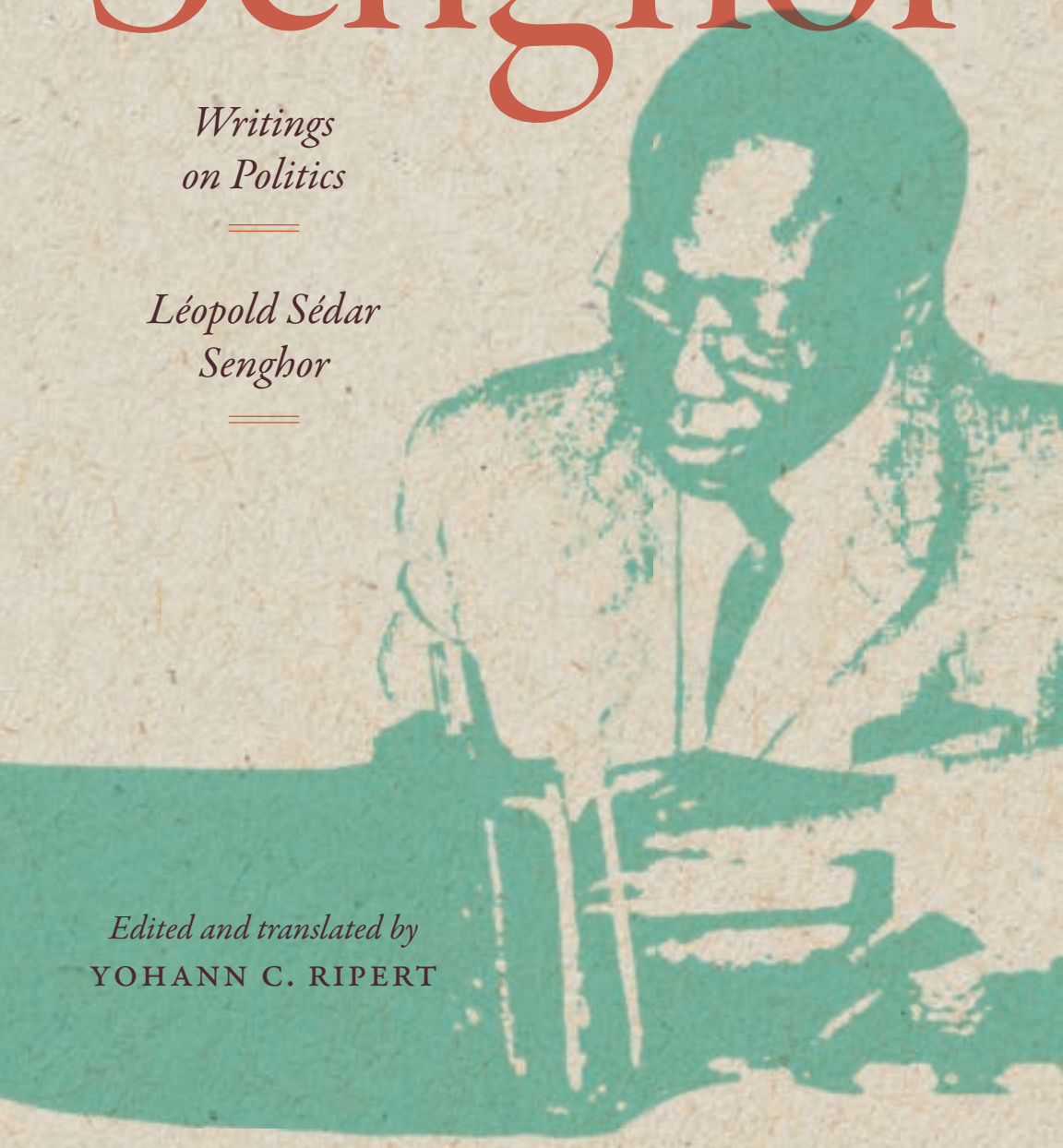
Senghor

Writings on Politics

Léopold Sédar Senghor



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Senghor

THEORY IN FORMS

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For my mother, ELIANE RIPERT,

who planted the seeds of curiosity,

For my wife, HANNAH SUN,

who nurtured this work with patience and love,

For my mentor, GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK,

who unveiled realms of thought I never knew existed.

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Translator's Introduction

Yohann C. Ripert

Léopold Sédar Senghor was a paradox: a thinker who sought to reinvent politics and yet was horrified by the idea of becoming a politician; a poet who dared to reimagine the contours of a new racial identity and yet was often seen as an apologist for essentialized identity politics. Like the philosopher who escaped Plato's cave only to be forced to return to free fellow cave dwellers, Senghor was imbued with the vision of a world that he felt compelled to share with fellow postcolonial pioneers. Negritude was that vision.

As often as Senghor himself defined and redefined Negritude, other prominent thinkers have given it some of the most memorable, if problematic, definitions. Over time, catchphrases and forgotten texts by those who participated in the elaboration of both the word and the concept petrified Senghor's original vision into a frozen tableau. Yet, even when Jean-Paul Sartre, in his eloquent preface to Senghor's *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie negre et malgache de langue française* (Anthology of new Black and Malagasy poets writing in French), a contribution that assured posterity for Senghor as both poet and politician, wrote that "Négritude is the root of its own destruction, a transition and not a conclusion, a means and not an ultimate end," he, too, challenged any easy definition. Though Frantz Fanon felt that Sartre "robbed him [Fanon] of his last chance" to regain power over Black consciousness, the psychiatrist's dismay only gave substance to what Senghor conveyed in poetics: Negritude is more than a racial movement. It is a peri-racial critique shaping a space around race rather than defining race itself.[1] Because "race is a reality" (page 3), Senghor writes, it seeks to generate narratives beyond core racial dialogues and engage with surrounding discourse production informed by race. Its goal is to constitute a repository of texts with diverse and sometimes conflicting voices to prevent the danger of imagining any kind of racial homogeneity. As its body of texts continues to grow, Negritude becomes

more than the sum of its parts, going beyond empirical observations and into the conditions for knowledge and experience—influenced by and influencing what surrounds the performance of Negritude.

To be sure, the *Anthology* did not constitute a cohesive body of texts from which something akin to a philosophical practice could eventually lead to—or at least coincide with—political actions. Following almost to the letter the argument developed in the *Republic*, Senghor had made his own the idea that no philosophical or poetic work could find a solution for political issues, yet philosophical and poetic practices were necessary for the success of any political work aimed at the sustainability of the polity—a timeless lesson we have often forgotten. In Plato's text, more than a coincidence between philosophy and politics, the philosopher-king succeeds when philosophical practice and political practice become one; indeed, when the philosopher-king embodies a truthful attitude toward knowledge of himself and his relations with others. Almost straight out of the *Republic*'s playbook, Senghor, who went through the best training Plato prescribed for the future leader of the just state, poetry writing, began to question the kind of knowledge through which he came to know himself and others. Surely, the nascent idea of Negritude could not rest on the imaginary that André Breton and Paul Éluard provided, however they pleased him. Surely, the language with which they painted the world was not unbiased, however they reworked it. Caught in double binds, he saw only one option: to burn it all. Let us listen to Senghor recalling the scene: "At the Sorbonne, I became infected by Surrealism. Fortunately, I discovered Africa and Negro art through European ethnographers and art critics on the one hand, Negro American literature and especially poetry on the other. . . . Those discoveries were true revelations for me which led me to seek myself and uncover myself as I truly was: a Negro, morally and intellectually métissé with French. I then burned almost all my early poetry to start at zero. It was 1935."[2]

The moment is significant in the trajectory of a promising graduate from the prestigious École Normale Supérieure. In Janet Vaillant's important biography, the moment is symptomatic of an identity crisis for which psychology provides the explanation.[3] The child must become a man. Decades later, the poet recalls the memory more boldly: "1935: the year when I burned *all* my early poetry."[4] The theatrical gesture is uncharacteristic of a man known for his calm temperament. It is also a noble lie. No, Senghor did not burn his early poetry.[5]

Poetry, perhaps more than any other genre, relies on powerful imagination and language, and Senghor's commitment to language as a tool to unearth a repository of knowledge buried by colonial epistemic violence cannot be under-

stated. The premise is not without problems. Which language to use to express what has been repressed by centuries of physical, psychological, and epistemic violence? It is this problem, the problem of language, that Senghor positioned as foundational for emancipation.[6] It is also the problem that most vocal critics of Negritude have seized upon to mount their assault against the movement. Thus, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's criticism of Senghor's "anointment" by the Académie Française illustrates the argument made in *Decolonising the Mind* against neocolonial oppression through linguistic imperialism: There can be no African history, literature, or even politics, unless it is decidedly thought and written in a language indigenous to the continent. But what would it mean to—and what are the conditions under which one could—think, write, or translate Negritude into one or more African languages? Indeed, Senghor asks, "What language to choose from the multiplicity of languages and dialects? There are mother tongues and dynamic languages, languages that prey on others: Mandinka, Hausa, Yoruba, Fulani, Wolof" (page 8). The question, which is fundamentally a problem of translatability, underwrites the entire project of Negritude—and Senghor's work. In a sense, translation is a performance of Negritude. "Each generation, each thinker, each writer, artist, politician, must, in their own ways and for their own good, go deeper and expand Négritude, [overcoming] Négritude's predecessors" (page 141). This monumental task is as pertinent to our time as it was in Senghor's.

The aim of this translation is therefore twofold: first, to engage in the ongoing performative act of translating and reinterpreting Negritude across languages and generations; second, to foster dynamic interplay between seemingly disparate texts to critique a constantly evolving movement. This is why this collection juxtaposes political and poetic texts, polished articles and lesser-known spontaneous lectures, many translated for the first time, and some offered with a refreshed translation: to reveal the porosity between Senghor's politics and poetics driving decolonization toward a sustainable independence. By highlighting a feedback loop through all five decades of his intellectual journey, this arrangement allows readers to witness Senghor's mind at work. The unexpected discovery of Marx's manuscripts in the library of the French National Assembly, reflected in "Marxism and Humanism," sits alongside the poetic revelations of his Harlem stroll evident in "Negro-American Poetry." Meanwhile, "Balkanization or Federation" is both a response to and a necessary correlate of a poetic foundation transcending political and linguistic boundaries expressed in "Like the Manatees Go Drink at the Source." Two short pieces about art, "The Fodéba Keita African Ballet" and "For a Senegalese Tapestry," respectively written and spoken, capture Senghor's constant negotiation between nation building

and transnational construction. The collection's chronological approach also brings to the fore a mutually reinforcing poetic and political vision challenging historical signposts and rigid periodization to demonstrate ongoing responses to global intellectual and political developments, always in motion. As such, both the early "The Problem of Culture in French West Africa" and the later "Francophonie as Culture" demonstrate an evolving stance on cultural identity and linguistic diversity that both precedes and follows independence while being enabled by the Year of Africa. Throughout, my translation philosophy aims to re-create these evolving dialogues at the core of Senghor's prose to engage readers in the ongoing process of crafting an interconnected poetico-political vision.

Through this approach, readers can appreciate how Senghor's evolving thoughts on culture, language, and politics contributed to his vision of true independence and societal transformation. Even though national resistance through protests, civil disobedience, and cultural reforms led to a political upheaval known as decolonization, Senghor knew that a sustainable independence required a literal revolution, a turning, like the Earth around the Sun. This revolution did not mean returning to a precolonial beginning but redoing a familiar route with renewed willpower—a re-volition. Indeed, such a revolution is not a radical transformation but a movement toward self-determination. For Senghor, self-determination means the freedom to determine one's history rather than merely escaping historical determinism—a premise that run through the poetic essay "Like the Manatees Drink at the Source." There, Senghor deftly navigates between myth and historical reality to demonstrate how the interplay of these narratives not only enriches literature but also empowers individuals to actively reclaim and reinterpret their past, crafting a self-determined politico-cultural identity. Indeed, because he is more interested in poetry and philosophy, his relationship with Africa's past is less reliant on historical evidence than on a personal, subjective, even sensual rediscovery of the continent, giving free rein to poetic imagination. One year after independence, Senghor posed a rhetorical question to the governor general of Nigeria, Nnamdi Azikiwe: "Governor General, did you not yourself call for Negritude, in 1934, in *Renascent Africa*, when you called for mental emancipation as a precondition for independence? Is it not true that the worst colonization is the colonization of the mind?" (page 103). As Frantz Fanon also noted in the early days of independence, from his vantage point in Algeria's painful struggle, the destruction of the mind, soul, and thought of the colonized subject is colonialism's deepest wound.[7] Despite the many divides between Senghor and Fanon, they are united in their shared effort to reconstruct the beings whose lives were shattered by the physical and

epistemic violence of colonialism and the power of its ideology.[8] Fanon, a trained psychiatrist, sought to heal his patients by developing a radical theory of colonial psychopathology; Senghor, a trained poet, sought a different goal and means: to spark the imagination of the present, without which no future emancipation can be sustained. Negritude was only—and sometimes barely—one element of that spark.

This book, through its introduction and collected essays, illuminates the intricate relationship between Negritude and Léopold Sédar Senghor. Both often flow in parallel, as the translation shows, with essays alternating between drawing on and deviating from the movement, supporting the poet's philosophy without being wholly defined by it. Yet, like the vesica piscis formed when two circles overlap, they also intersect at pivotal turning points where Senghor's vision either diverges from or reinterprets Negritude. At these junctures, the poet-president charts his own course, informed, yet not constrained, by the movement's trajectory. In this introduction, I aim to pinpoint four moments of divergence and convergence, or turning points. The first turn, occurring in 1935, marks the birth of two entities: a new French word, *Négritude*, and a new Francophone thought, embodied by Senghor. This period witnessed a fascinating divergence: As Senghor began to shift his focus from poetry toward politics, Negritude moved in the opposite direction, from political discourse toward poetic expression. While the movement sought to articulate the power of racial identity through poetic writing, the poet embarked on a journey to theorize the political implications of *métissage*: a process not so much akin to mixing (mestizo, from the Latin *mixtus*) as it is to *weaving* (*tissage*, from the Latin *textere*) racial and cultural threads: a "mixthreading" that preserves each thread while forming an organized whole.

In the years leading up to the next turning point, Senghor's journey unfolded alongside a Negritude still searching for its identity—a process that reached a significant milestone in 1948, our second turning point. The year marks a pivotal moment when Senghor's path fully converged with Negritude as the movement became the voice of the *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie negre et malgache de langue française*. Much like our present collection, the *Anthology* demands a comprehensive reading of both its preface and essays. It charts a decolonial trajectory toward sustainable independence—not merely independence in name, but a process liberated from the ideological and epistemic violence of colonialism. However, the turning point extends beyond this literary milestone. That year, Senghor advanced his vision of decolonization and cultural renaissance by establishing the Bloc Democratique Sénégalais (BDS, Senegalese democratic bloc), a political party, and *La Condition Humaine*, a journal bridging

philosophy and poetry. Over the subsequent twelve years, Senghor and Negritude jointly confronted the challenges of subalternity, each leveraging the other's name and ideas to articulate a newfound agency for peoples marching toward freedom. The year 1960 stands as a symbolic milestone for freedom and marks the third turn in Senghor's intellectual journey. His ascension to the presidency might seem a departure from poetry and philosophy. Yet it is at this apex of political power that Senghor reappropriated Negritude, liberating it from racial philosophy and steering it back toward its linguistic roots. This reimagining set the stage for Negritude's evolution into Francophonie over the following two decades, a process that unfolded alongside what Souleymane Bachir Diagne aptly terms "state poïesis."[9] This evolution reached its culmination in 1981 when Senghor resigned from the presidency. This moment, far from signaling a retreat, represents our fourth turning point. Liberated from the immediate demands of state governance, Senghor fully embraced his philosopher-king aura. Building on his political experience, he now articulated a vision that transcended national boundaries, reimagining the postcolonial world through the lens of shared linguistic and cultural heritage: Francophonie. In Senghor's hands, the institution became more than a mere celebration of the French language; it evolved into a comprehensive philosophy of cultural exchange. This period saw Senghor grappling with the challenge he had long foreseen: how to forge a cultural identity that respects diversity while fostering cooperation among nations with shared colonial histories. His approach to Francophonie echoed the earlier development of Negritude, but with a crucial difference. While Negritude emerged as a tool of cultural assertion against colonial dominance, Francophonie became Senghor's instrument for building bridges in a postcolonial world. Just as Negritude emerged in French at the twilight of the empire, Francophonie represented a poetic return to the challenge of national language in forging transnational politics.

1935: Senghor Before Negritude

Christopher Miller's groundbreaking article revealed that the word *Négritude* first appeared not in Aimé Césaire's *Journal of a Homecoming* in 1939 but in his much shorter 1935 article in *L'Étudiant Noir*, "Nègreries: Jeunesse noire et assimilation" (Negronesses: Black youth and assimilation). This earlier appearance substantiates the political framing of a nascent Negritude, easily eclipsed by its poetic quest for a mythical origin.[10] According to Miller, there is a troubling comfort in inscribing Negritude within a poetic tradition that Aimé Césaire inaugurates, which addressed race without racism, a comfort that obscures the

movement's emergence as a rallying cry for political action. But where Césaire frames the nascent concept with Marxist terminology, reading race through the lens of class and critiquing systemic structures of racial oppression, Senghor rejects using race as a colonial construct meant to systematize racism. Instead, Senghor attempts to move beyond entrenched binaries: reason and intuition, mind and soul, Black and White. In short, Aimé Césaire's Negritude emphasized a political stance rooted in Marxist theory, while Senghor's humanist approach sought to transcend racial binaries. Senghor's humanism presents a challenging counterpoint to current trends in Afro-pessimist thought and works emerging from diasporic geographies, like Sylvia Wynter's *After Man, Towards the Human*. While these approaches emphasize the enduring impact of systemic racisms and the limitations of traditional humanism, calling for the undoing (rather than mere replacement) of Eurocentric definitions of what it means to be human, Senghor challenges us to achieve horizontal solidarity through *métissage*. While his approach may appear idealistic in our current climate of renewed racial tensions and identity politics, it underscores the importance of reconsidering the fluidity and complexity of identity formation beyond rigid racial categories: of finding unity in diversity.

This perspective on fluid racial identity is evident even in Senghor's earliest writing. In his first-known publication, in the January edition of *L'Étudiant Noir,* "Humanism and Us: René Maran" (an essay meant to complement Jane Nardal's anticipated yet unprinted article, "For a Black Humanism"), he suggests, with the pronoun "us," the existence of a collective whose identity calls for a third option.[11] In the article, the figure of the métis subject opens the unverifiability of the experience of Blackness: "I am not a purebred Negro. Beautiful discovery! According to ethnologists, there is no more than 25 percent purebred Negroes in Africa. The remaining 75 believe themselves to be Negroes, and they are right. As a métis stated: 'Being a Negro is a psychological business, more than blood purity.'"[12]

Senghor's rejection of perceived scientific validity of ethnography in favor of the psychological subjectivity of *métissage* is not without political implications: How can individual experiences coalesce to form a collective, a people? Who is the *we*?

Unlike Plato's *kallipolis*, where governance is entrusted to political leaders trained in philosophical practice to determine the future of the state, Senghor turns to the formation of a collective from whom such governance—indeed a people—emanates. Not unlike Plato, Senghor shuns political action as the remedy for a life that the former wants just and the latter desires free, and in 1937, he swiftly declines an offer from the new governor general of French West

Africa, Marcel de Coppet, to become inspector general of education. That summer, the young graduate was invited to participate in the International Congress on the Cultural Evolution of Colonial Peoples in Dakar. Not missing the chance to go back home, Senghor accepted and gave an unexpectedly radical lecture on the necessity of indigenous knowledge for selfhood—a precondition for future self-determination. Titled "The Problem of Culture in French West Africa," the lecture focused not on colonized subjects but on the false premise upon which colonizers sought to educate them. The French aimed to select and groom some colonized men, like Senghor, in all French matters, preparing them to join a French collective—a romanticized idea that falsely promised acceptance on equal terms.[13] Yet, Senghor warned, shaped by decades of colonization and centuries of forced cooperation, colonized peoples had become essentially "bicephalous," a description that reappropriates W. E. B. Du Bois's "Double Consciousness." Du Bois articulated this as a space of psychosocial conflict and alienation experienced by African Americans. Senghor, however, envisioned it as potential for politico-cultural integration that would lead to a renewed social construction. While Du Bois emphasized the inner conflict resulting from forced dual identities, Senghor sought a *métissage* that willfully comprehended and interacted with the world through both colonized and indigenous knowledge. This perspective is further explored in Senghor's 1971 speech "The Problematics of Negritude," translated here, in which Senghor acknowledges Du Bois as yet another one of Negritude's forefathers, furthering the movement's Afro-American intellectual lineage. In 1937, the problem was not that the colonized had no culture, but that they had two: intertwined, complicit, and inseparable. The challenge was to find the conditions under which a bicephalic culture might coexist without overpowering or destroying its host. "*Survival* necessitates adaptation—indeed, *assimilation*. We cannot evade it. Our milieu is no longer just West African, it is also French. It is international. In short, it is Afro-French" (page 4). Still, Senghor's proposed educational path remained dichotomous and Eurocentric: "Scientific works, among others, would be written in French. Literary forms that express the racial spirit—poetry, theater, folklore—would be written in one's native language" (page 9).

Addressing a large gathering that included influential colonial administrators and many prospective decolonized constituents, Senghor did not foresee political independence.[14] Beneath a skillful political performance that sought not to burn bridges with French administrators while addressing the hopes of an African polity that viewed him as a prodigal son, Senghor hinted at a politics transcending mere empiricism. In a text that was to become the opening piece in the series *Liberté*, he laid the groundwork for racial reconstruction from

which a political collective could be formed. Simply put, before Negritude, Senghor did not seek to retrieve an authentic Negro selfhood from ancestral roots. Instead, self-introspection through bilingual memories served a political project: to overcome the false dichotomy between a return to authenticity and a dilution into globality.[15] In so doing, Senghor stands out as one of the first intellectuals to view this bilingual and bicultural experience not as a legacy of colonial epistemic violence to be undone but as a means of resistance to be cultivated. He eventually conceptualized this idea under a theory of *métissage* to build the foundation of a decolonized people.[16]

While racial and territorial threads form the core of individualized identities, they seldom define the collective. "Race is a reality; racial purity is not" (page 3), Senghor asserts shortly after translating a Wolof proverb into French. As Ben Conisbee Baer notes, Senghor's needle-threading constitutes one of the most forceful hints at the formation of a French citizenship "detached from the requirements of cultural identity."[17] But for children to become the citizens of the future polity, they must "little by little . . . grow the circle of the universe around them, where they will act, tomorrow, as men" (page 4). This vision aligns with what I have called *peri-racialism*, a framework that shapes the structures influencing the spaces, narratives, and discourses wherein race occupies a central role, yet more powerful than explicit racial declarations. At the inception of his intellectual journey, Senghor sought a path to bring Blackness from the margins while aiming to decouple the center-periphery binary, carving a path that would be neither color-blind nor racialist. Over time, Negritude emerged as one such path: "ever larger concentric circles staggered upon one another, entangled with one another," ending politically with "a federation or an empire."[18]

Senghor's world was profoundly marked by his experiences of Eurocentrism before and during World War II, leading him to literary portrayals of a post-imperial worldly vision elaborated throughout and after the war.[19] Contrary to many of his Caribbean counterparts, including Aimé Césaire and Paulette Nardal—who returned to Martinique in 1941 to cultivate a distinct politics of resistance against Nazi Germany and the Vichy Regime while researching and writing about their local environment in *Tropiques*—Senghor stayed in Paris throughout the war years. There he engaged with fellow Africans brought together by his compatriots Alioune Diop and Ousmane Socé Diop as well as French administrators Georges Pompidou and Robert Delavignette.[20] By 1945, Senghor had become adept at navigating this complex dual existence, his insights shaped by this intricate dance between two worlds.[21] *Hosties Noires*, written concurrently with *Chants d'ombre* (though published three years later), thus refuses to choose between sacrifice and victimization, vindication and

abstraction, loyalty and betrayal. In a sense, Senghor's new theory of *métissage* as mixthreading in the postwar period is a symptom of the refusal to choose between two poles productively intertwined in a nascent postcoloniality: aesthetics and politics. Ultimately, Senghor's political vindication of federalism as a sustainable pathway out of imperialism rises from his negotiations between self-rule and shared rule, racial identity and political responsibility—the former two hitherto investigated in literary writing. They find roots in the imagination of a postwar society where race and politics function as two converging circles unswervingly merging toward a unified ideal. Fortuitously, Senghor ascended to a role in the French Constituent Assembly, formally commencing his political career on October 21, 1945, as one of two (SFIO, French Section of the Workers' International) congressmen from Senegal. It would not be long before the two circles formed one.

1948: Becoming Senghor

Today, the annals of literary history earmark the year 1948 with the publication of Senghor's *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*, with "Orphée Noir" (Black Orpheus), its (in)famous preface by Jean-Paul Sartre.[22] More often analyzed through Sartre's preface than Senghor's anthologizing, it is easy to miss the journey from West to East that the poet undertakes: from Guyana to Haiti, then Black Africa, ending in Madagascar. The poetic reversal of the Middle Passage timely commemorates the centennial anniversary of slavery abolition and the decree, "signed the same day," which established a free and mandatory education in the colonies.[23]

Beneath the poetic enterprise, politics seeps through every page carefully selected by the poet. Calls to "set ablaze my bloody lips," to "burn every flower and all my vain ideas" in the poem "Hurricane" go beyond just the desire to reiterate the burning of poetry hitherto written in French.[24] It fosters a connection with the legacy of the political revolution of 1848 that, Senghor tells us in his introduction, "has been more fruitful than we think." Since that revolution aimed to dismantle old monarchical structures to pave the way for sovereign nation-states, it is safe to say that in 1948, the anthology is indistinguishably poetically and politically motivated.

It is to Sartre's credit that he laid bare the relation between racial oppression and economic exploitation. But Sartre soon races through a step Senghor is not ready to make: the definition of a constituted collective—of Africans on the continent and the Black diaspora united against colonial oppression—which can be integrated into another collective, that is, workers united by class consciousness

against capitalist exploitation. Indeed, in the twelve years between the *Anthology* and the moment of independence, the poet's imaginative energy turns to the political question par excellence: Who is the *we* that constitutes a people?

Though poetic writing made him aware of the nuance between individual and collective identity, the *we* he is called to represent in his political duties remains an ambiguously defined entity. Senghor finds himself caught between a desire to vindicate African voices and a proclivity not to racialize political agency. The tension is palpable in a piece written for *Réveil* in 1947, where the "tyranny of international capitalism" is denounced as the culprit for the racial discrimination and political shortcomings of the Fourth Republic constitution.[25] While articulating a vision for reconciliation between "European socialism and African collectivism," "modern techniques and African humanism," the goal remains to build a world "without distinction of race or religion." Senghor's impasse, which is symptomatic of what Jacques Derrida has termed "aporias," finds an opening in Marx's newly compiled and translated into French *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, which the poet-congressman reads in the library of the French National Assembly and reflects upon in "Marxism and Humanism," here translated for the first time into English:[26] "For us, men of 1947, men of the aftermath of the two wars who narrowly escaped the bloody contempt of past dictators only to face the looming shadows of new dictatorships, what profit could we gain of those early works" (page 33). In these pages where Marx develops a critique of capitalism based on an analysis of the alienation of human labor through wage labor, he finds the material to reframe the question steering him toward independence: What are the conditions under which self-determination can be achieved? "Only in community with others, each individual has the means to cultivate his faculties in all directions," Senghor paraphrases from *The German Ideology*, and "only in the community, therefore, is personal freedom possible" (page 44). The role of community building in the development of individual capacities is exactly not Sartre's vindication of an immanent formation of a world proletariat. Workers' struggle may be universal, not their working conditions. The reading of Marx's early works reveals to Senghor the existence of a "reciprocal action" between material conditions, whose transformation falls to economic and political actions, and imaginative performance, whose empowerment falls to poetic and philosophical training. Thus, self-determination is the task of both the poet-philosopher and the politician: the former to imagine the community and the latter to forge a polity from which a people can emerge.

In February 1948, Senghor creates *La Condition Humaine* (The human condition), a journal whose title echoes Malraux's 1933 eponymous novel about

the failed communist insurrection in Shanghai in 1927.[27] There, readers often encounter extended excerpts of "Negro-African" poetry, conveniently sourced from the *Anthology*, juxtaposed against political pamphlets.[28] A testament to Senghor's efforts to wield poetic creativity to amplify a shared experience of Blackness, the journal steers it toward a communal consciousness of West African workers' socioeconomic realities, like those in the Dakar-Niger Railway strike captured in Ousmane Sembène's *Les bouts de bois de Dieu* (*God's Bits of Wood*). Despite the strike's resolution in March 1948, Congressman Senghor had a front-row seat for the SFIO officials' refusal to engage with worker representatives, ongoing tribal politics, nepotism, and neglect of African interests. In a poignant letter penned to the party's secretary on September 27, 1948, Senghor expressed his disillusionment: "The Party is no longer, in Black Africa, structurally democratic or actively socialist. . . . It has sacrificed Marxist ethics and socialist practice to political tactics. . . . In the face of such deceit, I cannot but leave."[29] The BDS was created one month later. Influenced by Marx's late "Letter to Zassulitch," which suggested that the conclusions in *Capital* were valid only for Western Europe, Senghor set forth an "African Road to Socialism" that might bypass or mitigate the phases of capitalism.[30] Yet one thing is sure, he noted in his inaugural address to the BDS: "The consciousness of a world proletariat is not yet alive in our minds."[31]

Senghor's vocal antinationalism and the rise of Negritude throughout the decade both stemmed from the vision of a transnational solidarity that preserves the "original personality of each people."[32] His committed work for the Council of Europe at that time was driven by a parallel yet contrasting antinationalist goal where race is both medicine and poison.[33] Nominated to the United Nations Trusteeship Council in 1950, Senghor traveled to New York for the first time to urge the international organization to tame national sovereignty and empower local assemblies.[34] As he roamed the streets of Harlem, he could not but reflect proudly on a distinctive Negro American poetry: the Negro spirituals. Listen to "God's trombones" (page 53), wrote Senghor, alluding to James Weldon Johnson's eponymous collection of inspirational sermons by African American preachers reimagined as poetry. Yes, through centuries of physical and epistemic violence, "Black slaves had largely forgotten African languages and, to a smaller extent, African folklore," but they also "fertilized folklore even as some deep-rooted connections tethered it to their ancestral traditions" (page 48). Reading "Judgement Day" in a lecture whose exact details remain conspicuously undisclosed, the audience was urged to look past material conditions and seek something akin to divine mysticism.[35] "Negro imagination unfolds there" (page 52), Senghor wrote. Yet to read the poem for its content

is to take the shadow for the prey. Undoubtedly, there is in the poetry of Johnson, as well as that of Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Claude McKay, a racial affirmation of Blackness through an evocation of African folklore—and its transformation. After all, the "discourse surrounding Race inevitably intertwines with the discourse surrounding Africa" (page 62). But if, "rightfully so, Claude McKay can be considered the true inventor of Négritude" (page 58), it is because his poetry "rarely and discreetly evokes Africa"—and when it does, it is as a land marred by "destitution and savagery." Not unlike Sartre's, McKay's Negritude connects the racial struggle with the class struggle of the proletariat against capitalist exploitation. "In recent years," Senghor writes in the concluding paragraphs of the text, "Negro-American poetry has endeavored to overcome the discourse surrounding race, through union with God—or the proletariat" (page 63). Back home, it would become necessary to create the conditions under which a racial consciousness surrounded by political representation and economic potential would not just survive but thrive. Between 1948 and 1956, new electoral regulations enabled the BDS to clinch more victories in federal-wide polls, each new seat amplifying new voices (some inspired by the Muslim brotherhoods), each shifting the balance from city to country.[36] Soon, Senghor was faced with the task of uniting them. Far from assuming a preexisting unity, the future poet-president drew from the rich history of African oral traditions, which he discovered then, to raise a postcolonial consciousness that was not yet racial but collectively already more than purely political. Indeed, "since Blacks are oppressed in their race and because of it, it is of their race that a consciousness must arise," Senghor repeated.[37] If Africans sought more autonomy, politics and economics alone would not be enough: Racial agency would have to play a central role, on both sides of the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

The negotiated convergence of race and politics—consciousness of a distinctive racial personality and awareness of a shared political agency—intensified throughout the decade. In a book ardently promoting a single French citizenship for all members of the French Union, Doudou Thiam, future minister of foreign affairs of Senegal, depicts it as a "tendency," a "movement" toward an elusive "convergence between two humanities."[38] This stance, upheld by figures like Mamadou Dia, transcends a mere colonized desire to remain within the "French orbit" and contributes to Senghor's "federal solution"—a project whose seminal blueprint is translated here for the first time. It mirrors the growing incapacity to secure economic participation, contributions, and reparations from France—a feat the overseas legislators tirelessly advocated for—coupled with a simultaneous forging of the ideological framework of a peri-racial society: one not defined by race or embodying racial identity but

operating in an adaptive agency where core racial realities would influence and be influenced by surrounding factors (political, economic, environmental, etc.).

In "For a Federalist Solution," published in 1955 in *La Nef,* the congressman warns that "member states have grown disdainful of the epithet."[39] Though both Dia and Senghor respectively argue in the pages of *La Condition Humaine* that there may not be a "real alternative to federalism," that "it would be pure folly for the territories to constitute themselves in so-called independent nations," the problem to which federalism is the solution is not the political system: It is the polity. Indeed, no "French" polity can be sustained, be it national or federal, for "the word has become a symbol of domination." The problem is not just, not even primarily, political. "The overseas territories, specifically those in Black Africa . . . share a natural connection through ethnic, geographical, and development factors" (page 69). If "African nationalism is willing to forgo the nation, not the African fatherland" (page 73), Africans may be able to forgo the colonial legacy of the nation-state altogether. Senghor's vision extends beyond political structures to encompass cultural production as a means of fostering collective consciousness undefined by national boundaries alone.

In two pieces published in *La Condition Humaine* concurrently with the article in *La Nef*, "Laye Camara and Lamine Dialhaté, for Art Is Not Partisan" and "Laye Camara and Lamine Niang, for Art Must Be Incarnate," Senghor thus promotes an aesthetic creativity that draws from the African oral tradition to foster a collective consciousness indispensable to and yet independent of the experience of a shared identity. This decolonizing project aims to infuse aesthetic creativity in political construction—an ideological effort Terry Eagleton describes as the "equivalent in the mental realm of the overthrow of priest and king in the political one."[40] Inspired by Marx's *German Ideology*, the poet-congressman sets his political agenda to transform the socioeconomic conditions (e.g., wages, pensions, equal pay, etc.) of the West Africans he represents in the French National Assembly against the backdrop of the transformation of a cultural production (e.g., poetry, novels, music, etc.) not just reflective of its society but a force capable of molding it. Focusing on one without the other cannot succeed. Concluding that the real transformation is not political and economic but lies in "the conscious awakening of the men that are here" (page 75), the "federalist solution" presents only one part of the necessary changes on the road to independence. "Like the Manatees Go Drink at the Source" would stage the other.

On the board of *Présence Africaine*, Senghor hastened the production of an African corpus. In 1955, no less than three prefaces introducing collections of

West African tales, Mongo poetry, and Malagasy epic were published by the journal.[41] But as Senghor worked to develop a literary corpus that would qualify as African, significant political changes were unfolding across the continent. On the political front, New Year's Day set the tone: Sudan, the largest state of Africa with one million inhabitants, attained independence. In March 1956, France withdrew its protectorate over Morocco and Tunisia, acknowledging their freedom from French rule. Yet the Algerian war intensified, and Senghor, along with 146 other congressmen, voted in favor of a French peacekeeping intervention.[42] His vocal opposition to policies that might undermine the integrity of the French Union, however, was not a symptom of his sentimental or colonial attachment to France. It was a far-sighted warning of a postimperial governance structure that could hinder West African integration. At the core of Senghor's vindication of a thread connecting metropole and overseas territories is a Marxian premise that to enact a sustainable change in material conditions and relations of production, what is needed is the expropriation of old means of ideological production, which *métissage* enables.[43] If Frederick Cooper has shown that French politicians did not seek to "carve up French West Africa so as to keep its territories poor and weak," the genius of Senghor lies in foreseeing that the most significant and long-lasting lever of autonomy transcends politics: It is ideological.[44]

The commitment to an ideological reorientation necessary to secure the sustainability of any future autonomous governance—not to mention independence—came to the fore at the First World Congress of Black Writers and Artists, organized by Alioune Diop under the patronage of *Présence Africaine* and heralded as a cultural counterpart to the more political Bandung Conference held just one year earlier. Taking place at the symbolically significant Descartes amphitheater of the Sorbonne from September 19 to 22, 1956, the event marked a desire to affirm the existence of a collective consciousness shared by all Black peoples throughout the world, independent of colonial history. Although Malagasy writer Jacques Rabemananjara assured his listeners that the organizing committee deliberately omitted "the truly political aspect of the problem," Alioune Diop counterpointed that one frequently overlooks "the natural link between the cultural and the political," a separation that often leads to a "crisis of consciousness."[45] Ostensibly, Senghor's lecture, "Spirit of Civilization or the Laws of Negro-African Culture," sought to theorize an objective cultural creativity among African peoples that the hyphenated and singular "Negro-African Culture" represents.[46] Yet in the unscripted discussions that occurred in the private Q&A following the speakers' presentations, the poet-congressman went beyond dubious generalizations on Negro-African

arts and into a politically motivated artistic creativity as "prerequisite to overcoming our alienation."[47] This led him to further articulate the quandary at the core of Black emancipation: Neither a transnational solidarity constructed as a metonym for anticolonial struggle nor a nationalist freedom built on colonized politics would lead to a sustainable independence.[48] Senghor's approach to resolving this dilemma was unconventional and, to some, controversial. His desire to remain "within the French orbit" originated from his conviction that politics and economics alone could not address the core challenge of enhancing a collective's productive capacity in the postcolonial era. He believed in fostering "a true culture [that was] always [a] deracinalizing, active assimilation of foreign values," rejecting notions of an irreducible, racially homogeneous Blackness, through the political and linguistic practice of *métissage*.[49] Here, the concept of deracinalization stems from the Wolof phrase *Génn xeet*—literally, "to get out of one's race/ethnic group"—rather than the French word *racine* meaning "root." This linguistic nuance informed Senghor's (mis)translation of Claude McKay's "getting down to our native roots" as "*plonger jusqu'aux racines de notre race*" in *Banjo* as the concluding sentence of "The Problem of Culture in French West Africa." This nuanced understanding of the relation between race and root informed Senghor's broader views on racial identity and cultural politics. He cautioned against reducing racial identity and culture to a narrow politics of identity. While he acknowledged the importance of resisting epistemic violence, he warned that this approach risked leading to aesthetic insularity and political nationalism. It was this risk of racial essentialism and ethnic balkanization—a neologism he coined then—that led him to caution against policies that would "artificially divide territories into political, economic, and cultural entities that do not ignore the metropole but do ignore each other" (page 88). This did not negate the role of politics and economics or overlook the "social, economic, and even military frailties" of the colonies. It highlighted the need to aesthetically craft a renewed collective consciousness called Negritude, "rediscovered" from a repository clouded by centuries of epistemological violence.[50]

As Senghor noted in 1956, "the example stems from Europe where, in the nineteenth century, the nations on the continent, stirred by France, endeavored to become nations. They made themselves historians, archaeologists, philologists, ethnographers, to resuscitate their past and discover national virtues."[51] Arguably, "Balkanization or Federation," published in *Afrique nouvelle* in December 1956, is Senghor's blueprint for a political integration with France. But to prevent balkanization from eliminating the possibility of a shared historiography necessary to the formation of a collective, federalism alone is only a political answer.

To produce and then to sustain the collective, an aesthetic project is needed. This project, composed between 1948 and 1954, is *Éthiopiques*.[52]

Published in 1956, the compendium is concerned with the problem of representation, focusing not on the political but the cultural kind. Its postface, "Like the Manatees Go Drink at the Source," aims to radically alter recognizability and subvert the tradition of representation of words and images that perpetuates colonial epistemology and hinders self-determination.[53] How could it not, Senghor writes, for "after centuries of rationalism," what used to be a "transparent veil [is now] a wall" (page 80). Often analyzed for its elaboration of rhythm in Negro-African poetry, the postface exhorts a practice of naming to address the deeply ingrained epistemic violence in the process of world making. Simply put, naming—or renaming—is an essential step toward self-determination. Still, it would be a mistake to view the issue just as a matter of language. The postface calls for a new poetics, an ars poetica that aims to theorize a newly written and self-named Negro-African poetry.[54] "Our aspiration is humble: to pioneer, to pave the way for an authentic Negro poetry that does not foreclose being French" (page 84). If the "we" precedes and is simultaneously created by the process, it is because, as the title suggests, Negro-African poets will sustain independence by going toward—not returning to—an unspoiled source. Eventually, this "authentic Negro poetry" might as well be foreign to Wolof and French speakers. Consider the first verse of "Man and the Beast" that opens the compendium: "I name you Evening, / O ambiguous Evening, / fluttering leaf I name you."[55] This verse both names and is confounded by the act of naming. In "Kaya-Magan," the king's name changes in almost every verse, remaining elusive, while the poet ambiguously describes himself as "Prince of the North of South," "of rising-sun and setting-sun Prince," "both sides of a double door," and "tom-tom movement" that "commands future Africa." (Re)naming, then, is not merely a linguistic return but a political act for constituting a new polity by historically situated subjects whose emerging agency requires the continuous articulation of a new lexicon. As Jacques Chevrier notes, Senghor's (re) namings in the poems of *Éthiopiques* draw from Latin syntax (characterized by frequent inversions), Old French (incorporating archaic words), and African languages (with a translation glossary).[56] This nuanced articulation of multilingual representation echoing the past while allowing for future evolution, "*around which* the figure of the poem is organized," becomes a cornerstone in the formulation of Negritude.

The imminent political demise of French colonialism, alongside its desperate fight to retain power, and the resurgence of African aesthetics, arguably more vibrant in Europe and America than on the continent itself, temporarily

challenged Senghor's universal aspirations. In 1957, reflecting the continental reality of decolonization, the journal *Condition Humaine* gave way to a publication better suited to the task ahead*: L'Unité Africaine.* Addressing prospective independent citizens and party members, Senghor continually warned against balkanization as a territorial fragmentation that could not rely on an innate collective consciousness for reconstruction.[57] Writing for a different audience in *Le Monde*, Senghor extolled an "autonomy of thought" and a "decolonization of the minds" related to yet independent from the political independence of Africa.[58]

Senghor's urgency to train the minds of future African citizens, embracing a novel form of transnational solidarity as a precursor to sustainable independence, is evident in both his policy recommendations to the National Assembly and in his philosophical discussions on African socialism. Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò thus notes that decolonization was "a matter of making a colony into a self-governing entity with its political and economic fortunes under its own direction (though not necessarily control)," a fact demonstrated by Senghor's interventions in the National Assembly, where he backed addressing economic disparities and illiteracy through political means.[59] Yet he harbored a deeper concern: that independence not grounded in, or aligned with, a decolonized ideological framework would ultimately prove unsustainable.

The alternation between political and aesthetic speeches and essays in this translation aims to bring this negotiation to the fore of ongoing debates about decolonization, the process of decolonizing, and their own different goals. There is perhaps no better illustration of the difficult negotiation faced by intellectual leaders like Senghor than the context of General de Gaulle's 1958 constitutional referendum.[60] While Sékou Touré's Guinea is often cited as an isolated, almost aberrant response to the West African decolonization, this seemingly unwavering position obscures the fact that most intellectual leaders struggled with endorsing the yes vote. Just a few weeks before the vote on September 28, 1958, de Gaulle traveled to Senegal, where the conspicuous absence of both Léopold Sédar Senghor and Mamadou Dia—the former engaged with "urgent family business" in Normandy, the latter in Switzerland for "medical treatment"—conveyed their refusal to succumb to a false dichotomy between colonial subordination and immediate independence, leaving the relatively low-ranked minister of the interior, Valdiodio Ndiaye, to oversee the presidential reception.

How could a no vote, leading to immediate independence, not exacerbate the political fragmentation or balkanization unless it were a part of a concerted effort?[61] Conversely, how could a yes vote not perpetuate delays in crafting

policies steering the territories away from French rule—whether via an African federation, confederation, or union?[62] Denouncing the "nationalist virus" in an article for *Les Cahiers de la République*, Senghor substantiated his endorsement of the *yes* with more than just political arguments. One might lament the somewhat poetic justification of "friendship," "honesty," or "loyalty" or find hints of regrets interspersed throughout the text.[63] Yet he anchored his choice in Articles 76 and 86 of the constitution's text, which envisioned more than mere prospects of independence. By requiring that a "community member" aspiring to change their status "manifest a will" validated through a "local referendum," the process underscored a political objective grounded in fostering a cohesive Black collective—not undermining it. This rationale informed Senghor's ultimate justification for endorsing the yes vote, guided not merely by political expediency but by a will to foster African unity through a collective practice moving "freedom from" to "freedom to." Negritude is the attempt to make that move.

It should not escape us that Negritude was shaped by the dynamic relation between aesthetics and politics during this decade, more than it was by the *Anthology*. Indeed, Senghor eventually defined Negritude as "the sum of cultural values of the Black world" less than a year later, at the Second Congress of Black Artists and Writers, in Rome, on April 25, 1959.[64] As the decade turned, the movement faced the emerging realities of new nation-states stepping into political sovereignty. Far from meeting an ossifying death, it morphed in real time, becoming more institutionalized than essentialized. Under Senghor's presidency, it began to shape the national narrative, catalyzing a generation of engaged intellectuals like Ousmane Sembène, who challenged Negritude's boundaries. It also entered a new domain of national sovereignty: foreign policy. The diplomatic arena revitalized Negritude, ushering in a new chapter many had prematurely written off. The organization of the 1966 First World Festival of Negro Arts, creation of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie in 1970, and staging of the Négritude Colloquium of 1971, along with their politico-aesthetic inception and aftermath, embodied by texts such as "The Fodébo Keita African Ballet" and "For a Senegalese Tapestry," provided Senghor with ideological pivots to transform the spirit of unity, identity, and racialism that had been a cornerstone of the movement's early years. I have translated these texts here for the first time. In them, we see how the strategies Senghor adopted as the poet-turned-president were not merely political maneuvers but, in keeping with those of Socrates's philosopher-king, were rooted in an ideological ground prepared by years of poetic training. These texts are clear examples of how Senghor integrated his poetic sensibilities into his politics,

infusing Negritude into burgeoning domestic policies and international relations, reinventing the birth of a nation claiming its historical determination.

1960: Poet-President

The Year of Africa, 1960, which saw seventeen African nations win their independence, stands out as one of the greatest historical shifts in the modern world, a landmark in anticolonial politics. Yet commemorating decolonization with a single year fails to capture the culmination of decades, if not centuries, of struggle and the full geopolitical and historical magnitude of the event, including the lingering consequences of centuries of exploitation and underdevelopment. Symptomatic of the inadequate metonym that 1960 represents, Senghor's election to the highest office in Senegal was an extended process that both preceded and followed that pivotal year.

To understand the complex realities surrounding the symbolic year, let us look at the extended process around Senghor's election, which began in 1959. Then, 302 years after the French set foot in a place they named Fort Saint Louis, the leaders of the future Mali Federation drew upon Articles 76 and 86 of the Constitution of the Fifth Republic to chart the federation's course to independence and fulfill Senghor's long-standing vision for a federated polity.[65] During a meeting with de Gaulle on November 27, Senghor recounted the general's personal advice to "build a strong state"—advice whose repercussions would resonate beyond the Year of Africa.[66] On April 4, 1960, a "transfer of competence" was ratified by Michel Debré, Mamadou Dia, and Modibo Keita, leading to the proclamation of independence on June 20. Tensions soon emerged, however, and just two months later, Senegalese leaders Mamadou Dia and Léopold Sédar Senghor denounced what they perceived as a coup by Modibo Keita, breaking up the Mali Federation, triggering a state of emergency that would last for the next two years. Senghor was sworn in as president of the Republic of Senegal on September 5, 1960.

Less than a year after his presidential inauguration, Senghor, addressing the governor general of Nigeria, acknowledged that "national independence [was] not an end" (page 98). As though the federal idea from which independence politically rose was now itself also in question, the text was reprinted in 1963 with the title "From Federation to the Civilization of the Universal." Was national sovereignty merely a stepping stone, "an uncharted territory we must survey" to facilitate a progression from a federative to a universal polity? Or could it serve as a foundation of a new kind of entity—one that neither dismisses nor depends entirely on traditional political structures?

These questions, which the translated texts in this collection compel us to reconsider, point to the agenda Senghor grappled with in his transition to poet-president: a modern philosopher-king whose raison d'être was to shape a social community into a willed political entity. The hyphen between *poet* and *president* aptly presents Senghor's unique position. His poetic identity allowed him to navigate the political landscape with cultural authority while his responsibilities as president were balanced by his poetic work operating beyond just the political realm. Recall that Plato's leader yielded "no ruling, law, or political authority in the usual sense," for the goal was to exceed the political project and retrieve the possibility of justice. What would happen if we were to rethink Negritude as a broader ethos akin to Plato's *dikē*—justice—led by its philosopher-king Senghor? It would reveal its vital role in postcolonial self-governance and elucidate a twofold necessity: the need for aesthetic practice in fostering a political cohesion that did not rely only on repressive apparatuses, and the importance of political practice in shaping aesthetic representation pointing toward something more than just a romanticized idea of Blackness. Because no independence can sustain itself indefinitely, this dynamic relationship between aesthetics and politics required constant adaptation, creating a feedback loop where political actions inspired new aesthetic interpretations, which in turn influenced political strategies.

The constant reimagination and recalibration of Negritude that are symptomatic of postindependence texts such as "Négritude Is a Humanism" and "The Problematics of Négritude" exposed the limits of the movement. Its foundational vision, "the sum of cultural values of the Black world," reconnecting continent and diaspora via a dreamed United States of Africa as is evident in "Culture, Development, Cooperation," soon faced "too many fact-based obstacles that [would] prevent their realization for quite some time: cold war, as well as racial, linguistic, and cultural differences."[67]

By 1962, ethnic and religious tensions within Senegal, coupled with broader geopolitical challenges, led to two significant policy shifts, casting a shadow on the promise of transnational collaboration. One, a ministerial circular by Mamadou Dia dated May 21, granted the state the power to nationalize groundnut production, effectively politicizing the economy to sidestep the divergent interests of ethnic and religious groups—especially the Mouride Brotherhood.[68] The other, a decree signed by Senghor, accused his premier of orchestrating a coup in December and set the stage for a new constitution enhancing presidential power.[69] The political and economic fallout have often obscured that it was that very year, 1962, that Senghor first outlined what eventually became Francophonie in a special issue of *Esprit*—further developed in "Francophonie

as Culture" three years later.[70] There, the poet-president did not just introduce a concept he would institutionalize; he also elaborated on what it meant to decolonize when the legacy of colonialism had become so intertwined with indigeneity that distinguishing them became nearly impossible. In many ways, Francophonie, a linguistic *métissage*, a "double symbiosis between theory and experience, discursive reason and intuitive reason" (page 121), is Negritude's offspring.

By 1963, the poet-president could no longer ignore the ideological limits of postcolonial politics. He adopted a two-pronged approach: pursuing economic development contingent on external forces (e.g., environmental disasters, financial crises, monetary devaluation, aid assistance, etc.), and a decolonized imagination fueled by three decades of Negritude aesthetics. In "African Unity," delivered at the Organization of African Unity annual meeting in May and subsequently published in *Liberté 4,* Senghor made a poignant statement that underscores the aspirational nature of Negritude in the postcolonial imagination: "The vitality of our feelings, this passion, which is a hallmark of Africanness . . . was too often approached in a rhetorical manner. It is time to ground it on our *realities*."[71] In the first three years of independence, the poet-president had learned the hard way that a desire expressed in a text, poetic or political, is not to be confused with its fulfillment.

Recognizing these harsh realities, including "fanaticisms (racial, linguistic, religious)," "micro-nationalisms," and the limitations of the "European and American examples," Senghor addressed the Fourth UPS Congress just a few months later (Union Progressiste Sénégalaise, later renamed Parti Socialiste in 1976).[72] There, he denounced a lack of "creative imagination" and "spirit of innovation" without which sustainable independence would remain elusive. To overcome this deficit, Senghor argued, real decolonization required economic independence and intellectual freedom. "Truth be told . . . I should use the word *freedom*, which stands in opposition to the colonized situation and is the faculty to choose our ways. . . . More than political freedom, it is intellectual and spiritual freedom that cultural freedom needs: hearts and minds. In that sense, let's admit it, we are not yet decolonized."[73] Contrary to a literary historical narrative according to which Senghor was consumed by the lofty goals of a derelict Negritude inadequately suited to the economic, social, and political realities of postcoloniality, the poet-president championed economic development, revised the balance of payments, controlled budget planning, and so on. Indeed, *Liberté 4*, which highlights his pragmatic governance, bears the subtitle *Socialism and Planning*. In a policy address delivered on July 12, he extolled a "depoliticization of the masses," urging a shift toward the "primacy of economics" empowering a new decolonized governance: "Habib Thiam [minister of plan-

ning and development] will demonstrate, with data, that within a year—from December 1962 to 1963 . . . distortions and deviations from our plan have been largely corrected, and execution efficiency improved."[74] Indeed, the impartial economic metrics were increasingly prioritized over the more abstract notion of the nation-state, whose political unity was beginning to fray, heralding crises in nations like Algeria, Congo, and Nigeria.

With this profound understanding of the challenges ahead, Senghor's remarkable foresight of the coming wave of rebellions and civil wars that would sweep across the continent by the decade's end played a crucial role in helping Senegal remain relatively stable during this turbulent period. Beyond short-term political and economic gains, Senghor was focused on the long-term emancipation of minds. "I must reiterate, we are not yet decolonized," he emphasized.[75] The journey, he asserted, begins with acknowledging that "a well-formulated plan, reflecting our realities, is not enough. To a consciousness of our situation, we must add the *will* to transform it."[76] For that task to succeed—not just to decolonize but to engage in the process of decolonizing—what is needed is not merely a goal but a practice. "We must exercise our creative imagination."[77]

The 1966 First World Festival of Negro Arts emerged as a major showcase for this exercise, becoming a pinnacle of Negritude and a testament to postcolonial self-affirmation. Initiated during the 1959 Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists amid negotiations for independence and actualized after Senegal's constitution revision in March 1963, the event was steeped in political influences. Senghor, reliant on the United States for financial and cultural support, personally intervened in top-level political discussions, meticulously selecting artists and artworks for the Dakar showcase. On one occasion, he tasked Gray Cowan, a professor at Columbia University and eventual president of the African Studies Association, for expertise on "traditional African dances."[78] On another, he directly appealed to President John F. Kennedy to send American jazz artists, specifically requesting Duke Ellington.[79]

Fulfilling a wish expressed in "Ndessé or Blues," a wartime poem where the poet implored Ellington to play "Solitude," Ellington began crafting *Senegalese Suite*. Though the jazzman had never visited Senegal, he aimed to incorporate Senegalese musical motifs but ended up with an unconvincing essentialized representation. He soon altered the musical form from a suite of relatively independent pieces to an elaborate chord progression and titled it in French *La Plus Belle Africaine*, symbolizing a shift from national to continental framing. Ellington's composition became emblematic of the festival's struggle between its aspiration for authentic representation and translating

such aspirations into aesthetic creation that could be shared beyond inherited artificial borders. In Dakar, his jazz throbbed with these musical and political tensions. Such, however, was not Ellington's first musico-political negotiation. The US government had, for years, endorsed Black artists for global tours, leveraging their art as a countercommunism weapon with an air of color-blindness and civil rights optimism.[80] Aware of the festival's political undertones, Ellington innocently noted in his journal: "When the time for our concerts come, it is a wonderful success. We get the usual diplomatic applause from the diplomatic corps."[81] Still, the musician challenged the contours of a stage that had in many ways been tailored for him.[82] Ellington's unconventional approach mirrored the need for cultural and political transformation in the face of disillusionment with the realities of independence. Unsurprisingly, the concert's inception was marked more by its initial shock than anticipated familiarity.[83] Just as decolonized nations were grappling with rediscovered identities and renegotiating their places in the world, so too was Ellington pushing the boundaries of what was familiar and expected.

Senghor had anticipated the compounding meeting of music and politics. If the art was to shock, so was Dakar's visual appeal to the festival's guests—to their expectation. In the months leading up to the festival, the poet-president engaged in massive urban development reforms and aspired to transform the medina into a Le Corbusier–like Radiant City—a transformation that led its residents to support the students' uprising and demonstration in the city two years later.[84] At the political cost of antagonizing the Muslim brotherhoods, he cleared the streets of Dakar of beggars and erected walls to hide impoverished neighborhoods.[85] The image strongly recalls the shielding of high-level diplomatic summits more than the openness of popular cultural encounters.[86] As one article in the *New York Times* noted, "For the 10,000 visitors who came to Dakar this month . . . Dakar itself appeared strangely un-African."[87] Both Ellington's music and Senghor's nation were doing exactly what they had been designed to do: Leave an unambiguous print. For the three weeks during which the festival allegedly paused the political life of the nation, at least in Dakar, both its figurehead and its participants presented a curated image of postcolonial Africa through artistic production—an image recently scrutinized by scholars on transnational identity making.[88] The event served as an experiment that, unlike Plato's *kallipolis*, was not confined to mere thoughts. By excluding most Senegalese from its celebration, it relegated art to being a luxury available only to the select few who could attend it—by geographical or financial means. The significant outsourcing of its production raised questions about the political resources needed to craft African aesthetics.

The three essays from 1966 featured in this collection approach such questions from diverse perspectives: Negritude, African art, and Francophonie. "Négritude Is a Humanism," delivered in Beirut in the wake of the festival, begins with an unresolved tension: "Négritude . . . is a rooting in and an affirmation of oneself" (page 105), states Senghor, yet simultaneously expanding it outside of the self and into a collective notion in another language: "It is nothing more than what English-speaking Negro-Africans call *African personality*." The rest of the essay is mired in tensions emphasizing that "to live ethically means to live with naturally opposing yet complementary forces." These tensions, initially perceived as clichés, morph into a political principle facilitating a "decolonization in sub-Saharan Africa . . . with minimal bloodshed and hatred" that "could extend to South Africa, South Rhodesia, and the Portuguese colonies if only the Manichean mind of Albo-Europeans would open to dialogue." The First World Festival of Negro Arts, a point of pride for Senghor, indeed facilitated interactions between African, European, and American artworks and artists, with diplomacy playing a pivotal role. Yet these "apparent contradictions," far from being symptoms of an irreconcilable divide, instead point toward a latent harmony, "*the harmony of a union*" (page 113), that political governance could tap into. Enriched by references to Bergson and Augustine that present him as a philosopher in the most Platonic sense—the one who accesses the "forms," a word he uses more than twenty times—Senghor reveals his objective: to create a harmonious political order through laws, policies, and institutions. Symbolically, the festival's African contemporary art exhibitions were displayed in the old courthouse, requisitioned for the occasion. A sign of things to come, Jean Collin, Senghor's advisor, noted institutional weaknesses in *Dakar Matin* shortly after the festival's conclusion: "Too many public institutions have taken a step back because of their weakness before their client and a concern for clientelism." Clearly, de Gaulle's counsel for a robust state found resonance.

As illustrated in the essay "For a Senegalese Tapestry" (page 128), Senghor also began to lean heavily toward a state-driven patronage of culture. When he inaugurated a state-run factory because "national art requires a nation," the institutionalization of aesthetic creativity was turned toward not artistic but a political realization that Souleymane Bachir Diagne has fittingly termed a "State poïesis."[89] If the manufacture is to decolonize the imagination, it is not for the masses who cannot afford artworks predominantly created for consulates, embassies, museums, and other institutions.[90] As James S. Coleman points out in *Sénégal Carrefour*, an official imprint of Dakar's Ministry of Information and Tourism at the time, the state remains the sole "purchaser of the tapestries used to adorn its many Ministries and Embassies abroad." This practice became further

institutionalized when ratified into law on December 19, 1973, metamorphosing the manufacture into a public institution of an "industrial and commercial" character.[91] The new direction aligns with Negritude's foundational ethos: to perpetually recalibrate the play between aesthetic representation and political action, ensuring a postcolonial governance adapting to the necessities of its sustainability.

The rejection of Negritude by intellectuals such as Ousmane Sembène in Senegal, Wole Soyinka in Nigeria, and Stanislas Adotevi in Benin—evident at the 1969 Pan-African Festival in Algiers, where Adotevi famously declared the movement dead—represents the climactic reaction to this misperceived self-betrayal. If Negritude struggled to gather support after independence, it is because it shed, almost by political design, its once-mythical discursive qualities that empowered the Black imagination to think beyond the Eurocentric mythos. Reduced to a mere instrument of Senghor's policymaking, it descended from its pedestal, becoming a casualty of questionable decisions, including economic choices that paved the way for the 1970s—the "decade of decline." Indeed, the establishment and merging of large economic institutions in the late 1960s parallel what the Thiès tapestry factory, the Dynamic Museum, the Daniel Sorano National Theater, and other art and culture institutions did for a decolonized imagination: They ushered in a state patronage as politically potent as it was economically at odds with a world increasingly dominated by, and at the mercy of, unregulated finance capital.

It is in this context that Negritude was mobilized for one last vanishing Senghorian moment: filling the political vacuum left by this increasing technocratic turn. Spurred by political mismanagement, keeping Senegal economically weak and reliant on foreign aid, the turn emerged amid mounting challenges to both state authority and Senghor's leadership, especially as he gravitated toward a one-party system to solidify his philosopher-king dominance. As newly appointed experts turned to technocracy for an antinationalist panacea for African economic problems via neoliberal discourses and global institutional solutions, Negritude morphed into a cornerstone of Senegal's national identity and a tool for transnational construction, promoting development.[92] This time, however, the contradiction became untenable: Nationalism can accommodate transnationalism no more than econometrics can reconcile with aesthetics.

In "Francophonie as Culture," Senghor anchored the emerging institution within Blaise Pascal's rationalism that "grew and deepened, propelled by scientific progress, the subsequent development of technology and industry, and the burgeoning of interracial and intercontinental relations" (page 122). The essay

champions rationalism—a term reiterated seventeen times—paralleling the rational and technocratic veneration of mathematics and other data-driven paradigms. Rhetorically, Senghor asked, "In our technocratic and practical world today, isn't it mathematics that sits at the heart of science and thus material power?" (page 121). At the Eighth UPS Congress, aptly titled "Economic Community as Framework for Development," Senghor drove the point home: "Despite ever more work to be done, our planners benefit from better statistics with every year that passes. So do economists and other experts."[93] Domestically, a fresh wave of experts and technocrats gained private access to the corridors of power, as evidenced by the 1969 foundation of the Club Nation and Development (Club nation et développement) and the 1970 inception of the Center for Study and Research on Socialism, culminating with the appointment of Abdou Diouf in February to the revived *primature* (a French word coined by Senghor for the prime minister's office). On the international stage it is the Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique (ACCT, Agency of cultural and technical cooperation) that emerges in Niamey in March as precursor to the future Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie.

Amid the rise of technocratic governance and its corresponding erosion of the state, the politics of Negritude would—once again—morph into aesthetics, aiming to fill the political vacuum with creative imagination. Only this time, Francophonie would provide Negritude with a new tool for Senghor's cultural diplomacy. The decade spanning 1970 to 1980 bore witness to the zenith of Senghor's intellectual production. Sixteen prefaces—more than in any other decade—are strewn among his literary output, spanning topics from ancient Greece to African history, Chagall's paintings, and Frobenius's life. Translations of his earlier poetic and philosophical writings made their debut in languages as diverse as English, Italian, Chinese, and Romanian. For his Francophone readers, approximately a hundred essays and speeches found their way into *Liberté 2* and *Liberté 3*, published in 1971 and 1977, respectively. Indeed, 1971 saw Dakar hosting a weeklong Colloquium on Negritude under Senghor's presidential banner and the patronage of the UPS. "The Problematic of Négritude," the inaugural address, cast a veil of doubt on projects whose objectives of progress, modernization, retrieval, and so on tacitly reproduced the very paradigms they sought to displace. "In our ideological struggle—for this is where the heart of the issue lies—we need both facts—which scientific research alone can give—and concepts—which form the other half of dialectical reasoning—simultaneously" (page 136). Senghor's framing of Negritude as an ideology subtly nudged the attending intellectuals and technocrats to think beyond technocratic solutions.

As Senghor explored the complexities of Negritude on a renewed stage made increasingly international by a nascent neoliberal global world, he acknowledged its diasporic origins and championed its American roots once more, this time reconciled through Francophonie: "[It is] as though we were not Francophones, as though we did not draw inspiration from Negro-Americans when we crafted the concept from Alain Locke's movement, at least partially, which he christened with a French word: *Renaissance*" (page 134). A substantial segment of the discourse delved into the American Black experience, from W. E. B. Du Bois to Mercer Cook, hinting at the diasporic strength of ideological resistance. While the president might have been inclined to shape Senegalese society through technocratic and structured laws and decrees, the poet now urged his readers (and possibly himself) to appreciate the unpredictable, the nonlinear, the moments of reflection, seeking unexpected connections both familiar and foreign.

Even as he navigated the demands of governance, Senghor's poetic voice remained strong, as evidenced by his 1973 collection *Lettres d'Hivernage*. Composed of thirty new poems, the compendium explores the play between the familiar and the foreign—to begin with a title built on a word "coined by the French colonial army" to describe the rainy season in sub-Saharan Africa.[94] This is not to suggest that Senghor's poetic works were a catalyst redirecting the state's institutional power away from a nationalistic vision. But there is a renascent poetic realization about the contradictory nature of neoliberal discourse that shifts the fight back onto the terrain of ideology.[95] By 1975, in the face of a neoliberal growth that appeared unstoppable, abetted by technocrats and further stressed by droughts and oil crises that strained "developing economies," Senghor's philosopher-king instincts kicked in. With his sights on his own *dikē*, Negritude, he was compelled—by political duties, his cabinet, and the legislature—to return to the task of crafting laws and policies to ensure a harmony of the state, however artificial. Gravitating toward Platonic ideals, Senghor gradually retreats from the political arena.

In line with this philosophical shift, *Éthiopiques*, a journal he created in 1975, resembled the politico-aesthetic journals of the decade leading to independence that supported grassroots movements, yet it published few articles on politics, on political work, or by politicians. By 1976, as Senghor wrote his "Elegy for Martin Luther King," he implemented yet another constitutional revision empowering the prime minister to conclude a presidential term should the sitting president step down, preparing for his resignation even further. Even as he prepared his eventual exit from politics, he continued to advocate for diplomatic ties based on an aesthetic worldview transcending narrow national inter-

ests. The soon-to-be-established International Organization of Francophonie emerges as the most visible shift from national to international responsibility. *Dialogue on Francophone Poetry*, a telling addendum to *Major Elegies* published just a year prior to Senghor's leaving office, reads as both an epitaph and a vision.[96] As Senegal grappled with the desolation of economic stabilization endeavors and fiscal recovery strategies, Senghor came full circle and returned to the imaginary world of Francophone poetry unhindered by national fiscal deficits. By the decade's end, not only did Senegal's borrowing ability dwindle, but its diplomatic representations, one of Senghor's proudest accomplishments, diminished. Senghor's *Dialogue*, a modern spin on Plato's dialogues, introduced an alternative to the neoliberal gridlock via four texts, charting a path toward the Civilization of the Universal. Amid the failure of modernized economic development, Francophonie emerged as a worthy venture with the potential to reshape inherited norms in an increasingly global world. It is no surprise that it dominated Senghor's subsequent (last) decade. Amid strikes and popular discontent, it is time to turn the page. Léopold Sédar Senghor resigned on December 31, 1980.

1981: Negritude After Senghor

Though the formal announcement came in the form of a written communiqué on December 3, Senghor planned his resignation at least a year in advance.[97] Politically, there is no evidence that the president used his last months in office to settle scores or ossify his considerable legacy. Poetically, the ostensible turn toward Francophonie aligns with a "philosophy of becoming" that Souleymane Bachir Diagne underscores to characterize Negritude's contribution to African thought. After all, "each generation, each thinker, each writer, artist, politician, must," Senghor writes, "in their own ways and for their own good, go deeper and expand Négritude, [overcoming] Négritude's predecessors" (page 141). On January 1, 1981, Senghor overcame himself. Francophonie overcame Negritude. Looking at the texts that constitute *Liberté 5*—the final volume in the series published during Senghor's lifetime—the influence of Negritude wanes with each subsequent year. Then as now, neither the word nor the concept has died. Instead, successive generations have embraced it, used it—sometimes against its own grain—to give rise to other movements: Antillanité, Créolité, the Black Arts Movement, the African Renaissance, and more. Negritude claimed its independence.

Though the relation between Negritude and Francophonie can be traced back to Senghor's earliest text of 1937 that inaugurates this collection, by the

time Senghor left office, the two ideas had swapped ends and means. While the former unmistakably evolved in nonpolitical spheres, the latter had grown as an institution. When the poet-president was inducted into the Académie Française—an institution founded by Cardinal Richelieu to use language as a political instrument to assert transnational presence—on March 29, 1984, Negritude was conspicuously absent from Senghor's acceptance speech. Yet, in *Ce que je crois*, published that same year, Senghor contended that he "joined the Académie Française so that next to Francophonie, Négritude would join as well."[98] In May 1985, in a letter to Stelio Farandjis, chair of the High Council of Francophonie, Senghor elaborated on his motivation: "Our defense of the French language is not against the English or the Americans . . . but against the French of the Hexagon."[99] Proposing an overhaul of the archaic objectives set by the French Academy in 1635, which essentially tasked the grammarians with establishing "rules to the language and to make it pure," the mission was to develop a will to create a new Francophonie, rooted in direct engagement with innovative political, cultural, and social expressions—enabled by new scientific and technological innovations.[100] Such engagement, however, mandates substantial political commitment to tools of literacy and numeracy without which no creative imagination necessary for a sustainable polity—decolonized or not—can flourish. Hence, Senghor's vision encompasses more than mere grammar and structure; it encapsulates the political infrastructure mobilized by language building—a project both derailed and necessitated by the technocratic turn.

Throughout his half-century of intellectual, cultural, and political contributions, Léopold Sédar Senghor's wellspring was to imagine affirmative forms of agency that deliberately eschewed labels and epithets. Negritude is not simply a synonym for Black literature, African history, or diasporic psychology. Negritude cannot just be a definition. Its invitation to be elucidated is, in truth, a challenge to sculpt it, through which it becomes something else. That is why its originators profoundly contemplated its nomenclature. It was not—or not only—pure sophistry, pedantry, or surrender to a language that may or may not have been their own. It was the beginning of a journey to reverse the physical, political, and epistemological violence of colonialism and capitalism without legitimizing them by reversal (i.e., making them the end-all of all that is wrong with the world today).[101] On that journey, Senghor, along with many contemporaries, encountered numerous options. Federalism, African socialism, Francophonie, and even *métissage* are but attempts to build alternative futures, grounded not in regrets over what should not have existed, but in imaginings of what could. Senghor's final journey to Senegal was in November 1991, after

which he returned to Verson. Among his very last speeches, "Normandity," not "Normanditude," still signals the poet's negotiation of that incalculable distance between ipseity and alterity—incalculable but inviting calculation. Could only a *normand* claim *normanditude*? The key is perpetual inquiry. So long as we keep questioning, we will be all right.

NOTES

1. I use *critique* in the Kantian sense of *Kritik*, a form of analysis that systematically examines the conditions, possibilities, and limits of human knowledge and understanding. In this context, my premise resonates with—and expands upon—the project undertaken by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* and Achille Mbembe in *Critique of Black Reason*. My construction of the term aligns with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "peri-performativity": a class of utterances that, "though not themselves performatives, are *about* performatives and, more properly, cluster *around* performatives." See Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 67–90. Notably, the title of Plato's *Republic* represents not just a potential mistranslation by Cicero of the Greek term *politeia*, it has also overshadowed the work's subtitle, *Peri-dikaiosyne politikos*, which directly translates as "around political justice."

2. Senghor, "Letter to Maurice Martin du Gard, December 4, 1943," in Dormesaine, Fierro, and Masson, *Léopold Sédar Senghor*, 63.

3. Vaillant, *Black, French, and African*, 143–44.

4. Senghor, "L'inspiration poétique, ses sources, ses caprices," in *Liberté 5*, 27. The poet-president reiterated this in 1983 with "Tradition orale et modernité" (*Liberté 5,* 188).

5. An editor's note added to the 1970 speech, which was later published in *Liberté 5* in 1993, elucidates that these initial poems were eventually published separately in *Œuvre poétique*. In Plato's *Republic*, as noted by Karl Popper, the term *gennaios*, usually translated as "noble lie," more accurately conveys the notion of an "inspired lie" or "spirited fiction." These translations eschew the notion of nobility, instead emphasizing the grandeur and liberating potential of such a fiction. See Popper, *Open Society and Its Enemies*, 270n.

6. In *The Tongue-Tied Imagination*, Tobias Warner examines the dynamics surrounding the boundaries of literature, paying specific attention to the roles of translation and translatability. Warner suggests that the intersections and confrontations between Wolof and French languages act as "points of departure," fostering a unique "space in which to imagine literature otherwise."

7. Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution*, 171. Originally published as "Unité et solidarité effective sont les conditions de la libération africaine" in *Pour la Révolution Africaine* (Paris: Maspero, 1964), 196.

8. Another fortunate coincidence in literary history binds Senghor and Fanon: Jean-Paul Sartre penned the prefaces to their respective magnum opuses: Senghor's *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* (1948) and Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Despite challenging the authors' objectives, Sartre used his prefaces to critique colonialism as a system of institutionalized oppression. For a more in-depth exploration of Sartre's evolving stance on colonialism, including his prefaces to Albert

Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* and Patrice Lumumba's *Lumumba Speaks: The Speeches and Writings of Patrice Lumumba, 1958–1961*, see Arthur, *Unfinished Projects*.

9. Diagne, "La leçon de musique."

10. Miller, "(Revised) Birth of Négritude." I use the latest translation, by N. Gregson Davis and Abiola Irele, of Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* into *Journal of a Homecoming*. The word *Négritude* appears in both articles published by Aimé Césaire in *L'Étudiant Noir*: "Nègreries: Jeunesse noire et assimilation" (first issue) and "Nègreries: Conscience raciale et révolution sociale" (third and last issue). The two articles have been republished in *Les Temps Modernes*. Edward O. Ako goes as far as claiming that Negritude did not exist as a movement until Lilyan Kesteloot defined and popularized it. See Ako, "'L'Étudiant Noir.'"

11. Lewis, *Race, Culture, and Identity*, 62; see also Sharpley-Whiting, *Negritude Women*, 17.

12. Senghor, "L'Humanisme et nous," 1; translation mine. An original of the first issue of *L'Étudiant Noir* is kept in the Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence (France), SLOTFOM V, box 21, FR ANOM 4005 COL 21. For an analysis of the essay, see Vaillant, *Black, French, and African,* 114–15; and Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 185–86.

13. To some extent, the policy governing the Four Communes—a collective term for the oldest colonial settlements, Saint-Louis, Dakar, Gorée, and Rufisque—granted full French citizenship rights to their residents. However, various legal and societal barriers largely prevented them from fully exercising these privileges. For further exploration, see Diouf, "French Colonial Policy of Assimilation"; and Johnson, *Emergence of Black Politics*.

14. The evolving political imaginary of those who would later steer the continent toward independence faced significant challenges even in the postwar period, sometimes building paths not necessarily leading to political independence. See Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation*; and Wilder, *Freedom Time*. See also Smith and Jeppesen, *Britain, France, and the Decolonization*; and Collis-Buthelezi, "Peter Abrahams's Island Fictions."

15. In a separate vein, A. L. Becker explores the concept he termed "lingual memory" in *Beyond Translation*.

16. Over time, the French word *métissage* has undergone many translations: hybridity, crossbreeding, mixing, interbreeding, and more. While the Spanish *mestizaje* often involved a caste hierarchy and a eugenic racial mixing, the perspective I suggest here leads to a new understanding of *métissage* as "mixthreading," challenging the colonial history of enforced mixity and embodying the aspiration to intertwine threads differently in a decolonized world. The textile woven by this new mixthread is also a text to be read differently. *Mixthreading* captures both etymological accuracy (the *mix* prefix echoes the Latin root *miscere*, the linguistic ancestor of *métissage*) and the weaving imagery (the *thread* reflects the *tissage*, representing the intertwining of different elements, cultures, or races to create a new tapestry). For an exploration during the Spanish colonization, see Rappaport, *Disappearing Mestizo*; and Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness*. For Léopold Sédar Senghor's reflection on the topic in the 1949 essay, "De la liberté de l'âme ou éloge du métissage," see Marquet, *Le métissage dans la poésie de Léopold Sédar Senghor*. Françoise Verges argues that *métissage* should always be examined retrospectively, arising

from a forceful—yet anticipated—confrontation. See Verges, "Métissage, discours masculin," 79.

17. Baer, *Indigenous Vanguards*, 111–12.

18. Senghor reiterates the characterization of the African family as organized in "concentric circles" during his address at the First World Congress of Black Writers and Artists in 1956. This exploration can be found in Senghor, "Negro African Aesthetic," in *Liberté 1*, 202–17.

19. Further readings on this topic include Burbank, *Empires in World History*; and Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*.

20. For anticolonial dynamics in the Caribbean amid World War II, particularly the pivotal role of literary creativity in fostering a resistance movement, see Ripert, "When Is Poetry Political?"; see also Joseph-Gabriel, "Beyond the Great Camouflage"; and Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*.

21. In "Review of *La paix nazaréenne*," Senghor praises Delavignette's novel for its attempt to overcome a French African binary through the act of writing. Published by Gallimard in 1943, the novel explores the experiences of a French colonial administrator's family as they relocate to Niger amid World War I, pursuing a transcendent and elusive peace built on individuals relinquishing their differences and crafting a shared history.

22. The impact and interpretation of Sartre's preface, particularly its influence on subsequent evaluations and scholarly discourse on Negritude, has been examined by Lilyan Kesteloot in "L'après-guerre, l'Anthologie de Senghor et la préface de Sartre." In the aftermath of Sartre's death in 1980, Daniel Maximin heralded "Black Orpheus" as a pivotal resource for the independence generation in "Sartre à l'écoute des sauvages," 63. Furthermore, Valentin Mudimbe acknowledges Sartre's significant role in elevating Negritude to a political and philosophical platform critiquing colonialism. See Mudimbe, *Invention of Africa*, 83.

23. Senghor, "Introduction," in *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre*, 1.

24. Senghor, "Ouragan," in *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre*, 149; Senghor, *Collected Poetry*, 4; translation modified. Dixon's otherwise excellent English translation mistakenly interprets the French word *embraser* (to set ablaze) as *embrasser* (to kiss). It is noteworthy that Senghor's brief introduction to the compilation, spanning just two pages, is situated immediately following Sartre's preface.

25. Senghor, "Les négro-africains et l'Union française."

26. The manuscript initially surfaced in Germany in 1932 as *Der historische Materialismus*. By 1933, selected sections were translated into French by Norbert Guterman and Henri Lefebvre, initially appearing in *Avant-Poste* and later republished in their collaborative work, *La conscience mystifiée*. Comprehensive insights into the history of the manuscript's publication and its various French translations can be found in Fischbach, *Manuscrits économico-philosophiques de 1844* and in Renault, "Introduction" to *Comment lire les manuscrits de 1844?* On the aporia of democracy, see Derrida, *Rogues*, 48. The argument is that democracy (also sovereignty, identity, etc.), as it is elaborated by a certain philosophical tradition, is the sum of irreducible contradictions and contains or produces the very forces that can compromise or undermine it, thus inviting a constant rethinking or rewriting of its praxis. See also Derrida, *Aporias*.

27. Malraux, *La condition humaine*. The journal's motto, "We say Revolution . . . but not Revolt," resonates with the novel's attention to the varying attitudes to a revolutionary situation and interrogates how collective action can agree with individual free will. See Malraux, *Malraux*.

28. Tsitsi Jaji and Tobias Warner emphasize the importance of a comparative approach to *La condition humaine*. During this period, journals such as *Bingo* and *L'A.O.F.* witnessed an increase in readership and utilized distinct strategies to influence and engage readers, potentially as voters. While *Bingo* leveraged the impact of photographic content, *L'A.O.F.* employed pamphlet-like essays.

29. Janet Vaillant recounts that the SFIO government was not willing to engage in discussions with the representatives of the workers. Following the government's downfall and its replacement by the Auriol administration, Senghor advocated for a scrutiny of the colonial bureaucracy. See Vaillant, *Black, French, and African*, 228.

30. In 1881, Vera Zassoulitch corresponded with Marx to seek clarification on whether, according to *Das Kapital*, agrarian Russia needed to undergo the various phases of capitalist exploitation before aspiring to a socialist revolution. See Marx, "Lettre à Vera Zassoulitch."

31. Senghor, "Birth of the Democratic Senegalese Bloc," in *Liberté 2*, 51–59. This material is a condensed version of the formal "Report on the Method," which was presented during the inaugural congress of the BDS in April 1949.

32. Senghor, "Birth of the Democratic Senegalese Bloc," 57.

33. Senghor, "L'intégration des pays d'outre-mer." See also Senghor, "Eurafrica: Economic Unit of the Future" and "European Policy," in *Liberté 2*, 90–94 and 117–24. For an archival exploration of the role African intellectuals and politicians played in the integration process and its enduring legacy, see Hansen and Jonsson, *Eurafrica*; as well as Garavani, *After Empires*.

34. Mark Mazower critically revisits the ideological underpinnings of the inception of the United Nations, highlighting remnants of antiquated imperial and racial hierarchies in institution building. See Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*. Additionally, Senghor's discourse at the UN is documented in the minutes of the 145th General Assembly meeting, 4th Committee, October 3, 1950. See *Report of the Trusteeship Council* (A/1306—A/C-4/SR-145), UN Digital Library, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/813926?ln=en.

35. Johnson, *God's Trombones*. For further analysis, see Gates and West, *African American Century*.

36. For a foundational discussion on the evolution of political elections in the postwar period leading up to independence, see Morgenthau, *Political Parties*.

37. Senghor, "Half a Century of Negro Poetry Contribution," in *Liberté 1*, 134.

38. Thiam, *La portée de la citoyenneté française*, 157, 174.

39. Federalism was envisioned as a transitional solution, and Senghor predicted that independence would be a reality within a decade. This perspective is substantiated in a special issue of *La Nef*, which included contributions from individuals such as Gaston Monnerville, René de Lacharrière, Jean-Marie Domenach, Maurice Duverger, and François Mitterrand, all expressing doubts regarding the union's long-term viability.

40. See Eagleton, *Ideology*, 2.

41. See the following prefaces by Senghor: "The Realism of Amadou Koumba," in *Contes de l'Ouest africain* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1955); "Bolamba," in *Chants pour mon pays* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1955); and "Flavien Ranaivo," in *Mes chansons de toujours* (Paris: Chez l'Auteur, 1955), all reprinted in *Liberté 1*.

42. See Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 82. The term "Algerian War" was formally adopted by the Assemblée Nationale on June 10, 1999, replacing the 1956 designation, "Peacekeeping Operations in North Africa." For more, see "La France reconnaît qu'elle a fait la 'guerre' en Algérie. L'assemblée vote aujourd'hui un texte qui enterre le terme officiel d''opérations de maintien de l'ordre'" [France recognizes it went to "war" in Algeria. Congress votes today to bury the official term "peacekeeping"], *Libération*, June 10, 1999.

43. In his 1945 article "Vues sur l'Afrique noire ou assimiler, non être assimilé," Senghor advocated for alterations to the French graft (*hair greffe française*) to foster a "prolonged education" in anticipation of sustainable decolonized growth. See *Liberté 1*, 39–70. Nearly two decades later, he continued to use the graft metaphor to explain how France is a part of African history despite being colonial. See chapter 11, "Francophonie as Culture."

44. Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation*, 224.

45. See Rabemananjara, "Europe and Us"; and Diop, "Opening Discourse," *Présence Africaine*.

46. Initially published in *Présence Africaine*, June–November 1956, 51–65, the piece later reappears with minor modifications as "Negro-African Aesthetic" in *Liberté 1*. For an analysis of the lecture, see M'Baye, "Richard Wright and African Francophone Intellectuals"; Bonner, "Alioune Diop," 1–18; and Masse, "Diasporic Encounter."

47. Senghor, "Debate," 215.

48. Senghor, "Debate" 216. Frantz Fanon similarly contends that the "Black soul is a White man's construction" and postcolonial "history has already noted the fact that most 'Negroes' have ceased to exist." See Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xv. While Fanon critiques the notion of a uniform Black culture and admonishes Senghor for trying to establish "Black self-consciousness," he does not fundamentally oppose Senghor's idealized hope. See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 188, 234.

49. Senghor, "Socialism and Culture," in *Liberté 2*, 184–96, originally presented as the Report on Method for the Eighth Congress of the BDS, May 19–21, 1956.

50. Senghor, "Socialism and Culture," 202. Senghor emphasizes the absence of institutional resources to foster indigenous scientific research or economic infrastructures that could, long-term, eliminate the dependency on French investments.

51. Senghor, "Socialism and Culture," 202.

52. Corresponding with poet and editor Armand Guibert on September 14, 1948, Senghor mentions working on a "compendium titled *Éthiopiques*." See *Fonds Emmanuel Robles–Patrimoine méditerranéen*. For further study, see Lambert, *"Éthiopiques" de Senghor*; and Senghor, *Poésie complète*.

53. The postface is marked September 24, 1954, Strasburg, most likely because of Senghor's work for the Council of Europe. See Senghor, *Éthiopiques*.

54. Daniel Delas has shown how Senghor's adoption—and alteration—of musical terminology in the postface provides him with a way to indefinitely postpone a theorization of a "Negro poetics" that eventually proves unsuccessful. See Delas, "Rythme, culture et poésie," 104.

55. Senghor, "Man and the Beast," in *Collected Poetry*; translation modified, 75.

56. See the introduction to *Éthiopiques* in Senghor, *Poésie complète*, 209–24.

57. Senghor, "Implementing the Decrees of the Loi-Cadre," in *L'unité africaine*, March 1957, reprinted in *Liberté 2*, 212.

58. Senghor, "Decolonization as a Condition for the Franco-African Community," in *Le Monde*, September 1957, reprinted in *Liberté 2*, 216.

59. Senghor published several responses given during debates at the French National Assembly in *Liberté 2*—albeit with questionable omissions. For further insights on the topic of decolonization, see Táíwò, *Against Decolonisation*.

60. For an extensive comparative study examining the various attitudes and subsequent decisions regarding the constitutional referendum across French West Africa, see Schmidt, "Anticolonial Nationalism."

61. In May 1958, Senghor adopted the novel term *palestiniser* (to "Palestinize") to broaden the metaphor beyond Europe's borders. See, for instance, Senghor, "National Independence and Confederation," in *Liberté 2,* 222.

62. Schmidt suggests that by the time of the referendum, the potential to establish a federation or confederation within the political structure of the French Community had already been quashed. In a September meeting in Normandy, Dia and Senghor concurred that the transition from autonomy to independence would take no more than five years. See Dia, *Mémoires d'un militant du tiers-monde*, 91; see also Colin, *Sénégal notre pirogue*, 102.

63. In one instance, a peasant remarked to Senghor, "If you had asked us to vote no, we would have done so." In another context, Senghor noted, "Had de Gaulle not offered the opportunity to form primary federations, Lamine Guèye and I would have likely voted no." See Senghor, "Referendum in Black Africa," in *Les cahiers de la république*, October 1958, reprinted in *Liberté 2*, 225–31.

64. Senghor, "Constitutive Elements of a Negro-African Inspired Civilization," in *Liberté 1*, 260.

65. For an in-depth account of the events leading up to the activation of Article 86 of the constitution and the early phases of the Mali Federation in the summer of 1960, see Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation*, 398–413. For a focus on Senegal, see Langellier, *Léopold Sédar Senghor*, ch. 31.

66. Senghor, *La poésie de l'action*, 125.

67. Senghor, "Socialisme, unité africaine, construction nationale," in *Liberté 4*, 85; translation mine. The idea of the "United States of Africa" can be traced back to Marcus Garvey's 1924 poem, "Hail, United States of Africa," while W. E. B. Du Bois imagined its political framework at the fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, 1945. See Asi, *1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress*; see also Ayittey, "United States of Africa"; and Senghor, "Culture, développement, coopération" in *Éducation et Culture*.

68. See Boone, *Political Topographies of the African State*, 85–87; see also Gellar, "Circulaire 32 Revisited," 65–81.

69. For insights on the episode widely known as Mamadou Dia's coup in December 1962, see Colin, *Sénégal notre pirogue*, 300–323.

70. The special issue is titled "French: Living Language." For a more comprehensive examination, see Puccini, "Le fonctionnement du mot 'francophonie.'"

71. Senghor, "L'unité africaine," in *Liberté 4*, 108; translation mine.

72. Senghor, "L'unité africaine," 110.

73. Senghor, "Décoloniser pour créer," in *Liberté 4*, 115.

74. Senghor, "Une seule politique efficace: Celle du développement," in *Liberté 4*, 177.

75. Senghor, "Décoloniser pour créer," in *Liberté 4*, 152.

76. Senghor, "Décoloniser pour créer," 156. The resonance with Marx's eleventh thesis of Feuerbach is conspicuous, and Senghor indeed quoted it in the Fifth Congress of the UPS, in January 1966. See Senghor, "L'exécution du deuxième plan quadriennal de développement économique et social," in *Liberté 4*, 206.

77. Senghor, "Décoloniser pour créer," 157.

78. Gray Cowan, the founder and director of Columbia's Institute for African Studies, was also a professor of political science. More can be found in "African Institute Named National Resource Center." The related telegram is housed in the Archives Nationales du Sénégal (ANS, 5T928/FMAN/Pl).

79. See Ripert, "Decolonizing Diplomacy."

80. For an exploration of the intertwining of civil rights, jazz, and the Cold War, see Monson, *Freedom Sounds*; and Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*.

81. Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress*, 338.

82. Mercer Cook, US ambassador to Senegal, facilitated the planning behind the jazz performances of American artists. Ellington was the only musician to perform in the newly built national stadium, in contrast to gospel sensation Marion Williams, whose performances took place in Dakar's cathedral, limiting her audience to mostly white Christians. See "Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres," folder 22, Archives Nationales du Sénégal. Ambassador Cook hosted a noteworthy performance at his residence on April 8, 1966. See Cohen, *Duke Ellington's America*, 503.

83. While Ellington's renown partially stems from his extensive repertoire of popular songs, his virtuosic pianistic technique, and his mastery of rhythmic displacement, none of the recognizable traits emerge in the opening bars of *La Plus Belle Africaine*. Much like some compositions from his later period ("The Clothed Woman," "Summertime," etc.), the piece composed for the Dakar Festival breaks away from conventions. The piano has shifted backstage, backing the drummers and bassists, accompanying them with a gentle ostinato. Moreover, the instrument is more percussive than vocal and melodic—a trend that continues in other Africa-themed compositions ("Springtime in Africa").

84. For an examination of the 1968 student revolt and general strike in Senegal, see Blum, "Sénégal 1968."

85. Elizabeth Harney discusses the festival's elitism in her book *In Senghor's Shadow*, 75–76.

86. To understand Senghor's preventive measures against potential disruptions, including closing Cheikh Anta Diop University, see a transcribed interview with Frederick O'Neal from October 1966, archived in the United States Committee for the First World

Festival of Negro Arts, press agent's files, SC MG 220, box 2, folder 2, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

87. See Lloyd Garrison, "Real Bursts Through the Unreal at Dakar Festival; Vitality and Diversity Last of U.S. Winners," *New York Times*, April 26, 1966.

88. Edwards argues that diaspora is less a historical condition and more a practice. See Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*. Additionally, Jaji, *Africa in Stereo*, delves into transatlantic musical encounters and their role in the ongoing performance of Pan-Africanism, with a specific focus on the 1966 festival in chapter 3. For an insightful exploration of the challenges presented by the Dakar festival's performances, see Murphy, *First World Festival*.

89. Diagne, "La leçon de musique," 246.

90. Noting the cost disparities, one square meter of Senegalese tapestry ranges from 500,000 to one million CFA francs (equivalent to 762 and 1,524 euros) in a context where the minimum wage stands at 35,000 FCFA (53 euros). See "Les tapisseries de Thiès, des fresques du Sénégal aux quatre coins du monde," *Jeune Afrique*, September 19, 2012.

91. Subsequent decrees, notably Decree No. 76-1021 from October 14, 1976, delineate the objectives for a cultural policy, which the Senegalese government was obligated to execute through its established cultural institutions. For insights on Senghor's cultural patronage, see Abdou Sylla, "Le mécénat de Léopold Sédar Senghor," *Éthiopiques*, no. 59 (1997). Further readings include Delas, "Regard sur la politique culturelle"; Sylla, *Arts plastiques et État*; Snipe, *Arts and Politics in Senegal*; and Cochrane, "Growth of Artistic Nationalism."

92. In his semi-autobiographical work, Samir Amin critiques what he terms the "ideology of development," tracing its epistemological roots back to the first Afro-Asian conference in Bandung in 1955 and its economic foundation to the oil crises of 1975. See Amin, *Re-Reading the Postwar Period*. Mamadou Diouf offers a critical examination of Senegal's developmental strategies in that decade in his essay, "Senegalese Development."

93. Senghor, "Economic Community as Framework for Development," in *Liberté 4*, 561.

94. Senghor, *Letters in the Season of Hivernage*, 166–67; translation modified.

95. Mamadou Diouf observes that the marginalization of the masses from technocratic decision-making inadvertently led to the reemergence of networks among demographic groups. These networks aimed to counterbalance the overarching dominance of political and administrative power. See Diouf, "Senegalese Development," 308.

96. *Dialogue on Francophone Poetry* was first published in 1979 as an addendum to Senghor's *Major Elegies* collection. See Senghor, *Œuvre poétique.* In the 1990 edition of the compendium, twenty-six "Lost Poems" are inserted between the six elegies, including a new elegy to commemorate the passing of Senghor's son, Philippe-Maguilen, in 1981, and the essay whose title is now pluralized ("Dialogues . . ."). In subsequent publications of *Œuvre poétique*, the singular prevails.

97. For a personal recollection earlier in the same year where Senghor confided his plans of stepping down, refer to Diouf, *Mémoires*, 187.

98. Senghor, *Ce que je crois*, 201.

99. See Senghor, "Defending, Inventing, and Creating the French Language," 185. The letter is published in *Éducation et culture*, released in 2014 and prefaced by Felwine Sarr

with a postface by Souleymane Bachir Diagne, published by Senghor's eponymous foundation. It can arguably be viewed as the sixth installment in the *Liberté* series.

100. See the reference to Article 24 of the statutes in Académie Française, "Les missions," accessed January 8, 2025, https://www.academie-francaise.fr/linstitution/les-missions.

101. In that sense, this introduction paves the way for my forthcoming work, *Sustainable Independence*, which questions how pivotal moments, akin to dress rehearsals, can serve as preliminary steps toward the continuous practice of freedom—the latter theorized as an evolving practice shaped as much by imaginative epistemologies as strategic policymaking.