


Decolonizing Diplomacy: Senghor, Kennedy, and the Practice of Ideological Resistance

Yohann C. Ripert 

Abstract: At the turn of the 1960s, Léopold Sédar Senghor and John F. Kennedy vowed to radically transform African foreign policy. Through a close reading of a recently declassified correspondence and a historical analysis of two behind-the-scenes negotiations, Senghor's first state visit to the U.S. and Kennedy's support for the First World Festival of Negro Arts, Ripert examines the private and public concatenations that lead both statesmen to transform policymaking not by implementing new policies but by challenging inherited ideologies. Though their efforts did not always bring successful change in policymaking, the diplomatic correspondence between the two newly elected leaders reveals a more subtle and sustainable transformation: a decolonization of diplomacy.

Résumé: Au tournant des années 1960, Léopold Sédar Senghor et John F. Kennedy se sont engagés dans une transformation radicale de la politique étrangère africaine. Par une lecture minutieuse d'une correspondance récemment déclassifiée et une analyse historique des coulisses de deux négociations, la première visite d'état de Senghor aux États-Unis et la participation de Kennedy à l'élaboration du Premier Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres, Ripert examine les concaténations publiques et privées qui ont amené les deux chefs d'état à transformer la pratique politique non par la mise en place de nouvelles politiques mais en défiant les héritages idéologiques. Si leurs efforts pour un changement de politique n'ont pas toujours été couronné de succès, cette correspondance diplomatique entre les deux chefs d'état nouvellement élus

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révèle une transformation plus subtile et durable : une décolonisation de la diplomatie.

Resumo: No final da década de 1960, Léopold Sédar Senghor e John F. Kennedy prometeram transformar radicalmente a política externa africana. Através da leitura minuciosa de uma correspondência epistolar recentemente desclassificada e aberta ao público e da análise historiográfica de duas negociações de bastidores – a primeira visita de Estado de Senghor aos EUA e o apoio que Kennedy concedeu ao Primeiro Festival Internacional de Arte Negra –, Ripert debruça-se sobre a sequência de eventos públicos e privados que levaram estes dois homens de Estado a transformar a política não através da implementação de novas medidas, mas através do questionamento das ideologias do passado. Ainda que os seus esforços nem sempre se tenham traduzido em mudanças políticas bem-sucedidas, a correspondência entre estes dois líderes recém-eleitos revela uma transformação mais sutil e sustentável: a descolonização da diplomacia.

Keywords: Kennedy; Senghor; diplomacy; decolonization; ideology; foreign policy; First World Festival of Negro Arts; Negritude

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Introduction

Africa has never been a primary political interest with regard to United States foreign policy.¹ Yet between 1961 and 1963, John F. Kennedy takes a highly advertised turn toward the continent, inviting more African statesmen to the White House than any President before or since and appointing first-rate diplomats in charge of African affairs both at home and abroad (Noer 1989; Schlesinger 1965). Postcolonial leaders and intellectuals from the continent have often denounced the overwhelming presence of European references in the African imagination (e.g., the journey to Paris in Cheikh Amidou Kane's *L'aventure ambiguë* and Yambo Ouologuem's *Le devoir de violence* or the scenes in Southern France in Sembène Ousmane's *La Noire de...*), as well as a financial, political, and even cultural dependence on Europe, which seems to put America at the margins of African interests (Amin 1973; Hountondji 1976; Ngũgĩ 1986). Yet, from 1961 to 1963, statesmen such as Kwame Nkrumah and Léopold Sédar Senghor develop far-reaching economic and political partnerships with the United States—the former for the building of the Volta River Project, the latter for the organization of a monumental First World Festival of Negro Arts.

In this article, I return to a brief period of time in the history of Senegal and the United States when the leaders of the two countries worked together to develop an unprecedented relationship away from any colonial-inherited framework. Reading a recently declassified correspondence between Léopold Sédar Senghor and John F. Kennedy, I reveal the existence of an

unfinished policy project that aimed, at the highest political level, to marginalize and eventually destroy epistemic violence.² I argue that Kennedy's "African policy" was neither a success nor a failure in policy-making (Noer 1985; Paterson 1989; Kaiser 1992; Schraeder 1997). Rather, it was a terrain where both Senghor and Kennedy fought inherited ethnocentric, colonial, and Cold War ideologies to such an extent that a practice of resisting ideologies itself became the new diplomatic goal: decolonizing policy. Indeed, as Gary Wilder and Frederick Cooper have recently shown, figures from the Negritude movement had already attempted in the post-war years to redirect efforts to end colonialism away from independence alone (Cooper 2014; Wilder 2015), engaging instead in various alternatives to empire and nation-state that would replace, reframe, or repurpose colonial structures in a systematic way. In effect, intellectuals such as Senghor were acutely aware of the limits of political *freedom from* colonialism that would not be substantiated by a *freedom to* practice politics without the constant comparison with and reference to colonial precedents. Turning to the United States, in this context, serves as a performance of a political practice (foreign policy) premised on ideological autonomy from colonialism (hence, decolonization). This is why the turn does not just concentrate all efforts on economic and political change but also on a slow mind-changing process necessary to put systemic change into practice, or, as Kennedy proclaimed, to "turn the tide" (1962).

By focusing on the content as well as the form of the Senghor-Kennedy correspondence, I show that political and economic data alone provide an incomplete account of U.S.-African relations between 1961 and 1963. Indeed, a focus on ethical and aesthetic questions reveals a tension, shared by Kennedy and Senghor, between political actions ("what they can do") and ethical beliefs ("what they should do") that become the driving force of their diplomatic endeavor. I thus look at the Senghor-Kennedy correspondence not as a political document that provides factual data but rather as a literary text that opens a fictional world. Their correspondence represents both a real agenda that the two leaders could implement and an imagined depiction of an ideal world they wanted to see. After all, if the reality-based task of the political seems antithetical to the imagination-driven task of the literary, the promise of a political program or a diplomatic agenda—and even more so the rhetorical strategies used to convey them—rely on the ability to imagine what does not exist yet, except in the mind of the policymaker. Undoubtedly, the correspondence between two newly elected leaders sharing a Catholic faith largely unshared by those who elected them presents factual information: development loans, diplomatic votes, military partnerships, and so forth. To the literary critic, however, their success or failure leaves unexamined the ideological concatenation that produced these policies. A literary reading therefore looks for meaning within the rhetorical and ideological framings that the text deploys. By turning my attention to those framings, I call attention to a practice of ideological resistance driven by ethical actions at

the highest level, too often dismissed as superficial, dishonest, or instrumentalized for yet another political agenda.

Finally, I surmise that this practice of resistance was made possible in part by an unconventional instrument of foreign policy: art. Traditionally, states have several tools available to further their foreign policy, among them cooperation, trade, economic sanctions, military force, and foreign aid (Apodaca 2017; Edwards & Solarz 1997). As the correspondence shows, the diplomacy of Presidents Senghor and Kennedy built upon such tools. But they also idiosyncratically introduced art as an instrument where colonial ideologies could be fought. The behind-the-scenes politics of the Festival of Negro Arts is a case in point. By instrumentalizing art as policy, Senghor and Kennedy did not turn to what is sometimes called “soft” or “cultural” diplomacy—a practice with an extensive literature on its role during the Cold War, often presented as a supplement to “hard” economic policies (Fosler-Lussier 2015; Monson 2007; Von Eschen 2004). Rather, art was used as a new practice in policymaking in its own right, as a means to resist inherited ideologies. This article addresses those hopes and shortcomings. Though John F. Kennedy’s short time in the White House makes it difficult to assess the desire to “decolonize diplomacy,” I invite us to consider its limits and mishaps not as failures, but as symptoms of the pervasiveness of colonial ideology and the need to persistently resist it.

The Limits of Political Freedom

Almost as soon as he is elected, Senghor finds himself caught up in the opposition between a personal desire to implement the primacy of culture he has professed in poetry and philosophical essays and the public interest of the nation he is now elected to lead. As he admits in his independence speech, the nation faces the rise of “territorialisms” and “micro-nationalisms” (Senghor 1960). Among Senghor’s most important early decisions as president, however, are continental interventions that resonate with colonial regionalisms and a conservative political and economic orientation toward France that strengthens the influence of the former colonial power (Rocheteau 1982; Skurnik 1972:275–84). Indeed, French financial investments in its former colony have sometimes been characterized as “peripheral capitalism,” a move designed to preserve its economic interests in the region (Schraeder 1997). Without dwelling on the disappointment and tensions that arose from the break with the Mali Federation, from which Senghor had hoped to derive post-independence political and economic capital, it should come as no surprise that Senegal’s need for an economic liaison was paramount to its very survival. If turning to France was both an ethically poisoned option and a fraught political choice, and if turning to fellow neighbors proved more politically taxing and economically competitive than earlier discourses of Pan-African solidarity had suggested, perhaps an opportunity could come from a man who had campaigned specifically on “turning the tide” in a presidential race he had just won: John F. Kennedy. Indeed,

Senghor's diplomatic "turn" to the United States represents an opportune moment to position Senegal in a triangular space that attempts to alleviate the power of France's economic influence over the former colony, without retreating to sole continental politics or severing Pan-Africanism from its conceptual roots on the other side of the Atlantic. But Senghor's personal turn to Kennedy, a man who had delivered a resounding speech against French colonialism in Algeria to the U.S. Senate in July of 1957, also develops a partnership resolutely turned toward a world conceptualized outside of colonial binaries—a decolonized world.³ More than economic or political results, what can be called an "American opening" seeks to consolidate a change in the way of conducting African diplomacy unhindered by colonial ways of imagining the continent. It is enabled by a distinctive resonance between two statesmen who desire to challenge the ideologies they have inherited.

Senghor's first contact with American officials is woven into the tenuous political situation of Senegal immediately after its independence, representing a novel approach to African diplomacy. The question arose of whom should the new Kennedy administration send to the celebration of Senegal's independence? Kennedy's first contact with Senegal would have to mark a departure from Eisenhower's practices that the president had vigorously attacked during his campaign (Schlesinger 1965:554). With just over two months between receiving Senghor's invitation on the day of his inauguration (January 20) and the dates of the celebration in Dakar (April 3 and 4), Kennedy is pressed for time; he needs to choose two government officials to represent his administration in its first official visit to Africa. But the political back-and-forth and eventual outcome of this first diplomatic mission shows more than a concern with appearances and public relations; it reveals a presidential senior staff directly at work to set the stage for a new approach to the continent—a process traditionally left to foreign service officers working only a few blocks away at the State Department.

In addition to transmitting the pouch letter containing President Senghor's invitation, the telegram coming from the U.S. Embassy in Dakar presented three names of potential candidates: Mike Disalle, Romeo Champagne, and Ray Miller—three white men neither high-ranked nor African-savvy (JFKWHCSF-230-21).⁴ On February 16, Ralph A. Dungan, special assistant to the president, tasks Richard Maguire, Kennedy's former campaign manager, with the assignment of finding the two representatives, starting with the three names given by the Embassy in Dakar. On March 9, in an apparent gesture of overseeing the search from the top, supplementing Maguire's work, Dungan personally requests Romeo Champagne's private phone number along with a biographical sketch. The next day, a memo to Richard Maguire from M. F. Stanley, Deputy Under Secretary of State, stresses the importance of the new administration's African steps. First, it explains that the independence celebration had been originally scheduled for January, but the dates had to be scrapped after the Mali Federation broke apart in August 1960. The envoys would have to avoid humiliating a country that hoped to

gain international prestige after a delicate political upheaval by sending lesser-ranked representatives or officials with no knowledge of Africa. Second, the memo pointed out that in the past, “We have sent distinguished and well-known public officials ... beginning with sending the Vice President.” That the “we” refers to the “presidency” and not the president’s administration, which allows a reference to Eisenhower’s sending of his vice president Richard Nixon to Ghana’s independence celebration in 1957, seems to contradict the idea of the much-publicized “turn” that Kennedy emphasized throughout his campaign. Third, it remarked that “given that the President of Senegal is himself a man of letters (...) a literary or academic personality would be well-received by the Senegalese, but if such person were chosen to head the delegation, he should be a man of international reputation and stature.”

On April 3, Kennedy sends neither financier Romeo Champagne nor a renowned literary figure, but his own vice president Lyndon B. Johnson and Lady Bird Johnson, accompanied by the Eisenhower-appointed ambassador to Senegal, Henry Villard. Though the caliber of personalities and the president’s personal involvement attest to the seriousness with which the new administration thinks of Africa, the policy reorientation promised in the imaginative power of campaign rhetoric is eventually superseded by historical-institutional imperatives; Kennedy neither goes in person nor does he send a man of letters. By sending the vice president, he only imitated the diplomatic action of his predecessor, Eisenhower, a statesman more interested in maintaining than challenging the colonial *status quo* (Barkaoui 2012).

The desire of both presidents to overcome the tension between the personal will to enact radical change and institutional barriers supporting inherited colonial ideologies is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in Senghor’s first direct contact with American officials in April of 1961. To Vice President Johnson, President Senghor expresses two wishes: one economic, one political. In terms of economics, Senghor pushes for a bilateral agreement focused on long-term financial investments. In terms of politics, he requests a one-on-one meeting with President Kennedy during his visit to the United Nations General Assembly a few months later. With an agenda directed toward a new transatlantic relationship unhinged from France’s neo-colonial interests and unhindered by West African post-colonial regionalisms, this opening set up less than a year after the independence of Senegal is received rather quickly by Kennedy.

In May 1961, the American president acknowledges the two requests from his Senegalese counterpart and expresses positive reception of Senghor’s proposal:

The Vice President told me of his conversations with representatives of your Government on the general question of economic and technical cooperation between our two countries. As a result of these discussions, he has recommended that funds originally allocated for other purposes be diverted

to support a larger aid program in Senegal during our current fiscal year. I wish to assure you that this matter is now under active consideration. (JFKPOF-123b-013)

Though no promise is made, Kennedy conveys a sense that Senegal's requests are being considered at the highest level of the administration, a move that radically differs from previous attempts at engaging the continent as a singular entity—a vision propagated by colonial ideology. If in 1958, Eisenhower had presided over the creation of the “Bureau of African Affairs” following the recommendation of Vice President Richard Nixon, who squarely positioned the continent within the diplomatic mission of the State Department (Schraeder 1997:1; Borstelman 2001:123), Kennedy at once follows the recommendation of his vice president (“He has recommended”) and takes executive ownership at a personal political level (“I wish to assure you”). For the second time in a just a few months, Kennedy expresses a desire to personally control both narrative and action and bypass any ideological constraints produced by historical-institutional imperatives such as congressional authorization, governmental hierarchization, or even public opinion. As historians have often noticed, the desire to break away from ideological constraints and historical-institutional imperatives was not always met by tangible outcomes.⁵ With Senghor, however, Kennedy finds a presidential counterpart with whom a tension between politics (“what should be done”) and ethics (“what can be done”) becomes an impetus toward the realization of their imagined world, where neither post-colonial nor Cold War polarization need be preordained.

Yet, Senghor is known (and criticized) for the compromising position with which he approached post-coloniality, often calling for a symbiosis between the legacy of colonial domination and the prospects afforded by national liberation. Such a position, somewhat at odds with Sékou Touré's or Kwame Nkrumah's, did not go unnoticed by Kennedy's newly appointed ambassador to Senegal and Mauritania, Philip Kaiser. In a confidential telegram to Secretary of State Dean Rusk dated September 21, 1961, for instance, the ambassador conveys some talking points with Senghor in advance of the upcoming meeting between the two heads of state. These points illustrate a diplomatic maneuvering with France at the U.N.: “Senghor said *he thought he had* convinced the French not to veto Sierra Leone and *now expected them* to abstain” (JFKNSF-158-002). In his meeting with Kaiser, Senghor also seems to adopt a non-committal position vis-à-vis the Soviet threat: “Senghor expressed opinion *in passing* that Africa had more to fear from Red China than from USSR. ... He agreed and reiterated *strongly* Tananarive stand *against* Soviet Troika proposal.” What Senghor gives to Kennedy, at least in the way the Senegalese's words are conveyed to Washington, is a position that could help the American president with his anti-colonial and anti-communist rhetoric without cornering him to take a direct stance against either France or Russia. When, a month later, in a letter dated October 5, 1961, Senghor goes so far as to write that “American-Senegalese relations are not *what matters*

to me,” he instills a personal and ethical desire in an otherwise political action in a way that parallels Kennedy’s personal embrace of Africa: the “what can be done” must serve—rather than take priority over—the “what should be done” (JFKPOF-123b-013).⁶

Readers familiar with Senghor will recognize the way in which he conveys his commitment: through a feedback loop between politics and ethics with culture presented as the ultimate arbiter. As he claims in June 1961 in an address to the people of Madagascar, “If politics is ... the major function of nation building, or re-building, culture is the alpha and the omega of politics: not only its foundation but its goal” (Senghor 1964:320). Rethinking nation-(re-)building in post-independence Africa as a culturally-oriented rather than politically-directed goal, Senghor’s ideals resonate with intellectuals such as Aimé and Suzanne Césaire in the Caribbean. He emphasizes not “a simple recording of knowledge from memory” but “the imagination, the invention, indeed the creation of new values for the future.” This task invites a neutral engagement with the painful inheritance of colonialism, as neither its political proponent nor its detractor but as its ethical agent of change (Senghor 1964:321). In this manner, he offers Kennedy an opening into a policy of neutrality that the latter both campaigned on and, according to biographers, personally believed in. Indeed, as ambassador Philip Kaiser recalls in 1966, “The most important factor on the policy level was—and this was really a basic change, wasn’t it—the acceptance by Kennedy, in contrast to [John Foster] Dulles and [Dwight D.] Eisenhower, that genuine neutrality was perfectly fine for us” (Kaiser 1966).

Resisting Ideology: Neutralism and Non-Alignment

Historically, scholars and former policymakers have argued that, for Kennedy, there was an “acceptable” form of neutrality bound to the geopolitical division of the Cold War (Miroff 1976:110; Mennen Williams 1969:172; Noer 1989:257). Senghor’s reception of Kennedy’s neutrality, however, foregrounds another “acceptable” position, a non-alignment bound to the regional divisions produced by colonialism. In the context within which diplomatic contact with the United States is made, Senghor’s preoccupations are with practical regionalism, addressing such issues as admission of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania to the United Nations, U.N. operations in the Congo, Portuguese colonialism in Angola, South African apartheid, and Nasser’s anti-imperialism. Throughout the conversation with Kaiser, however, Senghor cannot but frame each issue in eerily familiar colonial terms, even as he attempts to continue the work of decolonization. Regarding Angola, for instance, Kaiser relays to the State Department that Senghor “emphasized [that] the West and friends [of the] West solve [the] problem of Portugal in Africa. ... [He] did not insist on *immediate* independence but [said that] Portugal must start *immediately* [to] make reforms leading towards self-government within [a] *reasonable time*” (JFKNSF-158-002). The semantic contradiction through which Senghor presents the problem of Portuguese

decolonization is symptomatic of a tension between the dismantling of Portugal's empire that *should* happen and the decolonizing process through which it *could* happen. Responding to the Angola situation, Kaiser posits that the United States is in a "better position [to] influence Portugal [and] take proper action by *maintaining rather than breaking* relations with her." Senghor retreats, stating "I appreciate what [the U.S. is] doing." In the next topic of conversation, South Africa, perhaps inviting an interventionist response, Senghor brings the Cold War to the fore. Advocating for an "*immediate* break in [U.S.] relations with South Africa," the Senegalese leader adds that "the only one benefitting from the situation in South Africa and Portugal [is] Russia." Kaiser pleads caution: "I said *not sure* break in relations or economic sanctions would be [the] best means [of] accomplishing what we both desired." Yet again, Senghor retreats and compares it to his "*maintaining* relations with 'great friend' De Gaulle and attempt to influence him out of Algeria." Throughout, the emphasis on "maintaining" a status quo or seeking a "reasonable" timeline while advocating for "immediate" action signals, from a political perspective, a contradiction between the anti-colonial/anti-bipolar rhetoric that the two statesmen have hitherto promulgated and the diplomatic action toward a policy that supports a transatlantic relation nested in neocolonial and Cold War ideological orders. It is this contradiction that has prompted scholars to interpret "Kennedy's African policy" as either a political failure or a pipe dream (Noer 1985; Kaiser 1992; Schraeder 1997). What a close reading of the documents and an attention to the ideological framing of these seemingly contradictory statements suggest, however, is that both leaders take a rather innovative approach toward the decolonizing of transatlantic diplomacy.

Senghor and Kennedy both engage in a practice of resistance against inherited ideologies, not by destroying them, but rather by persistently turning them against themselves—subduing the epistemic violence of colonialism and bipolarism. On Portuguese colonialism, we recall that Kaiser explains that Kennedy is in a "better position [to] influence Portugal ... by maintaining ... relations with her." What Kaiser does not say is that Kennedy is simultaneously developing a multiphase diplomatic plan to "overthrow the Salazar regime by pro-American officers" more favorable to the end of colonialism (Noer 1985:87). At home, relying upon the advice of his military for gauging the importance of the Azores base leased from Portugal, he can only push his advisors, albeit with a sarcastic tone, to think of a situation without Portugal's leverage: "What if ... there was a tidal wave and the Azores just disappeared?" (Attwood 1965).

The decolonizing of transatlantic diplomacy reaches a climactic moment in the conversation between Senghor and Kennedy on November 3, 1961, as recorded in a recently declassified memorandum of conversation (JFKPOF-124-002). What the conversation reveals is an acute awareness of a double bind, between neutrality and non-alignment.⁷ Both leaders desire for the new African states to be neutral, that is to say, unencumbered by Cold War politics and economics. Yet, the ideological influence of former imperial powers in

post-coloniality leads them to a strategy of non-alignment, that is to say, to a position where East-West or North-South rivalries might be, at times, affirmatively sabotaged.⁸ In that sense, neither “Kennedy’s African policy” nor what can be called “Senghor’s American policy” can be regarded as policies rapidly adjusted to the new political independence of African states. Rather, they present new ways of conducting foreign policy that contribute toward changing the implications of African independence in the long term. Indeed, Kennedy’s lack of assumption in the opening minutes of his tête-à-tête with Senghor is humbling: “Our involvement in Africa is recent, we are obliged to rely heavily on the counsel of those who have a deeper understanding of African matters.” Senghor’s own words resonate with Kennedy’s: “For some time, Africans have been trying to situate themselves in world affairs, to define their personality.” More than a political strategy, African foreign policy is framed as a doorway into epistemological and ethical investigations: What can I know? What ought I to do? The questions are, in retrospect, as surprising for the politicians as they are necessary for postcolonial politics.

With every remark that Senghor brings to the fore, colonial ideology abounds: “We want a kind of French-African cultural *métissage*. French influences are part of our heritage, and a people will only suffer if it deliberately denies a part of its past.” When one looks at the framing of Senghor’s somewhat essentialist position, a picture emerges of a slow but persistent practice of resistance against (post-)colonial ideology. Senghor deems it necessary to remind Kennedy that, as early as 1946, he “gave an interview in which he laid out two principles that should govern the future political development of French Africa: movement to independence by stages, close Franco-African cooperation after independence.” Whether exaggerating his thrust to independence in retrospect or genuinely expressing a carefully strategized long-term plan, it is not a struggle but a complementarity between independence and cooperation that Senghor desires to showcase, in what is still the early moments of post-colonial governance. “So, while establishing ourselves as a nation, and within our foreign policy of nonalignment,” Senghor continues, “we also mean to cooperate closely with other countries, particularly France.” His refusal to choose between an isolationist and an internationalist position, under such conditions, speaks more to an ethical practice of resisting colonial-minded divisions than a contradiction, a failure, or even a pipe dream in policymaking. In a speech given in Lagos just a few months earlier, “From Federation to Civilization of the Universal,” the Senegalese president refuses to define national independence as either a negation of colonialism or an affirmation of freedom, choosing rather to build upon an “equality between colonizer and colonized: between two peoples, two races, two civilizations” (Senghor 1983:45).⁹ The claim is more theoretical than real, but it encapsulates a movement toward a decolonization of African history where the continent’s colonial past is no longer the reference through which to interpret it. At the White House, in November 1961, Kennedy seems to agree.

The decolonization of foreign policy is perhaps nowhere more visible than in the U.S. financing of Nkrumah's Volta River project. As scholars have documented, Kennedy's commitment to Nkrumah's hydroelectric dam, based on a neutralist policy, led him to a quandary. Though the American president expresses to Senghor a desire to challenge institutional practices of "extending loans and grants" only to countries that do not "oppose our foreign policy positions," he also shares his concerns that "there is very little support in Congress and in public opinion [for Nkrumah]."¹⁰ Quickly, Kennedy falls back to a Cold War rhetoric that runs contrary to his desire to adopt a neutralist position vis-a-vis Africa: "Aid to countries such as Mali, Guinea and Ghana is given to prevent them from becoming entirely dependent on the Soviet bloc." Sharing a disappointment in Nkrumah's incessant anti-American rhetoric, or rather, mistaking Nkrumah's non-alignment for neutrality, Kennedy admits, "Nkrumah seems to change his position with every wind that blows, yet he does not wish to be dominated by the Soviets." Read as a difficulty to negotiate politics and ethics, the tension does not show a contradiction in Kennedy's avowed "acceptable neutralism," but rather a slow practice of resistance against an inherited periodization, where Senghor's contribution is instrumental. In a way, Kennedy throws Senghor a line to overcome political hurdles by ethical reasoning: should it be the right thing to do because it is not "entirely" a Cold War matter, or because Nkrumah "does not even wish to be dominated by the Soviets?" Senghor's response catches the line and bolsters the view that Soviet presence is not the problem, but also re-inscribes it within colonial terms: "You should concert your approach very closely *with the British* since they have means of bringing strong pressure to bear on Nkrumah." Caught in the impossibility to operate outside of colonial and Cold War ideologies, Senghor cannot but resort to irony: "I agree with you ... Nkrumah requires the attention of a psychiatrist!"

Yet, Senghor's sense of the tension between "what can be done" and "what should be done" is recalled by Ambassador Kaiser, whose presence is acknowledged in the memo, but which the official White House document leaves out.

Nkrumah requires the attentions of a psychiatrist... And a very good one! ... In spite of this man's instability, in spite of his radical politics with most of which I disagree, you, Mr. President, have no alternative but to go along with this project, particularly if, as I understand, it is economically viable, because otherwise the West African peoples and people in Africa generally will accuse you of using aid for vulgar ideological and political objectives. ... It is my firm conviction that you should approve the Volta River project. (Kaiser 1966)

Considering the tenuous relationship between the two West African leaders, Senghor's unambiguous support for Kennedy's financing of Nkrumah's dam seems counter-intuitive. The situation is no different for Kennedy who, hard-pressed by political lobbyists and advisors from within his administration to abandon the project, eventually approves its financing (Noer 1984). Whether

a “success” or a “failure” of foreign policy, the two presidents’ readiness to move forward in a direction opposite to their sole political interests is symptomatic of their commitment to understand ideological constraints and a desire to undo them through long-term ethical goals. Under these conditions, Senghor’s and Kennedy’s transatlantic policy is not predicated on factual changes from which to assess success or failure but on creating an environment where the imagination and practice of decolonized diplomacy can begin a persistent de-ideologizing work. Such work is never fully finished, because challenging historical-institutional imperatives dictated by a certain type of ideology-based policymaking must adapt to the changing nature of political construction. In that sense, it matters not only to evaluate the successes and failures of Senghor’s and Kennedy’s policies, but also to identify what they started and left for future generations to transform.

Art as Policy

The persistent engagement with inherited ideologies (colonial, imperial, bipolar, etc.) is made all the more necessary by the transitional nature of the domestic and international environment. Against an ever-changing political field, aesthetic and intellectual production also evolve in accordance with the conditions under which political issues unfold. In the Cold War years, especially in the 1960s with the conflation of nuclear conflict, the Vietnam War, and the Civil Rights movement, art often appears as a counterweight to an otherwise hegemonic political agenda. Recent scholarship on the role of African-American artists (jazz musicians in particular) in U.S. foreign policy has helped to nuance the opposition between art and politics, reading the encounter between, for instance, jazz bands and the State Department, as a collaborative endeavor rather than as a practice of resistance (Von Eschen 2004; Monson 2007). There is yet a particular form of political collaboration that need not eschew an aesthetic practice of resistance and which the relation between Senghor and Kennedy illustrates: resistance against ideological power.

In the wake of the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, Senegal faces a crisis of its own. In December 1962, Senghor survives politically what he later termed a “coup” attempt by the president of the Council of Ministers, Mamadou Dia, which led to the imprisonment of Dia and the writing of yet another constitution in February 1963, which strengthened the power of the presidency. It is during that same month that, amid a tenuous political equilibrium, Senghor announces via the radio the organization of a “First World Festival of Negro Arts” to be held in Dakar in December 1965 “under the auspices of UNESCO.”¹¹ While the timing of the announcement does not necessarily imply a political agenda behind the making of an art fair (the idea for such festival had first been raised in the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Rome in 1959), the festival certainly enables Senghor not only to promote the aesthetics of Negritude he had championed in earlier essays

but also to respond to critics (from Fanon to Soyinka) who denounced his praise of Western culture and French history. In sum, though Senghor built Negritude with Bergson's vitalism, Rimbaud's poetry, Picasso's masks, and even Stravinsky's use of so-called primitive rhythms, the First World Festival of Negro Arts enacts an aesthetic turn to continental sources of cultural production that, politically, illustrates a severance from Eurocentric influence validating aesthetic creation (Wofford 2009).¹²

In an address to the nation on February 4, 1963, Senghor does not shy away from the Festival's political resonance but grounds its aesthetics in Africa (NYPL-FNA-1-3). If a festival of Negro arts is not the first of its kind, that it should be held on the African continent is of "historical significance," declares Senghor. As the message continues, its language takes on an activist tone: "We will have ceased once and for all to be cultural consumers and will, at long last, ourselves become cultural producers." The use of the future perfect tense to epitomize the power that Senghor ascribes to a fictional future in order to change a rather grim present is strengthened by a call for immediate factual action: "The purpose of this message is to ask each and every one of you to give your material and moral backing to this noble undertaking, which is also calculated to enhance our country's prestige." In the midst of an internally tenuous political stability since the schism with Mamadou Dia, the call, staged as both qualitatively political ("country's prestige") and quantitatively economic ("calculated to enhance") proposes to supplement political independence with cultural independence: "Such, then, is the significance of this event which will mark the advent of a new era for us: the era of cultural independence." No sooner does Senghor pronounce the catchphrase than its meaning becomes a question: what is cultural independence? Staged in juxtaposition to political independence, it is designed as a *coup de grâce* to the relationship with, and recognition by, the former colonial power. France is no longer to be the reference by which artistic production is measured or the self-appointed authority for validating the authenticity of "Africanity" through ethnography. Indeed, as Senghor rises in the hierarchy of executive power (from a member of the French parliament in 1945 to the highest executive office of Senegal in 1960), his discourse on art and culture becomes less concerned with aesthetics and more focused on socio-political implications.¹³

Working toward political autonomy, Senghor writes to Kennedy on February 6, 1963, and asks his "dear friend" for a greater flexibility to use American aid (JFKPOF-123b-14). Kennedy's response, dated March 2, 1963, was as expectedly polite as it was surprisingly negative; the development program was to be used only for nation-building, loans would be contracted instead of grants being given, and any money given by the United States was to be used to buy merchandise from the United States. How the letter reached its final form is revealing. On February 26, executive secretary William H. Brubeck writes to McGeorge Bundy, recommending a presidential reply "in view of the fact that [Senghor] was received by the President in Nov. 1961," and encloses a draft. The problem, as Brubeck understands it, is that

“President Senghor appeals for a more flexible approach of AID in terms inconsistent with established executive and legislative policies.” In his official response, dated March 2, 1963, Kennedy writes that he “must explain that these restrictions [in aid-giving] reflect both our legislation which governs aid disbursements and the necessity to use our aid in a way that adds as little as possible to our balance of payment.” Kennedy’s hands are now tied, as he faces a new-yet-old way of conducting economic assistance through foreign policy: as a business. As Arthur Schlesinger Jr. recalls in *A Thousand Days*, by the end of 1962, a series of career diplomatic and government servants were replaced by brisk administrators trained in the corporate sector. “This posed a mortal threat to the vested ideas, interests, and routines of the aid bureaucracy,” and “the President often grew exceedingly impatient over its seeming inability to act” (Schlesinger 1965:593–94). To Senghor, Kennedy admits with quasi-regrets: “In the past, we gave aid freely,” but under such institutional gridlock, “I cannot continue to do so.” After two years of struggle not to let Cold War and colonial ideologies dictate their vision of a new diplomatic relation, a familiar discourse of capitalist efficiency catches up with them. In a change of tone henceforth focused on “financial assistance,” “dollar funding,” “estimated results,” and so forth, the president of the United States can only concede: “I recognize and share your concern with the problems of coordinating differing programs of external assistance.” Yet, the solution cannot come in the form of a change in external assistance. If anything is to be done, it can only be through “close collaboration on projects proposed for United States assistance.” Very soon indeed, Senghor would propose just that.

On March 4, 1963, Senghor writes to Kennedy to inform him that “the Government of Senegal has decided to organize, under the sponsorship of UNESCO, a World Festival of Negro Arts, the first one to be held in Dakar in April 1965” (JFKPOF-123b-14). In the concluding paragraph of the two-page cable, Senghor refers John F. Kennedy to Alioune Diop, president of the African Society of Culture (*Société Africaine de Culture*–SAC), “who will also be the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Festival Association.” The cable comes with a notice “listing by category and order of preference, the contribution by artists that the World Festival of Negro Arts would like to have [the United States] make.” More than a suggestion, it reads in block capitals: “IT IS REQUESTED THAT THE FOLLOWING NEGRO PERFORMANCES OR NEGRO ARTISTS FROM THE U.S.A. FORM PART OF THE FESTIVAL.” The high-level correspondence, including a formal request coming by way of traditional diplomatic protocols, inscribes the artistic event within the framework of a carefully monitored political collaboration. Indeed, the notice continues by suggesting three different musical art-forms expected to officially represent what Senghor calls Negro-American art: “Gospel singers and Negro spiritual” groups in the first week of the festival, “outstanding soloist (man or woman)” in the second week, and finally, a “top-ranking dance orchestra” (to include Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, and Dizzy Gillespie) to perform in “the last three nights of the Festival.” For

anyone versed in music, the labeling of jazz artists of the caliber of Ellington or Gillespie as “dance orchestras” shows a lack of awareness of, or consideration for, jazz music as a vehicle capable of supplementing other modes of imaginative expression (Edwards 2017). In fact, Ellington said as early as 1931, “What we could not say openly, we expressed in music, and what we know as ‘jazz’ is something more than just dance music” (Ellington 1993:49).¹⁴ His musical innovations (such as rethinking jazz orchestration, solo improvisation, tonal and modal variations, and using new instruments) are not merely supporting dance accompaniment, as Senghor naively requests, befitting an orientalist interwar narrative. Senghor’s jazz, here, fits with a particular perception or expectation of what Negro-American art was expected to be (Jackson 2003). The use of block capitals in a presidential cable together with the level of detail on specific artists or musical style furthermore points toward more than a suggestion; it undeniably and eerily resonates with certain colonial discourses on cultural difference.

Senghor’s appreciation of music was undoubtedly influenced by his years in Paris where jazz was in vogue, and where as a young student he was introduced to the artistic scene by his friend Léon-Gontran Damas (Noland 2015). Yet, his specific directions on how music was to be presented at the Festival as the closing events of “Negro Arts” also reveals a strategic vision that refocuses the larger conversation from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. Opening Senegal’s previously quasi-exclusive diplomatic channel with France to political and artistic cooperation with the United States, the tone of Senghor’s cable is decidedly overweening. Even though its purpose is to lay the groundwork for the eventual enlisting of American organizations and financial contribution toward African projects, it takes a patronizing approach: “I ... inform you,” “Senegal has decided,” “the Festival will include,” “I have taken the liberty,” etc. In his short response (less than one hundred words) dated April 1, 1963, Kennedy acknowledges the “significant contributions [of Negro-American artists] to the cultural life of the United States, who derive much of their artistry from their African heritage,” while referring Senghor to the relatively low-ranking Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

What prevents a reading of this exchange as a turn from “hard” (political) to “soft” (cultural) diplomacy is Senghor’s persistent engagement with earlier policies destined to resist old ways of conducting foreign policy. Senghor’s introduction of art at the highest diplomatic level neither replaces nor trails politics proper. It operates as a counterweight to the usual instruments of diplomacy that seem increasingly constrained by ideological limits. That Kennedy’s initial response is dismissive does not neutralize art as policy. Rather, as with the initial exchange on the sending of American envoys to celebrate Senegal’s independence, it shows a need to undo ideological preconceptions in post-colonial policies, namely, primacy of economics and futility of the aesthetic. In fact, Senghor does not neglect the importance of economic factors. In May 1963, he sends Doudou Thiam, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to speak to Ambassador Kaiser. The conversation was not

recorded verbatim but summarized by Kaiser in a memorandum to the Department of State written on April 30, 1963 (JFKPOF-123b-14). According to Kaiser, Thiam relays that the future of U.S.-Senegal relations hangs in the balance “for years to come,” as the United States “appears to be doing more for less friendly African countries,” and that Senegal’s “pro-Western” government “rests crucially on its ability to make economic and social progress.” In line with the reorientation of the AID program, Kaiser admits that no U.S. aid can be directly given to any country and downplays the influence of the United States. “The French are already making major contributions in Francophone West Africa. ... We have no thought of replacing them,” he states, showing remnants of an ideological gridlock that the two Presidents hoped to destroy. Still, Kaiser reassures Thiam that U.S. aid “would continue to be supplementary.” To his superiors in Washington, D.C., in the comment section of the confidential memorandum, the ambassador conveys that what he calls an “unpleasant awakening” for the Senegalese government has to be understood in terms of the “understandable desire to avoid the eventuality of being forced to become even more dependent on the French,” who would “doubtless drive a hard bargain in return for any increase of their level of aid.” From his standpoint, Kaiser sees a situation of a psychological and political nature, where the role of France as the former colonizer remains primary. In the early days of Kennedy’s “African policy,” such considerations might have symbolized an opening for American action. In what we now know to be the last months of John F. Kennedy’s life, the opportunity holds no value: “U.S. aid is not of nature to respond to psychological as well as economic demands of their present predicament.” In a final effort not to fall back to traditional Cold War strategy and not to return to an old way of African policymaking squaring the continent within colonialism, Kaiser writes: “I expect to make further concrete suggestions”—surely after instructions from Washington. These never came.¹⁵

One of the most important follow-ups happens exactly one month prior to Kennedy’s assassination. On October 22, 1963, the government of Senegal requests an official meeting between President Kennedy and President Senghor to stage the unambiguous official endorsement of the First World Festival of Negro Arts by the United States (JFKWHCSF-515-008). In a memo for White House National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, Benjamin H. Read, executive secretary for the U.S. Secretary of State, explains to Kennedy what the Senegalese delegation expects from the visit: “As evidence of highest U.S. Government interest in the Festival, the delegation seeks a very brief appointment with the President *mainly so that pictures may be taken for publicity purposes.*” The apparent presentation of the art festival as a publicity stunt that would undoubtedly boost Senegal’s prestige and credibility on the world stage is given a surprisingly fair response—perhaps a symptom of the slow erosion of old ideological practices. “Out of consideration for President Senghor” and “in view of our need to *depend largely on cultural relations to maintain an effective U.S. presence in Africa,*” the State Department offers two recommendations. First, “that the President receive the delegation for ten or

fifteen minutes sometime before Monday, October 28, 1963 and pose for pictures.” Second, “that, if the delegation asks for permission to use Mrs. Kennedy’s name, the President reply that he will think it over.” In a skillful diplomatic move, the Senegalese delegation does not stop at the appearance of political negotiations. It suggests, in addition to the request for publicity, to use official photographs showing political cooperation with the United States as well as the organization of an official “Committee of American Friends” of the Festival, to be constituted of prominent African American members from the artistic, academic, and political scene.

As is well known, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963. Yet, the persistent practice of decolonizing policy illustrated by the steps taken by both the American and the Senegalese presidents to negotiate economic policies, create political partnerships, and develop a collaborative artistic encounter survives the personal and admittedly warm relations that Kennedy strove to cultivate with many African statesmen (Muehlenbeck 2012). Indeed, the afterlife of Senghor’s Festival substantiated a success in decolonizing policy that has less to do with economic and political agreements between the United States and Senegal than with the resilience of transatlantic conversations at a time when the new U.S. administration faced an escalating war in Vietnam, a mounting pressure to respond to the Soviet space race, and the rise of the Civil Rights movement.

Conclusion

Less than a year after the last correspondence between Kennedy’s and Senghor’s administrations, the request for the creation of a “Committee of American Friends” materializes in the form of a massive United States Committee for the World Festival of Negro Arts, headquartered in the State Department (NYPL-FNA-001-006). Soon, the committee, chaired by Virginia Inness-Brown, is involved in political goals more than artistic concerns while being given access to the resources of the United States Information Agency (USIA)—a propaganda machine specifically built for fighting the Cold War using art and film as ideological weapons.

In the three years between the last Senghor-Kennedy correspondence and the opening date of the First World Festival of Negro Arts held in Dakar in April 1966, the two sides collaborate little. Indeed, when Innes-Brown asks Charles Delgado for an update about the Festival in 1965, the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Senegalese Mission to the United Nations admits that there had been no news since the president’s last visit to the United States in 1961. Though the new era of “African relations” undoubtedly shifts back to the margins of U.S. foreign interests after Kennedy’s death, the legacy of said relations remains, perhaps, in a domain least expected in the policy area: ideology. The limits of ideology, shown in Kennedy’s inability to free the terms of American loans or Senghor’s failure to sideline British and French influence, do not signal a diplomatic failure, but rather serve as evidence of a persistent engagement with ideological re-orientation. Under those

conditions, Senghor's silence reveals a diplomatic relation that is not so much based upon what it achieves (its result) but on how it achieves it (its practice).

If it is not the art that matters but rather how artistic considerations could open a new political practice, then micromanagement becomes, in the long-term, unnecessary. The relations between two countries thus becomes an instrument of domestic—rather than foreign—policy. Indeed, Senghor's silence leads the U.S. committee to focus on its own domestic political and commercial agenda. At the end of the meeting, Mrs. Inness-Brown raises the possibility of recording the American cultural production at the Festival for domestic use: "A recommendation should be made to the USIA that it makes tapes, films, and records of performances sent to Dakar, for use afterwards in the United States." It did. In 1968, William Greaves produced a USIA-commissioned forty-minute film eponymously titled "The First World Festival of Negro Arts," in which more than twenty-eight minutes of footage are dedicated to African American artists over against the optimism of African independence (Jaji 2014).

Eventually, the *New York Times* proudly announces that "The American delegation of 105 performers, specialists, artists, and technicians will be the largest and most comprehensive of any sent by the 43 nations"—a number comparable to how many athletes were sent to the Olympics.¹⁶ Clearly, Senghor's initial wish for a "Committee of American Friends" opened a Pandora's box which contributed to an accumulation of power and influence of the United States in the Festival. More importantly, it helped to balance Senghor's heavy reliance on France's financial and material support to realize the art project (Murphy 2016). If the aesthetic legacy of the First World Festival of Negro Art remains the subject of controversies with contemporary ramifications, the political behind-the-scenes of this massive endeavor initiated a transformation of a national liberation into an unconditional revolution—not only a regime change, but also an epistemological about-face. That such a project necessitated a persistent practice is what both Senghor and Kennedy set in motion, sometimes at the expense of short-term success or failure. That Senghor's Festival took place with a sizeable American presence sent by the Johnson administration in the midst of the Vietnam war entanglement and in relative cultural, linguistic, and political independence from French oversight, is perhaps the strongest hope of what I have called a practice of decolonizing policy.

Archival Materials

JFKNSF-158-002: John F. Kennedy National Security Files. Country Files: Senegal: General, 1961. Box 158, Folder 2.

JFKPOF-123b-013: Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. President's Office Files. Countries. Senegal: General, 1961. Box 123b, Folder 13.

JFKPOF-123b-14: Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. President's Office Files. Countries. Senegal: General, 1962-63. Box 123b, Folder 14.

JFKPOF-124-002: Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. President's Office Files. Countries. Senegal: Security: Briefing book, Senghor visit, November 1961. Box 124, Folder 2.

JFKWHCSF-230-21: John F. Kennedy White House Central Subject Files. Senegal: Appointment. Box 230, Fo2/Co261, Folder 21.

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Notes

1. In addition to a small number of academic publications on U.S. Foreign Policy in Africa, one can also take a clue from the official volumes published by the Department of State's Office of the Historian. Both reflect a marginal interest of U.S. foreign policy in the continent—save perhaps for Egypt, often combined with "Middle East Affairs." In the 1960s, the decade this article focuses on, only one publication focuses on "Africa," and one specifically on the Congo, compared to dozens of volumes on Vietnam, Cuba, the Berlin Crisis, etc. See <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/status-of-the-series>.
2. The deconstruction of Eurocentrism in African literature and philosophy has been a major undertaking in African studies scholarship since its inception. Seminal works include Valentin Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa* (1988) and Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind* (1986). More recent critiques on epistemic freedom include Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* (2000), Achille Mbembe's *On the Postcolony* (2001), and Gayatri Chakravorty Senghor's *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999). The argument here is that such undertaking was not limited to philosophers, ethnographers, or the larger body of "intellectuals," but also statesmen in their political practice.
3. Kennedy's administration slowly, but resolutely, worked toward the end of Portuguese colonialism in Africa (Attwood 1965; Noer 1989). On Kennedy's Senate speech, see *New York Times*, July 3, 1957: "Kennedy Urges U.S. Back Independence for Algeria; Senator Assails Support for France's Policy."
4. All primary source documents come from the archives of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. Those read here come from "John F. Kennedy White House Central Subject Files. Senegal: Appointment. Box 230, Fo2/Co261, Folder 21," hereafter abbreviated "JFKWHCSF-230-21." Other references follow a similar format: POF for President's Office File; NSF for National Security Files.
5. To a certain extent, Kennedy's "failure" to follow words with actions constitutes the main criticism of historians of American foreign policy in their analysis of African affairs. Thomas Noer has thus remarked that the President's "African policy" is more a wish than a policy, while the early work of Muehlenbeck on "courting of the Africans" in an effort to intervene in and win the Cold War brings

- a skeptical account of Kennedy's ethical support of African nationalism (Muehlenbeck 2004; Noer 1984).
6. Translation is mine. The original French reads: "Les rapports américano-énégalais ne sont pas l'essentiel pour moi." Facing the sentence's unusual nature in a cable designed to develop future "American-Senegalese" relations, the State Department's Division of Language Services translated it in a more "diplomatic" way: "American-Senegalese relations are not a matter of the greatest concern to me."
 7. A day before meeting with Kennedy, Senghor publicly exposed the double bind in his first speech at the U.N.: "We cannot be neutral when it is a question of peace and decolonization. ... We refuse to follow anyone's lead: we are, to be precise, in favor of non-alignment" (Senghor 1961:535).
 8. I borrow the term "affirmative sabotage" from Gayatri Spivak (2013), in an effort to go beyond the simple destruction of who or what is seen as the enemy and enter a structure intended for destruction so that it can be turned around for constructive goals.
 9. Translation is mine. Full translation is in *The Senghor Reader*. Translated by Yohann C. Ripert. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press (forthcoming).
 10. To assess the importance of public opinion in Kennedy's foreign policies, it is useful to recall that he refused to support the Tunisian-led Afro-Asian U.N. resolution calling for the withdrawal of French armed forces from Tunisian territory in July 1961, writing to President Bourguiba that he did not "find it possible to take a public position on this matter" (Schlesinger 1965:562).
 11. Archival documents related to the Festival are from the "United States Committee for the First World Festival of Negro Arts Press agent's files, 1965–1966 Sc MG 220," consulted in December 2016 and January 2017 at the New York Public Library-Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division). Hereafter referred to as NYPL-FNA, followed by box and folder numbers. (NYPL-FNA-1-3).
 12. Senghor's Negritude became the stage of a political fight (especially in relation to his controversial separation between "Negro Africa" and "North Africa") in two other aesthetic encounters: the 1969 Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers, and the 1977 Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture in Lagos. See Andrew Apter's article in *The First World Festival of Negro Arts*.
 13. In "Negro-African Aesthetics" for instance, an essay written in 1956, he only analyzes what he calls the "rhythm" of African art for its "political function" and warns against the danger of imitating a preconceived art that would not "translate the social reality of the racial, national, and class milieu" (Senghor 1964:207). Though the idea of a "social reality" remains relatively vague in Senghor's text, his references progressively depart from ethnographical data coming from French metropolitan workers. In that sense, Senghor's approach is remarkably akin to Valentin Mudimbe's engagement with Western social sciences during the colonial period, critiquing how anthropological interpretations created powerful paradigms that in turn influenced Africans in an understanding of culture and thought according to Western models." See *The Mudimbe Reader* (Fraiture & Orrells 2016).
 14. This is not to say that dance could not be part of their jazz performances, but rather that jazz as they performed it was a musical composition in its own right. Although Duke Ellington started his musical career by performing gigs for dance parties to earn a living, the musician left the monetary entertainment business for

the musically emerging and competitive jazz scene of Harlem as soon as he moved to New York City. While some jazz orchestras, such as Benny Goodman's, made money with popular "swing bands," Ellington's strength was the richness of his compositions and a new approach to orchestration. In his own words: "Jazz is music, swing is business" (Hasse 1995:200).

15. No other telegrams from Kaiser to the Department of State regarding this topic were seemingly sent in the six months prior to Kennedy's assassination. On August 16, 1963, a White House memo conveys that Kaiser would be "in Washington for a couple of weeks" but that there was "no reason for him to see the President." On January 28, 1964, another memo reads that "Mr. Brubeck wanted to hold this request until the end of the Selection Boards—then came the assassination and I don't think Ambassador Kaiser saw the President in the meantime" (JFKWHCSF-350-13).
16. To give an order of comparison, the United States sent 346 athletes to the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, and 357 to the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City. See the official website of the International Olympic Committee: <https://www.olympic.org/tokyo-1964>, and <https://www.olympic.org/mexico-1968>.