Altermodern was the first in a series of four one-day events, the Prologues, preceding the Tate Triennial exhibition. With contributions from prominent writers, art historians, artists and philosophers, each Prologue comprised lectures, performances, films and discussions attempting to introduce and provoke debate around the Triennial's themes.

The first Prologue opened the debate with the proposition that the period defined by postmodernism has come to an end and what can be called 'altermodernity' has taken its place. Art made in the times we live in belongs to the global era, and is conceived and produced as a reaction against standardisation and nationalism. The art is characterised by artists' cross-border, cross-cultural negotiations; a new real and virtual mobility; the surfing of different disciplines; the use of fiction as an expression of autonomy.

SATURDAY 28 APRIL 2008
TATE BRITAIN

14:00
MILLBANK ENTRANCE
**NAVIN
RAWANCHAIKUL**
Navins of Bollywood

14:00 and 15.15
AUDITORIUM
**STÉPHANE GOXE
and JORDI VIDAL**
Servitude and Simulacra

16:00
GALLERY 62
TRIS VONNA-MICHELL
Auto Tracking:
From Cellar to Garret

16:30
AUDITORIUM
OKWUI ENWEZOR
chaired by
J.J. CHARLESWORTH
Specious Modernity:
Speculations on the End
of Postcolonial Utopia

MODERNITY AND POSTCOLONIAL AMBIVALENCE
Okwui ENWEZOR

FROM *GRAND* MODERNITY
TO *PETIT* MODERNITY

THERE IS A DUAL NARRATIVE that is often taken to be characteristic of modernity: the first is the idea of its unique Europeanness, and the second is its translatability into non-European cultures. This narrative argues for the mutability of modernity, thus permitting its export and enhancing its universal character while putting a European epistemological stamp on its subsequent reception. The travelling character of this dimension of modernity as export understands modernity as emerging from Europe, say from the mid-fifteenth century, and slowly spreading outward like a million points of light into the patches of darkness that lie outside its foundational centre. Modernity in this guise was projected as an instrument of progress. The guiding concepts often associated with it – instrumental rationality, the development of capitalism – emerged in the debate between theological and scientific reason, and provided the foundation for the period of European Renaissance and Enlightenment, in which two structures of power and domination that marked the Middle Ages – feudalism and theological absolutism – collapsed. Scientific rationality and individual property that formed the basis of capital accumulation were triumphant. This collapse shifted the scales of sovereign power from the theological to the secular.

The chief principles of secularism – individual liberty, political sovereignty, democratic forms of governance, capitalism, etc. – defined its universal character and furnished its master narrative. Thus emerged the rightness of the European model, not only for its diverse societies, but also for other societies and civilisations across the rest of the world. Most importantly, the export of European modernity became not only a justification for, but a principal part of global imperialism. Among serious critics, the master narrative made the claims of universality susceptible to epistemological and historical distortion when deployed in the service of European imperialism. There is good reason for the criticism. Some historians on the right, such as Niall Ferguson, have argued that modern European imperialism, specifically that of the British Empire, was actually a good thing, not to be regretted, as it bestowed a semblance of modernity on those privileged enough to have been recipients of the Empire's civilising zeal.[1] So on the one hand there is *grand* modernity in all its European manifestations in reason and progress, and on the other is what could be called *petit* modernity, which represents the export kind, a sort of quotation, which some would go so far as to designate a mimic modernity through its various European references.

It is this relation between *grand* and *petit* modernity that has contributed to the widespread search for facilities of modernity that represent what the Indian Marxist historian Dipesh Chakrabarty would call modernity's heterotemporal history.[2] Chakrabarty argues that the various scenes of modernity observed from the point of view of a heterotemporal composition of history reveals the extent to which experiences of modernity are shot through with the particularities of each given locale, therefore deregulating any idea of one dominant universalism of historical experience. Such experiences, he argues, are structured within specific epistemological conditions that take account of diverse modes of social identity and discourse. Throughout the twentieth century, all across the world, diverse cultural contexts made adapting or translating modernity into specific local variants a pathway towards modernisation, by acquiring the accoutrements of a modern society. Because of colonial experience this resulted in what could be referred to as *grand* modernity writ small in cultures – Chakrabarty's case study was India – perceived to be in historical transition from colonialism to postcolonialism. In comparing different types of modernity, and in our attempts to describe their different characteristics we are constantly confronted with the persistent tension between *grand* modernity and *petit* modernity. How can this tension be resolved? And how can the fundamental historical experiences and the particularities of locale that attend them be reconciled or even compared? It strikes me that all recent attempts to make sense of modernity and bend it toward the multiple situated *petit* modernities – again Chakrabarty would have called these 'provincialities' – are premised on finding a way to render the divergent experiences and uses of modernity, namely

the necessity to historicise and ground them in traditions of thought and practice.

FORMS OF TRANSFORMATION: MODERNITY AS META-LANGUAGE

To HISTORICISE MODERNITY is not only to ground it within the conditions of social, political and economic life, it is also to recognise it as a meta-language with which cultural systems become codified and gain modern legitimation. The idea of modernity as a meta-language has been particularly acute for me over the past year. To travel in China and South Korea recently is to encounter this meta-language in action and in many guises. All around cities like Seoul, Busan, Shanghai, Beijing, Chengdu, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Taipei, etc., the clatter of machinery erecting impressive infrastructures sounded like the drill of the Morse code typing out the meta-language of modernisation. These structures – from museums, opera houses and theatres to stadiums, sporting centres, high-speed train lines, airports, stock exchanges, shopping malls and luxury apartments – bring alive to our very eyes brand new urban conditions and cultural spheres that were not remotely imaginable a generation ago. The cities of East Asia have become the playground of global architects enjoying the patronage of both public and private developers.

In fact, over the course of the last sixteen months,[3] I have had occasion to travel repeatedly to South Korea and China. On numerous trips, as part of my research work as a curator, this situation of urban transformation and social renewal was visible everywhere. Underscoring the experiences of these trips is an observation of the scale of growth of the contemporary art world: artists, galleries, collectors, exhibition spaces, museums and art fairs all are making their way to Beijing and Shanghai. In China alone, the restless imagination and ambition shaping the landscape of contemporary art is breathtaking. Along with this shift, especially among intellectuals and artists, a reverse phenomenon of migration is occurring, namely the relocation back to an Asian context from which many of them had emigrated years before. Yet it is not only the infrastructures of the state and private speculation that are being revived, but the artistic and intellectual cultures of many cities are also being remapped. New centres are definitely emerging, but rather than cultural and intellectual capital being concentrated in a limited number of cities, it is being dispersed in many cities as the reverse migration of ideas continues to explode and expand the cultural parameters of new China and South Korea.

OKWUI ENWEZOR [BELOW] responding to NICOLAS BOURRIAUD's [TOP] definition of the new 'modern': 'altermodern'. The session was chaired by London-based writer, curator and arist J.J. CHARLESWORTH.

THE BAZAAR OR WORLD'S FAIR OF MODERNISATION

I HAVE WITNESSED and marvelled at the breathtaking speed and scale of the modernisation occurring in both countries. Of course, the economies of these two countries – along with their modernisation, both in depth and in breadth – pale in comparison to Japan's, the immediate East Asian reference that lies equidistant to its two newly modernising neighbours. Both China and South Korea's financial strengths derive from a massive export economy. China, of course, is known as the factory of the world, a designation made possible by the fact that its factories are disproportionately the production centres of cheap global consumer goods that have transformed the 'Made in China' brand into a ubiquitous logo of global commerce. South Korea's industrial power, on the other hand, is characterised by a focus on advanced technology and heavy industry. Each of these two countries has built up its infrastructure through

the combination of *grand* and *petit* modernity, bringing together successful models from both East and West. That is, they are both undergoing modernisation based on the acquisition of instruments and institutions of Western modernity – I mean this in a superficial sense – within a relatively short span of time, yet without the wholesale discarding of local values that modify the importations.

The ongoing, large-scale process of modernisation in China and South Korea underscores part of the energy, excitement and sense of newness coursing through the various strata of each country, making them contemporary emblems of a new modernity. Travelling in Europe, on the other hand, conveys no such sense of energy, excitement or newness. Europe, on the contrary, feels old and dour in its majestic petrification. In fact, many European cities feel less like part of our time. With their miles of imperious ceremonial architecture and in the quaintness of the narrow, tourist-friendly, cobble-stoned streets, walking through these cities feels like being in a museum of modernity. The museumification of Europe is in fact the intention: the display of heritage, historical glory and dead past. Preservationists of this heritage and glory play the role of morticians of modernity.

Yet ancient cities like Beijing and Hangzhou – in a country that possesses a very old civilisation and society – in contrast feel nothing like museums. Where vestiges of the past exist, they tend to be peripheral rather than central to modern Chinese cities. These cities, if anything, could be likened to temporary exhibitions of city-making, a succession of dizzying obsolescence; a bazaar or world's fair of modernisation. The cities' skylines are full of glass boxes crowned with the pitched green roofs of the classical Chinese

pagoda. This hybridisation may appear absurd to us now, until we remember that, not too long ago, postmodern architecture in the West was busily inventing these trumped-up styles of the classical and the modern based on a similarly invented autochthonous Western past. Like latter-day biennales, Chinese cities are theatres of the grand statement, a lot of which have no other purpose than to impress and inspire awe. This has been achieved by what some have argued as indiscriminate modernisation and urbanisation schemes that have erased much of the cultural heritage of old China, sweeping out and destroying many old neighbourhoods and putting in their place unremarkable architecture.[4] Chinese bureaucrats, urban planners and developers, like latter-day Baron Hausmanns, are simply unsympathetic to any idea that cities like Beijing need to be historicised, that is to say museumified. Modernity is a continuous project. Its principal features, they may reason, are at best contingent. By this conjecture, I want to seek out what is currently at play in the relations of discourse in which the particularities or provincialities – I take this to mean the conditions and situations that generate them – of modernity are situated through the practice, production, dissemination and reception of contemporary art, far from any claims to a *grand* heritage or an arriviste, mimic *petit* translation.

IN HIS LECTURE AND SUBSEQUENT ESSAY, ENWEZOR drew on works such as THOMAS HIRSCHORN's *Bataille Monument* 2002 [TOP] and [BELOW] GUY TILLIM's *Congo Series* (this work showing supporters of Jean-Pierre Bemba on their way to a rally in Kinshasa, July 2006).

THE ALTERMODERN AND HABITATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY ART

IF THE CURRENT SPATE of modernisation in China effectively lays waste to heritage and historical glory and instead emphasises contingency, might it not be reasonable to argue for the non-universal nature

of modernity as such? This certainly would be true when applied to contemporary art. We are constantly entertained and exercised in equal measure by the notion that there is no red line running from modernism to contemporary art. For the pedagogues of the existence of such lineage, the chief emblem of this unbroken narrative can be found in the attention given to the procedures and ideas of the Western historical avant-gardes by contemporary artists. On the other hand, I take the view of this claim, *pace* Chakrabarty, as a provincial account of the complexity of contemporary art. To understand its various vectors, we need then to *provincialise modernism*. There is no one lineage of modernism or, for that matter, of contemporary art. Looking for an equivalent of an Andy Warhol in Mao's China is to be seriously blind to the fact that China of the Pop art era had neither a consumer society nor a capitalist structure, two things that were instrumentalised in Warhol's critique and usage of its images. In that sense, Pop art would be anathema to the revolutionary program – and, one might even claim, to the avant-garde imagination – of such a period in China that coincides with the condition and situation that fostered Warhol's analytical excavation of American mass media and consumer culture. But the absence of Pop art in China in the 1960s is not the same as the absence of 'progressive' contemporary Chinese art during that period, even if such contemporary art may have been subdued by the aggressive destruction of the Cultural Revolution.

If we are to make sense of contemporary art during this period in China and the United States, then we have to wield the heterotemporal tools of history-writing; in so doing, we will see how differently situated American and Chinese artists were at this time. Despite the importance of globalisation in mediating the recent accounts of contemporary art – a world in which artists like Huang Yong Ping, Zhang Huan, Xu Bing, Matthew Barney, Andreas Gursky and Jeff Koons, for instance, are contemporaries – we can apply the same mode of argument against any uniform or unifocal view of artistic practice today. When Huang Yong Ping, in the work *A History of Chinese Painting*

and a Concise History of Modern Painting washed in a Washing Machine for Two Minutes 1987 (Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis: below centre), washed two art historical texts – the first by Wang Bomin and the latter, one of the first books of Western art history published in China, Herbert Read's *A Concise History of Modern Painting* – in a washing machine, the result is a mound of pulped ideology, a history of hybridisation rather than universalism.[5] If we apply the same lens, say, to the work of Yinka Shonibare, a Nigerian artist working in London, we will again see how he has made the tension between histories, narratives, and the mythologies of modernity, identity and subjectivity important ingredients in his continuous attempts to deconstruct the invention of an African tradition by imperialism. The locus of Shonibare's theatrical and sometimes treacly installations is the fiction of the African fabric he employs. These fabrics and their busy patterns and vivid colours are often taken to be an authentic symbol of an African past. But they are in fact, products of colonial economic transactions that moved from Indonesia to the factories of England and Netherlands, to the markets of West, East and Central Africa, and ultimately to Brixton. These artists inhabit what could be called the provincialities of modernity and have incisively traced diverse paths of modernity through them. By examining these different locales of practice, as well as the historical experiences that inform them, we learn a lot more about the contingent conditions of modernity than about its universalism. Here again, Chakrabarty offers a useful framework in this regard by dint of what he refers to as 'habitations of modernity.'[6]

What could these habitations of modernity be? On what maps do they appear? And in what forms and shapes? The search for the habitations of modernity seems to me the crux of the 'altermodern' , the subject of the 2009 Tate Triennial exhibition and the accompanying discursive projects organised by Nicolas Bourriaud, its curator. In his outline to the altermodern project, Bourriaud lays out an intellectual and cultural itinerary, a jagged map of simultaneity and discontinuity; overlapping narratives and contigu-
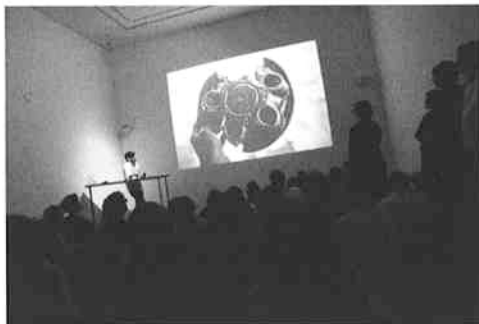
ous sites of production that form the basis of contemporary art practice globally. The chief claim of the altermodern project is simple: to discover the current habitations of contemporary practice. Thus the altermodern proposes the rejection of rigid structures put in place by a stubborn and implacable modernity and the modernist ideal of artistic autonomy. In the same way, it manifests a rebellion against the systematisation of artistic production based on a singular, universalised conception of artistic paradigms. If there is anything that marks the path of the altermodern, it would be the provincialities of contemporary art practice today – that is, the degree to which these practices, however globalised they may appear, are also informed by specific epistemological models and aesthetic conditions. Within this scheme, Bourriaud sets out to exmaine for us the unfolding of the diverse fields of contemporary art practice that have been unsettled by global links. But, more importantly, these practices are measured against the totalising principles of *grand* modernity.

TRIS VONNA-MICHELL uses the tradition of storytelling to make energetic performances that take the audience on a mental and physical journey. His narratives, both fictional and non-fictional, explore the ways history is passed on. *Auto-Tracking: From Cellar to Garret* was a new performance piece, conducted in six acts (each lasting approx. 7 mins). It reworked previous narratives exploring notions of personal and historical spaces and monuments, which are embodied, fabricated or sought for. The spoken-word monologue interwove past and current verbal scripts, performed between interludes of audio field-recordings.

At the core of the altermodern's jagged map is its description of what its author refers to in his introductory paper as the 'offshore' location of contemporary art practice.[7] However, I will foreground the location of these contemporary practices as indicative of a drive toward an off-centre principle, namely the multifocal, multilocal, heterotemporal and dispersed structures around which contemporary art is often organised and convened. This multiply located off-centre – which might not be analogous to Bourriaud's notion of offshore-based production – is not the same as the logic of decentred locations. Rather, the off-centre is structured by the simultaneous existence of multiple centres. In this way, rather than being the decentring of the universal, or the relocation of the centre of contemporary art, as the notion of the offshore suggests, it becomes instead, the emergence of multiplicity, the breakdown of cultural or locational hierarchies, the absence of a singular locus or a limited number of centres.

TOWARD THE EXCENTRIC: POSTCOLONIALITY, POSTMODERNITY AND THE ALTERMODERN

TO A LARGE EXTENT, the discursive feature of the altermodern project seems to me a return to earlier debates that shaped postcolonial and postmodernist critiques of modernity and the aesthetic principle of the universal. At the same time, they launched an attack on modernism's focus on a unifocal rather than dialogic modernity. Embracing these critiques, Bourriaud's project sets out to explore the excentric[8] and dialogic nature of art today, including its scattered trajectories and multiple temporalities, by questioning and provincialising the idea of the centre, by decentring its imaginary, as Chakrabarty posits in his provocative book *Provincializing Europe*.[9] Yet this excentric dimension of modern and contemporary art is not necessarily a rejection of modernity and modernism; rather it articulates the shift to off-centre structures of production and dissemination; the dispersal of the universal, the refusal of the monolithic, a rebellion against monoculturalism. In this way, what the altermodern proposes is a rephrasing of prior arguments. The objective is to propose a new terminology, one that could succinctly capture both the emergence of multiple cultural fields as they overspill into diverse arenas of thinking and practice, and a reconceptualisation of the structures of legitimation that follow in their wake. In his text, Bourriaud makes concrete what he sees as the field of the altermodern, describing his model as

> an attempt to redefine modernity in the era of globalisation. A state of mind more than a 'movement', the altermodern goes against cultural standardisation and massification on one hand, against nationalisms and cultural relativism on the other, by positioning itself within the world cultural gaps, putting translation, wander-

ing and culture-crossings at the centre of art production. Offshore-based, it forms clusters and archipelagos of thought against the continental 'mainstream': the altermodern artist produces links between signs far away from each other, explores the past and the present to create original paths.

Envisioning time as a multiplicity rather than as a linear progress, the altermodern artist considers the past as a territory to explore, and navigates throughout history as well as all the planetary time zones. Altermodern is heterochronical. Formally speaking, altermodern art privileges processes and dynamic forms to unidimensional single objects, trajectories to static masses.[10]

THE OFFSHORE, OFF-CENTRE AND PROCEDURES OF RELATION

THE FORMULATION of the altermodern reflects precisely Eduoard Glissant's theory of the 'poetics of relation,'[11] an idea predicated on linkages and networks of relations rather than on a singular focal point of practice. Bourriaud's idea of the altermodern addresses the cultural geography of relations of discourse and practice. He rightly reads contemporary art as that which always exceeds the borders of spatial confinement, beyond the limited geography of the nation and its totalised identity. The altermodern is structured around trajectories, connections, time zones: heterochronical pathways. Such relations suggest that the project is strongly in accord with a large corpus of scholarship and literature that has made conceiving an alternate system for evaluating modernity, one in which the off-centre contexts of contemporary art are a core intellectual principle. But have not the practices of art always been predicated on trajectories and detours, on dynamic forms and modes of production and dissemination? Is the role of contemporary art not always the constant refusal of orthodoxy; to display attentive vigilance against closure; to challenge all doctrinaire, unitary discourses on which some of the most powerful theses of classical modernism rest?

While Bourriaud identifies the shift in recent art as the desire to mobilise new localities of production, which he perceives today as proper to the field of artistic practice, a related field of historical research (as I have noted several times) has been examining the dimension of the off-centre principle of art-historical discourse for some time. The result of these research projects is slowly entering mainstream art-historical production. In the last decade, several scholars have explored the structure of the heterochronical (think, for instance, of Chakrabarty's notion of the heterotemporal method of organising historical frames) conception of modern and contemporary art history.

One such project is a recent exhibition, *Turns in Tropics: Artist-Curator*, developed for the *7th Gwangju Biennale* by the Manila-based Filipino art historian and curator Patrick Flores. In his exhibition project, he proposes an agenda of experimental and conceptualist practices from the late 1960s to early 1980s in Southeast Asia by four artists working in contexts in which the spirit of modernity was not only transforming the splintered identity of the nation, but rapid modernisation was also recalibrating the canons and languages of artistic practice.[12] Flores's emphasis of location represents a distinct cultural ecology, as it were, a habitation of modernity. His research explores not only the shifts in the language of artistic modernity – between the traditional and the experimental, from academic painting to conceptualism – it also interrogates the effects and receptions of modernity by these postcolonial artists in relation to their belonging to the nation.

In doing so, he directs attention to a text stencilled on a sculpture by the Malaysian artist Redza Piyadasa, which states that 'Artworks never exist in time, they have "entry points."'[13] In this text Piyadasa's sculpture declares the contingency of its own history. In fact, it historicises its own ambivalence towards canonical epistemology. What the stencilled text seems to be questioning is the idea of art as a universal sign that is a frozen historical datum. Instead, artworks are dynamic forces that seek out relations of discourse, map new topologies, and create multiple relations and pathways. Piyadasa's statement anticipates and echoes Bourriaud's own suggestion for altermodernist art, both in its claim for the trajectories of art, but also in the shifting historical and temporal dimension of the apprehension of such art.

While none of the four artists whose works were examined in the exhibition have appeared in standard, so-called mainstream surveys and accounts of experimental art and conceptualism of the late 1960s to the present, new off-centre historical research such as Flores's consistently drives us to the harbours of these archipelagos of modernity and contemporary art. The work of Ray Albano from the Philippines, Jim Supangkat from Indonesia, Piyadasa and the younger Thai artist, curator and art historian Apinan Poshyananda, have clear structural affinities with the work of their contemporaries practicing in the West. Yet their work – made with an awareness of, and in response to, specific historical conditions – shares similar objectives with the work of other postcolonial artists from different parts of the world, including those living and practicing in Europe.

These objectives would be familiar to emerging scholars such as Sunanda Sanyal, whose research focuses on modernism in Uganda;[14] Elizabeth Harney, who has written extensively about negritude and modernism in Senegal;[15] or the magisterial writing on modern and contemporary Indian art by the eminent critic Geeta Kapur.[16] Art historian Gao Minglu has engaged equally rigorously with contemporary Chinese art, and with the same objective.[17] In a similar vein of historical archaeology, the Princeton art historian Chika Okeke-Agulu has studied and written persuasively on the generative character of young modern Nigerian artists in the late 1950s during the period of decolonisation.[18] But by no means am I suggesting that many of the artists examined in these various research studies are obscure in their own artistic contexts. Their artistic trajectories belong exactly in the heterotemporal frames of historical reflection and the chronicles of their art are part of the heterochronical criticism and curating that has been part of the discourse of twentieth- and twenty-first-century modernity. However, viewed with the lens of a univocal modernist history, one that is predicated on the primacy of centres of practice – what Bourriaud refers to as the 'continental "mainstream"' – can these practices be understood as forming more than an archipelago, and in fact exceed the altermodernist impulse? They certainly do expand the purely modernist notion of artistic competence. These issues are at the core of recent writings and research by the British-Ghanaian art historian and cultural critic Kobena Mercer, who explores the diverse off-centre contexts of late modernism and contemporary art in a series of anthologies focused on artistic practices and artists in Africa, Asia and Europe.[19] Similar issues were mapped in the seminal 1989 exhibition, *The Other Story*, a project curated by the Pakistan-born British artist and critic, Rasheed Araeen at the Hayward Gallery, wherein he examined the contributions of hitherto unrecognised non-western modernist artists to European modernism.[20]

These surveys and situations of off-centredness are emblematic of the large historical gaps which today, in the era of globalisation, need to be reconciled with dominant paradigms of artistic discourse. In seeking to historicise these contexts of production and practice, a dialogic system of evaluation is established. It resolutely veers away from the standard and received notions of modernity, especially in the hierarchical segmentations that have been the prevailing point of entry into its review of off-centre practices.

MODERNITY, POSTCOLONIALITY AND SOVEREIGN SUBJECTIVITY

WHATEVER THE ENTRY POINT for the altermodern artists, there remain some boundaries between the locations of contemporary artistic practice and the historical production of modern subjectivity. These boundaries are tied up with the unfinished nature of the project of modernity. Consequently, I want to examine in more detail some ideas of modernity that could be related to the way hierarchies operate in the recognition and historicisation of artists and their locations of practice. The course I will follow could be likened to navigating the different levels and segments of *grand* and *petit* modernity, albeit with degrees of separation designating stages of development, movements, breaks in cultural logics, ossification of epistemological models, and transitions to which we ascribe the norms of the modern world. One logic of modernity to which the altermodern responds is globalisation, a series of processes synonymous with the emergence of a worldwide system of capitalism. We could understand this modernity, in its teleological unfolding, as part of the current manifestation of globalisation as a force-field of winners, near winners and losers. (The losers being, obviously, those thoroughly subordinated and utterly disenfranchised by modernity's centuries-long progression

from the worlds of indenture, slavery, imperialism and colonialism, to the aggressive, retributive wars of recent memory.)

This field of retributive conduct has at its disposal the overwhelming capacity to erase and deracinate subjectivities that inhabit the cultural localities of *petit* modernity. This makes the large claims ascribed to *grand* modernity less an avatar of enlightened cultural and material transformation, and more a structure with a dark core. It seems fairly impossible to think of modernity without linking it to concepts such as sovereignty, equality and liberty as they have been developed across domains of life and social practices. *Pace* Michel Foucault's theory of biopower,[21] a range of thinkers have focused on this dimension of modernity, a space in which the master and slave dialectic is writ large. This dialectic, developed by Hegel, dissociates sovereignty from the practice of self-governance, and instead embeds it in the interrogation of the relations between power and subordination.

However, subordination is directly linked to how power exposes the subordinated to structures of violence, to acts of historical erasure. In this area of analysis, Giorgio Agamben's extension of biopower and *biopolitics* was an attempt to sketch out the conditions around which what he calls *naked life* is summoned: a state of living in which individual sovereignty is exposed to its most basic, barest dimension, to execution.[22] In terms of ideas surrounding modernity and colonialism, this thinking has been singularly illuminating, and has been taken up by other thinkers. The feminist literary scholar Judith Butler, for example, in a recent reflection on the prosecution of the war on terror and the hopelessness of prisoners caught in its principal non-place, Guantanamo Bay, addressed the issue of naked life in the essay 'Precarious Life.'[23]

Pushing further the frontier of this thinking is the powerful writing of theorist Achille Mbembe, especially in an essay in which he summarises the dimensions of biopower, bare and precarious life as the zone of *necropolitics*. In the essay Mbembe explored the fundamental relationship between modernity and violence, particularly in the apparatuses of the colonial regime, such that 'To exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power.'[24] For

Mbembe, *necropolitics* is the condition under which conducts related to sovereignty – as he amply demonstrates by citing the policy of apartheid in South Africa or the predicament of the Palestinians in the occupied territories – are inextricably bound up with exercises of control over existence, of individual lives and their narratives. Most examinations of the artistic work coming out of South Africa during the apartheid era confirms how artists were overwhelmingly preoccupied with the structures of violence and its direct manifestation as part of the condition of colonial modernity and thereby establishes art as one exploration of the question of sovereignty. Here, resistance to violence and the rigorous assertion of sovereign subjectivity becomes in itself the subject and narrative of art and cultural production.

Facing away from culture, Mbembe in his critique, for example, sees political theory as tending to associate sovereignty with issues of autonomy, be it that of the state or of the individual. He argues however, that

> The romance of sovereignty, in this case, rests on the belief that the subject is the master and the controlling author of his or her own meaning. Sovereignty is therefore defined as a twofold process of *self-institution* and *self-limitation* (fixing one's own limits for oneself). The exercise of sovereignty, in turn, consists in society's capacity for self-creation through recourse to institutions inspired by specific social and imaginary significations.[25]

To distinguish this relation of *self-institution* and *self-limitation*, the central concern he notes targets instead 'those figures of sovereignty whose central project is not the struggle for autonomy but *the generalised instrumentalisation of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations*.'[26] Two of Mbembe's historical examples are South Africa and Palestine. In the fate of these two spaces, he identifies the fundamental rationality of modernity, arguing, 'that modernity was at the origin of multiple concepts of sovereignty – and therefore of the biopolitical.'[27] Artworks such as those by William Kentridge, in films such as *Ubu Tells the Truth* 1997, and Paul Stopforth, in his 1980 drawing series *Death of Steve Biko*, to name only two instances from South Africa; and by Emily Jacir in her exhibition *Where We*

Come From 2003, dealing with the emotions of separation, confinement, banishment and exile experienced by Palestinians – all form part of the artistic responses to the concepts of sovereignty and the biopolitical.

It strikes me that the idea of the altermodern, as it deviates from the limits placed on life and subjectivity by the instrumental violence of modernity, cannot be captured by focusing alone on shifts in locales of practice or by strategies of resistance against domination. The altermodern is to be found in the work of art itself; the work of art as a manifestation of pure difference in all the social, cultural and political signs it wields to elaborate that difference. It is the space in which to fulfil the radical gesture of refusal and disobedience, not in the formal sense, but in the ethical and epistemological sense. Such a stance – what I take to be altermodern – with difference writ large as the fundamental quest of the object of art, can be identified in such diverse works as the installations of Thomas Hirschhorn, the radiant paintings of Chris Ofili, the splayed anatomies of Marlene Dumas, the paintings on animal sacrifice as a metaphor for human suffering by Iba Ndiaye, the 2008 film *Hunger* by Steve McQueen and many more.

FRENCH PHILOSOPHER JORDI VIDAL's *Servitude and Simulacra*, co-directed with STÉPHANE GOXE was screened at the Altermodern Prologue. It is at once a filmic essay about contemporary thought, a curated exhibition commentated by its author, and a supplement to his book of the same title. VIDAL has produced polemical statements against postmodernism and its reduction of modernism's promise of social equality and justice.

FOUR MODERNITIES

IN NAVIGATING the different segments of modernity, one could well imagine the different levels of its development or in the hierarchical layers of its construction, as the zones of differing concepts of life and death, subject and non-subject, as the sites of the biopolitical, as the scenes of struggle of sovereignty, as domains of exception. Here I am employing the segments metaphorically to situate the hierarchies of modernity, and in so doing to catch its over-spill into domains of everyday practice, crucially art.

Considering this over-spill, and following the schema of the hierarchies of modernity, especially as it bears on cultural and artistic practice, I want to conceptualise what I see as the four domains of modernity. The first three domains lays out the architecture for thinking the link between differing zones of life and, indirectly, cultural practice. The fourth and last is sceptical of attributes of modernity as such. It is obvious that when the concept of modernity is broached in recent scholarship, the defining characteristic is overwhelmingly skewed toward the idea of one single modernity, that being the idea that modernity is essentially a project fundamentally connected to the development of Western capitalism and imperialism. Fredric Jameson's book, *A Singular Modernity*,[28] partly suggests this. In fact, he was brutally sceptical of recent attempts to expand the definitions of modernity into such things as 'alternative modernity', 'African modernity', 'subaltern modernity' or other such designations. To him modernity is inextricably bound to capitalism, and globalisation is its current and main feature. But by perceiving all other modernities as flowing from this one single, grand narrative as the fount of historical development, what emerges is a narrower, unifocal, monocultural and less heterochronical perspective of modernity.

However, new debates have been historicising the discourses of modernity in other to propose a more heterogeneous, multifocal, polycentric, broader interpretation of categories of modernity. Many of the recent scholarship do insist that there has never been a single modernity but multiple modernities, as S.N. Eisenstadt has argued.[29] The economist and philosopher Amartya Sen also applies a multifocal interpretation of modernity as he lays out and describes the changing modalities of modernity based on a broad view of the human community and identity.[30] Björn Wittrock develops a comparative analysis of early modernity, examining particularly the dimensions of the public sphere in the Indian subcontinent,

Europe, China and Japan.[31] The French *Annales* historian, Fernand Braudel, also argues for the diachronic dimension of modernity as a long process of slow evolution in which there are no linear, unidirectional flows of time. Rather than a singular causality, he places a strong emphasis on the study of microsystems and events – on trade and cultural exchanges among competing interests in the Mediterranean, for example – that provide a more complex, but overarching world picture.[32] In the context of twentieth-century globalisation, Arjun Appadurai argues for a modernity seen and experienced predominantly through a scalar analysis of mediated exchanges telegraphed by representations such as images, sound, technology and ideas.[33] The philosopher Kwame Appiah has recently examined modernity through the lens of cosmopolitanism,[34] a view that appears to be in accord with some of the objectives of the altermodern conception of contemporary art.

There are four categories that I identify as emblematic of the conditions of modernity today: *supermodernity*, *andromodernity*, *speciousmodernity* and *aftermodernity*. For the sake of our focus on visual modernity, my categories may simplify the point. But they will nonetheless serve as points of entry for the photographic images I will reference later.

A. *SUPERMODERNITY*

THE FIRST CATEGORY postulates the essential forms of modernity through the general character and forms it has taken in European and western culture. This category of modernity emerges directly from the grand narrative of modernity. It is the zone of what I call *supermodernity*, to borrow Marc Augé's term. *Supermodernity* represents the idea of the 'centre'. It is a domain of power, and is often understood as greatly evolved, or highly '*advanced*' or '*developed*'. It is generally acknowledged as fundamental to the development of the entire framework of global modernity, namely the world system of capitalism. Therefore, it is foundational to all other subsequent claims and discourses of modernity. All of them follow in the wake of *supermodernity*. The main coordinates of *supermodernity*, as developed through the Enlightenment, are marked by notions such as *freedom*, *progress*, *rationality* and *empiricism*. It is through these ideas that the concepts of sovereignty and autonomy emerge.

To understand the nature of the next two categories of modernity requires paying close attention to the four coordinates exemplified in *supermodernity*, because they are the framing devices that allow us to describe whether a cultural sphere is pre-modern, modern or anti-modern, insofar as it concerns the world of modernity that we have inherited since the ages of discovery and imperialism. *Supermodernity* is deeply embedded in structures of power and has at its disposal superior and formidable infrastructures of force to continuously maintain and advance its agenda. More importantly, it tends to represent our view of modernity in relation to cultural positions and political contexts that may subscribe to the idea of modernity for which Bourriaud has gone searching for new possible artistic imaginaries that deviate from or may even blaspheme against its suppositions. For six centuries, *supermodernity* has been stubbornly resilient and has remained the example to which other modernities respond. This is the modernity that is well-captured in Mbembe's *necropolitics*, because of its capacity to standardise zones of living and practice.

B. *ANDROMODERNITY*

THIS BRINGS US to the next category of modernity, its second level. If *supermodernity* understands and claims for itself the sole category of the developed and advanced, we can designate the next level, which – because of historical circumstances – is imagined as not to have evolved to the same tertiary degree, as *developing* modernity. It is not difficult to guess which segments of the global order occupy this circle of modernity. Specifically, developing modernity today refers to broad swaths of Asia, especially China, India, South Korea, etc. In a true sense, this circle of modernity is caught in a cycle that I designate as *andromodernity*, meaning that it is a hybrid form of modernity, achieved through a kind of accelerated type of development, while also devising alternative models of development. *Andromodernity*, as such, is a lesser modernity since its principal emphasis is development or modernisation, as Jürgen Habermas would have it.[35] Because it is still modernising, *andromodernity* has neither the global structure of power nor the infrastructure of economic, technological, political and epistemological force to promulgate its own agenda independent of the systems (museums, markets, academies) of *supermodernity*. It therefore

lacks, for the moment, the capacity for world dominance. Moreover, much of its development is seen to be based principally on the affective elements of modernity, that is they are deeply embedded in the process of modernisation; in the way things appear to be modern (hence the obsession with acquiring the accoutrements of a modern society, even if socially, there are distinctive differences between various zones of life.)

C. SPECIOUSMODERNITY

THIS BRINGS US to the next circle, which relates to the state of Islamic modernity today, especially in the present state of rebellion into which it is plunged. According to some detractors of the rise of political Islam and the extremist strains that have emerged out of the radicalisation of politics in Muslim societies, the problem of this rebellion is essentially one of modernity, the idea that these societies have never been modernised. One reason given for this state of affairs within Islam is the lack of democratic participation, which encourages and, in fact, foments authoritarian rule by either the clergy in theocratic Iran or the absolute monarchies in the Arabian peninsula or dictatorships such as Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Bashar al-Assad's Syria. The absence of democratic participation, the argument goes, makes it impossible to bring into existence modernising forces that would bring about modernity. When it is pointed out that countries like Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon and Turkey, have each undergone periods of radical secularisation throughout the twentieth century, such instances are often dismissed as superficial attempts at modernisation; therefore what they left in their wake is a kind of *speciousmodernity*. On the inverse, the long process of reform taking place within Muslim societies today is just as often labelled as a nihilistic, anti-modern movement. Whether specious or not, anti-modern or not, it is nevertheless the case that Muslim societies are radicalised, and within that radicalisation lies the seed of a biopolitical gesture that is a response to the programs of colonial modernity. Political Islam is thus not a consequence of a *speciousmodernity* that never assimilated into its structures an authentic modernity based on the four rationalities of *supermodernity*, but part of a postcolonial form of address seeking new models and political cultures.

The rise of Islamic radicalism throughout the Middle East, and the incipient revolution that exploded with the overthrow of the Shah Reza Pahlavi and the Peacock Throne in Iran, and with it, the sacking and occupation of the American embassy in Teheran by university students, unleashed a radical postcolonial force that is distinct from the forces of decolonisation in the 1950s and 1960s. The overthrow of the Shah not only revived political Islam, it placed it at the centre of global discursive formations in which it has remained since the founding of Al-Qaeda in the 1990s. Though political Islam was already well financed – both ideologically and intellectually with the formation of the Muslim Brotherhood by Hassan Al-Bana in Egypt in the 1920s, and its intellectual transformation by its chief ideologue Sayyid Qutb – the first demonstration of political Islam's will to globality was the theocratic organisation of its power in Iran in 1979.[36] The Islamic revolution in Iran signalled the changed context of superpower politics or, *pace* Mbembe, *necropolitics*. It not only introduced a new actor on the ideological landscape – an actor who decides on the limits of life and controls and mobilises the organisations of death – it also imagined a new political community separate from and permanently antagonistic to structures of power and infrastructures of force specific to *supermodernity*. As such, the early 1980s inaugurated a remarkable cultural and political shift in global terms.

The signal event of this historical shift was the return of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to Teheran from exile in Paris after the triumph of the resistance against the Shah. As the spiritual leader of the Islamic theocracy that has governed Iran to date, Khomeini presided over the radical ideological repositioning of Iran away from the epistemological and cultural dominance of the West to Islamic ethics, not only as a system of governance but as a worldview based on the Koran as the supreme tool of religious, political, cultural, social and economic conduct and identity. The revolution in Iran was not just an act of insurrection against *supermodernity*, attacking the dominant assumptions of imperialism that accompany it; the revolution posited itself as an instrument of spiritual and therefore social and cultural purification from the stain of Western, godless decadence. In the end the revolution, though political in the pedestrian sense, was in fact, about culture and identity: Islamic modernity as a counter-model and real

alternative to *supermodernity*. This position of political Islam is in remarkable accord with the idea of the altermodern.

Thus, the test for the power of persuasion of *supermodernity* can be partly analysed through the sanguine postcolonial lessons of the Islamic revolution and the various struggles – for better or worse – that have been undertaken by social and political forces radicalised by their resentment of the machinations of the West in Muslim societies. Structuring this radicalisation, and all the splintered cultural ideas and ideologies that rise from it, is the collision of two irreconcilable positions: on the one hand a Western ethnocentric exceptionalism that continues to prescribe a civilising ethos for the Muslim world, and on the other, an Islamic fundamentalism that mercilessly attacks the West and its allies with nihilistic violence. This meeting is a collision of political forces and cultural logics, an altermodernist relation marked by a

NAVIN RAWANCHAIKUL is a Thai artist who divides his time between Thailand and Japan, and whose family roots are Indian and Hindu-Punjabi. For the Altermodern Prologue he showed *Navins of Bollywood* 2006, which borrows from Bollywood song and dance cinema, and is part of the artist's ongoing investigation into identity through his global search for other 'Navins'.

face-off between colonial modernity and postcolonial modernity. However, the distance between colonial modernity and postcolonial modernity is one of degrees, for each incorporates and contradicts the other. Each is the mirror of the other. Their strained interpretation of the other is what has produced the kind of cultural antagonism that currently bedevils Western and postcolonial discursive formations, further enervating the competing institutional structures, epistemology, ideals, faith and identity.

D. *AFTERMODERN*

SO FAR, WE HAVE ADDRESSED the three dominant ideas of current thinking about modernity. The fourth idea concerns an area of the world – Africa – seen to be the most opaque to the persuasions of *supermodernity*. Africa is located in the nethermost part of modernity, relegated to an epistemology of non-existence that has never been modern, to literalise Bruno Latour's idea that the world has never been modern.[37] Africa shares part of the scorn about its non-modernity that is also directed at the Muslim world. But Islamic societies do enjoy greater respect than Africa, because, there is a classical Islamic past which Africa is said to lack. German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel made this explicit, when he wrote:

> Africa proper, as far as History goes back, has remained – for all purposes of connection with the rest of the world – shut up; it is the Gold land compressed within itself – the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night. Its isolated character originated, not merely in its tropical nature, but essentially in its geographical condition.[38]

If Africa is no part of historical consciousness, thereby lacking 'Spirit,' how can it lay claim to any experience of modernity if not from an education derived from the master narrative of *grand* modernity? If the Muslim world is speciously modern and Africa not yet modern, then the two societies exist in anti-rational systems of theocratic fundamentalism or tribal ethnocentrism. Each of these societies is reduced to cultural spheres whose experience of modernity have been developed out of oppression and violence and therefore in need of reconciling to modernity. However, Islamic societies tend to fare better than African ones in debates around modernity. Africa is a zone which many reflexively and categorically declare as the antithesis of the modern imagination, a place of the absence of modernity, where every aspect of the conditions of living specific to modernity has been effaced or erased. By this thinking, Africa is the true epigone of modernity. If Bourriaud posits the entire structure of his project as *altermodernist*, Africa, it may be said, at the very least is *aftermodern* not only because the narratives of modernity in Africa are predicated on an encounter of antagonism but also in the invention of a new African char-

acter of modernity that emerges after the end of modernity. The modernity to which Africa responds, and which it struggles to disaggregate from its social context, is the architecture of colonial modernity. It is in this sense that situations of modernity in Africa are *aftermodern*, because, having no relation to history-making, its modernity can only emerge after the end of the modern. Such modernity, more than in other parts of world, would be based in large part on a project of disinheriting the violence of colonial modernity.

This is partly what the recent images produced by South African photographer Guy Tillim seem to suggest: that parts of Africa – Congo, Angola, Madagascar, Ghana and Mozambique – have undertaken inconclusive projects of modernisation. Tillim's photographs depict processes of anomie. Viewed through a conventional lens, these images tend to convey and confirm the idea that modernisation has been marked by failure in Africa. To a large extent, the images are products of a certain ethnography of modernity, in the same way that my perception of European cities evokes the spectral nature of a museum of petrified modernity.

Tillim has been photographing in Africa for more than a decade now. His images can be superficially described as reportage, a mode of photographic production that can either oversimplify complex situations or may illuminate aspects of such situations as worthy of examination. Working with the verve of a photojournalist and an aid worker, over the years Tillim has carefully inserted himself and his camera into spaces that would normally be off-bounds for most photographers. He has made various African cities the haunt of his photographic enterprise, for instance photographing over a period of six months in the tough tenements of Johannesburg, in modernist buildings that have entered a state of ruin as the urban context of the post-apartheid city became replaced by a sense of siege. Likewise, Tillim has roamed all over Africa, to various regions of conflict, searching or, as some would say, scavenging for images of societies in near-collapse. On first encountering many of Tillim's images, the tendency is to view his photographs as the work of a zealous sensationalist or an ethnographer inscribing fantasies of visual frisson against the backdrop of social collapse.

The recent series of work by Tillim, like his Jo'burg series, initially gave me pause, but looking more carefully at the selection of scenes and the organisation of the larger compendium, the logic of his approach revealed a study of contrasts between postcolonial state failure in Africa and the notion of a continent in the throes of entering *aftermodernity*. To my mind it is in the intersection between these contrasts, the promise and failure of decolonisation, and the slow process of a counter-modernity that is about to take root in Africa. Tillim summarises this vision of a yet to come modernity, writing about his images:

> These photographs are not collapsed histories of post-colonial African states or a meditation on aspects of late modernist era colonial structures, but a walk through avenues of dreams. Patrice Lumumba's dream, his nationalism, is discernible in the structures, if one reads the signs, as is the death of his dream, in these de facto monuments. How strange that modernism, which eschewed monument and past for nature and future, should carry such memory so well.[39]

Throughout different parts of Africa new discourses and patterns of modernisation are not only rethinking the entire agenda which colonial modernity bequeathed the continent, but social scientists and researchers have also been articulating possible theories for a type of modernity and a structure of modernisation that can take hold in Africa. This modernity, it is hoped, is one that will emerge at the end of the project of *supermodernity*. It will perhaps mark not only an ideal of the altermodern, but will initiate a new cycle of the *aftermodern*.

Tillim succinctly articulates that spirit of the yet-to-come: 'In the frailty of this strange and beautiful hybrid landscape struggling to contain the calamities of the past fifty years, there is an indisputably African identity. This is my embrace of it.'[40] His photographic project is an expression of the hope that showing the decaying legacy of colonial modernity in Africa is not an attempt to mourn the loss of some great past, but a possible *tabula rasa* for a future composition. It disarms and dispossesses the colonial inheritance, and shows, as Jürgen Habermas argues, that modernity is an incomplete project.[41]

NOTES

1. NIALL FERGUSON, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power*, New York 2004. In a subsequent work, **NIALL FERGUSON**, *Colossus: The Price of American Empire*, New York 2004, Ferguson actually argues for an expanded American adaptation of the British model.

2. DIPESH CHAKRABARTY, *Provincializing Europe: Post-colonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 2nd ed., Princeton 2007, p.xvii.

3. These trips, totalling around 15 visits – 4 to China and 11 to South Korea – took place between June 2007 and early November 2008. They were made while I worked in Gwangju, South Korea, as artistic director of *Gwangju Biennale*, an event founded in 1995, in the wake of South Korea's transition to democracy in the 1990s. The biennale form, an exhibition model that combines massive scale with unabashed theatricality, is itself a product of a certain idea of cultural modernity that has made its way from the late nineteenth century in Europe to the explosion it presently enjoys all over the world, and more so in Asia in the twenty-first century.

4. NICOLAI OUROUSSOFF, 'Lost in the New Beijing: The Old Neighborhood', *New York Times*, 27 July 2008; and 'In the Changing Face of Beijing, a Look at the New China', *New York Times*, 13 July 2008. In a comparative analysis of China and Persian Gulf cities like Dubai, Ouroussoff explored how the idea of modernisation on a massive scale has shifted visionary architecture that, in the past, was largely viewed sceptically by architects and was, for the most part, peripheral to new theories of urbanism. With the advent of these changes in China and in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain and Doha, etc., the new frontier of urban experimentation has moved to the East and declined in the West. See Ouroussoff, 'The New, New City', *New York Times*, 8 June 2008.

5. In a commentary about the intention of the work, **HUANG YONG PING** says, 'In China, regarding the two cultures of East and West, traditional and modern, it is constantly being discussed as to which is right, which is wrong, and how to blend the two. In my opinion, placing these two texts in the washing machine for two minutes symbolises this situation and well solves the problem much more effectively and appropriately than debates lasting a hundred years.' Quoted in **GAO MINGLU**, *The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art*, exh. cat., Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo and Millennium Museum, Beijing 2005, p.129

6. DIPESH CHAKRABARTY, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, Chicago 2002.

7. NICOLAS BOURRIAUD, published statement from a brochure outline for the 'Altermodern' program, Tate Britain, London April 2008.

8. In 2001, the first African Pavilion in the Venice Biennale in the exhibition *Authentic/Excentric*, curated by Salah Hassan and Olu Oguibe, argued for this sense of a dispersed zone of practice. For a productive curatorial and critical exploration of the idea of the excentric nature of contemporary art, see the accompanying catalogue, **SALAH HASSAN AND OLU OGUIBE** (eds.), *Authentic/Excentric: Conceptualism in Contemporary African Art*, Ithaca 2001.

9. CHAKRABARTY 2007, p.4.

10. BOURRIAUD 2008.

11. ÉDOUARD GLISSANT, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsey Wing, Ann Arbor 1996.

12. The four artists in the exhibition: Ray Albano (Philippines), Redza Piyadasa (Malaysia), Jim Supangkat (Indonesia) and Apinan Poshyananda (Thailand). All played multiple roles as influential artists, curators, critics and historians in each of their individual national contexts in the development of the discourses of modernity and contemporary art.

13. PATRICK D. FLORES, 'Turns in Tropics: Artist Curator' in Okwui Enwezor (ed.), *Annual Report: A Year in Exhibitions*, Gwangju 2008, p.263.

14. SUNANDA K. SANYAL, 'Transgressing Borders, Shaping an Art History: Rose Kirumira and Makerere's Legacy' in Tobias Döring (ed.), *African Cultures, Visual Arts and the Museum: Sights/Sites of Creativity and Conflict*, Matatu, 25–6, Amsterdam and New York 2002, pp.133–59.

15. ELIZABETH HARNEY, *In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960–1995* Durham 2004.

16. GEETA KAPUR, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*, New Delhi 2000.

17. MINGLU 2005; and **GAO MINGLU**, *The Ecology of Post-Cultural Revolution Frontier Art: Apartment Art in China, 1970–1990s*, Beijing 2008.

18. CHIKA OKEKE-AGULU, 'The Art Society and the Making of Postcolonial Modernism in Nigeria', unpublished lecture, Princeton University, 2008. See also the remarkable study of the relationship between negritude, postcolonialism and modernism in Harney 2004 and Gao Minglu 2005. These studies are among a growing list of scholarship directed at excavating the multifaceted histories of modern and contemporary art across divergent historical and cultural geographies. The studies illuminate the basic fact that buried within official Western mainstream art history are complex tendencies, narratives and structures of practice that do not easily conform to the teleological construction of modern and contemporary art. These histories, at the same time, reveal the diverse temporalities of modern art by showing that there is no single genealogy of artistic modernity or sense of innovation. Yet whatever lacunae these histories inhabit, they do reveal modernity as a series of trajectories moving in multiple directions, and they are equally informed by cultural, ideological, formal and aesthetic logics.

19. KOBENA MERCER (ed.), *Cosmopolitan Modernisms* (2005); *Discrepant Abstraction* (2006); *Pop Art and Vernacular Cultures* (2007); and *Exiles, Diasporas and Strangers* (2008); Annotating Art's Histories, London and Cambridge 2005–8.

20. See **RASHEEN ARAEEN**, *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain*, exh. cat., Hayward Gallery, London 1989. This landmark exhibition and its accompanying catalogue was one of the earliest attempts to employ postcolonial and postmodern critiques to examine the institutional exclusions of the practices of artists who were not deemed to properly belong within the mainstream canon of historical legitimation.

21. MICHEL FOUCAULT, 'Right of Death and Power Over Life', in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, I, New York 1990, pp.135–59.

22. GIORGIO AGAMBEN, *Homer Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford 1998.

23. JUDITH BUTLER, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, London and New York 2004.

24. ACHILLE MBEMBE, 'Necropolitics', trans. Libby Meintjes, Public Culture, vol.15, no.1, Winter 2003 p.12.

25. Ibid., p.13.

26. Ibid., p.14.

27. Ibid., p.13.

28. FREDRIC JAMESON, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present*, London and New York 2002.

29. SHMUEL N. EISENSTADT, 'Multiple Modernities', in *Daedalus*, vol.129, no.1, Winter 2000, pp.1–29.

30. AMARTYA SEN, *Identity and Violence: The Illusions of Destiny*, New York 2006.

31. BJÖRN WITTROCK, 'Early Modernities: Varieties and Transitions', in *Daedalus*, vol.127, no.3, Summer 1998, pp.19–40.

32. FERNAND BRAUDEL, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds, Berkeley 1995; for a more overarching study of the historical development in relation to modernity, see **FERNAND BRAUDEL**, *A History of Civilizations*, trans. Richard Mayne, London and New York 1993.

33. ARJUN APPADURAI, *Modernity At Large: The Cultural Dimension of Globalization*, Minneapolis 1996.

34. KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, New York 2007.

35. See **JÜRGEN HABERMAS**, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Essays*, trans. Frederick Lawrence, Cambridge, Mass. 1987.

36. The Iranian revolution marked a shift from the modern politics of Gamel Abdel Nasser's pan-Arabism.

37. See **BRUNO LATOUR**, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter, Cambridge 1993.

38. G.W.F. HEGEL, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree, New York 1956, p.91.

39. This is an excerpt from an email statement sent to the author by **GUY TILLIM** on 25 September 2008.

40. Ibid.

41. HABERMAS 1987.