

Part One

The Uses of Afro-Pessimism

To begin, it is necessary that the reader confront the “idea” of Africa as a substance. But to do so requires us to struggle with a central paradox of this substance, by virtue of the fact that Africa is always perched on a precipice, on the threshold between something and nothingness, between survival and the negativity of life cycles. At the core of our consideration is the unrelentingly grim view of the world Africans occupy. This is the terrain of Afro-pessimism, that impossibility of fathoming another kind of understanding of what Africa stands for in the larger imagination. It could be said without exaggeration that Afro-pessimism is as old as the invention of Africa as the darkest of all places in human history. Afro-pessimism proceeds by first invalidating the historical usefulness of African experience. This is often based on the belief that “nothing good ever happens in Africa”; that her peoples possess nothing of value for the advancement of humanity. The media is filled with this pernicious objectification. Accompanying this notion are those others that seek to explain Africa’s inadequacy. Here, emphasis is placed on the point that the more contact one has with Africa, the better the understanding of the deficiency of its human development index. And therefore the more obvious the backwardness that plagues the continent and her peoples.¹

It is always tempting to begin discussions of Africa against this familiar backdrop. Depending on the critic’s intellectual disposition, he or she may defend or contest the sins and scandals committed and waged against the continent. As entrenched as Afro-pessimism has been as the dominant way to describe Africa, it has not escaped the careful rebuttal of African intellectuals and artists (following this lead, photography has emerged as fertile ground for this dispute).² Some African thinkers take a nuanced and ambivalent position toward the subject, striking a balance between stressing nonessentialism and a critique of problems in African governance.³ But others may take the tack, like earlier apologists of violence against colonized societies, of justifying the state of things in Africa by completely excoriating her in the harshest, most pitiless terms, as the German philosopher Hegel, writing in *Reason in History*, famously did at the beginning of the nineteenth century. We all know the caricature and set-up: the despotic, corrupt “African Big Man” rules a Potemkin state (a banana republic of some

sort), the kind novelist V. S. Naipaul gave us in noxious writings like “The Crocodiles of Yamoussoukro.” The British press has recently regaled its readers with the cruel stories of Zimbabwean misanthrope Robert Mugabe, and, with no sense of irony, even brought Ian Smith, former racist leader of the now expired Southern Rhodesia, as expert witness against him.

It is in the nature of the struggle to understand what Africa is and her place among other cultural spaces in history that it excites a lot of passion and sometimes regret. We choose which Africa suits our intentions, or, as it were, inventions.⁴ Each of these choices surely will correspond to a “correct” representation. In this way, Africa ceases to exist as a concrete reality. Instead, it becomes phosphorescent like the proverbial will-o’-the-wisp, a dazzling dark ember in the figment of our imaginations.

In thinking about Afro-pessimism and the opaque glass it places on our vision of Africa, we are here primarily concerned with the photographic attributes of its manufacture. Specifically, we are interested in exploring photography’s specular and blasphemous enterprise and the visual narratives that drive it, particularly if we are to interrogate the way it shapes images of Africa and uses them to telegraph reports which the global public absorbs as the events of life “over there.” Careful consideration of photography’s wild hallucinations about “phantom Africa”⁵ is not simply about its dimension but also the depth of photographic uses of Afro-pessimism to perpetuate a uniform, fixed, and singular approach to the study of Africa. This approach, given many of its assumptions, tends to offer sweeping impressions whereby spatial and cultural distinctiveness and diversity become one blurry, indistinguishable thing.

Can the photographic event of Afro-pessimism be overcome? And if so, how? To do so, we must look at one major impediment. Most reasonable observers would agree that Africa fares poorly in the lens of the global media industry and the twenty-four-hour news cycle that drives it today. Though the global media is by no means the only agent of this sordid affair, it is infinitely the most saturating. To live in the West is to be intimately acquainted and ruthlessly confronted with the evil eye the media casts on Africa. Africans are turned into specters haunting the photographic imagi-

nary and Western conscience. Entire industries that are dependent on this haunted scene have been sustained by a fiction that has been almost impossible to eradicate. For decades now, the photographic imaginary of Africa has circled the same paradoxical field of representation: either showing us the precarious conditions of life and existence, in which case the African subject always appears at risk, on the margins of life itself, at that intersection where one is forced to negotiate the relationship between man and animal. Or we are confronted with the heartbreaking beauty of its natural world, where man is virtually absent except on the occasion when the landscape is left to the whims of tourists and researchers with dollars and fat grants.

Both Africanists and African scholars have condemned the execrable representations which the media deploy to reduce a landmass ten times the size of Europe into a veritable unknowable. If I, like many others, have become inured to such impressions, it has little to do with wanting to inoculate my sensibility against the depredations that constantly leap at us whenever Africa is, as it were, in the picture. Neither is it apathy toward the African condition, nor the visceral need to shut my cognitive and mental vision against stories of debilitation that accompany much of the reporting. My single and sole reason, after decades of absorbing no other kind of information about the continent, is that these stories are no longer plausible. The disaster mongering of the media and its concentration on those scenarios (many abstracted from larger and more complex pictures) that make Africa seem less than a nurturing place for any imaginative and fulfilling life stretch credulity. This calls for a kind of counter-reporting, one driven by an informed, balanced approach to writing or picturing Africa, which is what the group of artists and photographers in this project are carefully sketching. The works they present do not offer palatable impressions and accounts of Africa; rather, what is important is that they bring to bear on the subject in question a different set of lenses guided by a scrupulous attention to images that form their photographic investigations.

To avoid undue sentimentality, it is important to state that there are reasons for reexamining representations of Africa other than the wish to construct “positive” views and stories. The development of such stories will in itself be a good thing. But that will be the job of an advertising and marketing campaign.⁶ The role of intellectuals and artists is another matter. It is their task to provide a different environment for reasonable discourse on Africa and, through such discourse, call into

question the prejudicial misrepresentations that characterize the work of thinkers and writers like Hegel, Naipaul, Joseph Conrad, Ryder Haggard, and many others. The reasons are both ethical and epistemological. To transform the epistemology of Afro-pessimism is to dismantle an entire intellectual edifice and with it a seemingly incorrigible world view. Ethically, placing the quest for truth above newsworthiness is essential. An ethical commitment to Africa requires the recognition of the complexity of each situation, seeing and writing about what is at hand in any given context as part of a larger world and not merely as a series of disjointed, fragmentary narratives.

An Atlas of Disorder

For more than 150 years, photography has been an intractable ogre in the visual life-world of modernity. Photography either sees through the caked-layer of life and reality, or it obfuscates them in a relentless production of sentimentality, spectacle, and fragmented rumors of existence. For Roland Barthes, photography’s final scenes—often wrought as textures of life and experience—are neither necessarily true nor real, but instead encode a visuality of mythmaking that is today collectivized in the daily consumption of mass media images.⁷ In contrast to the first, in which a laborious, studied affect of quasi-scientific observation is applied, the frenzy of mass media photography speaks less to the specificity of the photographic image as a carrier of meaning native to a singular subject, but to a whole eschatology of the industry, what Walter Benjamin called an image world.⁸ The photographic meaning of Africa is buffeted—perhaps we should say sandwiched—between these two points of view. In Africa, photography has carried the fragmented rumors of existence and mythmaking to another level. In particular, a type of photographic practice has repeatedly staged a veritable phantasmagoria. The manner in which photography frames the African body makes the body appear peculiarly defamiliarized, if not altogether monstrous. To survey these photographic images—in newspapers, on television, in film documentaries and magazines—is to encounter an atlas of disorder. One is immediately struck by the uniformity of the pictorial focus, namely, a resolute commitment to images of entropy. Though such a focus may not perturb most observers of the global photographic industry, the images are clearly at odds with those being made by a large number of



African practitioners.⁹ Not discounting the censor's black marker, take any number of images published in an African newspaper or magazine and compare them to those that appear in Europe and the U.S. The dissonance is striking.

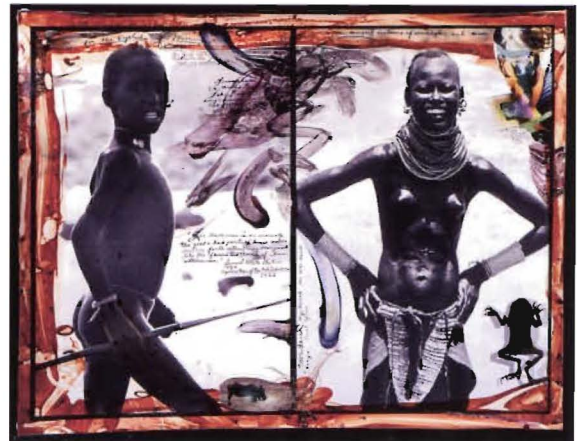
The gap between these two photographic discourses points us to a historical disjunction in the relationship between photography and Africa.¹⁰ This relationship is both rich and troubling. From the earliest recorded history of the photographic encounter, Africa has made for a fascinating and elusive subject, at once strange, intoxicating, carnal, primitive, wild, luminous.¹¹ At first the desire to record the exotic, mysterious beauty of the *black* continent may have provided the incentive to invent a kind of sport in which a hunterlike figure wielding congeries of instruments stalks a gamelike subject—suspended between an abyss of indeterminacy and plenitude—waiting to be literally captured. This early phase of the photographic sport (dominated by ethnographers, prospectors, speculators, prosecutors of the colonial enterprise) yielded a huge archive of visual tropes about Africa that have persisted in the popular imagination. Today, hunter and game remain more or less the same, except that the result has become not only outlandish but also has acquired a quality of myth impossible to dislodge from the real. In this latter phase, Africa has been transformed into a wasteland of the bizarre and outrageous.

No other cultural landscape has had a more problematic association with the photographic medium: its

apparatus, various industries, orders of knowledge, and hierarchies of power. As already mentioned, the act of photographing Africa has often been bound up with a certain conflict of vision: between how Africans see their world and how others see that world. In a way, this is a clash of lenses, a struggle to locate and represent Africa by two committed but disparate sensibilities—one intensely absorbed in its social and cultural world, the other passing through it, fleetingly, on one assignment or another. The latter sensibility has come to represent specters that haunt Africa. It is constituted around an accumulation of myths. This photographic sensibility works on assumptions based not so much on what it sees but on a preordained, fragmented, and internalized view of the world Africans seem to occupy. This view feeds a phantom essence and releases it as a readymade canon of fascination and repulsion. The image of Africa that I am describing, and which has overwhelmed every other pictorial value, has been produced as much from processes of estrangement as from positions of engagement.

A Vampiric Machine

Consider for example the work of Peter Beard, the socialite and expatriate American photographer who has spent more than forty years living and photographing in Kenya. What is immediately evident in Beard's work is its utter ambivalence toward Kenyans. His photographic pastiches of wild, edenic Africa and the cultivated languor of settler lifestyle, published in American fashion magazines and glossy coffee table books, give us a glimpse into a troubled image machine. Beard's photographs, in which graceful and unpredictable animals and Africans are commingled in a disjointed colonial fantasy, perfectly express the ethos of the vampiric ma-



chine and its primitivizing capacities. Beard appears simultaneously close to and distant from his subjects; the sleight of hand that permits this form of visualization is the simple trick of the telescopic lens, a tool of surveillance that enables the photographer to feign a kind of intimacy, even if the real intent is to remain untouched by that artificial proximity. The telescopic lens allows the photographic hunter to act as both ethnographer and surveyor, the more to underscore the cultural distinctions between himself and his subject. This distance is placed at the liminal point of the dichotomy of spatial and temporal relations. It exposes a civilizational gap, and at the same time eschews any kind of empathy in social relations. What I am describing here ought to be familiar to us, since it is not at all different from the ideology that supports the geopolitics of North and South relations.

To make sense of the spatial formatting (distance and closeness) and temporal remoteness at the core of Beard's photographic values, one may turn to the rich research that has been initiated in anthropology. In his remarkable book *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, Johannes Fabian explains this phenomenological separation: "When modern anthropology began to *construct* [my italics] its other in terms of topoi implying distance, difference, and opposition, its intent was above all, but at least also to construct ordered Space and Time—a cosmos—for Western society to inhabit rather than 'understanding other cultures ...'"¹² According to Fabian, at the root of the separation of Self and Other is the severance of temporal connection, to circumvent and deny coevalness.¹³ The denial of coevalness is usually based on the principle that even if the Self and Other share space, they may not share the same time; in other words, there is no intersubjective link between them. This lack offers one explanation for the dichotomy that has been a principal problem in modernity between the idea of the modern and primitive, civilized and savage, developed and underdeveloped, and ultimately Self and Other.

Photography reflexively encodes these orders of civility and lack of civility in its approaches to the Other. Photography, which is an art about time, inverts the structure of time in order to create an unnatural temporality that it does not wish to share or coexist in with the Other. However, Fabian observes, "To recognize *Intersubjective Time* would seem to preclude any sort of distancing almost by definition. After all, phenomenologists tried to demonstrate with their analyses that social interaction presupposes intersubjectivity, which in turn

is inconceivable without assuming that the participants involved are coeval, i.e. share the same time."¹⁴ In Beard's photographs, human qualities of the subjects are placed at the zero-degree of recognition, the more to focus on the exotic potentials of both man and animal. What we experience—looking at the pictures—is an anthropological machine¹⁵ at work, in which the qualities of man (the African) are always embedded in the environment of the animal. Beard's photographs thus exemplify the problems of coevalness in the documentation of life and people in Africa by Western photographers. The collages that constitute his primary technique of display play off the contrast between man and animal. The images are usually torn, painted, colored, and pieced together pell-mell to create a dizzying agglomeration of bodies, objects, landscapes, and animals. Consequently, there is never a settled point at which Africa is not photographically coextensive with the carefully organized jumble of images, much like the chaos one is subtly meant to perceive in its social reality. This is the sphere of photographic meaning that must be engaged and cleared away in any project concerned with photography and Africa.

If it has been impossible to write about photography and Africa without drawing attention to the vampiric machine—which has been mostly a history of the Western photographic relationship to Africa—it is partially because this photographic archive¹⁶ and its apparatus have remained largely intact and their capacity for mischief undiminished. The reason is simple: Western photographers have the broadest access to distribution systems and reach far more of the global public because of the Western control of global media and institutions of visual and archival modernity. Consequently, photographic depictions of Africa in the global media are shaped primarily by the subjectivity of Western photographers, many of whom wield a controlling influence over visual meaning.¹⁷ But beyond professionals, what of the amateur photographer on a backpacking trip through Africa? Consider another example: a European tourist comes upon a group of women sitting in their stalls in a West African market (say Mali or Senegal) and, seeing them in their resplendent attire, has an overwhelming desire to photograph them. He politely asks their permission, the women good-naturedly decline, but he persists. The question is, why would anyone want to photograph people with whom there is mutual estrangement? What would be the nature and final outcome of this transaction? The photographic sport between hunter and game often assumes the features of

a low-intensity courtship, blurring the boundary between assent and violation, license and exploitation.

A good part of the research for this project was spent observing such encounters and pondering the meaning of the photographic sport. As the research progressed, a clear fact emerged—the touristic eye has entered a new era of conflict with Africans who no longer enjoy the unsolicited attention of the lens. We can see in this conflict the emergence of new measures toward the eradication of the touristic eye. Yet, at the same time, the invasive aspect of photography needs to be balanced by the common fact of praxis (artistic or otherwise) within which photography is continuously staged in Africa. To get to this story, which is the result of my research, we would still need to account for the mass media industry and the pixilated remainders that make up its photographic archive.

Suffocation of Images

It is a shocking photograph. The tremor it set off on the first viewing remains palpable, a blunt-edged blow to conscience and the humanitarian conceit.¹⁸ Kevin Carter's photograph of an emaciated, exhausted, naked child crouched on the ground—his/her head bowed down like a supplicant—in the dusty, rutted landscape of Sudan is as iconic as it is disturbing. The child is surrounded by an eerie silence, the outlines of a straw bivouac barely visible in the background. The nakedness of the solitary figure is rendered all the more stark by two ornaments attached to his/her body: a heavy white bead necklace that weighs down the fragile neck and a white hospital tag—as if marked like a statistic—still intact around the skeletal right wrist. Published on the front page of the *New York Times* on March 26, 1993, this picture accompanied a story of the mass exodus of families driven from their homes by famine and a stubborn drought that engulfed and laid waste to formerly productive farmlands. Carter's photograph is distressing not only because of the suffering it records, but also because it is an image with little meaning.¹⁹

The photograph is also an emblem, registering how the world links Africa to the precariousness of life: hunger, disease, civil strife, genocidal madness, debt, anomie. It encapsulates and seems to feed an intractable addiction—the fascination with Africa's ostensibly futile struggle to slip the clutches of a perpetual nightmare. The photograph therefore serves the function of a double image: it depicts, on the one hand, the actuality of

the child's predicament, his/her utter helplessness and inability to reach the feeding center, and, on the other, the persistent image of Africa as "the land of motionless substance and of the blinding ... and tragic disorder of creation."²⁰ This disorder is often organized into a visual spectrum from where the image begins its journey into inscription. One tragic event, such as a famine, is illuminated, and from this a deductive perspective is drawn, a specificity accrues into a generality. An image repertoire is developed. Every photograph of Africa created in this mode repeats the same appropriation of singular scenes as stand-ins for a larger collective scene, turning the practice of photography into a mythology factory. Every image exists under the aegis of a particular typology: there is the grotesque, the despot; the fetid shantytown that is the very picture of disorganized geometry; the dank, frightful hospital scene crowded with patients dying from diseases not yet known to science; the wild, undisturbed beauty of primeval forests full of animals. All of which signify and represent one and the same thing: Africa. A condemnation to be born stoically until the next Live Aid or Live 8, or whatever indignity Bob Geldof and his fellow miracle workers can muster to rattle the tin can of mercy for an unfortunate people and place.



"In a framework in which every word [or image] spoken is spoken in a context of urgency—the urgency of ignorance—it is only possible to take the path from sense to reason in the opposite direction by saturating the words, resorting to an excess ... provoking a suffocation of images."²¹ On the day that Live 8, the follow-up to Live Aid from twenty years earlier, opened in London's Hyde Park, Geldof reenacted that scene of excess via a slide presentation of the 1984 Ethiopian famine. Projected in slow-motion across several gigantic screens in the capacious park were photographic images of an emaciated child collapsed like a sack of shredded cloth in the arms of a delirious looking mother while a dense nest of flies played havoc on the child's

Sudan Is Described as Trying to Placate the West

By DONATELLA LORCH
Special to The New York Times

JUBA, the Sudan — The Sudanese Government has made a series of gestures that are meant to placate the West but are also emblematic of the country's need to become more flexible and pragmatic, relief officials say.

The moves come as the United States threatens to add the Sudan to the list of countries that sponsor terrorism and considers creating safety zones for refugees in the south, which is devastated by war and famine.

More than a million people are at risk of starvation in the sparsely southern Sudan, the relief workers say. The people of the south, mostly Christians and animists, have been forced from their homes both by famine and by the Islamic fundamentalists' Government's offensives in 10 years of fighting.

The plight of the south's people is aggravated by their isolation. More than half the year, rains make the area inaccessible, and in recent years the Government has kept visitors out and offered only limited entry to relief agencies.

Food Is Provided

This year, the Government has donated enough food to provide for all the grain needs for the hundreds of thousands of displaced people in the south.

The Government and rebel factions are allowing the United Nations greater access to devastated and contested areas. Government-controlled areas in the south, previously closed, are granting visas to Western journalists, but they are not permitted to travel freely, but rather to spend the allotted 24 hours under Government supervision.

And one of the biggest concessions has been the permit for the United Nations food delivery by barge in the south to areas cut off in the wet season.

In the southern military outpost of Juba on the banks of the White Nile where more than 230,000 people displaced by fighting and famine rely on airlifted rations, food arrived by barge recently for the first time since the civil war began a decade ago.

"I think the Government has realized that relief needs to be addressed, and we have never gotten so much cooperation," said Manuel da Silva, director of operations for the World Food Program in Khartoum. "If we are stopped from reaching the people, then the situation will deteriorate."

Empty, dusty and empty of vitality, Juba is bounded by roads that are mined. Neighboring areas are controlled by rebels. Shops are barricaded shut, but a few foods, like onions and garlic, are laid out on dry burlap bags on the streets. There is electricity every other day for a few hours.

But Juba is better off than most other towns, largely because it is the most important Government stronghold in the south. There are no starving people here, and officials say some of the displaced are filtering back to their villages. For the first time since 1989, the food rations have reached the recommended level of 400 grams a person.

But Juba is also the most notorious town, a symbol of the vicious Government crackdown. Last fall, when the rebels almost gained control in heavy fighting, the Government retaliated with torture and execution. Priests and Westerners who fled the onslaught said that more than 300 people were accused of being collaborators and were brutally punished by the Government.

Denial by Government

The Government response is denial, as it has been throughout the Government of Gen. Omar Hassan al-Bashir. In an office empty of books and even visible paperwork, but equipped with a baby blue telephone, Gasim Barnaba Kianga, the Minister of Political Affairs, insisted that those who killed were caught in Government-rebel crossfire.

In an interview videotaped by an aide, he preferred to speak of new-found freedoms in the Sudan.

"People are leading a normal life," Mr. Kianga said. "We can all move around freely. Everything should be settled for lasting peace."

But the Sudan has largely been considered the breeding ground for some of the most zealous Islamic fundamentalists operating in the world today. Hassan al-Turabi, widely believed to be the real power behind the Bashir Government, has worked with Iran to build training camps in both countries for hundreds of militant Muslim recruits. It is unclear whether the Sudan's conciliatory gestures are merely reactions from a Government concerned with the threat of intervention or whether they reflect a schism between the relative pragmatists in the Government and the Islamic fundamentalists who favor a theocratic government.

Whatever the motivation, the blanket of silence that has cloak one of the world's most repressive governments, where hundreds of thousands of people have died in the last several years in a policy that officials have called "ethnic cleansing," appears to be lifting ever so slightly.

The United Nations Human Rights Commission recently accused the Su-



In a move meant to placate the West, the Sudanese Government is opening parts of the country's famine-stricken south to relief operations, but for some it could be too late. A little girl, weakened from hunger, collapsed recently along the trail to a feeding center in Ayod. Nearby, a vulture waited.



Over 230,000 people at Juba rely on airlifted food to survive.

dan of widespread executions, torture, detention and expulsions and voted to appoint a special investigator. The United States accused Khartoum of having close ties to Iran and Libya and harboring known terrorist groups, including the Palestinian group Hamas. Islamic Holy War and the Party God. The American list of countries accused of sponsoring state terrorism, which is expected to be released in April, now contains Libya, Iran, Syria, North Korea, Iraq and Cuba.

Rebels Strong in Countryside

Although the military balance favors the Government, which last year won back 14 towns and villages, Khartoum still does not control the countryside. Last year, the Sudanese People's Liberation Front splintered, and the factions fight with one another.

The Government has promised to investigate, and relief agencies are concerned that the Government, while talking peace, intends to seal the borders to the south to prevent weapons from reaching rebels.

"The Government has systematically raped the country," said a relief official who spoke on condition of anonymity. "This is definitely a change in tactics. I'd call it a charm offensive. They just deny. We mustn't forget that the Government is superior at delay tactics. It's amazing how you can lose six or eight months before a promise comes through."

Many Displaced and Hungry

Forced to leave their lands and with their cattle herds virtually decimated, hundreds of thousands of mostly nomadic southern Sudanese are either on the brink of starvation or face severe malnutrition, relief officials say. In the area around the town of Kongor, 625 miles south of Khartoum, 145,000 displaced people face starvation, and more than 15 are dying each day. About 100,000 more, mostly from the cattle-herding Dinka, have been pushed to camps along the Kenyan border.

In some areas there are no children under 5 years of age. In Bahr el Ghazal

Province, 530 miles southwest of Khartoum, more than 200,000 people are surviving by gathering wild food, relief officials say. In the same region, United Nations officials estimate that since 1988, a wasting disease carried by a sand fly has killed more than 60,000 people hemmed in by fighting. The disease, Kala-Azar or visceral leishmaniasis, can be cured in 30 days with proper medical attention.

United Nations workers and relief agencies, whose money as well as people are restricted, say keeping the people alive requires relief but not necessarily costly intervention. While airlifts cost about \$2 million per plane-load, barge shipments, which are much larger, cost only about \$200,000 a ton.

The arrival of the barge in Juba with wheat, lentils and vegetable oil was more of a symbolic delivery meant to spread hope to the 200,000 Sudanese living along that stretch of the White Nile who have not yet been reached.

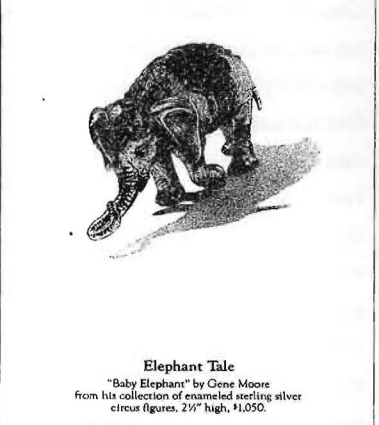
3-Day Trip Takes 50 Days

And it was far from easy. A trip scheduled to last two weeks took 50 days, delayed by negotiations and eight hijackings. The World Food Program crew was shot at and in one instance lost 1,300 tons of food to looters. But all 2,400 tons went out to the Sudanese, said Russell L. Ulrey, the barge coordinator. Another barge convoy is scheduled to begin as soon as possible.

The assessment teams, riding into the countryside on motorcycles, found hardly any cattle, the main stock animal. In most villages, there was no corn or wheat in the houses, and people were surviving on water lilies and papyrus roots. There were no seeds, and most everyone appeared to have some visible form of skin disease or illness.

Even the hijackings appeared to have been acts of desperation by groups who thought they were being bypassed. After the rebel looting, the crew expected the crowds on the banks to disappear into the swamps.

"We raised our hands, and then they raised theirs," said David Steele, one of the crew. "Then they began singing. It was beautiful. We went from frustration and anger to the most moving moment of the trip."



Elephant Tusk "Baby Elephant" by Gene Moore from his collection of enameled sterling silver circus figures, 2 1/2" high, \$1,050.

TIFFANY & CO.
NEW YORK • FIFTH AVENUE AND 37TH STREET • 800-316-6449 • QT & CO. 1993

THE SPRING 1993 SELECTIONS FOR WOMEN SIZES 14 TO 24 HAVE ARRIVED. SHOWN FROM ITEM, THE POET'S BLUESE IN IVORY, \$118, LONG VEIL IN TAUPE, \$148, AND MATCHING SOFT PANTS, \$124.



INFORMAL MODELLING ON NINE IN NEW YORK TOMORROW, MARCH 27TH FROM 10 TO 5.
SAKS FIFTH AVENUE
SALON Z • SIZES 14 TO 24

Last 3 days!

25% off

our spring shoe essentials

Now through Sunday only

Thousands of shoes — platforms, pumps & more

- Etienne Aigner
- Carressa
- Sam & Libby
- Aerosole
- Mia
- Unisa
- Sesto Meucci
- Nickels
- Nine West
- Van Ell
- Evan-Picone
- Amalfi
- Bandolino
- Enzo Angiolini

TAO HEUER
Now at Bloomingdale's, time tells all. Featuring the 2000 Chronograph by TAO HEUER. The unique timepiece shown has a black dial, unidirectional turning bezel and a sapphire crystal on a two-tone stainless steel bracelet, water resistant to 660 feet. In our Fine Jewelry Salons, 212-765-2667, in the Arcades, New York. And selected stores.

bloomingdales
IT'S LIKE NO OTHER STORE IN THE WORLD.

Kevin Carter, A little girl, weakened from hunger, collapsed recently along the trail to a feeding center in Ayod. Nearby, a vulture waited. New York Times, March 16, 1993, p. A3. New York Times and Corbis

Thousands of shoes — platforms, pumps & more

- Etienne Aigner
- Carressa
- Sam & Libby
- Aerosole
- Mia
- Unisa
- Sesto Meucci
- Nickels
- Nine West
- Van Ell
- Evan-Picone
- Amalfi
- Bandolino
- Enzo Angiolini

*Your reduction off ticketed prices will be taken at the register Fourth Floor, Lord & Taylor, Fifth Avenue. And at all Lord & Taylor stores.

Our regular and original prices are offering prices only and may or may not have resulted in sales. Advance merchandise may be available at sale prices upon upcoming sale events.

now through wednesday
extra 10% off baker furniture

Get additional savings on the sale prices of all Baker living room, dining room and bedroom furniture. The Milling Road 87' Lawson arm sofa is available in over 400 fabrics. Orig. * \$2332-\$2730, Sale \$1699-\$1999. After extra 10% off 1529.10-1799.10. Shown here, an elegant gold and burgundy rayon damask. Orig. * \$2465, Sale \$1799. After extra 10% off \$1819.

See the entire collection on 9, Herald Square. Selected styles available at White Plains, Rte. 110 Farmingdale and Rte. 4 Paramus.

Call Amy Stadler at our Interior Design Studio for details: 212-560-4154. Outside NY, Macy's By Appointment: 1-800-343-0121.

macy's

Extra savings off sale prices. Prices shown reflect extra savings. "Unauthorized" merchandise may have been taken. Sale ends 3/27.



gaping mouth. Was that child alive or dead? The answer to that question was the *raison d'être* of the presentation. Geldof showed us the motion picture of the Samaritan's plot in which are gathered a horde of hollow-eyed people who stare at us with sickening desperation, pleading literally for their lives, to be saved. Then, along with pop singer Madonna, he introduced a ravishing young woman, none other than the dying child seen earlier in the arms of her mother, now healthy and whole, rescued by the nutrient-rich gruel of the humanitarian industry. We were informed that she is studying to become, of all things, an agricultural engineer in her country.

Viewing this media spectacle within the stated reason of the concert, debt relief for African nations,²² one had the distinct impression of this woman being delivered twice, first from the clutches of starvation and death, then to the thunderous applause of the vast crowd gathered at Hyde Park in a secular crusade in which Sir Bob, in the role of miracle worker, literally brings the dead back to life before our eyes.

Documentary Heroism

Cynicism aside, Live Aid, the original musical charity event, came about because of responses to the harrowing documentary photographs and television footage of the Ethiopian famine. This makes the whole photographic set-up of the media in Africa a paradox. On the

one hand, it directs our attention to serious deficits around issues of human survival; at the same time, it seems incapable of imagining any other kind of situation outside of despair. Live Aid and its myriad offspring participate in the reproduction of these photographic practices. By all counts, it was a noble act. But it is not insignificant that Geldof returned to global prominence, after a failed career as a "rock star," through the recording and concert he organized for the unfortunate famine victims. That this single event also spawned a profitable career that is part humanitarian theater, part jejune pedantry on behalf of Africa tells us something about the capacity of images to transform lives. Not least because one can notice in the staging of Live 8 a certain sense of opportunism more than obligation. To connect the photographic misery of the 1984 famine to debt relief plays to the worst excesses of documentary heroism,²³ which was on full display on the screens in the park.

Looking back to the media experience of the Ethiopian famine sheds light on how we should read Carter's photograph of the Sudanese child, whose fate no one knows anything about today. (Perhaps a future concert will inform us whether he/she survived or perished, whether an enterprising white knight made it to the refugee camp in time to smite the agents of apocalypse that perpetually amplify the African dependency complex. For in the morality play in which documentary heroism participates, Africans are always at risk and white Europeans are forever there to deliver them.) It is no ordinary photograph. The skeletal hulk of the abandoned child fills the picture plane, as a corpulent vulture waits patiently in the background. Something beyond pity accompanied the experience of this image. The child came to represent more than a statistic—he/she was, literally, carrion. This devastating starkness tore at and touched the core of our humanitarian impulse. As an African, I felt a combination of shame and anger, disgust and outrage at that scandal of a picture. And it brought back haunting memories of my own experience nearly forty years earlier in the infernal refugee camps where many Biafran children were abandoned to disease, despair, and death in a brutal civil war. British photographer Don McCullin documented many scenes from the wretched ruins of the Biafran dream of self-determination. Among them are images which essayed the hollow, blank stares of pitiful children reduced to zombies by hunger. Looking at McCullin's images, I count myself lucky to have survived the harrowing experience but also to have es-

Joel Robine, *An Ethiopian mother holds her child suffering malnutrition in Gode, 2000.*
Joel Robine / AFP / Getty Images

caped from the picturesque capture of the news reporter's autistic lens. These images raise serious issues about the nature of photography, representation, and the ethics of media reporting in Africa. Their proliferation numbs the mind, to the point of glaucoma. We stop seeing the image; the heroism of the photographer becomes paramount. More importantly, I am concerned with the violence such images do to the collective African body. Central to the questions raised by images of calamity, beyond the immediate sorrow of witnessing dreadful scenes of the emptying of African life, is the relationship between photographer and subject. This question loomed large in the reception and discussions of Carter's Sudanese child. What is the photographer's ethical responsibility to the vulnerable subject? Is a living corpse, such as the image of the Sudanese child suggests, capable of being a proper subject? Can photography itself breath life into this lifeless body in order to win it recognition as to be counted among the living? In short, can Carter's picture confer on this nameless child the status of personhood? These questions are raised here not only in relation to the image but in recognition of a broader debate directed at reaching an equilibrium between pictorial concern and violence in representation.

Problems of Anomie in Documentary Practices

Over the years, the indignant voices of Africans have grown to a crescendo, contesting the negative representations of Africa in the media. Achille Mbembe, who has frequently engaged this subject in great detail, writes about two concerns: "One is the burden of arbitrariness involved in seizing from the world and putting to death what has previously been decreed to be nothing, an empty figure. The other is the way the negated subject deprived of power, pushed even farther away, to the other side, behind the existing world, out of the world, takes on himself or herself the act of his or her own destruction and prolongs his/her own crucifixion."²⁴

So what does it take for the African body to evade participation in the grotesque ceremonies of self-crucifixion, to avoid becoming a humiliated empty figure? Here is a paradox—is it possible to turn away from the kind of wrenching scenes drawn for the global public by Carter et al. of people at risk, in situations of travail and discomfort, marooned in a crepuscular indeterminacy, deprived of both agency and visibility? There are no easy answers. However, to address these questions re-

quires an acknowledgment that pictures of African suffering are preferred by the media; stories in the *New York Times*, for example, never depict Africa or Africans in normal, ordinary situations. Today it is Darfur and Niger, tomorrow it might be the plight of slum dwellers in Nairobi.²⁵ These are the kinds of stories and pictures that are rewarded, the ones that condemn many a photojournalist to the vicious cycle of media martyrdom and heroism. Carter would win the Pulitzer and other accolades and awards for his "gutsy" photograph, which in turn spurred a fierce debate about the photographer's obligation to his subject. So what is the responsibility of the image hunter? What we see frequently is the problem of anomie in documentary photography vis-à-vis Africa. For Carter, who was born in South Africa and knew such images firsthand as picture editor of the *Mail and Guardian* in Johannesburg and as a member of the gang of four nicknamed the "Bang Bang Club,"²⁶ a darker emotional ravaging accompanied the making of the kind of images that turned him into a star among the elite corps of disaster and war photographers. The force was centrifugal. Unable to cope with the demands of his simultaneous celebrity and vilification, the fragile photographer was drawn into a psychological maelstrom.²⁷

Seeing: Beyond Pathology

In beginning this essay thus, I wanted to force from the outset a recognition of the contradictory forms of photographic practice in Africa. I want us not so much to look away from images such as Carter's—or an eerily similar photograph shot by James Nachtwey in Baidoa, Somalia, of another child abandoned on the roadside, in a similar pose of prostration, his/her feeble wrist marked by a white tag—as to demand from them more answers than the simplistic ones to which we have become accustomed. I want us to direct attention to the multiple ways of representing African life and space, to enunciate forms of visual practice that open us up to the facts that we not only share the same space but also the same time. In other words, I am speaking about visual practices that recognize coevalness, that reach beyond the stock images that have endured until now as the iconography of the "abandoned" continent.

In light of this exhibition inquiry, how might the photographic apparatus—that is, any digital or mechanical, duplicating instrument—engage the continent's vast and complex visual world without resort-

ing to the clichéd metaphors of the media's horror index? This inquiry is as much about photography as it is about representation. Wherever and whenever photography engages Africa, it invents a pathology of spectrality and transience. Each pathology in turn invents its own panacea: pity, infantilization, paternalism, or the reanimation of the grotesque. It could be said that photography's greatest accomplishment is the vast encyclopedia of cures that have followed each of its forays into the continent. Whether we are witnessing visual splendor or astounding civil disorder, Live Aid and other charity events will always be on the near horizon to intercede. This exhibition is not about any of that. It is not about disorder. Nor is it about the collapse of civility, nor genocidal wars. It is not a recapitulation of pathologies.

This exhibition is in part devised to ask pertinent questions about the role of images in the public narratives of the African self and spaces within a changing global image ecology. It is not centered on a specific dispute, nor is its critique simplistic. The exhibition comprises discreet, modest, and forceful propositions on how to look at Africa, how artists work with the tool of photography to trace the arc of a different social reality that is both deliberately pictorial and narrative in approach and at the same time questions the historical dependence on narratives of anomie. African artists and photographers are looking at the unfolding drama of contemporary life and experience in Africa with a fine-tuned alertness. They are examining and analyzing the dizzying processes of spatial transformation, massive transition, and social adaptation that make up the varied realities of diverse groups: urban and rural, formal and

informal communities. The artists' penetrating insight provides the remarkable story of this project.

Each of the artists has either taken up a problematic or focused attention on social subjects. For instance, a number of artists explore the interstices of urban communities undergoing transformation, while others use very simple mechanisms of portraiture to spotlight the self-expression of individuals portrayed or deploy the artifice of fashion stylization to draw out values of individual identity. Overall, the works assembled here aid us in examining a different context of image making that is as African in its aesthetic intentions as in its ethical concerns. Given the prevailing, antiphotogenic gaze of these artists, the exhibition most certainly denies the viewer the violent spectacle of deprivation and depravity that has constituted the signature visual image of Africa. In fact, the works evidence a subtle yet substantive critique of such images. Not because there is no deprivation or depravity in contemporary Africa, but because the metaphors of violence and poverty cheapen our understanding of the cultural context. The paradox is that images of suffering—which function as a sort of shorthand for neither looking properly nor seeing Africans in normal human terms—do not ameliorate the disasters which they purportedly engage. On the contrary, they have compounded and skewed the photographic imperatives of a mediatized fascination with the continent's "abnormality" as the primal scene of global media's masochist pleasure, its unrelenting *horror vacui*. This is why quite often what the viewer encounters in the works produced by artists and photographers in this exhibition is a kind of antiphotogenic and antispectacular approach to making images.

1 See Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Négritude et humanisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1964). The Negritude movement, especially the version adopted by one of its principal founders, the philosopher, poet, and statesman Léopold Sédar Senghor, could be reread today as an attempt to restage colonial pessimism about Africa. But while Senghor's theory of Negritude may have unwittingly perpetuated certain prejudices about Africa by articulating the difference between Africa and Europe as the opposition between feeling (Africa) and reason (European), he was primarily vested in delineating an African ethic of which Africans should and could be proud, even if some of the values were anathema to how modern Africans actually thought of themselves.

2 For critical responses to Afro-pessimism, see Chinua Achebe, *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays* (New York: Anchor Books, 1988) and *Home and Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), especially the essay "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," pp. 1–20; see also Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London and Nairobi: James Currey/Heinemann, 1986), and, most famously, Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

3 See Manthia Diawara, *In Search of Africa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

4 See V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988) and *The Idea of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

5 In 1931, the French ethnographer and Surrealist Michel Leiris embarked on a long trip as the secretary of the Dakar-Djibouti expedition (my italics). What resulted was not just the collection of objects and other material plundered from Africa through the course of the expedition, but a book, *L'Afrique fantôme* (1934), comprised of Leiris's work during the trip. The tradition of writing and conjuring Africa from which Leiris's book emerged is long and distinguished. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* belongs to this tradition, as does Arthur Rimbaud's retirement to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and André Gide's *Voyage au Congo* (1927) and *Retour du Tchad* (1928). The point is that a long literature by eminent figures makes up the intellectual and visual imaginary of our exploration of Afro-pessimism.

6 In a recent edition of CNN, I saw an advertisement produced by the Nigerian Tourist Board flash across the screen touting the beauty of the people, the cultural dynamism of the cities, and the natural landscape. South Africa has used various contexts to promote itself to the world. No doubt, many African countries know the damage done their self-image and should engage the negative representations that have proved problematic to their conception of themselves.

7 See Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Noonday Press, 1972). The study which Barthes initiated in this book is partly based on the specific examples of certain phenomena of postwar mass culture and popular entertainment, but guiding this examination is the attempt to understand how myth is rooted in language. In "Myth Today," a section of this fascinating book, Barthes defined myth as "a type of speech"; the conditions of this speech are what give it utility, in other words "as a system of communication, that it is a message." He calls this message: signification, a way to communicate a message about something as basic as a car to the description of the cultural effect it has on the public perception of transportation. Consider, then, the nature of the myth embedded within the message of Afro-pessimism, and the manner in which it amplifies what is quite secondary to the African

condition and we can understand the powerful and affective nature of myth, being as it is a translation of something quite apart from its actual content.

8 Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," in *Selected Writings: Volume 2, 1927–1934*, edited by Michael W. Jennings et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1999).

9 A good example in this exhibition is the daily photograph published by Mamadou Gomis in the Dakar-based newspaper *Le Journal*.

10 Compare, for instance, Gomis's photographs to the examples in the September 2005 *National Geographic* special issue on Africa.

11 Leni Riefenstahl's book *Nuba* (1972) is one of the great examples of this photographic discourse. See also the photographic industry Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher have built around the powerful visual seductiveness of "tribal" African ceremonies.

12 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 111–12.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

15 See Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

16 I use *archive* here in the sense employed by Jacques Derrida in which relation to knowledge and authority is placed at the service of an interpretive, institutionalized function. Derrida noted that "A science of the archive must include the theory of this institutionalization, that is to say, the theory both of the law which begins by inscribing itself there and the right which authorizes it." *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 4.

17 Over the course of two weeks, as this essay was in progress, I randomly followed stories and images of Africa in my current hometown's newspaper, the *New York Times*. Each day a new story appeared about Africa, either as text or image. On Sunday, October, 23, 2005, Nicholas Kristof, writing on the Op-Ed page, had this to say about his visit to a hospital in Zinder, Niger: "When I walked into the maternity hospital here, I wished President Bush was with me. A 37-year-old woman was lying on a stretcher, groaning from labor pains and wracked by convulsions. She was losing her eyesight and seemed about to slip into a coma from eclampsia, a complication of pregnancy that kills 50,000 women a year in the developing world. Beneath her, cockroaches skittered across the floor." On November 1, a story about deforestation in Malawi was published by Michael Wines, along with a black-and-white photograph by Jeffrey Barbee on page A3, showing a group of people seemingly logging wood for firewood; in the same edition, the oil giant ExxonMobil ran an advertisement about malaria in a nameless African country with a color photograph of a group of school children looking directly at the reader. On November 2, a front-page story by Michael Wines with the headline "Drought Deepens Poverty, Starving More Africans" was accompanied by a color photograph by Jeffrey Barbee of a group of men buying corn from a shopkeeper. The emphasis of the stories makes all the more clear how readers ought to understand Africa and what makes for a compelling narrative about this vast continent.

18 See Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003), for an extensive analysis of the relationship between photography and humanitarianism.

19 On November 6, 2005, the *New York Times* published an extensive story on prison conditions in Africa. What makes this article fascinating is how the accompanying images by Joao Silva completely overshadowed the dire conditions under which the prison inmates live. The online version of the story included a slide version of the arresting

images, many of which, as photographs, are indeed stunning.

20 Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p. 176.

21 Ibid.

22 The rock star Bono, lead singer of the Irish band U2, has since supplanted Geldof as patron saint of African debt relief and the antipoverity campaign.

23 Paris-based Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado is today the undisputed master of documentary heroism. The saturated dark and silvery tones of his print monumentalize misery and turn terrible images of suffering into carefully executed pias, as if the struggle within the photographer's imagination is to both render the reality and transcend that reality in the name of art. A good contrast to the kind of documentary heroism often found in works such as Salgado's and even those of Gilles Peress can be observed in the work of Kenyan/American photographer Fazal Sheikh, whose practice involves making photographs in disaster areas as the first signs of normalcy begin to creep back into the lives of traumatized populations such as refugees.

24 Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, pp. 173–74.

25 CNN has recently been advertising its new anchor Anderson Cooper as a rising star of reporting from such disaster zones as Niger, Rwanda, and New Orleans.

26 The Bang Bang Club was comprised of Carter, Joao Silva, Ken Oosterbroek, and Greg Marinovich. Silva and Marinovich, the surviving members of this unofficial club, continue to contribute reportage to newspapers and magazines all over the world. They also recently published a memoir of the group.

27 At the height of the firestorm ignited by the publication of the photograph in which many questioned the photographer's motives and condemned his detachment from the child, Carter, who was already suffering from depression and stress, committed suicide.

28 See Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

29 In the 1960s and all through the '80s, many African artists and filmmakers, notably Sembène Ousmane and Abderrahmane Sissako, trained in the academies of the communist bloc in the Soviet Union and Cuba. Many exhibited their work throughout much of Eastern Europe, as well as in countries of the Non-Aligned Movement.

30 For example, in Nigeria a lively scene of contemporary art and writing was organized by the Mbari Club in Ibadan in the late 1950s.

31 See Geeta Kapur's excellent book *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2000) on the development of Indian modern art and the relationship between vanguard artistic propositions and progressive political movements.

32 See Okwui Enwezor, ed., *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945–1994* (Munich: Prestel, 2001).

33 The 1955 meeting of the Non-Aligned states held in Bandung, Indonesia, under the auspices of Sukarno was a dialectical political response to the bipolar division that characterized the capitalist and communist dichotomy that shaped much of the Cold War. The Bandung Conference marked a watershed moment in its radical response to American and Soviet hegemony and articulated an alternative perspective of twentieth-century modernity that remains a model of balance, solidarity against aggression, and support of the right of self-determination. Artists and writers were immensely influenced by the propositions of nonhegemonic international relations spelled out by the Non-Aligned states. In attendance during this historic conference were Tito (Yugoslavia), Nasser (Egypt), Nkrumah (Ghana), and Nehru (India). See Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference* (Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1956).

34 See Chika Okeke's careful analysis of contemporary Nigerian art: "Nigerian Art in the Independence Decade, 1957–1967," Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 2004; see also Clémentine Deliss, ed., *Seven Stories About Modern Art in Africa* (New York: Flammarion, 1995). Rasheed

Araeen's *Third Text* remains one of the most vital intellectual platforms where a counter-theory of the contemporary has been developed. The journal not only exemplified this theoretical position in its name, it did so in recognition that the struggle is as much a cultural as ideological and historical issue.

35 In spite of his best efforts and intentions, Jean-Hubert Martin's *Magiciens de la terre* (1989) created an impression of a hierarchy of artistic forms within which the work of contemporary African artists could be understood; this hierarchy encompassed two tracks of practice, one authentic (meaning developed outside any influence of Western academic style and therefore more properly African) and the other inauthentic (based on a Western academic style that was read as largely derivative). It may appear too late in the day to reprise these arguments, but I do so here in light of the critical amnesia that tends to accompany exhibition surveys such as the present one.

36 Certainly seeing the work of Yinka Shonibare (Nigeria), Malick Sidibé (Mali), William Kentridge (South Africa), and Chéri Samba (Republic of Congo) in the reinstalled permanent exhibition galleries of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, seems like a reflection on and acknowledgment by the museum's curators of the expanded spaces of contemporary art. In fact, this reinstallation, organized by Klaus Biesenbach, seems to me one of the most comprehensive attempts yet by a major museum to look at contemporary art through a decidedly global lens. Other artists in the galleries include Marina Abramovic (Serbia), Ilya and Emilia Kabakov (Russia), and Waltercio Caldas (Brazil), among others.

37 Notwithstanding the complaints of many New York critics, the spread of biennials has had a salutary effect on access to works by artists who live and work in places other than the Western world. It has also opened curators, museums, and historians to new possibilities of artistic production.

38 It is worth emphasizing that colonialism and imperialism cannot be dissociated from the projects that led to the rise of modernity and globalization. Each of these come together in the far-reaching study of the development of capitalism that encapsulates what the eminent historian Fernand Braudel called the *longue durée* in his three-volume study *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

39 *Seven Stories About Modern Art in Africa*, an exhibition organized by the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London in 1995, explored the vital link between modern African art, artists, and institutions of postcolonial nationalism under which many artists sought to develop autonomy from Western artistic practices.

40 See Elizabeth Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960–1995* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). Harney's book is an excellent and significant example of the new art history that has recently begun to address the distinct discursive, intellectual, and political developments instrumental to the emerging scholarship that shaped both modern and contemporary art in a broad sense, but also Africa in particular.

41 It is noteworthy that, despite the recent integration of Eastern European countries into the European Union, the art scenes of Western and Eastern Europe remain largely separated, though increasingly many artists from the East are being recognized in the more developed economies of the West.

42 Simon Njami's very successful and dynamic exhibition of contemporary African art, *Africa Remix*, which has been touring European venues such as the Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Hayward Gallery, London, Centre Pompidou, Paris, and Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, is a great recent example; another is *Fault Lines: Contemporary African Art and Shifting Landscapes*, curated by Gilane Tawadros for the Venice Biennale in 2003.

43 The development of new spaces of reception for contemporary art in Africa has been central to the expansion and critical positioning of