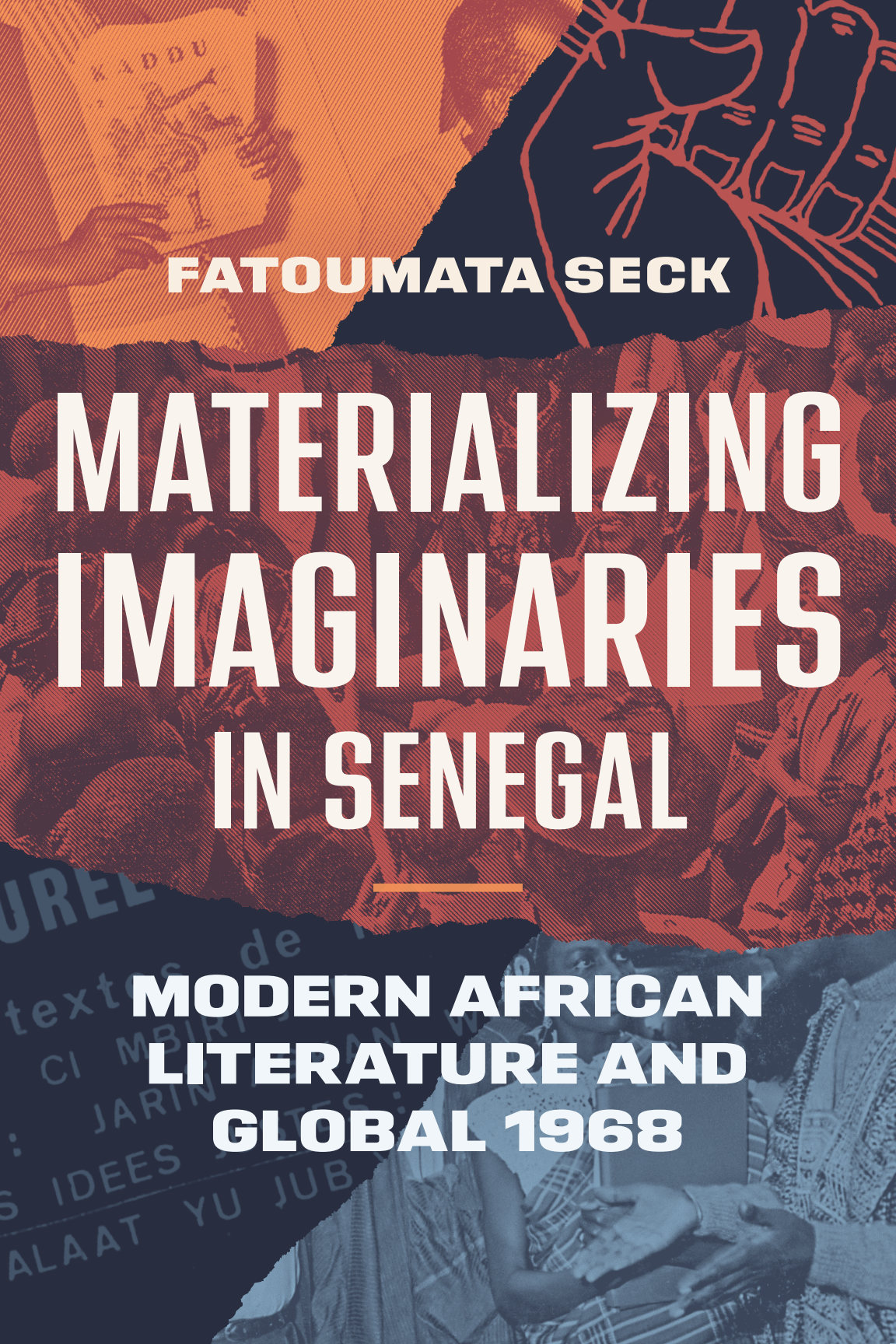




FATOUMATA SECK

MATERIALIZING IMAGINARIES IN SENEGAL

**MODERN AFRICAN
LITERATURE AND
GLOBAL 1968**

Materializing Imaginaries in Senegal



BUY

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Theory in Forms

Series Editors

Nancy Rose Hunt, Achille Mbembe, and Todd Meyers

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Materializing Imaginaries in Senegal

Modern African
Literature and
Global 1968 **Fatoumata Seck**

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To my family, with gratitude beyond words

To Momar Coumba Diop, for inspiring me

To Ousmane Faty Ndong, for his generosity

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Abbreviations

AAPSO	Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization
AAWA	Afro-Asian Writers' Association
AERDA	Association des Étudiants du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (Association of Students of the African Democratic Rally)
AESF	Association des Étudiants Sénégalais de France (Association of Senegalese Students in France)
AGED	Association Générale des Étudiants de Dakar (General Association of Students of Dakar)
ASC	<i>association sportive et culturelle</i> (sports and cultural association)
CDLD	Comité de Défense des Libertés Démocratiques (Committee for the Defense of Democratic Freedoms)
CEFA	Comité d'Études Franco-Africaines (Franco-African Studies Committee)
CLC	Culture et Loisirs Club (Culture and Leisure Club)
FAFS	Fédération des Associations Féminines du Sénégal (Federation of Women's Associations of Senegal)
FALCF	Foyer Artistique, Littéraire et Culturel du Fleuve (Artistic, Literary, and Cultural Hub of the River)
FCS	Front Culturel Sénégalais (Senegalese Cultural Front)
FEA	Afrique Équatoriale Française (French Equatorial Africa)
FEANF	Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France (Federation of Black African Students in France)
FESPACI	Fédération Panafricaine des Cinéastes (Pan-African Federation of Filmmakers)

FESPACO	Festival Panafricain du Cinéma et de la Télévision de Ouagadougou (Pan-African Festival of Film and Television of Ouagadougou)
FWA	Afrique Occidentale Française (French West Africa)
GAREP	Groupeement Africain de Recherche Economique et Politique (African Group for Economic and Political Research)
GEC	Groupes d'Études Communistes (Communist Study Groups)
JRDA	Jeunesse du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (Youth of the African Democratic Rally)
MJML	Mouvement de la Jeunesse Marxiste-Léniniste (Movement of Young Marxist-Leninists)
OSPAAAL	Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America
PAI	Parti Africain de l'Indépendance (African Independence Party)
PANAF	Pan-African Festival of Algiers
PCF	Parti Communiste Français (French Communist Party)
PCS	Parti Communiste Sénégalais (Senegalese Communist Party)
PRA	Parti du Regroupement Africain (African Regroupment Party)
RDA	Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (African Democratic Rally)
RND	Rassemblement National Démocratique (National Democratic Rally)
SAC	Société Africaine de Culture (African Society of Culture)
SFIO	Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (French Section of the Workers' International)
UDES	Union Démocratique des Etudiants du Sénégal (Democratic Union of Senegalese Students)
UDS-RDA	Union Démocratique Sénégalaise, Section Sénégalaise du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (Senegalese Democratic Union, Senegalese Section of the African Democratic Rally)
UED	Union des Étudiants de Dakar (Union of Students of Dakar)
UFOA	Union des Femmes de l'Ouest Africain (Union of Women of West Africa)

UFS	Union des Femmes du Sénégal (Union of Women of Senegal)
UGEAO	Union Générale des Étudiants d'Afrique de l'Ouest (General Union of West African Students)
UPA	Université Populaire Africaine (Popular African University)
UPS	Union Progressiste Sénégalaise (Senegalese Progressive Union)
UWA	Union of African Women
WIDF	Women's International Democratic Federation

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Note on Orthography

Throughout this book, I have used the Wolof transcription system established by Arame Fal and the team of linguists at the Center for Applied Linguistics of Dakar, except in cases where I quote from texts that may contain spelling variations. Accordingly, I have preserved the spellings found in the titles or excerpts of these works.

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Sixties Revolutionary Imaginaries in Modern African Literature

“La négritude est à chier!” (Negritude is crap!) spat the young man talking to Boubacar Boris Diop.¹ It was the summer of 1969 in the neighborhood of Médina in Dakar, Senegal. Diop was twenty-three years old, not yet the award-winning writer he would later become. The young man he was talking to was Omar Blondin Diop, an icon of May ’68. They were standing outside a house at the intersection of Rue 9 and Avenue Blaise Diagne, getting ready to attend the evening gathering where Maoists from the old guard Parti Communiste Sénégalais (PCS), who had split from the Marxist-Leninist Parti Africain de l’Indépendance (PAI), were meeting with youths from the clandestine group Mouvement de la Jeunesse Marxiste-Léniniste (MJML).

In the post-May ’68 context, government repression in Senegal had become more stringent. Young activists saw President Léopold Sédar Senghor’s Negritude as assimilationist if not outright neocolonial and were feeling connected to a global community of young dissidents inspired by the Black Panther Party, Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution and the Vietnamese, Algerian, and Cuban revolutions. Francis Kpatindé recalls that, in Dakar, students in flared trousers and Afro hairstyles tuned in to Radio Havana Cuba and Radio Liberdade, the station of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, broadcasting from Conakry. These young women and men were busy defying authorities by organizing underground and were being routinely arrested for “seeking to run an illegal association,” “deliberately setting fire to public buildings,” “writing and distributing subversive leaflets,” “disrupting, by illegal means,

the regular functioning of state institutions,” and other misdemeanors.² The same students who protested by day recited poetry by David Mandessi Diop at night, quoted Frantz Fanon, and chanted slogans from Mao’s Little Red Book while mimeographing pamphlets and drafting cultural manifestos. Caught in the whirlwind of the Global Sixties, African youths helped shape it through their fight for decolonization and nation building. In Africa, as was the case elsewhere, the tumultuous 1960s were inseparable from cultural expression in arenas ranging from dress to literature, art, and romantic relations. Armed with idealism, banned books, and revolutionary optimism, young activists sought to imbue culture with the power to make revolution possible, declaring that “the cultural struggle has always been a turning point in the development of consciousness for the realization of the revolution.”³

This cultural project found its way into the pages of modern African literature. But curiously, despite these bracing decades of revolutionary fervor, African literature of the 1970s came to be known almost exclusively for being “heavy” or “too serious.” Reductively branded as a “literature of disillusionment,” this standard portrayal of that era of African literature has dogged that creative field for generations, perplexing even the very people who were part of that cultural scene in the 1960s and 1970s. In a 2001 interview with Boubacar Boris Diop, for example, Charles Sugnet asked the writer: “So, what’s wrong with African literature?” Diop’s response was candid and anecdotal:

A few years ago, two Japanese journalists from a big Tokyo daily—I think it was *Asahi Shimbun*—came to Dakar. . . . We talked about literature, we talked about my work, and they said they’d help me get published in Japan. As it happened, they knew nothing about African literature, so they asked me to tell them what the major themes were. I said, well, there’s the struggle against the colonizer, there’s the one-party state, the dictators . . . and then when I’d finished my list, they said, African literature would never make it in Japan. It’s too serious.⁴

And Diop was inclined to agree with their dismay. “There’s a scene in *Guelwaar*, the movie by Ousmane Sembène, that illustrates this,” Diop explained. “I mean, I didn’t like that film at all, I detested it. Sembène approaches the problems of the 1990s with a mindset and a language left over from the 1970s, you might say.”⁵

For Boubacar Boris Diop, the prevalent themes of African literature—written in European languages during the second half of the twentieth century—such as anticolonial struggle, authoritarianism, and other areas

of political strife, failed to fully capture the dynamism and expressive beauty of African lives in the quotidian, and he defended in the interview the need for a literature that would do justice to the latter. Despite Diop's criticisms of Sembène's *Guelwaar*, however, I was struck by the sense of déjà vu I felt in Diop's charge that Sembène used "a mindset and language left over from the 1970s"—that he had failed to move on. They reminded me of how Diop's own works, published in the 1980s and 1990s, were similarly reminiscent of his own activities in the 1970s. It made me wonder if perhaps this lingering "mindset and language" of the 1970s, complex and layered as it was, could not be so easily dismissed as something outmoded, and if it might be more productive to view them as remnants of a time that we had yet to fully understand.

African literature of the 1970s is typically associated with the disillusionment of the postindependence period, due to the rise of single-party rule and autocratic regimes in many of the continent's new nations. All this unfolded during the age of African decolonization and the Cold War. The period of disillusionment can also be viewed, however, through the frame of the Global Sixties, where it corresponds to the period of African revolutions, student movements and anticolonial cultural nationalism, all of which took place alongside nation-building projects and the making of modern African literature as we know it today.

What if, then, we read the 1970s and the decades that surround it through a different lens—one that uses a larger, nonlinear temporal frame that takes seriously the 1970s' "sense of disconnection between the failures of the postcolonial present and the complex visions of postcolonial futures"?⁶ Sembène's *Guelwaar*, like other works, exhibits such aesthetic and sedimented traces of the 1970s that have unconsciously trickled down or remained—have become what is "left over," as Diop says—from that period. In this book, I examine the sedimented traces of African decolonization and its entanglement with the Cold War and Global Sixties through what I call the *Senegalese countercultural movement*. I tell the story of how this movement impacted African literature, cinema, and intellectual thought by contributing to the emergence of many canonical works in those fields, to the intellectual and political trajectories of some of their most celebrated figures, and to prevalent motifs in their works.

The term *African literature* as used in this study is not synonymous with *all* the literatures of the African continent produced across languages, regions, and traditions. As V. Y. Mudimbe noted in the early 1980s, "African literature as a commodity is a recent invention."⁷ In this context,

Simon Gikandi offers a useful distinction between “modern African literature”—which he sees as inextricable from colonial institutions—and the “thriving literary traditions” in African languages that were “produced outside the institutions of colonialism.”⁸ His framing points to the complex historical conditions under which different bodies of African writing emerged. Rather than approaching “African literature” as a stable or fixed category, then—especially in a study concerned with the very processes through which the category’s contours were actively being negotiated by writers, publishers, readers, and other cultural brokers—I draw from Graham Huggan and Ruth Bush’s approach. Both interrogate the term by considering how “African literature” is historically constructed, institutionally mediated, and materially produced.⁹ This disciplinary and field-specific understanding of “African literature” is central to this study, which is concerned with the processes through which certain works come to be canonized or become classics.

The Senegalese countercultural movement was a diffuse and grassroots movement whose active years spanned the 1960s to the 1980s with roots that reach back to the 1940s. Its main goal was to usher in a cultural revolution, and the movement reached its height in the 1970s with the birth of the Senegalese New Left and a cultural ferment of the debates, congresses, and Pan-African festivals of the previous decades. The movement, best described as a cultural experiment, consisted of a diverse set of anti-imperial cultural and educational initiatives whose common goal was the shaping of new Senegalese citizens. And importantly, the main actors of this movement did not group themselves under the banner “countercultural movement”; rather, they more commonly used the label “revolutionary movement,” while the Maoist activists involved in these efforts simultaneously used the terms “patriotic movement” and “cultural patriotic movement” to refer to their desired political and cultural transformation. These latter terms, in my view, obscure the countercultural ways in which they enacted their political endeavors and engaged in dialogue with their global historical context. By naming their political and cultural actions a “countercultural movement” and periodizing their activities within the *longue durée* of the larger context of the Cold War, Global Sixties, and decolonization, I seek to make visible these global entanglements and their cultural valence.

As the following discussion will show, my use of the modifier *countercultural* maintains a distance from the substantive “counterculture” as understood in the framework of the Euro-American 1960s, which typically refers to movements opposing conservative and bourgeois values. In

its initial phases, the Senegalese countercultural movement was framed in opposition to Léopold Sédar Senghor's nation-building project. This project was based on Senghor's vision of national unity through a "unified" state party and his guiding philosophies of Negritude and African socialism, both of which underpinned his policies and his ideal of the *homo senegalensis*.¹⁰ Both political and cultural actors of the revolutionary movement sought to challenge the charismatic and erudite poet-president on his terrain of predilection—culture—and strove to shape an alternative model of the nation that would give birth to their own versions of the Senegalese "New Man."

These antiestablishment, cultural nation-building activities of the time are a dimension of the political activities of the 1960s and 1970s seldom explored in studies of the period. *Materializing Imaginaries* brings to the fore this *cultural dimension of the revolutionary movement*, which in its style, mode of organizing, contextual language, and transnational connections can be more fully captured by the label *countercultural movement*. Ibrahima Wane rightly noted that what Maoist activists called the "cultural patriotic movement" was composed of the cultural and creative initiatives of the Front Culturel Sénégalais (Senegalese Cultural Front; FCS), Association des Étudiants Sénégalais de France (Association of Senegalese Students in France; AESF), and Senegalese *associations sportive et culturelle* (youth sports and cultural organizations; ASCs). Examining these organizations in the *longue durée* shows, however, that they were formal and structured expressions that evolved from earlier cultural activities and intellectual debates and events that dated back to the late 1940s. Specifically, these organizations' ideas, writings, activities, styles, and behaviors were materializations of political and cultural decolonizing efforts premised on theories and a praxis of decolonization through revolution. Literary critic Lilyan Kesteloot saw African and Afro-diasporic writers as the "spiritual guide to a political revolution of major global significance—the African revolution," for which, she argues, writers "had been prophetically preparing the way" since the beginning of the twentieth century.¹¹ Her argument that writers cultivated a certain mystique around revolution that would spread among intellectual circles is central to understanding the kinds of imaginaries mobilized during decolonization and how different actors sought to materialize them.

When taking the *longue durée* approach, then, one begins to see the crucial links between the African student movements at home and abroad and modern African literature. An important contribution of this book

is its emphasis on the entanglement between African literature and the Global Sixties. The Global Sixties, as many have noted, stretches backward to the previous decade and continues through the 1970s. Although the relationship between African literature and the Cold War has been explored in rich and groundbreaking ways, this book foregrounds the student movement as it coalesced into the landmark events of the Global Sixties (such as the May '68 protests). It calls attention to the fact that the African writers and filmmakers whose works I explore in this book came of age during the decolonization period, when they were students. They authored some of their most radical texts during those years, influencing younger generation of students in ways that challenged imperialism in the hopes of not only shaping their new nations but also transforming the world.¹² Engaging both nationalism and worldmaking under one project of radical reimaging, their dual focus resonated with Vijay Prashad's qualification of the formerly colonized nation's political project of the time as "internationalist nationalism."¹³

Importantly, given Senegalese writers', artists', and intellectuals' important presence and productions during this unprecedented time of international cultural events, exchanges, and development, the movement recounted here is not only a national story but also an international and Pan-African one. This book's core contention is that the Senegalese countercultural movement impacted African literature and critical thought in ways that have been overlooked. In particular, I argue that the Senegalese countercultural movement offers an alternative narrative to that of African postindependence disillusionment for interpreting African literary and intellectual work.¹⁴ This alternative narrative shows how both cultural worldmaking and national culture making coconstitute the emergence of the field of African literature and intellectual thought within the larger framework of the Cold War, decolonization, and the Global Sixties, and how, during this period, understudied countercultural endeavors emerged through both legal and clandestine channels. This gap in African literary and intellectual histories is significant because it has generated incomplete readings of the natures and forms of both canonical and lesser-known works, as well as of the aesthetic sensibilities of their authors. Boubacar Boris Diop's reaction to Sembène's *Guelwaar* points to the significance of this very "mindset and language left over from the 1970s," gesturing toward a historical period that, as I have now suggested, may be described as the "long 1960s" or the "Global Sixties," the quintessential revolutionary period of the twentieth century on the African continent.

The Senegalese countercultural movement led to the emergence of literary, cinematic, and intellectual works that have been reductively dismissed as too political; however, these works not only inform these fields of study but also function as a creative force within the political and cultural imaginaries of the time. Many classics of African literature, cinema, and political thought, some of which were authored by important figures of the movement, emerged from and contributed to this countercultural context. Among them are Cheikh Anta Diop's *Nations nègres et culture* (1954), which underpinned the movement's project of linguistic renewal, and Ousmane Sembène's *Mandabi* (1968), recognized as the first feature-length film from West Africa in an African language. Foundational texts of African feminism, like Awa Thiam's *La parole aux négresses* (1978), were controversial and debated for clashing with some of the movement's ideals, while other works, such as Lamine Senghor's *La violation d'un pays* (1927) were republished and celebrated for their internationalist and anticolonial stance. In 1974, Djibril Diop Mambety cofounded the Laboratoire Agit'Art. Its rejection of the modernist aesthetics of the École de Dakar—an institution associated with Senghor's state patronage and therefore with Negritude as a cultural policy—led to the development of the types of experimental art, improvisation, and performance that suffused Mambety's cinematic work in the 1990s.¹⁵ Similarly, Ken Bugul's proximity with Agit'Art through her close friendship with Mambety has produced works that bear traces of the countercultural movement while offering fictional representations of this unprecedented time. Other experimental forms of expression, such as the underground combat poetry of the FCS, emerged, while future award-winning writers, such as Boubacar Boris Diop, began to develop the distinctive features of his work that were simultaneously critical of the FCS and shaped by its influence.

Countercultural actors were unapologetically militant; possessed a keen awareness of the power of the arts in their struggle against imperialism, particularly in developing an anti-imperial consciousness; and demonstrated a steadfast commitment to aesthetic experimentation. We will meet many of these countercultural actors over the course of this book, first as colonial students in the 1940s and 1950s, and later as authors and intellectuals at international conferences and festivals and other venues. We will journey with them before they became renowned scholars, thinkers, writers, and filmmakers—when they were militants in clandestine political parties, street wanderers who took the pulse of the country and its ordinary denizens, and underground artists creating avant-garde movements.

This book draws from an archive of decolonization from below that offers a critical look at Léopold Sédar Senghor, while recognizing that he was a complex figure whose legacy cannot be reduced to his time as the first president of Senegal. A cofounder of Negritude, Senghor is also arguably the figure who has engaged with the concept the most and has continued to do so well beyond the interwar period. While acknowledging that the works of Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Donna Jones, Gary Wilder, and Cheikh Thiam, among others, signal a shift in contemporary academic responses to Senghorian Negritude, this book takes the debate in yet a different direction by looking at Negritude during the era of nation building in Senegal from the perspective of Senghor's detractors, who were mainly in conflict with Senghor the statesman rather than Senghor the poet.¹⁶ I see such an approach as generative insofar as it expands understandings of Negritude through its negative reception.

The countercultural movement was not only anti-Negritude, however; it was a full-fledged transnational movement that emphasized cultural nationalism and revolutionary decolonization and was rooted in anti-imperialism and internationalism. Encompassing an astute mix of clandestine and official activities, it used the languages, styles, codes, ideas, and values of diverse movements and ideologies. These influences ranged from Pan-African nationalism and the Black Panther movement to Maoism, Trotskyism, situationism, and Guevarism, among others. During the period of Senghor's single-party rule, youth cultural clubs as well as neighborhood sports and culture organizations (ASCS), particularly in the urban periphery, became, as Mamadou Diouf had noted, "sites of political and ideological competition in the neighborhoods."¹⁷ Clandestine and opposition periodicals emerged to challenge the dominant party's media hegemony. And while scholars, writers, and artists promoted the use of African languages in education and in literature; Ousmane Sembène and Pathé Diagne took the lead by publishing *Kaddu*, the first Senegalese magazine written entirely in African languages. Activists led literacy campaigns among rural and factory workers and wrote poems, recorded cassette tapes, and published tracts, pamphlets, manifestos, and brochures, attempting to sensitize the masses to the anticolonial struggle and rewrite national history. They published, translated, and circulated texts deemed seditious, smuggled subversive literature into the country, and disseminated them through their mobile library. The countercultural movement's sites of struggle were wide-ranging, encompassing language, representation, aesthetics, literature, memory, history, gender, moral values, and



1.1 Ousmane Sembène, Pathé Diagne, and members of the *Kaddu* team at Sembène's residence, working on an issue of *Kaddu*. Ousmane Sembène MSS, courtesy of the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.

the politics of education. Although this book focuses on countercultural struggles in the mediums of literature and cinema, many forms of cultural expression—especially in the realm of music—contributed to the ideological and sociocultural transformations engendered during this period.¹⁸

The history of revolutionary movements in Africa remains incompletely documented due to the clandestine nature of much of their activity. Many of their efforts have been reduced to proxy battles of Cold War superpowers or mere importations of their ideologies.¹⁹ Nonetheless, recent scholarship has made strides in bridging this historical gap.²⁰ In Senegal, the meticulous work of Pascal Bianchini, who collected oral histories from veterans of the “revolutionary left,” enables a more comprehensive map of the political dimension of the movement, especially the part that unfolded clandestinely, to be drawn. Others have sought to make visible the wave of student protests and left-wing activism of the 1960s and 1970s that sparked fear in Senghor's government, bringing about a heightened set of repressive state measures that included surveillance, arrests, torture, and persecution. It is only in relatively recent years that witnesses and victims from this period of repression have begun to come forward to tell

their stories.²¹ Aside from the seminal works of Ibrahima Wane and Ndiouga Benga, however, the history of revolutionary movements in Senegal has predominantly been approached through a political lens.²² This book takes on the task of reconstructing the cultural dimension of this history by offering both an intellectual and literary history of the Senegalese Left.

While I have chosen to call the political dimension of the countercultural movement a “revolutionary movement,” I do not mean to imply that a revolution did indeed take place. Rather, revolution was a goal that functioned for the movement as a motivating and possible horizon. It fit into the middle decades of the Left’s political trajectory from the 1940s to the 1980s, which was far from monolithic. In the 1940s and 1950s, for instance, Pan-Africanism or “African unity,” as many called it—envisioned as a federal political project—was central to the movement. By the postindependence period of the 1960s and 1970s, however, when federalist dreams had been thwarted, the word *revolutionary*, which had been floated in the previous decades, became the prevalent denomination. Later, following Senghor’s departure and the liberalization of the political landscape under Abdou Diouf’s introduction of multipartyism, both the goals and rhetoric of leftist politics changed yet again.²³

An important revolutionary goal of the countercultural movement was to bridge the gap between the intelligentsia and the people, and a running thread in this book examines their fraught attempts at this. Indeed, the movement’s biggest shortcoming was its inability to fully engage with its desired audience: “the people” or the “popular masses,” a polyvalent and overdetermined category used to refer to the vast majority of the population who were not part of the religious and governing elites or the intelligentsia. Senegalese countercultural actors especially sought to influence “the people” or “the masses” and engage them as agents of change, but they had limited success in influencing the minds and political actions of the small number of working-class people and the large peasantry of Senegal. Rather than telling a story of a failed revolutionary movement, however, this book follows its sedimented traces—residues of unresolved aspirations, dissident thinking, and counterhegemonic praxis—and the ways they were reactivated in political movements and cultural production in later decades. Although the political aspirations of the revolutionary movement to replace the Senghorian regime with a new and more radical left-wing ruling body never materialized, the countercultural movement was nonetheless able to carve out a discursive and expressive space through which ideas circulated and texts were produced. As I argue in this

book, these texts and ideas, in conjunction with other factors, gradually influenced sociocultural transformation. As such, just as the revolutionary movement impacted Senegal's democratic transition to independence and, to a larger extent, the history of democracy in Africa, the cultural dimension of that movement—the countercultural movement—impacted African literary imagination and intellectual history.

The Countercultural Movement and African Literature

The revolutionary movement, or the political dimension of the countercultural movement, was a movement where student organizations, unionists, political parties, social activists, writers, and artists located further left of the dominant state party sought to challenge its hegemony.²⁴ Actors of the revolutionary movement were mainly left-wing petty bourgeois intellectuals who formed part of the French educated elite of the country and understood their political action as part of the global revolutionary movement. Although the movement took root in the 1940s with the creation of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (African Democratic Rally; RDA), it was only after independence, especially with the May '68 events, that the movement came to be squarely in the public eye. The period between the late 1960s and the mid-1970s was the height of the movement, when opposition toward Senghor's single-party rule was at its most vehement. In the cultural realm, students, scholars, and writers had started a movement against cultural imperialism through which they reclaimed African history and worked toward the modernization of vernacular languages as languages of education and literature. They created cultural clubs, clandestine periodicals, independent magazines, and bookstores as textual and physical spaces for discussion of African history, internationalist solidarity, and Marxist, Pan-Africanist, and African literary works. The cultural ethos of the 1970s continued to shape literary and cinematic creation in the next decades with works infused with the ideals championed during the height of the movement. More antiestablishment periodicals emerged, the satirical press was born, and writers and artists started to critically examine the shortcomings of the movement.

The cultural effervescence of the period from the mid-1960s to 1981 is what I refer to in this book as the Senegalese countercultural movement. Sociologist Mamadou "Mao" Wane, himself a figure of the Senegalese

New Left and the May '68 generation, labels the cultural transformations that emerged in Senegal during that period a "national cultural revolution" rather than a counterculture. Indeed, we typically associate countercultures of the 1960s with the Beat generation, civil rights movements, protests against the Vietnam War, sexual liberation, women's movements, gay liberation movements, psychedelics, the rise of the New Left, and the May '68 protests.

The politically leftist cultural activities in Senegal during this era were similar in many ways, but there were also significant differences. Crucially, in Senegal's postcolonial context, the "dominant culture" that countercultural activists opposed was not singular but dual. As Wane recounts, countercultural youth rejected the French icons of the 1960s, whom they associated with "cultural alienation."²⁵ At the same time, however, they also rejected Negritude, which was seen by many in postindependence Senegal as the dominant discourse that prevented true cultural decolonization from taking place. Promoted by the state, Negritude underpinned Senghor's cultural policies, and was largely scorned by countercultural intelligentsia as little more than an avatar of neocolonialism. To challenge these dual hegemonies, they looked for inspiration in movements such as the Black Panthers and Maoism, as well as in globally renowned revolutionary figures who hailed largely from what was then called the Third World—figures such as Ho Chi Minh, Frantz Fanon, Amílcar Cabral, and Che Guevara, among others.²⁶

The dual antiestablishment stance that motivated the Senegalese countercultural movement was its first distinctive feature; the second was that its two-pronged rejection of the postcolonial Senegalese establishment was interwoven with the movement's search for and rehabilitation of national culture by drawing from "traditions" and folk cultures essentialized as markers of authenticity. This appeal to tradition, as Gikandi notes, "served as a bulwark against the disenchantment generated by colonial modernity."²⁷ The political hope raised by the Senegalese countercultural movement was premised on the preservation, rediscovery, and romanticization of cultures destroyed by colonialism. Countercultural actors therefore sought to combine "tradition" with a revolutionary spirit in order to produce a shared sense of national culture that would unite the diverse communities that constituted the new nation.

Importantly, this project of producing a communally shared sense of national culture entailed reducing the schism between the elite and the masses largely caused by the latter's limited access to education. Thus,

the movement's efforts included their championing and creation of literature in national languages; their own efforts at archival research; their creation of educational histories that they distributed in both written and recorded oral forms; live performances of poetry, plays, and other spoken-word genres; and literacy initiatives that they implemented in factories and in rural areas of Senegal. As part of their cultural excavation project, they often also looked for cultural precedents for their own antiestablishment stance in Senegalese history. This formed the third and final distinctive feature of the Senegalese countercultural movement, which was that it made concerted efforts to craft a new national culture out of materials it generated from its historical research, preservation, and rehabilitation projects. Significantly, the seeds of national culture they sought to unearth were not just for Senegal but also for rehabilitating a revolutionary spirit in African cultures more generally that stretched back into the centuries before and during colonial rule.

In their definition of *revolution*, scholars have often invoked two divergent meanings of the word. The first refers to the "restoration" of an older political order, while the second denotes a complete "reversal" of the existing system and its ensuing transformations.²⁸ While the former meaning is said to have prevailed before the Enlightenment, the latter, which is associated with the Enlightenment, epitomizes the concept's contemporary understanding and usage.²⁹ This clear division, however, has been challenged by historians such as Dan Edelstein and Keith Michael Baker, who caution against "the erroneousness of the long-accepted . . . assumption that 'revolution' derived its initial sense as a political concept from the more traditional notion of a return to a status quo." They have argued instead that while the outcome of a given revolution may have been the restoration of older norms and values, the initial intent was the reversal of a prevailing order of some kind.³⁰

Interestingly, the Senegalese countercultural movement enacted its "cultural revolution" as *both* reversal *and* restoration in the senses described above—the former in the movement's initial intent to destroy and reverse established colonial structures, and the latter in its efforts to recuperate what had been lost through the restoration of older norms that would pave the way for formerly colonized subjects to reconstitute a lost "authenticity." As a result, although the countercultural movement's use of the two revolutionary modes overlapped in their looking to the past, they did so in ways that were complex to the point of seeming contradictory, being both about destroying (in order to *revert* to the past) and

building (in order to *restore* the past in the present and the future) at the same time. While an account of only the overtly political acts of the revolutionary movement might note especially its determination to reverse and destroy colonial structures, the account this book provides of its cultural dimension—the countercultural movement—brings to the fore its double-edged project of *restoring* older forms while also building or *creating* a national culture rooted in values and practices of the past. Crucially, the countercultural movement was about more than just being antihegemonic; it was also a targeted project of social engineering and moral reforming—a project of nation building from below, through which artists, writers, and activists proceeded to “a work of reacculturation, reinvention of references, genealogical reconstruction.”³¹ Besides struggling against the state’s vision of national culture, the countercultural movement’s members also struggled among themselves to understand their own diverse, emerging views of national culture and to balance the contradictory dynamics of restoration and reversal in their own stances and activities.

The most prominent of the various means by which the countercultural movement sought to materialize its reimaginings of society was literature. The student movement, which was central to the Senegalese countercultural movement, is not readily associated with scholarship about African literature and the Cold War. Yet, even as a generation of African writers and scholars were establishing the contours of their field and asserting their autonomy vis-à-vis Cold War aesthetic dictates, African students were also debating the role of literature in African decolonizing efforts. Less drawn to the nonalignment movement of the Bandung generation, these students, some of whom were future writers and political leaders, were inspired by revolutionary models from Vietnam, Algeria, and Cuba and attracted to socialist aesthetics, and these influences showed in the visions that these students articulated of decolonized African cultures and literatures.

In *At Penpoint: African Literatures, Postcolonial Studies, and the Cold War*, Monica Popescu suggests “revisiting the history of African literature and postcolonial studies through a Cold War lens.”³² Along with Bakhti Shringarpure, Peter Kalliney, Rossen Djagalov, Duncan Yoon, and others, Popescu has studied Cold War superpowers’ cultural interventions in what was then the Third World, paying attention to how writers and intellectuals of colonized and newly independent nations reframed and responded creatively to these interventions as they shaped the field of African literature and its place in university curricula. Together, the

work of these scholars has been field-redefining, remapping the histories of African, postcolonial, and world literatures by putting “decolonization and the Cold War in the same frame.”³³ As they point out, Cold War superpowers used culture as a site of struggle, deploying official cultural diplomacy initiatives to shape artistic sensibilities and influence writers in the Global South.³⁴ At the same time, this cultural arm of the Cold War covertly funded cultural initiatives that led to the creation of what Andrew Rubin has described as “transnational literary spaces at war.”³⁵ In their attempts to influence aesthetic tastes in the decolonizing world, Cold War superpowers promoted certain kinds of writers over others by awarding them prizes, providing funds for literary magazines and platforms for their debates, and more. At the same time, however, these scholars have noted that the impact of Cold War cultural diplomacy initiatives on African literature should not be overemphasized. As Kalliney suggests, African writers, publishers, and scholars were not passive receptacles of these influences; rather, they contended with them in many ways that meant that Cold War interventions did not automatically translate into direct and unfiltered cultural influence.³⁶

What tracing these Cold War influences makes visible is that reading these geopolitical events and this cultural production together reveals how certain aesthetic sensibilities emerged and why they occupy such prominent places in the field of African literature. In this book, I build on this Cold War–related work to better illuminate how they participated in the creation of new geographies that shaped the literary internationalism of the Senegalese countercultural movement. From the pages of *Présence Africaine*, which in its first issues proclaimed its nonalignment vis à vis the Cold War, to other literary networks spearheaded by internationalist organizations that did not proclaim nonalignment, the movement’s influences stretched beyond the nation state. For instance, as will be discussed in chapter 1, the countercultural movement was connected to the Afro-Asian movement through the activities of Senegalese writers and intellectuals such as Ousmane Sembène and leader of the Marxist-Leninist PAI, Mahjemout Diop, who both attended the first Afro-Asian Writers’ Conference in 1958 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

In the early 1960s, other landmark events, covertly funded by the CIA, took place. These included the 1962 Conference of African Writers of English Expression at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda; the Dakar Conference on French African Literature at held at the University of Dakar in 1963; and the Freetown Conference on African Literature



1.2 Ousmane Sembène, Efua Sutherland, Majhemout Diop, Nazim Hikmet, and unidentified delegate at the First Afro-Asian Writers' Conference in Tashkent in 1958. Ousmane Sembène MSS, courtesy of the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.

and the University Curriculum held at Fourah Bay University in the same year. At these events, which were attended by established and soon-to-be-canonized writers such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Senghor, Ousmane Sembène, Camara Laye, Tchicaya U Tam'si, and others, key topics were discussed that sought to determine what constituted African literature. Notable topics of discussion that resonated with the countercultural movement were the languages in which African literature should be written, African literature curriculum, Negritude, representation and aesthetics, cultural authenticity, and the autonomy of African universities.³⁷

Counterculture, National Culture, and Competing Modernities

As the foregoing pages suggest, an examination of the countercultural movement in the Senegalese context expands traditional definitions of the term *counterculture*, and in doing so becomes part of ongoing scholarly efforts to globalize and decolonize the 1960s.³⁸ The term *counterculture*

is thought to have emerged in the second half of the twentieth century in the American context within the social sciences, in relation to subculture.³⁹ Theodore Roszak, who popularized the term *counterculture*, conceived of it as “youthful protest” in industrial societies, operating within a context of economic prosperity.⁴⁰ This plays out differently in the parts of the world where decolonization was creating new political and social structures. In these contexts, youths responded to a distinct set of concerns that remained nonetheless connected to the international outcry for social change and liberation. The FCS, for instance, a major movement within the countercultural movement featured in chapter 4 of this book, criticized in its manifesto other movements generally associated with the counterculture of the 1960s—the “hippie, yéyé and rasta” movements—for being “decadent” and “bourgeois.”⁴¹

More generally, historian Omar Guèye has investigated whether the Senegalese counterculture of the May ’68 generation constituted a form of “assimilation,” in that it was mainly composed of French-educated students who represented a privileged part of the population, who benefited from scholarships from the Senegalese government, and who articulated their protest using mainly foreign slogans and ideas mixed with local style and sensibilities that did not resonate with the vast majority of their fellow citizens whom they sought to address.⁴² While tempting, such a reading obscures the communicability of what Robert Frank has described as a symbolic “hyphen” (*trait d’union*) that created “signs of recognition between youth,” signs such as revolutionary figures of the time and—as I demonstrate in this book—Marxist lexemes, anti-imperial sensibilities, internationalist solidarity, and literary cosmopolitanism, among other shared and competing visions, ideologies, styles, and practices.⁴³ Moreover, Timothy S. Brown cautions against “the use of Europe (especially France) and the United States as normative models” in analyses of Global Sixties movements.⁴⁴ He suggests instead that “an ‘international counterculture’ to which theoretically anyone could belong” was a part of the manifold “commitments” of the sixties that “produced local effects that intensified political conflicts within respective national settings.”⁴⁵ Indeed, there is no singular way to be “countercultural” in the 1960s. The Senegalese movement was neither isolated nor derivative, but should be understood as part of the fabric of that historical moment and therefore integral to any genuinely global understanding of the 1960s.

The actors of the Senegalese countercultural movement were not a homogeneous group with a united vision of what Senegalese national culture

from the margins should look like. They more generally agreed on what it should be constructed against, and there were competing views among the revolutionary youth about the very nature of an idea of national culture in light of the plural countercultures of the time. Importantly, then, in Senegal's case, using the term *countercultural* rather than *the counter-culture* to describe the varied antihegemonic actions and processes examined in this book seems more fitting. As Arthur Marwick points out, using the adjective rather than the noun implies that "there was no unified, integrated counter-culture, totally and consistently in opposition to mainstream culture." Indeed, he suggests that, more generally, "what is called the counter-culture was in reality made up of a large number of very varied subcultures."⁴⁶ The May '68 generation, for instance, articulated their antihegemonic stance using a bricolage of subcultures, a quality that often misled commentators, including Senghor, into seeing their varied cultural references as mere imitation or cultural assimilation. Thus, as Martin Kimble and Mary Nolan observe, the globalization of the social and cultural changes that pertained to the long 1960s did not mean their uniformization; rather, the activities of the long 1960s continue to defy simple categorization, and could "alternately be classified as anti-colonial, anti-imperial, anti-authoritarian, countercultural, utopian, or reformist."⁴⁷ The Senegalese countercultural movement can be said to have fit almost all these epithets at different points in its history.

The struggle between the Senegalese countercultural movement and Senghor's cultural philosophy and the policies it produced also reveals competing projects of modernity. Andrew M. Ivaska uses the term "cultured states" to describe both the ideology behind 1960s Tanzania's national culture project and its concrete expressions in urban cultural politics.⁴⁸ In the Senegalese context, Ndiouga Benga similarly distinguishes between two aspects of national culture: the state's public measures concerning cultural and artistic activities and its broader ideological project to transform society.⁴⁹ On one hand, Ivaska emphasizes how national culture served as a "vehicle for negotiating anxieties about urban order, gender chaos, and undisciplined youth . . . as a tool for overcoming a colonial past"; on the other, Benga focuses on how Senegal's project provoked artistic responses.⁵⁰ According to Benga, artists, filmmakers, and young activists made "an attempt" to shape an "alternative culture of the people" (*culture populaire*) from within or in response to this state framework.⁵¹ Benga's and Ivaska's accounts both demonstrate how these states and their opponents used national cultural projects to advance competing definitions of

modernity in a postcolonial context. These works underscore the struggle to make any vision of national culture—whether imposed from above or generated from below—take root. It is this contested terrain that this book explores.

Sedimented Traces in the Postcolony

By revisiting this era of Senegalese history through the young cultural actors of the time, this book responds to calls to provide “a corrective to the genealogy of postcolonial studies” that has tended to downplay the impact of Cold War legacies on postcolonial history.⁵² In doing so, I foreground texts written in French, with awareness that David Murphy and Charles Forsdick among others have drawn attention to postcolonial studies’ “Anglophone ‘bias’” and the tendency for there to be a “French resistance to postcolonialism,” seeing the latter as an anglophone import.⁵³ Like Murphy, I see the term *francophone* as including both France and the larger French-speaking world, and do not recognize the divide between the Hexagon and former French colonies that the word initially implied.⁵⁴ But although this book features the works and trajectories of authors widely called “francophone,” it also examines materials originally produced in Wolof and is ultimately less concerned with illuminating what Murphy and Forsdick call “the ‘Francophone dimension’” of postcolonial studies than with understanding how the works produced in both French and Wolof highlighted in this book became constitutive of the “politics of literature” through which African literature was institutionalized.⁵⁵

This book also attempts to bridge the materialist–postmodernist divide in postcolonial studies, where postmodernist approaches to postcolonial texts tend to be depoliticized and skeptical of grand narratives, pitting themselves against materialist critiques that concern themselves with the economic, social, and political structures that shape the postcolonial condition.⁵⁶ The 1960s’ “protest culture” is important in this paradigm because it poses a challenge to this historical separation between literary studies and politics.⁵⁷ Reading Senegal’s countercultural movement through the prism of the social imaginary’s instituting and creative powers—as this book proposes to do—opens up a third space beyond this dichotomy. It emphasizes the creative force of cultural products and the role they play in social change by calling attention to a fluid understanding of the relationship between culture and politics, for the story of how

Senegal's countercultural movement shaped African literature and Senegalese political life is ultimately also a story about the role that cultural work plays in social and political change. In charting a path for the study of revolutionary imaginaries, I examined processes of meaning making that resonated with the Annales school's history of mentalities, which focused on tracing enduring collective patterns of perception. With the cultural turn of the 1970s, however, the school's focus on mentalities shifted to an emphasis on representation.⁵⁸ Both approaches are of interest to me because of their entanglements with the social imaginary not as a reflection of objective reality but as a historically situated structure of perceived reality.⁵⁹

As Charles Taylor explains, the social imaginary is a prism through which we make sense of the world; it denotes a "shared understanding" of a community's historical existence.⁶⁰ It is a way of knowing through which we grasp our most basic principles, values, practices, and symbols, usually "not expressed in theoretical terms but carried in images, stories, and legends."⁶¹ These elements are like a language through which a shared understanding of society is expressed, and it is by taking shape, as Maurice Godelier argues, in "institutions" and "symbolic representations" and by materializing in social relations that social imaginaries take concrete form in reality.⁶² Although the social imaginary can be invoked as an all-encompassing phenomenon, this book focuses on a specific kind of imaginary: the revolutionary imaginary. The concrete actions of the Senegalese countercultural movement were driven by the revolutionary imaginaries of the twentieth century, whose ideologies and utopias can be read, following Paul Ricoeur, as "expressions of the social imaginary."⁶³ The revolutionary imaginaries discussed in this book are therefore not merely *reflected* in literary texts and cultural production; rather, they are articulated *through* cultural products and processes, which serve as the conduits through which imaginaries are materialized, or given tangible form.

Relatedly, Kristin Ross explains in her groundbreaking study of the French May '68 "that memory and . . . forgetting have taken material forms," the history of which she charts in her work.⁶⁴ Expanding on Ross's thinking, this book explores the materialization of revolutionary imaginaries in two ways: First, it shows how the revolutionary imaginaries of the countercultural movement materialize through *tangible* cultural objects such as official and underground print cultures (magazines, brochures, manifestos, poetry anthologies, etc.). Second, it shows how the ideas that underpin these revolutionary utopias are taken up and enacted, manifesting as *intangible* forms in society such as new social practices, informal

gatherings, new mentalities and behaviors, and new styles of dress and forms of interaction. These processes of materialization guide my historical account of the countercultural movement, whereby a generation of writers, artists, and intellectuals strove to bring into being ideas, dreams, and theories that would transform society. My account of the countercultural movement is therefore not intended to be comprehensive but rather focused on the movement's processes of materializing its revolutionary imaginaries.

On the opposite end of this forward-moving historical account of the countercultural movement, I also examine literary and filmic works related to the countercultural movement to look back on how they encode historical consciousness.⁶⁵ This literary account approaches history—specifically here the history of how certain ideas and attitudes came to be widespread in African and especially Senegalese literature and film—from a different direction. Édouard Glissant suggests that we approach history “through the accumulation of sediments,” using the term “sediment” in its metaphorical sense to describe what is “deposited gradually and continuously” to shape “historical consciousness.”⁶⁶ Illuminating how history can be gleaned from literary interpretation, Glissant's approach shows how one can avoid totalizing, falsely universal conceptions of history by reading the contents of literary works not as *direct* evidence of the past but rather as *trace sediments* or *deposits* of a past, to be interpreted not as an archive of the past itself but rather as an archive of past sensibilities and shared ways of experiencing the world.⁶⁷ Crucially, such readings of literary works produce not history per se but layered accounts of *historical consciousness* that, while arising from the period of the past in question, does not necessarily remain tied to that particular era of the past and can continue to be animated and even flourish as traces beget more traces over time.

Importantly, of course, I do not suggest that a historical consciousness can only grow over time. Sometimes there is a notable lack of traces in the written record, while at other times there are observable transformations in the traces that manifest. Glissant and other philosophers borrowed the term *sediments* from the field of geology, where sediments containing information about past environments, life-forms, and climatic events function as archives of transformations. They allow scientists to compare climate differences between different periods of the past as well as the present.⁶⁸ Examining sediments therefore makes visible the traces of both continuity and transformation over time, allowing for the reconstruction

of the history of the collective consciousness itself. Applied in the present book, this framework helps my literary account portray not just the continuities but also the changes to the countercultural revolutionary imaginaries as they manifested in literary works over the decades following the movement's withdrawal from public visibility.

In a way, then, I am asserting that the countercultural movement's revolutionary imaginaries remain active to this day. But, in doing so, I am suggesting not that they have been passed down continuously or unchanged but rather that they have morphed into a collective consciousness that, while robust, is uneven, multifaceted, and unpredictable in when or how it reactivates the sediments of those revolutionary imaginaries. And I chart the imaginaries' processes of materialization in my historical account of the countercultural movement not so that I can assert that those materializations directly become the sediments whose traces I later read to understand the imaginaries-turned-historical-consciousness (although some of them surely do) but rather to show that even the processes of materialization themselves, like the behavior of sedimented traces later, demonstrate a dynamic and sometimes contradictory volatility. Alice Wilson has noted that the burgeoning field of the anthropology of revolution pays special attention to "how revolutions rework existing social forms," and as previously discussed, the Senegalese countercultural movement worked to both reverse (put back) and restore (bring forward) different aspects of Senegalese cultural and social structures.⁶⁹ As Wilson observes, this "combination of rupture and continuity constitutes a contradiction among the many paradoxes within revolutions."⁷⁰ When combined with the variability inherent also in the processes of sedimentation and reproduction of historical consciousness, this revolutionary spirit of both rupture and continuity can make the reemergences of their traces especially unpredictable as to whether they will be reversing or restoring and what they will be reversing or restoring.

Moreover, in this conception, my historical account of the countercultural movement does not neatly end at some point and pass the baton to the literary account of collective consciousness; rather, the two accounts overlap for the entire duration of the history being recounted. On the one hand, the project of charting the countercultural movement's materializations of its revolutionary imaginaries is brought forward in time past the official expiry date of the movement in 1981 through the actions and attitudes of lingering actors from the movement; on the other hand, the project of reading the traces of the countercultural movement in the literary

and filmic works of our present time moves backward in time, seeking out the origins of certain ideas, aesthetics, and mindsets that are now diffuse and commonplace. As the overview of chapters will later explain, the nexus where the two projects pass each other most clearly is chapter 4, where the historical account hands over its dominance to the literary account going forward, and the literary hands off to the historical going backward.

Reading the Colonial and Postcolonial Senegalese Laboratory

Besides being a history of Senegal's countercultural movement and its revolutionary imaginaries in its literary traces, this book also engages with a broader cultural history of Senegal's role in colonial and postcolonial Africa. Senegal's reputation as a model of democracy in Africa has been due to the fact that, besides never having experienced a coup d'état, it has counted three "peaceful" transfers of power between different parties or coalitions since 2000. But this book is not about Senegalese exceptionalism, nor does it see the Senegalese case as sufficient for making broad claims about African literature. Rather, it is interested in the political and cultural processes in the second half of the twentieth century that led to Senegal's playing a key role in the development of African literature, and in the implications this has for the influence of the Senegalese countercultural movement beyond the nation's borders.

The Senegalese revolutionary movement emerged before the nation's independence, when Senegal was still part of a federation, so although the countercultural movement coalesced later in the 1960s, much of its formative intellectual exchange had taken place in federative structures. It had taken shape through Pan-African platforms such as the Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France (Federation of Black African Students in France; FEANF), the Union Générale des Étudiants d'Afrique de l'Ouest (General Union of West African Students; UGEAO), the University of Dakar, and the publishing house and magazine *Présence Africaine*. Scholars have noted that during the May '68 protests at the University of Dakar, the institution had students from twenty-three nationalities.⁷¹ Many of these students, Françoise Blum recounts, took with them some of the modes of organizing and ideas they had learned in Dakar to lead protests in their respective countries after being sent back home as a sanction

for having partaken in the May '68 strike.⁷² The University of Dakar therefore served as a testing ground for young student militants in West Africa and beyond. The members of FEANF in particular were inclined toward federation and staunchly opposed Africa's balkanization, or its gaining of independence as broken-up territories.⁷³

Historically and geographically, the Senegambian region has also held a central role in the French empire. Its strategic geographical position led to the establishment of European trading posts in the fifteenth century and to the involvement of its coastal towns in the sixteenth-century development of the transatlantic slave trade. The region was also the launching point for the nineteenth-century colonial conquest of West Africa by the French, with two Senegalese cities becoming successive capitals of French West Africa—first Saint-Louis, then Dakar. Senegal was therefore used as a testing ground for the French policy of assimilation. Traditions of political representation, democracy, and multipartyism in the region date back to the nineteenth century, as the Four Communes of Senegal (Dakar, Saint-Louis, Rufisque, and Gorée) have had representation at the French National Assembly since 1848. The inhabitants of the Four Communes, known as *originaires*, were granted French citizenship and the right for men to vote in 1916. Furthermore, most of the colonial educational infrastructure was concentrated in Senegal, which made colonial Senegal a training ground for French-educated Africans who went on to assume key political positions in their respective countries.⁷⁴ These factors, among others, explain why many African intellectuals, writers, and influential figures whose impact extend beyond the French-speaking world hail from Senegal. Rather than reading them as markers of Senegal's exceptionalism, it is more productive to see Senegal—following Mamadou Diouf's formulation—as a “laboratory,” which denotes a place that has historically served as a colonial testing ground and whose prominent role in the empire and its ramifications have therefore been historically constructed rather than due to any natural or inherent exceptional qualities.

In the same vein, Wolof, the most widely spoken language in Senegal, occupies a central position in this book relative to Pulaar, Sereer, and Jolaa—languages that countercultural actors also sought to revive. This focus is primarily due to the prominence of Wolof within the countercultural movement and the difficulty of accessing sources in the other aforementioned languages. Much like Senegal's historically constructed prominence in the region, Wolof's predominance is rooted in its role as a transethnic and vehicular language, as well as its function as a language of

commerce in Senegambia since the sixteenth century.⁷⁵ This has afforded Wolof a hegemonic position over other national languages in Senegal, despite its secondary status relative to French, the official language.

Another factor that paved the way for the impact of Senegal's counter-cultural movement on modern African literature is that, unlike in many countries in the world during the Cold War, Senghor's regime did not actively persecute artists. Although Senghor did ban Ousmane Sembène's film *Ceddo*, he did not imprison or threaten the lives of those who criticized his government through their art. In general, the Senghorian regime did not treat artists as it did its political opponents, who, in contrast, were jailed and sometimes tortured. In turn, this paradoxical freedom of speech for artists and writers during the period of single-party rule provided the space for the actors of the countercultural movement to challenge Senghor. Senegal therefore came to function as a laboratory for countercultural initiatives, where ideas were tested and debated and led to the making of African literary and cinematic works that were later canonized.

The contradictory remnants of these experiments are what Boris Diop commented on in Sembène's *Guelwaar* in the opening anecdote to this introduction and that I examine throughout this book in literary texts, films, print cultures, infrastructures, and political and cultural initiatives.

My reading practice is concerned with how the literary and filmic works under consideration bring something into being—that is, how they actively contribute to *shaping* the revolutionary imaginaries themselves, in turn helping these imaginaries shape the world after their fashion. For Ousmane Sembène, the filmmaker's role within revolution was “not to ‘get it *done*’ but to ‘get it *started*!’”⁷⁶ Kesteloot has pointed to the influence of literary works in the context of African revolutions, suggesting that they can “react against reality and exercise an influence that can accelerate the development of social and political crises.” For Kesteloot, literature's interplay with politics “in the midst of an ensemble of social facts” gives literature an important role to play during times of major political transformations.⁷⁷ The literary and cinematic works under study in this book engage in dialogue with elements both inside and outside the literary realm and are part of a broader sociocultural network that shaped the revolutionary imaginaries that fueled the countercultural movement.

Critics have decried the tendency to approach African literary texts as sociohistorical documents—an approach that suggests that African literary texts merely *reflect* what has happened rather than participating at all in the active making of society as works of artistic creation. My dual

historical-literary lenses of reading processes of materialization and traces of sedimentation across the decades hope to capture how the creations of literary and filmic works, in every decade, in the first place were attempts to materialize in the world the revolutionary imaginaries that fueled the countercultural movement and in the second place were traces themselves of the impact that earlier attempts at materialization have had on the world, at least insofar as continuing to be taken up by writers and filmmakers of subsequent generations. This book therefore invites us to look at these cultural texts not as a reflection but as part of a “structuring matrix” of the revolutionary imaginaries both *of* and *from* the countercultural period and as works of artistic creation that in turn have played a part in shaping reality.⁷⁸

As Ato Quayson tells us, “The social world itself is the product of referential relays that are encapsulated in discursive ensembles in which different fragments ‘speak’ to each other across a nexus of knowledge, ideology, and power.” Drawing on Quayson, my project of re-creating the social world of the Senegalese countercultural movement accordingly uses an array of varied sources that pertain to both “literary and nonliterary discourses” and that “articulate both social realities and the epistemological orientations to such realities.”⁷⁹ As such, this book uses not only literary texts but also oral histories, official and underground archival documents, correspondence, interviews, and periodicals to reconstruct the countercultural movement. This process has made me appreciate the material aspects of revolutionary activity, as the collection of information about strategies for purchasing printing material and other kinds of secrecy surrounding the publication of pamphlets has been an enlightening experience. Interviewing countercultural actors (who are now largely in their seventies) about their revolutionary dreams and aspirations in their twenties also had its challenges, as testimonies from this tumultuous period tend to be tinted with self-censorship, fragmented information induced by trauma, romanticization of the revolutionary period, and differing gendered perspectives on the revolutionary struggles when narrated in retrospect. In addition to probing the limits of such sources of information—what Brahim El Guabli has called “other-archives”—this book also highlights underground literature as a category for literary and historical inquiry.⁸⁰ I reveal (when authorized) the identity and creative processes of the pseudonymous authors behind some of the underground works examined in this book. And while most of the archival documents I needed that pertained to or were examples of underground literature

were available in university or national archives, research institutes, and cultural centers in Senegal, France, and the United States, other documents, produced as part of clandestine political activity, were found only in personal libraries. By highlighting this material within their contexts of production and dissemination, I read and examine seldom-studied figures and aspects of African literary culture alongside canonized works and celebrated authors of the field.

Structure of the Book

This book is divided into two parts. The first part reconstructs the Senegalese countercultural movement by narrating how countercultural actors and their predecessors attempted to materialize revolutionary imaginaries, while the second part follows by reading sedimented traces of the movement in African literary texts and films. As previously mentioned, however, the reading of traces already begins to some extent in the first part, while the processes of materialization also continue to some extent into the second part.

Chapter 1 retraces the transnational, literary dimension of the Senegalese countercultural movement by exploring how literary form served as an experimental space for decolonizing writers during the Cold War. The chapter begins in the postwar period, when seeds of the movement were planted in debates about poetic form and the function of decolonizing writers. It continues through the 1950s and 1960s with international cultural events and follows influential figures of the movement. Drawing on Blum, I identify these influential figures as *passeurs*—conveyors of ideas and knowledge—who act as contributors to and intermediaries between these global events and the countercultural movement in Senegal.⁸¹

Chapter 2 examines key episodes of Senegal's political history of decolonization and nation building. Organized around the major events leading to Senegal's independence, this historical chapter centers on the coming into being of the revolutionary movement and the countercultural ideas that animated it. The first half of the chapter illuminates important early historical developments in the revolutionary movement, such as the birth and influence of the RDA in 1946; its role in fueling left-wing anti-colonial activities in French West Africa and among students in France; and the growth of the Senegalese women's movement beginning with the securing of suffrage for women of the Four communes in 1945. The second

half of the chapter picks up after Senegal's independence in 1960 with Senghor's gradual move toward single-party rule and the implementation of his nation-building project through Negritude-oriented cultural policies.

Chapter 3 revisits the main initiatives that constitute the countercultural movement: the movement for linguistic renewal; the project to reclaim African history; and the emergence of cultural clubs, the alternative press, and the women's movement. Entangled with these initiatives is the emergence of four canonical works that exemplify how the countercultural movement influenced African literature, film, and political thought: Cheikh Anta Diop's *Nations nègres et culture*; Ousmane Sembène's *Mandabi*; the FCS's republication of Lamine Senghor's *La violation d'un pays*, originally published during the interwar period; and finally, Awa Thiam's pioneering work *La parole aux négresses*, whose reception was riddled with controversy.

Chapter 4 analyzes the underground literature of a Maoist-oriented cultural movement, the Front Culturel Sénégalais, known as FCS, established in 1976 in Dakar. Inspired by the works of the *passeurs*/contributors of the transnational cultural movements and the debates and cultural events presented in chapters 1 and 3, the FCS represents the apex of the broader countercultural movement and epitomizes the move from countercultural initiatives to a structured effort to shape national culture. Leaning on interviews I conducted with former FCS members, I elucidate the main tenets of the FCS, analyze the movement's manifesto, and survey three poetry anthologies published by the movement. I also demonstrate how the pseudonymous poets in the anthologies experimented with traditional poetic song forms and genres in both Wolof and French.

Beginning to home in on the traces left behind by the intense cultural ferment of the preceding two decades, chapter 5 reestablishes, both textually and historically, the lost connections between the countercultural movement and the celebrated novelist, playwright, journalist, and Neustadt Prize-winner Boubacar Boris Diop. I examine Diop's first two novels and his play—*Le temps de Tamango* (1981) and *Thiaroye terre rouge* (1981), as well as *Les tambours de la mémoire* (1987)—to show how Diop's early works dialogue with the FCS's activities and the broader countercultural movement's nationalist historical project. Through the lens of speculative fiction and experimental writing, Diop interrogates literature's potential within the context of revolution.

Chapter 6 illuminates the literary and filmic reactivation in the late 1970s to 2010s of the countercultural movement's emphasis on "the people" as agents of change and as key actors in their desired revolution.

In particular, the chapter traces the creation of “the ordinary/common people” as a motif in classics of African film and literature, such as Ousmane Sembène’s film *Xala* and Aminata Sow Fall’s novel *The Beggars’ Strike*. The chapter then goes on to analyze filmmaker Djibril Diop Mambety’s unfinished trilogy, *Histoire des petites gens* (Tales of ordinary people), along with Ken Bugul’s ode to artists as ordinary people in *Rue Félix-Faure* (2005). Linking Mambety and Ken Bugul to the countercultural movement through their involvement in Agit’Art, I show how their works were, in their own ways, continuations of the movement’s spirit.

Over the course of the book, the broader picture that emerges from these chapters is that the debates raised by the literary left not only persistently challenged Senghorian Negritude but also sought to forge a new cultural vision by emphasizing five central issues: First, the broad role of literature and the arts in social transformation (chapters 1, 4, and 6); second, the politics of language, which centered on the importance of harnessing African languages to bridge the gap with the masses (chapters 3 and 4); third, the project to reclaim precolonial cultures, and more specifically the question of the extent to which they should serve as the foundation for a national culture (chapters 1, 3, and 4); fourth, the uses of the past in shaping a revolutionary present and decolonized futures (chapters 3 and 5); and finally, the redefinition of the relationship of the intelligentsia (writers, artists, scholars) with “the people” (chapter 6).

Finally, musing on the outcome and social aftermath of the 2024 presidential elections in Senegal, the coda revisits ways in which reading African literature through the lens of the countercultural movement deepens our understanding of African literary aesthetics and Senegalese political life, and makes visible the interconnectedness of cultural and political counterhegemonic practices in social transformation.

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Notes

Introduction

- 1 Interview with Boubacar Boris Diop, July 2, 2022; see also Bobin, *Cette si longue quête*, 144. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
- 2 Diop and Diouf, *Le Sénégal sous Abdou Diouf*, 207–8. Kpatindé, “Mai 68 à Dakar, Chronique d’une époque fébrile.”
- 3 Front Culturel Sénégalais, *Manifeste*, 5.
- 4 Sugnet and Diop, “Dances with Wolofs,” 144.
- 5 Sugnet and Diop, “Dances with Wolofs,” 144.
- 6 Lee, *Making a World*, 7. See also Hendrickson’s emphasis on 1968 as being simultaneously a “postcolonial moment” and a decolonizing movement, in *Decolonizing 1968*, 13.
- 7 Mudimbe, *Idea of Africa*, 177.
- 8 Gikandi “African Literature,” 54.
- 9 Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic*, 34–36; Bush, *Publishing Africa*, 26.
- 10 The term *homo senegalensis* (“Senegalese man” in Latin), popularized by Senghor, represents his vision of the “New Man.” It is a utopian archetype of a transformed citizen who is underpinned by a Senghorian Negritude–inspired philosophy of cultural *métissage*. For Senghor, the *homo senegalensis* is rooted in their own culture (*enracinement*) while being open to other cultures (*ouverture*). For more about the origin and different variants of the concept of the New Man, see Cheng, *Creating the “New Man.”*
- 11 Kesteloot, *Intellectual Origins*, 12. Kesteloot uses the phrase “the African revolution” to refer to the 1960s wave of national liberation struggles in Africa. Kesteloot focuses on the works of Negritude writers, on Frantz Fanon and Édouard Glissant, among others.
- 12 See Monaville, *Students of the World*.
- 13 Prashad, *Darker Nations*, 12. On the political dimension of anticolonial “worldmaking,” see Wilder, *Freedom Time*; Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*. For cultural approaches to worldmaking see Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*; Nünning et al., *Cultural Ways of Worldmaking*.
- 14 See Millar’s *Forms of Disappointment*, in which she examines post–Cold War Angolan and Cuban literatures and argues “for a more nuanced relationship

between [revolutionary] enthusiasm and disappointment beyond the strictly chronological one" (xxvi).

- 15 According to Joshua I. Cohen, the phrase "École de Dakar" is "a designation encompassing the first generation of modern artists under state patronage." Cohen, "African Socialist Cultural Policy," 31. While many have tended to associate the École de Dakar with Negritude aesthetics, others see this association as reductive. I agree with Elizabeth Harney, for instance, who notes that "the École de Dakar did not form a coherent visual whole." Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow*, 10.
- 16 Diagne, *Léopold S. Senghor*; Wilder, *Freedom Time*; Jones, *Racial Discourses*; Thiam, *Return to the Kingdom of Childhood*. See also the introduction by Calhoun, Fall, and Thiam to *The Essential Senghor*, their recent translation of selected writings by Senghor from the *Liberté* volumes.
- 17 Diouf, *Wall Paintings*, 38.
- 18 See Wane, "Chanson populaire"; Benga, "Mise en scène."
- 19 Bianchini et al., *Revolutionary Movements in Africa*, 5.
- 20 For revolutionary politics in Senegal, see Diop, *Mémoires de luttes*; Colin, *Sénégal notre pirogue*; Diagne, *Momsarew*; Camara, *L'épopée du Parti Africain de l'Indépendance*; Kah, *De la lutte des classes à la bataille des places*; Blum, *Révolutions africaines*; Bathily, *Mai 1968 à Dakar*; Niang, *Trajectoire et documents*; Guèye, *Mai 1968 au Sénégal*; Bianchini, "Les paradoxes du Parti africain de l'indépendance"; Wade, *Notre modeste part du combat du PAI*.
- 21 See, for example, Bobin and Sylla, "Underground Politics in Senegal." See also Yannek Simalla's series of YouTube interviews of 68ers among other Senegalese left-wing activists of the period under study.
- 22 For recent studies on various forms of cultural expression through which revolutionary movements in Africa were enacted, see James E. Genova, *Making New People*; Alexandra Reza's work on the PAIGC's *Radio Libertação*, "Reading the Radio-Magazine"; Elara Bertho's *Conakry, une utopie panafricaine*; and Drury et al.'s special issue on "Decolonization and the Underground."
- 23 I am grateful to Pascal Bianchini for the informative conversations regarding these distinctions.
- 24 Bianchini, "1968 Years," 186.
- 25 Wane, "Mai 68 à Dakar."
- 26 Wane, "Mai 68 à Dakar."
- 27 Gikandi, "African Literature and Modernity," 11.
- 28 Wilson, "Revolution."
- 29 Wilson, "Revolution."
- 30 Baker and Edelstein, *Scripting Revolution*, 12, 28.
- 31 Marcel Gauchet, cited in Bourseiller and Penot-Lacassagne, *Les contre-cultures*, 4–5.
- 32 Popescu, *At Penpoint*, 16, 94.
- 33 Kalliney, *Aesthetic Cold War*, 248.

- 34 See Bystrom et al., *Cultural Cold War*.
- 35 Rubin, *Archives of Authority*, 47.
- 36 Kalliney, *Aesthetic Cold War*, 245–49.
- 37 Mphahlele, “African Literature and Universities.”
- 38 See, for instance, Christiansen and Scarlett, *Third World*; Hendrickson, *Decolonizing 1968*; Zolov and Lee, “Special Issue.” See also Kimkle and Nolan, “Introduction.”
- 39 Yinger, “Contraculture and Subculture,” 625; Dunn, *Contracultura*, 4.
- 40 Roszak, *Making of a Counterculture*, 7.
- 41 Front Culturel Sénégalais, *Manifeste*, 13.
- 42 Guèye, *Mai 1968 au Sénégal*, 167.
- 43 Frank, “Imaginaire politique,” 46.
- 44 Brown, “1968.”
- 45 Brown, “1968.”
- 46 Marwick, *Sixties*, 12.
- 47 Kimkle and Nolan, “Introduction,” 6.
- 48 Ivaska, *Cultured States*, 7.
- 49 Benga, “Mise en scène,” 238.
- 50 Ivaska, *Cultured States*, 38.
- 51 Benga, “Mise en scène,” 238.
- 52 Shringerpure, *Cold War Assemblages*, 128; Popescu, *At Penpoint*, 5–9.
- 53 Forsdick and Murphy, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, 7.
- 54 Murphy, “De-Centering French Studies,” 166.
- 55 Here I refer to both Jacques Rancière’s and Benoît Denis’s conceptualizations of the term. For Rancière, a work is political insofar as it “intervenes in the distribution of the sensible,” which he defines as “the ways in which the forms of inclusion and exclusion that define participation in shared life are first configured within the sensible experience of life itself.” Palmieri, “Jacques Rancière,” 34–35.
- For Denis, by contrast, the politics of literature refers both to the struggles internal to the field (competing definitions of what literature is or should be) and to the strategies through which literature asserts its “authority” within the broader social world and its “autonomy.” Denis, “Engagement et contre-engagement,” 107.
- 56 See Lazarus, *Postcolonial Unconscious*; Parry, *Postcolonialism*; see also Majumdar, *World*.
- 57 Shringerpure, *Cold War Assemblages*, 105.
- 58 Chartier, “Le monde comme représentation,” 1511.
- 59 For Annales historian Claude Duby’s indebtedness to Cornelius Castoriadis’s work on the social imaginary, see Duby, “Les Trois ordres,” 203.
- 60 Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 25.
- 61 Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 23.
- 62 Godelier, *Imagined*, 27.

- 63 Ricoeur, "L'idéologie et l'utopie," 53.
- 64 Ross, *May* '68, 1.
- 65 My approach is informed by Fredric Jameson's reading of "cultural artifacts as socially symbolic acts" and Raymond Williams's "structures of feeling." Both show, in their own way, how literature mediates social experience and gives form to historical consciousness. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 20; Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 132.
- 66 "Through the accumulation of sediments": Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 33. "Deposited gradually . . .": Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 62.
- 67 While Glissant's metaphor of sedimentation resonates with Theodor Adorno's notion of "aesthetic form as sedimented content," it responds to a different set of concerns. Adorno's notion belongs to a philosophy of art grounded in his engagement with the European modern art movement. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 5. My discussion mobilizes Glissant's formulation, which emerges from his reflections on collective existence, relation, and memory in a postcolonial context. He proposes an epistemology anchored in what he calls "a poetics of duration" that eschews linear temporality and embraces the slow accumulation of sediments as a way of apprehending collective consciousness in the aftermath of a fragmented and traumatic colonial history.
- 68 Armitage et al., "Transformation."
- 69 Wilson, *Afterlives of Revolution*, 9.
- 70 Wilson, "Revolution."
- 71 Thioub, "Le mouvement étudiant," 273; Guèye, *Mai 1968 au Sénégal*, 110.
- 72 Blum, "Sénégal 1968," 150.
- 73 For definitions of *balkanization* in the context of decolonization in Africa, see Neuberger, "African Concept of Balkanization," 523–29. See also Benoist, *La balkanisation*.
- 74 For example, the teachers' training school École Normale Supérieure William Ponty, created in 1903, was a federal institution in the AOF and was renowned for having trained the first generation of French-educated professionals who became political elites in the region. We can count among its most famous students the first presidents of Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, Modibo Keita and Félix Houphouët-Boigny, respectively; Senegal's first prime minister, Mamadou Dia; and third president, Abdoulaye Wade; among others. A teacher training school for women would open thirty years later, the École Normale d'Institutrices, in Rufisque. The school provided training for a select few women from across the federation. Among its graduates were writers, pioneers of the women's movement, and political figures such as Mariama Bâ, Annette Mbaye d'Erneville, Sira Diop Sissoko, and Jeanne Martin Cissé, among others. Before the establishment of the school in Rufisque, the only professional training options made available to women by the colonial administration in French West Africa were a section within the school of

- medicine dedicated to training midwives in 1918 and, later, nurses in 1930. Barthélémy, *Africaines et diplômées*. See also Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français*.
- 75 McLaughlin, "Senegal," 92; see also O'Brien, "Langue et nationalité au Sénégal."
- 76 Cheriaa, "Issues in African Film," 15 (emphasis in original).
- 77 Kesteloot, *Intellectual Origins*, 12.
- 78 Gaonkar, "Towards New Imaginaries," 7.
- 79 Quayson, *Oxford Street*, 213.
- 80 El Guabli, *Moroccan Other-Archives*; see also Hendrickson, "From the Archives."
- 81 Blum, *Révolutions africaines*, 95.

Chapter 1. Revolutionizing Writers

- 1 Howlett, "Présence Africaine," 140–50. This meeting was one among many gatherings, discussions, correspondences, negotiations, and calls for endorsement that led to the creation of *Présence Africaine*. See Frioux-Salgas, "Présence Africaine."
- 2 Diop, foreword to *Surreptitious Speech*, xiv. Along with the committee of patrons stood an equally distinguished editorial board, which included writer Abdoulaye Sadi, anthropologist and sociologist George Balandier, poet Bernard Dadié, writers and politicians Fily Dabo Cissoko and Amadou Cissé Dia, politician and future vice president of Senegal Mamadou Dia, and scholars Roger Mercier and Tidjani Serpos.
- 3 Diop, "Niam N'goura," 185.
- 4 Scott, *Refashioning Futures*, 222.
- 5 Diawara, "Iconography," 85.
- 6 Sall, postface to Bathily, *Mai 1968 à Dakar*, 185.
- 7 Saunders, *Cultural Cold War*.
- 8 Bush, *Publishing Africa*, 57.
- 9 Jules-Rosette, *Black Paris*, 6–7.
- 10 Bush, *Publishing Africa*, 58.
- 11 Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 33.
- 12 Noland, *Voices of Negritude*, 238; Suhr-Systma, *Poetry, Print*, 10.
- 13 Andrade, *Revolution*, 86.
- 14 On occasional poetry in the context of decolonization, see Yoon, "South African Imaginary," 156. On "protest" poetry in the decolonization period, see Seck, "Cultural Underground of Decolonization."
- 15 See Alexandra Reza's illuminating examination of the postwar journals *Présence Africaine* and *Mensagem*, where she describes the work of Francophone and Lusophone decolonizing writers during the 1950s and early 1960s as "politically engaged but aesthetically free." She identifies the central