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Farsighted: The Age of the Picture as the World

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in African Studies

by

Sarah Marie Elbaum

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Farsighted: The Age of the Picture as the World

by

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Master of Arts in African Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Allen F. Roberts, Chair

Contemporary African artists Yinka Shonibare, MBE and Djibril Diop Mambety investigate the intimate effects of colonial materiality at large, utilizing colonial era aesthetics in their work while circumventing its indexicality, finding instead new methods with which to discuss individual experience, the colonial, and the postcolonial. To address the psychological import of extant colonial material culture, I analyze these artists' particular negotiations of plural locales and temporalities in their respective bodies of work as methods of re-archiving the colonial tangible and built environments in terms of individual experience.

Gender Studies scholarship on colonialism links psychology, in terms of power dynamics and sexuality, to nation-building, racism, and empire fatigue. This decoding of humanity's most large scale colonial projects and most intimate reactions in a grand sweep of analysis, to and fro,

is a task partially taken up by Shonibare and Mambety. Their work deals in terms of scale shifts,

from local to global, individual to empire, and from the intimate to the immense.

Thesis of Sarah Marie Elbaum is approved.

Sondra Hale

William H. Worger

Allen F. Roberts, Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2013

"I allowed myself to be amused in *Contras' City,* so as to make the viewer experience anticolonialist laughter. But anticolonialist laughter is ultimately laughter at oneself."

<div align="right">--Djibril Diop Mambety</div>

Table of Contents

My own work begs the question, how does the colonial built environment affect the individual? What is the intimate effect of the colonial landscape in its smallest and largest denominations, from its textiles to its urban planning projects, and how do such extant European-designed spaces and viewpoints inflect contemporary African urbanity?

Colonial materiality and infrastructure deal in terms of the gaze, both returned and unilateral. The gaze is a formidable character itself, holding its own across Humanities disciplines including Art History, Gender Studies, and Anthropology. I explore the colonial gaze, but also its parameters, conditions, beholders, and objects across colonial material culture.

Contemporary African artists Yinka Shonibare, MBE and Djibril Diop Mambety reframe colonial era material culture to expose the pedagogy inherent in colonial aesthetics, in the worldviews promoted and maintained by colonial visualities. Yinka Shonibare and Djibril Diop Mambety work in sculpture and film respectively, taking on colonial visualities that are built into, and ever present within, contemporary African urbanity. Though working a generation apart--Mambety from the late 1960s through the late 1990s, Shonibare gaining acclaim from the early 1990s onwards--these two artists share sentiments, repurposing the visual detritus of colonial moments to their own ends.

Mambety and Shonibare re-inflect colonial infrastructure to illustrate contemporary cityscapes archived with colonial imprints. Through their careers, individual experience can be linked to extant colonial material culture. Traces of colonial architecture and urban planning act almost as living remnants of the colonial decades, preserving their visual semiotics, reflecting both the theories and practices of the colonial powers at large, and those that were forced to live

such urbanity on the ground (Yervasi 2008, 51). Mambety and Shonibare expand the possibilities of these colonial remnants in their work, augmenting their dialogue with the quotidian.

Much of what Mambety and Shonibare work with are material memories in various states of neglect and preservation. These colonial leftovers are, in a sense, the memories of no one, memories of events held in the minds of now absent European colonists, memories that, as time passes, fewer and fewer people have lived firsthand, to the point that what they stand for in our contemporary world is no longer transparent.

Such informational gaps in the space of the contemporary city are utilized by artists like Yinka Shonibare and Djibril Diop Mambety to highlight urban environs that circumscribe other eras and regimes. Shonibare and Mambety use colonial era architecture, textiles, and industry, including trade and tourism, to augment and nuance definitions of place and space in contemporary West Africa, be it Shonibare's hometown of Lagos, Nigeria or Mambety's hometown of Dakar, Senegal.

To live amongst the architectural and material "ruins" of the colonial era, whether preserved meticulously in national museums or maintained to front operating legislative bodies and businesses, is to inhabit the colonial itself, the intimate logic of its organization. To live amongst such "ruins" is to both relive and re-narrate the colonial simultaneously, to experience the implications and effects of the colonial and to reiterate them. In a sense virtual archives bridge the lived experience of the urban realms to larger things at stake: the international scale of power and relationships, the economic and the ideological that originally mobilized such colonial infrastructure.

Using late 20th century French philosopher Michel de Certeau's model of the "tactics" of everyday life that interact with the "strategies" of urban infrastructure, one can trace the

implications of colonial urban planning and aesthetics, to translate the *lingua franca* of power

that is colonial visuality (de Certeau 1980, 4-8).

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Chapter 1: Fealty, Independence, and the Interwar Years

Power dynamics between Africa and Europe in the late colonial era were inflected by new developments in the Interwar years. A pan-African arts and literary movement forged in Paris in the 1920s prefaced a continent-wide Independence movement a generation later, particularly in Senegal where Djibril Diop Mambety launched his film career and found his favorite filmic subjects (Ukadike 1999, 140). Tracing the complex intermingling of Africanness and the Europeanness between War and Independence, and the definitive Independent aesthetic that was articulated in 1960s Senegal, requires a brief background.

By the Second World War the relationship between Africa and Europe had reached an uneasy point. European colonial powers relied heavily on their African holdings for critical resources and troops, as they had in the First World War. African veterans returned from the front exposed to the liberal sensibilities and jargon of the Allied Powers, having fought a fascist and dictatorial ethos that in a sense they were still forced to live under as colonial subjects at home (Meredith 2011, 6-8).

The Second World War crystallized other strained intercontinental relationships. In 1935, upon Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia and ultimate capture of Addis Ababa, the Emperor Haile Selassie took refuge in England, a miniature prelude to the adversarial relationship between England and Italy a handful of years later in World War II, as Ally and Axis, and many incarnations in between as Italy switched loyalties throughout the War (McIntire 2009, 333).

It was in the thick of War six years later in 1941 that the Atlantic Charter was put to paper, in which Churchill and Roosevelt spelled out the right to national self-government. In the midst of both the tangible and ideological rubble of the war-torn 1940s, Churchill refused to extend that autonomy to Britain's colonies in Africa, making it exclusive to post-War Europe

(Scott 1943, 40). Despite the continent's massive support in the European theatre of the War, French Africa drafting 80,000 troops to fight the Germans, future president of Senegal Leopold Sedar Senghor among them, and British Africa drafting an astounding 374,000 troops, Churchill was not moved to include his own colonial subjects in the Charter (Lee 2009, 114).

FDR however, during his 1943 visit to Morocco and the Gambia, made it a point to publicly declare, to the chagrin of France especially, that the Charter applied to African states and colonies as well as Western polities. FDR was appalled at the conditions under colonial rule he encountered on his tour, even writing to Churchill of his disgust, which motivated him to push for the Charter's applicability to colonized Africa (Meredith 2011, 8-10).

This fraught Interwar and WWII-era relationship between Europe and Africa, this intermediate stage between colonization and independence, between colony and autonomy, is full of uncomfortably shared infrastructure and European paternalism. Yet Pan-African movements and sensibilities developed from those cultivated decades earlier abroad continued to network across national and cultural boundaries.

Paris in the 1920s was where Martiniquais poet-playwright and future parliamentarian Aimé Césaire met future Senegalese president Leopold Senghor. Césaire, Senghor, and their cohort formed a pro- and pan-African arts and literary movement founded on a self-determined African diaspora. They dubbed their arts forum Négritude (Clément 2011, 185).

Between the two World Wars the Paris-based Négritude intelligentsia held salon gatherings and conferences with international rosters that examined Harlem Renaissance and other cultural movements abroad, expanding the sociopolitical pan-African discourse popularized by Marcus Garvey and his contemporaries into the fine and literary arts. Under Martiniquais scholar Paulette Nardal the Parisian set founded their own bilingual periodical, *La*

Revue du Monde Noir, for both English- and French-speakers from their Paris headquarters in 1931 (Soto 2006, 94). Michael Soto details the early days of *La revue* and Négritude in his critique of Brent Hayes Edwards' 2003 book *Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism.*

> Less familiar but perhaps most important in...the literary historical landscape is Paulette Nardal. Born in Martinique in 1896, Nardal learned English in the British West Indies and took a graduate degree at the Sorbonne. After writing for the Parisian journal *La Dépêche africaine*, she cofounded, with Haitian dentist Leo Sajous, *La Revue de monde noir*, a bilingual (French-English) journal that helped launch what would become the Négritude movement...Edwards makes a strong case that "Nardal became the most important connection between the 'Harlem Renaissance' writers and the Francophone university students who would become the core of the Négritude movement"...and therefore that she represents an important and previously underestimated nexus in twentieth-century cultural history.

Inspired by an American arts movement and propelled by Francophone Caribbean and African artists and scholars, Négritude itself acted as a "nexus" through which members sought to redefine blackness and diaspora abroad amidst competing philosophies voiced by leaders like Garvey and W. E. B. Du Bois. There was no summative stance authored by a global community, but instead a variety of dialogues on political and artistic mobilization in the face of ongoing imperialism. The poets, authors, and future political leaders of the Négritude literary movement, including President Senghor, were but one branch of a long-term, worldwide discussion of Africa and Africanness that engendered a number of responses from many individuals and

organizations within and beyond the diaspora. Nine years after *Le Revue du Monde Noir* was first published, Marcus Garvey, arbiter of the global Pan-African dialogue since the turn of the century, would die in "an inauspicious rented home in West Kensington," Central London, marking the end of the first generation of Pan-African global narrative (Ewing 2011, 144).

In 1956, Jean-Paul Sartre chimed in with his essay *Le colonialisme est un système,* published in his own journal *Les Temps Modernes* in April that year. T. J. Demos, a reader and essaysist at University College London, quotes Sartre on his alignment with Négritude:

> 'We, the people of Mainland France, have only one lesson to draw from these facts: Colonialism is in a process of destroying itself. But it still fouls the atmosphere. It is our shame; it mocks our laws or caricatures them. It infects us with its racism. [...] It obliges our young men to fight despite themselves and die for Nazi principles that we fought against ten years ago; it attempts to defend itself by arousing fascism even here in France. Our role is to help it die. Not only in Algeria but wherever it exists.' In relating colonialism to Nazism, Sartre was invoking the leading voices of radical black opposition to France's and Europe's colonial politics, including those of W. E. B. Du Bois, C. L. R. James, George Padmore, and Aimé Césaire (Demos 2013, 59).

By invoking the "radical black opposition" within the French "Mainland," Sartre appropriated a Black Atlantic social consciousness into mainstream French Existential discourse. By emphasizing that the specter of colonialism still hung in the air, "infecting" France's population with the hypocrisy of Nazism, Sartre illustrates that edge-of-empire colonial theater permeates even the "Mainland." Unseen though befouling the very air they breathe, the French are still affected by the infrastructure of colonial power, though its venue is abroad. Though tangibly not

close to the "Mainland," French colonialism in Africa is still hangs in the atmosphere, and implicates the French in Nazi-level moral crimes, according to Sartre. This long-stretched psychic fabric of colonialism, its abstract infrastructure of power, is something explored by Mambety as well in his film *Contras' City*, set in Senghor's Dakar.

In the early decades of his administration, President Senghor romanticized what he saw as the fundamental qualities of Africans and Africanness, specifically in Senegal. In poetic terms, perhaps a throwback to his culture-broker days in Paris, Senghor spelled out his view on the differences between the European and the African, shedding light on the lyrical ethos upon which Négritude is based, and Senghor's own artistic license and essentialism:

> It is significant that in Wolof, the main language of Senegal, there are at least three words to translate the word "spirit": xel, sago, or degal, whereas images have to be used for the word "matter": lef (thing) or yaram (body). The African is, of course, sensitive to the external world, to the material aspect of beings and things. It is precisely because he is more so than the white European, because he is sensitive to the tangible qualities of things--shape, color, smell, weight, etc.--that the African considers these things merely as signs that have to be interpreted and transcended in order to reach the reality of human beings (Senghor 1970).

In Senghor's eyes, not only are the Senegalese operating on a symbolic level, evident to him in Wolof's ample vocabulary with which to discuss the abstract and spiritual, but the Senegalese pluralistic view of reality is also more in step with, and eye level to, humanism, "the reality of human beings."

Here Senghor posited that the Senegalese are at once especially concrete and especially spiritual, more sensitive to tangible qualities such as weight and shape than the "white European," while simultaneously accessing this material sensitivity to read the physically manifest world as a set of "signs." Senghor wrote further, "Like others, more than others, he [the Senegalese] distinguishes the pebble from the plant...but once again, the accidents and appearances that differentiate these kingdoms only illustrate different aspects of the same reality" (Senghor 1970).

Senghor asserted the deep-seated, elemental spiritual logic of his Senegalese ethos, bridging distinct theoretical opposites of the physical and the spiritual, the literal and the abstract, into a gray area of unity. Part and whole, pebble and plant, are singular for Senghor, and Senghor's titular Senegalese. Rather than normalizing, distilling and clearly explaining so-called Africanity, Senghor opted to augment definitions and blur boundaries and diagnostics altogether, complicating a singular take of Senegalese weltanschauung and Senegal itself.

While Senghor's mystical pluralism can be read as expansive and interpretive, the implementation of cultural programming was extremely structured under his presidency. Négritude at the national level manifested as a well-funded answer to post-Independence identity politics, as well as an aesthetic inroad to international relations. Négritude was, among other things, a means to stay culturally and creatively connected to the European intelligentsia:

> ...the social elite and European-educated intellectuals worked together to create a coherent cultural and political vision for an independent nation. With 25 percent of the state's budget devoted to the Ministry of Culture, creative production, rather than industry, strategically connected independent Senegal to former colonial powers and

other first-world nations. The exchange of cultural capital bridged the gap that could not

be bridged economically (Craig 2006, 119).

Senghor's pan-African national aesthetic programming dovetailed with the philosophies of his

Parisian cohort and its international dialogues that spanned the Caribbean and both sides of the

Atlantic for decades. Senghor effectively expanded on these established political and social

stances that international Black intellectuals helped to author. His nationalization of a Négritude

aesthetic also strengthened international and intercontinental relationships in a way ordinary

diplomacy could not.

In dedicating one quarter of Senegal's national budget to the arts, financing the very sites

of manufacture of his vision, President Senghor executed aesthetic overhaul on a massive scale.

The profound economic, visual, and philosophical impact this had on the public affected the

minds and eyes of the Senegalese in the last decades of the twentieth century (Harney 2004).

Senghor's Négritude attempted to provide celebratory relief for a newly independent Senegal

through strategic and formulaic state patronage, and made an indelible mark on its psychic and

geographic landscapes for decades.

If colonial visuality thrived off of taxonomy and separation of countryman from

colonizer, then Senghor's imagined Senegalese sensibility and Négritude aesthetic program

attempted the opposite: symbolic language and universality, perhaps acting as antidote and salve

to absolve the effects of centuries of aggressive imperialist visuality, redirecting visual

sensibility toward holistic renewal, harmony of part with whole, of landsman with land, a pan-

African aesthetic vocabulary by definition.

President Senghor's brand of Postcolonial visual logic, supported by a doctrine that

reworked even earlier pan-African political and artistic philosophies, was ethos as much as

pathos. Like Senghor's archetypical Senegalese that he fabricated in his writings, his Négritude movement on the national scale operated on both logical and symbolic levels, providing an alternative symbology for and spiritual outlook on Africanity (Harney 2004). While literally placing new symbols into the lexicon of postcolonial and post-Independence art, Senghor's arts movement also created an arena for symbolic and connotative thinking and being, establishing a nexus for symbolic practice for individual artists, many of whom considered themselves outside the national fold of the movement (Grabski and Harney 2006). Under Senghor's leadership, Négritude had symbolic import in of itself while simultaneously providing a concrete symbolic language and artistic method. It was medium and message.

In 1969, nearly a decade into the reign of Senghor's socialist *Parti du Développement*, Djibril Diop Mambéty completed his first short film at the age of 25 (Grayson 2001, 136). *Contras' City*'s plot tows the line between narrative and surreal as a young, blonde, French tourist asks a local Senegalese man to be her tour guide through Dakar. As they briskly pass various city sights together, first on foot and then behind the windshield of a car, the tour guide points out visible landmarks, identifying colonial-era buildings and avenues.

However, far from being a typical tour, the local guide is misidentifying the vantage points and buildings, misreading the cityscape altogether. His misreading of a city comprised of colonial infrastructure operates as a surreal form of protest: subterfuge of the demands of colonial urban planning and visuality. Instead of allowing the cityscape to be legible, *Contras' City* only offers disassociation and misreading of a place at turns home, at turns vacation tourist destination, depending on who one asks on screen. Instead of a concrete stance for or against colonial infrastructure, *Contras' City* offers surreal refusal of its taxonomy.

Mambety's film calls into question who is privileged by whose gaze in a contemporary cityscape that features both colonial and postcolonial infrastructure. Just over a decade after Mambety filmed the city of contrasts, the urban environs transformed again. *Set/Setal*, literally cleanliness and propriety, as the 1980s urban movement was named, was a popular culture aspect of the Mouride order of Islam, founded in Senegal in the early 1900s, whose emphasis on a work ethic and urban engagement fueled the "refabulation" of Dakar (Roberts and Roberts 2002, 57-58). The renewal, reclamation, and street renaming of *Set/Setal* were also inspired by world famous Senegalese musician Youssou N'Dour and his thematic songs of "cleanliness, dignity and rectitude-" (ibid). This homegrown aesthetic and infrastructural reappropriation flavors the cityscape of Dakar further, adding another narrative to the city-in-progress and its authorship, layering it beyond the provenance of the colonial.

Because in Mambety's *Contras' City*, the cineaste refuses to "read" urban surroundings in terms of provenance, which narratives are being privileged instead? Do the intimate and the surreal come to the forefront in lieu of academic and historical diagnostics? Do Senghor's symbolic language and aesthetics have a place in Mambety's *City*, or are they yet another map to be redrawn, re-identified, re-narrated*?* Mambety's early work calls into question the compatibility of the past with the present in the urban scape, and asks if the duality of the colonial and the contemporary can be sustained, even on an individual, experiential level, at the smallest denomination of visual consumption.

If not even the landscape of *Contras' City* can be identified correctly, then what of the characters who inhabit it? How are they, too, illegible? How can the audience relate to them? And through what or whom will the audience "enter" the scenes and the story if not even the background can be trusted? By maintaining the aesthetic of a straightforward documentary

travelogue while nurturing a surrealist, anti-colonialist narrative, Mambety's short film blurs the line also between the two featured characters, female and male, tourist and local, French and Senegalese. By changing the stakes of the conversation between coloniality and contemporaneity, Mambety's film fashions a dialogue with the contemporary African cityscape that supersedes the taxonomy of colonial visual convention, binary identity politics, and perhaps even formal fields of inquiry themselves.

Senegalese film scholar Mbye Cham also outlined a paradigm shift in our reception of African cinema, a transition from "rigid and dogmatic" Western critical practice to one that is as "dialogic, nomadic and transient" as African film itself (Cham 1988, 11). Cham also characterized this "transient" aesthetic as one of aging, migrancy, and impermanence, themes addressed throughout Mambety's career (Thackway 2003, 67).

Mambety challenges postcolonial discourse by redefining even its most basic terms, including its chronological, national, and gendered referents. When denied the concrete and the familiar, Mambety's *Contras' City* asks, where will we go next, as filmgoers, as city-goers, as postcolonists?

Chapter 2: Façade and Faculty in the Colonial Scape

The role of urban planning in both public and private infrastructures designed by colonial powers in their 19th century Scramble for Africa is studied in terms of surveyor and surveyed, as a language of power and a very concrete expression of European encroachment upon the African continent during that period (Njoh 2007). The designs of such urban spaces, their attempt at mapping, their inherent taxonomy and circumnavigation of the public, the private, the social, and the economic, as defined by colonists, have been analyzed by modern scholars and artists in terms of indexicality and archive (Ashcroft 2002, 148). The viability and integrity of this colonial archive as per repurposed infrastructures and modern rereadings of colonial urban space has complicated the intended legibility of the colonial urban scape and its legacy.

Can the time capsule-cum-living museum that characterizes the extant colonial architecture on the continent be decoded? Was it ever coded in the first place? And how do contemporary African and diasporic artists translate the colonial urban infrastructure, if at all? Colonial modes of display and viewing provide insight into colonial priorities and begins to answer the question: what does colonialism want? (Nelson 2007, 145-146).

Inspired by the curiosity cabinet, a domestic mode of display designed to showcase the loot of the merchant-explorer in late Renaissance Europe, colonial era curatorial practice also relied on a self-styled encyclopedic approach (Steiner 1994, 108-109). Conflating the anthropological, the biological, and the cultural, curiosity cabinets sought to make sense of the entire universe at large within their classically wood-panelled interiors. One could theoretically traverse the universe as a whole, each exhibited item metonymically representing a continent, a culture, a philosopher, and so forth, the narrative connections and allusions plastic and as multiple as the number of observers (Bunn 1980, 314).

The curiosity cabinet convention of display reflects a didactic approach to the world, wherein everything displayed is assumed to be logical, sensible, and intellectually digestible. In the curiosity cabinet format, all one must do is peruse its contents to imagine ancient voyages and contemporary expeditions alike, investigate the zoological and the natural, and form theories about cosmology and the scale of humanity in the divine scheme of the world (Cheater 2008, 169). The curiosity cabinet's and colonial exhibitionism's intentionality is to assume and uphold the order of the entire universe socially, philosophically, environmentally, and biologically. The intent is mimesis in miniature of the grand order of things, a true microcosm, a distillation by scale.

The facility of this microcosmic theater in the colonial era, the world concentrated into a single location as per colonial exhibition culture, supported British imperial aspirations and imperial modes of display first embodied publicly at the Crystal Palace exhibition in London in 1851 (Hibbard 2007, 162). As arbiter of world's fair-type exhibition scapes that only grew in popularity and frequency well into the following century, the Crystal Palace circumscribed the known British world, ordering it according to colonial purview. The Crystal Palace functioned as a miniaturization of the world at large, its organization masquerading as intuitive entertainment but actually thoroughly programmed by colonial values, goals, and lifeways.

The Crystal Palace was built into being in the middle of Hyde Park, London in the summer of 1851. Three years prior, working class activists trod the very same ground to protest the unregulated industrialization and development that, as luck would have it, the Palace would display in encyclopedic detail only a few seasons later (Luckhurst 2012, 387). The Crystal Palace's 14,000 stalls exhibited 100,000 commodities meant to reflect a global itinerary for British capitalism (ibid). The British were expanding the purview of their home and their

ideology of homeland, as they circumscribed their place in the world alongside the very world itself, exploding the familiar and the unfamiliar under the auspices of commerce, and for the visual consumption and recreation of all who entered their Crystal kingdom in that year between the summers of 1851 and 1852.

Contemporary South African photographer Santu Mofokeng wrote in 1998 that "Home is an appropriated space; it does not exist objectively in reality. The notion of 'home' is a fiction we create out of a need to belong. Home is a place most people have never been to and never will arrive at" (Mofokeng 1998). While manufacture of homeland and empire was a full-time British industry in the Victorian era, the distinction between the domestic and the imperial was its primary anxiety, one that the indexical nature of the Crystal Palace attempted to resolve, heralding decades of such world exhibitions to come. The Crystal Palace provided answers to the more existential questions of economic expansion: How could the individual "enter" the vastness of empire? As the scale of British imperial holdings grew in size, how could one relate to a newly outsourced Britishness, and newly *insourced* worldliness in the form of commodity imports in the British domestic markets, as well as phrases, foodways, cultural practices, ideologies, and of course travelers and immigrants from abroad? By restricting British economic, governmental, and cultural expansion to the world of "things" to be displayed, admired, and held, such uneasy questions of identity and belonging could be parlayed. The Crystal Palace reinforced a manageable and relatable scale of imperial growth, down to something you could hold in your hand.

Modern museum culture, part and parcel of this colonial miniaturization of the world, was articulated a generation after the Crystal Palace in 1880s Paris in its tradition of Exposition Universelle. Such display of conquest writ in exhibition format was key to amalgamating urban

and peripheral zones of empire. City centers could metonymically represent and transform into different corners of the world connected by commercial, colonial, and commonwealth ties to the seat of power. As Heidegger puts it, "the fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture." The very imaging of empire was as crucial to the colonial enterprise as the tangible empire itself. Augmenting colonial ken into the further and the unfamiliar, appealingly displayed and commodified into universal expositions and world's fairs, authored the politics of exhibitionism as we know it.

By miniaturizing the world into an exhibition, the empire telegraphed its own global dominance to exhibition-goers, and asserted its all-seeing eye, its global omnipotence and ubiquity. All was appropriated into these literal shows of empire. Imperial visual taxonomy of the world not only defined the outskirts and limits of empire, but equally altered notions of the near, the palpable, and the familiar.

At Colonial era world's fair and exposition displays, the externality of the world at large and the internality of the metropole were predicated as opposites, but actually aimed towards the same imperial goal.

> The political method is the essence of the modern state, of the world-as-exhibition. The certainty of the political order is to be everywhere on exhibit, yet nowhere quite accessible, never quite touchable. Like reality at the world exhibition, the world's political truths are never presented, they are only ever represented. But we remain certain they exist outside (Mitchell 1991, 179).

The world exhibition's reality is one of externality. The world "out there" has been distilled to its defining elements, supposedly indexically displayed, and reproduced on a liveable scale for

casual perusal. This remote living of the world at large, a virtual experience of a distant reality, fundamentally operates on reduction, simplification, and part-for-whole in its method of display, and thus inherently trivializes that which it represents. Maintaining the abstract order of empire through representation and recreation, manufacturing the palpability of the distant, also upholds Cartesian priorities of division: mind and body, self and other, inside and outside, capital and colony (Mitchell 1991, 178).

The logic of the colonial cosmopolitan, referencing the world "out there" through domestic visuality, commodity, and fashion, capitalized off of the fantasy of empire: travel via miniaturization, compression of the exotic, nay, the world, into an item, into something on a liveable scale one could covet, acquire, caress, and truly own. Incarnations of the foreign and the familiar are peppered throughout colonial era material culture, in the fashions and textiles that defined its continental sensibilities and in the sartorial gender displays throughout the theater of colonial Europeanness. The manner in which a collar or bustle was tailored, the provenance of the fabric sewn into a bodice, all contributed to imperial mythology and identity that spanned continents and oceans, and in the case of England, was lit always by the light of the sun.

Yinka Shonibare takes the colonial circumscription of the world "out there" to an absurd, cosmic scale in his 2000 sculptural tableau *Vacation*, depicting a seemingly nuclear family clad in full space suits that are tailored from what appear to be West African textiles. The family explores their surroundings, actively bending and posturing to get a closer look at the space around them. One muses on their buoyancy in the relative gravity of their environs: is this family on Earth, among us, making us the very subject of their gaze, or are we viewing their *Vacation* on some faraway planet? Regardless of their itinerary, this family is clearly visiting from afar, and came prepared with their own sartorial protection for their leisurely jaunt.

Here, on top of colonial boundaries and specularity, Shonibare also recalls the space race of the Cold War with his layering of familial domesticity and space exploration. *Vacation*'s double index into the interior of family dynamics and international aerospace and defense industries recall mid-twentieth century foreign atomic threat as well as the banality of its suburban sprawl, domesticity and the privilege of weekending culture. *Artforum International* columnist and Professor of Fine Art and Transcultural Studies at Middlesex University Jean Fisher deconstructs Shonibare's authoring of foreignness, familiarity, and duality across the scales of inner and outer space.

> What characterizes Shonibare's artistic operations is their refusal to maintain...distance; they take mischievous delight in the pleasures of excess, in exaggerating the *jouissance* of the 'other,' in reinsinuating its signs into cultural spaces from which it had seemingly been purged. Shonibare 'trespasses' into forbidden territories, but with wit, humour, artistic dexterity and seductiveness that become irresistible, and he does this by recognising that the 'outsider' is always already within" (Fisher 2002, 28).

In *Vacation,* the consumer-level scale that permeated Cold War domestic life shares the stage with interstellar surveillance and militarization. The foreground and the background of Mid-Century pathos are equally in focus in this piece, the Eastern European and intergalactic realms both loom in the distance as the mundane prosperity of post-War family life is more immediately apparent on *Vacation*. The sublime image of a satellite suspended in the cold vastness of space coupled with the stifling proximity of familial dynamics have equal airtime in this peculiarly outfitted outing. The mythology of post-War intimacy is magnified by

Shonibare's use of unexpected West African textiles, out of place, out of time, referencing a colonial trade route centuries before the era of the Cold War and Africa's nascent Independence.

Shonibare's "seductive" textile aesthetic invokes the aristocratic consumption of the storied "other" in colonial continental commerce; the merchandising of the exotic, the unfamiliar, and the farther in both European and African markets. Shonibare's artistic strategies collapse the visually West African with the visually Western into works that criss-cross centuries, international borders, and cultural legibility. Unable to be read as strictly African or strictly Western, like the *Vacation*er's spacesuits, Shonibare's pieces stake claim on the interim, the process, the interaction between the continents; on the very exploration of otherness.

Operating like cinematic space with its temporal, spatial, and symbolic realms, Yinka Shonibare's sculptures read like Djibril Diop Mambety's filmic works, films which have been described as "interior projections without coordinates" (Speciale 1998, 7). Rather than spelling out narrative and meaning in a closed circuit of reference and referent, Shonibare and Mambety both provide imagery that allow open-ended associations and inquiry as the currency of discourse, rather than the rigid circumscription that traditional narrative strategies require.

Chapter 3: The Colonial Spectacle, Cross Examined

Rather than take-away concepts and definitions, Shonibare articulates a space for his viewers to consider. This is not a language of artifact, there is no testimony to be decoded, but instead a multi-directional narrative that one can choose to enter at its various points. Shonibare's double indexicality, into Africa and the West, or *Double Dress,* as per his titular 2002 Jerusalem solo show, constructs an intellectual arena to peruse rather than a straightforward message to read. Shonibare allows multi-referent symbologies to travel both to and from Africa and the West.

Cross-disciplinary and dispersed, Shonibare's and Mambety's works realize and imagine the colonial space of their respective hometowns and regions, often not how they appear upon first reading. Misreading and misidentification are a way for Mambety and Shonibare to share not only the layered experience of living the postcolonial, including living the colonial through its extant architecture, but also the repurposing necessary in living within such an aesthetic. Re-reading and misreading as a lived experience is poignant in terms of formerly colonized cultures living in the architectural remains and city skeletons rendered by colonizing powers.

This is not only a West African issue in terms of Mambety's and Shonibare's backgrounds, but is relevant in Cairo, where the British also left their mark legible at the infrastructural level, becoming the centerpiece of Timothy Mitchell's analysis of colonial specularity and exhibition culture in Cairo, Paris, London, and beyond. The insistent legibility of colonial visuality, its enforced indexicality, characterized an ethos that Shonibare and Mambety both deconstruct.

Shonibare's and Mambety's artistic styles, abstract and conceptual rather than cohesive in narrative, align with the values of the methodology with which to research the postcolonial

environment inevitably flavored with the colonial environment; functioning like the environment itself, a traversal of time and space much like the contemporary African city traverses time and space in the multiplicity of its architectural, aesthetic, and material presences, its lack of singularity and its inherent coexistence with itself.

Contemporary Canadian artist Jon Rafman's ongoing piece *9-Eyes* is another guide to such non-traditional pedagogies; a love letter of sorts to the unresolved nostalgia of the abandoned, now archived in the virtual realm of the Internet. Rafman culls images from Google Maps' Street View, and flavors this lost-and-found artistic process with the photographs' content of forgotten space. Rafman introduces his work as such, "...Google sent out an army of hybrid electric automobiles, each one bearing nine cameras on a single pole. Armed with a GPS and three laser range scanners, this fleet of cars began an endless quest to photograph every highway and byway in the free world" (Rafman 2009). These photographs, like most photographs, could have been a record of someone's memories, but aren't; instead, these photographs are captured automatically by a passing Google company car and are subsequently shuffled into the formulaic web domain of Google Maps. There is no memorabilia or intimate objective here. These photographs may have been accessed by an Internet user already, but just as easily may have never been seen before by anyone, existing in a vast Internet archive almost surreal in its proportions. Rafman declares that "a street view image can give us a sense of what it feels like to have everything recorded, but no particular significance accorded to anything," in other words, the scale of the archive at large leaves very little room for the minutiae and narrative of individual experience (Rafman 2009). While Google Maps' Street View schematizes all of the "free world," it cannot diagram the intimate scale of memory and individuality, leaving open-

ended the question once more, how do urban infrastructure and material culture formulate the individual?

The personhood of space, abandonment, and surveillance are invoked by Rafman's work, and are also invoked by colonial infrastructures that remain extant and visible today on the African continent, as archives in of themselves, solid, tangible archives; taxonomies of society as the European powers imagined and built them; still-living monuments to dead regimes and dead leaders. The memories, in a sense, of no one, or more accurately perhaps, someone who is no longer with us. This distinct flavor of absence guides postcolonial studies, and informs how we contend with the tangible colonial environment to this day.

The Internet is also conceptualized as a tangible environment and built archive. According to director of the Cincinnati Art Museum Aaron Betsky, "Cyberspace is mythic; it is a space that may have existed...may happen in the future, or maybe never nowhere. It could be the very essence of architecture" (Betsky 1995). This sense of displacement, and numbing temporal multiplicity, can also be a psychological model with which to approach the postcolonial African city and its environs. Multiple temporalities and locales are referenced heavily by Yinka Shonibare and Djibril Diop Mambety in their respective articulations of African urbanity. The virtual space of the Internet informs the tangible space of the postcolonial African city in its negotiations of plural locales and temporalities, particularly Dakar and in Mambety's films. Denied singularity and linear chronology, Mambety's and Shonibare's viewers are pushed to rely on multiple referents to see their work, and to see Africa in their work. Taking to task the transparency of built archives and material records, both Mambety and Shonibare highlight issues of colonial specularity and sight lines, and their persistence in our present reality.

Anthropologist Alfred Gell's conceptual model linking psychology with African religious icons and inner and outer modes of being and thinking forms an apparatus that helps me connect the innermost psychological experience of lostness that accompanies the "nowhere" of cyberspace and the "nowhere" of conflicting placement one feels in a tourist-packed port city in Africa, in turns French and Senegalese, or British and Egyptian, or British and Nigerian as the case may be. To link the found-art-made-by-no-one essence of perusing Google Maps with the inner psychological effects of walking through remnants of the colonial in the present day cityscape, I turn to Freud.

> Imagine that an explorer arrives in a little-known region where his interest is aroused by an expanse of ruins, with remains of walls, fragments of columns, and tablets with half-effaced and unreadable inscriptions... He may have brought picks, shovels and spades with him, and he may set the inhabitants to work with these implements. Together with them he may start upon the ruins, clear away the rubbish, and, beginning from the visible remains, uncover what is buried. (Freud 1896).

Khaki-and-pith-helmet imagery of the "explorer" employing, or enslaving, locals to pick away at their own heritage aside, I want to focus on the act of uncovering "ruins." Ruins are literally of so-called ruined civilizations, some sort of ode to decadence gone overfull and subsequently spoiled from the inside out, a last days of Rome diagnostic. Ruined could also be in terms of raped, as in a ruined woman, invaded intimately and biologically as well as structurally; ruined in name as well as body as a once "great" civilization is shamed into surrender, servitude, and ultimately erasure to atone for its losses against the passage of time. But, in the context of living, breathing cities like Cairo, Dakar, and Lagos, colonial ruins are not merely visual postcards to

European decadence gone awry or fallen out of fashion, rather they contend with repurposing and reuse, with life ongoing. A poignant example is also in Ghana, when President Kwame Nkrumah made the old European slave fortress Christiansborg Castle his presidential residence upon his election in 1960 (Ghana Office London 1963, 2).

The explorer that Freud speaks of is our own desire in terms of recovery of information, retrieval and restoration of the archive, of something original, meaningful yet now obscured, restored. It is a war of legibility, fought against time, against circumstance. Desire, magic and attainment all come into play in our own perusal of archives, whether tangible or virtual.

Colonial desire at once sought to taxonomize Africa while forming it to its own tastes, seemingly to make it legible, while in reality operating in terms of erasure; erasure of what the colonists deemed unsavory, or what didn't privilege Europe as the moral and intellectual superior. The colonial war of legibility was fought, and arguably lost upon the Colonial powers' exit and ultimate abdication of infrastructure, but we can still see their ways of looking, the archive they literally built into being on, and with, the African city. It is crucial how we live this extant archive today, its implications, its challenges, its competing legibilities, and how the archive operates within our mind, how these vast, urban places are lived in the most intimate parts of ourselves is their ultimate legacy as their "ruins" contend with their inevitable materiality.

Chapter 4: "I come from a distant planet"

Congolese philosopher Valentin Y. Mudimbe's deconstruction of the knowledge bank on Africa is outlined in his companion volumes *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* and *The Idea of Africa,* published in 1988 and 1994. Mudimbe discusses not merely how Africa is approached as a topic in the cultural imaginary but also how Africa is treated as a historical object and as a processual archive in of itself.

Peppered throughout the first volume, acting as a thematic mainstay between chapters, are quotes culled from *Planet of the Apes,* the 1963 French science fiction novel by Pierre Boulle which inspired the still-ongoing film franchise:

"'Apes...descend from men? Some of us thought so; but it is not exactly that. Apes and men are separate branches that have evolved from a point in common but in different directions...'--P. Boulle, *Planet of the Apes*" (Mudimbe 1988, 83).

Looking at the other as a means of looking at the self is a concept that holds the flavor of Freudian analysis and is maintained also by Boulle's prose throughout Mudimbe's volume. Mudimbe analyzes historical Western scholarship and how it simultaneously articulated the relationship between Africa and the West and illuminated the Western relationship to selfhood and otherness, mirroring Boulle's fictional treatise about two combatant species with intertwined histories, each defining themselves by way of the other. The symbolic richness of Boulle's words on origin and identity are used to great effect by Mudimbe in his own cataloguing of the Western imaginary of Africa and the careful painting of otherness therein.

The Invention of Africa repeatedly begs the question: what do both the *Planet of the Apes* storyline of a man marooned on a post-apocalyptic Earth and Western epistemology on Africa

have to do with each other? The positing of opposites, be it self and other or captive human and captor ape, highlights the mirrored and duplicative aspects of looking, otherness, alienation, and negotiation of the familiar and the foreign. As our human protagonist lost on the titular *Planet of the Apes* discovers he is, in fact, struggling for survival on his nearly unrecognizable home planet Earth, the nature of identity, singularity, and certainty are tested also by Mudimbe's *Africa* volumes latticed with 1960s Sci-Fi camp. Boulle's pulpy interstellar drama takes on an almost existential air when sandwiched between Mudimbe's intellectual rigour and mapping of Africa as seen from the West.

Mudimbe looks at Western knowledge systems of Africa built around formalized fields of study and their epistemological hierarchies to clarify the rendering of Africa in our mind's eye, as filtered through Western scholarship. The historical archive, under Mudimbe's gaze, is less repository and more active dossier, articulating desires and preferences that evolved over time. Mudimbe investigates symbology, philosophy, and historiography in his biography of Africa within the Western mindscape and taking nothing for granted, not the shape of these fields of study themselves nor the discourses they circumscribe.

Like Boulle's marooned human narrator, Mudimbe is aware of the pitfalls subjectivity, and tries his best to acknowledge his own authorial fallibility within his metanarrative of bodies of knowledge and the foreign encounter inherent in scholarship itself:

'In fact, I am now so accustomed to the paradoxes of this planet that I wrote the preceding sentence without thinking of the absurdity it represents' --P. Boulle, *Planet of the Apes* (Mudimbe 1988, 44).

The shape of the dialogue between Europe and Africa is also a focus of Shonibare's sculptural work. The seemingly West African textiles Shonibare utilizes are an early modern Dutch industry that, after failed start-up attempts in Indonesia, finally flourished thanks to an enthusiastic 19th century West African consumer market (Elam and Jackson 2005, 142). The designs of the cloth, effectively Dutch knock-offs of Indonesian designs, mimics older styles of traditional Indonesian batik printing processes, as per The Netherlands' four century-long colonial commercial relationship with the Southeast Asian island chain (Riello 2011, 131). Remarketed to the West African cultural intelligentsia, a failed Dutch business venture in Java became an enduring commercial success and regional cultural phenomenon, to the point that the textiles' trinodal nascence across Asia, Europe, and Africa is lost under its metonymic power to represent West Africa, and Africa as a whole, on the popular culture stage internationally to this day.

The semiotics of power and provenance in regards to West African textiles are magnified in the work of Shonibare, who clothes mannequins in seemingly West African prints, often tailored into high Victorian era European fashions. This sartorially European, but visually West African, cloth speaks to the intertwined nature of the European and West African economies, both when these Dutch wax resist prints hit the West African market in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and today as Shonibare continues to accrue international acclaim for his hybrid European and African aesthetic sensibility.

The history of the West African-Dutch wax print cloths is intimately connected to both the British domestic cotton industry and West African consumer tastes:

As a further incentive to trade, the Manchester merchants varied their cloth in color and pattern to cater to the different regions in the West African countries, each having its own

25

fashions and tastes and thereby giving rise to a special West African market for the

Manchester cotton industry...During the 1900's there was a considerable increase in the

trade of cotton goods, partly due to the following factors...cloth was still used as a means

of barter..and....foreign cloth became a status symbol in parts of Africa (Nielsen 1979,

469).

This alternative colonial casting of West Africa, as cotton and textile *consumer* of British

products, and not mere colonial subject, is perhaps a poignant articulation of the differences

between the French and British colonial environments and imperial ruling styles. British

merchants catering to West African tastes reads differently from the French forcing cotton

enterprise onto their West African holdings in an attempt to fit Africa into their own colonial

image (Boone 2006, 35-38). The foreign fabric aesthetic in demand in 19th century West Africa

flips the traditional narrative of center and periphery in the Wallersteinian world systems sense,

breaking the strict colonial model of hierarchy and subservience, of imperial center and

powerless periphery (Wallerstein 2004). The story of Dutch wax print cloth in West Africa is a

story of markets, and of suppliers struggling to satiate such markets. The colonial gaze becomes

bidirectional within the narrative of Dutch West African wax prints, and within the specularity

defined by Yinka Shonibare's work.

Both Mudimbe and Shonibare deal in terms of Africa and its standing in the

contemporary and historical imaginary, its archived and archiving qualities, its passive and active

traits as a body of knowledge. University of East Anglia's Professor of World Art Studies,

formerly of the British Museum and the British Institute in Eastern Africa, John Mack looks at

the psychological ramifications of archives, museum aesthetics, and conceptions of worldliness

and Africa in his 2003 publication *Museum of the Mind, Art and Memory in World Cultures.*

Touching on the concept of the "museum of the mind," or the psychological process of formatting memories and experiences into an archive, Mack's work addresses the personal, intimate aspect of visuality; investigating how one internalizes data about the world in a systematic way that may or may not mimic traditional museum formats, which are themselves inflected with colonial visuality and semiotics. The "museum of the mind" concept broaches the psychological effects of colonial visual systems, and how they are still lived today in the way we view the world at large, and our place within it.

More recently, Mack published an article on Henri Matisse's late career relationship with "African velvets," Kuba textiles from the region contemporarily known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo. When Mack quotes Matisse as to how he "'never tire[s] of looking at them for long periods of time, even the simplest of them, ...waiting for something to come...from the mystery of their instinctive geometry,'" it perhaps tells us more of how Matisse viewed visual Africanness than how Kuba velvets influenced his artwork, however mesmerizing their patterns. Matisse saw the Escher-like Kuba patterns as an insight into the human condition itself, a sort of materialization of universal intuition and "'instinct'" (Mack 2012, 4). If by looking at Africa Matisse was really looking at what he supposed was the intuitive self, then we must return to Mudimbe's final invocation of Pierre Boulle in his *The Invention of Africa*:

> 'I should like to reveal this astounding truth to you: not only am I a rational creature, not only does a mind paradoxically inhabit this human body, but I come from a distant planet.' --P. Boulle, *Planet of the Apes,* p. 84" (Mudimbe 1988, 145).

Of course the "distant planet" Boulle's protagonist hails from is the very one on which he has been stranded, complicating the sense of home with alienation, layering the sensations of

lostness and belonging also felt by Shonibare's viewers marooned somewhere between Indonesia and West Africa via The Netherlands, in the shape of a British waistcoat or a Soviet-era space costume. Unlike Matisse, Shonibare does not seek the universal self in the African, but the fragmented, globalized nature of selfhood that is problematized by evolving nationalities, commercial relationships, narratives, and visualities.

Matisse saw himself while studying the other, he saw foreignness as a mirror to himself, and a mirror to *the* self. For Matisse, African aesthetics were a tool with which to generalize human nature, a tool with which to research and access humanity as a whole. Matisse's intimacy with Kuba textiles was really his familiarity with himself and his search for identity in the external world. Matisse was struck with the same revelation that Boulle's protagonist reveals on the *Planet of the Apes*: the paradox of a mind inhabiting another body, the shock of your own parity with others. Eliminating one's singularity in the acknowledgment of other, equally conscious, beings is a destruction of the ego.

Multiplicity, worldliness, and cosmopolitanism's effect upon the psyche, the self, and the ego operates in terms of destruction. One ceases to exist as an individual, as a singularity, as soon as one acknowledges parity in the world outside oneself. Likewise, the fabrication of a distinct British cultural identity became even more crucial and visible at the height of British colonialism worldwide. The fear of intermixture, of British cultural reception as well as British cultural dispersion, was resolved by a mythological British singularity, which in of itself became reason for British imperial expansion. Britishness and its supposed inherent qualities of civility, order, and so forth, functioned as an explanation of superiority to, and of difference from, the cultures it colonized. If that cultural difference were to come under threat, if Britishness were to apprehend multiple incarnations in its global contacts, the ideology of colonization would be

destroyed altogether. The world "out there" demanded strictly defined opposition to the homefront in order for the colonial premise to survive.

Acting British or performing Britishness, whether in dress, customs, or domestic lifeways, was as important in enforcing colonialism as legislature and military. The perfect example is British troops having high tea in the bush, pith helmets in place. If the visual semiotics of colonial power ceased to exist, even in the deepest reaches of African wilderness, was the entire colonial project still viable? The obsessive maintenance of colonial costume, both abroad in Africa and on the homefront in England, proved that it was not. The invention and maintenance of a separate identity, and all of its aesthetic components, was crucial to imperial survival as it expanded, stretched itself thin, and perhaps took on the character of its local colonial holdings and peoples (Ranger and Hobsbawm 1983). Oxford University's Robert JC Young points out the processual definitions of "culture" in British purview:

> In English, 'culture' in its early use was a noun of process, almost, we might say anachronistically, of organic process: the ploughing of the earth, the cultivation of crops and animals: 'agri-culture'. From the sixteenth century this sense of culture as cultivation, the tending of natural growth, extended to the process of human development: the cultivation of the mind. In the eighteenth century it came to represent also the intellectual side of civilization, the intelligible as against the material. With this it gradually included a more abstract, general social process, and, in 'cultivated', took on a class-fix: as J. S. Mill put it succinctly, 'cultivation, to be carried beyond a certain point, requires leisure'. The OED [Oxford English Dictionary] cites 1764 as the date that 'cultured' was first used in the sense of 'refined' (Young 1995, 31).

This division between the leisure class and the working class, between a refined life dedicated to cultured self-improvement and a meager life scratching a living from the soil in agricultural subsistence, illustrates an internalization of cultural process and progress, an imagined evolution from the working body to the working brain, from hard-worn hands to hard-worn intellect. The British brokers of culture in the colonial project operated in the arena of the mind, spoke in the language of cultural divisions and maintenance of colonial aesthetic, and their labor was one of categorical separation and identity politics.

Under British purview, the colonized labor force abroad as well as the domestic working class on British soil both became foreign entities to be civilized, reformed, sanitized, and ultimately reigned into British social order. Manual labor became the social marker and the social stigma of the empire's foreign body (Cooper 1994, 1535). The workhorse body of the empire became the "other" to encounter, and to assimilate into the grand British project of imperial identity and selfhood that ultimately played out across the globe.

But what of the other side of the equation? How to maintain the self and one's cultural legacy in the face of Western encroachment, colonial overtures and invasions? Alessandra Speciale, in her 1998 journalistic tribute to Djibril Diop Mambety in film journal *Ecrans D'Afrique: Revue Internationale De Cinema Television Et Video*, intersperses quotes of Mambety speaking about his childhood in Dakar with an overview of Mid-Century European-Senegalese film industry relations.

> 'When I was seven, I was already a director and producer. I would invite my friends to shadow theatre projections. At that time, we were all inebriated by Westerns; I would cut out little paper bandits and cowboys and hold evening performances.'...The first World Festival of Black Arts, held in Dakar in 1966, which saw the participation of European

30

artists such as Picasso and Malraux, had launched many Senegalese filmmakers (Speciale 1998, 6-7).

Mambety's terminology, equating his boyhood affinity for the Western genre as intoxication, illness, and delirium, gives insight into his skeptical views of the Western cultural domain as a whole and its influence. But international artistic summits in the mid-1960s that drew big European names to Dakar also acted in concert with the pan-African arts infrastructure in Senegal, and heralded the creation of the Pan-African Federation of African Filmmakers several years later in 1970. However, linking Europe with this particular era in Senegal's artistic legacy is dicey. As Mambety himself put it himself when discussing his 1992 film *Hyènes,* a particular post-Independence ill was "betraying the hopes of independence for the false promise of Western materialism" (Ukadike 1998, 139).

In Mambety's *Le Franc,* produced two years later in 1994, Mambety explores the effects of the Senegalese government's fifty-percent devaluation of the West African Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA) franc in 1994 to comply with International Monetary Fund programs (Creevey and Vengroff and Gaye 1995, 669). Mambety's protagonist Marigo furtively holds onto a lottery ticket he keeps hidden in his room, on which he depends for his future. Such absurd circumstance, where someone's livelihood is based on a game of chance, comments on the powerlessness of those still caught in the middle of a colonial power struggle, now writ into the global financial infrastructure in an alleged postcolonial world more than a generation after Independence.

The absurdity of survival amidst a rigged hierarchy, where the intersections of profit motive, West African constituency, French legislature, and economy make a game of people's livelihoods and lives is the meat of *Le Franc.* The politics of individuality in an environment that

31

may be postcolonial in name only is the true main character of Mambety's film. As Kenneth W. Harrow puts it in international film journal *Black Camera:*

> "In Djibril Diop Mambety's *Le Franc* (1994), the musician passes through a garbage field on his way to town. We see a plastic bag hanging out of the mouth of a cow. The degradation of the former symbol of status is the condition for the development of the urban centers" (Harrow 2009, 64).

This transactional environment is a symptom of the aggressive visuality of the postcolony, where visible destruction and waste is required for urban development. In *Le Franc*, mutually beneficial coexistence between old and new lifeways seems as unlikely and impossible as winning the lottery.

How can identity and personhood survive in a climate where economic progress is antithetical to history, to say nothing of the survival of persons themselves? More pointedly, how can the very classically French ideals of *liberté, égalité,* and *fraternité* survive in a French economic climate enforced abroad? *Le Franc* poses these questions rather than answers them, as Mambety found meaning in the lives of marginalized populations in Senegal, and how they interacted, and were forced to interact, with French colonialism and Europeanness writ large. Mambety's favorite subjects are, in his own words, "'the only true, consistent, unaffected people in the world, for whom every morning brings the same question: how to preserve what is essential to themselves'" (Ukadike 1999, 140). Though survival tactics reacting to an urban power structure, after the philosophy of de Certeau, offer narrative possibilities to Mambety, Mambety's surreal filmic treatment of these power dynamics serves up neither philosophy nor clear-cut discourse.

Mambety's own oeuvre has been cast as a "critiqu[e] of Americanization and globalization," and yet the cohesive narrative one expects from such a critique, point and counterpoint, or at the very least a distinct case made against Western cultural dominance, eludes Mambety's viewers (Oscherwitz 2008, 224). Instead, implied interactions between characters, scenes without detectable rising and falling action, and cryptic dialogue all float on and off screen when not absent altogether, giving the impression of a plot but not providing the obvious signs of one, leaving an emotional cinematic imprint more than an intellectual one. Mambety's filmic style was revolutionary because its "narrative structure redefined the parameters of African film, effectively exploding a genre which had been dominated by linear and didactic forms inherited mainly from the West" (Smith, Trevor, and Dufour 2000, 94). In this case, a free association is required of the viewer as opposed to mere witnessing of character motivation and plot narrative. The concrete elements of cinema are blurred, alluded to, or elided altogether in Mambety's implicative and surrealistic cinema; an intellectual environment casted but not poured, without a definitive product to consume. Instead viewers are presented with a place to think and feel.

Such absence of straightforward cinema allows multiple readings, much like the intellectual arena constructed by Shonibare in his sculptural work. Congolese filmmaker Mweze Ngangura muses on contemporary African filmcraft and viewership:

'I am convinced that a...cinema [...] would contribute, even without an overt message, to the reflection of African spectators' everyday dreams and aspirations and that, like a mirror, it would enable the spectator to see him or herself and to decide whether to accept the image the filmmaker offers, completely or in part. The urgent need is not to make films that speak of Africa, but films for Africans' (Yervasi 2008, 46).

Without "an overt message" to takeaway "of Africa," and without a single intellectual rendering, Mambety's and Shonibare's conversations with their viewers are atypical, in the sense that their work does not function as mere testament to their perspective and is not merely a vehicle for their artistic vision. Their works are not closed circuits of testimony to be decoded by art historians, critics, and biographers. Rather, Shonibare and Mambety are curating a range of ideas into what appears to be a single film or sculpture, but what is actually an open-ended aesthetic and intellectual arena that says something about globalism, something about colonialism, something about Africanness, something about Europeanness, is located somewhere between both locales, but is ultimately out of time, space, and specificity.

Subverting the aspirational farsightedness of colonial exhibition culture, architecture, urban planning, and material culture, Shonibare and Mambety prevent indexical and straightforward readings of both their work and the topics dealt therein. One cannot read Africa from their art, likewise one cannot read the West from their art. Instead of a precise rendering, instead of the direct sight lines and inroads found in colonial visuality, Shonibare and Mambety analyze such concepts of taxonomy and identification and test the limits of their definitions. Their work begs the question: why one narrative, why one index? Whereas colonial visual hierarchy sought to answer this question in its praxis, marketing its own singularity and supremacy, Shonibare and Mambety undermine such attempts at colonial omnipotence not by questioning it directly, but by undermining the existence of singular narratives in the first place.

Mambety and Shonibare assert that the story is actually more complicated, that contemporary West African textile aesthetics are predicated on early modern Indonesian and Dutch business relations, that the contemporary cityscape of Dakar can be re-named, re-identified, and re-archived as easily as a local giving a French tourist the wrong directions as in

Mambety's *Contras' City.* Such "anticolonialist laughter" as Mambety described his 1968 film,

can only be rendered by the non-linear narratives that run antithetical to Western taxonomy and

its domineering ken into the further, the "other", the out there (Ukadike 1999, 153).

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