

Talking to the Dead

Diasporic African Cinema and the Wisdom of Bonds

By

Jean-Olivier Tchouaffe

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Sometimes I feel like a motherless child
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child
A long way from home, a long way from home

African American Spiritual song

Slaves gave the world our rhythm in space
and time

Eddie Glaude

Those who are dead are not ever gone;
They are in the darkness that grows lighter
And in the darkness that grows darker.
The dead are not down in the earth;
They are in the trembling of the trees
In the groaning of the woods,
In the water that runs,
In the water that sleeps,
They are in the hut; they are in the crowd:
The dead are not dead.

From Les Souffles of Birago Diop

Bringing the gifts that
my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope
of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Maya Angelou, Still I Rise

There is an ancient Indian saying that something lives only as long as the last person who remembers it. My people have come to trust memory over history. Memory, like fire, is radiant and immutable while history serves only those who seek to control it, those who douse the flame of memory in order to put out the dangerous fire of truth. Beware these men for they are dangerous themselves and unwise. Their false history is written in the blood of those who might remember and of those who seek the truth.

Floyd 'Red Crow' Westermann (Dakota Sioux) actor, activist, singer

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Chapter 1

Talking to the Dead: A Native Context: On Diasporic Cinema and Discourse of the Reel

Talking to the Dead is an exhaustive spectrum of a diasporic cinematic corpus of prophetic tradition as a dispositive that features the work of underrepresented and underestimated filmmakers such as Jean-Pierre Bekolo, Ladj Ly, Mati Diop, Wanuri Kahiu, Rosine Mbakam, Ryan Coogler, Alice Diop, Nana Mensah, Gina Prince-Bythehood, Nikyatu Jusu, Raoul Peck, Myriam Charles, Ellie Foubi, Tracy Heather Strain, Jordan Peele, Sheila S. Walker, Margaret Brown, Pierre Yves Borgeaud, Rachid Hami and Abderrhamane Sissako and the homology between the articulation of the black experience and the law of the conservation of energy where nothing is lost but constantly transformed which include the legal right of recognition.

Precisely, how these filmmakers are connecting their artistic sovereignty to the cultural imagination, across numerous cinematic genres and media, speaking in and to history, to frame the Black Zeitgeist through the demonstration of the political relevance of an autonomous Black system of signification and radical subjectivity across history and a praxis of visual conquest to open productive zones of transgression to produce new forms of Black liberation reinvesting a past made as changeable as the future to underscore Édouard Glissant's "Le Tout Monde" as the logic of modernity and social utility. "Le Tout Monde" calls for the capacity to complexify the spatialization of coloniality by thinking outside conventional perceptual apparatuses to see the invisible from the visible, hear the inaudible from the audible, and

predict from the unpredictable with a subversive technological ethic to synthesize a new reality from the unthought aspect of things at the origin of beliefs systems that prevent genuine cultural engagement. The aim is to unlock the grip of trapped subjectivity while provoking public discourse across history that challenges a hermetic worldview embedded in preconceived and accepted belief systems, the besieged status quo, and uncanny reprisals. In this book, it is not about life and death, nor about history, but about the preservation of survival skills, substances, and self-expression of a Black tradition now rooted in the survival of the planet itself.

They do so with tools that deconstruct totems of coloniality while capturing global black practical activities and experience of subjectivity and kinship always alive in transition to reveal sociological coordinates that reveals blackness as a powerful object of study of historical necessities operating through multiples temporal spaces and manipulating times that gradually scale into what Edouard Glissant calls le "Tout-Monde." A world that opens up spaces to tell stories of the historically powerless being propelled to better futures, alongside, highlighting the complex relationships between blackness and the world. Thus, the necessity to deconstruct colonial and totemic notions of race and cultural destiny and aesthetic norms and how black cinema cannot be simply reduced to perceptual apparatuses. In this sense, this work focuses on contemporary African diasporic cinema to highlight the power of cinema to resurrect the dead and provide space for the continuous flow and unity of black consciousness in the *longue durée* of human history. In hindsight, the black power to produce their own history, norms and ethics alongside the pressures and limits of capitalist modes of production and the enclosure of its social reproduction. In practice, the power to understand the forces of conditioning and how they can be resisted bringing forth the central question of agency and structures that give these diasporic filmmakers the power to decipher future events in advance

In so doing, the book's modest aim is to provide a relevant context for confronting the realities of power and the nuances of the black experience in terms of self-determination. and claims of rights, against exclusionary power dynamics embedded in the imagination of apocalyptic coloniality and its forced and organized amnesia, to foreground new forms of expertise and the aesthetics of the sublime for the work of dispossession. More specifically, how the conditions of dispossession by memory and its aesthetics of the sublime are powerful objects of study that reveal sociological coordinates that relate to traces and archives of origin anchored in concrete material values rather than to a desire motivated by evanescent forms as the results of an objective illusion. Hence, the recognition that the black subjects cannot be trapped without considering a constellation of history, memory and other forms of aesthetic expressions.

Talking to the Dead, consequently, reflects on cinema as a technology of visual conquest to trace diasporic subaltern aesthetic genealogies in forms that remain legible for Africans in the diaspora across time and produce an ethics of reality that is the cement that unites these diasporic communities through a "sharing of an African's sensibility" promoting emancipatory practices motivated by the belief in the notion of perfectibility and fulfillment as the highest expression of freedom. Hence, the notion that transmission occupies a central place and forces us to rethink the notion of ethical commitment at a time where institutional logics stigmatize diversity and numbers seems to be the only one that counts, and this in the name of a policy to which we must submit, thus forgetting the basics of what it means to welcome the wisdom of others. So, what constitutes and can still constitute transmission today? These questions can only be addressed in an epistemological and, of course, ethical way in the midst of extreme social and political changes with the singularity of the black experience to highlight the disciplinary specificity embedded in this

historical journey which reveals the importance of Afro-descendant artists in the redefinition of modernity and postmodernity.

The black energy's metaphor functions as the infinite possibility of black historical subjectivity that defines modernity as an accumulation of events that structure the connection of the past to the present and vice versa. In short, how these processes that shape the diasporic filmmakers' artistic sovereignty as a critical praxis of creativity and re-subjectification mapping out a geography of the black diasporic memorial trajectories and cultural imagination to demonstrate the power to break out of disciplinary discourse of coloniality and violent policing of black lives. More, to highlight how traces of the past continue to inform contemporary forms of subjectivities, self-invention and power that extent beyond diasporic confines to highlight the complexities of encounters and its new anthropological emergence.

What is more noteworthy is a corpus of films embedded in an endless practice of subjectivity, creativity and self-production through an eschatology of progress unhindered by white normality and expectations about modernity. In this light, this works foregrounds the imaginary of the maroon or the black fugitive strongly connected not to the margin but the center of gravity of history. In this light, the centrality of space and time in the context of the struggle for future freedom and to complicate the temporal equations on history. Time and space are, therefore, central battlefields in this struggle and we must not confuse acceleration with urgency.

By all accounts, consequently, this black diasporic network and flow of images foreground issues of catastrophes and historical ruptures centered around the power to start over and the centrality of justice to make sense of history. In this sense, the power to identify and trace black subjectivity in the realm of aesthetics and how this cultural work contributes to the development of thinkable and transformable

material modalities opening up new spaces where new forms of reality are incarnated.

They do so across numerous cinematic genres, to provide a relevant context for confronting the realities of power and the nuances of the black experience in terms of dispossession, self-determination and claims of rights, against the imagination of apocalyptic coloniality and its forced and organized amnesia, to foreground new forms of expertise and the capacity for dispossession and the sublime. More specifically, how the conditions of dispossession by memory and its aesthetics of the sublime relate to traces and archives of origin anchored in concrete material values rather than to a desire motivated by evanescent forms as the results of an objective illusion. Consequently, an in-depth reflection on cinema as a technology of visual conquest to trace diasporic subaltern aesthetic genealogies in forms that remain legible for Africans in the diaspora across time and produce an ethics of reality that is the cement that unites these diasporic communities through a “sharing of an African’s sensibility” promoting emancipatory practices motivated by the belief in the notion of perfectibility and fulfillment as the highest expression of freedom.

Throughout it all, a systematic analysis on the creation of meaningful diasporic stories through an enduring African culture that resonates with the creation of new values out of the renewed energy of their sacred communion, patrimonial emotion and haptic responses to spotlight and unlock the specificity of the traces of their origin that confer a statue of authenticity through historical continuity and transmission and recognition in a world where social recognition is the currency.

It follows from this, the objectivity of images and a key part in the fabric of social reproduction no longer handed down by nature or God but by the product of history embedded in the empowering perpetual communion that structures the bonds between the living and the dead

in relation to the constant production of new forms of creativity and subjectivity enabling and embodying individual and collective transformation, demonstrating along the way, how agency and free will are achieved and how these diasporic spaces are mapped and re-mapped. An interrogation between stories and spaces extending cinematic narratives into the real world but which remain understudied in film studies.

Of course, to reclaim, incorporate and articulate the unique experience of black ancestry, memory and experience of time. This cinema foregrounds the black ancestor as the figure of black history palimpsest and sedimentation of meanings and an archive where history never gets lost. Thus, in the history of world cinema that complicates one's experience of the image and memory, the relationship between nature and technology, and our understanding of subjectivity and temporal production and a more sustainable relationship to the world which involves the production of new rituals and a new imaginary to consider alternative worldmaking. In all, a figure of creative autonomy who engenders relationship and capacities that opens pathways for an emancipatory future.

After all, this work modest goal is to highlight a timeline continuum embedded in the diversity and unicity from across the global black diaspora through the emancipatory power of cinematic technology repurposed and indigenized as the "Camera-Eye" which feature cinematic technology as a self-critical medium that intensifies reality through the magic of montage. Thus, a technology with a built-in power into consciousness, time and reality.

Most crucially, to communicate the black ancestor as an epistemological figure in the history of world cinema that complicates one's experience of the image and memory, the relationship between nature and technology, and our understanding of subjectivity and temporal production and a more sustainable relationship to the world which involves the production of new rituals and a new imaginary

to consider alternative worldmaking. This is because blackness is at the center of capitalist relationships from the beginning which put them into the status of contemporaneity and capitalist logics instead of being relegated to ancient timescapes.

That said, this work modest goal, is to highlight a timeline continuum embedded in the diversity and unicity from across the global black diaspora through the emancipatory power of cinematic technology repurposed and indigenized as the “Camera-Eye” which feature cinematic technology as a self-critical medium that intensifies reality through the magic of montage. Thus, a technology with a built-in power into consciousness, time and reality.

By nature of its very form, the examination of the black body as an engine of energy through technology. Better yet, a cinema of emergency through a medium and vehicle of visual culture that animate, connect and modulate blackness and processes of planetary entanglements foreshadowing the useful knowledge that black self-preservation and sacrifice are now tied up to the planet’s survival as a key arena around which to stage and explore the contemporary developments in our planet such as the Anthropocene.

A poetic that tinkers with genres to make multiple voices and experiences heard in order to give several points of view and call into question the single version of dominant History and to break the unity of the great story full of good conscience and falsehood about diasporic blackness and where all these films participate in an epiphany where each film brings its share of the truth in the construction of a collective story embedded in new possibilities. Possibilities which do not follow the linear time of chronology, nor that of the eternal return of original myths, but a time generated by the shocks of being, in the process of producing and subjectifying itself between past-present-future through the most intimate of our experiences of conscious and unconscious transmissions.

Talking to the Dead, consequently, draws on diasporic African cinema as a praxis of meditation and black aesthetic control that offer a world historical perspective on black oral histories and the passage of time and subjectivity, in an age where the degeneracy of productivity and the injunction of non-stop growth, policies of immediacy versus durability, where anything that suggests death is so frightening that it must be hidden, where ephemeral constructions proliferate, like the waste they generate, while the present and the past disappear before our eyes opening up the void of political dystopia. To be clear, how economic conditions affect political subjectivity overtime.

Similarly, this author does so through the lineage of the seminal figure of the black ancestor that black diasporic cinema functions as expressive forms that excavates and consolidates filiative structures and ties to strongly demonstrates how existence, by essence, is all the memory one can carry. This memory is the filial strength of the links by which Africans of the diaspora chained themselves to the power of ancestral wisdom as the surplus meaning of experience, the ability to disturb oppressive reality in order to rejoin it differently. This was the only way that the world remained habitable.

Black memory, consequently, bears witness to a history that goes back to Africa a long time ago. So, this kind of story always began before, very far away, in what Edouard Glissant calls "the country before", almost unknown, but of which traces remain. It also comes from the "plantation" system which crosses borders, bringing together, beyond countries and languages, those whom the political and economic system has made to violently cohabit on these colonized American lands which go from the South of the United States to Caribbean basin. and northern Latin America. Europe, Africa, America forms this crucible of creolization which includes racist violence, segregation, cross-breeding, cultural contacts, and the rise of a syncretic culture.¹

¹ *Éloge de la créolité*, 1989, Gallimard.

The figure of the black ancestor through the dialectic of presence/absence, simultaneously, highlights the power of resurrection, rehabilitation and re-inscription of black diasporic cinema to re-capture temporality deemed irretrievable through the "Camera-Eye." More important, how cinematic technology can be repurposed as an indigenous form of praxis of African subjectivity that cannot be reduced to the mechanical reproduction of images and the ruins of time but with the capacity not only to witness history and capture non-events as a categorical analysis of history alongside agency and the future that the powerful does not want us to have at a time when black survival is entangled with the fate of the planet. This is where black diasporic cinema functions as the pharmakon pushing forms of social organizations base on communitarian ethics of humility, reciprocity and solidarity.

The book, in particular, is predicated on the radical and the spectral presence, but historically sidelined, of the black ancestor in black diasporic cinema to foreground notions of flows, transitivity and relationship of transference and values. Fittingly, how the dynamics of circulation complicate notion of cognitive mapping that bring a complexity to the slaves that can neither be simply reduced to incapacitated subjectivity nor the mechanistic and claustrophobic institutional statutory hierarchy of a property. In effect, how the black diasporic filmmaker displays this creative capacity as the founding element of the capacity to exist within cinema reflecting a structuring psychic modality that opens up possibilities of a world open to creation, invention and sharing and give meaning to singular and common existence. In that sense, a cognitive structure of anticipation in a world where the survival of blackness is now linked to the fate of the planet signaling what the powerful wants the future to forget.

In fact, an emphasis on a collective of black diasporic films that addresses the Black uninterrupted subjectivity through the figure of the black ancestor to harvest liminal and invisible forms of black

perennial transmission of knowledge and experience. Fittingly, how slavery is also a mythological construction with the creative capacity to articulate and to share which opens the world, and manifests “the between”, “the possibility of being with each other », which inscribes the singular in the collective movement which creates the common historical. This “between” is specified by Bin Kimura, Japanese phenomenologist, he calls it by the concept “Aida” which echoes “the between,” for example, among the musicians of an orchestra and with their conductor in the presence of the public when the event of shared interpretation is harmonized by their simultaneously common contribution, mutual and singular to the collective work.²

In all, how liminality collapses space and time with aesthetic tools as forms of social organization, production of subjectivity and possibilities of action.

What is more, this mythological and aesthetic of fugitivity concept contains a complex continuum and legacy tracing along the way problems of subjectivity and connected to the outer politics of its space and time where non-being is an impossibility. Henceforth, how a slave aesthetic becomes a movement driven by a counter-imaginary and processes of socialization that allowed for alternative forms of subjectivities that bring complexities to notions of belonging and exclusion within E.P. Thomson’s argument that It was present at its own making, particularly, at a time where black survival is tied up with the planetary entanglement of the Anthropocene.³

² Stivale, Charles J. “Mythologies revisited: Roland Barthes and the left.” *Cultural studies* 16, no. 3 (2002): 457-484. Cutting, John. “On Kimura’s *Ecrits de psychopathologie phenomenologique*.” *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 8, no. 4 (2001): 337-338. Fukao, Kenjiro. “Life philosophy of Bin Kimura.” *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences Reports* 2, no. 3 (2023): e145.

³ Scholars such as W.E.B Dubois (1903), Jean-Paul Sartre (2007), Zora Neale Hurston (1935) and E.P. Thompson (2016) have studied how folks held captive can develop an alternation form of imagination

Thus, *a* cinematic tour de force turning dead time into life and living things foregrounding the impossibility of blackness non-being into actually existing archives and events where black people are active participants in the knowledge being produced reflecting and filling the gaps in homemaking processes for black diasporic communities. In fact, this active archival practice ensures time and consciousness into generational continuity animated by an objective outside, one can call soul or sacrifice, that animates black subjectivity to become an engine fueled by the power to constantly create new meanings. To be sure, an indigenous economy of meanings where non-being is an unimaginable possibility for a cinema driven by subjectivity as an organic engine where history functions as evidences of the institutional suppression and resurrection of black lives where black folks understand themselves better as a collective by constantly challenging contemporary politics and aesthetics and ushering a new anti-essentialist, individualistic and racialized materialist perspective to foreground a communal ethos through a web of reciprocities, obligations and consequences.⁴

For these reasons, the book foregrounds a cinema as a form of aesthetic sovereignty where aesthetic choices function as acts of freedom within material forms as tool of freedom and expression and cultural transmission.

This ancestral transfiguration occurs within a fractured but entangled world, to bring a complex reflection on issues that involve cultural materiality, transmission and legacy where aesthetic choices are emblematic of freedom, possibilities and complex forms of agency and solidarity where the ancestral debt achieves his grandness.

Most importantly, through a liminal world carried by a figure of cultural continuity over the regulatory brutality of planetary entan-

⁴ Work by scholars such as W.E.B. Dubois, Edouard Glissant, Saidya Hartman address this soul of black folks.

gements from slavery to contemporary realities where the survival of black self-preservation and sacrifice is now tied up to the planet survival to consider notions of epistemic justice and what count as knowledge. To be sure, how coloniality produced knowledge that created historic and contemporary racial hierarchies, colonial necropolitical forces and planetary relations with deep implications on the Anthropocene and the future of the planet. The Anthropocene being the connection between colonial knowledge production, the desacralization of indigenous African traditional knowledge practices opening the way for the development of what Mohammed Amer Meziane calls the development and legitimation of extractive “fossil capitalism.”⁵

Once again, it makes the black ancestor as the quintessential figure of modernity within Yuval Noah Harari’s notion that the ancestor made the world as it is and it is up to us to decide what is to become. That becoming is what Achille Mbembe calls the becoming black of the world and the necessity to what Jacques Ranciere (2000) calls the partage of the sensible which a radical form of universalism and redistribution already embedded in Black ontologies Mbembe defines as a flow of matter, energy, and information combined into complex networks and intricate webs of interactions binding all species together : humans, technology, animals, fungi, plants, viruses, bacteria-the same life in disparate bodies (Mbembe 2021, 17).⁶ In all, the process of progressive humanization is irreversible

In practice, a cinema that captures everything alive through a black liminal technological transmutation of shared expression and an aesthetic of effraction embedded in a dispositif of power of transfiguration of reincarnation and regenerative forces as evidences of cognitive mapping of a

⁵ Meziane, Mohamed Amer. *The States of the Earth: An Ecological and Racial History of Secularization*. Verso Books, 2024.

⁶ Yuval Noah Harari, *Brief and Spectacular*, PBS, Newshour, April 15, 2024; Mbembe, Achille. “Futures of life and futures of reason.” *Public Culture* 33, no. 1 (2021): 11-33.

global epistemic community through the key figure of the black ancestor, across century of migration, violence and colonial trauma that challenge conventional received lines of transmission embedded in generative intrinsic forms of blackness, thus far, defined by logics of differences.

1.1 Diasporic Cinema and Embodied Blackness

This is, therefore, a major contribution to the study of embodied blackness and knowledge through the figure of the ancestor as the pillar of black subjectivity through relational awareness. The figure of the black ancestor is the embodiment of visible and invisible mechanisms by which coloniality is resisted and transformed through the tenacity of the African prophetic tradition that slavery and colonization have supposedly interrupted. In this respect, a figure that contradicts these logics of difference and the subsequent burden of difference that was so overbearing on blackness that Achille Mbembe argues that even discourses of self-determination such as identitarian movements like Negritude and Pan-Africanism were unable to escape this fiction of Blackness and Race. In proclaiming that 'We are Black', these movements rehabilitated singularity and difference, precluding the possibility of any real universalism (158). In accepting the categories of the colonizer, the colonized commit themselves, irrevocably so, to the colonial pedagogy of desire for liberal citizenship (119). The Black Man is unable to remember a past in terms other than those imposed on him by the colonizer. If he tries to, he 'stutters' and 'falters. Colonization produces a 'failure of consciousness' from which there is no escaping (128). Likewise, a past that cannot be reduced to symbolic questions but demands to be continually confronted as the symbiotic inward, existential and immersive environment that possibilities of freedom exist.

It serves the same purpose, —as Mbembe theorizes it—can potentially become the standpoint from which to articulate a new horizon of poli-

tics of solidarity and emancipation. Mbembe argues that modernity today has transformed the Black Man from the 'slave-form' of early modernity into a 'ghost' of late capitalism (130). While the Black slave is dead, his Blackness and Race have become 'open-ended signifiers' which can insert themselves into any context (5-6). The Black Man today stands not only for the degraded slave who worked on the death-camp that was the plantation, but for all of degraded humanity rendered death-like by the universal logic of Capital.

That said, a cinema that constantly reflect on black legacy and innovation to free up cinematic languages from racial codes and chains to open up conditions of possibilities of the historicity of the representation of the black self across space and time and the power of transcendence at a time when black survival is tied up to the survival of the planet. The power of the "Camera-Eye" thus becomes that of the power to re-animate bodies and souls, to augment our subjectivity and to reverse history to demonstrate how modes of life and creativity that were assigned to the dustbin of history are now seen as guides on the path to the future that anticipate a becoming black of the world.

To be clear, an emphasis on forms of non-western knowledge and vitalist practices to brings together activist politics and cultural memory to highlight the constant erasure of the subaltern and marginalized subjectivities as agents of change. In so doing, *talking to the Dead* follows from Tony Morrison's notion of "re-memory" as an eruptive force throughout history.⁷

This is a notion of re-memory is an expression of an anterior future embedded in a forward-looking process that emerges from the social,

⁷ The term "rememory" used by Morrison indicates the performative nature of the act of remembering in his thought. The term is used in her novel *Beloved* to refer to protagonist Sethe's engagement with her past as a slave and the infanticide that her past as a slave entailed: [what I remember is an image floating out of my head.

political, and economic needs of the present, legitimized and validated through its associations with the past for a habitable world, where nature is not, massively, exploited by the encroachments of industry and profit

Thus, a mystical cinematic practice that relies on the camera-eye as a critical exploration to reveal the ethereal veil between the visible and the invisible and the magic of the black everyday life that unfolds around us as evidences of its own dynamism and authenticity.

Likewise, a cinema that deploys that figure of the living ancestor as an avatar of the afterlife in order to document permanent traces of blackness over a memoryscape traversing centuries across time and space to expose new forms of reality into conversations with decolonial practices, lived experiences and distributive agency consistently entwined throughout history with calls of global decolonization.

This spectral presence of the ancestor, consequently, serves to leverage absence, loss and the invisible forces that sustain black survival amidst entrenched hierarchies and power relationships generated by centuries of coloniality through existing forms of global capitalist racist regime and its primitive accumulation practices now in complete mode of exhaustion and plunged into a crisis of futurity.

This poetic cinematic language highlights centuries of repressed histories to kill the notion of black epistemic ignorance to bring to the forth a radical approach and categories of analysis and conceptual imagination to the study of global blackness and its production of possibilities constantly challenging race as an infrastructure of capitalist resource extraction and the production of black bodies into machines that also extent into the industrialization of memory and culture.

Incidentally, a cinema of resourcefulness and ingenuity expressing how colonialism, cultural narratives and consumption practices inevitably prefigured resource extraction — creating the latter-day geopolitical and industrial conquests from which we currently suffer in terms of - economic, political, societal, anthropological, technological, climatic - the historical context in which this cinema operates, however, guarantees a form of permanence of black subjectivities and survival which breaks down the preconceived ideas of blackness and to deploy a form of self-preservation now linked to the survival of humanity itself.

In this groundbreaking book, a powerful contribution to the knowledge that the course of resource extraction was by no means inevitable and that the quantitative or global approach to the Anthropocene adopting a language of science and policy often overlook subaltern and marginalized subjectivities as agents of change.

In particular, a cinema entangled in a dispositive cross-bred with technology and the materiality of meaning-making through memorialization and creating a film-world that animates black subject formation unfolding throughout history.

What is more, a film-world invoking the power of an aesthetic and tool-oriented practice that, this author defines as the “Camera-Eye,” which is the production and revelation of concrete African material forms that synthesize imagination and perception through the dialectic between the reel and the creation of modalities of the possible.

At the same time, strong evidences of a cinema that directly engages embodied lived experiences and the evolving discourse of the black subject as always historically emergent to contradict the notion of the erasure of the legacies of the subjugated black ancestor as overstated. Accordingly, Fred Moten claims that the black ancestor was silent but not silenced. In practice, consequently, the black ancestor is a figure of continuity and a hardware relay that opens up an intergenerational

modes of being and knowing and a logic of an universal human experience that challenge histories of black objectification, liquidation and prolonged inattention to the legacy of slavery to offer productive insights into the survival of blackness, a marginalized perspective now tied into the self-preservation of humanity itself and the necessity of new values outside economies of enslavement.⁸

1.2 Diasporic Cinema and Timescales

In its granular creative process, featuring black diasporic subjects entwined between multiple overlapping worlds and timescapes, this cinema is embedded in a medium that amplifies the reincarnation of life with a powerful aesthetic that aims beyond discursive effects to redefine our own relationships to images.

In turn, the reification and redeployment of cinematic skills into the concrete material realities of intimate black networks and the where the restless past and memories embodied by ghosts demanding justice are lurking within avatars, totem-objects and allegories mapping out the topographies, zones, scenes, and structures that portend Black cultural experience and revealing mystical truths that express black sovereignty and self-knowledge as a product of a black ontological reality. The production of a reality that complicates and challenges the silence of the archive and the *longue durée* and recurrent crises of enduring forms of coloniality expressed through white supremacist social order and the violence that sustains it. In this way, how these cinematic specters mapped into geography and identity that challenge the notion of “natural borders” to keep informing each other with a new modality of survival at a time when black survival is now linked

⁸ Moten, Fred. “Blackness and nothingness (mysticism in the flesh).” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 4 (2013): 737-780. Brown, Jayna. “Black sonic refusal.” *The Female Voice in the Twentieth Century: Material, Symbolic, and Aesthetic Dimensions* (2021): 102-16.

to the survival of humanity itself giving new forms of emancipatory transcendence within the redefinition of universal human experience.

These symbolic forms keep open processes of intelligibility and the chains of transmission between different generations of Africans to new forms of generativity and invention. This invocation of history is a demonstration that history is not a straight line but a rhizome of networks of recognition and meaning around the central figure of the ancestor as a figure of transcendence linking the past to a future with a non-stop poetic of disclosure. As with Marcel Mauss, Emile Durkheim and WEB Dubois, the ancestor is the figure of the gift and mana bringing together black soul and a surplus of power in the form of magic that continually resists systematic oppression while paving the way for new possibilities at a time when black survival is now linked to the survival of the planet.⁹

This becomes a model for Black's mode of aurality and how the sensorial experiences of this cinema unveil a black cosmology that aligns and serves as a cultural bridge for a worldwide unified blackness around common oppression to challenge conventional ways of being and seeing.

In practice, a cinema operating against the backdrop of a mission to reclaim historical a priori conditions of blackness to deliver superior and emancipatory form of knowledge that empower a unified imaginative form of black prerogatives of sovereignty to challenge foundational assumptions and formative narratives driving white supremacy and anti-black politics on a global scale.

⁹ Mauss, Marcel. *The gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*. WW Norton & Company, 2000.; Connor, Brian T. "Émile Durkheim and the Birth of the Gods: Clans, Incest, Totems, Phratries, Hordes, Mana, Taboos, Corroborees, Sodalities, Menstrual Blood, Apes, Churingas, Cairns, and Other Mysterious Things by Alexandra Maryanski." *Social Forces* 98, no. 2 (2019): e3-e3. Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt. *The souls of black folk*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

What followed, strong evidences that black diasporic cinema is a form of artistic sovereignty clashing with the power and the force of coloniality and its logic of extraction and racial capitalism to set up the contours and parameters of a productive form of valid dissensus to open up new lenses for what is to come as new forms of political language, mutual recognition and emancipatory productive futurity that reform the conventional nation state and the innerworkings of capital.

1.3 Native Context: Strategies of Encounter, The Camera-Eye and Pedagogical Practices versus the Society of Spectacle and the Anthropocene.

For its part, this African diasporic cinema features a form of artistic sovereignty and technology of embodied action and a cultural praxis producing a new regime of visibility as new forms of participatory lived, aesthetic and sensorial experiences as an important realm of cultural resistance against the logics of racial capitalism. Taken together, an emphasis on the power of the black oral tradition, genealogical continuity, undocumented histories and transformation through the black archives and public rituals foregrounding the centrality of black diasporic lives and the crisis of liberal universalism embedded in a capitalist colonial worldview and the conflicts over sacrifice and social debt within extractives neoliberal practices that now place black survival within the survival of life at the age of the Anthropocene.¹⁰

These practices take root in the enforcement of the binary model of the sovereign family model and the notion of insider/outsider which have led to the systematic erasure of the contributions of blackness in the diaspora. In practice, the dialectic between the administrative state

¹⁰ Blaszczyk, Regina Lee, and David Suisman, eds. *Capitalism and the Senses*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023.

and community-based organization and the complexities of regime of recognition.

In practice, tackling networks of affectivity, collectivity, and new forms of black existence that have expanded the social, cultural, traditional, and political ways of black lives in the diaspora in terms of new forms of solidarity and sense of belonging and ingenuity that also work to counter and to resist state and racial capitalism, violence, structural inequality, marginalization, racism, classism, and stereotyping.

These questions of sacrifices and social debt are embedded in the complexities of displacement, social adaptation and regeneration. Taken together, the power of double consciousness and contemporaneity which is the existential power to experience the light of the present and the tiny veil and traces of darkness that envelop that gaze of the present which foreground that time is always fractured in what the painter Rembrandt understood as the chiaroscuro making the difference between time, memory and becoming where the future must be created rather than be consumed. More, how black image-makers use images to negotiate power with conventional apparatuses of surveillance and control to pass messages and to deconstruct the mechanics of Eurocentric discourse of the reel that consistently drip into our social interactions (Agamben 2009, 44).¹¹

What is more, a cultural process that takes place in the backdrop of the crisis and the insurmountable intellectual horizon of liberalism and its enlightened individualism and universalist assumption and practices as frames to understand reality within forms of sovereignty and power which are incapable to provide answers for contemporary crises.

¹¹ Agamben, Giorgio. "What is an apparatus?" and other essays. Stanford University Press, 2009.; Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt. The souls of black folk. Oxford University Press, 2008.

Accordingly, this work apotheosis is the development of an original technological ritual for a new context of relationships and the communal self and the double consciousness and care that demonstrate the power of memory and narrative that allow for a capacity to live outside of colonial logics under anthropological time. This African notion is exemplified with the Sankofa Bird which is similar to Walter Benjamin's notion of the Angel of History and the power of double consciousness and overlapping temporalities to create a new emancipatory time¹²

By the same token, a double consciousness embedded in the promotion of collective resources in a world where black survival is now linked to collective survival. Thus, this two-dimensional theorization of time recognizes the past not as something to be escaped, as in the absurd flight from the late capitalist ruin of the Anthropocene, but as something to be reckoned with, as this cinema functions, as a pillar of resilience and wisdom, in the ever-increasing possibilities of the present unleashing new forms of worldmaking and complicating current system of knowledge through a re-signification of illegal modes of knowledge and unauthorized versions of collective memory for potential collective action, In practice, to break through old rituals of knowledge to connect with notion of Eudemonia which is to find new rituals of knowing based on the pharmakon which is the healing power of knowledge . In light of this reading, the awareness of how we use knowledge and the pharmakon here plays the role of where to put the curser between poison and medicine.

Following from this, a cinema inspired by the spiritual song "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child" and the struggle and power to make a home away from home. What is more, African culture and the power of the dead exemplified by the poem of Birago Diop called

¹² Sankofa Time By Abena Ampofoa Asare, Los Angeles review of Books, November 30, 2023

Les Souffles to emphasize a world that is there to be seen with clarity and no distraction generated by the spectacle and the central struggle between the production of future knowledge, transmission and containment and surfaces versus depth to confront established images and imaginary and where humans come before images.

This is a world captured by the diasporic filmmakers are the centrality of an existence rooted in the ancestors as the birth and engine of subjectivity that engenders the transmission of knowledge, expectations and style of beings. In practice, a world of infinite possibilities that Edouard Glissant calls "*Le Tout Monde*." So, infinite possibilities from the inside out that also serve to build our environment and new forms of transcendence that resist colonial violence and organized scarcity of black subjectivation. Specifically, how politics of emancipation have to take into account modes of knowledge production and resistance through modalities of kinship formations.

In so doing, for the black images, there are more than meet the eyes and that the reception of images must not be automatic. As such, the speed of information and its reception and its cognitive integration require a temporality that must challenge our automatic understanding and appropriation of film messages. Thus, the understanding of what kinds of transformation or non-transformation film messages circulate and the complex reality between truth and fiction and how truth is stranger than fiction since truth is not limited by possibilities as fiction is. In so doing, how our sense of reality and normality and what is expected from the world can always being challenged. Taken together, the business of image-making is always an unfinished business.

What is more, ways, in which, that the proliferation of enlightened liberal democratic ideals is a mode of engagement with the world that functions with a strategic logic of viruses in terms of adaptability and difficulty to eradicate putting to the front a creative pressure

on the tensions and convergence between identity, survival versus the management of difference and the stability of the liberal social order at a time where the survival of humanity itself is threatened by the conjunction of the climate, pandemic and political crises, backed by the rise of the white supremacist far right and its takeover of the media, poses a risk to our societies and calls on us to develop a counter-proposition.

This cinematic practice relies on stories of black diasporic cinema and the power of genealogy and transformative power of knowledge through the production of truth- events and the making of new regime of truth. This work communicates the interpellation of the real and black production of a new regime of truth as an aesthetic of confrontation engages with conventional production of reality and the redeeming of the past to create new forms of imaginary and emancipatory futurity.

In this sense, an engagement with notion of dehumanization and cultural suppression in favor of cultural continuity, reproduction and re-combination to demonstrate how narratives of cultural suppression have been overstated.¹³

Most of all, a focus on the power to get around obstacles and to keep opening spaces of possibilities to engage the ethical shortcoming of the ethic of liberal democracy such as the idea of non-stop progress and the disappearance of death. In so doing, the power to articulate and make sayable and visible cultural continuity and wisdom through African genealogy through the cult of the ancestor to problematize the rise and nature of black social existence and present cultural condition dominated by necropolitics and the Anthropocene and a culture of the dead that haunts white supremacy.

¹³ Behn, Aphra. Oroonoko. Penguin UK, 2003.