

# PRESENCE AFRICAINE AND THE EMERGENCE OF AFRICAN FILM CRITICISM

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*The essay was written in celebration of the centennial year (1995) of the birth of the cinema.*

It is practically impossible to overestimate the cultural importance of *Presence Africaine*, founded in 1947 by Alioune Diop, in black intellectual history of the twentieth-century. It assisted in establishing the complex web of intellectual relations from Paris between Africa and the African diaspora (North America and the Caribbean) which enabled Richard Wright and Frantz Fanon, Aime Cesaire and David Diop, Ezekiel Mphahlele and Langston Hughes, Jean Price-Mars and Birago Diop, Paul Niger and Leopold Sedar Senghor, to discourse with each other across transnational cultural and geographic boundaries about the condition and situation of the black world. Valentine Y. Mudimbe, arguably the most vital intellectual force to have emerged in Africa since Amilcar Cabral, has assembled a series of essays from various scholars, intellectuals, writers appraising and paying tribute to the intellectual legacy of this great journal.

***The Surreptitious Speech: Presence Africaine and the Politics of Otherness 1947-87***, a text celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the publication of *Presence Africaine*, is a remarkable document by any standard and measure.<sup>1</sup> In the Preface to the book, in the form of a letter to Mudimbe, Leopold Sedar Senghor, the great master of the Negritude Movement, links *Presence*



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*Africaine* to the black Surrealist poetic movement founded by Aime Cesaire, Leon Damas and himself, which sought to put Africa in the forefront of human civilization and attempted to establish cultural lines of continuity between ancient Egypt and contemporary Africa.

In a way confirming Senghor's observation on the affiliative relation between the black poetic movement and the Paris-based journal, Alioune Diop had written the following at the founding moment of the review:

"This journal is not subservient to any philosophical or political ideology. It wishes to be open to the collaboration of all men [and women] of good

will (white, yellow, or black) capable of helping us to define the African originality and to hasten its insertion into the modern world..... The idea goes back to 1942-43. We, a certain number of students from overseas, were in Paris in the very middle of the suffering of a Europe that was questioning itself on its essence and the authenticity of its values; we gathered together to study the situation and the characteristics that defined us, too."2

the gap between Westernized African elites and the people partly through festivals whose central aim is mutual education,4 to restore cultural authority and initiate the renewal of the values of black civilization; to recognize the weaknesses and strengths of black civilization within the context of international society; to examine the issues which emerge from the absence of the linguistic unity among black people; to establish the mass media communication system for it facilitates a proper understanding of modernity through exchange of information;5 to affirm that African elites should not only make their disciplines speak an African language, but most also Africanize their work; and lastly, to establish 'organic solidarity' between elites and its people within nations and societies, as well as 'cultural solidarity' among black people in Africa and in the African diaspora. In another context Diop summarized the project of Presence Africaine under several objectives, which are complementary to the aforementioned principles: informing an international public about black civilization; forging of scientific skills and the recovery of the scientific mastery by African societies; establishing the principles of black civilization without renouncing the historical experience of modernity; spreading the multiplicity of African languages of culture through radio, cinema, books, etc.; and questing for the attainment of humanism.6 In yet another context, Diop outlined the three phases of Presence Africaine (the name of the review means the assertion of the African presence in the modern world) through which it would promote the Afri-

In two subsequent essays, written approximately three decades after the founding of the review, Diop reflected on what the historical project of Presence Africaine had/has been. In "*The History of the Black World Festival Concept*", written in the context of the then upcoming 1977 FESTAC Festival (Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture) in Lagos, Diop indicates that the review was founded not so much as a result of the ideology of Pan-Africanism, as much as a reaction against the French policy of assimilation.3 Struggling against this assimilationist policy of attempting to incorporate African cultures into the Latin heritage, Presence Africaine sought to define an African identity through affirmation of the African personality by theorizing the black colonized subjects as part of a common cultural heritage. Summarizing the theses and principles governing the founding moment of the review, Diop states that it also sought: to stem Western appropriation of the African idea of expressive plasticity as well as countering the equation of French culture with universal culture; to bridge

can authoritativeness in the modern world: the first phase, from 1941 to 1946, involved the capturing of the attention of the West in Paris, and the interaction between African intellectuals and European ethnologists in order to illustrate and describe African values; the second phase, was concerned with constructing a profile of the African personality, since the independence of the African countries in the early 1960s led to a new resurgence of pride in African cultures — the African personality is a resultant of the development through centuries of history, traditions and values; and the third phase was preoccupied with forging of the disciplines, politics, science, literature, philosophy, which would make possible the construction of African authoritativeness.<sup>7</sup> Concluding his reflections, Diop states that African historians must provide the structural patterns of national consciousness and consciousness of Africa among the people of the world.

Jacques Rabemananjara, the Madagascan poet and one of the founding members of *Presence Africaine*, in a letter to Mudimbe recalls the historical projects of the journal in these terms:

"*Presence Africaine* assigned itself a double mission: to implement the spiritual prophylaxis of both the Black man and the White woman, to place them both side by side, on the same level, on the same lending, and to have them look each other straight in the eyes."<sup>8</sup>

In another context Rabemananjara makes the following observations on historical and cultural thrust of the review:

"In sum, there are three themes of

*Presence Africaine*: first revitalization, second illustration, and third creation of new values in the black world. The goal is to revalorize the black world, the black man, so, from one perspective, to revitalize the specific values of the black man in today's world. What I mean is that these values have been despised. They have been ridiculed. Now the role of *Presence Africaine* is to affirm this revitalization. But *Presence Africaine* is not content to stop at revitalization. We must go beyond that to illustrate these values, to place them in their proper context. And finally, *Presence Africaine* wants to create new values for the African of today, the black man of today, values that belong to the black world. So if you say that there has been a change in our goals since the early days, it is as a result of the milieu in which we live. Times change. There has been an evolution. Consequently, values become married to their era, which is what *Presence Africaine* has done in identifying itself with the conditions of the world in which it exists today."<sup>9</sup>

The historical project of *Presence Africaine* has been the revitalization, illustration and creation of new values.

As Christiane Yande Diop (the widow of Alioune Diop who today edits *Presence Africaine* and runs its publishing house) indicates in the Foreword to *The Surreptitious Speech*, that the revitalization, illustration and creation of new values was achieved by Alioune Diop in three ways by: rehabilitating the collective memory of the people of Africa; dissemination of African culture and the recognition of its importance

throughout the world; situating of black culture in its proper place in the history of humanity.<sup>10</sup> It is with the synthesis of these three aims that *Presence Africaine* made possible and created what Mudimbe calls a "new African text".<sup>11</sup> This new African text is constituted in the literacy and intellectual space organized by *Presence Africaine* in continuity with historical precedents. Inspired by Michel Foucault, Mudimbe postulates that the African text was founded by three systems of spatialization: anthropology, Christianity (or Islam) and the concept of literature. Although the African discourses which founded the new African text were marginalized within the tradition of Western history, the great merit of *Presence Africaine* is to have centralized this text within European consciousness. For Mudimbe, the central moments of the African discourses which founded the new African text are African literatures and African history. Although recognizing that the historical parameters of the new African text are configured by these two intellectual disciplines, the prescience of Mudimbe lies in the fact that he invited Manthia Diawara, who represents the new intellectual discipline of African Film Studies, to theorize his location and continuity with the tradition founded by *Presence Africaine*. Reflecting on his critical position concerning the great tradition represented by the *Négritude Movement* and *Presence Africaine*, in an interview conducted by Balentine Mudimbe, Manthia Diawara comments:

"As a scholar emerging from the Francophone tradition, I do not see negritude as a bad word in the same manner that it was seen by Wole Soyinka and Ezekiel Mphahlele. I see negritude as a movement from which I came. To me negritude is the first modernist movement of con-

sciousness in the former French colonies. People of my generation, following the lead of Sembene Ousmane, simply revise or rewrite negritude.... The important thing for us is to make our discourse reflect our socioeconomic realities. We criticize negritude, therefore, for marginalizing the majority of our populations, and for not basing its theories on economic, cultural, and social realities in Africa. Negritude was too philosophical and had too little material basis."<sup>12</sup>

While Mudimbe in *The Surreptitious Speech* gives recognition to African Film Studies as elaborating further the epistemological structure of the new African Text, Diawara in turn recognizes that the great film work of Sembène Ousmane made possible this new African intellectual discipline.

By interrogating Manthia Diawara to position himself in relation to the tradition founded by *Presence Africaine*, Valentine Mudimbe was acknowledging that it was this great review which established the intellectual and cultural space in which African Film Studies were to emerge. It was the film work of Sembène Ousmane which compelled *Presence Africaine* to give cognizance to the new African discourse of Film Studies. As a consequence, the major figures of African Film Studies, Teshome Gabriel, Manthia Diawara, Paulin Sxoumanou Vieyra, Mbye-Baboucar Cham found their critical voice through the facilities of *Presence Africaine* which published a fundamental text by each of them. Without the contribution of *Presence Africaine* African Film Studies would not be what it is today. The review also published the documents and dossiers that emerged from the critical moment in the development of F.E.P.A.C.I.

(Pan-African Federation of Filmmakers). Consequently the important role of *Presence Africaine* in the emergence of this new discipline can hardly be overestimated.

Within a few years of the founding of review in the late 1940s, Alioune Diop and *Presence Africaine* invited Paulin Soumanou Vieyra to make regular contributions on film matters affecting African national cultures and black civilization.<sup>13</sup> Although Vieyra wrote regularly from the moment of the invitation, it was only in 1960-61 that he published a major document, "*The Cinema and the African Revolution*", which was in effect the first manifesto of the African cinema. The literary verve, theoretical rigour and political urgency of the essay is perhaps to be explained by the historical turbulence of the African Political Independence Movement of 1960-61, which was also the driving force of a famous political manifesto, *Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth*. Vieyra's text sought to examine how cinema can facilitate the integration of the African into the experience of modernity. He begins by establishing three theses on the historical location and philosophical nature of cinema: that cinema is a fundamental part of human civilization inseparable from human progress in the twentieth-century; that it is one of the inventions testifying to the historical experience of modernity; and that it establishes ethics in order to interrogate and establish humanism on firmer foundations.<sup>14</sup> The revolutionary nature of the cinema resides in its capacity to shape the human imagination. Although arguing that the film's true power is still unknown or not fully recognized, Vieyra acknowledges its psychological power of as a tool of social research. He then poses one of the perennial problems of film culture: while film must cater to a diverse audience (intellectuals, proletarians

and the bourgeoisie), the danger it encounters here is that it may fall into mediocrity because of its possible appeal to the common denominator; on the other hand, if the film is too refined or esoteric, it may possibly lose its audience. For Vieyra the instinctive feel for cinema by Africans is based on their affinity for movement. European films are outside the mental conception of the African population because they tend to negate their preference for movement.

Defining 'revolution' as a rupture between past and present, Vieyra theorizes the African revolution as the decolonization process which overthrew classical colonialism and imperialism.<sup>15</sup> The essay configures a triadic relationship between revolution and cinema in the African context: how the revolutionary means of expression of cinema promoted the African revolution; how the cinema understands the African revolution; and lastly, the influence of the African revolution on the cinema itself. Elaborating Vieyra writes:

"This primary revolution of political independence which is the point of departure for all future changes in Africa, was only possible thanks to a series of revolts that the cinema, if not participating in them decisively, all the same encouraged to a slight degree, I believe."<sup>16</sup>

While colonialist films promoted the ideological maintenance of white domination, the new African films identifying with the decolonization process contested white hegemony. These films awakened revolutionary and political consciousness among the African people Vieyra argues that the emergent new African cinema had effected a revolution in the youth of Africa: by encouraging their abandonment of ancestral customs; by supporting the adoption of the heroes'

moral values on the part of the youth; and by encouraging the incitement of revolutionary consciousness in the minds of young Africans. These observations lead Vieyra to favour documentary (film) form over feature (film) form. Vieyra believed that the revolutionary nature of the new African cinema was creating a New Africa on the march to forging and writing a New African History. He hoped that the transformation of the manners, habits and customs of African youth would lead to a New Humanism.

Examining several documentary films, *Independence for Ghana, Africa 50, Voyage of Presidents Senghor and Modibo Keita to the Sudan, Voyage of President Sekou Toure to the United States*, Vieyra analyzes them as recording aspects of the African revolution: the first film is seen as the bearer of humanism by giving account of the independence movement; and the other three as creators of humanism by giving reasons for the liberation movement in Africa; and all three attack European imperialism, record the awakening of political consciousness, and represent African leaders as symbols of freedom and dignity. Vieyra also mentions two other documentary films by Jean Rouch, *Moi un Noir* and *Jaguar*. Interestingly enough, he does not say much about them.

Concluding his manifesto on the African cinema, Vieyra states that although oral traditions and written African literature should be adapted to the screen, the African films themselves can in turn inspire written African literature. These new African films which he theorizes as part of the "Third Bloc", in anticipation of Teshome Gabriel's concept of Third Cinema, will help to bring to an end colonial domination in Africa and awaken the rapid development of revolutionary consciousness:

"Arts is born in freedom and dies from constraint, but artists have never confused liberty with licence. To be valid, artistic expression must be the desires voiced by the people; if the artist intensely feels these desires he cannot but translate them faithfully. It is this that artists are always the leaders of men's actions and that through their particular art they attain universality."<sup>17</sup>

These lyrical words were an attempt to conjure what was to be characteristic of the cinema of Ousmane Sembène.

Towards the end of his life in 1989 Paulin Soumanou Vieyra published a remarkable document spelling out the crisis of the African cinema: "*African Cinema: Solidarity and Difference*". Vieyra begins by indicating that the generic term cinema encapsulates both the industry and the art of the cinema. He notes the absence on the continent of an industrial base for the creation of the African cinema because of several factors: the lack of infrastructural resources, capital and political will. This is partly because Western hegemonic control of the film market impedes the distribution of African cinema: "*In African Cinema: Solidarity and Difference*". Vieyra begins by indicating that the generic term cinema encapsulates both the industry and the art of the cinema. He notes the absence on the continent of an industrial base for the creation of the African cinema because of several factors: the lack of infrastructural resources, capital and political will. This is partly because Western hegemonic control of the film market impedes the distribution of African films. Despite these infrastructural problems, Vieyra marvels at the prodigious existence of the art of the cinema in Africa, represented by African filmmakers like Desire Ecare, Med Hondo, Souleymane Cisse, among many others. What partly

accounts for the emergence of the African art of the cinema is the solidarity among African filmmakers, symbolized by the Catharge Film Festival of 1966, the formation of the Pan-African Filmmakers Federation in Algiers in 1969 (FEPACi, an association of filmmakers in 33 African countries), the establishing of the Pan-African Film Festival in Ouagadougou in 1970, and the Mogadishu Symposium of 1978. The solidarity is exemplified in co-productions among African filmmakers, and in the seminars on the African cinema organized by FEPACI. Vieyra calls for the creation of African national cinemas, which would entail the establishing of film schools, libraries, training facilities, various other institutions, as well as the formation of an enlightened public informed by critics and historians. Marvelling at the richness of American cinema because of its cultural diversity, Vieyra thinks that the African cinema has a greater potential for diversity, because of the multiplicity of national cultures, negating the possibility of a unitary African culture. Vieyra is modeling his theory of the African national cinema on Frantz Fanon's theory of national cultures in *The Wretched of the Earth* concluding this brilliant essay characterized by brevity, Vieyra writes:

"The African Cinema that will be born, inevitably through solidarity with other cinemas, in the framework of the development of audiovisual means, will, paradoxically, affirm itself only through those differences."<sup>18</sup>

While the revolutionary changes effected in the African cinema by the historical project of Ousmane Sembène were still in the future, *Presence Africaine* published in 1957 a seminal document in the evolution of African film criticism: namely, J. Koyinde Vaughan's "*Africa South of the Sahara*

*and the Cinema*". This Nigerian scholar and writer had originally presented the essay at the 1956 First Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in Paris. It appears in a special issue of the review documenting the presentations at the International Congress.<sup>19</sup> One of the great merits of this essay is that it presents the historical background of the hegemonic Western film in Africa against which Paulin Soumanou Vieyra was reacting in formulating the manifesto of the African cinema. Its second merit is that it indicates the crucial importance of literary figuration in shaping the cinematic imagination.<sup>20</sup> Vaughan argues that the idea of Africa in Western commercial films about and made in Africa, which influenced the world's perception of the continent, was largely derived from late nineteenth-century pulp literature, classically exemplified by the novels of H. Rider Haggard, *She* and *King Solomon's Mines*, and the travel writing of European colonials. He includes also Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* in this line of indictment. This idea of Africa is of savage African tribes and strange rituals which results in the false exoticization of Africa and condescending and patronizing attitudes toward Africans. It is this false image of Africa which is superimposed on the reality of Africa. Having drawn this false image of Africa, the mission of European imperialism, its 'civilizing mission' and *raison d'être*, is supposedly to uplift Africa from its self-willed ignorance and uncivilized nature. The importance of Africa is seen as residing in its scenery as well as in the spectacle of animals. Simultaneous with demonizing and belittling the historical achievements of Africans, these films project a philosophy of individualism, arguing for the view that America and Britain have ultimate solutions to Africa's problems, which are supposedly a product of dark evil superstition on the part of Africans.

Vaughan convincingly argues this to be the position of British films, *Sanders of the River* (1935) and *Men of Two Worlds* (1943), as Hollywood films such as *Mogambo*, *White Witch Doctor*, *Odongo* and others. These films betray their lack of awareness of African civilizations, customs, and languages. In effect, these films argue for a position that there can be such thing as African civilization because the continent is supposedly an area of darkness.<sup>21</sup> The recurrent call of *Presence Africaine* for African intellectuals, writers and artists to re-situate and re-connect themselves in the glorious history of black civilizations has legitimacy because of the European demeaning of African contribution to human civilization.

The second type of films which Vaughan shows to have emerged from Europe's falsification of Africa are the documentary films whose aim were to publicize the 'progress' Africans are supposed to have made under the guidance colonialism and imperialism. While on the one hand the European Colonial Film Units, especially British, made films that falsified the authentic image of Africa for propagandistic purposes, on the other hand, these same Film Units also made other documentary films of genuine merit, which were pedagogical instruments in the struggle against illiteracy, unsanitary health conditions, etc. The third type of films Vaughan was concerned with, in this essay that Langston Hughes conferred classic status by anthologizing it in his *African Treasures*, were the documentaries made by imperial and colonial trading companies purporting to show the great 'benefits' the African people had derived from their enterprise in Africa. Concerning anthropological films, Vaughan has high praise for in them "the people of Africa suddenly spring to life on the screen." This is in stark contrast to the "distortion" of colonial

propaganda and the "sensationalism" of the Hollywood commercial picture industry. The only criticism Vaughan makes of European anthropological films about Africa is that they are obsessively concerned with the "primitive" past in total ignorance of the new vitality represented by the present-day urban centers. Jean Rouch was the only exception since both spheres were part of his central preoccupations.<sup>22</sup> Both Paulin Soumanou Vieyra and J. Koyinde Vaughan are reticent about criticizing the work of Jean Rouch. Concluding his rigorous analysis and prophetic presentation, Vaughan writes:

"The question that naturally springs to mind is what attempt is being made to develop African cinema productions that will inevitably counteract the decades of distortion of the conventional cinema industry. The future presentation on the screen of African life with the infinite possibilities of dramatising both the past and the present, as well as communicating to world audiences African aspirations, can only be successfully achieved by Africans conscious of the great contribution that we must make to the art of the cinema. It is clearly obvious that neither Hollywood nor other commercial productions of the West can serve as a guide. Rather, local heroes, the conflict of ideas raging in African communities and the wealth of imagery present in folklore will provide their inevitable inspiration. Themes that spring to mind as subjects for feature films of the future, although too numerous to mention here, could include the great resistance of numerous African tribes to



European penetration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the recreation of the former civilisations of 'Ife', the 'Ashanti' and other tribes in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa, and the present turmoil created in African urban societies by a new and restless industrial proletariat".<sup>23</sup>

This is shrewd and prescient because Vaughan prophetically indicated the historical necessity and the conditions of possibility of a Ousmane Sembène.

It was the film work of Sembène which made possible the epistemological break that shifted the nature of African film criticism which appeared in *Presence Africaine* from the descriptive and teleological criticism of Vieyra and Vaughan to the analytic and formalizing (note, not formalistic) criticism of Teshome, Gabriel, Mbya and Diawara. Though their names are being coupled here, there is a fundamental difference between Vieyra and Vaughan, whereas the former theorized the African cinema as predicated purely on documentary form, the latter predicted its founding on the basis of fiction form. The work of the younger scholars founded African Film Studies because it defined its object of study by tracing its poetics on the basis of African oral narrative traditions.<sup>24</sup>

Ousmane Sembène completely revolutionized the creative space of African film production. The Cinema of Ousmane Sembene by Francoise Pfaff captures the singular nature of his achievement.<sup>25</sup> The first incontrovertible observation made by Pfaff is that films of Sembene are truly a realistic representative of Africa from the perspective of Africans. This is contra to the colonial and commercial films which were a major preoccupation of J. Koyinde Vaughan's criticism. The cinema of Sembène emerged at a crucial

juncture in African political and cultural history: the consolidation of African nationalism in alignment with Pan-Africanism in the struggle against colonialism and imperialism; the moment of the Congo Crisis of 1960 which signaled the end of classical colonialism and the arrival of neo-colonialism; the hegemony of African national literatures in the European languages, especially in South Africa and in Nigeria, the two countries which had had dominant literatures in the African languages; the historical demise of the *Négritude Movement* in Francophone Africa and Sophiatown Renaissance in South Africa, both of which were the expression of modernism in Africa; the arrival of Fanonism and Cabralism as authentic forms of Classical African Marxism; the cultural unity of Anglophone African literary tradition around *Transition* (situated in Kampala) and *Black Orpheus* (located in Lagos).<sup>26</sup> The films of Sembène were part of this historical dynamic in the early 1960s. The second point raised by Pfaff is the struggle to decolonize the cinema undertaken by Sembène in order to make it adaptable to the needs and reality of Africa. Thirdly, Sembène forced the African cinema to speak in its authentic voice, the voice of the African languages. Sembene founded the African cinema, hence becoming 'a griot of modern times', by modeling his films on the themes and styles of African oral traditions.<sup>27</sup> It is perhaps not accidental that *Borom Sarret* (1963), *Black Girl* (1966), *Mandabi* (1968), are all in one way or another concerned with the dialectic between tradition and modernity, while the other series of films, *Emitai* (1971), *Ceddo* (1976) *Camp de Thiore* (1987), portray the struggle between imperialism, in the form of hegemonic European history and imperializing Islamism, and the progressive African national histories. *Xala* (1974) stands by itself as a condemnation of

neo-colonialism and the exemplification of the thesis developed by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*. That Ousmane Sembène was fully conscious of his historical mission is made clear by his statement at the 1954 Berlin International Filmfestival: "*Limage cinématographique et al poésie en Afrique*".<sup>28</sup> Sembène puts forth several theses: the historical necessity of African filmmakers forming an association to struggle against the neo-colonial monopoly over film distribution; the importance of controlling the image of Africa on the screen; and the need for inter-African infrastructural means of film production.

By the time *Presence Africaine* published two important documents on the African cinema in the early 1970s, Lionel Ngakane's "*The Cinema in South Africa*"<sup>29</sup> and the historic document "*The Role of the African Filmmaker in Rousing an Awareness of Black Civilization*",<sup>30</sup> Ousmane Sembène had already shifted the theoretical and praxiological terms of articulating and producing this emergent cultural formation. Ngakane sought to indicate the debilitating effect of extensive censorship system against the emergence of an authentically South African cinema.<sup>31</sup> Since white South Africans took the cinema seriously as a form of entertainment as well as a propaganda instrument, the minority white regime made sure that Africans would not see the kind of films that would make questionable their subordinate position in the racist and fascist society of South Africa. These conditions have made it impossible for a black South African cinema to emerge. On the other hand, the Apartheid State supported the making of Afrikaans films which largely supported the ideology of white chauvinism, in some instances of outright fascism. As a counter-measure against this chauvinistic white South African cinema, Ngakane spells out the diffi-

culties which hindered the realization of South African cinema in exile. The great merit of Lionel Ngakane is that in his thirty-five year exile period he attempted to construct a South African cinema in exile.<sup>32</sup> Though he did not succeed, he implanted the seeds for the emergence of progressive film culture in a New South Africa. Concluding his essay, Ngakane writes:

"Today, many films are being made for television about South Africa. These are made by television companies and have been sympathetic to our cause in that they have been mainly critical of the South African racist situation. But it is essential that the Africans should be the main critics by virtue of knowing the situation at first hand...The only true picture of South Africa can come from African writers, directors and actors."<sup>33</sup>

With these last words, Lionel Ngakane was in effect in agreeing with the principle formulated fourteen years previously by J. Koyinde Vaughan, that the Africans should represent themselves through the images of the cinema. It is this principle that the document, "*The Role of the African Filmmakers in Rousing an Awareness of Black Civilization*", published by *Presence Africaine* in 1974 sought to concretize.

The Seminar from which the document emerged addressed five critical issues concerning the African cinema:

"how the cinema can inspire a feeling of cultural and historical solidarity between black communities and rouse an awareness of a common civilization; how the cinema can present the human, social and cultural realities of Africa and make Africans think about their destiny; how

the cinema can work for African independence and cultural authority; how and why the African cinema should use African languages; the problem of an original cinematographic language freed from certain Western models, criteria and myths (e.g. the individualistic hero myth, the all-pervading power of money, unbridled sex, violence, false luxury, etc.)”<sup>34</sup>

Among the participants addressing these issues were: Djibril Tamsir Niane, Richard B. de Medeiros, Lucien Mailli, Sekou Tall, Solo Randrasana, Alkaly Kaba, Ntite Mukendi, Ferid Boughedir, Bassori Timite, Jean-Claude Rahage, Annette M'baye, M. Damiba, M. Some, and Mme Ki-Zerbo. The Seminar agreed on a working definition of cinema from an African perspective:

“The cinema is an instrument of communication and education through image and sound; it is therefore a language. This language is particularly adapted to Africa because it can cut across linguistic barriers through its power of image and can adapt itself essentially to our oral civilizations which are based on spectacle and speech”.<sup>35</sup>

The Seminar also passed several resolutions concerning African history

“Since the history of Africa is badly known by Africans, African film-makers will have a major role to play in promoting the knowledge of this history by producing historical films. They will have to recall and illustrate the great empires of the past, evoke legends and mythical stories through which the profound life of the people is expressed. All these concern an-

cient history. As for modern and contemporary history, African film-makers will have to retrace the different episodes of colonization and analyse them in order to learn the lessons that explain what Africa is today. They will also have to fight against the after-effects and relics of systematically organized cultural subjugation.”; concerning civilization and African culture - “The Seminar began with a premise unanimously accepted as true: the existence of civilization and a culture that are African, perceived as the sum of all values, usages and customs of black peoples which establishes the relations between man [and woman] and his [her] environment. On the basis, the Seminar has emphasized the necessity for the African cinema to show all aspects of this civilization and culture, as well as its problems, contradictions and the dynamics of its modern evolution, so that they can serve Africans as a basis of reflection on their own world.”;

Concerning African languages and the African cinema:

“The Seminar studies the relationships between African languages, culture and the cinema..... The African cinema cannot afford to be simply a cinema of entertainment; it has to become a means of educating the people, especially if the cinematographic message is expressed in African languages. In fact, this will favour, from all points of view, a more active participation of the population in cinematographic creation.”;

Concerning cinematographic language:

“One should not confuse cinematographic language with cinematographic technique. Since the invention of the cinema, technique has been practically the same in all countries of the world; the language in itself is different according to whether the film is Japanese, Brazilian, Russian or American. That is to say that the language is a component of many elements which can differ according to countries.....One can therefore say that a cinematographic language is specified when the sum of its elements belongs to a nation, a culture, a given civilization. From this it can be seen what an African cinematographic language could be - that which uses African languages and music and which should be joined to African pictorial, architectural, gesticular and dramatic traditions”.<sup>36</sup>

Undoubtedly, these resolutions represent one of the most thorough examinations of the nature of the African cinema.

Teshome Gabriel was to found African Film Studies by particularizing and objectifying the structure of African film according to these edicts and principles, a gesture which opened a new African discursive space beyond the African film criticism of J. Koyinde Vaughan and Paulin Soumanou Vieyra. The importance Teshome Gabriel occupies in Africa Film Studies today is indicated by the notes of acknowledgment given in the recent vintage of books that belong to this tradition by relatively younger scholars: Manthia Diawara<sup>37</sup> and N. Frank Ukadike.<sup>38</sup> Gabriel is also a central figure in the theorization of the Third Cinema.<sup>39</sup> The conceptual perspective

of Gabriel's essay on Ousmane Sembene in *Presence Africaine*, “*Xala: A Cinema of Wax and Gold*”, locates a unity between African Film Studies and Third Cinema within the same discursive field.<sup>40</sup> The essay is one of the first detailed ideological, stylistic and visual reading of an African film by African scholar. It opened a new mode of analysis in African Film Studies. For Gabriel the artistic and historical vision of Sembene is governed by particular dialectical tensions: between modernity and tradition, the individual and context, foreign and domestic, and the internal and the external. Gabriel argues that in essence *Xala* is a critique of the neo-colonial role which the African bourgeoisie has been playing in African history, and that neo-colonialism is more insidious than colonialism. The impotence of the main character, El Hadji Abdou Kader Beye, is in fact the symbolic representation of the bareness of the African national bourgeoisie, or for that matter, Third World national ruling classes. In many ways then, *Xala* occupies the same epistemological space as Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. The brilliance of the film for Gabriel lies in its being both comedy and satire about neo-colonialism in Africa. Continuing on the line of thought first opened by Paulin Vieyra who had argued that African film should seek its sustenance in African oral traditions, Gabriel postulates that the linguistic and filmic structure of *Xala* is modeled on African poetic form, and for him poetic form attains maximum ideas with minimum of words. In the rest of the essay Gabriel unveils the comedic format of the film to gain access to its ideology. Arguing that the form of the film is located in the dialectic between cultural codes and filmic codes, Teshome Gabriel indicates that its narrative structure is characterized by a dualism of the authentic and the inauthentic: at the level of the lan-

guage, dress, cultural codes, etc. Concluding a detailed analysis, Gabriel argues that *Xala* translates an African folk-narrative form into a cinematic form, and this is the proof that African cinema must draw from the wealth of oral cultural and aesthetic traditions.

Inspired by the achievement of Ousmane Sembène<sup>41</sup> and the theoretical formulations of the Argentinian radical filmmakers, Fernando Solanas Octavio Getino (themselves inspired by Frantz Fanon, one of the intellectual pillars of *Presence Africaine*), on the idea of the Third Cinema, Teshome Gabriel wrote arguably the most influential text on Third Cinema: *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation*. It could be argued that in writing such a book, Gabriel, though transformed into a class position from its culturalist perspective, was embellishing and extending the project of *Presence Africaine* of finding the unity of black civilization, an intellectual position the great Alioune Diop insisted upon. In articulating the concept of Third Cinema, Teshome Gabriel encompassed Latin America within the historical space of black civilization: the *Cinema Novo* of Glauber Rocha, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Carlos Diegues, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade had as one of its central tasks the re-articulation of the them marginalized black culture into the center of Brazilian history and society; the Cuban Cinema of Sergio Giral, Sara Gomez, Humberto Solas, Tomas Gutierrez Alea and others, as part of the New Latin American Cinema, also sought to situate that country's black culture at the center of the achievements of the Cuban Revolution. It is therefore not accidental that the *Cinema Novo* and the Cuban Cinema occupy a pre-eminent position in Third Cinema in the Third World.

Teshome Gabriel situates this historical emergence of the Third Cinema, which occupies the dynamized cultural space

of the Third World, in the revolutionary upheavals of the 1960s in reaction to the hegemony of Hollywood traditional cinema. He tabulates the following political characteristics of this new cinema: it immerses itself in the struggle of Third World peoples; views itself as a weapon and political act; it seeks to establish new cinematic codes; as an alternative cinema, it is an instrument for decolonization and liberation. Taking a two-pronged approach, the book is a study of the style and ideology of Third World films as well as studying the social and political conditions making such films possible. Hence the films are examined for their innovative style and ideological orientation. One critical issue which Teshome clarifies at the outset of the book is that Third Cinema is not synonymous with Third World Cinema, for the former is a movement which is politically engaged in opposing capitalism, if not in overthrowing it, as well as establishing an innovative film language which contests Hollywood classical film language. Having laid out the conceptual and historical parameters of the Third Cinema, Teshome delineates further specificity: it sought to give voice to the mass of humanity; develop a new revolutionary attitude towards film practice; articulate a particular class position; contests the aestheticizing of ideology while advocating the politicization of cinema; it corresponds to the cultural tastes and political needs of society; and aimed at formulating a politics of style. Throughout its sweeping canvassing of the films representing this new approach to film, Third Cinema in the Third World seeks to emphasize that Third Cinema is not a coherent movement, but is based on contradictory shared historical experiences and objectives. Nevertheless, the penetrative gaze of Teshome moves from Miguel Littin's *The Promised Land* and Humberto Solas' *Lucia* through Ousmane

Sembène's *Emitai* and Nana Mohomo's *Last Grave at Dimbaza* to Paul Leduc's *Reed: Insurgent Mexico* and Haile Gerima's *Harvest: 3000 Years*, delineating the politics of stylistics, the cultural and linguistic codes, the historical problematics of each of the films in its path.

With such an example of a sweeping perspective as a domain of African Film Studies, the younger scholars who come after Teshome Gabriel, were to stake their particular territories of black civilization in different locations: Mbye B. Cham in the Caribbean Cinema and Manthia Diawara in British Black Cinema and Black American Cinema. The other territories are mapped from their beginnings in Africa. There can be no doubt that had Alioune Diop lived to see the new interpretations of the meaning of black civilization, he would have seen that the tradition of *Presence Africaine* begun by Aime Cesaire, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Jacques Rabemajara (poets) in the 1940s, continued by Frantz Fanon and Felix Moumie (political philosophers) in the 1950s, extended by Jacqueling Ki-Zerbo (historian) and V.Y. Mudimbe (philosopher and ethnologist, not to mention writer) in the 1960s, embellished by Paulin J. Hountondji (philosopher and educator) in the 1970s, had been taken to new heights by the African film scholars in the 1980s.

Mbye-Baboucar Cham made his debut in *Presence Africaine* with an article, "Film Production in West Africa: 1979-1981", canvassing a cultural space seeking to explain the differential forms of film production.<sup>42</sup> Beginning by indicating the weakness of African infrastructure, Mbye Cham postulates a very controversial and debatable notion that the North and West Africans were dominant in the sphere of cinema in the 1970s as they had been in literary matters in the 1960s over South, East and Central Africans.<sup>43</sup> The reason for

this, according Cham, is the differential nature of colonialism in Africa. Whereas Mbye Cham uses a comparative method for judgmental purposes, in Manthia Diawara's *African Cinema*, it is utilized to illuminate the rich, differential and complex nature of the African cinema. This postulate is accompanied by the observation of the dearth of African film criticism. Focusing on Nigerian cinema, Mbye argues that perhaps one of the reasons for the underdevelopment of film industry in "Anglophone" West Africa is the political instability that has traumatized the region. Focusing on the film work of Ola Balogun, he lauds it for being the product of the adaptation of African literary texts. Mbye traces the film career of Balogun (arguably the most prominent filmmaker Nigeria has produced) from its copying of non-African models to the making of the first Nigerian film in an indigenous language, *Amadi* (1976) in Igbol by Cham moves on to consider the work Kwqqa Ansa in Ghana, especially *Love Brewed in the African Pot* (1980). Offering a detailed reading of the film, he concludes by indicating that despite its various technical flaws, the film was a positive development in Ghanaian cinema. Concluding his observations on the paucity of "Anglophone" West African film culture, Mbye Cham writes:

"For the moment, Balogun is perhaps the Nigerian cineast with the most potential to transform the industry from its present state of a 'kwi' (that well-known New Zealand bird that cannot fly) into, maybe, an eagle!"<sup>44</sup>

Considering "Francophone" West Africa, where 'the beat goes on', Mbye Cham remarks that one of the significant events of the African cinema in 1980. was the production of Paulin Soumanou Vieyra's first feature film, *En Residence Surveillee*, following on

the twelve documentaries since the pioneering achievement of 1955, *C'était il y a 4 ans* and *Afrique-sur-Seine*. The film examines the role of foreign experts who serve as advisers to many African governments:

"This film is loud indictment of the dependency mentality of many an African country."

Surveying seventeen films made in the time period between 1979 and 1981, Mbye Cham concludes that for more films to be made in Africa, more supportive institutions have to be constructed: distribution outlets, laboratories, film schools, film societies, financial support of governments.

Two years later, Cham published in *Presence Africaine* a fascinating article on the filmwork of Ousmane Sembène and Haile Gerima. "*Art and Ideology in the Work of Sembène Ousmane and Haile Gerima*" presents the thesis that there are similarities in ideological orientation, field of action and revolutionary consciousness in both of these remarkable African artists to merit their work being examined adjacent to each other.<sup>45</sup> This adjacency may be justified by the fact that for Mbye Cham their film work defines the broad outlines of the African film. In both there is a dramatization of African history, a comparable positioning of ideology in their aesthetic practices and an analogous construction of a dialectical framework of polar opposites. The preoccupation of their films is with truth, justice, equality, change, progress, and reality is articulated as a contradictory force. At the same time, they expose oppression, exploitation and make a critique of capitalism:

"Both directors expose and denounce the inhumanity of this system and the inevitable lesson that forces itself upon the viewer is the imperativeness of struggle and

change".

In other words, they denounce the inhumanity, largely the result of colonialism and imperialism, present prevalent in Africa. Reflecting on the antagonistic polarities of the narrative structure of some of their films, Mbye Cham specifies that, in Sembène's *Ceddo*, there is a polarity between Islam and ceddo ('pagan' masses), while in Sembène's *Xala*, there is a duality between El-Hadji and the beggar, and in Gerima's *Harvest: 3000 Years*, there is the contrariety between the feudal lord and the peasants. Since both artists are Marxists, class struggle is the driving force of history. Hence their films are largely concerned with systemic processes more than individualist undertakings. Although Marxist dialectics is the driving force of the movement of the narration, the central idea of the narration itself is invariably based on African oral narratives: a unique synthesis of the modern and the traditional. Impressively, Mbye Cham moves on to consider the politics of style in both artists: film stylization takes the form of flashback, flashforward, dream, hallucination which is tied to particular ideological and thematic concerns. Cham postulates a similarity also in editing styles:

"Another important area of the convergence in the art and ideology of both directors lies in their conception of the editing of their work.....The same principle of opposition is also present: shots are juxtaposed in contrapuntal fashion, mainly for analysis and denunciation."

Cham concludes his analysis by situating Ousmane Sembène and Haile Gerima within the context of Third World film culture: the progressive African film artist, like other Third World film artists in other countries, who are similar to him/her, is engaged in an

anti-imperialist struggle.

A concern with Third World Cinema led Mbye Baboucar Cham to an engagement with Caribbean Cinema: *Ex-iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*.<sup>46</sup> Previous to this book five years earlier, as part of the elaboration of the domain of black civilization, Cham had assembled a book largely about the Caribbean diaspora in Britain: *Blackframes: Critical Perspectives on Black Independent Cinema*. This latter text intersects with what were to be the preoccupations of Manthia Diawara: *Black British Cinema*. *Ex-iles* focuses on films from Guadeloupe, Martinique, Curacao, Surinam, Aruba, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad, Tobago, and those of their diaspora in United States, Canada, Holland and France. In the "Introduction" to the text Mbye Cham defines the Caribbean cinema as a cinema created by the Caribbean people themselves. This new phenomenon emerged in the 1980s. Its late emergence is partly explained by the absence of weakness of the infrastructure of production, distribution and exhibition, a characteristic prevalent in many Third World countries. The Caribbean cinema had to struggle against two forms of hegemony: films by Western filmmakers which fabricated an image of the Caribbean which was at odds with its actual reality; and the dominance of Western capitalist culture in these countries. Mbye indicates that since the history of the Caribbean was a history of plantation slavery, Western imperial and colonial exploitation, the Caribbean cinema, in order to be authentic to its historical mission, had to confront the politics and history which invariably emanate from such a form of imperial domination. In order to find its voice of 'Caribbean-ness', in forging its unique identity, this new cinema had to school itself in Caribbean oral traditions as well as in the new intellectual formations constituted by the achievements of Frantz Fanon,

Aime Cesaire, Edouard Glissant, Joseph Zobel in Martinique, Jean Price-Mars, Jacques Roumain, Jacques Stephen Alexis in Haiti, V.S. Reid, Roger Mais, Louise Bennett in Jamaica, and C.L.R. James in Trinidad. Only by taking cognisance of its true origins, could the Caribbean cinema form a part of the civilization of cinema. This is true of Euzhan Palcy's *Sugarcane Alley* (1983) in Martinique, as it is of Raoul Peck's *Haitian Corner* (1988) in Haiti, Sarah Maldoror's *Une Homme, Une Terre* (1977) in Guadeloupe, Christian Lara's *Coco la Fleur Candidate* (1977) also in Guadeloupe, Horace Ove's films made in the diaspora in Britain, as well as many others. Many of these films, if not all of them, consciously or unconsciously, work under the idea that the defining characteristic of Caribbean identity is Creolite (the sovereignty of Creole language and culture), as recently theorized by Edouard Glissant. Although working within the domain defined by this singular idea, concerning form, style and orientation, each of the national cinemas constituting the Caribbean cinema, has forged its uniqueness. Nevertheless the idea of the Creolite is fundamental as Mbye Cham makes clear in the following sentence:

"Along with other cognate articulations such as 'marronisme moderne' ('modern maroonism'), Creolite constitutes a continuation of as well as a shift away from a history of intellectual, cultural, and political practice in the Caribbean ranging from Negrismo in Cuba, Indigenisme in Haiti, Negritude in Martinique and Guadeloupe, and Pan Africanism."

Consequently it is not accidental that within the pages of *Ex-iles*, Aime Cesaire, the great Martiniquan poet of the epic, *Return To My Native Land*, and founding member of *Presence Afri-*



caine, stands as one of the principal influences of the Caribbean cinema.

Sarah Maldoror, a major artist of the Caribbean cinema, though her position within it is controversial because of her origins, preoccupations and commitments, has made only one film in which the Caribbean is the subject: a documentary about Aime Cesaire: *Une Homme, Une Terre*. There can be no doubt that this homage is a recognition of the imaginative possibilities that Cesaire has opened for the Caribbean cinema. In parenthesis, it should be added that when Maldoror made *Sambizanga* (1972), a film about the then unfolding Angolan Revolution, she clearly played a vital role in the development of the African cinema. In a 1988 interview published in *Ex-iles*, Cesaire states that for him the Caribbean cinema is important in helping to define the cultural identity of the Caribbeans as well as in facilitating the self-knowledge of the Antilleans, thereby assisting in bringing to an end their alienation from themselves.<sup>47</sup> Giving support to the idea of Creolite, Cesaire argues that Creole is a neo-African language functioning according to the rules of African phonetics and syntax. As to the possible relation the Caribbean cinema and Negritude, Cesaire states:

"I do believe that cinema can be a great vehicle of Negritude. I know that the word Negritude these days makes some people uncomfortable and tense... There will be a Negritude as long as there are Black people, as long as there are Black people who think. Negritude is our culture. It is our history..... Negritude is the state of being Black."

Perhaps it should be pointed that Aime Cesaire has not only given moral support to the Caribbean cinema, but he was also instrumental in facilitating

the making of Palcy's *Sugarcane Alley*, a film that announced to the general public world-wide the existence of the Caribbean cinema. In an interview, with Palcy in *Ex-iles*, she emphasizes the importance of Cesaire for her work as well as he having made it possible for her to finish *Sugarcane Alley* when a European television station reneged on giving her the full sum to complete the film.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps with the passage of time Derek Walcott's epic poem about the Caribbean, *Omeros* (1990), will also open other imaginative possibilities for the Caribbean cinema.

In a seminal essay, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation", in *Ex-iles*, Stuart Hall uses the metaphor of '*Presence Africaine*' to argue, for a historical construction of cultural identity, the central preoccupation of the Caribbean cinema, especially at the moment of its emergence, in which its new kinds of subjects are constituted in the process of representation, rather than before its commencement.<sup>49</sup> For Stuart Hall the Caribbean identity is defined by three contrasting and contestatory convergences: '*Presence Africaine*', '*Presence Europeene*' and '*Presence Americaine*'. Within this triadic unity, *Presence Africaine* is the site of the repressed. In order to make *Presence Africaine* speak its cultural presence in the process of historical retrieval and recovery, Stuart Hall articulates cultural identity as a 'production process', as a becoming and being, rather than as an unalterable constituted historical fact. Cultural identity as a production process, as a process continually in the making, recognizes the intervention of history as an instrument of making and unmaking. Postulating identity as a constructed 'imaginary unification' gives cognisance to differences and discontinuities in cultural formation which are mediated by time, history and place. In

formulating such a concept identity, Stuart Hall is challenging the prevailing definition of cultural identity as reflecting shared cultural codes, common historical experiences, and continuous frames of reference. Such an understanding of cultural identity supposes 'Caribbeanness' as a 'oneness', rather than as a unity of multiplicity of experiences. In other words, for Stuart Hall, cultural identity in our postmodern times is a unity of the vectors of continuity and similarity, as well as the vectors of differences and rupture. Hall states that he hopes the then emergent Caribbean cinema would construct a politics of cultural identity understood as a process perpetually in the making. Stuart Hall's reformulation of the historical construct of cultural identity is revolutionary in that it enables a radical historicization of Aime Cesaire's argument that *Negritude* is a constant presence in the black world. This remarkable essay has had a profound impact on many scholars in many parts of the world, especially among young black scholars in the African diaspora.

The voluminous writings of Manthia Diawara on the black cinema in the African diaspora, the Black American Cinema and the British Black Cinema, is in many ways a conceptual construction of '*Presence Africaine*' against the hegemonic patterns of the white Hollywood cinema and the Western world.<sup>50</sup> Before we examining these writings, a consideration of his debut in *Presence Africaine* is in order. The essay, "*Oral Literature and African Film: Narratology in Wend Kuuni*", is one of the most detailed, thorough, comprehensive ever to be devoted to an African film.<sup>51</sup> It announced the relevance of high European theory in the analysis of African film, or for that matter, in the analysis of cultural products in the African diaspora.<sup>52</sup> The essay undertakes the same historical project as Homi K. Bhabha's famous

essay, "*The Commitment to Theory*", the unavoidability of high theory in deep and penetrative cultural analysis.<sup>53</sup> Diawara begins the essay by taking note of Gaston Kaborè's statement that the African cinema must find a style that would define its singular uniqueness. Supporting the position formulated by his predecessors (Paulin Vieyra, J. Koyinde Vaughan, Teshome Gabriel and other African film scholars), Diawara emphasizes the exemplariness of African literature, written and oral, for African cinema in finding its polyphonous voice. Particularizing the point, he indicates that oral traditions are of much greater importance than written African literature in inspiring and vitalizing the African cinema. Going beyond merely tracing the influence of oral literature on an African film and the mere discussion of film as if it were literature. Diawara, in analyzing Gaston Kabore's *Wend Kuuni*, seeks to trace the transformed narrative points of view in the film that emanate directly from the oral tradition. He examines the subversion of character and the conception of order and closure in different generic forms. Although recognizing the structure of *Wend Kuuni* as coming from oral traditions, Diawara argues that the ideology of time and the role of the griot in the film are distinctively positioned than they are in oral traditions. In other words, the African cinema borrows from the oral traditions while simultaneously interrogating their nature.

In analyzing the film, Manthia Diawara aims to achieve three things: to delineate how the film transforms events and characters from their original representation in oral traditions; outline a different closure of ideological order; and describe the orality subject of the film. He examines these three processes by analyzing the narratology of *Wend Kuuni*. Diawara develops a theory of African narratology borrowing

from the theories of narrative analysis as developed by Gerard Genette, Vladimir Propp, Roland Barthes and Claude Bremond. With this strong theoretical machinery of narrative analysis, Diawara undertakes a detailed analysis of the linear structure of the narrative in the film as it relates to oral traditions. The four functions which are articulated in the narrative structure are related to three myths in *Wend Kuuni*: the 'emancipation of the daughter', the 'Gift of God' and that of the 'wanted son'. These three myths or stories are combine into an archetypal story which holds the unity of the narration together. Relating the film to its origins in oral traditions, Diawara shows how the traditions provide to the film: the invaluable devices of linearization, montage techniques and the information that opens and closes action. Though related to each other, he indicates how the film form constantly subverts the functions, actants and relationships prevalent in the oral form. In an inspired moment of comparing the oral text and the film text, Manthia Diawara writes these shrewd words:

"The different temporal ordering of events in the film as a whole, affects the meaning of the story from the oral tradition. The former's opening sequence presents an individual at odds with the system; a woman, placing her desires above tradition, chooses to run away. In the oral text, the opposite occurs: the story begins with a lost boy in need of a home. While the film starts indoors and points toward the wilderness, the oral tradition goes from the wilderness to the village. The narrator is interested in restoring the status quo where there is chaos, while the director rejects the existing order and proposes an alternative system".

With such powerful analysis, it is no wonder that the essay was singled out for high praise in *Film Quarterly*, when the book in which it was anthologized, *Questions of Third Cinema*, was being reviewed.<sup>54</sup> The essay is conspicuous by its absence in Diawara's *African Cinema: Politics and Culture*, the reason being perhaps that the book is more preoccupied with infrastructural problems of the African cinema rather than with close reading of African film texts.

*Oral Literature and African Film: Narratology in Wend Kuuni* is part of a series of essays in which Manthia Diawara tabulated conceptually the 'Africaness' of African film. Related to this is another essay: "*Popular Culture and Oral Traditions in African Film*". Diawara begins the essay by lamenting the absence of an enlightened African film criticism at a time when the African films have created an aesthetic tradition. To overcome this lacuna, he argues, moving in the same direction as Houston A. Baker and Henry Louis Gates within the African American literary context, that African film criticism must possess a deep knowledge of African traditions, especially oral traditions, and a vast critical apparatus of Western theoretical and philosophical knowledge. To be sure, this achievement is due to the serious ways in which the African film has schooled itself in African traditions. Diawara postulates that the fundamental issues have been at the center of African films: critiquing of Western values; creation of anti-neocolonialist discourses; and re-affirmation of African cultures that have been repressed by the West. Surveying a vast canvas of African films, Ousmane Sembene's *Xala* (1974) and *Ceddo* (1989), Desire Ecare's *Visages de Femmes* (Faces of Women, 1985), Ben Diogaye Beye's *Sey Seyeti* (One Man, Several Women, 1980), Souleymane Cisse's *Finye* (The

Wind, 1983), Lancine Fadika-Kramo's *Djeli* (The Griot, 1981), Ababakar Samb's *Jorn* (1983), he argues that these films in different ways resort to oral story-telling forms as well as to traditional story-telling techniques of narrating: the filmmaker is comparable to the griot in the reproduction of traditional modes of being within the scope of their differences and similarities. Several orderings, of different intensity, are at work, in different ways, in practically all of these films as well as in many others: the invention and fashioning of an African film language(s); the appropriation of African popular culture(s) moves the films in the direction of traditional narrative codes, away from Western film language; the appropriation, the interrogation of popular culture, particularly concerning phallogocentrism; the struggle between modernity and tradition; the critiquing of the prepressiveness of polygamy; the romantic return to tradition and 'authenticity' does not necessarily bring about solutions to the problem of modernity; the questioning of the hierarchies of the caste system; and the portrayal of the transformation of the social order. Concluding the essay on an extended reflection on the nature of orality in African film, especially in *Ceddo*, Diawara argues that the African filmmaker is in the process of replacing the griot as a re-writer of African history. The new African griot with a camera, may not necessarily only be an author of new texts, but also a reproducer of old texts. In an interview with Manthia Diawara, "*Souleymane Cisse's Light on Africa*", Cisse would seem to confirm the thesis formulated by Diawara in "*Popular Culture and Oral Traditions in African Film*", when he says the following:

"There are fundamental reasons that led me to look for a different style in my film language. I made a new

departure so as to see things in a different manner, to see things from a different angle. After *The Wind*, I wanted to change my style before people begin to label me as a political and didactic filmmaker..... Given that people were sensitive to my first films, a more subtle way of doing things was necessary to deal with these delicate issues. I had to put my thesis at a deeper level. I made *el. I made Yeelen*, which to me is my most political film.....I believe that the mastery of content is crucial. I don't want to give lessons to African filmmakers on this issue. But one thing is certain: If one does not have control over the content of what one is making, and if one is not mindful of the space and the environment that surround one, I think that the film loses a lot...There are thousands of Malians who know about the 'Komo's' existence but have never seen it performed. For them, the 'Komo' was a secret religion that remained as a mystery to them. For the first time, a film decodes the secret ritual described by the song they usually hear on the radio. The film interprets this ritualistic song that one is used to hearing."

In this statement, Souleymane Cisse directly links modern African film form to traditional oral form.

It was perhaps this dialectic of the modern and the traditional so prevalent in African film form that inspired Manthia Diawara to translate into English from French Amadou Hajte Ba's "*The African Tale of Cinema*". The short story relates the consequences that emerged when the Europeans arrived in Bandiagara (Mali) in 1908 to screen

the first showing of the film. Hampte Ba portrays the class between Islamic beliefs and the new unknown technology. In other words, the clash between modernity and tradition. The coming of cinema in Africa is associated with the machinations of the devil, the evil forces of colonialism, which paradoxically represent progress. The Mother of Amadou, the protagonist in the short story, welcomes the coming of a new technological culture which she does not see as necessitating a clash between modernity and culture. The woman within African traditions, is seen by Hampte Ba, as representing the spirit of progress and wisdom. Given this, it is not surprising that Ousmane Sembene in *Ceddo* (1978), Haile Gerima in *Sankofe* (1993), and Med Hondo in *Sarraounia* (1987), portray African history from the perspective of a woman.

Having penetratively analyzed a particular African film in "Oral Literature and African Film: Narratology in *Wend Kuuni*", Manthia Diawara analyzes the infrastructural problems of the African cinema in *African Cinema: Politics and Literature*.<sup>55</sup> The book surveys a wide and complex canvas. The first three chapters undertake a comparative analysis of the impact of the different film policies by three European nations on their colonial territories in Africa: England in Anglophone Africa, Belgium in Zaire and France in Francophone Africa. This approach facilitates an explanation of why in postcolonial Africa the national cinemas in French-speaking Africa have been creatively much stronger and prodigious than the national cinemas in English-speaking Africa.<sup>56</sup> In setting up the British Colonial Film Unit in 1939 within the Colonial Office, which was preceded by the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment in 1935, England was principally concerned with using film as a propaganda instrument in making Af-

ricans accept English colonialism and white men's burden, secondarily perhaps with its pedagogical potential, and at a distant third position, with its great creative possibilities. This reversal of the possibilities of the role of film culture was an indication of the absolute contempt in which English colonialism held Africans. The Colonial Office's aim was the creation of a neo-colonial cinema in Anglophone Africa, a cinema that was paternalistic and racist, totally oblivious of African cultures and traditions. One of the most glaring consequences of the legacy of British Colonial Film Units in Africa was its training of African filmmakers in its tradition of cultural racism and paternalism: Sam Aryetey's *No Tears for Ananse* (1970) in Ghana and Alhaji Adamu Halilu's *Shaihu Umar* (1976) in Nigeria. Of the former English colonies in Africa, after independence, Ghana was practically the only country to attempt to integrate film into a national cultural policy. In other words, Kwame Nkrumah constructed the most sophisticated infrastructure of film in Africa. The later emergence of *Kwaw Ansah* and *King Ampaw* resonates with the logic of the consequences of this integration. Later Nigeria gave rise to excellent filmmakers like Ola Balogun, Francis Olaele, Segun Olusola and others. In a fascinating paragraph, Manthia Diawara, tabulates the reasons that have been advanced for the relative paucity of film production in Anglophone Africa: the legacies of pragmatism, empiricism, lack of economic independence and non-assimilationism. Diawara concludes the chapter with a refrain that runs through many of his essays: "In fact, African oral narratives abound in digressions, parallelisms, flashbacks, dreams, etc. Aesthetically in the same tradition, an African film can easily contain all these elements without necessarily disorienting its audience."

The British Colonial Film Unit, although working hand-in-hand with Anthropology to mummify African cultures, as Frantz Fanon said, never acknowledged the complexity and richness of African oral narratives as possible models for the new cinematic narratives within modernity.

In the second chapter Diawara indicates that Belgium in the Congo followed the example of the British Colonial Film Unit with its attendant disastrous ideological and cultural consequences. In 1947, a branch of the Belgian Ministry of Information, the Film and Photo Bureau started producing propaganda educational films, newsreads and documentaries. The Catholic Church produced many religious propaganda films; inevitably these films were racist and paternalistic. Diawara specifies the hindrance of Belgian paternalism on the development of Zairean film production. One mistake which Zaire did from the moment of its independence, perhaps because of the great traumas of its coming into being, was in neglecting to construct a national cinema. It is only in recent decade that a Zairean national cinema has emerged with the documentary work of Kwami Mambuzinga and Ngangura Mweze.

The third chapter on film production in Francophone Africa begins with a jarring statement, jarring because it is unnecessary, even though its correctness is not in dispute:

"Films directed by Africans in the former French colonies are superior, both in quantity and in quality, to those by directors in other sub-Saharan African countries formerly colonized by the British, the Belgians, and the Portuguese."

In a fundamental contrast to English and Belgian colonialism, French colonialism never initiated a policy to create

propaganda films for their colonial subjects in Africa. Another crucial contrast is that whereas the English and the Belgians intervened largely institutionally, or individuals intervening to further institutional aims, in the situation of Francophone Africa, besides French institutional intervention, French filmmakers intervened individual pursuing their own individual goal and aims. These interventions, institutional and individual, sometimes clashed with each other. Manthia Diawara elaborates on an example of the Lavai Decree of 1934, which sought to minimize and control the creative role played by Africans in making (thereby postponing the birth of African cinema), was subverted, perhaps inadvertently, by the interventions of Jean Rouch and Jean-Rene Debrix (then, director of *Bureau du Cinema*). In tandem with this individual intervention, Chris Marker and Alain Resnais made *Les statues meurent aussi* (1955) on behalf of *Presence Africaine*. Jean-Rene Debrix through the *Bureau* made it possible for African filmmakers to become serious filmmakers by producing many of their films: Ousmane Sembène's *Borrom Sarret* (1963), *Niaye* (1964) and *Black Girl* (1966); Moustapha Allisane's *Aoure* (1962), *La bague du Roi Koda* (1964), *Le retour de l'aventurier* (1966); Timité Basson's *Sur la dune de la solitude* (1964) and *La femme au couteau* (1968); Urbain Dia-Moukori's *Point de vue I* (1965, Desire Ecare's *Concerto pour un exilé* (1967); Oumarou Ganda's *Cabascado* (1968); Mahama Traore's *Diankhabi* (1969) and many others. Later Ousmane Sembène was to accuse Jean-Rene Debrix and *Bureau du Cinema* of neo-colonialism. Souleymane Cisse has also condemned the Bureau for molding African films into "sociological or anthropological documents". Jean Rouch on the other hand, besides his controversial African eth-

nographic films, discovered and helped Oumarou Ganda and Moustapha Alassane. Diawara concludes the chapter by making this observation:

“Thus, while the Cooperation [Bureau du Cinema] made it possible for Sembene and Cisse to mature as film directors and to replace directors of the colonial, such as Rouch, it made no effort to decolonize the tools of production in order for Sembene and Cisse to work autonomously in Africa.”

The fourth chapter, “*The Artist as the Leader of the Revolution*” examines the foundations which have made possible the emergence of an authentic African cinema. Here Manthia Diawara narrates the history of the Federation of Pan-African Filmmakers (*Federation Pan-Africaine des Cineastes*), FEPACI. Previous to the formation of FEPACI in 1969 in Algiers, there had been attempts by African filmmakers, Paulin Vieyra and Blaise Senghor in Senegal, and Timite Bassori in Ivory Coast, to forge something similar to it. Its most immediate prefiguration was the *Le Groupe Africain du Cinema* founded by Vieyra in 1958, which established an international film center in Dakar with the aim of producing educational, instructional and feature films. As had usually been the case, The French production and distribution companies made the tasks of *Le Groupe* unachievable in fear of their hegemonic interests in Africa. FEPACI has in the main succeeded because the organization has been continental in nature and its aims have had some infrastructural support in many African countries. Diawara tabulates the aims of FEPACI at the moment of its founding: and expression commitment to the ideology of Pan-Africanism; utilization of film as an instrument for liberation as well as possibly playing a

role in the unification of Africa; breaking the monopoly of French film companies (COMACICO [*Compagnie Africain Cinematographique et Commerciale*] and SECMA [*Societe d’Exploitation Cinematographique Africaine*]); creation of African national cinemas; instituting a political and cultural struggle against neo-colonialism; creation of the film aesthetics of decolonization and disalienation; setting an inter-African film distribution center (CIDC [*Consortium Interfricain de Distribution Cinematographique*]) and a film production center (CIPROFILM [*Centre Interfricain de Production de Films*]). Upon evaluating these tasks, FEPACE at the Niamey Congress of 1982, published a Manifesto embellishing and elaborating the original principles of 1969. The Niamey Manifesto emphasized several things: examined in detail the economics of film production in Africa; specifically linked film production to distribution, exhibition, the training of technicians, and the acquisition of equipment and the construction of laboratories and studios; emphasized the need to go beyond national cinemas and establish regional cinemas; a need to establish an actual accounting of film tickets actual sold in Africa; and lastly, proposed a tax reform plan that would make African film industries self-supporting.

Although FEPACE has realized many of these aims, though in an unevenly fashion, their full realization has been hindered by structural weaknesses within FEPACI. Diawara indicates the most fundamental weakness: the interests of FEPACI have sometimes come into conflict with those of particular national interests, since many African countries are still economically and culturally dependent on the West. Despite this weakness FEPACI has been instrumental in the establishing of African national cinemas.

The following several chapters, “*The*

*Situation of National and International Film Production in Francophone Africa*, "Film Production in Lusophone Africa: Toward the Kuxa Kenema in Mozambique", "Film Distribution and Exhibition in Francophone Africa", "The Present Situation of the Film Industry in Anglophone Africa", examine the differential nature of actually existing or incipient or rudimentary structures of African national cinemas. The survey is impressive for its deep knowledge of so many different national cinemas. The survey in Anglophone Africa moves from Kenya where the incipient forms of a national cinema are in the making with novelists such as Ngugi wa Thiongo and Meja Mwangi turning to making films as Ousmane Sembene in Senegal and Wole Soyinka in Nigeria had done, to Ghana where King Ampaw and Kwaw Ansah have replaced the documentary tradition which was dominant with a feature film tradition which is based on popular culture through utilization of generic forms of comedy and melodrama, to the national cinema of Ola Balogun and the 'New Yoruba Cinema' of Wole Soyinka in Nigeria. Manthia Diawara emphasizes that African popular cultures, nearly as much as oral narrative traditions, have been essential crucial in the founding of an authentic African cinematic voice:

"The movement toward popular culture constitutes a step forward giving African cinema its own identity."

In considering the development national cinemas in Francophone Africa, Diawara argues that they follow three distinct patterns: the first patterned within the lines of a *laissez-faire* or a liberal economic system is characterized by the governments paradoxically giving financial subsidies to filmmakers, Senegal, Niger and Cameroon taking this form; the second consists of film productions and co-productions

occasionally made by national television, this being true of Ivory Coast, Gabon, Niger and the Congo; and the third is that of the countries that attempted a total break with France, in such countries as Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea. The actual survey itself, emphasizes the pre-eminence of the Senegalese national cinema in the 1960s and the 1970s with the shift moving towards the Malian national cinema in the 1980s, with Souleymane Cisse in the forefront. Ousmane Sembene, Paulin Soumanou Vieyra, Babakar Samba, Safi Faye, Mahama Traore, Momar Thiam, Thierno Sow, Moussa Bathily, Ben Diogaye Beye, Cheikh N'Gaido Ba and others made Senegalese cinema at one time to be at the forefront of the African cinema. Surveying other Francophone countries, Diawara foregrounds the importance of particular individuals within the background of various national cinemas: in Ivory Coast, it is Timite Bassori, whose importance to the African cinema has not as yet been fully recognized; in Guinea, there is Costa Diagne and other film documentarists actually constituting a movement; in Burkina Faso, arguably the critical figure is Djim Mamadou Kola; in Niger, it was Moustapha Allissane and Oumarou Ganda. Manthia Diawara concludes the survey of Francophone Africa by indicating the limitations of national cinemas in Africa: the respective governments attempt to control the content of the films and limiting the creativity of the filmmaker; the facilities of production and filmed equipment are not fully utilized and well maintained; government funding for films is always in competition with other pressing national priorities; and the lack of good distribution and exhibition of films. Because of these problems, Diawara argues for the construction of regional or inter-African cinema either in tandem with national cinemas, or superseding them:



"By grouping the filmmakers and other technicians to work in one place, the strategy will provide them with the opportunity to exchange views and to formulate aesthetics that might characterize an African film."

Extending his conception of regionality in African cultural production and creativity, in a recent essay in *Social Text*, Diawara has favored the analysis and criticism of African literature from a regional perspective.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps such regional cultural creations would facilitate African unity. The whole survey concludes with a consideration of Lusophone Africa, indicating the importance of Abrantes Menas, Antonio Ole, Luanda Vieira and Ruy Duarte d Carvalho in Angola, and the bizarre struggle between Jean Rouch, Jean-Luc Godard and Ruy Guerra over the Mozambiquan National Film Institute and the direction the national cinema in Mozambique should take.

African Cinema concludes with a consideration of the present film situation in Africa. At the same time as its founding in 1969, FEPACI organized the first FESPACO (*Festival Panafricain du Cinema de Ouagadougou*) Film Festival. It was on the occasion of its third meeting in 1972 that it found a permanent home in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The main objective of FESPACO is the dissemination of African films and facilitating the exchange of ideas between African filmmakers and other artists and scholars who are non-African. Manthia Diawara indicates that over the years the quality of films shown at the Festival has improved considerably. 1985 seems to have been watershed year of some kind for FESPACO because of the participation of a contingent of African American filmmakers and film scholars led by the Ethiopian film director, Haile Gerima, who is based in United States. Clyde

Taylor, one of the leading African American film scholars has written a memorable report of this historic encounter between African and African American artists and intellectuals.<sup>58</sup> Today in 1994, twenty-five years after the founding of FEPACI and FESPACO, African cinema has produced some outstanding work by Ousmane Sembene, Haile Gerima, Med Hondo, Souleymane Cisse and others. Arguably the defining moments of the recent African cinema are Cisse's *Yeelen* (1987) and Gerima's *Sankofa* (1993). In a concluding chapter, "*The African Cinema*", Manthia Diawara divides the African cinema into three different rubrics: the cinema of social realist narratives; the cinema of historical confrontation; and the cinema of a return to the source. In the first category he assembles Sembene's *The Money Order* (1968) and *Xala* (1974), Cisse's *Baara* (1978) and *Finye* (1982), Gasotn Kabore's *Zan Boko* (1988), Cheick Oumar Sissoko's *Nyamanton* (1986), Moustapha Allisane's *Femmes, villa, voiture, argent* (1972) and others. Most of these films, in different ways, deal with contemporary social and cultural issues from a populist perspective of the working class and the lumpen-proletariat. In the second category, he gathers together Med Hondo's *Sarraounia* (1987), Kwaw Ansah's *Heritage Africa* (1988), Ousmane Sembene's *Camp de Thiaroye* (1988) and others, all of which, again differently, examine the struggle between African heroes and heroines against European oppressors. Some concentrate on the African resistance in the nineteenth-century to European colonialism, while others look at Islamic imperialism in Africa. All of them are concerned with the retrieval of African history. Gerima's *Sankofa* falls within this tradition. Diawara writes:

"In other words, they valorize African cultures in order to emphasize the

dehumanizing effect of colonization, which is intent on destroying them.” In this third category, Diawara collects Cisse’s *Yeelen*, Ouedraogo’s *Tilai* (1990), Gaston Gabore’s *Wend Kuuni* and others. He posits that these are searching for a new film language as well as for African precolonial traditions. All of these films constitute part of the horizon of modern African cinema.

Simultaneously as his preoccupation with the African cinema, Manthia Diawara, has been theorizing the recently emergent British Black Cinema. This is part of his contribution to, and continuation of, the legacy of *Presence Africaine* and Alioune Diop of searching for the point of cultural unity of black civilization(s). Using C.L.R. James’s *Beyond a Boundary* as a point of departure, Diawara examines the ‘Manichean’ dialectic of whiteness (Englishness, Britishness) and blackness (Africanity, Caribbeanity) as it inheres in the game of cricket. Diawara argues correctly that the concept of blackness developed outside Africa, for within it, it would have been a historical impossibility. Perhaps one of the high defining moments of this concept is W.E.B. DuBois’ *The Souls of Black Folk*. Diawara conceptualizes the multiplicity of positions and the multifarious nature of blackness since its ‘founding’ in this text: blackness is a discourse of humanism about the situation of black people in the West; blackness is a reflexive movement of modernity about being African within modernity; blackness is a discourse of difference that posits relativistic aesthetics and the aesthetics of relativity; blackness interrogates the homogenizing desire of modernistic theories and reveals a space omitted or silenced by Eurocentrism. Diawara argues that it is this concept of blackness as a humanist discourse from the blacks in the West which informs people in Africa through different manifestations such as

“*Negritude*”, “*Black Consciousness*”, and “*Africanism*”. In order to forestall essentialist pitfalls, Diawara postulates blackness as a field force of ambivalence.

Using the assumptions of the positioning of spectators in classical Hollywood cinema, Diawara examines the positioning of blacks in Englishness as reflected in a classic text, *Beyond a Boundary*. A correspondence is postulated between how Hollywood classical narrative homogenizes spectators and how Englishness naturalizes local customs. Diawara postulates the concept of suture in film narrative discourse, which is part of reception theory and is a theory of representation, as consisting of three issues: the problem of the ‘Absent One’, theorized by Jean-Pierre Oudart; the possibility of differentiated spectator positions; and the formal disposition of the objects on the screen. In film discourse the idea of the ‘Absent One’ is articulated differently, with Stephen Heath it is the ‘mother’, and with David Bordwell it is the ‘narration absent from the frame’:

“For my part, I will use the ‘Absent One’ interchangeably with such categories as Englishness, or as discourse, in the analysis of the work that will follow.”

Seeing a parallel between a spectator watching an image on the screen and a spectator watching a game of cricket, the central theme of James’ book, Diawara argues that the ‘Absent One’ in the discourse of Englishness represented by cricket involving black diasporan people is Caribbeanity. *Beyond a Boundary* inaugurates a black discourse of Englishness through the ‘Absent One’. Since cricket, from the perspective of the Antilles, represents Englishness as well as the West Indian way of situating himself and herself in the modern world, *Beyond a Boundary*, which Manthia Diawara postulates as a

social history of cricket, as an autobiography which has the appearance of the generic form of the novel, as well as being a form of journalistic writing, is zone of contestation between Englishness and the emergence of Caribbeaness. It is because of this theme of the dialectic between Englishness and Caribbeaness, that Diawara sees James' great book as the prefiguration of the central theme that was to run through many of the major films of the Black British Cinema. The 'Absent One' within the context of the construction of Englishness is Caribbeaness or blackness. Clearly, through the concept of the 'Absent One' as blackness, Diawara continues the project of *Negritude* and *Presence Africaine*, of searching for the point of unity of black civilization. In this shrewd analysis, Diawara connects the Pan-Africanism of C.L.R. James to the *Negritude* of Aime Cesaire and Leopold Sedar Senghor.<sup>59</sup> In a sense, *Negritude* is a continuing legacy for Manthia Diawara.<sup>60</sup>

In two essays, "*The Nature of Mother in Dreaming Rivers*" and "*The Absent One: The Avant-Garde and the Black Imaginary in Looking for Langston*", on two important films of the Black British Cinema, Manthia Diawara articulates the notion of the 'Absent One' as a strategy for reading film texts. The first essay is principally a reading of *Dreaming Rivers* (1988) by Martina Attille as a terrain of contestation of blackness and Englishness in gender and class relations. It is also a psychoanalytic inquiry into the formation of subjecthood of black children portrayed in the film. The essay broaches several issues in relations to the film: it problematizes the notion of homogeneous spectatorial position in relation to the children; using Fanon's interpretation of Lacan's theory of "Mirror Phase", it examines the role of race, class and sexuality in the formation of identities; it posits a

contradiction in the work of Homi Bhabha which utilizes "racial Otherness" as a criterion of identification yet neglects the cultural and historical spaces created by (post) coloniality in the formation of subjecthood; is postulates that Miss T. (the Mother) is the 'Absent One', an absence that is a symbolic representation of blackness and the Caribbean; it theorizes that the film, which is a syncretism of Christianity, Creole language, Caribbean rituals and other Atlanticisms, indicates that Britishness is no longer an exclusivity of whiteness; and it positions *Dreaming Rivers* in the same historical space as *Beyond a Boundary* and George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile*, in that they all examine the construction of Caribbeaness in relation to the Other. Interweaving these issues superbly in an exemplary interpretation of the film, Diawara argues that the film contravenes the codes of Hollywood narrative structure. Perhaps the controversial part of the essay is his critique of Homi Bhabha's understanding of Frantz Fanon's interpretation of Jacques Lacan's theory of the Mirror Phase, a notion Diawara postulates as fundamental in interpreting *Dreaming Rivers*. Diawara formulates several points in his criticism of Bhabha: that Bhabha does not seem to believe that identification is determined by historical and cultural vectors; that he confuses the distinction between the Other and Otherness; that he denies the possibility of agency to the Subject; that he marginalizes colonial subjecthood by not locating its historical specificity; that he unwittingly accepts the sovereignty of the white subject, while denying the notion of identify; that he relinquishes the quest for equality between black and white; and that neutralizes the ideology created by non-Western ideologies, while giving cognisance to the ideologies created by Western philosophical systems.<sup>61</sup> Concluding

the essay on creolization and hybridization in the film, Diawara argues that the body of the Mother is the battle-area of contending positions of blackness:

"Miss T. creates the conditions of possibility of the children's Black Britishness by positing Blackness next to Whiteness, in Britain, as alternative and equal ways of identifying with the nation. Significantly enough, the First Other, the mother, departs, leaving behind two equal signifiers: Blackness and Whiteness."

The other essay on Black British Cinema which examines Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* (1989) is also a discourse on the dialectic between blackness and whiteness, but in this instance mediated by the historical experience of modernity. Manthia Diawara writes that the film is a gay film theorizing the nature of blackness, as well as being a meditation on Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance. To the gay men at the center of its narrative movement, the Absent One(s) are Hughes, the other members of the Renaissance (the strong presence of gay culture in the Harlem Renaissance has not as yet been fully examined), and James Baldwin. Following the example of Houston A. Baker in *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*, Diawara argues *Looking for Langston* defamiliarized the traditional Avant-Garde film (read white) film form in order to reconstruct 'black sounding' and to visualize Harlem as the capital of the black world. Stylistically, the film attempts to reconstruct the homosexuality that was repressed during the Harlem Renaissance:

"On the other, insofar as the Avant-Garde constructs itself outside of linearization and extra-textual

reference, the film confronts the Avant-Garde with its Other, i.e., race."

In other words, the film intersects race and homosexuality across a multiplicity of vectors: geographic, cultural, racial, historical, class and so on. In a remarkable paragraph, Manthia Diawara 'looks' at the different forms of representation in the film, forms coalescing differential temporal zones. Diawara concludes his consideration by situating in the film in the project of black experimental film, a project that attempts to reconstruct film form, rearticulate a new conception of film history, and criticise the avant-garde's (white) tradition of excluding blacks. In short, Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* attempts to specify black modernism as universal knowledge.

The writing of Manthia Diawara in recent years has been moving between the British Black Cinema, which is part of the recent explosion of British Black renaissance, and the Black American Cinema.<sup>62</sup> The essay we just considered, *The Absent One: The Avant-Garde and the Black Imaginary in Looking for Langston*, appeared in a special issue of *Wide Angle* under the heading 'Black Cinema', edited by Diawara. In an introductory essay to the special issue, *Cinema Studies, the Strong Thought and Black Film*, Manthia Diawara continues on the theme of blackness he had considered in the essay on C.L.R. James' *Beyond a Boundary, "Englishness and Blackness: Cricket as Discourse on Colonialism"*, but now transposed to the American context: that blackness challenges Eurocentric domination of historical space; that blackness is a way of being human in the West, where whiteness is hegemonic; that blackness originates in the diaspora, not in Africa, and it is a way of forging humanism within the experience of mod-

ernity; and that although blackness and Africanism depend on each other, they are not interchangeable. In his contribution to "A Symposium on Popular Culture and Political Correctness" organized by *Social Text*, Diawara writes this affirmative statement:

"Popular culture has always been where black people theorize blackness in America."<sup>63</sup>

Diawara examines the truthfulness of this statement in relation to the many black films made in the early 1990s: *Juice*, *Straight out of Brooklyn* ('masterpieces of black realism'), *Deep Cover*, *Boyz N the Hood*, *Do the Right Thing*. The center piece of his reflections is Bill Duke's *A Rage in Harlem* (1992). Linking the blackness (noir) of *A Rage in Harlem* with black funk culture, he writes:

"The point of *A Rage in Harlem* is to create a comic space by mixing romance and noir genres, deflating the tough detectives and attenuating the scenes that seem dissonant with conventions of decorum in Hollywood."

In an essay written in 1993, "*Noir by Noirs: Towards a New Realism in Black Cinema*", which originally appeared in *Shades of Noir: A Reader*, edited by Joan Copjec, Manthia Diawara analyzes *A Rage in Harlem* in the context of *film noir*. Criticizing both Marxist criticism and feminist criticism in *film noir* studies for blurring the boundaries that partake of blackness, Diawara argues that black directors use the style of *film noir* to represent urbanized black images. Whereas for white *film noir* blackness is a representation of a fall from whiteness and hence supposedly a morally inferior position, for black *film noir* blackness is an affirmation of humanism and a means of protesting against social injustice. In totality, Diawara indicates that *Noir by Noirs* is a

critique of patriarchy, capitalism, racism and the social conditions in which black people live. *Noir by Noirs* is a redeeming of blackness by recasting a new relations between light and dark which is fundamental to *film noir* style. Although Chester Himes's *A Rage in Harlem* closely follows generically on Raymond Chandler's *The Maltese Falcon*, in that a retrieval of a lost object triggers a disturbance in the underworld, Diawara makes clear that fundamentally at the center of the former text is black rage which is a direct consequence of the lived conditions of black people. Manthia Diawara situates Bill Duke's *A Rage in Harlem* in the context of the black cinema of the 1980s which was linked in many ways to rap music and jazz. These films configures two categories: those that are a closer approximation to gangster genre than to *noir* itself; and those that through their realism articulate black nationalism. Diawara sees the film as a re-thematization of 'funk' as a black cultural element; its central preoccupation with law breaking is part of an expression against 'the policing of the black body, mind, or air.' Its 'artistic' lawbreaking through song, dance and storytelling is also an expression of rebellion 'against the policing of black life in America.' Astutely analyzing the film as linking the North and the South, Diawara criticizes the *A Rage in Harlem* for opting for a resolution whereby the problems of the urban North can be evaded by escaping to the 'simplicity' of life in the South: the implication in such a resolution is that black rage is a product of the urban environment rather than it being a product of the oppression of black people by white people. Counterpoising to this film other *noir(s)* by *Noirs* concerned with the same historical problematic (the black nationalist and realist texts), Diawara commends them for valorizing black public spheres in which black

people can construct institutions and knowledges that can resist white oppression.<sup>64</sup>

Two other essays, "*Black American Cinema: The New Realism*" and "*Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance*", which form part of Black American Cinema map further and with much intensity, the parameters of black civilization that Manthia Diawara seeks to trace and articulate through film form. Manthia begins the first essay by situating Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* at the center of America's representation of blackness through film form: the fact that it is the quintessential grammar book of Hollywood's representation of blackness; it locates whiteness at the center and blackness at the periphery; its all encompassing obsession with miscegenation; and its construction of blacks as criminals. It is because of the virulent racism and the denial of the humanism of black people in this film, and its profound effect on American culture, that 'race films' by the first black independent film directors emerged to construct a more historical and humane representation of blackness. Black independent cinema, according to Diawara, is a research tool, that interweaves metafilmic and nationalistic constructs. Invariably, black independent cinema is driven by both political and artistic agendas: constructing black subjectivities and the heterogeneity of black lives. In his estimation this cinema is characterized by the following essential features: it builds new narrative forms which are inspired by black literature and folklore; denounces racism, sexism and homophobia found in American culture; marginalizes whiteness and white people; centers black people as well their experiences, including those of diasporic existence; and lastly, black culture is at the center of its narrative development. Although the essay fo-

cuses mainly on black feature films, Diawara mentions in passing that the major black documentary filmmakers (William Greaves, Louis Massiah, Camille Bishops, St. Clair Bourne and others) have made outstanding achievements of their own: they have focused on the black life experience in order to re-construct black history; giving voices to people; and celebrating black writers and activists.

The essay situates Oscar Micheaux (his films of the 1920s and the 1930s) at the center of black independent cinema. Manthia Diawara postulates that Micheaux created a 'freewheeling cinematic grammar' that in its improvisational quality is similar to jazz and black English. This new grammar reveals visual pleasures and spatial forms which are foreign to the classic Hollywood narrative. Borrowing a concept from the Cuban filmmaker and theorist, Julio Garcia Espinosa, in articulating the central aesthetics of the Third Cinema, Diawara characterizes Micheaux's film grammar as 'imperfect'. Because of his historical achievement, which we have indicated above in relation to the historical and artistic project of the black independent cinema, Manthia Diawara argues that black film aesthetics must begin by considering Micheaux's composition of shots as well as the effect of his films on spectators. Part of the critical importance of Micheaux would be seen to lie in his having turned the camera on black people and their experiences new ways, beyond the then emerging Hollywood's representation of blackness. Though complexly different from each other, Manthia Diawara argues that Melvin, Van Peebles, Bill Gunn, Kathleen Collins, Spike Lee and the members of the Los Angeles School (Charles Burnett, Julie Dash, Teshome Gabriel, Alile Sharon Larkin, Haile Gerima, Billy Woodberry, Melvonna Ballenger, Zeneibu Irene Davis, Ben

Caldwell, Jamaa Fanaka) and others belong in the black tradition founded by Oscar Micheaux.

Undertaking a formal analysis of many recent modern black films, Manthia Diawara theorizes that there are two stylistic traditions within the black independent cinema: symbolism (exemplified by Bill Gunn's *Ganja and Hess*:

"which is perhaps the most beautifully shot Black film, and the most daring with respect to pushing different passions to their limits")

and realism (classically represented by Julie Dash's *Daughter of the Dust*). In both stylistic traditions, the articulation of the specificity of black identity, the empowerment of black people and the rewriting of American history, are centrally important. *Ganja and Hess* is seen by Diawara as representing the reflexive style of postmodernism, whereas on the other hand, Melvin Van Peebles's *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* falls within the action-oriented style of modernism. These observations are a prelude to a remarkable analyses of *Daughters of the Dust* and John Singleton's *Boyz n the Hood*. The latter is analyzed in the context of black-times narratives "where a linear time dominates", and the latter within the ambience of space-based narratives "where spatial narration predominates". The analysis of *Daughters of the Dust* is singularly impressive:

"In *Daughters of the Dust*, the screen belongs to Black women. At a deeper level, where space and time are combined into a narrative, Julie Dash emphasizes spatial narration as a conduit to Black self-expressivity, a storytelling device which interrogates identity, memory, and Black ways of life. *Daughters of*

*the Dust* stops time at 1902, when the story was set, and uses the canvas of Ibo Landing in the Sea Islands to glance backward to slavery, the Middle Passage, African religions, Christianity, Islam, the print media, photography, moving pictures, African-American folkways, as elements with which Black people must come to terms in order to glance forward as citizens of United States. In other words, the film asks us to know ourselves first, know where we came from, before knowing where we are going. To put it in yet another way, Ibo Landing is a symbolic space in which African Americans can articulate their relation to Africa, the Middle Passage, and the survival of Black people and their ways of life in America. Crucially, the themes of survival, the memories of African religions and ways of life which enter into conflict with Christianity and European ways of life, and the film's proposal of syncretism as a way out, are narrativized from Black women's points of view."<sup>65</sup>

These words are part of an extraordinary paragraph of insights. *Boyz n the Hood* is fascinatingly contrasted to Julie Dash's film: "*Daughters of the Dust* is about Black peoples' reconstitution of the memories of the past: it is a film about identity, and the celebration of Black ways of life. *Boyz n the Hood*, on the other hand, is a rite of passage film, a film about the Black man's journey in America. The story is linear in *Boyz n the Hood*, whereas *Daughters of the Dust* unfolds in a circular manner."<sup>66</sup> Both films configure a new black realism in film form.

Not much will be said about the other essay, "*Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance*", which is also in *Black American Cinema*, since, as Manthia Diawara himself admits, is marred by black essentialism. Its importance lies in its attempt to shift the issue of spectatorship from being centrally concerned only with gendered spectatorship and the subject of sexuality, to the question of race.

The developing and productive film criticism of Manthia Diawara, combined with outstanding critical work of Teshome Gabriel, Mbye B. Cham, Paulin Vieyra, J. Koyinde Vaughan and others embellish and enlarge the idea of black civilization in the twentieth century as articulated by *Presence Africaine*. It is then with profound sadness to note that since its spectacular memorial issue on the great Cheikh Anta Diop in 1991, about three years ago, *Presence Africaine*, for all intents and purposes, has ceased publication. Without a shadow of a doubt, it was one of the great journals of the twentieth century. It is a profound sense of history and deep cultural awareness that inspired V.Y. Mudimbe to pay tribute to *Presence Africaine* in the form of the marvelous book, *The Surreptitious Speech: Presence Africaine and the Politics of Otherness 1947-87*. Mudimbe's colossal work itself is a continuation of the great work of Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Leopold Sédar Senghor, Léon Damas, Abiola Irele<sup>67</sup> and others, whose cultural and epistemological aim was/is inseparable from the historical vision of *Presence Africaine*.

In a remarkable two-page essay, "*The Black Man and the Art*", the great Guinean writer, Camara Laye, writes with splendid brilliance of the fundamental importance of African sculpture in the African imagination: its combination of plasticity, spirituality and anthropological content.<sup>68</sup> Laye makes

the astute observation that African sculpture has not as yet found its place in new plastic forms. Indeed the African cinema as well as the African film criticism has not as yet grappled with the aesthetics of plasticity represented by African sculpture. Perhaps Souleymane Cissé's *Yeelen* approximates this new necessary aesthetics of plasticity based on African sculpture. The African film criticism inspired by *Presence Africaine*, which has been the subject of this consideration, has been based, rightly enough, on African oral and written literary traditions, without giving cognisance to the aesthetics of plasticity based on African sculpture. The historical view represented by *Presence Africaine*, as we approach a new century, clearly in a process of demise, perhaps the African cinema should construct new narrative forms based on the plasticity of African sculpture. We conclude with this complicated statement formulated by V.Y. Mudimbe in the essay, "*African Art as Question Mark*":

African culture, and more visibly African art, are historical products of a complex process: the metamorphosis of concrete realities into abstract categories and, complementarily, the possible transformation of those realities into cultural objects with a financial value. In other words, African realities become, within anthropological frameworks, objects of knowledge; they are understood, classified, and defined as cultural signs from the perspective of the Western cultural and epistemological tradition.<sup>69</sup>

In many ways the different observations formulated by Camara Laye and V.Y. Mudimbe concerning African art echo those of Léopold Sédar Senghor concerning African Negro Art:



it is closer to the cosmic and vital sources of human emotion; it possesses compelling rhythm; it unifies music and spirituality; and expresses the depths of human consciousness.<sup>70</sup> Given these great plastic, spiritual and epistemological qualities of African art, how would the African cinema not gain enormously by emulating the aesthetic plasticity of African sculpture!

## BIBLIOGRAPHY / END NOTES

- 1 V.Y. MUDIMBE (ed.), *The Surreptitious Speech: Presence Africaine and the Politics of Otherness 1947-87*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992.
- 2 ALIOUNE DIOP, "Niam n'goura ou les raisons d'être de Presence Africaine," *Presence Africaine*, no. 1 (November-December 1947). Cited by Bernard Mouralis, "Presence Africaine: Geography of an 'Ideology'", *ibid.*, p.5-6.
- 3 ALIOUNE DIOP, "The History of the Black World Festival Concept", *Black World*, January 1975, pp.66-71.
- 4 It is incomprehensible why Louise Fiber Luce would make the unfounded charge that Presence Africaine had an elitist view of African cultures which perpetuated neo-colonial relations of subordination and domination relations within African cultures, when her own tabulation of the principles that governed the review at the time of Alioune Diop refute such a charge: that modern written African literary culture has its origins in oral traditions; that there is an original African literature in the indigenous languages; that there exist in Africa and in the black diaspora ontologi-  
cal and cosmological systems that define humanity; and that Presence Africaine attempted to establish a perspective that unified politics, culture and the arts (see: "Neocolonialism and Presence Africaine", *African Studies Review*, vol. 29 no.1, March 1986, pp.5-11).
- 5 This is the reason *Presence Africaine* published important articles on the development of the African media: Mbella Sonne Dipoko, "Africa and the News Media", vol.12, 1961; Emile Saint-Lot, "Audio-Visual Techniques and Africa", vol.22, 1964; Ferdinand N'Sougan Agbelmagnon, "The Negro-African Socio-Cultural Condition and the Cinema", vol. 27, 1965; a special of the review 'Mass Media and Black Civilization' - Syl Cheyney-Coker, "African Artists and Mass Media" and Anthony V. John-Kanem "Mass Media and Black Civilization", both in vol. 88, 1973; a special section of the review 'Black Civilization and Education' - Christopher Kolade, "The Role of the Mass Media in Maintaining and Propagating a Nigerian Cultural Identity", vol. 95, 1975. Anthony V. John-Kanem articulates the role of the media in Africa as an instrument for racial emancipation, for correcting of Africa's distorted history, and for influencing the construction of the African concept of social order.
- 6 ALIOUNE DIOP, "Three Objectives of a Cultural Policy: Africa, Asia, the Americas", *Black World*, October 1973, pp.38-41; see also: "Political and Cultural Solidarity in Africa", *Presence Africaine*, vol.13, 1962.
- 7 ALIOUNE DIOP, "*The Spirit of 'Presence Africaine'*", *The Proceedings of the First International Congress of Africanists*, (eds.) Lalage Brown and Michael Crowder, Longmans, London, 1964,

pp.46-51.

- 8 JACQUES RABEMANANJARA, "Letter to Mudimbe", *The Surreptitious Speech*, p.377.
- 9 JACQUES RABEMANANJARA cited by Bennetta Jules-Rosette: "Conjugating Cultural Realities: Presence Africaine", *ibid.*, p.18-19.
- 10 CHRISTIANE YANDE DIOP, "Presence Africaine", *ibid.*, p.xiii.
- 11 V.Y. MUDIMBE, "Finale", *ibid.*, p.437.
- 12 V.Y. MUDIMBE, "Manthia Diawara", *ibid.*, p.383-84. In a fundamental essay mapping Mudimbe's position in African intellectual history, Manthia Diawara shows how Mudimbe has found a new African discursive space on the basis of reformulated Foucauldian epistemological principles. By transforming and decentering the Western ratio in African literary canon, Diawara argues that Mudimbe has founded a regime of truth within the newly created postcolonial and postimperialist discourse. Articulating Mudimbean principles, Diawara impressively re-reads the cultural history of Leopold Sedar Senghor's *Negritude* as one of the founding moments of African modernism (see: "Reading Africa Through Foucault: V.Y. Mudimbe's Reaffirmation of the Subject", October, 55, Winter 1990, pp. 79-92). In an essay following immediately upon Manthia Diawara's essay in the same issue of October, Mudimbe undertakes a brilliant critique of Herskowitz's cultural relativism in order to establish a discursive space of "Africanism" by overcoming the erasure of African histories through a complex theorizing of epistemology, and by excavating for more solid knowledge about the African past (see: "Which Idea of Africa? Herskowitz Cultural Relativism"). In another context, Mudimbe undertakes an anthropological excavation of the pathways of African oral and written discourses (see: "African Literature: Myth or Reality?", in African Literature Studies: The Present State, Stephan Arnold [ed.], Three Continents Press, Washington, D.C., 1985). In an introductory essay to the special section of Callaloo devoted to V.Y. Mudimbe, Manthia Diawara amplifies further the discursive field opened by this scholar's great work: in effect, that Mudimbe's work, particularly *The Invention of Africa*, is one of the central components in the recent revival of African Studies and Black Studies, in that it has effected a repositioning of epistemological concepts in the whole domain known as Africa. Diawara emphasizes in this achievement Mudimbe's critique of anthropology and his attempt to reconstitute the postcolonial subject (see: "Introduction", Callaloo, vol. 14 no. 4, Fall 1991, pp. 929-930).
- 13 From the very beginning of his preoccupations with cinema, Paulin Soumanou Vieyra has combined theoretical reflections on African film with the actual making of African films, as is apparent with his first piece in *Presence Africaine* which appeared in 1955, which coincided with his first documentary film made in the same year with others: *Afrique-sur-Seine* (Africa on the Seine). At the same time that Vieyra was beginning to contribute to the review in Paris, across the continent in South Africa, William "Bloke" Modisane, a member of the Sophiatown Renaissance movement, was writing articles on film for *Drum* magazine. It is perhaps this remarkable combination of theory and practice that motivates Mbye-

Baboucar Cham to characterize Vieyra as the father of Senegalese cinema and the foremost authority on African film criticism (see: "*Film Production West Africa: 1979-1981*", *Presence Africaine*, 124, 1982, p. 171). In many ways Haile Gerima belongs to this eminent African film tradition of theory and practice opened by Vierya, even though the high quality of his film production locates him in the tradition founded by Ousmane Sembene, as Cham argues very well in another essay we will consider in a moment (see: "*Art and Ideology in The Work of Ousmane Sembène and Haile Gerima*", *Presence Africaine*, 129, 1984, pp. 79-91).

14 PAULIN SOUMANOU VIEYRA, "The Cinema and the African Revolution", *Presence Africaine*, 31, 1960-61. The subsequent extensive essays or articles of Vieyra in the review will not concern us since they were no longer in the avant-garde position of Africa film criticism. Younger African scholars, Teshome Gabriel, Keyan Tomaselli, Manthia Diawara, Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike, Mbye Baboucar Cham and others, have established the scholarly protocols of African film criticism. It is important to emphasize that although Vieyra was an important figure in African film criticism, he was not the first major figure in this tradition, for that honour goes to an outstanding South African scholar: Thelma Gutsche, whose book, *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa 1895-1940* [written in 1940 and only published in 1970], is still a marvel of astonishing insights. In another context, I have attempted to indicate her historical importance in an essay presented at the 1994 Modern Language As-

sociation Annual Conference in San Diego, California: "*Critical Perspectives on the South African Cinema: From Thelma Gutsche to Keyan Tomaselli*". There has been an impressive recent vintage of critical texts on the problematical nature of South African cinema by South African scholars: Keyan Tomaselli, *The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Film*, Lake View Press Book, New York, 1988; Martin Botha and Adri van Aswegen, *Images of South Africa: The Rise of the Alternative Film*, Human Sciences research Council, Pretoria, 1992; Johan Blignaut and Martin Botha (eds.), *Movie-Moguls-Mavericks: South African Cinema 1979-1991*, Showdata, Cape Town, 1992. A few years back I attempted to indicate the importance of the South African cinema within the context of the African cinema: "Critical Issues in the South African Cinema", *Jumpcut*, Spring 1988.

15 At the time of the writing of the essay Paulin Vieyra seems not have conceptualized the distinction between classical colonialism and neo-colonialism, as Ousmane Sembène was doing from a Marxist position.

16 PAULIN SOUMANOU VIEYRA, "*The Cinema and the African Revolution*", op. cit., p.69. 17 *ibid.*, p.77.

18 PAULIN SOUMANOU VIEYRA, "*African Cinema: Solidarity and Difference*", (eds.) Jim Pines and Paul Willemen, *Questions of Third Cinema*, BFI, London, 1989, p.198. The historic importance of this text is that assembles together the essay by Vieyra, the father of African film criticism, together with that of his brilliant descendants, Teshome Gabriel and Manthia Diawara. Some of the infrastructural prob-

lems indicated by Vieyra in this essay as besetting the African cinema

19 J. KOYINDE VAUGHAN, "Africa South of the Sahara and the Cinema", *Presence Africaine*, 14-15, June-September 1957, pp.210-221. A shorter version of the essay was selected by Langston Hughes for inclusion in his *An African Treasury: Articles, Essays, Stories and Poems by Black Africans* (Crown Publishers, New York, 1960). The historic importance of An African Treasury resides in Huges presenting to the world the emergent African national literatures in the European languages in Anglophone Africa, especially in Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana and other countries. Secondly, Hughes assembled in the book some writings of the leading writers of the South African Sophiatown Renaissance of the 1950s (Ezekiel Mphahlele, Can Themba, Todd Mathshikiza, Peter Kumalo, Bloke Modisane, Richard Rive, Tennyson Makiwane and others). The Sophiatown Renaissance represented one of the moments of modernism in Africa. Hughes himself was the link between the Sophiatown Renaissance and the American Harlem Renaissance, of which he was a central member. Thirdly, the book indicates the importance of journals such as *Black Orpheus* (Nigeria), *Transition* (Uganda), *Drum* (South Africa) in facilitating the emergence of modern African literature. Some of these issues I have broached them in several places: "Sudafrikanische Fotografie aus der Ara der Sophiatown Renaissance", *Fotogeschichte*, Heft 36, 1990, pp. 97-100; "Richard Rive: In Memoriam", *Isivivane*, 3, January 1991, pp. 39-42.

20 SERGEI EISENSTEIN had indicated the inspirational importance

of Charles Dickens's fiction in his construction of the theory and practice of montage.

21 V.S. NAIPAUL today portrays Africa scornfully in his travelling writings as the very essence of darkness and uncivility. Paradoxically on the other hand, his relationship to Africa that emerges from his novella, *In a Free State*, and the novel, *A Bend in the River*, is one of tragic love for the continent. Indeed, as Edward Said says of Naipaul, he is a classical colonial renegade.

22 Both PAULIN SOUMANOU VIEYRA AND J. KOYINDE VAUGHAN were reticent about criticising the work of Jean Rouch. In a recent excellent book, *The Cinematic Griot: The Ethnography of Jean Rouch* (University of Chicago, Chicago, 1992), Paul Stoller traces a complex portrait of this enigmatic ethnologist and filmmaker. Stoller locates Rouch in a tradition of French ethnology founded by Marcel Griaule which emphasized long-term fieldwork, documentation and initiation. As an ethnographic filmmaker, Rouch combines the poetics of Robert Flaherty methodological approach and Dziga-Vertov's principle of the camera as the extension of the filmmaker's body. Summarizing Stoller writes: "Whereas Flaherty is Rouch's model for the method of participatory, shared cinema, Vertov leads Rouch to making cinema-verite films, the technique Rouch has used extensively. Vertov provides Rouch a theoretical model that reinforces politically and epistemologically his film practices." (p. 103) Stoller argues that the ethnographic films of Rouch are a Nietzschean blending of Apollonian rigor and Dionysian intensity (p.23). The films made by Rouch over the past fifty years among the Songhay

of Niger and the Dogon of Mali constitute a stumbling block in the definition of the African cinema. Over the years, he has trained outstanding African filmmakers, such as Oumarou Ganda, Stephane Aïssane and others. Rouch's controversial film *Les Maitres Fous* (1955), which some consider as Rouch's masterpiece, while others as a classic example of the ethnographic decontextualizing nature his work, has prompted Ousmane Sembene to say of Rouch in a debate between them: "Because you show it [traditional life] and you dwell on a reality without showing its evolution. What I reproach them for, as I reproach Africanists, is that you observe us like insects." (p.152) Oumarou Ganda has said: "Rouch is a European who sees with a French eye." (p.159) While agreeing with some parts of the critique of Rouch, Paul Stoller makes the following shrewd observation: "The scenes in [Les] Magiciens [de Wanzerbe] force many Western viewers to rethink taken-for-granted categories. By the same token, some scenes may force Western-educated African viewers to confront worlds they had happily forgotten." (p. 113) In accepting some of the criticism by African intellectuals, artists and filmmakers, Jean Rouch has written: "We will never be African and our films will remain films made by foreigners" (cited by Francoise Pfaff, *The Cinema of Ousmane Sembène*, p.8). The young lions of African film criticism, Teshome Gabriel and Manthia Diawara, have also been reticent about the question of Jean Rouch in relation to the African cinema.

23 J. KOYINDE VAUGHAN, op. cit., p.220-221.

24 It is interesting to note that whereas African American Film

Studies, following on the example on African American Literary Studies as practised by Houston A. Baker, Hortense Spillers and Henry Louis Gates, was founded in relation to music by tracing the blues poetic structure in black literary narrative form, African Film Studies came into being by tracing the poetic structure of oral literacy tradition in African film narrative. One discursive field was founded through disengaging the musical figuration of its object, the other through unhinging the literary figuration which is realized by means of the vocalization, proximating musicality. Arguably, the text edited by Manthia Diawara, *Black American Cinema* (Routledge, London, 1993), is the founding document of African American Film Studies. As African American Literary Studies, through Henry Louis Gates, is about to consolidate the canonization of African American literature, it holds numerous lessons for African Film Studies as well as for African American Film Studies. In a magisterial essay, tracing the history of African American criticism since the 1960s, Gates traces three developmental stages which were necessary for consolidating the canon of African American literature: the moment of the Black Arts Movement in the 1960s when criticism was based on the poetics of social realism and mimeticism, against New Criticism; the formalist organicism of the 1970s which postulated the literariness of black text against the social organicism of the 1960s; and the retheorizing of the social and the textual boundaries in the 1980s within a black aesthetic movement. Speaking of the critical project of his own historical moment of the 1970s, Gates writes: "Black literature, recent critics seem to be

saving, can no longer simply name 'the margin'. Close readings are increasingly naming the specificity of black texts, revealing the depth and range of cultural details far beyond the economic exploitation of blacks by whites. This heightened focus on specificity of text has enabled us to begin to chart the patterns of repetition and revision among texts by black authors... Accordingly, many black authors read and revise one another, address similar themes, and repeat the cultural and linguistic codes of a common symbolic geography. For these reasons, we can think of them as forming literary traditions: (see: "African American Criticism", in *Redrawing the Boundaries*, [eds.] Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn, Modern Language Association, New York, 1922, p.308). In another context, Gates argues that literary theories about black literary texts should emanate only from black literary texts (see: "Criticism in the Jungle", *Black Literature and Literary Theory*, [ed.] Henry Louis Gates, Methuen, New York, 1984). Cornel West has insightful things to say about what he characterizes as a 'New Black Formalism', which the work of Gates is an instance of. He rightly criticizes this new Formalism as being blind to certain historical factors and processes that inform canon formation, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged: that it is necessary to reveal the historical interpretations of the cultural crisis which necessitates canon formation; that the making or consolidation of canons depend not the interpretive acts that make possible a correct reading of the crisis which authorizes canons; that, in effect, canonizing is a reading of the historical crisis that necessitates canonization; that a historical reading

of a particular historical crisis involves a complex interplay of rhetorical practices; that serious canonization interrogates the canon already, rather than being an automatic consolidation of it; that canonization should also be preoccupied with content analysis, beyond only a concern with the figurative language of texts; historicizing the process of canon formation reveals that canonization is centrally concerned with matters of power, political struggle and cultural identity inscribed in the formal structure of texts; that rhetorical enactments of texts should be related to institutional and structural battles; and that the construction is part of a response to a historical crisis (see: "Black Critics and the Pitfalls of Canon Formation", in *Keeping the Faith: Philosophy and Race in America*, Routledge, New York, 1993). These debates resonates with many implications for the different projects of Teshome Gabriel and Manthia Diawara in articulating the specificity of African filmic texts whose poetic form emanates from oral narrative traditions. Serious criticism is by its very nature a process of constructing a canon, or at the very least, a consolidation of a canon. Consequently the projects of Teshome, Mbya, Tomaselli, Ukadike and Diawara are part of the establishing of an African film canon. The searches of Teshome and Diawara are similar to that of Henry Louis Gates, though inflected differently, since they are conscious of the necessity of historical contextualization as indicated by Cornel West.

25 FRANCOISE PFAFF, *The Cinema of Ousmane Sembène: A Pioneer of African Film*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1984. The first book-length study of Ousmane Sembène

- was undertaken by Paulin Soumanou Vieyra published by Presence Africaine: Sembene Ousmane: *Cineaste*, Presence Africaine, Paris, 1972. Vieyra's book consists of five short parts: a biographical sketch of Ousmane; a summary sketch of Sembene's films up to 1972; a series of interviews with him concerning his film work; a compilation of film reviews and essays by predominantly Western scholars concerning his oeuvre; a major statement by Sembene about the poetics of the African cinema. While Pfaff's book is historical, analytical, situationalist, and profoundly concerned with the stylistics of Sembene's cinematic form, Vieyra's is descriptive, summarizing, and deeply preoccupied with the biographical. It is interesting to note the interchangeability of Sembene's name in many scholarly works: either as Ousmane Sembene or Ousmane Sembene. Note the different ordering of his name in the two books mentioned here. One of the early studies of the films of Ousmane Sembene in the English-speaking world is still one of the best a quarter century later (see: Robert A. Mortimer, "Ousmane Sembene and the Cinema of Decolonization", *African Arts*, Spring 1972, p.26, 64-68).
- 26 I have examined some of these issues in the essay, "Classical Pan-Africanism or Classical African Marxism?" (*Imagining Home: Class, Culture and Nationalism in the African Diaspora*, [eds.] Sidney Lemelle and Robin Kelley, Verso, London, forthcoming).
- 27 FRANCOISE PFAFF, op. cit., p.32. She cites Haile Gerima, the Ethiopian filmmaker, remarking: "The oral tradition is a part of African film aesthetics in terms of space, pace, and rhythms."
- 28 OUSMANE SEMBENE, "L'image cinematographique et al poesie en Afrique", in Paulin Soumanou Vieyra, *Sembene Ousmane: Cineaste*, op. cit., pp.165-173.
- 29 LIONEL NGAKANE, "The Cinema in South Africa", *Presence Africaine*, 80, 1971, pp.131-133. Ngakane's essay appeared in a special symposium on 'Cultural Days on South Africa', which included other contributions by exiled South African writers, intellectuals and artists: Alex La Guma, "The Condition of Culture in South Africa", Arthur Maimane, "Can't You Write about Anything Else?", Edward Ngaloshe, "Economics and Apartheid", and Gerald Sekoto, "The Present Situation of a Non-white Artist in South Africa". *Presence Africaine's* preoccupation with the question of South Africa goes much earlier when it published Ezekiel Mphahlele's essay: "What the South African Negro Reads and Writes", *Presence Africaine*, no. 16, October-November 1957. The Society of African Culture founded by the First Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in 1956 invited Mphalele to participate at the Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in 1959 in Rome; the result was the essay, "La culture noire dans une society multiracial en Afrique", *Presence Africaine*, no. 24-25, February-May 1959, pp. 209-214. Continuing its concern about the suppression of black civilization in South Africa, *Presence Africaine* published a review of one of the most important films ever done about that country (see: Andre Clair, "Come Back Africa: A film by Lionel Rogosin" *Presence Africaine*, no. 31, 1960). With the recent dramatic changes in my country, with Nelson Mandela assuming political leadership, *Presence Africaine* can

feel proud of having played an important role in affirming black culture in South Africa at a very trying moment.

30 "The Role of the African Filmmaker in Rousing an Awareness of Black Civilization", *Presence Africaine*, 90, 1974, pp.6-203. All the documents in this special issue were published in both French and English. This seminar was held in Ouagadougou in April 1974, organized by the Society of African Culture (a culture policy wing of *Presence Africaine*) and the government of Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta).

31 In a recent essay written from the perspective of the newly emergent New South Africa, J. M. Coetzee reflects on the terrible consequences of censorship in South African cultural history (see: "Emerging from Censorship", *Salmagundi*, 100, Fall 1993, pp. 36-50). The actual object of this riveting essay, is the nature of censorship, emanating from Stalin's paranoid personality and megalomania, that tragically enveloped the Soviet Union in the 1930s and 1940s. It is a profound reading of the explosive intersection of power, politics, and creativity that destroyed Osip Mandelstam. The essay falters when it attempts to read the situation of Mandelstam and Breytenbach within the same historical purview. These reflections exemplify why and how white South African writers and intellectuals have passed the test of Apartheid. Even though there cannot be a direct comparison, will we black South Africans artists, writers, artists, especially filmmakers, pass the test of the Mandela era in South African political history! Should the nature of support of the ANC from the progressive black intelligentsia remain the same as it was in exile, as it is about to assume state

power in a month's time, in May 1994!

32 While in exile in Britain, Lionel Ngakane was one of the founders of the black British cinema. This is the view of Julien Isaac, one of the major figures of a later generation this cultural movement (see: Coco Fusco, "Sankofa and Black Audio Film Collective", in *Discourses: Conversations in Postmodern Art and Culture*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1990, p.17). Kobena Mercer also emphasizes the historic importance of Ngakane in the emergence of this new British cinema (see: "Diaspora Culture and the Dialogic Imagination: The Aesthetics of Black Independent Film in Britain", in *Blackframes: Critical Perspectives on Black Independent Cinema*, [eds.] Mbye B Cham and Claire Andrade-Watkins, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1988, p. 50; in the same anthology, Jim Pines analyzes Lionel Ngakane's film, *Jemima and Johnnie* (19640, which indicated the coming into being of anew cinema ["The Cultural Context of Black British Cinema", p.29-30]). Maureen Blackwood comments on the impact of Lionel Ngakane on her film work (see: "Perfect Image: An Interview with Maureen Blackwood", *Black Film Review*, vol.6 no.1, 1990).

33 Lionel Ngakane, op. cit., p.132.

34 "*The Role of the African Filmmaker in Rousing an Awareness of Black Civilization*", op. cit., p.7.

35 *ibid.*, p.190.

36 *ibid.* pp.185-190.

37 *African Cinema: Politics and Culture*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1992.

38 *Black African Cinema*, University of California Press, Bloomington, 1993. See also the riveting essay:



"Framing Fespaco: Pan-African Film in Context", *Afterimage*, November 1991, pp.6-9.

- 39 JOHN KING writes in the introduction to his book: "Teshome Gabriel is the most ambitious theoretician of Third Cinema" (see: *Magical Reels: A History of Cinema in Latin America*, Verso, London, 1990, p.4). A recent book on the South African cinema pays tribute to Teshome Gabriel in the form of 15-page critical analysis of his theory of the Third Cinema (see: Martin Botha and Adri van Aswegen, *Images of South Africa: The rise of the Alternative Film*, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, 1992).
- 40 TESHOME GABRIEL, "Xala': A Cinema of Wax and Gold", *Presence Africaine*, 116, 1980, pp.202-214. I will not say much about the work of Teshome Gabriel in this essay since a chapter, "Teshome Gabriel: Mapping the Cognitive Structure of the Los Angeles School", in my forthcoming, *The Los Angeles School*, examines his contribution to African Film Criticism in more detail.
- 41 One of the appendixes in Teshome Gabriel's *Third Cinema in the World* (UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, 1982), consists of a lecture and a dialogue given by Ousmane Sembene in Gabriel's seminar at the University of California at Los Angeles in 1975.
- 42 MBYE-BABOUCAR CHAM, "Film Production in West Africa: 1979-1981", *Presence Africaine*, 124, 1982.
- 43 Such comparison are invariably invidious by nature. The fact of the matter is that the best literary and cultural reviews in Africa in 1960s were in the Anglophone Africa:
- Transition in Uganda and Black Orpheus in Nigeria. South Africa gave birth to the Sophiatown Renaissance in the 1950s which via Nigeria ended in exile in Europe in the 1960s. The 1950s witnessed the emergence of modern Nigerian national literature in a European language which was arguably the most dominant national literature in Africa in the 1960s. The rendezvous between the Sophiatown Renaissance writers and the Nigeria writers in the 1960s was one of the most momentous occasions in that decade of hopes and utopias. Transitions made possible not only a great African intellectual tradition centered around Kampala in the 1960s, it vitalized East African literary culture which eventually gave birth to a giant like Ngugi wa Thiong'o. As far as matters concerning cinema, few would argue with position of Mbye.
- 44 MBYE-BABOUCAR CHAM, op. cit., p.181.
- 45 MBYE-BABOUCAR CHAM, "Art and Ideology in the Work of Sembene Ousmane and Haile Gerima", *Presence Africaine*, 129, 1984. There is another essay by Cham which nearly covers the same ground from a different perspective: "Islam in Senegalese Literature and Film", *Africa*, vol. 55 no. 4, 1985.
- 46 MBYE B. CHAM (editor), *Exiles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema, Africa World Press*, Trenton, 1992.
- 47 MARIE-LINE SEPHOCLE, "Interview with Aime Cesaire", *ibid.*, pp.359-369.
- 48 JUNE GIVANNI, "Interview with Euzhan Palcy", *ibid.*, p.293-297.
- 49 STUART HALL, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation", in *Exiles*, op. cit., pp.220-236.
- 50 These are the writings of Manthia Diawara we will consider here: "The

Absent One: The Avant-Garde and the Black Imaginary in Looking for Langston”, and “Cinema, Studies, the Strong Thought and Black Film”, a special issue *Wide Angle on Black Cinema* edited by Diawara, vol. 13 no. 3-4, July-October 1991; “The Nature of Mother in Dreaming Rivers”, and with Phyllis R. Klotman, Ganja and Hess: Vampires, Sex, and Addictions”, *Black American Literature Forum*, vol. 25 no. 2, Summer 1991; “Englishness and Blackness: Cricket as Discourse on Colonialism”, *Callaloo*, vol. 13 no. 4, Fall 1990; “Noir by Noirs: Towards a New Realism in Black Cinema”, *Shades of Noir: A Reader*, (ed.) Joan Copjec, Verso, London, 1993, pp. 261-278 (republished in *African American Review*, vol. 27 no.4, Winter 1993; Manthia Diawara’s contribution to “A Symposium on Popular Culture and Political Correctness”, *Social Text*, 36, Fall 1993, pp.2-7’ *Black American Cinema*, (ed.) Manthia Diawara, Routledge, London, 1993; Manthia Diawara’s essays on film in the Column Section of *Popular Culture* since 1993 will not be considered here.

51 MANTHIA DIAWARA, “Oral Literature and African Film: Narratology in *Wend Kuuni*”, *Presence Africaine*, 142, 1987. Other essays by Manthia Diawara in a supportive vein: “Popular Culture and Oral Traditions in African film”, *Film Quarterly*, vol.xi no.3, Spring 1988; “Souleymand Cisse’s Light on Africa”, *Black Film Review*, vol 4 no. 4, Fall 1988; Manthia Diawara’s translation of Anadou Hampate Ba’s short story, or perhaps essay, “The African Tale of Cinema”, *Discourse*, vol. 11 no. 2, Spring-Summer 1989.

52 This commitment to high theory is similar to the work of Henry Louis

Gates and Houston A. Baker; see Houston Baker’s recent affirmation to this commitment: *Workings of the Spirit: The Poetics of Afro-American Women’s Writings*, University of Chicago Press, 1991.

53 Both the essays by Manthia Diawara and Homi Bhabha were originally presented at the 1986 40th Edinburgh International Film Festival whose theme was Third Cinema Conference: Theories and Practices. Both essays appeared in *Questions of Third Cinema*, edited by Paul Willemen and Jim Pine, 1989 (Homi Bhabha’s essay in his recent *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, 1994).

54 GINA MARCHETTI, “Questions of Third Cinema”, *Film Quarterly*, vol.45 no.2, Winter 1991-92, pp.52-54.

55 The way African Cinema: Politics and Culture was constructed from predominantly previously published materials has elicited a very negative review: Nancy J. Schmidt, *Research in African Literatures*, vol.24 no.3, Fall 1993, pp.150-154. The main criticism seems to be that the essays making the book are somewhat dated, yet it is silent about arguably its main achievement: its incisive attempt to analytically categorize the differential nature of African national cinemas.

56 Although Ethiopia and South Africa cinemas are sometimes considered within the historical bloc of Anglophone Africa, they possess their own singular logic which will be considered elsewhere.

57 MANTHIA DIAWARA, “Canonizing Soundiata in Mande Literature”, *Social Text*, no.31/32, 1992.

58 CLYDE TAYLOR, “FESPACO 85 Was a Dream Come True”, *Black Film Review*, vol.1 no.4, September

1985.

59 One can object that this reading of C.L.R. James is incomplete because for James himself Pan-Africanism was inseparably united with Marxism, a position which distinguished him from those of Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore, Ras Makonnen, as different as they are from each other, at one time or another.

60 In the interview with Valentine Mudimbe in *The Surreptitious Speech*, Manthia Diawara has said: "Thus there are some correlations between the word 'negritude' and the lived experiences of people in Africa, the West Indies, and Europe. . . ." (p.382).

61 This critique is comparable to that formulated by Aijaz Ahmad in *Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (Verso, London, 1992). Although Homi Bhabha's complex philosophical and cultural thought is widely acknowledged, the complicated nature of his ideological positionality is not seriously recognized. As one of Bhabha's contemporary masters, has recently revealed himself to have always been a Marxist under the veneer of deconstructionism (see: Jacques Derrida, "Spectres of Marx", *New Left Review*, 205, May/June 1994, pp. 31-58), the true political alignments of Bhabha have no as yet full revealed themselves.

62 Although this is not the place to trace the complex configurations of the history of the Black American Cinema, its real beginnings is usually traced from *Birth of the Race* (1918) produced by Emmett J. Scott (former secretary of Booker T. Washington). In its early history, its masters were Spencer Williams and Oscar Micheaux. Unavoidably African American film criticism had

immediately to concern itself with the representation of black images in white films made by Hollywood. Arguably the founding text of black film criticism is Alain Locke and Sterling A. Brown's "Folk Values in a New Medium" (1930). Its canonization is realized in James Baldwin's remarkable *The Devil Finds Work* (1975), a remarkable series of essays reflecting on the relationship between film and literature. Earlier in 1955, Baldwin had written "Carmen Jones: The Dark Is Light Enough", which was a prefiguration of the later book. James Snead's posthumous book, *White Screens, Black Images: Hollywood from the Dark Side* (eds. Colin McCabe and Cornel West, Routledge: London, 1994), published a few months ago, is a brilliant continuation, or perhaps more correctly, culmination point of this high criticism. Inside *White Screens, Black Images*, there is a shift from scrutinizing black images in white films to theorizing black films. This shifting perspective is largely explained by the fact that whereas in the 1920s and 1930s the black independent film movement was characterized more by individual instances, in the 1970s and the 1980s, it becomes a historical and cultural movement. Witness the emergence of the Los Angeles School (Charles Burnett, Julie Dash, Larry Clark, Alile Sharon Larkin, Haile Gerima and others) on the West Coast, the East Coast Documentary Film Movement (William Greaves, St. Clair Boume and others), and the black feminist films of Camille Bishop, Zenaibu Irene Davis and others. In this historical conjuncture, African American film criticism shifts towards a predominant concern with black images by black directors in black films. Questions of low culture, high culture and

popular culture within black American film culture have become important (my forthcoming *The Los Angeles School* attempts to deal with some of these issues). It is within this complex historical space that Manthia Diawara has intervened. *Black American Cinema*, assembled and edited by Diawara, is a fundamental text of this new emergent African American film criticism: criticism examining the construction and representational articulation of black images by black directors in black films. Two recent important related texts are Ed Guerrero's *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* and Mark Reid's *Redefining Black Film*.

63 Popular culture is also a domain where black people have theorized their proletarian class consciousness. When self-consciousness of blackness intersects with the historical consciousness of proletarian class position in a profoundly reciprocal way, that intersection invariably gives birth to a great art form: the blues. That moment of intersection has proven unrepeatable since then, with the obvious consequences.

64 The essay, "Ganja and Hess: Vampires, Sex, and Addictions", written together with Phyllis R. Klotman, stands in a peculiar distinctiveness within the body of Manthia Diawara's film criticism. It is perhaps the most formalistic of his writings: marvelling at the renewal of cinematic devices that Bill Gunn undertook in this film of 1973.

65 MANTHIA DIAWARA, "*Black American Cinema: The New Realism*", in *Black American Cinema*, (ed.) Manthia Diawara, p.14. This book has also an essay by Toni Cade Bambara which is a brilliant

reading of *Daughters of the Dust*.

66 *ibid.*, p.20.

67 ABIOLA IRELE, in a series of recent of vital essays has called for the revival of the eminent nature of African scholarship at one time or another practiced by us Africans: "The Crisis of Legitimacy in Africa: A Time of Change and Despair", *Dissent*, Summer 1992, pp. 296-302; "The African Scholar: Is black Africa entering the Dark Ages of scholarship?", *Transition*, no. 51, 1991, pp. 56-69. In other words, one could interpret Abiola Irele as calling for a return to the high quality of scholarship and imagination which once braced the pages of *Presence Africaine*: the poetry of Nicolas Guillen, the historical research of Joseph Ki-Zerbo and Cheikh Anta Diop, the literary criticism of Rene Depestre and literary essays of Ezekiel Mphahlele, the book reviews of Abiola Irele, the historical denunciations of Aime Cesaire, the philosophical meditations of Leopold Sedar Senghor, the letters of Abdias do Nascimento and Carlos Moore and so on.

68 CAMARA LAYE, "The Black Man and Art", in *African Arts*, Autumn 1970, pp.58-9.

69 V.Y. MUDIMBE, "African Art as a Question Mark", *African Studies Review*, vol.29 no.1, March 1986, p.3.

70 LEOPOLD SEDAR SENGHOR, "Standards/Critiques de l'art Africain", *African Arts*, Autumn 1967, p.1.