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**Fed Up: Creating a New Type of Senegal through the Arts**

Guest Editors: **Molly Krueger Enz and Devin Bryson**

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## Table of Contents

*Introduction -- Fed Up: Creating a New Type of Senegal Through the Arts*  
Molly Krueger Enz and Devin Bryson (1-12)

*The New Type of Senegalese under Construction: Fadel Barro and Aliou Sané on Yenamarrism after Wade*  
Sarah Nelson (13-32)

*The Rise of a New Senegalese Cultural Philosophy?*  
Devin Bryson (33-56)

*Nafissatou Dia Diouf's Critical Look at a "Senegal in the Midst of Transformation"*  
Molly Krueger Enz (57-73)

*De-centering Theatrical Heritage: Forum Theater in Contemporary Senegal*  
Brian Quinn (75-88)

*"These Walls Belong to Everybody" The Graffiti Art Movement in Dakar*  
Leslie W. Rabine (89-112)

## Book Reviews

---

### Large-Scale Colonial-Era Dams in Southern Africa

Allen Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman. 2013. *Dams, Displacement, and the Delusion of Development. Cahora Bassa and Its Legacies in Mozambique, 1965–2007*. Athens: Ohio University Press. 324pp.  
Review by Julia Tischler (113-115)

Julia Tischler. 2013. *Light and Power for a Multiracial Nation The Kariba Dam Scheme in the Central African Federation*. Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series. Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. 336pp.  
Review by Allen Isaacman (115-117)

### Additional Reviews

Wale Adebani and Ebenezer Obadare, eds. 2013. *Democracy and Prebendalism in Nigeria: Critical Interpretations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 300 pp.  
Review by Samuel Ojo Oloruntoba (117-118)

Afe Adogame, Ezra Chitando, and Bolaji Bateye, eds. 2013. *African Traditions in the Study of Religion, Diaspora and Gendered Societies*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate. 192 pp.  
Review by Richardson Addai-Mununkum (119-120)

Peter Alexander, Thapelo Lekgowa, Botsang Mmope, Luke Sinwell, and Bongani Xezwi. 2013. *Marikana: Voices from South Africa's Mining Massacre*. Athens: Ohio University Press. 165 pp.

Review by Esther Uzar (120-122)

Johan Brosche and Daniel Rothbart. 2013. *Violent Conflict and Peacebuilding: The Continuing Crisis in Darfur*. London & New York: Routledge. 175 pp.

Review by Hope Tichaenzana Chichaya (122-123)

J.J. Carney. 2014. *Rwanda Before the Genocide: Catholic Politics and Ethnic Discourse in the Late Colonial Era*. New York: Oxford University Press. 343 pp.

Review by Jonathan R. Beloff (124-125)

Karen E. Ferree. 2011. *Framing the Race in South Africa: The Political Origins of Racial Census Elections*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 291 pp.

Review by Olugbemiga Samuel Afolabi (125-126)

David Francis, ed. 2012. *When War Ends: Building Peace in Divided Communities*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company. 217 pp.

Review by Rasul Ahmed Minja (127-128)

Carmela Garritano. 2013. *African Video Movies and Global Desires: A Ghanaian History*. Athens: Ohio University Press. 246 pp.

Review by Nana Osei-Opare (128-129)

Trevor Getz, ed. 2014. *African Voices of the Global Past: 1500 to the Present*. Boulder: Westview Press. 223 pp.

Review by Mohamed Adel Manai (130-131)

Clive Glaser. 2013. *The ANC Youth League*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. 168 pp.

Review by Steven Gish (131-133)

Richard Gray. 2012. *Christianity, The Papacy and Mission in Africa*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis. 197 pp.

Review by Muhammed Haron (133-134)

Gerald Horne. 2012. *Mau Mau in Harlem? The U.S. and the Liberation of Kenya*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 334 pp. Reprint Edition.

Review by Richard M. Mares (135-136)

Hamid Irbouh. 2005. *Art in the Service of Colonialism: French Art Education in Morocco, 1912-1956*. New York: I.B. Tauris. 280 pp.

Review by Lara Ayad (136-138)

Daniel Mains. 2012. *Hope is Cut: Youth, Unemployment, and the Future in Urban Ethiopia*.

Pennsylvania: Temple University Press. 193 pp.

Review by Ramphal Sillah (138-139)

Richard C. Marback. 2012. *Managing Vulnerability: South Africa's Struggle for a Democratic Rhetoric*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press. 138 pp.

Review by Emeka Smart Oruh (139-140)

Barbaro Martinez-Ruiz. 2013. *Kongo Graphic Writing and Other Narratives of the Sign*.

Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 228 pp.

Review by Kate Cowcher (141-142)

Niq Mhlongo. 2012. *Dog Eat Dog: A Novel*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. 222 pp.

Review by Rebecca Steiner (142-143)

Sasha Newell. 2012. *The Modernity Bluff: Crime, Consumption, and Citizenship in Côte d'Ivoire*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. 305 pp.

Review by Joschka Philipps (143-145)

David P. Sandgren. 2012. *Mau Mau's Children: The Making of Kenya's Postcolonial Elite*.

Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 185 pp.

Review by Frederik Sonner (145-146)

Elizabeth Schmidt. 2013. *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror*.

New York: Cambridge University Press. 267 pp.

Review by Felix Kumah-Abiwu (146-148)

Jesse Weaver Shipley. 2013. *Living The Hiplife: Celebrity and Entrepreneurship in Ghanaian Popular Music*. Durham: Duke University Press. 344 pp.

Review by Msia Kibona Clark (148-149)

James Howard Smith and Rosalind I. J. Hackett, eds. 2012. *Displacing the State: Religion and Conflict in Neoliberal Africa*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press. 299 pp.

Review by Ibukun Ajayi (149-151)

Hakeem Ibikunle Tikani. 2012. *Union Education in Nigeria: Labor, Empire, and Decolonization since 1945*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan. 176 pp.

Review by Ryan Driskell Tate (151-153)

Mélanie Torrent. 2012. *Diplomacy and Nation-Building in Africa: Franco-British Relations and Cameroon at the End of Empire*. London: I.B. Tauris. 409 pp.

Review by Benedikt Erforth (153-155)

Bernard Waites. 2012. *South Asia and Africa: Post-colonialism in Historical Perspective*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 456 pp.

Review by Kwesi D. L. S. Prah (155-156)



## Introduction

### Fed Up: Creating a New Type of Senegal Through the Arts

MOLLY KRUEGER ENZ and DEVIN BRYSON

Present-day Senegal is home to a vibrant cultural milieu that, in many respects, is reflective of that which its first president, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and the Senegalese cultural *eminentes grises* endeavored to promote during the early postcolonial period. As Elizabeth Harney has noted, Senghor “regarded art as a medium of change—a tool that could be used to advance his cultural, political, and economic development plans. Consequently, he envisioned the artist as a representative of and advocate for a new nation.”<sup>1</sup> Today, there exists a burgeoning scene of young authors, artists, actors, and musicians who are continuing in this Senghorian cultural tradition by envisioning art as the means to produce social change, but who are also rethinking the type of nation and citizen that would be formed through this intersection of culture and politics. This is not Senghor’s Senegal however. For one thing, the country’s cultural production reflects the fact that over 63 percent of the population is under the age of twenty-five. Furthermore, whereas Senghor generously supported the arts and successfully channeled them to further political stability, Senegal in the twenty-first century has been marked by a more overt tension between politics and the arts. In fact, young Senegalese artists, authors, filmmakers, and musicians are reworking the relationship between politics and the arts to strike against the injustices and indifference they see as endemic to the social and political norms of contemporary Senegalese society.

Nowhere was the rise of young, politically engaged Senegalese artists more evident than during the last reelection campaign of the country’s third president, Abdoulaye Wade, who initially served as an important figure of change from the prevailing political paradigm in post-independence Senegal. Wade was first elected in 2000 thanks to the *Sopi* (Wolof for “change”) Coalition that he formed between his *Parti Démocratique Sénégalais* and several other smaller political parties. This was the first time that the country had seen a unified political opposition. After four unsuccessful runs for president, he was finally able to win in 2000 by garnering the support and endorsement of all the other opposition candidates. Furthermore, Wade maintained this coalition of opposition parties through the 2001

**Devin Bryson** is Assistant Professor of Francophone Studies at Illinois College and his research topics include Francophone African migratory cultures and expressions, minority cultures in France, and the intersections between hip-hop and social activism in Africa.

**Molly KruegerENZ** is an Associate Professor of French at South Dakota State University. Her research focuses on representations of race and gender in nineteenth-century French colonial literature as well as contemporary Caribbean and Sub-Saharan African Francophone fiction. She has published scholarly articles in a variety of journals including *The French Review*, *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* and *Journal of the African Literature Association*. She is currently working on a monograph that examines the figure of the mulatto and racial tensions in colonial Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti).

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v14/v14i3a1.pdf>



parliamentary elections, giving the *Sopi* Coalition a majority in the legislature and Wade full control of the government.

This hope for change was especially prevalent among young people who “massively participated in 2000 to bring to power the champion of *Sopi*.”<sup>2</sup> Their excitement for change, however, quickly curdled into disillusionment as Wade and his administration failed “to understand and to translate into a type of program, especially in a popular and accessible manner, the daily and ordinary demands of the immense majority of the population in terms of basic needs.”<sup>3</sup> By the time that Wade attempted to rewrite the Senegalese constitution to gain a third term in office in 2011, the circumstances and prospects for young Senegalese caused them to become fed up with Wade’s presidency and established politics in general. Consequently, many of these young people took part in the *Y’en a Marre* (“We’re Fed Up” / “Enough is Enough”) youth movement that rose to prominence during Wade’s bid for a third term. This movement, in particular, provided the means for young Senegalese to respond to Wade’s power grab from artistic and cultural positions rather than in the more traditional form of political opposition, seeking to create a new type of Senegal in the process.

The primary objective of this collection of essays is to present the shifting political and social landscape in contemporary Senegal led by artists/activists, to introduce new and innovative forms of musical, literary, theatrical, and artistic expression existing in Senegal today, and to analyze the intersections between the political and the arts in the attempts by artistic creators to transform Senegalese culture, society, and politics. We believe that the articles demonstrate that contemporary Senegalese artists are working through their artistic and cultural creations to empower ordinary citizens who are fed up with the calcification of conventional political avenues to create a new type of Senegal. Furthermore, this guest-edited issue of the *African Studies Quarterly* will show that the mentality among these artists to reform Senegalese society through the arts is a uniquely Senegalese philosophy that can be traced back to the birth of Senegal’s independence.

### **Intersection Among Culture, Society, and Politics**

Following Senegal’s independence from France in 1960, the country quickly gained international prominence due to Léopold Sédar Senghor. A well-respected poet, a member of the French colonial government, and one of the founders of the literary, intellectual, and political Négritude movement, Senghor understood the need and had the means to strengthen the global image of Senegal. One of the principal ways in which he was able to accomplish this feat was via the arts. Souleyman Bachir Diagne describes Senghor’s strategy as “assigning to cultural politics the primary mission to forge a national consciousness... Overall, culturalism is explained first and foremost as a will for national construction.”<sup>4</sup> Harney articulates Senghor’s philosophy towards culture in a similar manner: “The new president placed the arts at the center of his attempt to craft a salient nationalist narrative and to promote a coherent representation of modern Africanness.”<sup>5</sup> Throughout Senghor’s two-decades long presidency, Senegalese society enjoyed relative prosperity while rising to the fore of West African literature, art, cinema, and music. Senghor held office from 1960 until 1980, and his successor Abdou Diouf, also a member of the *Parti Socialiste du Sénégal* (PS), was in power from 1981 through 2000. Diouf faced more dire economic circumstances than his predecessor but maintained a political commitment to the arts, although it was more rhetorical than financial. During the forty years that Senghor and Diouf held the

presidency, the PS also maintained a majority in the legislature. This political homogeneity led to legislative stagnation and disillusionment among the citizenry, setting the stage for Wade's election.

When Wade was first elected president in 2000, breaking forty years of one-party rule, there was much enthusiasm and hope for improvements in the country, especially among young voters, who strongly supported him. However, despite Wade's constant call for change and overt courting of young voters during the 2000 campaign, these same young citizens were the ones who eventually turned on him just over ten years later: "Those among them who, at his invitation, raised their arms in the air to testify to the unemployment in which they lived and to nourish the hope of a change of direction with the arrival of their leader, were disillusioned."<sup>6</sup> Young Senegalese were especially frustrated by the inertia of Wade's presidency due to the bleak social circumstances in which they now found themselves. According to the *Agence nationale de la statistique et de la démographie*, six out of every ten unemployed Senegalese were young citizens between the ages of fifteen and thirty-four at the end of Wade's presidency in 2011. Despite instituting social structures and government agencies that were intended to create employment for the youth, the high level of unemployment among young Senegalese only increased under Wade. Understandably, by 2012, young people across the country held a grim outlook toward Wade, politics in general, and the state of their country: "Whatever their conditions, young people in the capital area of Dakar, Thiès, Kaolack, Ziguinchor, Tambacounda, Saint-Louis, just like those in the rural areas, are in large numbers prey to a certain despair."<sup>7</sup>

Senegalese citizens were as dismayed with Wade's handling of the country's cultural policy throughout his tenure in office as they were with his failures in the economic realm. From the beginning of his presidency, Wade was conscientious of the need to reinforce how he differed from his predecessor Diouf. One of the principal ways he did this was to affirm his commitment to the arts since governmental funding and support for the arts had notoriously diminished under Diouf. However, instead of concretely supporting the arts, Wade used hollow rhetorical maneuvers and unfeasible plans of cultural construction to consolidate his power and to enlarge his personal coffers. Early in his first term he announced seven *grands projets culturels*, of which only two were ever completed during his twelve years in office. He constructed the massive and controversial *Monument de la Renaissance africaine* for twenty-seven million US dollars using the state revenues. He owns the copyright for this gigantesque statue, however, which allows him to take a hefty slice of whatever profits it might bring in. Faced with his inability to decrease the unemployment rate among young people, Savané and Sarr argue that Wade "attempted to mask his failure to create jobs by promoting wrestling, dance, and music, which are extremely popular, especially in urban areas."<sup>8</sup>

Throughout his presidency, Wade manipulated for his self-interests the unique relationship in Senegal between artists and the state that was first instituted by Senghor. By the time he left office, the remains of Senghor's postindependence cultural plan to stabilize the country and make it a player on the international stage through the arts were left dilapidated, at best. One recent example of this transition in Senegalese arts from Senghor to Wade can be found at *Les Manufactures sénégalaises des arts décoratifs*, a tapestry school instituted by Papa Ibra Tall under the behest of Senghor in 1965. At its peak under the Senghor government, the *Manufactures* produced a number of annual graduates who went on to gain employment in government ministries. Additionally, it provided an artists-in-residence program for future renowned painters and generated up to one hundred

tapestries a year. These works of art were primarily purchased by the presidential and ministerial offices in order to display them publicly in governmental buildings or to give them as gifts to visiting foreign dignitaries as demonstrations of Senegalese culture. When we visited the site in June of 2012, a neglected, unfinished tapestry rested on a deserted loom. Alongside the rolled up tapestry was a dusty sign indicating that this particular product of the *Manufactures* had been commissioned by and was destined for “his eminency President Abdoulaye Wade.” A guide explained that after Wade lost the presidency in the heated election earlier that year, he abandoned completion of the tapestry as well as its payment. Unlike post-independence Senegal under Senghor, culture and the arts under Wade became one more tool for self-gain and self-aggrandizement, no longer one of the means to move Senegal forward.

### **The Birth and Rise of *Y'en a Marre***

Given Wade’s manipulation of the arts, in 2011 when he attempted to rewrite the constitution and seize a third term in office, young Senegalese responded from artistic and cultural positions rather than from the traditional political opposition. They were able to utilize artistic tools to express their frustrations and combat Wade’s grasp for further control of the country. The diverse groups of protestors were made up of:

artists, writers, or “parliamentarians of the street,” those popular singers, those numerous “carriers of signs” (which sometimes contained whimsical messages) who took over public space to craft demands that were tied up with wants of the central political system...This new avant-garde was built from the arts, but also from a radical critique of society that had been voiced for years by Senegalese rap music.<sup>9</sup>

Hip-hop culture and rap music played a key role in these protests and many activist collectives were formed around hip-hop. Longtime Senegalese hip-hop scene stalwart DJ Awadi formed a collective named *Yewoulen* (“Wake Up”), while musician Daddy Bibson started NON (*Nouvelle orientation nationale*; “New National Direction”).

Among the many actors protesting against Wade through the arts, the most visible group was the *Y'en a Marre* youth movement, formed when several Senegalese journalists and hip-hop artists banded together. Using music, written manifestoes, oratory, and striking visual imagery, *Y'en a Marre* quickly garnered the support of Senegalese youth from various walks of life and successfully prevented Wade from regaining office. According to Savané and Sarr, “it [the group] knew how to unite a community of young people who had been broken by the steamroller of unemployment. Young dynamic managers, journalists, the unemployed, workers, students, musicians, basically all social categories were part of their cry of revolt.”<sup>10</sup> The movement’s members continually urged their countrymen and women to become a *Nouveau Type de Sénégalais* (“A New Type of Senegalese”) and thus to serve as catalysts for social and political reform. Savané and Sarr highlight the goals of the *Y'en a Marre* movement: “its primary mission is...to offer itself in the service of the people, notably the disenfranchised, by helping them to help themselves, by rendering them capable of seizing the opportunities that are offered to them.”<sup>11</sup> The founders of *Y'en a Marre* understood how they could use their celebrity in order to convince their compatriots to become active members of their society: “The value of *Y'en a Marre* is in having succeeded in breaking the inertia, the indifference, and the inaction of Senegalese. Having understood very early on that a social movement needed visibility and concrete action on the ground, it

initiated a program to make its cause understood and to make it heard by those who held public power.”<sup>12</sup> Building upon the socially engaged music many of the members had already created, *Y'en a Marre's* use of the arts to engage with Senegalese citizens during the protests against Wade and his election campaign was essential. This strategy allowed the members to connect with the populace on a personal, intimate level and to encourage individuals “to express the conditions of their souls and to denounce the struggles of daily life.”<sup>13</sup> The arts stood at the heart of the movement and its success, which exemplified the shifting identity between various artistic communities and politics in contemporary Senegal.

### **Social Engagement Beyond *Y'en a Marre***

Young authors, visual artists, actors, directors, and musicians of all genres are also rethinking traditional models of artistic creation in order to examine the Senegal in which they live and inspire social engagement among their audience. While Senegal has a strong tradition of socially aware writers like Aminata Sow Fall and Ousmane Sembène, contemporary authors are reworking this lineage for the twenty-first century. Felwine Sarr is an author and professor at Gaston Berger University in Saint-Louis who organized a group of university instructors and researchers called *Devoir de résistance* (“Responsibility of Resistance”) to oppose Wade’s attempt to secure a third term. In an essay published in the daily Senegalese newspaper *le Populaire*, Sarr writes: “There are moments in the life of a nation when silence is complicit and inaction is guilty. Senegal is faced with an unprecedented strike of strength, which appears to be a constitutional coup d’état.”<sup>14</sup> Since 2012, the association has remained active by proposing citizen-led solutions to public issues.

Nafissatou Dia Diouf is another socially engaged author who does not hesitate to articulate her vision for Senegal or criticize her country’s leadership. In her most recent publication *Sociobiz 2*, which includes a postface by Felwine Sarr, Diouf campaigns for a new type of Senegalese citizen who takes pride in his or her country. She argues that if every Senegalese citizen worked to better his or her homeland, Dakar would be comparable to New York, but without violence or indifference. Her vision for the future is one of optimism: “Prosperity is finally at our door because we will have exploited and transformed our own human resources (and God knows we have some), but also our mineral, water, agricultural, etc. resources... We will have invented our own model of development based upon our values with our History and our rich and diverse civilizations as our common ground.”<sup>15</sup>

Like their literary counterparts, visual artists are extending the traditions inherited from their forebears into more socially engaged spheres. Amadou Kane Sy, known as Kan-Si, has been a very active leader and organizer of socially conscious art both in urban and rural areas of Senegal. In 1996, he was one of the founding members of the Senegalese Artist Association *Huit Facettes* (Eight Facets). The Association is known for its socially interactive work and has organized international artist workshops in Senegal, the United States, and Europe. Since 1999, Kan-Si has led the Gorée Institute Printmaking Workshop, which has brought together artists and instructed them in the practices of etching, lithography, and woodcut, and then allowed them to produce works around a single social issue, including HIV/AIDS, peace and conflict resolution, and gender and sexual freedom. Another socially engaged artist working in a visual medium is the young filmmaker Adams Sie. Faced with the deteriorating Senegalese cinema industry, Sie has begun his own production company through which he has written, directed, and produced a number of short films focused on important social issues such as albino social integration, homeless children, sexual abuse,



female genital mutilation, alcoholism, and gender parity in politics. Confronting a stagnant political culture, young Senegalese are engaging with their society and expressing their concerns with social ills through artistic mediums. As a result, they are refiguring the role of the arts from their traditional antecedents.

These socially engaged Senegalese artists show that their work has not been confined to opposing Wade's attempt to win a third presidential term. Even *Y'en a Marre*, whose initial objective was to remove Wade from office, has worked diligently to expand its perspective to include a range of social problems. Therefore, the election of Macky Sall, the presidential candidate who defeated Wade in 2012, is simply a by-product of a far-reaching intersection of the arts and politics in contemporary Senegal.<sup>16</sup> Many Senegalese viewed Sall as nothing more than the lesser of two evils upon his election. Nevertheless, he now stands as the most public representation of the flashpoint at which *Y'en a Marre* coalesced and rose to prominence, at which Senegalese society took to protest, and at which contemporary politicized art reached its apotheosis.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, it is important in this introduction to survey the artists/activists and their communities two years after the election of President Sall.

### **Macky Sall and the Continued Relevance of Socially Engaged Artists**

Sall's presidency serves to outline the consolidated strength and permanence of socially engaged art among young Senegalese as well as its growth beyond simplistic political denunciation. Many of these artists/activists speak plainly about the public's newfound vigilance toward its president and its readiness to remove him if he has not provided the desired societal changes. They are ready to do this either by revolts in the street or through the electoral process at the end of his first term.<sup>18</sup> When asked to iterate their opinion on the status of Sall's presidency, however, these same artists/activists quickly dismiss him as irrelevant and just another politician who will see his time end one way or another. Furthermore, they prefer to speak of the ways they and their communities are using their own art, means, intelligence, and self-reliance to improve Senegalese society. In the wake of their efforts to bring about the peaceful removal of Wade from the presidency, young artists in Senegal have taken on a confidence in their ability to engage the public and to critique political malfeasance effectively and quickly, freeing them to focus on deploying their art to build substantial social change.

*Y'en a Marre* remains an active, engaged collective that continues to draw the attention of both the public and the government. The movement still holds its weekly Tuesday meetings in the old apartment owned by Fadel Barro, a journalist and one of the founders of the group, in the Parcelles Assainies neighborhood of Dakar. The door remains open throughout the day for groups and individuals to come, share ideas, and benefit from *Y'en a Marre's* experiences and perspectives. On Tuesday, July 2, 2013, members of Mali's community of civic groups, preparing for the country's elections after its recent civil war, came to the headquarters to hear Fadel Barro and fellow journalist and *Y'en a Marre* founder Aliou Sané's suggestions for stoking voter participation and ensuring fair results. *Y'en a Marre* has become an example of social engagement to citizens of other African nations, but is still focused primarily on Senegalese issues. In August 2013 the group announced the launch of its Observatory of Democracy and Good Governance (*Dox Ak Sa Gox*), which will initially function in areas outside of Dakar, such as Saint Louis, Ziguinchor, and Thiès. Its primary goal is to provide citizens with a means both to express their own local concerns to

politicians and to monitor the efficacy of how politicians address those issues. Not surprisingly, *Y'en a Marre* released a new group CD track, "*Dox Ak Sa Gox*," to promote the Observatory.

Individual members of the movement remain active in endeavors outside of the confines of official *Y'en a Marre* programs. Foumalade, one of the founding rap artists of the collective, engages with social issues both through his music and social organizing. His group, Bat'Haillons Blin-D, was the first *Y'en a Marre*-affiliated rap group to release an album after the protests with its 2012 release *RésistaNTS*. Even before the release of that album, Foumalade and his group were active in the area of prison reform. In 2005, they toured prisons and heard from prisoners after the concerts that they needed help beyond musical distraction, that they needed assistance to improve their living conditions and the possibility of continuing their lives after their imprisonment. Bat'Haillons Blin-D followed this tour by publicly speaking out against excessively long detentions, overcrowding in prisons, unequal sentencing dependent upon the social backgrounds of defendants, and for the need for alternative forms of rehabilitation for non-dangerous prisoners, such as job training. Foumalade says of this message he has expressed, "Only hip-hop can express it. This is why I say, 'Hip-hop is a power.' I believe fundamentally that hip-hop is a power."<sup>19</sup> In 2013, Foumalade established a youth center called G-Hip-Hop in the Dakar suburb of Guédiawaye whose main purpose is to provide a location for at-risk youth to expend their energies on hip-hop creation, rather than on criminal activities that will lead to imprisonment. In regards to the purpose of this center, he states: "We want hip-hop and the activities at the center to impact the social and economic life of the population...In the street they [inhabitants of Guédiawaye] encounter drugs, prostitution, delinquency. But they also encounter hip-hop. How can we use the hip-hop that they encounter in the streets? Because what hip-hop shares with delinquency is language. Also, this contesting, revolutionary aspect."<sup>20</sup> In addition, the center has also served as a site for forums on poverty and illiteracy among women.

Thiat, perhaps the most outspoken member of *Y'en a Marre*, continues to perform with his hip-hop group Keur Gui, which is in the process of recording a double album in Dakar, Paris, and New York. This album will make the case for the diasporic, cross-cultural nature of the group's and, by extension, *Y'en a Marre*'s artistic and political strategies. Individually, Thiat was selected as a Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellow by the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington, D.C. This fellowship, which took place from October 2013-February 2014, supports his work to establish a program he is calling "100% Democracy by Youth," which would provide funding to socially engaged artists throughout Africa. He works to transmit his message wherever he goes and has a multifaceted identity as an artist, activist, and missionary: "Activism is inside of me, in my blood. For me, the message is the most important...I am an activist who uses music, hip-hop, to give a message. My mission is to get people involved...I am a missionary...my weapon is my mouth and my bullet is my word."<sup>21</sup>

Despite the success of *Y'en a Marre* and its founding members, not all Senegalese are enamored by the movement's rhetoric and tactics. Some young people express doubts about the group's motives, are convinced that the members are being paid for their activism, and are displeased with the movement's forceful denunciation of Wade. Many of them were even active participants and members of *Y'en a Marre* during the presidential campaign of Wade, but have come to disagree with the direction the group has taken since then. However, these same young people who oppose *Y'en a Marre*'s debated tactics and

disrespect of Wade are themselves engaged in thoughtful activism to improve their country, often through artistic mediums. Those ex-members of *Y'en a Marre* acknowledge the power and inspiration that they took from the initial stages of the movement and that they are applying to new endeavors. Thus, they prove that *Y'en a Marre*, while an influential turning point, is just one iteration of a widespread current running through contemporary Senegal that unites the arts and politics. One such group, *Eaux secours*, works in the Pikine/Thiaroye region of the greater Dakar area and uses rap music, video clips, on-line interactions, and social gatherings to promote the need for a greater consciousness and a stronger infrastructure towards flood prevention and relief.<sup>22</sup> Kal'z, a member of the rap group Flamm J that is at the center of *Eaux secours*, posits: "The problem of water is eternal. Without water there is no life. Water is our aid. In these areas where water is lacking, we are going to mobilize."<sup>23</sup> The group recently created a compilation of hip-hop songs called *Zero Mbeund* with contributions from rappers such as Xuman, Matador, and Foulalade. On the back cover of the CD, the group articulates its view regarding the unnatural disaster: "Flooding is not a catastrophe, but moreso an abundance that has been poorly managed."<sup>24</sup> Profits from the CD will go toward raising awareness about water issues in Thiaroye and Pikine and ideally finding a solution to the problems.

Of course, all of these actions need to be promoted to the public in order to have a real impact. While the individuals and organizations themselves take on this task, they are still extremely reliant upon traditional media since digital technology and media are not widespread in Senegal. The artist/activists themselves have thus attempted to intervene in mainstream media outlets as much as possible. If one turns on the local television news in Dakar on a Friday evening, the viewer might come across the *Journal rappé*, a news segment during which two rappers present the most important news items from the past week by rapping them: one in French, one in Wolof. Rappers Xuman and Keyti are dressed in suits, seated behind a news desk, and the segment is obviously produced and presented with high-quality production techniques. Clearly, the *Journal rappé* is not an ironic curio but rather a genuine attempt to keep young Senegalese informed of current events through an original, engaging format. Both the organizers of *Eaux secours* and the rappers of the *Journal rappé* speak about receiving inspiration for their work from the social engagement of *Y'en a Marre* through hip-hop. All of these artists continue to remain active and engaged because they believe in the emergence of a new generation and the importance of profound change in Senegal.

### Intersection of the Arts and Politics in Contemporary Senegal

The five articles in this special issue of the *African Studies Quarterly* examine the ways in which diverse musical, literary, theatrical, and visual artists use their work as a medium to bring about change that will result in a "new type of Senegal." The first two articles outline a historical, political, and cultural context for the recent *Y'en a Marre* movement from varying perspectives: one dealing with the principle spokesmen and writers of the group, the other concerned with the historical contextualization of the movement's use of culture. In her article, "The New Type of Senegalese under Construction: Fadel Barro and Aliou Sané on *Yenamarrism* after Wade," Sarah Nelson presents an interview with two of the founding journalists of the movement, Fidel Barro and Aliou Sané. In it, they discuss the formation and the evolution of *Y'en a Marre* since the 2012 presidential election as well as their vision for the future of the movement, Senegal, and Africa as a continent. In the second

contribution devoted to *Y'en a Marre*, "The Rise of a New Senegalese Cultural Philosophy?" Devin Bryson begins by questioning the tendency of observers to focus on the newness of the group and then proceeds to place the movement in a Senegalese historical context. He argues that the collective uses cultural interventions in Senegalese society in a manner that is consistent with the cultural continuum that was first conjured under Senghor, but that the *Yenamarristes* also render this cultural philosophy more inclusive of and useful for the people of Senegal.

The remaining articles expand our point of view from *Y'en a Marre* to other socially engaged artists. In her piece, "Nafissatou Dia Diouf's Critical Look at a 'Senegal in the Midst of Transformation,'" Molly Krueger Enz combines an interview with Nafissatou Dia Diouf and textual analysis of her writing in order to show how the internationally acclaimed author provides her readers with a comprehensive yet critical view of Senegal. Through her work that includes fiction, poetry, and philosophical essays, Diouf examines contemporary Senegalese society and portrays a country in the process of transition and transformation. The next contribution, "De-centering Theatrical Heritage: Forum Theater in Contemporary Senegal," explores the history of forum theater, also known as the theater of the oppressed, that has developed into a global phenomenon since the 1970s. Brian Quinn posits that its prominence in Senegal has led to its role as an adopted form of traditional performance in the country that presents an alternative, decentralized model directly opposed to the permanent structure of the *Grand Théâtre National*. The final article in this special issue offers a unique perspective on the artistic scene in Senegal today. Leslie Rabine's essay "'These Walls Belong to Everybody': The Graffiti Arts Movement in Dakar" draws upon extensive ethnographic research and astutely examines how graffiti artists conceive of their identity and community, and then express these ideals through their murals, transforming Dakar's urban landscape and engaging with global hip-hop dialogues in the process.

It is our hope that *Fed Up: Creating a New Type of Senegal Through the Arts* will make a significant contribution to current debates about contemporary Senegalese culture and society and shed light on the *Y'en a Marre* movement that emerged in 2011 as a political force in Senegal. Within all of the articles contained in this issue, readers will find evidence of the way in which the citizenry of Senegal, frustrated with its economic, political, and cultural marginalization, has wrested the postcolonial tradition of social engagement through the arts from the control of the cultural and political elite to use as a tool to render its society more just, more democratic, and more inclusive. Beyond those discussions specific to Senegal, we believe that this collection of essays will provide readers with galvanizing examples of the possibilities in the intermingling of the arts and politics, and will demonstrate that Senegal has, in ways its first president could not have envisioned, fulfilled Senghor's desires for his country to become a beacon to the world.

## Notes

- 1 Harney 2004, p. 5.
- 2 Savané and Sarr 2012, p. 21. "ont massivement participé en 2000 à porter au pouvoir le chantre du 'Sopi'." All translations from the original French into English are by the authors.
- 3 Copans 2013, p. 19. "de comprendre et de traduire sous forme de programme, et surtout



- de manière accessible et populaire, les revendications ordinaires et quotidiennes de l'immense majorité de la population en matière de besoins de base."
- 4 Diagne 2002, p. 252. "assigner à la politique culturelle la mission première de forger une conscience nationale ... Au fond, le culturalisme se justifie avant tout comme un volontarisme de la construction nationale."
  - 5 Harney 2004, p. 49.
  - 6 Copans 2013, p. 21. "Ceux d'entre eux qui, à son invite, levaient les bras en l'air pour témoigner du chômage dans lequel ils baignaient et nourrir l'espoir de voir la tendance se renverser avec l'avènement de leur leader ont dû déchanter."
  - 7 Savané and Sarr 2012, p. 13. "Quelles que soient leurs conditions, les jeunes des capitales régionales de Dakar, Thiès, Kaolack, Ziguinchor, Tambacounda, Saint-Louis, tout comme ceux des campagnes, sont dans leur grande majorité en proie à une certaine désespérance."
  - 8 Ibid., p. 15. "tente ainsi de masquer ses échecs dans la création d'emplois par une promotion de la lutte, de la danse et de la musique qui suscitent beaucoup d'engouement, notamment en banlieue."
  - 9 Diop 2013, p. 67. "artistes, écrivains, ou 'parlementaires de la rue,' ces chanteurs populaires, ces nombreux 'porteurs de pancartes' (aux messages parfois fantaisistes) qui ont investi l'espace public pour bricoler des revendications arrimées à la demande politique centrale... Cette nouvelle avant-garde se construit à partir des arts, mais aussi de la critique radicale de la société véhiculée pendant des années par le *rap* sénégalais."
  - 10 Savané and Sarr 2012, p. 8. "il a su fédérer toute une jeunesse broyée par le rouleau compresseur du chômage. Jeunes cadres dynamiques, journalistes, chômeurs, ouvriers, étudiants, musiciens, bref toutes les catégories sociales se sont identifiées à leur coup de gueule..."
  - 11 Ibid., p. 30. "sa mission première est... de se mettre au service des gens, notamment les plus démunies, en les aidant à s'aider eux-mêmes, en les rendant capables de saisir les opportunités qui s'offrent à elles."
  - 12 Ibid., p. 35. "Le mérite de Y'en a marre est d'avoir réussi à briser l'inertie, l'indifférence et l'inaction des Sénégalais. Ayant très tôt compris qu'un mouvement social a besoin de visibilité, d'action concrètes sur le terrain, il a initié une démarche pour faire comprendre sa cause et se faire entendre par les pouvoirs publics."
  - 13 Ibid., p. 57. "d'exprimer ses états d'âme ou de dénoncer les travers du quotidien." Previous socially engaged work from the members of *Y'en a Marre* include Thiat and Kilifeu's rap group Keur Gui's first four albums, of which the debut was censored due to its virulent political critique, and Foumalade's group Bat'haillons Blin-D's tours of prisons to draw the public's attention to the condition of its incarcerated countrymen.
  - 14 Sarr 2012. "Il est des moments dans la vie d'une nation où le silence est complice et l'inaction coupable. Le Sénégal est en face d'un coup de force sans précédent, qui prend les allures d'un coup d'Etat constitutionnel."
  - 15 Diouf 2013, pp. 127-28. "La prospérité est enfin à nos portes car nous aurons exploiter et transformer nos propres ressources humaines (et Dieu sait qu'on en a), mais aussi minières, aurifères, agricoles etc.. Nous aurons somme toute inventé notre propre modèle de développement. Basé sur nos valeurs et pour socle notre Histoire, nos civilisations riches et diverses."

- 16 *Y'en a Marre* refused to support any of the opposition candidates in the first round of voting, preferring to stress voter participation and the need to remove Wade. It wasn't until the second round of voting that the group finally endorsed Sall's candidacy, with significant qualifications, in order to ensure that Wade was not reelected. The members of the group have said that they have refused multiple offers from Sall to join his administration since his election.
- 17 This widespread skepticism toward Sall's ability and/or desire to produce real change in the country is particularly emphasized when noting Sall's previous positions in the Wade administration: Prime Minister from 2004 until 2007 and President of the National Assembly from 2007 until 2008. He played a major role in the regime against which *Y'en a Marre* and others protested.
- 18 Removal of Sall from office through either revolt or the electoral process are both equally evoked by Senegalese, often by the same person. After campaign promises and continuing public pressure from *Y'en a Marre* and others to reduce the presidential term from seven to five years, Sall has confirmed that his term will end in 2017, though this still needs to be officially ratified, whether by referendum or the National Assembly.
- 19 Foulalade 2013. Interview with the authors. "C'est seul le hip-hop qui peut le dire. C'est pourquoi je dis, 'Hip-hop is a power.' Je crois fondamentalement que le hip-hop est un pouvoir."
- 20 Ibid. "Nous voulons que le hip-hop et les activités menées dans ce centre impactent sur la vie sociale et économique de la population... Dans la rue ils rencontrent la drogue, la prostitution, la délinquance. Mais ils rencontrent le hip-hop. Comment utiliser le hip-hop qu'ils rencontrent dans la rue? Parce que ce que le hip-hop partage avec le milieu de la délinquance, c'est le langage. C'est aussi cet aspect contestataire, révolutionnaire."
- 21 Thiat 2013. Interview with authors (in English).
- 22 The phrase "Eaux secours" is a play-on-words, with "eaux" meaning water and "secours" meaning help. The literal, though grammatically incorrect meaning is "waters help," thus referring to the group's work on flood issues. The real power of the expression comes from the combination of "eaux," a homophone for "au," with "secours." The expression "Au secours" often refers to an emergency situation where someone is in danger or needs help quickly.
- 23 Flamm J 2013. Interview with authors. "Le problème de l'eau, c'est éternel. Sans eau, il n'y a pas de vie. L'eau est notre secours. Dans ces zones-là où l'eau manque, on va mobiliser." The *Eaux secours* collective is led by the rap group Flamm J which includes members LG, Kal'z, and Daddy.
- 24 "L'inondation n'est pas une catastrophe mais plutôt une abondance mal gérée."

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# The New Type of Senegalese under Construction: Fadel Barro and Aliou Sané on *Yenamarrisme* after Wade

SARAH NELSON

**Abstract:** Senegal's *Y'en a Marre* movement, formed in early 2011, was instrumental in mobilizing the nation's population, and especially its youth, to participate in the 2012 presidential election and to prevent the incumbent president from hijacking the political institutions and electoral process in order to remain in power. Since the 2012 election, far from evaporating, *Y'en a Marre* has pursued a broader agenda of projects (*chantiers* in French; a *chantier* is a construction site) in support of its objective of fostering an "NTS" (*Nouveau Type de Sénégalais* / New Type of Senegalese). The NTS agenda proceeds from the understanding that strong national institutions can only be founded on a society of responsible and engaged citizens who act with integrity and expect the same from their leaders. The most recognizable public faces of *Y'en a Marre* were those of the noted rap artists at its center, who were often in front of the cameras and behind the microphones during press conferences. Two journalists, however, Fadel Barro and Aliou Sané, are at the core of the movement and are some of the most eloquent spokespeople regarding the philosophy, development, actions, and priorities of its members. In this interview article, Barro and Sané discuss the evolution of *Y'en a Marre* since the 2012 election, including, in particular, the NTS *chantiers* the movement has prioritized: citizen action (citizenship training plus democracy watch), leadership, and entrepreneurship. Barro and Sané explain *Y'en a Marre's* strategies for social change in Senegal; the growing number of affiliated groups in Africa and among the diaspora in Europe and America; the concrete steps they are taking to realize their plans; and their vision for the future of the movement, the nation, and the continent.

## Introduction

Senegal's *Y'en a Marre* movement, formed in early 2011, was instrumental in mobilizing the nation's population, and especially its youth, to participate in the 2012 presidential election and to prevent the incumbent president, Abdoulaye Wade, from hijacking the political institutions and electoral process in order to remain in power.<sup>1</sup> Since the 2012 election, far from evaporating, *Y'en a Marre* has pursued a broader agenda of projects (*chantiers* in French; a *chantier* is a construction site) in support of its objective of fostering an "NTS" (*Nouveau Type de Sénégalais* / New Type of Senegalese). The NTS agenda proceeds from the understanding that strong national institutions can only be founded on a society of responsible and engaged citizens who act with integrity and demand the same from their leaders. Founding members of the movement and key players in its inner core group, the two journalists Fadel Barro and Aliou Sané have become familiar public figures alongside the noted rap artists with whom *Y'en a Marre* has been identified since its inception. Popular

**Sarah Nelson** is Associate Professor of French at the University of Idaho. She has published on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French literature and is the translator and editor of Hortense Mancini and Marie Mancini, *Memoirs* (University of Chicago Press, 2008). Anthony St. Claire provided valuable transcription assistance in the preparation of this article.

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enthusiasm and media attention for the movement have spread beyond Senegal, so that it now has a pan-African and intercontinental presence. Furthermore, the coverage and analysis of the movement has progressed from the press article or broadcast report to the scholarly study and film documentary.<sup>2</sup> In the interviews upon which this article is based, Barro and Sané relate the philosophy, character, and evolution of *Y'en a Marre* as it lays the foundations for a lasting social movement, while still seeking to remain true to its original calling as a protest movement and “sentinel of democracy.”

Certain dates stand out in the brief history (so far) of *Y'en a Marre*—January 16 and 18, 2011; March 19, 2011; June 23, 2011—and *Y'en a Marre* members commonly invoke significant dates for the values they represent to the movement. Whereas January 16 and 18 (genesis of *Y'en a Marre*) or June 23 (mass protests against Wade’s attempt to amend the constitution) are important markers of the popular exasperation and mobilization against chronic government corruption, mismanagement, and manipulation that spawned the movement, they are not the dates mentioned by Barro and Sané when they discuss the future of *Y'en a Marre* post-Wade. Following the 2012 presidential election and the success of their efforts to prevent Wade from acceding to what was widely considered an unconstitutional third term in office, *Y'en a Marre* members are now interested in shifting the emphasis in their public image from one of protest and conflict to one of positive, constructive action, and for that reason, both Barro and Sané begin their remarks by invoking the date of March 19, 2011.<sup>3</sup>

## The Interviews

**Fadel Barro:** I think I should start by defining the concept of *Y'en a Marre*. What are we trying to do, what’s the philosophy of our current action? There is something important to keep in mind from even before Abdoulaye Wade left office—the date of March 19, 2011, when we launched the concept of the New Type of Senegalese (NTS).<sup>4</sup> We were already saying, in a way, that the many problems faced by the people of Senegal don’t just come from Abdoulaye Wade, they go beyond the politicians. It’s the whole system, and to change it, we have to take a look at ourselves. We have to examine our own behavior, our habits with regard to the country and to public life. What is our share of the responsibility? That’s what motivated our idea of the NTS. Even before Abdoulaye Wade left office, we said that change in Senegal will not come from a political leader, much less from a political party or coalition of parties. Change will come from each Senegalese understanding that the problem of Senegal is his or her problem. So we weren’t expecting Macky Sall to come and change everything, that’s important to note.

**Aliou Sané:** On March 19, 2011, when we called the Senegalese to a big rally, we launched the manifesto that I consider one of the most important things *Y'en a Marre* has produced. It lays out the basic principles of a citizens’ republic for the advent of a New Type of Senegalese. What does that mean? It means that the manifesto addressed not only the state and the role it should play, but it called on the citizen to take a hard look at himself and to say, “I’m fed up with myself” (“*Y'en a marre de moi*”). Fed up with the citizen who sees the problems in the community around him but stands idly by, who does nothing to change things, who takes no action to try to move forward and goad the state to act, who doesn’t demand that the state fulfill its side of the contract.

**Sarah Nelson: In your vision of the NTS, what are the roles and the responsibilities of the individual and of the state?**

**FB:** You know, we in *Y'en a Marre* have always said that there is no single system that is right for everyone. People talk about parliamentary systems, presidential systems, semi-presidential ... it's all just theoretical. Africa suffers from that kind of thinking—from trying to simply copy systems that don't conform to our realities. So we can't just choose a system and apply it, but what we can do is express what our people want and how to make our country work based on who we are.

In this country, people come to Dakar and they have no regard for the public good, for traffic laws, for anything. But when they go back to where they're from, be it Medina Baye or Touba or Tivaouane, they may be Christian or atheist, they may live in Fatick or in Casamance in the Sacred Wood—when they go back there, nobody needs to tell them that they're not allowed to urinate here or how they should behave there, because they naturally show respect, it's part of who they are.<sup>5</sup> But when the same guy who respects those codes within his religious community or his family or his ethnic group comes to Dakar and you talk to him about the Constitution, he has no idea what you're talking about. To him, the Constitution has nothing to do with the people, it's a matter for the intellectuals, it's not his concern.

So now how do we start with that reality and build a strong republic based on it? We are not going to be able to answer that question right away, but we can start by proposing new paradigms and reflecting on them. There are good aspects of other systems, and certainly we should be open to them, but how can we alloy them to ourselves, to who we are, in order to build a strong republic that respects itself and that moves forward, for God's sake!

I'll give you a simple example. If the marabout of Touba or of Tivaouane or of Medina Baye calls his disciples to come and work his fields, everyone goes, because according to our mindset as Wolofs, in our tradition, there was something called *tolou bour*.<sup>6</sup> *Tolou bour* means "the king's fields," but the king's fields were the community's fields. Everyone went to work there, and then afterwards, they got something in return. But since that doesn't exist anymore, now they devote that energy to the marabout, who uses it for his own personal gain. What we need is the kind of leader who, without being a marabout, is capable of calling the population to community service in the interest of advancing the country. One problem for Africans, in reality, is that the people who lead them don't identify with them; we've got that problem in Senegal. In my view, that's where we need to go—we need to have states capable of mobilizing the masses in a common project of development, because the masses understand that it's in their interest, that it's done by them and for them; not states made up of political and intellectual elites, who know everything, who plan everything from their offices and just impose it on the population. That's what we've had for fifty-three years now, and what has it done for us? Absolutely nothing! How much money has been invested in Africa and in Senegal? What has it done for us? Absolutely nothing! And even—I've said this to the members of civil society groups, and I said it in front of President Barack Obama—even the civil society groups, how many billions have those people received?<sup>7</sup> Just as African heads of state are responsible for having misappropriated a lot of money, we ought to question all of the civil society types who say, "Work for the community!" but who have not managed to have much of an impact on development, in the end.



We have to come to terms with that. Is it a matter of money, or is it more a problem of attitude, of mentality? I think that Africans, across the board, need to begin developing those alternate paradigms; we need to conceive our states based on who we are and not try to adopt readymade solutions. And I think, honestly, that Macky Sall won't be the one to carry that kind of reflection through to fruition, it won't be this generation of politicians that we have right now. And since we [*Y'en a Marre*] don't want to get involved in politics, then let's work on our *chantiers*.<sup>8</sup> Let's get our youth committed to the task, and since we are lucky enough to have people listen to us, let's get our communities, Senegalese citizens, involved in it, so that they can see that outside of the current power structures, little by little, we can create a different system. It may be that one day the two systems will clash, though we're far from that for the time being—and I hope it would be in a peaceful manner; but if we create the mechanisms and people see that they can take the lead and change things on their own, then our states are bound to follow.

**SN:** On January 18, 2013, Fadel, you observed the second anniversary of the genesis of *Y'en a Marre* by publishing a statement of principles entitled, "*Yenamarrisme is a philosophy of citizen action.*"<sup>9</sup> In that piece, you recalled the dynamism and energy deployed during the 2012 elections and asked, "How can we maintain that dynamism? How can we put that energy to work for the country's development and avoid being seduced by the privileges that the new powers can offer, avoid being coopted by the system?" And indeed, although you've been offered government posts under the presidency of Macky Sall, it seems that *Y'en a Marre* leaders are not inclined to pursue the aims of the movement by assuming the responsibility of governing. What is your thinking on this?

**AS:** After all the struggle of that period, the citizens' struggle that led to the second handover of power, President Macky Sall received us and congratulated us and reaffirmed his appreciation of the role we'd played.<sup>10</sup> He thought that we should join his administration by accepting top-level government positions and helping him put in place his agenda. We declined. We thanked him for his appreciation, but we told him that we felt *Y'en a Marre* had another role to play. We need to stay in our role as a sentinel of democracy. In any state, there needs to be a government that sets policy and governs, that guarantees the separation of powers, a strong judicial system, a free and independent press; but there also needs to be a strong public opinion, supported by civil society and social movements, and we felt that to preserve democracy, to allow democracy to thrive in this country, *Y'en a Marre* needed to maintain its sentinel position.

**FB:** The first proposal from the Senegalese government to come and work with them was really an act of corruption. It was March 18, 2011, and Abdoulaye Wade sent someone to talk to me at the central police station to ask me for the first time to "leave those young guys." They said, "You should leave those rappers; all they do is shout insults. You're an intelligent young man with ideas, that's what the president needs, just say the word and we'll make you a government minister." I told them I wasn't interested because I wasn't acting as an individual; it wasn't my person that was important, it was *Y'en a Marre*. That was under Abdoulaye Wade.

After Abdoulaye Wade left, Macky Sall received us when we went to congratulate him. With Macky, it was more a gesture of appreciation, it was not an act of corruption, it must be said. He said, "You contributed a lot to the defeat of Abdoulaye Wade and to my election,

whether you say so or not. You shouldn't be afraid of exercising power—that's how you can change things." That's his point of view. He offered a lot of different things—positions as ministers or ambassadors—but we told him that we appreciated his recognition, and yet we felt we could be much more useful by working on developing that strong public opinion and that critical mass capable of changing the country. We would be abandoning our fight for change if we accepted his offers, and he understood.

There has been another proposal, very recently; the other guys don't even know about it yet. They came back to me and offered a minister gig again, and I told them the same thing. I'm going to talk to the other members about it, but I haven't had the chance yet. Anyway, they tried again to convince me to come and work with Macky Sall. But we know that it's not time yet, and we've decided to keep following the path we're on all the way through to the end because ... well, we're not all that young—I'm thirty-five, I'm not a kid anymore—but at the same time, I'd say I've still got the time to follow this dream through and maybe to make mistakes and start over; but we've started something important, and we need to follow it through. We'll see, you know?

**SN: Can you explain what you're working on now?**

**FB:** After the election of Macky Sall, we decided we needed to organize ourselves so that what we represented was not just theoretical explanations, but concrete actions. We came up with what we called the NTS *chantiers*, the *chantiers* of the New Type of Senegalese. The idea is to channel the energies that young people deployed during the presidential election to get rid of Abdoulaye Wade, and to turn them into a positive force, not only to uphold Senegalese democracy and pursue the struggle for good governance and against corruption, but also to embody the struggle for development.

**AS:** When we formed the *Y'en a Marre* movement, we conceived of the *esprits* and determined what an *esprit* would be.<sup>11</sup> It is a component part of *Y'en a Marre* in a given locality. Each *Y'en a Marre esprit* is composed of at least twenty-five members, of which ten are women. The *esprits* diagnose the problems of their localities and reflect on what they can do by organizing.

**FB:** So the NTS *chantiers* focus on two main areas—citizenship and development. On the citizenship side, we are targeting communication for social change, since it's basically a question of behavior and mentality. We are setting up NTS clubs in schools, in order to nurture ongoing discussion about civic action and the public good among students.

**AS:** The NTS clubs are one of our leading initiatives. Right now, we are doing a lot of speaking in schools, and we help students organize clubs and engage in various kinds of civic actions—things like school improvement projects and returning the national flag to the schools. It can seem like an insignificant detail, but in Senegal now, in primary schools, for example, they no longer fly the national flag. We organize the young people and have them contribute fifty CFA francs each, so that the national flag can fly again in their schools.<sup>12</sup> Instilling respect for the flag and for other emblems of the nation is part of the effort to imbue young people with a sense of civic pride and responsibility, so that they will reject all the small, everyday acts of incivility and corruption, and instead recognize that they have a duty of exemplarity to cultivate, both with regard to the state and within their local communities.

**FB:** Next, we are working with the city of Dakar to launch a competition called "Clean Neighborhoods—it's clean, it's mine" ("*Quartiers propres—c'est propre, c'est ma propriété*"), so



that different neighborhoods in Dakar or in Senegal will compete with each other in civic action, investment in human capital, cleanliness of common spaces, etc.

We are also doing what we call “itinerant popular juries,” where the movement travels around to different places and organizes big forums where the people have a chance to speak.

At the same time, we are developing a watchdog project on democracy and good governance. Our Democracy and Good Governance Watch (*l’Observatoire de la démocratie et de la bonne gouvernance*) relies on the network of *Y’en a Marre esprits*. We train the *esprit* members in citizen monitoring, in reading budgets, etc., so that they can track what is happening at the local and regional levels. All of that information will be collected on a website we are calling the Monitoring Site (*le Site du monitoring*), which will not only keep track of all the information that is made public, but it will also allow individual Senegalese to participate, to tell how things look from where they sit, and to weigh in on how things are working in their localities.

**AS :** Over the past two months, we have had a lot of discussions with potential partners who could help us implement these plans. We felt it was necessary to organize the whole “Sentinel of Democracy” (*Sentinelle de la démocratie*) component of *Y’en a Marre*, which was an ad-hoc, temporary kind of thing while Abdoulaye Wade was in power, into something more permanent and ongoing. So we wrote a plan for the Democracy and Good Governance Watch project, concerned especially with tracking the follow-through on election promises. It is in the planning stages right now; we have secured funding, and we will launch in August. Our partner is Oxfam, and they have agreed to underwrite a first phase that will involve seven of the twelve regions of Senegal. We will do some training in Dakar, with two or three people from each of the regional *esprit* watch groups. But there will be on-site training, too, where we will go and meet with people where they are, in line with *Y’en a Marre*’s emphasis on community action, popular action, which should be as inclusive as possible. By bringing some of the local members to Dakar for training, we’re creating a structure that allows the different *esprits* to meet and get to know each other, exchange ideas, share best practices, all of that.

You know, there is a problem right now in all of the regions with the takeover of land by foreign agro-business. The state hands over land to them, and then the populations of the localities find themselves working as hired labor on their own land. For young people in those areas, there will be training on land use processes, so they’ll know how it is supposed to work, they’ll understand their right to contest improper procedures, and they’ll learn to what channels citizens can have recourse.

There is all of this at the local level, but there is also the national level, with Macky Sall and his governance. During the campaign, he made a number of commitments on essential priorities for the Senegalese people. We will be able to keep track of his progress on the Monitoring Site. If there are areas of positive movement, we will definitely recognize them, but we’ll also point out where things are not moving forward; and then every three months, we will be publishing what we’re calling “Citizens’ Reports” on all of those questions.

**SN: Is this effort at government accountability something entirely new in Senegal?**

**AS:** No, it’s not new. There was a platform like this during the last election, called SUNU 2012, and others, too. We didn’t invent the idea, other people have done it, but for the most part, it has been short-term efforts. And then besides that, generally with those other efforts,

people developed them and the youth were the target audience for what had been developed upstream from them, they just helped carry it out; but here, the young people are leading the process from start to finish. There is another interesting site that's been developed now, called "Mackymètre."<sup>13</sup> It's a site that tracks what Macky Sall is getting done, but we think it's too elitist; it's not very understandable, it's not inviting for ordinary people. So anyway, what we're doing is not new, but what's different about it is that we're making it an ongoing project, with young people at the helm, accessible and welcoming to ordinary people, and then finally there's the local aspect—we're providing a window on even the smallest localities, and that was not a feature of what's been developed before.

**SN: Everything you've explained so far relates to the *chantiers* of citizen action. What about the *chantiers* for economic development?**

**FB:** As part of the *chantier* of leadership and entrepreneurship, we're developing something called "initiative core groups" ("*noyaux d'initiative*"). We help young people group together and pool their problems, or the problems of their localities, but especially we help them pool their resources: their human capacity—what they can do, what training they have had, what training they still need—and also the possibilities offered by their local area. We organize them into little development units, the initiative core groups. In concrete terms, what are the groups doing? For example, in Kaolack, there are groups working on salt production, and in Thiès, there is a group working to produce chalk, which is being imported now, but the resources are there to produce it locally.

And in Gandiol, there is an initiative core group working to commercialize new fishery resources. You know, in 2003 there was flooding threatening to engulf much of Saint-Louis, and so to save the city, the president at the time, Abdoulaye Wade, opened a breach in the Barbary Tongue.<sup>14</sup> The breach was ten meters wide at first, but today it has grown to three kilometers. So the Atlantic Ocean is washing away the Barbary Tongue, and whole villages on the coast along with it; there is a village called Doune Baba Dièye that has been wiped off the map. So there are populations there who used to live off of agriculture and freshwater fisheries in the Senegal River, who now are losing their fields and dealing with the salination of the water and land. Well, when we went there to meet with the *Y'en a Marre esprit* and the young people of Gandiol, we all said to ourselves that this doesn't have to be an inevitable catastrophe. We asked ourselves how we could turn this manmade disaster to our advantage. Because I like to say that we *Yenamarristes*, we try to change the situation of young Africans from a burden to a resource, a means, an energy source; that's what I said to President Barack Obama, and it appealed to him very much.

So with that philosophy in mind, we noticed in Gandiol that along with the ocean water came some marine species that people had never seen there before, such as mullet and a new kind of oyster. The oyster is of a very high quality, and mullet eggs bring 25,000 CFA francs on the market; so we have an initiative core group pooling their individual contributions right now and gearing up to go into business selling the mullet, mullet eggs, and oysters. In addition to that, they are in an attractive tourist area, but it's not very well known. We told them, if you clean up your village and make it attractive, you can develop a kind of socially responsible tourism that would benefit the local population, as opposed to what there is now, which is big hotels on the Barbary Tongue, where the tourists go directly and don't even interact with the population. So we started another initiative core group to work on developing that kind of tourism. They have already begun fixing up the village,

and they are going to set up a small information office at the entrance to the village, where people can find out about possible activities, including things like going to see the women who harvest salt or grow onions. So it would offer an alternative to the high-end kind of tourism that exists now.

**AS:** I can give you another example. In Nietty Mbar—in the *esprit* of Pikine Nietty Mbar—there are a number of guys who are maybe eighteen, twenty, twenty-five years old. Their dream is to succeed in traditional Senegalese wrestling, and they spend a lot of time at the beach, lifting weights, building up their muscles. But it's hard to break into wrestling, and most of the guys don't have much chance of making it. So what happens? Those are the guys—big, muscular guys—that the politicians use to settle their disputes with each other; they arm them and send them off to assault people.

Well, some of those guys came to us and said, "Organize us." So we organized them into an initiative core group, and they all started contributing 500 CFA francs a week, and eventually they had enough to start their business. They bought uniforms and they set themselves up as a formal, legally established security agency; they contract with all the *Y'en a Marre* artists to provide security at concerts, and they're paid for their work.

**FB:** And the latest initiative core group that we've set up is our agricultural project. Right now, I'm doing the paperwork to access land in the Senegal River valley and in the Saloum to grow rice and sesame.<sup>15</sup> By 2015, we want to be producing NTS rice, grown here and consumed here. We'll start with small plots of land that will be farmed by young people who leave Dakar to work there and also by people who live there already. Maybe eventually it will grow into real agro-business with large operations, but for now we need to start small, it's the symbolism of producing our own NTS food that is most important. And just today, President Obama told us that he is prepared to provide us with technological support for the development of our agricultural projects.

So that's our approach—trying to see how we can build on who we are and what we have, on the strength of our ingenuity and commitment; because we like to say that to develop this country, it takes ingenuity and commitment, and money will come after. *Y'en a Marre* is interested in pursuing these concrete development projects, in addition to playing our role as sentinel of democracy. We don't want to just focus on what Macky Sall is doing and throw stones, because if that's all we do, we won't have much to show for it in the end.

**SN:** Can you tell me about your recent meeting with President Obama?<sup>16</sup>

**FB:** I explained to him everything we're doing, and he was very supportive. He said, "Be strong." And he even talked about *Y'en a Marre* later in his speech at the University of Cape Town. So clearly, he really understood what I was saying, and he was very proud and very supportive.

**SN:** Your work is right in line with the kind of community organizing he did early in his career.

**FB:** Yes, that's right. He didn't mention that to me, but the people who were there talked about it afterwards. When I talked to him, Obama paid really close attention to what I was saying, and it made a strong impression on him. In fact, someone said to me, "You remind the president of his youth."

**SN:** I'm pleased to hear that the Obama administration has offered support for your agricultural projects. In general, though, it sounds as if the main financing of *Y'en a Marre* projects comes simply from the contributions of its members--is that right?

**FB:** Yes, for the initiative core groups; for the moment, all we've asked for from the NGOs is technical support on those projects. But for the Democracy Watch, it takes a lot of money because we need offices, we need to train the young people, we need to supply them with things, etc. For that, Oxfam of the Netherlands is supporting us. But for the initiative core groups, the development projects, we just want the young people to get off the ground on their own. That's the only way they can have a chance of lasting. If someone just hands them the means to start up, nothing will change; they'll start, they'll use up all the money, and that will be that.

**SN:** *Y'en a Marre* has recognized that a major problem at the heart of Senegalese politics is that parties are organized around leaders and systems of patronage, rather than around ideological or ethical principles. Power and personality have mattered more than democratic ideals. The cult of personality is also common in the world of musicians and performers. How has *Y'en a Marre* worked to avoid a culture of stardom and celebrity in the movement, and to keep the artists' fans focused on the common aims that motivate them to action?

**AS:** First of all, I would add to your remark about Senegalese politics that even in the realm of civil society, groups have been centered on single personalities; take, for example, RADDHO—if you mention RADDHO in Senegal, everyone thinks of Alioune Tine.<sup>17</sup> And in politics, when young people got involved, it was normally within a partisan context, so that whatever they did, it was aimed at pleasing the party leader. So when the Macky Sall youth snipe at *Y'en a Marre*, they're doing it to curry favor with him.

*Y'en a Marre* has managed to create a different dynamic. You can see it even in the structure of the organization: there is no single person who is *Y'en a Marre*. We have an inner core group, which we've now broadened to include some coordinators from various *esprits*; we have a structure we call the General Assembly, where all of the important decisions are made; but around that inner core, we have sprouted *Y'en a Marre esprits* everywhere, and the idea with those *esprits* is to create leaders everywhere. So *Y'en a Marre* has lots of leaders. If I, Aliou Sané, mess up as a leader, the movement goes on; if Fadel messes up, the movement goes on; if Thiat messes up, the movement goes on; if Malal messes up, the movement goes on.<sup>18</sup> Whereas today if Macky Sall were to mess up, the APR would be dead.<sup>19</sup> If Alioune Tine messed up, RADDHO would be dead. That's the great thing about *Y'en a Marre*, I think, and the thing we need to maintain at all cost.

**SN:** *Y'en a Marre* is known as a youth movement. Going forward, is it important for the group to maintain that character, or to broaden and include people of all ages?

**AS:** All ages, it's very inclusive. At the beginning, everyone saw *Y'en a Marre* as just a youth movement, but it's changing. Last Saturday, we were invited to a conference where *Y'en a Marre* was recognized as Model Leader for 2013, and there was an old man there—the imam of Rufisque, he's almost seventy-five; he came with the Rufisque *esprit*, and he spoke at the conference and said that whatever *Y'en a Marre* does in Rufisque, he takes part in it.<sup>20</sup>

**SN: Do women take part in Y'en a Marre? I see far fewer women than men in photos of Y'en a Marre gatherings. Ideally, would you see them participating in equal numbers to men, and if so, what are the barriers to that?**

**AS:** From the start, when we composed the charter that sets the rules for the formation of *esprits*, we specified that of the twenty-five members needed to found an *esprit*, at least ten needed to be women. So you can see that right from the start, we saw the need to promote the emergence of women leaders and broad participation by women.

However, we take a different approach from that of the politicians who harp on the idea of parity and who go hunting for women that they can hold up as tokens. And then there's another thing. Why have the women in the movement been less visible? It's because unfortunately, at the start of the movement, our peaceful civil action was met by the state with extreme violence, which caused the death of thirteen people in Senegal. In that context, it was very difficult for the women to be out in front.

But there are great women at the heart of the movement. Sofia—Denise Sow—was there the day the movement was born, and she does extraordinary work. She's the one behind all of the social media—the Facebook page, the website during the campaign—and she always kept us in line. When things got tense she reminded us we needed to stick together, she did an incredible job.<sup>21</sup> But she never wanted to be in the spotlight. Sometimes we really pushed her to come forward and speak to the press, but she always preferred to stay in the shadows and just do her part. At the award ceremony last Saturday, she finally spoke publicly for the first time. And in fact, she said that she is not a supporter of the parity approach, because it feels to her like an indirect way of accepting a certain inferiority for women. Women have a leading role to play, just like men, and they need to simply assume it, rather than waiting to be invited in. She pointed to herself as an example; she fought alongside everyone else, and today she's there whenever decisions are being made for the movement, her opinion holds sway, people listen to her. And there are other women coming to the fore now, too—there is Seynabou Sy Ndiaye, who was in the *esprit* of Gaston Berger University in Saint-Louis and who is now in Dakar working on her doctorate in sociology, for example, and there are many more.

**FB:** Yes, it's true that there are fewer women than men in the movement, for various reasons. You can't force a change, you have to let it develop; we invite women's participation, we're giving them responsibilities, and little by little their participation will increase. It's also worth noting that it takes time and practice to build political and organizing skills. In the past, there have been lots of mediocre politicians who were all men. So we need to give women the latitude to be mediocre before they become skilled, just like men.

**SN: In an article entitled, "Urban Youth and Senegalese Politics: Dakar 1988-1994," author Mamadou Diouf identifies two distinct groups of urban youth, which he refers to as students and marginalized youth (*déclassés*).<sup>22</sup> To what extent does Y'en a Marre merge those two groups? Clearly, you and the other leaders of the movement have high levels of education and model a respect for knowledge and informed analysis. Do the rest of the movement's participants also have a higher level of education than the average in Senegalese society, or do you see the movement as a cross-section of society?**

**AS:** I would say without hesitation that it is representative of society as a whole, and that's what's so interesting about it. Y'en a Marre forms a bridge between Aliou Sané who has an advanced degree in communication, Cheikh Fadel who has an advanced degree in



communication, Malal who has a degree in English, ... and Ibou who is a street vendor and who is also in the inner core group. Honestly, if it weren't for *Y'en a Marre*, he and I would never have encountered each other anywhere, because we're just not on the same paths in life.

Just yesterday, there was someone from the Kaolack *esprit* who came to the coordination meeting to present an agricultural project to us. He saw an opportunity in his area to grow sesame and sell it to a group of Chinese merchants. He presented his idea to us, and now he is working with Julien, who is a young *Yenamarriste* with a master's in political science. So this young *Yenamarriste* who's a farmer comes from Kaolack with an idea for a project, and he can work with Julien, who has done advanced studies, to define the project, study the feasibility, and put it all down on paper so that we can examine it and see how to move forward together. The structure of *Y'en a Marre* allows that collaboration to happen.

**SN:** In "*Yenamarrisme is a philosophy of citizen action*," Fadel said, "The Senegalese social contract can be conceived as a triangular relationship between the politicians, the citizens, and the marabouts." Do you have an image in mind of an NTM--a new type of marabout? Or, alternatively, would the NTS have a different kind of relationship with the marabouts than in the past?

**FB:** You know, this kind of marabout, it's a pretty recent phenomenon in Senegal, actually. It took hold in the mid-twentieth century. Touba was created towards the end of colonization.<sup>23</sup> When the colonizer dominated the kings in Senegal, the kings tried to shore up their power by allying themselves with the marabouts, and they all started marrying into marabout families. At the same time, the people looked to the religious leaders as figures of cultural resistance against the colonial regime, which made the kings all the more interested in allying themselves with the power and respect the marabouts commanded among the population. So that's how this system got started, but it's evolved today into a system where the marabouts pursue their own interests, and the politicians are complicit. They all come to Touba to present their proposals, since as long as they have the blessing of the marabout, they can do what they please. We need to work toward a system where the marabouts, instead of issuing voting directives to their followers, issue citizenship directives. Or at the very least, we can try for greater transparency; we have no way of knowing anything about all of the money at play in the system. In the U.S., there are lobbyists and there is a lot of money poured into the system, but at least people can find out about it—you're required to declare it.<sup>24</sup>

Anyway, the reality of the political system in Senegal is that the marabouts are present, and they are influential. A system such as the one we have right now, which is closely modeled on the French system, cannot properly deal with that reality because it does not exist in France. Just because Montesquieu said something, does not make it universal truth. Montesquieu was not familiar with marabouts. What he said was great, and we can apply parts of it, but it is up to us to build our own system that reflects our realities.

**AS:** The marabouts represent a real power in this country, and we have to take that into account. The line we take is that we need to break with the type of marabout who cozies up to the political class, who receives large sums of money from them, and who issues voting directives to his followers on the eve of the election. In our view, the marabouts' power should be put to a better use—to exhort their *talibés*, their disciples, to be good citizens, to be NTS, and to work to preserve democracy. We think that new types of marabouts need to

emerge, and there are indeed some marabouts who say so, too, now. For example, the grand caliph of Touba has said things to that effect; in his general attitude, he has distanced himself from the politicians, and he did not issue a voting directive. At the time of the elections, we went to meet with him, and we explained our position on the question. But there are mid-level marabouts who continue to trade on their status in the old way. However, there is something else that is changing, and that is that there are more and more citizens who are becoming conscious of this problem and who are drawing the line between their religious and political lives. They are coming to see that they can have a spiritual connection with their marabout and still have the freedom to make up their own minds on political candidates. There are a lot of people who think this way now, but *Y'en a Marre* is still one of the few entities to say it openly because it is still a sensitive question.

**SN:** *Y'en a Marre* is extending its influence beyond the borders of Senegal, isn't it? You've been traveling quite a bit to meet with *Yenamarristes* in other countries.

**FB:** Yes, we're working with *Yenamarristes* elsewhere in Africa. The idea is to talk to each other and organize so we're all on the same wavelength and speaking in the same terms, and then also to draw inspiration from each other.

**AS:** We've been traveling a lot, especially in Africa. Thiat and Kilifeu just came back from Burkina Faso, where they helped organize a march last Saturday against the establishment of a senate where the president could install his cronies.<sup>25</sup> I've been twice to Tunisia, and I've been to Ivory Coast, where I led an integrity camp for forty young Africans and told them about the experiences of *Y'en a Marre*. There are movements now in lots of other countries—Burkina, Togo, Gabon, Mali ... They're not all called "*Y'en a Marre*;" some are, but there are other names, like "*Etiamé*," "*Ça suffit*," the "*Sofas*," etc. Anyway, there are a lot of similar movements being created in Africa, and we have put in place a working group that will network with those African brothers and organize a big gathering in Bamako for sometime next year. We want to come together to perhaps develop a common roadmap in certain areas, because we realize that most African states share some of the same problems—problems of political leadership and governance—so we would like to generate synergy on a pan-African scale to work for the emergence of a New Type of African, too.

**FB:** And then on June 1, 2013, we held an international meeting in Paris that brought together the diaspora in Europe—the Forum of *Y'en a Marre Esprits* in Europe (FEYE).

**AS:** At the forum we discussed the problems of African emigrants and students in Europe, and a lot of ideas came out of the exchanges, which can be proposed to the entities responsible for addressing those concerns. And there was also an intergenerational dialogue that took place there, a discussion between *Yenamarristes* and people of older generations. There was Lamine Diack, the Senegalese head of the IAAF (International Association of Athletics Federations); his generation also did a lot of important work on citizenship issues in their day, but they suffered setbacks. How can we learn from both their successes and their failures? In *Y'en a Marre*, we're not trying to say that we young people have all the answers; we can learn a lot from our elders.

And do you know what was great about that forum? There were young *Yenamarristes* who come from very disadvantaged backgrounds, who are not educated, who have never traveled before, and those young people had the chance to get on a plane, go to Europe, meet with their Senegalese brothers over there and with other European brothers, and share

ideas about the challenges of our time. That was something I really liked. For those young people to be able to widen their horizons, to participate in something like that in Paris and then come back home—that's another great thing about *Y'en a Marre*.

**SN: What would it look like if the goals of *Y'en a Marre* were attained? How would your children's problems be different from yours?**

**FB:** We would see an engaged citizenry, people would live well. Those are the large goals towards which *Y'en a Marre* is working, but we are not yet accepted across the breadth of society. People think that *Y'en a Marre* is all about negativity, that all we know how to do is say no, that we don't do anything. That's why we are concentrating on these *chantiers*. We can make speeches about grand ideas, but what we really need to do is to concentrate on what is possible, what's feasible. Our *chantiers* are concrete things that we can actually do. We can form clubs in the schools, we can organize neighborhood competitions, we can create initiative core groups, and we can develop the Democracy and Good Government Watch project. It's difficult work, and it will take a very, very long time, but that's what will change people's minds.

**AS:** We feel quite sure that we won't be the ones to reap the rewards of the struggle we're in right now. But we're fighting so our children and grandchildren can grow up in a country where the citizen is at the center of the republic, a country where the separation of powers and good governance are the rule in the conduct of public affairs. A country where there is rigor and discipline at every level of society. Above all, we want our children to be able to thrive and flourish in a society of justice, law, peace, and progress for all, a society that works and produces wealth and opportunity equitably for all its sons and daughters, without preference or discrimination.

**POSTSCRIPT: Just a couple of minutes into the interview with Aliou Sané, the power suddenly went out on his end of the Skype session and he was plunged into darkness.**

**AS:** You see? We're still saying, "*Y'en a marre!*"

**SN:** Does it happen often?

**AS:** No, no, I must admit that it's gotten much less frequent now. I hope that will last. It's been a long time since there have been any power outages here at my house.

**SN:** Why? What's made the difference, do you think?

**AS:** Well, I think the current government—I guess they realize that the electricity problem was a source of social tension. If you recall, after June 23 in Senegal, the reason there were riots here in Dakar—it was chaos on June 27, 2011—was because there had been mass power outages. All of Dakar was in the dark, and frankly, people were upset, and they went into the streets to protest. I think the government realizes they have to be careful about that. Now, there is certainly no permanent solution to the problem yet, but they are working on making the outages a thing of the past. I know there's no permanent fix yet, but, well, they realize that they'd better supply electricity to people's homes because if they don't, the protests can mobilize again.



## Conclusions

As Aliou Sané readily recognizes, *Y'en a Marre* is not the first movement in Senegal or in the region to have pursued aims of promoting good governance, an engaged electorate, economic self-determination, or individual initiative. In the interview, Sané refers specifically to other watchdog efforts that have been mounted around the 2012 election and since, but *Y'en a Marre* also fits into a somewhat longer history of youth action in Senegal and elsewhere in Africa.<sup>26</sup> The generation of West Africans born after independence came to the fore in the 1980s, and throughout the region, countries saw student strikes disruptive enough to cause the cancellation of entire academic years. In Senegal, Abdou Diouf succeeded Léopold Sédar Senghor in 1981, and although the country had officially adopted a multiparty system, the continued dominance of the Socialist Party (PS), in combination with a worsening economy, left young people disenchanted with the official structures of *encadrement*—the government-sponsored youth organizations meant to contain and channel the youth in ways supportive of the ruling party. Rather than engaging in activities under the aegis of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, young Senegalese created their own local “athletic and cultural associations” (*associations sportives et culturelles*, ASCs), through which they undertook neighborhood cleanup and beautification projects, they offered education, they contended with providers of public utilities and transportation, they built playgrounds and established libraries, and they ventured into professional training through the creation of economic interest groups (*groupements d'intérêt économique*, GIEs) and small and medium-sized businesses (*petites et moyennes entreprises*, PME).<sup>27</sup>

The affinities between the approach of the ASCs and that of *Y'en a Marre* are evident when Fadel Barro points to the kinds of *chantiers* that *Y'en a Marre* is launching—“we can form clubs in the schools, we can organize neighborhood competitions, we can create initiative core groups, and we can develop the Democracy and Good Government Watch project.” Another notable antecedent to *Y'en a Marre*'s initiatives was a collective effort known as *Set/Setal* (*set* = clean, *setal* = to clean up), which began after a period of torrential rains in Dakar in September 1990.<sup>28</sup> Historian Mamadou Diouf defines it as:

[T]he mobilization of human effort for the purpose of cleansing in the sense of sanitation and hygiene, but also in the moral sense of the fight against corruption, prostitution, and delinquency. The movement's primary concern was to rehabilitate local surroundings and remove garbage and filth. It also undertook to embellish these sites, sometimes naming them, often marking them with stele and monuments to bear witness by recalling moments or figures from local history or appealing to the private memories of families or youth associations. *Set/Setal* is clearly a youth movement and a local movement...<sup>29</sup>

In its fusion of outward and inward cleansing, the concept of *Set/Setal* resembles that of the NTS, which also involves outward and inward change. A participant expressed this essential fusion, as well as the primacy of citizen action over state control which *Set/Setal* represented:

*Set/Setal* is in the hearts and souls of all young people. If people think that [d]oing *Set/Setal* is simply sweeping the streets and painting the walls, they are mistaken because there are people paid to do that. You can't make street-sweepers out of every one of us. The authorities haven't understood a thing.

They don't know how to listen. To do *Set/Setal* is to rid ourselves of this colonial heritage that regulates our way of being, of conceptualizing things. *Set/Setal* is an absolute obligation to find a way out and this necessity to express new concepts in a new language, in this struggle for life.<sup>30</sup>

In its political action, too, there is clear continuity between *Y'en a Marre* and its antecedents, but also a clear attempt to reject certain aspects of them and choose another path. For *Yenamarristes*, who were born around 1980 or later, there had been a single party (the PS) and a single man (Abdou Diouf) in power for their whole lives, when finally in 2000 Abdoulaye Wade of the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) succeeded in unseating Diouf, after having been the perennial second-place finisher in every presidential election since 1978. Wade's Sopi ("change" in Wolof) movement had rallied strong youth support in the 1988 and 1993 elections, and Wade had benefitted very significantly in 2000 from the highly visible support of a number of well known rap artists. The hope among his young supporters was that Wade truly would bring a change to the stagnant economic situation and extremely high unemployment rates among youth, even those with higher degrees. Well before his bid for reelection in 2007, however, it had become clear to those supporters that Wade's government was every bit as corrupt and rife with self-dealing as the one it had replaced. The rappers who had helped Wade win election in 2000 (Didier Awadi of Positive Black Soul, Keyti, Xuman, etc.) opposed him in 2007, but he won anyway in the first round of voting, with 56 percent of the vote.<sup>31</sup>

When the founding members of *Y'en a Marre* conceived the movement in early 2011, they could look to the successful example of a hip hop-led movement in 2000, but they could also be guided by the cautionary example of 1988, when youth support was not enough to propel Wade's Sopi movement to victory over Diouf, and what followed was a prolonged period of serious violence. *Y'en a Marre* concertedly steered away from violence, from their early initiative called *Daas Fananal*, "My voting card, my weapon," throughout the period up to and through the 2012 election. In this, as in several other particulars that are both explicit and implicit in the above remarks by Barro and Sané, the leaders of *Y'en a Marre* have been at pains to counter the criticisms leveled at them and to confound the negative assumptions about "a bunch of rappers" trying to lead a movement. In their book on *Y'en a Marre*, published just eight months after the electoral victory of Macky Sall over Abdoulaye Wade, Vieux Savané and Baye Makébé Sarr express a number of those criticisms.<sup>32</sup> They contend that an outmoded, non-participatory model of decision-making hampers the group's effectiveness, with a hermetic inner core group (the *noyau dur*) of old buddies calling all the shots. In an implicit reply to this observation, Aliou Sané emphasizes in the interview the increasing age, gender, and class inclusivity of the movement. Savané and Sarr remark on what they see as an excessive tendency to court the media and to make grandiose declarations at the expense of real and effective action. Fadel Barro responds explicitly to this common accusation near the end of his comments above, by contending that now in the post-election evolution of the group, they are devoting themselves almost entirely to working on their *chantiers*. Savané and Sarr end their book with a challenge to *Y'en a Marre* to remain true to their mission of citizen action and democracy watch and not to succumb to the temptation of exercising power in their own right. Barro explains in some detail that this is precisely what they intend to keep doing.

Perhaps the most pervasive motive for disapproval or denigration of *Y'en a Marre*, which Savané and Sarr do not espouse themselves, is simply the negative reaction among

some Senegalese, and probably particularly among older generations, to the group's youth and to the hip hop identity of its leaders and many members. This is a manifestation of the contestation over the traditional relationships between juniors and seniors, a contestation which is prevalent throughout West Africa and which has been the object of much scholarly attention.<sup>33</sup> Each side of the relationship has criticism to direct at the other—the seniors see the unemployed youth who spend their days drinking tea as lazy and disrespectful, and their hip hop lifestyle, as un-Islamic.<sup>34</sup> The juniors lament their inability to find decent work, even after having completed the studies that were to have prepared them for it, and they hold responsible their elders—government authorities and others with power—for this state of affairs, which keeps them in a forced suspended adolescence. Further, they defend hip hop as educational, as entirely compatible with Islam, and as a vehicle of engaged discourse, consciousness-raising, integrity, truth, and authenticity.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, much of West African rap is focused on that kind of serious mission, more so than the imported American varieties. Rap is the idiom of recent generations in West Africa. Some significant segment of U.S. youth may get their news from satirists like Jon Stewart and Steven Colbert, but Senegalese youth watch the “rap newscast” (*journal rappé*) presented by well known, politically conscious artists Xuman, rapping in French, and Keyti, in Wolof.<sup>36</sup> *Y'en a Marre* appears on the *journal rappé* as the subject of reports, and its leading members—Thiat, Fou Malade, Simon—also contribute rap commentary.

Thiat of the group Keur Gui (Omar Cyril Touré) is an exceptionally eloquent spokesman for the aims of *Y'en a Marre*, and a serious, focused, and disciplined practitioner of socially conscious rap, all of which has landed him in jail both before and since the genesis of *Y'en a Marre*. On July 23, 2011, Thiat addressed a crowd assembled to renew the call for Wade to respect the Senegalese constitution and withdraw his candidacy. The date was chosen to recall the events of one month earlier, June 23, when Wade had made his abortive attempt to change the constitution. Thiat was promptly detained after his appearance because of a remark he made to the crowd. Speaking in Wolof, he put a twist on a well known maxim from the seventeenth-century Wolof philosopher Kocc Barma Fall. The maxim is, “An elder is always useful in a community” (*Mag mat naa bayi cim rew*). Thiat's twist was to add, “unless the elder is a liar,” in reference to President Wade.<sup>37</sup> The fact that this rather tame, erudite affront could result in Thiat's detention is particularly rich, given that the story from which the maxim comes is a tale about the philosopher's being unjustly condemned to death for having defied a tyrant.

In an interview that Thiat did in Burkina Faso in summer 2013, he was asked about the reasons for his expressed admiration of the Burkinabé Thomas Sankara.<sup>38</sup> He might have noted Sankara's youth: he was just thirty-three when he became president and thirty-seven at his death, but Thiat cited three other reasons: Sankara's defense of women's rights; his policy of “consuming what we produce and producing what we consume” as the true path to African independence; and his courage in standing up to *la Françafrique*, the system of France's neocolonial domination of Burkina Faso and its neighbors. In Thiat's use of Wolof or Burkinabé wisdom to communicate his vision for Africa, and in Aliou Sané's and Fadel Barro's explanations of the civic and economic *chantiers* being pursued by a progressively more inclusive *Y'en a Marre*, one can glimpse the construction of a New Type of Senegalese, which indeed appears to be underway.

## Notes

- 1 The French expression “*y’en a marre*” is used to express exasperation, the idea of being “fed up.” This movement’s adoption of the name echoes a well known song by the Ivorian rapper Tiken Jah Fakoly, “*Y’en a marre*,” which pillories corrupt African states and the effects of abusive globalization on suffering populations.
- 2 Note, for example, the present ASQ special issue, as well as the book *Y’en a marre. Radioscopie d’une jeunesse insurgée au Sénégal* (L’Harmattan, 2012), by Vieux Savané and Baye Makébé Sarr, and the film by Audrey Gallet, *Boy Saloum. La révolte des Y’en a marre* (2013).
- 3 The remarks presented in this article come from separate interviews conducted over Skype on July 4 (Sané) and July 9 (Barro), 2013. The interviews were conducted in French, and all translation to English is by the author. Interview transcripts are in the author’s possession. Thanks to an International Faculty Development Seminar organized by the international education consortium CIEE, the author had visited Senegal and met Fadel Barro, Aliou Sané, and other members of *Y’en a Marre* in June 2011, just before the June 23<sup>rd</sup> massed protests against Wade.
- 4 It should be noted that the choice of March 19 for the announcement of *Y’en a Marre*’s NTS initiative was significant in itself. March 19, 2000, was the date of Abdoulaye Wade’s election to his first term as president, and his supporters had been celebrating the anniversary of that event each year since 2000.
- 5 All of the places to which Barro refers here are important spiritual centers for different groups within Senegalese society. Medina Baye, Touba, and Tivaouane are holy cities for the two largest Muslim brotherhoods in Senegal — Medina Baye (in Kaolack) and Tivaouane are centers of Tijaniyya (connected with the spiritual leaders Ibrahima Niasse and El-Hadji Malick Sy, respectively), and Touba is the center of Mouridism founded by Cheikh Amadou Bamba. Fatick is a center of Serer population and religion, with holy sites where traditional ceremonies are held. The Casamance region in the south of Senegal is an area of Diola population and more is animist and Christian in religion than Islamic; the Sacred Wood in the Casamance is the site of important mass initiation ceremonies for young Diola men, which happen only once a generation.
- 6 A marabout is a spiritual leader and teacher in the Sufi tradition of Islam and in the Senegalese brotherhoods, which follow that tradition. The term can be applied to wandering ascetic holy men and to teachers in Quranic schools; here, Barro is referring to the leaders at different levels in the hierarchies of the Muslim brotherhoods.
- 7 Fadel Barro was one of thirteen representatives of Senegalese civil society groups who met with President Obama on June 27, 2013, at the Gorée Institute on Gorée Island, during Obama’s visit to Senegal.
- 8 In the period following the election, *Y’en a Marre* drew up a plan of action centered on a series of *chantiers*, or projects. The word is left untranslated in this article because it represents a deliberate choice of terminology by the *Yenamarristes*, and it evokes the notion of things being under construction.
- 9 The statement was published on the same day in many different Senegalese newspapers and news sites, including the one cited in the bibliography below. It can also be found on the movement’s Facebook page, where it was posted on January 26, 2013.

- 10 The first handover of power was in 2000, when Abdoulaye Wade and his party, the Senegalese Democratic Party (*Parti démocratique sénégalais*, PDS), were elected and replaced the Socialist Party (*Parti socialiste*, PS), which had been in power since independence in 1960, through the presidencies of Léopold Sédar Senghor and Abdou Diouf.
- 11 “*Esprit*” is the term chosen by *Y’en a Marre* for the local affiliates of the movement. The word in French means “spirit” or “mind.” It is left untranslated in this article because the use of the term in this way is unique to *Y’en a Marre*.
- 12 The West African CFA franc is the currency used in Senegal, and its exchange rate is pegged to the euro, so its value relative to the U.S. dollar varies somewhat; but the exchange rate with the dollar is roughly 500 CFA francs to one dollar. Thus, 50 francs would be approximately equivalent to 10 cents.
- 13 See <http://www.mackymetre.com/>.
- 14 The Barbary Tongue (*la langue de Barbarie*) is a spit of sand thirty kilometers long running parallel to the coast of northern Senegal from Saint-Louis southward and separating the Atlantic Ocean from the last stretch of the Senegal River as it reaches its mouth.
- 15 The Senegal River forms the northern border of Senegal, and the Saloum is in the central part of the country, where the precolonial Kingdom of Saloum was. The Saloum River flows westward through Kaolack to the Saloum Delta and the Atlantic Ocean.
- 16 For Radio France International coverage of the June 27, 2013 Obama-Barro meeting, see <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20130629-fadel-barro-senegal-y-marre-obama-est-president-sympa-attentif>.
- 17 RADDHO: *Rencontre Africaine pour la Défense des Droits de l’Homme* / African Encounter for the Defense of Human Rights. Alioune Tine is a well known Senegalese activist in defense of human rights and good governance. He was an organizer of the group M23 (*Mouvement du 23 juin* / Movement of June 23), which brought together a number of civil society groups to oppose the 2012 candidacy of Abdoulaye Wade, alongside *Y’en a Marre*.
- 18 Besides himself and Fadel Barro, Aliou Sané names two other core members of *Y’en a Marre*—Thiat of the rap group Keur Gui (Omar Cyril Touré), and Malal Talla aka Fou Malade.
- 19 APR: *Alliance pour la République* / Alliance for the Republic, the party of President Macky Sall.
- 20 On Saturday, June 29, 2013, *Y’en a Marre* was honored as “Model Leader for 2013” by the NGO LEAD Afrique Francophone.
- 21 Sofia is the narrator of the story of Keur Gui and *Y’en a Marre*, as it is told in the documentary film by Audrey Gallet, *Boy Saloum*.
- 22 Diouf 1996, pp. 230-35.
- 23 Indeed, the city of Touba was built up only after the death of Cheikh Amadou Bamba (1853-1927), the founder of Mouridism. It is on the site where he experienced a vision in 1887; he is buried there, and the Great Mosque of Touba, completed in 1963, was built next to his tomb. The Tijani leaders associated with Medina Baye and Tivaouane were of similarly recent generations: Ibrahima Niasse (Medina Baye, 1900-1975) and El-Hadji Malick Sy (Tivaouane, 1855-1922).



- 24 Granted, this is perhaps an overly rosy view of the transparency of financial influence on electoral politics in the U.S., particularly after the 2010 Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission decision by the U.S. Supreme Court.
- 25 Thiat and Kilifeu are the two members of Keur Gui. The name of the group means “the house” in Wolof, Thiat (pronounced like “chat”) means “little brother,” and Kilifeu means “big brother.”
- 26 See Diouf 1996, 2003, 2005.
- 27 Diouf 1996, pp. 232-36; 2003, pp. 7-8.
- 28 Diouf 1996, pp. 243-49; 2005.
- 29 Diouf 1996, p. 243.
- 30 From an interview reported in Diallo 1993, p. 213, as quoted in Diouf 1996, p. 245.
- 31 For an account of rap artists’ involvement in the 2000 and 2007 elections, see the documentary film *African Underground: Democracy in Dakar*.
- 32 Savané and Sarr 2012, pp. 71-87.
- 33 For just a few examples, see Ralph 2008, on Senegal; Newell 2012, on Ivory Coast; Soares 2010, on Mali; and Masquelier 1999, 2010a, 2010b, 2013a, and 2013b, on Niger.
- 34 On attitudes around tea-drinking, see Ralph 2008, and Masquelier 2013b. The most extensive discussion of generational conflicts over hip hop style and way of life is provided by Masquelier 2010a.
- 35 Masquelier 2010a; 2010b, p. 229.
- 36 Videos of broadcasts are available at <http://www.youtube.com/user/jtronline>.
- 37 My thanks to Mr. Ibrahima Faye for his explanation of Thiat’s reference to Kocc Barma Fall.
- 38 Barry 2013. Thomas Sankara (1949-1987) was president of Burkina Faso from 1983 until his assassination in the 1987 coup d’état led by Blaise Compaoré, who is president today. Sankara was a Marxist pan-Africanist devoted to countering the post-colonial domination by France.

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# The Rise of a New Senegalese Cultural Philosophy?

DEVIN BRYSON

**Abstract:** The Senegalese social movement *Y'en a Marre* formed in 2011 in response to political stagnation and a lack of key public services. It played a decisive role in defeating incumbent president Abdoulaye Wade in his unconstitutional reelection campaign in 2012. This article considers the movement within the context of postcolonial Senegalese cultural politics. After a brief survey of the recent forms of hip-hop engagement with social issues in other African countries, this study presents *Y'en a Marre* as articulating a social identity, a collective movement, and a cultural/musical form that are distinct from these other examples of hip-hop activism because they are continuations of a specifically Senegalese hybrid of art and social engagement imagined first by Senghor. *Y'en a Marre* is a culminating articulation of various trends within post-independence Senegalese culture by bridging the divide between tradition and modernity, between the national and the local, between elders and youth. *Y'en a Marre* combatted the threat to Senegal's prized political stability, and has continued to challenge social and political stagnation, by reconfiguring, but also confirming, Senegalese cultural philosophy for a diverse, inclusive audience.

## Introduction

In the summer of 2011, when President Abdoulaye Wade announced his intention to seek an unprecedented third term in the presidential office and began tinkering with the two-term limit of the constitution to assure his re-election in 2012, Senegalese society was forced into an unwelcomed and unusual position. Long a paragon for political stability in West Africa, the country now seemed to be on the precipice of social rupture. Angry citizens took to the streets to protest Wade's attempt to secure a third term, and law enforcement struck back with tear gas, arrests, and violent dispersal. As the cycle of protests and retaliation continued up to the elections it became clear that if Wade were to retain the presidency, Senegal's prized exceptional standing as a political leader among African nations would be severely threatened, if not outright demolished.

Amidst these events, a group of rappers and journalists, calling themselves *Y'en a Marre* (We're Fed Up), succeeded in arousing the dormant social consciousness of Senegalese society through community organization, written manifestoes, social media, thundering oratory, striking visual imagery, and unifying hip-hop anthems, attracting enough followers to ensure Wade's defeat and his peaceful exit from office. Originally formed in January 2011 by Thiat (Cheikh Omar Cyrille Toure) and Kilifeu (Mbessane Seck) of the rap group *Keur Gui*, and journalists Fadel Barro and Alioune Sané in the city of Kaolack in response to one of the too-frequent extended blackouts in the country, *Y'en a Marre* has sustained the tremendous momentum they won during the presidential elections to become an intractable institution within Senegalese social, political, and cultural life.

The group maintains an informal, open connection to the general public, represented most readily by the "open house" format they maintain at the collective's headquarters in

**Devin Bryson** is Assistant Professor of Francophone Studies at Illinois College, and his research topics include Francophone African migratory cultures and expressions, minority cultures in France, and the intersections between hip-hop and social activism in Africa.

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v14/v14i3a3.pdf>

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the Parcelles Assainies neighborhood of Dakar, during which anyone may stop by on Tuesdays to elicit advice from or to propose partnerships to members of the core of the group. During one such open house I observed in July 2013, Barro and Sané first welcomed engaged citizens and civic leaders from Mali who had come to elicit their advice on raising public consciousness ahead of Mali's presidential elections that were taking place later that month. Barro and Sané emphasized the need to remain non-partisan so that they could earn the confidence of the people, the excitement and energy that the two *Yenamarristes* still feel towards such issues coming through in their increasingly animated speech. Next on their agenda was a group of teenagers who wanted *Y'en a Marre's* help in organizing a nationwide campaign to elect Mactar Seck, a Senegalese living in New York who directs an organization called Orphan Children of Africa, as one of CNN's heroes of 2013 through an online election. Barro told them that this wasn't something that the collective would take under their official aegis, but he would bring it to the entire membership to see if individuals wanted to support it. Finally, a business leader from a town on the outskirts of Dakar came to ask *Y'en a Marre* for their public endorsement of a study he had undertaken to analyze his local problems, which, in his view, would instigate solutions to those problems more quickly. Sané suggested that one of *Y'en a Marre's esprits*, or local chapters, close to his town would be the most appropriate venue for soliciting support for his project.

The variety of Barro and Sané's interlocutors, as well as the diversity of their demands and the *Yenamarristes'* suggestions, on that day pointed to the breadth of the collective's reputation and influence, extending across generational and geographical boundaries. *Y'en a Marre* has also undertaken ambitious public projects that aim to significantly reconfigure Senegalese society. Most recently, at the end of August 2013, the collective launched the *Observatoire de la démocratie et de la bonne gouvernance* (Observatory of Democracy and Good Governance), whose principle objective is to elicit widespread public engagement in politics through informing and training the public in their rights, their responsibilities, and the practice of those rights and responsibilities. The first event within the context of this program was a workshop to train young people in local leadership and governance, held over three days in late December 2013. While many observers of the 2012 presidential campaign and election questioned whether *Y'en a Marre* would last beyond that tumultuous period, the group has unquestionably demonstrated its commitment to sustain social and political reforms in Senegal.

Due to *Y'en a Marre's* rise to prominence during the flashpoint of the 2012 presidential elections and its continued productivity and visibility in Senegalese public life, the collective has drawn international media and scholarly attention. Much of the commentary in the popular media that was concurrent with the presidential campaign and elections placed the collective within transnational and global cultural contexts, most readily those formed around hip-hop culture and rap music.<sup>1</sup> Continental connections between rappers were easy to make at the time due to the hip-hop activism that had been recently sweeping across Africa. By the time the movement was prominently active in the 2012 Senegalese presidential campaign, rappers were a common element of recent struggles for democracy, equality, and freedom in a number of African countries. Tunisian rapper El Général, with his song "Rais lebled," was instrumental in sparking the uprisings in Tunisia against President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali.<sup>2</sup> El-Haqed, a Moroccan rapper, released tracks criticizing the Moroccan monarchy, which eventually led to his imprisonment.<sup>3</sup>

Critics were quick to place the members of *Y'en a Marre* in line with their fellow socially conscious rappers from the continent.<sup>4</sup> Although such an approach to analyzing the

movement provides important insights, such as opening up lines of solidarity and community between activists that transcend national borders, and sketching out consistent ideals for democratic reform, this method also elides the essential national and cultural contexts that *Y'en a Marre* arose from, and that it continues to reference and to draw from. Hisham Aidi, writing about recent protests across Africa and media coverage of them, points to the ethnocentric views underlying such approaches that ignore national and cultural specificities: "Western journalists' focus on hip hop – like their fixation on Facebook and Twitter – seems partly because, in their eyes, a taste for hip hop among young Muslims is a sign of moderation, modernity, even 'an embrace of the US.'" <sup>5</sup> Academic critics have subsequently attempted to correct this problem, providing a variety of analyses of the *Y'en a Marre* collective that take into account Senegalese dynamics, both germane to hip-hop culture and not. <sup>6</sup> These scholarly correctives to the popular press's conflation of African individuals, social protests, and cultures under the umbrella of hip-hop have convincingly demonstrated that, just as the members of the group themselves insist, *Y'en a Marre* is a movement by Senegalese for Senegalese issues, and must be considered as such in any treatment of it.

The analytical thread that does connect the media accounts and the scholarly considerations of the collective and its significance for various communities, whether they be Senegalese, African, or global, whether they are based in hip-hop culture or not, is that of "newness." The journalists, writers, and academics who have worked through *Y'en a Marre*'s importance have all fixated on the ways that the movement breaks new ground in various social, political, rhetorical, and cultural domains. This special issue of the *African Studies Quarterly* itself, provoked by *Y'en a Marre*, if not exclusively devoted to the collective, is dedicated to new art forms in contemporary Senegal. This critical framework of "newness" in regards to the movement follows *Y'en a Marre*'s own rhetoric and objectives, as they have called for "a new type of Senegalese." <sup>7</sup>

The following overview of the quickly burgeoning critical literature on *Y'en a Marre* should provide adequate background for understanding the two primary lines of inquiry on the movement that I engage with in this essay: Senegal's specific historical, cultural, and social context, and the originality of the collective. In fact, this article takes the national contextualization of the movement further than it has been previously done in order to push back against the prevailing notion of *Y'en a Marre*'s originality, particularly that which claims its newness is primarily due to the collective's use of hip-hop. I want to prod our readiness to view *Y'en a Marre*'s actions and rhetoric as producing a rupture with what then comes to be considered anemic, conventional Senegalese society. This article places the *Y'en a Marre* movement in the historical and social context of Senegalese cultural forms. In particular, I examine the ways that the collective, for all of its calls for "a new type of Senegalese," its use of contemporary media, and its foundation in hip-hop culture, equally draws upon cultural ideology, models, and trends that can be traced back to Léopold Sédar Senghor and that have endured in Senegal since his presidency. I believe that this methodology will shed new light on the strategies of *Y'en a Marre* and reveal new dimensions of their innovation.

Among the body of scholarship that places *Y'en a Marre* within national and local contexts, fine research has been produced that offers up analyses of the role of socially-engaged hip-hop within the movement, drawing upon much previous work on the Senegalese hip-hop scene generally. <sup>8</sup> While these studies inform my research, I extrapolate their conclusions out to a broader object of study. For example, Marame Gueye argues that

the role of viable, important rap produced by the rappers of *Y'en a Marre* in instigating social change has been undervalued in most considerations of the movement.<sup>9</sup> Following her perceptive critique of the need to consider *Y'en a Marre's* cultural productions, but expanding this approach beyond a focus on hip-hop, I consider *Yenamarristes* primarily as cultural actors. I view the movement as composed of individuals and groups working with cultural forms in a manner specific to postcolonial Senegal to convey important national ideals and values, to intervene in the public and political spheres. The members of *Y'en a Marre* are part of a lineage of Senegalese cultural producers who have worked within the cultural context established by Senghor through an institutionalization and propagation of a uniquely Senegalese cultural ideology. Senghor believed that specifically Senegalese cultural products could produce political stability and social cohesion within postcolonial Senegalese society, and carve out a role for the country, politically and culturally, on the global stage. As we will see, due to the manner in which Senghor implemented his cultural philosophy in early postcolonial Senegal, the concept has had and continues to have currency within Senegal, which compels both the political and cultural elites who are dictating the sanctioned limits of Senegalese cultural forms, and those cultural actors and consumers who are redrawing them, to acknowledge and to address it. I will show that, while the cultural actors and movements since Senghor have not always conceived of the specific dimensions of Senegalese cultural production in the same manner as Senghor, and have attempted to redefine those characteristics, they have nevertheless been fully invested in Senegal's cultural ideology initiated by Senghor—that homegrown culture is the primary means to reconfigure the country politically and socially. This includes *Y'en a Marre*.

I show that by grounding its actions and rhetoric in recognizable Senegalese cultural patterns, in the ideology of Senegal's cultural uniqueness, *Y'en a Marre* is able to subtly and carefully introduce transgressive political and social ideas, including ones rooted in hip-hop culture, to a broad spectrum of people. Yet the group is not using Senegalese cultural ideology simply as a cover to smuggle in radicalism. Their tactics, music, and rhetoric reveal their investment in enacting a redefinition of Senegalese politics, while continuing Senegal's postcolonial cultural continuum. However, the cultural philosophy offered by *Y'en a Marre* is more approachable and inclusive than its iteration within the official cultural institutions. In their cultural interventions the members of *Y'en a Marre* carve out a middle ground between Senegalese historical trends and contexts, on one side, and global, progressive, inclusive innovation, on the other. The movement is ultimately able to offer a new political vision for the nation by existing in that interstitial space. They successfully mold hip-hop values to Senegal's cultural history, giving birth to a concept of Senegalese culture that appears wholly new and groundbreaking, but which ultimately harkens back to its original form as conceived by Senghor.

The article therefore begins by tracing the progression of the entwined political and cultural landscape in Senegal from the dawn of independence to the current day, analyzing the enduring intersections between politics and the arts in the attempts by artistic creators to transform their country. This provides the historical foundation for the cultural philosophy that I am referencing, as well as shows the enduring cultural negotiation between Senegalese cultural policy and ideology. Such historical work has not been adequately done with *Y'en a Marre*. As journalist and academics have rushed to capture the movement's effervescence and to reflect the group's own articulation of "the new," they have neglected the essential Senegalese historical progression that *Y'en a Marre* is a part of.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, I proceed to consider *Y'en a Marre* within this historical cultural context, drawing on interviews with the

members, observations of their meetings, and analysis of their rhetoric, ultimately proposing the movement as the culmination, in many of ways, of Senegal's postcolonial cultural trajectory.<sup>11</sup> I show that the rhetoric, strategies, and actions of the group articulate various moments and tendencies within post-independence Senegalese cultural philosophy, while tacking back and forth between tradition and modernity, between the national and the local, between elders and youth, between the new and the old. This approach is not meant to dismiss the claims of original strategies, rhetoric, and results that have been emanating from the movement and its observers. Instead, it will allow us to better comprehend the group's newness. To begin this process of better understanding the nature of *Y'en a Marre*, I argue, we must begin with Senghor and his own sense of being fed up.

### Senghor and State-Building

As a student, writer, philosopher, and statesman in Paris during the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, Senghor began to articulate his vision of black culture, a philosophy that would guide his cultural policy during the years of his presidency in Senegal, in the face of seemingly indomitable French colonialism. Dialoguing with his fellow intellectuals of The African Society of Culture and publishing in the group's journal *Présence Africaine*, Senghor was part of a community that placed artists and cultural producers at the fore of the struggle for independence and its aftermath. Elizabeth Harney describes this time in the following way:

The very establishment of a society of intellectuals and activists, a publication house, and a set of organized forums that could nurture burgeoning political and cultural philosophies afforded the arts and artists central roles in the processes of postcolonialism. At conferences, art was envisioned to be in the service of a variety of pressing pursuits, acting as a means of exploring and expressing newfound senses of cultural nationalism, shared racial consciousness, and philosophy.<sup>12</sup>

Here we see the germination of the cultural ideology that would come to fruition in independent Senegal under Senghor and that would come to define cultural production up to the present day, including *Y'en a Marre's* cultural interventions. At the second Congress of Black Writers and Artists in 1959 Senghor declared, "writers and artists must play, do play an essential role in the struggle for decolonization."<sup>13</sup> Once African countries were free from the cultural strictures of colonialism, they would be able to produce "true" black art and culture, which, in Senghor's view, would provide a unique dimension to the cultural hybridization in which all countries could now freely participate. For centuries world culture had been lacking the characteristics inherent to Africa due to colonial suppression. Now Africa could offer those aspects—in particular rhythm and emotion—to all countries and allow them to appreciate and assimilate them. This process, in Senghor's view, would result in the civilization of the universal.

With the arrival of decolonization and independence, Senghor was able to put this philosophy into meaningful practice through his cultural policy in Senegal. Harney writes:

Senghor became a great patron of the arts in his newly independent nation. He viewed art and politics as handmaidens in the struggle toward economic development and, by extension, the artists as cultural workers...He believed that Negritude, acting as the people's cultural repository, could illustrate the rich potential in Senegalese society and thereby motivate individuals to strive



for greater production. Its promotion was not simply a luxury but crucial to the success of Senegalese state building.<sup>14</sup>

Funds—as much as 25 or 30 percent of the state’s budget—were allocated to the Ministry of Culture and were used to build presses, theaters, museums, art schools, archives, and workshops.<sup>15</sup> Senegal “hosted annual salons, sponsored internationally traveling exhibitions, and provided a generous system of bursaries and civil service jobs” within the visual arts community.<sup>16</sup> The National Dance Company and The National Ballet were formed in the year after independence, drawing from different ethnic groups and regions to foster a sense of national unity and identity. Troupe members quickly departed on overseas tours, acting as ambassadors of Senegal. In 1966, Senghor organized The First World Festival of Black Arts, whose purpose was to promote Senegalese art to the world, as well as to further the articulation of a pan-African aesthetic.

From these early manifestations of Senegalese postindependence culture I want to identify and look more closely at two principles that run through all of them, proving to be defining and enduring characteristics of Senghorian cultural policy, of enduring Senegalese cultural philosophy, as well as dimensions of *Y'en a Marre's* deployment of cultural productions. The first is the expression of an inherent identity through culture, and the second the engagement of this expression with an international audience. Souleymane Bachir Diagne shows that the “natural” state of African cultures was inscribed in the cultural policy as a counterpoint to colonial nation formation, making postcolonial culture an essential component to postcolonial national identity: “the primary goal of cultural politics was to forge a national consciousness for nation-states that had inherited borders that rarely followed ethnic and cultural coherency established by precolonial history.”<sup>17</sup> Writing in 1973 for a study prepared for UNESCO on cultural policy in Senegal, Mamadou Seyni M'Bengue, an adviser in the country’s Ministry of Culture, emphasized the importance of organizing new cultural forms and institutions around “authentic” African civilization:

It was, indeed, in this heritage of the past, embodying our most authentic values of civilization, that the new cultural system had to be rooted. It was in the heart of this parent-stock full of life-giving sap that the future grafts of modernity and enriching new contributions had to be implanted...Our new cultural system was, therefore, to reflect our vision of the world, our constant preoccupation with man, our desire to organize life according to our own criteria with regard to the beautiful and the useful, so as to revive in the world a sense of aesthetic values, to make it hear the profound message of Africa, conveyed by the regular rhythm of the tom-tom.<sup>18</sup>

Such ideology had a profound impact on the practices, products, and success of those actually creating artwork shortly after independence. For example, Ndiouga Adrien Benga reveals the expectations placed on urban musical forms, writing: “Senghor determined precisely what suited him and what was important therefore to support. Urban music was not exempt from this. It was supposed to protect national languages through appropriate compositions and adaptations. In addition, it was supposed to be concerned with the creation of an authentically local music.”<sup>19</sup> In the visual arts, this “life giving sap” took the form of recognizably pan-African images: masks and carved statues, for example.

These “authentically” African art forms were then sent out to the world, demonstrating the inherent characteristics of African society and arguing for Africa’s place among the

world's leading nations. This second component of postcolonial Senegalese cultural ideology was essential in order to harness the nationalism that had been provoked by cultural productions within the country and to use it to elevate Senegal's global standing. Again, examples abound of cultural producers who were developed under Senghor's cultural policy to be eventual representatives of Senegalese culture and society for a worldwide audience. Benga cites the example of Lamine Konté who came from a family of griots and wrote songs based on African or Afro-Diasporic poems and texts with traditional instruments like the balafon and the kora. His music was supported and promoted by the government's cultural institutions and was embraced by primarily European listeners. In regards to visual art, Harney notes, "the arts infrastructure remained essentially export-oriented, promoting an image of the nation and its aesthetic abroad."<sup>20</sup> The promotional value of cultural products for Senegalese national identity was facilitated by the fact that the State controlled every facet of the art world, from production and selling, to curation and criticism. Due to the government's active development of consistently identifiable cultural productions and its insistence on exporting those productions outside of Senegal for nationalist and political ends, creating an aura of cultural exceptionalism around the country, during Senghor's presidency it was difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between the art world and the political sphere. Culture became the *de facto* tool in Senegal for engaging with global, national, and local political issues. Diagne emphasizes the overwhelming influence that Senghorian cultural strategies have had on Senegal up to its present day:

Senegal's emphasis on the idea of *cultural politics* since its independence, which differentiates it from many other African nations, is well known. This emphasis is so significant that the idea itself must be understood to mean that true politics can only exist *through* culture and *for* culture. The immense shadow of President Senghor, of course, hovers over this perspective."<sup>21</sup>

Despite Senghor's obvious dedication to the arts and his continuing influence over that domain of Senegalese society, the cultural policy that he instituted contained within it some obvious contradictions and tensions. His desire for artists to emphasize authentically African motifs in their work has led to criticism that Senghor was, in fact, accommodating and reinforcing French colonial ideology. Harney notes that masks and statues were "commodified signs of *l'art primitif* within the European marketplace and imagination."<sup>22</sup> Senghor's focus on the exportation of Senegalese cultural products and knowledge has also been criticized for leaving Senegal's own general populace bereft of these art forms and know-how. Politician Abdoulaye Bathily has said that Senghor "acted more internationally than nationally...his cultural policy really did not have an impact on the mass of the people."<sup>23</sup> Harney argues that Senghor's tactics left "a larger Senegalese public with little guidance or incentive to acquire the kind of 'cultural capital' needed to serve as an active consumer or patron class for these new arts."<sup>24</sup> State patronage itself, whatever the preferred motifs and targeted audience, was problematic as it pressured artists, whether directly or indirectly, to conform to expectations. As a result, a diluted body of national artwork was created due to the patronage system giving the same support to all artists who were willing to meet stylistic demands, regardless of their differences in skill and technique. Benga details the dilemma faced by urban musicians during Senghor's presidency. In order to earn the meager living that was available through music during that time period, musicians had to base their songs on "praises for some marabout or member of the establishment."<sup>25</sup>



Musicians who bridled against such exigencies were faced with censorship. Filmmaker Ousmane Sembène, an outspoken critic of many aspects of Senegalese politics and society under Senghor, received funding from the Senegalese government, yet also had to endure censorship of some of his films.

Senghor's cultural policy, then, unquestionably birthed a concept of cultural exceptionalism in Senegal that has infused the country's various postcolonial cultural scenes, producers, and productions. Yet, just as certainly, it promulgated a cultural philosophy riven with tension between politics and the arts, between the cultural elite and the general populace, between national leaders and artists. Cultural exceptionalism is thus not an inherent, authentic trait of Senegalese society, easily accessible to all, but it is a program carefully and purposefully constructed, implemented, and maintained by Senghor to further specific political ends. Nevertheless, it has created a rhetorical and ideological space that cultural actors and producers, and their work, in Senegal must pass through, even those who strive to subvert normativity within the cultural and political spheres. Even these firebrands must work within the framework of Senegal's cultural ideology instituted by Senghor, acknowledging it in order to distort it.

### Artists Against the State

This section traces the lineage, from the beginning of independence to our current day, of artists and cultural producers who have pushed against the boundaries of Senghorian cultural policy, but whose work is still defined by it. Doing so will foreground the ways *Y'en a Marre* can be read as a continuation of Senegal's postcolonial cultural context—another example of this negotiation between innovation and convention—and to bring to light the new approaches they do in fact bring to such a negotiation. Cultural actors have consistently interrogated Senghor's articulation of Senegal's cultural exception through their creations, even immediately following the institution of Senghor's cultural policy, which will be the time period focused on in this section, and within its bulwarks. Analyzing the state-sponsored *École de Dakar*, the assumed epicenter for normative, dictated visual arts during Senghor's presidency, Harney argues, "artworks grouped therein did not always follow a strictly prescribed artistic vision and ... the visual artists who chose to engage with the philosophy of Negritude were not necessarily governmental dupes but actors in shaping what could, at times, be a highly syncretic postindependence vision."<sup>26</sup> The following two sections will group together a variety of research on disparate artistic and cultural communities in postcolonial Senegal in order to emphasize the syncretism that has consistently defined Senegalese cultural work as it has responded to the explicit and implicit directives from Senghor's cultural policy.

Even as Senghor's administration pushed symbolically, purposefully "Senegalese" music upon the public, the musicians and listeners themselves engaged in a creative symbiosis in which the bands and songwriters would bring to the public compositions forged from a mix of traditional and foreign styles, to which the audiences would respond favorably, giving the musicians further impetus to advance their hybrid musical creations. These dynamics fostered a space of contestation for both the listener and the musician to normative directives inscribed in purely traditional musical forms: "Urban music enthusiasts demonstrated their ability to mix disparate elements, to produce modernity. They refashioned the attempts of the historicizing State to totalize, to inscribe a single memory, a single story in their playful space."<sup>27</sup> From these intimate musical negotiations

between creator and consumer emerged a heterogeneous public music scene much different than the one envisioned by Senghor's cultural policy: "No one style emerged to define the musical scene. Instead, it was marked by a constant renewal in which mixed both innovative and conservative characteristics, originality and experience, movement and stability; in short, it was part of a *dynamic* urban culture."<sup>28</sup>

Surveying Senghor's entire tenure as president of Senegal, we find several examples of artists working in such a space of flux between sanctioned and personalized modes of creation, artists who were rethinking the relationship between politics and the arts, while still addressing aspects of Senghorian ideology and models of culture. In 1974, an actor by the name of Youssouf John established the *Laboratoire Agit-Art*, which denounced the institutionalized nature of the arts in Senegal due to state patronage and the centrality of Western paradigms. The Senghor-sanctioned artist, according to members of the Laboratory, was divorced from Senegalese society and history. In response to this situation, the artists in this group focused on disruptive cultural activity in the country, particularly in theater, which, as they saw it, was a site for the intermingling of the visual, musical, and literary arts. In their performances, the Laboratory eschewed written scripts, instead relying upon improvisation and gesture. They equally rejected Western forms of theatrical space, preferring open-air models that allowed for free interaction between the actors, the surrounding environment, and the audience. Their work, however, did not completely escape Senghorian practice and theory, as the participants in the Laboratory just as strongly emphasized the importance of "traditional" forms, albeit alternative ones to Senghor's. Worldwide engagement also eventually became an important possibility for the members, finally exhibiting their visual and performance art in London in 1995. The perplexed reaction of many critics, however, spoke to the dangers of de-contextualization for the group and, perhaps, all exported Senegalese art. Harney ultimately declares the Laboratory's alternative to Senghorian cultural ideology as "a replacement of one synthesis of ideas with another," revealing the difficulty cultural producers, even ones as vociferously anti-Senghorian cultural policy as those of the Laboratory, would have in pulling out of Senghor's cultural compunctions.<sup>29</sup>

In conjunction with the Laboratory, one of its members began squatting in an abandoned military camp, inviting other artists to occupy the buildings and eventually naming it *le Village des Arts* in 1977. It quickly became a viable and popular alternative site for workshops and studios. There, artists could experiment with materials and methods in ways that were not always possible when housed in government subsidized locations. Inhabitants of the Village could interact openly, establishing an environment of communal inspiration and creation that often included the surrounding community. Art exhibitions, musical performances, theatrical productions and literary readings were all held at the site, encouraging a free exchange of ideas. This artistic community, though created as a rebuttal to state-codified art, does not appear to be that different from Senghor's early vision of art in Senegal as he describes it: "each manifestation of art is collective, is made for the participation of all with the participation of all...[Art] engages the *person*—and not simply the individual—through and in the collective."<sup>30</sup> Once again, we note the liminal nature of oppositional artists who strive for innovative forms of cultural engagement while still echoing the rhetoric and ideology of culture that Senghor instilled in the country. The true mark of distinction between the two spheres of culture comes from the use of power in reinforcing one's cultural domain. Senghor never made a show of the forces available to him with regard to the Village, though his government acknowledged its existence while

avoiding interference in its operation. However, Senghor's successor held no such compunction. The peaceful co-existence between the Village and the government came to an end in 1983 when government tanks, under President Abdou Diouf's orders, rolled into the Village, subsequently chasing off residents and crushing artwork and documents.

### Public Art Under Presidents Following Senghor

For some observers such actions taken by the new president marked the shift, if not the complete rupture, in cultural and political policy in Senegal from Senghor, a poet, to Diouf, a technocrat.<sup>31</sup> Underlying tensions between the state's conception of the arts and artists' need for independence under Senghor became more overt under the new administration of Diouf. Faced with increasing economic instability, Diouf significantly decreased the government's support of the arts, as well as basic governmental services. The federal government completely abandoned the areas of health, education, culture, and sanitation, leaving them to be provided by under-prepared local governments. Cityscapes became dirty and decrepit. Rural inhabitants streamed into the city, looking to escape the droughts that were ravaging their livelihood. Riots marked the national elections of 1988 as the opposition claimed corruption and vote rigging. University strikes led to an entire academic year being canceled in Dakar.

Despite this bleak social context and the concrete state cuts in cultural funding, however, it would be inaccurate to claim the state's cultural ideology was no longer propagated or accepted in Senegal. As Diagne explains, "the *political* expectations of Senegalese are much more impregnated with this Senghorian culturalist mindset than they would like to admit, convinced that they are part of a cultural 'exception' that defines their country. And they expect those who lead them to act and to *speak* in a manner that conforms to the expectations that come from this belief."<sup>32</sup> This mentality among the general populace towards its government that Senghor had planted and cultivated allowed the state to maintain its cultural influence, despite its limitations in maintaining its cultural infrastructure: "the State...continues to hold symbolic weight from the culturalist philosophy."<sup>33</sup> A cultural policy, though altered and limited in practice, persisted ideologically within the country under Diouf, which in turn provoked artists to continue to engage with official conceptions of culture, attempting to bend it closer to their desires for their society.

While musicians during the presidency of Senghor had to struggle with the normalizing impetuses of the cultural policy, outright censorship, and the severe financial restrictions on supporting oneself through music, musicians under Diouf found their horizons slightly opening up and expanding. Musicians working within the genre of *mbalax*, established and popularized during the 1970s, had to face the question now, with increased international exposure and popularity, of how this "national" music would continue to reflect Senegalese reality: "*Mbalax* was looking for a direction between the tradition of the griots, their propensity to manipulate identity markers (the excessive references to the Mouride brotherhood and to traditional values that predate Wolof ones) and the opening towards the outside world, to foreign, international styles."<sup>34</sup>

Two youth movements that emerged in the late 1980s within the interstitial space of culture and politics serve as particular harbingers of, but also counterpoints to *Y'en a Marre*. First, a community of young people, known as *set/setal*, dedicated themselves to cleaning up their streets and neighborhoods, revivifying dilapidated buildings, and beautifying the areas

with murals. Ideologically, the group hoped to cleanse its society of government corruption, immorality, and social division. The members painted the walls of the city with figures from Senegalese history and culture—including Senghor—but also from Western culture. Art, affixed prominently on walls and buildings throughout Dakar, became a part of daily life, echoing Senghor's early claims that "Literature and art are not separate from the generic activities of man... There is the people, the anonymous mass that sings, dances, sculpts and paints."<sup>35</sup> As the group gained increasing attention, politicians, primarily those of the SOPI ("change" in Wolof) opposition, tried to lay claim to the work and philosophy of *set/setal* in order to capitalize on this socially engaged cultural movement for political ends.<sup>36</sup> Again, we can note the constant negotiation through cultural productions between opposing notions of Senegalese politics, society, and governmental rule, with Senghorian cultural ideology underlying both positions.

Succeeding *set/setal*, the *Boul Falé* generation brought a near-nihilistic perspective to Senegalese society and employed rap music for its soundtrack during the 1990s. Taking its moniker from the title of an album by the hip-hop group Positive Black Soul, the young people who aligned themselves with this philosophy principally came from poor urban areas that were struck hard by the failing economic and social policies of the Diouf administration. Whereas the participants in *set/setal* turned to the public use of cultural creations to fight against similar problems, those of the *Boul Falé* generation "offer[ed] and test[ed] out the only goods available to them, their bodies."<sup>37</sup> Through dress, dance, drinking, and drugs, youth of *Boul Falé* confronted and expressed their dismay with "bodies assailed and traumatized by the violence of economic attacks, of hunger and of the stress of work. But also bodies weakened by the idleness of an endemic unemployment."<sup>38</sup> Young people's bodies became sites of expression for an increasingly globalized, heterogeneous, marginalized cultural outlook since turning to accepted Senegalese society only offered destitution and disenfranchisement: "The fashioning of an evasive identity makes sense of an unstable life whose immediacy is revealed in this expression produced by a process of channel surfing through the global market. A culture of collage. The cobbled together expression testifies to the cultural mixing and transactions that take place in the marketplace of Senegalese leisure activities."<sup>39</sup> *Boul Falé*, perhaps, is the most concrete attempt of those outlined in this article to break from the cultural heritage of the early years of nation-building—choosing the body over artwork as the medium of expression; adopting without mitigation globalized or Western cultural forms. Yet the marginalized end result of this philosophy that was largely limited to the individual and that ignored the greater community attests to the entrenchment of Senghorian cultural philosophy as the lens through which social and political change must be projected in Senegal for it to have a chance to be widespread, meaningful, and lasting.

While *Boul Falé* was an aimless, disenfranchised group of young people using the body as its *cri de coeur*, as opposed to *set/setal*, which was an amorphous movement that strived for concrete social change through public art, both are manifestations of the frustration that continued to rise during Diouf's terms in office, which finally resulted in his ouster from power. Even as the presidency transitioned from Diouf to Wade, however, many of the sanctioned dynamics between politics and the arts that marked Senghor and Diouf's administrations endured. Wade's administration viewed official cultural projects as the most evident ways the new government could manifest its dedication to safeguarding the myth of Senegalese exceptionalism by breaking from the policies undertaken by Senghor's and Diouf's socialist party, ignoring the irony in how fully this undertaking implicated them in



Senghorian cultural ideology. In 2002, Wade modified the constitution to inscribe the president as the “primary protector of arts and letters.” He announced ambitious *grands projets culturels*, planning to construct seven cultural sites, including museums, a national theater, a national library, a national archives, and an architectural school. Wade’s eager public engagement with Senegalese culture demonstrates once again the inevitability of Senghorian cultural ideology being the process to even evoke political change.

A close analysis, however, of one of the two completed *projets*—*le Monument de la Renaissance africaine*—exposes the ways that the praxis of Senghorian cultural policy had continued to decompose within governmental power and institutions in its ability to engage authentically with the lives of the Senegalese people. The Monument, constructed for the exorbitant cost of 27 million US dollars, provoked protests and the outcries of political opposition leaders at its unveiling. Depicting a shirtless man cradling a toddler pointing toward Africa’s glorious future in his left arm, while seizing a scantily clad woman around the waist with his right arm, the Monument received a gamut of criticism for its artistic worth. Some denounced its “Stalinist” style, while others claimed that the figures do not resemble Africans in the slightest. Local imams objected to the fact that the Monument depicted human figures at all, as representation of the human form is forbidden in Islam. To compound the problem, those human forms were immodestly dressed. Wade, not helping his cause, responded by comparing it to the depiction of Jesus Christ in Christian churches. Not surprisingly, this remark offended Senegalese Christians who make up 6 percent of the population. Even the conception and construction of the Monument was fraught, as claims that it was designed by a Senegalese architect proved to be false. The architect was Romanian, a North Korean company fabricated the sculpture, and Wade claimed a 35 percent stake in the monument’s earnings.

Wade’s very public, bungling cultural leadership in constructing the Monument, contrasted with his insistent public claims as to the significance of the Monument for Senegal’s, and even Africa’s, political, social, and economic standing in the world, represents the bifurcation of Senegalese cultural philosophy, with the persistence of the ideological importance of culture for politics and social issues on one side and the deterioration of official practice of Senegalese culture on the other. *Y’en a Marre* has positioned itself within this bifurcation. While opposition, tension, negotiation, and confrontation between the state and artists have been an enduring part of Senegal’s cultural and political atmosphere since Senghor, this conflict becomes more pointed throughout the presidencies of Diouf and then Wade, with the state’s role regressing from censoring advisor to corrupted exploiter. Nevertheless, Senghor’s cultural philosophy has endured. This means that current cultural actors are questioning this cultural paradigm like no time previously, searching for a way to seize the rhetoric of culture from those with power and to give it to the people. They wonder to what extent they can blaze new trails and how much they need to work within cultural frameworks that are recognizable and understandable to Senegalese citizens if they have any hope of someone finally listening to their cries of “enough is enough.”

## Fed Up

In its hybridity of convention and innovation, *Y’en a Marre* is the culmination of both of the historical trends traced in this article that have defined postcolonial Senegal: the incessant influence of Senghorian cultural policy in Senegalese society and the constant attempts by cultural actors to renegotiate the characteristics and practical implications of this cultural



ideology. This section explores the manner in which *Y'en a Marre* taps into the symbolic meaning in Senegalese society of both of these components to reinforce the social and political significance of Senegalese culture, but also to reform it as the domain of the people instead of those in positions of authority. As the previously cited work of Diagne shows, the "all-encompassing culturalist philosophy" instituted by Senghor looms over politics and culture in contemporary Senegal, shaping the manner in which citizens understand their political leaders and their cultural creators, and the interactions between the two.<sup>40</sup> *Y'en a Marre* is not wholly original then, as the movement is anchored in previous conceptions of the intersection of culture and politics. What they are attempting to innovate is the potential of culture to impact society away from historically sanctioned political spheres in the Senegalese imaginary and to render Senegal's cultural philosophy a matter of daily life and the people rather than of memory and the powers that be. With their own cultural interventions, the collective adopts aspects of Senghorian cultural ideology in order to refashion it for their own political and social ends. Through this endeavor, the collective has become the apogee of a rising youthful urban culture that Mamadou Diouf recognized at the beginning of the century, a culture that participates in "an undertaking of disorganization that is also an adventure of reorganization and of recomposition of several historical lineages...It is at the heart of the creation of a new historicity...It is, at the same time, an undertaking of reorganization in the sense that it operates, through a given reserve of images, towards a task of permanent mobilization, selection, translation, and alteration."<sup>41</sup> As I have shown, it is inevitable for cultural actors in Senegal to engage with Senghorian cultural ideology. However, I would argue that *Y'en a Marre* more knowingly and purposefully engages with Senegal's culturalism than did their cultural predecessors. This specific strategy is what has allowed them to make meaningful, lasting social change.

As noted in the introduction, this article focuses specifically on *Yenamaristes* as cultural actors because, as I will show, they conceive of social change in Senegal as happening largely, if not exclusively, through cultural productions; often ones based in hip-hop culture, but not exclusively. This conceptualization of the pairing of politics and the arts itself is a testament to the adherence *Y'en a Marre* has shown to Senghorian cultural ideology. At first glance, however, it appears that the group itself would reject such an assessment. The members of the collective, speaking about its origins, emphasize the breaking point they reached, when they felt compelled to do something about the problems Senegal was suffering from, rather than just to complain and to denounce.<sup>42</sup> Djily Bagdad, one of the rappers of the group who joined later on, recounts the impetus for forming *Y'en a Marre* during a blackout:

It was Fadel [Barro]...He was sitting around with Thiat, Kilifeu, and some other people. They were just in a room discussing why the lights were off. And they were like, "Are we going to sit here and watch this situation?" The rappers were saying to the journalists, "You only write the papers. It's not concrete work to change things." And the journalists were saying to the rappers, "You only protest in your songs and when the songs over you put it away. You guys aren't doing anything to change things." From this discussion they were like, "Let's create a movement."<sup>43</sup>

From this origin myth it appears that the members of *Y'en a Marre* have attempted to abandon the impotent stance of the artist in favor of the powerful persona of the activist to combat Senegal's social and political ills. Indeed, Thiat emphasizes exactly this sort of

division in his own personal progression. On the balcony of his modest home overlooking the beaches that extend from the Parcelles Assainies neighborhood of Dakar, he says, “I’m not a rapper, I’m an activist...Being a rapper means being, like, someone who is a star... I’m not an artist like Kilifeu [his musical collaborator in their group *Keur Gui* and fellow *Yenamarriste*]. For me, the message is the most important. I keep the message strong.”<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, *Y’en a Marre*’s collective actions and the politically engaged endeavors of its members betray the group’s devotion to social and political change through cultural productions.

Without a doubt, *Y’en a Marre*’s calls for action, the protests they have organized, their stays in jail, and the socially- and politically-engaged programs they have launched—in short, their political actions—have had an important impact on transforming Senegalese society. For example, along with the protests against Wade during the 2012 presidential election, *Y’en a Marre* organized voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives, which, to reiterate, significantly contributed to Macky Sall’s defeat of Wade’s. When severe floods hit a number of Dakar neighborhoods during the rainy season of 2012, the group was there to assist with clean-up. Thiat spent significant time in prison during the tumultuous presidential campaign and election cycle, leading him to question, “In Africa, an artist who calls himself engaged, revolutionary, a message, and he’s never been in jail? Pffft!”<sup>45</sup> Certainly the members of *Y’en a Marre* have put their words into action, and that action has produced change.

In the political action itself and the way the members conceive of and articulate it, however, there is an inseparable relationship between the political actions of *Yenamarristes* and the cultural forms that they use to express, to instigate, and to organize their actions. *Y’en a Marre*, for each of its acts of protest or social organizing, has included a cultural component to reinforce its message, to engage a larger and more diverse population, and to sustain the momentum of its actions. Foumalade, the artistic director of the movement, says of Senegalese, “We are a population that is deeply interested in culture, in the arts.... Art is something that is in our veins,” citing the call of the muezzin, the song-like recitation of the Koran, and the popularity of rap as examples.<sup>46</sup> Due to the calcified manner that politicians communicate with the population, he notes, *Y’en a Marre* strives to communicate through culture: “Artistically, it was necessary to find a much more simple comprehension for the population.”<sup>47</sup> Exemplifying this objective, when it was engaged in the presidential campaigns and election the collective released three group tracks, one for each of the stages of the election: “Faux ! Pas force!” (“fake! forced step!” or “don’t push”) to warn Wade early on about the anger that his unconstitutional candidacy was stoking; “Daas Fanaanal” (“sharpening your weapon in preparation”) for the voter registration drive; and “Doggali” (“finishing a killing”), which expressed the desire of the group to finish the job of keeping Wade out of office by voting for Sall in the final run-off of the election. When *Y’en a Marre* launched the Observatory of Democracy and Good Governance they simultaneously released another group track, entitled “Dox Ak Sa Gox” (“walking with your community”).

The releases of most of these tracks have been accompanied by videos that artistically represent the anger, the call for action, and the desire for change expressed in the songs. For example, the video for “Faux pas! Forcé” depicts a diverse group of Senegalese citizens—male and female; young and middle-aged—taking to the streets.<sup>48</sup> In the video for “Dox Ak Sa Gox” the various rapping members of *Y’en a Marre*, backed by a large contingency of local inhabitants, confront the mayor of a neighborhood in order to put him on notice that they are watching him, ready to vote him out of office if he isn’t governing properly, and to lead

him through the neighborhood, pointing out the various problems that need to be fixed.<sup>49</sup> During the presidential elections, the members also took to using their cultural forms in public spaces, making music more than just an angry soundtrack to a revolution but instead, a direct tool of public, collective action. To raise the public's consciousness of issues and to recruit participants in protests, rappers would jump on buses or take up spots in a populated neighborhood to start rhyming about social problems. Younger people would pay attention to the political lyrics, recognizing in the rapper's flow a musical form they already knew and loved, while older people would be pulled into a genre due to its politicized content that they might have dismissed out of hand. *Y'en a Marre's* use of rap was able to unite young and old alike in political action because it participated in Senegal's postcolonial cultural ideology.



Figure 1: The courtyard murals at Foumalade's hip-hop center in Guediawaye

Foumalade has toured prisons with his own rap group *Bat'haillons Blin-D*. During their first such tour they would hear from prisoners about the harsh conditions in the prisons and the severity of the sentences they received. Subsequent tours of the prisons by *Bat'haillons Blin-D* have continued to spark dialogue with prisoners, but have also been designed and promoted to draw public attention to the problems the members of the group were hearing from the prisoners. Culture and activism inform one another in this work. He has also established a hip-hop cultural center in the suburb of Guediawaye that provides social forums to a spectrum of Guediawaye inhabitants through events as diverse as hip-hop dance classes and concerts, workshops on youth civic engagement, and discussion circles for illiterate women. Colorful murals that decorate the walls of the center's courtyard include the likenesses of political heroes—Thomas Sankara, Sékou Touré, Malcom X., Kwame Nkrumah—as well as directives above the concessions window that state “Here, we eat hip-hop, we drink hip-hop, we sit with hip-hop” with the menu offering Name Dropping, Dirty South, Gangsta, BBoy, Graff, and D.J. among other hip-hop delicacies (see Figure 1 above



and Figure 2 below).<sup>50</sup> In Foulmalade's view, this hip-hop nourishment is important for the Guediawaye neighborhood: "We want hip-hop to have an impact on the social and economic life of the population."<sup>51</sup>

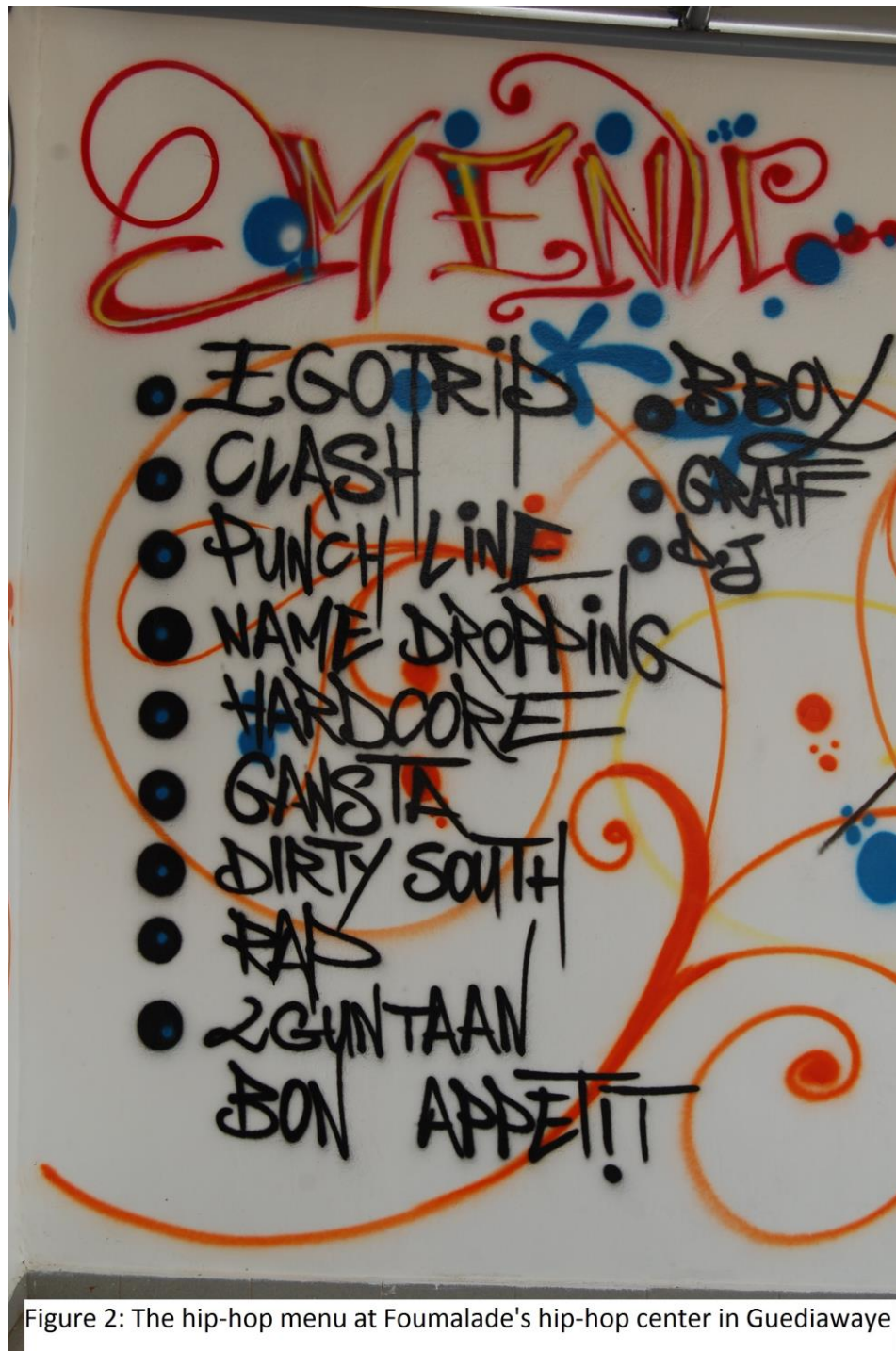


Figure 2: The hip-hop menu at Foulmalade's hip-hop center in Guediawaye

Even as he claims that he is an activist and not an artist, Thiat underlines the essential role that art and culture play in his activism: "I do hip-hop just, like, a way for me to give my message. ... Every concert is an opportunity for me to give a message. Activist who uses hip-hop to give a message. I'm going to use hip-hop like my car, to get me to where I want to go."<sup>52</sup> Utilitarian as his view of it might be, Thiat cannot separate art from social and political engagement. Just as he cannot conceive of an artist without tangible manifestations of his activism, Thiat uses culture as the lens through which he understands his own

activism and envisions its impact. Thiat's comments, in fact, echo Senghor's pronouncements on African art and culture, and their capacity for social engagement: "Because they are functional and collective, Black African literature and art are socially engaged...They engage society in a future that will be present from then on, an integral part of its identity."<sup>53</sup>

Thiat received a Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellowship to work in Washington, D.C. from October 2013 through February 2014. This fellowship program is designed to support, as described on its website, "democratic activists, scholars, and journalists from around the world to undertake independent research on democratic challenges worldwide."<sup>54</sup> Of course, his particular project reflects Senegal's cultural exception and the way it is elemental to the work of *Yenamarristes*. He is creating a network called "100 Percent Democracy by Youth" that would facilitate cooperation among socially-engaged African artists:

How to make connections across the continent with youth of different countries, mostly engaged artists...The topic is, "find a way to make the connections between the artists." Have a big tour across the continent—a pedagogical tour....To push youth who are engaged to move forward and to get people involved in their country...From the population, for the population...I know a lot of engaged rappers...rappers who are close to the population and not very famous.<sup>55</sup>

Along with the network giving an opportunity to these engaged rappers to connect with one another and to tour together, Thiat wants it to provide the lesser known rappers with introductions to producers and with the financial, logistical, and technological means to record their music in a studio and to distribute it as widely as possible. Besides creating the platform for this network of socially-engaged artists during his fellowship, Thiat is also continuing his personal artistic work with *Keur Gui*, recording a new double-album in D.C. and New York that, he says, will reflect the duality of the group, with their cultural identity as rappers, on one of the album sides, and their social engagement with the public as *Yenamarristes* on the other. One disc, entitled *Règlement de comptes* (*Reckoning*), will be a traditional hip-hop battle album in which they take down fellow rappers, while the other disc *Opinion public* (*Public Opinion*) will focus on political and social issues. All of these examples of the projects undertaken by *Yenamarristes* embody the cultural ideology instituted in Senegal by Senghor that culture is intimately related to social change; that if one wants to improve Senegalese society, it must come largely through the arts.

Obviously, hip-hop has been the branch of culture that *Y'en a Marre* has most directly deployed in their social and political actions. Due to the seemingly inherent politicizing power of hip-hop, it could be tempting to explain *Y'en a Marre*'s pairing of culture and social engagement as a product of the hip-hop thread of their identity. Sujatha Fernandes undertakes a global study of the binary of hip-hop and politics in her book *Close to the Edge: In Search of the Global Hip Hop Generation*, exploring hip-hop cultures in locations as diverse as Havana, Sydney, and Caracas. Based upon her travels, she concludes that a generational shift has occurred: "there is something that connects a global generation of young people, born in an era when corporate-led globalization undermined their basic standard of living yet deprived them of the tools to protest. Whereas their parents' generation took to the streets, they took up a microphone."<sup>56</sup> Of course, what differentiates the rappers of *Y'en a Marre* from their peers in the global hip-hop community is that they are grabbing the mic while occupying the streets. In her epilogue, appearing disabused of the concept of hip-hop



globality, Fernandes states: “The sheer diversity of voices and politics that emerged across the hip hop globe made any attempts at a unitary protest culture impossible. And maybe even undesirable. For all its emancipatory promise, music couldn’t substitute for politics.”<sup>57</sup> *Y’en a Marre’s* use of culture to intervene in politics has shown, though, that music and politics do not have to be mutually exclusive. Through the juxtaposition of *Y’en a Marre* against the other hip-hop activists around the world and Fernandes’ conclusions about their ability to bring culture to bear on politics, it becomes clear that *Y’en a Marre* is not simply an outlier. Instead, the collective draws on resources that are not as immediately available to socially-engaged hip-hoppers in other countries; resources, I argue, that come directly from the cultural philosophy that has played such a prominent role in Senegalese public life since independence.

*Y’en a Marre’s* cultural interventions in Senegalese society echo Senghorian cultural ideology not simply in the way they embody a linkage between culture and politics, but also in the manner in which they evoke Senegalese national identity. Just as Senghor’s cultural policy cultivated the concept that certain characteristics and values were unique to Senegal—the “life-giving sap” that M’Bengue wrote about—and that they had to be expressed in cultural productions, the cultural forms of *Yenamaristes* project a communal understanding of what it means to be Senegalese. Their investment in Senegalese national identity and communalism became obvious to me when I attended the ceremony organized by *Lead Afrique Francophone*, a non-profit organization that provides support for individuals and institutions working for change in their communities, to award *Y’en a Marre* their “Model Leader” prize at the end of June, 2013. After a number of laudatory introductory speeches by the director of the organization, academics, and social activists, Fadel Barro took the microphone and asked everyone to rise and sing the Senegalese national anthem. This act strikingly demonstrated that one of the collective’s objectives in crusading for social and political change was not to deform Senegalese tradition and identity, as some of their critics have claimed, but was to strengthen the ability of Senegalese citizens to feel responsibility towards and pride for their national community. In their words and actions the members of *Y’en a Marre* also emphasize the importance of local community, making their work important on both a macro and micro level in terms of Senegalese identity. From very early on in the group’s history it has established *esprits*, literally, “spirits,” but understood as local chapters, in Dakar neighborhoods and suburbs, and now internationally, to deal with local issues. Projects and plans of the various *esprits* are decided by their respective membership, independent from the national leaders. In conversation Thiat proudly states that “I am a country boy,” coming from the town of Kaolack.<sup>58</sup> He insists that part of his desire for activism is due to where he is from, the town being an important location for independence leaders and activists. Foumalade created his hip-hop center in his hometown of Guediawaye, wanting to engage with its local problems. The objective of the Observatory of Democracy and Good Governance is designed specifically to assist citizens to engage in local politics, to take ownership over their communities, and to make those local elected officials responsible to them. Senegalese identity, both national and local, is at the heart of the *Y’en a Marre* movement.

Their cultural forms express and are based in the characteristics and understanding of this identity. When the group launched their voter registration drive they chose to call it by the name of “Daas fanaanal,” a common Wolof expression that literally means “to sharpen one’s knife” and figuratively “to be prepared.” Within the context of the song and the group’s public use of that expression, *Y’en a Marre* transformed the knife, the weapon of

Senegalese tradition in the phrase into a voting card, the weapon of the contemporary. Of this expression, as well as “Fanaane daas,” which is the name they gave to the phase during which they encouraged citizens to vote, Djily Bagdad says, “We are playing with Wolof words.”<sup>59</sup> Foumalade elaborates upon the group’s use of language and its significance: “We played a lot with words that gave the population a sense of pride.”<sup>60</sup> This strategy to take cultural forms that are familiar and important to Senegalese, but to invest them with a new meaning that unites Senegalese in a different way than the original, extends to when the movement was creating its hymn. As told by Foumalade, the group borrowed from culture that had significance for young people, especially:

When it came to think about the movement’s hymn, we noticed that wrestling was extremely popular. How to use wrestling for positive ends? Because young people aren’t interested only in rap; they are interested much more in wrestling. A wrestling match draws a lot more people than a free rap concert...And each time a wrestler wins, the fans, the young people would sing [he sings the melody]. And in *Y’en a Marre*, we said, “That’s an interesting melody that we have to use positively.” I said to the guys, “In the chorus for *Y’en a Marre*, we have to use this exact melody.” This melody is used to make people pay attention to what we are saying.<sup>61</sup>

*Y’en a Marre* is not interested in creating a schism within Senegalese society by deploying cultural productions that clash with Senegalese identity, values, and tradition, but rather, like Senghor and others before them, the group wants to tap into the reservoir of cultural knowledge, practices, and forms that already express communal characteristics of the Senegalese people. As Foumalade insists, “What is culturally valuable in my country might not be in France or elsewhere.”<sup>62</sup> The Senegalese specificity is essential to *Y’en a Marre*’s cultural productions having meaning and impact.

While the group has conveyed Senegalese-ness through their cultural productions, however, they have equally directed their use of culture towards a global audience. In this we find another reflection, but also a refraction of Senghorian cultural philosophy. Senghor wanted Senegal’s cultural creations to be meaningful at the international level because it would confirm the country’s importance and allow them entry into participation in global relationships, whether cultural, political, or economic, which he largely achieved. However, Senghor’s government, as well as those that have followed, as their critics have pointed out and as outlined previously in this article, had a problematic relationship with the international community in terms of economic exploitation, artistic appropriation, and cultural impoverishment of the Senegalese people. Despite these pitfalls of global engagement in previous Senegalese cultural contexts, *Y’en a Marre* has not shied away from seeking out international connections with the work they are doing and balancing them with national focus. During their campaign to combat Wade’s candidacy, members took to SoundCloud, Facebook, their own website, and YouTube in order to post songs, music videos, messages, and clips of the demonstrations.<sup>63</sup> This fomented activism among those Senegalese who had not yet taken to the street, but who were interested in the music. The mixture of documentation of lived events and distribution of artistic productions through on-line culture also served to extend the bounds of the movement, allowing *Y’en a Marre* to invite directly a global audience to participate through culture. Importantly, the group controlled the means of distribution and communication for these productions. The *esprits* have also provided an important platform for *Y’en a Marre* to engage globally. The group

has established chapters in Mali and France, and organized forums in Paris and Bordeaux for *esprits* throughout Europe in June, 2013, with the objective to engage Senegalese of the diaspora, to make them viable participants in the reformulation of Senegalese identity and social actions. Members of the collective, in their own personal projects, reveal their investment in international cooperation. Thiat's "100 Percent Democracy by Youth" project, as we previously saw, will be a pan-African network. His and Kilifeu's new album will be recorded in Dakar, New York, and Paris to capture the cultural connections between these three cities that are essential to Senegal and its diaspora. *Y'en a Marre* has been able to enter the global stage on its own terms, maintaining its Senegalese uniqueness and its focus on issues relevant to Senegal in a particular manner, while still allowing international connections to happen. Articulating his own philosophy on relating to global culture, Thiat says, "Take from your roots, but open to the rest of the world. Take the good things from somewhere else, bring in your good to make a cocktail with the rest of the world."<sup>64</sup>

By adopting culture that is already recognizable to Senegalese, both in form and meaning, while opening the movement up to global connections, *Yenamarristes* are more easily able to alter the mentality and actions of citizens towards their community, their society, their government, and, even the world. It is in this area of *Y'en a Marre*'s cultural practices and rhetoric that I locate their true innovation: they work within Senegal's cultural philosophy in order to render it more democratic and inclusive. The group has purposefully placed itself within the lineage of Senegalese artists. They have then reworked that heritage from within in order to emphasize "*plurality* against a dense and unchanging conception of cultural identity that has often prevailed throughout discourses on culture. In pursuing a culture of identity in fact, one risks losing sight of the fact that the true meaning of culture comes from movement; not from indefinitely drawing boundaries of belonging around oneself, but by crossing those boundaries."<sup>65</sup> These values of identity movement and boundary crossing are embedded in the inner-workings of the group itself and the relationships among the members. Thiat recalls how worried they all were to bring together that many rappers under one umbrella due to geographical tensions and prejudice. But the unique organizational and communicative nature of the group resolved those issues. Thiat states, "The amazing thing is how we were doing to get them together for the same cause...One day Foulalade said to me, 'You know, I can't believe that one day I take care of Simon...It's amazing. Because Simon is a downtown boy and I'm from the suburbs.'"<sup>66</sup> Foulalade then locates the strength of the movement specifically in this diverse composition: "the different personalities allow the movement to stay close to the people."<sup>67</sup> The group has then worked to convey these values of diversity and inclusiveness to the population through recognizably Senegalese cultural contexts. As shown in the section of this article focused on Senghor's creation and implementation of his cultural ideology, it became the privilege of the cultural elite and those approbated by the government to participate in Senegal's cultural exception. The fact of the exclusionary nature of Senghorian cultural policy puts the lie to any concept of Senegal being culturally exceptional. I have already shown how many Senegalese cultural actors have attempted to exploit this failing of Senghor's cultural philosophy, but have ultimately failed to escape its influence or to significantly alter its social significance. *Y'en a Marre* have finally begun that process by situating themselves ambivalently, even ambiguously towards the country's cultural lineage, taking up many of its qualities and forms, but resignifying them from within. Foulalade says, "It is important, from time to time, to create cultural syncretism....One must never be a cultural narcissist."<sup>68</sup> Through their rap songs that use primarily Wolof

lyrics, their campaign expressions that are *détournements* of common Senegalese phrases, their videos that depict young, old, male, and female *Yenamarristes*, the cultural spaces they have created for networking and community building, and their international efforts, *Y'en a Marre* have invited through their hybrid cultural work all who want to change Senegal for the better to join them, to become full participants in the cultural work of improving the country. This is a call that all Senegalese recognize from the continuing postcolonial influence of Senghorian cultural philosophy, but it is one that they only now finally feel like they can answer.

## Notes

- 1 I use “hip-hop” throughout my paper to refer to a constellation of urban cultural practices, including rap music, graffiti art, tagging, dancing, and fashion. See Nossiter 2011 for one early example of the American media’s reporting of *Y'en a Marre*’s hip-hop dimension.
- 2 See Peisner 2011.
- 3 See DeGhett 2012. El Haqed, né Mouad Belrhoute, was released from a year’s imprisonment on April 2, 2013.
- 4 See Fernandes 2012.
- 5 Aidi 2011.
- 6 See Dalberto 2011, Fredericks 2013, and Gueye 2011.
- 7 “*Nouveau type de Sénégalais*,” NTS, became one of the catchphrases and popular acronyms of the movement, seen on placards and t-shirts at rallies, mentioned in press releases and interviews, and referenced in rap songs.
- 8 See Gueye 2013 and Fredericks 2013 for analyses of hip-hop within *Y'en a Marre*, and Appert 2011, Herson 2011, Moulard-Kouka 2004, and Niang 2006, 2010 for considerations of hip-hop more generally in Dakar and Senegal.
- 9 See Gueye 2013.
- 10 Rosalind Fredericks, for example, in her study of *Y'en a Marre* focuses on “rap and its history,” which doesn’t extend before the 1980s.
- 11 I draw extensively from fieldwork done in Senegal in June-July 2012 and June-August 2013. I wish to thank the West African Research Association for a Post-Doctoral Fellowship that made the second trip to Senegal possible.
- 12 Harney 2004, p. 43.
- 13 Senghor 1959, p. 279. All translations of work originally published in French are the author’s unless otherwise noted.
- 14 Harney 2004, p. 49.
- 15 Estimates and documentation vary on the percentage of state funds. See Harney 2004 and Snipes 1998 for discussions of how these figures have been reached.
- 16 Harney 2004, p. 49.
- 17 Diagne 2002, p. 252.
- 18 M’Bengue 1973, pp. 13-14.
- 19 Benga 2002, p. 294.
- 20 Harney 2004, p. 78.
- 21 Diagne 2002, p. 243.

- 22 Harney 2004, p. 10.
- 23 Snipe 1998, p. 59.
- 24 Harney 2004, p. 79.
- 25 Benga 2002, p. 297.
- 26 Harney 2004, p. 52.
- 27 Benga 2002, p. 294.
- 28 Ibid., p. 298.
- 29 Harney 2004, p. 115.
- 30 Senghor 1956, p. 56.
- 31 See Snipe 1998, pp. 61-62.
- 32 Diagne 2002, p. 244.
- 33 Ibid., p. 254.
- 34 Benga 2002, pp. 295-96.
- 35 Senghor 1956, p. 56.
- 36 See Diouf 1992 and SET SETAL 1991 for more detailed analysis of the movement.
- 37 Diouf 2002, p. 278.
- 38 Ibid., p. 279.
- 39 Ibid., pp. 278-79.
- 40 Diagne 2002, p. 246.
- 41 Diouf 2002, p. 262.
- 42 See Savané and Sarr, p.69: ““Guys, are we going to sit here, with our arms crossed?”  
From this quasi-existential question the core group of close friends that would become  
Y’en a Marre decided to do something.”
- 43 Djily Bagdad 2012, International Faculty Development Seminar presentation.
- 44 Thiat 2013, interview with author.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Foulalade 2013, interview with author.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCuKAN-T0pk>
- 49 See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4i1Ot1jypDc>
- 50 Both photographs are by the author.
- 51 Foulalade 2013, interview with author.
- 52 Thiat 2013, interview with author.
- 53 Senghor 1956, p. 56.
- 54 Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellows website: <http://www.ned.org/fellowships/reagan-fascell-democracy-fellows-program>. For Thiat’s fellowship, see  
<http://www.ned.org/fellowships/current-past-fellows/thiat-mr-cheikh-oumar-toure>
- 55 Thiat 2013, interview with author.
- 56 Fernandes 2011, p. 23.
- 57 Ibid., p. 187.
- 58 Thiat 2013, interview with author.
- 59 Djily Bagdad 2012, International Faculty Development Seminar presentation.
- 60 Foulalade 2013, interview with author.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Ibid.



- 63 See <https://soundcloud.com/yenamarre>; <https://fr-fr.facebook.com/pages/Y-en-a-marre/173373102703740>; <https://www.youtube.com/user/Yenamarresenegal/featured>. Their website is no longer maintained.
- 64 Thiat 2013, interview with author.
- 65 Diagne 2002, p. 258.
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## Nafissatou Dia Diouf's Critical Look at a "Senegal in the Midst of Transformation"

MOLLY KRUEGER ENZ

**Abstract:** Nafissatou Dia Diouf is a Senegalese author who has garnered recognition both in her home country and internationally since she began publishing in the 1990s. Her work, including fiction, poetry, children's literature, and philosophical essays, portrays diverse topics as they relate to her country such as education, marriage, polygamy, maternity/paternity, the influence of the West, the roles of business and government, and the power of the media. Diouf provides her reader with a comprehensive yet critical view of Senegal and shows how her homeland is affected by and reacts to the changes it currently faces. In a recent interview, Diouf stated: "For me, the first role of a citizen, even more when one has the power of influence such as in the case of writers, is to take a critical look (a constructive critique, of course) at one's own country." In this article that combines an interview with the author and textual analysis of her work, I explore how Nafissatou Dia Diouf critically examines contemporary Senegalese society and portrays a country in the process of transition and transformation. Through her visionary writing, Diouf works to construct a new type of Senegalese society and identity of which she and her fellow citizens can be proud.

Senegalese author Nafissatou Dia Diouf has garnered acclaim both in Senegal and internationally since she began publishing in the 1990s. She won several noteworthy awards early in her literary career including the following: *Prix du Jeune Écrivain Francophone* (France; 1999), *Prix Francomania* sponsored by Radio-Canada (Canada; 1999), and *Prix de la Fondation Léopold Sédar Senghor* (Senegal; 2000). Diouf was featured by the journal *Notre Librairie* as an emerging writer of African literature in 2005. The same year, she represented Senegal at the Francophone Games in Niamey, Niger and won the jury prize in the literary category. Despite Diouf's lengthy publication record and international recognition, critical studies on her are very limited with the exception of a handful of articles in various Senegalese newspapers and magazines.<sup>1</sup>

Nafissatou Dia Diouf was born in Senegal's capital city of Dakar in 1973 where she attended primary and secondary school. She then went on to complete university studies in Bordeaux, France at Michel de Montaigne University. Here, she obtained a bachelor's degree in applied foreign languages as well as a degree in industrial systems management.<sup>2</sup> She also earned a master's degree in telecommunications management from the *École*

**Molly KruegerENZ** is an Associate Professor of French at South Dakota State University. Her research focuses on representations of race and gender in nineteenth-century French colonial literature as well as contemporary Caribbean and Sub-Saharan African Francophone fiction. She has published scholarly articles in a variety of journals including *The French Review*, *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, and *Journal of the African Literature Association*. She is currently working on a monograph that examines the figure of the mulatto and racial tensions in colonial Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti).

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v14/v14i3a4.pdf>

*Supérieure Multinationale des Télécommunications* in Dakar. Although she did not pursue formal literary studies during her career in higher education, she was always passionate about reading, manipulating words, and writing.<sup>3</sup> In an article for the online newspaper *Dakarvoice.com* the author explains her origins as a writer: “In my first essay written when I was 12 years old, I described the scene of a birth with so much precision that my mother couldn’t believe it.”<sup>4</sup> Just over a decade later, Diouf’s short stories were first published in the Senegalese women’s magazine *Amina*, and she has since written and published a wide variety of texts including short stories, poetry, children’s literature, and essays.<sup>5</sup> In her work, she examines diverse topics as they relate to her country such as education, marriage, polygamy, maternity/paternity, the influence of the West, the role of business, and the power of the media. Diouf provides her reader with a comprehensive view of contemporary Senegalese society and depicts how Senegal is affected by and reacts to the changes it faces. In a recent interview, Diouf stated: “For me, the first role of a citizen, even more when one has the power of influence such as in the case of writers, is to take a critical look (a constructive critique, of course) at one’s own country.”<sup>6</sup> Combining an interview with the author and textual analysis of her work, I explore in this article how Nafissatou Dia Diouf critically examines contemporary Senegalese society and portrays a country in the midst of transformation.<sup>7</sup>

### A New African Image and Identity

In a 2007 interview with *Amina*, Diouf posits that the youth in her country must be able to speak about their society in a critical manner, including “the ills that preoccupy them, situations that touch them or make them laugh.”<sup>8</sup> These everyday situations are what she explores in her writing and argues that African literature must be reenergized. In my recent interview with Diouf, she describes the potential impact authors can have in forging a new African image and identity.

**Molly Krueger Enz (MKE):** What is the role of writers in creating a new and positive image of Africa?

**Nafissatou Dia Diouf (NDD):** Writers are observers by definition, those that sense the weakest of signals who have perhaps this particular sensibility that allows them to perceive social and political happenings well before the public at large. Or else, they place themselves at a sufficient distance to analyze the facts removed from their immediate dimension and their social urgency. Writers are those that witness their time and era in a more critical and analytical way than journalists, for example. Their role is also to highlight the beautiful potential or virtues of their continent so that the entire world has a more just vision of who we are. For that matter, the best writers among us, through their talent, creativity, and art, are true ambassadors of our cultures and values. Thanks to the cultural mixings that allow for exchanges and voyages, literature from Africa and about Africans is fruitful elsewhere. The world of ideas only has borders for those who are narrow-minded!

**MKE:** You pay homage to the great political and literary figure Léopold Sédar Senghor in your poem “Mame Sédar.”<sup>9</sup> You write: “Rest in peace, Mame Sédar / Because Senghor is dead / But rhyme remains queen.”<sup>10</sup> In your opinion, how has Senegalese literature changed since Senghor’s time?

**NDD:** Senghor marked the country with his political but even moreso his cultural footprint. His influence as a poet and man of culture permitted our country to shine in all four corners

of the earth. Inside our borders, a true cultural policy was carried out. Since his retreat from public affairs and death, Senghor remains in our country's heritage and in the hearts of all Senegalese, but it is true that culture has been brutally marginalized. Great writers linked to this cultural movement emerged in the 60s and 70s such as Cheikh Hamidou Kane, Cheikh Aliou Ndao, Birago Diop, Mariama Bâ, Aminata Sow Fall, Ousmane Sembène, Boubacar Boris Diop. However, since then one can argue that inspiration has given way. Even if a few writers emerge in the new generation, we are far from the golden age that constituted the Senghorian years.

**MKE:** In her article "La fonction politique des littératures africaines écrites," published in 1981, Mariama Bâ says that the African woman writer has a particularly critical mission and that her literary presence must be seen and recognized in order for Africa to develop and grow: "She must, more than her masculine co-authors, paint a picture of the condition of the African woman."<sup>11</sup> In your opinion, must the African woman writer have a particular mission? What is your mission as a Senegalese woman writer?

**NDD:** Personally, I do not write with a mission in mind or a particular objective. That said, my concerns as a writer are never far from the concerns of the society, of my countrymen and women, and of the women who still today suffer every sort of social weight. I realize that we have a real combat to undertake because we are leaders of opinion and our ideas are driven by our books, read and debated. As a woman, I realize also that I am more sensitive to the condition of my sisters, knowing that many of them cannot express themselves, denounce oppression and injustice, or even defend themselves or make their opinion heard. So, whether one wants it or not, this mission imposes itself on us, as women but also spokespeople.

**MKE:** I have recently read your short story collections *Le Retour d'un si long exil* (2000) and *Cirque de Missira* (2010). What were your goals in writing these stories? What image of Senegalese or African women did you want to show to your readers?

**NDD:** Through my short stories, I try to describe situations lived by women, but not only women. I am against all forms of inequality, especially when it is linked to gender. We, woman and men, are all people with the same base value. The only difference is in the capacity for some to distinguish themselves by their own merit and value. My short stories recount the paths, sometimes difficult, of ordinary people who are heroes of resistance and struggle.

### Resistance and Cultural Changes

These ordinary "heroes of resistance and struggle" are represented in *Le Retour d'un si long exil* (2000), Diouf's first published collection of short stories that explore the idea of change. The compilation aptly opens with an epigraph by Omar Khayyam, an eleventh-century Persian poet and mathematician: "Life passes, rapid caravan! Stop your race and try to be happy."<sup>12</sup> Diouf alerts her reader to the rapidity as well as the fragility of life as a sort of *carpe diem* cautionary message. The first text, "Le Retour d'un si long exil," sets the tone for the stories that follow, as it recounts the experience of a young woman who returns to her native village after spending time abroad to pursue her university studies. In the first paragraph, the narrator is happy to return home after several years "in exile," but she notices some unpleasant transformations that have occurred since her departure. Two central themes of movement and change are highlighted:



I returned from my too long exile. This land that I had not tread upon for five years appeared to me today hotter and more arid than in my memory. Its skin was cracked, its body lapidated, its complexion naturally dark had taken on brown and ocher colors, its gaping wounds were thirsty for rain. But I found it just as I loved it.<sup>13</sup>

The use of the noun “exile” and adverb “too” in the first line are critical, as they highlight not only the narrator’s desire to return home but also her sense of displacement while living abroad. Diouf equates the young narrator’s unnamed home country to an aging and wounded person who has been beaten down by its harsh climate. Despite the fact that her homeland is “cracked” and “lapidated,” the narrator’s love for it has not diminished. This wounded and thirsty place that begs for love is an apt metaphor for Africa as a whole. Despite the continent’s poverty, harsh climate, and past wounds inflicted as a result of colonization, it is a beautiful place that should instill pride in its inhabitants rather than shame or the desire to flee. The narrator has been gone for a considerable amount of time, but she insists that she would recognize her country no matter how many changes it has undergone: “I would have recognized them among a thousand, my land, my people, my body and my blood.”<sup>14</sup>

Although the symbolic baobab trees are still as beautiful and imposing as when she left, she quickly realizes that many things are no longer the same. This fertile “oasis in the desert” whose fish, flora, and fauna lived here “without being worried” was now in jeopardy of extinction.<sup>15</sup> She understands these differences but faces them with “a heavy heart.”<sup>16</sup> She is disappointed to no longer be able to see the water, as *toubabs*, or white Westerners, have invaded the village and built large multi-story buildings that block the view. The narrator must “adapt to the new configuration” as she fights feelings of displacement due to societal and cultural changes in her country. Although “*Le Retour d’un si long exil*” may seem autobiographical at first glance, Diouf claims that this is not entirely true. She explains her reaction to these cultural changes that she witnessed upon her return to Senegal after completing her studies in France.

**MKE:** The narrator of the first short story in *Le Retour d’un si long exil* describes her return home after her “too long an exile.” Is this story autobiographical?

**NDD:** Not exactly. It is true that I lived several years outside of Senegal and upon my return, I was struck by what my compatriots called ‘progress.’ I found that because of the desire to imitate the West, we were losing our soul and were no longer ourselves. One’s home country is often dreamed about and idealized when one is far away and choked by nostalgia. In a sense, it is Ariadne’s thread that allows one to become more attached to something when one no longer has a point of reference.<sup>17</sup> We often forget that time passes and societies evolve. Yes for progress, but we must pay attention to not lose our specificities and values.

### Destroying the Myth of Omnipotence

Through her work, Diouf champions progress and positive change in order to create a stronger society. One such example can be found in the story “*Dérive en eaux troubles*,” featured in *Le Retour d’un si long exil*. Diouf breaks the stereotype of the omnipotent male who is not allowed to show signs of perceived weakness or emotions through the character of Souleymane. He struggles to come to terms with the impending birth of his first child

and his role as a father. However, for his wife Awa, motherhood is not simply the ability to conceive but rather a lifelong responsibility: "Maternity, for her...was a responsibility, a true role for which she had attempted to prepare herself."<sup>18</sup> While she courageously embraces this new role, her husband is not as excited or confident. As Awa is in the hospital with uneven contractions, he becomes anxious about how he will handle caring for a newborn. Unable to concentrate at work, he decides to leave early and go to the cinema followed by a bar. He asks himself the following question: "But what do other parents of newborns do? Do they all have this same immense joy mixed with a profound anxiety...?"<sup>19</sup> In the meantime, Awa faces complications and a severe hemorrhage. After looking at her chart, the doctor notices that her husband is a universal donor. Thus, Souleymane's absence not only hurts Awa emotionally but also physically. Fortunately, she survives the ordeal and gives birth to a healthy baby girl via cesarean section. She is greatly disappointed and saddened by her husband's actions, but now she must focus on her child: "She fought for her daughter. Her daughter needed her. She glanced around the room but Souleymane still was not there."<sup>20</sup> When he finally does arrive at the hospital with red lipstick stains on his collar in a "state of advanced inebriation," he grabs his newborn baby girl, slumps against the wall, and begins to cry.<sup>21</sup> Awa battles for her own life, showing her strength and dedication to her daughter. Souleymane, on the other hand, lacks courage and fears that he cannot the responsibilities of fatherhood. He is a character who questions his paternal role and openly displays his vulnerability.

**MKE:** I have the impression that the male characters in your short stories are often represented as weak. I am thinking, for example, of Souleymane in "Dérive aux eaux troubles" who misses the birth of his child because he goes to a bar and arrives drunk at the hospital; or Badou in "Bonne nuit, petite fleur" who misses the flight for his honeymoon and as a result, his wife leaves without him. Could you speak a bit about this portrayal?

**NDD:** In my writing, I speak in general about human weakness, sometimes about the lack of courage or on the contrary, the extraordinary courage of certain people. My goal is not to caricaturize one or the other of the sexes, but perhaps I attempt to reestablish an equilibrium in the perception that we have of men in Africa: all powerful, without emotion, required to excel in society, in particular in front of their family and loved ones, and to create admiration. Yet, these are people made of skin and blood, who anguish over things, their faults, their temporary weaknesses, sometimes their lack of courage, even their defects. To describe what is behind the scenes contributes to debunking the myth of the "superman" and finally render them as humans. It is without a doubt a way for me to invite men to accept their fallibility without it being an apology for weakness. This helps also with the deconstruction of the myth of omnipotence that has contributed to creating a chauvinistic society.

### Critique of Polygamy

One way in which Diouf criticizes chauvinism is through her depiction of polygamy and the disastrous results it can have on the women it affects. In *La Parole aux négresses* (*Speak Out, Black Sisters*), considered by some critics as the seminal book on African feminism, author Awa Thiam intermingles her own reflections with personal testimonies of African women. She writes:

Black women have been silent for too long. Are they now beginning to find their voices? Are they claiming the right to speak for themselves? Is it not high time that they discovered their own voices, that—even if they are unused to speaking for themselves—they now take the floor, if only to say that they exist, they are human beings—something that is not always immediately obvious—and that, as such they have a right to liberty, respect, and dignity?<sup>22</sup>

Nafissatou Dia Diouf's views on women's rights to liberty, respect, and dignity echo those of Thiam. She advocates for women to make their own decisions, express themselves freely, and pose questions rather than accept societal roles dictated to them.

In the story "A Tîre-d'aile," found in *Le Retour d'un si long exil*, Malick loses interest in his wife when she has difficulty conceiving. After he deserts their "love nest," the narrator feels so alone and guilty that she is "ready to make any concession for him to sleep next to me again. No, I was not proud of myself. All of my convictions that I thought were unshakeable—particularly by a man—were smashed today like that, like the snap of a dish towel."<sup>23</sup> The pressure she feels to conceive and the guilt after not being able to are common literary motifs in African women's writing. According to Odile Cazenave, "marriage is not seen as an end in itself anymore than it is considered for love or the notion of sharing that it may entail. Children and the official recognition that it gives women are what justify marriage."<sup>24</sup>

The narrator could not have predicted how inviting a young university student to live with them would change her life. Aïssa, the daughter of Malick's friend, is moving to the capital from the countryside to study history and is fourteen years younger than the narrator. With Aïssa to help with domestic tasks, the narrator now has more time to "make herself beautiful" for her husband's arrival home at the end of the day. However, he has simply lost interest despite all her efforts. After the narrator returns from the hospital where she has had an operation to help her conceive, Malick announces that he will be sleeping in Aïssa's room, as he took her for his second wife in a private ceremony a day ago. The narrator instinctively grabs Aïssa by her hair and drags her outside in a state of agitation: "I was like a crazy woman...I heard him screaming...that I was not normal, that I didn't deserve respect, that in the end he did well, etc. I didn't even listen to him."<sup>25</sup> Instead of quietly accepting her husband's decision to marry a second wife, the narrator reacts viscerally and openly displays her emotions. After crying endlessly, the narrator admits that she cannot understand how she could be so naïve. "Most of all, I cannot come to terms with such a degree of treason by a man to whom one gives one's youth and love unconditionally...I feel disillusioned. Malick fled like that, cowardly, he ran swiftly."<sup>26</sup> The narrator in "À Tîre-d'aile" reclaims her voice in order to speak out against the "treason" of which she feels her husband is guilty.

**MKE:** Many Senegalese women writers such as Mariama Bâ, Aminata Sow Fall, Ken Bugul, and Fatou Diome treat the controversial subject of polygamy in their work. It is a recurring trope in *Le Retour d'un si long exil* and *Cirque de Missira* as well. What is your opinion about polygamy in Senegal? Does it represent the same values and objectives as in the past?

**NDD:** In our societies, one often frames polygamy in religion in order to make those who suffer the most accept it: women. Thus, these are moralizing and guilt-creating discourses, even sometimes menacing. A woman should not mention her feelings and should hold

them back for the good of her children. It is more of a tradition than a divine commandment: a societal tradition where men make the decisions and women do not have a voice. However, while on the surface they show dignity, most women who are in polygamous households (not all, I recognize) suffer from sharing their husband, tensions, and unavoidable rivalries. Our former generation of female authors courageously spoke up, particularly to describe the disarray it caused these women. We should dare to go further and to refuse. I, for one, make no apologies in assuming this.

### Reconceptualizing Marriage, Maternity, and Femininity

Diouf routinely features female characters that courageously work to create their own unique identities. In her story "Sagar," also from *Le Retour d'un si long exil*, the eponymous heroine refuses to be confined to a polygamous marriage. After two years of marriage to Alioune, the protagonist's belly is empty, "like a sea without fish, a tree without fruit, an infertile land. She was useless."<sup>27</sup> In Wolof society, a woman must bear her first child within nine to ten months of marriage. "Maternity for a woman was the center of life."<sup>28</sup> Due to Sagar's "difference," or inability to conceive, her husband Alioune decided to take a second, third, and finally a fourth wife.<sup>29</sup> Despite Sagar's perceived infertility, at the age of forty-four she experiences what she describes as a miracle and becomes pregnant. When Alioune does not fulfill his repeated promises to leave his younger wives, she divorces him and raises her son without his support. Sagar is thankful for the close relationship she shares with her son and does not carry any regrets despite the sadness she felt in her marriage. "She began to live at the moment where this embryo became attached to the hollow of her belly. This embryo that was today a father and that made her become reborn when she no longer believed in life."<sup>30</sup> Sagar represents the courageous women who refuse to accept a life dictated to them by their husband or society. Even though Sagar's name signifies "rag" and she is viewed as an "object" rather than a wife or woman in the eyes of her husband, she refuses to accept this definition. She becomes a ray of light for her son and claims that she "had a life full of waiting, but then full of happiness."<sup>31</sup> In her book *Francophone African Women Writers: Destroying the Emptiness of Silence*, Irène Assiba d'Almeida posits that contemporary African women writers have begun to challenge stereotypes and accurately represent their roles as women and mothers: "This quest for self-knowledge has led African women to begin representing themselves in fiction, and to gradually call into question the male view of themselves as mythical and symbolic figures...women have emphasized the necessity of abandoning the idealization of women."<sup>32</sup> Sagar does not represent the mythical figure of the African woman, but rather a mother who rejects polygamy and subsequently raises her son independently. Diouf helps to create a new image of the contemporary Senegalese woman who chooses her own destiny without relying on the moral, familial, or financial support of her husband.

**MKE:** It seems that an important and recurring theme in your short stories is conjugal relationships and marital problems. Could you speak about the role of marriage in Senegal?

**NDD:** Marriage has an extremely social role, even more in Senegal where religion carries considerable weight in the life of an individual. When one marries, one does not marry a man or a woman but a family with an initial decision and decisions throughout the marriage that exceed the narrow setting of the couple. At this level, one could consider that the family, the oldest members and parents in particular, play an intrusive role, especially in the

eyes of foreigners. However, traditionally it is a system that worked well, indeed it even functioned as a regulator. Things change in modern and urban societies under the influence of international media that present us with other management methods for families and couples. Therefore, that which was accepted, perhaps tolerated (polygamy, levirate marriage, “giving” one’s child to a family member who doesn’t have a child, etc.), can seem today inconceivable or at least not compatible with our current way of life.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the fact that women never participated in decisions that concerned her did not mean that she was consenting. Today, women have been uninhibited, liberated, and even if they pay a steep price, they do not hesitate to refuse and denounce.

**MKE:** The famous poem “Femme noire” by Senghor is sometimes criticized for reinforcing the stereotypical image of the woman as a mythical symbol of “Mother Africa.”<sup>34</sup> Mariama Bâ argues: “The nostalgic songs dedicated to African mothers which express the anxieties of men concerning Mother Africa are no longer enough.”<sup>35</sup> Do you agree with this statement? Maternity is an important theme in your fiction. In your opinion, what is the role of the mother in Senegalese society?

**NDD:** In Africa, beyond the very important biological role (for the survival of the human race), women play a social role linked to their status as women, a role that holds real power, as long as it does not confine them uniquely to this role. I am not the type to reject this somewhat cliché side of the African woman, a mother who reigns over her family and offspring. On the contrary, she ensures the equilibrium and development of her family members. In fact, many African societies are matrilineal, which grants significant power in terms of the transmission of ancestry, patrimony, heritage, etc. For me, it is about preserving all of this and conquering new territories, particularly in the public domain. It is important that women are citizens in their own right, that they can publicly defend their ideas and fight their own battles without complexes or obstacles—not necessarily or exclusively feminist but for the betterment of their society. We should refuse to be confined to familial and private spheres but rather conquer spaces of public expression and contribution without denying that which creates our specificity of being women (femininity, maternity, protection of family interests).

**MKE:** What is the current reality of Senegalese women and the role of Senegalese women in contemporary society?

**NDD:** Senegalese women, African in general, have power but it is traditionally confined to familial and social circles. Concerning the economic sphere, they were either in the productive sector (agriculture, for example) or in small business. Things have changed enormously in the past thirty years. More and more go to school, pursue their education, and obtain good degrees. They naturally claim their place in society through their roles in business, administration, and in the political sphere as well. For this, they must fight two times harder for a result that is not even guaranteed. Unfortunately, we still live in a chauvinistic society with men who are still not ready, because of their education, to make space for us. I have to admit that President Abdoulaye Wade very much believed in and encouraged women.<sup>36</sup> It is thanks to him that the system of parity for all elective and semi-elective functions (National Assembly) was integrated. It was under his presidency that Senegal saw its first female Prime Minister and more women in important governmental roles. The change in mentalities will be made at the institutional level and in the familial sphere notably with an indispensable change in the education of our girls and boys!



## Changing Mentalities

Diouf firmly believes in the power of education and that young Senegalese children should be proud of their country and gain the essential tools to make it better. It is this image that she attempts to portray in her writing: "It is necessary to show an Africa that moves, that has faith in the future, that invests in its children while wanting to give them all the tools to live and integrate into a globalized society without any shame whatsoever."<sup>37</sup> Diouf criticizes the tendency to do things only for the sake of appearances and shows how certain traditions have the potential to generate feelings of shame.

In "Mémoires d'un chauffeur de taxi," the final story in *Le Retour d'un si long exil*, a Dakarais taxi driver named Modou Cissé warns the reader that in order to understand Senegal and its culture, you must know the following: "One must understand something: in Senegal, everything is a matter of dignity. A question of *sutura*. One cannot get enough to eat but it is essential to keep up appearances."<sup>38</sup> In this story, Diouf critically examines the role of young *talibés* who are sent to live with a *serigne* in Dakar to learn the teachings of Islam.<sup>39</sup> Instead of being nurtured by their teachers, the *talibés* are often required to beg in the streets to support themselves. Moudou notices a young boy walking with bare feet along the cold asphalt one night well past midnight. When Moudou asks him what he is doing out alone so late, the boy responds that he had not collected the sum of money that his *serigne* demanded in order to return to the Koranic school. He was told that if he didn't earn this money, he would have to sleep on the pavement outside. "In the middle of the homeless, the drugged, and the crazy, he was the only innocent one trying to survive in the jungle of the night, abandoned to all the fears and all the dangers."<sup>40</sup> After the taxi driver feeds the boy, he discovers that the boy left his village of Linguère for Dakar because he was the oldest child and his father wanted him to become a scholar of Islam. Moudou convinces the boy to be driven home, and his parents barely recognize their son upon arrival. They are ecstatic that he has returned but surprised by his appearance and mistreatment. Diouf paints a clear picture of the exploitation of *talibés* who are sent to Dakar under the auspices of learning the teachings and practices of Islam.<sup>41</sup>

**MKE:** Could you elaborate on this "change of mentalities" that should be made?

**NDD:** A society does not define itself uniquely by rules and laws that must be respected. The real revolution will be the work that we do ourselves. I dream of an egalitarian society where it is guaranteed that everyone will thrive, men as well as women, each according to the personal investment that he or she makes. We still suffer too much from pseudo-religious obstacles or those linked to traditions. The world is evolving. We no longer live like we did 200 years ago; we no longer have the same way of life. We have accepted to open ourselves up to the world. We should agree to hold up a mirror and take a look at ourselves without indulgence, although of course without renouncing who we are intrinsically: our values, our culture, and our historical heritage. An unequal society is a fragile society.

## Senegal in the Midst of Transformation

In her recent books *Sociobiz* (2010) and *Sociobiz 2* (2013), Diouf features chronicles focused on themes related to contemporary Senegalese culture and society that juxtapose profound philosophical analysis with humor and illustrations by Samba Ndar Cissé. In the first work,

*Sociobiz*, Diouf highlights the economic and business practices in her country, depicting an “Africa simultaneously proud of its performances and conscious of its handicaps.”<sup>42</sup> *Sociobiz 2* follows the same format evoked in the first book but focuses on societal and cultural practices in contemporary Senegal. In his preface, Cheikh Tidiane Mbaye, former President and CEO of Sonatel, describes his perception of the book’s message.<sup>43</sup> “In my opinion, if a message can be taken from these thirty chronicles, beyond the caricatures and exaggerations, it is the invitation the author makes to this ‘New Type of Senegalese’ for a profound transformation: in one’s life, one’s environment, one’s work, one’s relationships with others, and in particular with one’s link to the productive sector, with the ‘hand that feeds us’.”<sup>44</sup> Diouf articulates Africa’s potential to be a player in the world’s economy and encourages her fellow citizens to invent their “own model of development” through civic action.<sup>45</sup>

**MKE:** Cheikh Tidiane Mbaye poses some essential questions in his preface to *Sociobiz 2*. He asks: “Has the ‘homo senegalensis’ examined in the first volume fundamentally evolved? What lessons from history has he retained in order to improve his way of life, performance of his enterprise, evolution of his society, and his children’s future? Have the recent political events of the country awoken the civic responsibility that was dormant in each Senegalese and succeeded in uniting the society in a unique spirit of patriotism?”<sup>46</sup> What were your objectives in writing *Sociobiz 2*, and do you feel that Senegalese society is united after the recent political events?<sup>47</sup>

**NDD:** We saw the Senegalese mobilize, come together, and block against arbitrariness. It is said that there is strength in numbers, and the last elections showed that. However, with danger in the past, we feel this solidarity relapse and the fight fragment, at the very least weaken. *Sociobiz 2* was written in the context of strong political and social tensions, at a moment when the ‘homo senegalensis’ awoke to its citizen consciousness thanks to a spontaneous but beneficial movement. These are the great moments of a nation that I was lucky to witness and most of all to retell and attempt to analyze by stepping back. The question is: what did we do with this momentum? Did it fundamentally change our capacity to take destiny into our own hands? I fear that the answer is no, and this makes me sad. Should we only mobilize ourselves when faced with imminent danger or should we be vigilant citizens at all times and in all places in order to construct our society together?

**MKE:** What circumstances provoked the birth of the *Y’en a marre* movement and what is your opinion of it?

**NDD:** Those that I evoked earlier. The feelings of irreparable danger, fragility, lack of frame of reference for our youth, and the bleak future paved the way for the *Y’en a marre* movement. Moreover, the name of the movement is very eloquent. It is a cry of desperation. It is not simply “I want” but on the contrary “I no longer want.” It does not imply construction but rejection. The challenge now is to transform this rejection, this rage, this beneficial energy into something positive, proactive, a project for our society to construct and then to maintain.

**MKE:** In your fiction as well as your recent essays *Sociobiz* and *Sociobiz 2*, you criticize certain aspects of Senegalese society while simultaneously showing the beauty of your country. What is your image of contemporary Senegal and how do your texts reflect it?

**NDD:** We live in a Senegal that is in the midst of transformation.<sup>48</sup> I love my country and I chose to live here despite the fact that I had career possibilities elsewhere. For me, it was

important to play a role in building this country, to being close to my family, to seeing my children grow up and that all together we would work to construct our social project. It is true that sometimes my analyses are rather severe, but they are not unfair. The last thing we need is indulgence. It is because we love our country, for its virtues, for its values, for its resistance and the optimism of its people, that we should not let things that are not going well continue or keep quiet about them.

**MKE:** And what is not going well at this point in time? In your opinion, which problems are the most urgent to resolve?

**NDD:** I think that there is a crisis of values, a loss of reference points for the youth who no longer believe in the future, who no longer think they have a place or utility in society. They are growing up spontaneously, really without much support (with parents who have often resigned their roles). Consequently, they are in survival mode and potentially aggressive because they feel unappreciated. Some take refuge in artificial paradises or religious extremism. We must restore hope for our youth and give them high quality education, jobs, and a real place and use in our society. At the institutional level, one of the ills that poisons us is poor governance and its corollary in the vicious cycle: impunity. If impunity didn't exit, there wouldn't be poor governance.

### **Visions for the Future and Visionary Writing**

**MKE:** I would like to continue with this idea of "mutation" that plays a key role in your texts. I noticed that you have an essay entitled "Mutations" in your new book *Sociobiz 2*. Which mutations are positive, which are negative, and what is your vision for the future of Senegal?

**NDD:** The chronicle "Mutations" in the text you cite makes reference to modernity and the manner in which it is lived by our societies. I pay special attention to that which involves technologies and the virtual world that now blurs the boundaries of information, knowledge, cultures, and people. At the same time, geographical boundaries have never been so rigid. The cultural question therefore becomes essential: what do we have to win and lose in opening up to the world? How can we enrich ourselves with new ideas and practices, expand our mental horizons all the while keeping and sharing our culture, our values, and in short our essence with the world? How can we ensure that these exchanges are balanced, based on give-give and not a culture (dominant Western) that imposes itself on us and drives us to deny who we are? You see that the question is complex and that the answer cannot be definitive. Our role as writers is more to pose questions, bring light to and raise awareness about issues rather than give answers. There is not a positive or negative transformation in itself. Everything is in the manner in which we integrate progress, as a necessity in the evolution of people and their societies, all the while being careful to stay true to ourselves and to take and give our best.

### **Conclusion**

Through her writing, Nafissatou Dia Diouf does not perpetuate stereotypes but rather critically examines the ills her country faces and encourages her compatriots to co-construct a better society. In *Rebellious Women: The New Generation of Female African Novelists*, Odile Cazenave argues that writers such as Calixthe Beyala and Véronique Tadjo "define a new

political novel in the feminine mode.” By questioning women’s roles and integrating both male and female narrative voices, these writers allow us to look toward the future. Her description of Beyala and Tadjou aptly applies to Nafissatou Dia Diouf’s writing and message as well.

This new writing is truly visionary, as it offers us an alternative vision, one of a better Africa. In their *prise de parole*, these women strive to establish a more active interaction between writer and readers in order to call on them directly and bring them into the quest for a new social and political balance. Both men and women are forced to conduct their own individual reassessments of their participation in the construction of the African continent.<sup>49</sup>

Nafissatou Dia Diouf’s depiction of everyday people and situations in Senegal makes her work innovative and representative of the society in which she lives. Through her visionary writing, she “gives her best” and works to create a new type of Senegal of which she and her fellow citizens can be proud.

## Notes

- 1 I am not aware of any scholarly journal articles that have been published on the author. On Diouf’s personal website, <http://www.nafidiadiouf.net/>, there is a section entitled “Dans la presse” (In the press) with links to articles from Senegalese newspapers and magazines such as *Amina*, *Sud Quotidien*, and *Le Matin*. Diouf is featured in James Gaash’s anthology *La Nouvelle sénégalaise: texte et contexte* (2000) that includes an interview with the author and the short story “Le Retour d’un si long exil.” Additionally, she is included in Kathleen Madigan’s reader *Neuf Nouvelles: Hommage aux Sénégalaises* published in 2008. This collection is intended for use in the advanced French literature and culture classroom and features both an interview with the author as well as her short story “Le Rêve d’Amina.”
- 2 Mikolo 2006, p. 57.
- 3 Bikindou 2007, p. 102.
- 4 Laye 2012, no pagination. “Dans mon premier essai à l’âge de 12 ans, j’ai décrit la scène d’un accouchement avec tellement d’exactitude que ma maman n’en revenait pas.”
- 5 Mikolo 2006, p. 57. “*Amina* is my first publication experience and I thank M. Michel de Breteuil to have given me this opportunity ten years ago! I was already writing short stories on diverse topics that touchend me, and this was like a helium balloon. To know that my short stories could attract a larger public audience was the first encouraging step of my career.” “*Amina* est ma première expérience de publication et je remercie M. Michel de Breteuil de m’avoir donné cette chance il y a dix ans! J’écrivais déjà des nouvelles sur divers sujets qui me touchaient et ce fut pour moi comme un ballon de sonde. Savoir que mes nouvelles pouvaient plaire à un large public a été le premier encouragement de ma carrière.”
- 6 Diouf 2013, interview with author.
- 7 The interview remarks presented in this article come from questions posed via e-mail between June and December 2013 and a personal interview with Diouf on June 22, 2013 in Dakar. The interviews were conducted in French, and all translations to English are

- by the author. Interview transcripts are in the author's possession.
- 8 Bikindou 2007, p. 102. "des maux qui les préoccupent, des situations qui les touchent ou qui les font rire."
  - 9 "Mame Sédar" is included in Diouf's collection of poetry entitled *Primeur*. Léopold Sédar Senghor was a co-founder of the literary and intellectual Negritude movement. He is also celebrated author and politician who served as Senegal's first president from 1960-1980 and was the first African elected to the *Académie Française* in 1983.
  - 10 Diouf 2003, p. 39. "Mais repose en paix, Mame Sédar / Car Senghor est mort / Mais la rime reste reine!"
  - 11 Bâ 1981, p. 6. "Elle doit, plus que ses pairs masculins, dresser un tableau de la condition de femme africaine."
  - 12 Diouf 2000, p. 9. "La vie passe, rapide caravane! Arrête ta monture et cherche à être heureux."
  - 13 Ibid., p. 11. "Je revenais de mon trop long exil. Cette terre que je n'avais pas foulée depuis un lustre m'apparaissait aujourd'hui plus chaude et plus aride que dans mon souvenir. Sa peau était craquelée, sa chair lapidée, son teint naturellement sombre avait pris des couleurs brunes et ocre, ses plaies béantes étaient assoiffées de pluie. Mais je la retrouvais telle que je l'aimais."
  - 14 Ibid., p. 11. "Je les aurais reconnus entre mille, ma terre, mes gens, ma chair et mon sang."
  - 15 Ibid., p. 16. "cette oasis dans le désert"
  - 16 Ibid., p. 16. "le cœur gros"
  - 17 Ariadne is a Greek mythological figure. She was the daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë from Crete who gave Theseus the thread with which he found his way out of the Minotaur's labyrinth. Ariadne's thread refers to a method of problem solving where one exhausts all available routes of logic in order to determine a solution. It is often used interchangeably with the expression "trial and error."
  - 18 Ibid., p. 41. "La maternité, pour elle...c'était une responsabilité, un véritable rôle auquel elle avait tenté de se préparer."
  - 19 Ibid., p. 45. "Mais comment font les autres parents de nouveau-nés? Avaient-ils tous en eux cette immense joie mêlée à une angoisse profonde...?"
  - 20 Ibid., p. 48. "Elle luttait pour sa fille. Sa fille avait besoin d'elle. Elle jeta un coup d'œil circulaire dans la salle mais Souleymane n'était toujours pas là."
  - 21 Ibid., p. 49. "un état d'ébriété avancé"
  - 22 Thiam 1986, p. 15.
  - 23 Ibid., p. 86. "J'étais prête à faire n'importe quelle concession pour qu'il dorme à nouveau près de moi. Non, je n'étais pas fière de moi. Toutes mes convictions que je pensais inébranlables—surtout par un homme!—étaient aujourd'hui battues en brèche comme cela, comme d'un coup de torchon."
  - 24 Cazenave 2000, p. 108.
  - 25 Ibid., p. 93. "J'étais comme folle...Je l'entendais hurler...que je n'étais pas normale, que je ne méritais pas tant d'égards, que finalement, il avait bien fait, etc. Je ne l'écoutais même pas."
  - 26 Diouf 2000, p. 94. "Surtout, je n'arrive pas à réaliser à tel degré de trahison chez un homme à qui on a donné sa jeunesse et son amour sans condition...Je me sens désabusée."



- Malick avait fuit comme ça, lâchement, il s'était enfui à tire-d'aile."
- 27 Ibid., p. 111. "comme une mer sans poisson, un arbre sans fruit, une terre infertile. Elle était inutile."
- 28 Ibid., p. 114. "la maternité pour une femme était le centre de toute une vie." For more background on how African women writers since the 1980s have transformed traditional literary depictions of maternity and fertility, see Éloïse Brière's article "Le retour des mères dévorantes."
- 29 For a detailed study on polygamy as it relates to Wolof society, see Abdoulaye Bara Diop *La société wolof: tradition et changement*.
- 30 Ibid., p. 118. "Elle avait commencé à vivre à l'instant où cet embryon s'était nidé au creux de son ventre. Cet embryon qui était aujourd'hui père et qui l'avait fait revivre quand elle ne croyait plus à la vie."
- 31 Ibid., p. 118. "Elle avait une vie pleine d'attente puis remplie de bonheur."
- 32 Assiba d'Almeida 1994, p. 8.
- 33 Levirate marriage is an ancient Hebrew tradition that allows a man to marry his dead brother's widow in order to maintain his familial line. It is permitted under article 110 of the Senegalese Family Code created in 1972 and put into effect on January 1, 1973 that regulates marriage, divorce, succession, and custody. The Code can be accessed online through the Senegalese Ministry of Justice at the link provided in the bibliography.
- 34 For a detailed analysis of the Mother Africa trope in male-authored African literature, see Florence Stratton's *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*. She writes: "The trope is...not just a periodic feature of the male literary tradition, it is one of its *defining* features." Stratton 1994, p. 50.
- 35 Bâ 1981, pp. 6-7. "Les chants nostalgiques dédiés à la mère africaine confondue dans les angoisses d'homme à la Mère Afrique ne nous suffisent plus."
- 36 For more background on Abdoulaye Wade's presidency, see the introduction to this issue as well as Momar-Coumba Diop's volume *Senegal (2000-2012): Les institutions et politiques publiques à l'épreuve d'une gouvernance libérale*. Wade was first elected President of Senegal in 2000 and won reelection for a second term in 2007.
- 37 Bikindou, 102. "Il faut montrer une Afrique qui bouge, qui a foi en l'avenir, qui mise sur ses enfants en voulant leur donner les atouts pour vivre et s'insérer dans un monde globalisé et ce, sans complexe, aucun."
- 38 Ibid., p. 141. "Il faut comprendre quelque chose: au Sénégal, tout est affaire de dignité. Question de *sutura*. On peut ne pas manger à sa faim mais il est toujours très important de garder les apparences." In a footnote, Diouf defines *sutura* as the preservation of honor.
- 39 The Arabic word *talibé* refers to a student of Islam who is taught by a *serigne*.
- 40 Diouf 2000, p. 147. "Au milieu des clochards, des drogués, et des fous, il était le seul innocent à essayer de survivre dans la jungle de la nuit, livré à toutes les frayeurs et à tous les dangers."
- 41 UNICEF estimates that there are 100,000 *talibés* in Senegal today, and there is no shortage of media coverage on their exploitation. Most of these young boys are under the age of thirteen and come from low-income families. For an analysis of the role of begging in the Islamic context, see Loretta Elizabeth Bass's *Child Labor in Sub-Saharan Africa*. She explains the vulnerability of the *talibé* children: "Talibes are vulnerable to

exploitation for obvious reasons. They are children, separated from their immediate and extended families, who spend considerable time on the street begging for food and money. They are in the exclusive custody of one person, their teacher, for long periods of time. Talibes are generally no longer a part of the household strategy of their parents. The marabout is expected to provide the basic needs of the child—food, an Islamic education, and housing. Generally, an urban marabout provides one or just a few cooked meals per week for his talibes. Likewise, the quality of housing provided by marabouts varies widely, and there is no oversight.” Bass 2004, p. 26.

- 42 Diouf 2010, p. 6. This quotation is from the book's preface, written by Babacar Ndiaye, former President of the African Development Bank. “Une Afrique à la fois fière de ses performances et consciente de ses handicaps.”
- 43 Sonatel stands for *Société Nationale des Télécommunications du Sénégal* and is the country's premiere telecommunications provider. Under Mbaye's direction, Sonatel became one of the most competitive companies in Africa.
- 44 Diouf 2013, p. 8. “A mon sens, si un message doit être retenu de cette trentaine de chroniques, au-delà de la caricature et du trait forcé, c'est l'invite que l'auteur fait à ce ‘Nouveau Type de Sénégalais’ pour une mue en profondeur: dans sa vie, dans son cadre de vie et son cadre de travail, dans ses rapports à l'autre et en particulier dans son lien au secteur productif, à la ‘main qui nous nourrit.’”
- 45 Ibid., p. 128. “notre propre modèle de développement.”
- 46 Ibid., p. 8. “L'homo senegalensis dont il a tant été question dans le premier volume a-t-il fondamentalement évolué? Quelles leçons de l'Histoire a-t-il retenues pour l'amélioration de son cadre de vie, la performance de son entreprise, l'évolution de sa société et l'avenir de ses enfants? La récente actualité politique du pays a-t-elle réveillé la fibre citoyenne qui sommeillait en chaque Sénégalais et a-t-elle réussi à unir la société dans un même élan patriotique?”
- 47 The recent political events to which Mbaye and Diouf refer are related to former Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade's attempt in 2011 to rewrite the Senegalese constitution and seize a third term in office. As a result, many young protestors took to the streets and voiced their opposition. It was at this time that the *Y'en a marre* (*We're Fed Up*) youth movement was formed by several Senegalese journalists and hip-hop artists. *Y'en a marre* leaders vociferously encouraged young people to cast their vote against Wade. According to Savané and Sarr, “*Y'en a marre* knew how to present a clear and simple message. Positioning itself at equidistance from political parties, it knew how to unite a community of young people who had been broken by the steamroller of unemployment. Young dynamic managers, journalists, the unemployed, workers, students, musicians, basically all societal categories were part of their cry for revolt.” Savané and Sarr 2012, p. 8. (“*Y'en a marre* a su dérouler un message clair et simple. Se positionnant à équidistance des partis politiques, il a su fédérer toute une jeunesse broyée par le rouleau compresseur du chômage. Jeunes cadres dynamiques, journalistes, chômeurs, ouvriers, étudiants, musiciens, bref toutes les catégories sociales se sont identifiées à leur coup de gueule.”)
- 48 I have used the phrase “in the midst of transformation” in the English translation. However, the expression employed by Diouf in French is “en pleine mutation” which has a more nuanced meaning. It reinforces the *process* of change or mutation.

49 Cazenave 2000, p. 242-243.

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# De-centering Theatrical Heritage: Forum Theater in Contemporary Senegal

BRIAN QUINN

**Abstract:** The current state of Senegalese theater is a source of concern for a number of the country's most prominent directors and performers, many of whom have come to doubt the efficacy of the centralized cultural policies that have led to the construction of two grandiose national theaters just a few kilometers apart from each other in the country's congested capital of Dakar. State-subsidized theatrical productions at the *Théâtre Daniel Sorano* and, more recently, at the *Grand Théâtre National* have struggled to achieve relevance within the national cultural landscape. And yet, independent, so-called popular theater troupes continue to spread if not thrive, largely ignored by both official cultural policy and scholarship on Senegalese theater and performance. This article explores the work of an independent forum theater troupe called *Kaddu Yaraax*, which has managed to establish an international profile and become a de facto role model for countless community-based independent theater troupes throughout Senegal. Much of *Kaddu Yaraax*'s success can be linked to its decision to work exclusively in the form of forum theater, as inspired by the performance philosophy of late Brazilian theater artist and activist Augusto Boal. I will argue that dramaturgical decisions necessary in the process of creating what is called a popular theatrical performance compel companies such as *Kaddu Yaraax* to address questions of Senegalese theatrical heritage and to position themselves vis-à-vis notions of pre-colonial, colonial and contemporary performance. These stakes are made apparent through an exploration of the performative architecture that troupes employ.

## Introduction

Senegalese popular theater is often criticized, dismissed even, as amateurish due in part to its characteristic exclusion of literary writing practices. Shows of this kind are rarely written down, let alone published, and there is no direct authorial relationship between an individual and the final content of what is presented before an audience.<sup>1</sup> An additional critique of popular theater in Africa in general has highlighted the fine line it treads between serving anti-authoritarian populist objectives and installing another mechanism of top-down moralizing characteristic of state-centered discourse. Indeed, the popular works in Senegal, as elsewhere, often veer toward the authoritarian end of this line, finding it difficult to refuse the not-so-disinterested aid proffered by political leaders and foreign NGOs. Yet forms of popular theater continue to thrive throughout the country, especially if one compares them to the small creative output of institutions such as the country's two large national theaters, both of which struggle to attract enough theater-goers to justify a full-blown theatrical production. Surely, imperfect though it may be in carrying out its promise of social

**Brian Quinn** is a PhD candidate at UCLA's Department of French and Francophone Studies. Focusing on theater and performance in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa, his dissertation examines shifting definitions and practices of theatrical staging in Senegal. Looking at the historical institutions where such performance paradigms have emerged, he has also focused on important postcolonial sites of memory in the field of cultural production.

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transformation as inspired by the work of progressive thinkers such as Paulo Freire, by virtue of its imprint on the creative landscape and collective imaginary popular theater must be included in any discussion of contemporary arts in Senegal and their potential to promote a so-called *nouveau type de Sénégalais*.<sup>2</sup>

The term "popular theater" in fact proves too broad in the Senegalese context, where "popular" has often come to indicate any theatrical work created outside the country's state-run theatrical structures.<sup>3</sup> For the sake of clarity, I would like to focus on the specific case of Senegal's primary forum theater company, also described as a leader in the realm of "popular" theater, *Kaddu Yaraax*, whose name means "word," or "voice" of Yaraax, the neighborhood from which these performers hail, located in Dakar's *Baie de Hann* and inhabited by a poor community of fishermen. I will suggest that such so-called popular companies should not be assessed solely by how they may or may not advance literary practices in theater, or through a discussion of how effectively they execute attempts to form an anti-authoritarian theater for the oppressed. Beyond these otherwise important concerns, it is essential to also consider troupes' modes of innovation and transmission within a theatrical heritage that ranges from pre-colonial times to the present. My argument is intended to address simultaneously calls for a more text-based approach to popular theater, as well as past writing on the practice of theater for development in Africa.<sup>4</sup> The latter have often focused on the failure of popular theater forms to abide by Paulo Freire's conceptual framework without instating the very kind of authoritarian discourse the Brazilian philosopher and educator wished to circumvent. However, aside from trying to remain faithful to theorists such as Freire and, from a theatrical perspective, Brazilian artist and political dissident Augusto Boal, in its work, *Kaddu Yaraax* is also situating itself as an innovator within a broader theatrical landscape, and is wresting the transmission of Senegalese theatrical heritage from the control of top-heavy, state-centered institutions.<sup>5</sup> A fuller appreciation of this heritage component in the work of independent theatrical groups will highlight the symbolic importance of adapting a performative architecture inspired by contemporary notions of pre-colonial African performance, especially as this flexibility in performative architecture is so lacking within the confines of national theatrical structures.

### Theater Within the "Pôle Officiel"

If seen solely from the vantage point of the country's state-funded theatrical institutions, contemporary Senegalese theater would appear to be at a rather disquieting standstill. For years, Léopold Sédar Senghor's *Théâtre Daniel Sorano*—inaugurated in 1965 as the paragon of a nationalist cultural production driven by Négritude ideology—has struggled to attract audiences. The drama department of the *Ecole Nationale des Arts*, which once supplied *Sorano* with its performers, has yet to recover from an enrollment crisis and hopes to receive enough applications from candidates in the 2013-14 academic year to justify funding an incoming class.<sup>6</sup> And as the paint still dries on the *Grand Théâtre National*, one of the truly grandiose *grands projets* pushed forward by former president Abdoulaye Wade, the structure has yet to demonstrate how it will live up to its promise of enhancing Senegal's prominence on the global theatrical stage.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the most commonly cited stormy petrel for the official pole of theater is the lack of up-and-coming, or even aspiring new playwrights hoping to carry on the stage tradition of literary pioneers such as Cheikh Aliou Ndao, Marouba Fall, or Boubacar Boris Diop.

Before we conclude that the place of theater in Senegal has diminished to a state of irrelevance vis-à-vis its national audiences, however, we might first ask just what the term "theater" evokes in the collective national imaginary, not only within official circles, but also on the proverbial street. Because of organizations like the ubiquitous, locally organized *Associations Sportives et Culturelles*, along with nationally coordinated theatrical youth groups such as the *Association des artistes comédiens du théâtre sénégalais* (ARCOTS), and the nightly televised sketches often sold on the street in DVD form and referred to by the Senegalese as being "*du théâtre*," despite never having been performed in front of a live audience, national understandings of theater have expanded beyond the typical Western vision of the crafted theatrical text performed on a proscenium-style stage for an audience of paying theatergoers.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, today in Senegal one finds multiple forms of a non-official theater, often called "popular," which in the past few decades has far outpaced its official, state-funded counterpart in adapting to the tastes and sensibilities of its national audience.

While productions at the *Théâtre Daniel Sorano* are performed to near empty houses, events produced by the ARCOTS branches of urban areas such as Pikine are often full beyond capacity and feature performers widely recognized from their work in television or with popular theater festivals. In seeking to explain the ubiquitous phenomenon of popular theater in contemporary Senegalese life, Director of Culture for the City of Dakar, Oumar Ndao, assesses the situation by pointing out: "We have more actors per square meter than any other country in the world. Here everyone is an actor, since everyone has performed with their ASC at one point or another."<sup>9</sup> Indeed, casual observations evince a Senegalese preference for forms of theater outside of the official, nationalist pole of cultural production. "And yet," Ndao continues, "we don't produce good theater." With the lack of training and resources for drama in Senegal, especially on the local level, popular performances can indeed often appear thrown together, or even amateurish, as Ndao suggests, a point which may in part explain the lack of critical interest in these works. Yet, questions of quality notwithstanding, the social implications of this theater come to the fore when considered as a foil to more formalized works of state-driven theater. Given the lack of audiences and scarcity of resources at official state institutions of culture, popular theater groups have today taken on the role of transmitting what they see as an important national theatrical heritage. Of course this transmission does not take place without new interpretations and performative innovations regarding what such a heritage must represent and defend.

A brief look at the *Kaddu Yaraax* company's artistic background, as well as the creative choices made throughout its development, will serve to highlight the historical and artistic stakes involved in this troupe's work, as well as how their performances fit within the broader dynamic of a Senegalese theatrical heritage as performed and produced by so-called popular theater companies.

### **Folklore, Transmission and Theatrical Heritage**

Like countless other Senegalese youths, the founding members of *Kaddu Yaraax* had their first encounter with theater through their local *Association Sportive et Culturelle* in the neighborhood of Tableau Ferraille. Organized locally and operating throughout the country, these ASCs enable young Senegalese to form their own troupes in order to take part in theatrical competitions through the *Nawetaan* initiative, a nationwide program providing schoolchildren with a range of activities during the summer vacation. Representing their community in a series of regional contests, the group of friends that would later form the

*Kaddu Yaraax* troupe quickly made a name for itself by taking home numerous awards in the performance form known as *théâtre total*. This form obligatorily includes four separate performance elements: a folkloric scene, a theatrical play, a chorus, and a dance.<sup>10</sup>

Additional points were attributed to groups managing to connect these with some kind of narrative through line. "For us it wasn't a game," explains the company's director Mouhamadou Diol, who insists that from the beginning the group saw its activities as part of a larger artistic vocation. "We used to read plays and wanted to inform ourselves on the theater."<sup>11</sup>

The group developed its technique, its members familiarizing themselves over the course of several years with the modes of African folklore, dance, and music taught and disseminated through the *Nawetaan* initiative. As a performer and artist, Diol does not denounce the role of folklore in African creation. He describes such practices as "What we have naturally. I mean, as Africans, we just know how to dance and play music." This position in relation to folklore has meant that *Kaddu Yaraax*'s theater has not sought to problematize notions of an essentialist African "soul" transmitted through performance, even as the troupe has drawn inspiration from non-African theatrical theories and practices. Diol does not disavow this folkloric aspect of what he considers the national Senegalese character. However, he does problematize its current place in theatrical productions. "It's who we are," he continues, "but I don't think that, on its own, it constitutes a work of art."<sup>12</sup> For Diol, in fact, the first critical response to the theatrical heritage of his country consisted not of criticizing the folkloric content of *Nawetaan* performances, but rather in denouncing the form imposed by these competitions of *théâtre total*. The competitive nature of these events appeared to preclude any artistic innovation and performances were assessed according to their ability to meet pre-established criteria of form.

Diol's greatest objection to these events was that they reinforced colonial historical constructs, acting according to ethnographic notions of authenticity and portraying the African performer as static, in a sense, frozen in time. This objection resonates clearly with the colonial origins of competitions such as those of the *Nawetaan* events, which, in fact, find historical roots in a form of theater that had emerged through the activities of the *centres culturels* of French West Africa.<sup>13</sup> These colonial institutions rose to prominence in the 1950s, when they would replace the prestigious *écoles normales* as the most visible promoters of so-called indigenous performance forms and styles in French West Africa.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, as the French authorities began to sense their waning influence, cultural institutions doubled down in their activities, deploying time and resources to a regional theatrical competition among *centres culturels* throughout then French West Africa (*Afrique occidentale française*, AOF) in an attempt to foment a sense of cultural solidarity not only between each colony and its ruling administration, but also among the colonies themselves, thus instantiating a fabricated notion of a common, French, West African identity. Much as with the *Nawetaan* events today, theatrical competitions among *centres culturels* took place in a series of local and regional rounds, with a final performance/competition held annually at the *Théâtre du Palais* in Dakar, where decisions of the mixed jury of French and African judges would often be hotly contested. In search of the notoriety that would come with being the prevailing *centre* of a given year, companies often threw themselves into the faithful representation of an African theater whose form and contours had in fact been established by an interested colonial authority.

Given their lasting impression on events such as the contemporary *Nawetaan* competitions, the *centres culturels* represent an important historical phase in the fabrication

of today's idea of *théâtre total* in Senegal. This genre of performance, mixing traditional dance, music, and folklore in fact finds its origins further back in the colonial period, with the theater produced at the *écoles normales* of the AOF, most notably the William Ponty school, where young African students were encouraged to use their familiarity with Western dramaturgy to recreate and perform aspects of indigenous culture, history, and mythology. The beginnings of *théâtre total* came about with the students' desire to infuse Western-inspired dramaturgy with notions of traditional or folkloric culture performed so as to highlight the students' potential for assimilation through France's civilizing precepts. Decades later, as the *écoles normales* lost their prominence in indigenous education, this "Africanized" style of theater was seized upon by administrators of the *centres culturels*, which, to create an evaluative system for the purposes of their competitions, assessed and divided the performances into discrete generic categories in order to establish the structure of what juries could consider the ideal work of *théâtre total*, an ideal intended to exert a strong influence on notions of identity and participation among local African audiences. The criteria employed to evaluate troupes' performances at the AOF-wide competition had a sufficiently enduring effect on notions of theater in Senegal to have carried over to evaluative criteria used to judge a *Nawetaan* performance today.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, by denouncing this criteria-driven approach to folklore in performance, *Kaddu Yaraax*'s artistic director was consciously walking away from the disavowed imprint of these competitions on much of what is today called *théâtre populaire*.

Diol is therefore elucidating one of *Kaddu Yaraax*'s most important initial artistic insights as a company when he explains the troupe's early desire to break away from the *Nawetaan* vision of theater. As the *Kaddu Yaraax* members were able to sense at their creative beginnings, and as Diol now explains, "in fact, *théâtre total* really means *théâtre colonisé*."<sup>16</sup> This comparison is not only a comment on *théâtre total*'s roots in the colonial cultural policy of the AOF, but also refers to Diol's objections to this theater's insistence on moralizing to its audience, a prime feature of a theatrical approach whose main goal was once to produce a greater number of *évolués* through Francophone colonial culture. Indeed, once they had become multiple *Nawetaan* awardees, the troupe soon found itself confronted consistently with a formidable artistic dilemma. "With the contests, you could be creative, but only within certain constraints," explains Diol. "And the format was always slightly political. Troupes were expected to use their shows to convey some kind of lesson, saying 'when there's a strike you shouldn't go around demolishing buses,' and so on." It is at this point that Diol and his companions decided to break away from the stylized mores of their *Nawetaan* co-competitors and began seeking out a more politically incisive means of presenting their work. "We realized that we could improve our performances greatly if we cut out the advice."<sup>17</sup> It is a decision which marked a turning point for the company while also presenting a formidable challenge: how to present a theatrical message to an audience without engaging, however so subtly, in what one might call "moralizing"?

In 1998, the group, having become independent of its ASC and taking on its current name of *Kaddu Yaraax*, created a new performance piece called *Yakaar* ("Hope"). In this original creation, the group did away with the mixed, "Africanized" performance modes it had adapted at its beginnings and developed the following message, summarized by Diol as, "If you want to develop something, a project or whatever, you must begin by developing yourself."<sup>18</sup> The main objective of the work was to reveal the ideological faults and practical shortcomings of seeing the country's problems as always coming from abroad, usually from the West. At this point, the company's primary mission was to produce a theater that would



encourage positive change in everyday behavior as a means for developing solutions to larger societal issues. The troupe also decided to remove as much as possible the moralizing component from their work, although it quickly became apparent that a moralizing message was still present implicitly in their performances. In their search to make good on a promise to commit to a form of theater that was not only dialogical but multi-logical, the members of *Kaddu Yaraax* would make their next important artistic discovery with their first encounter with the form of forum theater.

### The Forum-géew

In 2002, Kaddu Yaraax discovered forum theater at a training workshop offered by the *Institut Français* in Dakar and run by Burkinabe performing artist Prosper Kampaoré.<sup>19</sup> Forum theater is a performance method originally developed in the 1960s by Brazilian artist and political dissident Augusto Boal as part of his larger vision of a "Theater of the Oppressed." Since its development, this technique for using theater as a tool for political activism and social dialogue has gained popularity around the globe, and today a broad network of performers and activists works to promote forum theater as a means of empowerment for oppressed populations.<sup>20</sup> Boal's 1979 book *Theater of the Oppressed* elaborates on the structure and phases of forum theater, which, in the vein of Bertolt Brecht's "V-effekt," seeks to countervail Aristotelian processes of dramatic catharsis.<sup>21</sup> Taking Brecht's position of anti-empathetic distance one step further, Boal advocates a theater in which spectators, or as he calls them, "spect-actors," are incited to act immediately on stage to embody the type of social or behavioral changes necessary to address a given problem. To begin, actors present a short scenario in which a person or group is the victim of some form of oppression. Once the actors have performed their scene, a "joker" intervenes to solicit reactions from the audience. When the spectators have affirmed that what has taken place on stage could be improved upon toward a more equitable end, the troupe encourages them to take on the status of "spect-actor," stepping on stage themselves to replace one of the actors and modify the scene's outcome. Additional spect-actors are then asked to join in, and an open-form creative dialogue ensues wherein the stage becomes the facilitator of collaborative problem solving and discussion.

From the moment of this initial contact with forum theater, *Kaddu Yaraax* decided to dedicate their work exclusively to the form. In fact, what they call the suppleness of the forum theater form appealed first to the troupe's desire to use their work to engage with local audiences and address difficulties confronted on a daily basis to further their movement toward a more politically engaged theater. An additional benefit of this shift to forum theater was the adaptation of an architecture of performance that moved away from the folkloric or moralizing theater performed at the group's ASC and toward a form that bore important similarities with the *géew*, or the circle formed by residents of a village or neighborhood for a meeting, ritual or performance, and a performative structure with which Senegalese audiences would be quite familiar. For Diol, the reference point for the use of the *géew* in performance is a study by Alioune Oumy Diop, called *Le théâtre traditionnel au Sénégal*.<sup>22</sup> Diol cites this work as one of the earliest influences in his search for a means of creating theater in an African mode that does not fall into the trap of facile reenactments of African folklore or mythology. Diop's study provided the opportunity for an artistic melding of theatrical approaches, now central to *Kaddu Yaraax*'s work, which draws from pertinent outside theoretical writings and frameworks, while tapping into the collective



Senegalese imaginary for ways of setting the theatrical stage. In effect, it is the architecture of such so-called traditional performance forms that have proven useful to the company more than the folkloric content often associated with it.

Scholar and stage director Diop in his book offers a strong practical undergirding for directors who, like Diol, find the common folkloric approach rife with colonial undertones. Diop argues that, "the content of the performance must not consist of folklore set to music or dance that is simply ready for consumption. It must be an instrument of social transformation through its direct action upon its society."<sup>23</sup> The idea of the social function of theater has been central to discussions of Senegalese theater, beginning with Bakary Traoré's 1958 seminal work, *Le Théâtre Nègro-Africain et ses fonctions sociales*. Much like *Kaddu Yaraax*'s president and members, Diop is highly critical of staging folklore for folklore's sake. Like director Diol, however, he by no means dismisses all use of traditionalist or folkloric sources in contemporary Senegalese theater. To the contrary, Diop argues that Senegalese performers have a fruitful though underused architecture of traditional performance at their disposal in Senegalese performative practices that remains underrepresented in official theater to this day. He further argues that, while the exteriors of folkloric theater, checkered with the pitfalls of exoticism, are overused, elements of form from pre-colonial theater remain underused by performers despite their potential for reviving a potent and dynamic theatrical scene in Senegal.

For Diop, the most important of these forms of theatrical architecture is the *géew*, wherein communities create an impromptu, circular performance space for a theatrical or ritual performance, where one went "to see and be seen," a connection he makes with the role of the *theatron* in Ancient Greece.<sup>24</sup> This particular performance layout has much in common with the West's theater-in-the-round, but also includes a communitarian aspect, since the *géew* is place-specific and ideally conceived for and by the community in which it is formed. In fact, far from constituting a mere practical detail of the performance, the *géew* posits an entire theatrical architecture that one does not find, for example, in the stone constructions of Senegal's two opulent national theaters.

While discussions of what is often seen as the current dearth of theatrical production in Senegal often focus on the lack of written works for the theater - an observation which, in effect, opposes the "literary" theater of official national culture and the "merely popular" theater found in community centers - altogether different possibilities emerge when the focus shifts to these questions of "architectures" of performance.<sup>25</sup> Diop, for example, insists that in order for Senegalese theater to thrive, it must do away with the physical and ontological separation imposed by Western drama between audience and performer. Oumar Ndao shares in this sentiment when he relates theater's current state to its architecture in both the literal and figurative sense. "Today, we've put ourselves into all kinds of cornered constructions with right angles. We've cut ourselves off from each other. We've left the circle." Ndao thus joins Diop in suggesting that the national theaters do more to achieve a suppleness of form as they work to attract audiences. Unfortunately, the task is made difficult by the Western conventions of the proscenium adopted by both national theaters, where, as Ndao explains, "everyone consumes his product individually - but for us theater is meant to be a collective consumption!"<sup>26</sup>

While state-funded theatrical organizations continue to struggle to marry Western theatrical conventions with more locally inspired performance forms, independent companies have had greater success employing the principles of the performance circle, or *géew*, within the communities where they perform. The case of *Kaddu Yaraax* adds an

additional layer in the performance hybrid by combining the notion of the *géeuw* with the advantages of the contemporary activist form of forum theater. For Diol, forum theater provides an opportunity to divest popular performances of their often moralizing tone, to perform in accordance with the *géeuw*, and thereby to promote and transmit a form of Senegalese heritage that can be innovated upon and seeks to address important social issues. The choice of the form was therefore paramount in the company's development. As we shall see in the description of one of its events, however, attempts at realizing each of these visions would prove fraught with their own challenges.

### **The Forum at Work: Case Study of a *Kaddu Yaraax* Performance**

On June 4, 2013, the *Kaddu Yaraax* company was called upon to create a forum piece on the difficulties experienced and posed by Dakar's large number of *marchands ambulants*, the blanket term used in this case for vendors on foot as well as those who set up temporary stalls. For several weeks the city had been grappling with security and safety issues related to the presence of these vendors in its streets and public squares. In the midst of this citywide debate, the municipality of the commune of Sicap-Liberté had just rendered an executive decision to remove the vendors who for decades could be found working each day on the public square of the *Marché Ndiago* in the neighborhood of Liberté 2. The expulsion was rendered down without local consultation and was certain to have a devastating effect on these vendors and their ability to support themselves. However, municipal authorities cited issues of safety and sanitation as deciding factors, a justification which seemed to satisfy many within the local community despite the lack of input from the vendors themselves. It was in the face of this one-way authoritarian decision-making and heightened tension within the community that the neighboring cultural center, *Kër Thiossane*, decided to sponsor a forum theater presentation and debate bringing together vendors, city officials and local residents.

The performance took place on the same public square where the vendors would typically be found at their tables, selling their wares. At the time of the performance, the site had already been cleared out by the town hall. When *Kaddu Yaraax* arrived, its members hung the company banner alongside the façade of a house on the square, demarcating the performance space, which created a circular area quickly surrounded by spectators. Groups of children were seated on large mats on the ground. Chairs were set out for older members of the community. The expelled vendors were present, but remained off to the side, sitting along a building on an adjacent side of the square. The performance began with a warm-up, led by the show's designated "joker," who first engaged the children in a few dancing games and exercises. He then used the microphone placed in the middle of the circle to announce to the neighborhood that a performance and discussion were about to take place on the matter of the street vendors who had just been expelled from the very square where the audience was seated. The announcement attracted more people and by the time the performance began the size of the crowd had doubled within the space of approximately ten minutes, with some straddlers standing in the street and watching from afar.

The troupe began with its usual opener, a short sequence in which the performers are divided into two groups, one yelling *Waaw, waaw*, ("Yes, yes!") the other responding *Dédéet* ("No!") while pulling at a pantomimed rope in an imaginary game of tug-of-war. The joker stopped the group and asked them if there was any way they might turn the yes into a no or the no into a yes. Both groups refused, pulling at their end of the imaginary rope until the

joker stepped in the middle and snapped it, sending both groups flying. The sight gag earned a hearty laugh from the children in the audience. The joker then announced the troupe as the company *Kaddu Yaraax*. They performed a succinct explanation of what forum theater is, telling the audience that the show that was about to take place included three stages. First, the troupe would perform a scene while the audience watched. Then, the audience would be asked to give their opinion on the behavior of each character in the scene, with an open vote to decide which characters displayed good behavior (these were allowed to rest in the shade), which displayed bad behavior (these were made to wait out in the sun), and which had behavior that was somewhere in the middle (these were left in between the shady and sunny spots in the performance space). In the last stage, the audience would be invited to replace the actors on stage to improve whatever behavior they perceived as lacking. The joker then asked the audience members to commit to their active participation, sending the actors to have certain spectators sign a pantomimed pact of participation.

The performance then began, with two actresses portraying female produce vendors tending their respective tables while in the middle of a heated discussion. One was reprimanding the other, clearly her senior, for never properly cleaning up after herself at the end of the day and never sweeping up or collecting her garbage. The elder vendor replied by stating that she often had less energy than her younger colleague who should, above all, be showing respect to those who had played an instrumental role in establishing the vendor community on that particular square. As the discussion continued, an older gentleman in traditional dress entered and scolded the women for always leaving the square such a mess. He stated that years ago people in the neighborhood used to be able to convene on the square, but now the site is too dirty for one to stop and pray. He then stormed off, having said his piece. The next character was one of the public servants known locally as "*les duty*." These are ambulant tax collectors in charge of collecting a daily fee from each of the vendors for the right to set up shop in a public space. After a brief interaction with the audience, the collector approached the two vendors, expecting payment, otherwise, he said, he would give the women a ticket. The vendors, however, were unable to pay the tax, since they had just arrived on the square. They pleaded with the collector to return later in the day when they would have sold something and would thus be able to pay. They also protested fervently at the amount of the tax, which they said represented too substantial a portion of their pay and has not resulted in any of the services the tax revenue is partially intended to fund, such as water sources, local security guards, and public cleaning services. Unwilling to wait until later in the day, the collector handed down a fine and stormed off.

A by-stander, having witnessed the previous scene, then approached the vendors acknowledging the difficulty of their situation, but saying that she could not feel sorry for them. As a resident of the neighborhood she lamented the fact that the square had become so dirty that her children could no longer play there. She also explained that one of her children had recently hurt himself on a throwaway utensil left behind by one of the vendors and had to go to the hospital for treatment. Visibly upset by this, the vendors apologized, explaining that they were unaware of the incident. After effusive apologies, however, they also insisted that the residents should be supporting the vendors who, for decades, have provided a useful service to local families, often delivering goods directly to their clients' homes. Since residents have come to expect the convenience of such a service, they should also be willing to accept the vendors' presence on the square. At this point, a municipal employee abruptly burst on stage, reprimanding the two women for continuing to sell on

the square when they had yet to respond to three consecutive summonses to appear at the town hall. After an additional kerfuffle, he proceeded to expel the women as they pleaded with him to leave them be since they needed to sell in order to provide for their families.

At the end of this short scene, the audience applauded and the joker once again took the stage. He asked for reactions to the behavior of each character, challenging some to explain why they thought certain characters should be left in the shade or the sun. The children initially insisted that the vendors should be placed in the sun, since they had not obtained the necessary authorization and were a nuisance to the neighborhood. However, after some interjections from the elder members of the community as well as from the vendors themselves, seated far off to the side but within earshot, it was generally agreed upon that they might instead find a way to coordinate with the vendors. This shift in the tone of the discussion took place with little direct intervention on the part of the joker. In fact, the forum had openly aired a latent indifference to the vendors' predicament that had facilitated the group's expulsion but, once stated in the open, was fervently opposed by many of the elder audience members. In the end, there was no obvious consensus and so the vendors were left in the middle, between the sun and the shade.

Once verdicts were rendered on each character's behavior, it was time for the audience to interact in a reprisal of sections of the scene. This began with children stepping up to replace the tax collector. Between the ages of twelve and sixteen, the young "spect-actors" began by chastising the vendors for not studying hard in school or acquiring some kind of trade so that they would not find themselves in such a predicament. Objections soon arose from the other community figures, and the children decided to step down when asked by the joker how this remark might offer any kind of solution to the problem. When the joker again asked the audience how the vendors might have changed their behavior, one of the actual vendors, visibly the doyenne, stepped forward and delivered an adamant and emotional objection to being thrown out of a neighborhood where she had been working for over fifty years. Clearly shaken up by the experience of her expulsion from the square, she returned the microphone after a heartfelt testimonial and left both the circle and the performance. At this point a teenager stepped forward to suggest that the vendors take the time to clean up after they have finished their work, since cleanliness was one of the major complaints of local residents as well as the commune's main pretext for throwing them out. The vendors then insisted that they have always cleaned up their areas before leaving the square, but that there are others who consistently neglect to do so, thus giving the whole group a bad image and reputation. At this point the joker asked if some kind of organizational scheme could not be created in order to ensure that each vendor left the public square as clean as it was when he or she arrived that day. This idea was met with general approval from vendors and the audience. After some further discussion on the details of such an idea, the show came to a close on the conclusion that a solution was possible, but that it would take further work and dialogue on the part of the community. The groups present agreed to continue to seek out an agreement in this manner, and *Kaddu Yaraax* offered to return to facilitate a follow-up performance and forum.

*Kaddu Yaraax*'s performances nearly always end with a sense of open-endedness whereby no definitive resolution is achieved. This lack of resolution is, in fact, built into the framework of forum theater, for Boal argues that the audience's energy to react politically must not be drained vicariously through the arc of the story on stage.<sup>27</sup> Instead, the conflict at hand must remain unresolved on stage, as it is in life. Forum performers do not attempt to provide audiences with answers to their problems, but rather aspire to serve as a catalyst

for the kind of social dialogue that might lead to a workable solution. In this case, the forum process effectively uncovered at least one important point that had not been addressed in the one-way political discourse leading up to the expulsion, which was that the community could try to implement an organizational scheme to ensure that each vendor clean up his or her section. Aside from this point, written into the play were a number of other latent issues, which could have been taken up by the discussion but were left aside. For example, in the exchange between the vendors and the tax collector, audience members could have asked why the tax could not instead be collected later in the day, after the vendors have sold something and are in a better position to pay. Furthermore, spect-actors might have wondered where this tax revenue winds up if, as the vendors contend, it does not go into the improvement of conditions in public spaces like the *Marché Ndiago*. These potential points of dialogue were worked into the show following an initial research phase, during which the company integrated to the performance feedback from vendors, residents and local authorities. Unlike the moralizing theater from which the troupe is continually distancing itself, however, these performances resist forcing issues that are not willingly adopted by the public and so constitute a more dialogical exchange between actors and audience.

For all of their merits as social theater, these forum works are not without shortcomings, as Diol willingly admits himself. For starters, although this particular performance takes place among the local community, it has been commissioned and funded by *Kër Thiossane*, an internationally supported cultural organization, thus introducing a problematic patron-client relationship between *Kër Thiossane* and *Kaddu Yaraax*, who naturally wish to satisfy their patron in the hopes of receiving future commissions. Furthermore, within the audience, Diol admits that the troupe is not always successful in countering the overbearing effect of certain authority figures in a given community, who may be present at a show and can tend to monopolize a discussion, even bring it to a halt. This indeed nearly happened at the *Kër Thiossane* event, when it seemed that one of the actual tax collectors might intervene forcefully and take over the discussion. Finally, the performances end with the hope that there will be a follow-up, which, by the company's admission, does not always happen for lack of time or funding.

### The Forum Effect in Contemporary Senegal?

Even with these criticisms in mind, it remains that *Kaddu Yaraax* has managed to have a visible and lasting impact on the theatrical landscape of the country. On one hand we may consider some of the real political resistance that the company has encountered in recent years in response to its work. The troupe became deeply engaged politically in opposition to the actions and abuses of former president Abdoulaye Wade, most notably in its 2011 performance "*C'est simple comme Mbane*" ("It's as easy as Mbane"), which toured around the country denouncing Wade's anti-democratic decision to install a "*délégation spéciale*" in the locality of Mbane in order to offset the political weight of a region where his party had just lost representatives in local elections. The troupe satirized the president's party, the *Parti Démocratique Sénégalais* (PDS), as the *Parti Djaay Suuf* (*Parti des Vendeurs de Terre*, or Party of Land Sellers), in response to Wade's covert sale of public land throughout the country, especially in the Dakar region. The troupe members also nearly found themselves in prison due to a heavy-handed reaction by authorities to a performance in Casamance of their creation "*Monsieur Casamance*," on the separatist movement in that region.



Beyond its frequent run-ins with political power, however, the troupe has also played a decisive role in transmitting a certain form of Senegalese theatrical heritage among other independent troupes around the country, one that responds innovatively to Senegal's theatrical past as well as to the pressing political issues of the moment. Indeed, there are distinctive echoes of *Kaddu Yaraax*'s most salient themes and images that resound throughout the landscape of local, activist theater in Senegal. Troupes frequently make direct reference to *Kaddu Yaraax*'s work in performance creations. Thus, *Kaddu Yaraax*'s creation entitled *La Baie de Hann n'est pas une poubelle* ("The Bay of Hann is not a Garbage Can") soon inspired another creation called *Kaolack n'est pas une poubelle*, performed in the city of Kaolack. *Kaddu Yaraax* also toured a show addressing the thousands of Senegalese attempting to emigrate to Europe clandestinely by *pirogue*, a phenomenon that had a particularly devastating effect on Yaraax given its location on the Baie de Hann, from which the boats would often embark on the treacherous journey northward. The company's performance was entitled *Partir, ne pas partir* ("To Go, or Not to Go") and inspired a number of variations on the theme, with spin-offs that often even took the same title as the original production and always included a number of direct acknowledgements of the work of *Kaddu Yaraax* and of the impact they have had on Senegalese performance. In fact, within the same neighborhood of Yaraax, such a show was performed in the community's small circular performance area, or *géeuw*, by a young company named *Kaddu Askan Bi* (Voice of the People), a clear reference to the presence and success of the group's elder and respected colleagues.

In the absence of an effective official pole in Senegalese theater, companies such as *Kaddu Yaraax* have carried on the torch when it comes to transmitting national theatrical heritage to the next generation of performers. The sheer frequency and long-standing presence of what are often called popular theater shows stand as evidence that an effective transmission is, indeed, taking place, though more so through small, independent companies than through the large state-funded edifices such as the national theaters or the *Ecole Nationale des Arts*. While these forms of popular theater are often dismissed as non-literate, amateurish, and ephemeral, in fact many of these companies, like *Kaddu Yaraax*, are mounting a conscious defense of their own philosophical, historical, and political positions through the way in which they endeavor to set the stage. Although they remove the role of the playwright and greatly reduce the place of written culture in their work, the decisions of these popular theater troupes respond directly to a longer theatrical history in Senegal, where, while the official pole of theatrical creation has ostensibly withered, the non-official continues to expand.

## Notes

- 1 The hierarchy of a high, literary theatrical culture sitting atop the "paratheatrical" devices of an illiterate populist theater was present as early as Mbengue's document on cultural policy in 1973.
- 2 Freire 1970. Freire's critique of what he called the "banking" approach to education was taken on by many theater practitioners in the hopes of subverting authoritarian approaches to interpersonal relations in theater and, more broadly, in society at large.
- 3 Desai 1990. Desai focuses on "popular" as a term of functional discourse that defies any

- rigid definition or categorization.
- 4 Fall 1984, and Kidd and Kumar 1981; Kidd and Byram 1982; Kerr 1995.
  - 5 Boal 1979. Boal's model for a "Theater of the Oppressed" sought to apply Freire's ideas to a performance form that promoted freedom from authoritarian discourse and oppression.
  - 6 Diop, Mamadou. 2012. Director of the drama department at the *Ecole Nationale des Arts*. Personal interview, Dakar, Senegal. 9 December (transcript in author's possession).
  - 7 Mbengue, Mocodou. 2012. Personal interview, *Grand Théâtre*, Dakar, Senegal. 27 June (transcript in author's possession). At the time, Mbengue was the artistic director for the theatrical program of the *Grand Théâtre*, which sought to distinguish itself from the *Théâtre Sorano* through the international scope of its productions.
  - 8 A situation first spurred on by prominent theatrical troupes like *Daaray Kocc*, which produced filmed productions of theatrical works for television. Today this tradition is carried on by the popular sketches performed by troupes such as *Sa Neex*.
  - 9 Ndao, Oumar. 2012. Personal interview, Dakar municipal building, Dakar, Senegal. 3 July (transcript in author's possession). All English translations are my own.
  - 10 Diol, Mouhamadou. 2012. Personal interview, Dakar, Senegal. 3 December (transcript in author's possession).
  - 11 Diol, Mouhamadou. 2013. Personal interview, Dakar, Senegal. 6 June (transcript in author's possession).
  - 12 Ibid.
  - 13 Jézéquel 1996.
  - 14 Mbaye 2006
  - 15 *Archives Nationales de Dakar*, 069(31), documents on the *centres culturels*. These criteria included a focus on comedy, drama and folklore. As with today's *Nawetaan* events, troupes were expected to integrate each of these through discrete sections that would be linked together by a single through line or theme. Sow, 2004 provides an example of the judging criteria implemented today for *théâtre total*.
  - 16 Ndao. 2012 interview, op. cit.
  - 17 Diol. 2012 interview, op cit.
  - 18 Ibid.
  - 19 Founder of the *Atelier Théâtre Burkinabé*.
  - 20 [www.theatreoftheoppressed.org](http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org) keeps a running directory of troupes throughout the world, and helps promote several international forum theater festivals, including the one organized annually in Dakar by *Kaddu Yaraax*.
  - 21 Boal 1979; Brecht 1964.
  - 22 Diop 1990.
  - 23 Ibid., p. 21.
  - 24 Ibid., p. 26.
  - 25 See Fall 1984. Fall reflects the opinion of many of his fellow creators when he calls for a popular theater, but one that places prime importance on the written text of the play.
  - 26 Diop. 2012 interview, op.cit.
  - 27 Boal 2002, p. 274.

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## “These Walls Belong to Everybody” The Graffiti Art Movement in Dakar

LESLIE W. RABINE

**Abstract:** While the graffiti artists of Dakar acknowledge the influence of the U.S. hop-hop movement, they also trace their beginnings to their own *Set Setal* (be clean-make clean) youth movement of the 1980s. Graffiti artist Mad Zoo explains that young Senegalese were responding to an “ethical crisis” in Dakar: “People would piss in the street and throw garbage all over... and when someone would ask them to explain themselves, they would tell you the street doesn’t belong to anybody, so I have the right to make it dirty... So [the participants of *Set-Setal*] decided to go and represent religious personalities on the walls and people didn’t have the courage to go and piss in front of those religious figures.” As for the phrase, “the street doesn’t belong to anybody,” pioneer *graffeur* Big Key expresses the *graffeurs*’ telling response: “But the walls belong to all of us... The only thing is, if [the walls] are for everybody, you have to use them correctly...” The graffiti artists pursue with passion their responsibility for the collective ownership of the public walls. They make graffiti art a force to cleanse and beautify the disintegrating spaces of their culturally rich but economically impoverished city. Aesthetic creativity, inspiration, technical ingenuity in the face of a dire lack of resources, and communal solidarity—these are enduring values in Senegalese culture. The graffiti artists both preserve and transform these inherited values to make them serve a globalized, urban society in economic crisis.

### Introduction

Pioneer Dakar graffiti artist Big Key (Thierno Moussa Sane, b. 1981) stretches his tall, muscular frame from the floor of the studio where he has been sitting. A windowless, ten-by-ten-foot room, in one of Dakar’s not-quite-rectilinear concrete buildings, the studio opens on to the interior courtyard where women do cooking and laundry. The building is in one of the mazes of sandy lanes off the paved thoroughfare of the crowded *Parcelles Assainies* neighborhood. Like many young Dakarois men who rent such rooms, Big Key has furnished it with a mattress, a TV, and his used laptop. A single twenty-watt bulb provides the only light. Piercing the gloom, his portraits, with their brilliantly colored, free-swirling brush strokes, line the walls.

I ask Big Key a seemingly technical question: “How do you make a gradation of tones with spray paint?” But Big Key, who speaks from his soul, answers:

Here we don’t have enough [spray paint] colors, only the basic ones. That teaches you a lot because with the experience of managing what you have, you can do better. In Europe, there are spray cans with several [tones of each color], so it’s easy. Here there might be two [tones of a color]. If you want a gradation of tones, you have to know how to use the equipment. You take a

**Leslie W. Rabine** is Professor Emerita of Women and Gender Studies and French at the University of California, Davis. Author of *The Global Circulation of African Fashion* (Berg, 2002), she has also published several books on nineteenth-century French literature and culture, as well as several essays on African fashion and photography.

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side of the tip and press lightly. It's a technique you learn with respect to pathetic equipment. With few means, you have to have a lot of experience.<sup>1</sup>

Big Key's younger colleague, graffiti artist Mad Zoo (Serigne Moumar Fall, b. 1987) expresses this deeply held value as an adage: "WITH FEW MEANS INSPIRATION MANAGES TO DO GREAT THINGS.....THAT'S AFRICAN INGENUITY."<sup>2</sup> Creativity, inspiration, technical ingenuity in the face of a dire lack of resources—these are enduring values of Dakar's culture that tailors, auto mechanics, dyers, fabric designers, and young computer geeks have expressed to me during two decades of my research in Senegal.

Pioneer *graffeur* Grafixx aka Afia (Omar Diop, b. 1985) talks about this value as it guides his daily life.<sup>3</sup> He suggests that "It's difficult... Fortunately, we know that comfort can kill inspiration."<sup>4</sup> But he also suggests how difficult it can be to ward off discouragement. Many *graffeurs* warn: "If it's money that pushes you to enter graffiti, you may as well go do something else. You have to put your passion first."<sup>5</sup> But Grafixx has sacrificed more than others. A protégée of the legendary rapper Matador since his teenage years in the low-income *banlieue* of Thiaroye, Grafixx left a paying job to help found Matador's Africulturban hip-hop arts center in 2006. He has worked as graffiti director for eight years without pay: "There have been days when I had a lot of inspiration but I didn't have the means to buy, for example, materials for them," he says, but quickly wards off discouragement: "It was really tough but I've gone beyond that."<sup>6</sup>

Grafixx joins the value of creative ingenuity to overcome lack of resources to another Senegalese value. He works within an ethos of communal solidarity. Docta (Amadou Lamine Ngom, b. 1975), internationally known graffiti artist and leader of Dakar's graffiti movement, emphasizes this as Senegal's crucial mark of identity within transnational hip-hop networks:

We are really socially conscious, super engaged by what goes on around us. Furthermore, our hip-hop remains pure. It's a hip-hop for the community; it defends the community and must speak for the community. If it doesn't do this, it no longer has a *raison d'être*.<sup>7</sup>

Dakar's *graffeurs* start from and constantly return to this inherited foundation of aesthetic creativity, technical ingenuity in the face of need, and communal solidarity.

### Modernizing Inherited Values of Senegalese Culture

How do the artists reshape these foundational values and make them serve a globalized, urban society in economic crisis? To begin exploring this central question of the essay, we need to take into account a serendipitous accident of history that has enabled the *graffeurs*' mission. Graffiti has never had an illegal status in Dakar. Every dictionary definition of graffiti I found begins with the notion that it is "illicit." From the beginnings of graffiti art in Western cities, officials have created a distinction between "legitimate" and "illegal," "vandalizing" graffiti.<sup>8</sup> But in Dakar, no such distinction has ever existed. Anyone can openly do graffiti on a public wall.

This unique advantage makes Senegal, according to Docta, "the paradise of graffiti": "The guys [in other African countries] tell me, oh, Senegal is becoming the paradise of graffiti. We don't have . . . the worry that when you go to graff a wall the police run after you to arrest you. On the contrary, they are going to appreciate what you are doing and say wow! that's beautiful. And this has been important in the work we've carried on from the beginning until today."<sup>9</sup> Officials, businessmen, and neighborhood people support the



*graffeurs*. They all see graffiti art as a force to cleanse and beautify the disintegrating spaces of their culturally rich but economically impoverished city. Expressing a vision of graffiti that might seem strange in the U.S., *graffeur* Triga (Youssoufa Touré, b. 1985) says: "There is nothing more noble, noting that a public place is unsanitary and coming to make it healthy."<sup>10</sup>

Dakar's graffiti artists have used their accident of history in their quest to modernize the inherited values of their community. To explore the question of how they do this, it is helpful to first envision the urban environment in which the *graffeurs* take up their historic task. Let's follow the *graffeurs* from wall to wall during one of their collective graffiti events. Dakar's annual *Festigraffiti* is the first "100% graff festival on the [African] continent," and remains the influential prototype of such events.<sup>11</sup>

Docta, who leads *Festigraffiti* through his organization *Doxadem Squad*, explains its original purpose. A proud hip-hopper, he opposes the common conflation of hip-hop with rap: When people talk about hip-hop in Senegal, they are only talking about rap. Rap is not hip-hop. Rap is a part of hip-hop. And the other elements of hip-hop are almost non-existent. Why? Because there are no events which, properly speaking, showcase this whole [graffiti] form of expression... It was necessary to have our own event.<sup>12</sup> For the highlight of the ten-day event, the artists collectively perform mural painting on three successive walls.<sup>13</sup> At about 10:00 A.M on the first day of painting, young people begin converging at a seven-foot concrete wall lining the paved thoroughfare of the HLM Neighborhood. Between this wall and the wide busy thoroughfare, runs a well-used athletic track as well as a ubiquitous landscape feature of Dakar. This latter consists of a wide stretch of sand, studded with weeds, strewn with rubbish and rutted with stagnant puddles. Fifteen to twenty young artists are joined by "apprentices" who are trying to learn graffiti and hoping to assist one of the artists. Awaiting the arrival of Docta, the *graffeurs* gather around the equipment they will use: a carton of the low quality spray-paint cans, large cans of acrylic paint and gesso, pails, brushes, and rollers. Before the graffiti can happen, the apprentices cleanse the area. Taking up shovels and wheel barrels, they begin to collect the rubbish and fill in the pools of stagnant water. The most experienced artists begin to mix the gesso with which they will whitewash the walls before painting them.

At about 11:00 A.M., Mad Zoo gathers the artists together. Refusing the word "leader" and preferring the term "representative of all the *graffeurs* of the new generation," Mad Zoo gives the artists the "theme" they will paint.<sup>14</sup> At *Festigraffiti*, a "theme" is a one-sentence message intended to inspire the population to positive action. As a practice, it also emphasizes the collective engagement of the artists. Today's theme is "Believe in yourself for as long as it takes, and you will succeed." Mad Zoo assigns to each artist either one word of the theme or a *perso* (character). When the *graffeurs* spread across the wall, those painting a word and those painting a *perso* will alternate with each other. Finally, the *graffeurs* can approach the wall and start to paint. The air itself seems to exude their intensity.

The process seems magical as it combines this strong will to collectively influence the population with each artist's ardent effort to express, in Docta's words, "a certain form of expression which belongs to artistic liberty."<sup>15</sup> As the day goes on, herds of runners thunder along the track, kicking up clouds of dust to the annoyance of the artists. Groups of children, sometimes led by their teacher, come to watch and, if they are lucky, paint a few brush strokes. Journalists, photographers, videographers, and members of the Dakar art scene come to work or kibitz. The artists are intense, but they visit each other's walls to

comment and critique, make suggestions, and lend each other a hand. At the end of the day, a palpable release follows the intensity of the work.

On the second day, the artists trek to Guediawaye, one of Dakar's low-income *banlieues*. These outlying districts, lacking basic infrastructure, have taken on the edgy glamour of the "hood" since the advent of hip-hop. A maze of paved streets and sandy roads, Guediawaye has no apparent plan. Therefore, the site is hard for outsiders to find and people are late. Gradually, the artists gather in front of the old Guediawaye soccer stadium. Its wall presents real challenges. About twelve feet high, it is extremely rough, pitted, and in some places crumbling (see Figure 1 below). Here, the theme is: "Knowledge before action is more sure."



Figure 1: Diablos works on his word for the collective theme at the Guediawaye stadium. Dakar, 17 April, 2013.

The third day, the artists paint what is in essence a private wall. This very long and curving retainer wall lines the property alongside the Toll Highway that starts just outside Dakar at the entry to the *banlieues*, and leads to the other cities of western Senegal. Although this wall is smooth and new, the wide field of sand and weeds between the wall and the four-lane highway is studded with even larger pools of stagnant water and even more rubbish that the apprentices have to clean up. On this day, the young artist Mow announces the theme and organizes the artists. Expressing a core value of both the artists' practice and their mission, the theme reads: "Dirtiness is bad; be clean inside, clean outside." Oblivious to the streams of traffic rushing by, the artists spend two days creating the most elaborate and beautiful work of the event.

Beyond *Festigraff* and similar events, the artists work alone or in crews, whenever they have the time and materials. They have claimed the right to paint public walls all over Dakar. As Big Key puts it: "I would even say that the walls need us."<sup>16</sup> But the question of

how *graffeurs* seek, through answering this need, to preserve and transform inherited Senegalese values needs deeper exploration. This begins with their stories about the origins of graffiti in Senegal. A *graffeur* might tell different versions of the story depending upon which generation he belongs to. The graffiti artists divide themselves into two generations: the pioneers, born between 1975 and 1985, and the younger people born between 1986 and 1990. They often call the two generations "*les grands frères*" and "*les jeunes*."

The pioneers tell the story of discovering graffiti through the hip-hop movement that came to them from the U.S.<sup>17</sup> Grafixx fondly remembers: "I began to see something new, CD covers. And during this time I had a friend who sold CDs of American rap. His older brother was in Italy and he made pirated copies of the CDs. He brought them here and sold them."<sup>18</sup> Although younger, Mow remembers: "One of my cousins lent me a magazine called *Groove*. It even featured 50 Cent, and this issue had an interview... with *graffeurs* . . . When I saw it, I immediately loved graffiti. I went to the Net to see what was going on."<sup>19</sup> Big Key recounts: "I began graffiti in 1998, but not completely. It's just that I saw CD covers, like Snoop Doggy Dogg. At the same time I saw an American hip-hop magazine called *Radical*. It had a few pages where you could see some artists and their graffiti works. I tried to look at these works so I could redo them on the covers of my text books."<sup>20</sup> Then Big Key joined Deep to form the crew *Mizérables Grafff* in 1999.

Although *graffeurs* explicitly focus on the difficulties of their early lonely attempts, their story inadvertently reveals the striking acceptance of graffiti. Deep says: "I'd be graffitiing at a wall, and the people going by would say, 'You are crazy.'"<sup>21</sup> Likewise, Big Key says his parents would scold: "Someone saw you doing graffiti at the side of the road. Why are you wasting your time instead of being in school?"<sup>22</sup> But the two pioneers were nonetheless doing graffiti in public and in daylight. Within a few months, moreover, they received affirmation. Big Key recounts that they were unable to afford paint and so were reduced to graffitiing with charcoal.

We were covering the wall of a hospital with graffiti in charcoal, and when the director came, he said "what you are doing is really beautiful." And we didn't even have authorization. "But," he said, "if you are using only charcoal, it will wear away through rain and other weather." Later he gave us something to buy paint, because, as he said, with paint, that will be something with a guarantee that it won't have with charcoal. He gave us 10,000 francs CFA [\$20].

With a nostalgic sigh Big Key remembers: "It was our first sale. So we began graffiti. It was fantastic at that time... Me and Deep, '99."

One of "*les jeunes*," Diablos (Maguette Traoré, b. 1989), who learned graffiti under the tutelage of Docta and Big Key, simply can't imagine that graffiti would not be respected. When he tells me that a French soldier has given him a room to use as a studio in the French military camp in Dakar, I ask in surprise if the commander knows about this. "Of course," he exclaims, equally surprised by my question. "Everybody knows me there—because I'm a *graffeur*, I'm a *taggeur*!"<sup>23</sup> This Dakarois acceptance of graffiti turns on its head the meaning that graffiti writers of U.S. and European cities invested in the practice. Nancy MacDonald insightfully concludes that "illegality... function[s] as the subculture's backbone. Without it, the threat, danger, challenge or test and the fame, respect and masculinity that writers earn from completing this would be lost."<sup>24</sup> The writer Col tells her that legal graffiti would have



no appeal: “there’d be no threat, graffiti would be a waste of time. I go bombing for the excitement, it’s like I get a great adrenalin rush out there.”<sup>25</sup>

The Senegalese *graffeurs* have other sources of inspiration. Mad Zoo says: “It’s born of a different reality. For example in France, or in the U.S.,... a *graffeur*—but not necessarily all of them—must have adrenalin to really feel like, O.K., I’m a complete *graffeur*. Here in Senegal, you note that *graffeurs* have a certain sense of duty. They feel invested with a mission... It really accords with the very beginning of our history of graffiti.”<sup>26</sup>

Mad Zoo traces Senegalese graffiti to a different beginning than that of the pioneers who personally experienced its introduction from the U.S. In this version: “It concerns a typically Senegalese system of thought. What pushed people to go to the walls for the first time here in Senegal... was that they had found a possible solution to [an] ethical crisis... The point of departure of Senegalese graffiti... was the *Set Setal* movement.”<sup>27</sup> Meaning “be clean-make clean” in Wolof, *Set-Setal* was a short-lived but historically significant youth movement in the 1980s. Young people took it upon themselves to clean up their dirty city and to inspire the population to do likewise through murals and other forms of public art. Although many murals depicted themes of cleanliness and public health, young participants initiated the now famous public murals of local legendary Muslim religious leaders.<sup>28</sup> Mad Zoo recounts:

Here in Senegal you see that religious personalities have a really huge influence on the population. . . . At a certain moment, we had a real problem with people’s mentality. People would piss in the street and throw garbage all over . . . and when someone would ask them to explain themselves, they would tell you the street doesn’t belong to anybody, so I have the right to make it dirty. And then you’d see this same Senegalese before a religious guide being like an exemplary person. . . . So [the participants of *Set-Setal*] decided to go and represent religious personalities on the walls and people didn’t have the courage to go and piss in front of those religious figures. . . . It was after this aha! moment that we saw the first generation of *graffeurs* here, through the Big Keys, the Doctas and others.<sup>29</sup>

The phrase “this street doesn’t belong to anybody” signifies the anomie of city life during the period of intense urbanization in Africa, when millions of people moved away from the communal solidarity of their villages.

Big Key expresses the *graffeurs*’ telling response to this phrase: “But the walls belong to all of us. They’re for everybody.”<sup>30</sup> He repeats this refrain in the course of an impassioned defense of Senegalese graffiti: “The only thing is, if [the walls] are for everybody, you have to use them correctly... and the reason is that sometimes people soil them, piss, throw garbage. And when the *graffeur* comes, he cleans, he creates a nice design, and he talks with the people. It’s a good act. The walls need to be cleaned, to be grafted.”

Big Key is speaking with great intensity to me and other people in the formal salon off the central courtyard of his family’s home. Typical of a middle-class extended family home, the salon is filled with overstuffed couches and chairs hand-made by local carpenters. Lace curtains cover the windows. One approaches the house by going behind some buildings on one of the apparently-leading-nowhere paved roads of Guediawaye and crossing a large sandy field. We have just returned from the Guediawaye Bus Terminal, at the intersection of two wide and curving roads. Big Key has filled the long concrete wall of the terminal with a giant white, orange, and blue “DISCIPLINE” (Figures 2 and 3 below). As Big Key works

intently, busses and the garbage truck rumble past, horse-drawn carts trundle by, sheep peck at the refuse lining the foot of the wall, pedestrians offer comments, and people sitting on mats under the bus terminal pavilion watch with amusement. Analyzing his adventure later that day, Big Key holds that indiscipline lurks at the core of people's failure to engage in communal responsibility. He firmly hopes that his striking graff will attract them to heed its message of civic-minded communalism.



Figure 2: Big Key's "Discipline" graff at the Guediawaye bus terminal. Dakar, 16 September, 2013.

"If I take off alone, all by myself, just to do a graffiti, without it being a collective or a festival, what I graff is something that makes a positive effect. . . . It's my contribution, because we make the walls talk, we make the walls live." Whether doing a formal festival or a spontaneous solo, the *graffeurs* see their mission as reshaping the old collective ethos for a new urban environment. Big Key says: "I've come to beautify and at the same time talk to people, and at the same time explain and let them know what discipline is. You understand? There's a professional, commercial side where I have to make money to live, but there's a side that is the true meaning of graffiti for me."

### Constructing Identities through Graffiti

Drawing their ardent attachment to graffiti from other sources than the thrill of dangerous illegality, the Dakar *graffeurs* also construct social identities differently than the Western writers of the 1990s. MacDonald writes: "Illegal graffiti writers position themselves as 'outsiders'; that is, members of a socially detached and isolated group... [T]hey use the 'world apart' construction to enhance their power, solidarity, and... the solidity of their subculture."<sup>31</sup> By contrast, the Dakar artists form their social identity through connection to the population. They see themselves as taking a leadership role. Mad Zoo comments: "For everything that goes on here, the artist should be the guiding pole for his young people, for his population, his public... In these troubled periods... an artist owes it to himself to be a haven of respect and profound peace."<sup>32</sup> Docta puts it this way: "It speaks to the community, because Docta belongs to that community..."<sup>33</sup> Many artists see their community as the economically impoverished neighborhood they come from. Atibou Diallo, the manager of Docta's *Doxadem Squad*, says: "Everything we have we bring back to the neighborhood, because we carry the neighborhood in our heart, and I mean forever. So that's what the combat is about."<sup>34</sup>





Figure 3: Big Key works on his graff at the Guediawaye bus terminal. Dakar, 16 September, 2013.

Docta remains attached to the neighborhood *La Médina*. One of Dakar's oldest neighborhoods, it was called "the native quarter" and then "Tilene" under French colonial rule. Low ramshackle buildings, built for extended families, line the grid of narrow paved streets. Although Docta has a house in the tonier neighborhood of *Point E*, he lives in his grandfather's house in the *Médina*. His tiny windowless room, at the furthest corner of the large courtyard, has just enough space to hold his single bed and a pile of suitcases. Over the bed, Docta has draped a canopy in a way that gives the tiny space a magical, fantasy quality. Sitting cross-legged on his bed at our first interview, Docta explains his commitment: "I am a hip-hopper, as they say. What have I brought to the *Médina*? I've brought a different vision of urban art and culture. I've brought another point of view, the commitment of youth to clean up the environment."<sup>35</sup> Like Big Key, Docta expresses the identity of a youthful generation born into globalization and engaged in modernizing inherited values:

It's seeing filthy, disgusting places where I take up my responsibility to go to that place without asking my right from anyone. I brighten up the environment to make it more livable, more beautiful to see, even beautiful to sit beside and to smell that it's clean... The *Médinois* appreciate it. People come to me and say, there's a wall at my house, and I'm giving it to you... What I learned in this neighborhood, I bring back to this neighborhood – solidarity, citizenship, commitment.

A later interview with Docta performs communal values. Six people are sitting on hard metal chairs in the grandfather's large courtyard with its old doors shadowed in mysterious

alcoves. Present are my husband, my friend the photographer Malika Diagana, Atibou, and Docta's younger brother, whom he is apprenticing. In addition to educating me, Docta is also educating them.

Even more people are present at my interviews with Mad Zoo. He lives in a room almost exactly like Big Key's studio. He has hung his paintings representing Sufi Islam themes. He has also adorned his walls with a genealogy of Muslim prophets and posters of the *graffeurs'* African American heroes: Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Rosa Parks, along with KRS-One's *Hip Hop Declaration of Peace*. The room is filled with people—his brother and the *graffeurs* Mow, Triga, Beaugraff, and Chimere. Malika has also come. The young men seated on the mattress are sketching in their black books, listening to their iPods, and watching a soccer match on TV. Yet at one point in this interview, Mad Zoo does confide a negative aspect of African communalism: "Most people in my own family... thought that I was straight out crazy. That's because I wanted to be alone in my corner and do what I wanted to do. Solitude is very, very frowned upon here. If it's a child, they think that you are mentally retarded. If it's an adult, they say you aren't a social person."<sup>36</sup> But he ends this analysis on a positive note: "Now I'm here, all the guys are here, so it's something I've learned to transform..."

Mad Zoo, like Big Key, analyzes the Senegalese *graffeurs'* identity through reference to the transnational graffiti networks:

An exchange can take place only on condition that you know in the first place what you really have. If you don't know... you won't be able to see the difference between what you have and what the others have... So if there's an exchange, it's because you know what you're doing, but you're also recognizing the others' worth. I respect the Western *graffeurs*. I admire them, because they hold firm in spite of a system that oppresses them.

Mad Zoo then clearly states what differentiates his identity: "The Senegalese *graffeur* cannot break this tie with his people." He goes on: "Here in Africa, we have a certain sense of respect, of ethics. As a *graffeur*, I can't personally go and write my name on private property, because my very sense of Senegalese ethics doesn't allow me to do it."

Mad Zoo raises here yet another way in which the Dakar *graffeurs* have transformed Western graffiti and its process of identity construction. For the young pioneers in the U.S. and Europe, graffiti, "embodying a desire to put one's name about town," became "the pure mark of individuality."<sup>37</sup> Although the Dakar *graffeurs* may begin their careers by tagging their names, they have to move beyond that. Docta says: "My blazon Docta everywhere—Docta, Docta, Docta—who does that serve?... It doesn't serve anyone... What interests us is that we can talk to the population, that we can touch with our finger what the population is living through every day."<sup>38</sup>

Although the artists do strive to make a name for themselves, many argue that the essence of graffiti lies elsewhere. Docta does so in terms that combine the social with the spiritual. Although the graffiti "themes" generally communicate a secular and civic message, graffiti can fulfill its social mission, according to Docta, only as "a divine expression translated into the human... It attracts the other because it's divine. If it's just human, it remains individual." Like Big Key, Docta unites the responsibility to educate the people and the creation of beauty as inseparable elements of a single practice and mission: "That's our identity. We are one hundred per cent social, very engaged in what we do.

That's what defines us, but also the way of our aesthetic, the way each artist lays it on... So this graffiti coming from Senegal has an international level."

### Organization and Ethical Issues of the Dakar Graffiti Movement

Given their mission to enhance the collective responsibility of the population, the graffiti artists also see the need for the same mission among themselves. They have not found it easy to develop a code of behavior, nor to live it faithfully day to day. But over time, they have developed a discourse and organizations that attempt to avoid egotistic rivalries.

The *graffeurs* can organize themselves toward this goal because they are few in number. Senegal, according to *Hip Hop Africa*, has one of the strongest international reputations for hip-hop among African countries.<sup>39</sup> But while Dakar rappers number in the thousands, graffiti artists number in the dozens. The accomplished and intensely dedicated artists "in the scene" number "fewer than twenty."<sup>40</sup> Before the artist Mbautta (Moussa Kane) joined the Dakar scene, he could identify the best-known artists: "If you asked me about the *graffeurs* in Senegal who have a name, I would say there's Docta, there's Mad Zoo, there's Diablos, there's Mow, there's Grafixx."<sup>41</sup>

Graffiti art, as Docta says, demands, "rigor" and long-term "apprenticeship."<sup>42</sup> *Les jeunes* are constantly sketching and writing in their "*black books*." Mad Zoo says: "We aren't many. That's because graff doesn't allow for cheating. It's different from rap where you can see a super terrible rapper but with a beat constructed to mask his weakness . . . Graffiti is free style."<sup>43</sup>

Through their artistic reputations and leadership abilities, Docta and Mad Zoo exercise influence in determining who has attained the level to qualify as an accomplished artist, and "to have his own wall," as Docta says, at *Festigraff*. Having created *Doxadem* as a small crew in the 1990s, Docta grew it into a force for organizing the graffiti movement. In 2010, *Doxadem* was able to mount the ambitious *Festigraff* and then to make it an annual event. The fourth annual *Festigraff*, in 2013, announced as its object: "To experiment with new techniques and to communicate a passion and convictions to a new African generation of *graffeurs*."<sup>44</sup>

Docta has the charisma to gain financing for this and other events. He and Atibou negotiate sponsorships with the Minister of Culture, the few large businesses, like the Senegalese telecommunications company, and cultural institutes of dominant countries, mainly France, but also the U.S. This financing serves an array of events. Before the four days of mural painting described above, the artists exhibit their paintings on canvas or paper at the French Cultural Center in the old colonial downtown of Dakar. Then, during three days of workshops, guest artists from Switzerland, Germany, and Togo instruct children, adolescents, and, finally, the accomplished *graffeurs* themselves.

Even as most of "*les jeunes*" continue to work closely with *Doxadem* Squad, some of the most highly regarded young artists have begun their own organization. Mow explains: "Every time we worked together during the festivals, there was this feeling for doing something as a graffiti group of the young generation."<sup>45</sup> In 2012, Mow and Mad Zoo formed the RBS Crew. By the end of 2013, RBS, grown to nine members, has become in its own right an active force. The main criteria for membership are, in Diablos's words, "to contribute something beautiful, and to constantly strive to surpass yourself," through "a schedule of intensive *jobs* and a schedule of intensive work."<sup>46</sup> RBS exercises influence in deciding which *graffeurs* have attained a high artistic level. It does so through the reputation

of its members, its collective murals all over the city, and its power to invite new members. RBS continues to enjoy harmonious relations with Docta and other pioneers.

Beyond *Doxadem*, RBS and other crews, the *graffeurs* are enmeshed in the networks of Dakar's hip-hop movement. As members of rap crews, they perform the visual—what they call the "aesthetic"—forms of the hip-hop arts, without which rap cannot flourish. They tag the city walls with the rap crew's name, design their costumes, and paint the backgrounds for their concerts. So much does a rap crew need a good graffiti artist that Atibou's crew *Attentrap*, in the isolated, remote *banlieue* of Yeumbeul, took steps to transform the local artist Mbautta, who had decorated their studio walls, into a talented *graffeur*. Atibou recounts: "We all chipped in to buy two or three spray cans. Then we said to Mbautta, go out there and write something about *Attentrap*. So he threw it up, and you realize the rest!"<sup>47</sup> Mbautta's somewhat less enthusiastic version goes: "They told me, since you're the designer of the group, ... you are its *graffeur*."<sup>48</sup> When the Yeumbeul artist turned *graffeur* came to Dakar for his first *Festigraff* in 2013, he chose to apprentice with the much younger Diablos so that he could learn what he called his "secrets." At the Toll Highway, on the third day, the leaders deemed that Mbautta could advance to "having his own wall." In this way does the graffiti movement determine artistic quality and push its members to raise the aesthetic level.

In their struggle against egotistic rivalries, the Dakar *graffeurs* have transformed to fit their own culture the "fierce" competition of Western graffiti writers "to be the most artistic, the most innovative, the most daring, the most suicidal."<sup>49</sup> Mad Zoo explains: "No one needs to claim to be the best. We are all expressing ourselves in different styles. So it's just a waste of time to devote ourselves to a real competition. Positivity remains the essence of our art, and competition must be positive and strive to heighten our abilities and techniques."<sup>50</sup> Docta deploys this discourse as he talks about *Festigraff*: "At the moment that I'm in front of a wall with many *graffeurs*, and I see someone do a certain technique,... I go and ask him how do you do that... Then you'll try it out in front of him, and he will correct you. He'll tell you: no, it's not like that, you have to do this... I'm not ashamed as an artist to ask my colleague artist... because he too has things he needs to ask me."<sup>51</sup>

Among the *graffeurs*, Mow has an innately non-competitive spirit. Mad Zoo says that he originally formed RBS "between Mow and me," because "Mow always had this reserved personality. That's his philosophy... with regard to a certain kind of behavior in our milieu where some people have the impression they're entering into competition with others."<sup>52</sup> Among the pioneers, Big Key also has an innate inability to be competitive, and has not taken a public leadership role. But he quietly exercises his immense gift as a mentor. Mad Zoo writes, "Here in Senegal, in particular the person who inspired me in graffiti was Big Key... He initiated me... He wanted to support me on this path and I have become a *graffeur* in his image. 'RESPECT BRO.' He repeated to me all the time, 'I believe in you...'. He's the one who gave me the idea of graffiti."<sup>53</sup>

Diablos also singles out Big Key: "I was very much side by side with Big Key. He just encouraged me. He said that I must not stay where I was, that I had to think much more about art. I had to dig down much deeper. He told me: 'You have to go forward, believe in yourself.' Since then I believed in myself, and I began to do things."<sup>54</sup> So much does Diablos fashion himself "in the image of Big Key" that even at the age of twenty-four, he was the only *graffeur* at the 2013 *Festigraff* who constantly mentored two apprentices. He did this, he said, to be "like Big Key."<sup>55</sup> Big Key continues behind-the-scenes to mentor yet a younger generation.



## Masculinity and Gender Identity

If the London writers celebrate their fierce competition, while the Dakar *graffeurs* struggle to transform this urge, in each culture the artists construct identity through graffiti. And in each graffiti scene, identity is decidedly masculine.<sup>56</sup> Yet here too, the artists construct different masculine identities as their specific gender system determines. According to MacDonald, in London and New York of the 1990s, a militaristic discourse transforms the “war” with police into “a celebration of masculine supremacy.”<sup>57</sup> If one admits that women are equally capable of performing the dangers of graffiti, “The male writer has everything to lose because ‘If women can do what “real men” do, the value of the practice for accommodating masculinity is effectively challenged.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, “the female writer is not particularly welcome” and “the exclusion of women is used to nourish, amplify and salvage notions of masculinity.”<sup>59</sup>

The Senegalese *graffeurs* do not define graffiti as exclusively masculine or attempt to exclude women. Rather they simply assume a masculine voice, a masculine audience and a masculine membership. There is only one woman *graffeur*, Zeinixx (Dieynaba Sidibe, b. 1990) in the Dakar movement.<sup>60</sup> Also the youngest artist in “the scene,” Zeinixx is a university student in business management and an accomplished slammer. In RBS, she says, “there are only boys. But in any event, I belong to the biggest graffiti collective in Senegal, *Doxadem Squad*.”<sup>61</sup>

When *graffeurs* such as Mad Zoo say that “graffiti is universal,” and I ask them how it can be universal when so few women participate, they offer several answers.<sup>62</sup> Most of these relieve them from responsibility for gender inequality. The most common response blames the Senegalese family. Mad Zoo explains:

Many parents want to see their children really succeed in school... and they see those young people with a certain rebel approach... That shocks the parents. Boys . . . lay claim to their position much more aggressively. Girls don't have that liberty... So the parents lack understanding vis-à-vis their [daughters] with respect to hip-hop... because in its essence hip-hop has everything that's most healthy to guide young people in search of an identity.

More proactive, Docta and Atibou express the wish for more women in the movement, and say that they are actively trying to recruit women through *Doxadem Squad*. In fact, large numbers of girls and young women do participate in their workshops, financed by the French and US institutions legally required to give lip-service to gender non-discrimination. But when these female participants come of age, will they have the collective courage to graff on walls in public? Ironically, where the clandestine night-time forays of London graffiti functioned as an excuse to exclude British women, the highly public Dakar graffiti events work to exclude Senegalese women. Although the *graffeurs* welcome Zeinixx and Western women guest artists, Zeinixx says that passersby stare and comment about her “as if I were a Martian!”<sup>63</sup> If Docta and Atibou give more thought to gender inequality than their peers, they must also deal more directly with neo-colonial inequality in seeking financing for *Festigraff* and other events from European and U.S. sponsors. This need for foreign sponsorships creates a contradiction.



## Economic Poverty and Artistic Wealth

Grafixx, Mow, and Diablos express a passion for the "artistic liberty" of "deforming academic letters" in graffiti styles.<sup>64</sup> Mad Zoo elaborates: This has become "a rebellion with respect to school itself, to a system of education which is not anchored in our African realities." The education system, established when "the African francophone countries . . . were French colonies," is still in place. "Independence hasn't happened yet."<sup>65</sup>

Yet in order to create these liberating deforming styles, the *graffeurs* have to depend on neo-colonial sponsors. At the fourth annual *Festigraff*, they find this sponsorship capricious and controlling. Resentment about the high-handed treatment of the Festival from the French sponsor and the paltry payment the *graffeurs* receive are muted undertones. The European guest of honor at the 2013 *Festigraff*, however, openly expresses dismay. Mode 2, born in Mauritius and raised in France, lives in Germany. Angered about the treatment meted out by both Senegalese and foreign official sponsors, he says that they did not deliver on promises, nor were funds available when needed.<sup>66</sup> He himself has brought materials, acrylics, and good quality European brushes worth much more than the money the Minister of Culture donated. Thus Mode 2 was prepared to find the infamous lack of resources, but does not expect to find a situation as dire as it is. He says, the artists "are still in front of the walls with not enough paint."<sup>67</sup>

While Mode 2 finds dismaying the official neglect of the artists' material needs, he is impressed with the young artists' social and cultural consciousness. Compared to the Senegalese *graffeurs*, the Europeans, he says, are spoiled. By contrast, the young Dakarais *graffeurs* know how to manage the immediacy of real life. Mode 2 asks: Where do we strike the balance? He sees that it is our duty to find the missing links between the resources available in Europe and the consciousness of the Senegalese artists.

This lack of resources, we have seen, stimulates the *graffeurs* to encourage each other to higher levels of aesthetic creativity.<sup>68</sup> When the leaders assess the artistic level of aspiring *graffeurs*, they have to evaluate beauty according to the internationally accepted canons of graffiti art that the U.S. writers established in the 1980s. As in many art forms—think of jazz or Petrarchan sonnets—the challenge of working within strict codes, and at a certain level of mastery playing with them, inspires artists to infinite creativity and originality. Among the many graffiti styles, most artists play upon variations of wild style, semi-wild style, three-D, and bubble style.<sup>69</sup> Wild style, with its hyper-deformed, intertwined letters is the most difficult to write and to read (see Figures 4 and 5 below).



Figure 4: Wild style graff of the word “set” [clean] by Diablos, for the *Festigraff* mural: “Dirtiness is bad, be clean inside, clean outside.”  
Dakar, 19 April, 2013.



Figure 5: Wild style graff of the word “set” [clean] by Mad Zoo, for the *Festigraff* mural: “Dirtiness is bad, be clean inside, clean outside.”  
Dakar, 19 April, 2013.



Diablos and Mad Zoo are well known for their creative mastery of wild style. Like the pioneer New York masters of the form, Diablos and Mad Zoo make the word as a whole the unit of expression, but with a culturally different cast.<sup>70</sup> The New York artists wrote their names repeatedly. But when the Dakar *graffeurs* participate in a collective "theme," they won't know what word they will write until they arrive at the site. Diablos has developed a "symmetrical form" that can adapt itself to whatever word he must paint. His basic structure, although constantly evolving, has an elegant shape that stands out distinctly from its surrounding negative space. At the 2013 *Festigraff*, Diablos experiments with a tension between a vertical, angular center and flowing billows (see Figure 6 below). The billowing curvaceous stokes surging through and around the energetic vertical and oblique lines seem to symbolize the marriage between expression of collective social engagement and individual artistic liberty.



Figure 6: The unit of writing is the word. "Dii" [verb particle expressing the future] by Diablos. For the *Festigraff* HLM neighborhood mural: "Believe in yourself for as long as it takes, and you will succeed." Dakar, 16 April, 2013.



Figure 7: The unit of writing is the word. "Xam" [Know] by Mad Zoo. For the *Festigraff* Guediawaye stadium mural: "Knowledge before action is more sure." Dakar, 17 April, 2013.

Mad Zoo's wild style incorporates his intellectual passion for philosophy, and like Docta, a "profound experimentation in the spiritual area."<sup>71</sup> He combines elements of Chinese calligraphy, Arabic script and sharply angled Fraktur-style typeface in his ultra fluid wild style (see Figure 7 above). He says: "Many people think it's a paradox that I have strong messages to convey while on the walls they see an illegible style." But he makes form and function coincide: What people take for "reality and human nature... is only a manipulation... Media images emphasize... what divides us: stories of race, stories of religion." These seductive images, he maintains, "smother us in our intellectual idleness."

Mad Zoo elaborates the notion that difficulty inspires one to great attainment while comfort leaves one clueless: "My message bears upon a vision of a single community without psychological, religious or even racial barriers." He aims to convey this message through a writing style that encourages readers to "break those ties of facility of the image." If a message is too easily readable, people "will never take the time to decode it." For Mad Zoo, inspiring "this passion to go to the very bottom of things and wrest the message constitutes the very utility of what we do."

In addition to mastering styles that aesthetically deform letters, another criterion for beauty concerns the famous lack of resources. The artists call upon their ingenuity to master the use of make-shift tools. In Claudia Walde's interviews with graffiti artists around the world, aple 76 (Grenoble, France), and Casper (Osaka, Japan), say that what they like about graffiti is that all you need is a wall and a spray can.<sup>72</sup> But for the Senegalese, even the poor quality spray paint is too costly. They must use brushes and rollers with acrylic paint for much of their work. Mode 2 also finds dismaying the poor quality of the paints and brushes available in Dakar. These are manufactured in China purposefully for export to Africa. When I ask Diablos about the brushes, he says that he has to cut the bristles in order to be able to use them. So knowing how to cut the brushes, and then how to achieve effects with them, are hard-won skills in themselves.

But one of the most difficult skills does require the use of the precious aerosol paint. An accomplished artist has to be able to write the outlines of the giant letters free-form and, says Docta, "if you don't know how to use the spray-can, you will waste it, because... you must make one single, very clean line."<sup>73</sup> Often not knowing in advance what word he will write, a *graffeur* must write the complex deformed letters with an unhesitatingly free and sure sense of space and proportion. Once an artist creates the word, he may supervise apprentices in filling in the letters with a brush. Thus the first thing an apprentice learns, when he finally advances from his sketchbook to the wall, is how to use the poor quality brushes. The artists again use the precious aerosol paint for the decorative flourishes, spatters, star bursts, and splashes in the graffiti code. Here too, they must exercise ingenuity in the face of economic scarcity. Where the Western writers use specialty fat caps and thin caps on their spray cans, the Dakar *graffeurs* must master the same effects using just the one standard-issue tip of their low-quality spray cans.

In addition to mastering all these technical difficulties, a *graffeur* can advance to the charmed circle only when he has achieved an original, distinctively individual style of lettering within the graffiti code. If not, says Docta, "we can't be permitted to give you a wall." He explains the necessary dialectic between collectivity and individuality: "Your style... must develop individually, and when you've developed it, at that moment you can share." After the 2013 *Festigraff*, Docta, like the young *graffeurs*, expresses elation: "The *graffeurs* have jumped several levels because there was this aspect of individual work."

The *graffeurs* intensely perform this dialectic between the collective message and individual artistic freedom during the *Festigraff* mural paintings. The performance itself has to be visible in the graff. As Docta maintains, the marriage between social engagement and high artistic quality happens only when one can clearly read both the social message and "the expression of artistic liberty" in the final product. Each word of the theme is both a sign with a familiar meaning and the pure trace of the graceful, energetic body movement that wrote it.<sup>74</sup> Mad Zoo and Diablos are known for expressing artistic liberty through their physical performance of writing as well as through their wild style visual products. Hip-hoppers have written about dance as graffiti and graffiti as dance.<sup>75</sup> Mad Zoo and Diablos make their graffiti into a kind of choreography.

Mad Zoo walks up to his wall. He has often alluded to his fight to transform his penchant for "violence" and "anger" into an "an ethic of respect."<sup>76</sup> He has said: "Hip-hop rose up at a certain moment like the first rampart in this struggle against criminality in the urban environment... In my case, graff helped me to channel my impulses... without it, there would currently be a disaster."<sup>77</sup> Now at *Festigraff*, he takes his brush and forcefully swings his whole body in gigantic, rapid sweeps. Twisting his body from right to extreme left, he ends with abrupt flourishes, leaving in his wake fiery swashes of magenta and red (see Figure 8 below). At the same time, Diablos approaches his wall. He too engages a struggle against internal demons. He prevails over speech defects, a lack of formal education and a health so fragile that his skinny body seems to disappear under his baggies. All his eloquence goes into his art. He takes up a spray-can, bends low in the wide stance of a skater or martial artist, puts all his weight on his left leg, and extends his right. Then he smoothly, rapidly, and gracefully shifts his weight to his right and leaves in his wake in a long, sinuous stroke with no breaks in the thin, fine line (see Figure 9 below).





Figure 8: Mad Zoo rapidly twists his whole body and ends with an abrupt flourish to create an energetic stroke.  
Dakar, 20 April, 2013.



Figure 9: Diablos bends low like a skater, and smoothly shifts his weight from one side to the other, to create a long, fluid line.  
Dakar, 20 April, 2013.

## Conclusion

All day long, Dakar's *graffeurs* will perform the thrill of reminding the population that, in the words of Big Key, "Those walls are for all of us." By proclaiming themselves guardians of the collective ownership of the walls, the artists have become the intermediaries of inherited foundational Senegalese values. They have charged themselves with rebirthing these into a new society where unplanned urban sprawl and economic crisis have threatened their wellbeing. The *graffeurs* paint the walls all over the city, so that, in a very meaningful way, the walls, the city itself, do belong to them as the custodians of a common heritage they seek to modernize. They have given themselves the task, at once a burden and an inspiring privilege, of enlarging those values beyond the old confines of family and village, to embrace the entire sprawling city.

## Notes

- 1 Sane (Big Key) 2012, personal interview, 22 June. All personal interviews quoted in this paper were conducted in Dakar, Senegal, by the author. Quotations from interviews, conversations, emails and Facebook are translated from French into English by the author. When the person quoted uses an English word, it is italicized. The first instance of an interview will be footnoted, and then not noted again unless quotations from other people or sources intervene.
- 2 Fall 2013, Facebook post, 8 June, <https://www.facebook.com/madzoo.fall>. Caps and the five-point ellipsis in the original.
- 3 In the U.S., the terms for graffiti artist are "writer" or "spray-can artist," but in Dakar graffiti artists call themselves "*graffeurs*."
- 4 Diop (Grafixx) 2013, personal interview, 25 April.
- 5 Beaugraff, qtd. in Drame 2013, 11 June.
- 6 Diop (Grafixx) 2013, personal interview, 29 April. In July, 2013, Grafixx left Africulturban for a paying job and an opportunity to start his "Graffiti Skool" for children. (Diop 2013, personal Facebook message to the author, 23 July).
- 7 Ngom (Docta) 2012, personal interview, 29 June.
- 8 On the outlaw status of graffiti art in cities around the world, see Atlanta and Alexander 1988, p. 159; Cooper and Chalfant 1984; Edlin 2011; Klopper 2003; Mansbach 2006, p. 92; Savelli et al. 2007. For the tension between legal and illegal graffiti, see Gastman and Neelon 2010, pp. 126-31; Grody 2006, pp. 257, 281; Schacter 2013, p. 9; Tucker 2013.
- 9 Ngom (Docta) 2013, personal interview, 24 April.
- 10 Triga, qtd. in Drame 2013.
- 11 Centre de Documentation 2013.
- 12 Ngom (Docta) 2013, personal interview, 24 April.
- 13 For panoramic photographs of the three murals, see Rabine 2013a, 14 May. <http://www.leslierabine.net/senegal-arts-project-gallery/dakar-graffiti-festival-festigraff/>.
- 14 Fall (Mad Zoo) 2013, personal interview, 16 September.
- 15 Ngom (Docta) 2013, personal interview, 24 April.
- 16 Sane (Big Key) 2013, personal interview, 16 September.
- 17 For the entrance of graffiti in other African countries, see Ariefdien and Abrahams 2006; Klopper 2003, p. 224; and Perry 2012.

- 18 Diop (Grafixx) 2013, personal interview, 25 April.
- 19 Souare (Mow) 2013, personal interview, 27 April.
- 20 Sane (Big Key) 2012, personal interview, 22 June.
- 21 Diba (Deep) 2012, personal interview, 26 June.
- 22 Sane (Big Key) 2012, personal interview, 22 June.
- 23 Traoré (Diablos) 2012, personal interview, 24 June.
- 24 MacDonald 2001, p. 128.
- 25 Col quoted in *ibid*, p. 128.
- 26 Fall (Mad Zoo) 2013, personal interview, 16 September.
- 27 Diouf 1992.
- 28 On murals of Senegalese Muslim religious leaders, see Roberts et al. 2003.
- 29 Fall (Mad Zoo) 2013, personal interview, 16 September.
- 30 Sane (Big Key) 2013, personal interview, 16 September.
- 31 MacDonald 2001, p. 153.
- 32 Fall (Mad Zoo) 2013, personal interview, 24 April.
- 33 Ngom (Docta) 2012, personal interview, 29 June.
- 34 Diallo 2013, personal interview, 25 April.
- 35 Ngom (Docta) 2012, personal interview, 29 June.
- 36 Fall (Mad Zoo) 2013, personal interview, 16 September.
- 37 Atlanta and Alexander 1988, pp. 164, 167; see also Ganz 2006, p. 10.
- 38 Ngom (Docta) 2013, personal interview, 24 April.
- 39 Charry 2012, p. ix.
- 40 Traoré, Maguette (“Diablos”) 2013, personal Facebook message to the author, 30 May. See also Drame, 2012.
- 41 Kane (Mbautta) 2013, personal interview, 2 May.
- 42 Ngom (Docta) 2013, personal interview, 24 April.
- 43 Fall (Mad Zoo) 2013, personal interview, 16 September.
- 44 Centre de Documentation 2013.
- 45 Souare (Mow) 2013, personal interview, 27 April.
- 46 Traoré (Diablos) 2013, personal interview, 15 September.
- 47 Diallo 2013, personal interview, 25 April.
- 48 Kane (Mbautta) 2013, personal interview, 2 May.
- 49 MacDonald 2001, p. 78, and graffiti writer Acridqtd. in *Ibid*, p. 105.
- 50 Fall (Mad Zoo) 2013, personal interview, 16 September. For this kind of collaborative spirit among Los Angeles crews, see Grody 2006, pp. 219-22.
- 51 Ngom (Docta) 2013, personal interview, 24 April.
- 52 Fall (Mad Zoo) 2013, personal interview, 16 September.
- 53 Fall (Mad Zoo) 2013. Personal interview of April 24, written transcript edited by Fall, caps font in edited transcript. 2 July.
- 54 Traoré (Diablos) 2012, personal interview, 24 June. Big Key also initiated me into graffiti art, and mentored me with just as much heartfelt encouragement, though with much less success, than in the case of Mad Zoo and Diablos.
- 55 Traoré (Diablos) 2013, personal communication, 18 April.
- 56 This section will be brief, since I have written at length about gender and masculinity in the Dakar youth arts movement in another essay. See Rabine 2013b.

- 57 MacDonald 2001, pp. 122-23.
- 58 Messerschmidt, 1993, p. 32, qtd.in MacDonald 2001, p. 142.
- 59 MacDonald 2001, pp. 143, 149.
- 60 In the first generation of Senegalese hip-hop, the few women rappers quickly went on to concentrate on other genres of music. In this younger generation, the only well-known woman rapper is the dynamic Toussa Senerap. Her crew Gotal includes the multi-talented Ndaye Fatou Ina Thiam as beat-maker. Ina is also a videographer and photographer, and works at Africulturban.
- 61 Sidibe (Zeinixx) 2013, personal interview, 29 April.
- 62 Fall (Mad Zoo), personal interview, 2013. 24 April. Other graffeurs have made similar comments.
- 63 Sidibe (Zeinixx) 2013, personal interview, 29 April.
- 64 Diop (Grafixx) 2013, 25 April; Souare (Mow) 2013, 27 April, Traoré (Diablos) 2013, 15 September—personal interviews.
- 65 Fall (Mad Zoo) 2013, personal interview, 16 September. In his essay on graffiti in Dakar, Ndiouga Benga 2013, pp. 358, 362, writes that the "graffs seem . . . to pull the letter to its ultimate limits," thereby "destabilizing so-called classical culture, always centered around reading."
- 66 Mode 2 2013, group interview, 15 April. Mode 2 did his interviews in English. They were not recorded by the author. The material is from the author's notes taken during the interviews.
- 67 Mode 2 2013, personal interview, 18 April. Interview not recorded and material taken from author's notes.
- 68 Veterans and historians of early graffiti in New York and Los Angeles point out that those pioneer artists faced a deprivation of material resources. "But as in many creative traditions, the paucity of user-friendly materials and adversity of the entire endeavor give rise to exceptional results" (Grody 2006, p. 47). Yet Andrew Paul recounts that "in London, it became a product of the predominantly White, Middle Class suburban youth" (2013, loc. 4).
- 69 Atlanta and Alexander 1988, pp. 157-58; MacDonald 2001, pp. 82, 185; Walde 2011, p. 7.
- 70 Walde 2011.
- 71 Fall (Mad Zoo), personal interview, 2013. 24 April.
- 72 Walde 2011, pp. 20 and 48.
- 73 Ngom (Docta) 2013, personal interview, 24 April.
- 74 On the relation between writing as sign and writing as trace, see Derrida 1978, pp. 11, 199.
- 75 Mode 2 2013; Pabon 2006.
- 76 Fall (Mad Zoo) 2013, personal interview, 16 September.
- 77 Fall (Mad Zoo), personal interview, 2013. 24 April.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### Large-Scale Colonial-Era Dams in Southern Africa

**Allen Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman. 2013. *Dams, Displacement, and the Delusion of Development: Cahora Bassa and Its Legacies in Mozambique, 1965–2007*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.**

Many people today are aware that hydroelectric dams are not “innocent,” but rather have caused serious social and ecological damage in different parts of the world. Nonetheless, after some 50,000 large dams were built in the name of modernization in the previous century, the dam euphoria continues to haunt the twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup> Allen and Barbara Isaacman oppose this trend with a piece of critically engaged research, offering an “alternative history” (p. 7) of the Cahora Bassa Dam on the Zambezi River, Mozambique’s most important (supposedly) development project. The authors aim to recover the silenced voices of those who had to pay for “progress,” suffering displacement and massive disturbances in their livelihoods. This piece of “engaged scholarship” (p. 187) is the result of a project initiated fifteen years ago, which encompassed archival research in Mozambique and Portugal and, especially, an impressive feat of oral history. The study rests on over 300 interviews, the bulk of which were conducted by the authors and their research team themselves, while also drawing on other scholars’ fieldwork.

While the “dam revolution” (p. 7) that swept across Africa during the second half of the twentieth century was none too glorious in the first place, the case of Cahora Bassa is particularly extreme, the Introduction explains. Built in the early 1970s during the final years of Portuguese rule and against the backdrop of increasing security problems and economic constraints, the dam became a “single-purpose hydroelectric scheme” (p. 64). Rather than stimulating economic activity, including within the Zambezi valley, as planners had originally envisaged, the dam’s sole function was to generate cheap electricity for colonial Mozambique’s neighbor and ally, apartheid South Africa. The project attracted harsh criticism from Frelimo (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*) and other anti-colonial groups. After independence in 1975, however, it was easily, frustratingly easily, accommodated in the postcolonial socialist and later neoliberal agendas.

The book’s seven chapters are bound together by three central arguments: first, that the dam “has caused very real ecological, economic, and social trauma for Zambezi valley residents” (p. 4); second, that violence was a pervasive feature in the project; and third, that there are strong links between the colonial past and the postcolonial—or “neocolonial” (p. 6)—present. While the monograph focuses on the period from the 1960s to 2007, the authors also sketch the long history of planning rhetoric centered on the Zambezi. While similar tropes about the “wild,” “dangerous,” and “unproductive” river have been circulating since around the sixteenth century, local representations were radically different (Chapter 2). Valley residents predominantly depicted the pre-dam Zambezi as a source of life, although many also referred to the river’s destructive side and its unpredictable floods. Skilfully interweaving environmental and social history, the authors subsequently describe the riparian communities’

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/pdfs/v14i3a7.pdf>

socio-economic organization, which was finely attuned to the river's ecosystem. The third chapter examines the building of the dam, highlighting the many aspects of coercion and exploitation that it involved. The authors also draw out the strictly hierarchical and racialized labor process, whereby remuneration, work types and general treatment differed immensely depending on the respective employee's skin color.

While forced resettlements reflect the "dark side" of most large-scale dam projects, the displacements for Cahora Bassa were particularly violent (Chapter 4). As part of a larger counterinsurgency strategy, men and women were herded into barbed-wire encampments (*aldeamentos*), where they came under constant surveillance and suffered from hunger and disease. Moreover, the valley became a site of combat for Frelimo guerillas, colonial forces and later Renamo (*Resistência Nacional Moçambicana*) fighters trying to destabilize the area after independence. Turning to the larger downriver area, Chapter 5 describes how the Zambezi's radically altered flood regime upset the complex social-ecological organization of riparian communities, disrupting farming and fishing practices and undermining people's food security, health, social institutions, and cultural repertoires. The sixth chapter explains how Cahora Bassa's energy, rather than bringing profits to Mozambicans, has been benefiting South Africa and, in terms of revenue, Portugal. It was only in 2007 that Mozambique was finally able to acquire main ownership of the installation. Despite this recent achievement in terms of "resource sovereignty" (p. 166), the final chapter does not leave the reader optimistic. As current plans to build a second dam further down the Zambezi at Mphanda Nkuwa demonstrate, there are disillusioning parallels between the colonial and postcolonial governments' development calculations, which again seem to come at the expense of the rural poor and the river ecology.

The authors achieve their intention of bringing the perspectives of those who Cahora Bassa marginalized to the fore through rigorous research, careful analysis, and convincing arguments. However, the authors' strong commitment to their aim also constitutes the book's main limitation. While readers learn much about the suffering of the affected communities, differentiated along age and gender and carefully contextualized in the people's pre-dam nostalgia, the approach to higher-level stakeholders or intermediaries is rather broad-brush by comparison. Without wanting to suggest any form of whitewashing, I would argue that it is the ambivalent "grey areas"—the space between the "modernizing perpetrators" and their victims, for instance disagreeing planners, officials not entirely callous about people's concerns, or affected peasants trying to wrest some benefits from the project—that help to explain why the idea of development still holds such power. Regardless of this, the book is exceptional in the way in which it brings out local perspectives and overcomes archival silences. Equally praiseworthy is the authors' knowledgeable integration of environmental aspects in their analysis. The monograph is bound to become a classic in the literature on dams and large-scale development schemes and deserves a wide readership, including beyond academic circles.

#### Notes:

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1 <http://www.internationalrivers.org/problems-with-big-dams>.

Julia Tischler, *Humboldt-University in Berlin, Germany*

**Julia Tischler. 2013. *Light and Power for a Multiracial Nation The Kariba Dam Scheme in the Central African Federation*. Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series. Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. 336 pp.**

The dam revolution, which dates back to the completion of the Hoover hydroelectric project in 1939, has generated a voluminous body of literature. Engineers, economists, developmental experts and representatives of the dam's industry hailed these mega-projects. They stressed that dams provided a cheap energy that would stimulate industrial development, promote rural electrification, increase irrigated farming and flood control and insure a secure supply of clean water. In the 1970's, geographers and anthropologists concerned about the social costs of dislocation and the troubling environmental effects of recently constructed dams challenged this developmentalist narrative. Africanists, most notably Elizabeth Colson, questioned the dam building frenzy that was sweeping across Africa.<sup>1</sup> Julia Tischler's study, *Light and Power for a Multiracial Nation* is a significant addition to this scholarly literature. Based on her award-winning doctoral dissertation she provides "a multi-perspective accounts of Kariba's construction and planning process and seeks to explore the links between modernization and late colonial nation building" (p. 3).

The book is organized chronologically into five chapters. The first documents the planning process surrounding the dam and the shifting, and at times, politically charged negotiations between British officials, settlers interests in Southern Rhodesia, foreign donors and development experts who promoted this high modernist project. Chapter two shifts the angle of vision to explore how the initial concerns about "racial partnership" gave way to a development project in which the interests of poor Gwembe Tonga peasants were ignored in favor of the need to maximize energy for settler plantations, industry and mining. The Third chapter documents the actual resettlement of 30,000 Gwembe Tonga who were removed from their fertile homeland to harsh backwater regions. Tischler also examines how nationalists and anti-colonial forces in England used the forced removal of the Gwembe Tonga to attack the white supremacist policies of the settler-based Southern Rhodesian government and to promote the cause of the Northern Rhodesian African National Congress. Chapter 4 focuses on the building of the dam. Colonial authorities claimed that the work sites would promote racial harmony and instill a work ethic among Africans by emulating the behavior of their European colleagues. One of the most fascinating dimensions of this racially defined effort to "uplift the Africans" was the belief that the relatively large number of "brown" Italian workers would be the brokers in this civilizing project. The author demonstrates that the colonial discourse bore no relationship to reality in the highly segregated labor process at Kariba. The final chapter



examines the competing and hardening interests of the various protagonists, which helped to undermine the Central African Federation.

The great strength of this study is the author's success in writing an "entangled history" of Kariba, which emphasizes the ways that the ideas, practices, strategies, and understandings of the competing protagonists are constructed as part of a set cross-cultural interactions located within an asymmetrical field of power. Her notion of "entangled history," derived from a broad reading of post-colonial and subaltern studies, allows Tischler to move beyond the familiar binaries of "colonized and colonizer," "black and white," "resistors and collaborators," and "colonial and post-colonial." She presents a more nuanced and complicated analysis of the ambiguous, and at times, contradictory, roles which many of the principal protagonists played in the unfolding drama of national building and modernization at both the local, national and global levels. She argues persuasively that "by opposing, circumventing or collaborating in the resettlement and rehabilitation program, the Gwembe Tonga re-inscribed themselves into the development endeavor that they had been excluded from" (p. 17). In her creative hands we follow the efforts of Chief Habanyama, the first Native Authority to learn about the proposed resettlement scheme, as he tried to mediate between his displaced followers who experienced hardships and misery and the colonial authorities in Northern Rhodesia: "Habanyama knew exactly how to stretch but not transgress the hierarchical boundaries" (p. 99). In a similar vein Tischler demonstrates how Harry Nkumbula, the leader of the Northern Rhodesian African Nationalist Congress and supported by anti-colonial interests in London, first championed the cause of the Gwembe Tonga. He lost interest in their plight, however, when it became clear that his nationalist agenda was not congruent with that of the Gwembe Tonga.

*Light and Power* is an extremely important book, which opens up new areas of scholarly inquiry. The study could have been even richer if Tischler had paid as much attention to the voices and memories of the displaced Gwembe Tonga and the workers who built the dam as to the documentation written primarily by colonial authorities and development experts. While she acknowledges that life histories can contribute to an agency centered account (which is one of her objectives) she uses the oral accounts of workers almost as an afterthought at the end of the chapter on the building of Kariba dam and made no effort to interview displaced peasants. Her justification for not giving more prominence to these accounts is that she is not confident that they represent "the true Kariba experiences in a representative way" (p. 203). This argument strikes me as flawed in two respects. There is never any authentic voice or voices that can capture the complex lived experiences of workers or displaced peasants. All such accounts are only partial and must be interrogated as such. Moreover Tischler is not reluctant to rely on written accounts, produced primarily by Europeans, with all their race, class, and cultural biases. This reservation notwithstanding, Tischler has written a major study of Kariba both as a source of cheap energy for the ill-fated Central African Confederation and as a symbol of the ill-conceived notion of "racial partnership" that underpinned the idea of the Central African Federation.

## Notes

- 1 Elizabeth Colson. 1971. *The Social Consequences of Resettlement: The Impact of the Kariba Resettlement on the Gwemba Tonga*. Manchester: Manchester University Press; William Adams. 1992. *Wasting the Rain: Rivers, People and Planning in Africa*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Allen Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman 2013. *Dams, Displacement and the Delusion of Development: Cahora Bassa and Its Legacies in Mozambique, 1965-2007*. 2013. Athens: Ohio University Press; JoAnn McGregor. 2009. *Crossing the Zambezi: The Politics of Landscape on A Central African Frontier*. Cambridge: James Curry; Thayer Scudder. 2005. *The Future of Large Dams: Dealing with Social Environmental, Institutional and Political Costs*. London: Earthscan; Dodzi Tsikata. 2006. *Living in the Shadows of the Large Dams: Long Term Responses of Downstream and Lakeside Communities of Ghana's Volta River Project*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Allen Isaacman, *University of Minnesota*

## Additional Reviews

**Wale Adebawale and Ebenezer Obadare, eds. 2013. *Democracy and Prebendalism in Nigeria: Critical Interpretations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 300 pp.**

This book is a critical engagement with the theoretical formulation that Richard Joseph articulated in his seminal 1987 book, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics: The Rise and the Fall of Nigeria's Second Republic*. The book creatively re-engages with the central issues Joseph raised on the trajectories of governance, primitive accumulation and under-development in Nigeria. The editors divided the book into three parts: governance and the political economy of prebendalism; prebendalism and identity politics; and reconsiderations.

In part one, several scholars on Nigeria examine the historical, sociological, political and economic factors that foster prebendalism in the country. The contributors were able to capture the essence of Joseph's theoretical interpretation of the nature and character of the Nigeria state, which predisposed it to such destructive level of corruption through primitive accumulation of what supposed to be a collective patrimony. The relevance of Joseph's book, which this volume elaborates, is the continuity (or, at the worst degree) of prebendalism in Nigeria. In other words, more than a quarter of a century after the seminal work was published, Nigeria continues to reel under the burden of endemic corruption, with inevitable attendant consequences such as poverty, inequality, non-inclusivity, conflict, and a perpetual threat of disintegration.

In their introduction, editors Ebenezer Obadare and Wale Adebawale underscore the inherent contradictions in Nigeria's version of democracy, which they rightly dubbed as "crude democracy" where for an illustrative example, the political leadership took a decision on January 1, 2012 to remove the subsidy on fuel, a decision that gravely affected the very livelihood of the majority of the citizens when consultation was still ongoing. The editors clearly identify the central question and the basic assumption of Joseph's work, which was to

understand “the nature of the fundamental processes of Nigerian political life,” which in turn requires “a prior appreciation of the nature, extent and persistence of a certain mode of political behavior and of its social and economic ramifications” (p. 5, quoting Joseph 1987, p. 1). They then went further to provide a summary of each contributors and how their views feed into the propensity toward prebendalism in contemporary Nigeria. The general summary that the editors provide to the book constituted one of the major strengths of the volume as it gave any potential reader an insight to what the book contains.

The contribution by Leena Hoffmann and Insa Nolte was significant, as they identify the pull and push factors of neopatrimonialism, such as “survival and adaptation into the modern state of networks based on reciprocity and mutual organization” (p. 25), which dates back to pre-colonial and colonial periods. Using the South-Western Nigeria as their point of entry, they narrate how influential Yoruba political leaders such as Obafemi Awolowo, Lamidi Adedibu, Olusegun Obasanjo, Gbenga Daniel, and Bola Tinubu creatively played either mainstream or opposition politics within the context of a rich and powerful central government and a politically savvy local populace, who maintain confidence in the local base of neopatrimonialism. In a more sector specific approach, Jane Guyer and LaRay Denzer examine prebendalism and the people through the prism of the vexed issue of the price of petrol. After tracing the history of increases in the price of petrol and the regular discontent that accompanied them, they place the debate around appropriate petroleum pricing within the context of the international pricing system. This is the weakest part of the chapter as local conditions in terms of wages and infrastructure deficits prevent such comparison. Rotimi Suberu’s contribution was important as he effectively locates the inscrutable problem of prebendalism within the communal nature of Nigeria’s federal system as against liberal individualism on which federalism is anchored in United States of America. Even though there are constitutional means such as the federal character principle of addressing communal contention over resources in Nigeria’s federation, Suberu contends that over centralization of power at the center has limited its utility. Remi Aiyede employs an institutionalist’s perspective to argue that political choices of political actors in post-independence Nigeria and other African countries are products of elite competition and these define and determine their level of political responsibility to the people. Other contributors to this book share similar perspective on the faulty foundation of Nigeria’s federalism, unending influence of colonial policies, weak and decadent bureaucracy, sustained culture of entitlement and rent seeking; class interests, media and global consumerism as contributory factors to continuing prebendalism in Nigeria. The epilogue by Richard Joseph on the “Logic and Legacy of Prebendalism” not only showed the current relevance of prebendalism to the reality of Nigeria’s contemporary experiences, but also utilizes similar words such as patrimonialism and predation to explain the phenomenon of using official positions to appropriate state resources for personal ends.

Samuel Ojo Oloruntoba, *University of South Africa*

**Afe Adogame, Ezra Chitando, and Bolaji Bateye, eds. 2013. *African Traditions in the Study of Religion, Diaspora and Gendered Societies*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate. 192 pp.**

For a long time the academy of religious studies has lacked scholarly writings with a multidisciplinary approach about religion in Africa. As prominent scholars have alluded to, religion in Africa permeates all the departments of life so it is not easy or possible to isolate it.<sup>1</sup> For this unique nature of African societies, some attempts at studying a phenomenon called religion has been a superficial description of its resemblance and often misleading. *African Traditions in the Study of Religion, Diaspora and Gendered Societies* is a welcome intervention in a field dominated by misrepresentations, miscategorizations and bias. It assembles a group of African scholars from varied disciplines whose writings connect all the dots that are missing in outsiders' perspectives of African religion. Writing in honor of the renowned scholar, Jacob Olupona, the thirteen-chapter book is divided into two sections.

My initial skepticism of the broadened geographical contexts of the book disappeared a few pages into the first chapter. The blend of vivid descriptions about religious practices of Africans in Africa, Africans in the diaspora, and Caribbeans in the diaspora, leaves no doubt about the peculiar sameness of people from African descent, regardless of their present domiciles. This is rare in some writings that often situate their central arguments in one context and make generalizing assumptions that often tend to be far from the reality. I commend and encourage such collaborative adventures as a new way for Africans to tell our stories in a communal way.

I could not agree more with the authors that Eurocentric theories are inadequate in explaining religion in Africa. For instance, Shamala suggests that peace in the Eurocentric sense is the absence of strife but to Africans, it is the ability to live in harmony (p. 17). Similarly, according to Laguda, theories that see modernization and secularization as going hand in hand do not hold true in the African context (p. 261). That is why modernized Ghana describes itself as a secular state; yet, state functions begin with religious prayers, and being "God fearing" is a trump card to winning political power. Moreover, the belief that Indigenous religions have been forced into oblivion by western religions and modernization is, according to Chitando et al., an inaccurate description of a religious syncretic marketplace (p. 4). With a widespread belief that no religion possesses all the answers to the myriad of problems in Africa, individuals shop for, and adopt multi-religious solutions to their spiritual and material problems. Indigenous religion is still very prominent and has been appropriated for use by Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore imperative for scholars to formulate Afrocentric theories and not wait for readymade ones from the west. The call by Chitando for life saving research and knowledge on masculinities and HIV in Africa (p. 139) is therefore in the right direction. Scholarship in religious studies in Africa need to move towards multivariate research linking religion with other social problems in a bid to generate workable theories that have relevance for the socio-economic development of the continent.

I enjoyed the interesting scholarship on gender in African societies and its' intertwine with religion. With gender discussions assuming political dimensions, it becomes even more complicated for fair opinion to be assessed on its own merit. I do share the view of Bateye (p. 147) that theories that view women as temptress, destroyers and people who should be subordinated, arrived with colonialism and western religions. For this reason, it becomes

counterproductive to adopt and adapt western feminist theories in Africa. The call by the writers for an increase in the number of women scholars in Africa did not go far enough. In fact we should begin to critique male-centric scholarship of African religion regardless of the gender of the writers. Women are key to religions in Africa, and any research that neglects such vital source of information cannot be credible.

While commending the scholars for such a great work, I would advocate for a more inclusive array of writers in subsequent editions and similar ventures that are being nursed. The dominance of Nigerian writers casts a slur on its comprehensive nature and plays into the naive western perception that Africa is one country. I believe widespread solicitation from different parts of Africa would have enriched the book. Relatedly, subsequent editions would benefit from some proofreading to avoid some minor, yet embarrassing typographical and grammatical errors (see pp. 14 ln 30, 55 ln32, and 123 ln 18).

These issues notwithstanding, *African Traditions in the Study of Religion, Diaspora and Gendered Societies* is a must read for scholars of African studies, scholars in other fields with Africa as their context as well as for reading pleasure. Its simplified appeal with short articles written in clear and concise language makes it an easy read for any reader.

## Notes

- 1 Mbiti 1969, p 1.
- 2 Asamoah-Gyadu 2010

## References

Asamoah-Gyadu, J. K. 2010. "Religious Education and Religious Pluralism in the New Africa." *Religious Education* 105.3: 238–44.

Mbiti, J. S. 1990. *African Religions and Philosophy*. 2nd edition. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann.

Richardson Addai-Mununkum, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*

**Peter Alexander, Thapelo Lekgowa, Botsang Mmope, Luke Sinwell, and Bongani Xezwi. 2013. *Marikana: Voices from South Africa's Mining Massacre*. Athens: Ohio University Press. 165 pp.**

Written by both academics and political activists, the book captured my interest from the first page. It attempts to understand the massacre at the South African Marikana mine on 16 August 2012, in which the police intervened against three thousand miners on strike, killed thirty-four of them, injured about one hundred, and arrested two hundred and fifty-nine. The book is a narrative through the lens of the workers and creates "history from below" (p. 24). Contrary to media reports, which depicted the striking miners as unruly and dangerous mob, Alexander claimed that they remained disciplined and peaceful. *Marikana* is based on qualitative research, with interviews conducted with striking miners, their wives, community leaders and rival



union leaders in the two months after the intervention, completed by newspaper reports. Displaying original interview transcripts, the book offers more data than many dissertations. It claims that the “merciless and bloody massacre [...] had been planned in advance” (p. 16) and was a “sober undertaking by powerful agents of the state and capital who consciously organized to kill workers” (p. 21). The authors identified the police and the ANC government, the mining company, and the National Union of Mineworkers as the three main “culprits” responsible for the “atrocities” (p. 136). Alexander criticized that the deployment of paramilitary units and the use of sharp ammunition were not justified considering that miners did not attack the police and carried only traditional sticks, spears, and machetes. He further speculated that such a mission required authorization from the Police Minister at least. He interpreted workers’ insurgence as a rank and file rebellion against mine owners and the dominant union, and indicated that the union has lost all credibility in the eyes of the mineworkers. Suspecting labor leaders of corruption, miners had rejected their representation, elected their own strike committees, and demanded higher wage outside the bargaining unit.

The descriptions are quite normative, depicting the workers as remarkably brave, mine bosses as cruel, the union’s indifference as depressing, and the police brutality as awful. Miners’ accounts were frequently taken as the truth, rather than constructions of meaning. The goal of the book, to understand “what happened in Marikana and why” (p. 24), was hardly accomplished, considering that the Commission of Inquiry is still on going. Furthermore, the speculations about the suspected mastermind behind the massacre should not be taken as conclusions based on evidence, especially since interviews were limited to workers and disregard further parties involved.

After reading the book, the mystery remains unsolved. I asked myself why during the first six days of the strike, no union branch leader, no company official, and no politician spoke to the striking miners, but only a police negotiator? The authors’ worst assumptions turned out to be true, with the Commission revealing that the mine’s senior management (including Deputy President Ramaphosa of the ruling African National Congress party) and the union leadership pressuring the police to understand the strike not as labor dispute, but as criminal act. In fact, after having listened only to the company reports, not even talking to his local branches, the president of the National Union of Mine Workers, Zokwana, had asked the Police Minister for more special forces, believing that, “it was no longer a situation where you needed negotiations. It was a situation where you needed trained personnel to play their role to restore law and order.”<sup>1</sup> It was only after continuous meetings with the company security and the police that a general managed to persuade the union President to talk to the workers.

The union saw the substance of the strikers’ demands not as their responsibility. From the onset of the strike, the National Union of Mine Workers had appealed to members to resume work and asked the police to protect them from being assaulted as strikebreakers. The distance of the union from the miners became clearer than ever when a branch secretary distributed knobkerries, sticks, and spears among his stewards, ready to defend their office against an apparent attack by striking miners. After a union representative had even fired shots at these, the branch fled to “a safe place in the bush.”<sup>2</sup>

The raw data provided by the book makes it not only recommendable for labor scholars and African studies, but also a thrilling read for social movement activists. *Marikana* leaves room for more inquiries, which should contribute to conceptual debates. Expanding on classic socialist approaches, research on the (failed) production of legitimacy in organizations, the bases for and the rejection of authority, and the formation of criticism seem promising.

### Notes

- 1 Zokwana, S. at the Commission: 31 January 2013, p. 4442.
- 2 Setelele, M. at the Commission: 28 January 2013, p. 4105.

### References

The Marikana Commission of Inquiry (Commission). 2013. *Transcripts of the Marikana Commission Hearings*. <http://www.marikanacomm.org.za/transcripts.html>.

Esther Uzar, *University of Basel*

**Johan Brosche and Daniel Rothbart. 2013. *Violent Conflict and Peacebuilding: The Continuing Crisis in Darfur*. London and New York: Routledge. 175 pp.**

The Darfur crisis in Sudan has received considerable attention concerning the prospects for peace, conflict, and humanitarian aid. Different articles, reports, and analyses have been published since the crisis. All had different targets. There have been different interventions, but they seem to have had limited success because the crisis continues. Interventions have ranged from international peacekeeping to mediation efforts. Some explain the crisis as a mere climate change-conflict. Others see it as ethnic conflict between Black Africans and Arabs. The reality on the ground is that whatever analysis or angle people use, the crisis continues. And the question we ought to ask is why? Fortunately, Johan Brosche and Daniel Rothbart present a solid analysis of the Darfur crisis. In *Violent Conflict and Peacebuilding*, the two remind us and argue that the crisis is greatly problematic. Darfur is a continuing crisis, so they say.

Brosche and Daniel employed a framework of complementarity in explaining complex conflict dynamics like the Darfur crisis. It is a complex perspective. Four different conflict types identified were exposed. First, they argue that it is long standing disputes between farmers and herders and between different herder communities. The second is political struggles between local elite leaders or resistance and between traditional leaders as well as young leaders in the Darfur region. The third conflict is long standing grievances of marginalized groups at the periphery against the national center of power due to the disparity of power, among other factors. The fourth conflict type observed using this complementarity framework consists of cross-border conflicts. This particularly includes the proxy war waged between Chad and Sudan, and sometimes with South Sudan.

The argument of the book is well-presented. It has two parts. Part 1, with seven chapters, details the framework of conflict complementarity. Chapter 1 uniquely and summarizes the nature, scope, dynamics, and scale of violence in Darfur. The book proceeds with establishing

the theoretical framework in Chapter 2. The framework provides vital connections with findings from social identity theory. Chapter 3 presents communal conflicts. This entails “struggles among so-called identity groups-ethnic, religious, or nationalistic” (p. 36). Chapter 4 highlights the local elite conflicts. Among others, it includes “power struggles among selected individuals within the group.” The center-periphery conflict type is developed well in Chapter 5. Powerful elites at state level control multiple societal sectors at the marginalized periphery groups. The fourth conflict type of cross-border conflict is illustrated by the proxy wars between Sudan and Chad in Chapter 6. The authors points out the cross-border dimension of the conflict. The last chapter finishes Part 1 with an examination of South Sudan, a new nation carved out from Sudan, using this complementarity conflict perspective.

Part 2 consists of three chapters presenting peace building in Darfur. Chapter 8 highlights the strengths and pitfalls of peace building through the international response to the crisis. It focuses on key actors like United States, China, the International Criminal Court, Russia, the African Union (AU), the United Nations, and the European Union. Although the authors did not dwell much on the role of NGOs and civil society role in peace building, their emphasis on the influence of international actors in relation to other actors clearly shows the challenge of confronting the continuing crisis. Chapter 9 highlights the fruits and challenges of major peace initiatives. The authors note some pros and cons effects of these initiatives on the dynamics of the crisis using the complementarity framework. The last chapter is the conclusion.

The authors used a variety of sources. The information gathered is from both primary and secondary sources. Field visits for interviews to Sudan and South Sudan plus wide participation of the authors in conferences on Sudan and Darfur provided insightful information. The book also shows a wide and deep desk review of materials on Darfur such as journals, magazines, newsletters, organizational reports, and analyses by other scholars. These sources coupled with deep-rooted perspectives from “conflict analysis, social identity theory, social psychology, international relations and African studies” (p. 4) make this book a hot-cake for many potential readers given the ongoing crisis in Darfur.

The book is potentially marketable to policy makers in North Africa, East Africa, and the Great Lakes Region, INGOs working in Africa, and researchers and academicians and their students. It is very useful for multilateral institutions and Inter-governmental organizations like the UN and AU, among others. It is also highly useful for those involved with armed and civilian peacekeeping in Africa. The subject areas for this book include but are not limited to: international relations, African studies, international peace studies, diplomacy, conflict resolution, justice and transformation, war studies, and development studies.

Hope Tichaenzana Chichaya, *Alumni of Catholic University of Eastern Africa*

**J. J. Carney. 2014. *Rwanda Before the Genocide: Catholic Politics and Ethnic Discourse in the Late Colonial Era*. New York: Oxford University Press. 343 pp.**

In the hills of Rwanda, Christianity is known both as a centerpiece of Rwandan culture and as a great divider that led to violence, murder, rape, and ultimately the 1994 Rwanda Tutsi Genocide. Many well-known Rwanda-based authors have written on the connection between the Catholic Church and ethnic hatreds between the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. Carney adds to this literature by providing an in-depth historical narrative of the Catholic Church, specifically the White Fathers, during the colonial period from 1950 to Rwanda's independence in 1962. This book makes a significant contribution to understanding Rwandan history, Catholic missionary work in Africa, and the formation of ethnic identity during and after colonization.

Carney describes Rwandan colonial and post-colonial history in the context of four influential and controversial figures. The first is Leon-Paul Classe, who introduced Christianity to Rwanda and developed the strategic relationship between the White Fathers and the Rwandan monarchy. This close church-state relationship provided the *Mwami*, the (usually Tutsi) King of Rwanda, with the full support of the Catholic Church. In addition, Classe established the segregation of Tutsi political elites from the poorer Tutsis and from the majority of the Hutu population in church-related institutions such as education. It was under Classe's watch that Rwanda became a "Christian Kingdom in Africa." The next and very controversial figure is Andre Perraudin, who led the Catholic Church in Rwanda after the death of Classe. Perraudin is often criticized for the formation of ethnic identities through the publication of *Super Omni Caritas*, which is recognized as the document that shifted the Church's allegiance away from the Tutsi political order and towards the Hutu peasants; and which reconfigured socioeconomic classes as ethnicities, with Hutus needing to raise themselves above Tutsis. Many scholars and the current Rwanda Patriotic Front-led Rwandan government see this publication and Perraudin's later support of the Hutu power movement as one of the most important factors that ultimately led to the 1994 genocide. Carney disputes this zero-sum belief that Perraudin should be solely held responsible for ethnic violence in Rwanda, by stating that during the early days of Perraudin's tenure as archbishop of Rwanda, he did not in fact concern himself with the growing ethnic question between Tutsis vs. Hutus. While he did go on later to support the pro-Hutu political party, Parmehutu, he did so not because of belief in Hutu power, but because of his fears of opposition parties, specifically the Union National Rwandaise (UNAR), spreading communism in the region. Overall, Carney describes the former controversial religious figure as a complex individual who made serious mistakes while in Rwanda.

Aloys Bigirumwami is the next major figure that Carney describes. Compared to Perraudin, Bigirumwami was able to foresee the future ethnic problems that the Church was propagating. Throughout his tenure as a bishop, he tried to push for national unity and dismissed ideas of ethnic power. In Carney's historical analysis, Bigirumwami's warnings are prophetic of the coming genocide, but he is tainted by the fact that when he could have acted politically to stop the spread of ethnic hatred, he instead fell in line with Perraudin's beliefs of the Church's neutrality in political matters. Gregoire Kayibanda is the last major individual

Carney deals with. Kayibanda is depicted sporadically until he creates the Parmehutu political party and then becomes President of the newly independent Rwanda, at which point he is elevated to a person of major interest in the book. Carney is clever in only mentioning Kayibanda's early rise within the Church in order to prevent his legacy from overshadowing the other historical figures.

Carney assigns these four people as the major individuals during Rwanda's colonization and post-independence with great success. Even though each chapter focuses on a specific time period, it is described through the writings, speeches and actions of these very important historical figures. Carney briefly describes Church-related events after the 1973 military coup-d'état of Juvenal Habyarimana and up until the 1994 genocide, but his major focus remains on the period between 1950 and 1962. The author is able through very detailed historical research to depict the lives and choices of the people who shaped ethnicity, Catholic growth and ethnic politics in Rwanda. Most importantly, Carney is able to execute this sizeable task without submitting to the common narratives that are found among Rwandan-based scholars and the current Rwandan government. In effect, he depicts people as individuals who cannot be put into simple categories of "good" or "bad." Even though scholars and students who focus on Rwanda will most likely read this book, it may be interesting for academics who are interested in missionary work in Africa or on how ethnic categories were created and reinforced by colonization and Christianity.

Jonathan R. Beloff, *School of Oriental and African Studies*

**Karen E. Ferree. 2011. *Framing the Race in South Africa: The Political Origins of Racial Census Elections*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 291 pp.**

*Framing the Race in South Africa, The Political Origins of Racial-Census Elections* is an easy book to read, and understand, written with moderate language, good prints, and illustrative examples that are clear and relevant to the concepts presented in the book. The author presents a robust tabular data presentation, which was collected largely through survey at relevant sections of the text and well analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Comprehensive footnotes also add to the features of the book with a view to buttressing and expatiating on the claims and position of the author.

It is a well-researched, 291-paged book, with nine chapters chronologically and logically presented starting with chapter one as the general introduction. Chapter two focuses on voters' voting decisions, which are better determined by party image other than identity considerations, policy preference, or performance evaluation. Chapter three to five present campaign efforts of major political parties—ANC, DA, and NNP in South Africa in 1994, 1999, and 2004 that focused on the struggle to retain and change party label/image using persuasion strategy. Chapter six discusses the effort of political parties to alter the candidates' characteristics with a view to changing their party label in order to convince the voters of their inclusiveness. Efforts and difficulties in recruiting high quality candidates were addressed in chapter seven. Chapter eight analyses how the ANC uses its negative framing strategy against



its black opposition parties—IFP, UDM, and Cope—while chapter nine is a comparative analysis of negative framing strategies experiences in South Africa, Israel, and El-Salvador.

The book is rich in content and quite insightful. It gives a vivid account and a peep into post-apartheid South African democratic experiments with robust empirical data presentation, largely sourced through survey method and analyzed with recourse to works of different scholars. Experiences of different countries such Sweden, Italy, Japan, Israel, El Salvador, and Mexico were also alluded to. Hence, the book is scholarly and has good theoretical grounding. It is characterized by comprehensive footnotes to elucidate views expressed and has a good reference style.

Also, the book presents a lucid and novel account of how race and identity described as “red herrings” has been used to influence the ruling party’s (ANC) power dominance since the end of apartheid in South Africa to the disadvantage of its main opposition parties, the NNP and the DP, through its campaign strategy and retention of most black African talents-elite recruitment. Contrary to general belief, among political observers, the author shows that the racial-census election in South Africa is politically engendered rather than socially evolved.

It is the intention of the author to show that a coherent and credible opposition is central to the ability of elections to generate accountability. In this connection, Ferree states thus:

when oppositions lack credibility voters are stranded on the shores of the dominant party. . . Understanding when and how oppositions win this battle is crucial to our understanding how democracy consolidates, for without a coherent, credible opposition, elections lose their ability to generate accountability. It is to this and I write this book. (pp 29-30).

This purpose was achieved by the author, as she was able to convince the readers that coherent and credible opposition is essential for elections to generate accountability thereby consolidating democracy. This was done through extensive and comparative analyses of how ruling parties use negative image campaign strategy to discredit their opponents so as not to provide alternative choice for the voters in spite of the ruling parties poor performances. In South Africa, ANC’s monopoly of mass media and African talents as well as access to resources was used to discredit its main opponents by painting them as “white” and linking them to apartheid rule in the mind of the voters instead of being “new” or “rainbow” and “Africanizing” as they claimed. This, she argued, has increased Africans uncertainty about opposition parties (tables 1.1 and 1.2), thereby maintaining parties images/labels that has not enabled the opposition parties to win voters (chapter 3-5).

The book has some areas of strength. There is robust data presentation and analysis. It also presents in-depth analyses and historical account of issues/events. However, the author used not too robust and inconclusive data (tables 6.5 and 6.10). Nevertheless, the book is a good piece suitable for whoever wants to understand the dynamics of elections and how democracy works in any political system and especially for its target audience-politicians, scholars, and students.

Olugbemiga Samuel Afolabi, *Obafemi Awolowo University*

**David Francis, ed. 2012. *When War Ends: Building Peace in Divided Communities*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company. 217 pp.**

This multi-authored volume offers the opportunity to comprehend the whole process of reconstructing post-conflict war-torn societies. It is an important volume, which besides capturing problems, challenges, and opportunities associated with the reconstruction process, offers in-depth analyses of the nature, dynamics, and complexity of the process.

Contributions in this volume reveal the lack of consensus on the definition of peacebuilding. Some authors show preference for a narrow definition whilst others opt for an all-inclusive, broad conceptualization. However, one characterization that in my view comes close to providing a close description of the process holds that “in effect, though peacebuilding has a normative orientation, i.e. reconstructing a secure, peaceful and developed society, it is a largely value-laden project that apportioning disproportionate powers to those who prescribe, fund and implement peacebuilding programmes” (p.5). The volume adopts the label “Liberal Peacebuilding” because of the predominant emphasis on neoliberal political and economic principles.

The West African country of Sierra Leone that has had a significant share of peacebuilding programmes, is covered in great detail. Some comparative analyses of peacebuilding in Liberia and Sierra Leone also feature in the final chapter. Those keen on grasping both the “virtues” and “vices” of liberal peacebuilding project in Africa will find the volume very useful as it offers both accounts, even though on the balance, the critical chapters outnumber those in defense of liberal peacebuilding.

Arguably, a robust defense of liberal peacebuilding is provided in chapter 2. The chapter attacks the so-called “hyper-critical school” of scholars and commentators, branding their claims as “exaggerated” (p.28). The chapter finds alternative strategies proposed by the critical school, insightful as they are, are not markedly detached from liberal principles but rather espousing variations within liberal peacebuilding. The verdict here is that some criticisms have gone too far and offer no convincing rationale for abandoning liberal peacebuilding.

Those adopting a critical position raise doubts on the selective nature of liberal peacebuilding interventions: excessive focus on state reconstruction; scanty attention on the trade-off between peace and justice; and placing too much of a premium on economic growth as the most reliable means that can propel the success of peacebuilding. Others rightly observe that economic aspects of post-conflict reconstruction still have been accorded relatively little attention. Critics also maintain that insulating the local market from the perils of neoliberal policies is necessary because economic inequality is often at the roots of conflicts in countries emerging from violence.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the nine-chapter volume. First, an altruistic mission does not drive ongoing liberal peacebuilding around the world. Strategic economic and political interests of the external actors, who are intimately engaged in the whole peacebuilding enterprise, cannot be ruled out of the equation. Second, the major concern remains to be the quality of the peace achieved. Branding Sierra Leone as a successful model while the potential for a relapse into violence exists, and where people's welfare and well-being are marginal concerns, ought to be seriously questioned. Third, evaluation on the continent's experience that

“the balance of the results of peacebuilding in Africa, is ambiguous, uncertain and very subjective” (p. 87), is spot on. The volume’s last chapter provides a conclusive assessment of the discussion stating that “in short, similar to Liberia, Sierra Leone’s peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts have made the social subservient to the liberal, with major deficiencies in responding to the social problems which contributed to war in the first place” (p. 181).

With regard to the organization of the contents, one may find the volume repetitive in some chapters especially where authors begin their discussions with historical accounts of the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Historical accounts could have been presented at the beginning of the book instead of being repeated in the last chapter. On the topic of public health and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone (chapter 7), the author cites a local newspaper story in Uganda to illustrate medical malfeasance in developing countries, especially in Africa! Proper citation of a researched and documented report could convey the message better. Moreover, depicting the decision by the Blair administration to deploy six hundred British troops as demonstration of the international community “will and capacity” to act effectively goes a long way to portray the growing tradition of overemphasizing the impact of external actors’ engagement. It, henceforth, comes as no surprise that the real motive of the initial British troops deployment in Freetown to protect British nationals, is taken for granted.

Rasul Ahmed Minja, *University of Dar es Salaam*

**Carmela Garritano. 2013. *African Video Movies and Global Desires: A Ghanaian History*. Athens: Ohio University Press. 246 pp.**

Carmela Garritano's *African Video Movies and Global Desires: A Ghanaian History* is a captivating, well-researched and written first book arguing that Ghanaians refashioned their moral and national identities while engaging in globalization (1987-2000) through video movie-making. It offers a welcomed conceptual departure from Birgit Meyer's work, which primarily sees Ghanaian video movies through the eyes of pentecostalism modernity. Instead, Garritano argues that Ghanaian video movie production and consumption suggests shifting conceptions of dominant discourses concerning globalization, gender and sexuality, neoliberalism, and consumerism in Ghana (p. 23).

Garritano's methodological approach is innovative and multi-faceted. Rather than analyzing and understanding video movies by locating meaning within the movies, Garritano utilizes "contextual criticism" as an approach. Borrowing from Julianne Burton, she examines video movies by understanding the dialectical relationship between the movie, its many contexts, and how the relationship affects the other (p. 8). Furthermore, beyond simply media analysis, Garritano conducted extensive ethnographic research over a ten-year period during numerous visits to Ghana. Each chapter is constructed around an argument building upon a close analysis of two to three Ghanaian video films, and substantiated by ethnographic interviews with the producers and people responsible for the distribution, production and filming of the video movies. The book is divided into five chapters, excluding the introduction and conclusion. Ultimately, each chapter reveals the historical circumstances that shape present-

day economic, moral, and social anxieties within the spectators' consciousness and how the movies address those.

Chapter one, "Mapping the Modern," based on the study of two films: *The Boy Kumasenu* (1952) and *A Debut for Dede* (1992), argues against the grain by not seeing the birth of a national Ghanaian cinema as a complete turning away from colonial influence. Instead, Garritano insists that there is continuous "connection and disconnection" between the feature films of the Ghanaian Film Industry Corporation (Ghanaian film productions) and the Gold Coast Film Unit (British colonial film productions) (p. 26). Chapter two, "Work, Women, and Worldly Wealth," presents the case that video movies attempted to a) normalize the fantasy of middle-class comfort; b) conceive of the female body as a metaphor for "pure consumption;" and c) highlight Ghanaians' "ambivalent responses to globalization" and their subsequent shift from being producers to consumers in the global economy (pp. 63, 90).

Chapter three, "Professional Movies and Their Global Aspirations," raises two important points. Firstly, the author maintains that video movie directors shifted their movie plots from "poverty and economic decline," which were central to the first wave of video movies (1987-1992), to their characters' individual choices, unconstrained by fate or wealth. Secondly, she contends that the second wave of video movies (1992-2000) gestured toward global fantasies, transcending previous video movies' local horizons (p. 93). In this shift, Garritano asserts that female Ghanaian movie directors inserted themselves into broader, global gender debates through the use of female-centric actresses and scripts. In chapter four, "Tourism and Trafficking," Garritano examines Ghanaians in the diaspora attempts to locate a better life in their new surroundings and their shifting moral and social obligations to their relatives in Ghana. Finally, chapter five, "Transcultural Encounters and Local Imaginaries," argues that there should be a shift from viewing African films as an aligned force against a Western center. Instead, Garritano purposes adopting a view point that accounts for the heterogeneous competitions and tensions between multiple national African video movie industries. Thus, the book uniquely analyzes "Nollywood," the regional film powerhouse "Nigerian-Hollywood" as a both a hinderance and help to the Ghanaian video movie industry.

Thinkers such as Simon Gikandi, James Ferguson, Jonathan Haynes, Brian Larkin, John McCall, Birgit Meyer, and Terrence Turner inform Garritano's analysis, but they never overwhelm her own voice. One of the most striking feats of *African Video Movies and Global Desires* is Garritano's ability to seamlessly weave sets of heterogeneous theoretical frameworks from various continents and people into a Ghana-centric, ideological conception of Ghanaian video movies (pp. 34, 59, 77, 125).

This book is a forerunner in the excavation and understanding of the Ghanaian video movie industry's emergence out of neoliberal economic policies over the past two decades. It highlights the struggles and tensions between Ghana's dynamic local, national, and regional video movie industries. Garritano brings to light the contemporary paradoxical struggle of Ghanaian video movies' attempts to creatively re-frame and confront "the grand narratives of modernity and globalization" while simultaneously often being complicit to such forces (p. 9). I have already highly recommended this book to colleagues, friends, and family members, and I do so again.

Nana Osei-Opere, *University of California of Los Angeles*

**Trevor Getz, ed. 2014. *African Voices of the Global Past: 1500 to the Present*. Boulder: Westview Press. 223 pp.**

The Atlantic slave trade, the industrial revolution, formal colonialism, World Wars I and II, decolonization, and women's struggle for their rights and opportunities are key themes in world history textbooks today. They mostly tell the narrative of Western Europe and North America and how these events, trends, developments and realities have shaped the world since 1500 and have established an almost unique perspective, which makes these two regions the major agents of change in the period historians term modern history. This, however, is a partial global perspective, which overlooked others not less significant for the telling and writing of a compelling world history. One of these concealed if not untold perspectives is the African. Yet, as this book clearly shows, Africa and Africans were at the core of this global history not as victims, casualties, or scapegoats but as potential and dynamic participants.

This book covers the period from the fifteenth century to the late twentieth century chronologically by looking at each of the six world episodes, setting them first in their global context, then looking at the African experience and finally offering the African perspective in the form of primary source material ranging from stories, poems, diaries, speeches to newspaper articles and police reports and written by different Africans including South Africans, Nigerians and others of Afro-Caribbean descent. Individual Africans relate their own stories of how they lived specific experiences, which directly affected their lives, and how they responded to them and in so doing, they unconsciously played a role in significant global events and contributed to their unfolding.

The transatlantic slave system was bound to disappear, not because European slave traders decided so, but because resistance to the system by slaves, which took the form of attacks on ships, European forts, the burning of factories, the building of fortresses, and the diversion of rivers among other strategies of resistance, were so costly, that it ultimately led to its demise. This is not to suggest that other Africans did not accommodate or take part in the system. Over the long term and of greater significance, the transatlantic slave system thoroughly impacted central African societies by changing sex ratios, leading to depopulation, creating social hierarchies and political fragmentation, and introducing new forms of domestic enslavement and encouraging materialist values in societies that value people above everything.

Similarly, the industrial revolution, which is exclusively associated with Britain, Europe, and the western world in general and which generated the unprecedented wealth of these societies and made them leading economic powers, would not have occurred without the vast amounts of resources carried to Britain from the colonies, in addition to African partnership and African labor. These resources helped to improve the living standards of the British and funded innovation and development in Britain and later in other parts of Europe and the world. The reputed Oxford and Cambridge universities, to cite but one example, were indeed endowed with money deriving from the slave trade. Africans were fully involved in the various global trade networks since the fifteenth century, and this is a component of world history.



In the same vein, the two world wars were partly about the African colonies. Yet, Africans had no story to tell, perceptions to develop or experiences to live in these world events. World history has so far silenced them. A close look at these global events reveals a radically different narrative. The African continent was an integral component of the global economic and political system in both wars. Both world wars were almost felt everywhere in the continent and had dramatic impact on Africans, who supplied raw materials and soldiers, many of whom lost their lives in two conflicts which were not theirs. In addition, many African regions were theaters of conflict and actually helped determine the final outcome of the war. For those Africans who were not directly involved in the conflicts, the imperial powers made them pay more taxes and restricted their consumption to support the war efforts. Africans contributed in other ways, not less crucial. In Nigeria, the newspaper press, which since the late nineteenth century, was culturally nationalist and which shifted its focus on the ills of foreign domination and the need for self-determination after World War II, sided with colonial Britain in the war, and launched a campaign to encourage Nigerians to join the colonial army not only to fight against Nazi Germany but also to train for the sake of the future development of an independent Nigeria.

These are samples of how Africans largely and effectively contributed to key global events and patterns since the fifteenth century and legitimately invite historians to give them and the continent of Africa the floor in their world history writing, that is why this book is a significant addition to this history and is very likely to be a popular textbook and a companion to the existing history.

Mohamed Adel Manai, *Qatar University*

**Clive Glaser. 2013. *The ANC Youth League*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. 168 pp.**

Black South African youth have shaped their country's history in important ways, from protesting inferior education to resisting apartheid, from nurturing new leaders to developing new ideologies. In this study, historian Clive Glaser reflects on the history of the African National Congress Youth League on the seventieth anniversary of its founding. His book is part of the Ohio Short Histories of Africa series, which has provided brief introductions on mostly South African topics to a broad audience. Glaser is supremely qualified for the task, having written extensively on black politics in South Africa and the role of black youth in particular. Drawing mostly upon secondary sources, Glaser charts the Youth League's evolution, accomplishments, limitations, and historical significance. In so doing, he has produced a concise book that is unusually engaging and well-written.

Because of the book's brevity, Glaser moves quickly through time. He traces the origins of the Youth League in the 1940s, showing how young intellectuals became increasingly frustrated by South Africa's rising tide of racist legislation and the ANC's inability to stop it. He explores the "Africanist" ideology of Anton Lembede and A.P. Mda and notes how these Youth Leaguers—and their colleagues Tambo, Mandela, and Sisulu—developed a "Programme of Action" calling on the ANC to adopt more militant tactics in the fight against apartheid. With

the Youth League's triumph at the ANC's national conference in 1949, "a new era of direct mass action and civil disobedience had begun" (p. 40). From that moment onward, several Youth Leaguers assumed leadership positions in the ANC as a whole. They put the ANC on a more defiant course, but also began to engage in a broader set of alliances that included communists and activists of other races. Some resisted this trend and held fast to the Youth League's original Africanist ideology, ultimately breaking away from the ANC to form the Pan Africanist Congress. As he tells this story, Glaser interweaves important contextual material on the increasing state repression of the 1950s, culminating in the shootings at Sharpeville in 1960 and the banning of the ANC and PAC.

Between 1960 and 1990, the Youth League was effectively defunct, so Glaser shifts his focus to black youth without direct ties to the ANC. He charts the growth of the black consciousness movement and shows how its ideas spread among black high school students, leading to a reemergence of internal black protest from the 1976 Soweto unrest onward. He describes the militant township youths known as "comrades," noting both their bravery and their excesses. As he demonstrates how the youth regained the political initiative, Glaser touches upon many new organizations that rose to prominence, including SASM, SASO, COSAS, and SAYCO. Although these acronyms might perplex American students, Glaser's message is clear—that a highly politicized youth subculture had emerged by the 1980s, a subculture that would play a leading role in apartheid's ultimate demise.

Once the ANC was unbanned in 1990, it sought to incorporate disparate internal youth organizations into a reconstituted Youth League, which was officially re-launched in 1991. As he describes the turbulent transition period, Glaser discusses the rise of Peter Mokaba, the dominant figure in Youth League politics in the early 1990s. He documents the rift between the older ANC leaders and the Youth League over the abandonment of the armed struggle. He later asserts that Thabo Mbeki triumphed over Cyril Ramaphosa in the contest to succeed Mandela partly because of Youth League lobbying. He also discusses the Youth League's role in deposing Mbeki and supporting Jacob Zuma, showing that it could be an important pressure group in the ANC, just as it had been decades earlier.

Finally, Glaser examines the career of Julius Malema, one of South Africa's most visible and controversial politicians. After he became Youth League president in 2008, Malema called for the nationalization of the economy, praised Robert Mugabe's seizure of white-owned land in Zimbabwe, and resurrected the song "Shoot the Boer" at political rallies. He also used his political connections to make lucrative business deals. Glaser's disdain for Malema is evident, but he remains judicious in his observations. He predicts that as long as poverty and youth unemployment fester in South Africa, Malema will have a following, even with his recent expulsion from the ANC.

Glaser concludes his study by comparing the Youth League of the 1940s with its more modern counterpart. He argues that despite some ideological similarities, a key difference stands out. In his view, the "class of '44" was more idealistic, whereas the current generation is primarily driven by personal ambition. In short, "self-help" has morphed into "help yourself" (p. 156). Glaser's study shows that while the impact of the Youth League has ebbed and flowed,

black South African youth have shaped the nation's politics in fundamental ways. Authoritative, streamlined, and highly readable, this book deserves a wide readership.

Steven Gish, *Auburn University at Montgomery*

**Richard Gray. 2012. *Christianity, The Papacy and Mission in Africa* (Lamin Sanneh, editor). Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis. 197pp.**

Richard Gray (d.2005), known for his text titled *Black Christians and White Missionaries* (Yale University Press 1990), devoted a fair degree of time exploring Christianity's ties with the African continent. Whilst Gray demonstrated an interest in the Ethiopian Church's early history, he spent his energies investigating the Roman Catholic Church's (RCC), represented by various orders, such as the Jesuits, presence among African communities. Gray was enthusiastically engrossed with the way the Ethiopian Church, and the Kongo Catholics, made constant overtures to cement connections with the papacy and how these unfurled since the fifteenth century; a period during which the RCC was challenged by the influence of the Ottoman Empire that controlled large swaths of the North African geographical spaces that blocked it from maintaining close links with the mentioned African Christian denominations. Even though most of Gray's research outputs appeared in reputable journals between 1967 and 2001 as noted from the list of sources given on pp.177-178, Gray's family felt the need to bring these together in an edited publication. The family thus approached Lamin Sanneh, the well-known African professor of Church History at the Yale Divinity School, to execute this assignment.

Sanneh's willingness, with the financial support of the Lundman Family Foundation, to undertake this editorial task was clearly observed in his informative introductory essay titled 'Foresight in Hindsight' (pp. 1-26); herein Sanneh contextualized the collection of eleven essays (some of) by sharing his personal scholarly thoughts about the importance of Gray's intellectual interventions. Sanneh opined that the essays illustrated "history is a living experience, not just conformity on official pronouncements" (p. 5). Gray's fundamental thesis for having researched RCC's relations with Africa was to debunk the view that the papacy's participation in Africa was initiated by it, or its European missionaries (p. 4), and this was a point that he repeated in each of the first five chapters (pp. 27-115). Speaking about repetitive facts, one wonders why the editor did not employ his editorial skills to weed out some of the superfluous overlaps so that there was a better flow of ideas. Nevertheless, in each of them Gray confirmed that Africa's Christians pro-actively dispatched delegations to Rome since 1402 with the intention of forging ties (pp. 28-29). All of these diplomatic developments were partly spurred on by socio-religious factors and more importantly to counter the spread of Ottoman Empire's authority; an authority that ultimately succeeded by 1453 in wresting the heavily fortified city of Constantinople from Byzantine control (p. 29).

The edited text revealed that Gray, who was acquainted with the Ethiopian Church's historical developments and familiar with Bengt Sundkler's missionary/scholarly endeavors (Chapter 11 pp. 171-75), was keenly interested in "The African Origins of the *Missio Antiqua*"

(Chapter 1 pp. 27-47). Gray observed that the papacy pursued this mission at the behest of Africa's Christians and not vice versa. Though these initiatives eventually resulted in the papacy's formation of its overseas missionary wing baptized as the "Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide" during 1622, it was surprising to learn from Gray that this body did not have Africa in mind when Francesco Ingoli, its first secretary, drafted the guidelines (Chapter 3; see pp.69-71 and p.80). Nonetheless, this essay was complemented by "A Kongo Princess, the Kongo Ambassadors and the Papacy" (Chapter 2) and "Ingoli ... and the Atlantic Slave Trade" (Chapter 4); whilst the former briefly narrated, among others, the story of a little known Kongo princess who requested permission from the Lisbon based Mother Maria de San Jose to join the Carmelite order (pp. 51, 77), the latter focused on, inter alia, Ingoli's critical role in drafting the Propaganda Fide's memorandum as well as one that unhesitatingly condemned the ongoing slave trade; a trade that enormously benefitted the Spanish rulers (pp. 71-72). Gray further discussed the unfolding relations between "The Papacy and Africa in the Seventeenth Century" (Chapter 4) in which he showed to what extent Kongo's King Garcia II strongly identified with the Catholic Church (pp. 82-86), and he elaborated more on related developments when he assessed the Capuchins' connections with Soyo's authorities/rulers in "*Come Vero Principe Catolico...*" (Chapter 5).

Turning to the next five chapters, one questions why Chapter 8, "The Southern Sudan," that was published previously in the *Journal of Contemporary History* in 1971, was included since its contents that dealt more specifically with Southern Sudan's socio-political developments did not neatly fit into the volume's overall theme. This was unlike Chapter 6 which uncovered "Christian Traces and a Franciscan Mission in the Central Sudan, 1700-1711" and Chapter 7 that explored "The Catholic Church and National States in Western Europe during the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries, from a Perspective of Africa." At the end of Chapter 7 Gray once again underlined the fact that "the increasing influence of the papal Curia was not...a sudden revolutionary change initiated by Pius IX...(r)ather its roots stretched back...when the papacy....began to grasp the significance presented by the existence of African Christian Kingdoms..." (p. 140). And Chapter 7 and not Chapter 8 acted as an appropriate backdrop for Chapters 9, "Christianity, Colonialism and Communications in Sub-Saharan Africa," and 10, "Popular Theologies in Africa," respectively. In these two essays Gray reflected upon the importance of communication and he reported upon a timely *Speaking for Ourselves* 1984 document that was issued by South Africa's Institute of Contextual Theology (ICT). Even though Gray's article generated lively theological debates when it was first circulated in *African Affairs* during January 1986, one would like to know why he did not also offer his scholarly insights into the 1985 *Kairos Document* that was co-drafted by the ICT and others such as the Dominican priest Albert Nolan.

In conclusion it may be stated that these, previously published, Gray essays, which were competently introduced by Sanneh, will remain an important contribution to both African historical studies and Christian studies. It may also be added that the collection underlined the Church's position as one of Africa's religious stakeholders.

Muhammed Haron, *University of Botswana*

**Gerald Horne. 2012. *Mau Mau in Harlem? The U.S. and the Liberation of Kenya*. Reprint Edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 334 pp.**

In this reprint edition of 2009's *Mau Mau in Harlem?*, Gerald Horne provided an examination of the relationship between the United States, Kenya, and Great Britain beginning with the early twentieth century. Horne intended to place the bond "between Kenya and the United States in the context of the struggle against white supremacy in both nations and in the context of the struggle for national liberation in East Africa" (p. 3). This is neither a history of US intervention nor Kenyan responses; instead, it is a recounting of the interactions between US and Kenyan leaders, politicians, activists, and common citizens to demonstrate how the fight for African and African American equality became intersected in the 1950s. Relying heavily on the Kenyan National Archives in Nairobi to recount the internal struggles within Kenya, Horne also utilized the National Archives and Records Administration in its College Park, Maryland and Washington, D.C. locations. Through the use of documents from the United Automobile Workers union and media depictions of Kenya, he strengthened his source base by examining its, often sensationalized, image in the United States. This allowed Horne to provide perspectives into how the civil rights movement in the United States "sent 'ripples' flowing across the ocean but there were simultaneous currents flowing as well from Kenya" (p. 15). This two-way "current" between Kenyan and American, especially African American, communities was the heart of Horne's study.

Horne began his work in the early twentieth century when adventurous Americans exchanged a closed Western frontier for a new one in Kenya. The colonial government welcomed these European Americans in order to maintain control over a much larger indigenous population (pp. 26-27). This led to the growth of a quasi-partnership between the US and Britain in order to maintain their respective racial hierarchies (pp. 31, 41). Thus, Kenya became a nexus point and a symbol for the two powers as they attempted to justify their control over the African American and African populations. Horne revealed how the relationship fragmented with the onset of World War II since the "war represented a weakening of the grip of the colonial powers and the concomitant ascendancy of the United States" (p. 70). The use of black soldiers by both powers in the war also weakened white control in both Kenya and the US while simultaneously pushing African and African American agendas together (pp. 67, 77). The onset of the Cold War drastically complicated matters amongst the US, Britain, and Kenya. Britain and the United States' relationship became further strained as the globe was divided between the influence of the Soviet Union and the US. Horne attributed this breakdown to Washington's not having a colonial state in Africa since it afforded them with "ample flexibility that London simply did not possess" (pp. 81, 74). However, the rise of the Kenyan anti-colonial Mau Mau forces in 1952 sustained the increasingly uneasy alliance between the US and Britain. Due to the culture of the Cold War and the sensationalized image of Mau Mau as a violent African movement, the US perceived Mau Mau and native Kenyans as underneath communist sway (p. 108). Horne credited the influence of Cold War blinders for the failure of the US to recognize "the true issues at the heart of the conflict—land, white supremacy, colonialism, brutal exploitation" (p. 111). This led the US to side with the settler class as they violently oppressed the indigenous Kenyans. Yet, along with growing domestic pressure from African



Americans, the Bandung Conference in 1955, and the Suez Crisis in 1956 shifted the Cold War landscape since the former demonstrated the growing political clout of the Third World while the latter firmly established the Cold War as a struggle dominated by the US and the Soviet Union. In Africa, this meant the US began looking for options in Kenya beyond the colonial governments (pp. 140-41, 143-47).

In the late 1950s, the Kenyan labor leader Tom Mboya quickly became the United States' preferred choice between the violent colonial government and the fear of Mau Mau's supposed Communist ties. Mboya opposed the settler regime and his ethnic identity was Luo, which distanced him from the mainly Kikuyu-led Mau Mau movement. Horne noted how Mboya's appeal crossed ideological lines in the US as he gained the support of the John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon (pp. 165, 172). Mboya was also responsible for spearheading one of most significant attacks on the colonial government: the 1959 airlift of Kenyan and other African students to the United States for an education long denied to them by the settler class. The US took part as a way to sway the young Kenyans away from the perceived danger of Communism (pp. 193-95, 204-05). However, Mboya encountered the criticism often attributed to moderates. He was too liberal to be embraced by the colonial government. On the other hand, he was tainted by his ties to the US due to the practice of Jim Crow and the assassination of Patrice Lumumba. This led to many criticisms from his political left by Kenyan leaders such as Oginga Odinga and Jomo Kenyatta (pp. 177-79, 213-15).

Those seeking a play-by-play of Mau Mau or Washington's interventions in Kenya should look elsewhere. Instead, Horne sought to write a transnational study and succeeded. He mainly focused on events within Kenya's borders, but was more concerned with demonstrating the two-way current between the US and Kenya. Horne also intended to explain the, to some, puzzling ties between the African American community and East Africa since the rise of Mau Mau and the civil rights movement in the 1950s created a level of unity between the two communities (pp. 237-38).

Richard M. Mares, *Michigan State University*

**Hamid Irbouh. 2005. *Art in the Service of Colonialism: French Art Education in Morocco, 1912-1956*. New York: I.B. Tauris. 280 pp.**

Recent international scholarship has focused on the role of colonialism in visual culture, as well as women's participation in colonial and postcolonial institutions in Africa and the Middle East. Hamid Irbouh's *Art in the Service of Colonialism* is a valuable source for readers interested in art education, colonialism, gender, and the social role of arts and crafts. It also challenges traditional scholarship on modern artistic production in North Africa by focusing on the artisanal, rather than "fine art," sectors of Morocco.

Irbouh argues that French art education in craft industries in the Protectorate of Morocco played a major role in supporting the colonial agenda there. The author pulls from colonial accounts, aesthetic and political theory, administrative correspondence, art journals, and contemporary scholarship to illustrate how French educational reform shifted control from

Moroccan guilds to French authorities, and, furthermore, formed generations of Moroccan craftsmen and women trained with French techniques. Colonial administrators promoted these craft schools as a way for Moroccans to develop their own economic sector in the *medinas* (traditionally Muslim quarters of cities) and gain economic independence. As Irbouh demonstrates, however, these schools accentuated unequal education based on French misconceptions of racial and ethnic divisions in Morocco, and produced a subordinate work force for the development of European-occupied *villes nouvelles* in cities such as Rabat and Fez.

Irbouh's analysis is dense with archival research. In dealing with art education reform and the "colonial visual culture" that resulted, Irbouh uses French and Moroccan textual sources to challenge assumptions about colonialism, women, and agency in Morocco. He demonstrates that Moroccan craftsmen and women either adopted or rejected visual practices developed by the Protectorate. The Moroccan elite, for example, supported the French educational project because it would "enlighten" the local working class and instill them with "modern" skills, such as education and physical fitness.

Irbouh also responds to scholarly claims that European women played inconsequential or subordinate roles in the colonial project. As demonstrated in Chapter Five, French female educators were key players in managing craft schools and constructing visual culture in the Moroccan "feminine milieu." However, in his analyses of men and women's vocational schools, it is unclear what Irbouh means by the "feminine milieu," for which there is no "masculine" counterpart. He illustrates Moroccan craftsmen's resistance to colonial reform, yet fails to demonstrate the same for Moroccan women, making his repeated use of "feminine milieu" to describe Moroccan women's experiences in artisanal sectors somewhat dubious.

Nevertheless, Irbouh takes a critical approach to the ethnographic observations of French colonial officials. In Chapter One he describes the "strong language" of Prosper Ricard's accounts of Moroccan embroidery, which Ricard claimed was "subdued" by imported Italian textile patterns. It is sometimes difficult to tell whether qualitative observations on Moroccan craft production are those of the author or of the colonial administrators, as Irbouh cites similar French texts to demonstrate the harmonious and independent nature of pre-colonial men's guilds.

Considering Irbouh's reliance on archival sources, *Art in the Service of Colonialism* is a historical analysis, rather than an art historical one. The black and white photographs of craft workshops and ironworking diagrams are valuable and intriguing, yet they lack captions and merely support the author's critical approach to French colonial accounts. Irbouh provides brief formal analysis in Chapters Five and Seven, where he discusses the symbolism of Rabat women's carpets and a floral drawing made by a Fez grammar school student.

While images and visual analysis are sparse, readers will find Irbouh's nuanced discussion of the tensions between "arts" and "crafts" in Moroccan and French discourses particularly enriching. In Chapter One Irbouh describes the organization of pre-colonial men's guilds, where building construction professions derived their high social rank from the wealth amassed through these crafts. The author also highlights the role of drawing and vocational education in late nineteenth century France. These nationalist and industrial developments in the *métropole*

transmitted to Moroccan craft schools, where drawing became a manual exercise in visual memory and dexterity for students.

Also useful is Irbouh's introductory discussion of contemporary Moroccan scholarship and "fine art" production, including writings on Farid Belkahia, an "elite" Moroccan artist trained in the West. *Art in the Service of Colonialism* thus raises pertinent questions about gender and artistic appropriation between the "realms" of arts and crafts in Morocco: what did it mean for male Arab artists at the Casablanca School of Fine Arts to appropriate the arts and techniques of Moroccan Berber women? And how did Moroccan understandings of "arts" and "crafts" shift in the 1960s, when artists were forming a "national" aesthetic for newly independent Morocco?

Lara Ayad, *Boston University*

**Daniel Mains. 2012. *Hope is Cut: Youth, Unemployment, and the Future in Urban Ethiopia*. Pennsylvania: Temple University Press. 193 pp.**

Youth unemployment has become one of the most pressing development issues in contemporary Africa. With the youth being the majority of citizens in Africa, there is a growing concern that if this group of people is not catered for in all aspects of human existence, the stability and subsequent positive continuity of society will be ostracized. It is upon this justification that there is need for scholars to unpack the dynamics surrounding youth unemployment. There is a genuine need to conceptualize the terms youth and unemployment: unearth the causes of unemployment: the coping strategies employed by the youth: as well as understand the stratification dynamics surrounding youth unemployment. It is only when this is done that we can proffer solutions to this arduous problem of youth unemployment. This is exactly what Daniel Mains does in this book in a brilliant manner.

The book starts with a radiant introduction that sets the basis for later chapters by giving a luminous conceptualization of the terms youth, hope and unemployment. The definition of youth as not being modeled on age but on relations of reciprocity is of major interest in the introduction. The author, states that an individual stops being a youth when they can be relied upon by their immediate relatives. The author's methodology is very reliable as it resembles a largely phenomenological and ethnography centered approach, as the author spent over eighteen months living and interacting with the youth of Jimma. Of interest however, is the fact that the author decided to specifically focus on youthful men only and not women.

Chapter one introduces readers to an intrinsic understanding of the carving of the present outlook of unemployment in urban Jimma. The writer gives a beautiful historical analysis dating back to the 1800s where chief occupations were modeled on trade and religion. With the Ethiopian revolution in 1974, the government became the apex employer, providing employees with prestige and material benefit. Secondary education became a ticket to wealth and prestige as a qualification for government employment. With the inception of the Structural Adjustment Programs the requirement for government employment increased, but government employment still remains the symbol of success for the youth of Jimma.

Chapter two elaborates a high-quality conceptualization of time, where time is unstructured and is in abundance for the unemployed youth. In essence, unemployment was not simply the absence of work but a problem of time. Unemployed youth “killed” time by chewing “khat” and watching movies. These methods of killing time become a beacon of hope. This is a great chapter with various new angles on the concepts of youth, hope and time. In chapter three the author comes up with an amusing theory that contradicts itself immaculately. At one end, education is a way of attaining “progress” (linear improvement in the lives of the youth). On the other hand however, education has stopped most youth from “progressing” as they feel they cannot settle for jobs that are not equivalent with the status of their education. They therefore rather choose to remain unemployed but upholding their prestige, which is an important part of relationships.

Chapter four examines the social aspects attached to unemployment. The author produces a handsome elaboration that communal values have a bearing on unemployment. Those young men that ignored communal evaluations of status managed to seek employment in the dreaded low status occupations and created their own reality of progress different from that of society. Those who remained wary of societal status evaluations remained largely unemployed. In chapter five, the author challenges the mainstream ideology of material rationalism, by unearthing new status hierarchies existing in urban Ethiopia. The author brings out the notion that material accumulation is used to create new relationships and networks. On the other hand, the unemployed used gifts to strengthen their social relationships with existing peers. To this end, the author argues that the state of relationships must complement the materialistic conceptions of inequality.

In chapter six and the conclusion, the author comes up with possible solutions to the problem of unemployment. These solutions include migration (in and out of Ethiopia) to modern spaces developed by the free market, entrepreneurial brilliance and a return to education. An obvious change in culture is required as well to restructure social evaluations of status, which obviously restrict many young men from venturing into different professions. This is a book that students and teachers of Anthropology, Development Studies, African Studies and African Literature should get their hands on. The major pro of this book is the author’s ability to re-conceptualize key concepts of youth, progress and unemployment.

Ramphal Sillah, *Midlands State University*

**Richard C. Marback. 2012. *Managing Vulnerability: South Africa’s Struggle for a Democratic Rhetoric*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press. 138 pp.**

The book opens up a vista of rethinking vulnerability in the South African social space; it equally calibrates the long struggle for freedom, democracy, and reconciliation, which apartheid South Africa framed and sustained via its variegated tendency to exclude coloured and black folks to the margins. In this wavelength, Marback, reasons with Nelson Mandela in his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, which is appositely parallel to *Managing Vulnerability: South Africa’s Struggle for a Democrat Rhetoric*. The essence of the book resounds with

transcending the shenanigans, atrophy, and social backwater occasioned and underwritten by the Western attempt to perpetually stifle alternative discourse. It equally dramatizes the attempt to rupture the dynamics of disempowering the marginalized by envisioning democratic culture and rhetorical artifact that is tempered with equality, social justice, and inclusiveness.

Marback's clarion call also sheds light on human capacity to pursue means of mitigating material, emotional, psychological, and cultural vulnerability that detonates with democratic rhetoric, freedom and sovereignty (p. 22). The book, therefore, finds timbre in questioning the very logic of vulnerability as well as marginalization of the vulnerable in society—the South African social space. To this end, “We best respond to the suffering of others by giving expression to vulnerability in our aspirations for common good. Being vulnerable is fundamental to the human condition. We can never eliminate it. We must try to not ignore it in the experiences of others” (p.131).

This book's eight chapters coalesce to give an imprimatur of critical terms on vulnerability and sovereignty observed by the author. The first chapter, “The Promise of Participation,” encapsulates the processes of South Africa's democratic transition from apartheid. The second, “Rhetoric as Vulnerability,” presents the dual move by Salazar that depicts the vulnerability, which animates the pursuit for rhetoric of sovereignty and the vulnerability that takes account of inclusion. Chapter three, titled “The Dangerous Rhetoric of Robert Sobukwe,” brings to mind the author's view on the Sobukwe clause, which was intended by the parliament to keep Sobukwe, the first president of the Pan African Congress, in jail three years beyond his sentence. Chapter four, well titled “On the Fragile Memories of Robben Island,” reconstructs the issues surrounding the small house in the Island where Sobukwe was imprisoned. This little house has now become a historic tourist attraction. Chapter five, “Nelson Mandela's Compromised Gesture,” brings to mind Mandela and other freedom fighters' journey to prison and the “clenched fist” that symbolizes uncompromising monumental commitment to the struggle against apartheid. This experience was paradoxically forgotten until Mandela's release from jail. Chapter six, “Desmond Tutu's Even-Handedness,” portrays Tutu as the pioneer of the gesture towards “conciliation and open-handedness extended to another” in the entire democratic processes spanning from 1967 to the 1980s. Chapter seven, “Tsotsi, District 9, and the Visualisation of Vulnerable Rhetoric,” dramatizes the admission of past injustices meted against the South African people, while equally promoting positive dialogue. The last chapter, “The Prospects of Rhetoric as Vulnerability,” takes further the inner workings of vulnerability orchestrated via sad experiences by the likes of David and Wilkus van der Merve.

No doubt, the book has strengths. Nevertheless, it suffers from sanctimonious preachment, as well as near pseudo vision of democratizing South African society by ignoring the perils and challenges that lie ahead. Although the book challenges our collective conscience to take the path of conciliation, sovereignty, justice and equality, if you like, nonetheless, it is tinkered with an idealized view of change in the way vulnerability and democratic rhetoric is being managed in South Africa. Put simply and tersely, it would be more appropriate for the author to anchor his philosophy of democratic rhetoric in a more pragmatic approach.

Emeka Smart Oruh, *Brunel University*



**Barbaro Martinez-Ruiz. 2013. *Kongo Graphic Writing and Other Narratives of the Sign*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 228 pp.**

In a focused study of Central Africa and Cuba, *Kongo Graphic Writing and Other Narratives of the Sign* succinctly and precisely dismantles several old school paradigms of Africa. The most pernicious, of course, was that the continent lacked writing (with the exception of Egypt, which was more often grouped with Mediterranean antiquity). By extension, Africa's perceived lack of comparable written documents led scholars, from Hegel to Hugh Trevor Roper, to insist that it was as a place of historical darkness. Many have worked to disprove such fallacies, shifting focus to oral or visual sources as empirical records of the African past, but research into manifold African scripts is more scant. Where it exists, Barbaro Martinez-Ruiz argues in his Introduction, it often reinforces the divide between two- and three-dimensional forms of communication (p. 6). Martinez-Ruiz boldly insists that, in Kongo culture at least, writing—the systematic making visible of language—is not restricted to the flat arrangement of lines and dots, but extends to expressive gestures and the construction of religious objects, in particular *Minkisi* figures and their Cuban Palo Monte counterpart, *Prendas*.

The product of not just several years of academic research, but a lifetime of involvement in Afro-Cuban religion, Palo Monte, *Kongo Graphic Writing* is a rare, ambitious scholarly work. Its chapters expound the spread of Kongo belief systems from Africa across the Atlantic, Kongo cosmology and cosmogony, pictographic and ideographic writing used for religious and other societal purposes, and the physical manifestations of these constructions. Kongo graphic writing, although deployed by experts conversant in its myriad forms, is not rarified communication; it is inextricably bound to daily practices, from the devotional to the memorial to the medicinal.

Martinez-Ruiz's thesis relies upon a painstaking tracing of continuities and ruptures between signs and symbols across vast swathes of history and geography. He examines ancient rupestrian markings, mapping their recurrence across a number of sites and recording how they are understood within the context of living, local proverbs and practices. He scours illustrations from seventeenth-century European travel writing, exposing within them documentation of religious practices that have stood the test of time. The methodology is rich and unconventional, mobilizing fieldwork, interviews, and archival research, along unique personal insights from within Palo Monte.

The cruciform "Almighty Dikenga," the *ur-graphic* of Kongo cosmology, is the single greatest example of continuity between ancient and contemporary Bakongo culture (p. 68). Further, the appearance of the dikenga as *nkuyu* or *lucero* in Cuban Palo Monte evidences the fundamental connective tissue between the Caribbean and Central Africa, and insists upon the resilience of African religious practice despite the horrors of the Middle Passage. Indeed, another paradigm that Martinez-Ruiz's book concretely dismisses is that the latter, although an unquestionably horrendous trauma, equates to a total loss of culture. As he writes, his book desires to demonstrate the "fundamental and rich continuity" between Africa and the diaspora (p. 11). That he is a student of Robert Farris Thompson, who's *Flash of the Spirit* (1983) is regularly referenced, should come as no surprise.

Martinez-Ruiz offers not just an academic explication of the history and the mechanics of Afro-Atlantic graphic writing, but a practical sourcebook for future research. The book's chapter arrangement is telling, with approximately half of the pages contained in Chapter 4. Here, Martinez-Ruiz not only discusses in depth the variety of two-dimensional graphic forms that constitute the communication systems of the Kongo (*bidimbu* and *bisinsu*) and Palo Monte (*firmas*), but illustrates his text with extensive tables of signs collected from both historic sites and contemporary informants, typically local priests. Hand drawn by the author, these signs and symbols, presented in table format to allow comparisons of recurrent forms and their varied interpretations, equip the reader with an invaluable Kongo lexicon. The author puts this to work, using it, for example to decode the composite complexity of certain Palo Monte "signatures" known as *firmas*.

*Kongo Graphic Writing* defies categorization, for its findings spanning African and Afro-Cuban history, linguistics, religious studies, archaeology, and art history. While written by an art historian, its Library of Congress catalogue number places it in "Language and Literature." This speaks directly to its multi-disciplinary appeal. That the author simultaneously published the book in Spanish further evidences his commitment to pushing the boundaries of the American academy. The opportunities for future research, from African graphic writing beyond the Kongo to linguistic/artistic/cultural connections between the continent and the diaspora are teasingly inferred in the Conclusion. Martinez-Ruiz's final paragraph alludes to no less than eight related lines of inquiry; the generative potential of this text is vast.

Kate Cowcher, *Stanford University*

**Niq Mhlongo. 2012. *Dog Eat Dog: A Novel*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. 222pp.**

*Dog Eat Dog* is a work of fiction by Niq Mhlongo, a South African writer, and is part of Ohio University's Modern African Writing series. Because *Dog Eat Dog* is part of this series, the intended audience is college students in African Studies or world literature classes. Mhlongo has also written two other novels, *After Tears* (2010) and *Way Back Home* (2013). The setting is Johannesburg and Soweto, South Africa. The book mostly takes place in the year 1994. Various flashbacks in the novel describe stories from the protagonist's childhood such as the death of his father, getting beaten in school for being absent, and the police searching his home and taking away his uncle for political reasons.

The novel is narrated by Dingamanzi Makhedama Njomane, or "Dingz" for short. Dingz is an average college student at the University of Witwatersrand. Each chapter discusses some of the stories of his daily life, such as school and partying. Dingz's personal triumphs and struggles are sometimes overshadowed by a larger political backdrop. In 1994, the South African general elections marked the end of the apartheid system. Dingz and his friends were excited to be part of the election and eagerly waited in the queue. A few memorable lines reflect the importance of this election: "It was a queue of limitless hope. Many of us there thought this election would reshape our lives in the southern part of this unruly 'Dark Continent' ... It was the moment most of us had been waiting years to experience," (p. 58). And, "There was no one

at home and I guessed that they were still trying to vote at the nearest polling station. My brother's hi-fi speakers were pumping out some fat kwaito beats outside on the lawn" (p. 83). Despite the end of apartheid, Dingz has several encounters with racism such as corrupt police officers, classmates, and the school dean.

"Dog Eat Dog" is an apt title for this book because all of the chapters deal with the struggles of Dingz's life in post-apartheid South Africa. In each chapter the reader senses how the world is very "dog eat dog." Early on, we learn Dingz was denied financial aid from the University. He cannot otherwise afford to attend school, so he lies to the registrar at the Bursar's Office about the severity of his situation. Dingz explains, "I was not ashamed that I lied. Living in this South Africa of ours you have to master the art of lying in order to survive" (p. 21). With the help of his friends, Dingz manages to stay ahead or at least survive his troubles. Dingz is usually a likeable character who the reader can empathize with, but sometimes Dingz could have easily avoided many of his problems. For example, he could have studied harder for his exams and then he would not have worry about getting an exemption to take the test again later.

A critique about this book stems from the character development and side story of Dingz's love interest Nkanyezi. Part of Dingz's life revolves around picking up girls. Based on the rest of the book, it seems unlikely that Dingz's character would enter a serious relationship with one woman. Their relationship moves very quickly. Within days they have already slept together and said "I love you." All the reader knows about Nkanyezi is her name, major in school, and some details of what she looks like. Nkanyezi is the reason Dingz gets kicked out of his temporary housing arrangement and even contracts an STD from Nkanyezi. Yet, there is no discussion of how she got the STD and what either of these events means for the relationship.

Another critique is that the novel contains excessive harsh profanity and explicit sexual content. On the one hand, the dialogue between characters contains so much profanity that it can be off-putting to the reader. On the other hand, some may think Mhlomo's style is witty, gritty, and raucous. Although it could be considered witty, the jarring profanity can also distract from the substantive content of the writing.

Overall, the book is easy to read, but by no means a light read. *Dog Eat Dog* is an entertaining set of stories about the kwaito generation and life in South Africa during the 1994 elections, a transition of government, and the end of apartheid.

Rebecca Steiner, *University of Florida*

**Sasha Newell. 2012. *The Modernity Bluff: Crime, Consumption, and Citizenship in Côte d'Ivoire*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. 305 pp.**

Sasha Newell's *The Modernity Bluff* starts out by pulling the reader into one of Abidjan's typical outdoor bars where, around tables fully covered with bottles, groups of young men lavishly outspend each other. They flash rolls of money, prominently display their cell phones, and exhibit their prestigious US brand name clothing in the most refined ways. We witness a bluff: many of those indulging in seemingly unlimited consumption that night "would struggle to

find enough money to feed themselves the next day" (p. 2). What follows is an extraordinary account of how such bluffing makes sense in the Ivoirian context. Newell delineates in its most intricate details how the fakery of being wealthy and the performance of being "modern" (i.e. "Westernized") are of constitutive importance to such diverse phenomena as street language (chapter 1), the illicit urban economy (chapter 2), masculinity and social cohesion (chapter 3), consumption (chapter 4), migration (chapter 5), and the Ivoirian political crisis (chapter 6).

Newell does not discard bluffing as unauthentic. He seeks to analyze the relations between the bluffer and the audience to show how the bluff intertwines the real and the imaginary. Through the copious use of rich ethnographic data, he hopes to demonstrate that appearances of "modern" success fortify one's social networks and thereby convey "real" success, and that the quest for appearing modern and successful has replaced the quest for "being" successful amongst urban youth in Côte d'Ivoire. Mind the inverted commas: in his conclusion, Newell challenges the normative differentiation between the real and the fake and argues that modernity itself is founded on bluffing in the first place. "The modernity bluff therefore is neither fake nor real, but rather the ability to produce the real through manipulation of the imaginary" (p. 261).

What deserves particular acknowledgement is, maybe unsurprisingly, the *form* of Newell's argumentation throughout the book. First and foremost, the author develops a captivating proximity to the people, places, and phenomena under study, which he conveys through detailed anecdotes, extensive and intriguing quotations of his friends and acquaintances in Abidjan, pop song lyrics, Ivoirian cartoons, and expressive photographs. Secondly, as much as Newell obviously immersed himself in the milieu he studies, he consistently steps back to situate his ethnographic accounts carefully within their larger context, tracing the history of the phenomena and the etymology of the concepts he studies, critically cross-checking different narratives and addressing their contradictions, and ordering the diversity and ambivalence of his topic through lists, typologies, and comparisons. Third and finally, Newell is a stunningly skillful theorist, opening up new perspectives on the political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, transnationalism, brands and consumption, to name but a few issues at stake. And while his cross-referencing between empirical and theoretical observations and between social theory classics and contemporary Africanist writing can be dazzling at times, it never appears heavy or lofty.

Persuasively, *The Modernity Bluff* thus creates a suspicion against itself: could the reader not be duped by a brilliant *bluffeur*? The suspicion surfaces in sections where the author seems to play with the bluff's inherent ambivalence as a stylistic device (e.g. when we read about the *bluffeurs*' 'true' selves on p. 140; inverted commas in original), and concerns more substantially his diverse conceptualizations of modernity that are not accordingly mirrored in his empirical accounts. Generally, Newell interprets Ivoirians' ubiquitous reference to a Western locus of power through their ideas about cosmology, consumption, and fakery; modernity is considered a culturally specific construction. While he also emphasizes the ideological, exclusive character of modernity ("the West is modern, the rest is not"), his descriptions of Ivoirian "modern" youth one-sidedly concentrate on the situational inclusion and creative appropriation of

modernity, and the “ability to make real through appearance, if only temporarily, what was otherwise merely the reverie of desire” (p. 139).

Another surprising analytical blank space concerns Newell’s fieldwork. Notwithstanding a few methodological remarks and interesting anecdotes, the author never really harnesses the empirical data of his experiences as a white, American researcher (who was, for instance, often perceived as a modern accessory to his Ivoirian friends). In many ways, a more reflexive elaboration on the intercultural aspects of fieldwork could have been helpful to empirically ground Newell’s fascinating insights on cultural specificities and cultural hybridization. Finally, the reader is left wanting a conclusion about the epistemological consequences of Newell’s findings. In fact, if culture and modernity are based on bluff, what about anthropology? Whatever the answer to this question may be and despite the ambiguity that it might intend to produce, Newell’s *Modernity Bluff* is clearly a magnificently written, and thoroughly researched work. Accomplishing its ambitious objective to “recast anthropological theories of the relationship between mimesis, modernity and postcolonial identity” (p. 5), it will undoubtedly continue to spark new debates in anthropological and Africanist circles for quite a while.

Joschka Philipps, *Centre for African Studies Basel, Switzerland*

**David P. Sandgren. 2012. *Mau Mau’s Children: The Making of Kenya’s Postcolonial Elite*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 185 pp.**

David P. Sandgren, a professor of African history at Concordia College- Moorhead in Minnesota, taught from 1963 on for four years as a young college graduate at a secondary school in Giakanja, Kenya. In this work he explores significant elements of the daily life of seventy-five of his pupils over a fifty-year span from their childhood in the late 1940’s into adulthood in the mid 1990’s. The book is the result of interviews with his former scholars and members of their families held in 1995.

In seven chapters the life histories of these men, which can be characterized today as Kenya’s first postcolonial elite, are told by trying to use as much their own words as possible while adding some crucial information about the general situation they had to face in their country at that time. The result is a refreshing mixture of individual histories and historical facts. But for this reason the reader has to keep in mind that he is not dealing with a historical work about Kenya, but with information from a unique point of view about a limited group of men raised in Central Province near Nyeri belonging without exception to the tribe of the Gikuyu.

The first chapter illustrates the difficult situation of the Gikuyu in the colonial society and especially childhood in the time of the Mau Mau rebellion. He enables the reader to see the conflict from the point of view of normal people being confronted with cruelties not only from the government but also from Mau Mau. It becomes clear that they could not see everything in black and white and were either loyalists or rebels but that they simply struggled to survive and to escape the blood thirst of that time. The second chapter explains the great need for education after independence and the difficulties the Giakanja Secondary School and its first students had



to face. The start was especially problematic because Giakanja was one of the first day schools in the country, and most people at that time were convinced that only boarding school education could be successful. The following sections deal with the importance and difficulties of achieving a pass on the “Cambridge Exams” and of choosing the right path for making a career afterwards. It is summarized that after all the majority of this so-called “golden generation” irrespective of the results of their exams and whether further education at a university took place entered the wealthy middle-class. Showing generational conflicts and the differences between the traditions and the new lifestyle in a wealthy environment the final two chapters display figuratively the dramatic change of the society in just fifty years.

The fact alone that the book is based on interviews and the personal experience of the author makes the work worth reading. Besides Sandgren shows once more his detailed knowledge about the Gikuyu society before and after independence already displayed in his 1989 work, *Christianity and the Kikuyu: Religious Divisions and Social Conflict*. Furthermore he combines the facts and the individual stories in a brilliant style and achieves a figurative description of the situation, which is unique in the historical literature about Kenya so far.

Although an overview was not the aim of the work, some more explanations and a more detailed description of the present-day political and economical situation of the country would have enriched the study. In addition the author could have made even clearer, especially in the last two chapters, that the situation of his former scholars has nothing to do with the reality of the majority of Kenyan people today. They are the wealthy and extraordinarily-educated exception. Particularly the optimistic view that the tensions between the tribes belong to the past and the impression that all Kenyans are on their way to a lifestyle on a Western level being conveyed on the last pages can be questioned. It should have been mentioned at that point that the majority of people all over the country are still living under very poor conditions and that Nairobi is somehow another world in comparison to rural areas. Many young people still have to quit their education before achieving their secondary leaving certificate in order to go work and help their families to survive. Nevertheless the work can be recommended as an extraordinary and vital contribution to the scientific discussion about the history of Kenya and of the Gikuyu.

Frederik Sonner, *Institute of Philosophy and Leadership in Munich*

**Elizabeth Schmidt. 2013. *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 267 pp.**

The literature on Africa’s foreign relations is not only vast and complex, but the field is constantly changing with new perspectives/explanations on the continent’s challenges. Elizabeth Schmidt’s *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror* is another valuable addition to the literature. The book is unique in terms of its intellectual rigor and continental coverage. Unlike the practice where some scholars select few countries in Africa as case studies and generalize their findings for the entire continent with little/no regard for the

divergent issues (cultural, historical, political, and socio-economic), this book is quite different from the norm.

Grounded on a qualitative research method, the book investigates the root causes of Africa's contemporary problems of statehood and governance. Although the problems that confront Africa are multifaceted, the dominant explanations tend to over-emphasize the internally-driven factors like dictatorship, corruption, and inactions of political elites at the expense of the externally-driven factors. While the centrality of the internally-driven factors cannot be ignored, the author also reminds readers not to forget the impact of foreign intervention in Africa on the current problems. Schmidt's main argument therefore focuses on the consequences of foreign interventions (political and military) across the continent (p. 1).

The book is categorized into phases of decolonization (1956-75), the Cold War (1945-91), state collapse (1991-2001), and the global war on terror (2001-10). Within the context of this categorization, the author sets forth four central assumptions/propositions as guiding tenets for investigation (pp. 1-3). The first assumption underscores the fact that imperialist and Cold War powers hijacked the decolonization process in Africa for their economic and political interests, to the extent that the continent became the battleground for imperialist influences and East-West ideological proxy wars. Second, the author posits that Africa became strategically less important to Cold War allies after the demise of communism. Third, like the Cold War, the global war on terror increased foreign military presence in Africa with support for authoritarian regimes. Fourth, the author theorizes that foreign intervention tended to increase rather than decrease conflicts on the continent (p. 2).

The author examines these assumptions with other topics like radical nationalism, decolonization, and the Cold War. In chapter one, for example, the author constructs a compelling narrative/argument to help readers understand the motives/tactics of these foreign actors (imperial and Cold War) on the continent. While major European countries (Britain, France, Portugal, and Belgium) occupied the top group of imperial powers during the colonial and post-colonial eras, the United States and the former Soviet Union were undoubtedly the Cold War giants on the continent. The roles of China and Cuba as Cold War actors were also addressed (pp. 18-32).

With the propositions clearly outlined in chapter one, the author shifted the focus (chapters two to seven) to case study analysis of African countries that were deeply affected by these interventions (pp. 35-189). For instance, the author has systematically discussed interventions by neo-colonial and Cold War actors in Northern Africa (Egypt and Algeria), Central and Southern Africa (Congo, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa) and East Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea). The colonial/post-colonial relations between France and its former colonies were also examined. The case of France and Guinea's independence struggle and the Cold War power politics that occurred in the Congo and Somalia are few examples to highlight.

The eighth and last chapter explores the so-called global war on terrorism (pp. 193-222) and the growing military presence of the US in Africa. For Schmidt, "terrorism replaced communism as the rallying cry for American overseas involvement" following the 2001 terrorist attack on the US (p. 195). Clearly, the book appears to have accomplished its stated

goals/propositions. Not only is it well researched and logically argued, but the author has demonstrated outstanding knowledge and an in-depth grasp of the continent's history and political complexities. The analyses and the persuasive arguments attest to this claim.

One major drawback is the author's inability to examine the current intervention in Africa by China in search for economic resources/political influence. Although the author touches on China as a Cold War actor (pp. 27-29) and again mentions China with other emerging powers in Africa (p.221), the author was unable to discuss adequately China's current/forceful involvement on the continent. I also find the broad categorization of the period of state collapse (1991-2001) somehow problematic, especially from a continental perspective, since this was the same era that many authoritarian regimes in Africa transitioned quite well to democratic/semi-democratic forms of government. Notwithstanding, this book is an excellent resource for the academia, policymakers/researchers and anyone interested in African Affairs.

Felix Kumah-Abiwu, *Eastern Illinois University*

**Jesse Weaver Shipley. 2013. *Living The Hiplife: Celebrity and Entrepreneurship in Ghanaian Popular Music*. Durham: Duke University Press. 344 pp.**

The book is an in-depth look at the hiplife scene in Ghana. Jesse Shipley has years of experience researching popular culture in Ghana, and it comes through in this text. He provides a detailed account of the history of hiplife and some of the genre's important figures. Shipley examines hiplife's innovative use of language and speech. According to Shipley, early on hiplife incorporated local cultural values and the use of proverbs. In comparing hiplife to highlife, he says the former has expanded on the use of storytelling, proverbs, and "references to traditional life."

Shipley's access to and relationship with key hiplife figures resulted in a wealth of information on the popular music scene in Ghana. The strength of Shipley's text is his "actor-centered approach," through which the author presents detailed historical accounts of hiplife emergence. He details a post-Rawlings Ghana, the various figures that pioneered hiplife music, and stories of second-generation hiplife artists.

Chapter six, one of the strongest, is an important examination of attempts to control female sexuality, and the public shaming of women who "misbehave." The chapter builds on existing literature on African women's sexualities as places of contestation, and of the public shaming of women as a means of control and discouraging deviation. The chapter focuses on assaults committed against hiplife artist Mzbel and the subsequent onslaught of comments that the artists brought on the attacks due to her provocative performances. Shipley addresses cultural attitudes towards female "economic and sexual autonomy" and the perceived threats female autonomy poses to public morality and male sexual dominance. The research represents some of the only work on the reinforcement of gendered spaces in urban youth music in Africa. Shipley's research also highlights the ambiguity of the parameters of hiplife. Presenting various perspectives on what hiplife actually is, Shipley includes this discussion briefly towards the end of chapter four. Discussing it earlier could prevent readers from getting the impression that

hiplife is Ghanaian hip hop. Hiplife is more its own genre. Shipley alludes to this. His analysis of hiplife suggests a genre that stands alone, but that incorporates elements from other genres, namely highlife and hip hop.

An aspect of the text that stood out was the placing of hiplife within neoliberal ideals, hip hop culture, and Pan Africanism. While hiplife borrows heavily from hip hop, and may espouse Pan African sentiments, hip hop, as well as Pan Africanism, is extremely critical of neoliberalism. While few hip hop artists call neoliberalism out by name, hip hop often addresses the devastating results of neoliberalism on the urban poor. The contradictions inherent in an embrace of both neoliberalism and hip hop further distinguish hiplife as its own genre. Shipley says “hip hop promotes desires for the bodily material markers of capitalist consumption and accumulation, though it does so through Black images of protest and authority” (p. 17). This is arguably the case with hip hop’s emergence as a pop music phenomenon. Hip hop’s core values, however, have remained decidedly anti-neoliberal, and while not socialist, is very critical of capitalism.

Finally, it would have been good to see information on other genres of urban youth music in Ghana, namely hip hop and azonto. Given hiplife’s ties to hip hop, some mention of the relationship between hip hop and hiplife in Ghana would have been beneficial. Shipley’s chapter on M3nsa and his discussion of Blitz the Ambassador were important, as neither is classified as hiplife. Both perform hip hop music (Blitz, almost exclusively) and their inclusion in the text provided an opportunity to explore the relationship between hiplife and hip hop. In addition, the emergence of azonto music in Ghana has further diversified the urban youth music scene in Ghana. As the azonto scene grows, what will be the impact on hiplife?

Overall, Shipley’s book provides a wealth of information on hiplife’s history and some of the key figures that most influence the genre. The incorporation of both local and foreign sounds in the creation popular music genre in Ghana was well reviewed. In addition, the look on the intersections of gender, sexuality and power in hiplife was one of the book’s strongest aspects.

Msia Kibona Clark, *California State University, Los Angeles*

**James Howard Smith and Rosalind I. J. Hackett, eds. 2012. *Displacing the State: Religion and Conflict in Neoliberal Africa*. South Bend, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press. 299 pp.**

Many interpretations of religion and conflict in Africa are too simplistic. The book under review, therefore, seeks to deviate from those interpretations and provide a more detailed perspective. A collection of essays edited by James Howard Smith and Rosalind I. J. Hackett, the book is touted as an introductory text to key themes with regard to religion and conflict in Africa. Most of the chapters in the volume are historical and ethnographic in method and scale and focus on the everyday activities, processes and structures that engender conflict and peace: liturgical verse, movies and street pamphlets, church services, secret societies, legal debates surrounding domestic arrangements, and so on. In this way, the volume pulls focus away from dramatic and highly mediated violent conflicts by examining the role of religious practices in

the making and unmaking of social orders from the bottom up, in stark contrast to conventional top-down approaches.

The first part of three, "Historical Sources of Religious Conflict and Peace," examines how aspects of African history have laid the foundation for very divergent models of peace: one stressing reconciliation and cooperation between formerly opposed parties, and another relying on the ongoing perpetuation of conflict and the persistent demonization of others, especially the poor or marginal. In "Forgiveness with Consequences: Scriptures, Qene, and Traditions of Restorative Justice in Nineteenth-Century Ethiopia," historian Charles Schaefer delineates a tradition of restorative justice in Ethiopia that extends back to the medieval period, elements of which can be found in Ethiopian political thought and practice in the twenty-first century. He also argues that Ethiopian restorative justice has allowed for forgiveness of vanquished parties, but that forgiveness has always come with consequences; this "conditional clemency" has implied that the "one seeking forgiveness [was] obligated to show contrition and to be accountable for future actions; in other words, to correct their criminal ways." Schaefer's theme dwells at length on the peaceful potential of religion and religious discourse, and argues that these aspects of religious belief and practice should develop so that religion can contribute effectively to peace building. In contrast, in the chapter entitled "Making Peace with the Devil: The Political Life of Devil Worship Rumors in Kenya," James Howard Smith focuses on the productive dimensions of the concept of evil, epitomized by the idea of the devil. He argues that specific, culturally nuanced ideas about the devil and devil worshippers have been central to governance in Kenya from the colonial period, and that diverse Kenyan groups have tried to use these concepts to "make peace" by destroying that which threatens their vision of social order. Thus, Smith's chapter dwells on the unseemly aspects of peace—the fact that real-world peace often involves scapegoating and the perpetration of tension.

The second part, entitled "New Religious Movements, Enduring Social Tensions," comprises three chapters. The first Grace Nyatugah Wamue-Ngare's "The Mungiki Movement: A Source of Religio-Political Conflict in Kenya," examines a Gikuyu neo-traditionalist religious and political movement whose members and leadership have struggled to retain their original utopian religious foundations at the same time as the organization has morphed into a powerful shadow state and mafia. Wamue-Ngare eventually emphasizes the religious dimensions of Mungiki in reaction to those who have portrayed the movement as a mafia organization with no redeeming moral virtues. In contrast, Koen Vlassenroot, in his chapter "Magic as Identity Maker: Conflict and Militia Formation in Eastern Congo," minimizes the occult dimensions of a similar, equally heterogeneous, youth-based movement in the eastern Congo in an effort to draw out their often unrecognized political and sociological motivations and historical underpinnings. Both Wamue-Ngare and Vlassenroot draw attention to an even more fundamental issue: mainly, that the new religious movements at work in Africa challenge entrenched Western understandings of religion as belief in a transcendental truth above and beyond political realities. Rather, these religious/political movements are firmly grounded in real-world struggles and transformations and are the principal mechanism through which people try to bend overarching structures to their wills. Isabel Mukonyora confronts this issue directly in her chapter, "Religion, Politics, and Gender in Zimbabwe: The Masowe Apostles and



Chimurega Religion." Mukonyora examines a religious movement that has taken on many social functions including those formerly reserved for states, while in some ways echoing Zimbabwean state ideology about the sacral power stolen lands. Mukonyora's analysis demonstrates a profound ambivalence about tradition among Masowe Apostles: while they incorporate many elements of Shona culture into their rituals, and emphasize the symbolic significance of land, Masowe religious ritual is ultimately aimed at curtailing the power of ancestors, and hence the past, over living populations in the present (and thus shares much in common with other popular religious movements such as Pentecostalism).

While the second part emphasized how religion engenders new forms of social and political identification in the wake of state transformation - and in many instances, decline and collapse - the final part, "New Religious Public Spheres and the Crisis of Regulation," highlights the conflict between state structures and the new ideologies and institutions associated with neoliberal globalization (international religious nongovernmental organizations, new forms of media, and discourses of human rights, for example). Rosalind Hackett's chapter, "'Devil Bustin' Satellites': How Media Liberalization in Africa Generates Intolerance and Conflict," argues that, contrary to all expectations that a liberalized print and electronic media would engender peaceful, open public discussion and dialogue among religions, the recent proliferation of new media images is in fact "replicating, if not intensifying, old, as well as generating new, forms of religious conflict". Azonzeh F.-K. Ukah's "Mediating Armageddon: Popular Christian Video Films as a Source of Conflict in Nigeria" examines the popular and legal controversy surrounding the release of the Nigerian Pentecostal film "Rapture." His theme expands upon the themes that Hackett introduced by examining a single example of antagonistic religious imagery made possible by a newly liberalized media. And, to sum it up, the Ugandan literary scholar Abasi Kiyimba's chapter on the fraught history of the Ugandan Domestic Relations Bill ("The Domestic Relations Bill' and Inter-Religious Conflict in Uganda: A Muslim Reading of Personal Law and Religious Pluralism in a Postcolonial Society") suggests a more complex relationship between the state and religion in contemporary Africa.

This book adds to the growing literature about religion and conflict in Africa; it documents important traditional African responses to conflicts from a religion and conflict studies dimension; and it offers a different conceptualization of religion and conflict. There is a weakness, however. Some of the articles need to be reviewed. Lastly, while *Religion and Conflict in Neoliberal Africa* can indeed serve as an introduction to key themes revolving around Displacing the State in Africa, it obviously cannot stand on its own as a foundation text in this field.

Ibukun Ajayi, *University of Ibadan*

**Hakeem Ibikunle Tijani. 2012. *Union Education in Nigeria: Labor, Empire, and Decolonization since 1945*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan. 176 pp.**

Hakeem Ibikunle Tijani's most recent book, *Union Education in Nigeria: Labor, Empire, and Decolonization since 1945*, is an ambitious attempt to contextualize Nigerian labor union

education during British decolonization. Tijani threads multiple theses throughout the work, but his central project is an emphasis on the pre- and post-colonial struggle to shape union education and workers' "mental development" (p. 57). He positions the anti-leftist colonial state at odds with leftist unions and the leftist intelligentsia, arguing that the colonial government established structural "opportunities" and used "proactive mind-bending" to exclude the left in the 1950s (p. 46). This in turn assured more conservative government influence over union education curriculums and institutions in post-colonial Nigeria.

In Chapter One, Tijani explores labor unions in Africa prior to Nigerian independence in 1960. Central to his analysis is an overview of the six major communist front organizations operating during the period that, to varying degrees, used clandestine means to further their agendas within Africa. He also draws warranted attention to non-communist international groups, such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, America's AFL-CIO, and Britain's TUC that helped train and fund (directly as well as indirectly) African labor unions and officials in the 1950s. The chapter, which finishes with an introductory summation and thesis overview, is aimed at providing a primer on the continent's "orientation of labor unions" with passing commentary on Nigerian specifics (p. 1).

Chapter Two examines the role of post-World War II Nigerian "leftists," who, despite using their influence in forming alliances during the colonial period, were unable to survive the organization and institutionalization of the "antileftist" state model of unionism and the Nigerianization process. Tijani paints a broad picture, from a sweeping description of Nigerian labor union history in the twentieth century, to the influence of the Cold War on local labor groups. Unfortunately, this wide stance leaves the chapter feeling wispy and unsubstantial as Tijani attempts to cover so much background and context that he gives too little attention to his greater argument and purpose. Proceeding to Chapter Three, Tijani alters course, reconsidering European colonialism and adaptations in colonial policy in West Africa in contrast and complementary to conventional narratives. Tijani's major observation is that literature has given too little attention to why and how colonial powers began "to initiate politics and methods aimed at persuading conservative African nationalists to become involved in a peaceful devolution of power in the colonies" (p. 31).

The most promising, though short, tenet of the monograph comes in Chapter Four. Tijani asserts that Britain's use of formal and informal labor education programs during the colonial period was a concerted effort to reduce the threat of communism among the "sector of society most vulnerable to leftist ideology": the labor union (p. 44). Despite this strong start, Tijani prematurely shifts focus, leaving the threads of his argument dangling behind him. Chapters five and eight provide respective overviews of labor union education in Nigeria pre- and post-1960. Prior to independence, Tijani focuses on the Crown's use of education to confront the communist threat and create an enduring environment of anti-leftist unionism (pp. 53, 71). Tijani also elaborates on his definition of labor union education, which though varied in method, is defined as "an attempt by all stakeholders...to ensure workers' success through access to information and skill acquisition" (p. 57). Post independence, Tijani shows the association between union education programs and postcolonial nation building, including international dynamics and the national institute of labor education. Meanwhile, Chapters six

and seven focus on specific individuals and strikes: namely, Marxist publisher and activist Samuel Ikoku, and the Nigerian Seaman's Union which instigated the last strike prior to independence.

Unfortunately, the caveats for Tijani's work require serious discussion. To begin, editing is problematic. The book is more than simply repetitious. Entire sentences, and on occasion, entire paragraphs are repeated verbatim (sometimes within a matter of pages) (pp. 16, 20). Larger detractions also weaken Tijani's argument, including unsupported assertions, and a loose structure that leaves the argument out-of-focus and ill proven. Key terms also go undefined. Most troubling are the terms "leftist" and "anti-leftist." Though he uses these terms prominently, their definition is vague. A reader can surmise that "leftist" refers loosely to those individuals and groups identifying with, and sympathetic to, general Communist and Marxist ideologies, while also holding an opposition to the colonial state. But this is not always clear. This lack of nuance is concerning given the extreme weight these terms carry in labor and union scholarship. Also, "Nigerianization", which the late sociologist Joseph Agbowuro once described as "the appointment of qualified Nigerians to higher and responsible [government] posts," is such an exacting term that Tijani should have provided a better sense of interpretation.<sup>1</sup>

Overall, Tijani's monograph is a useful and worthwhile examination of the institutional and state history of an understudied region. Historians of Africa and abroad can gleam much from overlooking the blemishes and considering the larger implications of Tijani's turn towards the burgeoning field of labor and empire.

## Notes

- 1 Joseph Agbowuro. 1976. "Nigerianization and the Nigerian Universities." *Comparative Education* 12.3: 243-54.

Ryan Driskell Tate, Rutgers University

**Torrent Mélanie. 2012. *Diplomacy and Nation-Building in Africa: Franco-British Relations and Cameroon at the End of Empire*. London: I.B. Tauris. 409 pp.**

Mélanie Torrent's historical case study *Diplomacy and Nation-Building* recounts Cameroon's march towards independence and its subsequent nation-building process. Drawing upon extensive archival material collected in France, Great Britain, Canada, Cameroon, and the US, the author adopts an actor-centric approach to narrate Cameroon's striving for emancipation in the international system from the perspectives of British, French, Cameroonian, and Canadian state leaders and diplomats. The volume's central thesis holds that for the period between 1959 and the late 1970s, triangular diplomacy among France, Britain, and Cameroon substantially influenced Cameroon's decolonization and state-formation processes. Concurrently, Cameroon is described as "central to the histories of French and British decolonization processes and foreign policy choices" (p. ix).

In chronological order, the volume's five core chapters survey French and British diplomatic struggles to safeguard their influence over a territory, which constituted a colonial boundary line between the French and the British zones of influence. The first chapter shows how France, after some initial reluctance towards Cameroon's quest for independence, soon emerged as the young nation's principal ally ahead of Britain, which appears to have begun regarding Cameroon as unpredictable francophone state (pp. 16-23, 39, 68-72). Following this argument, the second chapter demonstrates how close relations with France made Cameroon become a strange hybrid in British eyes, neither truly foreign nor fully integrated within the Commonwealth scheme. The early post-independence years were marked by an increasing alienation of British diplomats and Cameroonian officials, who to British diplomats "were often, in effect, Frenchmen with black skins" (p. 77).

Chapter Three, dedicated to the early post-independence period, stresses France's by then predominant influence in many sectors of the Cameroonian state and society, before attention is given to the 1967 Nigerian civil war over the Biafra region. Torrent illustrates how the Nigerian civil war revealed essential antagonisms between French and British diplomats. The latter "held de Gaulle and Foccart "responsible for keeping the Nigerian civil war going for its last year"" (p. 144, quoting Jean-Pierre Bat, *Le syndrome Foccart*). Fearing that the Igbo movement could "prompt secessionist tendencies in reunified Cameroon itself" (p. 141), President Ahidjo supported the central government in Lagos, a move, which improved relations between Cameroon and Britain (p. 145). The remainder of the chapter is dedicated to an issue that otherwise runs like a thread through the whole volume: the struggle for linguistic predominance in a formally bi-lingual state. While French had already become the dominant language in the political capital, Yaoundé, as well as in the economic center, Douala (p. 150), Ahidjo initially remained opposed to the *Francophonie* organization, which he deemed to be a revival of the French Community and as such being dominated by the former colonizer (p. 162).

Against the backdrop of the referendum in May 1972 regarding the transformation of the Cameroonian Federation into a unitary state and Britain's possible entry into the EEC, chapter Four examines French and British efforts to bury old rivalries and their limits. Finally, chapter Five—covering the period after the UK's joining of the EEC—asserts that Britain, by then, had become disinterested in Cameroon (pp. 226-7). British officials conceded to France's all-dominant influence over the whole francophone African region (p. 246).

Overall, Britain is portrayed as the more reluctant of the two former colonial powers, always anxious that its foreign policy towards Cameroon could corrupt its relations with France or the Commonwealth. France, on the other hand, driven by its quest for *grandeur* considers close ties with Cameroon and the whole francophone region as an indispensable factor of its foreign policy (p. 248). Cameroon itself is said to have emerged from the double-rejection of the Commonwealth and the French Community; but subsequently little space was left for balanced relations with both European powers or for other multilateral alternatives. In the end, Cameroon always had to side with either Britain or France when it came to important issues (pp. 271-2).

Mélanie Torrent's monograph provides a detailed account of the international dynamics behind Cameroon's decolonization process. The mainly descriptive text would have benefitted

from a more clearly formulated central argument, which would in turn have helped the reader to discriminate between essentials and annotations. It would also have facilitated Torrent's intention to speak as an historian to an IR community. Some confusion emerges from the fact that the book does not limit itself to the triangular relationship among Britain, Cameroon, and France, and its impact on the nation-building process in Cameroon, but also engages with the inverse impact of Cameroonian foreign policy decisions on the Franco-British relationship and makes references to Canada's position on Cameroon in addition to the Commonwealth and *Francophonie* Organisations.

The very interesting agent-centered approach to foreign policymaking might have been elaborated further in theoretical terms, in particular with reference to the pertinent literature in the field of foreign policy analysis. Regarding the examined decision-units, the plethora of officials and diplomats cited throughout the work is evidence of a meticulous research, but also confronts the reader with a cast of Tolstoyesque dimensions without always qualifying the relative importance of the different decision-making units involved.

Despite the criticisms listed above, the study remains a valuable contribution to the fields of international history, African Studies, and IR. Torrent's empirically grounded work stands out due to the subtle style in which it brings the archives to life. The book can be recommended to history students engaging with the notion of Empire or post-colonial Africa. For pundits of French and British foreign policy the book's most promising contribution lies in the detailed description of patterns of state behavior that emerged at the end of the colonial period but which can be observed until the present day.

Benedikt Erforth, *University of Trento*

**Bernard Waites. 2012. *South Asia and Africa: Post-colonialism in Historical Perspective*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 456 pp.**

At 456 pages (excluding the contents pages, acknowledgements, list of tables and list of maps, and abbreviations, but including the bibliography and index page), this is a content-rich text that grapples with a difficult type of historical analysis. It is a comparative history of South Asia and Africa, with the notion of post-colonialism as its main historical theme. The author states that his "endeavour" is to perform an analysis on human agency; and how political and economic factors affected the histories of South Asia and Africa. Apparently, "these were, very broadly, of two kinds: historical constraints arising from comparative economic 'backwardness' and a 'low' level of social development; and structural constraints arising from geography, factor endowments, natural resource wealth and resource penury, climate and disease ecology. ('Backwardness' and 'low' have pejorative undertones which I do not intend, and refer to measurable indices such as the prevalence of subsistence agriculture and high infant and maternal mortality.)" (p. 3). To gauge how these constraints were "exacerbated or alleviated," he chose to analyze how South Asian and African political "actors" sought to overcome them. The use of maps, colonial records and studies, World Bank and United Nations reports, government surveys, texts, and articles endows this book with a variety of facts that, at times,



absorb the reader. To synthesize this wealth of information, the author refers to Partha Chatterjee's thesis, which states that the "*general form of the transition from colonial to post-colonial national states was a 'passive revolution'...*" (p. 8). This, in essence, was an appropriation of Antonio Gramsci's work on Italian reunification, the related suppression of popular radicalism, and the forms of social relations that developed between ruling classes and the industrial bourgeoisie (under the auspices of a 'passive revolution'). The author suggests that "the parallels with Chatterjee's South Asian paradigm of 'passive revolution' are not exact but they are sufficiently close to underline the usefulness of the concept for comparative analysis. This must begin, however, with those historical and structural constraints to which I referred earlier" (p. 9). This idea serves as the narrative's comparative template as he compares and contrasts the various political personalities, their ideologies, and their actions in the two regions.

As his narrative proceeds into in-depth political and economic surveys and analyses of South Asia and Africa (specifically Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, "Congo-Zaire," Nigeria, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, and Mozambique), it becomes evident that despite the range of information, and depth of insight, the purpose of the author's study, at times, is unclear. This purpose, being to provide an account of post-colonialism as an idiographic expression, rather than a nomothetic idea within a linear historical narrative, is over-shadowed by un-warranted or ill-informed assertions and judgments throughout the text. This then obscures what he means by "post-colonialism" (pp. 27, 28, 29-34, 99-100, 142-44, 179-85, 215-16, 223-25, etc.). Indeed, if historical perspective inevitably elicits a degree of bias, it is always necessary to be acutely aware of the balance in perspectives, regarding the subject under investigation.

Nevertheless, the multi-disciplinary nature of the author's sources reveals his laudable ability to arrange and analyze the vast volume of information found in this study. This works in favor of the author's research credentials, but at the same time, forces a seasoned reader in histories of Africa and South Asia to question some of the premises for his arguments. Although this book is endowed with a great deal of facts in its analyses, its arguments and "opinions" need to be heavily scrutinized; a process which would require prior historical knowledge of the regions under investigation. More specifically, this text needs careful intellectual scrutiny, which senior scholars, or post-graduate students will be better equipped to perform. It is otherwise a very useful, factual account of "post-colonialism in historical perspective."

Kwesi D. L. S. Prah, *East China Normal University*