularisme étroit. Mais je ne veux pas non plus me perdre dans un universalisme décharné. Il ya deux manières de se perdre: par ségrégation murée dans le particulier ou par dilution dans l’universel.” See *Lettre à Maurice Thorez*, in Aimé Césaire, *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris: CNRS, 2013). In 1962, Césaire is still working the idea of the particular situation of Martinique, as he reflects in an article “Les Antilles et le problème Antillais,” republished in Lilyan Kesteloot, *Aimé Césaire* (Paris: Seghers, 1962), pp. 170-180. Vice-versa, in 1965, Césaire insists on the evolution of the project of Negritude that must first seek self-construction, then the relation to and with Africa, finally a “going further” (*aller plus loin*) that had no end. See “Présence africaine et la négritude” where Césaire offers a summary of the movement from the 30s to the 60s, in *Croissance des jeunes nations*, No. 50. Dec. 1965, pp. 39-41.

¹³⁵ Reprinted as “Poetry and Knowledge” in Michael Richardson, ed., *Refusal of the Shadow: Surrealism and the Caribbean*, trans. by Michael Richardson and Krzysztof Fijalkowski (London: Verso, 1996); and as “Poetry and Cognition” in *Aimé Césaire: Lyric and Dramatic Poetry*, trans. Clayton Eshelman and Annette Smith (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 1990), hereafter referred to as LDP.

use.¹³⁶ Those nuances resonate with the differences in the French words *connaissance* and *cognition*.¹³⁷ More than an impossibility of translation, this difficulty informs the direction that Césaire intends to take in his essay—upstream from what the title might indicate: perhaps, an affirmative sabotage of the word “knowledge” as it had been used by colonizers as the harbinger of progress or modernity. The word ‘poetry’ offers the same invitation for a subversive reading. Is Césaire referring to a poetry that breaks rules—as in Mallarmé? Is he alluding to the poetry of the Renaissance that established rules—so that they could be broken? Or is he hinting at a different alternative altogether? In 1972, towards the end of his poetic career—and after his theatrical period—Césaire still “stand[s] first in [his] belief that creole is a poor language that therefore needs to be worked on in a way comparable to what the French did with their language during the Renaissance.”¹³⁸ Yet in the essay proper, as well as another interview given in 1969, Césaire refers to a whole French literary tradition of language-working from Baudelaire to the Surrealists, “through the words of Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Lautréamont and Claudel.”¹³⁹ It is indeed from Paul Claudel—one of the most devout French poets—that Césaire borrows the word *connaissance*, and the ambivalence given by the author in the subchapters of his *Art Poétique* in

¹³⁶ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the noun is attested earlier (in an apparently isolated example) in an east midland source from the first half of the 12th century, but not again until the 14th century; whereas the verb is widely attested from the early 13th century onwards and remains rare in northern sources before the 15th century. These factors seem to indicate that noun and verb have quite separate etymologies, rather than, as some have thought, having the noun derive from the verb, or (even less likely) the verb from the noun.

¹³⁷ According to the *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales* (CNRTL), a lexical portal created in 2005 by the CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research) that includes an inventory of resources, documentation (and metadata), and archival sources. I checked the entry to both the words *connaissance* and *cognition* on their online portal in June 2016 at <http://www.cnrtl.fr>.

¹³⁸ In “Aimé Césaire à Québec. En marche vers l’anti-destin: entretien avec Ivanhoé Beaulieu” in *Le Soleil* (Quebec), April 14, 1972.

¹³⁹ Originally published in *Casa de las Americas* (Cuba), No. 49, July/August 1968, pp. 127-142. Reprinted in “An Interview with Aimé Césaire,” trans. Maro Riofrancos, postface to the American publication of the *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1972) pp. 63-79. As far as I know, this essay was never published in French.

particular: between *connaissance* (knowledge) and *co-naissance* (co-birth).¹⁴⁰ Though Claudel is not quoted at length in the paper, the implied reference to his work is a way to show that the imagination of a connection between poetry and knowledge transcends Césaire—and his Negritude—to reach another poet whose notoriety at the time was conspicuous. No sooner has this ambivalence been noted than a paradox arises that seems to contradict the emancipatory hope that Césaire has desired to give to poetry. If to know is to be born with something, is there not a pre-existing essence over against which one constantly refers to as role model? As the poet hammered throughout his life, poetry was a way to “return to the source” which, as an intellectual and imaginative journey, “circumscribed itself in authenticity,”¹⁴¹ without any pre-fixed or correct form of poetry or knowledge. Yet, the poet should be allowed a “right to make mistakes” (*droit à l’erreur*)—which seems to entail a mistake-less reference source.¹⁴² Is Césaire arguing for a form of cultural relativism? Or is he moving towards poetry as a practice that enables violation?¹⁴³ How are we to understand this “right to make mistakes” if indeed there is no pre-defined knowledge?

¹⁴⁰ Paul Claudel, *Art Poétique - Connaissance du temps; Traité de la co-naissance au monde et de soi-même* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1907). Césaire acknowledges his debt to Claudel in the first paragraph of *Poetry and Knowledge*.

¹⁴¹ See for instance, “Sur la poésie nationale” in *Présence africaine*, No. 4, Nov. 1955, p. 39, in the context of a response against the “Antillean poetry” and the “French tradition” extolled by René Depestre; also, “Interview with Aimé Césaire” in *Trait d’union, bulletin de l’Association des étudiants de la Martinique*, Mai 1956, p. 17; and in “Présence africaine et la négritude” in *Croissance des jeunes nations*, No. 50, Dec. 1965, p. 39.

¹⁴² “Sur la poésie nationale,” *op. cit.*, p. 41.

¹⁴³ I borrow the term from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who defines it as a critical and deconstructive position towards an action that arose under the particular conditions of a historically given situation. In that sense, that action is an unescapable contradiction that carries both medicine (it enables something) and poison (it violates it too)—the two being able to claim legitimacy equally. See *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, ed. Donna Landry (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 19. Also in Spivak, “Righting Wrongs” in *Other Asias* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. 15. Drucilla Cornell also elaborates on the term after Spivak in *Between Women and Generations: Legacies of Dignity* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 112.

The “problem of knowledge” that Césaire wishes to relate to poetry does not stem from the different “definitions” that the poet and the philosopher have. Rather, it stems from the hypotheses that knowledge reveals itself most openly when it stands on the edge of oblivion. Such was the opinion of the philosophers gathered in an “International Congress of Philosophy,” in September 1944 near the end of World War II—before the atomic bombs of August 1945. The problem was questioned in two different yet complementary ways. On the one hand, what did we know before the war, and did we know anything at all (a question warranted by the horrors that the part of the world that considered itself so advanced had been able to carry through to a degree of near-total self-annihilation)? On the other hand, what do we know now, and can we indeed know anything (that the world that had survived the war could attend to) and use a moment of crisis as an opportunity of construction? In the words of Adolf A. Berle, Assistant Secretary of State writing to the President of the International Congress of Philosophy: “rarely had the world stood in greater need of that common understanding between man and nations which could arise only from wider education and increased diffusion and interchange of knowledge.”¹⁴⁴ Coming from a representative of the United States government, also the author of a treaty on corporate international law and future Ambassador to Brazil, the implied connection between knowledge and political governance is conspicuous. Indeed, the whole congress, organized by the Haitian Society of Scientific Studies, was officially sponsored by governments who sent “representatives of knowledge.” The Provisional Government of the French Republic sent two of its most brilliant minds: a well-known philosopher who would be appointed Ambassador to the

¹⁴⁴ Proceedings of the International Congress of Philosophy regarding the Problems of Knowledge, in *Travaux du Congrès International de Philosophie consacré aux problèmes de la connaissance* (Port-au-Prince, Haïti: Imprimerie de l’État, 1947), p. 29 and 34 (Hereafter cited as Proceedings). Secretary Berle did not attend the conference. A cable was sent from Washington, D.C., on September 20th, 1944.

Vatican the following year, Jacques Maritain, and a relatively unknown poet who would get elected *député-maire* (congressman and mayor) of Fort-de-France (Martinique) a year later as well, Aimé Césaire, “whose reputation clearly show[ed] the vitality of French literature.”¹⁴⁵ In the words of M. Milon de Peillon, Plenipotentiary Minister of the Provisory Government of the French Republic and future Ambassador to Nicaragua, Césaire and Maritain both represented that “solemn and moving moment where the French mind could speak again, following a tradition illustrated by Descartes, Malebranche and Bergson.”

There seems to be a contradictory movement embedded in the organization, the theme, and the timing of the conference. On the one hand: a call for a reinterpretation and challenge of a philosophical “problem of knowledge” that transcends national politics. On the other hand: a movement engrained in national philosophical thinking concurrently with their representative governments—and the choice of Haiti to address such matters, both far away from Europe yet never fully out of its grip, seems highly symbolic. Far from being pawns of their governments, writers and thinkers such as Césaire and Du Bois play on both fronts: political actors in the rapidly evolving colonial landscape in the post World War II context; intellectuals writing about history as they live it regardless of political endgames. One month before reaching the philosophical congress where he had been invited by the President of Haiti, Du Bois thus writes to Walter White—the executive secretary of the NAACP¹⁴⁶—that his work aimed at organizing African peoples of Negro descent and other color groups so as to clarify and unify their ideas, plans and demands across the board. Working in the United States and for American Negroes, Du

¹⁴⁵ Proceedings, p. 35.

¹⁴⁶ The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, an African-American civil rights organization that Du Bois founded in 1909 with Moorfield Storey, Mary White Ovington. See <http://www.naacp.org/pages/naacp-history>.

Bois added that he was “also in correspondence with people in Jamaica, England and West Africa” and conjectured that

if Haiti, B. W. I. and Colored Cuba can be brought into unified effort with Black Africa and Negro U.S.A and eventually with India, South-East Asia and China, we can face the post-war world with a program which must be listened to. The young intellectuals here [in the United States] have rallied around me and are eager to cooperate with me on the question of colonies and post-war conditions.¹⁴⁷

Du Bois, as newly appointed director of special research at the NAACP,¹⁴⁸ was immersed in both a “world hope” opened by the prospect of the end of World War II and the reality of the political situation in the United States from where he wrote. He made his trip as part of his work and gave it the official stamp of the U. S. government by having the expenses of his trip to the preparatory meetings of the congress paid for by the State Department. In addition, already thinking of the future organization of a fifth Pan-African Congress held for the first time on African soil, Du Bois hoped his visit to Haiti to be “broached with the object of increasing the cultural unity of the Caribbean area and the Negroes of the U.S, as well as white friends.”¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile, he also sent a letter to the Haitian philosopher and organizer of the Congress, Camille Lhérisson, in

¹⁴⁷ *The Correspondence of W. E. B Du Bois*, ed. Herbert Aptheker, Vol. II (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976), p. 417-418. All further information regarding Du Bois’s trip to the Congress, comes from his own account as it is archived in the *Correspondence*.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

French, where he elaborated his vision of the “problems of knowledge” without any political references. Staging the development of the “natural sciences in the seventeenth century” as the beginning of an era where “it is almost impossible for a single mind to seize, in its wholeness, the domain of scientific knowledge (*connaissance scientifique*),” the historian shared his hopes for a more comprehensive message of philosophy whereby the gap between our science and reasoning (*notre technique et nos procédés de raisonnement*) could be bridged. Addressing philosophers, Du Bois positioned himself within the boundaries of the discipline and hoped for the “birth of a larger philosophy” that would “integrate knowledge into life.” Yet, Du Bois was a historian. Stepping in a discipline of which he “ha[d] understood the critical position,” the ultimate “unification” he wished for did not only stem from philosophical knowledge: it was “a marriage between industry and commerce on the one hand, and thought, feeling and ideal on the other.”¹⁵⁰

Like W.E.B Du Bois, Aimé Césaire also does not come to the congress as a philosopher. He too attempts to write from within a certain philosophical tradition to address the problems of knowledge. Césaire is a poet, and it is also from the confines of his disciplinary boundaries—poetry—that he steps into the problems of knowledge. In a published column written after the congress, he admits to a double pride: that of a poet recognized by philosophers (“certified” or “*agrée*” by philosophers), and that of an Antillean “philosophizing and poetizing” on Antillean land.¹⁵¹ He too, is caught in a double movement whereby he writes a paper on poetry using the

¹⁵⁰ Surprisingly, this letter is not reproduced in the otherwise comprehensive *Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois*. It is included in the Proceedings, p. 40. W. E. B. Du Bois writes three communications in preparation for the debates: two in French, one in English (the two working languages of the congress).

¹⁵¹ Aimé Césaire, “Le Congrès de Philosophie vu par Aimé Césaire,” in *Cahiers d’Haïti*, Oct. 1944 (Nendeln, Lichtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1980), p. 32.

language of philosophy, altogether remaining in the realm of a scholarly communication in a confined scholarly congress on “the problems of knowledge;” meanwhile, because of the conditions under which the congress is held, his verbal text intertwines with a timely political context (post-war pondering, post-colonial thinking, etc).¹⁵² His paper bears the mark of these different (and not always clear) approaches to the congress’s philosophical and political reflections. The title of his communication, “Poetry and Knowledge” (*Poésie et connaissance*), for instance, suggests a relation between two broad concepts, poetry and knowledge, whose articulation is as important as what they separately stand for.¹⁵³ The word “and” (*et*), as a subordinating conjunction connecting two parts of a same nature, can be understood as either a lack in the field of poetry proper onto which an abstract knowledge must be grafted—and if so, asking where would this knowledge come from remains an unanswered question; or, oppositely, a lack in the domain of knowledge that cannot be complete without poetry—and if so, whether this poetry is manifold or uniform also remains unanswered. Furthermore, in the original French, the word “*et*” sounds like “*est*” from the verb “*être*” conjugated at the third person singular: poetry *is* knowledge. In this case, poetry as such would be knowledge, in a quasi absolute form

¹⁵² In *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), Gary Wilder shows how, already in 1944, Césaire articulated the potential of economic and political emancipation within the framework of departmentalization. In effect, the not-yet-elected mayor of Fort-de-France espoused federalism as a medium of decolonization to counteract the “oligarchy of huge planters still sympathetic to slavery” (p. 2). In a similar way, Senghor would envision a preferred partnership with France, beginning with De Gaulle’s French Union and ending with the *Communauté franco-africaine*. See Robert Mortimer, “From Federalism to Francophonie: Senghor’s African Policy,” in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Sept. 1972), pp. 283-306; Richard Kessler, “Senghor’s Foreign Policy: Preparation for a transition,” in *Africa Report* (March-April 1980), pp. 47-50; and Frédéric Turpin, “1958, la Communauté franco-africaine : un projet de puissance entre héritage de la IVe République et conceptions gaulliennes,” in *Outre-mers*, No. 358-359 (2008), pp. 45-58;

¹⁵³ It is to be noted that Césaire is not the only one to use such an enigmatic title for his communication. Théophile Cahn titles his paper “Science et connaissance” [“Science and knowledge”]; Leconte du Nouÿ’s paper is entitled “L’Expérience et la connaissance” [“Experience and knowledge”]; and Habib Estéphano’s paper reads “L’Homme et la connaissance” [“Man and knowledge”]. On the contrary, the papers given in English provide the audience with more technical titles: Paul Weiss speaks on “Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong”; Cornelius Benjamin develops “Some Principles of Empiricism”; and John Wild more specifically uncovers a “Natural Realism and Contemporary Epistemology in North America.” See the program of the *Proceedings*, p. 6.

that would indeed fit the language of philosophy within which the problems of knowledge are discussed in the congress. In the title as well as in the paper reprinted in the proceedings, Césaire shows not so much a use of the philosophical language but rather weaves poetry-writing with philosophical-questioning—an element mostly lost in the English translations.

Today, the paper is not widely known. When it is read and commented upon, the reference text is the truncated version that appeared in *Tropiques* in 1945.¹⁵⁴ In the communication that the poet gave in Port-au-Prince in September 1944, several passages from “poetry” or “literature” were woven into the text to support the “philosophical” argument—or rather his counter-argumentation. For instance, grounding himself in an arbitrary chosen date of 1850 when, writes Césaire, “the revenge of Dionysos upon Apollo” and “the great leap into the poetic void” occurred, the poet stages an artificial beginning of an era where “poets dared to claim (*osé prétendre*) that they KNEW.”¹⁵⁵ Baudelaire, in Césaire’s line of reasoning, stands for the first poet who “dared to claim” some sort of knowledge that ultimately would come together with clairvoyance: “At the end of the road [of the “poetical adventure”]: clairvoyance and knowledge.” In the 1945 version, however, an excerpt from Rimbaud’s *Lettre à Paul Demeny* of

¹⁵⁴ *Tropiques*, No. 12, Jan. 1945, pp. 157-170; also in *Aimé Césaire, l’homme et l’œuvre*, ed. Lilyan Kesteloot and Barthelemy Kotchy (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1973), pp. 112-126. The “seven propositions” and the conclusive “corollary” are often printed separately, e.g., in *Art Poétique*, ed. Jacques Charpier and Pierre Seghers (Paris: Seghers, 1956), p. 702, and *Études littéraires*, special issue for Aimé Césaire, No 1, vol. 6, April 1973, pp. 111-112. The full version is to be found in the original proceedings of the congress, *op. cit.*, and is reprinted with an introduction by Thomas A. Hale in *Aimé Césaire, Œuvres Complètes* (Paris: CNRS, 2013).

¹⁵⁵ Aimé Césaire, *Poetry and Knowledge*, trans. Clayton Eshelman and Annette Smith in *Aimé Césaire: Lyric and Dramatic Poetry*, (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 1990), p. xlv. The Apollo-Dionysus reference may be an allusion to Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy*, Césaire’s bedside book at the time, as the poet states at multiple occasions. See among others, in an interview with Claude Stevens entitled “Pour un théâtre d’inspiration africaine: Aime Césaire,” in *La Vie africaine*, No. 59, June 1965, p. 41: “En 1945, j’ai rédigé ma première pièce de théâtre : *Et les chiens se taisaient*. A cette époque j’avais subi l’influence de Nietzsche et de son ouvrage sur la tragédie grecque.” I have not found the source for the unreferenced “great leap,” in italics in the original.

May 1871 where the young poet underlines three times the word *voyant* (seer) is removed.¹⁵⁶ As is well-known to readers of the symbolist poet, the letter offers a critique of poetry from Ancient Greece to Romanticism, and it is there that Rimbaud defines the relationship between the poet and his poetry as a radically foreign mode of expression, summarized in the famous formula “Je est un autre” (“I is an other”). What it means, is that poetry is a medium through which the poet’s thoughts are revealed to himself in a way that he otherwise would not have been able to know. In other words, for Rimbaud, poetry is not a repository of knowledge but holds the keys to access one. Yet, it is not what Césaire chooses to tell his audience of philosophers. Rather, the poet of Martinique chooses to quote Rimbaud’s call to “make oneself clairvoyant” (*se faire voyant*) through a “long and immense reasoned derangement of all the senses” (*long et immense raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens*). The artificiality of clairvoyance as well as the rational nature of the derangement help Césaire to rhetorically stage a process (“long and immense”) more than an opposition. Poetry is not caught in the mind-body dualism or in the reason-emotion dichotomy that would have been common language for the philosophers to whom Césaire was speaking.

Perhaps the most important truncation happens towards the middle of the essay. Following the climactic moment of a new poetic history that started with Baudelaire and Rimbaud where poetry “dared to know,” to reach Apollinaire and Breton where it is no less than “in relation with the entire universe,” Césaire leaves poetry aside and goes into prose—the same prose which he had claimed earlier “France was dying of.” Making an incursion into literature, he reads a long excerpt from Proust’s *The Prisoner* where the main character, Albertine, is

¹⁵⁶ The *Lettre à Paul Demeny* of May 15, 1871, together with the *Lettre à Georges Izambard* are now known as the *Lettres du voyant*. See Arthur Rimbaud, *Œuvres Complètes* ed. André Guyaut (Paris: Gallimard, 2009).

depicted as having an experience of consciousness-losing. In the text, Albertine is quite simply falling asleep and is about to “feel... something as pure, as immaterial, as mysterious, as if [she] had been in the presence of those inanimate creatures which are the beauties of nature.” The access to a previously unknown knowledge coming from an unconscious experience is a commonplace that could find—in the French tradition—its roots in Montaigne and Rousseau. Yet, Césaire decides remain in Proust’s text and chooses to espouse the author’s own way of writing. In *In Search of Lost Time*, the recalling of one memory often calls for another. Césaire thus follows the memory of consciousness-losing experience, tracing the memory back to another excerpt on sleep in Proust’s *In the shadow of Young Girls in Flower*. Walking his audience of philosophers through a moment where the textuality in the novel shows us a change in epistemology, Césaire points out the contradiction of a knowledge that is both familiar and foreign: “all those mysteries which we imagine ourselves not to know and into which we are in reality initiated almost every night.”¹⁵⁷ Textually, the poet heavily cuts Proust’s excerpt and, as with Rimbaud’s letter, carefully chooses his quotes. He does not linger on Proust’s digression on dreamwork that would have taken him another way—perhaps, to a Freudian analysis of affect that he rejects in the conclusive “fourth proposition.” If one can certainly criticize Césaire for taking too much liberty in quoting or trying to make Proust’s text fit his own purpose, one shall also recognize that the poet is trying to drive home a teaching moment in reading: how changes are mapped. Albertine’s knowledge is not derived from her sensory experiences, yet it is not quite a priori either. In one book, she had “closed her eyes, lost consciousness.” In another, she had simply “fallen asleep.” It begs the question: what happened? The carefully crafted quotes that the

¹⁵⁷ Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge,” in *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. Albert James Arnold (Paris: CNRS, Présence Africaine, p. 1382. (hereafter referred to as OC).

poet chooses show an experience of an a-priori-like moment where the character's intuition took over, imagining a unity between nature and herself. In the context of the theme of the congress, one ought to ask: what did she know? What could she know? In effect, she did not know anything—though she had cognition. Again, Césaire leaves the questions unanswered and moves back to poetry by quoting Giraudoux and Claudel respectively: “Close your eyes, Rosemonde, you will find the world,” and “Before I open the eyes, I know everything.”¹⁵⁸ This “knowledge” that the two quoted poets foreground cannot be understood through the analytical framework of philosophy (e.g., *a priori* vs. experienced knowledge), or even through the literary staging of a novelist inviting his reader to ask questions.¹⁵⁹ Poetry, perhaps because of an economy of words, certainly because of stylistic and etymological concerns, operates differently. It is to this different operation, or mode of reading, that Césaire calls this audience of philosophers to pay attention to.

It would be a mistake to take Césaire's words at face-value, especially in the context of philosophers gathered in an international congress to discuss the “problems of knowledge.” Though “Poetry and Knowledge” presents the idea of the poetic ambition to access a totality that, by definition, encompasses everything,¹⁶⁰ the poet acknowledges the thought-experiment nature of the ambition: “Everything happens *as though*, prior to the secondary scattering of life,

¹⁵⁸ OC, p. 1382. The quote from Giraudoux is in *Suzanne et le Pacifique* (Paris: Emile-Paul Frères, 1921), p. 186. That of Claudel is in the *Art Poétique: Traité de la co-naissance au monde et de soi-même* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1907), p. 105.

¹⁵⁹ In the case of Proust, as Césaire undoubtedly knows, the author of the monumental “In Search of Lost Time” constantly demands to return to earlier passages in an endless cyclical pattern. For instance, the last volume of the saga, *Time Regained*, is staged as a preface, almost three thousand pages later, to the well-known opening lines of *Swann's way*. On a second reading, those lines, informed by the revelation of the ending and the role of the narrator, frame the novel differently.

¹⁶⁰ Throughout the essay, Césaire reiterates the idea that what presides over poetry is “an entire experience: all the women loved, all the desires experienced, all the dreams dreamed, all the images received or grasped, the whole weight of the body, the whole weight of the mind. All lived experience. All the possibility.” A little further: “Everything is summoned. Everything awaits. Everything, I say.” OC, p. 1381-1382; LDP, p. xlvii.

there was a knotty primal unity whose poets would have kept a dazzling sight.”¹⁶¹ Wishful thinking of a poet before philosophers? “Poetry and Knowledge” needs also to be approached in the context of a “cultural mission” that he and Suzanne Césaire were part of, that involved a five-month residency in Haiti and a series of nine conferences at the University of Port-au-Prince. Césaire’s paper is the penultimate lecture of their trip and follows seven lectures given from June to September 1944 where the poet spoke on Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, and Giraudoux—four poets that appear in that order in the philosophical essay.¹⁶² In other words, it is as though the philosophical essay given in 1944 summed up the conferences that preceded it. That might explain the erasing of those extended references in its subsequent 1945 publication. It does not explain the removing of Proust. More relevantly to the philosophical content of the paper, it also leaves unexplained the withdrawal of the unacknowledged reference to Bergson—a philosopher whose notoriety at the time was not to be underestimated, quoted more than twenty times during the congress—and in the conclusive “seventh proposition” of the paper.¹⁶³

Bergson, who died three years before the congress, is an unexpected common ground for both Jacques Maritain and Aimé Césaire. In Maritain’s words, Bergson “asked intelligence to seize duration by using an extra-conceptual intuition.”¹⁶⁴ In other words, to liquidate the

¹⁶¹ OC, p. 1383; LDP, p. xlvi. Translation modified. Emphasis is mine.

¹⁶² The details of this trip are scarce. The comprehensive collection of Césaire’s writings, *Les écrits d’Aimé Césaire* edited by Thomas A. Hale and Kora Véron (Paris: Champion, 2013), gives the list of the lectures given by Césaire, including their dates and titles, but does not mention any other information (p. 70). I was unable to find the original texts of those lectures.

¹⁶³ Only the last sentence of the proposition is lacking, where the expression “vital forces of man and nature” carries Bergsonian overtones that would doubtless be recognized in 1944.

¹⁶⁴ Proceedings, p. 109. Maritain’s paper given on Sept. 25, 1944, entitled: “De la connaissance humaine” Translation is mine.

positivistic mind that corrupted neo-kantian approaches throughout the nineteenth century, Maritain follows Bergson in the latter's insistence that the relation between the self and the world shall reside not in scientific or experimental knowledge, not even a different kind of science, but rather in the "prolongation of science into the irrational philosophy of movement." As Albert James Arnold remarks in his seminal book on the poetry and poetics of Aimé Césaire, "Poetry and knowledge" is constructed not on the binary opposition between poetry and philosophy but between poetry and science.¹⁶⁵ In so doing, Césaire's argument mirrors most of the communications of the congress that operate on the binary opposition between philosophy and science.¹⁶⁶ Césaire, as a poet, reacts neither for nor against such statements. Rather does he redefine it in his own terms in the "seventh proposition," calling such irrational philosophy a poetic beauty: "There only is beauty where the vital forces of man and nature merge."¹⁶⁷ Bergson, interlocutor of the text but never mentioned, haunts Césaire's communication: "Surrender to the vital movement, to the creative élan. Joyous surrender." In the 1944 version, the word "surrender" was followed by the redundant emphasis: "with *no* reticence *at all*." One may even fancy that the 'poetic way' is indeed staged—in a way that recalls the automatic writing of the Surrealists—as a complete surrender of the poet's imagination to his poetic inspiration, redefined as 'vital knowledge.' Hence, the 'poetic way of knowing' cannot give a

¹⁶⁵ Albert James Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude: The Poetry and Poetics of Aimé Césaire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 57. Abiola Irele also concurs that, in the essay, the poet "envisions poetic and scientific knowledges as complementary rather than contradictory." See Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, ed. Abiola Irele (Ibadan, Nigeria: New Horn Press Limited, 1994), p. xxxiii.

¹⁶⁶ Césaire's communication, given on September 28, 1944, occurs towards the end of the congress that was held from Sept. 24 to 30, 1944. More than half of the papers deal with one or more aspects of the hard sciences (biology, medicine, cognitive psychology, etc), such as "Science et Connaissance" by Théophile Cahn, "Plaisir poétique et Plaisir musculaire" by André Spire, or "Des Bases Biologiques de la Connaissance" by Camille Lhérisson, among the French papers; "Cognition and Value" by Cornelius Krusé, "Natural Realism and Contemporary Epistemology in North America" by John Wild, among the papers given in English.

¹⁶⁷ OC, p. 1389.

knowledge ‘of something.’ If it did, it would already divide it and make it ready for a petrification by what Césaire calls the “poverty of judgement.” Contrasting judgement and image in the theatrical mode of a quasi-dialogue, he writes:

Judgement is poor from all the reason in the world.

The image is rich with all the absurdity in the world.

Judgement is poor from all the “thought” in the world.

The image is rich with all the life in the universe.

Judgement is poor from all the rationality in existence.

The image is rich with all the irrationality in life.

Judgement is poor from all immanence.

The image is rich with all transcendence.¹⁶⁸

Although the binaries are straight-forward and would be familiar language to the audience of philosophers he was addressing, Césaire leaves open one binary that seems to exceed the poetically constructed set of oppositions. Where in the third couplet, ‘life’ is opposed to existence, the same ‘life’ in the second couplet is opposed to an enigmatically scare-quoted “thought” (« *le pensé* »). What is to be gained by differentiating a “being thought” to an “existence” insofar as they relate to the limits of “judgement?” The difference is exacerbated by another opposition between the limits of the “world” over against the boundless “universe.” Perhaps what Césaire is doing is placing himself at the center of the rigid binaries in order to break them apart and give rise to a third option? The force of the binary opposition, engendered by the force of the system of thought itself, is so strong that only from within the “being thought”

¹⁶⁸ OC, p. 1385; LDP, p. li. The awkward phrasing “judgment is poor from...” mirrors an equally clumsy french: “le jugement est pauvre de...”

(*pensé*) can Césaire hope to overcome the rigid structure of that particular philosophical knowledge. As I have shown, Bergson's philosophy of movement or 'vital knowledge' is doubtless in the background of the poet's line of arguments—especially in the text of 1944. Nonetheless, the intertextuality extends further and reaches for a time to a philosopher whose name also recurs in the communications of the congress: Immanuel Kant.¹⁶⁹

Following the oppositions between image and judgement, Césaire does not explain the binaries but attempts to confront the philosopher of analytical and synthetic judgements on his terrain:

However much one may strain to reduce analytics judgement to synthetic judgement; or to say that judgement supposes the connecting of two different concepts; or to insist on the idea that there is no judgement without X; that all judgement is transcendence, it is nonetheless true that in all valid judgement the field of transcendence is limited.¹⁷⁰

According to this school of thought, one of the goals of *Critique of Pure Reason* was to demonstrate the existence and validity of *a priori* synthetic judgements. Over against analytical judgments where the relationship between two concepts is deemed analytical if, by an analytical process, one can see how the second concept is contained in the first, a synthetic judgement has

¹⁶⁹ The influence of "neo-Kantianism" in the 1930s and 40s is well documented. For a history of "neo-kantism," see Massimo Ferrari, *Retours à Kant*, trans. Thierry Loisel (Paris: Cerf, 2001 [1997]) especially German neo-kantisms ("physiological," the Bade school, the Marburg school), and in France in the interwar period (Renouvier, Boutroux, Brunschvicg). As early as 1881, Alexander Fouillé had claimed that "for several years, there ha[d] been a neo-kantian movement in France that [was] not without importance, in "Le Neo-kantisme en France" in *Revue Philosophique*, 11 (1881): 1-45. For a criticism of the movement closer to Césaire's time, see Paul Nizan, *Les Chiens de Garde* (Paris: Rieder, 1932)—quoted in the heading of his article "Nègreries: Conscience raciale et révolution sociale," in *l'Étudiant noir*, No. 3, May-June 1935, p. 5.

¹⁷⁰ OC, p. 1385; LDP., p. li.

no a priori reason to link two independent concepts in the first place. For Kant, a synthetic judgement adds something to the judgement that is not contained in the premises, and there is no a priori reason for the subject to know of such relation before the onset of experience, the structuring of the experiment, etc. There is something that a synthetic judgement can teach, in the sense that it aims at discovering an other conceptual or empirical relation. In “Poetry and Knowledge,” Césaire builds on the idea of adding something that was already there, albeit unknown or undeveloped, but accessible through the practice of reading poetry and literature—as the excerpt by Proust, illustrating the idea of something akin to a “foreign familiarity,” shows. This is not to say that one cannot learn anything from judgements. Rather, approached from a philosophical vantage point, they are limited to a certain realm of logical reasoning that, since Aristotle, has been based upon three “laws of thought” that Césaire duly recalls in the same paragraph: “the law of identity, the law of non-contradiction, the logical principle of the excluded middle.”¹⁷¹ To each laws, the poet from Martinique stages a particular poetic opposition, in reverse chronological order: Mallarmé and Rimbaud for the first two laws; Baudelaire for the third logical principle. In 1945, the long quote from Baudelaire’s *Invitation au voyage*, a prose

¹⁷¹ OC, p. 1386; LDP: p. li. According to the article “Laws of Thought” in the Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), the “laws of thought” are fundamental axiomatic rules upon which rational discourse itself is based. They are laws by which “valid thought proceeds, or that justify valid inference, or to which all valid deduction is reducible” (p. 489). The expression “laws of thought” gained popularity in the 19th century. For instance, it was used by George Boole (1815–64) to denote theorems of his “algebra of logic” (hence the title of his second logic book: *An Investigation of the Laws of Thought on Which are Founded the Mathematical Theories of Logic and Probabilities* (1854) [George Boole, *Les lois de la pensée*, trans. Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Paris: Vrin, 1992)]. Modern logicians such as Bertrand Russell disagreed with Boole, taking the name ‘laws of thought’ to be “misleading, for what is important is not the fact that we think in accordance with these laws, but the fact that things behave in accordance with them.” See *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 73. In France, such criticism appears in the work of Louis Couturat, who writes in 1905 that “the principle of contradiction is not sufficient to define contradictories. (*contradictaires*)” See *The Algebra of Logic*, trans. Lydia Gillingham Robinson (Chicago and London, The Open Court Publishing Company, 1914), p. 23. [original French: *L’algèbre de la logique* (Paris: Albert Blanchard, 1980 [reprint]), p. 24]. For a history of the term and its reception, see Marie-José Durand-Richard, “L’école algébrique anglaise et les conditions conceptuelles et institutionnelles d’un calcul symbolique comme fondement de la connaissance,” in *L’Europe mathématique* (Paris: Edition de la Maison des Sciences de l’homme, 1996), pp. 445-477. For a discussion of George Boole, see Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *Boole, 1815-1864 - L’oiseau de nuit en plein jour* (Paris: Editions Berlin, 1989).

poem given by Césaire to illustrate a way of “poetic blending, poetic transcendence” is however removed, short-circuiting the “blending” and emphasizing the opposition by directly linking the limiting “laws of thoughts” to the “unlimited power of images.” As Marcel Raymond writes in his influential book on the French poetic history, *From Baudelaire to Surrealism*, the author of the *Invitation au voyage* writes a poetry that exceeds knowledge because he asks for a trained protocol of writing that is based on a psychological and unconscious working aimed at a work of art in which all elements are intertwined in a complex and coherent network of reciprocal relations.¹⁷² In other words, in Baudelaire, the poem becomes the stage for a controlled *delirium* where the order and the unity created by the mind triumphs over the semblance of natural chaos, where “knowledge” stems more from a moving process than an objective fact. The deletion of this reference in 1945 leaves Césaire’s poetry in the wake of Rimbaud and Mallarmé and conceals the non-intellectual character of the poetic hope that he finds in Baudelaire. Even though, as Paul Valéry writes in resonance with Baudelaire’s poetry, each of Mallarmé’s sentence is like a “careful equilibrium of forces that has to be progressively grasped over time,”¹⁷³ Césaire concludes that “there is no longer any possibility of doubt about Mallarmé’s enterprise. “Mallarmé is an especially important engineer of the mind.”¹⁷⁴ Rather than dismissing him, Césaire subverts one of the poet’s more enigmatic texts, closer to tragedy than it is to poetry: *Hérodiade*.

The reference appears in the original conclusion of “Poetry and Knowledge” as it was given in September 1944. Completely erased from the 1945 publication, it did not reappear in

¹⁷² Marcel Raymond, *De Baudelaire au Surréalisme* (Paris: José Corti, 1940), p. 27. As Albert James Arnold notices, Césaire’s poetic examples and chronology seems to follow almost exactly Raymond’s. See *Modernism and Negritude*, p. 66.

¹⁷³ Paul Valéry *Variétés II* (Paris: Nouvelle Revue Française, 1930), p. 224. Quoted in Raymond, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

¹⁷⁴ OC., p. 1385; LDP, p. xlix.

print until the genetic edition of the paper in 2013 by Thomas Hale.¹⁷⁵ Mallarmé's enterprise in his *Hérodiade* consisted in an attempt to practice a hyperconscious use of the language whereby every detail was carefully controlled with the intention to go beneath/beyond it. "I have finally begun my *Hérodiade*," he writes in a letter to Theodore de Banville in September 1864:

With terror because I am inventing a language which must necessarily arise from a very new poetics, which I could define in these two words: *to paint not the thing but the effect that it produces*. Therefore, the verse must not be composed of words, but of intentions, and all language must be erased in the face of feelings.¹⁷⁶

In this particular attempt, words hold a secondary role to the syntax as such. The reader is therefore caught in an ambiguous (and ambitious) approach that should lead him beyond words in theory, but that restricts him to their syntactic relation in practice. Syntax is there designed to make immediate apprehension impossible: extreme distances between subject and predicate or predicate and object; insistence upon inversions of subject and verb; and reliance on grammatical inflection alone to solve passages obscured by unconventional word order; all these techniques serve to create a feeling of unease with words. We can see why Césaire would refer to such text. Already in the *Notebook on the Return to the Native Land*, as Brent Edwards shows, the syntax more than the syllabic vocabulary opens a reading that breaks from French poetic predecessors, leaving his readers marveling at his "willingness to tamper with French syntax in a way that

¹⁷⁵ OC., pp. 1371- 1392.

¹⁷⁶ Quoted in English translation in David Lenson, "Introduction to a translation of Herodiade," in *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Winter 1989), p. 537. For the original, see Stéphane Mallarmé, "Hérodiade" in *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), with an introduction and edition by Henri Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry, p. 1440-1441.

makes Breton and Éluard sound like Mme de La Fayette.”¹⁷⁷ When Césaire ends “Poetry and Knowledge” with a quote from *Hérodiade*, he changes the punctuation to force a new sense of the sentence, again entering the language of the author he is quoting—as he had done with Proust.¹⁷⁸ From beginning to end, Césaire thus never stops to practice what he claims: that poetry invites its careful reader and writer to enter the text and transform it—and break its rules—from within. In a sense, it is also what Negritudes attempted with the French language: change from within.

What the original version of 1944 shows is therefore more than an abstract “poetic idealism” from which one—either the poet or its reader—could gain access to a different knowledge. It shows an attempt to inhabit a certain poetical-philosophical tradition, to master its language—concepts, vocabulary, syntax—to ultimately undo its way to construct an object of knowledge. The enterprise appears distinctly personal and as such, contrary to the collective vision of Negritude. It also collides with Negritude at the level of the language that here plays a secondary role to the more ‘structural’ way of meaning or self-expressing. Language is incidental. It might as well have been another one. In other words, the core of Césaire’s argument for the power of the poetic imagination does not rest upon the particular language that it uses, but rather on the fact that it can subvert any language at will: “[The poet] speaks and his language (*langue*) and brings speech (*langage*) back to the pure state. Pure state, I mean subdued (*soumis*) not to

¹⁷⁷ Brent Hayes Edwards offers an analysis of the *Notebook* that focuses on a syntactic rather than a syllabic reading and traces the reception and influence of this process in the work of work of other African diasporic writers. See “Aimé Césaire and the syntax of Influence,” in *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Summer 2005), p. 2. The quote is taken from the introduction to *The Collected Poetry of Aimé Césaire*, trans. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1983), p. 18.

¹⁷⁸ The sentence by Mallarmé reads: “Une voix, du passé, longue évocation / Est-ce la mienne prête à l’incantation?” Césaire’s quotation has taken off the comma after “voix,” henceforth changing the meaning from “a voice, some past” to “a voice from the past.”

habit or thinking.”¹⁷⁹ Undoubtedly, there is something akin to a mysticism of language in Césaire’s description, as if there were some sort of linguistic universalism or essentialism, a ‘supra-language’ that a surrendering to the poetic imagery of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, or Proust could uncover. For all intents and purposes, the language and literary references of Césaire’s paper are French—even the passage on Kant is more concerned with the reception of Kant’s philosophy in France than with his philosophy proper—but they serve as names for a double bind to inhabit: between their ties to a particular language and their desire to overcome these ties through a challenging of their genres.¹⁸⁰

Could Sartre have misread Césaire when four years later he wrote a preface to a Francophone anthology where the poet from Martinique would most eloquently represent the power of negritude’s engagement with a specific French language and colonialism? To be sure, when the philosopher writes that “[t]his dense mass of words, hurled into the air like rocks by a volcano is the negritude that arrays itself against Europe and colonialism. What Césaire destroys is not all cultures, it is the white culture,” the name Césaire stands for the binary opposition between French and non-French, itself a metonym for the larger opposition between “whites” and “blacks,” itself a metonym for a global struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Ultimately, as the conclusion of “Black Orpheus” announces, Negritude is inscribed into the

¹⁷⁹ OC, p. 1384; LDP, p.xliv. Emphasis is mine. Translation modified.

¹⁸⁰ That might explain the reason behind the excerpts that Césaire chose in his philosophical paper. For instance, Baudelaire is represented by both the most classic poetry in *Les Fleurs du Mal* and his innovative prose poetry of *Spleen et Idéal*; Rimbaud is quoted both in the prose of the *Lettre à Démény* and the poetry of *Illuminations* published just one year before he stops writing poetry altogether; as for Mallarmé, Césaire not only recognized the influence of his notoriously difficult vocabulary that makes the poet so difficult to translate, he also chose among the most eclectic of the poet’s writings: one poem from the eponymous *Poésie*, a letter to Verlaine that is often quoted to underline the artificial endeavor of poetry, and two verses from the dramatic composition *Hérodiade* that ultimately turned out to remain a poetic composition. Often praised for pushing the limits of the French vocabulary, Mallarmé’s relation to the English language is also well-known, as shows the poet’s late works such as *Les Mots Anglais* and the *Thèmes Anglais*.

larger goal of the negation of white oppression, forged through colonial exploitation. As we remember, Sartre noted that the poetry of the Negritude writers confronted the system through a reversal of the value attributed to a vocabulary imposed upon them by the French—a vocabulary that essentialized them in a particularly humiliating way, so as to justify their integration into the capitalist system as exploited workers. In “Black Orpheus,” Negritude is presented not as a movement that went as far as negating the thinking of racial differentiation, but only to reverse it. Read from the vantage point of Césaire’s “Poetry and Knowledge” where the numerous sets of binary oppositions are staged to specifically show the limits of such binaries, and to attend to the conditions under which they were practiced in poetry and philosophy under a fallacious use of the term “knowledge,” the instrumentality that Sartre attributes to the use of the French language by the Negritude poets appears—perhaps on purpose—quite unsophisticated.

Addressing the Francophone poets of Senghor’s anthology as cultural products of France, Sartre saw the French language as a medium of expression imposed by colonization—and still unavoidable as non-alienating language after decolonization. Yet, the philosopher also pointed at the double bind of a language that, in the meantime, could not be considered “foreign” for the colonized—and all the more for the generation that gave rise to the poets of Negritude: “Blacks rediscover themselves only on the terrain full of the traps which white men have set for them.”¹⁸¹ As Sartre posits French as a permanent colonial language that acts as a personified arbiter, it is he who becomes trapped in the binary oppositions he has acutely described. Language has become the site of a contradiction where the instrument of liberation must be the same as the instrument of oppression. However, where Césaire inhabits the contradiction in

¹⁸¹ BO, p. 226 (Fr, p. XVIII).

French poetry from Baudelaire to the Surrealists to transgress it, Sartre seems to use his 1948 preface to Negritude's poetry as the starting point for a theorizing of a violent oppositional relation between colonizer and colonized that is constantly mediated and mediating by language. In 1961, his preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* displays a much more anti-colonial rhetoric grounded in "violence;" in 1963, his introduction to *The Political Thought of Patrice Lumumba*, shows a similar rhetoric but from a pan-African perspective that extolls non-violence; and in 1965, moving even farther than colonialism, his less known preface to Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* starts not with the Algerian context but with racism in the U. S. South.¹⁸² Though he writes from a position of solidarity with the intellectuals whose works he prefaces, Sartre nevertheless retains a certain critical distance vis-a-vis their radical position. In a way, he plays the role of the mediator when he addresses what one may call a collective "otherness" as such, such as the imagined homogeneity of "Blacks" who themselves have to imagine a past Africa to return to: "Africa beyond reach, imaginary continent. (...) [The Black man] must indeed, one day, return to Africa." It stands to reason, then, that Black poets writing in French might, in forging images of Africa, be forging a common practice named Negritude

¹⁸² The difference between the 1948 preface to Senghor's *Anthology of the New Negro and Malagasy Poetry in French* and the 1961 preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* is blatant. Although there is much that unites these texts thematically—for example, the reliance on a dialectical structure of negation and an appeal to a new form of humanism—the rhetoric of the latter is certainly more political. Of course, this might reflect the historical context: *Black Orpheus* is written in an era of a careful postwar confidence, where the preface to Fanon's book unfolds during one of the darkest periods of modern French history. As Paige Arthur notices in her work on Sartre's anti-colonial writings, Sartre's preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* "expressed his most extreme views on the violence of the colonial system as well as the most uncompromising prescriptions for its destruction." See *Unfinished Projects, Decolonization and the Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, p. 107-110. For a discussion on the relationship between Sartre and the authors whom he prefaced, see Patrick Williams, "'Faire peau neuve'—Césaire, Fanon, Memmi, Sartre and Senghor," in Charles Forsdick, ed., *Francophone Postcolonial Studies* (London: Arnold, 2003), 181–91. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has criticized Sartre's misunderstanding of the double bind of the colonial subject, confronting it with Césaire's Lumumba in *A Season in the Congo*. See "Postcolonialism in France," in *Romanic Review*, Vol. 104. 1-2 (May-November 2014), pp. 223-242.

whose goal was “tearing off [their] white underclothing.” That the common wish of the poets of Negritude be an imaginary one does not make “Black” consciousness any less real.

“African” or “Black” consciousness, like Negritude, is nowhere to be found in *Poetry and Knowledge*. No language is presented as a privileged route for remembering the past. Yet, if we are to read Césaire seriously in his attempt to merge with the way of writing of the poets he reads—e.g., with Mallarmé’s syntax or Proust’s memory-traces—then we ought to ask: could Césaire not find other references in other languages—if not from his native creole that he so vividly criticized, from the Harlem Renaissance poets whom he translated and published? For the poet, to inhabit the contradiction of a language entrenched with its colonial history of domination, yet whose use with such tight control in poetry practice (use of homonyms, foreign language grafts, invented words, obscure idioms, rare and technical terms) enables violation, calls not for the *Aufhebung* of a proletarian revolution but a revolutionary imagery that is “not artificially imposed from outside, but erupts [*jaillit*] from the depths,” a position suitable to a departmental head. That is why, “like a volcano,” one must always “return to poetry,” “our place of force, the eminent situation where we are; magic; magic.”¹⁸³ Contrary to Sartre, the terrain upon which Césaire’s imaged revolution takes place is not the stage of the colonizer-colonized binary mediating and mediated by language. Rather, it is a space where the practitioner of

¹⁸³ Aimé Césaire, letter to Lilyan Kesteloot, reproduced in *La Poésie*, ed. Daniel Maximin (Paris: Seuil, 2006 [1994]). The idea of a poetry whose meaning is conveyed more through images than through words is developed at length in *Poetry and Knowledge*. In the long passage that challenged Kant, the confrontation between philosophy and poetry is staged through the power of imagery: “It is by means of the image, the revolutionary image, the distant image, the image that overthrows all the laws of through that mankind finally breaks down the barrier. In the image *A* is no longer *A*.” (p. li). A quote of a verse by Mallarmé follows those lines. This resonates with what Sartre wrote in his 1936 essay entitled *L’imagination*, in which the image is described as “a certain type of consciousness. The image is an act and not a thing. The image is consciousness of something.” In Jean-Paul Sartre, *L’imagination* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1936), p. 162.

Negritude defines his own binary: the collective unconscious.¹⁸⁴ Building on Carl Jung's controversial theory of archetypes (through which, Jung writes, "modern man (...) comes to know that most ancient form of thinking as an autonomous activity whose object he is"¹⁸⁵) Césaire adopts the notion of the collective unconscious to represent an incapsulated personal system that is neither a personal acquisition nor an acquisition from experience, but a repressed collection of images that poetry seems to bring to the surface. Jung's effort to reach a second psychic system of a collective nature does not stand alone. It resonates with references that would have been familiar to Césaire in the interwar period: Durkheim's "collective consciousness" and Lévy-Bruhl's "collective representations."¹⁸⁶ Yet, it is through something akin to what Jung calls a repository of "universal images that have existed since the remotest times"¹⁸⁷ that, in the 1944 essay, Césaire hopes to access in the esoteric message of poetry. Thereafter, the poet continues to refine his use of the concept. In June 1959, he writes to Lilyan Kesteloot that "all of almost all images are reducible to some *primordial images*, which—

¹⁸⁴ The term is obviously borrowed from Carl Jung, as it appears in "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," in *The Collected Words of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 9, Part 1, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 37. However, at the time of the writing of *Poetry and Knowledge*, Jung's works had yet to be translated into French. From his correspondence with the German scholar Janheitz Jahn, Césaire did not seem to be proficient in German (which would account for Césaire's mistake in taking Jung for a German philosopher as opposed to an Austrian psychiatrist), and thus probably read Jung in the secondary literature available at the time, such as Gaston Bachelard's *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, published in 1938. On a more conceptual level, many of Jung's ideas resonate with the role of intuition in the philosophical writing of Bergson—an author that the quasi totality of the philosopher at the congress quote or refer to. For a discussion of the relation between Bergson and Jung, see Gilles Deleuze, *Le Bergsonisme* (Paris: P.U.F, 1966); Pete A. Y. Gunter, "Bergson and Jung" in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Oct.-Dec., 1982), pp. 635-652; more recently, Christian Kerslake, "Insects and Incest: From Bergson and Jung to Deleuze," in *Multitudes*, No. 25 (2006/2), pp. 31-51.

¹⁸⁵ Carl Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," in *The Collected Words of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 9, Part 1, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 37.

¹⁸⁶ As it appears, for instance, in Césaire's defense of Lévy-Bruhl against Caillois in the *Discourse on Colonialism*. For primary references, see Emile Durkheim, *The division of labor in society*, tr. W. D. Halls (New York: Free Press, 1984 [1893]), p. 227; Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *How Native Think*, tr. Lilian Clare (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985 [1910]), p. 36.

¹⁸⁷ Carl Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," in *The Collected Words of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 9, Part 1, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 5.

encrusted in the *collective unconscious*—are universal, as the languages of dreams proves, identical for all people above and beyond the diversity of languages and modes of existence.”¹⁸⁸ Undeniably, Césaire hints at a meta-language where the content of the imagery would either be universally translatable, or else, would need no translation at all—an argument that runs counter to Negritude as well as its criticism.¹⁸⁹ Jung, however, had warned that archetypes were not determined by their content. In itself, the archetype is empty and purely formal, nothing but a representation given *a priori*. But in the text of “Poetry and Knowledge,” Césaire takes the material of poetry—words-image—as content for the archetypes and site of a movement of being. The “individual foundation” where “intimate conflicts, the obsessions, the phobias, the fixations, the codes of the personal messages,” emerge; the collective “old ancestral foundation” where “hereditary images” and their “millennially buried knowledge” are the objects that poetry is to unearth.¹⁹⁰ I say movement and not contradiction because the seemingly oxymoronic character of Jung’s expression, “the collective unconscious,” summarizes the tension between the collective and the individual, and is staged as a passage from one to other through duration—a lifespan. First, it is staged literally: “My past is here (...) My future is there.” Then, metaphorically: “It is my childhood in flames.” For the poet, the burning is not a place for lament, it is a place for reconstruction: “It is my childhood talking and looking for me. And within the person I am now, the person I will be stands on tiptoe.”¹⁹¹ The text then moves without transition to “the German

¹⁸⁸ Letter quoted by Lilyan Kesteloot in her *Les Ecrivains noirs de langue française: naissance d’une littérature*, (Brussels: Université libre de Bruxelles, 1965), p. 238. Translation and emphasis are mine.

¹⁸⁹ Such as Ngugi Wa Thiong’o famous words on the irony of Senghor’s “anointment” by the French *Académie* in *Decolonising the Mind* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1981), p. 19, or, in a different setting, the manifesto written by Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, entitled *Éloge de la créolité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989).

¹⁹⁰ OC, p. 1387; LDP, p. lii.

¹⁹¹OC, *ibid*; LDP, p. liii.

philosopher Jung.” Nearly thirty years after the letter to Kesteloot, in 1989, Césaire still holds true the existence and the value of Jung’s archetypes in founding the experience of identity:

Do we need anything more to found an identity? I do not care much for chromosomes. But I believe in archetypes. I believe in the value of everything that is buried in the collective memory of our peoples and even in the collective unconscious.¹⁹²

B. Addendum: “Geneva and the Black World”

Nearly thirty years after “Poetry and Knowledge,” in a little-known address entitled “Geneva and the Black World,” given in 1978 at the occasion of the “transfiguration” of *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* into a musical cantata, Césaire takes an opportunity to deliver another message on the question of language as a moment to look back at the significance of Negritude. Had Negritude been too optimistic? Had it lost itself into a “universal” where its poets were compelled to move beyond the diversity of languages, and ultimately abandon Negritude itself? Where “Poetry and Knowledge” foregrounded the wish for a poetic *langue* that left the language of the poets of Negritude in the background, “Geneva and the Black World” reverses the situation: it foregrounds Negritude as a movement that is said to create a “minor

¹⁹² Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur la Negritude* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 2011 [1989]), p. 83. Translation is mine. Senghor did not develop the same affinity with the concept but resonates with Césaire when he mentions “archetypal images” in an interview in 1976: “Je me bats contre cette terrible langue française pour lui faire exprimer les images archétypes jaillies de l’inconscient nègre” in “Interview accordée à C. Souyris,” in *Fer de lance*, Sept. 30th, 1976. To the best of my knowledge, this is the only time Senghor refers to Jung’s concept.

literature”—defined as “that which a minority makes in a major language”¹⁹³—and leaves the question of *langue* in the background. Why and how does the poet revise the relation between *langue* and *langage*? Writing at the end of the golden age of the movement that had sprung in the thirties, the linguistic question resonates with a twofold criticism coming from two different sources. On the one hand, some—like Wole Soyinka or Stanislas Adotevi—challenged the movement for adopting a too narrow self-construction as knower and as being that reinforced the old colonial ideology and supported antiquated colonial preconceptions and clichés of otherness.¹⁹⁴ On the other hand, some—like Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and the Creolists Jean Bernabé or Patrick Chamoiseau—accused the movement of the opposite, namely that the theories upon which Negritude was built did not account for the particulars of different places and prevented from

¹⁹³ Césaire quotes the expression from Deleuze and Guattari’s essay, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) [*Kafka, pour une littérature mineure* (Paris: Minuit, 1975)], in “Genève et le monde noir,” paper presented in Geneva on June 2, 1978, and reproduced in *Aimé Césaire, pour regarder le siècle en face*, ed., Annick Thébia-Melsan (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2000), p. 27. Deleuze and Guattari’s essay was published only four years before Césaire’s talk in Geneva. It thus shows the poet up to date with the current trends on literature. It should be noticed that at the time, the reception of Deleuze and Guattari’s book was contrasted, written over against the works of Marthe Robert, Roland Barthes, and Maurice Blanchot—respectively: *Kafka* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960); “La réponse de Kafka” in *Essais critiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1964), and “Le pont de bois” in *L’entretien infini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969). In his dissertation (directed by Henry Louis Gates and Barbara Johnson), “Shooting Arrows: Deleuze and Guattari’s Theory of Minor Literature,” James Bland warns against the use of concepts that link society, literature, and minorities given that they often follow an ideological pattern which is simply repeated and (re)used for the benefit of the major discourse: “The sociological level is already over-coded, and to ask a question on the field is already to assume too much, for the social field is nothing other than a field of static conventions, dominant ideologies, and metaphysical bigotries” (p. 230). For a more comprehensive contextualization of Deleuze and Guattari’s essay, see the foreword to the English translation by Réda Bensmaïa, and Klein Rony, “Deleuze et Guattari, *Kafka, pour une littérature mineure*. Kafka au carrefour du désir et de la Loi,” in *Études Germaniques*, No. 273, Jan. 2014, pp. 133-150.

¹⁹⁴ Wole Soyinka’s most famous line is of course “The tiger does not speak his *tigritude*,” originally given in Kampala, Uganda in 1962, and developed in a lecture given in Berlin in 1964. See *Critical Perspectives on Wole Soyinka* (Washington D.C: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1980). Adotevi’s most vivid criticism of the movement is in *Négritude et négrologues* (Paris: Union Générale d’Éditions, 1972), where the author seeks to detail the negative impact that Negritude concepts have had on African society and to prove that Negritude was based on assumptions which did not correspond to reality. These views are not limited to these two authors. One could also read, for instance, Es’kia Mphahlele’s arguments against the alleged romanticism and racism of Negritude that would “aid the [South African] Government to reconstruct ethnic groups and help work the repressive machinery,” in “What Price, Negritude” in *The African Image* (London: Faber & Faber, 1962), p. 40. More specifically, In “Encore de la Négritude, ou Negritude, Nègrerie, et Nigritie,” Senghor responds to series of letters against Negritude sent to *The Ethiopian Herald* on July 31, August 14 and 18, 1973 by—respectively—Tségaye Débalké, Asfaw Damté and Latyr Camara, read over against the opposition between Anglophone and Francophone West Africa.

thinking Europe as an other.¹⁹⁵ To echo the title of a paper given by Adotevi in Algiers entitled “Negritude is Dead: The Burial,”¹⁹⁶ one might accept that, with attacks coming from a multitude of places and perspectives on the movement as Césaire and Senghor had devised it to be for nearly half a century, no new argument could indeed save Negritude from being buried as a thing of the past. Yet, neither Césaire nor Senghor show a retreat into a fixed definition to defend their position. Rather, they seem to show not only an adoption of the criticism of which they are the object, they also make the subsequent alterations of Negritude the thrust of its never-ending re-definition. In other words, Negritude never *is*: it always *becomes*—a point Senghor illustrates in an aphorism: it is not a source but a resource.¹⁹⁷

The circumstantial occasion of *Geneva and the Black world* offers Césaire the opportunity to present the example of Kafka—“Czech and Jew who wrote in German”—as a way in which one learns to inhabit the space of the other through the double bind in which the bilingual diasporic is caught. Reading Kafka not in German but through Deleuze’s appropriation of Kafka in French, the poet claims a misappropriation of Deleuze’s “interesting definition” and re-defines “minor literature” as a “piracy of the language”—that seems to respond to Sartre’s rooting of Negritude in the reversal of the use of French. As we recall, in Sartre’s *Black Orpheus*,

¹⁹⁵ As such, the manifesto *Éloge de la créolité* starts with the line: “Neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians, we proclaim ourselves Creoles” (p. 13) Later, Europe disappears from the comparison: “It is necessary, however, to make a distinction between Americanness, Caribbeanness and Creoleness.” (p. 29). The role of Edouard Glissant “spelling Caribbeanness” (p. 21) as an intermediary steps between Negritude and Creolité that abandons neither Europe nor Africa seems to take into account the need for a theorizing not of the particular status of Martinique or even the Antilles but of particularity itself—upon which the Creolists will build their movement as a continuation of both Césaire and Glissant. See Edouard Glissant, *Le Discours Antillais* (Paris: Seuil, 1981).

¹⁹⁶ The paper was first presented as a “Discours sur le mélanisme” at the First Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers in 1969. It was revised and published under the title “Negritude is Dead: The Burial” in the *Journal of the New African Literature and the Art*, No. 7-8 (1969), pp. 70-81. Adotevi’s article has been discussed by Leo Kuper in *Race, class and power: ideology and revolutionary change in plural societies* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1975); and Elizabeth Harney in *In Senghor’s Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960–1995* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

¹⁹⁷ In “Encore de la Négritude, ou Negritude, Nègrerie, et Nigritie,” p. 471.

language was a quasi-reified object that switched hands without ever being transformed. Deleuze's concept, however, is no solution either. While, resonating with Sartre, it presents a recognition of a minority's ability to speak and to be heard in that language (German for Kafka in Deleuze and Guattari's essay, French for the poets of Negritude in Sartre's preface), it still leaves the question of *langue* unanswered: "What has become of that *langue*?" asks Césaire. "In the hands of those who seized it, is it indeed the same *langue*, or at least, the same *langage*?"¹⁹⁸ Not answering the question, Césaire's re-appropriation of the concept of minor literature says something different from both Sartre and Deleuze: that one's *langue* is not simply a *langage* that allows a moving from one's private sphere to the public arena; it is a space that rejects this artificial dichotomy and constructs the problem without the discourse of a recovery of a lost authenticity, wishing to give a sense that one's language is both private and public, the latter possibly found through theater, poetry or fiction.

"Geneva and the Black World" is only an address. Therefore, Césaire does not go into the different subtexts to substantiate his claim. Yet it retains the challenge to think the limits of language that he had developed in "Poetry and Knowledge." Already in 1944, especially in the original address to the philosophical congress, Césaire constructed his text around a series of quotes, all taken from the French poetic tradition with the two exception of Proust and Jung.

¹⁹⁸ The difference between *langue* and *langage* finds its sources in the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure as it appears in the *Course on General Linguistics* (New York: Hill Book, 1959). According to this set of notes gathered by its students, Saussure constructs a distinction between *langue* and *parole*. On the one hand, *langue* is the work of a "collective movement toward innovation" (73) and cannot be changed by the action of an individual alone; it can be theorized as the general sign systems of any language. On the other hand, *parole* is an individual act and its utterance; its study ought to use all the available resources, usually within a specific language. Building upon a criticism of this distinction by post-structuralist thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and here Gilles Deleuze, Césaire challenges the becoming of the *langue* once it is appropriated by another collective and becomes one's language. Even though the sign system (syntax, morphology, etc) may not have changed, the act of appropriation allows to question whether a former linguistic hierarchy is kept, and focuses on how languages survive as they are slowly transformed from within the literary production of their speakers.

In so doing, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé were not synonym for a necessary debt to the French language, ready for subversion. They were recognized as names to enter the hegemony of the majority,¹⁹⁹ hoping to mitigate the difference between *his* private and *their* public language. Here, Césaire refers not to those poets whom he had entered the private grammar so that he could be transformed, but he names a set of writers whose language is deliberately not French: Herder, Hegel, Spengler, Toynbee, Frobenius, etc. Quoting from Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*: “What we understand under the name Africa, is what has no history and has not blossomed, what is still enclosed completely in the natural spirit and should simply be presented here at the threshold of universal history,”²⁰⁰ the poet argues for Negritude as a supplement—both a lack and a replacement. For Hegel, as Césaire recalls, Africa was a ‘mistake’ that needed to be “put aside” in order for a “serious” universal history to arise. Rather than arguing directly against Hegel and taking the risk of legitimizing his claim by reversal, the poet takes the philosopher’s words seriously—albeit in a sarcastic tone—and let himself be misled.

What “Geneva and the Black World” claims more emphatically than “Poetry and Knowledge” is that a *langue* that has been pirated in that way is “consciously misled” (*langue dévoyée assurément*), and it is this misleading that has “re-charged” it (*langue rechargée*)—quite

¹⁹⁹ I am not using the word “hegemony” in its colloquial meaning of leadership or dominance, especially by one state or social group over others, but I borrow it from Gramsci in his writing on Machiavelli. Both Gramsci and Machiavelli are concerned with the idea of founding a new state and finding a leadership that will unify the state. For Machiavelli, the Prince is necessarily a combination of consent and coercion, but so long as the consensual aspect wins over the coercive, hegemony (both leading and directing) prevails and ensures social cohesion. Building upon that definition, for Gramsci, there is no Prince but a hegemonic revolutionary party (that acts as the Modern Prince) freed from a form of power tied to a historical social class. See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and trans. by Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), pp. 169-170.

²⁰⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956). Translation modified to match Césaire’s. The poet’s source in French is Hegel, *Leçons sur la Philosophie de l’Histoire*, trans. J. Gibelin (Paris: Vrin, 1937), p. 80.

literally, putting one in charge.²⁰¹ Towards the end of the address, it is indeed the one “in charge” who is perhaps self-correcting the earlier opposition between *langue* and *langage* that had been so cautiously claimed (“One should take the *painstaking study* of what has become of *langue* in the hands of those who seized it and see if it is indeed the same *langue*, or at least the same *langage*”), ready to enter the more Saussurian opposition—Césaire, after all, is in Geneva—between *langue* and *parole* (“the one who is in charge of speech [*la parole*] knows, by instinct that his speech [*sa parole*] is universalizing”). Alluding to the universal but not delving into it, the poet instead uses a trope that illustrates the point of misleading: a preterition—rhetorical technique of making summary mention of something by professing to omit it. He writes that he “could have quoted” Paul Claudel—the devout poet and dramatist—before precisely doing that: quoting him, twice. Firstly, Césaire quotes a passage from Claudel’s theater about the irremediable singularity of things: “Every thing is in that it differs and is right and proper, individually, on an incommunicable principle.”²⁰² Secondly, it is with another passage from the same *Traité de la co-naissance* with which “Poetry and Knowledge” had begun, that the poet corrects the preterition: “‘Every thing that is, designates everywhere all that without which it could not have been’. We are indeed talking about transcended difference and recovered

²⁰¹ Along the lines of what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has termed a “grounding error,” this misleading is not awaiting fixing or correction; rather, it becomes constitutive of mediation, criticism, historicity, and agency. As such, the goal of the grounding error or the “intended mistake”—understood as the willful residing in a counter-intuitive use of reason—is to learn from and to make the most productive mistakes through reading. We remember, earlier in this chapter, that Senghor’s staging of the opposition between two sixteenth-century poets, Ronsard and Malherbe, was an invitation to take the “mistake” of reading the French language historically into account. Jean-Paul Sartre, in his reading of Negritude, did not read French historically but analyzed French as solely the language of the former colonizer. Among other references to Spivak’s discussion of the “grounding error,” see the introduction to *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 20-21; also the “Foreword to the Routledge edition” of *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (London: Routledge, 2009 [1993]), p. xiii.

²⁰² Césaire, *Genève et le Monde Noir*, p. 29. The quote—unreferenced in Césaire’s paper—is from Paul Claudel’s play *La Ville*, in *Théâtre Complet*, Vol. I (Paris: Gallimard, 2011), p. 458.

complementarity.”²⁰³ The tone of the presentation of the seeming contradiction is light and amusing, as if, to paraphrase again from *Poetry and Knowledge*, Césaire was playing. There: “the poet plays the play of the world.”²⁰⁴ Here: “[Claudel] wallows in the contradiction.”

Making his way towards the conclusion, the poet returns to Hegel in a playful mode in form, yet with a seriousness in content: “Why not, then, quote Hegel, this time, with praise.” The passage, then, is taken from the third part of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*: “But in the very act of developing itself independently to totality, the principle of particularity passes over into universality.”²⁰⁵ The source of Césaire’s quotation is unknown and does not match the available French translations at the time,²⁰⁶ but in an interview given in 1985 (where Césaire recalls the development of his political ideas from the early years of Negritude in the 1930s to the law of departmentalization voted in 1945) as well as in the conclusion of the *Discourse on Negritude* given as a paper in 1987, the poet seems to summon the idea from memory.

In the former, Césaire states: “I add the conception of the *universal*, no longer conceived as the negation of the singular, but as deepening (*approfondissement*) of the *singular*.”²⁰⁷ In the

²⁰³ Ibid. The passage—also unreferenced—from Paul Claudel is taken from the *Traité de la co-naissance*, 1907, p. 150

²⁰⁴ OC, p. 1384; LDP: p. xlix-l.

²⁰⁵ In the original text of Hegel, the word translated as universal [*Allgemeinheit*] is not the end of the sentence but continues—in translation—as follows: “and only in the latter does it have its truth and its right to positive actuality.” G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 223. The original German reads: “Aber das Prinzip der Besonderheit geht eben damit, daß es sich für sich zur Totalität entwickelt, in die *Allgemeinheit* über und hat allein in dieser seine Wahrheit und das Recht seiner positiven Wirklichkeit.” in *Werke, Band 7*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), §186.

²⁰⁶ The first French translation, by André Kaan, appeared in 1940 and reads: “Par le fait qu’il se développe jusqu’à la totalité, le principe de la particularité se transforme en universalité dans laquelle seulement il trouve sa vérité et la légitimation de sa réalité positive.” in *Principes de la philosophie du droit* (Paris: Gallimard, 1940), p. 221. A second translation, by Robert Derathé, was published in 1975: “Du fait qu’il se développe jusqu’à la totalité, le principe de la particularité se transforme en l’universalité dans laquelle seulement il trouve sa vérité et le droit de sa réalité positive.” (Paris: Vrin, 1975), p. 217. I have not been able to find Césaire’s translation anywhere but in his communication of June 1978, nor did he refer to the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* before 1978.

²⁰⁷ Aimé Césaire, “Ces îles où l’on parle français,” in *Hérodote*, No. 37-38 (1985), p. 91. Translation is mine.

latter: “The universal, yes. But there is quite a long time that Hegel showed us the way: the universal, of course, but not by negation of the singular, but as deepening of our own singularity.”²⁰⁸ The alterations of an idea that the poet seems to quote freely, from the “particular” to the “singular” and from the “singular” to “our own singularity,” once again shows not so much a rooting in a specific tradition or school of thought but rather the development and adaptation of a thought-process always in becoming, specific to the poets of Negritude.

In what can be called the “late period” of Negritude, the retrospective reflections that the poets offered (more in interviews than in heavily edited publications) shows that they never ceased to redefine their message, even as they were under multilateral (and multilingual) criticism. In short, if the Negritude of the 1930s bears any resemblance with the Negritude of 1980s, it is only in the spelling of its name and the names of its sources that it can be found. Anything else is constantly altered, constantly leads to another direction, sometimes misleads. Perhaps because Negritude was a literary movement under the reign of the imagination. Perhaps also, because their poets were also statesmen, always adapting to the reality of their electorate. Perhaps, precisely, because it had lasted so long.

²⁰⁸ Aimé Césaire, “Discourse on Negritude,” reproduced in *Discours sur le colonialisme, suivi de Discours sur la négritude* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 2004), p. 92.

CHAPTER II - NEGRITUDE & MÉTISSAGE

Introduction

There are two predominant arguments made against Negritude. One is that it valorizes an essentialist and romanticized idea of an African past where everything was good before the advent of slavery and colonialism. Such has been the argument of Wole Soyinka—until his recent reappraisal of the movement.²⁰⁹ The other argument is that Negritude was too French in its ideological conception, in its language, and in its anti-colonialism, and thus does not adequately connect to the wealth of African languages and diversity of worldview on the continent and in the diaspora. Such is the argument of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o and the Creolist movement.²¹⁰ In this chapter, I will argue that the poets of Negritude, caught in this double bind often resulting from their colonial situations, developed a discourse on *métissage* as a political concept in order to overcome anti-colonial and essentialist narratives with a more globalizing approach. Especially, following the essentialist definition of Negritude that Sartre gave in 1948 in

²⁰⁹ Soyinka’s recent “reversal” of his opinion concerning Negritude has yet to be analyzed. See “Negritude: A Dialogue Between Wole Soyinka and Senghor,” a documentary film featuring an interview by Soyinka, premiered at the New York Film Festival and presented by Mamadou Diouf in April 2016. Even more recently, in October 2016, Soyinka acknowledged in a lecture titled “Negritude By Any Other Name” given at NYU, that he had been “unfair” to Negritude. On a different note, Soyinka’s early critical stance is not solely directed against Negritude, but more largely against any politicization of “Africa” and also writes against unexamined culturalism in his native country, Nigeria. See, for instance, his Nobel Prize’s speech, on December 8, 1986.

²¹⁰ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o has been fairly constant in his relation to Negritude, although, like Soyinka, he has recently nuanced his former radical opposition to the movement. In *Decolonising the Mind* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1981) Ngũgĩ mocked Senghor’s “anointment” by the French *Académie* (19). In *Something Torn and New* (New York: Perseus Books, 2009), however, he reconnects Senghor to other historical movements that have thought about black consciousness, emphasizing the concurrent “inspirational roots” of Pan-Africanism, Garveyism, Afro-Brazilianism, etc. (38-39). Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, in their *Éloge de la créolité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), lament Césaire’s lack of attention to the creole of Martinique, choosing rather to write in French: “We have committed ourselves to understand why, despite an advocated return ‘to the deserted hideousness of our wounds’ Césaire did not seriously associate Creole to a scriptural practice forged on the anvils of the French language” (79).

his influential preface to Senghor's *Anthology of Negro and Malagasy Poetry in French*,²¹¹ the poets reorientate their focus away from Europe and towards the United States as an ambivalent example both to avoid and to follow. This chapter attends to this reorientation.

Before 1948, the poets of Negritude undoubtedly used an essentialist vocabulary to establish an anti-colonial stance, especially when they created the movement before World War II. In one of his early essays, "What the Black Man Contributes" published in 1939, Senghor's essentialist position is palpable from the opening paragraph: "I adopt the word Negro among other words; it is handy. Are there Negroes? Pure Negroes? Black Negroes? Science says no. I know there is, there was a Negro culture, whose area included Sudan, Guinea and Congo."²¹² The unverifiable "I know there is," directly following a familiar scientific authority in Western colonial discourses ("Science says no"), allows Senghor to stage a way of knowing that undermines colonial scientific disciplines such as anthropology. Indeed, it is "precisely not as an ethnologist" that he desires to write. When we remember the central place of anthropological texts in the training of the poet and the foundation of Negritude's ideology (Frobenius, Temples, Griaule, etc), it is not really surprising to see Senghor strategically positioning his anti-

²¹¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Black Orpheus*, trans. S. W. Allen, in *Présence Africaine*, No. 10/11 (1951). For instance: "There exists in effect an objective negritude which expresses itself in the customs, the arts, the songs and the dances of the African populations" (231); or yet, it allows "the Negro [to] create an anti-racist racism" (245).

²¹² Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Ce que l'homme noir apporte," in *Liberté I* (Paris: Seuil, 1964), p. 22. Translation is mine.

colonialism by standing on the other side of the oppositions that form the core of colonial epistemology: nature-culture, body-mind, emotion-reason.²¹³

After 1948, as the political situation evolves, Negritude's position is not fully devoid of essentialist references, but it redirects its goal: from anti-colonial fighting to global thinking. In the late communication of 1967, "The Foundations of *Africanité* or *Négritude* and *Arabité*," one can read a concluding statement that sounds undoubtedly essentialist: "It is necessary that you remain *Arabs*. Otherwise, you would have nothing to offer us. But it is also necessary that we, sub-Saharan, remain *Negroes*. To be specific, Negro-Africans."²¹⁴ The categorization of Egyptians as Arabs and of Sub-Saharan peoples as Negro-Africans seems to dwell in racial generalizations established by the colonizer to administrate the colonies. But the conclusion of the essay soon presents the former colonial subject as one whose history invites us to rethink a global circulation of texts and ideas. Senghor recalls that Augustine, the scholar who thought of Christianity beyond the politics of the Roman empire, was born in today's Algeria; that Ibn Rush, the Islamic theologian who commented on and translated Aristotle from Ancient Greek to Arabic, was educated in the Almoravid's emirate; that Tertullian and Ibn Khaldun, who "created, perhaps for the first time," a philosophy of history or historical materialism, were born in today's Tunisia. In sum, the poet relocates himself and his audience in a line of thinkers who, through religious,

²¹³ Frantz Fanon examined the propensity of this desire to categorize the response to the colonial situation, either as an adoption or assimilation (coerced or desired) of the "European" model, or as a nostalgic gaze towards an imagined "Africa" (mostly by way of poetry). In *Black Skin, White Masks* trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1967), Fanon analyzed the former process through gender and called it a hallucinatory desire to "whiten the race" (33). In his 1955 article "West Indians and Africans," he focused on this perception from the viewpoint of the Caribbean subject. See *Towards the African Revolution*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1967), pp. 25-26. The original was entitled "Africains et Antillais," and published in *Esprit*, No. 223, 1955, pp. 261-269.

²¹⁴ Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Les Fondements de l'Africanité ou Négritude et Arabité," in *Liberté III*, p. 150; *The Foundations of "Africanite" or "Negritude" and Arabité*, trans. Mercer Cook (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1971), p. 86.

linguistic, and philosophical contacts, imagined the world beyond just political or national categories.²¹⁵ Speaking at Cairo University, Senghor's audience, according to the translator of this speech into English, Mercer Cook, included such dignitaries as the then President Gamal Abdel Nasser as well as several Ministers of the Egyptian government. Throughout his speech, Senghor not only invites his listeners to rethink the meaning of "Africanity," he is also setting the ground for a debate about the relation between Pan-Arabism and Pan-Africanism. Speaking as a philosopher and a head of state to another head of state, to policy-makers and intellectuals, Senghor invites his audience to partake in this project to create direct political and cultural partnerships outside of the former European colonial binary.²¹⁶

The reorientation of Negritude's political project away from the European sphere of influence, foregrounding instead its interaction with movements that shared connections with the idea of Africa (Afro-Cubanism, Afro-Brazilianism, Haitian indigenism, Harlem Renaissance), has usually been dismissed by Negritude's critics, mostly because of a lack of coherent discourse

²¹⁵ This gesture of reclaiming a tradition that post-Enlightenment thought defined as "Western" is not uncommon to postcolonial thinkers. Yet, arguing for an altogether different kind of francophonie and perhaps, for "francophonies" in the plural, Assia Djebar inscribes herself in an almost exactly similar genealogy for the Maghreb in her *Discours de réception à l'Académie Française* on June 22, 2006. See "Discours de réception, et réponse de Pierre-Jean Rémy," <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/discours-de-reception-et-reponse-de-pierre-jean-remy>.

²¹⁶ Indeed, the speech starts with the political statement: "Four years ago African chiefs of State and heads of Government assembled at Addis Ababa to lay the foundations for the unity of the African continent. As you know, a new international organism emerged: the Organization of African Unity (OAU)." (5) Senghor saw the premises of such a political construction in the Bandung conference, which he applauded in 1956 at the *First World Congress of Negro Writers and Artists* not only for taking an anti-colonial stance, but also to envision a relationship Africa-Asia with a direct connection between the two continents without Europe as intermediary. In 1959, however, in "Les nationalismes d'outre-mer et l'avenir des peuples de couleur" (in *Liberté II*), Senghor warns against nationalisms as a perpetuation of an insidious "myth" inherited from European colonialism. For the poet, one had to look beyond nations and towards a federation, beginning with an "Afro-Asian Group" (279-280). He sees global interdependence as a necessary complement to national independence. He then renames this opening the "neutralist movement," and mentions India, Egypt and Yugoslavia as champions of a world thinking of political and economic operations outside "the two blocks." (281). The legacy of Bandung is as contested today as its symbol is praised, and Senghor seldom refers to the meeting in later writings.

to support the reorientation.²¹⁷ Rather than correcting the movements' founding anti-colonial stance or denouncing its political compromises when its main protagonists were elected public servants and developed policies, this chapter argues that the poets of Negritude were not only anti-colonial writers, they were also thinkers trying to grasp a nascent image of globality. It shows the existence of a discourse on *métissage*, parallel to their political practices, that opened for them the imagining of a world beyond the polarization of colonialism (colonizer and colonized) and of post-colonialism (the "two blocs"). Because they were public servants, they could work from within the system that had polarized their world along a "crest line that separate[d], theoretically, whites and blacks."²¹⁸ Constantly asking to transcend false oppositions, Senghor ultimately calls for a crossing of that crest line, which he calls the "line of *métissage*."

A line always implies a separation, however artificial, between two sides I suggest that the development of a discourse on *métissage*, supplementing a racial essentialism, is constructed as a political concept that affirmatively sabotages the artificial separation between races imposed by the West, and allows the poets of Negritude to think the world beyond colonial frameworks.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ The Creolist writers, for instance, who never mention Léopold Sédar Senghor in their Creolist manifesto, stand in opposition to what they consider to be Césaire's centering of the relation between "two incumbent monsters: Europeanness and Africanness" (80), and ask for an overcoming of this binary. Incidentally, the first phrase of their manifesto starts with a series of negations, which they later use to define *créolité*: "Expressing [Creoleness] is not expressing a synthesis, not just expressing a *métissage* or any other unicity. It is expressing a kaleidoscopic totality." (89). Frantz Fanon already analyzed, in 1955, the predicament of an artificial "color choice" (the "great white error" and the "great black mirage") arguing that, before 1939 (i.e., before the advent of Negritude), the Caribbean saw "a scale of colors the intervals of which could readily be passed over," seemingly differentiating his subject position from that of the African, yet not being quite European. See "West Indians and Africans," *op. cit.*

²¹⁸ Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Réponse au toast du Président Ould Daddah," January 11, 1971. Cited in Marie-Madeleine Marquet, *Le métissage dans la poésie de Léopold Sédar Senghor* (Dakar: Nouvelles Éditions Africaines, 1983), p. 165.

²¹⁹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has developed the concept of "affirmative sabotage" extensively, to refer to the deliberate appropriation of the master's machine from the inside. She suggests that affirmation can have a critical dimension and vice-versa, where a binary is turned into a dialectic. The idea is to enter the discourse that one is criticizing in order to turn it around from inside because the only way one can sabotage something is when one is working intimately with it. For the most recent discussion, see Spivak, "When Law Is Not Justice," *New York Times*, July 13, 2016. A more elaborate argument is to be found in *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 2, 114-116.

I locate a moment within the denounced Western narrative when the poets operate a discursive reorientation away from where it was born, the Mediterranean, towards another center where it finds its roots, the Atlantic. In particular, the reception of the works of African-American thinkers in the colonies, at the crossroads of both a “local” problem of the “color line” in the American South after the Civil War and a “global” Pan-Africanism that reframes racial issues away from just U.S debates and civil rights struggles,²²⁰ gradually becomes a beacon of light for the poets of Negritude until the end of the 60s. Incidentally, Pan-Africanism begins at the start of the 20th century, mostly at the instigation of Du Bois whom Senghor calls “the true father of the Negritude movement,”²²¹ and is immediately adopted by the young colonial students in Paris. This chapter traces back the early references to *métissage* at the inception of Negritude and follows its theorization as the movement dreams of Pan-African solidarity and turns towards the Atlantic.

The word “negritude” appears in 1935 in the third issue of the periodical *L'Étudiant Noir*.²²² In 1939, Césaire develops the concept in his famous *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* while on vacation on the coast of the Adriatic Sea.²²³ In 1945, he self-inscribes the genealogy of Negritude’s poetry in the writings of the French Surrealists in texts such as “Poetry and Knowledge.” That same year, Senghor praises the preponderant role of the Mediterranean as

²²⁰ We should recall that Du Bois’s famous statement, “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line,” is first given at the inaugural Pan-African convention in London, in a paper titled “To the Nations of the World” that stages a scene of global thinking where the African-American subject is situated transnationally. See *Address to the Nations of the World by the Pan-African Conference in London, 1900* (London: Collings, 1979).

²²¹ Senghor, “Problématique de la Négritude,” in *Liberté III* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), p. 278.

²²² Aimé Césaire, “Nègreries: conscience raciale et révolution sociale,” in *L'Étudiant Noir*, No. 3, May-June 1935, p. 2. A facsimile of the original is reproduced in Christian Filostrat, *Negritude Agonistes* (Cherry Hill: Africana Homestead, 2008), p. 123. There is a reprint of the article in *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 676 (2013), pp. 249-251.

²²³ As Césaire recalls, though the *Notebook* was not “born” in Yugoslavia but in the Paris of the interwar where he was studying, the “idea” of the return of his native island of Martinique came from the view of the island of Martinska, in Dalmatia (ex-Yugoslavia) where he was spending his vacation with his schoolfriend, Peter Guberina. See Jacqueline Leiner, *Aimé Césaire: le terreau primordial*, Vol. 1 (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1993), p. 136.

the locus of the most “fecund exchanges” in his first post-World War II essay: “Vues sur l’Afrique Noire, ou assimiler, non être assimilés.”²²⁴ In 1948, however, Césaire turns his attention to the United States and the role of the Caribbean area within the geographical influence of American imperialism, while publishing a second version of his article “The Impossible Contact,” retitled *Discourse on Colonialism* two years later with a newly written ending:

And now I ask: what else has bourgeois Europe done? It has undermined civilizations, destroyed countries, ruined nationalities, extirpated “the root of diversity.” No more dikes, no more bulwarks. The hour of the barbarian is at hand. The modern barbarian. The American hour.²²⁵

That same year, Senghor too focuses on the United States but in a radically opposed register. Turning to one of the leaders of the Harlem Renaissance, he praises Langston Hughes as the “true inventor” [*le véritable inventeur*] of Negritude and sees “the chance of the United States and USSR” civilizations to become *métisse*, “at the crossroads of races.”²²⁶

Many critics, including Maryse Condé and Lylian Kesteloot, have seen in this divergence an irreversible schism in the movement: a “Cesairean” and a “Senghorian” Negritude. There is indeed a difference in the ways in which the poet from Martinique and the poet from Senegal

²²⁴ In Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Liberté I*, pp. 39-69. Originally published in *La Communauté impériale française* (Paris: Editions Alsatia, 1945).

²²⁵ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans Joan Pinkkam (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), p. 76. For the genetic edition of the work, see the remarkable archival work done by Daniel Delas, published by Albert James Arnold in *Aimé Césaire, Poésie, Théâtre, Essais et Discours* (Paris: CNRS, 2013), pp. 1443-1476.

²²⁶ Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Liberté I*, p. 97 and 104. Indeed, the 8th version of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française*, that Senghor would have read at the time, defines *métissage* precisely as a crossing of races, “*Croisement de races*.” Today, the 9th edition has included Senghor’s “*métissage culturel*” and reads: “**1.** Dans l’espèce humaine, croisement, mélange de races différentes. *Le métissage d’une population*. Par ext. *Métissage culturel*. **2.** BIOL. Croisement entre deux races d’animaux ou deux variétés de végétaux de même espèce, par lequel on crée une race ou une variété nouvelle.”

approach political and cultural issues that can be attributed to the specificities of the geography they both represent in the post-World War II period: French Overseas Territories (DOM) still within the grip of the Hexagon over against successfully independent nations in West Africa. Indeed, the different relation that “Africans” and “Caribbean” subjects hold to the continent, and the pivotal work of the poets of Negritude in the aftermath of World War II, is thoroughly analyzed by Fanon in “Africans and Caribbeans.”²²⁷ There is, also, a different reaction to Sartre’s 1948 preface, *Black Orpheus*. The preface indeed consecrates both Negritude and Senghor as its spokesperson—as the author of the anthology who has gathered the most salient texts of the movement: Césaire, Damas, Gratian, Léro, Roumain, Diop, Senghor, Rabéarivelo.²²⁸ Yet, in the text, it is Césaire who best represents what Sartre saw as the power of Negritude’s engagement with the French language and colonialism. Not just anyone could be a black writer in French. In the preface, Césaire emerges as the real hero of Negritude. He, above the other poets, including Senghor, represents both a synthesis of the then-current situation of blacks and also a transcendence of that situation. His poetry is many things at once: a negation of white culture even as it produces it; the epitome of Surrealism even as it destroys it; an attempt to explore the depths of a “black soul” even as it historicizes it. Still, according to the terms of the dialectic, “Negritude is dedicated to its own destruction, it is passage and not objective, means and not the ultimate goal,” which Fanon described as “a blow that can never be forgiven,” and what

²²⁷ Translation is mine of “Africans and West Indians,” *op. cit.*

²²⁸ It should be noticed that there are no female authors in Senghor’s anthology—even though he includes women as objects of poetry, such as Césaire’s “La femme et le couteau” and his own “Femme noire.” Frantz Fanon, whose relation to colonized women is otherwise contentious, quotes at length from Mayotte Capétia’s *Je suis martiniquaise* and *La négresse blanche* in *Peau noire, masques blancs*, published just four years later.

Souleymane Bachir Diagne has called a death kiss.²²⁹ Thereafter, Césaire never responded or alluded to Sartre’s preface. Senghor continued to quote it: sometimes, to praise it, other times, to partially disavow it.²³⁰ That same year of 1948, Césaire and Senghor, both congressmen in the *Assemblée Nationale*, read the new translations (and in some cases, the first complete publication) of what is then called the “early Marx,” finding material in those texts not only to challenge Sartre’s marxism and its resulting misconstruction of Negritude, but also to return to a Marx that had not yet become Marxism and that they could use on their own terms. Senghor’s reflections on Marx’s text gradually sinks in his political writings—as demonstrated by the publication of an entire volume dedicated to Marxian texts: *Liberté II*.

The first part of this chapter tracks the word *métissage* in the early writing of Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor, from 1935 when they create *L’Étudiant Noir* to 1948 when Sartre publishes *Black Orpheus*, in order to see how *métissage* helps them frame their nascent vindication of Negritude out of Eurocentric and ethnographic texts that they read critically. Initially, I focus on the ways in which the word appears in *L’Étudiant Noir*—the short-lived

²²⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Black Orpheus*, trans. S. W. Allen, in *Présence Africaine*, No. 10/11 (1951), p. 245. Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *Léopold Sédar Senghor: l’art africain comme philosophie* (Paris: Riveneuve, 2007), p. 24. Frantz Fanon, *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* (Paris: Seuil, 1952), p. 108 [*Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1967), p. 102].

²³⁰ “Sorbonne et Négritude,” in *Liberté I*, pp. 316-317: “Sartre n’a pas tout à fait raison quand dans *Orphée Noir*, il définit la Négritude « un racisme anti-raciste »; il a sûrement raison quand il la présente comme « une certaine attitude affective à l’égard du monde ».”

periodical founded by Césaire in March 1935 (of which only a few copies remain today).²³¹ By examining how Césaire and Senghor’s early texts used, as a starting point, definitions coming from the epistemological framework provided by the modern colonial discourses—such as the anthropological nature-culture and the philosophical reason-emotion oppositions—I show that their lofty reflections often reflect an intellectual struggle to get away from the facile periodization of colonial/anti-colonial texts they read in a metropolitan context. I attempt to demonstrate that *Métissage* provides them with an ostensible reason to take their imagination beyond Eurocentrism. I then those essays of Senghor that attempt to rewrite *métissage* from 1945 to 1948 as the poet becomes elected to the French Parliament. In particular, I confront Senghor’s rhetorical experimenting on the adjective *métis/métisse* and the noun *métissage* through the idea of *greffe* or *graft*. I conclude with the year 1948 as a turning point in Negritude’s conceptual framework and locate the sources of its epistemological change in the reading of translations of the early Marx and the Marxist scene at the time as well as a response to Sartre’s essentialist definition of the movement.

²³¹ An original of the first issue of *L’Étudiant noir* is to be found in the *Centre des Archives d’Outre-Mer*, Aix-en-Provence, Archives Nationales, France. SLOTFOM V, Box 21.(FR ANOM 4005 COL 21). All translations are mine. I am grateful to the *Centre des Archives d’Outre-Mer* for their help in exploring related material in their rich exploring collections, tracking down elusive journals, photographs, and more. The box presentation gives two erroneous pieces of information: “Journal fondé par Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Léon Gontran Damas en mars 1935. Un seul numéro connu.” Firstly, two issues at least are available through reprint, the first and the third—in Christian Filostrat, *Negritude Agonistes* (Cherry Hill, NJ: Africana Homestead Publishers, 2008), p. 123, which allow us to hypothesize at least three publications. Secondly, neither Senghor nor Damas were involved in the founding of the journal—as Lilyan Kesteloot recalls, quoting a personal interview with Léon-Gontran Damas, in *Les écrivains noirs de langue française : naissance d’une littérature* (Brussels: Institut de Sociologie de l’Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1963), pp. 85-92.

The second part of this chapter historicizes and critically analyzes two cultural events that showcase the evolution of the position of the poets of Negritude vis-a-vis Black culture and identity, concurrent with their reflections on cultural *métissage*: the *First Congress of Black Writers and Artists*, held in Paris in 1956; and the *Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists*, held in Rome in 1959. In the former, many black intellectuals—mainly from the U.S. delegation, but also Francophones from Haiti—expressed their concern about a certain privileging of culture that left behind what they saw as the most pressing and primary issues of political and economic emancipations in Africa. In the latter, the preamble purported to correct that concern by asserting that: “political independence and economic liberation are the essential conditions for the cultural advance of the underdeveloped countries in general and the Negro-African countries in particular.”²³² Yet, throughout, although it is this period that sees the rise of the poet to the first president of Senegal—a position that would provide him with an unparalleled international political platform to enact economic as well as cultural policies—Senghor’s argument for Negritude is built precisely on the opposite. I will attend to that period in the following (and last) chapter of the dissertation.

²³² Reprinted in *African Intellectual Heritage: A Book of Sources*, ed., Molefi K. Asante, Abu Shardow Abarry (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996) p. 229. The complete proceedings of the Congress were published in a special issue of *Presence Africaine*. It is all the more interesting that *Présence Africaine* published the first version of the proceedings in English (N° XXIV-XXV) with the subtitle “The Unity of Negro African Cultures,” whereas the second version in French (N° XXVII-XXVIII) bore the subtitled “Responsibility of the Men of Culture.”

I. Métissage: Between Biology and Culture

Senghor's metaphor of a "line of *métissage*" to be crossed between peoples or ethnic groups in order to affirmatively sabotage the artificial racial separation established by European colonization, hides an impossible corollary: the project, as such, can never fully be achieved. Lines always imply a possibility (or an impossibility) to move between or to cross them. Indeed, free movement is what Senghor hopes to achieve—even if only in the realm of the literary: textual borrowings, bilingualism, neologisms, etc. But Senghor's metaphor also steps into a project whose history is politically loaded, and goes against the grain of what *métissage* is historically related to. When the concept first arose as *mestizaje* in connection with the colonization of Brazil in the fifteenth century, it did not so much account for an artificial separation of races for political domination as for a process by which all races but one could be eliminated by ethnic dilution.²³³ In Spanish, *mestizaje* was primarily a process of "ethnic mixing" as a means to ultimately eradicate the indigenous population—and in sixteenth/seventeenth centuries Latin America, the

²³³ One needs only to recall the (in)famous "casta paintings," *Las castas* (anonymous, 18th century, oil on canvas, Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlán, Mexico), which describes a system of color hierarchy based on biological mixing—where the word *mestizo* comes from—aiming at the disappearance of any mixed elements in the colonies. There were over a dozen different terms for different "castes" based on racial ancestry, and for some of them, the term differed in accordance with the "race" (i.e., the color) of one of the parents (mother or father). See *Mezclado y sospechoso: movilidad e identidades, España y América, siglos XVI-XVIII*, ed. Gregorio Salinero (Madrid: Casa Velasquez, 2000), especially pp. 158-189; also Llona Katzew, *New World Orders. Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America* (New York: Americas Society Art Gallery, 1996). Despite this attempt to define fixed racial categories based on "biology," it is paradoxical that the process to erase the mixing was expected to take many generations to be completed, underlining the instability of mixing from one generation to the next and making it impossible to determine who was what. In sum, where "casta" meant mixed in general, "mestizo" meant one white parent and one Indian parent. In the early twentieth century, "mestizaje" starts to get appropriated as a positive national-cultural identity, as José Vasconcelos has described in his influential 1925 essay, *Raza cósmica* (Mexico: Espasa-Calpe, 1966) [*The Cosmic Race*, trans. Didier T. Jaén (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997)]. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui has written critically about the use of "mestizaje" by white intellectuals in particular to erase or further marginalize indigeneity. See for instance, "Construcción de imágenes de indios y mujeres en la iconografía post-52: El miserabilismo en el Album de la Revolución (1954)," in *Discursos Sobre (L)a Pobreza: América Latina Y/E Países Luso-Africanos* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2006); also "The Notion of "Rights" and the Paradoxes of Postcolonial Modernity: Indigenous Peoples and Women in Bolivia" in *Qui Parle*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Spring/Summer 2010), pp. 29-54.

Catholic Church supplemented the biological enterprise by recognizing (and sometimes encouraging) intermarriage as a necessary *mestizaje* of another kind (spiritual, social, cultural, etc) for the propagation of the Christian gospel.²³⁴ In English, *métissage* is translated alternately as creolization, cross-culture, hybridity, *mestizaje*, miscegenation, syncretism, transculturation etc.²³⁵ Those translations, while neither incorrect nor encompassing the various meanings that Senghor hopes to instill to the concept, oscillate between a biological and cultural frame.

To reclaim *métissage*, in French, from the racialism of colonialism and imperialism, Senghor's first development of the notion of *métissage* in the 30s is staged in opposition to the controversial "biological *métissage*" that recalls earlier theories of race.²³⁶ Indeed, when

²³⁴ See Serge Grusiniski and Régis Guyotat, "Un laboratoire de notre modernité," in *Le Monde des débats* (Oct. 1992), pp. 19-20. Michelle A. Gonzalez goes so far as to claim that "racial, biological and cultural mixture characterizes the Latin American colonial subject" in "Who is Americano/a: theological anthropology, Postcolonialism and the Spanish-Speaking Americas" in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, p. 64-66. In medieval Spain, "mistos" or "metis" were Christians who chose to form an alliance with the Muslim Moors to fight King Rodrigo. In English, see Richard Hitchcock, *Mozarabs in Medieval and Early Modern Spain: Identities and Influences* (Exeter, UK: Ashgate Press, 2008), p. 116. In Spanish, see Carmen Bernard "Mestizos, Mulatos y Ladinos en Hispanoamérica: Un enfoque antropológico de un proceso histórico," in *Motivos de la antropología americanista: Indagaciones en la diferencia*, ed. Miguel León Portilla (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001), pp. 105-133. In French, see Serge Gruzinski, *La pensée métisse*, op. cit., p. 36.

²³⁵ For instance, Serge Gruzinski's book *La pensée métisse* (Paris: Fayard, 1999) is translated into English as *The Mestizo Mind* (New York, Routledge, 2002). The title conspicuously echoes *La Pensée Sauvage* by Claude Lévi-Strauss, a thinker for whom *métissage* as the merging of two "cultures" holds a gap that can never be fully bridged. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *L'identité - séminaire interdisciplinaire: 1974-1975*, ed. Jean-Marie Benoist (Paris: P.U.F, 1977), p. 322. Similarly, Jean-Loup Amselle's *Logiques métisses* (Paris: Payot, 1990) is entitled *Mestizo Logics* in the English translation (San Francisco: Stanford University Press, 1998). Anjali Prabhu's book about the history and development of *métissage* in the former French colony of La Réunion, is entitled *Hybridity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007). The notion of "hybridity" is also at the core of Homi. K. Bhabha's *Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994). Talking from the discipline of anthropology, Charles Steward expands on the ambivalence between hybridity, creolization and syncretism as they relate to a form of cultural mixture, in "Syncretism and Its Synonyms: Reflections on Cultural Mixture," *Diacritics* 29.3 (1999): 40-62.

²³⁶ The vast literature on "theory of race" and its criticism is impossible to summarize here. A well-known text in the French corpus is Arthur De Gobineau's *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (1855). Indeed, in a speech given in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 1964, Senghor quotes Gobineau against the grain, using the author to support his own theory of *métissage*. See "Latinité et Negritude," in *Liberté III*, p. 37. In 1988, in the collection *Ce que je crois*, Senghor attempts quite controversially to connect biological and cultural inheritances or character traits with blood types and biological qualities. In doing so, he incorporates some popular scientific work at the time such as Dr. Jacques Ruffié's *De la biologie à la culture* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977). For a contemporary position on racism, in particular how she engages with race as an ideological problem and confronts "race" and "sex" to the biased biological focus of other French feminists, see Colette Guillaumin, *Racism, Sexism, Power, and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1995). For Guillaumin, there is nothing "natural" about our ideas of "race" and "sex," which we must approach through the ways in which they are constructed as sign systems.

Senghor attempts to theorize the concept by creating the expression *métissage culturel*, he never quite leaves the framework inherited from the colonial discipline of anthropology. It is useful, however, to recall that Senghor, even caught in the biological-cultural dynamic since the early development of colonial anthropology, progressively arrives at the formulation of the noun *métissage* from the limited realm of *métis* as an adjective. Throughout the early years of Negritude, Senghor's (and also Césaire's) grammatical and orthographic fluctuating related to the word testify to a noticeable discomfort with a notion that they desperately attempt to rewrite. Solidly trained in classics, both Césaire and Senghor knew that the word *métis* finds its first use in the fifteenth century to denote something made of two equal halves of anything.²³⁷ The problem with this definition is that it operates under the premise that something "pure" is about to get "soiled"—for, in principle, one can only mix that which has never been mixed. Rhetorically moving to the word *métissage* allows the poets to reclaim the radical of the word, *tissage*, coming from the verb *tisser* (to weave), itself coming from the Latin *texere*, from which we derive the words *text* and *textile* in both English and French. The metaphor of weaving is not foreign to Senghor,²³⁸ and as the poet then theorizes *métissage*, the relation between biology and culture is constantly rewoven. Towards the end of his presidency, in the 70-s, Senghor

²³⁷ According to the CNRS-CNRTL (Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales) that tracks not only the etymology and lexicography of the word but also provides the reader with sources where the word is found. "*Mestis* « qui est fait moitié d'une chose, moitié d'une autre » (*Digestes*, ms. de Montpellier, 47, fol. 116a *Compl.*); 1559 [éd.] *mestif* « dont la mère est d'un autre peuple que le père (chez les Grecs) » (amyot) *Vie des hommes illustres grecs et romains*, fo. 76); and "Métissage: 1837 « croisement des races » (Baudrimont, *Dict. de l'industr. manufacturière comm. et agric.*, t. 6, p.198, s.v. haras)." The authoritative *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* concurs with these sources and interpretations. Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink gives a similar history of the word in the French-speaking area (with references in Raynal, Chateaubriand, and uses in Aimé Césaire and Abdoulaye Sadi) in "«Métissage»: Contours et enjeux d'un concept carrefour dans l'aire francophone," in *Études littéraires*, Volume 25, No. 3 (1993), pp. 93-106. It is interesting that the fifteenth century is also the time when, French was being transformed and fixed so that it could become a political tool of the nation.

²³⁸ Senghor speaks of the "tissu du récit" in 1956. See "Socialisme et Culture," in *Liberté II*, p. 191. In the communication given during the *Second Congress of Negro Writers* in Paris in 1959, Senghor also speaks of the "tissu de la société" (reproduced in *Liberté I*, p. 262). Finally, in 1966, at the *World Festival of Negro Arts* in Dakar, Senghor defines man as a "tissu de forces" whose goal is to "resserrer les fils du tissu de vie." (in *Liberté III*, p. 74).

acknowledges biological *métissage* not only as factual, but surprisingly, as pre-condition for the more ambivalent cultural *métissage*: “Before being able to talk about cultural *métissage*, it is necessary to talk about biological *métissage*, the latter having favored the former, as always.”²³⁹ The goal is not to achieve *métissage*, but politically to transform it into another discourse where a politics of purity is neither denied nor accepted, where indeed it is used strategically to explore the limitations of the oscillation altogether. Aiming at a “cosmopolitanism” understood in its etymological sense –world governance²⁴⁰– where a critique of identitarianism does not imply to become “less black,” one is obliged to admit that neither Senghor nor Césaire ever really managed to achieve their ambitious goal, perhaps because of its pedantic linguistic basis. Still, their reflections on and tribulation with *métissage*, particularly in the broader context of a post-colonial world grappling with “globality,”²⁴¹ shows that the poets of Negritude were neither lapped by a discourse they could not fully control, nor did they merely remain at the mercy of assimilated colonial categories. Rather, choosing to embrace the ambivalence of *métissage-mestizaje-hybridity* alongside its historical etymology and problems of translation,

²³⁹ Senghor, “La place des langues classiques dans les Humanités sénégalaises,” in *Education et Culture*, p. 222. The speech is given in Paris in 1978. Ten years later in the collection *Ce que je crois*, Senghor attempts quite controversially to connect biological and cultural inheritances or character traits with blood types and biological qualities, by incorporating popular scientific essays at the time, such as Dr. Jacques Ruffié’s *De la biologie à la culture* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977), paraphrasing in an eponymous subchapter “De la biologie à la culture africaine.”

²⁴⁰ The idea is prominently invoked by Kant in *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). I am grateful to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak for introducing me to this reading of the word in a seminar on W.E.B Du Bois entitled “Imagining the General Strike” that she taught at Columbia University in Spring 2012. Spivak developed further that interpretation in a lecture for the American Geographical Association, given in New York in Fall 2012 and published as “Scattered Speculations on Geography” in *Antipode: a radial journal of geography*, published online in Sept. 2013.

²⁴¹ One of the earliest known usages of the word “globalization,” as a noun, dates back the 1930s, according to the OED, and, like other nouns such as “wholeness” and “integration,” refers to a “keywords of the new education view of mind.” In French, the word “globalisation” appears in the 1940s and refers to a process that struggles against “la tendance de chaque poussée d’activité à se constituer en faisceau séparé de l’activité totale.” See the CNRS lexicographic dictionary, <http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/>. Today’s word that most often translates globalization, “mondialisation,” appears in the 1960s.

Senghor and Césaire progressively shifted from an anti-colonialist stance fighting against a determined historical condition to a rethinking of self-critical practices aligned with their perception of an increasingly globalized world.

In simpler terms, they progressively shifted from the question “what is it to be a negro” that permeates Negritude’s periodical *L’Étudiant Noir*, to the inquiry “how does one become black” that arises with the politicization of their fight after World War II.

A. From 1935: the Anti-Colonialism of *L’Étudiant Noir*...

It is important to recall that if Aimé Césaire, Léon-Gontran Damas, Alioune Diop, Gilbert Gratiant, Paulette Nardal, and Léopold Sédar Senghor all came from different geographies (though one might argue that they came from specifically two places: Saint-Louis, Senegal, and Fort-de-France, Martinique), it is nevertheless in the French city of Paris that they met, reflected, and eventually gathered as a group that would ultimately be recognized as “Negritude.”²⁴² As Raymond Williams has argued, post-World-War-I Paris provided these young students who craved the “ascension” to the urban center with a space that simply was unique among the world metropolises at the time (except perhaps New York). Paris allowed for “a complexity and a

²⁴² Edward Ako goes as far as arguing that it is Lilyan Kesteloot who, in her seminal work on Negritude in *Les écrivains noirs de langue française : naissance d'une littérature*, published in 1963 by the *Institut de Sociologie de l'Université Libre de Bruxelles*, quite literally “created” the idea of a movement where, on the ground, the ideological disparities, disciplinary training, not to mention the sexism within the group prevented it from becoming the literary group it has since been seen as. See “‘*L’Étudiant Noir*’ and the Myth of the Genesis of the Negritude Movement,” in *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Autumn, 1984), pp. 341-353. One might also take into account the special relationship of the Senegalese city of Saint-Louis (where Senghor is from) to France, from an enclave to the transatlantic slave trade to a colonial capital of the French empire. See “L’esclavage à Saint-Louis du Sénégal au XVIII^e-XIX^e siècle,” in *Jahrbuch 2008/2009*, Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, 2010, pp. 334-356, as well as *Saint-Louis et l’esclavage : actes du Symposium international sur “la traite négrière à Saint-Louis du Sénégal et dans son arrière-pays”* (Dakar: Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, 2000).

sophistication of social relations, supplemented in the most important cases by exceptional liberties of expression” where “small groups of any form of divergence or dissent could find some kind of foothold.”²⁴³ Yet, those students coming from the colonies did not meet because of all the opportunities that Paris had to offer (although, to believe Césaire’s account, one might argue that Léon-Gontran Damas, the least known of the three main protagonists of Negritude, enjoyed the clubs of the capital more than its libraries), they met because of the disillusion of the hopes that France meant for them. In an attempt to make something out of this disillusion, a young student from Martinique and Senghor’s protégé in the elite *Classes Préparatoires aux Grandes Écoles* at the Lycée Louis-Le-Grand, Aimé Césaire, created journal after journal. In 1934, the 21-year-old student participated in the publication of *L’Étudiant Martiniquais*. Concerned about a larger readership not only to reach a broader audience but also to make the journal financially viable,²⁴⁴ Césaire transforms the periodical into *L’Étudiant Noir* in 1935, with the subtitle “Journal de l’association des étudiants martiniquais en France” (“Journal of the association of students from Martinique in France”).²⁴⁵ The precision “in France,” as though they were “there,” temporarily dislocated from “their” place, nuances the idea (and Césaire’s own claim) that the journal aimed to reach all black students. In reality, Senghor is the only African contributor, all others are from the French Caribbean. Césaire is the president of the *Association*

²⁴³ Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 45.

²⁴⁴ Césaire admitted many years later that he did not know how to manage a personal budget at the time. According to George Ngal, he and the other contributors to the review had to pay from their own pocket—and sometimes not pay the publisher, which would explain why the journal is so difficult to be found, even in the national archives: there was no *dépôt légal*. See *Aimé Césaire: un homme à la recherche d’une patrie*, p. 61. In an interview with Jacqueline Leiner for the reprint of *Tropiques*, Césaire describes a similar outcome for his latter journal.

²⁴⁵ Thomas A. Hale recalls a summarized genealogy of the early years of those short-lived periodicals, based on the historical and archival work of Lilyan Kesteloot and George Ngal, supplemented by interviews with Aimé Césaire in 1972. See “Aimé Césaire: Bibliographie commentée,” *Études françaises*, Vol. 14, No. 3-4, 1978, 221-498.

des étudiants martiniquais and managing editor of the journal. A careful look at the original first issue shows that its content was more local than global: scholarships (on page 1), role of the associations (on page 2), reflection on a meeting of students (on page 3), and even a section on jokes (“sottisier”) and on sport manifestations (both on the last page). If it is impossible to know how many copies were sold and read, where, and by who, the content seems to reach an audience geographically limited to the vicinity of Parisian universities. This does not mean, however, that the central section (from page 3 to 7)—with articles by Aimé Césaire, Léopold Senghor, Paulette Nardal and the concluding piece by Césaire’s teacher, Gilbert Gratiant (filling the entire pages 6 and 7)—is devoid of intellectual reflections important to settle the ground for worldly debates on the more burning themes of culture, race, and ethnicity. Indeed, the articles aim at providing their readers with a sense of a commonality between all blacks in the world. Yet, the arguments proper of the articles are framed primarily as anti-colonial as though, in 1935, nothing else but the resistance to colonialism could unite them all. It is this common fight against the colonial power that unites, for instance, two articles whose contents have apparently nothing in common: Césaire’s “Nègreries: jeunesse noire et assimilation” and Senghor’s “L’humanisme noir.” Notwithstanding the more militant tone and stance that Césaire’s essay holds in comparison to Senghor’s, their theme is surprisingly similar: a battle between life and death. Senghor’s first sentence reads: “We must strip humanism from everything that is not it, not to *kill* ‘the old man’ in us, but to *resuscitate* it.” Here is Césaire: “The tribe of the Old says: ‘assimilation,’ we respond: ‘*resurrection!*’ What does black youth want? To *live*.” If the word “resuscitate” is not a surprise in the vocabulary of the very devout Senghor, the use of the term “resurrection” in texts by the atheist Césaire is much rarer. Similarly, the gist of Césaire’s piece is an ever elusive

“search for oneself” in much the same vein as Senghor’s recalling of his ancestral “kingdom of childhood,” a hopelessly romanticized memory of a somewhat privileged bourgeois childhood. Senghor’s “kingdom of childhood” is indeed not everyone’s; it is a personal construction based on an individually lived experience, embellished by an imagination that cannot be taken away by the superimposed history taught in the French colonial schools that asked all colonials to recite: “Our ancestors the Gauls.” In 1935, the call for a look inside oneself, or for exhuming a mythical past buried like a treasure, is not the rediscovery of a “black essence” covered by the epistemic violence of colonial assimilation that these authors will term “negritude.” It is a discourse that aims at the awakening of a desire to want to rewrite the story of one’s own history.

Attempting to find commonality outside of the frame of anti-colonialism while remaining committed to a vindication of identity politics, Gilbert Gratiant, reacting to what seems to be Césaire’s first publication, describes mixing as both medicine and poison. In the longest article of the first issue of *L’Étudiant Noir*, “Mûlatres... pour le bien et pour le mal,”²⁴⁶ Césaire’s teacher states: “All martiniquais are *métis*.” Yet in the conclusion, he writes:

Césaire speaks of a ‘tragedy’ in his last piece, a very good one, and reveals a perfect assimilation of his year in ‘khâgne.’ But in so doing, he does not speak of the real tragedy: that of being at once [*ensemble*], for the colored man, sincerely, *completely* (there lies the mystery) French in thought, soul and culture; that of being sincerely, but *confusingly*, though with a sometimes moving plenitude, black, negro and African.

²⁴⁶ Gilbert Gratiant, “Mulâtre... pour le bien et le mal” in *L’Étudiant Noir* 1 (March 1935), 5-7. The essay was reprinted in *Fables créoles et autres écrits* (Paris: Stock, 1996), pp. 701-710.

Condescendingly mocking his student (“reveals a perfect assimilation of his year in ‘khâgne’”), Gratiant’s narrative is a story of an impossible choice which stages the mulatto as the child of the foundational rape that gave birth to what he calls the “Creole civilization.” “Two or three hundreds years ago,” the white man, defined by his low class status that sent him away to a less than desirable colony far from the metropole, no more indigenous to the land of Martinique than the slave he imported from Africa, gave way to his caprice and raped “a young negress, with or without her consent.” The rape did not take away any of the young woman’s race, religion, language, civilization, family interests, class or caste, but *through* her, those were forever lost for her descendant. “Our ancestors the Gauls” could no longer be an absurdity for the child of rape. The Gauls were *also* his ancestors. Yet, how to live, or to survive such ominous act of *métissage*, this “means of *ensauvagement* of the Frenchmen by which they penetrate the deepest souls?” Indeed, Gratiant asks about the chance of “survival” of ethnic characters in this cross-race violation. “What happens for our mulatto, 50 x 50, in regard to ethnicity?” Already “over-mixed” (*sur-mêlé*), product of a forcefully migrated Negro woman and of a Frenchman himself mixed (“who does not know of a true light-skin yet frizzy-haired European?”), his becoming is incalculable. But where *métissage* remains the violent scar of this interracial encounter, the *métis* who chose neither his or her class nor his or her race, can turn a historically conditioned situation into a structure that enables violation. In a sense, as a child of the colonizer, the *métis* is no longer only a receiver of colonilization; but in another sense, *métissage*, while enabling the transition away from the position of a colonized subject, also further severs the connexion to his or her history—now only accessible through the *métis*’s imaginary domain. Both his father and mother, literally and metaphorically, are foreigners—to each other, to the land, to their histories.

S/he, however, stands in a position of equilibrium that can go either way. In any case, s/he stands as the unifier of differences, the creator rather than the receiver of this new civilization “with variable modalities of expression:” creole. Notwithstanding his non-identitarian stance, Gratian’s “Africa” remains a site of a shared memory. Building on the hypothesis that discussions—and even disagreements—on a politics of purity preceded the publication of the first issue of *L’Étudiant Noir*, Senghor, only African contributor to the journal, in “L’Humanisme et Nous: « René Maran»,” fuels the memory. As the title suggests, the pronoun *nous* posits the existence, or at least the possibility, of a collective that remains undefined, and as the coordinative conjunction *et* hints, “Humanism” is going to be used as a way to acknowledge or loosely legitimize that collective. Quite directly, Senghor offers a connection in the opening sentence of the article: “Humanism is a cultural movement that has the black man as end, with Western reason and the Black soul as its research means [*instrument*], because it needs both reason and intuition.” The opposition between “Western” and “Black” are not necessarily a mark of Senghor’s anti-colonialism. The opposition between “reason” and “intuition,” however, constitutes a distinct colonial framework. When the closing paragraph of the essay stages Maran’s life within a similar set of oppositions, “a tragedy, a duel between Reason and Imagination, Spirit and Soul, Black and White,”²⁴⁷ colonialism provides the frame within which the article is built.

²⁴⁷ As Martin Steins notices, these oppositions were used “since Gobineau and the beginning of colonial literature around 1900.” See “Jeunesse Noire,” in *Neohelicon* 4, No.1-2 (1976), p. 115. The dichotomy reason-intuition is a constant binary throughout Senghor’s writings, often the launchpad for a more elaborate discussion on the relation between “Africa” and “France.” In 1939, it gives rise to the (in)famous alexandrine “Emotion is Negro as reason is Hellenic,” preceding a discussion on Black poetry and Christianity (in “What The Black Man Contributes,” *Liberté I* p. 24). In 1959 at the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists, he expands: “European reason is analytical by utilization; Negro reason is intuitive by participation” before to develop a parallel reading of Sartre’s theory of emotion and his own experience of emotion expressed in Wolof (in *Liberté I* p. 260). In 1969, he writes in “La Francophonie comme Culture:” “In Pascal, Descartes’s contemporary, reason and intuition are gathered synthetically” (in *Liberté III* p. 188) and immediately moves to the intellectual history of French rationalism and its contribution to Francophonie.

Although “imagination” has replaced “intuition,” the poet keeps oppositions he can work with, straight from his training and his readings: philosophy, theology, ethnography. These three poles never leave Senghor. He then finds in Bergson, Chardin and Frobenius, figures that allow him to construct and strengthen his own elaboration of Negritude. For the moment, Senghor focuses on ethnography—perhaps, the most colonial discipline of all three. Without transition, the second paragraph rejects the idea of a pure biological essence and challenges the limits of ethnography:

I am not a thoroughbred negro.

Beautiful discovery! If we believe the ethnologist, there is no 25 percent thoroughbred negro in Africa. The other 75 believe themselves to be negroes, and they are right. As a *métis* was saying: “To be a negro is a psychological business, more than blood purity.”²⁴⁸

Contrary to the usual interpretation that makes ethnographic discourse the main source of Negritude’s ideals, ethnography here remains a major point of reference but pushed to its limits. Not relying upon common ethnographic methodology (fieldwork, native informant, data or facts collection, etc), Senghor advocates through the unverifiability of the literary—using the metaphorical language of the “thoroughbred” to convey his argument. The text takes us into the impossibility of the pure opposition between clearly defined percentages about ethnic groups and the unquantifiable experience of one’s own individuality. In horse racing, though the word “thoroughbred” usually refers to the Thoroughbred breed, it also means any breed of purebred horse. One breed, known and recognizable as such, is grafted onto another, equally known and recognizable, making it possible to trace the hybrid back to the source. There is a degree of

²⁴⁸ Senghor, “L’Humanisme et nous: « René Maran »,” in *L’Étudiant Noir*, No. 1 (March 1935), p. 3.

certainty in any hybridization process. In Senghor's text, not only is that process foreclosed ("I am not a thoroughbred Negro"), it is the figure of the *métis* who opens the unverifiability of the experience of blackness and challenges identitarianism—much like in Gratiant's narrative.

In the following paragraph, Senghor starts the argument of his article: a critique of René Maran's masterpiece, *Batouala, véritable roman nègre*, which he faults for trying too hard to reach "man" in the singular. Senghor's choice of René Maran is not neutral. After having received the coveted *Prix Goncourt* in 1921, both the author and his book quickly became the subject of a controversy. Not only was he the first "black" to receive the award, *Batouala* was also the site of an unacceptable criticism of the French Empire and its handling of colonialism.²⁴⁹ Soon, the novel was banned in the colonies, and its author slowly retreated from public life. As he nears the concluding paragraphs of his piece, Senghor praises another novel by Maran: *Le livre de la brousse* ("The Bush's Book").²⁵⁰ Published just the year before, in 1934, Senghor finds the book built on oppositions that he can work with, starting with a familiar and heteronormative politics of naming: "Kossi means 'man', Yassi means 'woman'" writes Senghor. "It is key." The last sentence of the article reads not so much as a prosecution of Maran's limits but rather as Senghor's framework within which Maran is written: "Culture led him to Nature." The reversal of the dichotomy does not get rid of it but rather legitimizes by reversal the already

²⁴⁹ Indeed, many critics expressed the belief that a black man was being rewarded only for indicting the ills of civilization. For a comprehensive treatment of this literary and cultural event, see Iheanachor Egonu, "Le Prix Goncourt de 1921 et la "Querelle De Batouala,"" in *Research in African Literatures* 11.4 (1980): 529-45; for the relation between the writing of the novel and France's colonial expansion at the time, in particular, the creation of the federation of French Equatorial Africa and of Maran's relationship to the idea of a federation, see Alice Smith, "Rene Maran's *Batouala* and the *Prix Goncourt*," in *Contributions in Black Studies*: Vol. 4 (1980).

²⁵⁰ René Maran, *Le livre de la brousse* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1934). In 1948, Maran will concur in a private correspondence with Frederic Jacques Temple that *Batouala* was "[his] worst novel" while *Le livre de la brousse* was "[his] masterpiece." See "Six lettres inédites de René Maran à Frédéric Jacques Temple. Autour d'un homme pareil aux autres," *Présence Africaine* 1/2013 (No. 187-188), 175-182. It is also striking that the title recalls Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book*, translated by Louis Fabulet as *Le livre de la jungle* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1899).

fixed categorization that serves the colonial discipline of ethnography well. No matter how the thoroughbred metaphor was to subvert the supposed authority of the ethnologist (“if we believe the ethnologist”), ultimately, Senghor does not escape the ethnologist’s last laugh.

There is no trace of the second issue of *L’Étudiant Noir*. In the third, however (the last one known), Senghor’s article, “Racism? No, but Spiritual Alliance,” is still trying to challenge the limiting framework—albeit unsuccessfully. The young student hints at a geographical move away not only from Europe but also from the Mediterranean, reaching to the Atlantic:

Arab travelers who were visiting Sudan marveled at the splendor and prosperity [of the great Negro empires that flourished in Africa during the Middle-Ages]. To believe them, these states [*états*] had nothing to envy in those around the Mediterranean. I want to recall from memory, the famous Empire of Mali that spread from the Niger delta to the Atlantic.”²⁵¹

The shift in focus from Mediterranean-looking states for Atlantic-oriented empires that “Arab travelers” marvel at, emphasizes not only an approach away from the political outlook of colonialism, but also a perceived difference (cultural, linguistic, religious, historical, etc) between Sub-Saharan African and North-Africa (Senghor calls it “Arabo-Berber,” in reference to an ethnic group indigenous to Algeria and Morocco, but geographically stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea). Indeed, Senghor makes it clear as he moves towards his conclusion: “This explains that we will not sacrifice the cultural aspect for the political.” Yet, his source on African empires is a French ethnographer: “the great Africanist Maurice Delafosse.” Going as far as writing about the transformation of Europe more than about the future of Africa

²⁵¹ Senghor, “L’Humanisme et nous: « René Maran »,” in *L’étudiant noir*, No. 1 (March 1935), p. 3.

(“To Old Europe, we want to bring new elements of humanity”), Senghor’s suggestion for a “spiritual alliance” also comes from a Frenchman: “We extol exchange, ‘the spiritual alliance’ according to the beautiful expression by M. Brévié.” M. Brévié, the author of the expression also used in the article’s title, is most likely Jules Brévié, colonial administrator and Governor-general of French West Africa (Afrique Occidentale Française, AOF) at the time.²⁵² Similarly, although the concluding paragraph of the article asks the reader (presumably, young black students in Paris) to look across the Atlantic (“let us now look at Black America”), his references are, again, two Frenchmen: diplomat Paul Morand and essayist André Gide. Senghor misquotes the essayist to rewrite the narrative away from Gide’s Franco-German context and fit his own argument about the problem of European racism towards Africa. Writing about “a nation, a race,” the paragraph concludes: “She must prove herself capable to evolve without denying her past, it is that very past that must condition her becoming [*devenir*].” “A nation, a race,” writes Senghor, “only liberates itself by itself; for progress implies identity.” In Gide’s original text, however, the antecedent is neither ‘race’ nor any ‘nation.’ It is France herself:

Nothing in [Sieburg’s] book proves to me that European equilibrium cannot be re-established without France’s *handing in her resignation*. She must prove herself capable to evolve without denying her past. A renewal for which such a

²⁵² I was unable to track down the expression that Senghor quotes. It seems surprising to read the word “spiritual” in the vocabulary of a governor who declared colonization to be a “question of method, calculation, of predictions, in short, of science.” See Jules Brévié, “Science et colonisation,” in *Trois études de M. le gouverneur général Brévié*, (Gorée: Imprimerie du Gouverneur Général, 1936), p. 41. For a biography of Brévié, see Robert Cornevin, “Jules Brévié,” in *Hommes et destins*, Vol. 5 (Paris: Académie des sciences d’outre-mer, 1975), p. 86.

price was paid would be tantamount to a bankruptcy. It is that very past that must give birth to her becoming.²⁵³

The quote is from the writer's private diary, dated January 21, 1931—the year of the *Exposition Coloniale* in Paris.²⁵⁴ In this not-yet-published piece, Gide positions his French pride against Friedrich Sieburg's German nationalism (as expressed in the bestseller *Is God a Frenchman?*). Senghor's *tour de force* however is not so much to simply reposition the opposition geographically, away from the Franco-German nationalisms, but to redefine the conditions under which the world can be staged without references to racism (as expressed in the title: "Racism? No..."). Where Gide's original opposition resides in the metaphor of national birth (France's past must "give birth [*enfanter*] to France's becoming"), Senghor rewrites the quote with the verb "condition:" "It is [the] very past [of a nation, a race] that must condition its becoming."

In trying to think what a black solidarity could look like outside of colonialism, I suggest that it is also necessary for Léopold Sédar Senghor to move beyond the Mediterranean and toward the Atlantic, learning from his younger associate from the Caribbean: Aimé Césaire.

²⁵³ André Gide, *Journal, 1889-1939* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 1024 [*Journals: 1928-1939*, trans. Justin O'Brien (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p.142]. Translation modified. The whole text was published for the first time in France four years after the publication of *L'Étudiant Noir*. I was unable to find the source that Senghor used at the time of the writing of his piece. It is not devoid of meaning that Senghor chose a text from a genre that, by its very name, is neither audience-oriented nor forward-looking. Diaries, as Orhan Pamuk notices in an article about the translation of Gide's *Journal* in Turkish, are usually not kept with any idea of writing for posterity. See Orhan Pamuk, "A Private Reading of André Gide's Public 'Journal'" in *Social Research*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (Fall 2004), p. 680. Alan Sheridan, Gide's biographer, calls private-diary-writing "the pre-eminently Gidean mode of expression," calling attention to the fact that Gide's first novel emerged from his own journal, and that in his well-know *Les faux-monnayeurs*, the main character's journal provides an alternative voice to the narrator's. See Alan Sheridan, *André Gide: A Life in the Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 638.

²⁵⁴ For a critical and historical reading of the colonial exhibition, see Christopher Miller, "Hallucinations of France and Africa in the Colonial Exhibition of 1931 and Ousmane Socé's *Mirages de Paris*," in *Paragraph - Modern Critical Theory Group*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (March 1995), pp. 39-63. That year, several articles from the "anticolonial" branch of the left party S.F.I.O, such as "Colonisation et Socialisme" (July 6, 1931), are published in the periodical's *Le populaire*. Yet, far from being anti-colonial, the attitude of French socialists on colonial problems is ambiguous at best. In 1927, Leon Blum himself argues for a "moderate position" that admits to both "crimes" of the colonial administration and the "civilizing mission" it brought to the natives. See his "Déclaration à la Chambre" on June 10, 1927, in the *Journal officiel*, p. 1841. See also Manuela Semidei, "Les socialistes français et le problème colonial entre les deux guerres (1919-1939)" in *Revue française de science politique*, 18e année, No. 6, 1968. pp. 1115-1154.

Usually, critics notice that it is Césaire who, by his own confession, comes to Senghor to be informed about the “black world” in general and Africa in particular.²⁵⁵ But Césaire’s piece in the last issue of *L’Étudiant Noir*, “Nègreries: conscience raciale et révolution sociale,” neither presents broad generalization on an abstract “negro youth” nor becomes a platform for an ire against the colonizer. Rather, it zooms to the specific situation of the Caribbean:

A strange illness is eating us away in the Antilles: a fear of oneself, a surrender of who we are to who we appear to be, a weakness that forces an exploited people [*peuple*] to turn their back on human nature, because a race of exploiters made them ashamed of it with the goal to abolish “the proper consciousness of exploited men.”²⁵⁶

The situation of the Caribbean, presented as somehow different, is however repositioned within the narrative of revolution and exploitation. Basing himself on something guaranteed only by his personal certitude and perhaps with the hopes of a young and smart 21-year-old student who had not yet entered the *École Normale Supérieure*, Césaire already offers to think the universal through the particular—which he later develops in his 1945 piece “Poetry and Knowledge:” “We want to exploit our own values, to know our forces through personal experience, and dig our own racial domain, *certain to find, deep inside*, the springing source of the universal *human* [*l’humain universel*].” As he continues, before any revolution can take place, the “mechanical

²⁵⁵ “Senghor awoke the African in me, the fundamental negro. I became better conscious of myself. Through Senghor, I had the impression that I discovered Africa.” See *Entretien avec Aimé Césaire* in *Le Terreau Primordial*, vol 2., ed. Jacqueline Leine (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2003), p. 32-33.

²⁵⁶ Aimé Césaire, “Nègreries: conscience raciale et révolution sociale,” in *L’Étudiant noir* 3 (June 1935), 2. Césaire’s two articles, from March and June 1935, are available in a special issue of *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 676, pp. 246-251. One should note Césaire’s use of the word “human” where, earlier he had only mentioned “man.” Though the scene hopelessly leaves aside the role of gender, one might consider this nuance a timid move towards the male-dominated frame of reference of the Negritude group at the time.

identification of races” has to be broken. “Black” must no longer be an adjective, it has to become a substantive: “We must not be revolutionaries, accidentally black [*noir*], but strictly speaking revolutionary negroes [*nègres*].” It is impossible to know what works of Marx the student read at the time, but it is striking to note that Césaire already shows his intent not to be confined to class.²⁵⁷ Indeed, he weaves together race and class for self-determination.²⁵⁸

“For those who believe in Marx only to cross the line, we say: for the Revolution, let us work to take possession of ourselves, by dominating from up high the official white culture, ‘spiritual rigging’ of conquering imperialism. (...) Yes, let us work to be negro with the certitude that it is a work for the Revolution.”

This move towards Marx but not towards Marxism finds resonance in Senghor’s own article:

A few leftist comrades tell me: there is a class problem, not a race one. Why do they not say that there is a problem of race doubled with a problem of class?
Because in the Antilles, race preexists to class, and explains it from the beginning.

Senghor’s surprising explanation of the conditions under which racism gave rise to “classism” by generalizing the example from a geographical location where he has never been, shows not only how strong his desire is to cross the Atlantic, it also testifies to the often overlooked

²⁵⁷ Though I do not attend to what Cédric Robinson has termed “Black Marxism” (an investigation that attempts to connect readings of Marx away from the usual Marxist analyses that presuppose European models of history and experience and focuses instead on Black peoples and committees as agent of resistance) or “Black Internationalism,” I will expand the relation between Negritude and African-America in work subsequent to this dissertation.

²⁵⁸ In this sense, we can connect it to the much more complicated argument of W.E.B Du Bois in *Black Reconstruction*. Du Bois’s masterpiece is, surprisingly, still not translated into French, and given the poor reception of the book in the United States in 1935, it seems highly unlikely that the book in English was readily available that same year in Paris. See Claire Parfait, “Rewriting History: The Publication of W. E. B. Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935) in *Book History*, Vol. 12, 2009, pp. 266-294. However, Césaire always mentioned that he wrote a thesis entitled “The Theme of the South in the Negro American Poetry of the United States.” Whether Césaire knew of the scholarship on reconstruction is impossible to determine. However, his necessary knowledge of black intellectual production on the other side of the Atlantic seems to pervade his writing throughout.

influence of Césaire on Senghor. Senghor too must learn about blackness, especially if Negritude is to reach out to the diaspora.

In the interwar period, the young poets of Negritude, gathered in the heart of the colonial power, test and try different ways in which to renegotiate their subject position within the empire. Among those ways, *métissage* allows them to rethink a move away from their marginal position of receiver of what the metropole forcefully offers, towards a more central situation where they hope to produce institutionally validated agency from the colony. Just a decade later, in the aftermath of World War II, Senghor's and Césaire's election in the French parliament opens an altogether different scene: a world seemingly without colonial empires.

B. To 1948: ... and an Imagining of Globality.

The year 1948 marks a turning point in the history of Negritude. It is the year of the publication of Senghor's *Anthology of Negro and Malagasy Poetry in French* with the influential preface of Jean-Paul Sartre, "Black Orpheus," that inscribed what was hitherto merely a collection of poems by poets reflecting on their subjectivity, subjection, and subject-position, on the map of worldly movements. It is also the hundredth anniversary of abolition, marked by the re-edition of Victor Schoelcher's *Esclavage et colonisation* for which Aimé Césaire writes an introduction. In addition, it is the year of both Senghor's and Césaire's publication of their first major political essay, respectively "Marxism and Humanism" and "The Impossible Contact."²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹ "Marxism et humanisme" originally appeared in *La Revue Socialiste*, No. 19 (March 1948), pp. 201-216. It was reprinted in *Liberté II* (Paris: Seuil, 1971), pp. 29-44. It has never been translated into English. Césaire's piece, "L'impossible contact" was first published in *Chemins du monde*, No. 5-6 (1948), pp. 105-112. It formed the basis for the rewriting of the piece into the famous *Discourse on Colonialism* in 1950 and 1955.

Finally, it is the year of Léon-Gontran Damas's election in the French parliament, gathering the triumvir of Negritude in the legislative arena of political decisions for about three years.²⁶⁰ On the world stage, it is important to recall that just a year earlier: India became independent; Alioune Diop founded a periodical whose title *Présence Africaine* was suggested by Sartre; Césaire saw the first English translation of his celebrated *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*. What I mean to suggest with this list of international events related to the poets of Negritude is that their poetical discourse no longer seemed sufficient an apparatus with which to vindicate their cause. I argue that the discursive reorientation of Negritude from anti-colonial thinking to global imagining did not happen in spite of the lack of adequacy of poetry but because of it.

In the political arena where colonialism was felt as coming to an end one way or another, a new discourse had to be found and formed to adapt to the new world that seemed to rise from the ashes of war. The desire of pursuing risky alternative political and economic development, if only because of the world-historical opening that the end of World War II presented, is perhaps one of Negritude's most consequential (and least acknowledged) self-critical reflections. Without this readiness for risk-taking, would Césaire have given in to hexagonal politics for economic equality in the making of the still-controversial law of departmentalization? Would Senghor have failed multiple attempts at West African federations because of his troubled relation to De Gaulle's strategizing France's political and economic grip on the post-colonies? Would they have taken as much poetical and literary resources to paint an ever-elusive "Africanity?" These questions belong to the hypothetical and cannot be answered. Yet, as I argue

²⁶⁰ Damas was elected in *député* in the *Assemblée Nationale* on February 10, 1948 after the accidental death of René Jadfard, and remained in position until July 4, 1951 when he lost the election. See http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire/tables_archives/leon-damas.asp

in my introduction, they are often the source of major criticism against Negritude. The poets of Negritude were certainly avid writers and utopian thinkers, but they were also highly trained intellectuals in the domain of literature and philosophy and elected public servants with mandate from their electorate. Therefore, it matters less to ask what were their ideal or utopian visions of a different world order, and more to inquire about the discourse that they created and organized to supplement the political compromises that their delicate position forced them to make. In simpler terms, what follows is not about what could have happened, but how the poets of Negritude, and especially Léopold Sédar Senghor, as subjects in the colonies, articulated differently these visions of and hopes for a post-war globality. In order to learn from their mistakes—which was not so much the imagination of utopian solutions to practical problems but, perhaps, the failure to properly address and theorize a discourse that would support their vision—it is necessary to uncover the conditions under which they made them: the end of World War II, the dislocation of the French empire, and a critical reassessment of their intellectual training. What follows attends to the relation of the poets of Negritude to each of these conditions.

Senghor's first publication after the war is the long essay "Vues sur l'Afrique Noire, où assimiler, non être assimilés."²⁶¹ In the immediate aftermath of World War II, France, victorious but weakened, no longer appears as an insurmountable obstacle to inevitable independence. Dedicated to French colonial official Robert Delavignette, the text yet opens with a quote about a

²⁶¹ In *Liberté I*, pp. 39-69. Allegedly, the title of the latter essay suggests a hope for a direct reversal of the policy of colonial assimilation. The original article was published in *La Communauté impériale française* (Paris: Editions Alsatia, 1945), alongside essays by Robert Lemaigen (a future French European Commissioner) and Sisowath Youtevong (who was to become the fourth Prime Minister of Cambodia from December 1946 to July 1947). Together with "De la liberté de l'âme ou éloge du métissage" published in the journal *L'Esprit*, "Vues sur l'Afrique Noire, où assimiler, non être assimilés" is the second piece to appear together with predominantly right-wing writings—perhaps a sign of Senghor's attempt to work "from within," as he had just been elected congressman (*député*) in the French Parliament.

“certain kind of patriotism and attachment to the French Empire.” But what French Empire? The first page of the essay is but a development that subtly opens the question of the “rethinking of colonialism.”²⁶² No later than the second page, Senghor’s prose becomes sharper. Building upon what he claims to read in Hubert Lyautey and Robert Delavignette, the poet restates what he calls “the colonial problem” as “nothing else but a provincial problem, a human problem.” The juxtaposition of “human” and “provincial” to characterize “colonialism” is ambivalent. One paragraph later, borrowing from the title of a book by Delavignette, Senghor seems to outbid his earlier claim: “*Sudan-Paris-Burgundy*. Paris uniting the two provinces.” Set between Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and a rural French region, Paris is a center as much as it is a thoroughfare. What follows that ambivalence is an avalanche of references to early modern metropolitan authors and movements: Descartes, Pascal, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the Society of the Friends of the Blacks, Voltaire, Abbé Grégoire, etc. This first-rate collection of classic authors learned in the French education system is not only an academic showcase from the first African to succeed in the prestigious *Agrégation de grammaire*. It occurs in a context in which, more or less surreptitiously, in the aftermath of World War II, the transformation of the colonial empire was perceived as inevitable and opened for many concerned intellectuals the thinking of the forms that such transformation could take. In short, the evolving political situation at the time, along with intellectual debates on blackness,

²⁶² In *Liberté I*, p. 39. The quote is from General Hubert Lyautey in his last book, *Paroles d’Action* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1927). Deceased in 1937, Lyautey had been the first French Resident-General in Morocco from 1912 to 1925, and commissioner of the Paris Colonial Exhibition of 1931, showcasing the Empire in Metropolitan France. Later study has it that Lyautey became associated with France’s growing fascist movement in the 1930s—he admired Benito Mussolini, and was associated with the far right “Croix de Feu.” See Jacques Szaluta, “Marshal Pétain’s Ambassadorship to Spain: Conspiratorial or Providential Rise toward Power?” in *French Historical Studies* 8.4 (1974): 517. For the larger context of this move, see Henry Lémery, *D’une république à l’autre: Souvenirs de la mêlée politique, 1894-1944* (Paris: Table Ronde, 1964), p. 15 and passim. Given the date of publication of the latter studies, it is unlikely that those information were known and/or available at the time.

Africanness, post-imperialism and post-colonialism, gave rise to more than two options. Suddenly, Congressman Senghor and Mayor Césaire could, at least in theory, contemplate effectively changing the false binary—some would say the blackmail—between assimilation and independence.²⁶³ Though Senghor’s writings sometimes appear as an undeniably example of what a “successful assimilation” looks like, they also represent a laboratory of ideas for the critical evaluation of the situation on the ground. Now an elected public servant having one foot in Senegal and another in the French parliament, Senghor can supplement literary subversion with political negotiations: degree of autonomy, states’ sovereignty, and role of the soon-to-be-dislocated French Empire. As Cédric Robinson notices, the immediate aftermath of World War II gives rise to a *petit bourgeoisie*—a class of Black middle-class civil servants who benefited from their “higher” position in the colonial hierarchy that had its origins in the mission schools.²⁶⁴ Though they were expected by the colonial state to form docile functionaries, the success of their mission revolved around not only religious conversion but also the creation of a class that was

²⁶³ Here again, Frederick Cooper’s interdisciplinary work the postwar period in *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014) and Gary Wilder’s recent archival findings gathered in *Freedom Time* on the political position of the poets of Negritude between 1945 and 1960, arguing for a decolonization without independence and a federalism that was not De Gaulle’s idea of a “preferred” (i.e., “unequal”) partnership, are crucial. This is not to say that there was no blackmail coming from French or American “negotiations,” or that indeed, the threats were not carried on. To give but one example, Guinea won independence at the price of a drastic cut in Western financial investments, not mentioning the withdrawal, overnight, of the quasi-totality of functionaries of Western governments when Sékou Touré declared independence. See in particular, Mairi Stewart MacDonald, “The Challenge of Guinean Independence, 1958-1971,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 2009. For a general study of the influence of the United States in the independence of colonial countries, see Robert B. Rakove, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). On the role of De Gaulle’s policy regarding African independences, in particular the “shift” from “federation” to “cooperation” in 1960, see Dorothy S. White, *Black Africa and De Gaulle: From the French Empire to Independence* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979); and Baadikko Mammadu, *Françafrique: l’échec. L’Afrique postcoloniale en question* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2001).

²⁶⁴ See Cédric Robinson, *Black Marxism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), p. 179-180. In this chapter, Robinson focuses on English imperialism and its conflict with the British “indirect rule.” I locate here a similar working in the yet different context of French assimilation policy, for Senghor openly refers to “the idea of an indigenous elite” that fuels the fear of the “metropolitan bourgeoisie.” In *Liberté I*, p. 44. It is also important to recall Senghor’s training in a Catholic school and, even so briefly, his consideration of a career neither in politics nor in poetry, but in the seminary.

termed “Civilized Christian.”²⁶⁵ When the school outperformed itself, its success was acknowledged in the words of missionary-educated Africans, like Senghor, who “demanded social equality and political rights.”²⁶⁶ In the hybrid position of an African trained in Catholic school and a student formed at the heart of France’s academic machine of ideological production (the Sorbonne), Senghor’s demands within the hemicycle of the Parliament are grounded in the two sides of what he claims to be his hybridity: an all-too-French universalism and a West-African particularism. “For is *reason* not identical in *all* men?” he asked rhetorically and sarcastically in 1946 in an unreferenced paraphrase of the opening paragraph of Descartes’s *Discourse of Method*.²⁶⁷

“I do not ask for a preferential treatment in the A.O.F [French Western Africa], I only ask that it

²⁶⁵ Victor Murray, “Missions and Indirect Administration,” in *Oxford University Summer School on Colonial Administration* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1938), pp. 50-51. On the paradoxical relationship between English Christian missions and the imperial interests of the colonial states, see Arthur Mayhew, who also remarks that the ambivalent character of a successful education potentially detrimental to the colonial administration warranted a change in the training of students: “Before the Great War, education was undoubtedly too ‘literary’ (...) From 1925 onwards, great emphasis was laid on vocational training.” See “Education in the Colonies,” *ibid.*, pp. 84-85. Mamadou Diouf attends to the specifics of the French aspect of the relation between religious schooling and colonial administration, particularly the collaboration between French colonial administrators and Muslim leaders, noting that in that area, “the difference between direct and indirect rule associated, respectively with French and British imperialisms, real in theory, became somewhat irrelevant in practice.” See *Tolerance, Democracy, and Sufis in Senegal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), p. 44. Souleymane Bachir Diagne has also insisted on the historicity of both Islam and Africa, from the age of the manuscripts of Timbuktu to the post-colonial state. See, among other references, “Islam in Africa: Examining the Notion of an African Identity within the Islamic World,” in *A Companion to African Philosophy*, ed. Kwasi Wiredu (Oxford: Blackwell publishing, 2004), pp. 374-383.

²⁶⁶ Penelope Hetherington, *British Paternalism and Africa, 1920-40* (London: Frank Cass, 1978), p. 11. Quoted in Robinson, *op cit.*, p. 180. Senghor claims exactly that on August 8, 1946. See the reproduction of an interview he gave in the journal *Gavroches*, in *Liberté II*, “Nous ne voulons plus être des sujets,” p. 18. It is to be noticed that these rights are always framed, if not as universal, at least as coming from an Europe that remains the reference. As Aimé Césaire vividly criticizes in his *Discourse on Colonialism*, even a book on “African philosophy” such as Belgian missionary Father Placide Tempels’s *La philosophie bantoue* (published the same year as Senghor’s piece, 1945), becomes a ruse to justify the disrespect of indigenous property, liberty, and sovereignty, insofar as the “philosophy” is respected for its connection with European thought. Indeed, for Séverine Kodjo-Grandvaux, Tempels’s book is often considered one of the essential works of contemporary African philosophy, not for what it says, but for how African philosophers positioned themselves subsequently to it. See Séverine Kodjo-Grandvaux, *Philosophies Africaines* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 2013), p. 26.

²⁶⁷ The debate was held on March 21, 1946 and is recorded in the *Journal Officiel* of the Parliament, public domain, available on the online website of the *Assemblée Nationale*: http://4e.republique.jo-an.fr/page2/1946_p945ac.pdf?q=Senghor. Emphasis is mine. One should also notice the same unacknowledged reference to Descartes in Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism*, written in the same period: 1946-1960. In the non-literary genre of his political interventions in the French Parliament, Senghor’s remarks are often sarcastic and mocking his audience. Here for instance, the rhetorical question on equality stands on equal foot with a denouncing of the colonial administration’s use of public education to train “gullible small civil servants submitted to their masters.” See the reproduction of the debate in the Parliament as the opening piece of *Liberté II, Nation et Voie Africaine du Socialisme*, p. 10.

be done justice.” In his philosophical writings, however, Senghor resorts to the Gospel of Mark to warn against the danger of reproducing colonial and imperial divisive policies: “A house divided against itself cannot stand.”²⁶⁸

The religious undertone which conditioned the political unity that transcends the empire is not without relation to the Spaniards’ *mestizaje* understood as a mode of government merging the power of the Church and the rise of Spain as a nation-state in the early years of the Latin American conquest.²⁶⁹ Indeed, elaborating on a soon-to-be-past French colonialism and a soon-to-come African post-colonialism, Senghor reframes the transition period in terms of what he calls the “Catholic question:” a debate on the legitimacy of missions and the evangelization of black peoples, between Francis Aupiais, a clergyman stationed in Dahomey (an area of the present-day country of Benin), and Marcel Griaule, a French anthropologist who purported to present the religious ideas of the Dogon people as a coherent metaphysical cosmogony.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Senghor, “Vues sur l’Afrique Noire, où assimiler, non être assimilés,” p. 45 and 59. The quote from the Gospel is from Mark 3:25. It has been noticed that Mark emphasizes colonialism and imperialism more than theology or philosophy. According to Horsley, “Whatever theological doctrine is supposedly found in Mark, however, is the creation of theologians. The Gospel of Mark itself can be recognized as a story... ostensibly about historical events under Roman imperial rule.” See Richard A Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark’s Gospel* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2001), p. x. Horsley nuances his political claims in *Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2001).

²⁶⁹ See María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, “Jean Franco, in Her Own Words: An Interview” in *PMLA* 131.3 (2006), p.734f, as well as *Indian Given: Racial Geographies across Mexico and the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), pp. 33-65 for a discussion of *mestizaje* as an important factor in creating Catholic unity in Latin America.

²⁷⁰ One also recalls the first instance of this “Catholic question” in the well-known “Valladolid Controversy” in 1550, often regarded as the first politico-theological debate in European history to discuss the rights and treatment of colonized peoples, which staged Bishop of Chiapas Bartolomé de las Casas against Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda. Trying to resolve the politico-theological dispute, Francisco de Vitoria recast the debate in philosophical and legal terms, between the ‘the right to go to war’ (*jus ad bellum*) and “right conduct in war” (*jus in bello*). On the history of the debate, see Hanke, Lewis, *All Mankind is One: A study of the Disputation Between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda in 1550 on the Intellectual and Religious Capacity of the American Indian* (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974); also Daniel Brunstetter, “Just War against Barbarians: Revisiting the Valladolid Debates between Sepúlveda and Las Casas,” in *Political Studies*, 59.3 (2011): 733-752. Carl Schmitt approaches that historical dispute as a defining moment for the beginning of international law. See *The Nomos of the Earth*, trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, Publishing, 2006), especially pp. 101-125, “Justification of the Land Appropriation of a New World.”

The latter argued that colonialism should not be concerned with religion, while for the former religion should promote a reformed humanitarian empire.²⁷¹ For Senghor, the debate was an instantiation of the broader opposition between science and religion: “a debate that could not reach any conclusion because it opposed a man of faith and a man of science.”²⁷² It is in between these two extremes that Senghor posits himself as a hybrid semi-providential man, albeit in a humble manner that only hopes for happiness: “Can I hope to be happier, I, who is black and catholic at the same time? I can at least attempt a synthesis.”²⁷³

The surprising synthesis between an undeniable racial claim (“I am black”) and a religious identity (“I am catholic”) tainted by universalism (the poet recalls the Greek root of catholicism, “*katholikos*,” meaning “universal”) is articulated in the midst of an intellectual criticism of all hitherto intellectual systems—that Henri Lefebvre later calls “the old rationalism, the old liberalism, the old individualism” to leave untouched “only Catholicism and

²⁷¹ Both critical of colonialism and trained by at the *Institut d’Ethnologie* (founded in 1925) by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, their way of navigating the colonial endeavor differs in the means to publicize their experience in the field: for Griaule, “traditional” ethnographic fieldwork is followed by a report and a book; for Aupiais, a unique body of films made in Dahomey (present-day Benin) between 1929 and 1930 (that nearly resulted in his ex-communication and were banned from the Colonial Exhibition). But what can film studies do for the understanding of the colonial nexus, beyond legitimizing the camera’s overgeneralized complicity in the subjugation of racial others? This question was comprehensively addressed by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (New York: Routledge, 1989), and later by Fatimah Tobing Rony in *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996). For a particular analysis of film studies and the role of Father Aupiais, see Paula Amad, “Visual Riposte: Looking Back at the Return of the Gaze as Postcolonial Theory’s Gift to Film Studies,” in *Cinema Journal* 52.3 (2013): 49-74. Although Aupiais ended up challenging the Catholic Church, he originally traveled to Africa as a servant of the civilizing mission, de facto supporting France’s colonial consolidations in the 1920s. Yet, his films bear the trace of a tension between “the field” and its colonial background. If *Le Dahomey Chrétien* (*Christian Dahomey*, 1930) was shot for and owned by the Catholic Missionary of Lyon, it is also heavily edited in service to a message supporting the church’s role in the colonies. See Martine Balard, *Dahomey 1930: Mission catholique et culte vodou, l’oeuvre de Francis Aupiais (1877–1945), missionnaire et ethnographe* (Perpignan: Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 1998).

²⁷² That the discipline of ethnography was called by Senghor “scientific” is revealing of a dynamic at the time where French ethnography was caught in the middle of its literary influences and its scientific aspiration. On the history of the development of ethnography in France, in particular its ties to both scientific and literary traditions, see Vincent Debaene, *L’adieu au voyage* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009).

²⁷³ Senghor, “Vues sur l’Afrique Noire, où assimiler, non être assimilés,” p. 55.

Marxism.”²⁷⁴ At the time, we must recall that “Negritude” is only the sum of scattered poems and essays. It is Sartre who, interpreting the texts after their gathering in Senghor’s *Anthology* in 1948, transforms the sparse collection into a literary and political movement—more precisely, into an intellectual step marching towards Marxism. In his own words, Sartre did not “understand” Marx—let alone Marxism—until after 1945.²⁷⁵ At a moment where a post-colonial world seems, if not inevitable, at least possible, “Marxism” does not form yet an organized discourse with which to think beyond the artificial polarization of the colonial order. No synthesis cannot therefore be made between Catholicism and Marxism as Senghor perhaps hopes,²⁷⁶ but it fuels the need for the creation of another discourse with which to imagine another kind of synthesis: a graft.

In the third part of the 1945 essay, after the initial section on “Contact” and a dwelling in the “Community of Sine,” Senghor calls for the “Modification of the French Graft.” Graft, or *greffe*, is a word that comes from horticulture. It means that the tissues from one plant are inserted into those of another so that their growth system may become one. In a way,

²⁷⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *Le Marxisme* (Paris: P.U.F, 1948), p. 14; also Tony Judt, *Marxism and the French Left: Studies on Labour and Politics in France, 1830-1981* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), p. 181.

²⁷⁵ “Oh sure, I knew what Marxism was, as I’ve said many times before, I had read and re-read Marx, but that is nothing: you really being to understand something in context with the world. To understand Marxism meant above all understanding the class struggle—and that I only understood after 1945.” In *Sartre by himself*, ed. Alexandre Astruc and Michel Contat (New York : Urizen Books, 1978), pp. 77-78. In another work, Sartre notes that Marx was read in the French universities in the mid 1920s, but only to refute him. Worse, “Communist students were very careful not to appeal to Marxism or even to mention it in their examinations; had they done so, they would have failed,” Sartre recalls in *The Problem of Method* (London: Methuen, 1963), p. 17. It is worth recalling that Marx’s works were, besides *Capital*, not available in French until 1945, and still, mostly through the reading of Hegel and Hegel’s critics, such as Hyppolite and Kojève.

²⁷⁶ It should be noticed, though, that as Marxism becomes a more theorized discourse with the new translations of Marx’s early works into French in 1948, such a synthesis between Catholicism and Marxism is attempted by prominent philosophers at the time, whom Senghor reads, such as Maritain. See Jacques Maritain, *Humanisme Intégral* (Paris: Aubier, 1947 [1936]), pp. 53-54; Luc Somerhausen, *L’humanisme agissant de Karl Marx* (Paris: Richard Masse, 1946). Roger Garaudy, *Perspectives de l’homme: Existentialisme, Pensée Catholique, Marxisme* (Paris: P.U.F, 1959), pp. 196-197.

it amounts to a parasitical move from which, once the grafted species have been fully contaminated, by way of hybridity—one of the many English translations of the French *métissage*. Senghor’s quote of Aupiais indeed dwells in the horticulture metaphor used by the cleric: “The graft that is going to improve, completely transform its leaves, fruits, even its essence.”²⁷⁷ It is as though, for the graft to be successful, there was to be a fabricated essence to begin with. As if to hurry, Senghor expresses a feeling of urgency, “Old Africa is dying,”²⁷⁸ in a move that parallels what he had written just a decade before where “Old Europe desperately need[ed] elements of humanity.” Hopelessly, it appears as though neither part of the binomial Europe-Africa could become autonomous. As in 1935, it is to the normative discipline of ethnography that Senghor will appeal to rescue “the Old.” But if, in *L’Étudiant Noir*, he had written that he would “not cross the Atlantic today,” in 1945, Senghor is now ready to make the move.

In the rest of the essay, the influence of the Harlem Renaissance is barely veiled. Constructing a connection over the Atlantic between “Africa” and “America,” Senghor argues for the birth of a “New Negro:” “If the *New Negro* must have his literature, as in America, it is at these sources that he will draw. (...) Once again, it is the ultimate goal of Colonization: an intellectual fecundation, a spiritual graft.”²⁷⁹ The “New Negro” is doubtless an implied reference to Alain Locke’s eponymous anthology published in 1925, and the “Black Soul” a direct allusion

²⁷⁷ Senghor, “Vues sur l’Afrique Noire, où assimiler, non être assimilés,” p. 56. The original written by Francis Aupiais is referenced without title or date, and is available in the *Archives des Missions Africaines* in Rome (AMA), 3 H. 99, p. 12.

²⁷⁸ Senghor, “Vues sur l’Afrique Noire, où assimiler, non être assimilés,” p. 66.

²⁷⁹ Senghor, “Vues sur l’Afrique Noire, où assimiler, non être assimilés,” p. 68.

to Du Bois's first major book.²⁸⁰ Senghor does not dwell on it. He merely uses it as a pivot between the "cultural" strength of Negro-Americans (they have "a literature") and their "biological" shortcomings (they are further away from "the source"). Between America and Africa, biological and cultural grafting, there is an ever elusive space that Senghor can never quite fill, and yet that never disappears from his ethnographical frame of reference. But as World War II gives way to a sense of profound anguish resulting from the barbarities of Nazism and fascism, Senghor's texts in the immediate aftermath of the war foreground an ambivalence between a desire to use the troubled and weak state of Europe to engage with decolonization and to look away to the United States as an example both to follow and to avoid. Let us recall that in 1945, Senghor, congressman in the French Parliament, develops a radical vision for decolonization without national independence that he calls "federalism" and starts coining the word "Euramérique" in the same way he talks about "Eurafrique."²⁸¹ And yet both Césaire and Senghor are aware of the danger of appropriating the American example as it were, supplementing one form of dehumanizing capitalist colonialism for another. If, for Césaire, "[European] colonialism works to decivilize the colonizer," American capitalism also represents

²⁸⁰ Alain Locke's anthology was partially translated into French in the leftist journal *Europe* under the title *Le Nègre Nouveau* in 1931 (No. 102, pp. 289-300), but only in 1959 was Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk* published in French (in *Présence Africaine*), according to the records of the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. Du Bois contributed to Locke's anthology with an influential (yet untranslated) essay titled "The Negro Mind Reaches Out," in which peoples from African descent might "shadow" the diverse forms of European colonialisms. This means that, either there was another French translation of Locke's anthology that circulated at the time and has thus disappeared (we know, for instance, that Paulette Nardal, who was a distant member of the Negritude group in Paris at the time, offered to translate the entire book by Locke for Payot Edition in 1927, although it never appeared in print; see Brent Edwards, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18), or that Senghor read the English texts (of Locke and Du Bois) in the original. We know that Senghor often offered his own English translations of Harlem Renaissance authors—if only briefly—in subsequent essays. See, for instance, Senghor, *Liberté III*, "Problématique de la Négritude," pp. 274-278.

²⁸¹ Hervé de Carmoy, *L'Euramérique* (Paris: P.U.F, 2008) makes no reference to Senghor's use of the term, focusing rather on what he sees as "new" in the twenty-first century: a union between Europe and the United States, giving rise to a new globality, "la mondialité" (3). The word itself is also known as Laurussia, and refers to continental mass which resulted from the fusion of north-western Europe and North America during the Caledonian orogeny, 433 million years ago. See "Euramerica" in *A Dictionary of Ecology* (Oxford University Press, 2010), online edition.

a “prodigious mechanization, the mechanization of man; the gigantic rape of everything intimate, undamaged, undefiled that, despoiled as we are, our humanity has still managed to preserve.”²⁸² In the search for a viable alternative to European Colonialism and American Capitalism, the poets of Negritude, now elected officials, find in their readings at the time a discourse that responded to their belief in a humanism that would expand their struggle beyond just anti-colonialism.

In the library of the French Parliament, Senghor starts reading “early Marx” texts.²⁸³ As Henri Lefebvre puts it, the study of Marx’s early writings in the postwar years was “the decisive philosophical event [of] the period.”²⁸⁴ In 1947, one year before the publication of Sartre’s preface, Alexander Kojève publishes his influential *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* in which, among other important and controversial claims, the passages on history and especially the master-slave dialectic bring a lot to (and are influenced by) Marxist scholarship—although there is little on the relation between Marx and Hegel *per se*. In 1947 still, appears a book that Senghor reads right away: an extensive French translation of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*,²⁸⁵ whose publication is symptomatic of a re-reading of Marx at the time that questions what is then seen as his scientific writings on political economy.

²⁸² Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, op. cit., p. 35 and 77.

²⁸³ Senghor recalls that it is only after having been elected that he reads Marx’s early works in the library of the Palais Bourbon, along with the works of Lenin, Lefebvre, Jaurès, Mao and Gandhi. See Senghor, *La poésie de l’action* (Paris: Stock, 1980), pp. 130-138; also in Gary Wider, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), p. 319.

²⁸⁴ Henri Lefebvre, “Le marxisme et la pensée française”, *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 137-138 (1957), p. 114. See also Ornella Pompeo Faracovi, *Il marxismo francese contemporaneo fra dialettica e struttura (1945–1968)* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1972), especially pp. 12–18, where it is recalled that “postwar French philosophical culture was for a long time interested almost exclusively in the thought of the young Marx.” For a history of the context of the reception of the “young Marx” in France at the time, see Marcello Musto, “The ‘Young Marx’ Myth in Interpretations of the Economic–Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” *Critique*, 43:2 (2015), 233-260.

²⁸⁵ However, some Marxist critics note that that particular translation is not only incomplete and truncated, it is also filled with translation mistakes. See Jean Callewaert, “Les manuscrits économique-philosophiques de Karl Marx,” in *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*. 49, No. 23, 1951. pp. 393-394; Louis Althusser, « Les Manuscrits de 1844 de Karl Marx » in *Pour Marx* (Paris: La Découverte, 2005 [1965]), pp. 153-160. It is not until the 1962 retranslation and edition by Emile Bottigelli, that the French readers of Marx will have a more acute and complete translation.

To tell the truth, the question of Marx's humanism has only arisen in the past few years, that is to say, since the publication of some of his early works. What he saw in those works was the effort that had allowed him to break free from the Hegelian method, and indeed to "get back on his feet." The important things, for him, were the concrete solutions—economic and political—exposed in the works posterior to 1851. But for us, men of 1947, men of the post-two-wars period, who have just escaped the bloody contempt of dictatorships and are threatened by other dictatorships, what benefit can we get from these early works!²⁸⁶

Indeed, with the publication of the "early works" in France—also the first French translation of Marx's 1881 "Letter to Vera Zassoulitch"²⁸⁷—the relation between Marx, Marxism, and Capitalism is the site of an intense debate on what Louis Althusser will later term the "epistemological break."²⁸⁸ For Althusser, the "break," which represents Marx becoming more "scientific" and focused on economics than remaining a student of Hegel's philosophy, is located in non-

²⁸⁶ Senghor, "Marxisme et humanisme" in *La Revue Socialiste*, No. 19, March 1948, pp. 201-216. The article was translated into English by Erich Fromm as "Socialism is a Humanism," in *Socialist Humanism* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), pp. 53-67. Both French and English titles echo Sartre's famous 1945 lecture, "L'existentialisme est un humanisme." The article can be found in a full and an altered form in "Marxisme et Humanisme" and "Nation et Socialisme," in *Liberté II* (Paris: Seuil, 1971), pp. 29-44 and pp. 234-271.

²⁸⁷ Karl Marx, "Lettre à Vera Zassoulitch du 8 Mars 1881," published with a facsimile in Maximilien Rubel, "Karl Marx et le Socialisme Populiste Russe," *La Revue Socialiste*, 11 Mai 1947, pp. 544-559. Also, Vera Zasulich, "Vera Zasulich: A letter to Marx," *Late Marx and the Russian Road*, ed. Teodor Shanin (New York: Monthly Review, 1983). The actual letter of Vera Zassulitch to Marx, in French, is only available in the second volume of Marx's works in the *Pleiade* edition (alongside Marx's drafts and response) published in 1968, p. 1568.

²⁸⁸ Louis Althusser, *Pour Marx* (Paris: Maspero, 1965); trans. Allen Lane (London: The Penguin Press, 1969). Althusser writes that he borrows the term from the philosopher of science, Gaston Bachelard. Etienne Balibar notes however that Bachelard's term was *rupture*, not *coupure*. For the history and criticism of the concept, see Etienne Balibar, "Le concept de 'coupure épistémologique' de Gaston Bachelard à Louis Althusser," in *Écrits pour Althusser* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991); "From Bachelard to Althusser: the concept of epistemological break," in *Economy and Society*, Vol. 7, Issue 3, 1978. Bottigelli, addresses that question in an 80-page preface to the second edition in 1969. Althusser comes back to the same theme in an essay, "Est-il simple d'être Marxiste en Philosophie?" published in 1975. More recently, Etienne Balibar asked the question again in the very first page of his *Philosophy of Marx*: "Marxist philosophy or philosophy of Marx?" The staging of the break that interests Althusser, almost as a performative gesture, is a model of change that does not think an epistemological break as a radical discontinuity that separates two invariants paradigms, but rather a transformation (Althusser writes: "the mutation"), or what Etienne Balibar has attempted to call a "discontinuity without invariance." See Balibar (1979), p. 223.

published early works, such as the *Manuscripts*.²⁸⁹ In his political writings of the postwar period, Senghor strews his interventions with quotes from the *Manuscripts*, the *German Ideology*, and the “Letter to Vera Zassoulitch” at the same time as he argues against the so-called objectivity of scientific statistics and, indeed, argues against the “scientific Marx” of texts such as *Capital*.²⁹⁰ In 1947 for instance, in a debate within the hemicycle of the French Parliament about monetary subsidies for education in AOF, reproduced in *Liberté II* under the title “L’enseignement: base de l’évolution des peuples,” Senghor ironically remarks:

I have to confess I remain skeptical. I know all too well how *statistics* are set up by the executive management in charge of education in West Africa. One example among others: the *métis*, depending on their success, are categorized among Europeans or Africans. Parodying the famous verse of the poet:

According to whether you are powerful or miserable,

*The Judgments of Court will return to you white or black.*²⁹¹

The quote from the famous fable by La Fontaine certainly allows Senghor to foreground a use of color not as racially determined but as politically, economically, or juridically conditioned. Indeed, the subject of *métissage* stands as witness to a politico-economic manipulation of race.

²⁸⁹ The staging of the break that interests Althusser, almost as a performative gesture, is a model of change that does not think an epistemological break as a radical discontinuity that separates two invariant paradigms, but rather a transformation (Althusser writes: “the mutation”), or what Étienne Balibar has attempted to call a “discontinuity without invariance.” See Balibar (1979), p. 223.

²⁹⁰ The argument is most comprehensively explored in the long article “Marxism and Humanism” of 1948, reprinted in *Liberté II*, pp. 29-44. In 1949, Senghor also refers to the “Letter to Vera Zassoulitch” (in *Naissance du Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais*) where the singular nature of the Russian commune provides another example to the way in which the general argument of primitive accumulations is theorized, conjecturing that the capitalization of land may not happen at the same speed everywhere. That same year of 1949, records from the debate in the Parliament shows a number of reference to Karl Marx, “qui n’a jamais été autant lu que dans les temps présents” to quote Georges Bidault on July 26, 1949. On the otherwise tense relation between Bidault and Senghor, see Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*.

²⁹¹ Senghor, *Liberté II, Nation et Voie Africaine du Socialisme*, p. 11. The quotation is from Jean de La Fontaine, *Fables of La Fontaine*, trans. Marianne Moore (New York: Viking Press, 1954), p. 144. Translation modified.

Concurrently with Senghor's reading of the Marx's early works in the library of the National Assembly where he pronounces these lines, the figure of the *métis* is treated as a point of articulation: neither white nor black, both potentially exploiter and already exploited. Yet, when Senghor later writes about the *métis* as "torn from *his* order, thrown in the suffering of exile, the contradiction of *métissage* and of Capitalism," he is not talking about the European or the African but about the Negro-Caribbean subject on the other side of the Atlantic.²⁹² The peculiar status of the *métis* is not only to be the example of a means for a moment of articulation. In the same parliamentary intervention, Senghor adds:

I know it is a question of colonial bourgeoisie, that the question of race does not matter much (...). The native is always the problem, whether it be black, yellow or even white. It is a question of class, and it is why I speak of Europeans and Africans, not of Black and Whites.²⁹³

The *métis*, color-free but class-defined, also becomes the site for the development of another discourse where the intersectionality of race and class can be rethought. In 1935, W.E.B. Du Bois's monumental *Black Reconstruction* had broken away from the purely racial narrative to attend to the relation between racism and its economic foundations. As David Levering Lewis notes, already in "Reconstruction and its Benefits" that Du Bois delivered at the 1909 meeting of the American Historical Association, such "reinterpretation [was] incompatible with the contemporary historiography, advancing facts and arguing positions diverging so radically from what the gentlemen listening to Du Bois knew that it could find no meaningful place in their tradition of

²⁹² Senghor, "Comme les lamantins vont boire à la source" in *Liberté I*, p. 225.

²⁹³ Senghor, *Liberté II, Nation et Voie Africaine du Socialisme*, p. 12. The debate was held on March 21, 1946 and is also recorded in the *Journal Officiel* of the Parliament, public domain, available on the online website of the *Assemblée Nationale* at http://4e.republique.jo-an.fr/page2/1946_p945ac.pdf?q=Senghor

enquiry.”²⁹⁴ Twenty-five years later, *Black Reconstruction* apparently suffered the same fate.²⁹⁵ But in the post-1945 era where Senghor evolves, and from a platform at the French parliament where he stands, there seems to be opportunities for change. It is doubtful that Senghor read Du Bois’s masterpiece, but it inscribes the poet of Negritude in a genealogy of thinkers that investigated the problem of race away from the sole question of ethnicity. When in the years following, Senghor goes as far as claiming W.E.B Du Bois and Claude MacKay as intellectual antecedents, the former as “the true father of the Negritude movement,” the latter as “the true inventor of Negritude,”²⁹⁶ he retains a vanguardist conviction adapted from the American New Negro movement such as W.E.B Du Bois’s early vindication of a “talented tenth,” that an elite group of educated intellectuals were to lead their fellow-men and women towards a better life.²⁹⁷

In a way, the poets of Negritude constitute a highly educated vanguard whose political positions both support and arise from their literary and philosophical imagination as it transforms from an anti-colonial fight to a more global struggle. To adapt the narrative of Negritude from a colonial to a post-colonial global perspective, Césaire and Senghor expand their frame of political and cultural references to an unexplored Americanism, precisely because it seems to contradict the Euro-African paradigm. They operate a discursive shift from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic.

²⁹⁴ David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race*, pp. 383-384.

²⁹⁵ See Claire Parfait, “Rewriting History: The Publication of *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935), in *Book History*, Vol. 12, 2009 p. 287. As an indication of the change in the historiography of the field, Eric Foner states in his review of David W. Blight’s 2001 *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*: “Today, nearly all historians view slavery as the war’s fundamental cause, emancipation as central to its meaning and consequences, and Reconstruction as a praiseworthy effort to establish the principle of racial justice in America” (*New York Times Book Review*, 4 March 2001).

²⁹⁶ Senghor, *Liberté III*, “Problématique de la Négritude,” p. 278; *Liberté I*, “La poésie négro-américaine,” p. 116.

²⁹⁷ This is also the conclusion of Gary Wilder in his exploration of decolonization and what he terms “post national” democracy, i.e., the refusal of the poets of Negritude to reduce decolonization to national independence. See *Freedom Time*, op. cit., p. 241-243. Indeed, Du Bois offers a self-critical appreciation of his early “talented tenth” that very year of 1948. See W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth Memorial Address,” 1948, in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Cornel West eds., *The Future of the Race* (New York: Knopf, 1996).

Sartre had been correct in seeing in Negritude the need for solidarity between oppressed peoples, but had quickly interpreted it as a pre-text for the sole class-struggle. The development of a discourse on *métissage* that timely follows Sartre's definition of Negritude and a re-reading of Marx is Césaire's and Senghor's response to this desire for solidarity that must expand beyond the Mediterranean and to the Atlantic. Indeed, soon, the poets are involved in the organization of World Congresses and World Festivals where *métissage* becomes more than a reference in passing: it becomes a political concept with which to take their imagination beyond continental borders, reaching to the diaspora.

II. Negritude in Worldly Meetings

The first of these world events occurs in September 1956, under the ambitious title of “First World Congress of Black Writers and Artists.” 1956 also foregrounds a year of intense political and literary activities in the colonial world. Inescapably, different events and voices arise simultaneously. Politically, New Year’s Day sets the tone: Sudan, the largest state of Africa with its one million inhabitants, becomes independent. In March 1956, France withdraws its protectorate from Morocco and Tunisia, *de facto* recognizing the two countries’ independence. Yet, the Algerian war (then only called a “disorderly event”) intensifies in the meantime, and Césaire, together with 146 other congressmen from the French Communist Party, votes for “exceptional measures to restore order in Algeria.”²⁹⁸ As is well-known, Césaire resigns from the Communist Party a few months later.²⁹⁹ 1956 is also a year of intense publication for the poets of Negritude. Césaire sees his works translated into German by Africanist Janheinz Jahn: his first play, *And The Dogs Were Silent*, appears alongside a compendium of chosen poetry.³⁰⁰ Léon-Gontran Damas publishes his *Black-Label*, whose title in English foregrounds the

²⁹⁸ See the *Journal Officiel* of the Parliament, public domain, available on the online website of the *Assemblée Nationale*. It is only on June 10th, 1999, that the *Assemblée Nationale* will officially substitute the term “Guerre d’Algérie” to the expression “Opérations de maintien de l’ordre en Afrique du Nord,” henceforth separating the Algerian events from the long process of decolonization in the rest of its African possessions. For the latter, see “La France reconnaît qu’elle a fait la «guerre» en Algérie. L’Assemblée vote aujourd’hui un texte qui enterre le terme officiel d’«opérations de maintien de l’ordre».” *Libération*, June 10, 1999.

²⁹⁹ Although the famous “Letter to Maurice Thorez” is dated October 24, 1956, the *Journal Officiel de la République Française, Débats Parlementaires. Assemblée Nationale*, p. 4278, shows that Césaire officially submitted his motion to be withdrawn from the Communist parliamentary group on October 23—the same day as Budapest’s uprising against the Soviet Union. In so doing, Césaire is protesting not only against the dogma of Moscow over the singularities of minorities (in Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, etc.) but he is also interpreting that dogma as incompatible with the condition of colonized peoples as well as his singular condition of a “man of color.”

³⁰⁰ *Und die Hunde Schwiegen*, trans. Janheinz Jahn (Emsdetten: Lechte, 1956); *Sonnendolche. Poignards du Soleil. Lyrik von Den Antillen*, bilingual edition (Heidelberg: Wolfgang Rothe, 1956).

ambivalent position of the *métis*, sometimes expressed through the pejorative word “mulatto.” Indeed, *Black-Label* constitutes the *métis* as victim for the irremediable stigmata of racial discrimination inflicted by whites who defined as “black” anyone of color and therefore inferior.³⁰¹ Senghor’s compendium *Éthiopiennes* stages the same subject in a similar–yet more appreciative–manner: it extols the ambivalence of the *métis*. The development of a discourse on the *métis* and progressively, on *métissage*, is not isolated from the intellectual debates on blackness between writers, artists and scholars that arise in France or in French at the time. To name but a few, Fanon’s first major publication, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, appears in 1952; Édouard Glissant’s first compendium of poetry, *La Terre inquiète, lithographies de Wilfredo Lam*, dates back to 1955, and his first essay, *Soleil de la conscience*, is printed in 1956. Across the Atlantic, Jean Price-Mars offers multiple revisions of the colonial and post-colonial history of Haiti with *La République d’Haïti et la République Dominicaine. Les aspects divers d’un problème d’histoire, de géographie et d’ethnologie* in 1953, and *Le bilan des études ethnologiques en Haïti et le cycle du Nègre* in 1954. In the anglophone world, Richard Wright, then residing in Paris, is active in the elaboration of the periodical *Présence Africaine* and publishes *The Outsider* in 1953 (translated as *Le transfuge* in 1955), while James Baldwin publishes *Notes of a Native Son*—ten essays that tackle issues of race in America and Europe and rebuke Wright’s bestseller *Native Son*. Senghor’s life, at the time, spans two countries (Senegal and France). In a sense, it gives him access to a Paris often considered a culture capital

³⁰¹ On a detailed stylistic interpretation of *Black Label* as well as its place in the evolution of Damas’s thought and movement within Negritude, including his differences and similarities with both Césaire and Senghor, see Laurence M. Porter, “An Equivocal Negritude: Léon-Gontran Damas’s Lyric Masterpiece, *Black-Label* (1956),” in *Research in African Literatures* 41.4 (2010): 187-207. Also, F. Bart Miller, *Rethinking Negritude through Léon-Gontran Damas* (Amsterdam: Rodopi Editions, 2014), especially the fourth chapter: “Drinking to remember: Pre-histories and afterlives of Assimilation in *Black Label*.”

of the African diaspora, what Baldwin called in 1950 the “encounters on the Seine” among black intellectuals and artists from Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States.³⁰² In talking about “the American Negro,” it occurs to him that, while in Paris, he has a “need to establish himself in relation to his past and present,” in relation to his “American experience.” Not surprisingly, it is in Paris that these writers, artists and scholars are gathered in 1956 for the *First World Congress of Black Writers and Artists* where Paris, once again, is only a thoroughfare.

A. The First World Congress of Black Writers and Artists (1956)

As its designation indicates, the Congress was designed to showcase the world presence of black writers and artists. Hosted by *Présence Africaine*—the publication that was founded by one of the creators of the Negritude movement, Alioune Diop—it inscribes the Congress within the goal of the journal: to use writing—in its broadest sense—to make known the presence of Africans to the modern world.³⁰³ In the mission statement of the first issue, Alioune Diop writes: “The black man [*le noir*], conspicuous by his absence in the building up of the modern city, will be able to signify his presence little by little by contributing to the recreating of a humanism

³⁰² See James Baldwin “Encounters on the Seine: Black Meets Brown,” in *Collective Essays* (New York: The Library of America, 1998), pp. 85-90. Baldwin develops the topic further in his 1954 “A Question of Identity” where it is “from the vantage point of Europe” that the subject “discovers his country.”

³⁰³ The title of the journal, which purported an intention to fill a “lack” both of knowledge about Africa and of African producers of that knowledge, had been suggested to Diop by Sartre. According to Georges Balandier: “Diop and some friends envisaged the creation of a journal that would give a voice to the civilizations of Africa; it appeared in Paris soon after with a title, suggested by Sartre, that demanded the affirmation of an African *presence*.” Georges Balandier, “1946, Rencontres Dakaroises: Diop, Senghor, Monod,” in *Civilisés, dit-on* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), p. 75. Sartre’s interest in the black conditions in the United States is recalled by Simone De Beauvoir in *The Force of Circumstance*, Vol. 1, p. 33.

reflecting the true measure of man.”³⁰⁴ It is striking that the lamented past absence of the black man is not countered by the presence of a new black man, but rather by a presence of the “African” subject, metonym for all blacks from the continent and the diaspora. Indeed, the englobing gesture is framed not as an explanation of an objective fact retrieved from the past, but as a constitutive act for “a new race, mentally crossed [*mentalement métissée*].”³⁰⁵ The use of the adjective “métissée,” especially its association with the adverb “mentally,” does little to clarify the nature of this “new race,” but sets the terms for, perhaps, another way of addressing the racial issue away from just colonial interpretation of ethnicity—mostly through ethnography. Diop’s piece was important enough not only to be the first article of the first issue, but also for being translated by Richard Wright and included as the closing piece in the same issue. The tentativeness of Diop’s writing comes through when one compares the original with the English translation. While the translation keeps the original title borrowed from a Toucouleur proverb, “*Niam n’goura*,” it also intervenes in its interpretation by explaining both what it means and what it does not (“eat in order to live, not in order to get fat”). In the text, the translation reads that the new race is “mentally crossed” and that it will be “incapable of returning completely to our ancestral traditions” by virtue of “being neither white, yellow, nor black,” implying that, in Wright’s Diop, there was still the partial possibility of a return to a being of another sort (other color? color-less?). The original French is more subtle. There is no defining “being” that precedes the set of negations “Ni blancs, ni jaunes, ni noirs.”³⁰⁶ It is not that

³⁰⁴ Alioune Diop, “Niuam N’Goura, or *Présence Africaine’s raison d’être*,” trans. Richard Wright and Thomas Diop, *Présence Africaine* 1 (October-November 1947) : 190-91. The French original is on pages 7-14.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

³⁰⁶ Strikingly, it is how the Creolits also open their famous manifesto *Éloge de la créolité / In Praise of Creoleness*: “Neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians.” Their own translation astutely avoids any verb, hence exactly mirroring the original “Ni Européens, ni Africains, ni Asiatiques” at the expense of a more “clumsy” English.

Wright's word-choice is wrong, but wherever Diop alludes to a new way of constructing racialism, Wright's choice of words displays an essentialist perspective. Wright's name was on the masthead of *Présence Africaine* and his work was featured in the inaugural 1945 edition of Sartre's *Les Temps Modernes*.³⁰⁷ In other words, Wright was well versed in the debates that preoccupied French intellectuals, including Negritude, for some time. At the 1956 Congress, a divergence of interpretation between Diop and Wright seems to heighten. As his article was the first in the new journal, his intervention is the first in the meeting. In the first sentence of his editorial to the Congress, titled "Modern Culture and Our Destiny," resolutely forward-looking, he states: "In the modern world, where violence is gaining ground and the quiet ones are cruelly trampled upon, we have long felt the need to make known the presence of Negro men of culture." In the last talk, given by Richard Wright and titled "Tradition and Industrialization; the Plight of the Tragic Elite in Africa," the writer famously opens his statement by the pragmatic—if ironic: "Ladies and Gentlemen, the hour is late and I am pressed by time." As Henry Louis Gates remarks, it is doubtful that Wright's caution was due to a concern about time. Rather, the irony of his opening words seems to imply what the body of the text confirms a few paragraphs down: he doubted that what he deemed his progressive message would be understood by backward-looking Africans—most especially, the poets of Negritude whose work he was familiar

³⁰⁷ Richard Wright, "Le feu dans la nuée," trans. Marcel Duhamel, *Les Temps Modernes* 1 (October 1945), pp. 22–47. For an analysis of the relationship between Sartre and the color problem in the U.S in the after-war period, see Paige Arthur, *Unfinished Projects: Decolonization and the Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, 1945–1980* (London: Verso, 2010).

with.³⁰⁸ What is more, if the publication of Wright's communication in the collection *White Man, Listen* emphasizes a forward-looking secularization of Africa over against the failed promises of European Enlightenment, the verbatim version given at the conference, published in *Présence Africaine*, laments the backward-looking state of affairs he felt at the Congress. It is as though, what the poets of Negritude had expressed in their early writings of the 1930s and what Wright had translated and Sartre made famous, was to follow them with the indelible stamp of essentialism. No matter what Senghor or Césaire would later claim, they could not take back their original stance—doubtless filled with (and explained by) their youthful identity politics.³⁰⁹

Indeed, Senghor's paper, "The Spirit of Civilization or the Laws of Negro-African Culture," still carries an indubitably essentialist flavor. In the recorded closed-session debates, even Aimé Césaire acknowledges the questionable generalizations in Senghor's presentation. Quite pragmatically, Césaire notes that a twenty-minute paper cannot even begin to summarize a whole argument, let alone a whole continent. It is the impracticality and artificiality of the organization of the congress that must become the strength of forward-looking discussions on problems of culture and black identity:

³⁰⁸ Henry Louis Gates, *Tradition and the Black Atlantic: Critical Theory in the African Diaspora* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2010), p. 9. In "Richard Wright and African francophone intellectuals: a reassessment of the 1956 Congress of Black Writers in Paris" (in *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, Vol. 2, Issue 1 (2009) 29-42) Babacar M'Baye analyzes the pivotal role that Wright had in the development of *Présence Africaine* and Negritude despite his condescending views about Africans. Anthony Ratcliff also notices the targeted response of Wright to the Negritude's poets, arguing that Wright's speech was a direct response not to Diop but to Senghor's notion of an essentialist "Black culture." See "When Negritude Was In Vogue: Critical Reflections of the First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture in 1966," in *Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol. 6, Issue 7 (2014), 167-184.

³⁰⁹ Though his paper at the 1956 Congress, "L'esprit de la civilisation où les lois de la culture négro-Africaine" (that appears in *Liberté I*, pp. 96) still carries an indubitable essentialist aspect, Senghor also attempts to refute the irreversible dichotomy that people often accused him to advance: "The Negro is not devoid of reason, as I am supposed to have said. But his reason is not discursive, it is synthetic." Emphasis and translation are mine.

I know very well that this order is more or less artificial, but it was necessary, at least, that a minimum of order be introduced, without which we would have had a totally impertinent discussion (...) The speakers haven't been able to express all their thoughts.³¹⁰

In a similar vein, François Agblemagnon, from Togo, also acknowledges that Senghor's paper "sins by its generality... because it was necessary for it to sin by generality."³¹¹ In his own communication given the following day, "Culture and Colonization," Césaire seems to follow a questionable identitarian rhetoric on cultural purity giving credibility to Negritude's critics. In the conclusion of his paper, however, the poet allows for an opening. The plurality of peoples and their cultures (still acknowledged as a premise for a Negro-African world) is yet to be born. The goal is to enable this plurality to adapt to the conditions of a world in perpetual movement.³¹²

I believe that our particular cultures contain within them enough strength, enough vitality, enough regenerative power to *adapt themselves*, when objective conditions have been modified to the conditions of the modern world. (...) In our culture to be born, there will be, undoubtedly, new and old elements. Which new ones? Which old ones? Here only starts our ignorance. And to be honest, it is not up to one individual to give an answer.

³¹⁰ In *Présence Africaine*, No. 8-9-10, p. 72.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

³¹² Aimé Césaire, "Culture et Colonisation." The paper given at the Congress was published for the first time in *Présence africaine*, No. 8-9-10, June 1956. It was reprinted in *Liberté* (Montreal) in 1963 with some minor corrections, and today in *Œuvres Complètes*, p. 1532-47. Translation and emphasis are mine. In the debate of Sept. 19, responding to Jacques-Stephen Alexis, Césaire argued with virulence: "I think therefore that in Africa, there are, indeed, national cultures. It is evident. It is clear."

Emphasis on adaptation is paramount for the author of the law of departmentalization. It allows not to fall prey to what Césaire elsewhere calls the blackmailing of colonization: complete assimilation or absolute independence.³¹³ The goal is to find ways in which indigenous and colonial “elements” can work together in a non-coercive political and cultural relation. It is the discussion on the political conditions under which such merging may take place that leads the participants to further interrogate the concept of *métissage* and what it entails. In the closed-session question-and-answer, interrogated by Louis Achille, who wonders whether his opposition to a *mestizo* culture meant that he believed in a pure one, it is Senghor who intervenes on the values of foreign contributions. He extols change, variance and adaptation—the opposite of what Negritude are known for. Here is Senghor’s answer. It precedes Césaire’s:

All great civilizations were civilizations that resulted from a *métissage*—objectively speaking: Indian civilization, Ancient Greek civilization, French civilization, etc. In my opinion, and quite objectively, this *métissage* is a necessity. It is the result of the contact between civilizations.

Indeed, either the external situation changed [*a varié*]; a cultural contribution then allows us to *adapt to* a new situation. Or the external situation did not change. A cultural contribution then allows us a *better adaptation* to the situation. But Césaire is correct when he says that (...) one must not be assimilated: one must assimilate (...). Yet, a civilization is really fecund when it is no longer felt as *métissage*. If you will, one needs an objective and a subjective *métissage*.³¹⁴

³¹³ See an interview in *L'Express*, May 24-30, 1971, pp. 80-81: “Ou bien vous conservez le statut actuel, ou bien c’est l’indépendance totale, à vos risques et périls. J’estime qu’il s’agit là d’un chantage éhonté.”

³¹⁴ Léopold Sédar Senghor, the debate on Sept, 20th, 1956, in *op. cit.*, p. 216. Emphasis and translation are mine.

When finally Césaire answers, he retreats his earlier comment on *métissage* surprisingly quickly and adopts just as quickly Senghor's opposition between an objective and subjective *métissage*. Complementing rather than opposing Senghor's words ("a civilization is only fecund when it is no longer felt as a *métissage*"), Césaire rephrases: "I said that, of course, there is some heterogeneity at the beginning, externally, but this diversity is felt, internally, as homogeneity. Then only, there is no longer any *métissage*."³¹⁵ *Métissage*, both medicine (when it stands for free assimilation) and poison (when it remains a colonial addition), perhaps quite unexpectedly, becomes an unavoidable subject of controversy woven within the question of cultural and political independence. Even though Césaire qualifies Achille's uncertainty about his stance on *métissage* and pure culture as a "small misunderstanding in form" [*petit malentendu dans la forme*], he uses the question as an invitation to elaborate further: "One can oppose *mestizo* races to pure races, to the extent that a pure race can exist—which *I* do not believe. But one cannot oppose a *mestizo* civilization to a pure civilization." What Césaire means is that such an opposition necessarily rests upon a fallacious premise where two civilizations freely borrow distinct features (cultural or otherwise) from one another. In the case of colonization, however, one cannot talk about civilizational borrowing but about colonial assimilation and coercion.

³¹⁵ In *Présence Africaine*, No. 8-9-10, p. 216 and 224. This is also the reason behind Edouard Glissant's rejection of *métissage* in favor of creolization. For Glissant, creolization is unpredictable while the effects of *métissage* can be calculated. In other words, *métissage* opens up the possibility of creolization. See Glissant, *Poétique de la relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), p. 46 [*Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 34]. For Françoise Vergès, *métissage* is always to be understood retroactively, tracking back to a moment when a radically defined difference was as identifiable. As such, *métissage* is characterized by the shock of a brutal—yet predictable—encounter. She writes: "*métissage* is an encounter between and a synthesis of two entities, whereas creolization is a limitless *métissage*." See "Métissage, discours masculin et déni de la mère," in *Penser la créolité*, ed. Maryse Condé (Paris: Khartala, 1995), p. 79. Translation is mine. Anjali Prabhu also argues that Glissant provides three terms that work together within his theory of hybridity: *métissage*, creolization, and relation. While *métissage* could lead toward a process that privileges synthesis by the erasure of difference, it also provides a space where the possibility for the complex process of creolization that Glissant describes and admires as a dynamic process in which difference continues to function and proliferate as a basis for thought and action. See *Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).

A “mestizo civilization,” in these conditions, is a remnant of this unbalanced contact between two political entities. Let us recall that Louis Achille, to whom Césaire is responding, is also from Martinique. Trying to write his time as what he doubtless intuits to be an incipient decolonization, and yet having implemented the political process of departmentalization, the poet is also trying to navigate this dilemma, grasping the larger context of what Paul Gilroy will term the “Black Atlantic”—a reference to a culture that is not specifically African, American, or Caribbean, but all of these moving together and with each other at once.³¹⁶

Turning towards the Atlantic, Césaire does more than take sides for or against *métissage*. What he is after is what he calls “horizontal solidarity,” a solidarity reaching across nations, cultures and language. In practice, Césaire stages the fights of African-Americans for equal rights within colonial structures of oppression, along with Caribbean and West African peoples. African Americans, too, he says, are colonized. They are in a “colonial situation” similar to peoples in West Africa or even the larger Caribbean. Transcripts of the debate immediately following Césaire’s intervention show a vivid reaction from the U.S. delegation as well as Haiti. John Davis, speaking in English because he “suppose[s] that Mr. Césaire will understand,” does not directly deny the “African cultural heritage” of Negroes in America, but he categorically refuses to call *colonial* what he understands to be *racial*. Similarly, Mercer Cook wonders about the appellation of colonialism that Césaire seems to stamp on the situation of African-Americans:

³¹⁶ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). The book has since become a classic in the social history of the African diaspora. As Simon Gikandi notices, the major success of the book may be due to its “systematic and critical exploration of cultural relationships across the Atlantic outside the traumatic experience of the Middle Passage and its stories of loss. For Gilroy, however violent it had been, the black subject’s entry into modernity was part of a redemptive hermeneutics.” Though it is obvious that Césaire could not have read Gilroy, Gilroy read the authors of Negritude and hailed them as intellectual predecessors of his work. See *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 91-93.

“I would like to ask Mr. Césaire for a few precisions if we are here to discuss colonialism and only this kind of colonialism.”³¹⁷ There is no doubt that Césaire thought about the United States government as following an imperialist policy within its domestic territory as much as abroad, but his “strategy” was altogether different.³¹⁸ By mentioning the “conditioning” of black cultures in the rather diffident “colonial, or semi-colonial, or para-colonial situation,” he provokes a discussion on a topic he earlier admitted having no answers to (“Here only starts our ignorance”). Responding to Mercer Cook and John Davis, Césaire surprisingly expresses not his own dissent but only his “sad feelings.” First, he claims to be “quite sad [*fort peiné*] to notice the emotion with which [his] words have been received.” Then, he claims his knowledge of the situation of African Americans in the United States to come from “an impression he felt from the outside.” Finally, reiterating being a “little sad” [*un peu peiné*], he shows complete personal detachment: “Not sad for myself. I am used to upholding my responsibilities. I am quite well-known to be like that. But I am sad for my friend, Alioune Diop, who organized this congress.”³¹⁹

Césaire’s ‘emotional’ response in the midst of a paper on the anthropological notion of culture

³¹⁷ This remark also relates to an intense debate in the United States since the 1930s on the position of the Communist Party of the U.S.A on colonialism and liberation struggles abroad vis-a-vis the situation of African-American in the United States. Among other source, see Roderick Bush, “The Internal Colony” in *Hybrid Identities: Theoretical and Empirical Examinations*, ed. Patricia Leavy (Boston: Brill, 2008), pp. 145-153, and *The End of White World Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2009). Contextually, Césaire is just months away from his own resignation to the French Community Party in 1956. I will offer a necessary more extended discussion of this historical development in subsequent work.

³¹⁸ The harsh criticism in Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* published just a year before substantiates his views: “The barbarism of Western Europe has reached an incredibly high level, being only surpassed—far surpassed, it is true—by the barbarism of the United States.” In *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review, 2000), p. 47. Césaire’s attacks against American imperialism was not new, as shows the record of his interventions in the French Parliament, on March 15 and June 20 1950 where he warns against the “increase of the American influence over Europe;” or his reaction after the lynching of a black student Emmett Till in August 1955, published in a “Message sur l’état de l’Union” in *Présence Africaine*, Feb-March 1956, pp. 119-120. Brent Edwards reads Césaire’s position vis-a-vis the United States as more mitigated during the Congress in an effort to “conserve the potency of what in his speech he calls ‘horizontal solidarity.’” In “Césaire in 1956” in *Social Text*, Volume 28, No. 2 (2010), 115-125.

³¹⁹ In *Présence Africaine*, No. 8-9-10, p. 222-223.

and the political working of assimilation, departmentalization and decolonization, supported by a wealth of scholarly references to Hegel, Nietzsche, Marx, Spengler, Frobenius, Toynbee, Mead, and others, requires a political interpretation. Indeed, it appears as a strategic move to engage the position of African-American intellectuals and adapt Negritude's narrative to other Black movements from the diaspora. Indeed, responding to the Chairman of the panel who, though Haitian, uses the pronoun "we" to comment on the large minority of African Americans in the United States, Césaire, far from retreating or expressing regret or sadness, seems to reveal his intention to learn from others. Here is Césaire's response:

I only expressed a schematic view when I said that the problem in the United States was a colonial problem. No. I tried, in the introduction of my report (which was not only focused on that question) *to ask those who are here* this question: how can people who are so different in their origins, etc, speak a language that may be understood by each other?³²⁰

To adapt the narrative of Negritude from an anti-colonial to a post-colonial perspective, Césaire expands his frame of political and cultural references to an unexplored Americanism, precisely because it seems to contradict Negritude's anchor in the Euro-African struggle. In so doing, what he does is to respond to Richard Wright's initial concerns on the first day of the Congress, and moves the focus from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic—reaching to the diaspora. Indeed, speaking in English, Richard Wright is clear about his concerns on what he calls his "Negro-

³²⁰ Ibid., p. 222. Emphasis is mine. The scene is undoubtedly dominated by male writers: of the twenty-two invited speakers, from Martinique and Haiti to Senegal and the United States, not one was female, nor did any of the papers touch upon gender or sexuality, except, as with Senghor's communication, to depict women as repository of "culture."

Americanness” seen from his side of the Atlantic, challenging a strategic use of territorial ontology:

I want to speak as carefully as I can. Well, maybe I should start, since we are in closed session—that’s why I was concerned about it being closed session—and I wanted to speak frankly. (...) I am a problem to myself in many respects (...). I am asking a question of *brothers*. I wonder where do I come, an American Negro, conditioned by the harsh industrial, abstract force of the Western world that has used stern, political prejudices against the society, which [Senghor] has so brilliantly elucidated—where do *I* stand in relation to that culture?³²¹

Wright knows that he is at a congress of black writers, and yet stages his blackness at a distance:

If I were of another color or another race, I could say, “All this is very exotic, but it is not directly related to me,” and I could let it go at that. I *can not*. The modern world has cast us both in the same mould. I am *black* and he is *black*: I am *American* and he is *French* and so, there you are. And yet there is a schism in our relationship, not political but profoundly human. Everything I have ever written and said has existed in the culture that Léopold Sédar Senghor describes. (...) And yet if I try to fit myself into that society, I feel uncomfortable.

Wright’s alleged discomfort did not go away with the end of the conference, but the *First World Congress of Black Writers and Artists* managed to open a channel of communication, however discordant, between the thinkers of Negritude and African American intellectuals. Contrary to its

³²¹ In *Présence Africaine*, No. 8-9-10, p. 67-68. All following quotes from Wright are from those pages unless otherwise indicated. In both congresses of 1956 and 1959, there is no invited female intellectuals, nor is there any paper that focuses on gender. For an analysis of the role of women in the elaboration of the Negritude movement, see in particular Ally Greenberg, *Women of the Negritude Movement* (New York: the Calhoun School, 2014); and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Negritude women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

ambitious title, the result of the meeting was more local than worldly and displayed more dissension than solidarity. Only two articles were published about the Congress in the United States, three in France.³²² Yet, pictures of the event immortalized the international gathering.³²³ American historian Horace Mann Bond photographed in the same panel, from left to right, Jacques Rabemananjara, Alioune Diop, Dr. Price-Mars, Richard Wright, and Aimé Césaire. More importantly, on the back of the picture itself, Mann took great care in imputing not only the names but also underlined geographical provenance of each actor, including broad ethnic categories such as “Cédric Dover, Eurasian.”

Their desire to display an international unity of “blackness” at the center of all communications, even in Richard Wright’s skepticism, could not ignore the anti-colonial struggles that arose that same year of 1956 and that started to attract attention from a metropolitan audience who, otherwise, might not have had any reason to pay particular attention to a gathering of writers. The intensification of hostilities in Algeria and the Franco-British intervention in Egypt with the Suez Canal crisis were major conflicts that constituted the background of the Congress. Looking forward to a post-colonial world to come, but inevitably caught in the upheavals of colonialism’s end, the congress could only do so much—particularly as it was set up in the French capital. But it set in motion a spirit of initiative and creativity that did not have to rely upon cultural heritage.

³²² In the United States: Edward Wiggins, “First world negro congress of writers, artists more political than cultural,” in *Philadelphia Tribune*, Oct. 9, 1956; and Ollie Stewart, “Artists, writers in Paris; DuBois sends message,” in *Afro-American*, Oct 6, 1956. In France, “Le premier congrès mondial des écrivains noirs,” in *Le Monde*, Sept. 20, 1956; “Au congrès des des écrivains noirs à la Sorbonne,” in *Le Monde*, Sept. 22, 1956; and the concluding article “Du 19 au 22 Septembre à la Sorbonne le congrès mondial des écrivains et artistes noirs a défini les caractères d’une culture noire libre,” in in *Le Monde*, Sept. 25, 1956.

³²³ First World Congress of Black Writers and Artists, September 1956. Horace Mann Bond Papers (MS 411). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. MS 411. mums411-b122-f021.

It is in that sense that the intellectual clash with *métissage* is to be read: a political imagining of what it would be like to transcend the “false alternative” or the “false antinomy” between a return to authenticity and a dilution into globality.

B. The Second World Congress of Black Writers and Artists (1959)

The call for paper or *appel* to the *Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists* is set directly over against the inaugural session that occurred three years before: “In 1956, we diagnosed the ill [*le mal*]. In 1959, we propose a cure [*une solution*]: the solidarity of our peoples.”³²⁴ As Alioune Diop continues: “This year, our concern has a less critical and more constructive character.” For any construction to be sound, the second congress aims at a basis upon which constructors must agree. It does not fully prohibit differences between builders, but focuses on a one-size-fits-all building process where disagreements are quickly curtailed. In 1959, what must be built is independence, and at the Congress, no debate would be held. Next to the closing “messages” section, one does find a section entitled “diverse communications,” but it emphasizes a one-way conversation where no response can be given. More than an invitation to dialogue, the proceedings published by *Présence Africaine* gives an impression of a lesson in listening that undoes the earlier shortcomings denounced by Césaire. As the list of guest speakers and committee-members involved with the organization of the

³²⁴ In *Présence Africaine*, No. 24-25, p. 9. It is to be noticed that if the *appel* gives the location of its second encounter its date is not mentioned in the precise calendar term “March 26, 1959”, but the very catholic “Easter.” Next to the city, Rome, and with an allocation of Pope John XXIII “To the Black Writers and Artists,” this too, recalls Césaire’s words in the closed session debate of the second day when, admitting his atheism, the poet chose to defend the bishop Thomas Ekollo who had been the subject of mockery by the audience. See *Présence Africaine*, No. 8-9-10, p. 221.

Second Congress shows, there is much change in the board of *Présence Africaine*.³²⁵ This cautious way not to repeat what had happened at the Sorbonne is even clearer as the journal puts the *appel*, the projected plan [*plan du congrès*], and the preparatory work of the different commissions, together in a first presentation section titled “Paris,” while all the communications are gathered under “Rome.” From Paris to Rome, the Congress does not only travel geographically: it shifts its focus from scholarly discussions to political preparation for a post-colonialism at its fingertips. Notwithstanding the allocution of an Italian senator and the former mayor of Florence, the speech of Sékou Touré, President of Guinea since its independence on October 2, 1958, as well as that of Césaire on the responsibility of the “man of culture,” are notably focused towards political issues using culture rather than defending a cultural identity rid of the political poison of colonialism—that led the disagreement on *métissage* three years before.

At the 1959 Congress, the collaboration between the *African Society of Culture* (SAC) and *Présence Africaine* undertakes to form a socially responsible and politically conscious intellectual elite with the goal to steer changes in Africa. The “preamble” of the Second Congress hence states that “political independence and economic liberation are the essential conditions for the cultural advance of the underdeveloped countries in general and the Negro-African

³²⁵ Indeed, the journal itself seems to have pushed itself to the background, transferring the organization of the event to the *African Society of Culture* (SAC). Between 1956 and 1959, with the notable exceptions of its founder Alioune Diop and the most prominent figures of Negritude (Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Jacques Rabemananjara), first-rank writers such as Bernard Dadié, René Depestre, Abdoulaye Sadju and Abdoulaye Wade left space for a new generation that included Mercer Cook, Cheikh Anta Diop, Frantz Fanon, and Edouard Glissant.

countries in particular.³²⁶ Yet, the concluding speech is Senghor's, and its content has little to do with political independence and economic liberation. Consistent with the setting of the Congress, the future first President of Senegal starts with a connection between this speech and the one he gave three years before: "Did I not address the topic in my report to the Paris Congress? (...) My embarrassment was even greater when I read the *appel* of the SAC to define the spirit of this Second Congress."³²⁷ He starts with a reference to Marx and proposes that his communication define the "economic infrastructure that determines in great part the social and cultural superstructure." Not quoting from the original text, it is Césaire whom he quotes quoting Marx at the 1956 Paris Congress. No dwelling on or explanation of the passage is offered to the reader, and within one written page (i.e., a minute or two of his speech), Senghor moves to a first part entitled "The Tropical and Agrarian Milieu" that starts not with nature but with a critical reading of the notion of race: "We can ramble on the term 'race.' It is no less true that the word corresponds to a reality, as does the word 'civilization.'" Throughout the communication, Africa is described as a romanticized ideal—almost utopian—place where family rhymes with socialism

³²⁶ Not reproduced in the proceedings published by *Présence Africaine* in 1959, the Preamble is accessible in *African Intellectual Heritage: A Book of Sources*, ed. Molefi Asante (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 229. In *Black Paris: The African Writers' Landscape* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), Bennetta Jules-Rosette gives a detailed account of some behind-the-scenes discussion that she gathered from interview with various writers who attended or participated in the Congress. According to Lilyan Kesteloot, both Léopold Sédar Senghor and Sékou Touré were not in attendance through they sent their communication. Senghor was campaigning in Senegal, while Touré had just started his presidency. See her *Histoire de la littérature négro-africaine* (Paris: Khartala, 1986), p. 225. In that spirit, the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists would be the last one to be held on European soil—much like the Fifth Pan-African Congress. In *Artistic Ambassadors: Literary and International Representation of the New Negro Era* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), Brian R. Roberts argues that Richard Wright's use of the term "artistic ambassador" as he was himself residing in Paris at the time, drew negative attention to the African-American literary tradition. In his reading, the political practice was both undercut and used as a means to promote a black internationalism by literary and diplomatic performances of African American writers. As he evidences, many African-American writers, such as Mercer Cook, sought diplomatic assignments (cultural or otherwise) in Africa in order to confront their "fascination of living on a continent to which many [of them] felt ancestral tires." (70).

³²⁷ In *Présence Africaine*, No. 24-25, p. 249. It is also published, with minor corrections, in *Liberté I*, under the same title "Éléments constitutifs d'une civilisation d'inspiration négro-africaine," pp. 252-286.

and nature with humanism. Yet, it is Negro-America that is presented as a repository. “What strikes me in Negro-American people, is the permanence not of their physical characters, but of the psychical one, in spite of the new milieu, in spite of *métissage*.”³²⁸ The generalization of “Negro-America,” which had made Richard Wright react to what he interpreted as Senghor’s dilution of differences within a “same mould” of color in 1956, still constitutes the core of the argument. In fact, quoting Sartre writing on Wright no later than the fifth paragraph of his talk, Senghor seems to define the novelist as the embodiment of Negro-American writers: “Each of [his] books shows the alienation of the black race within American society.” But in 1959, Senghor has learned the lesson of 1956 and is more careful to frame the gesture as an epistemological move that people on the African continent, about to conquer independence, can make if they are ready to look across the Atlantic. In the last pages of his communication, Senghor reiterates a point he had made in the first pages of his introduction: “It is not a matter to resuscitate the past, to live in a Negro-African museum; it is matter to animate this world, *hic et nunc*, with the values of our past. It is, indeed, what the Negro-Americans have begun to do.”³²⁹

Senghor does not simply generalize Negro-America to even the score with Richard Wright. He also develops a dialogue with other American intellectuals, such as James W. Ivy—the multilingual editor of *The Crisis*, official publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Ivy was well-known for his tenure at the journal, in particular for making it profitable and for publishing the complete text of the United States

³²⁸ *Presence Africaine*, No. 24-25 (1959), p. 251. *Liberté I*, p. 254.

³²⁹ *Presence Africaine*, No. 24-25 (1959), p. 277. *Liberté I*, p. 283. I will attend to the long and complex relation between the thinkers of Negritude and African-American intellectuals (from W.E.B Du Bois to Malcom X) in future work. A recent investigation of this relation has been offered by F. Abiola Irele, “The Harlem Renaissance and the Negritude Movement,” *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, Vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 759-784. Brent H. Edwards has also analyzed the relationship of Paulette Nardal with Alain Locke in *The Practice of Diaspora*, op. cit.

Supreme Court decision of May 17, 1954, on the unconstitutionality of racial segregation in American public schools.³³⁰ In Rome, his paper was, in a way, a continuation of the one he had given in Paris three years before on “The N.A.A.C.P as an instrument of social change.” Then, he had argued for the benefits of a commitment to gradual political and legal progress leading to an integrated society in the United States. Now, in “The Fact to Be Black in the Americas,” he too broadens his geographical sight, and although he remains on his continent, he expands his view beyond borders and languages to show that the negative connotations associated with the word “negro” was only a matter of race if it were taken unilaterally and in one language. Dwelling into the use of the word “in the Americas” and delving into its history in Brazil, Mexico and Cuba from the 18th century to the present, Ivy weaves the political use of race in the United States with the historical world dynamic between peoples of different ethnic origins:

Let us review a few of these terms. The most used one was probably “mulatto” [*mulâtre*], applied to any descendant of a *métis*. Although the popular tradition takes it as a diminutive of *mulo*, mule, this etymology, that is also encountered in many dictionaries, is rejected by Fernando Ortiz and Vicente Rossi. Ortiz thinks that the word comes from the Manding languages “*mulata*,” of light color; Rossi, on his end, argues for the Arabic *muallad*, that comes from a combination of Moore and Gothic and which, in Spanish, has been corrupted [*s’est corrompu*] to “muladi.”³³¹

³³⁰ The original article of the Supreme Court decision appears in its June-July 1954 issue, pp. 325-336, along with several pages offering background material for an understanding of the Court’s decision in five school cases. The relation between the political context within which these American thinkers evolve and that of the poets of Negritude trying to connect their flight to the plight of African-Americans, will be investigated in further work.

³³¹ James Ivy, “Le fait d’être nègre dans les Amériques,” in *Presence Africaine*, No. 24-25 (1959), p. 126 and “The semantics of being negro in the Americas,” in *Presence Africaine*, No. 24-25 (1959) in English translation, p. 136. It is revealing that the French translates “semantics” by “fact,” as though to emphasize language as a sociological fact.

The long etymological digression of what Ivy describes as a corruption continues for two more pages and resembles the grammatical indulging of the young poets of Negritude coining words in pre-war Paris. It signals, perhaps, a desire to reclaim a certain etymology by investigating a history of racialism from a multilateral and multilingual outlook. Indeed, for Ivy, the ways in which the colonizers appropriated and defined the word “métissage” only exemplifies an “unconscious belief in white supremacy” (138) or a “perhaps unconscious racialism” (139). What he calls the “arithmetic” of miscegenation [*mélanges*] does not vindicate an approach to the *métis* or *métissage* as a harbinger of race: it denounces the presence of a political practice of racialism. Ivy stops short of saying that there is no race, but unlike Negritude, he does not fall prey to the ethnographic biological-cultural reading framework. Though he positions himself against the biological notion of race and recognizes that race was always used for political purposes and sociological categorizations, he inhabits *métissage* as a space of transgression to explore the conditions under which racialism is practiced, focusing on an often overlooked load of “economic and legal discrimination” (139). For the multilingual editor of *The Crisis*, as for Richard Wright in Paris and Robert L. Carter in Rome, the question was how to talk about Blackness without referring to an abstract “African” spirit or culture. Indeed, Ivy’s inhabiting of a politics of naming that allows for a “way of crossing the colour line” (141) complements Senghor’s discourse on *métissage* as a way of subverting institutional racialism.³³²

³³² In *Black Paris: The African Writers’ Landscape*, Bennetta Jules-Rosette, argues that the choice on the part of the U.S delegation at the First Congress not to draw parallel between the problem of race relations in the United States and the framing of the same issue for Francophone and African writers, artists, and intellectuals, is because the former “did not consider violent protest a viable political option.” (60)

The fight against institutional racialism was certainly more instrumentally staged in Rome than it had been in Paris. In Rome, the careful framing of speakers and the concomitant image of an international solidarity beyond national boundaries seemed to foreclose the role, presence, and influence of the latter in a way that fitted the federalist argument of Negritude for a decolonization without national independence. Yet, one voice did strike a chord in the otherwise anti-national focus of the encounter: the voice of Frantz Fanon.

Fanon's relationship to Negritude is a complicated one. One might recall that Fanon was not only born in Martinique, he was also a student of Aimé Césaire to begin with—although neither claimed that fact to have influenced their respective works. It is less known that, following his medical internship, Fanon had written to Senghor to offer his medical knowledge of psychiatry for projects of decolonization and liberation in Senegal but that letter remained unanswered.³³³ Finally, though discordant, Fanon's communication at the Congress, "Reciprocal Foundation of National Culture and Liberation Struggles," did not necessarily misalign with Senghor's or Césaire's views. When that paper was reworked a year and half later to form the fourth chapter of his *Wretched of the Earth*, the argument became a striking blow to Negritude. Like those before him who attended both the Paris and Rome Congresses, Fanon started his paper by contrasting his 1956 and 1959 goals. Within a sentence, he moved to the gist of his rather short paper: "There cannot exist an authentic culture that is not a national one."³³⁴

³³³ Fanon wrote to Senghor in the Summer 1953, after having passed his exams and become an official member of France's psychiatric health system. See Alice Cherki, *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait*, trans. and Nadia Benabid (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 22-23; Lewis R. Gordon, *What Fanon Said: A Philosophical Introduction to His Life and Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), p. 81; and Hans Panofsky and Henry Louis Gates, "Letters to the Editor," in *Research in African Literatures* 18.2 (1987): 261. In all of his published writings, Senghor never mentioned Fanon, and Césaire cut any reference short—merely alluding to "a former student."

³³⁴ *Présence Africaine*, No. 24-25 (1959), p. 87.

Strikingly, although the paper is reproduced at the end of the chapter “On National Culture,” in *The Wretched of the Earth*, that particular sentence is deleted.³³⁵

At the Congress, Fanon’s paper is ambivalent. On the one hand, it stages an opposition between national culture and the colonial situation. It argues that his earlier claim (that “in a colonial situation, cultural dynamism [was] fairly replaced by a reification of attitudes”³³⁶) had to be supplemented by an understanding of the conditions under which cultural creation and people’s revolution worked together for national liberation. Positing national struggle as a cultural manifestation, itself a manifestation of national consciousness, Fanon drives home the point that in soon-to-be-independent countries, national culture is neither a premise to nor a consequence of the struggle: it is fully woven with the enterprise of national liberation. “Culture does not go into hibernation during the fight [*combat*]. The actual struggle, as it unfolds, in its internal process, develops the different directions of culture and hints at new possibilities.”³³⁷ Indeed, thinking of “new possibilities,” Fanon continues by writing as though he was looking at a situation after independence: “Once national liberation has been accomplished under these conditions, there is none of that tiresome cultural indecisiveness we find in certain newly independent countries.” While most of the communications adopted a continent-wide perspective, Fanon’s argument seems distinctively out of place. Though Fanon had been

³³⁵ “Il ne saurait exister de culture authentique que nationale.” In Fanon, *Les Damnés de la Terre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), hereafter referred to as DT; *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), hereafter referred to as WE.

³³⁶ DT, p. 223; WE, 170.

³³⁷ DT, p. 227; WE, 178. Translation modified.

“willing to concede that West Indian and African people did exist”³³⁸ in 1955, the title as well as the content of his 1959 paper undoubtedly foreground the nation as a political and cultural unit.

On the other hand, the paper also contrasts the reality of a national culture with the imaginary dimension of an ethnic culture.³³⁹ At the Congress, the contrast between national cultures and a Negro-African culture as vindicated by Senghor is presented as an impasse. It shows how, ultimately, the ethnic or racial approach leads not only to paradoxical conclusions: it is, at best, transitory; at worst, the site of an untenable contradiction:

One of the mistakes, hardly defensible, moreover, is to attempt cultural innovations, to reassert the value of indigenous culture within the context of colonial domination. Hence, we drive at a seemingly paradoxical proposition: In a colonized country, nationalism in its most basic, most rudimentary, and undifferentiated form is the most forceful and effective way of defending national culture.³⁴⁰

³³⁸ See Fanon, “Antillais Et Africains,” in *Esprit* 223 (2) (1955): 261-69. David Macey calls attention to the fact that, though the article recognizes some sort of supra-national connections that resembles Senghor’s ideals, it also rejects Negritude as “a great black mirage.” See David Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Biography* (London: Verso, 2000), p. 372.

³³⁹ The argument is fully developed in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Here again, David Macey gives a detailed account of the “On National Culture” chapter as well as the historical background to its origin in the Spring/Summer 1961 as the Algerian War is coming to an end. In particular, Macey attends to the expansion of the argument to Algeria and the Arab world, both also coming out of a colonial situation but whose different situation with Francophone Africa demonstrates even more the grounding of cultures in national contexts. As Fanon writes unashamedly: “Negritude thus came up against its first limitation, namely those phenomena that take into account the historicizing of men. ‘Negro’ or ‘Negro-African’ culture broke up because the men who set out to embody it realized that every culture is first and foremost national, and that the problems for which Richard Wright or Langston Hughes had to be on the alert were fundamentally different from those face by Léopold Senghor of Jomo Kenyatta.” DT, 202; WE, 154; and Macey, *ibid.* Anthony C. Alessandrini also remarks that one of the difference between the Rome paper and the 1961 masterpiece, Fanon moves towards a clearer role as a spokesman for the GPRA [Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne], and proposes to read the paper as well as the book not only in a Pan-African milieu but over against the Martinican context. See *Frantz Fanon and the Future of Cultural Politics: Finding Something Different* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014) pp. 106-108.

³⁴⁰ DT, p. 230; WE, 177.

Fanon's argument is not necessarily incompatible with Negritude, insofar as, in order to find something akin to the "greatest common divisor" of black cultures, necessarily erroneous generalizations have to be made. In 1956, the strategic use of false generalizations had been defended by Aimé Césaire and François Agblemagnon. In 1959, working from three main examples—literature, artisanship, and music—Fanon is not immune either to making similar generalizations about the bard songs in Algeria or jazz music in America to argue that slow and almost imperceptible changes within the defined fields of oral literature or music are signs of a political change that a well-trained reader can discern: "Well before the political or armed struggle, a careful reader can thus feel and see appear a fresh stimulus, the coming fight [*combat*]."³⁴¹ The danger, as Fanon writes, does not come from Negritude's "congealing and petrifying culture." It comes rather from the "colonial specialist, the ethnologist, who are quick to perceive these mutations and denounce them all, referring rather to a codified artistic style and culture developing in tune with the colonial situation."³⁴² It is the white subject who, informed by colonial experts, in jazz for instance, will see the "frozen image of a certain type of relationship and a certain form of negritude."³⁴³ The non-capitalization of Negritude reads indeed like a surprising acknowledgment of the movement's racial argument, as though Fanon were ready to start from that necessarily erroneous picture to reach his argument about the need for a political struggle in order to transform the structures that produce the conditions for racism and "make use of them" for their own reproduction—i.e., capitalism, nationalism, imperialism, etc. What mattered was not the beginning but the end of the enterprise, where the post-colonial

³⁴¹ DT, p. 229-230; WE, 176. Translation modified.

³⁴² DT, p. 225; WE, 175. In DT, Fanon has corrected "the colonial specialist" in to "the metropolitan specialist."

³⁴³ DT, p. 229-230; WE, 176. Translation modified.

subject would be able to make the move that the white ethnologist had denied the colonized: from a “Negro” to a “Senegalese,” a “native” to a “citizen.”

In light of the 1959 communication, Fanon’s criticism of Negritude reads as an expression of a missed opportunity and a political betrayal that resulted in the realization that the political practices of the Negritude thinkers were different from what their literary or philosophical essays vindicated. We must recall that what Fanon saw in the political practice of the members of the Negritude movement could only reinforce his concern about what Etienne Balibar has recently called an “inverse cosmopolitanism:” an intensification of intolerance and falling back on identities in opposition to the cosmopolitanism that emerged from the tradition of the Enlightenment—from where a mutual recognition and the consciousness that we belong to one same humanity seemingly flowed.³⁴⁴ Even as Fanon denounces Negro-African unity in “On National Culture,” Jacques Rabemananjara, a figure of the Negritude movement and minister in the government of Madagascar, could write passionately about that unity and vote quietly against the Algerian people at the United Nations General Assembly. Yet, perhaps out of respect for his former teacher or fellow Martinican, Fanon stops short of criticizing Césaire for voting the “exceptional measures to restore order in Algeria” along party lines.³⁴⁵ Similarly, in an often overlooked footnote, the psychiatrist reacts to Senghor’s announcement that Negritude should be included in Senegal’s school curricula; rather than blatantly attacking that decision, the criticism according to which it could constitute a shaping of black consciousness legitimizing by reversal the Eurocentric discourse of the existence (and therefore, inferiority) of “Negroes,” is carefully

³⁴⁴ See “Un racism sans races : entrevue avec Étienne Balibar,” in *Relations*, No. 763, 03/2013, pp. 13-17. Translated by Clement Petitjean as “‘A Racism Without Races’: An interview with Étienne Balibar,” <http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/1559-a-racism-without-races-an-interview-with-etienne-balibar>

³⁴⁵ See *Infra*, p. 45 of this chapter.

nuanced: “If this decision is an exercise in cultural history, it can only be approved,” writes Fanon.³⁴⁶

The divergence between the direction that Fanon and Negritude would take after the Congress in regard to post-colonial construction almost becomes a question of political method. Following his speech in Accra at the All-African People’s Congress in December 1958 where he extolled the necessity for and value of violence, Fanon became known not only as the theoretician of violence but also as a thinker of practices of resistance which, in his view, were also local practices. When he addressed the audience in Rome in 1959, contrary to the delegation-based arrangement that had ruled the Paris encounter, he did not represent the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA). Rather, since every speaker appeared either in their individual capacity or as members of working commissions, Fanon was isolated not only in the content of his speech (the emergence of a national consciousness) but also as the only guest from the Maghreb (even as a francophone speaker). According to Ivory Coast novelist, Bernard Dadié, Fanon “came and gave his speech, then left right away.”³⁴⁷ The other speakers, however, not only stayed, but used the “commissions” to establish projects, some utterly ambitious (such as the establishment of one single language to represent the continent), some assuredly practical (such as the recommendation to create an artistic festival which would later be labeled as the *First World Festival of Negro Arts*). Indeed, though Senghor was not physically present at the Congress because of electoral campaigning in Senegal,

³⁴⁶ DT, p. 220; WE, 169. David Macey analyzes the benefit of the doubt that Fanon gives to Senghor through the prism of his progressive moving away from Negritude’s “folklore” and towards an investigation of the conditions under which staged national culture meant struggle for national liberation, rather than a pure ideological rejection of the movement created by Césaire and Senghor. See *op. cit.*, (London: Verso, 2000), p. 372.

³⁴⁷ Quoted by Jules-Rosette Benetta in *In Black Paris: The African Writers’ Landscape*, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

he would come to be the major proponent of the *First World Festival of Negro Arts* as a weapon of foreign policy for American intervention.³⁴⁸

Part of the legacy of the Second Congress was the recommendation of its commissions. Their division resembled more or less the division of humanities and social sciences departments in French universities. Their work was to consider, create, or even apply administrative measures or state cultural policies. In addition, though the preparatory works of the Congress had been divided into four groups (literature, human sciences, arts, and mathematical and technical sciences), the resolutions were divided into and adopted by a number of different commissions and deputy-commissions [*sous-commissions*] that acted as small self-sufficient societies making political demands of a cultural nature. Some of those demands were “suggested.” Others were downright “ordered” as though the commissions had effective political powers. For instance, the “linguistics resolution” read that the Congress “invited young African scholars” (or, as the anonymous translator of *Présence Africaine* preferred to write: ‘research workers’) to undertake:

A sustained study of African linguistics and to look beyond the multiplicity of African languages for the *true* foundations of their unity so as to encourage the *natural and desirable* evolution towards a regrouping of these languages, and, *if possible*, towards the determination of a language *generally* valid for all African peoples, without recourse to artificial means.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁸ The third chapter of this dissertation details the relation between Senghor, Kennedy, and the 1966 Festival.

³⁴⁹ *Présence Africaine*, No. 24-25 (1959), English edition, p. 435. Translator is unknown. Emphasis is mine.

In its conclusion, the Linguistics Commission proposed that “no European foreign language or other” be adopted as “national expression.” Notwithstanding the fact that, almost responding to Fanon’s paper, the word “national” stood in for what was undoubtedly “continental,” it proposed that “one privileged African language be chosen.” More specifically, it proposed that “a team of linguists be in charge of introducing all the concepts necessary for the expression of philosophy, the exact sciences, and technology, just as soon as possible.”³⁵⁰

Perhaps the most long-lasting legacy of the Second Congress rests in the conclusive remarks of the Arts Commission. It is that commission that suggested the following resolution: “The Commission recommends that the Congress must establish as an essential part of its activities a Festival to be held during the next Congress meeting.” With this recommendation came for the first time the idea that would become in Senghor’s agenda during his political tenure the “First World Festival of Negro Arts,” held in Dakar in 1966. More than a suggestion, the commission gave strict artistic directions, as though to control what it intended to produce: “The festival must include singing, drumming, and dancing, and perhaps also drama and poetry readings. Those will have to take place when the Congress is in session.”³⁵¹ It is striking that the English translation reads “The festival *should*” when the French read “The festival *must*”—almost to be more cautious to the anglophone delegations. That it asked for the “establishment of Centers for African Culture” under the aegis of the SAC in Paris only reinforces the necessary political dimension of the ostensible cultural manifestation.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ *Présence Africaine*, No. 24-25 (1959), p. 417; English edition, p. 458.

When Senghor defines, in Brazil, the Festival as a moment to “prove that art, like beauty, perfection of the mind and, of man, is at the crossroads of the ‘conciliatory agreement’: of *métissage*,” there can be no more doubt.³⁵² *Métissage* has become, if only through the veil of a cultural performance of Negritude, a political concept that has definitely reached across the Atlantic.

³⁵² Senghor, “Latinité et Négritude” in *Liberté III*, p. 39. The speech was given at the occasion of his *Doctor Honoris Causa* ceremony at the University of Bahia, in September 1964 and followed another communication given at the Brazilian Academy of Letters where Senghor praises the “more the of cultural symbiosis than the biological *métissage*” that the “brazilian culture made real [a réalisé].”

CHAPTER III - NEGRITUDE BETWEEN ARTS AND POLITICS

“The First World Festival of Negro Art (1966)”

Introduction

The 1959 *Second World Congress of Negro Writers and Artists* ended at a crossroads. On the one hand, the intellectual problems that had been somewhat contained in earlier meetings gave way to an almost unbridgeable ideological rift.³⁵³ On the other hand, the reality of political independence called for a rethinking of a Pan-Africanism that had been hitherto only desired.³⁵⁴ In 1960 alone, seventeen African countries declared independence. In most cases, decolonization was conquered with minimal damage—either material or human—but in certain colonies, such as Algeria and Kenya, a long period of armed struggles preceded national independence.

³⁵³ The second chapter of this dissertation offered a thorough analysis of this shift. In 1956 for instance, Richard Wright and Léopold Sédar Senghor kept their divergence for closed-door meetings, while Fanon’s communication, already calling attention to the radically different situation in Algeria, acknowledged the contribution of the poets of Negritude to the imagination of a shared “blackness.” In 1959, Fanon’s paper almost directly clashed with Senghor’s, while African-American intellectuals such as James Ivy politely but publicly disagreed with Negritude’s philosophizing of “blackness.” For a questioning of Negritude’s relation to African-American writers, especially before World War II, see Brent Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* and Julian Kunnie, “Richard Wright’s Interrogation of Negritude: Revolutionary Implications for Pan Africanism and Liberation,” *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 4, no. 9, 2012, pp. 1-23.

³⁵⁴ One should recall that the first Pan-African Conference was held in London in 1900. The next five Pan-African Congresses were held in London, in Paris, and in New York. In April 1958, the All-African Peoples’ Conference, often hailed as the successor of the former Pan-African Congresses, met on the African continent (in Ghana) for the first time. But when the sixth Pan-African Congress met for the first time after independence in Dar-es-Salaam in 1974 (also meeting for the first time after the death of its originary instigator, W.E.B. Du Bois), Pan-Africanism was not only the site of a generational conflict, it was also the stage of a radically different political approach—bringing, among other disagreements, heated debates between delegates from the United States and the Caribbean. For a history of Pan-Africanism and the Pan-African Congresses, see, among other references, T. Ras Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism from Within*, ed. Kenneth King (Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1973); Imanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe, and Africa*, trans. Ann Keep (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishing, 1968); Olisanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1963*, (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1982); and William Ackah, *Pan-Africanism: Exploring the Contradictions; Politics, Identity and Development in Africa and the African Diaspora* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999). For an analysis of the relation between Pan-Africanism and Negritude, see Bentley Le Baron, “Négritude: A Pan-African Ideal?” *Ethics*, vol. 76, no. 4, 1966, pp. 267–76.

By 1961, Senegal promulgated a new constitution, separate from the Mali Federation, and Senghor gained entry into the world of diplomacy. Following his first state visit to the United States, the newly elected president of independent Senegal faced his first major political crisis. In December 1962, Senghor politically survived what he termed a “coup” attempt by the President of the Council of Ministers, Mamadou Dia, that led to the imprisonment of Dia and the writing of yet another constitution, strengthening the power of the Presidency, in February 1963.³⁵⁵ It is that same month that, amidst a tenuous political equilibrium, Senghor announced the organization of “The First World Festival of Negro Arts,” to be held in Dakar in December 1965 “under the auspices of UNESCO.” The timing is surprising. Even considering that the planning of this major event had started in 1959, at the *Second World Congress of Negro Writers* in Rome, what urgency was there to announce the organization of an art fair when no less than a new constitution and the stabilization of political institutions were under way?

This chapter argues that, in the midst of a tumultuous political environment at the dawn of the 1960s, the early aesthetic discourse of the young poets of Negritude transformed into an opportunity with which to reimagine the political actions of now mature statesmen of Negritude.

Art, no longer only a subject of philosophical discussions about the future of postcolonial

³⁵⁵ There is remarkably little published work on this crucial episode of Senegal’s (and Senghor’s) political life. One account includes Paul Thibaud, “Dia, Senghor et le socialisme africain,” *Esprit* 9.2 (Sept. 1963), pp. 332-48. Some work has been done on Mamadou Dia’s policies regarding the Arab–and Muslim–world in the months preceding the political upheaval. See Roman Loimeier, “The Secular State and Islam in Senegal,” in *Questioning the Secular State: The Worldwide Resurgence of Religion in Politics*, ed. David Westerlund (London: Hurst and Company, 1996), pp. 183-96. Souleymane Bachir Diagne has also written about the relation between Senghor and Dia in a religious context in “Islam in Africa: Examining the Notion of an African Identity within the Islamic World,” in *A Companion to African Philosophy*, ed. Kwasi Wiredu (Oxford: Blackwell publishing, 2004), pp. 374-83. Primary source includes Mamadou Dia, *Mémoires d’un militant de tiers-monde* (Paris: Publisud, 1985). The constitution is adopted by referendum on March 3, 1963. See the “Constitution de la République du Sénégal, adoptée le 3 mars 1963 par referendum” (Dakar: Imprimerie Nationale, 1963). The office of the prime minister was re-established by amendment in 1970 (Rufisque: Imprimerie nationale, 1984). Multiple analysis and archival documents exist in relation to the constitution. See, among others, Luc Myracciole, “La Constitution de la République du Sénégal du 7.3.1963,” in *Revue juridique et politique d’outremer*, vol 17, no. 1 (1963), pp. 138-60; F. K. Camara and A. Seck, “Secularity and Freedom of Religion in Senegal: Between a Constitutional Rock and a Hard Reality,” in *Brigham Young University Law Review*, 2010 (3), pp. 859-84.

pan-african culture, became instrumentalized for pragmatic political actions. Indeed, if the young student of Martinique, Aimé Césaire, develops, in the early 1930s, an idea of African art through various ethnographic and surrealist readings at the time of his studies, the mature congressman and mayor of Fort-de-France vindicates, in the 1950s, an elaborate defense of artistic primitivism to support his political wrangle in one of his most well-known pieces, *Discourse on Colonialism*.³⁵⁶ There, the defense of a “primitive African art” is used as an argument against the alleged “modern European art” of the colonizer. Senghor’s path is similar. As Souleymane Bachir Diagne has shown, the influence of plastic arts and art criticism on the young student from Senegal in Paris, in particular what he sees at the *Musée du Trocadéro* (e.g., Picasso’s “African period” paintings, *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon*) and what he reads about “primitive Negro sculpture” in Paul Guillaume and Thomas Munro’s *La sculpture nègre primitive*, is of paramount

³⁵⁶ Much scholarship has been published on Negritude’s relation to art, especially regarding Senghor’s and Césaire’s years in interwar Paris. For a comprehensive account, see in particular, Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *Senghor: l’art africain comme philosophie* (Paris: Riveneuve, 2007), and Donna V. Jones, *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). About Césaire’s relation to art, a detailed account is given by Romuald Fonkoua in “Césaire et le discours sur l’art nègre,” *Présence Africaine*, 2014/1, No. 189, pp. 165-79. Fonkoua publishes an *inédit* of a dateless letter addressed to Michel Leiris where the poet claims to offer the ethnographer a short piece on “Negro Sculpture.” Though the short-piece itself has seemingly been lost, it nevertheless shows a desire to connect poetic vision with ethnographic analysis for an imagined unifying “Negro Art.” For an investigation of the long-standing connection between such imagined art and political practice in post-independence Senegal, see Abdou Sylla, *Arts plastiques et état : trente-cinq ans de mécénat au Sénégal* (Dakar: Université Cheikh Anta Diop, 1998); Tracy Snipe, *Arts and Politics in Senegal, 1960-1996* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1998); as well as Elizabeth Harney, *In Senghor’s Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960-1995* (Durham : Duke University Press, 2004).

importance for his poetic creation.³⁵⁷ But as Senghor becomes Congressman in 1945 and then President of Senegal in 1960, his approach to African art includes social and political considerations in addition to an extensive reflections on its aesthetic quality. In “Negro-African Esthetics” for instance, he analyzes not only what he calls the “rhythm” of African art, he also focuses on its “political function” and concludes on the danger of imitating a preconceived art that would not “translate the social reality of the racial, national, and class milieu.”³⁵⁸ Relatively undeveloped in 1956, the argument takes a broader dimension ten years later at the *First World Festival of Negro Arts* in 1966 where Senghor mobilizes a whole political apparatus to connect artistic creation with national cohesion.

This chapter further argues that Senghor’s preoccupation with the Festival’s display of an “authentic” set of artistic traditions necessitated a highly organized political and diplomatic communication machinery that unfortunately relied on foreign powers, and especially France and the United States. For instance, Senghor’s longtime friend and managing director of the Festival, Alioune Diop, asked Columbia University Professor Gray Cowan, future President of the Washington-based African Studies Association, for academic expertise on “traditional African

³⁵⁷ See Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *Senghor: l’art africain comme philosophie*, particularly pp. 35-47. For Picasso’s “African Period,” which lasted from 1906 to 1909, and has also been termed the Negro Period or Black Period, see Christopher Green and John Musgrove, “Cubism.” *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. 8 Mar. 2017, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T020539>. It is described as such for its sources in and influence from West African sculptures and masks. It has to be noticed that Picasso never went to Africa. His sources are, like Senghor’s, what he sees in museums and exhibitions in Paris, such as the *Musée du Trocadéro*. For an account of Picasso’s ambiguous reaction after such visits (“It was disgusting. I wanted to get out of there... I did not leave. I stayed.”), see Francette Pacteau, “Dark Continent,” in *With Other Eyes: Looking at Race and Gender in Visual Culture*, ed. Lisa Bloom (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 94-95; also *Primitivism and Twentieth-century Art: A Documentary History*, edited by Jack D. Flam, Miriam Deutch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). What Senghor reads is Paul Guillaume and Thomas Munro, *La sculpture nègre primitive* (Paris: Edition Crès & Cie, 1929) first published in the United States as *Primitive Negro Sculpture* (New York: Harcourt, 1929). The French translation does not include Guillaume and Munro’s last chapter on the relationship between such “primitive Negro sculpture” and contemporary art.

³⁵⁸ Léopold Sédar Senghor, “L’esthétique négro-africaine” in *Liberté I*, op. cit., pp. 202-216.

dances.”³⁵⁹ Specifically, this chapter shows that there is a significant diplomatic behind-the-scenes to the *First World Festival of Negro Arts* that not only explains its organization but also drives its conceptual message. In his “*Message à la nation*” indeed, where he first announces the festival to the people of Senegal, Senghor does not shy away from the political resonance of the art fair. If a festival of Negro arts is not the first of its kind, that it be held on African soil is of “historical significance,” declares President Senghor.³⁶⁰ More important, after years of theoretical debates for the “defense of Negritude,” time has come, Senghor says, to “illustrate” it as a “positive contribution to the construction of a civilization based on universal values.”³⁶¹ As the message continues, its language becomes even more activist: “We will have ceased once and for all to be cultural consumers and will, at long last, ourselves become cultural producers.” The use of the future anterior foregrounds a shift in epistemological performance (from passive consumer to active producer) that is strengthened by a call for immediate social action: “The purpose of this message is to ask each and every one of you to give your material and moral backing to this noble undertaking, which is also calculated to enhance our country’s prestige.”

³⁵⁹ Gray Cowan was the first director and founder of Columbia’s Institute for African Studies, and a political science professor. See Columbia University Record, December 10, 1993, vol 10, no. 13, “African Institute Named National Resource Center,” http://www.columbia.edu/cu/record/archives/vol19/vol19_iss13/record1913.26. The telegram from Diop to Cowan is located in the *Archives Nationales du Sénégal* (ANS, st928/FMAN/Pl) and reproduced in Hélène Neveu Kringelbach, “Dance at the 1966 World Festival of Negro Arts: Of ‘Fabulous Dancers’ and Negritude Undermined” *The First World Festival of Negro Arts, Dakar, 1966*, ed. David Murphy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), p. 77. The scene can also be analyzed from the more complex point of view of the marketability of art. As Jean-Godefroy Bidema notices, a non-African “buyer” defines what African art is or should be insofar as it can be “sold” as such. Hence, even contemporary art is created in accordance with the expectation of often neocolonial buyers: “African art? It is the art of Africans, reviewed and corrected by the White people!” In *L’art négro-africain* (Paris: P.U.F., 1997), p. 6.

³⁶⁰ All quotations are from what appears to be an official English translation of Senghor’s message, dated “4 February, 1963” and part of the *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts Press agent’s files, 1965-1966* Sc MG 220 Box 1, folder 3, that I consulted in December 2016 and January 2017 at the New York Public Library-Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division).

³⁶¹ Moving towards what he will soon term with more nuance and subtlety the “civilization of the universal,” an expression that departs from (and subverts) the tradition of the European Enlightenment, Senghor articulates a difference between universalism and the universal. This will indeed be the title of the third volume of Senghor’s collection *Liberté*. See *Liberté III : Negritude et civilisation de l’universel* (Paris: Seuil, 1977).

The social action could not be less cultural: it is as qualitatively political (“country’s prestige”) as it is quantitatively economic (“calculated to enhance”). In the midst of a political independence at risk from within since the schism with Mamadou Dia, Senghor is proposing another kind of independence, less easy to attack and more susceptible to last, a cultural one: “Such, then, is the significance of this event which will mark the advent of a new era for us: the era of cultural independence.”

Staged in opposition to political independence, the call for “cultural independence” is designed as a *coup de grâce* to the relation with, and recognition by, the former colonial power. France is no longer to be the reference by which artistic production is measured or the self-appointed cultural authority for validating the authenticity of “African” art by way of ethnography. Yet, by the act of politicizing a festival designed to showcase a certain freedom of artistic and cultural production, I question whether Senghor has replaced one jury by another, one authority by another, ultimately standing at the edge of reproducing the very structure he sought to sabotage.³⁶²

This is why, in this chapter, I investigate the machinery that led to the *First World Festival of Negro Arts* and show that it forces us to question the extent to which Senghor’s artistic policy was more a top-down political directive than a bottom-up support for creativity. I look, primarily, at the increase of interaction, almost immediately following Senghor’s presidential message, between Senegal and the United States regarding the executive organization of the Festival, with particular attention to the creation of a political institution:

³⁶² Indeed, the Festival opens with a scholarly conference that gathers a majority of French, British and American ethnographers, such as Dominique Zahan, Geneviève Calame-Griaule, Michel Leiris, Simon Coppans, Roger Bastide, Bernard Fagg, William Fagg, and Margaret Plass, among famous writers Aimé Césaire, Langston Hughes and Wole Soyinka. See the two-volume proceedings of the *Colloquium on Negro Art* published in French and in English by *Presence Africaine* in 1967.

the *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts*. I then look at the organizational framework of the Festival, starting with the inaugural *Colloquium on Negro Arts* that gathered scholars from Africa, Europe, and the United States to think about the “Function of Negro Art in the life of and for the people,” to show that the politicization of a staged revival of artistic creativity is both medicine and poison: medicine because it fits into a larger project not only to further independence on political ground, but also to strengthen it on economic, social and cultural foundations; poison because in the very act of declaring an independence from a former overseeing power and comparing “his” culture to “theirs,” Senghor fell prey to having recourse to a third party, the United States. In so doing, he also performs power play in the mined political arena of the Cold War. In this chapter, I therefore reposition Senghor’s invitation of French Minister of Culture André Malraux to give the inaugural address to the Festival in the delicate relation between a post-coloniality that vindicates autonomy and a complex Cold War dynamic that expands beyond just postcolonialism. To this end, I read Malraux’s address not only over against Senghor’s but also Césaire’s quasi-improvised “Discourse on African Art”—directly staged as a response to Malraux at the end of the Colloquium, and received as such.³⁶³ Finally, I end this chapter with a look at Senghor’s artistic policy on a smaller scale, focusing on his tendentious project of reviving an alleged local tradition while anchoring it in foreign training and an imagined deep African history: the *Tapisseries de Thiés*.

³⁶³ The “Discourse on African Art” has never been translated into English. The French version was published for the first time as a version edited by Thomas A. Hale in *Études littéraires*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (April 1973), pp. 99-109. It is now also available with a genetic edition in *Aimé Césaire: poésie, théâtre, essais et discours* (Paris: CNRS, 2013), pp. 1562-1569. Hereafter, I refer to it as DAA, followed by the page number in the latter edition.

By zooming on a project decidedly not as flamboyant as the 1966 *First World Festival of Negro Art* or, in another realm, the *International Organization of Francophonie* created just a few years later in Niamey in 1970, I show that the apparent locality of its practice is still politically and artistically ambivalent. I argue that it constitutes yet another paradigm of Senghor's presidency where an artistic policy that claimed independent artistic creation was founded upon a coercive political direction. In sum, this chapter unravels how, at a local level or on a world scale, Senghor's artistic vision is fully intertwined with his foreign policy: institutionalizing art for cultural diplomacy.

I. 1963 - 1966: Imagining the *First World Festival of Negro Arts*

a) Art as Policy

On March 4, 1963, President Leopold Sédar Senghor wrote to President John Fitzgerald Kennedy to inform him that “the Government of Senegal ha[d] decided to organize, under the sponsorship of UNESCO, a World Festival of Negro Arts, the first one to be held in Dakar in April 1965.”³⁶⁴ In the concluding paragraph of the two-page presidential cable, Senghor refers John F. Kennedy to Alioune Diop, President of the *Société Africaine de Culture* (SAC), “who will also be the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Festival Association.”³⁶⁵ The cable came with a notice “listing by category and order of preference, the contribution by artists that the World Festival of Negro Arts would like to have [the United States] make.” More than a suggestion, it read in block capitals: “IT IS REQUESTED THAT THE FOLLOWING NEGRO PERFORMANCES OR NEGRO ARTISTS FROM THE U.S.A

³⁶⁴ The letter, dated March 4, 1963, was conveyed to President John F. Kennedy by the Ambassador of Senegal through Ambassador Duke (serving as Chief of Protocol for the U.S. Department of State with the rank of Ambassador) on March 13. The letter, as well as the “Memorandum for Mr. McGeorge Bundy” at The White House acknowledging receipt of Senghor’s letter, is conserved in the Kennedy Library Archives in Washington D.C (Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. President’s Office Files. Countries. Senegal: General, 1962-1963). I thank Fadi Dagher, from the Columbia SIPA Library, for her help in tracking these recently unclassified documents.

³⁶⁵ What the letter did not say, is that Alioune Diop was a replacement for Dr. Robert S. Pritchard, well-known concert pianist and alumnus of Syracuse University who, in 1960, was commissioned by the Council of Ministers of the Mali Federation (the federated governments of Senegal and Mali) to submit a proposal for the establishment of the first *Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres* (First World Festival of Negro Arts). Though the reasons behind his replacement by Diop is not fully documented, Robert Pritchard subsequently almost singlehandedly organized the New York based *American Festival of Negro Arts*, and presided at the Pan-American association. For the history of the relation between the American and Dakar Festivals, see Harold Cruse, “Negro Writers Conferences: The Dialogue Distorted” in *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Historical Analysis of the Failure of Black Leadership* (New York: New York Review Book, 1967) pp. 499-523. Part of the article was also printed in *Negro Digest* (Jan. 1968), 58-74. See also *Jet* (Aug. 19,1971), p. 15.

FORM PART OF THE FESTIVAL.” The high-level correspondence together with a formal request coming by way of diplomatic protocols (from official cables to ambassadors’ exchanges) inscribes the artistic event within the framework of a carefully monitored political collaboration. Indeed, the notice continues by making reference to a series of three different musical art-forms expected to officially represent what Senghor terms Negro-American art: “Gospel singers and Negro spiritual” groups in the first week of the festival; “outstanding soloist (man or woman)” in the second week; and finally, a “top-ranking dance orchestra” (to include Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton and Dizzy Gillespie) to perform in “the last three nights of the Festival.” For anyone versed in music, the definition of jazz artists on the caliber of Ellington or Gillespie as “dance orchestras” shows a lack of awareness of or consideration for what the aesthetic genre and its performers were up to: the belief in music as a vehicle capable of supplementing other modes of imaginative expression. In fact, Ellington himself said as early as 1931: “What we could not say openly, we expressed in music, and what we know as ‘jazz’ is something more than just dance music.”³⁶⁶ This is not to say that dance could not be part of their jazz performances, but rather that jazz as they performed it was a musical composition in its own right.³⁶⁷ In short, their musical innovations (rethinking jazz orchestration, solo improvisation, tonal and modal variations, new instruments, etc) could not be further away from being a dance accompaniment,

³⁶⁶ Duke Ellington, “The Duke Steps Out,” *Rhythm* (March 1931), pp. 20-22, also collected in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. Mark Tucker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 49-50. Brent Edwards attends to the rich connection between Ellington’s musical creation and the literary imagination in “The Literary Ellington,” *Representations*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (Winter 2002), pp. 1-29; as well as, more generally, in his forthcoming *Epistrophies: Jazz and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017).

³⁶⁷ Although Duke Ellington started his musical career by performing gigs for dance parties and society balls to earn a living, as soon as he moved from Washington D.C to New York City, the musician left the purely monetary entertainment business to enter the musically emerging and competitive jazz scene of Harlem. While some jazz orchestras, like Benny Goodman’s, made money by fitting the popularity of “swing bands,” selling records and getting concerts because of the danceability of their music, the strength of Ellington’s band was the richness of its composition and new orchestration. In Ellington’s own words: “Jazz is music, swing is business,” in John Edward Hasse, *Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington* (New York: Da Capo, 1995), p. 200 and passim.

as the notice naively requests. Furthermore, that a master list of “outstanding” artists be given (the use of block capitals in a presidential cable as well as the level of detail pertaining to the artists or musical style seems to point towards more than a simple suggestion), in accordance with a particular perception of what Negro-American art, seen from outside, was expected to be, undeniably and eerily resonates with certain Western discourses on cultural difference, particularly regarding jazz.³⁶⁸ Yet, this particular outlook on the music and how it was to be presented at the Festival also reveals an interest of Senghor to transform what can be loosely defined as “African heritage” in America into an American “African policy.”³⁶⁹ From an artistic point of view, Senghor’s appreciation of the music was perhaps influenced by his years in Paris where jazz was in vogue in the interwar period, or when as a young student he was introduced to the artistic scene by the third pillar of Negritude: Léon-Gontran Damas.³⁷⁰ From a political standpoint, to request with such distinctness the presence of jazz artists at the apex of their careers reveals a desire to be part of a successful artistic story linked to the plight of African-

³⁶⁸ Responses by writers and surrealist intellectuals to the arrival of jazz in Europe are strikingly akin to the reception of “oriental tunes” by travelers and philosophers in the Early Modern period: both refuted its status as music (let alone art) while enjoying its entertainment quality. See the analysis by Anne-Marie Mercier-Faivre and Yannick Seité, “Le jazz à la lumière de Jean-Jacques Rousseau,” *L’Homme*, 158-159 (2001), pp. 35-52. I reserve the occasion for a critique of this paradigm for future work.

³⁶⁹ This is most visible in Senghor’s criticism of the United States’s foreign policy for not taking advantage of its alleged “racial and civilizational” diversity in general, and African-American cultural production in particular. See, among other references, his 1949 article “De la liberté de l’âme ou éloge du métissage,” in *Liberté I*, op. cit., p. 97; and the 1956 “Union française et fédéralisme,” in *Liberté II*, op. cit., p. 203. The relation between African-America and its African (political and aesthetic) connection in the United States at the time is tenuous, and Senghor’s intervention resonates with the more complex position of African-American intellectuals—whom Senghor refers to. Indeed, one may recall the NAACP standing for “equal rights for black in America” and Marcus Garvey’s UNIA advocating for a “back to Africa” movement, while Du Bois’s Pan-Africanism offered a more nuanced outlook. Senghor shows an awareness of this complex political and aesthetic dynamic by quoting Harlem Renaissance writers, including Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Claude MacKay, etc, and even Marcus Garvey, Jean Toomer, Richard Wright, in “La poésie du nègre nouveau,” *Liberté I*, op. cit., p. 120.

³⁷⁰ For a comprehensive treatment of jazz in Paris in the interwar period, see Jeffrey H. Jackson, *Making Jazz French* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), that examines not only how jazz became so widely performed in Paris during the 1920s and 1930s, but also why it was culturally controversial. On Léon-Gontran Damas and Langston Hughes attending night parties in Paris where jazz and cabaret music were performed, see Katharine Conley, *Robert Desnos, Surrealism and the Marvelous in Everyday Life* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003) and Carrie Noland, *Voices of Negritude in Modernist Print* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

Americans with whom Senghor, since the *First World Congress of Negro Artists and Writers*, has vindicated a shared history. In his short response (less than one hundred words) dated April 1, 1963, Kennedy acknowledged the “significant contributions [of Negro-American artists] to the cultural life of the United States, who derive much of their artistry from their African heritage,” while referring Senghor to the rather low-ranked Assistant Secretary of State for Educational And Cultural Affairs.³⁷¹ Insofar as political protocol is concerned, Kennedy’s response and formal expression of interest to Senghor’s project does not translate into extensive involvement. But concurrently to this unexpected high-level exchange regarding an art fair, Senghor also pursues a more predictable monetary and political negotiation regarding a partnership between one of the most powerful countries on the planet and his fairly new presence on the global stage.

Just a month before Senghor’s letter setting the Festival as a “precious message of friendship” between Senegal and the United States of America, another exchange, less friendly, took place between the leaders of the two nations. On February 6, 1963, Senghor asked Kennedy for a greater flexibility to use American aid. Kennedy’s response, dated March 2, 1963, just two days before Senghor’s letter, was as polite as it was negative: the development program was to be used only for nation-building, loans would be contracted instead of grants being given, and any money given by the United States was to be used to buy merchandise from the United States. It is safe to say that such was not the answer that the Senegalese administration at the time was expecting. A little over two months after the exchange, Senghor sent his Foreign Minister, Doudou Thiam, to speak to the American Ambassador to the Republic of Senegal and to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Philip M. Kaiser. The conversation was not recorded verbatim,

³⁷¹ The letter is also part of the *Papers of John F. Kennedy*, op. cit.

but summarized by Kaiser in a memorandum to the Department of State.³⁷² Its content appears politically partisan. According to Kaiser, Thiam relayed to him that the future of U.S.-Senegal relations was in the balance “for years to come,” that the U.S “appear[ed] to be doing more for less friendly African countries,” and that its “pro-Western” government “rest[ed] crucially on its ability to make economic and social progress.” Most interesting, however, is Kaiser’s response to Thiam when we compare it to his policy recommendation sent to Kennedy in the meantime. Admitting that no U.S. aid could be directly given to any country, Kaiser seems to downplay the role and influence of the United States before Minister Thiam. As he recalls to have said in his memorandum, the “French [were] already making major contributions in Francophone West Africa” and the Americans had “no thought of replacing them.” Meanwhile, he reassured Thiam that U.S. aid “would continue to be supplementary.” Yet, in the comment section of this confidential memorandum, the Ambassador also conveyed to his superiors in Washington D.C. that what he called an “unpleasant awakening” for the Senegalese government had to be understood in terms of the “understandable desire to avoid the eventuality of being forced to become even more dependent on the French” who would “doubtless drive a hard bargain in return for any increase of their level of aid.” From his standpoint, Kaiser saw a situation of psychological and political nature where the role of the former colonizer, France, was primary. Did Kaiser consider the form of these negotiations to symbolize an opening for United States interference in an area predominantly occupied, in the realm of foreign policy, by France? In a more enigmatic sentence, Kaiser conveyed that U.S. aid was “not of nature to respond to psychological as well as economic demands of their present predicament.” What exactly were

³⁷² The memorandum, addressed by Kaiser to the Department of State with The White House as its final addressee, is dated April 30, 1963. In *Papers of John F. Kennedy*, op. cit.

the psychological demands and how, if not in terms of monetary aid, was the U.S. ready to concede, is left blank by the Ambassador: “I expect to make further concrete suggestions,” Kaiser wrote, surely after instructions from Washington. These never came.³⁷³

Pursuing simultaneously a political correspondence destined to open another economic channel that would give Senegal another option to an otherwise monetary dependence to France, and a cultural diplomacy that foregrounds the United States as one of the most courted guests of his World Festival project, Senghor writes a personal letter to John F. Kennedy on June 22, 1963. In the short missive (just over 3 lines), the President of Senegal congratulates Kennedy for his “policy on racial integration”—a message whose response from Kennedy remains elusive.³⁷⁴ One of the most important follow-ups happens exactly a month prior to Kennedy’s assassination. On October 22, the “ties of friendship which bind [the] two countries” are pushed to the test: the request for an official meeting between President Kennedy and a Senegalese delegation led

³⁷³ No other telegrams from Kaiser to the Department of State (DOS) regarding this topic were sent in the last six months of the administration prior to Kennedy’s assassination. The following Summer 1963, internal information is given that the Ambassador was “in [Washington D.C.] for a couple of weeks,” yet that there was “no reason for him to see the President.” See a “Note from McG. B.” with a White House seal, dated August 16, 1963. On Jan. 28, 1964, internal communication reads that “Mr. Brubeck wanted to hold this request until the end of the Selection Boards—then came the assassination and I don’t think Amb. Kaiser saw the President in the meantime.”

³⁷⁴ There exists a draft of the suggested reply to Senghor that mentions “the ties of friendship and common purpose which bind [the] two countries.” I was unable to locate an official cable or telegram sent to Dakar. In the light of what happened in the first half of 1963, Senghor may refer to two unrelated events. First, Martin Luther King Jr.’s desegregation campaign in Birmingham, Alabama. On Good Friday, King was arrested and spent a week in prison where he wrote his well-known “Letter from Birmingham Jail” on racial injustice and civil disobedience. When James Bevel, one of King’s lieutenants, asked black youths to demonstrate at the beginning of May, Birmingham City Commissioner Eugene Connor used police dogs and high-pressure fire hoses to put down the demonstrations. The violence was broadcast on television to the nation and the world. Invoking federal authority, President Kennedy sent several thousand troops to an Alabama air base, and his administration responded by speeding up the drafting of a comprehensive civil rights bill. Second, Governor George Wallace had vowed at his inauguration to defend “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever.” One June 11, he upheld his promise to “stand in the schoolhouse door” to prevent two black students from enrolling at the University of Alabama. To protect the students and secure their admission, President Kennedy federalized the Alabama National Guard. The same day, he addressed the nation and defined the civil rights crisis as moral, as well as constitutional and legal. He announced that major civil rights legislation would be submitted to Congress to guarantee equal access to public facilities, to end segregation in education, and to provide federal protection of the right to vote. For a comprehensive treatment of the segregation history in the sixties, see *“Takin’ it to the streets”: a sixties reader*, ed. Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

by President Senghor himself, designed to stage the official endorsement by the United States of the *First World Festival of Negro Arts*. In a memorandum for McGeorge Bundy at The White House, Benjamin H. Read, Executive Secretary for the United States Secretary of State, explains to Kennedy what the Senegalese delegation expects from the visit. Though he presents Senghor as “the originator and champion of the concept of Negritude,” he does not detail what the concept implies or means, or what the U.S.’s role in the Festival’s organization might be. Rather, condescendingly presenting the Festival as Senghor’s “pet project,” emphasis is given on the political strategy behind the official Senegalese state visit: “As evidence of highest U.S. Government interest in the Festival, the delegation seeks a very brief appointment with the President [of the United States] *mainly so that pictures may be taken for publicity purposes.*”³⁷⁵ On a more personal note, “out of consideration for President Senghor” and “in view of our need to depend largely on cultural relations to maintain an effective U.S. presence in Africa,” the Department gives two recommendations. First, “that the President receive the delegation for 10 or 15 minutes sometime before Monday, October 28, 1963 and pose for pictures.” Second, “that, if the delegation asks for permission to use Mrs. Kennedy’s name, the President reply that he will think it over.” But the Senegalese delegation did not stop at the optics of political negotiations. In a skillful diplomatic move, it suggested, in addition to the publicity request, to use official photographs showing political cooperation with the United States, and the organization of an official “Committee of American Friends” of the Festival to be constituted of prominent African American members from the artistic, academic, and political scene.

³⁷⁵ Memorandum for Mr. McGeorgeBundy at The White House, written by Benjamin H. Read, Executive Secretary of the Department of State. The memo is dated Oct. 22, 1963. In the *Papers of John F. Kennedy*, op. cit. In terms of protocol, a “State Visit” stands at the top of the list and includes a list of ceremonial activities determined in advance during pre-visit negotiations between protocol officials of the United States and the visiting state (White House dinner, exchange of gifts, etc). As such, it differs, in the image being conveyed, from a regular “Official Visit.”

The assassination of President Kennedy the following month did not deter the behind-the-scenes political strategies that developed between Senegal and the United States. In fact, a close look at publicity material in the early months of 1964 shows an increase of political activities surrounding an official American involvement in the Festival. In Spring 1964, the Department of State appointed Mrs. Virginia Inness-Brown, first as consultant to the Senegalese mission in preparation for U.S. participation in the Festival, then as Chair of the *United States Committee for the World Festival of Negro Arts*—the formal outcome of the earlier request for a “Committee of American Friends.” Placed under the direct jurisdiction of the Department of State, the Committee kept a tight connection to American foreign policy.³⁷⁶

The appointment of Mrs. Virginia Inness-Brown provoked a mini-crisis in the overall relation between the French-ruled *Society of African Culture* (SAC) that initiated the idea of a festival in 1959 and the American organization of the Festival that Senghor strongly advocated for just as soon as he announced the festival publicly in Senegal. As literary critic Harold Cruse recalls, the role of the American branch of the SAC, officially called the *American Society of African Culture* (AMSAC) was to promote the ideas of the Paris-based SAC across the Atlantic with particular attention to the application of its cultural program among American Negroes. But when African-American classical concert pianist Robert Pritchard claimed to be in charge of the organization of a pre-Dakar Festival in the United States, bypassing the role and supervision

³⁷⁶ In *Journey to Africa* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1971), pp. 240-52, a politico-biography of Guinea and Senegal, Hoyt Fuller, managing editor of the *Negro Digest*, claimed that it was during his time in Dakar covering the art fair that he learned about the connection between AMSAC (the American Society for African Culture, parent organization of the Paris-based SAC) and the CIA. As Anthony Ratcliff surmises, the U.S. State Department’s overt support and the CIA’s involvement in keeping Black radicals away from the Festival, undermined the prospects for Pan-African actions. See “When *Négritude* Was In Vogue: Critical Reflections of the First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture in 1966,” *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 6, no. 7 (Feb. 2014), pp. 167-86.

of the Department of State, the organizational unity across the Atlantic came under stress.³⁷⁷ According to Pritchard, Alioune Diop (founder of the intellectual journal *Présence Africaine*) had personally appointed him to organize a pre-Festival in New York in February 1965, called the *American Festival of Negro Arts*. In a New York Times interview dated June 19, 1964, Pritchard cites evidence from a written correspondence with Diop. Tracking this evidence, the newspapers contacted the other party and offered the following statement: “Mr. Diop added that Mr. Pritchard and all other interested groups [are] welcome to contribute to Mrs. Inness-Brown and whatever committee she might organize.”³⁷⁸

However justified Pritchard’s diatribe—and however verifiable his evidence—may have been, the controversy over the executive management of the event reveals a tenuous dynamic between arts and politics that expands beyond just the Dakar festival. Indeed, Senghor’s use of art as a political tool to further transatlantic communication between Dakar and Washington is progressively appropriated by intellectuals and policy-makers in the United States for intra-American affairs with little regard for Senghor’s project. In short, the artistic Festival organized by the Senegalese state starts to develop, in the United States, a political life of its own.

³⁷⁷ See Harold Cruse, “Negro Writers’ Conference—The Dialogue Distorted” in *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: William Morrow and Cie, 1969), pp. 498-518. Cruse’s piece is the only one I could find on this American Festival of Negro Arts (AFNA). The event is said to have been held on the campus of Fairleigh Dickinson University. Contact with FDU as well as its library archives did not show a record of this event, although a webpage of the “PaPa,” The Panamerican-Panafrican Association, a Virginia-based NGO in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC), presents a program of AFNA. It also displays a calendar for publicity purposes that bears the symbol of the journal *Présence Africaine*. Cruse explains the lack of success of AFNA by the cultural split from the *American Society of African Culture* (AMSAC) that went to organize, instead, a writers’ conference at *The New School* in April 1965, inviting figures such as James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, and Herbert Aptheker.

³⁷⁸ “Senegal to Hold Negro Arts Fete,” article published by Theodore Strongin in the *New York Times* on June 19, 1964, p. 34.

b) A Pandora's Box: The United States Committee for the World Festival of Negro Arts

The appointment by the American government of an official spokesperson through the Department of State and the U.S. Information Agency, as well as a whole machinery to support it (financial support from the government, public relation firm to promote its work, and quasi-monopoly over its decisions and actions), signals the presence of an agenda (political and artistic) that evolves both in the context of an international postcolonialism and a domestic Civil Rights movement. Indeed, in a brochure designed by the Department of State in 1964, the *United States Committee for the World Festival of Negro Arts* is presented as an organism with an equal commitment to Senegal and to the United States:

The United States Department of State and the United States Information Agency serve as sources to the *Committee* and work in association with *it*.

The Government of Senegal has designed the *Committee* as the sole organization for American participation on the Festival.³⁷⁹

Though President Lyndon B. Johnson's letter of support in the same brochure praises the "private American response to this cause," he also expresses his pleasure at the government's "cooperation with the committee," concluding on a political note: "this whole effort reflects so faithfully the ideals and purposes of the United States and the International Cooperation Year."³⁸⁰

³⁷⁹ See *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts Press agent's files*, 1965-1966 Sc MG 220 Box 1, folder 5. Emphasis is mine.

³⁸⁰ Ibid. The "International Cooperation Year" was announced by the United Nations in 1964 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the creation of the international organization. Cooperation between the United States and the United Nations resulted in a commemorative American stamp, U.S. #1266, issued in San Francisco, at the site of the first meeting of the United Nations. See Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks Upon Proclaiming 1965 as International Cooperation Year," October 2, 1964, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson: 1963-1964* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Office, 1965), p. 1186.

The *United States Committee for the World Festival of Negro Arts* (USCWFNA) held its inaugural meeting on September 17, 1964. The political agenda of the artistic project transpired even in the choice of the locale: the American National Theatre and Academy (ANTA). Located in New York, ANTA was a training organization established in 1935 to be the official American national theatre and an alternative to for-profit Broadway shows.³⁸¹ Among the attendees were Chairman of the USCWFNA Mrs. Virginia Inness-Brown, Director of African Affairs at the State Department Mr. Roland Jacobs, President of AMSAC Dr. John Davis, and Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes. Initially in charge of finding private funding and of selecting African-American artists to represent the United States in Dakar, the Committee becomes almost immediately concerned with the viability of long-term corollary projects that would expand beyond the 1966 Festival. According to the confidential minutes of the meeting, one goal was to raise funds for a post-Festival “Cité d’Art” in Dakar. More than simple financial benevolence for an artistic project, the committee questioned how such a space could also become “the center in Black Africa for the study and preservation of African culture.”³⁸² In addition, it suggested that the United States Information Agency (USIA) “be of great help in helping to publicize the Festival throughout Africa,” i.e., beyond just Senegal. Such American involvement in African Affairs was part of Robert Pritchard’s early concerns. Regardless of the impeccable record of John A. Davis’s fight for social and political rights of African Americans,³⁸³

³⁸¹ See “National Theatre Is Authorized By Congress to Advance the Drama” in the *New York Times*, June 20, 1935, as well as *The Oxford Companion to American Theatre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), article “American National Theatre and Academy,” pp. 25-26.

³⁸² See the minutes of the inaugural meeting, in *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts Press agent’s files*, 1965-1966 Sc MG 220 Box 1, folder 6. This specific comment is John A. Davis’s.

³⁸³ John A. Davis was an African-American Civil Rights activist who served as the head academic researcher on the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* case (along with a team, including economist Mabel Smythe, psychologist Kenneth Clark, and scholar Horace Mann Bond). See <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/brown/brown-brown.html#obj73>.

the latter's suggestion to invite as "Mr. David Rockefeller, President of Chase Bank, to serve as Chairman of the Finance Committee," would have strengthened Pritchard's agitation and given credence to his concerns about an imperialist economic and political agenda trumping artistic goals. At the request of Mrs. Inness-Brown, Senegalese Ambassador to the United Nations Charles Delgado moved towards an exclusion of Robert Pritchard from any official activity between Senegal and the United States regarding the festival. Qualifying Pritchard's activities as nothing less than "illegal," Delgado also gave the assurance that the Senegalese government recognized "the group assembled [the USCWFNA] [as] the only entity entitled to represent the interests of the *First World Festival of Negro Arts* in the United States."

The politicization of the Festival kept increasing from there on both sides of the Atlantic. During the second meeting of the Committee, on November 6, 1964, Virginia Inness-Brown acknowledged "direct involvement" from the State Department, the USIA, as well as the White House.³⁸⁴ In the meantime, involvement with Senegal became more open-ended: "We should make every *attempt* to comply with President Senghor's requests," added Inness-Brown, as though the fact that some requests would challenge Senghor were to be expected. More important, what indeed were those requests? The minutes recall that, among other demands, "President Léopold Senghor asked for American works in watercolor and gouache." As with the specific request for jazz musicians and "dance orchestras," the distinct demand for

³⁸⁴ See the minutes of the second meeting, in *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts Press agent's files*, 1965-1966 Sc MG 220 Box 1, folder 6. Once the USCWFNA completed its organizational work at the end of Spring 1965, President Lyndon Johnson himself sent a message to the committee, which the White House used for publicity purposes. Johnson's statement was subsequently printed in the American brochure to the *First World Festival of Negro Arts* and in mainstream press—e.g., a *New York Times* article titled "Negro Arts Fete Enlists Groups Here" on June 23, 1965. The complex relation between U.S. foreign policy (of which the Festival was part), and a domestic political agenda (for instance, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 developed in these very months), cannot be investigated here. It will be part of subsequent work following this dissertation.

already-created paintings fitting the imagination of an “American” art that Senghor probably saw in European museums or exhibitions seems to exhibit the same kind of orientalist view on “African” works. At this point, the minutes recall that “in answer to the Chairman’s question, Mr. Delgado said that there ha[d] been no news regarding the Festival since the President’s visit to the United States [in 1961].” The surprising lack of follow-up to those specific requests made at the states’ highest level indicates not only a lack of interest in the actual response, it also prioritizes political maneuvers over seemingly—and expectedly—primordial artistic considerations. Indeed, the perplexing silence led the American committee to focus on its own domestic political and commercial agenda under the supervision of The White House and the Department of State. At the conclusion of the meeting, Mrs. Inness-Brown raised the possibility of using the United States Information Agency, an organization created to fight Communism and whose mission was “to understand, inform, and influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest,”³⁸⁵ to record the American cultural production at the Festival for domestic use: “The Chairman stated that a recommendation should be made to the USIA that it make tapes, films, and records of performances sent to Dakar, for use afterwards in the United States.”³⁸⁶

An official motion, seconded by John Davis, was subsequently unanimously adopted:

³⁸⁵ Though the organization was dismantled in 1999, the “Mission Statement” of the USIA is available on a variety of sources. Among others, see <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/usia/usiahome/oldoview.htm#overview>, an online source of The University of Illinois at Chicago that houses the Electronic Research Collection (ERC), a partnership between the United States Department of State and the Federal Depository Library at the Richard J. Daley Library. The USIA’s extensive use of media, from radio broadcasting to libraries, book publication and distribution, press motion pictures, television, etc, has led scholars to surmise that it allowed the United States government to disguise an ineffective propaganda more easily. See Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower’s Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2006); Robert Elder, *The Information Machine: The United States Information Agency and American Foreign Policy* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1968); Ernest Lefever, *Ethics and United States Foreign Policy* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1957).

³⁸⁶ I was unable to find any of these tapes or records from performances at the Festival. There is, however, among the archival footage, a USIA-commissioned 40-minute film produced in 1968 by prominent African-American filmmaker, William Greaves, eponymously titled “The First World Festival of Negro Arts.” More than 28 minutes of footage are dedicated to African-American artists, over against a background that aims at capturing the optimism of that early period of African independence.

That the USIA be asked to use its good offices to obtain tapes, films, and records of America's contribution to the Festival, and the U.S. Committee or its successor, attempt to utilize this material for presentation in the United States after completion of the Festival in Dakar.³⁸⁷

In addition to the motion, Inness-Brown asked that a Festival program "subsequently be used to great advantage in the United States." Another member, Mrs. Lawrence Copley Thaw, a rich New York philanthropist, asked Dr. Davis that "he suggest a[n African] tour to the USIA, hoping that this exhibition will be shown in the United States." Davis did not offer a reply.

In Spring 1965, the role of communication is further strengthened when a public relations firm specializing in the advertisement of Broadway shows, Seymour Krawitz, is hired.³⁸⁸ In a confidential file compiled by the public relations agent in February 1965, the role of advertisement as a didactic and psychological use of an imagined "African" success to counterbalance the plight of African-American struggles is foregrounded without ambiguity: "This major exposure of the American Negro intellectual and artist following his participation in the Festival can have a lasting effect on the morale of the Negro in general; it will also serve to eliminate many pressures now felt through lack of awareness on the part of the general

³⁸⁷ *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts Press agent's files, 1965-1966 Sc MG 220 Box 1, folder 6, page seven.* That the USCWFNA was able even just to suggest a redirection of the USIA's mission, otherwise under direct supervision of the State Department and, at times, The White House, to influence national interests abroad for domestic use reveals the extent to which its own agenda was intertwined with both a Cold War dynamic and a concern over the increasingly popular Civil Right movement on its soil. See, again, Robert Elder, *The Information Machine: The United States Information Agency and American Foreign Policy* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1968).

³⁸⁸ Seymour Krawitz is invited to the fourth and last closed-doors meeting of the United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts on April 23, 1965. No other transcripts are recorded, but many documents following the alleged last meeting foreground the role and action of Krawitz's public relation firm. See *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts Press agent's files, 1965-1966 Sc MG 220 Box 1, folder 7.* Among others, an annotated transcript (with names of African-American artists crossed and replaced) of an article that would appear (with Krawitz's corrections) in the *New York Times*.

public.”³⁸⁹ Building upon both the positive reception of the political development of independent nation-states in Africa by African-American writers and the failure to transform recent political and legislative success (e.g., Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and Voting Rights Bills of 1965) into an improvement of the economic situation of their alleged beneficiaries in the United States, Krawitz seeks to stage the Dakar Festival as a diverting metonym for victory on the socio-political front.³⁹⁰ Its first public act is no less than the publication in mainstream medias of a private telegram sent by President Lyndon B. Johnson to the *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts* to several major newspapers, including the *New York Times* and *The Chicago Defender*.³⁹¹ Alongside high quotes of praise to President Senghor from President Johnson—whose approval ratings, amidst the escalation of American involvement in Vietnam, civil rights upheaval and legislation, and a war on poverty, started to drop in Fall 1964—the articles applaud a budget of \$600,000 (nearly \$5M in today’s value) as a starting fund for the USCWFNA to be eventually matched by private donors. Officially, as the *New York Times* remarks, the goal of American participation is to “demonstrate forcefully and factually how the growing prestige and leadership of the Negro are reaching out to all aspects of life and culture.”

³⁸⁹ *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts Press agent’s files, 1965-1966 Sc MG 220 Box 1, folder 2.* In the midst of the Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War, USCWFNA uses “all medias in the coverage: the press, books, and magazines of national and international distribution, television, films, tapes, recordings and exhibitions.” Also listed as American advantages, are “cash awards to be given to Negro writers and artists of merit” and “documentary reports of the colloquium to be held in Dakar.”

³⁹⁰ Indeed, in the United States, the realization that the legislative changes had not substantially helped the socio-economic situation of African-Americans led to a resurgence of militant acts expressing a desire for radical change. After 1965, the “Black Power” movement, with figures such as Malcolm X, helped channel this desire away from what is usually seen as the pacifist civil right struggles, with figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. The dynamic is caught by Aimé Césaire in his last play *The Tempest*—which he started to write in 1966. For a socio-political analysis of the dynamic, see Herbert H. Haines, *Black Radicals and the Civil Rights Mainstream, 1954-1970* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988); Edward Greer, *Black Liberation Politics* (Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 1971); Stokely Carmichael, *Black Power: the Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

³⁹¹ *New York Times*, June 23, 1965, “Negro Arts Fete Enlists Groups Here,” p. 46; *The Chicago Defender*, July 3, 1965, “United States Committee Aids World Festival of Negro Arts,” p. 26A.

Indeed, the demonstration is corroborated by impressive numbers. If, back in November 1964, the USCFWFNA had expressed, however condescendingly, a care “not to swamp the contributions of the other participating nations, France, Switzerland, Italy, Brazil, Trinidad, possibly England and Belgium as well as some sixteen African countries [that remain unnamed],” the situation in July 1965 foregrounds the United States as the primary actor in terms of financial contribution and number of artists sent to Dakar. In *The Chicago Defender*, one reads that “approximately 100 distinguished leaders and figures in the field of literature, art, films, dance and theater are participating in the activities of the United States Committee and are assisting in the plans to send American Negro representatives of the arts and their work to the First World Festival of Negro Arts.” As the *New York Times* foregrounds in its own article titled “105 U.S Negro Artists Prepare for Senegal Arts Fete:” “The American delegation of 105 performers, specialists, artists, and technicians will be the *largest and most comprehensive of any sent by the 43 nations.*”³⁹² Clearly, Senghor’s initial wish for a “Committee of American Friends” opened a Pandora’s box which contributed almost daily to an accumulation of power and influence. Perhaps in an attempt to regain control of an increasingly unbalanced political situation, Senghor sent, in the early months of 1965, Ousmane Socé Diop, the Ambassador of the Republic of Senegal to the United States, to participate in the preparatory meetings of the *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts*.

³⁹² To give an order of comparison, the United States sent three times more participants in the Olympics: 346 athletes to the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, and 357 to the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City, out of 93 and 112 nations respectively. Data comes from the official website run by the International Olympic Committee: <https://www.olympic.org/tokyo-1964>, and <https://www.olympic.org/mexico-1968>.

During the third meeting, on January 21, 1965, Diop confidentially spoke of the “American participation as the hope of the Festival,” and discussion ensued on the strongest ways in which to “showcase the ties” between the two countries. By the end of the meeting, the Committee expressed the recommendation that First Lady “Mrs. Johnson, accept the Honorary Chairmanship of the United States Committee.”³⁹³ Meanwhile, the political activities of pianist Robert Pritchard were also mentioned and took a more official turn whereby top politicians now directly went after dissident artists. Notwithstanding the enigmatic way in which a Senegalese official, even in his executive capacity of head of state, would enact such restriction on an American citizen writing in the United States, the committee took reassurance that:

President Senghor has directly written to Dr. Pritchard informing him that the government of Senegal has given the U.S. Committee complete authority for American participation, and demanding that he (Dr. Pritchard) immediately cease and desist all independent activists outside of the U.S. Committee.³⁹⁴

The disenfranchisement of Dr. Pritchard, whose artistic vision and goal for the 1966 festival resonated with a “negro aesthetic” extolled in the early years of Negritude but did not seem sufficiently politically resourceful, testifies to the ideological reorientation of the movement after World War II. Perhaps more consequentially, it is at this time that the government of Senegal officially changed the dates of the Festival from December 1965 to April 1966. As the

³⁹³ Ultimately, the Chairmanship was accepted by Ambassador Adlai E. Stevenson, United States Representative to the United Nations, with Lady Bird Johnson’s name on the masthead of the *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts*. See Letter dated June 22, 1965, in *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts Press agent’s files, 1965-1966* Sc MG 220 Box 1, folder 2.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, Box 1, folder 7, page ten. Perhaps as a result of this foreign political involvement, but certainly simultaneously with it, Pritchard redirected his efforts to the making of a national event, “Negro History Week,” first launched in 1965 and now an annual event otherwise known as “Black History Month.” See David Colburn and George Pozzeta, “Race, Ethnicity and the Evolution of Political Legitimacy” in *The Sixties: From Memory to History*, ed. David Farber (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), pp. 124-25.

Committee recalled from a report written by Mr. Alioune N'Doye, Chargé d'Affaires at the Embassy of the Republic of Senegal, it was discovered that the original date of the Festival would coincide with the "sacred Islamic period of Ramadan, during which those of the Muslim faith sharply curtail all activity." Though the United States committee welcomed the change as an additional time to raise more funds, that it took three years for a predominantly Muslim country to realize the scheduling conflict of the Festival with one of the five pillars of Islam, reveals a troubled political dynamic within Senegal where, unexpectedly, it is an artistic event (and its organization) that allowed to attend to a scene of religious agency.³⁹⁵ The diplomatic reason given by N'Doye for this mishap is not altogether convincing: "It was impossible to foresee until this time" because "Ramadan is not a fixed period," as though astronomical calculations were not an option.³⁹⁶ Perhaps more controversial is the reason that ultimately led into taking it into account: "to avoid any social or religious factor which would mar the success of the Festival and prevent attendance." By being defined as a religious factor potentially disrupting a national event (with international ambition), Islam is being *de facto* pushed to the

³⁹⁵ Historians John Hargreaves and G. Wesley Johnson, among others, notice the peculiar status of Senegal's religious dynamic due to the colonial assimilation policy and the presence of the four-communes, guaranteeing to those born in these four towns all the rights of native French citizens. Indeed, though substantial legal and social barriers often prevented the full exercise of these rights, inhabitants of Dakar, Rufisque, Saint-Louis and Gorée fought for their political rights like any other citizens of the hexagon, while maintaining religious practices—such as Islam—seen by France as a potential threat. Wesley Johnson goes so far as to argue that the practice of Islam was also a practice of resistance to cultural assimilation, and that the French's rules against Islam (such as the ban of Arabic in Muslim tribunals in 1909) pushed many Senegalese into the Muslim brotherhoods (e.g., Tijaniyya, Mouride, etc). See G. Wesley Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal: The Struggle for Power in the Four Communes, 1900-1920* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), p. 198; Donald B. Cruise O'Brien, *The Mourides of Senegal, The Political and Economic Organization of an Islamic Brotherhood* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

³⁹⁶ One might surmise that the dates might indeed be adjusted closer to the event, but no more than one or two days. The relation between the sighting of the moon and astronomical calculations as ways to determine the exact start of Ramadan has been complex for centuries. See for instance, Zulfiqar Ali Shah, *The Astronomical Calculations and Ramadan: A Fiqhi Discourse* (Hemdon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2009). The use, however, of calculation to predict the exact period of Ramadan in 1966, undermines that philosophical debate. It is also to be noted that the change of dates allows for a celebration of the country's independence on April 4. Surprisingly, this crucial point is not even brought up by N'Doye to his American counterparts.

margin of the alleged “national gathering” promoted in the initial presidential message of 1961 announcing the Festival. When we recall that the aforementioned presidential message happened concurrently with the political upheaval related to the activities of Muslim leader Mamadou Dia, we must question whether the reasons behind the “impossibility to foresee” an Islamic event alongside the organization of the festival can be related to a more complex dynamic in Senegal that involves religious pluralism over against an idea of secularism familiar to the French-educated Senghor. It also signals the lack of connection of a highly westernized colonial elite to the religiosity of the masses.

What the *First World Festival of Negro Arts* can be credited with, by the act of necessitating the moving of its official dates due to the period of Ramadan, is not only a *de facto* recognition of the presence and influence of a heterogeneous communitarianism, it is also the real necessity of political compromise and heterogeneity as a basis for any claim of national unity through art. This is where the paramount interest of Senghor in the participation of an American contingent of “Negro Artists” invited to represent an idea of “Negro culture,” as well as the increase of an orientalist discourse of said contingent to satisfy a political agenda in the United States, becomes both medicine and poison. As Senghor is indeed engaged with the task of repositioning his state on the stage of world politics with the wish to play in the premier league, at the same time as he is asserting the political independence of his newly-formed nation from Western imperial powers, he cannot but acknowledge the hierarchical contact between Senegal and the United States while using the heritage of Western imperialism and become

complicit with it.³⁹⁷ It is in that sense that the role, presence, and influence of the United States in the Senegal's Festival is medicine, because it allowed Senghor to move away both from a simplistic archeological worldview of Africa derived from European ethnography and from a giving in to hexagonal politics in exchange for an idea of modernity and progress that retained a colonizer-colonized hierarchy. Yet it is also poison not only because it assimilated an idealized African-America in a quasi colonial approach to foreign art and culture; it also co-opted the Festival as a space for political leadership in cultural creation in lieu of cultural initiative for political alternatives. This is so much a characteristic of self-conscious postcolonial planning that I use the medicine/poison concept-metaphor a number of times in this chapter. Indeed, reversing the hierarchical relation between "art" and "politics," where the former is no longer a secondary outcome of the latter, but rather, a primary resource to respond to (as with Dia's coup) or even anticipate (as with Ramadan) political crisis, constitutes the major argument of one of Aimé Césaire's most famous speeches: the "Discourse on African Art," given at the *First World Festival of Negro Arts* on April 6, 1966, at the end of the Colloquium on Negro Arts.

³⁹⁷ I am using the word "complicit" in the sense of a historical and ideological "folded-togetherness," that Gayatri Spivak often uses to describe the relation between two entities otherwise only described as antithetical or mutually exclusive. I am grateful to have benefited from numerous conversations where Spivak develops the idea, as well as a lecture given in Marseille in May 2014, entitled "Complicities," that I translated into French.

II. April 1966: On the Stage of the First World Festival of Negro Arts

Beginning just a day before the official opening date of the Festival (April 1st), but continuing concurrently with the Festival's artistic performances, a "Colloquium on Negro Art" was organized by Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor as a one-week event gathering writers and scholars to debate on the "Function of Negro Art in the life of and for the people." Symbolically, the colloquium was held in the legislative chamber of the National Assembly, officially in recess that week to give space for those intellectuals put at the center of both Senegal's political stage and Senghor's artistic festival.³⁹⁸ Gathering thirty scholars, writers, and artists, one of its tasks was to question and reappraise Negritude six years after independence. Hence, figures familiar with the movement, such as Louis Achille, Engelbert Mveng, but also Michel Leiris and Geneviève Calame-Griaule, were invited. Their papers ranged, respectively, from "*Les Negro-Spirituals*" and "*Signification africaine de l'art*" to "*Le sentiment esthétique chez les Noirs africains*" and "*La littérature orale*," thus covering a vast array of cultural and ethnographic themes. In addition to their scholarly communications to be subsequently published by *Présence Africaine*, these invited personalities were also required to participate, as Article IV of the Colloquium Rule of Procedures demanded, "every day, in world groups or committees, in order to study the item provided for in the program among the reports proposed."³⁹⁹

³⁹⁸ A detailed account of the Colloquium is given in *The First World Festival of Negro Arts, Dakar 1966*, ed. David Murphy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016). Before this recent publication, only two articles paid attention to the scholarly event: an anonymous "Notes and News" in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 1966, pp. 439-47; and Z. Volavková-Skořepová, "In the Margin of the Colloquium on Negro Art Held in Dakar," *New Orient* 5.5 (1966), pp. 151-54.

³⁹⁹ *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts Press agent's files, 1965-1966 Sc MG 220 Box 1, folder 1.*

Though there is no information as to who divided the committees and proposed objects of study, the Colloquium's organization seems similar in form to the former congresses of 1956 and 1959 where commissions were to provide a series of recommendations as the result of the participants' collective work. Indeed, Article VIII of the 1966 Colloquium read: "At the closing session, the seminar will adopt the concrete recommendations relating mainly to the future of Negro Arts and Artists, to the artistic education of the people and to the diffusion of Negro Art in the world." Far removed from the early days of Negritude, when essentialist romanticized statements on Negro Art were common, used to awaken in its readers and practitioners the Negro being that colonialism had buried under cultural assimilation, the 1966 World Festival constitutes the climactic moment of the previous World Congresses of 1956 and 1959 where art had already become an instrument of political manipulation. In April 1966, it is state-building that leads the way to artistic production—as Césaire would soon remark. The colloquium, therefore, assembles artists and scholars who expect statesmanship for the statesmen. In sum, rather than offering an aesthetic reflection on African art (as writes Engelbert Mveng, President of the Organization Committee of the Colloquium, an "interpretation of this art with the help of those who are in Africa itself, authorized trustees of its culture and its traditions"⁴⁰⁰), the colloquium aims to offer practical ("concrete") solutions to be followed by art practitioners. Presumably, artists were not those from whom a holistic image of Negro Arts would emerge; their art was to be an evidence of the vitality of what Senghor called "cultural independence," while also substantiating the reality of "political independence."

⁴⁰⁰ See the brochure of the colloquium, archived in the *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts Press agent's files*, 1965-1966 Sc MG 220 Box 1, folder 1.

a) From the Top: Assessing Negro Arts in French and English

One momentous—and proud—task of the Colloquium was to attribute prizes for each artistic category of Negro Arts, awarded during a solemn ceremony on April 7, 1966—the last day of the Colloquium. But as I showed, Senghor himself was personally involved with the kind of Negro Arts he had requested. To give one example, one of the prizes was for “Jazz Music.” Who but American jazzmen, personally invited (if not chosen) by Senghor, could compete? Unsurprisingly, the prize was given to Louis Armstrong for “Hello Dolly,” with a runner-up award for Duke Ellington.⁴⁰¹ More troubling is the way in which literary prizes were decided. The “*Grands Prix Littéraires*” were divided into two groups: francophone and anglophone.⁴⁰² Indeed, the rule of literary submissions to the Colloquium is expressly mentioned in Article VIII: “As the bilingual factor « English-French » is the keynote of the entire Festival, it is *compulsory*

⁴⁰¹ See *Le Premier Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres* (Paris: Bouchet-Lakara, 1967), pp. 122-33. The list was also published in a *New York Times* article, “Real Bursts Through the Unreal at Dakar Festival,” on April 26, 1966, p. 9. Indeed, about a third of the total prizes were awarded to—or literally created for—Americans. In a sense, the largest contributor to the Festival in human and financial terms, notwithstanding its anchor across the Atlantic, is being rewarded as the figurehead of a festival that must look away from just the continent and reach out to the diaspora.

⁴⁰² The Dakar Festival was not the first event to foreground European languages as primary means of expression. In June 1962, the “Conference of African Writers of English Expression,” also known as the “African Writers Conference,” was held in Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. The controversial “of English expression”—which resonates with Senghor’s 1948 *Anthology of Negro and Malagasy poetry of French Expression*—indeed expresses a double bind familiar to postcolonial writers: on the one hand, the recognition of the existence of an international body of texts forming an “African literature” and celebrated it in a country on its march towards independence from England (Uganda gained independence on 9 October 1962); on the other hand, it allegedly excluded a great part of writers who did not write in English, defining African literature but accepting that it must be in English. In attendance were, among others, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ezechiel Mphahlele, and James Ngugi—who would later renounce his colonial-influenced name and write as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o before also resorting to write in his native Gikuyu as well as Swahili in lieu of English. See *Decolonising the Mind* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1981). In an essay titled “The Dead End Of African Literature,” published in 1963, Obiajunwa Wali also remarked upon the “final climax of the attack on the Negritude school,” pitting English-language writers Ezekiel Mphahlele, Wole Soyinka, and Christopher Okigbo, against French-language poets Léopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire: “One would say that negritude is now dead, judging from the confident tones of the remarks and decisions made at the Makerere conference.” Obiajunwa Wali, “The Dead End of African Literature?” *Transition*, No. 10 (Sept. 1963), pp. 13-15.

to submit works written in English or French.”⁴⁰³ The exclusive choice, seemingly contradicting the original message asking to strengthen political independence with cultural independence and the claimed performance of a Negro Art thriving on diverse and plural contributions, signals a vindication of a territorialized self-construction presented to territorialized others—i.e., French-speaking, English-speaking adjudicators. Yet, it also allows them to affirmatively sabotage the predicament they are in: intervening in an already orientalized discourse on Negro Art and politicizing such art by reproducing colonial categorization.

Double in size to the anglophone jury, the francophone jury was presided over by Aimé Césaire, and included editors Armand Guibert and Jacques Howlett (both from France), scholars Lilyan Kesteloot and Janheinz Jahn (respectively from Belgium and Germany), as well as Negritude figures Bernard Dadié (Ivory Coast), Birago Diop (Senegal), Amadou Hampâté Bâ (Mali) and Léon-Gontran Damas (wrongly identified as from Haiti in the *Livre d'or* of the Festival). The anglophone jury was presided over by Langston Hughes (USA), included Rosey Pool and Clifford Simmons (both from England), Obi Wall and Chinua Achebe (both from Nigeria). The division into the two former colonial languages, as well as a sizable contingent of judges from the former colonial powers, brought some surprises. In the category “Art,” the francophone literary award was given to Belgian ethnographer Jacques Macquet, for his 1962 book *Afrique : Les Civilisations Noires* that divides Africa into six civilizations—each with a

⁴⁰³ In the *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts Press agent's files*, 1965-1966 Sc MG 220 Box 1, folder 1. Emphasis is mine. Although the rules for submission archived here are written in English, one should notice the use of the French “guillemets,” perhaps a trace of the influence of Senghor’s and Césaire’s French education.

specific artistic technique.⁴⁰⁴ In the category “Documentary,” it was awarded to French journalists Hélène Tournaire and Robert Bouteau for *Le livre noir du Congo : Congo, Katanga, Angola*.⁴⁰⁵ Neither the category “Social Sciences” nor the “Best Francophone Play” found a winner—even though four plays were performed during the festival, two of which would draw popular success: Aimé Césaire’s *La Tragédie du Roi Christophe* and Amadou Cissé Dia’s *Les Derniers Jours de Lat Dior*. In the anglophone realm, Kenyan author James Ngugi was awarded the best anglophone “Novel” prize for *Weep Not, Child*, while Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka was given the prize in the category “Best Anglophone Play” for *The Road*.⁴⁰⁶ But in the broad category “Negro Art”—equivalent, although with the addition of the adjective “Negro,” to the French category “Art”—it remains surprising to see that the prize awarded to British ethnographer William Fagg for his orientalist book: *Nigerian Images*.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁴ Jacques J. Maquet, *Afrique, les civilisations noires* (Paris: Éditions Horizons de France, 1962). The book concludes on a prospective note where the author surmises that “African civilization” (in the singular) will follow the same industrialization as “the modern world.” Throughout, the book includes photos either from art museums (Paris, London, etc) or from the author’s personal collection, as well as ethnographic and geographical maps of migrations, and economic and natural resources.

⁴⁰⁵ Hélène Tournaire and Robert Bouteau, *Le livre noir du Congo : Congo, Katanga, Angola* (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1963). Claiming to offer an investigation of the conditions in which Patrice Lumumba worked at the time of independence, the book, however, relies mostly on secondary sources analyzed from afar. Similarly, the third chapter on Angola depicts rather picturesque scenes (such as a farmer’s market) that the authors visited after leaving Leopoldville.

⁴⁰⁶ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *Weep Not, Child* (London: Heinemann, 1964); and Wole Soyinka, *The Road* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965). Ngũgĩ’s 1964 book was the first anglophone novel to be published by an East African writer. The novel famously focuses on the Mau Mau Uprising and immortalizes Jomo Kenyatta’s trial. Soyinka’s 1965 play narrates a series of accidents experienced by a group of drivers on the roads of Nigeria, metaphorically depicting the dangers on the road to independence—which the country had gained five years before.

⁴⁰⁷ William Fagg, *Nigerian Images: The Splendor of African Sculpture* (New York: Praeger, 1963). Although the book can be credited with the argument it attempts to make against a single “Nigerian art,” indeed referring to “Ibo art,” “Afo art,” etc., it seems addressed to a non-specialist reader and remains essentialist in content (e.g., “African art is a tribal art... what is not tribal is not African,” on p. 121). Indeed, though *Nigerian Images* starts with a glossary, neither the terms “tribe” nor “tribalism” are included. The book has an extensive section on Negritude (9 out of a total of 47 pages of text). Last, as the introduction indicates, its inspiration was a series of exhibitions of Nigerian art (explaining, perhaps, the source of the book’s major argument) in 1960-62 England, Germany, and Switzerland, which makes one wonder about the orientalist perspective on “African art” displayed in Western museums at the time when most African countries conquered independence.

A few months before the Festival, delivering the Sir Thomas Howland Memorial Lecture at the Royal Society of Arts, William Fagg gave a paper not on Nigerian Art but on Negro Art as it was to be presented at the Dakar Festival. Amidst a presentation of the art fair as a product of the *Société Africaine de Culture* (SAC), Fagg noted the bilingualism of the Festival in all too colonial terms: “Perhaps the most important fact about the Festival is that it has been carefully planned on a bilingual basis, with French and English on equal terms and with an electronic simultaneous translation at all appropriate times, and particularly during the Colloquium.”⁴⁰⁸ French and English bilingualism, notwithstanding the contemptuous brushing aside of the wealth of African mother-tongues as full-fledged languages of the continent, still constitutes a problem. For those who do not speak both, the solution lies not even in their learning, but in the “electronic” simultaneity that modern technology has to offer. It is as though, in an increasingly globalized and soon digitalized world,⁴⁰⁹ even two languages whose power Fagg had already endorsed as “the most important fact,” were two too many. Fagg indeed continues: “Because of the variety of tribal languages in which it is so extraordinarily rich, Africa cannot ‘know itself’ except through the medium of one or more of the international languages introduced by the former colonial powers.” Presented as one solid entity rather than the aggregation of fifty-four nations and countless languages and ethnicities conveniently separated by the artificiality of colonial borders (and thus contradicting the argument Fagg makes in the book which the Festival will reward with a prize), independent Africa is staged as still in need of the colonizer’s

⁴⁰⁸ William Fagg, “The Negro Arts: Preparing for the Dakar Festival,” in the *Journal of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce*, April 1, 1966, no. 114, pp. 409-25.

⁴⁰⁹ Senghor will soon talk, already in 1978, about the future of digital libraries (which he calls “phonothèque:” a library based not on printed books but “transistors, électrophones, magnétophones, etc”). See “La Parole et le Livre,” in Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Éducation et culture* (Paris: Fondation Léopold Sédar Senghor - Présence Africaine, 2014), pp. 183-85.

surreptitious presence as savior in order to “know itself.” In a sense, Fagg makes explicit the dilemma of the postcolonial subject regarding its relation to the language of the former colonizer: speaking it with the hope of being heard, or choosing an African mother-tongue with the quasi certainty of being ignored. Sartre had made the dilemma explicit for the poets of Negritude almost twenty years before in his preface to Senghor’s anthology, “Black Orpheus:”

Blacks rediscover themselves only on the terrain full of the traps which white men have set for them. The colonist rises between the colonials to be the eternal mediator; he is there, always there, even though absent, in the most secret councils.⁴¹⁰

Indeed, Fagg’s paper ultimately concludes with an argument that exemplifies Sartre’s warning:

The ultimate solution must undoubtedly be for English and French to be taught in double harness all over Africa—and Africans, for historical reasons, tend to be apt linguists—but in the meantime simultaneous translation seems the only effective method of free cultural intercourse between the two ‘halves’ of Africa.⁴¹¹

(Somewhat anachronistically, I present here the passion of a gendered statement about what might seem the same predicament in Assia Djebar’s *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*:

“To attempt an autobiography in French words alone is to show more than its skin under the slow

⁴¹⁰ Black Orpheus, *op. cit.*, p. 226 [Fr., Orphée Noir, p. XVIII].

⁴¹¹ William Fagg, “The Negro Arts: Preparing for the Dakar Festival,” p. 410. It is to be noted that, from an entirely postcolonial Pan-African perspective, Cheikh Anta Diop makes a similar argument for the need of one or two languages to be coercively taught on a continental scale in preparation for political federalism—albeit one or two “African” languages. See *Black Africa: The Economic and Cultural Basis for a Federated State* (Chicago: Lawrence Hills Books, 1987), pp. 13-16; originally published in French as *Les fondements économiques et culturels d’un état fédéral d’Afrique Noire* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1974). In 1937, Senghor too had argued for bilingualism in Africa, advocating for one “Western” language and one “African” mother-tongue to be taught in primary schools.

scalpel of a live autopsy;” I also note that Djébar’s poignantly comments that her father had given her in child marriage to the French language.⁴¹²)

The rest of Fagg’s presentation of the Festival to his London audience is a gathering of descriptions, often orientalized, about the “scenic beauty of the historical island of Gorée” (also known as the major port of departure for the slave trade),⁴¹³ “Wolof ladies with their more than Parisian elegance,” and an “African tribal art” about which “it cannot yet be said that it is fully and universally accepted in the currency of human thought among the great arts of mankind (...) as are the arts of medieval and Renaissance Europe.” During the Colloquium, Fagg’s paper attempts to lay the foundations for the esoteric therapeutic quality of a somewhat special African “tribality,” for which European scholarship is presented as necessary because there is “only one person in the whole of anglophone Africa to have the necessary academic level” to fully appreciate the “great value of African art.”⁴¹⁴ The fact that Fagg’s scholarship, communication, and ultimately his award for his contribution to “Negro Art,” fit with Senghor’s Festival, is symptomatic of an approach to “African” or “Negro” art subjected to a political discourse directed not only towards Africans but also towards foreign guests. Indeed, in addition to the intense diplomatic effort to bring an important United States artistic delegation (the “hope of the Festival”), a quick look at the official booklet and the *Livre d’or* of the Festival shows the prominence of France as addressee. In the first list of *Haut Patronage* prominently opening

⁴¹² Assia Djébar, *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*, trans. Dorothy S. Blair (New York: Quartet Books, 1985), p. 178

⁴¹³ During the Festival, the island was indeed the site of a grand (and French-designed) “Sons et Lumières” performance every night, praised by most critics across the board. At the time of Fagg’s remarks, however, the performance had not yet been shown to the audience.

⁴¹⁴ William Fagg, “Tribalité,” in *Colloque sur l’Art nègre* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1967), p. 115. Perhaps, Fagg’s paper is a response to much criticism on his lack of explanation and references on a term that he uses expansively in his *Nigerian Images* book. Fagg does not give the name of the only scholar allegedly knowledgeable on African tribal art, though he admits him or her to be participating at the Colloquium.

both publications, the names of General de Gaulle, President of the Republic of France, and M. Léopold Sédar Senghor, President of the Republic of Senegal, sit above unnamed “MM. les Présidents des Républiques Africaines.”⁴¹⁵ On the next few pages, the *Comité d’honneur* and the *Comité d’organisation* list, in a similar way, personalities from France (George Pompidou, André Malraux, etc), from Senegal (Doudou Thiam, Ibra Mamadou Wane, etc), above “*remerciements*” to UNESCO and “other countries.” In the middle of the booklet, the advertisement pages—that probably helped defray the cost of printing—are mostly in French and almost entirely about upper-class French products—such as the luxurious car “Peugeot 504,” the olive oil French corporation Lessieur, and countless commercial banks with headquarters both in Dakar and in Paris. In the *Livre d’or*, printed as a tribute to the Festival, the two countries listed as main donors whose financial contributions helped make the event possible are the United States of America and France (in that order). Similarly, the *Comité de soutien* recognizes that “the obtaining of this international aid has been greatly facilitated by the action of *Comités de soutien* founded in the following countries:” France’s (*Association Française pour le Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres*, with Princess De Croy as Executive President); U.S.A (Association of the World Festival of Negro Arts, with Mrs. Iness-Brown as Executive President); and Great Britain (United Kingdom Association for the World Festival of Negro Arts, under the leadership of William Fagg). It is in front of this crowd that, on the late evening of March 30, 1966, as the Colloquium started, Senghor gave the much-expected inaugural address to the First World

⁴¹⁵ See the 127-page *Premier Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres, Dakar, 1-24 Avril, 1966* (Paris: Impressions André Rousseau, 1966), as well as a post-festival 155-page *Livre d’or*, also entitled *Premier Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres* (Paris: Havas Publisher, 1967). Both are bilingual publications (French and English), but only the latter includes the inaugural discourses of Léopold Sédar Senghor and André Malraux given on the first day of the Festival’s Colloquium, as well as the full list of awards given on its last day.

Festival of Negro Arts. Indeed, it is not one but two discourses that would be pronounced, artistically different yet politically complementary: Senghor's and Malraux's.⁴¹⁶

b) Senghor's Discourse

In its first sentence, before even the beginning of the Festival *per se*, Senghor positions the event not in a petrified image of an archeological past, but in a scene to come, using the future anterior to appeal to the retrospective imagination of his audience: what will have happened once this has been done. "What honors us above all and what is your greatest merit, is that you *will have participated* in an enterprise even more revolutionary than the exploration of the cosmos: the elaboration of a new Humanism."⁴¹⁷ What will have happened after the Festival, Senghor hopes, is that Negro Art will be known in a certain way.

The exhortation to celebrate a culture that Césaire had defined in 1956 as this open-ended "African culture yet to be born, or [the] para-African culture yet to be born" constitutes the main argument of Senghor's inaugural speech of 1966.⁴¹⁸ Yet, writers, artists, and scholars have questioned to what extent Senghor used his presidential authority and political will to make the

⁴¹⁶ It is revealing that both discourses were broadcasted together as part of a "*documentaire spécial*" in the midday news (*Journal de 13h*) on France 2, on April 4th, 1966 (Senegal's Independence Day). See the brochure of the exhibition *Dakar 66: Chroniques d'un Festival Pan-Africain*, at the Musée du quai Branly in Paris, from February to May 2016 (available on various online sources, such as http://www.quaibranly.fr/fileadmin/user_upload/4-Ancien-site-web/documentation_scientifique/2016-04-31-v2Dakar_66.pdf). The television documentary is available in the INA Archives (Institut National de l'Audiovisuel), <http://www.ina.fr>.

⁴¹⁷ Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Fonction et signification du premier festival mondial des arts nègres," reproduced in *Liberté III* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), pp. 58-63. Emphasis and translation are mine.

⁴¹⁸ Aimé Césaire, "Culture et colonisation," *Présence africaine*, No. 8-9-10, June 1956. The text was reprinted in *Liberté* (Montreal) in 1963 with some minor corrections. The full text was translated into English by Brent Hayes Edwards for the first time in 2010: "Culture and Colonization," *Social Text* 103, Vol. 28, No. 2. This particular quote is on page 141.

art festival a festival of Negritude, i.e., to convey a predetermined vision of African culture through the specific agenda of the movement.⁴¹⁹ Several articles from *The Washington Post* and the *New York Times* covering the Festival at the time also questioned the underlying connection of the Festival to Negritude. In “Senghor Long Championed ‘Negritude’” for instance, Donald Loucheim’s starts with the recognition that “this concept has been the subject of controversy that has engulfed the present festival.”⁴²⁰ In “Debate on ‘Negritude’ Splits Festival in Dakar,” Lloyd Garrison quotes several artists expressing a different relation to Negritude. First, he quotes Langston Hughes on offering an equivalence between Senghor’s concept and the word “soul:” “‘As I understand it,’ Mr. Hughes said in his paper to the colloquium, ‘Negritude has its roots deep in the beauty of the black people—in what younger American writers and musicians call ‘soul’;’”⁴²¹ then, he cites African-American choreographer Katherine Dunham who, while advising Senghor in the dance programming at the Festival, “has described negritude as

⁴¹⁹ A criticism denouncing Senghor’s use of his political position to convey a negritude ideology in arts, education and culture, further unfolds at the 1969 Pan-African Festival in Algiers, notably with Stanislas Adotevi’s virulent paper: “The Strategy of Culture,” in *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 1, No. 1, November 1969, pp. 27-35. As I showed in Chapter 2, Fanon had already warned against this danger in his 1959 communication at the *Second World Congress of Black Artists and Writers*. Recently, David Murphy asked if “the 1966 Festival really [is] a Festival of Negritude,” in his introduction of *The First World Festival of Negro Arts, Dakar 1966* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), arguing for a more nuanced criticism given the important presence of African-Americans often highly skeptical of Negritude, as well as a new reading of Senghor’s late works emphasizing movement rather than essence.

⁴²⁰ In *The Washington Post*, April 11, 1966, p. A16. The article goes so far as to claim “as a result, several influential African and American Negro leaders deliberately boycotted the festival.” Loucheim nevertheless admits that “their objections to Senghor’s conversation about domestic and foreign policies may also have affected their decision,” *de facto* linking ideological and artistic stances with economic and political disagreement. In conclusion, Loucheim even conjectures, wrongly, that “the current festival (...) may be the last major milestone in [Senghor’s] political career. His second presidential term expires in 1967, and Senghor, who is 60, has told friends that he does not plan to run again.”

⁴²¹ In the *New York Times*, April 24, 1966, p. 17. In his paper proper, entitled in French “Les écrivains noirs dans un monde troublé” (“Black writers in a troubled world;” there is no mention of a translator, so it is unknown whether the American poet wrote or spoke directly in French), Hughes indeed argues that a similar direction in “what writers and musicians of the new American generation call soul” and “negritude which [he] understand[s], through the reading of Senghor’s poems, to mean a deep dive into the roots of the beauty of the black people.” His focus, however, remains on “the constraint, for the Black American writer, to write for two audiences: a white one and a black one,” offering to please neither, but to embrace the dilemma. In Africa, he adds, the dilemmas are not only racial but also linguistic—between “regional” and “European” languages. Throughout his paper, it is to be noted that Hughes acknowledges that his understanding of Negritude comes from reading Senghor’s poetry, with no mention of Césaire. The paper is published as part of the Colloquium’s proceedings in *Présence Africaine*, op cit., pp. 549-54.

‘meaningless’;” finally, he quotes star writer Wole Soyinka’s variation on his famous quote: ‘The Duiker antelope does not try to prove his Duikertude.’ But if Soyinka’s catchphrase has often been quoted, Senghor’s response has often been forgotten. It is twofold: first, “the tiger does not speak of its tigritude because it is an animal,” while human beings can speak of their “humanity;” second, a few years later, Senghor would unearth Soyinka’s own explanation of his statement: “I wanted to distinguish the propaganda from the true poetry creation.”⁴²² The emphasis on creation rather than petrification indeed resonates with Negritude as a means to overcome historical determination and celebrate fidelity as movement. Recalling the early years of Negritude and inscribing the movement within the debates started even earlier by W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain Locke on the other side of the Atlantic (the former vindicating, according to Senghor, “propaganda,” while the latter preferring “to choose art and leave propaganda aside,”) Senghor admits to the sensibleness of Soyinka’s remarks.⁴²³ Nevertheless, he also sees the opportunity to revisit the relation between the artistic and the political at the light of the artistic production at a highly politicized Festival and, perhaps, correct the reception of Negritude.

The tension between the call for artistic creation anew and an anchoring in a controversial Negritude is thus not necessarily contradictory. There is no doubt that Senghor saw the *First World Festival of Negro Arts* as a space to conduct a new and fair trial for Negritude—particularly after Obiajunwa Wali’s remarks at the Makerere Conference of 1962: “One would say that

⁴²² The response that Senghor gives to Soyinka’s remark appears in “Qu’est-ce que la Negritude” and “Problematique de la Négritude,” both reprinted in *Liberté III*, op. cit., p. 101 and p. 280. In the former, Senghor goes on to contextualize the scene with Soyinka’s performance of his play during the 1966 Festival in a reworked English language that the Ambassador of Great Britain, in attendance, could not understand. For Senghor, in a convoluted logical argument, what he calls Soyinka’s “English dialect of Nigeria” shows a desire of get rid of his “Negritude,” which in turns shows that “Negritude” indeed exists. Soyinka’s remarks were published in Janheinz Jahn, *Histoire de la littérature néo-africaine* (Paris: Resma, 1969), pp. 242-43.

⁴²³ In Senghor’s “Problematique de la Négritude,” p. 280. Senghor quotes Jean Wagner quoting Alain Locke, in *Les Poètes Nègres des États-Unis* (Paris: Librairie Istra, 1963), p. 182.

Negritude is now dead.” Thus Senghor responds in 1966: “In one word, if we are taking the terrible responsibility to organize this Festival, it is for a *defense and illustration of Negritude*,” declares the president in the second paragraph of his written speech. But it also allows the President of Senegal to come back to Negritude and rid the movement of its sole essentialist image, supplementing it with a “spirit of creation” as antithesis to a “spirit of imitation”:

What the young Black men and women of my generation wanted, between the two world wars, was to abandon the spirit of imitation of the old regime; it was to recover, with the sense of our dignity, the spirit of creation that had been, for millennia, the seal of Negritude.⁴²⁴

The Festival, echoing Negritude not as “the sum of values of civilization of the black world” but as the tool to “recover” a “spirit,” was to showcase the triumph of anti-imitation. Reflecting upon anti-imitation, Senghor considered the Festival as nothing less than a political victory.⁴²⁵ But although the anti-imitation desire of Senghor is indubitable, the discourse itself rhetorically stages imitation in various ways. First, the “defense and illustration” of Negritude (or Negro Arts) is a repetition of the gesture of Joachim Du Bellay writing his well-known manifesto *Defense and Illustration of the French language* in 1549. Second, Senghor compares the current status and project of “Negro Art” to the history of European Art: “Like European Art... .” Thirdly, the comparison becomes an argument for an African art that must, also, remain within the confines of a natural model: “If Negro Art’s function is, always, to update [*actualiser*] its object, by which I mean its material, the *nature* of Negro Art is, on the contrary, *always*, to

⁴²⁴ Ibid., p. 62.

⁴²⁵ In “Qu’est-ce que la Negritude,” p. 95, Senghor remarks: “Nobody can consider us anymore as just followers, just good to make bad copies. The victory [of 1966] because that’s what it was, made us, as a consequence, even more open to all contributions.”

express this object *with the same signs, the same profound style.*⁴²⁶ More rhetorically problematic, is that such nature of Negro art cannot be denied, for it is “the Europeans themselves who discovered and defined it in the first place.” From Picasso to Soulages, Rimbaud to Apollinaire, Marcel Griaule to André Malraux, the list of artists that Senghor offers as proof of the vitality of Negro arts puts the argument in a dilemma: if its influence on such prominent artists does give credence to an artistic production on the continent too often categorized as ethnographic or archeological, their exclusive European provenance and a direct comparison between Africa and Europe transforms artistic creation as a means to political ends that seeks validation by a recognizable “other”—here, European artists. Even if the *First World Festival of Negro Arts* was a Negritude Festival, the problem is elsewhere: in a claim for creation and movement that itself imitates an old and essentialized view of art and culture, because it is also politically addressed to a targeted and territorialized audience.

Indeed, much has been written on the fact that the Festival excluded a local audience: cleaning up the streets of Dakar of beggars’ presence, erecting walls to hide poor neighborhood, and limiting ticket access to many Dakarais and others by raising the price of admission and/or claiming an event to be sold out when the theater retrospectively clearly appeared half empty.⁴²⁷

One article in the *New York Times*, published two days after the end of the Festival also remarked:

⁴²⁶ Ibid., p. 59. Emphasis is mine.

⁴²⁷ See for instance, the account of this elitist event in Elizabeth Harney, *In Senghor’s Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960–1995* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 75-76. In *La jeunesse africaine* (Paris: Maspéro, 1971), Jean-Pierre N’Diaye also recalls Senghor’s closing of the Cheikh Anta Diop University to prevent student riots (pp. 48-50); finally, a transcribed recorded radiophonic interview with Frederick O’Neal in October 1966, archived in *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts Press agent’s files*, Sc MG 220 Box 2, folder 2, conveys a similar story. One may also note that, negative reaction towards begging reveals a troubling religious dynamic in a predominantly Muslim Senegal. If, as a pillar of Islam, giving to the poor is encouraged, failure to do so (or be able to do so) is blameful. In *La Grève des bàttu* (Dakar: N.E.A, 1979), Senegalese writer Aminata Sow Fall satirically depicts the consequences of driving beggars out of the city to please a fit tourist economy. In the novel, when beggars go “on strike” and thus deprive Muslims of their religious duties, the political faces the dilemma between a “modern-driven economy” and deeply influential religious practices.

“For the 10,000 visitors who came to Dakar this month (...) Dakar itself appeared strangely un-African.”⁴²⁸ Though such a remark undoubtedly points out an orientalist view of “Africa” only known to Westerners through safari brochures and movies, it also presents a troubling presidential intervention: “Was this really Africa? In some respect, no. President Senghor had erected a kind of wall of aluminum sheeting that shielded from the foreign eye the tin-roofed shacks of the Medina, the city’s teeming haven for the unemployed.” More troubling and reinforcing the argument of a politicization of the art festival is the realization that “for the benefit of the tourists, the Government erected a ‘typical’ African village. It was neater than neat, cleaner than clean, and projected an image of the “real” Africa as accurate as a reel from an old Tarzan film.”

No one can blame a country for its desire to offer the best image it can produce before foreign guests during a world cultural event, especially when said event is presented as a window for cultural independence following a political independence won just six years before—and all the more when its president actively courted monetary aid from those guest countries. When the latter political objectives prompt, however, their representatives to interpret or demand “tribality” or “tradition” as the only Negro Art worthy of the name, then the hope for a shift in relation between postcolonial Pan-Africa and post-imperial Euro-America must be questioned. André Malraux, whose presence was praised in Senghor’s discourse, pronounced a speech right after the Senegalese President, that epitomizes such interpretation of, or demand for, “African Art.”

⁴²⁸ In the *New York Times*, April 26, 1966, p. 9.

c) Malraux's Discourse

Let us first notice that the full discourse of France's Minister of Culture was not printed as such in the *Livre d'or* of the Festival. The whole first part, literally constituting half of the speech, was omitted. With a heightened sense of drama, Malraux opened his discourse with a connection between a reflection on the process of artistic creation paramount to the Festival, and the role of the political leader of the nation as a guide for the masses:

Here we are in history. For the first time, a head of state takes into his imperishable hands the spiritual destiny of a continent. Never did it happen, either in Europe, or in Asia or in America, that a head of state speaks of the future of the mind [*avenir de l'esprit*].⁴²⁹

Here, like Senghor, Malraux extols a process of artistic creation through a repetition of the gesture of Du Bellay, adapted for the occasion, before getting into the argument proper: "Before this *defense and illustration of African creation*, it is yet necessary, ladies and gentlemen, that we attend to questions that have brought confusion for about ten years." Ten years before, in 1956, the *First World Congress of Negro Artists and Writers* provided the poets of Negritude with a space where to think about the conditions under which supranational literary and cultural production would occur in post-coloniality. In 1966, Malraux sees the scene as an aggregation of different arts that articulate "two different yet complementary meanings." Perhaps one of the most eloquent illustrations of this ambivalence, deleted from the Festival's *Livre d'or*, is Malraux's example of African dance: "Africa changed dance for the whole world.

⁴²⁹ The full discourse is available on the official website of the Ministry of Culture of France, at <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/actualites/dossiers/malraux2006/discours/a.m-dakar.htm>. Translation is mine.

But she possessed another dance, her secular or sacred dance. This dance is dying, and it belongs to African Governments to save it.”⁴³⁰ The cliché of a dying art awaiting salvation resonates with Senghor’s relation to, writing about, and political action towards, Africa’s oral tradition, also defined as “dying” and in need be saved by an ethnographic work as well as a grammatization of African languages.⁴³¹ In sum, the political leader is put in charge of the development of cultural policies, intervening in artistic creation and saving a “dying art” by importing political solutions. It is not hard to see why this first part of Malraux’s discourse was thereafter deleted from the transcript published in the *Livre d’or*: it directly contradicted the official message of the Festival praising the independent vitality of a Negro Art that survived precisely because of its ability to change and self-regenerate from within. Perhaps as importantly problematic, the deleted part of Malraux’s discourse also included statements that removed Africa from the process of artistic creation by assigning it either a source or a development outside of the continent—and not necessarily in the diaspora, but in Europe or America. Either way, for the French novelist, no artistic production could really stem from Africa. To illustrate his point, Malraux goes into different arts: painting, sculpture, and music—with which he starts. In a hopelessly romanticized way, the French writer authoritatively declares: “Africa, ladies and gentlemen, has two musics.” First, Africa has a “music that was born out of the despair, in the United States.” Enigmatically

⁴³⁰ The controversial staging of “African dance” performances during the Festival has been thoroughly criticized by Hélène Neveu Kringelbach in “Dance at the 1966 World Festival of Negro Arts: Of ‘Fabulous Dancers’ and Negritude Undermined” in *The First World Festival of Negro Arts, Dakar, 1966*, pp. 64-82. Investigating an often overlooked artistic part of the Festival’s array of exhibitions and performances, she questions the ways in which Senghor’s objectives to showcase artistic inclusion of the manifold black experiences also strategically excluded dance companies perceived as too “modern” or choreographies deemed too “professionally practiced,” thereby extending colonial ideologies into the postcolonial period.

⁴³¹ I have analyzed this argument at length in the first and second chapters of this dissertation, particularly on pp. 135-137.

defining as “African” a music that was born on another continent, Malraux then quotes classical violinist Yehudi Menuhin: “this music arose on the banks of the Mississippi River as the very simple and banal happiness of men,” looking nostalgically at “the sun that set behind palm trees that resembled those of Africa.” With no words on slavery and merely a glimpse at the dislocation of millions who suffered the trauma of the Middle Passage, Malraux concludes with a foreclosure of an innovative contribution: “this music is similar to ours [European], just more expressive.”

Second, there is jazz. But there too, Africa is denied creation of the musical phenomenon that was paramount to Senghor—to the extent that he specifically asked President John F. Kennedy for the inclusion of jazz performers to an American delegation sent to the Festival. Going against the grain of a substantial ethnomusicological scholarship on jazz that has investigated the delicate questions of the “African” roots of this African-American music, Malraux repositions the history of jazz on a scene of American imitation where Europe remains a distant model, returning to Africa only as a finished product with no need of creation: “We often can bridge [*rapprocher*] the material of the greatest jazz to that of Stravinsky and Boulez (...) Jazz began with melodic elements from Europe and America, from which Africa found back [*a retrouvé*] its soul.”⁴³²

⁴³² Seminal work on the “American” development of jazz out of (or even independent from) its “African” origin is André Schaeffner, *Le Jazz* (Paris: José Corti, 1926). For Schaeffner, the full range of influences contained in jazz music must be carefully traced, neither overlooking the “American” aspect of jazz nor forgetting elements emphasized in the music from the continent (primacy of rhythm, care for tones, specific musical instrumentation.” Indeed, “organology” (the study of musical instruments) was not only Schaeffner’s ethnomusicological strength, it was also the subject of the first French article on jazz by Ernest Ansermet: “Sur un orchestre nègre,” in *La Revue Romande* (Oct. 15, 1919). Schaeffner publishes *Le Jazz* in 1926, while in the United States, Abbe Niles publishes an introduction to the “blues” in a gathering of musical scores by W. C. Handy; Arthur Hoérée write an analytical study, “Le Jazz” in the prestigious journal *La Revue Musicale* (Oct. 1927); in 1932, Robert Goffin publishes his monumental *Aux Frontières du Jazz*; in 1934, Hugues Panassié writes, from the vantage point of a music performer, *Le jazz hot*; finally, in 1938, appears a musicological treaty written by Winthrop Sergeant, *Jazz, Hot and Hybrid*, reedited four times already by the time André Malraux gives his address in 1966. It is also worth mentioning that Lucien Malson edited, in *Les Cahiers du Jazz* in 1965 (No 11, pp. 9-62 and No. 12, pp. 46-61), an unpublished piece on jazz by Schaeffner called “*Les racines africaines du jazz*.” On recent studies on the limits of jazz as an expressive vehicle for African-American literature, see Brent Edwards’s introduction to “Jazz Poetics: A Special Issue” in *Callaloo*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Winter, 2002), pp. 5-7, and “The Literary Ellington” in *Representations*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (Winter 2002), pp. 1-29.

According to Malraux, more than a paradigm of African or African-American creation, jazz stands as an art that has undergone a transformation of its form: a “metamorphosis.” Specifically, jazz is depicted as an art that has survived because—and is defined—by its capacity to change. The idea of its return to the continent is not a going back in time or space to an essential African rhythm or instrumentation. Even though there undeniably exists a connection to past artistic creations, the conditions under which those creations took place no longer operate under the same principles. The contemporary form may resonate with an art of the past revealed to us by organology or ethnomusicology (syncopation, percussion, improvisation, etc), as well perhaps, the social context within which it is performed (ceremony, ritual, catharsis, etc); but the meaning attributed to its contemporary artistry is not conditioned by tradition. It is in this sense that one must understand Malraux’s warning:

May you avoid making mistakes about the ancient spirits; they really are the spirits of Africa. They have changed a lot; and yet they will be there for you when you call upon them. But you will not find communion by studying rural ceremonies. Certainly, Africa must claim her past; but it is even more important to conceive a past of the world that belongs to her (...) Did you know what jazz would be?

The open-ended nature of jazz, of any artistic form indeed, stands as a reminder that one should desire artistic creation to be free from any external function or historical conditions. There is no intention to go from the performance to the world or to expect any consequence in the fabric of society. Most importantly, the contrary is also true. What happens in the world is declared to be of no consequence to the art itself, as there is no invitation to recognize in the art some substrate

of reality: “you will not find communion by studying rural ceremonies,” declares Malraux, where rurality is a metonym for a space preserved from modernity; a few lines down: “the truth is that an art, magical or sacred, is created in a universe not mastered by the artist.” Perhaps controversially, the novelist expresses a sense of an art ever and only closed upon itself. As such, art is opposed to being a political statement, a scientific experiment, or even an esthetic doctrine such as “art for art’s sake.” It has its proper function and its proper audience, *qua art*.

The significance of Malraux’s argument for an artistic “metamorphosis” has rarely been appreciated. Quite unequivocally, he denounces the misleading belief (that he finds in certain Western artistic criticisms) that art has the capacity to transcend time and changes, and hopes to call attention to the framework within which it is appreciated.⁴³³ In so doing, he warns against such preoccupation in what he fears is a current appreciation of African art in Africa: “What once upon a time made the masks, as what once upon a time made the cathedrals, is lost forever. But this country [*pays*] is an heir of those masks and can say: I have a relationship with them that

⁴³³ Malraux famously terms this contextual reading of art a “musée imaginaire:” a modern intellectualization of artworks. He explores this argument in considerable depth in *Les voix du silence* and *La métamorphose des dieux*, and in doing so, sets it on a theoretical foundation that does not depend solely on historical evidence but also anchors it in his fundamental claims about the nature and significance of art. André Malraux, *Les voix du silence*, in *Écrits sur l’art* (I), ed. Jean-Yves Tadié, (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), p. 203; *La métamorphose des dieux*, in *Écrits sur l’art* (II) (2004). For a criticism of Malraux’s evolution of his thought on art, see Derek Allan, “Vanquishing Temporal Distance: Malraux, Art, and Metamorphosis,” *Australian Journal of French Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 1, 2016, pp. 136-48. For a broader argument, see Derek Allan, *Art and Time* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013). Malraux’s theory of art radically departs from a certain tradition of post-Enlightenment aesthetics. Jean-Pierre Zarader, for example, argues that major aspects of Malraux’s theory of art can be related to the thinking of figures such as Kant, Hegel, Benjamin, Nancy, and Derrida. See Jean-Pierre Zarader, *André Malraux : les écrits sur l’art* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2013), and *Malraux où la pensée de l’art : une approche philosophique* (Vans: Ellipses, 1998).

nobody else has.”⁴³⁴ Concomitant to the metamorphosis he so vividly argues for, Malraux also calls for a resuscitation or a resurrection. Neither those who made the masks nor those who made the cathedrals, are presently here. The argument is therefore not about the death of African art, but about the transformation of its presence, freed from—yet always related to—past traditions: “Whether the Egyptians believe themselves to be descendants of Pharaohs is of no consequence; what matters is that they refer to Pharaohs and ask how to be worthy of them.” There is a shift in discourse to be made where the relation to the past is staged as a condition under which the artist no longer imitates an imagined glorious past, but rather seeks anti-imitation as a creative principle that both pays a respectful homage to tradition and exhibits cultural independence.

What Malraux could not conceive of, however, was how Pan-African postcolonial artists reimagined the past in well-staged performances through carefully chosen “traditions” often merging elements from the “national” culture of the new states’ rural peripheries with other performance practices, in order to respond to an ambivalent political agenda.

On the one hand, these performances that strategically staged a tradition supposedly preserved in rural areas served as a way to integrate regional practices into national policies.⁴³⁵ On the other hand, they also were used to reinforce a vision of the alleged modernity and

⁴³⁴ It is unclear what Malraux refers to with the mention of a “country.” Is it the “*pays Dogon*” where the masks were ethnographically investigated by Marcel Griaule in *Masques Dogon* and *Jeux Dogon*—both published in 1938? Is it Senegal where the speech is being given—which would conflict with the location of the Dogon, between Mali and Burkina Faso? Couple of sentences before, the French Minister of Culture had declared that “each country of Africa needs its own culture,” therefore making it unlikely that he was considering the continent as one undivided whole. The discourse of Africa as an undivided whole is found in works by post-independence postcolonial writers who argue, controversially, for the exceptional status of Africa and the exclusive nature of its scholarship: only Africans could understand Africa. See for instance, John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1969).

⁴³⁵ As I showed in chapter 1, this is what Senghor did with a grammatization of indigenous languages defined as “endangered,” directed by governmental decrees and erected as state policy. Later in this third chapter, I also show a similar mode of operation for the promotion of an alleged tradition of Senegalese tapestry going back to Ancient Egypt while requiring artistic training in Aubusson, France. Subsequently, these very expensive tapestries were directly commissioned and purchased by the government and erected as national pride in Embassies overseas.

superiority of urban centers—that were also political or global centers—by presenting rural heritage as backward. The careful choice of novels and plays, dance and music performances, visual artwork and sculptures, etc, undoubtedly signals a promotion of traditionalism that leaves little room for experimentation and innovation. A quick look at press reviews, brochures, publicity material and commentaries on the festival shows an achievement of this strategy. Most journalistic articles for instance, praised the “traditional” African art on display in the newly built *Musée Dynamique*, while remaining skeptical of the African contemporary art exhibitions on display in the old courthouse—requisitioned for the occasion.⁴³⁶ In terms of plays, the choice of the four dramas that were performed during the Festival reveals a desire to showcase a glorious yet tragic past of political leaders, perhaps for a didactic purpose of reflecting upon rising dictatorships and neocolonialism on the continent. Hence, Vincent de Paul Nyonda’s *La mort de Guikafi* foregrounds the fall of a legendary (yet forgotten) hero of Gabon. Michael Kebede’s *Hannibal*, rewrites the famous Carthaginian warrior as an Ethiopian hero fighting the European threat from Rome, ultimately defeated because of divisive factionalism. Amadou Cisse Dia’s *Les derniers jours de Lat Dior* recalls the resistance to colonialism of one of Senegal’s most important historical heroes; and finally Césaire’s *La tragédie du Roi Christophe*,

⁴³⁶ For instance, Donald Loucheim in “Negro Art Festival Has Air Of Pride,” in *The Washington Post*, on April 3, 1966: “Less impressive is the exhibition of contemporary art, mostly painting, in the Palais de Justice, about a mile away.” p. G1. John Povey, in “Dakar: an African Rendez-vous,” in *Africa Today*, Vol. 13, No. 5 (May 1966), also wrote after a comparison with the traditional art exhibit in the Musée Dynamique: “After such an exhibition, the display of contemporary arts at the Palais de Justice seemed rather inadequate,” p. 5.

undeniably the most successful play of the festival, merges history and fiction about the first leader of the first independent colony, Haiti, who also fell in disarray due to his megalomania.⁴³⁷

d) Césaire's Play

In 1966, Césaire has just published his second major play: *A Season in the Congo*, inspired by the tragic events that led to the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in January 1961. Whereas his two earlier plays, *And the Dogs Were Silent* and *The Tragedy of King Christophe* staged heroes from the past, *A Season in the Congo* anguishes over the destruction of a contemporary politics of present events that, in 1966, can be recalled as relatively recent. Césaire's plays are warning to especially African readers and audiences against intra-African ethnic violence and the attendant foreign intervention, also destroying so-called "independence." *A Season in the Congo* tries to speak for a pan-Africanism which presents hopes for a different future that we have not yet seen. Lumumba's assassination is seen as more than a tragedy about utopian ideals, but rather as the vision of a united Africa that could have been (implicitly, the theater of Negritude).

⁴³⁷ For an account of theatre programming at the Festival, especially how the choice of plays and the staging of the performances articulated the relation between the role of "the historic present at the Festival" and a "reframing of the colonial encounter," see the comprehensive treatment of Brian Quinn, "Staging Culture: Senghor, Malraux and the Theatre Programme at the First World Festival of Negro Arts," in *The First World Festival of Negro Arts, Dakar 1966*, ed. David Murphy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016). Quinn also attends to a corrective reception of Césaire's and Dia's plays, noting the importance of the performance of *Lat Dior* as closer to the festival's "symbolic reckoning with colonial and cultural heritage," and certainly more in tune with the history of Senegal.

Yet, at the Festival, it is not his 1966 *A Season in the Congo* that is performed as world premiere, but his play from 1963—*The Tragedy of King Christophe*—that is promoted.⁴³⁸ Expressing the reasons behind this performance choice as well as the major themes he wanted to convey, Césaire offers three interpretations: a political struggle between two men, a visionary Christophe and a pragmatic Pétion; the human dimension of the tragic destiny of a man walking towards his untimely death; and a metaphysical questioning of the nature of force and power.⁴³⁹ These aspects resonate with the dilemma faced by many postcolonial nations, threatened by power-hungry dictators, internal regionalisms, and zealous nationalisms undermining the hopes of Pan-Africanism and Negritude, alongside the tragic fate of men whose visions are clad over the reality of international politics. More troubling, however, is his lofty interpretation of Christophe’s psychological character based, as he explains, on a symbolism derived from Yoruba mythology. Throughout the play, Christophe is caught between the ambivalent legacy of the figure of Toussaint Louverture who innocently believed that Napoleon would behave by the standards of the European Enlightenment, and a hopeful look towards an imagined Africa where, notwithstanding the ramping economic underdevelopment concurrent to a rising political corruption of the continent, the audience can learn from the mistakes of the past.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁸ Senghor had planned a first performance in the new, but relatively small, Théâtre Daniel Sorano on April 16, 1966, and a second performance in the much larger stadium the following day. Following the success of Césaire’s play, Senghor requested two additional performances after the Festival, on April 27 and 28, 1966. See “*La Tragédie du Roi Christophe* mercredi et jeudi au théâtre Daniel Sorano” in *Dakar Matin*, April 26, 1966.

⁴³⁹ Aimé Césaire, “Sur *La Tragédie du Roi Christophe*” in *Dakar-Matin*, April 16, 1966.

⁴⁴⁰ The connection between Christophe and Toussaint has been subject to much criticism. See, among others, Víctor Figueroa, “Between Louverture and Christophe: Aimé Césaire on the Haitian Revolution,” *The French Review*, Vol. 82, No. 5, 2009, pp. 1006-21; John Patrick Walsh, “Césaire Reads Toussaint Louverture: The Haitian Revolution and the Problem of Departmentalization,” *Small Axe*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2011, pp. 110-24; Arnold, A. James, “D’Haïti à l’Afrique: ‘La Tragédie Du Roi Christophe’ De Césaire,” *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, Vol. 60, No. 2, 1986, pp. 133-149. One should also remember that, preceding the writing of the play, Césaire reads C.L.R. James *The Black Jacobins*, does extensive archival research on Haiti and publishes *Toussaint Louverture: La Révolution française et le problème colonial* (Paris: Club Français du Livre, 1960). See the genetic dossier by Paul Breslin and Albert James Arnold in *Aimé Césaire: poésie, théâtre, essais et discours* (Paris: CNRS, 2013), pp. 987-1000.

At the end of the tragedy, Christophe calls: “Afrique! Aide-moi à rentrer.”⁴⁴¹ The character dies right after, as though no return was possible. On the continent, the end of the play takes an enhanced meaning. What Africa indeed is being staged? What independence is being claimed? In a way that *The Tragedy of King Christophe* could not, *A Season in the Congo* invites us to rethink how old continental traditions and regional tribalities must, as Gayatri Spivak writes, “be recoded for the postcolonial world, as Césaire’s claim to a shared ‘Africa’ quietly insists.”⁴⁴²

In another interview that follows the performance of the play, Césaire underlines the connection of his tragedy about Haiti in the 1820s and his new drama about the Congo in 1961. There, he surprisingly compares megalomaniac King Christophe with Premier Patrice Lumumba, both “losing their grip on an unforgiving reality.”⁴⁴³ It is striking to notice that Césaire seldom speaks about Africa when addressing an African audience, reserving his thought about the continent for a European or Caribbean readership. With a heightened sense of the *mise-en-scène*, the poet parades his kinship to Africa in a small interview given to two American journalists for a piece that would be published only two years later, in May 1968, in *Negro Digest*.⁴⁴⁴ Challenged by the interviewers to expand on the Festival’s plea for an African unity in the midst of vast political, economic, geographical, and cultural diversity, Césaire responded by directly positioning his stance against American anthropologist (and first president of the African

⁴⁴¹ Césaire, *La Tragédie du Roi Christophe* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963), p. 147.

⁴⁴² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Postcolonialism in France,” *Romanic Review* 104.3-4 (May-November 2013), p. 238. Such a reading of Lumumba is, according to Spivak, missed by Sartre in the preface the philosopher writes to *La pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba*, ed. Jean van Lierde (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963), entitled “Lumumba et le néo-colonialisme.”

⁴⁴³ “Christophe is the incarnation of Shango, powerful god, both detrimental and beneficial, who symbolizes immobility, while Hugonin [the court jester] is Eshu, the cunning god of the Yoruba, symbol of change. In “Pour Aimé Césaire, Lumumba fut un héros tragique,” interview with Frédéric Mégret for *Le Figaro littéraire* published on April 21, 1966, and printed in Caribbean journal *Le progressiste* on May 19, 1966.

⁴⁴⁴ Ellen Conroy Kennedy, “Aimé Césaire,” in *Negro Digest*, May 1968, pp. 56-61.

Studies Association) Melville Herskovits: “He always insisted that for him Africa was a vast number of different and unconnected cultures, while I held and continue to hold that despite this undeniable fact, there is something that transcends those differences, an underlying cultural unity.” Then questioned on Negritude, Césaire, who had already started taking distance with the word and what it came to stand for, stages an unexpected “faithfulness to Negritude:”

INTERVIEWERS: Has the concept of *Négritude* changed since you and Senghor originated it back in the 1930’s?

CÉSAIRE: Not at all. The question now is to remain faithful to it, to develop it. It is not Negritude that has changed, but the historical situation. (...) Since independence, it has been able to take on a more constructive emphasis. *If anything, Négritude is more necessary today than ever!* It has moral and ethical implications that should concern everyone. It must be valid for the whole Negro world. It is a philosophy which is emerging, bringing unity, making a synthesis of the traditional and the modern.”

Césaire’s vivid response is not only surprising in form, it is also contradictory in content. It vindicates a core Negritude that has not changed, even as the movement is being criticized from both francophone and anglophone intellectuals for what they see as an essentialist defense of blackness. Furthermore, it even defines it as a “philosophy” which goes completely against what he publicly denounces four years later in a radiophonic interview.⁴⁴⁵ Finally, his endorsement of Negritude is all the more unexpected given that the interview takes place after Césaire had himself ambivalently recused the word with the declaration: “No word irritates me

⁴⁴⁵ “[Senghor] tended to construct *négritude* as an essentialism, as though there were a black essence, a black soul, finally something rather metaphysical... I do not believe that there is either a black substance or a black essence...” See Aimé Césaire, interview by Lucien Attoun in “Aimé Césaire et le théâtre nègre,” *Le Théâtre* 1 (1970): 99-116. That particular sentence is on page 104. It is also analyzed by Albert James Arnold in “Césaire is Dead: Long Live Césaire! Recuperations and Reparations,” *French Politics, Culture & Society*, Vol 27, No. 3, Special Issue, pp. 9-18. Years later, in his “Discourse on Negritude,” the poet will be even clearer: “Negritude, in my eyes, is not a philosophy. / Negritude is not a metaphysics. / Negritude is not a pretentious conception of the universe.” Aimé Césaire, “Discourse on Negritude,” reproduced in *Discours sur le colonialisme, suivi de Discours sur la négritude* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 2004), p. 82.

more than the word *negritude*,”⁴⁴⁶ repeated three times, in the “Discourse on African Art” given on April 6, 1966—one day before the end of the Colloquium.

Moving rapidly, enigmatically, and unclearly between *Negritude*, African art, and Western civilization almost as if he were impatient,⁴⁴⁷ Césaire gives his longest and most elaborate comment on the inaugural discourse of André Malraux. Contrary to the eloquence and almost aggressive verve of the “Discourse,” here Césaire takes great care to explain his difference with the French Minister of Culture, pointing neither to a misunderstanding, nor to a neocolonial orientalist or a racial essentialism, but rather towards a different framing of the question: “It seems to me that Malraux put the question badly.” Where André Malraux warned against the misguided desire for art by grounding inspiration in a past forever lost, Césaire rewrites the question not in terms of art but of artists: “The problem of African art can only be posed in human terms.”⁴⁴⁸ Indeed, the poet from Martinique had staged his remarks as coming

⁴⁴⁶ In “Discours sur l’art africain,” in *Aimé Césaire: poésie, théâtre, essais et discours* (Paris: CNRS, 2013), pp. 1562-1569. Hereafter referred to as DAA. All translations are mine. This specific passage is on p. 1563.

⁴⁴⁷ To believe his interviewers, Césaire’s availability during the Festival was minimum. For this interview, the poet agreed to an hour-long conversation, before the dress rehearsal of *La Tragédie du Roi Christophe*, scheduled on a whim: “The interview itself came about unexpectedly. I phoned in the afternoon. Césaire had just lunched (...) but now he had an hour to spare. Would my husband and I care to come over right away?” The conversation happened in a large townhouse overlooking the sea and Gorée Island, secured by an iron gate and a six-foot high wall. In *Negro Digest*, May 1968, p. 57.

⁴⁴⁸ *Negro Digest*, May 1968, p. 59.

from his “experience as man of culture, [his] experience as poet, [his] experience as human [homme],” but concluding on his particular vantage point: “as an *Antillais*.”⁴⁴⁹

e) Césaire’s Discourse

“I would like, first of all, to share with you that I hesitated to speak during this colloquium. I am not a man of science, in no way an expert, and I am aware that, in such a gathering, I have more to learn than to teach.”⁴⁵⁰ Césaire’s surprising vacillation to speak seems more rhetorical than true. Although he did wait until the end of the colloquium to express his opinion after none of the other participants dared to challenge France’s Minister of Culture, as Lloyd Garrison writes in two *New York Times* articles, Malraux’s speech found much resistance to the claim that traditional African art was dead.⁴⁵¹ It would be reductive, however, to oppose Césaire and Malraux on the sole basis of the latter’s discourse. Since 1958, the two French statesmen are engaged in a process of negotiation for the betterment of

⁴⁴⁹ DAA, p. 1562. Césaire’s surprising claim to speak as an “*Antillais*” in a discourse dedicated to “African” art is the mark of a political difference between a continent that is, through the Festival, celebrating independence, over against the situation of Martinique that, amidst recurring social upheavals, fails to obtain greater political autonomy. Just a few months before, in October 1965, intervening in Congress for the first time since 1963, Césaire had again asked for a different political regime, citing the similar demands of Corsican representatives, comparing the states of their island to that of Sicily and Sardinia with Italy. See the *Journal Officiel de la République Française. Débats parlementaires. Assemblée Nationale*. October 15, 1965, pp. 3774-75. On March 15, 1966, interviewed by Caribbean journal *Le Progressiste*, Césaire also pointed to the “paradox of asking for autonomy and having to represent France at the Festival,” adding that we would come to Dakar “as a personal guest” of Senghor. Under the socialist government of Pierre Mauroy (1981-1984), Césaire would continue to advocate for (and indeed get) more autonomy for Martinique, eventually leading to the creation of the “Region Martinique” in 1982.

⁴⁵⁰ DAA, p. 1562.

⁴⁵¹ In “Real Bursts Through the Unreal at Dakar Festival,” *New York Times* article of April 26, 1966, Garrison writes: “Most critics here thought Mr. Malraux was wrong, and many Africans said so.” (pg. 9) In “The Vitality of Negro Art,” printed in the *New York Times* on May 1, 1966, he writes: “André Malraux, who represented France’s President de Gaulle, proclaimed traditional African sculpture dead as a contemporary creative force. Not so, replied African artists and critics” (pg. 137). Malraux’s speech was translated into English and published in the *New York Times Magazine* on May 15, 1966 under the title “Behind the Mask of Africa.”

Martinique's economic and political conditions—and beyond it, that of overseas territories.⁴⁵² When therefore, Césaire hesitates to react publicly to Malraux's authoritative statement on the death of African Art, he is also trying to enter Malraux's stance on Africa in order to be able to reply to the Minister not only about art but also about politics. While Malraux invites artists not only to create future artworks but also to invent a past they can use, Césaire sees an invitation to enter the discourse of an all-too-simple periodization between past and present, and suggests rather a look at the political and economic conditions under which artists necessarily evolve. Indeed, the poet does not attack Malraux at all on the argument according to which it is useless to imitate a forever lost "African traditional past." Together with Senghor, Césaire agrees that the danger comes not only from a desire to imitate European art to attain world recognition and success, but also from an attempt to repeat and copy an ever elusive "African art."

Building upon his own words on the need for colonized peoples to regain "historical initiative"⁴⁵³ as he had argued in his paper "Culture and Colonization" given ten years before at the *First World Congress of Negro Writers and Artists*, Césaire, in the post-independence year of 1966, denounces the colonial alternative between traditional authenticity and modern progress, and repositions the statement in post-coloniality. He not only warns against imitation but also extols anti-imitation, adopting autonomy as a slogan that rejects a certain colonial African art.

⁴⁵² In September 1958, De Gaulle sent André Malraux to Martinique to campaign for the "yes" to the fifth republic referendum. As a skillful politician, Césaire negotiated his official endorsement for the referendum by asking Malraux to convey to De Gaulle his request for an increase of local tariffs, an improvement of economic conditions for Martinique, and application of several "*lois sociales*" (social security, unemployment benefits, etc) to the larger Overseas Departments (DOM). See Césaire's two articles in *Le Progressiste*: first, a reproduction of his welcoming address to Malraux, published on Sept. 19, 1958 ("Aimé Césaire accueille André Malraux à la Martinique"); second, a short piece calling to vote "yes" to De Gaulle's referendum, on Sept. 20, 1958 ("Tenir le pas gagné). Both are now reproduced in *Aimé Césaire, Écrits Politiques*, Vol. 3 (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 2016), pp. 71-76.

⁴⁵³ Aimé Césaire, "Culture et colonisation," in *Aimé Césaire, Poésie, Théâtre, Essais et Discours* (Paris: CNRS, 2013), p. 1544.

The Festival must not be, as Césaire conveys, a simple juxtaposition of archeological treasures, but rather a space where a questioning of artworks and artists that desire to be called “African” can take place with no colonial or ideological preconception. In a sense, the poet of Martinique follows the same trajectory as the one he adopted in 1944 in “Poetry and Knowledge,” where he had argued in lofty philosophical terms for the “revenge of Dionysus against Apollo,” offering an idealized poetic knowledge as alternative to the exclusive pursuit of “the impersonality of scientific knowledge.”⁴⁵⁴ But in 1966, Césaire, older and politically accountable, is also speaking in Dakar to an African audience. He thus redirects his warning against both the mirage of a scientific, ethnographic, taxonomic approach to African art, inherited from the colonial era; and the danger of something akin to a deluded self-imitation, relying upon an idea of something called “African art” to be endlessly repeated, satisfying not the postcolonial artist but a neocolonial market buyer in search for artworks fitting an essentialized and orientalized Africa. To both dangers, Césaire—as indeed Senghor—insists on the open-endedness and unpredictability of the creative process, calling for the political responsibility of newly independent African governments to create the conditions under which artists will not have to respond to neocolonial market demands: “To the African heads of state who tell us, ‘African artists, work for the salvation of African art,’ we respond: Africans, and specifically you, African statesmen (...) make us a good African politics (...) and African art will be saved.”⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁴ The paper was, after all, given at a philosophical conference on the “Problems of Knowledge” in Haiti in June 1944. I offer an extensive analysis of this essay in the first chapter of this dissertation, pp. 66-91.

⁴⁵⁵ DAA, p. 1569. Translation is mine.

Césaire's words tellingly convey a sense of the post-independence work the thinkers of Negritude are concerned with in Africa as well as the Caribbean. The philosophical and cultural has not entirely disappeared (indeed, the statement is pronounced at the closing of the Festival's academic Colloquium on Negro Arts), but it now in the expected product of a "good politics," no longer a result but a premise for the arts.

This is why I suggest that we read Césaire's response not opposing, but supplementing Malraux's. Alluding to the inaugural discourse of the French Minister of Culture, Césaire argues for an ambivalent relation to the past and its traditions, and in fact, appropriates the French novelist's periodization between a bygone holistic approach to museum artworks as immune to change and the new "museum without walls" that rests upon our imagination of countless historical and stylistic connections, in order to rewrite it in a way that allows subversion:

Here, I hear Malraux's objection, who will tell us and has told us: sorry, wishes and desires do not matter in history. There is an evolution, a necessary evolution. We have been told: let us try to find again the African soul that made the masks; through it, we will reach the African people. I do not believe a word of it. Here is Malraux: 'What once upon a time made the masks, as what once upon a time made the cathedrals, is lost forever.' But we can answer to Malraux the following: that the problem is not correctly phrased [*mal posé*] and that it is not a matter of remaking the masks, no more than, for Europe, it was a matter or remaking cathedrals.⁴⁵⁶

With subtlety, Césaire does not so much rebuff Malraux as he stages a shifting from a static and objective historical periodization to a dynamic and subjective historicized positioning. "There is an evolution, a necessary evolution," says Césaire, ambiguously acknowledging and referring to the French Minister of Culture without quoting him. Contrary to what Lloyd Garrison of the *New York Times* writes, it is not a question of finding a "traditional African art

⁴⁵⁶ DAA, p. 1567.

that is still a living influence among artists.”⁴⁵⁷ As Césaire makes clear a few lines later after an unexpected acknowledgment of Roger Bastide, French sociologist known for his criticism and provoking of the Negritude poets:⁴⁵⁸

The mistake is to set the question in terms of art. It is not in terms of art, but in human terms that we must set the problem of African art, and it is the consideration of the specific character of African art itself that leads us to adopt this direction.⁴⁵⁹

Rewriting an opposition between a “modern” and a “traditional” world as a shift between the artwork as an object and the artist as the subject, Césaire goes back to the position he adopted in his earlier masterpiece, *Discourse on Colonialism*, where colonization did not stand for modernization but for reification—an allusion to the vocabulary of Sartre’s philosophy. Indeed, the “Discourse on African Art” starts with this reference:

With modern European thought (I say modern, because Europe has not always been what it is now, how we see it), a new process is born, which some thinkers have called a process of reification, that is to say, of thingification of the world.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁷ In “Real Bursts Through the Unreal at Dakar Festival,” *op. cit.*

⁴⁵⁸ In 1961, Roger Bastide published an article, “Variations on Négritude” where he openly denounced Césaire’s lofty construction of Africa on the basis of Jung’s concept of “collective memory.” In Césaire’s poetry, Bastide writes that Africa is a “willed construction of his creative imagination, by way of reading, not a dictate of his subconscious.” Césaire, continues Bastide in a provocation way, is indeed a “White poet.” See Roger Bastide, “Variations on Négritude,” in *Négritude: Essays and Studies*, ed. Albert H. Berrian & Richard A. Long (Hampton VA: Hampton Institute Press, 1967): 76-77. The article was originally published in French in *Présence Africaine*, No. 36 (1961/1): 83-92.

⁴⁵⁹ DAA, p. 1567.

⁴⁶⁰ DAA, p. 1563. *Discourse on Colonialism* reads: “My turn to state an equation: colonization = thingification,” in *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review, 2000), p. 42. [*Discours sur le colonialisme* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1955), p. 23].

In sum, what has been called European modernity is not only a threat for the postcolonial world, it is a threat that leaves no part of the globe untouched: “The industrial civilization covers the world with its network and now reaches—it is clear that today, we have entered the era of the finite world—the most remote parts of the globe.” Aware of the global, Césaire is also focused on the local and stresses the urgency of the artistic creation in Africa: not to define an African art, but to question its means and methods for Africans:

Never has Africa needed her art most, her own art. This is true for the general reasons I evoked just a moment ago and that are valid for the whole world. But on top of that, there are reasons that are specific to Africa.⁴⁶¹

Africa is threatened not only by the external danger of globalization, it is also menaced by the internal poison of disintegration—from regionalism to nationalism and unexamined culturalism. Such is indeed the subject of *A Season in the Congo*, where Lumumba is written as desperately trying to overcome ethnic divisions as well as to recode old tribal traditions in postcoloniality (today, we would say globality).⁴⁶² Yet, this is not the play presented at the Festival, and Césaire conveys his message through different means. “African art” becomes a metonym for a type of relation between postcolonial Africa and a globalized world, which Malraux’s discourse warned against, albeit differently. Where Malraux declared an idea of a past African art “forever lost”

⁴⁶¹ DAA, p. 1567.

⁴⁶² This is most visible in the most crucial scene of the play that signals the downfall of the Premier of Congo: the scene of the leopard stole. As Lumumba rejects the tradition that would have covered him with a leopard stole to protect him from evil spirits, his tragic fate is sealed. Lumumba’s rejection is nevertheless written by Césaire as subtle and not fully secular. The gesture of covering him bears resemblance to the stole which covers Christ in the New Testament’s “Book of Revelation,” and it is indeed “Ecclesiasticus” (Apocrypha: 20.4) that Césaire makes Lumumba quote in the same scene: “I am not a religious man, but I have made my own the words: ‘As is the lust of an eunuch to deflower a virgin; so is he that executeth judgment with violence.’” But the gesture is not caught by the people of Congo, symbolized by the nameless Sanza player, who remains silent. For a comprehensive analysis of the play, see Suzanne Houyoux, *Quand Césaire écrit, Lumumba parle* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1974).

and proposed its reinvention in order to find both an audience and an anchoring, Césaire focuses on the African artist caught in the dilemma of responding to a certain European idea of art (as evidenced in the Colloquium's list of awards mirroring a nineteenth century European classification of art forms) and a certain vision of African art dictated either by a political agenda or a global mercantilism (as, for instance, with the action of the *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts* carefully choosing artworks that would be "African enough" to tour the country as a cultural exhibit able to produce a "lasting effect on the morale" in the midst of the Civil Rights movement). In sum, as Césaire points out, one must think of "African art" as also dependent on a certain market (real or symbolic) and African artists must avoid two pitfalls directly related to it. On the one hand, they must avoid the eternal reproduction of the same, or they will produce an already expected result ("typically African"). On the other hand, they must avoid imitating a European art seen as a reference to an abstract universal called "art," or they will fall prey to becoming nothing more than marketable objects.

All we can say, we, African men, we, men of this colloquium, we, men of culture, is that we do not consider it a desirable goal to substitute African art with an art that some will define as, laudably, universal, and others will define as, pejoratively, cosmopolitan, in any case, not specifically made by Africans.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶³ DAA, p. 1567. Notwithstanding the success of the discourse, its masculinization is undoubtedly one of its regrettable shortcomings. It is indeed to "men," and not "humans," to whom Césaire addresses its remarks. When he names artists or participants (M. Goldwater, M. Laude, M. Fagg, Michel Leiris, André Malraux, Roger Bastide), no women are acknowledged although they are speaking at the Colloquium on that very topic. For instance, Geneviève Calame-Griaule's presentation on "oral literature" questions "to what extent it is legitimate to speak of oral literature in relation to art," thereafter investigating the diverse forms of art and their relation to multiple forms of poetry. Katherine Dunham, also in charge of the programmatic of dance performances throughout the Festival, speaks on "the arts of representation in Africa." Doris Banks Henries gives a paper on "Traditional Negro Art." Finally, Mrs. Zdenka Volakvova, from the University of Prague, offers a communication that resonates with the very threat Césaire warns against: "The European experience of Negro Art" as reference for its marketability. All communications were printed a year later in a two-volume special issue of *Présence Africaine* entitled "Colloquium on Negro Art." It is to be noted that none of the women tackle the question of gender or sexuality in their respective communications.

III. After 1966: Learning from the *First World Festival of Negro Arts*

a) Reception and Criticism

The end of Césaire's discourse and its exhortation sent to African heads of state resonates with the end of the Festival, and I offer an eloquent reorientation to the need for good politics needed for the production of an art with the correct philosophical narratives:

Men of Africa, and especially you, African politicians, give us a good African politics, give us an Africa where there are reasons to be hopeful, means for achievement, reasons to be proud, give Africa its dignity and health again, and African art will be saved.⁴⁶⁴

As the Festival comes to a close, Alioune Diop and Aimé Césaire are invited to the Ivory Coast where, according to the local newspaper in Abidjan, *Fraternité-Matin*, they are welcomed as quasi heads of state.⁴⁶⁵ Just a week after the closing ceremony, Senghor flies to Lebanon where he gives a speech on Negritude and adds, in English, another definition to the usual "sum total of the values of civilization of the Black world," which he often quotes to present Negritude. At the University of Beirut, Negritude, Senghor says, is also "a way of relating oneself to the world and to the others."⁴⁶⁶ The English "to the others" is not only a peculiar syntactic construction (that may or may not be due to Senghor's poor command of the language), it also

⁴⁶⁴ DAA, p. 1569.

⁴⁶⁵ "L'interview exclusive de M. Aimé Césaire à *Fraternité-matin*. La négritude n'est pas un racisme. *Fraternité-matin*, April 29, 1966. Reprinted in "Impressions sur le Festival de Dakar," *Alizés* (Bulletin de la Fédération antillo-guyanaise des étudiants catholiques de Paris), No. 6, June 1966, pp. 27-29.

⁴⁶⁶ Léopold Sédar Senghor, "La Négritude est un Humanisme du XX siècle," in *Liberté III* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), p. 70.

signals a subsequent reflection upon the artificial separation that was questioned during the Festival, especially during Césaire's Discourse: between an "authentic" African art and a pale imitation of an "other" European art (or a European vision of African art). Writing after the Festival, William Kgositsile publishes a diatribe against the politicization of the Festival that, in his view, could not attend to that split because of the desire to be recognized by the Western world. "Spokesmen for neo-African or new Black culture have spent years trying to convince Whites of the validity of Black culture." For Kgositsile, one of the major contradictions of the Festival was that while it officially purported to celebrate an African art from below, it excluded an African mass suffering from political corruption in addition to economic hardship and malnutrition, in order to please what he called a "white patronage." "One of the disturbing things about the Festival was that Black culture was being 'made illustrious' to and for a white patronage."⁴⁶⁷ It is for this white audience that the streets had to be cleared of beggars and a fence be built around the slums surrounding downtown Dakar. As importantly, it is for such white audience that a so-called traditional art had to be displayed. Such art did not need to be rejected. After all, he admitted to have "sat electrified by the excellent performances, or took a bus from one museum to another (instead of a plane or a boat to see African art in a museum in Europe or America)." But while recognizing the potential contribution of such staged art in liberation struggles, the targeted audience of the Festival made it impossible not to succumb to its politicization.

⁴⁶⁷ Keorapetse Kgositsile, "I Have Had Enough!" *Liberator* (July 1966), p. 11.

One, however, cannot but be surprised when Kgositsile suggests that a contemporary artist such as James Brown should have been invited to supplement the political use of art. “Where was James Brown! Contemporary Black artists were supposed to be invited. By this I mean that rhythm-and-blues is the most contemporary art form in Black America.”⁴⁶⁸ Notwithstanding the fact that “contemporary” artists such as Duke Ellington, Louis Lomax, LeRoi Jones (later Amiri Baraka), and Louis Armstrong were among the invited Black Americans, the reference to an artist still coming from the United States as potential counterweight to the presence and expectation of a European audience, is indicative both of a postcolonial world dynamic and of a racial politics over the choice of “Negro-American artists.”

Another critic of the Festival, Hoyt Fuller—editor of the monthly magazine *Negro Digest*—recalls Senghor’s political influence in the artistic choices of the *United States Committee*. In the June 1966 issue of *Negro Digest*, Fuller recalls a troubling anecdote as to the choice of musicians to be sent to Dakar, not for their artistic value but political image. I quote it here in full:

One hopes that the story is apocryphal. The way it goes, the prime movers of the American Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts were considering which group of musicians to invite to Dakar as exemplars of jazz music in America. Benny Goodman and his sidemen were mentioned but it was remembered that the State Department already had sent them on such a tour. Then Woody Herman and his orchestra were suggested, and the idea was received with much enthusiasm. But then someone asked about the number of Negroes in Mr. Herman’s current Herd...

⁴⁶⁸ Kgositsile, “I Have Had Enough!,” p. 10. The appellation “Rhythm-and-Blues” stands for *Billboard* magazine’s new categorization of music made by African-Americans in 1949, in lieu of hitherto “Race Music.” In 1969, the category would be renamed “Soul Music” in an effort to strengthen the political message of African-American artists, connect it to the Black Power, and invite a broader reflection of “blackness.” In those years, the political message of James Brown is particularly vocal (e.g., “Say it Loud: I’m Black and I’m Proud”, 1968). For a history of the term “Soul Music,” see the entry in *Encyclopedia of African American Music*, eds. Emmett G. Price III, Tammy Kernodle, Horace Maxille (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2011), pp. 892-903; also, Mellonee Burnim and Portia Maulsby, eds. *African American Music: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

As it turned out, Duke Ellington and his orchestra were chosen as the musicians to carry the message of jazz music to Dakar, but the above story—whether apocryphal or true—tells much about the orientation of the American Committee.⁴⁶⁹

These political considerations on music performers recalled, combined with Senghor's first suggestions over which artist to send to Dakar in his first correspondence with President Kennedy, only compound the critical reception of the Festival's artistic credibility. But if the Festival's artistic success can be (and has been) questioned, its political aftermath is unquestionable. No later than July 1966, an informal (yet official) state visit was organized by Mercer Cook—the American Ambassador to Senegal and longtime friend of Senghor—to invite the “poet, philosopher, classical scholar, and organizer of the First World Festival of Negro Art” to the United States.⁴⁷⁰ From September 28 to October 6, 1966, traveling from Washington D.C. and New York to San Francisco, Senghor's visit included not only traditional meetings and dinners, but also a joint press conference with President Johnson and Secretary of State Dean Rusk.⁴⁷¹ Responding to a press interview, Senghor revealed that he asked President Johnson to “redirect the U.S. aid program in Africa, with concentration on the stabilization of raw material prices to permit African states to earn more from the sale of their products.”⁴⁷² Questioned on his long-term commitment to bring together political actions and artistic endeavors, Senghor ended

⁴⁶⁹ Hoyt Fuller, “Festival Postscripts: Assessment and Questions,” *Negro Digest* (June 1966), p. 82.

⁴⁷⁰ “Senghor's Visit to Renew Ties,” in *The Washington Post*, Aug. 1, 1966, p. B5. This second visit, less than three years after Senghor's first one in 1963, is unparalleled by any other African heads of State—and only topped by the Prime Minister of England. For a full lists of state visits to the United States, see the Department of State's Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/visits>.

⁴⁷¹ The exact schedule and agenda are part of the online archives of the Department of State (document no. 213, Sept. 20, 1966 “President of the Republic of Senegal to Visit the United States” - September 28 - October 6, 1966). A facsimile is also archived in *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts Press agent's files, 1965-1966* Sc MG 220 Box 2 folder 2.

⁴⁷² “Thinking Is Close to That Of LBL, Senghor Asserts,” in *The Washington Post*, Sept. 30, 1966, p. A18. This demand had been paramount in the last correspondence between Senghor and Kennedy in 1963, when he mentioned the First World Festival of Negro Arts.

the interview by quoting one of his own poems. Merging political and economic demands with artistic activities, the visit also included an invitation by New York Mayor John Lindsay to attend a concert at the Metropolitan Opera House (for a performance of “La Traviata”), and last, a reception with the president and directors of the *United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts* where, for the second time, Senghor would award the prizes given to Americans at the Festival four months before. Just a few weeks after his return to Senegal, Senghor would merge arts and politics in another—yet more local—way. He would inaugurate the state-owned *Manufacture nationale de tapisserie* of Thiès, whose goal was to celebrate and manufacture a “new tradition,” in the presence of the Malian President Modibo Keita.

b) Addendum: Senghor and the Tapestry of Thiès

Similar to the organization of the *First World Festival of Negro Arts*, the project of the *Manufacture nationale de tapisserie* is the site of a use of presidential powers to push forward a certain idea of art through public policy. As Senghor inaugurates the *Manufacture* in December 1966, one wonders why a ceremony for the opening of a “national” factory in a small industrial town 72 kilometers to the east of Dakar, is celebrated in the presence of a foreign dignitary. In addition, one also questions the way in which an alleged new commercial venture is otherwise presented as the paradigm of a surviving old tradition traced back to Ancient Egypt. Where the monumental *First World Festival of Negro Arts* exposed the dilemma of the relation between old and new, staged as an opposition between tradition and modernity, the *ex-nihilo* creation of the *Manufacture nationale de tapisserie* (renamed *Manufactures sénégalaises des arts décoratifs*, in 1986) illustrates another kind of political use of art. As a variation on this chapter

leading argument, it should be noticed that far from the early essentialist—and often orientalist—claims of the young poets aiming at an idealized universal, or even the grand “World Festival” that hoped to place Senegal on the radar of the most powerful nations, this project takes Negritude down to the individual and the local level Senghor knows personally.⁴⁷³

First, the choice of Thiès calls for a look at a historical dynamic of a region dear to Senghor. A historical settlement of Serer people (the ethnic group with which Senghor self-identifies), the town is also at the junction of railway lines between Dakar (Senegal’s capital) and Saint-Louis. Second, the presence of the President of Mali Modibo Keita at the official inauguration of the *Manufacture* signals a political will to reinvigorate, through artistic channels of communication, a cooperation between Mali and Senegal after the break-up of the Mali Federation (symbolized by the dual control of the railroad between two national organizations, *Régie des Chemin de fer du Mali* and *Régie des Chemins de Fer du Sénégal*).⁴⁷⁴ Indeed, in the inaugural speech given on December 4, 1966, Senghor states:

If we have chosen, to inaugurate this *Manufacture nationale de tapisserie*, the official state visit of President Modibo Keita, it is because the presence of the Malian head of state shows [*témoigne*] our common past, North-Sudanese (...)

⁴⁷³ Looking at a local venture over against an international art fair (as well as the international visibility of a local industry and the local consequences of a world festival) allows for a questioning of the dynamic relationship between aesthetics and politics in Senegalese cultural policy (largely shaped by Negritude’s ideals) where politics govern artistic and cultural affairs—as this chapter argues. A comprehensive study of this question has been undertaken by Tracy David Snipe, in *Arts and Politics in Senegal, 1960-1996* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998), as well as M. S. Mbengue, *Cultural Policy in Senegal* (Paris: UNESCO, 1973).

⁴⁷⁴ For a historical account of the Dakar-Niger Railway connecting Dakar (Senegal) to Koulikoro (Mali), see James A. Jones, *Industrial Labor in the Colonial World: Workers of the Chemin de Fer Dakar-Niger, 1881-1963* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002), especially the last two chapters on the railroad strike and the decline of the colonial railroad project. For a fictional narrative on that history, see Ousmane Sembène’s novel, *God’s Bits of Wood*, trans. Francis Price (New York: Doubleday, 1962). There, Thiès is staged alongside the two state capitals of Bamako and Dakar. In particular, Ousmane writes on the railroad strike of 1947 through the women’s march from Thiès to Dakar on foot for over four days. In the novel, it is the women’s march that leads to both a self-perception of the strikers and a concern of the French colonial government over the power of the labor movement in Senegal.

Again, dear President, we thank you for having accepted our invitation to preside, with me, over this ceremony placed under the sign of the *North-Sudanese civilization*, of which Mali has been, for centuries, the most radiant home.⁴⁷⁵

Senghor's ambivalent inscription of a national institution within both the framework of a historical relation with Mali (and, as we will see, with France as well) and the imagination of a deep African past, reflects a desire that expands beyond just the celebration of an artistic project. Indeed, the invitation of President Keita is part of the poet's long-term conviction that the two countries of Mali and Senegal form the same cultural matrix—that led to the formation of the Mali Federation, a political entity linking the French colonies of Senegal and the Sudanese Republic for a period of only two months in 1960. The reference to the “North Sudanese” civilization as historical anchoring of the art institution (for the *Manufacture* is not simply a factory, but rather, a school of fine art, a gallery, and a center of contemporary Senegalese art) is not only a celebration to the Mali empire—known as Sudan in the Arab world; it is also, perhaps, a modest response to the failure of the political entity in the early months of decolonization. It is thus also crucial to understand Senghor's sense of history in the elaboration of the *Manufacture nationale de tapisserie*. Extolling a romanticized return to “mother-Africa,” Senghor rewrites the origin of tapestry-weaving as far as “Ancient Egypt, 3000 years before Christ.”⁴⁷⁶ According to the poet, traveling through the continent from east to west to reach the “Atlantic facies of the North-Sudanese Culture,” this tradition survived in the “piece of clothing or draperies,” the African loincloth [*pagne africain*]. At the time of the institutionalization of the *Manufacture*, Senghor's

⁴⁷⁵ Léopold Sédar Senghor, “Pour une tapisserie Sénégalaise,” in *Liberté III* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), p. 102.

⁴⁷⁶ “Pour une tapisserie Sénégalaise,” p. 104.

goal is to re-inscribe this imagined millennially-old tradition into an idea of modernity by epistemologically shifting from loincloth to tapestry. Notwithstanding this *rapprochement*, Senghor is adamant that the primary goal of the *Manufacture* is the “creation of a new art, for a new nation.” More revealing, the poet admits that the idea did not originate in his rich artistic imagination or political desire, but in the mind of Jean Lurçat and François Tabard, two master weavers from the *Atelier-École* from another national institution: the *Tapisserie d’Aubusson*.⁴⁷⁷

The unambiguous recognition of the connection with the former colonial power is, to say the least, surprising, considering the claim for national creation and cultural independence. Quoting French anthropologist Irmeline Hossman, Senghor states: “If Senegalese painting manages to avoid the pitfall of ornamenting (...), it will be able to set its sight on the top rank in Africa.”⁴⁷⁸ Clearly aware that there was no such tradition of tapestry where he wished to establish the national institution, Senghor’s connection to France’s three-hundred-year-old know-how is oriented towards a nationally artistic pride seeking political means to achieve it. Speaking of its “return to Senegal” at the time of independence after his studies in France, Papa Ibra Tall, first director of the *Manufacture nationale de tapisserie*, recalls in Senghorian terms:

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 102. The connection with Aubusson is a longstanding one. As Papa Ibra Tall (first director of the *Manufacture*) recalls, in 1965, Senghor wanted to offer an artistic gift to the United Nations that would speak for the whole of Senegal. Tall suggested “Le Magal de Touba,” a depiction of a Mourids’s religious celebration, commemorating the exile of Sufi religious leader, Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba. Lacking the appropriate space to weave the scene, as well as the training of weavers, however, the tapestry was made in France, in the *Atelier d’Aubusson*. In 2008, as the United Nations complained about the run-down condition of the 50-year-old mural, the then President Abdoulaye Wade ordered a modern reproduction to be made, this time, in Senegal, at the *Manufactures sénégalaises des arts décoratifs*. See the interview of Papa Ibra Tall, “Les tapisseries de Thiès, des fresques du Sénégal aux quatre coins du monde,” published in the magazine *Jeune Afrique* on Sept. 19, 2012.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 103. The original is in *Afrique, société internationale de publications commerciales, culturelles et artistiques*, special issue “Senegal,” 1966 (Third Trimester), p. 64.

I think that we have authentic values (...) When I came back from Paris in 1960, I thought it was necessary to look within the masses to find deeper realities. It is from there that the new African civilization will come.⁴⁷⁹

Neither in France nor in Senegal, can such elaborate art be said to be an “art of the masses.” In fact, the price of the *Tapisserie d’Aubusson* as well as the market for the *Tapisseries de Thiès* is so removed from what individual buyers can afford, that these artworks are essentially restricted to states, consulates, embassies, museums, and other national institutions.⁴⁸⁰ As James S. Coleman notices in *Sénégal Carrefour*, a then official publishing house of Dakar’s *Ministère de l’Information et du Tourisme*, the State is the major (and only) “purchaser of the tapestries which are used to decorate its many Ministries and Embassies abroad.”⁴⁸¹ As a national institution, the *Manufacture nationale de tapisserie* is predicated upon national representation of the cultural scene in Senegal—as evidenced by ties to the nation that Senghor vindicates in the inaugural discourse: “The goal is to create a new art, for a new nation,” “it is evident, that in order to create a national art, we must be a nation.” But acting as a complement to the *École nationale des arts*, i.e., as state-owned “school” that welcomes Senegalese artists sent to France for training and who, once in residence in Thiès, must be trained again to “try to undo the learned habits [from their years spent in the Western artistic milieu],” the place becomes a motor for

⁴⁷⁹ Quoted in James S. Coleman, “Tapisseries de Thiès,” in *African Arts*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Winter 1970). pp. 61-63. The article is printed in both French and English. I modified the translation from the French.

⁴⁸⁰ According to a newspaper article, one square meter of the Senegalese tapestries costs between 500,000 and one million FCFA (762 and 1.524 Euros)—in a country where minimum wage is 35.000 FCFA (ca. 53 euros). See “Les tapisseries de Thiès, des fresques du Sénégal aux quatre coins du monde” in *Jeune Afrique* Sept. 19, 2012.

⁴⁸¹ I was unable to find the original source. It was reprinted, however, in “Tapisseries de Thiès,” in *African Arts*, *op. cit.*, p. 63. James Smoot Coleman was an American scholar, professor of Political Science and African Studies (West Africa) at UCLA. He was also the second president of the African Studies Association.

what it defines from the top as the “authentic culture” of Senegal at the same time as it encourages independent creation from below. Indeed, as early as 1964, Senghor and Tall create an *Atelier de tapisserie* tied to the section “Negro Plastic Arts” of the *École nationale des arts*—an institution under direct jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture.⁴⁸² The first entering class of 1964 (Mamadou Wade, Mar Fall, Doudou Diagne, etc) is promptly sent for additional training to Aubusson and Gobelins. When they return in 1966, they are appointed as “master-weaver”—a title imitating that of Lurçat and Tabard at the *Atelier-École* of Aubusson.⁴⁸³ As Senghor declares in his Thiès discourse, their goal is to find a “national style,” defined as the symbiosis between an acknowledged “set of techniques imported from France” and an undefined “traditional culture” whose relation with Senegalese painting is supposed to arise “spontaneously.” This assigned process of creation is completed by the commission of artworks directly from the state, as evidenced by Law No. 73-61 of December 19, 1973, that transforms the school into a public institution “à caractère industriel et commercial,” or what Souleymane Bachir Diagne has termed a “*poïesis* d’État.”⁴⁸⁴ Looking back at Senghor’s artistic policies, one cannot but note the radically different use of Negritude from the early years of the movement: where art had been conceived as naturally arising from the individual, it is now imposed by a national state policy.

⁴⁸² See Abdou Sylla, “Le Mécénat de Léopold Sédar Senghor ” in *Ethiopiennes*, No. 59 (1997); also Daniel Delas, “Regard sur la politique culturelle de Senghor (1960-1980),” *Africultures*, 2/2006, No. 67, pp. 239-43. For a comprehensive investigation of art as policy in Senegal, see Abdou Sylla, *Arts plastiques et État: trente ans de mécénat au Sénégal* (Dakar: IFAN, 1998).

⁴⁸³ Souleymane Bachir Diagne, “La leçon de musique,” in *Le Sénégal contemporain*, ed. Momar Coumba Diop (Paris: Khartala, 2002), pp. 243-50. For a study of the relation between the manufacture and an idea of artistic nationalism, see Laura Cochrane, “The Growth of Artistic Nationalism in Senegal,” in *Nations and Nationalism: Journal of the Association of Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 17(2), pp. 377-95.

⁴⁸⁴ Diagne, “La leçon de musique,” p. 246 and passim. For the legal aspect and administration of artistic and cultural institutions, see in particular Abdou Sylla, “Histoire des arts plastiques sénégalais contemporains” in *Ethiopiennes*, No. 87 (2011). The law of 1973 changed the denomination of the *Manufacture nationale de tapisserie* into the title it holds today: the *Manufacture sénégalaise des arts décoratifs*. Thereafter, other decrees, such as Decree No. 76-1021 from October 14, 1976, assigned goals for a cultural policy that the Government of Senegal is entrusted to apply using the very cultural institutions it created.

There are other artistic or cultural institutions whose extensive and quasi-exclusive relations to the state of Senegal have put their goal of autonomous creation into conflict. For instance, the publishing house *Nouvelles Éditions Africaines* (NEA) was created in 1972 and sponsored by no less than three states (Senegal, Togo, Ivory Coast) until 1988 when it was replaced by NEA-Senegal—with a fifth of the press’s capital owned by the Senegalese government and still heavily reliant on the edition of Senegal’s public school manuals.⁴⁸⁵ Similarly, the *Musée Dynamique* and the *Théâtre National Daniel Sorano*, both created for the *First World Festival of Negro Arts*, also respond to the same cultural state policy. In a more general outlook not of the artistic scene but of the behind-the-scenes of artistic production and creation, Senghor’s presidency is marked by a weaving of arts and politics as tools for Negritude’s ideals. Such political involvement and financial investment are not necessarily the mark of a Soviet-like “Socialist Realism” that Senghor was quick to condemn as propaganda using art as means. Indeed, as Abdou Sylla notices, the nature and diversity of a myriad of cultural institutions created by state policy, state laws, and political decrees, undoubtedly convey a constant goal: “a coherence of cultural policy in order to increasingly optimize the efficacy of cultural action.” But it cannot be forgotten that Senghor’s political patronage of the arts did not stop after his presidency or the end of Negritude’s heyday. Indeed, recent scholarship has investigated the implementation of similar cultural and artistic state policy implemented by the two other Senegalese Presidents since Senghor’s resignation in 1981: Abdoulaye Wade and Abdou Diouf.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁵ Diagne, “La leçon de musique,” p. 249.

⁴⁸⁶ See again, Tracy David Snipe, *Arts and politics in Senegal, 1960-1996*, op. cit.

Looking at the desire to weave art with policy as both medicine and poison, allows us to question Negritude's discourse on cultural identity as an articulation not of a simple periodization between a necessary return to authenticity or a perilous dilution into globality, but rather as a move away from the definition of one's own border (biological, cultural, linguistic) and to the ways in which such borders can be crossed. Negritude is indeed never achieved or even achievable, for it is a philosophy of movement that asks for a never-ending questioning. This is what drives Abiola Irele to declare: "Before declaring Negritude is over, better to have gone over it!"⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁷ Abiola Irele, *Négritude et condition africaine* (Paris: Khartala, 2008), p. 8. "Avant de décréter que la Négritude est dépassée, encore faut-il y être passé!" Translation is mine.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have shown that black movement, transformation, and becoming, were as crucial to the thinkers of Negritude as were black essence, fixity, and being. The two authors I have focused on, Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor, critically engaged with a discourse on blackness that, far from being predetermined, they kept redefining alongside the redefinition of the conditions under which it could be practiced—anti-coloniality, post-coloniality, globality. It is one of the problems of a movement that lasted so long that, not only did Negritude survive “post-Negritude” moments (*antillanité*, *créolité*, black consciousness movement, etc⁴⁸⁸), its criticism fell prey to a few brilliant and short masterpieces that were, perhaps, too hastily categorized. Césaire’s magistral *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* lend itself to a facile interpretation of a nostalgic quest for an ever elusive lost identity; Sartre’s definition of the movement as an “anti-racist racism” restricted its fieldwork to race narratives; and Senghor’s (in)famous alexandrine “emotion is negro as reason is hellenic” emphasized an easy dualism that led to an essentialist reading that was legitimately decried. Concurrently to these opportune and infelicitous catchphrases, however, there is a large body of overlooked texts (essays, discourses, interviews, manuscripts, correspondence, etc) written over half a century that complicate—and sometimes even question—the existence of the black essence that these two authors are so often accused of purporting. My goals in this dissertation have therefore been twofold: to give credence to Césaire’s and Senghor’s lesser known texts where an idea of blackness is critically challenged rather than easily taken for granted, that is to say, where I noticed that a defense of

⁴⁸⁸ This moment can be represented by Édouard Glissant for *antillanité*, Jean Bernabé and Patrick Chamoiseau for *créolité*, Steve Biko for a major figure of the “Black consciousness movement.” Those examples are by no means comprehensive or exclusive. In the Francophone Caribbean for instance, the position of Maryse Condé, for instance, both praising creoleness while keeping her distance with the linguistic binaries of creolization, is more subtle.

“identity” always remain resolutely anti-identitarian; and to understand the relation between a discourse on black-being on the one hand and on black-becoming on the other, seemingly contradictory, that invites the reader to exclude both a plea for and a plea against blackness in the interest of finding the conditions under which these two discourses interact dialectically and stage contradictions as a condition of their development—and thus, movement.

Perhaps, one of the advantages of looking at Negritude in its movement is the resultant attention to the different linguistic, social, and political positions of its two figureheads—and their adjustments as World War II, Decolonization, and the Civil Rights changed their terrain. Indeed, the linguistic, social, and political positions of Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor have often been staged as antithetical. What I have attempted to do in this dissertation by reading a broader set of texts throughout a longer time period is to show the necessity of their differences as the two figures navigated a radically different stage and dealt with entirely distinct conditions. Ultimately, Senghor, often justifiably criticized for its undeniable pro-French policies, led his country to independence, while Césaire, often praised for his virulent anti-colonial discourse, became the architect of Martinique’s full assimilation to France’s network of departments. Focusing not on their ideological differences but on the sheer similarity on their goals, it then became clear that it was the difference in the conditions under which they could realize them that gave rise to two discourses that, at times, were indeed contradicting each other. Their alleged contradictory discourses articulate not two different visions but two different means to attain it.

This explains why, among other terrains, language, culture, and politics, were used differently by the two authors, both in their poetic and political practices. As I show in the first chapter of this dissertation, where Césaire kept challenging the French syntax and its vocabulary

to the point where any reader—native, foreign, learned, unschooled, colonial, colonized, etc—of his poetry would have difficulty with “his” French language that should otherwise be familiar, Senghor continued to adhere to the most rigorous and outdated rules of French grammar and lexicon, also developing in the reader of his work a sense of linguistic foreignness and alienation. Hence, medical doctor and literary scholar René Hénane deemed necessary to publish, in 2004, a 140-page *Glossaire des termes rares dans l’œuvre d’Aimé Césaire*, while Papa Samba Diop added a “Lexique de l’œuvre” to his *La poésie d’Aimé Césaire : propositions de lectures*.⁴⁸⁹ Similarly, French novelist Jean Dutourd, member of the Académie Française and thus one of the nation’s quasi-sacred guardians of the language, acknowledged that he learned the arcane and now quasi-defunct “subjonctif imparfait” not from his school-years but from a three-week training-like conversation with Léopold Sédar Senghor, “patron ébéniste” of the “grande affaire de l’imparfait du subjonctif.”⁴⁹⁰ Far from falling in the trap of the colonizer’s “eternal mediation,” as Sartre wrote in 1948, the two authors slowly but surely forced their readers to rethink their relation to a language they thought they knew. In the end, it is Senghor and Césaire who imposed themselves as mediators between a long, rich, and complex history of the language, and its speakers, readers, and learners—even the ones who allegedly claim its ownership. But the thinkers of Negritude did not stop at redefining highly elitist grammar rules or Latin and Greek neologisms. What I have attempted to show in this dissertation, especially in the second and third chapters, is that their fight also had a consequential political dimension to their public practices. In particular, the role of the United States as both an example to follow and

⁴⁸⁹ René Hénane, *Glossaire des termes rares dans l’œuvre d’Aimé Césaire* (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 2004); Papa Samba Diop, *La poésie d’Aimé Césaire : propositions de lectures (accompagnés d’un lexique de l’œuvre)* (Paris: Champion, 2010).

⁴⁹⁰ <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/des-vertus-de-limparfait-du-subjonctif-discours-de-la-seance-publique-annuelle>

to avoid, and the position of African-American thinkers as connected to, yet whose situation differ from, Negritude's anti-colonial struggle, constitute one of the most salient transformations of Césaire's and Senghor's reorientation from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. The third chapter of this dissertation is thus entirely devoted to the role and influence of the presence of a large American contingent of artist in Senghor's ambitious *First World Festival of Negro Arts* held in 1966. Even Léon-Gontran Damas, whose work this dissertation does not sufficiently read, looked towards Harlem almost as soon as he reached Paris, and moved to Washington D.C in 1970, taught at Georgetown University and ultimately became a professor at Howard University where he wrote his last collection of poems, *Mine de Rien*.⁴⁹¹ In a sense, then, Negritude was never really estranged from its (African-)American connection.

As the movement slowly but surely engaged with a tangible post-coloniality and an acute perception of globality, its thinkers progressively abandoned the central reference to France and Europe, and turned towards the United States—either to praise or to criticize it, sometimes both. One must therefore attend to the colossal debt that Negritude owes to Harlem Renaissance writers such as Claude McKay and Langston Hughes, “where Negritude was born,” and to W.E.B Du Bois, “the true father of the Negritude movement,”⁴⁹² but also follow the evolution of this American connection throughout. Today, Brent Edwards's and Souleymane Bachir Diagne's work on, respectively, the pre-history and the early years of the literary movement, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting's editing of Paulette Nardal's early writings, Gary Wilder's and Frederick Cooper's scholarship on Negritude's political projects in the aftermath of the World War II, and

⁴⁹¹ This last collection of poems remains unpublished. Facsimile are reproduced in Christian Filostrate, *Negritude Agonistes*, op. cit., p. 139-140.

⁴⁹² Respectively, Césaire, *Discours sur la Negritude*, p.88-89 ; and Senghor, *Liberté III*, “Problématique de la Négritude,” pp. 274-178.

finally the recent posthumous edition of Senghor's late essays—after his resignation from the presidency of Senegal—by Felwine Sarr and Bachir Diagne, as well as a new edition of Césaire's complete works that include his late poetry and lesser-read discourses (e.g., “On African Art,” “On Negritude,” “On Martinique”) by Albert James Arnold, thus address the toing and froing between the two sides of the Atlantic. This dissertation is certainly inspired by their new look at the Negritude movement and is indebted to their many foundational questions and excavations. I found necessary, however, to supplement their work by looking at the ways in which this generation of writers and statesmen articulated a nascent vision of globality seen from the colonies, and how, in particular, they negotiated the confrontation between the free reign of their literary imagination over against the reality of global political compromises over time. It is with this goal in mind that I focused on lesser-read texts not from one particular timeframe, but throughout nearly fifty years of the poets' literary activities, tracing and following the transformations in their literary writings as their world and political positions also transformed.

The questions and dilemmas in our world are certainly different from those addressed by Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor for Negritude. They were also different for their critics, from Jean-Paul Sartre to Wole Soyinka—two authors whose Nobel Prizes, rejected or accepted, attest of their own articulation and negotiation of the “global.” But if the writings of Sartre now remain fixed, the words of Soyinka keep evolving—and so is his stance on Negritude. Hence, the general lesson that can perhaps be learned from the thinkers of Negritude is that we should not give up on the effort to imagine another globality where all is not already squared away.

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