

# INTRODUCTION: MODERNISM AND THE BLACK ATLANTIC

TANYA BARSON

Whenever a fleet of ships gave chase to slave ships, it was easiest just to lighten the boat by throwing cargo overboard, weighing it down with balls and chains... Navigating the green splendour of the sea...still brings to mind, coming to light like seaweed, these lowest depths, these deeps, with their punctuation of scarcely corroded balls... the entire ocean, the entire sea gently collapsing in the end into the pleasures of sand, makes one vast beginning, but a beginning whose time is marked by these balls and chains gone green... Relation is not made up of things that are foreign but of shared knowledge. This experience of the abyss can now be said to be the best element of exchange.

**Édouard Glissant**<sup>1</sup>

Our existence today is marked by a tenebrous sense of survival, living on the borderlines of the 'present', for which there seems to be no proper name other than the current and controversial shiftiness of the prefix 'post': postmodernism, [postcolonialism](#), postfeminism...

**Homi K. Bhabha**<sup>2</sup>

To Homi K. Bhabha's list of terms carrying the prefix 'post-' we can now add '[post-black](#)', indicating the continuing 'shiftiness' of meaning and ongoing attempts to define new registers of cultural expression that supersede those of yesterday. Robert Farris Thompson first proposed '[post-black](#)' as a term that aimed to expose the restrictions of postmodernity in a 1991 essay titled '[Afro-Modernism](#)', in which he suggested 'a retelling of Modernism to show how it predicts [that] the triumph of the current sequences would reveal that "the Other" is your neighbour – that black and Modernist cultures were inseparable long ago', which in itself echoes Frank Bowling's even earlier assertion that 'the black soul, if there can be such a thing, belongs in Modernism'.<sup>3</sup> Both authors highlight a problem that concerns a much broader field within visual modernism, and one taken up by Paul Gilroy's book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), and that is that there are different spaces and temporalities at work throughout the Atlantic realm that produce new periodisations of the modern and postmodern, as well as new formulations of modernism in art.<sup>4</sup>

This exhibition aims to address the shifting spaces, temporalities and formulations of modernism as it relates to black cultures and the black [diaspora](#)

through the last century. In this, it also concerns a changing politics impacting on artistic expression at key instances when dominant or hegemonic modes of modernism can be seen to be challenged by alternative versions. In this sense, the exhibition is indebted to a great deal of work that has been done previously in defining a multiplicity of modernisms, rather than one single, core narrative.<sup>5</sup>

Paul Gilroy's concept of the [Black Atlantic](#) describes a counterculture to European modernity and modernism, to the project of the [Enlightenment](#) and its concomitant [rationalism](#), historical progress and scientific reason. His thesis argues against essentialist versions of racial identity and racial nationalisms, in favour of a shared, though heterogeneous, culture that joins diverse communities in North and South America, the Caribbean, Europe and Africa. He proposes that the Atlantic be treated as 'one single, complex unit of analysis' which could 'produce an explicitly [transnational](#) and intercultural perspective'.<sup>6</sup> This perspective recognises the value of specific and divergent local or regional developments within culture, while relating them to a metaculture – described by Gilroy as a network or [rhizome](#). In such an analysis what becomes important are the real and metaphorical journeys (both enforced and voluntary) that constitute this network across the Atlantic. Within it, the slave journeys of the [Middle Passage](#) take on a pre-eminent and foundational position. They are the origin of the racial terror and dislocation shared by black communities throughout the Atlantic, but are also the root of a productive syncretism that Gilroy aims to wrest from what has otherwise been cast as wholly negative, perpetuating a limiting sense of victimhood, cultural exclusion and inferiority. Gilroy argues that a number of different moments of connectedness might emerge from this network that, overall, build up a complex picture of cultural exchange and continuity.<sup>7</sup> This does not impose an all-encompassing and totalising homogeneity on what he calls '[black Atlantic](#) expressive culture', but rather proposes a subtle analysis that, instead of foregrounding difference, takes into account aspects of sameness that nevertheless surface in diverse and complex ways and in different contexts as 'the changing same'.<sup>8</sup> Gilroy's text aims to highlight both the paradoxes and overlooked narratives of modernity, and to argue that racialised reason, terror and slavery were internal to the project of modernity. One of the central themes that Gilroy delineates is that of '[double consciousness](#)'; drawn from the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, this concept describes the split subjectivity and race-consciousness that Du Bois observes as inherent to the experience of being an African-American, an awareness of existing simultaneously both within and outside the dominant culture. This [double consciousness](#), Gilroy argues, is one of the defining characteristics of [Black Atlantic](#) expressive culture.

Gilroy's concept of a '[Black Atlantic](#)' has important implications for the study of art.<sup>9</sup> Importantly, his book prefigured many of the debates around the [transnational](#), the intercultural and globalisation that have taken place since it was published. Gilroy's text can also be related to other, prior conceptual framings of these issues, such as Édouard Glissant's notion of [antillanité](#) (or Caribbean-ness), though this latter presents both a case for a more specifically regional convergence of a greater multiplicity of cultures highlighting difference, and an emphasis

on mutability, in which fragmentation, adaptation and synchronicity all play a part in the dynamics of relation. Glissant's 'Table of the [Diaspora](#)' maps complex, non-linear and somewhat chaotic associations within a network encompassing continental America, the Caribbean and Africa.<sup>10</sup> This diagram manifests Glissant's sense of the formlessness of cross-cultural relation or the 'true shapelessness of historical diversity' around the Atlantic and thus the complexity of its cultural and aesthetic effects.

## BLACK ATLANTIC AVANT-GARDES

Any discussion of the [Black Atlantic](#) and modernism must necessarily address the appropriation by the European avant-garde of the forms of African art. From the initial pre-war engagement of Dada, Fauvism, Cubism and Expressionism, to the interwar years, characterised by a hyperbolic craze for black culture and the Surrealists' fascination with [ethnography](#), this was a fundamental and persisting feature of the emergence of avant-garde modernism in the first half of the twentieth century. The story of this relationship is usually told without recourse to other movements that occurred more or less simultaneously outside Europe, or in relation to the European context through the agency of individual artists, writers and performers who traversed the Atlantic. There are, for example, significant links between Europe and the [Harlem Renaissance](#) in the United States and, similarly between European 'primitivism' and Brazilian modernism through artists such as Tarsila do Amaral and Lasar Segall.

African art had come to the attention of artists such as Matisse and Picasso in the first decade of the twentieth century, and Dada artists had incorporated it into their assault on the cultural establishment and status quo. However, as Petrine Archer argues in her book [Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s](#), the arts of Africa were utilised more comprehensively in the period immediately after the First World War, when the full-blown craze for African art and black culture, epitomised by figures such as Nancy Cunard, was seen as providing a means for a renewal of European society and culture.<sup>11</sup> Into this 1920s' context came artists such as Aaron Douglas, Palmer Hayden, Lois Mailou Jones and James Van Der Zee, and performers such as Josephine Baker and Paul Robeson, who aimed to participate within and contribute to modernism and who could all to varying degrees be described as (in James Baldwin's phrase) 'trans-Atlantic commuters'.<sup>12</sup> Robert Farris Thompson has highlighted how such participation took many forms, one of which was '[New Negro](#)' fashion: 'the zoot suit – cubism as apparel, the wearing of satiric dozens as dress – was an early example of Africa staring back, of Africa remaking Europe and America'.<sup>13</sup> Equally, the work of these artists remade European and American modernism. Thus, the way that black practitioners of modernism negotiated this territory sheds light on the subsequent development of [Black Atlantic](#) aesthetics. The act of appropriation by the European avant-gardes laid the seeds for counter-appropriations.

Aaron Douglas is, perhaps, the foundational artist of [Black Atlantic](#) modernism. While Douglas engaged briefly and belatedly with pre-war avant-garde

styles, as in his *Birds in Flight* 1927, he quickly rejected this brand of Cubist-Futurist modernism. As the most prominent of the artists who contributed to the [NAACP](#) journal *The Crisis*, his trajectory was more clearly one that made a transition from post-impressionism to a distinctive brand of politically engaged, socialist realist figuration that embodied founding editor W.E.B. Du Bois's concept of '[double consciousness](#)' and addressed the contemporary predicament of African-Americans in the years following the trial of the Scottsboro Boys and the Depression. Douglas's paintings, as well as his illustrations for *The Crisis*, the journal *Opportunity* and other graphic projects, negotiate on the one hand an image of an idealised African past as a source of pride, to be recovered and made accessible in the present, and on the other hand a modernity that was contested, yet offered a focus for aspiration. Douglas's works assert the decisive contribution of African-Americans to the history of the United States – reflecting the optimism inherent within Du Boisian politics and its utopian plan for advancement, allied to Douglas's belief in the potential for equality offered at this time by Communism. This is introduced in paintings such as *Aspiration* 1936, where a ray and star motif refers at once to the light of Christianity, the star of emancipation and Marxist socialism.<sup>14</sup> Such images were only infrequently countered by paintings such as *Into Bondage* 1936, in which the exile of slavery is highlighted, though the terrors of the [Middle Passage](#) are not shown.<sup>15</sup>

Tarsila do Amaral presents a particular illustration of the contradictions inherent in any narrative of [Black Atlantic](#) modernism. She came from a highly privileged background, her family home being a sugar plantation in which the main workforce was drawn from the black population of former slaves.<sup>16</sup> Her fast absorption of European [primitivism](#) is evident in *The Negress (La Negra)* 1923, which was painted only shortly after her arrival in Paris, where she studied with Fernand Léger and befriended Blaise Cendrars. This was a short-lived though crucial stage in the development of an identifiably [postcolonial](#) modernism in two swiftly succeeding movements known as [Pau Brazil](#) and [Antropofagia](#) – theorised by her husband Oswald de Andrade in manifestos in 1925 and 1928 respectively.<sup>17</sup> Responding to [primitivism](#), the couple proposed an assertion of Brazilian culture and, moreover, the conceptual transformation of modernism into a new form that countered the European model through the potent conceit of cannibalism. As Andrea Guinta has highlighted, 'few images are as successful as that of swallowing: eating the white man, devouring and digesting him. That which will nourish is selected and the negative parts are discarded. The swallowing metaphor was radically developed by the Brazilian avant-garde. Marked as an inaugural fact, it was also felt to be the start of a history that even required a new date-system, a chronological mark to vindicate the value of anthropofagy.'<sup>18</sup> That Tarsila's later painting *Anthropofagia* 1929 so clearly shares compositional elements with the earlier *The Negress* indicates how this transition was made directly through the surpassing of European [primitivism](#). Thus she developed a mode of modernism that represented, for the first time, a perspective drawn from a society emerging from colonialism and discovering the potentiality of its cultural syncretism, as in *Hill of the Shanty Town (Moro da Favela)* 1924.<sup>19</sup>

## MAYA DEREN: THE LIVING GODS OF HAITI

Maya Deren's Haitian project began as an investigation into dance, emerging from her ongoing collaborative relationship with the pioneering African-American choreographer Katherine Dunham, who had conducted anthropological studies of the African-influenced dance of the wider Caribbean before focusing on Haiti. Deren's aim was to present Haitian dance as just that – 'purely' dance. Moreover, it was to be an exercise in creative filmmaking, beyond the commercial or documentary domains, bringing an avant-garde approach to bear on her material to create what she conceived of as a 'film-poem'. This testifies to her background and involvement in Surrealist circles, as well as the tendency within that movement towards blurring the boundaries between the aesthetic and the ethnographic.

As Deren's project progressed, it deviated from her original plan. She made repeated visits to the island, becoming progressively more engaged with ceremonies, which appealed to her Surrealist interest in alternative realms of reality, than with dance. The film escalated in length and, on her death, she left hours of unedited footage, the project incomplete.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, Deren's film stands as an important cultural record, while illustrating the messy boundaries between European modernism and disciplines such as [ethnography](#). Moreover, it also registers her engagement with new forms of [ethnography](#), as exemplified by her proximity to the pioneers of visual anthropology Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead. From both Deren's footage and her 1953 book, the source of the film's title, it is evident that the focus of her interest was the complex nature of Haitian ceremonies, the survivals from diverse African cultures which, in the Caribbean, had mixed to become a new cultural and religious form, highlighting cultural transmission, synthesis and invention in the face of rupture and dislocation.<sup>21</sup>

Through the twentieth century Haiti, the scene of the first successful slave rebellion and independent black republic outside Africa, was sustained as a locus of sorts within the [Black Atlantic](#), a contested site symbolically and geopolitically.<sup>22</sup> C.L.R. James' anti-colonial history of Haiti, *The Black Jacobins*, published in 1938, was written as part of the fight to end colonialism in Africa, connecting the persecution of Africans in Africa, during the [Middle Passage](#), in the United States, and in the Caribbean.<sup>23</sup> The following year saw the appearance of Aimé Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land* in *Voluntés*, the first and principal text of the Négritude movement, which took inspiration from Haiti, but developed in the context of Surrealism and the meeting of African and Caribbean intellectuals in Paris. It aimed to break away from European models and the stifling hegemony of early twentieth-century avant-gardism, and established a new agenda for [Black Atlantic](#) and African artists working in relation to, yet formulating their own versions of, modernism.

## BLACK ORPHEUS: NÉGRITUDE, CREOLISATION, NATURAL SYNTHESIS<sup>24</sup>

Aimé Césaire inaugurated Négritude as an act of cultural and linguistic appropriation, reclaiming the pejorative term nègre and combining it with defiant

references to the revolution in Haiti and to African roots to reverse its usage. Equally importantly, literary Négritude became an exercise in linguistic mutability and in neologism, language in the constant process of being made. The efforts of artists to give visual form to the potentialities of Négritude were often inconsistent. Nevertheless, important visual manifestations were produced that constitute a challenge to canonical versions of modernism. Most prominent and successful of the Négritude artists was Wifredo Lam, who effected a powerful subversion of the language of 'assimilation' and 'affinity' within European modernism in his paintings; African art motifs mediated by Cubist and Surrealist '[primitivism](#)' are redeployed and combined with references to Afro-Caribbean culture. As Andrea Guinta has commented,

European modernity's appropriation of 'primitive' formal structures as food for a self-centred discourse was imitated and disarticulated as an operative system in Lam's work after his return to Cuba. He made the mechanisms of the centre evident, repeated them and charged them with a new meaning... Thus it was discovered that what, in the European discourse, was a horizon of desires or the object of a laboratory experiment, in the Caribbean was the latent everyday, hidden and suppressed since the Conquest and slavery.<sup>25</sup>

Or as put, succinctly, by Gerardo Mosquera, Lam raises the question of 'who eats whom?'<sup>26</sup> While Lam has in the past been called the 'painter of Négritude', his work can be seen to extend beyond Négritude's limitations, going beyond its association with a narrow politics or philosophy, to embrace the broader political and cultural basis of [creolisation](#) or [antillanité](#).<sup>27</sup> Thus he can be seen as a product of the specific conditions of the Caribbean,<sup>28</sup> while his work marks the expression of an African presence in the Americas, as Guinta declares: 'Lam is a protagonist of the modern construction of Afro-American visuality'.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, he has also been identified as a 'post-modern modernist' who effects another challenge to the periodisations of the modern and postmodern within [Black Atlantic](#) modernism.<sup>30</sup> Like Lam, the sculptor and fellow Cuban Agustín Cárdenas lies at the fault line between Négritude and its subsequent surpassing. In Glissant's writing Cardenas embodies Caribbean-ness, the [archipelago](#) that is a 'land of converging cultures, race of many ideas'.<sup>31</sup> Both Lam and Cardenas encountered in their journeys within and around the Caribbean a sense of a shared intersection of cultures and races in which Africa featured prominently.

African versions of Négritude followed a very different path to those in the Caribbean. Under Leopold Senghor in Senegal, the Négritude of the École de Dakar became the official aesthetic, strongly linked to the road to independent nationhood, but marked by the opposition between the work and positions of Papa Ibra Tall, an advocate of Négritude and the use of African subject matter, and those of Iba N'Diaye, who promoted technique over concepts of 'authenticity' and 'Africanness'.<sup>32</sup> Even though N'Diaye drew his subjects from Africa, his technique remained resolutely School of Paris. In contrast to the starkly oppositional formulations created in Senegal, in Nigeria a different kind of aesthetic was developed. As a consequence of the return of slaves from Brazil in the mid-nineteenth century, cultural syncretism already existed within the country and its

culture. Artistic exchange between Nigeria, Europe and the USA (through the conventions of training in Europe, and artists including Aaron Douglas and Jacob Lawrence visiting or teaching in Nigeria) also fed into a complex situation of aesthetic polyphony. The most succinct expression of this situation was the movement called [Natural Synthesis](#); the manifesto, written in 1960 by artist Uche Okeke, called for a fusion of tradition and modernity but emphasised the *contemporaneity* of African culture and society, and called for an independent spirit to meet it. Nigeria, Okeke wrote,

needs a virile school of art with a new philosophy for the new age – our renaissance period. Whether our African writers call the new realization [Negritude](#) or our politicians talk about the ‘African Personality,’ they both stand for the awareness and yearning for freedom of black people all over the world. Contemporary Nigerian artists could, and should, champion the cause of this movement... The key word is *synthesis*, and I am often tempted to describe it as [natural synthesis](#), for it should be unconscious, not forced.<sup>33</sup>

He openly declared himself against both a slavish reliance on European modernism and a misguided deference to African traditions, stating, ‘I disagree with those who live in Africa and ape European artists. Future generations of Africans will scorn their efforts. Our new society calls for a synthesis of old and new, of functional art and art for its own sake... Western art today is generally in confusion... It is equally futile copying our old art heritages, for they stand for our old order. Culture lives by change’.<sup>34</sup> Okeke’s *Ana Mmuo* 1961 embodies this sense of purpose, synthesising Africa and modernity, uli line and a syntactical modernism, formulating an abstract language that epitomized contemporary Africa.

Négritude in Brazil arose at the onset of a volatile period within the history of the nation, with a military coup ushering in a succession of authoritarian regimes. Against this backdrop, Rubem Valentim’s paintings crossed the aesthetic boundaries drawn between the Brazilian modernism of Concrete and Neo-Concrete art, and Brazil’s culture and religions of African origin. This was a significant act of trespass since at the time such religions were the subject of repression.<sup>35</sup> Thus his works manifest Hélio Oiticica’s assertion that in Brazil ‘purity is a myth’. Oiticica’s provocative statement referred to both the suppressed nature of Brazil’s social make-up and the subversive potential of art to challenge the versions of modernism emanating from Europe and the USA, a project that was to reach its culmination in the counter-cultural movement known as Tropicalia. Meanwhile, as Paulo Herkenhoff has commented, ‘Valentim led Brazilian art to a new symbolic level and a new ethical plane... Xangô’s double axe, which cuts from both sides, is the metaphor for an art conceived within Western constructivist modernity and genuinely incorporates Brazil’s African roots.’<sup>36</sup> Moreover, he continues, ‘in lieu of experiencing the nostalgia of Africa, [Valentim] seeks the contemporariness of the Afro-Brazilian present’.<sup>37</sup> It should come as no surprise, then, that Valentim’s works found significant exposure in Africa, where they were exhibited at the First World Festival of Black Arts in 1966 in Dakar, a festival conceived by Senghor as a celebration of Négritude and contemporary optimism in the African Independence movements. Oiticica’s own work, particularly his *‘fireball’ B03 Box Bolide 03 ‘African’ and*

*'Addendum'* 1963, aimed at a similar unification of abstract-constructive language with an acknowledgement of the importance, as well as the potentially incendiary significance, of Africa within Brazilian culture. Such works complicate the narrative of Brazilian modernism and the ways in which it took up the challenge of transforming Eurocentric modernism.

## **DISSIDENT IDENTITIES: RADICALISM, RESISTANCE AND MARGINALITY**

The counter-cultural politics of the Civil Rights and [Black Power](#) movements form the background for a greater political engagement in art around issues of racial politics, identity and visibility, and the development of strategies that involved diverse manifestations of institutional critique. The anti-dictatorship stance of artists, musicians and activists in Brazil provided a parallel context, though one that prompted more clandestine operations, or else necessitated exile in London or New York. Thus political activism and radicalism, street-based performances, interventions and improvisations, often allied to carnival, and other strategies of marginal resistance located outside institutional structures, proliferated in diverse locations from the late 1960s onwards. [Black Atlantic](#) art became less about the trans-national relationships traversing the Atlantic than about the specific social and political implications of the legacies of slavery, segregation and oppression within societies such as the United States and Brazil.

Norman Lewis's delicate Abstract Expressionist compositions of the 1940s and 1950s gave way in the early 1960s to paintings composed of stark chromatic contrasts and equally stark political subjects that embodied an oppositional sense of what it was to be an African-American.<sup>38</sup> Lewis was a committed participant in the Civil Rights movement throughout his life, but this shift in his work coincided precisely with the increasing prominence of the movement and the foundation of Spiral in 1963, a group dedicated to furthering the movement's aims through the visual arts. In paintings such as *American Totem* 1960, hooded Ku Klux Klan figures merge to form a totemic, or missile-like, form, while *Redneck Birth* 1961 exemplifies Lewis's fusion of abstraction with the scenes of Klan congregations, parades and mobs that would occupy him for the next decade. These allusive compositions do not make a return to the overt politics of his 1930s' socialist realist paintings; instead, they present a subtly politicised abstraction. Romare Bearden, a close associate of Lewis's, was also becoming involved with the Civil Rights movement by the early 1960s, at precisely the moment when, abandoning abstract painting, he developed his most distinctive productions – socially engaged collages in which scenes from the history and experience of African-Americans were orchestrated in a deliberately rudimentary play of newspaper and magazine cuttings.<sup>39</sup> His composite arrangements employ the glossy materials of consumerist modernity to critique modernist [primitivism](#) and effect a simultaneous reappropriation of African art in an echo of Lam's strategy of counter-appropriation. Here, however, African sculptures are sliced and reassembled, sampled and redeployed, forging a new language based on a disjunctive mix of forms and sources. In other works Bearden focused on the nude, using pornographic magazines as a starting-point. These works function as

reflections on Gauguin, Picasso and Matisse, though subverted again through the origin of their material sources, that make explicit the nature of the male gaze. Hinting – perhaps inadvertently – at the complexities of gender relations within the black community, these works nevertheless bring to mind the contemporary slogan ‘Black is Beautiful’ and mark the political use of the nude as a symbol of black pride; for Judith Wilson, Bearden’s nudes ‘recuperate the black female body, wresting it from the clutches of white purveyors of erotic fantasies about exotic Others, and reposition it in relation to black vernacular culture.’<sup>40</sup>

More radical practices are embodied, quite literally, in the work of David Hammons and Adrian Piper. Piper’s early work *Food for the Spirit* 1971, according to Lorraine O’Grady, might be considered ‘the catalytic moment for the black subjective nude’ suggesting a more complete recuperation of the female nude than that presented by Bearden, since this work designates the body more specifically as a site of black female subjectivity, and addresses the traditional aesthetic unworthiness or invisibility of the black female nude by offering ‘a paradigm for the willingness to look, to get past embarrassment and retrieve the mutilated body.’<sup>41</sup> Hammons’s practice, which combines aspects of Duchamp, Dada and Arte Povera with Outsider or Folk art, is one of inventive evasiveness; his critique of the institutions of art consists, more often than not, of ignoring them. He prefers instead to operate in the domain of the street or, more specifically, the neighbourhood (Harlem), making ephemeral, often unannounced, art for those who stumble across it, or else surfacing in diverse and unexpected locations in street performances and alternative venues. Hammons’s is an art rooted in the materials and realities of street, neighbourhood and other marginal spaces, and of African-American life, under-mining the commercial value of art by using humble substances or discarded items. Hammons’s early sculpture *The Door (Admissions Office)* 1969 belongs to a series of body prints, in which he used his own body, often in combination with unconventional materials such as margarine or grease and pigment rather than ink or paint. The sculpture, in which the print represents a body pressed up forcefully against the glass pane, appears to refer quite clearly to the systematic exclusion of African-Americans from the privileges of white society, including education and employment, not solely through racial segregation, but as a much more widespread and persistent situation.<sup>42</sup> Kellie Jones has described how for Hammons, ‘Charles White, whose socially committed work was for and about African Americans and their struggles, and the climate of [Black Power](#) and black cultural nationalism of the late 1960s, were certainly influences’.<sup>43</sup> Hammons’s work manifests a sophisticated negotiation of modernities and modernisms in relation to the persisting [double consciousness](#) of being black in America.

There are a number of artists whose careers raise pertinent, yet often overlooked or evaded, questions about the relationships between modernism, its subversion, and the communities of the black [diaspora](#) within the [Black Atlantic](#), as well as the position of the artist as both marginal and hero.<sup>44</sup> Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica’s engagement with the marginalised, predominantly black communities of *Rio’s favelas* has often been oversimplified, particularly in terms of the problem of appearing to speak for others, the level to which Oiticica became truly immersed in

or participated within those communities, the degree to which this has become mythologised in relation to his career and persona, and, moreover, as Michael Asbury has pointed out, the extent to which 'the exotic nature of the favela, its attractiveness and repulsiveness, could ... become tamed via the figure of Oiticica'.<sup>45</sup> Oiticica's series of *parangolés* or capes were created in close collaboration with his friends among the inhabitants of the *favelas*; they were produced to be worn within carnival-inspired gatherings, the first one staged at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio in 1965 with dancers from Mangueira, the largest of Rio's *favelas*. The invasion of the museum by poor inhabitants from the city's margins proved too much for the museum authorities and the dancers were thrown out. This event, and the *parangolé* series, manifested a significant development in Oiticica's work, and achieved a position of avant-garde dissidence in relation to Brazil's governing elite and art establishment, as well as effecting a challenge to the parameters of modernist practice in the form of both an interrogation of modernist formalism as well as institutional critique through the example of the officially marginalised Afro-Brazilian culture. However, the nature of Oiticica's relationship with the *favela* communities, and the balance between collaboration and representation, should not be accepted uncritically, but rather treated with circumspection.

Residing outside the art world and on the margins of society, Arthur Bispo do Rosario made works drawing upon the Afro-Brazilian imaginary, using found objects and detritus, or elaborate embroidery. The fact that he committed himself to a psychiatric hospital in 1939, and remained there until his death fifty years later, has quite reasonably resulted in his being viewed as an outsider figure.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, he left behind a substantial body of work that reveals an idiosyncratic awareness of art and its institutions, and of the works of a range of artists. Bispo's assemblage of found objects, *Macumba*, is a shrine dedicated to Lemanjá, the *Candomblé* goddess of the sea and mother of the waters derived from the Yoruba *orisha* Yemaya, while his *Exu's Cape* stands as a counterpoint to Oiticica's *parangolés*.<sup>47</sup>

Jean-Michel Basquiat's movement from the margins to the mainstream raised the issue once again of the extent to which black artists were able effectively to control their own agency and participation within cultural modernities, rather than continuing to be viewed as 'other' and remaining the subject of tokenism. Again, we seem to return to the question of who eats whom. Thus while Basquiat began his career as a graffiti artist, creating 'tags' captured in photographs by Peter Moore, the small scale and un-announced gestures of his work make knowing references to the history of modernism's anti-art practices. By the time he came to paint *Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari* 1982 he had been embraced by New York's art scene and had achieved a level of fame and recognition unprecedented for an African-American artist. Yet this work offers a multi-layered reflection on identity politics and *postcolonialism*; while it critiques the history of Western colonialism, it does not attempt to recuperate racial identity in any simplistic sense but, as bell hooks has observed, 'graphically evokes images of incomplete blackness'.<sup>48</sup> In its epigraph, it also epitomises Basquiat's anti-materialist stance, whereby he attacked the tendency of the art establishment to co-opt cultural opposition.

## RECONSTRUCTING THE MIDDLES PASSAGE: DIASPORA AND MEMORY

In recent years, contemporary artists have repeatedly examined a series of interrelated themes that are also crucial to Gilroy's concept of a [Black Atlantic](#); they approach the terrors of the [Middle Passage](#) and the experience of [diaspora](#) and dislocation from culture and history, through the strategy of representing historical narratives (in the absence of adequate records) by imaginative recovery. The image of the [Middle Passage](#) and the slave ship become central motifs or ciphers of the [Black Atlantic](#), located, as they are, outside national boundaries. Gilroy defines the ship as a [chronotope](#), a spatio-temporal matrix which can be considered not only as the mobile means by which the different points of the Atlantic world became joined but also as a 'cultural and political unit'.<sup>49</sup> As Gilroy states,

I have settled on the image of ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean as a central organising symbol for this enterprise and as my starting point. The image of the ship – a living micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion – is especially important for historical and theoretical reasons... Ships immediately focus attention on the [middle passage](#), on the various projects for redemptive return to an African homeland, on the circulation of ideas and activists as well as the movement of key cultural and political artefacts: tracts, books, gramophone records, and choirs.<sup>50</sup>

Édouard Glissant, in his *Poetics of Relation*, has also written of the [Middle Passage](#) as a foundational experience, though he describes it as an abyss. He too emphasises that it 'projects a reverse image of all that has been left behind, not to be regained for generations except – more and more threadbare – in the blue savannahs of memory or imagination'.<sup>51</sup> He describes the Atlantic as a 'land-sea', upon which a relation, though not a unity, is formed: 'Peoples do not live on exception. Relation is not made up of things that are foreign but of shared knowledge. This experience of the abyss can now be said to be the best element of exchange.'<sup>52</sup> So, the communities that formed among diverse island nations as a result of slavery also find themselves crucial to these imaginative retrievals of history. Consequently, Renée Cox enacts the life of Nanny of the [Maroons](#), the rebellious leader of Jamaica's [maroon](#) community, in her series of black and white photographs, while Ellen Gallagher's painting *Bird in Hand* 2007 makes the figure of the black sailor, drawn from the population of former slaves in the Cape Verde islands, its central motif of [Black Atlantic](#) mobility. Gallagher's work also evokes an alternative Atlantic cartography of the [Middle Passage](#) through the underwater world of Drexciya, the home of souls thrown overboard during the transatlantic journey, suggesting the desire for a kind of utopia or return to an African homeland.

In Keith Piper's *Go West Young Man* 1987 the artist brings together multiple histories of migration from slavery to post-war immigration, while Isaac Julien's *Western Union Series No.1 (Cast No Shadow)* 2007 addresses more recent migrations and trafficking from Africa to Europe, although through an image that also harks

back to the historical departure of slaves from western Africa as well as quoting subtly Douglas's painting *Into Bondage*. From the slave ships of the [Middle Passage](#) to warships crewed by black sailors, post-war immigrant vessels such as the Empire Windrush and the latter-day migrations and human trafficking from North Africa and across the Caribbean, the ship has become a potent symbol of [transnational](#) dislocation, global inequity and violence in contemporary art.

## **EXHIBITING BODIES: RACISM, RATIONALISM AND PSEUDO-SCIENCE**

Early twentieth-century ethnographic Surrealism produced a complex iconography that sought to challenge and undermine, but which also often reinforced, the tradition of Western scientific [rationalism](#) and its dubious assumptions and prejudices that framed the West's relation to 'otherness'. Surrealism both highlighted and adapted the specific pseudo-scientific languages on which such a discourse was based. It was often the black female body that provided the most extreme embodiment of 'otherness', both for the proponents of 'rational' science and for Surrealism.<sup>53</sup> As O'Grady has commented, 'it is the African female who, by virtue of colour and feature and the extreme metaphors of enslavement, is at the outermost reaches of "otherness"' and yet, she continues, 'the black female's body needs less to be rescued from the masculine "gaze" than to be sprung from a historic script surrounding her with signification while at the same time, and not paradoxically, it erases her completely.'<sup>54</sup> Since the 1980s, a number of women artists have investigated the representation of the black female body and its framing through devices such as ethnographic and classificatory photography, tourist postcards and other seemingly 'documentary' forms and conventions, as well as pornography, as a way to explore wider issues of gender, race and inequality. Focusing on these examples of the performance of identity and re-presentation of the female body, on contemporary responses to the explicit objectification of the black female body during colonialism through instances of transportation and exhibition for amusement's sake (most notably perhaps the case of Sarah Bartmann, who became known as the Hottentot Venus), this section of the exhibition highlights a key argument within Gilroy's book: that the project of modernity was dependent upon and effectively produced the terrors of slavery as part and parcel of its own formation and continuance.<sup>55</sup> But this group of works also addresses aspects of gender politics and notions of visibility that are absent from Gilroy's text.

In a photographic self-portrait Tracey Rose pays tribute to Bartmann, who is recuperated and transformed into a symbol of black female struggle; the work can also be read as a commentary on the complexities of the (self-) presentation of the black female body within modernism, referring back to figures such as Josephine Baker and her willingness to appear nude or in exaggerated poses, and at the same time also owing a debt to Adrian Piper's forceful performance of the 'subjective black nude'. In her work, Candice Breitz has explored the abuses and ambivalences of (pseudo-)ethnographic imagery in relation to globalised multiculturalism and the commodification of ethnicity that reached a particular height during the 1980s and early 1990s, as well as the context of a specific period in the post-apartheid history

of South Africa where the use of the black body by white artists was itself a contentious issue. Appropriating postcards of women in 'typical' tribal settings in her *Ghost Series* 1994–96, she altered them by masking the women's bodies in brilliant white correction fluid and then re-photographed the images, as Octavio Zaya has commented, 'not only in order to highlight the phantasmagoric nature that already pervades them – in the elision or erasure of the subjectivity of the women in the image – but, more significantly, to exacerbate the laws of appropriation that categorize these presences as exotic and primitive fetishized absences'.<sup>56</sup> Wangechi Mutu's works deliberately recall the workings of Surrealist collage (particularly the work of Hannah Hoch), creating a confluence between ethnographic photo-essays and postcards, similar to those used by Breitz, and cuttings from fashion magazines, medical journals, wildlife and pornographic magazines, in works that comment on and subvert notions of beauty within popular culture as well as in Surrealist magazines.

Carrie Mae Weems' photographic work *A Negroid Type / You Became a Scientific Profile / An Anthropological Debate / & A Photographic Subject* 1995–96 interrogates the attitudes underlying the early development of the discipline of [ethnography](#), and the deprivation of subjectivity within photographic representation as it was deployed during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Coco Fusco's video performance with the Mexican artist Guillermo Gomez-Peña, *The Couple in the Cage: A Guantianau Odyssey* 1993, also refers back into the historical past, to the transportation for spectacle and amusement, as well as the objectifying gaze, in order to highlight ongoing exclusions. Fusco's work plays on complex notions of colonial desire, entrapment, exile and display, and the historical exclusion of black subjectivities from modernity. Ana Mendieta's performative work and Marta Maria Pérez Bravo's photographs foreground the female body, this time in relation to the practice of Afro-Cuban religions such as [Santería](#) and [Candomblé](#). Pérez Bravo's works employ an anachronistic photographic style combined with a deliberately jarring assertiveness and the foregrounding of frequently submerged cultural forms which have often been seen as outside or beyond modernism.

In Sonia Boyce's *From Tarzan to Rambo: English Born 'Native' Considers her Relationship to the Constructed/Self Image and her Roots in Reconstruction* 1987 the artist questions the relationship between her own 'self-image' and the one offered by a predominantly white society through the mass media and Hollywood; 'blackface' or 'golliwog' images are included as indictments of the widespread dissemination of racially prejudiced imagery and black stereotypes. The repeated portraits and wide-eyed expression of the artist refer to the perverse representation in Hollywood films of black religious practices such as trance, which is central to Haitian voodoo. At the same time, for Boyce, Tarzan and Rambo represent a crisis of white identity which necessitates the construction of an 'other'. Concepts of nationhood and belonging are also addressed and questioned in the work and its analytical title. Thus, this section of the exhibition makes clear the complicity of rational science and racialised reason in the racism that underpinned slavery, which reverberates in the dissemination of imagery within Surrealism, Hollywood film, advertising and other forms of mass media.

## FROM POSTMODERN TO POST-BLACK: APPROPRIATION, BLACK HUMOUR AND DOUBLE NEGATIVES

As in silent film, Kara Walker's *8 Possible Beginnings or: The Creation of African-America, a Moving Picture* by Kara E. Walker 2005 is divided into chapters, each detailing the history of black experience in America, including the initial crossing, in which bodies are thrown off a slave ship in the [Middle Passage](#), and then swallowed by a Motherland rising out of the sea, only to be digested, excreted and reborn as King Cotton in the New World. Walker's shadow-play images recover the atrocities and the bestialities of humanity exemplified by racial slavery, their double-negative aiming to effect a moral ellipse. Like Walker's film, which is both an ellipse and a beginning, an embarkation, the exhibition ends on a conceptual starting point. It marks a transition between generations, from the identity art of the 1990s to the '[post-black](#)' art of today. This final section examines the tactics used by contemporary artists to explore the profound complexities and ambivalences within black diasporic subjectivity. These tactics include appropriation, the use of black vernacular and popular culture, the practices of sampling, recycling and accumulation – embodying what Gilroy calls the 'polyphonic qualities of black cultural expression' – and, often allied to this, the use of negative and racist images and/or black humour and laughter to undermine racism but also to re-examine the attitudes and aspirations of black politics, particularly of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>57</sup>

Chris Ofili's works draw on a wide range of black vernacular sources that are combined with references drawn from the history of Eurocentric and [Black Atlantic](#) modernisms, from Matisse and Kandinsky to Douglas and Bearden. In *Double Captain Shit and the Legend of the Black Stars* 1997 Captain Shit is a symbol of black superstardom, though couched in ambivalence and self-directed parody, while the collaged black stars refer to the many untold stories of fame in black history. The apparently pejorative and racist imagery contained within the images of Ofili or Walker is, like the lyrics of rap music, a latter-day equivalent to the 'satiric' practice known as the 'dirty dozens' recorded in the novels of Richard Wright.

Another aspect of this deep ambivalence is the practice of masking and/or doubling. The image of split or fractured subjectivity persists. Alongside the artists that exemplify this set of tendencies, including Glenn Ligon, Ellen Gallagher, Walker and Ofili, is David Hammons, whose work continues to be a reference point, and those whose work signals both a debt and a departure and who have been associated with the term '[post-black](#)', including Adam Pendleton. Thelma Golden and Glenn Ligon's application of the term '[post-black](#)' to a younger generation of artists 'who were adamant about not being labelled as "black" artists, though their work was steeped, in fact deeply interested, in redefining complex notions of blackness' can be brought to bear here.<sup>58</sup>

Ligon's investigation of the social, linguistic and political construction of race is encapsulated in his text paintings *Gold Nobody Knew Me #1* and *Gold When Black Wasn't Beautiful #1* 2007. They incorporate jokes employing profane language and

racial epithets taken from routines addressing racism, black culture and politics by stand-up comic Richard Pryor. The gags used highlight the discrepancy between the imagined and real Africa and the myth of black unity, and explode notions of racial harmony and pride. Ligon has commented that ‘Pryor’s genius is that his jokes ain’t funny in any conventional sense. He makes you laugh, but you are laughing at incredibly painful and charged topics... Pryor is an archive... his routines are a catalogue of working-class black life... He spares no one – not even himself.’<sup>59</sup>

Adam Pendleton’s work, such as his *Black Dada 2008* and *System of Display 2008–9* series, is concerned with language as an open structure, and alludes in a deliberately disjunctive manner to early twentieth-century modernism through the filter of conceptual art practices, the black arts movement and experimental poetry. *System of Display* combines references to diverse [Black Atlantic](#) modernisms and modernities, from a Dada performance through the display of Picasso’s work and African art in the first Documenta exhibition in 1955 to a photographic studio in Nigeria or the Independence movement in Ghana. He interrogates the notion of history and the archive and its assumed veracity, fixity and chronological integrity. As Pendleton’s *Black Dada* manifesto states, ‘Black Dada is a way to talk about the future while talking about the past. It is our present moment.’<sup>60</sup>

Examining modernism through the lens of the concept of a [Black Atlantic](#) does not furnish a comprehensive history any more than do canonical narratives of modernism. However, it does foreground different protagonists and highlights different contributions, problematising conventional accounts and making for a more complex field of study, as well as intimating further routes of investigation and relationships of exclusion and inclusion to be resolved. Gilroy’s questioning of the temporality of modernity, the division between the modern and the postmodern, proposes a longer-standing strategy of syncretism and polyphony. Thus, simultaneous to Eurocentric versions of modernism, artists such as Tarsila do Amaral, Wifredo Lam, Uche Okeke and Romare Bearden were creating challenging models which pre-empt and prefigure what would later be termed postmodernity. One way in which the concept of the [Black Atlantic](#) could be useful is to see how it enables a sense of connectedness to arise among different manifestations that could be said to share conceptual problems and find equivalent though unrelated solutions; thus the Brazilian anthropophagist notion of cannibalising Eurocentric modernism can be compared with Lam’s commandeering of [‘primitivism’](#), effecting, as Andrea Giunta has called it, an ‘appropriation of appropriation’.<sup>61</sup> Considering the ways in which other divergent modernisms – ones that developed, in contrast, from within hegemonic cultural bases – relate to these examples can also illuminate their special place within newly expanded histories of modernism. Thus, Gilroy’s concept of a [Black Atlantic](#) can be used to establish a [transnational](#) and transhistorical revision of the story of modernism.

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<sup>1</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, translated by Betsy Wing, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1997, pp. 6–8.

<sup>2</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994, p. 1.

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Farris Thompson, 'Afro-Modernism', *Artforum*, Sept. 1991, pp. 91–94. Farris Thompson, however, was using the term to critique postmodernity, Bhabha's borderline of the present, and to ask 'Can anything really be post-now?'; but also to argue for the preservation of race-consciousness in art in order to redress the omissions from the history of modernism. Thus he asks '[why] use the word "post-Modern" when it may also mean "post-black"?' (p. 91). Farris Thompson's argument for a rewriting of modernism and its temporalities, and his emphasis on the impact of blackness on modernism, holds even if one does not accept his dismissal of either 'postmodern' or 'post-black'. Thelma Golden and Glenn Ligon's deployment of the term 'post-black' is very different, and more subtle, and is discussed below as well as in the conversation they had with Huey Copeland, also published in this volume. Frank Bowling quoted by Kobena Mercer in 'Black Atlantic Abstraction: Aubrey Williams and Frank Bowling', in Kobena Mercer (ed.), *Discrepant Abstraction*, London, Institute of International Visual Arts, 2006, p. 203.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, London and New York, Verso, 1993.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, exhibitions in the UK alone such as *The Thin Black Line*, ICA, London, 1985; *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain*, Hayward Gallery, London, 1989; *Mirage: Enigmas of Race, Difference and Desire*, ICA, London, 1993; *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance*, Hayward Gallery, London, 1997; as well as elsewhere, including *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945–1994*, Museum Villa Stuck, Munich, 2001; and numerous publications, for instance the series of books edited by Kobena Mercer for the Institute for International Visual Arts, London, have made important contributions to this discourse.

<sup>6</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> This comes out most clearly in his use of the motif of the ship as [chronotope](#), which is discussed below.

<sup>8</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 106.

<sup>9</sup> This is not the first time that Paul Gilroy's book has been taken as the starting point for an exhibition. An important exhibition titled *Der Black Atlantic* was organised by the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, in 2004, and featured the work of Isaac Julien, Keith Piper, Lisl Ponger and Tim Sharpe, Jean-Paul Bourelly and Ismael Ivo. Gilroy's book has been both influential and controversial, though he does point out that 'Black Atlantic culture is ... massive and its history so little known', and that in his book he has 'scarcely done more than put down some preliminary markers for more detailed future investigations. My concerns are heuristic and my conclusions are strictly provisional. There are also many obvious omissions'; Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. xi. Lucy Evans has recently provided an invaluable summary of the critical reception of Gilroy's text in 'The Black Atlantic: Exploring Gilroy's Legacy', *Atlantic Studies*, 6.2, Aug. 2009, pp. 255–68; in addition, Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio (eds.), *Beyond the Black Atlantic: Relocating Modernism and Technology*, London, Routledge, 2006, provides a collection of detailed responses; for a more critical stance, see David Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999.

<sup>10</sup> 'Appendix: Table of the Diaspora', in Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, translated and introduction by J. Michael Dash, Charlottesville, Caraf Books, University Press of Virginia, 1989, pp. 258–59, and Dash, p. xxix.

<sup>11</sup> Petrine Archer-Straw, *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s*, London, Thames & Hudson, 2000, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> James Baldwin, 'James Baldwin Breaks His Silence', in Fred L. Stanley and Louis H. Pratt (eds.), *Conversations with James Baldwin*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 1989, p.60. For an in depth discussion of the relationship of black artists and performers to modernism and some of the problems that qualified their participation, see Archer-Straw's *Negrophilia*, *ibid.*, and Jeffrey Stewart's essay 'Paul Robeson and the Problem of Modernism' in *Rhapsodies in Black*, *op cit.*, pp.90–101. For African-American artists and writers in Europe see *Explorations in the City of Light: African American Artists in Paris 1945–1965*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Farris Thompson, 'Afro-Modernism', p. 92.

<sup>14</sup> Susan Earle (ed.), *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 107.

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- 15 This lack within Douglas's stylised use of silhouette was taken up and its optimism forcefully subverted by Kara Walker.
- 16 Slavery was not abolished until 1888 in Brazil, the last nation in the Western hemisphere to abolish it; thus Tarsila's experience was of the immediate aftermath of slavery.
- 17 Dawn Ades, *Art in Latin America: The Modern Era, 1820–1980*, London, Hayward Gallery, 1989, p. 133.
- 18 Andrea Guinta, 'Strategies of Modernity in Latin America', in Gerardo Mosquera (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1995, p. 55.
- 19 Ades, *Art in Latin America*, pp. 133–134. It is for this reason that the strategies delineated by [Antropofagia](#) were later to prove such an important basis for the *Tropicalia* countercultural movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which foregrounded Brazil's [hybridity](#) and its Afro-Brazilian heritage.
- 20 The film was only assembled posthumously in 1977, at which point its rather traditional, ethnographically toned voice-over reading extracts from Deren's book was also applied.
- 21 Such Vodun gods and ceremonies recorded by Deren remain an important source of inspiration for the visual arts of the Caribbean, surfacing in the work of numerous artists, from Wifredo Lam and Agustín Cárdenas to Marta María Pérez Bravo, Ana Mendieta and Tania Bruguera.
- 22 It was occupied by US forces between 1915 and 1934.
- 23 C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*, London, Penguin Books, 2001 [1938]. The Appendix, added in 1963 following the Cuban Revolution, argued that 'West Indians first became aware of themselves as a people in the Haitian Revolution', p. 305.
- 24 The title '[Black Orpheus](#)' establishes a web of transatlantic connections: Sartre's essay 'Orphée noir' ([Black Orpheus](#)) from 1948, introducing Leopold Senghor's *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* (and later issued independently by the Présence Africaine press) inaugurated a reflection on Négritude in literature and politics. From 1957, *Black Orpheus* also became the title for the Nigerian journal edited by Ulli Beier (who was inspired to found it by Alioune Diop's Paris-based Présence Africaine), Wole Soyinka and Es'kia Mphahlele and issued in Ibadan by the Mbari Club (which was closely associated with the [Natural Synthesis](#) movement); it contained writing by African, African-American and West Indian intellectuals and artists. Finally, *Orfeu Negro* was the title of Marcel Camus' film of 1959, which set a contemporary retelling of the myth of Orpheus within Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* and carnival.
- 25 Guinta, 'Strategies of Modernity in Latin America', p. 62.
- 26 Gerardo Mosquera, 'Modernism from Afro-America: Wifredo Lam', in *Beyond the Fantastic*, p. 121.
- 27 Robert Linsley, 'Wifredo Lam: Painter of Négritude', *Art History*, 11.4, Dec. 1988, pp. 527–44. Mosquera comments that Lam's work can be 'related to [Négritude](#) as conscious and neological construction of a black paradigm'; 'Wifredo Lam', p. 126.
- 28 Lam's work, for Mosquera, can be seen as 'a result of Cuban and Caribbean culture and as a pioneering contribution to the role of the Third World in the contemporary world'. Furthermore, 'the intercultural dialogue implicit in Lam's work is an example of the advantageous use of "ontological" diversity in the ethnogenesis of the new Latin American nationalities, of which the Caribbean is paradigmatic'; Mosquera, 'Wifredo Lam', pp. 121 and 123.
- 29 Guinta, 'Strategies of Modernity in Latin America', p. 63. Mosquera makes the substantial, and rather more problematic, claim that Lam was 'the first artist to offer a vision from the African element in the Americas'; 'Wifredo Lam', p. 123.
- 30 See Lowery Stokes Sims, 'The Post-Modern Modernism of Wifredo Lam', in Kobena Mercer (ed.), *Cosmopolitan Modernisms*, Cambridge, MA, and London, MIT Press and Institute of International Visual Arts, 2005, p. 86. Mosquera had made a similar observation, though less directly, in relation to Brazilian modernism, which he sees as 'heralding postmodernism'; 'Wifredo Lam', p. 122.
- 31 Glissant, 'Seven Landscapes for the Sculptures of Agustín Cardenas', in *Caribbean Discourse*, p. 241.

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- 32 For an in-depth discussion see Elizabeth Harney, 'The Ecole de Dakar: Pan-Africanism in Paint and Textile', *African Arts*, 35.3, Autumn 2002, pp. 12–31 and 88–90.
- 33 Uche Okeke, 'Natural Synthesis', in Okwei Enwezor (ed.), *The Short Century and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945–1994*, Munich and London, Prestel, 2001, p. 453.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Paulo Herkenhoff, 'Constructive Congá: Rubem Valentim', in *Pincelada: Pintura e Método, Projeções da Década de 50*, São Paulo, Instituto Tomie Otake, 2006, p. 184. I would like to thank Paulo Herkenhoff for bringing his text to my attention.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 In his youth Lewis worked for two years on ocean freighters, travelling extensively as a result, and thus is perhaps another exemplar of Black Atlantic mobility.
- 39 Lewis and Bearden had been fellow members of the 306 group of artists and writers during the 1930s, which also included Ralph Ellison and Jacob Lawrence.
- 40 Such works can be considered the antecedents of Ofili and Mutu's complicated and contentious use of collage. Judith Wilson, 'Getting Down to Get Over: Romare Bearden's Use of Pornography and the Problem of the Black Female Body in Afro-US Art', in *Feminism-Art-Theory: An Anthology 1968–2000*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, Oxford, 2001, p.274.
- 41 Lorraine O'Grady, 'Olympia's Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity', online at [http://lorraineogrady.com/sites/default/files/wr102\\_olympiasmaidfull.pdf](http://lorraineogrady.com/sites/default/files/wr102_olympiasmaidfull.pdf), © Lorraine O'Grady, 1992, 1994, p.5–6.
- 42 In 1968, the year in which Hammons began his body print series, all forms of segregation were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, though it was also the year in which Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated.
- 43 Kellie Jones, 'The Structure of Myth and the Potency of Magic', in *Rousing the Rubble*, New York, PS1 Museum, 1991, p. 16.
- 44 Echoing Oiticica's slogan 'Seja marginal, seja herói' or 'Be a marginal, be a hero'.
- 45 Michael Asbury, 'Hélio não Tinha Ginga (Hélio Couldn't Dance)', in Paula Braga (ed.), *Fios Soltos: A Arte de Hélio Oiticica (Loose Threads: The Art of Hélio Oiticica)*, São Paulo, Editora Perspectiva, 2008, p. 53. Asbury highlights the fact that the 'overwhelming emphasis on the artist's involvement with Mangueira, with Samba and the architecture, environment and culture of the favela' has led to a significant imbalance in discussions of his work.
- 46 This has meant that it is impossible to date Bispo's works with any accuracy.
- 47 Lemanjá (also known in Brazil as Yemanjá or Janaína) exists in various forms around the Black Atlantic; for instance in Haitian Vodou she is La Sirène, while in South Africa she becomes Mami Wata.
- 48 bell hooks, 'Altars of Sacrifice: Re-membering Basquiat – Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat', *Art in America*, June 1993, p. 71.
- 49 Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, pp. 16–17.
- 50 Ibid., p. 4.
- 51 Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 7.
- 52 Ibid., p. 8.
- 53 As Petrine Archer's essay in this publication demonstrates.
- 54 O'Grady, op cit, p. 2, p. 9.
- 55 Sarah Bartmann (1790–1815), or Saartjie Baartman in Afrikaans, was a Khoi-San (or Hottentot) woman from Cape Town, South Africa, who was brought to England in 1810 and displayed as a sideshow attraction in London and Paris to demonstrate the alleged anatomical distortions of the black female, particularly the size and shape of her buttocks.
- 56 Octavio Zaya, 'From Text to Action in the Work of Candice Breitz', in *Candice Breitz: Multiple Exposure*, Leon, MUSAC, 2007, p. 21.
- 57 Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 32.
- 58 Thelma Golden, 'Post...', in *Freestyle*, New York, The Studio Museum in Harlem, 2001, p. 4.

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<sup>59</sup> Glenn Ligon, interviewed by Malik Gaines in *Glenn Ligon: Text Paintings 1990–2004*, Los Angeles, Regen Projects, 2004, p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> Adam Pendleton, 'Black Dada Manifesto', quoted in *Adam Pendleton El T D K*, Berlin, Haunch of Venison, 2009, p. 26.

<sup>61</sup> Guinta, 'Strategies of Modernity in Latin America', p. 61.