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John E. Drabinski

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John E. Drabinski

Amherst College

In the following remarks, I want to explore a key conceptual problematic in Léopold Senghor's short 1945 essay "Assimilation and Association," in which he recasts the problem of assimilation as an epistemological and ontological problem. Senghor's essay, as is typical even of his work on African socialism, is lodged in cultural politics, rather than the political economy of colonial domination. Theorizing "assimilation" as an epistemological and ontological imperative of syncretic cultural work, Senghor describes the relationship between Europe and Africa as a case – in a normative register, what the case *ought* to be – of African cultural production discerning the productive contribution of European thought. In so doing, Senghor refuses to cast Africa as prostrate before European cultural domination. Rather, for Senghor, Africa is plenty equipped to render judgment in moments of cultural contact, and thus able to assimilate from a position of life and force. How is it possible for assimilation to function as *judgment*, one operating from the emotive site of cognition rather than the rational? If the life force of Africa – Senghor's metaphysics from the beginning – is able to sustain assimilation-as-judgment, then the terms of the postcolonial are already in some ways present under colonial domination.

But, as we shall see, the programme outlined in 1945 presupposes an atavistic conception of national and cultural identity, something taken up with more rigor (and speculation) in Senghor's later work and to which the development of the concept of Négritude is largely aimed. Reading Senghor's early account of assimilation as *productive* rather than the sign of colonialism's *destruction of indigeneity* offers, I want to argue, an alternative account of the origins of Négritude as an African thought. That is, rather than born of the anxieties of colonial domination we find in Aimé Césaire and Léon Damas, Senghor presupposes the coherence, rootedness, and unquestioned *élan vital* of Africanness. From that Africanness, Senghor is able to imagine Senegalese cultural, which is perhaps identical with political, nationalism a decade and a half before the founding or re-founding of the nation. At the same time, this sense of assimilation and the possibilities it

opens up for thinking about *influence* points to the necessity of Négritude as a *project*, that is, something thrown into the future, and so not simply drawn from the past or signified in the present. Senghor therefore straddles two temporalities that define his anxious postcolonial moment: the retrievability of the repressed past (a certain *parousia*, as it were) and the bringing into being/Being the unprecedented to-come (the future as *poiesis*). Between those two times is the question of national literature and the vernacular intellectual, both of which are absolutely critical for Senghor's vision of decolonization and postcolonial identity.

The stakes in what follows, then, lie in this peculiar tension between the aspiration of national literatures and cultural forms as foundations of the postcolonial and the hard truths of reckoning with colonialism as a total project. In other words, there is, for Senghor, a fundamentally anxious relation between the sort of nationalism needed for atavistic visions of liberation and the post-nationalist cultural conditions of decolonization. Senghor situates the problem of language - the element of assimilation and association - in this anxious relation. In the end, what is distinctive in Senghor's case is his sense of the politics of syncretism and a certain sensitivity to how language operates in this moment as a *pharmakon* - poisoning the possibility of a postcolonial moment at the very same time that it cures the fatalism of working under the colonial gaze.

To begin, a few words on Senghor's intervention in theorizing blackness.

Senghor After Négritude

There are two signature moments - exemplary utterances, perhaps - in the Négritude movement, both of which mark the intersection between diasporic and continental visions of blackness as a trans-Atlantic identity. This intersection is crucial, but so too is the difference; given that Négritude turns on some form of cultural and political fantasy, the conditions under which those fantasies take shape prove decisive. Diasporic and continental conditions sustain very different fantasies, and therefore very different cultural politics (and even political economy). A note on two moments, both of which come from Césaire's pen.

The first is well-known, though for all of its reputation, the moment is really rather thin: Césaire's deployment of the term in *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, writing, famously, that he *is* his Négritude and that it surpasses the geography of colonialism. Initially, Négritude is associated with the Haitian Revolution. Négritude rises first in Haiti, with the violence and liberation from slavery, from the enslaved themselves. This is important as a bit of archipelagic history, yes, but also as part of the black Atlantic imaginary in the age of emancipation, then in the age of anti-colonial

struggle and the question of postcolonial identity. Césaire ties all of these aspects of Négritude in the key moment in *Notebook*, in phrases evoking earth and air. He writes, in that important passage:

my negritude is neither tower nor cathedral
it takes root in the red flesh of the soil
it takes root in the ardent flesh of the sky
it breaks through opaque prostration with its upright patience.¹

In this moment, Césaire, drawing on Haiti's avenging history, turns the racial slur *négre* into a sense of virility, the re-erection of culture and identity through the assertion of the profundity of what *had been* abject. His appeal here is to the soil and the sky, de-linking Négritude from naïve utopia while at the same time elevating the language of roots and place from the banality of site specific histories and memories. What was opaque and prostrate – the enslaved, then colonized awash in ignorance of self and submissive before those who subjected them – becomes, in a turn of poetic word, upright, full of revolutionary desire, and patient. It is noteworthy here that Césaire's embrace of Négritude comes many pages after his declaration

What can I do?
One must begin somewhere.
Begin what?
The only thing in the world
worth beginning
The End of the world of course.²

This is Césaire's great apocalyptic claim, his genuinely afro-pessimist moment, a moment in which the only possibility of liberation lies in the end of the world we know. The world as we know it is unlivable for Black people. Négritude redeems in its assertion of life-force. Blackness, in the black Atlantic context, was never quite the same after. This is the first moment of the Négritude *word*, a declaration that makes another world thinkable.

The second moment I have in mind comes nearly a decade and a half later, when Césaire plays host in Paris to the 1956 Congress of Black Writers and Artists. Césaire's presence at that event is plenty legendary; James Baldwin's long descriptions of his face, demeanor, and peculiar tics of speech in "Princes and Powers" is lovely testimony to Césaire's importance as an icon of this intellectual insurgency. But just as much, there is Césaire's essay from that Congress –perhaps less well-known than *Notebook*, though profound and transformative, essay "Culture and Colonization." The essay captures the diasporic sense of Négritude with remarkable precision at the outset, where he writes:

[O]ne can speak of a great family of African cultures, which deserves the name of Negro-African civilization, and which includes the different cultures of each of the countries of Africa. And we know that the misadventures of history have caused the field of this civilization, the area of this civilization, to exceed today Africa itself. And it is in this sense that we can say that there are if not centers then at least margins of this Negro-African culture in Brazil or in the Caribbean, as much in Haiti as in the French Antilles, or even in the United States.³

The excess of the continent, a product of the “misadventures of history,” is the production of diasporic work in survival, resistance, and what remains after over four centuries of subjugation. That diasporic work is the creation of culture, but culture is not the free production of a nation (or nation within a nation). Rather, and this is the life-force of Négritude at the cultural level, every culture that “deserves the name of Negro-African civilization” is an expression of a civilizational force. “[C]ivilization and culture,” Césaire writes, “define two aspects of a single reality: civilization marks the perimeter of culture, its most exterior and general aspects, whereas culture in its turn constitutes the intimate and radiant kernel of a civilization, its most singular aspect.”⁴ Césaire calls this a “sociological fact,” appealing to, of all people, Marcel Mauss’ reflections on cultural production.

Césaire’s careful distinction between culture and civilization, and therefore his ability to sustain a language of difference and identity at the same time, is at once strategic and attuned to the intersection of geography and epistemology. The strategic question is simply this: reserving space for cultural difference mediates Senghor’s stronger claim that “Négritude is the sum total of the values of the civilization of the African world.”⁵ That stronger claim would, by logical extension, cast the diaspora as a fallen geography, distorted and out of joint because of the cruelty of history. Such a claim would then have to explain away as abject – something, it is of note, we find in Fanon’s work – the cultural production of African-Americans, as well as Caribbean innovations in culture. But Césaire falls into no such trap on the diasporic model. He is able to maintain the metaphysical and aesthetic force of civilization talk in the language of culture, marking the latter as a scene of animation and collection of African traces, and the syncretic work of cultural formation becomes, at least in principle, both defensible and worthy of its own metaphysics and epistemology. Whatever the force of Africa, Africa does not mean *everything* to Césaire; he won’t pay the ultimate price of nostalgia and for that reason is complex in that moment in which blunt simplicity would erase so many anxieties (but also so many histories).

The diasporic concern is quite simply a question for the diaspora. And so that is Césaire’s question and resolution, at least in the 1956 essay. Senghor’s concerns are not with the meaning of the diaspora; his is in no

way what Glissant calls an *archipelagic* thought, but instead wholly *continental*. Rather than traces, Senghor works from the persistence of fully integrated, vertical, and historical cultural practices – all of which, in the end, contribute to that *sum total* that makes the African world a *world*. Composite, yet also transcending that compositional quality and its parts, Négritude for Senghor is fundamentally atavistic *and* mythic. He writes:

Négritude is not even attachement to a particular race, our own, although such attachment is quite legitimate. *Négritude* is the awareness, defence and development of African cultural values. *Négritude* is a myth, I agree. And I agree that there are false myths, myths which breed division and hatred. *Négritude* as a true myth is the very opposite of these. It is the awareness by a particular social group or people of its own situation in the world, and the expression of it by means of the concrete image.

Africa's misfortune has been that our secret enemies, in defending their values, have made us despise our own.⁶

This last remark is important for many reasons, firstly, from my concerns here, for how it marks Senghor's deviation from the diasporic experience of what we can call colonial shame. Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, no matter its deep critique of Négritude, underscores this difference in important ways. To wit: in Fanon's early work, the anxieties of the colonial subject do not come from a sense of shame about who one is *as an original or atavistic being*, but rather from the impossibility of ever measuring up to the colonizer's standard of comparison. That is, the diasporic colonial is already French, but black, and therefore blocked from the full realization of his or her humanity inside the colonizer's cultural values. Césaire's innovation as a thinker lies in his keen ability to locate this set of values within poetic language, then programmatically *and* in a certain surrealist practice subvert and overcome those values in poetry. Négritude as a kind of linguistic praxis.

Césaire's key distinction between culture and civilization adds an important third layer to time. Three times dominate the diasporic sense of Africanness: the time of Africa (a sort of eternity, untouched by the vicissitudes of history), the time of diasporic alienation (the mangling of Africa by the colonial gaze and psyche), and the time of diasporic authenticity (cultural production in decolonized space). Négritude, for Césaire, is rooted in both soil and sky for this reason, placed as it is in what has been and what will be. The name itself, and the magical power of the poet (a commitment the young Césaire surely had), merges these three times in a moment that is both apocalyptic – the world ends – and restorative – a world comes into being. Messianism, in a word, with Africa as its efficient cause and sole-survivor. Senghor's Négritude, a continental notion, is fundamentally restorative, confronting the colonial myth with the decolonial

myth. The world does not end in Senghor, but rather the past is summoned to redeem the landscape, the word, and the people. A mythic past, yes, yet also a set of extant values that are not fictions of colonial or decolonial thinking, but rather fraught worldviews, ethical spaces, and vital life-forces. This is another sort of messianism, but one that contends with two times only: the time of the abject past, abject only by way of the supervenience of colonial values, and the time of the decolonized future. In other words, a collapse – or even just near collapse – of the distinction between culture and civilization: “*awareness, defence and development of African cultural values.*”

Words Against Empire

In the 1958 essay “Africans and West Indians,” Fanon tells us a long story about the meaning of the Second World War for West Indian colonies, in particular how the war experience for both the afro-Caribbeans conscripted to fight in the African theater of the war and the men and women at home in the islands illuminated the fragility and fraud of race-thinking. The soldiers learned that their imaginary proximity to France made them “superior” to African soldiers conscripted into the same battle, but also the subversive insight into the impossibility of sustaining that imagined intimacy with France once the shared experience of being colonized was made clear. The simple presence of a white soldier accomplished the latter. The men and women left in the islands, behind the blockade, learned that the colonizer was morally depraved, weak, and generally incapable of survival without the decadence of living-from the colony. From both experiences, Fanon claims, the colonizer’s precarity was exposed and the colonized were faced with the abyss of being split between the three times described above.

The end of the war proved a remarkable period for Senghor’s work on cultural politics; 1945, in particular, occasioned a number of important essays on cultural contact, education, and language that both complement and complicate the story of Négritude in its African register. Négritude, as a movement, gains real cultural force beginning in the 1950s, but Senghor’s early, just after the end of the war essays already anticipate the terms of the resistance that movement *wanted to say* – the *vouloir-dire*, meaning as anticipation – against empire. The end of the war, of course, began the slow end of colonial rule in Senegal, a negotiated transfer of power that avoided the kind of identity-forming violence Fanon saw in Algeria – and by extension wanted for the Americas. But the shift from a diasporic or archipelagic context to the continental one shifts the meaning of violence for cultural politics and identity. Négritude, then, does not come to Senghor as a matter of reanimating the dead or giving virility to the torpid bodies and landscapes as we see in Césaire’s *Notebook*, but rather as the (non-Nietzschean) revaluation of values. The diasporic context of Négritude *needs* the myth of African civilization in order to create and commit to a set of de-

or post-colonial values, whereas, for Senghor in Senegal, it is a matter of *reminding* and altering the temporal direction of African thinking. The postwar era, then, is for Senghor less about an encounter with the abyss of a decolonizing world of spirit, and more about the anxious relationship of influence between France and Senegal in the Senegalese context.

In 1945, the question of resistance to empire lies primarily in the matter of thinking through the kinds of relation a post-colonial Africa *ought* to have to the colonizer. Already, the question shifts grounds from Césaire and the New World postcolonial sensibility; the presupposition, from the outset, is for Senghor that the postcolonial nation bears a potentially productive relation to the former colonizer. Senghor's short essay "Association and Assimilation" is a particularly compelling piece, in part because of its early argument – already complicating so many of the terms of postcolonial theorizing in 1945 – but mostly for its refusal of the kind of nationalism one expects in these moments. Indeed, Fanon hints at this nationalist surge, one of course never realized in Martinique and Guadeloupe, when he reflects on the German blockade of Caribbean colonies, and one can surely understand the compulsion. But Senghor's resistance to nationalism, and coextensive theorizing of resistance to the force of colonial culture, pushes in a different direction and marks out a different kind of pedagogy, cultural politics, and temporality. This is clear at the outset, when Senghor writes, opening the "Association and Assimilation" essay:

We Africans have a temperament and a spirit which are profoundly original. This is apparent in our customs and our beliefs. You can import as it stands the political and social organization of France...We can be made to lose our good qualities and maybe even our defects. We can be inoculated with the defects of the French, but I do not believe that in this way we can ever be given their good qualities. All that can happen is that we become pale copies of Frenchmen, consumers not producers of culture. The vine, to take one example, has not established itself in Black Africa. It will grow, but the grapes never ripen. The soil is different and so is the climate.⁷

Interestingly, Senghor, not unlike Césaire in *Notebook*, deploys the classic – and post-war, even frighteningly German – image of earth and soil in order to establish the terms of cultural, racial, and national identity. But the imagery is also important for its appeal to Africa as unconquerable, that colonialism, in the continental context, will always be partial and meet, not so much with resistance, but with a kind of obstinacy. Soil and climate signify in the West Indies as terms of creolization; the creole is created by climate alone, so the myth goes, and everything else is just confirmation of that climatic transformation. In African, on Senghor's rendering, soil and climate mark the unconquerable that comes less from indomitable will or some such thing, more from the facts of contact and the limits of force. And

so Senghor declares, rather without hesitation or complication, that “[w]e Africans are indeed opposed to that false kind of assimilation which is merely identification,” rejecting, in that simple declaration, the notion that assimilation is synonymous with similarity or, as the instantiation of colonial violence, the hegemony of *making* similar. As well, this declaration against the intractable violence of contact – assimilationist or associationist – rejects the notion that assimilation is identical to and logically flows from any form of cultural or political association.

Part of what is so difficult about 1945 as a moment for this kind of theorizing, of course, is the still thinkable idea of Africa as part of the French empire. The question of association, for that reason, is still caught up in the question of the relationship of Senegal – which constantly stands in for the continent of Africa in Senghor’s work – on the world stage *alongside* and even *integral* to the place of France in the same. One can understand that relationship in two fundamental ways: as a straightforward concession to global empire and a sort of sad pragmatism about nation and culture *or* as a form of deconstructive intervention *against* global empire by disrupting the fantasy of disentangled colonial time with the entangled, then re-entangled time of the colonies inside French identity. Senghor writes:

There is no question of France’s adopting African customs and institutions. Still, she must understand the spirit of Africa. And perhaps she will be able to benefit from this spirit when she comes to turn back again to the old French tradition. But for the colonies there is the problem of assimilating the spirit of French civilization. It must be an active and judicious assimilation, fertilizing the indigenous civilizations, bringing them out of their stagnation, re-creating them out of their decadence. It must be *an assimilation that leaves room for association*. Only on this condition can there be a common ideal and a common purpose in life, only on this condition can there be a French Empire.⁸

This is a strange passage, and all the more important for its strangeness. Senghor opens with the motif of France-as-miscegenated space, culturally and politically, and his appeal is clearly to the life-philosophy trends so powerfully present in the French academy of the time (Bergson, most prominently). But he closes with the same claim for Senegal, suggesting either concession to the long effects of colonial present – a sort of post-mourning pessimism, revitalized by the indefatigable life-force of African civilization – or a complete recasting of that empire as foundationally, in at least one of its grounding pieces, black African.

One might say, then, with an air of criticism, or perhaps even just periodization, that Senghor’s early essays document the resignation of one type of postcolonial imagination. Resignation to empire, yes, but his is a resignation without mourning precisely because the location or re-location

of France inside Senegal operates at the same time with a location or re-location of Senegal inside France. In either case, the imperial rhetoric and vision remains intact; Senghor hesitates – and this is particularly noteworthy – before the nationalist suggestion of his description of Senegal, or Africa, as assimilating on its own terms. Senghor's close of the essay with “*only*” and “*can there be*” operates in that undecidable space opened up by his description of the terms of assimilation. The imperial future of *association* makes this decision for him, but assimilation as such decides nothing. *Soil and climate*, we might say, *as supplements to colonial epistemology*.

At the same time, the “Association and Assimilation” essay says more than the imperial concerns of the document can contain, and Senghor himself sees this in other work from the same year. The conciliatory gesture at the essay's close is interesting and reflects its own ambitions to Africanize France – a compelling idea, always, to re-entangle the colonizer in the history of the colonized, making colonialism's identitarian legacy a two-way street – but it also diverts attention from the independence question and how it reconciles anxieties of influence. Theorizing the resistance of Africa as rooted in the unrooting function of soil and climate suggests a sort of nationalism, and though Senghor rejects the simple terms of nationalism in adopting an aggressively *present* Africa in moments of contact (he is never fully nostalgic), he also sees the profound power of cultivating a certain kind of cultural opacity and unicity. That is, Senghor understands the necessity of a counter to European modernity, not as a fiction, but as writing, tradition, and conditions of reproduction outside the alienating fecundity of colonial time. This helps us make sense of the following remark on the significance of Africa for theorizing the possibility of a postcolonial future. Senghor writes:

Every language, which means every civilization, can provide material for the humanities, because *every civilization is the expression, with its own peculiar emphasis, of certain characteristics of humanity*. How can an African élite play its part in bringing about a renaissance of African civilization out of the ferment caused by French contact if they start off knowing nothing about that civilization? And where can a more authentic expression of that civilization be found than in vernacular languages and literature?²⁹

Here, just a decade or so prior to Césaire's great pronouncements about culture and civilization in Paris, Senghor turns to the vernacular as a transcendental condition. That is, he does not begin, in 1945, with a metaphysical conception of Africa or Africanness, but instead with the condition for the possibility of thinking *as* vernacular culture. Vernacular culture corrects the excesses of influence among the “African élite,” remarking that class with the civilizational marks found only in national literature. But, and this is crucial, Senghor is not advancing an argument for African indigeneity as authenticity. For better or worse, this turn to the vernacular and its intellectual force functions as a resetting and resettling of

the terms of French influence – a sense of cultural insurgency by Africans, for Africans, in relation to France and global culture more generally.

This cultural insurgency is not a one-off struggle or moment of transformation. Rather, it is a recasting – not a creation – of *tradition*. “African civilization” is Senghor’s metaphysical language for tradition, naming the animating spirit (in the Hegelian sense) for places and peoples. Spirit must become concrete; that is both a dialectical imperative and the imperative of a cultural politics committed, as is Senghor, to some sense of “the people.” That is, civilization must risk writing, then pedagogy, which is a risk we might conceive in terms of Derridean anxieties, but which are for Senghor more risks of translation than marking the oral tradition with signifiers of finitude. Risks that must be taken, indeed; fixing and preserving not only establish tradition as *transferrable* through time and location, but also change the terms of pedagogy by eliminating the chasm – created by colonial educational and cultural practices – between African knowledge and the European classroom on African terrain. And so he writes:

No doubt the argument about the African’s *tabula rasa* and the primitiveness of African languages will be brought up. Once again, go back to the great Africanists. They tell you that Africa has rich and subtle languages, capable of abstract expression although in a completely African manner, and full of imagery and poetry...All that is needed now is for the linguist to fix and preserve these riches in the written word. There the schoolboy of the future will be able to find the features of the Africa which is eternal. He will also find there a proper technique of expression, one which our ‘new Negroes’ will have to study. If they are to have their own literature like the Negroes of America, these are the sources from which they must draw.¹⁰

This is an interesting passage, in no small part because, in its decisive moment, Senghor turns to the Harlem Renaissance as a kind of model – or, at least, a parallel sensibility. Now, the endgame of the short “Education” essay is the reversal of colonial missionary work, making the claim that, or appeal to, Europe as a degenerating civilization for which Africa – cast in characteristically wide terms by Senghor – is the best and most likely revitalizing force. (Frobenius is the lead example here of a thinker who has already started this sort of process, in terms of outlining a philosophy and anthropology of life.) But the parallel sensibility here is paramount. Africa’s new Negroes enact that doubling of time, rooted in a past bereft for its lack of writing – and there is something mournful for Senghor, in the cleavage of the oral from the written, a sort of wondering of what could have been for the written African word, pedagogy, and assimilation – and also rooted in the vanguard to come, the enactment of writing, the strange possibility, here in the future, of marking in finitude the possibility of persisting without cessation through repetition, generations, and the transmission of knowing.

The vernacular intellectual, then, becomes the visible and invisible site of not just reproduction of *Africa*, but also the king's guard, as it were, for an Africa put in relationship to Europe, for a Senegal as part of the French empire, for a transformation of influence and its attendant anxieties. Assimilation is a complex operation, one that in the diaspora – the victim of colonialism's total project – means only death, but on the continent bears a different promise. A promise that does not require the slaying of the Father. A promise that cannot be without African writing and pedagogy, but also a promise that overturns and surpasses the *doxa* of colonial relations and their long shadow. *Paris noir*, achieved in Senghor's account through the re-entanglement of the metropole with its site of violence, the colony speaking back through linguistic and intellectual miscegenation, and, most importantly, the retrieval of Africa's possibilities through a renegotiated sense of assimilation. Senghor's moment is a peculiar time. And the temporality of his moment, his postcolonial moment, is every bit as peculiar.

Times of the Postcolonial

Senghor's post-war moment is revealing, not solely for what might be its naivete or optimism, but, more powerfully, for how it reckons with the honesty of the African postcolonial moment, one which must be distinguished, in terms of anxieties of influence, from the diasporic experience of the same. That moment would change in the coming decades, of course, with waves of independence struggle and victory, and any variety despotisms on the continent. And, indeed, more productively, with Senghor himself emerging as the first president of Senegal and the myriad nationalist cultural projects he initiated, projects rooted in his vision of assimilation-as-influence and the unimpeachable force of Négritude. Those later developments allow for important innovations, not the least of which is a renewed intensity of commitment to independence *as such* (rather than concession to a renegotiated empire), a political, rather than cultural, pan-African sensibility, and an investment at every level – from the psyche to political institutions – in the process of recovering and elevating indigeneity. Each of these developments, too, remain in flux; the experience of independence alters the imagination of French empire and the possibilities of an honest miscegenation of French cultural identity (namely, the recurrence of French racial nationalism against the entanglement question). But in 1945, Senghor thinks the moment freshly and with ambitious eyes.

The ambition of his eyes, however, is not enough to resolve or surpass the complex web of temporalities at stake in theorizing indigeneity, assimilation, and national culture. Everything hinges on the dual process of conversion to writing and the prominence of the vernacular intellectual, something that in the person Senghor himself is both fraught and continually in process. Césaire's resolution of colonial anxiety with the

three-fold time of Négritude serves as an important contrast, moving from the initial power of nostalgia for Africa (civilization) to the realities of colonial alienation (the opening motifs of *Notebook*) to the cultural possibilities opened up by retrieval of African civilization after the end of the world. Senghor is no apocalyptic thinker, however, and therein lies his particular African moment in the formation of Négritude as a cultural and political myth. The necessity of writing, which elevates and also risks vernacular literary forms, recenters Africa on the world stage, a centering which, in turn, makes assimilation and association possible without being fated to alienation. Influence therefore does not entail slaying the Father – something necessary in Césaire’s apocalyptic moment, for sure – but instead holds out the possibility of France (or Europe more broadly) as either a compatriot (extension of empire) or worthy opponent (sublimated in the process of decolonization). This transformation of influence through the myth of Négritude situates the postcolonial in the doubled-time of retrieval and futurity, a doubling negotiated through writing and its subsequent pedagogical power. Fecundity through new forms of finitude, we might say.

And perhaps we could say that Senghor himself embodies these temporalities, insofar as his function as a vernacular intellectual – one rooted in the past, but also organizing the present toward another future – places him between the pen and paper that becomes the first African member of the *Académie française* and the dance stage that becomes Négritude’s great nationalist project in postcolonial Senegal. Between the linguist and the pen, between the president and the dance company, there is that risk of assimilation and association, but also all of the attendant risks of splitting place and time in relation to the future. I am thinking here of Castaldi’s *Choreographies of African Identity*, which traces not only Senghor’s national ballet project, guided by the principles of his vision of Négritude, in relation to North American and European dance forms, but also to the discotheque and other vernacular forms of urban dance in Dakar. That collage is sustained, in its African moment, by a very Kierkegaardian sense of faith – a belief in Africa, a commitment to its future *élan vital*, and so a leap of faith that pushes retrieved and reformed indigenous cultural forms back into contact with colonial powers without promise of return. It is Senghor’s temporality of risk. It is the postcolonial vision of Africa as indigeneity, yes, but indigeneity without hermetic politics. Between France and the continent.

¹ Aimé Césaire, “Notebook of a Return to the Native Land,” in *Aimé Césaire: The Collected Poetry*, trs. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 67.

² Césaire, “Notebook of a Return to the Native Land,” 55.

- ³ Aimé Césaire, "Culture and Colonization," trs. Brent Edwards, *Social Text* 103, vol 28, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 128.
- ⁴ Césaire, "Culture and Colonization," 132.
- ⁵ Léopold Senghor, "Négritude," trs. John Reed and Clive Wake, in *Senghor: Prose & Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 99.
- ⁶ Léopold Senghor, "The Struggle for Négritude," in *Senghor: Prose & Poetry*, 97.
- ⁷ Léopold Senghor, "Association and Assimilation," in *Senghor: Prose & Poetry*, op. cit., 49.
- ⁸ Senghor, "Association and Assimilation," 52.
- ⁹ Léopold Senghor, "Education," in *Senghor: Prose & Poetry*, op. cit., 53-54.
- ¹⁰ Senghor, "Education," 54.