

Gendered labour, negritude and the Black public sphere*

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Abstract

This article uses the landmark 1956 Congress of Black Writers and Artists to re-examine the gendering of the Black public sphere. Organized by *Présence africaine*, the journal/publishing house that served as the hub for the negritude movement, the congress is one of the iconic moments in African and Black intellectual history. Women were notoriously absent among its delegates, yet this article reconstructs the contributions of Christiane Yandé Diop, Dorothy Brooks and other collectives whose myriad contributions were critical to its success. It argues that the congress was representative of what feminist theorists and organizers have called the fused nature of ‘work’ (production) and ‘domestic work’ (social reproduction), that is, labour necessary to sustain life. As they have shown, where labour takes place impacts its gendering. Because most of the planning for the congress took place in social reproductive settings like homes and cafés, this often compressed re/productive labours, gendering negritude’s intellectual life in consequential ways. Yet though negritude’s women exemplify the frequently blurred lines between re/productive labour, between so-called ‘intellectuals’ and those who operated without such a designation, their own self-understandings sometimes reinstated these gendered divisions. Yandé Diop, Brooks and many others were critical to shaping negritude, and yet the alternative choices they made in that shaping need to be reckoned with on their own terms. I thus argue that we need to take such choices seriously *at the same time* as we do justice to the integral nature of their contributions. Doing so can help us negotiate with greater nuance the different choices that women made in their contributions to intellectual life.

The Congress of Black Writers and Artists in 1956 was notorious for having no women among its sixty-three delegates. Held from 19 to 22 September at the Sorbonne, it was one of the pivotal gatherings of Black intellectuals in the twentieth century, especially for adopting ‘black culture as its principal focus’.¹ Organized by the iconic journal *Présence africaine*, the event was critical in launching negritude, the philosophy of Black humanism developed by francophone intellectuals, into global consciousness. Delegates like Aimé Césaire, Cheikh Anta Diop, Frantz Fanon, Léopold Senghor, Richard Wright and numerous others have ratified the congress’s status and their debates generated a continuous commentary.² At its fiftieth anniversary celebration, Christiane Yandé Diop

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¹ H. Spillers, ‘A transatlantic circuit: Baldwin at midcentury’, *Callaloo*, xxxv (2012), 929–38, at p. 929 (emphasis in original).

² A. Adesokan, ‘Baldwin, Paris, and the “conundrum of Africa”’, *Textual Practice*, xxiii (2009), 73–97; C. Bonner, ‘Alioune Diop and the cultural politics of negritude: reading the first Congress of Black Writers and Artists, 1956’, *Research in African Literatures*, 1 (2019), 1–18; S. C. Dunstan, ‘A question of allegiance: African American intellectuals, *Présence africaine*, and the 1956 Congrès des écrivains et artistes noirs’, *Australasian Journal of American Studies*,

delivered an address as then editor of *Présence africaine* and director of its publishing house. She applauded the ‘presence of women who are visible this time, contrary to what was the case in 1956’.³ Scholars, too, have bemoaned their earlier absence. Yet what about the numerous women in 1956 who ‘so fervently contributed to its success’ beyond the podium?⁴ The fact that Yandé Diop named neither herself nor other female contributors presents intellectual historians with a series of problems. What work ‘counts’ when it comes to intellectual life and where do we look to find it? Even more pressing, how do we grapple with a desire to broaden the category of the intellectual, while reckoning with the possible distance of some subjects from such a framing?

Even in the sparse archival trail the 1956 congress has left behind, we find abundant evidence of the central participation of women alongside men: making logistical arrangements, raising funds, editing manuscripts and more. They conducted this labour less in formal offices, but in homes, cafés and dance halls. Even in the finest revisionist Black intellectual histories, however, such myriad labours can be written over as ‘menial movement chores’.⁵ We are confronted, then, first by assumptions about the kinds of intellectual contribution notable enough to register as presence and second, the places we expect to find contributions. Yandé Diop, the co-runner of *Présence africaine* with her husband, Alioune Diop, was a key part of the congress’s success as a member of its planning team. She and a White woman who organized the London delegation, Dorothy Brooks, were commended by delegates for their essential roles. With little funding and much skill, they laboured to mount an event of considerable scale – blurring the line between labours of the mind and body.

Both women shaped the 1956 congress as much as Césaire or Senghor, and yet both distanced themselves from the category ‘intellectual’ in complex ways. In Yandé Diop’s own words: ‘I don’t really like the word intellectual used nowadays. It is so overused, everyone calls themselves intellectual. I prefer to use the term “man of culture”’.⁶ As we shall see, this example is one of many that highlights a tension between a historical acknowledgement of subjects’ co-equal participation in shaping intellectual legacies and their distance from conventional revisionist vocabularies. On the one hand, ‘contingent daily activities is what gets the work done and shapes the theory’.⁷ Therefore, we must incorporate ‘movement chores’ into intellectual history’s purview. On the other hand,

xxxiv (2015), 1–16; N. Ellis, ‘The fraternal agonies of James Baldwin and George Lamming’, in *Territories of the Soul: Queered Belonging in the Black Diaspora* (Durham, N.C., 2015), pp. 62–94; G. Massé, ‘A diasporic encounter: the politics of race and culture at the first International Congress of Black Writers and Artists’ (unpublished Emory University Ph.D. thesis, 2005); B. M’Baye, ‘Richard Wright and francophone intellectuals: a reassessment of the 1956 Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Paris’, *African and Black Diaspora: an International Journal*, ii (2009), 29–42; and C. Winks, ‘Into the heart of the great wilderness: understanding Baldwin’s quarrel with “négritude”’, *African American Review*, xlvii (2013), 605–14. This list does not include the boundless monographs that include discussions of this congress or subsequent ones hosted by *Présence africaine*.

³ C. Yandé Diop, ‘Discours de Christiane Diop’, *Présence africaine*, clxxiv (2006), 45–8, at p. 46. Translations all my own. At the time Richard Wright observed, ‘I don’t know how many of you have noticed it – there have been no women functioning vitally and responsibly upon this platform helping to mold and mobilize our thoughts ... This ... is a criticism that I heap upon ourselves collectively’ (R. Wright, ‘Tradition and industrialization: the plight of the tragic elite in Africa’, in *Le 1er Congrès international des écrivains et artistes noirs* (Paris, 1997), pp. 347–60, at p. 348).

⁴ Yandé Diop, ‘Discours’, p. 45.

⁵ Ransby specified as menial chores ‘typing leaflets to licking stamps to buying toiletries for jailed protesters’, in the case of Ella Baker (B. Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement* (Chapel Hill, 2003), p. 357).

⁶ ‘Christiane Diop: “Présence Africaine” a beaucoup de difficultés’, *L’Association d’aides aux veuves et aux orphelins de mauritanie*, 26 Nov. 2007 <https://www.avomm.com/Christiane-Diop-Présence-Africaine-a-beaucoup-de-difficultés_a3655.html> [accessed 15 March 2022].

⁷ L. Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology: Fieldwork, Networks, and the Making of Cultural Knowledge in Central Africa* (Durham, N.C., 2001), p. 8.

dwelling upon ambiguous relationships to the category of the intellectual confronts us with people and ‘practices that nearly refuse to draw attention to themselves’.⁸ Therefore, we should approach these refusals on our subjects’ own terms.

The disparity between these two women and the lionized delegates reflects the gendered regimes of consecration that distinguish the labour power of intellectuals with prestige, in opposition to the entire web of labour power in the field of cultural production.⁹ Yet it also reflects a problem to which intellectual historians can devote more consideration: the tension between the analytical categories we adopt to describe intellectual contributions, and the way in which our subjects themselves conceived of their labours. Using the 1956 congress as a case study, I suggest that we navigate this tension better when we attend to the scenes and practices of ‘invisible’ labour in intellectual production. By *labour* I encompass administrative, logistical, editorial and other tasks alongside the care work, food provision or infrastructural labour equally crucial to the very possibility of intellectual activity. While this may be an expansive definition of labour, intellectual or otherwise, it reflects the insights of theorists and organizers who have long argued for conceptualizing the two faces of labour as indivisible.¹⁰ The 1956 congress is emblematic of the fused nature of ‘work’ (production) and what is often called ‘domestic work’ (social reproduction), but is more accurately described as all labour necessary to sustain life.

Thus, I use *re/production* to signify these joined faces of labour, specifying *production* when referring to conventional labours associated with workplaces, and *social reproduction* when specifying labours that stretched into and beyond the home. Editing manuscripts and feeding delegates were different tasks, but both manifestations of *re/production* were equally necessary to the success of that 1956 gathering. Moreover, the labour for both the congress and the wider intellectual enterprises to which these individuals belonged was mostly conducted inside classic sites of social reproduction – the homes, cafés and other places where we go to sustain ourselves. This meant that the continuum between editing, feeding delegates and feeding oneself was less stark than the gulf between the dining table and the rostrum. It also meant that the spaces and labours associated with social reproduction alone were concomitantly feminized.

This may seem to resemble the familiar terrain of the public/private distinction that prevents women’s intellectual contributions from being acknowledged. Yet I want to draw out two less familiar conclusions. First, though Yandé Diop, Brooks and other women explored in this article exemplify the frequently blurred lines between *re/productive* labour, between so-called ‘intellectuals’ and those who operated without such a designation, their own self-understandings sometimes reinstated these gendered divisions. Some, like Yandé Diop and Brooks, distanced themselves from public recognition as ‘leaders’ or ‘intellectuals’. Others, like a group of West African female students who attended the congress, explicitly sought to carve out roles as intellectuals. Yet others, like a self-named ‘Group of Black Women’ who sent a telegram to the congress organizers, challenge public conditions of intellectual recognition with their deliberate anonymity.

⁸ L. E. Helton, ‘Making lists: keeping time, infrastructures of Black inquiry, 1900–1950’, in *Against a Sharp White Background: Infrastructures of African American Print*, ed. B. Fielder and J. Senchyne (Madison, Wis., 2019), pp. 82–108, at p. 83.

⁹ S. Shapiro, ‘Intellectual labor power, cultural capital, and the value of prestige’, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, cviii (2009), 249–64.

¹⁰ S. James and M. Dalla Costa, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Bristol, 1972); M. Prescod, *Black Women: Bringing It All Back Home* (Bristol, 1980); P. Nadasen, *Household Workers Unite: the Untold Story of African American Women Who Built a Movement* (New York, 2016); K.-Y. Taylor, *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Chicago, 2017); *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*, ed. T. Bhattacharya (London, 2017); and National Domestic Workers Alliance <<https://www.domestic-workers.org/>> [accessed 15 March 2022].

All of these women were critical to shaping negritude, and yet the alternative choices they made in that shaping need to be reckoned with on their own terms. I thus argue that we need to take such choices seriously *at the same time* as we do justice to the integral nature of their contributions. Doing so can help us negotiate with greater nuance the way that subjects situated their involvement in intellectual life.

Second, I argue that where labour takes place impacts its gendering. By this I do not invoke an inexorable logic of separate spheres, but rather, to riff off Luise White, I mean that the site of re/production determined the form of intellectual labour and congregation.¹¹ As Marxist feminists have argued since the 1970s, the very reason re/productive labours appear to be separate is because they typically take place in separate settings – for example, the office versus the home. Whenever conditions have compressed these two spaces (the Covid-19 pandemic being a prime example), such spatial containment is much harder to sustain. This compression was often a circumstance of necessity, whether due to financial precarity or state surveillance. Nevertheless, many Black intellectual ventures like that of *Présence africaine* and its congresses were conducted out of front rooms. The compression of re/productive labour in social reproductive settings made it harder to draw boundaries between the two faces of labour, the individual and the collective, or the homosocial and heterosocial.

My approach compels us to grapple with *why* and *where* we claim subjects for intellectual history, and how our desire to assimilate marginalized contributors into the role of intellectual alone might reinforce the very conditions of visibility we would like to dismantle. Visionary scholars have offered strategies to help navigate this tension and paved the way in challenging the systematic omission of African and Black women from intellectual history.¹² Most strategies to address the field's exclusions (gendered, classed and raced) have fallen into two camps, both of which adopt an approach that broadens the category of the intellectual. The first method demands an expansion of 'the usual hunting grounds for intellectual historians', while the second interrogates 'who counts as an intellectual'.¹³ Africanists and Black Studies scholars have employed both to rich effect: mining letters, oral histories, songs, dress and so much more for evidence of women's intellectual lives; while they have also insisted that educators, performers, healers and others ought to join the ranks of classic intellectuals.¹⁴ Often, both sets of scholars share a common Gramscian theoretical justification for opening up the category of the intellectual, for whom all human activity made use of creative faculties and 'organic intellectuals' denoted non-traditional thinkers from subaltern groups.¹⁵

These tools remain an essential part of a revisionist intellectual historical repertoire, and I build upon their insights. Yet I reveal what is missed when marginalized intellectual

¹¹ L. White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago, 1990), p. 13.

¹² Path-breaking early examples include H. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: the Emergence of the Afro-American Novelist* (Oxford, 1987); I. A. d'Almeida, *Francophone African Women Writers: Destroying the Emptiness of Silence* (Gainesville, Fla., 1994); and T. Adewale-Nduka and O. Segun, *Breaking the Silence: an Anthology of Short Stories* (Lagos, 1998). For recent recuperative work covering African, Caribbean and African American women, see *Toward an Intellectual History of Black Women*, ed. M. Bay and others (Chapel Hill, 2015).

¹³ L. Kerber, *Toward an Intellectual History of Women* (Chapel Hill, 1997), p. 17; and K. N. Blain, C. Cameron and A. Farmer, 'The contours of Black intellectual history', in *New Perspectives on the Black Intellectual Tradition*, ed. K. N. Blain, C. Cameron and A. Farmer (Evanston, Ill., 2018), pp. 3–16, at p. 4.

¹⁴ For two overviews of recent developments in African and African American intellectual history, see N. Rose Hunt, 'JAH Forum: the affective, the intellectual, and gender history', *Journal of African History*, lv (2014), 331–45; and B. Byrd, 'The rise of African American intellectual history', *Modern Intellectual History*, xviii (2020), 1–32.

¹⁵ A. Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Q. Hoare and G. N. Smith (New York, 1971). Through Gramsci, Africanists have located 'peasant intellectuals', for example, while Americanists have situated 'partisan intellectuals' (S. Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison, Wis., 1990); Ransby, *Ella Baker*).

labourers are too rapidly absorbed into the broadened category of the intellectual, rather than excavating the division of intellectual labour itself. Contending with these legacies should push us to reconsider how democratizing intellectual history and flattening these distinctions might prohibit us coming to terms with the undemocratic venture that intellectual production has often been. I therefore engage recent attempts from historians of science, philosophy and print culture to think through the co-production of knowledge between intellectuals and intellectual labourers, alongside the hierarchical processes that regulated intellectual visibility.¹⁶ This integrates their material culture-derived attention to the *stuff* and *work* involved in sustaining intellectual life: here, for instance, formulaic memos, logistical correspondence, childcare arrangements. Such evidence cannot always convey subjects' perspectives as a written treatise might. Yet it can 'document a relationship' between people, whether hierarchical (for example, 'intellectuals' and administrators) or horizontal (for example, the anonymous Group of Black Women).¹⁷ Most importantly, evidence of labour can teach us, as Keguro Macharia has written about care work, to '*linger at the ordinary*'.¹⁸ It can allow us to preserve the analytical centrality of re/productive labours, the labours of collectives and solitary 'intellectuals', in the same frame as we consider why and when gendered subjects may have undermined or contributed to their division and separation.

On its surface the second aspect of my argument, that where intellectual labour takes place impacts its gendering, sounds hardly surprising. Ostensibly it aligns with scholars of eighteenth-century French and twentieth-century African American public spheres, for whom salons were feminocentric institutions that afforded women greater intellectual prominence than masculinist congresses.¹⁹ Gendered studies of negritude have clustered around the movement's initial interwar emergence in Paris, via three Martinican sisters: Jeanne, Andrée and Paulette Nardal.²⁰ Self-described intellectuals, the Nardals regularly

¹⁶ Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology*; H. Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory* (Chicago, 2011); N. Jacobs, *Birders of Africa: History of a Network* (New Haven, Conn., 2016); J. Tonn, 'Extralaboratory life: gender politics and experimental biology at Radcliffe College, 1894–1910', *Gender & History*, xxix (2017), 329–58; 'Gender and the "Great Man": recovering philosophy's "wives of the canon"', ed. J. Forestal and M. Phillips, *Hypatia*, xxxiii (2018), 587–92; *Working With Paper: Gendered Practices in the History of Knowledge*, ed. C. Bittel, E. Leong and C. von Oertzen (Pittsburg, 2019); and L. E. Helton, 'On decimals, catalogs, and racial imaginaries of reading', *PMLA*, cxxxiv (2019), 99–120.

¹⁷ S. Strickrodt, 'African girls' samplers from mission schools in Sierra Leone (1820s to 1840s)', *History in Africa*, xxxvii (2010), 189–245, at p. 210.

¹⁸ K. Macharia, 'black (beyond negation)', *The New Inquiry*, 26 May 2018 <<https://thenewinquiry.com/blog/black-beyond-negation/>> [accessed 15 March 2022] (emphasis in original).

¹⁹ On French salon culture, see C. Lougee, *Le Paradis des Femmes: Women, Salons, and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France* (Princeton, 1976); J. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (London, 1988); and D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: a Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (London, 1994). On Harlem Renaissance salons, see S. Stoeckl, 'Salon, page, world: Jessie Redmon Fauset, Mabel Dodge Luhan, Gertrude Stein, and the borderlands of culture' (unpublished Utah State University Master's thesis, 2007); D. Krasner, 'Dark tower and Saturday nighters: salons as themes in African American drama', *American Studies*, xlix (2008), 81–95; E. Whitmire, *Regina Anderson Andrews, Harlem Renaissance Librarian* (Chicago, 2014), pp. 41–7; and T. B. Lindsey, 'Saturday at the S Street Salon: new negro women playwrights', in *Colored No More: Reinventing Black Womanhood in Washington D.C.* (Chicago, 2017), pp. 111–36.

²⁰ T. D. Sharpley-Whiting, *Negritude Women* (London, 2002); B. Hayes Edwards, 'Feminism and L'Internationalisme Noir: Paulette Nardal', in *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), pp. 119–86; J. Boittin, 'In black and white: gender, race relations, and the Nardal sisters in interwar Paris', *French Colonial History*, vi (2005), 119–35; J. Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis: the Urban Grounds of Anti-imperialism and Feminism* (Lincoln, Neb., 2010), pp. 133–70; C. Sweeney, 'Resisting the primitive: the Nardal sisters', *La revue du monde noir*, and *La dépêche africaine*, *Nottingham French Studies*, xliii (2012), 45–55; E. Musil Church, 'In search of seven sisters: a biography of the Nardal Sisters of Martinique', *Callaloo*, xxxvi (2013), 375–90; T. Boni, 'Women and negritude: Paulette Nardal and Suzanne Césaire', *Rue Descartes*, lxxxiii (2014), 62–76; and I. Umoren, *Race Women Internationalists: Activist-Intellectuals and Global Freedom Struggles* (Oakland, Calif., 2017).

hosted a salon that forged a francophone-anglophone Black international community. Moreover, the sisters wrote and edited early Black Parisian periodicals, including one Paulette co-founded with Dr. Léo Sajous in 1931: *La revue du monde noir*. The Nardals' path-breaking work bridging Black internationalists and feminists has been rightfully restored to negritude's genealogy, while their salon has become a representative institution of 'dominant feminine' Black publics 'quite unlike a corporate circle or a masculine club'.²¹ As an arena of 'racial confraternity', the 1956 congress's displacement of salons looks like the unfortunate institutional terminus of negritude's expansion.²² This is perhaps substantiated by few studies of post-war 'negritude women'.²³ If we adapt the feminist critiques of public sphere histories, then, the congress was 'essentially, not contingently masculinist', while the salon was essentially womanist, contingently encircling men.²⁴

What are we to make, then, of the fact that Yandé Diop co-hosted such salons with her husband after the Second World War, or that she did so among regularly gender-mixed company? What, moreover, of the converging re/productive labours that linked the projects of the Nardals to that of the Diops? As we shall see, both salons and congresses continued to define negritude's public, just as Black subjects of all genders continued to perform its labours in social reproductive settings. Negritude's salons have been crucial sites of overlooked congregation, but they were neither exclusively hosted by women (even the Nardal salon alternated in Sajous' home), nor constitutively 'feminine space[s]'.²⁵ Rather, I argue that the spatial integration of the re/productive often *feminized* sites of congregation and production, since mere proximity to the social reproductive was enough to characterize intellectual labour or congregation as *feminine*. Still, this integration was key to enabling institutions of Black intellectual community to be less restrictively masculinist. Ultimately, analysing together sites of Black intellectual congregation and re/production can challenge the assumption that only the former count in shaping intellectual trajectories. Integrating labour as a category of analysis into our repertoire, therefore, can build upon the work of revisionists. Firstly, it can allow us to appreciate the seamless cycle of re/productive contributions that made intellectual life possible. Secondly, it can allow us to investigate more precisely the means by which individuals demarcated intellectuals in superlative, individualized and masculinized terms, while feminizing collective re/productive labours. Finally, it can allow us to explore the ways in which women and other gendered subjects conceived of their intellectual contributions in their own unique ways.

In what follows, I unpack these elements through the example of the 1956 congress across four sections following different subjects. The first two sections situate individuals within larger networks of Black intellectual life: Christiane Yandé Diop at *Présence africaine*, followed by Dorothy Brooks in Londoner pan-African circles. The third section considers two groups of women who offer a window into alternative intellectual practices: a group of three students who attended the congress – Virginie Camara,

²¹ L.-T. Achille, 'Préface', *La revue du monde noir* (1931–32) (repr., Paris, 1992), p. xv, digital copy available at Gallica, Bibliothèque Nationale de France <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k32946v/f4.item.r=Louis%20Thomas%20Achille>> [accessed 4 May 2022]. Achille was a regular attendee of the Nardal salon.

²² A. Burton, 'Epilogue, the sodalities of Bandung: toward a critical 21st-century history', in *Making a World After Empire: the Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*, ed. C. J. Lee (Athens, Ohio, 2010), at p. 357.

²³ Exceptions include C. Zimra, 'Negritude in the feminine mode: the case of Martinique and Guadeloupe', *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, xii (1984), 53–77; S. Césaire, *The Great Camouflage: Writings of Dissent, 1941–45*, ed. D. Maximin (Middletown, Conn., 2012); and J. M. Wilks, 'Surrealist dreams, Martinican realities: the negritude of Suzanne Césaire', in *Race, Gender, and Comparative Black Modernism* (Baton Rouge, 2008), pp. 107–40.

²⁴ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, p. 7.

²⁵ Umoren, *Race Women Internationalists*, p. 17.

Marguerite Senghor and Dienaba Bâ – alongside the anonymous ‘Group of Black Women’. The final section returns to the Nardals, to situate negritude’s salons within larger implications of appreciating collective re/productive labour in public spheres. The Cold War was instrumental in shaping the intellectual dimensions of the 1956 congress and is considered in the second section. However, because the Cold War tends to overwhelm other contextual considerations, like the gendered ones I offer, it is given less emphasis than in all other literature on the congress.²⁶ Additionally, though I discuss only ‘men’ and ‘women’ here, following the language of my subjects, the re/productive labour framework is applicable far beyond a binary gender model.

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Across decades of anniversary commemorations since 1947, it is striking how often *Présence africaine* describe their contributions in the collective.²⁷ *Présence* distinguished itself from fellow mid-century Parisian or Londoner publishers by emphasizing the collaborative nature of cultural production. Ultimately, however, those affiliated with the *maison d’édition* both distended and reinforced the gendering of the Black public sphere, by subsuming the valorized, feminized domain of intellectual labour to the masculine role of intellectual representation. The gender-mixed sites of *Présence*’s production do not just expose the contradictions of this discursive framing, but ground them in the foundational contradiction between the supposedly distinct realms of production and reproduction.

Despite *Présence africaine*’s persistent emphasis on collectivity, Alioune Diop has been singled out most by scholars as its originating and sustaining force.²⁸ Diop, who arrived in France from Senegal in 1937 to further his education, had by his death in 1980 overseen the journal’s expansion into a publishing house by 1949, a bookshop by 1962 and the headquarters of a U.N.E.S.C.O.-backed international network of over a dozen Societies of African Culture from 1957 onwards (all still exist today). By Diop’s own estimation, however, the idea for and execution of the journal came from a growing collective of overseas students he met in student halls or cafés, alongside an older generation of negritude intellectuals like Léopold Senghor.²⁹ It was during this period, too, that he met Yandé Diop, at the time completing high school.³⁰

Yandé Diop is rarely recognized by scholars as one of the co-impresarios of the *Présence* enterprise. The daughter of a Protestant from an aristocratic Cameroonian family, Maria Mandessi Bell, and of a Senegalese First World War veteran, Mamadou Yandé Diop, Bell relocated her five children from Dakar to France in 1938 after the sudden death of her husband three years prior.³¹ The move was prompted by Bell’s determination to

²⁶ For an exception to the Cold War determinist approach, see Ellis, ‘Fraternal agonies’, which features an extensive discussion of the gendered homosociality of the congress.

²⁷ *Présence Africaine 1947–1967: Mélanges réflexions d’hommes de culture* (Paris, 1969); *Hommage à Alioune Diop*, ed. M. Glisenti (Paris, 2000); and *Présence Africaine: Colloque international Alioune Diop* (Paris, 2011). For studies of the journal in which interviews with the staff appear, see *Surreptitious Speech: Présence Africaine and the Politics of Otherness, 1947–1987*, ed. V. Y. Mudimbe (Chicago, 1992); B. Jules-Rosette, *Black Paris: the African Writers Landscape* (Chicago, 2000); and ‘Présence africaine. Les conditions noires: une généalogie des discours’ (special issue), ed. S. Frioux-Salgas, *Gradhiva*, x (2006).

²⁸ Exceptions to this include Jules-Rosette’s *Black Paris*, which includes extensive interviews with Yandé Diop, as well as R. Bush, ‘Book-publishing at Présence Africaine’, in *Publishing Africa in French: Literary Institutions and Decolonization, 1945–1967* (Liverpool, 2016), pp. 56–91.

²⁹ A. Diop, ‘Niam n’goura: ou les raisons d’être de Présence Africaine’, *Présence africaine*, i (1947), 7–14, at p. 8.

³⁰ P. Verdin, *Alioune Diop, Le Socrate noir* (Paris, 2010), p. 85. Diop is a common surname in Senegal.

³¹ R. Aitken and E. Rosenhaft, *Black Germany: the Making and Unmaking of a Diaspora Community, 1884–1960* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 192.

educate her children (as she herself had been), and she even moved her family closer to the Latin Quarter in 1945 to bring them to the centre of Black intellectual life. Bell's salons were as important as those of her late husband's first cousin, Léopold Senghor, in bringing together generations of Black intellectuals.³² Parisian police took notice, worrying over the 'numerous visitors of color' to Bell's home, since she was 'animated by feelings particularly hostile to France'.³³

Ultimately, it was in such settings that Alioune and Christiane became acquainted and in 1944 that they married.³⁴ The two carried on the salon tradition at their residences in Paris and Dakar across their life, but the core of *Présence africaine* emerged out of such gatherings in 1946–8. Guided by negritude's liberal humanist call to embrace a racially particular universalism, this nascent collective envisioned a journal focused exclusively on 'culture', demanding that 'the African must be able to speak as a representative of an original civilization'.³⁵ Restrictive costs combined with little funding limited early operations to the Diops' household, however. Even later, when *Présence* was able to expand to a storefront, their residences shared the same building.³⁶ Those who circulated out of their many residences across the years remarked on the unique relationships and labours such settings enabled.

Centring social reproductive settings of Black intellectual labour – student halls, cafés, homes – showcases congregations often missed when attention is turned purely on congresses. As a salon, the Diops' home convened middle-class professionals, both Black and White, around performances of elite sociability (virtue, courtesy, refined hospitality) that were the hallmarks of such institutions.³⁷ Yet what interests me here is less these performances than the possibilities enabled, and sometimes disenabled, by social reproductive spaces as such. The surveillance state's paranoia about the 'continual coming and going of people' at the Diops, inadvertently revealed an appreciation of public/private fusions.³⁸ A report on Mandessi Bell made this even clearer: 'We assume that even her room serves as a meeting place for African nationalists'.³⁹ Yet the very intimacy of one's room carried with it an implied selectivity, as Yandé Diop made explicit: 'On the one hand stood the exploited laborers, who lived in the *foyers*, and on the other the professionals, usually educated and financially comfortable people from the upper

³² Aitkin and Rosenhaft, *Black Germany*. For a description of Senghor's salon, see M. Sankalé, 'L'ainé du Quartier Latin ou déjà la passion de la culture', in *Hommage à Léopold Sédar Senghor: homme de la culture* (Paris, 1976), pp. 189–94, at p. 192. A personal reminiscence by Charly Lukula is one of the few acknowledgements of Mandessi Bell's important role (C. Lukula, 'Un devoir de transmission', *Présence africaine*, clxxv–clxxvi (2007), 431–2).

³³ Paris, Archives du Préfecture de Police (hereafter A.P.P.), 77W4047/413.099, Rapport, 4 Nov. 1951.

³⁴ Verdin, *Alioune Diop*, p. 85. Verdin credits Senghor's salon alone with introducing the couple to each other, but given Bell's own active participation in intellectual life, this seems unlikely.

³⁵ Unsigned, undated circular letter on 'Découvertes' stationery (Bibliothèque Claude Lévi-Strauss, Archives Michel Leiris (hereafter A.M.L.), fr/cdf/las/FML.E.01.01.143).

³⁶ Parisian police archives tracked the Diops' address until the 1960s, as well as that of *Présence africaine*. Between 1947 and 1949 the Diops split their time between 32 rue des Écoles (the same building as Mandessi Bell) or alternately a hotel at 43 boulevard Raspail in Paris, and 2 bis avenue Pasteur in Dakar. *Présence*'s earliest Parisian address appears in 1951, listed as 16 rue Henri Barbusse, while the Diops unusually lived separately at 43 boulevard Raspail. This office seems to have shut down, since at the time of the congress in 1956 both *Présence* and the Diops' address is listed as 17 rue de Chaligny (A.P.P., 77W4047/413.099, 'Alioune Diop', and 77W3952/395.638, 'Présence Africaine').

³⁷ See René Depestre's description of Alioune Diop: 'I was immediately struck by his courtesy, his self-control, the sobriety of his inner strength, his intellectual rigor and his high coefficient of civility' (R. Depestre, 'Alioune Diop, l'un des pères de la civilité démocratique mondiale', *Gradhiva*, x (2009), 164–9, at p. 164).

³⁸ A.P.P., 77W3952/395.638, Rapport, Sept. 1956.

³⁹ A.P.P., 77W4047/413.099, Rapport, 4 Nov. 1951 (emphasis mine).

classes of African societies'.⁴⁰ Her observation is suggestive for acknowledging that not all social reproductive sites were co-eval, and that migrants in temporary social housing, the *foyers*, were not encircled by the Black elite gathered in the Diops' home. While the public congress typically encircled men alone, neither was the private salon unmarked by exclusions.

Yet by undertaking *Présence's* production in their rooms, the Diops' residences often united re/production. Iwiyé Kala-Lobé, Yandé Diop's half-brother and a member of the *Présence* staff, provided a glimpse into the ways such compression blurred the lines between re/productive needs. He recalled, for example, how once the editorial collective huddled together editing manuscript sheafs, while burning other paper to keep warm: 'As there was no central heating in the [Diops'] building, we installed a wood stove which we fed with newspaper, because the winter of 1946–47 was very harsh'.⁴¹ He also served as a courier between the various cafés at which the journal's contributors held court, while the abundant memos bearing his and Yandé Diop's signature testify to joint labours. Indeed, the logistical and editorial correspondence in *Présence's* archives alternate among all staff, suggesting that administrative labour was shared across gendered lines. Unlike in turn-of-the-century clerical professions, where women in the workforce spurred a concomitant devaluation of 'secretaries', *Présence africaine* staff neither divided the work of running the enterprise along gendered lines, nor produced a gendered hierarchy that subordinated admin to editing, for instance.⁴²

Because half of the journal's initial editorial team were either directly related to the Diops or were close friends, *Présence africaine* seemed rooted in the kinship-like hallmarks of the most iconic institution of social reproduction: the household.⁴³ This *en famille* atmosphere lent the professional space of *Présence* an unusual consanguine density – less like the bourgeois nuclear household, and closer to a more extended West African one. A friend, the French anthropologist Georges Balandier, later described the journal's production as 'a sort of family craft'.⁴⁴ The French, *artisanat familial*, conveys still more specific connotations, evoking a mode of production in which intergenerational kin worked side by side. While we might be tempted to privilege the rosy connotation of domesticity over that of labour, Balandier's comment was as much about the latter as the former. He was witness not to a pre-modern scene of the 'traditional' African family, though, as his comment possibly implies. Rather, the team exemplified a household mode of intellectual production that has been traced to the late eighteenth century.⁴⁵

The yeasty environment at *Présence africaine* ruled out, even if by necessity, superficial divisions between public modes of production from private modes of social reproduction. In fact, in such heterosocial re/production *Présence africaine* was not unique. Consider that Black presses like Britain's New Beacon Books or Bogle Louverture also began

⁴⁰ C. Yandé Diop, quoted in F. Germain, *Decolonizing the Republic: African and Caribbean Migrants in Postwar Paris* (East Lansing, Mich., 2016), p. 72.

⁴¹ Verdin, *Alioune Diop*, p. 154.

⁴² R. Crompton and G. Jones, *White-Collar Proletariat: Deskillings and Gender in Clerical Work* (Philadelphia, 1984); S. Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class, and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900–1930* (Urbana, Ill., 1992); M. Davies, *Women's Place Is at the Typewriter: Office Work and Office Workers, 1870–1930* (Philadelphia, 1982); and G. Lowe, *Women in the Administrative Revolution: the Feminization of Clerical Work* (Toronto, 1987).

⁴³ The full team included Mario de Andrade, Christiane Diop, David Diop, Thomas Diop, Jacques Howlett, Paulin Joachim, Iwiyé Kala-Lobé and Jacques Rabemananjara. David was Christiane's younger brother, Iwiyé her older half-brother, and Thomas was Alioune's cousin.

⁴⁴ Georges Balandier, quoted in 'Extraits d'Histoire d'autres de Georges Balandier', *Gradhiva*, x (2006), 170–3, at p. 171.

⁴⁵ B. Smith, *The Gender of History* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000); and T. Koditschek, 'Genius and the household mode of intellectual production: 1795–1885', *Journal of Social History* (2005), xxxix, 429–49.

out of their founders' parlours, or that Black bibliophiles like Arturo Schomburg started collecting the resources for future libraries in their homes, or that party organizers like Bibi Titi Mohamed mobilized Tanganyikan women in dance halls, and countless other intellectual and political institutions that originated in social reproductive settings.⁴⁶ This was motivated sometimes because of material or state constraints, and in other cases like that of Mohamed, by a politicization of everyday life. Either way, it becomes clear that the relationship between the intellectual/political and re/productive in the Black public sphere has been as historically compressed, as much as it has been subsequently obscured.

This compression, however, did not necessarily overcome gendered associations. Indeed, their collapsing could heighten them. In *Présence africaine's* case, the re/productive fusion of labour expressed itself in analogies of biological reproduction. Staff member Jacques Rabemamananjara adopted the metaphor of midwifery to demarcate the feminized labour of re/production from the masculinized production of intellectuals, which he claimed to have lifted from Alioune himself. As he elaborated:

The writers composed and created. *Présence africaine* has always been there to support them and help them to flourish, to bring out their insights and values ... *Présence africaine* has always functioned as a midwife that has given birth to others. Voilà! A midwife! It has supported the creativity of writers from the black world for the simple reason that European publishers were reluctant to publish the work of black writers. *Présence africaine* took up this task as its vocation, nurtured the talents of black writers, and literally gave birth to great authors.⁴⁷

Rabemamananjara may have given the clearest statement of the gendered division of cultural production, but it found wider expression.

The charter for the 'Friends of *Présence africaine*', a group set up in Dakar in 1947 to attract material and moral support for the enterprise, suggests that men were taken for granted as recipients of literary midwifery, even if 'both sexes' could be their midwives. It declared: 'Members of the association "Friends of *Présence africaine*" can include those individuals of both sexes drawn by its vision, who have faith in the future of the black man and are desirous of working towards Africa's development through the edification of its youth'.⁴⁸ In 1955 Yandé Diop sought the input of a friend on the congress's proposed themes, including: 'Position of black men of culture', 'Disseminating works of black men of culture ... etc'.⁴⁹ 'Literary midwifery' is as abundant a trope in characterizing the role of editors and publishers as childbirth is among authors.⁵⁰ *Présence* was neither the first nor last to employ it, but the congress made explicit the gendered division between intellectual labour that could be performed by women and men, but a role of intellectual occupied by men alone.

⁴⁶ P. Ireland, 'Laying the foundations: New Beacon Books, Bogle L'Ouverture Press and the politics of Black British publishing', *Revue d'études anglophones*, xi (2013), <<https://journals.openedition.org/ereca/3524>> [accessed 16 March 2022]; E. DesVerney Sinnette, *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg, Black Bibliophile and Collector: a Biography* (Detroit, 1989); and S. Geiger, 'Women in nationalist struggle: TANU activists in Dar es Salaam', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, xx (1987), 1–26.

⁴⁷ J. Rabemamananjara, quoted in B. Jules-Rosette, 'Conjugating cultural realities: *Présence Africaine*', in Mudimbe, *Surreptitious Speech*, pp. 14–44, at pp. 36–7. See also Rabemamananjara, quoted in Mudimbe, *Surreptitious Speech*, pp. 367–81, at p. 376 ('I can say only one thing: I am overjoyed that the child (that the small team surrounding Alioune Diop almost delivered with forceps) has grown, has affirmed itself, has blossomed'); or I. Kala-Lobé, 'Lorsque l'enfant paraît...', in *Mélanges*, pp. 70–81.

⁴⁸ A.M.L., fr/cdf/las/FML.E.01.01.110, Statuts d'Association d'amis de *Présence africaine*, 5 Apr. 1947.

⁴⁹ A.M.L., fr/cdf/las/FML.E.01.01.076, Christiane Diop to Michel Leiris, 22 Oct. 1955.

⁵⁰ For a discussion of literary midwifery, see S. Benstock, *Women in the Left Bank: Paris, 1900–1940* (Austin, 1986), pp. 20–4; and A. Pochmara, 'Midwifery and camaraderie: Alain Locke's tropes of gender and sexuality', in *The Making of the New Negro: Black Authorship, Masculinity, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance* (Amsterdam, 2011), pp. 57–98.

Little material survives of the eighteen-month planning period that preceded the congress.⁵¹ Yet it is still possible to imagine the scales of an undertaking that necessitated intercontinental communication, manuscript exchange, travel arrangements, press co-ordination and surveillance dodging. While the role of the state in controlling the flows of Black intellectual life has justifiably been an object of sustained inquiry, there has been little reckoning with the sheer scale of labour that Black internationalism required.⁵² Social reproductive labour was integral to congress planning, as it was to *Présence's* publishing: Yandé Diop's sisters lent a hand, such as Suzanne Ursule Diop. Such duties likely included helping care for Christiane and Alioune's young children, all four of whom were under the age of twelve.⁵³ Similarly, the re/productive could converge, as when honorary patron Josephine Baker hosted an 'evening ball' to raise funds for the event.⁵⁴

Probably no aspect of planning more demonstrated the unity of re/productive labour than logistics. Considerations about how to pay for the passage and lodgings of delegates consumed much energy. Some delegates, like Fanon, paid their own fare to offset organizing costs.⁵⁵ Arranging travel for African delegates based on the continent was the most difficult hurdle. The French art historian Madeleine Rousseau donated towards travel expenses, while Black Parisian hosts offered their homes for lodging. Meals were managed at such homes or local restaurants, and 'the Diop's table was always open'.⁵⁶ Léopold Senghor, too, acknowledged the importance of forging connections between intellectuals through dining: a luncheon at his flat for the African American delegation cemented a favourable impression of him.⁵⁷ Another meal organized by congress planners symbolized the curation of Black internationalism through food, at 'a Cafe, where African food was featured, also Haitian rum'.⁵⁸

The memos that bear Yandé Diop's signature indicate she took an especially prominent role in organizing, processing manuscripts and communicating with delegations. One of the earliest surviving planning letters offers a rare insight into her own understanding of the problems faced by the Black public sphere and the ambitions of the 1956 meeting to overcome them. 'We are shocked that the novelists and poets (of French or English expression) don't reach an African public, which anyway is not itself devoid of culture', she wrote to a friend. 'We have also observed that these works do not sufficiently reflect the themes, concerns, feelings and situations most familiar to the cultural awareness

⁵¹ Howlett recorded that the congress took eighteen months of planning (J. Howlett, 'Présence Africaine: 1947–1958', *Journal of Negro History*, xliii (1958), 140–50, at p. 147).

⁵² The French government continually threatened to shut the entire event down, up until it took place (Christiane Yandé Diop, interview in Jules-Rosette, *Black Paris*, p. 45). On the state's attempt to control Black international mobility, see P. Dewitte, *Les mouvements nègres en France, 1919–39* (Paris, 2007); and W. J. Maxwell, *F.B. Eyes: How J. Edgar Hoover's Ghostreaders Framed African American Literature* (Princeton, 2015).

⁵³ Verdin, *Alioune Diop*, p. 244.

⁵⁴ A.P.P., 77W4047/413.099, Rapport, July 1956. Baker's aid to the *Présence* group attracted the attention of the F.B.I. as well ('Appel aux Écrivains et Artistes Noirs', *Présence africaine*, v (Dec.–Jan. 1955); and R. P. Joyce, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Josephine Baker, 'Subject: First Congress of the Presence Africaine', Washington, D.C., 8 May 1955 <<https://vault.fbi.gov/josephine-baker/josephine-baker-part-02-of-03/view>> [accessed 21 March 2022]).

⁵⁵ Verdin, *Alioune Diop*, p. 244.

⁵⁶ Verdin, *Alioune Diop*, p. 244.

⁵⁷ H. M. Bond, 'Report on the First Congress of Negro Writers and Artists', Folder: Council on Race and Caste in World Affairs, Horace Mann Bond Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries <<https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/pageturn/mums411-b034-fo16/#page/31/mode/1up>> [accessed 17 March 2022].

⁵⁸ Bond, 'Report'.

of these peoples. Still other questions arise, which deserve to be examined during the Congress'.⁵⁹ A delegate recalled her dedication to ensuring its success: 'She worked quietly and with great effectiveness behind the scene. She performed all the necessary work to secure the success of the international conference, including displaying *Présence africaine*'s journals and books, taking orders, making arrangements for translation and publication of manuscripts writers had brought with them'.⁶⁰ The event was a turning point in her relationship to the expanding *Présence* enterprise that the congress made possible: afterwards she was responsible for the publishing house, while Alioune concentrated on their newly founded Society of African Culture.⁶¹

In an often reproduced photograph, Diop is pictured tacking up the congress poster, whose drawing of a Black man crowned by a laurel wreath had been sketched by Picasso for the occasion. Lost to the viewer of this image of a Black woman gazing at a symbol of Black male achievement, are the lengths she herself had gone in soliciting the illustration (Figure 1).⁶² This poster sits in the *Présence* archives, signed by Césaire and others, rendering homage to her skill while expressing them in a feminized register. One unsigned dedication piled on the superlatives, 'To Christiane Diop, of whom I do not know what to admire the most; her generosity! ... her passion!', while René Depestre praised the 'tribute to Africa which she wears as a queen does her crown'.⁶³ Dorothy

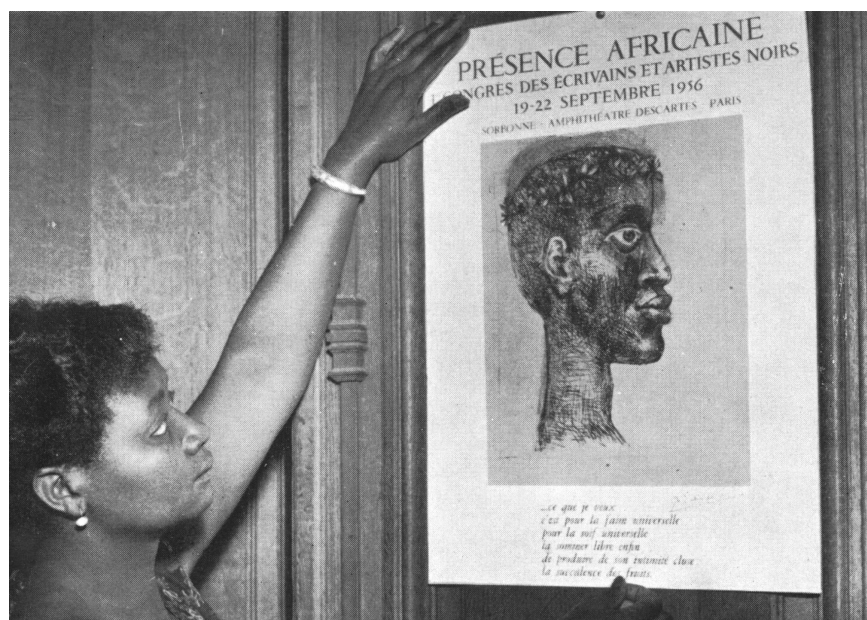


Figure 1. Christiane Yandé Diop affixing the poster for the 1956 Congress of Black Writers and Artists. ©Présence Africaine Editions, Communauté Africaine de Culture, 1956.

⁵⁹ A.M.L., fr/cdf/las/FML.E.01.01.076, Christiane Diop to Michel Leiris, 22 Oct. 1955.

⁶⁰ Davidson Nicol, quoted in Germain, *Decolonizing the Republic*, p. 6.

⁶¹ Verdin, *Alioune Diop*, p. 215.

⁶² Though the letter to the solicitation to Picasso for the first congress has not survived, the tone of her letter to Picasso for the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists in 1959 indicates she was probably responsible for writing him the first time in 1956 (A.M.L., fr/cdf/las/FML.E/.01.01.050, Christiane Diop to Pablo Picasso, 19 May 1958).

⁶³ Poster, Cote 17, Fonds Communauté africaine de culture, Institut moderne d'édition contemporaine.

Pizer, the partner of Trinidadian pan-Africanist George Padmore, appraised her very differently: 'She seems to be the business mind among them'.⁶⁴

As either a business mind or an editorial one, Yandé Diop's skills have yet to receive the same attention as the many for which her husband has been so lauded. This is a casualty not just of scholarship that absorbs the work of women (especially wives) into histories of male intellectuals but of an inability, too, to contend with the collaborative nature of intellectual labour that dissolves the boundaries between 'inspired minds and automated hands'.⁶⁵ *Présence* both contributed to this distinction and undermined it, and their feminization of labour echoed the feminine symbology that typified negritude's aesthetic. This symbology often foreclosed the possibility that women shaped its philosophy, even as it became sutured to their child-bearing bodies. In an interview for French public radio in 2019, a journalist endeavoured to reverse this imagery by concentrating specifically on Yandé Diop: '*Présence africaine* is also a face, and today, it is your face'.⁶⁶ Now ninety-six, the management of *Présence africaine* has long been taken over by her eldest daughter, Suzanne Diop. At this point, the enterprise has been led by women longer than Alioune's entire career doing so. Yet one is struck by the regular pauses in Yandé Diop's responses, as she navigated Yasmine Chouaki's attempts to centre her in the story of *Présence*.

Beginning with the old adage that 'behind every great man, there is a great woman', Chouaki asked her guest, 'You are the proof, aren't you?' Yandé Diop demurred, 'I want to be modest. Because he supported me a lot, too'. Chouaki continued, suggesting the Diops were one of the 'famous couples of the history of thought', comparing them to Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. Yandé Diop hesitated but described their mutual partnership: 'Maybe ... I think we completed one another. He was 15 years older than me; thus I learned a great deal and he, too, learned a great deal'. Throughout the interview, Yandé Diop narrowed her contributions (and as the third person indicates, that of her contemporaries) to the still critical, yet intellectually less serious social reproductive tasks alone: 'We were more present in the home than at work. We were there to help our husbands, because we wanted to allow our men to exempt themselves from the daily troubles'. At one point Chouaki invited Yandé Diop to 'measure all that you have done that is still thriving today', to which the latter replied: 'I did all that because I admired the man [Alioune]'. Later, Chouaki teased her guest as she launched into an explanation of a formative book on African philosophy, 'So you aren't just a little housewife, huh?' Yandé Diop laughed: 'Ah, but one must accompany one's companion'.

This interview does not rule out that Yandé Diop considers herself a *femme de culture*, least of all that scholars should. Her 'modesty' might even exhort us to do so. However, her self-confessed timidity, her disdain for the apparent overuse of 'the word intellectual', or her readiness in centring men rather than herself, compel us to reckon with the divergence between scholars' preferred categories of analysis and our subjects' categories of practice. Her assessments may discomfit us for affirming the gendered regimes of visibility/invisibility that her own labours dissolved. Yet Yandé Diop can also help us acknowledge other possibilities. Perhaps her insistence on a marriage of mutual love and learning unsettles atomistic forms of recognition. Or that modes of hesitant publicness

⁶⁴ Connecticut, Beinecke Library, Richard Wright Papers, (hereafter R.W.P.), Box 103, Folder 1521, Dorothy Pizer to Richard Wright, 3 March 1960.

⁶⁵ *Literary Secretaries/Secretarial Culture*, ed. L. Price and P. Thurschwell (London, 2016), p. 1.

⁶⁶ Y. Chouaki and C. Yandé Diop, 'Christiane Yandé Diop: une présence africaine', *Radio France Internationale*, 17 Oct. 2019 <<https://www.rfi.fr/emission/20191020-christiane-yande-diop>> [accessed 17 March 2022].

like hers, and indeed the re/productive embedded in all publicness, remind us ‘how privacy is publicly constructed’.⁶⁷ Whatever the case, a project of reclaiming Yandé Diop into Black intellectual history cannot proceed *despite* these statements; doing so would only accept hierarchical metrics of re/productive labour, intellectuals or ‘agency’.⁶⁸ Instead, we must inhabit these tensions in order to fully appreciate Yandé Diop’s complex voice alongside silences she has creatively assembled for us. Rather than rushing in to resolve silences especially, we might pause to hear their eloquence.

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Dorothy Brooks was thanked twice by members of the congress’s London delegation, Saburi Biobaku and George Padmore, the latter of whom commended her as an ‘energetic secretary’.⁶⁹ Like many acknowledgements sections, these thanks provide glimpses into the ‘accumulated traces that record a field’s hidden substrata’.⁷⁰ The London planning committee performed the same collaborative labour in social reproductive sites to ensure the success of the congress. Yet in contrast to *Présence africaine*, male members of the London committee followed the classic pattern of the gendering of intellectual production: devaluing such labour *because* of its feminization. We know little about Dorothy Brooks, a White African art enthusiast and in all likelihood a communist. The first two identities raise one of the thornier problems of twentieth-century Black intellectual life – the role of White patrons – while the last one raises the question of the Cold War struggle to capture Black internationalism. On the former, Lyn Schumaker’s ‘culture broker’ enables an approach to White mediators that integrates professions of solidarity into inquiries about the racialized power that structured such support.⁷¹ On the latter, delegates repeatedly invoked the Asian–African Conference at Bandung, Indonesia in 1955 as the example that inspired their ‘cultural Bandung’, framing the 1956 congress as a non-aligned counterpublic to surpass Cold War binaries.⁷² As we shall see, unlike most White supporters who made their presence visibly known, Brooks’s behind-the-scenes labour and her possible political affiliations render the question of her ‘authority’ uncertain. Dwelling in this uncertainty permits us again to critically examine a strategy of reclaiming intellectual authority on behalf of subjects.

Traces of Brooks’s involvement in London pan-African circles begin in 1950 with the formation of the West African Arts Club, which contributed to the nucleus of what eventually became the congress’s London delegation.⁷³ Though the club vanished around 1960 as quickly as it appeared in 1950, Lonneke Geerlings has put together a sketch of its activities, which included performances of West African music in homes, venues, and occasional radio broadcasts, film screenings and lectures.⁷⁴ An undated programme of lectures includes one from Dorothy Brooks entitled ‘Tribal art’ and some book reviews between 1955 and 1961

⁶⁷ M. Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York, 2002), p. 62.

⁶⁸ For an Africanist critique of liberal ‘agency’, see S. Andrade, ‘Gender and the “public sphere” in Africa: writing women and rioting women’, *Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, liv (2002), 45–59.

⁶⁹ G. Padmore, message, in *Le Ier Congrès*, p. 384; and S. Biobaku, message, in *Le Ier Congrès*, pp. 394–5.

⁷⁰ Helton, ‘Making lists, keeping time’, p. 83.

⁷¹ Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology*, p. 13.

⁷² Peter Kalliney has written that the 1956 congress ‘helped to translate the political philosophy of nonalignment into the aesthetic principles of a rejuvenated black Atlantic literary culture’ (P. Kalliney, ‘Modernism, African literature, and the Cold War’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, lxxvi (2015), 333–58, at p. 336).

⁷³ Printed notices about the club appeared in R. Pool, ‘African renaissance’, *Phylon*, xiv (1953), 5–8; and *The African Music Society Newsletter*, i (1952), 46. In the newsletter the correspondence address for the club is in care of ‘Miss Dorothy Brooks’.

⁷⁴ L. Geerlings, ‘West African Arts Club’ (unpublished draft).

indicate familiarity with African art.⁷⁵ An extant piece of club stationery listed Brooks as 'Art Editor', while the address for the club, which alternated between her home in Walthamstow and the Ghanaian physician Dr. Seth Cudjoe's home in Camberwell, again reinforces the centrality of social reproductive sites to Black intellectual production.⁷⁶

In 1951 both Cudjoe and Brooks appeared on the B.B.C. programme *Calling West Africa* to announce the club's 'services'. In a formulation very reminiscent of negritudinalists, Cudjoe declared that its mission was to highlight the 'contribution which African culture can make towards world civilisation'. Brooks added, 'The African must take the lead in disseminating his own culture. It is his way of life and it is assumed that he understands it more fully, than persons who live outside it'.⁷⁷ The irony of a White woman encouraging African (male) leadership of cultural activity, seems to have been coupled with a possible self-perception as an objective cultural broker. Brooks secured speakers exposure on *Calling West Africa*, hosted parties for authors like the Nigerian novelist Cyprian Ekwensi, and organized a group 'for the practice of painting, sculpture, modelling, etc' for 'colonial students at Art Schools in this country'.⁷⁸ It was probably these activities that introduced her to George Padmore and led to the outcome of a White woman assembling the London delegation.

Horace Mann Bond, a member of the African American delegation, called her its 'Director and general manager'.⁷⁹ Bond observed: 'Miss Brooks was praised highly by Conference officials for her interest in making the large delegation from England possible. It appears that she had "raised" the money to make the travel possible, and had organized attendance'.⁸⁰ It also appears that she solicited Padmore to serve a 'leading role'. Yet Padmore demurred with 'advice and suggestions', arguing that delegation leadership was most suitable for an African member.⁸¹ Bond still insisted Brooks was its 'chief', observing that 'she took a back seat (right behind the several rows reserved for the 'official' delegates); but she maintained very close scrutiny of what transpired' (Figure 2).⁸² Bond's descriptions, as opposed to Padmore's 'energetic secretary', potentially signals an openness to including feminized organizational labour into masculinized leadership. Equally, it hints that whiteness could have made that conceptual leap more readily possible, even if Brooks's leadership was not uniformly endorsed.

Despite Padmore's minimization, he and the African American novelist Richard Wright were convinced that the London delegation bore her communist imprint.⁸³ As

⁷⁵ S.O.A.S. Archives, Dr. Robert Wellesley Cole Papers, CBMS/01/A/08/03, PP MS. 35, Box 262, 'Lectures on West African Culture: second series', n.d. Brooks's book reviews were all of volumes by Margaret Trowell ('Review of *Classical African Sculpture*', *African Affairs*, liv (1955), 147–8; 'Review of *African Tapestry*', *African Affairs*, lvii (1958), 323–4; and 'Review of *African Design*', *African Affairs*, lx (1961), 201–2).

⁷⁶ The other officers were E. Bankole Timothy, editor and secretary; Dr. S. D. Cudjoe, treasurer; and Frances Quashie-Edun and Adisa O. Williams, subeditors (Dorothy Brooks to Malcolm MacKenzie, 4 May 1950, letter courtesy of Richard Ford Manuscripts, 70 Chaucer Road, London, W3 6DP).

⁷⁷ B.B.C. Written Archives Centre, *Calling West Africa*, Program-as-Broadcast Form. Box 6, 'West African Writers and Artists Club', 25 Apr. 1951; image courtesy of Arnet Addis.

⁷⁸ B.B.C. Written Archives Centre, Program-as-Broadcast Form, 'West African Diary by Dorothy Brooks and Hastena Bull', 15 Apr. 1953; image courtesy of Arnet Addis. For the Ekwensi party invitation, see R.W.P., Box 103, folder 1522, George Padmore to Dorothy Brooks, 17 Apr. 1956. For the letter about co-ordinating art classes, see Brooks to Mackenzie, 4 May 1950, letter courtesy of Richard Ford Manuscripts.

⁷⁹ Bond, 'Report'.

⁸⁰ Bond, 'Report'.

⁸¹ R.W.P., Box 103, folder 1522, Padmore to Brooks, 17 Apr. 1956.

⁸² Bond, 'Report'.

⁸³ Blackman, Holness, Lamming and Dover were part of leftist circles, and Dover and Blackman were members of the C.P.G.B. In the earliest correspondence surrounding the London delegation, Padmore wrote to Wright that he 'Will be seeing Dorothy Brooks and English Stalinist about Diop's KULTURE conf. and will report when I get the dope from the horse's mouth' (R.W.P., Box 103, folder 1522, George Padmore to Richard Wright, 5 March 1956).



Figure 2. A photograph of congress attendees. According to Horace Mann Bond's description, the woman seated at the end of the fourth row, near the middle of the frame, may be Dorothy Brooks. © Gamma-Keystone via Getty Images

both Padmore and Wright had left the party years earlier (the former in 1934, the latter in 1942), they quarrelled with Brooks. She seems to have been no fan of Wright's, if we accept Padmore's account: 'My references to Stalin in the letter to D.B. has a reason. She is, or was, a Stalinist and one day before the god was dethroned, I had to give her a piece of my tongue when she expressed to me that you were an "enemy of the people"'.⁸⁴ A cryptic numbered sheet with Wright's one sentence reflections from the congress begins with, '1. Dorothy Brooks's declaration of intent: USA or USSR', suggesting that they may have clashed, or that she pushed delegates to declare their allegiances.⁸⁵ Bond reported a less volatile encounter: 'The Communists (if Dorothy Brooks may be taken as the exponent of the "line") were conciliatory'.⁸⁶

Though there are no sources yet from Brooks herself to corroborate these interpretations, neither the Communist Party of Great Britain nor the Foreign Office archives mention

⁸⁴ R.W.P., Box 103, folder 1522, George Padmore to Richard Wright, 17 Apr. 1956.

⁸⁵ R.W.P., Box 103, folder 1522, Untitled document.

⁸⁶ Bond, 'Report'.

her.⁸⁷ While the possibility that Brooks kept a low profile as an operative cannot be ruled out, she would not have been the only one with clandestine motivations. Wright had privately communicated with the U.S. State Department for help to assemble an American delegation to overtake the perceived communists, and Bond had filed a report for them on its proceedings.⁸⁸ However, it would be misguided to read these exchanges purely as a replication of Cold War dichotomies. Black internationalism's political energies were so unsettling to Brooks, Wright and others because they resisted binary containment.⁸⁹

Padmore's *Pan-Africanism or Communism?* was a prime embodiment of this, a 1956 pamphlet proffering non-aligned pan-Africanism as the answer to global Black liberation. In talks with *Présence africaine* to issue a French translation at the same time as the congress was being planned, Padmore's increasing disdain over the absence of 'fighting guts' among negritude intellectuals led him to mark off his pan-Africanism as a superior (qua virile) Black politics. 'Dear Dick', he wrote to Wright, 'these black Frenchmen are a damn nuisance. Do they think I have nothing else to do but keep up a running correspondence with these café lizards (laughter). While the Arabs are fighting for their freedom they lounge around cafés discussing the French Revolution'.⁹⁰ Padmore further entrenched a feminized negritude culturalism against masculinized pan-Africanism, when he refused to admit Alioune Diop as a delegate on behalf of *Présence africaine* at the All-African People's Conference in Accra in 1958.⁹¹ Even today, the 1956 and 1958 congresses are used to illustrate negritude as the 'cultural' contrast to 'political' pan-Africanism, a comparison that perpetuates a gendered opposition between the two.⁹²

Ultimately, for both the London and Paris committees, the labour of staging Black internationalism was feminized and the public stages themselves largely reserved for men. Yet while for *Présence* this labour was a critical part of the intellectual process, for Padmore and others, feminized labour undermined masculinized politics. What makes this opposition even more artificial is Padmore's participation in a circle that replicated the overlapping re/productive modes embodied by the Diops. As Leslie James has shown, Padmore's life presents an important example of the need to expand the category of intellectual to include organizing work.⁹³ As he proudly declared to Wright, 'I produce my propaganda on an old kitchen table'.⁹⁴

⁸⁷ The digitized C.P.G.B. archives do not mention the congress at all ('Communist Party of Great Britain archive' <<https://communistpartyarchive.org.uk/>> [accessed 17 March 2022]). The African Department of the Foreign Office became aware of the congress only after a notice about it was printed after the fact in *Paris-Dakar*. This generated a report worrying over whether the congress signalled a turn from an 'all-black line' to 'all-black Communism' (The National Archives of the U.K., FO371/119449, File 2231, J. A. D. Stewart Robinson to J. H. A. Watson, 2 Nov. 1956).

⁸⁸ H. Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (London, 2008), pp. 200–5.

⁸⁹ For more on black internationalism and its resistance to Cold War dichotomies, see J. Munro, *The Anticolonial Front: the African American Freedom Struggle and Global Decolonisation, 1945–1960* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 231–45.

⁹⁰ R.W.P., Box 103, folder 1522, Padmore to Wright, 17 Apr. 1956. He repeated the sentiment several times in various letters to Wright. As Leslie James has observed in her monograph on Padmore, his disdain for 'café intellectuals' was a criticism he also meted out to others besides negritudists (L. James, *George Padmore and Decolonization From Below: Pan-Africanism, the Cold War, and the End of Empire* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 148).

⁹¹ 'Of most significance was that he objected to the fact that PRESENCE AFRICAINE and SAC were not accepted as official organizations ... I suppose this represented Mr. Diop's work. Alioune was quite shocked that his organization was not accepted' (The American Society of African Culture Papers, Box 1, Folder: Harris, James T., J. T. Harris, Report on All-African People's Conference, 18 Dec. 1958).

⁹² E.g., H. Adi, *Pan-Africanism: a History* (London, 2018), p. 105.

⁹³ James, *George Padmore and Decolonization From Below*.

⁹⁴ 'They [other Black intellectuals] always express surprise that I produce my propaganda on an old kitchen table and not on a grand mahogany desk with a battery of phones and secretaries at my beck and call' (R.W.P., Box 103, folder 1522, George Padmore to Richard Wright, 19 Apr. 1956).

Moreover, Padmore's correspondence with Wright, interlaced with letters between their partners Ellen and Dorothy, reframes their friendship as a four-person circle of intellectual mutuality. The roles of Brooks, Pizer, Padmore and the Wrights were not drawn together under the same conceptual vocabulary employed by *Présence* staff. But the central roles played by women still demonstrates a continuous circuit of intellectual production in which women were regular, not exceptional, parts. Christiane Yandé Diop and Dorothy Brooks were recognized as particularly adept organizers, but they also possessed a multitude of skills that made a truly international Black public sphere possible. Joining up these figures exposes the power differentials that included 'women at every node of the cycle' of intellectual re/production, but rarely of intellectual representation.⁹⁵

The ambiguous status of Brooks's and Yandé Diop's leadership or intellectualism highlight the ongoing necessity of revisionist strategies that expand both categories. But even as we restore both figures to the mid-century Black public sphere, we need resist passing too quickly over the process that generated distinctions between intellectuals and intellectual labour in order to preserve the category for men (and rarely, White women) alone. Further, we must accept that women were also part of this process: think of Brooks's wish to nominate a 'male leader' or Yandé Diop's preference for 'men of culture'. Their examples encourage us to be more cautious about interpretations that make recourse to the category of intellectual as the only possible role through which subjects' contributions can be understood. A lurking Habermasian utopianism that recuperates Yandé Diop and Brooks without accounting for such possibilities would reanimate a conception of public spheres constituted by individuals who bracketed asymmetry, rather than operating under their constraints.

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In a photograph of congress socializing outside the Sorbonne, the reason three young women appealed to French photojournalists is not hard to imagine. Clothed in wax-print near Aimé Césaire, they were identified only as 'charming congressgoers'.⁹⁶ Pictured are three students: Virginie Camara, Marguerite Senghor (no relation to Léopold) and Dienaba Bâ (Figure 3).⁹⁷ The photograph only hints at the cross-cutting currents of negritude's intergenerational public sphere, rare instances of heterosocial congress sociability and a separate world from either of these of Black sisterhood. We learn from the Guadeloupean novelist Maryse Condé (later a vocal critic of negritude) that she and Senghor were the only Black classmates at the prestigious Lycée Fénélon, where they were preparing for entry into the Grandes Écoles.⁹⁸ Senghor was a member of the largest Black student organization in France, the Fédération d'étudiants d'Afrique noire en France (F.E.A.N.F.). A few months before the Paris congress, she had served on a three-person F.E.A.N.F. delegation to the national congress of student unions in Strasbourg in June 1956.⁹⁹

The Ivorian organizer Jeanne Martin Cissé spoke admiringly of her Senegalese comrade Virginie Camara, alongside whom she maintained a lifelong political career at the

⁹⁵ Leslie Howsam, quoted in T. Travis, 'The women in print movement: history and implications', *Book History*, xi (2008), 275–300, at p. 275.

⁹⁶ The full caption of the photograph read, 'Le grand poète noir Aimé Césaire entouré de charmantes congressistes' ('Premier congrès mondial des écrivains et artistes noirs', BnF Gallica, *La défense*, Oct. 1956, no. 385 <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k98202460.r=césaire?rk=42918;4>> [accessed 4 May 2022]). Another newspaper printed the photo identifying only Césaire (BnF François Mitterand, Rez-de-jardin, MICR D-889, Tolbiac, *Réforme*, 29 Sept. 1956, no. 602).

⁹⁷ With thanks to Ruth Bush and Pascale Barthélémy for helping me identify these women and learn more about them.

⁹⁸ M. Condé, *Mets et merveilles* (Paris, 2015).

⁹⁹ A. A. Dieng, *Mémoires d'un étudiant africain* (Dakar, 2011), p. 63.



Figure 3. From right to left: Virginie Camara, Margeurite Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Dienabâ Ba, in the courtyard of the Sorbonne. © AFP via Getty Images

respective national, West African, pan-African and international levels.¹⁰⁰ In 1956 Camara would have been a treasurer of the Union of Senegalese Women, an organization affiliated with the Senegalese chapter of the French West African socialist party, *Rassemblement démocratique africain*. Shortly after she worked with other African feminists to establish the Union of West African Women in 1959 and was the head of the delegation to the Congress of African Women in 1962.¹⁰¹ Even the president of the International Council of Women praised her in the highest possible terms: ‘Highly intelligent. She is a “leader” amongst women’.¹⁰² Camara was no stranger to culture either – she contributed poetry to the Dakar women’s magazine *Awa*.¹⁰³ Yet her career has been entirely overlooked in comparison to her then husband, David Diop, a poet who at the time was christened

¹⁰⁰ J. M. Cissé, *La fille du Milo* (Paris, 2009).

¹⁰¹ Wall text for *Awa, une revue féminine pionnière, 1964–73*, Musée de la Femme Henriette Bathily, Dakar, Nov. 2017–Jan. 2018.

¹⁰² ‘Très intelligente. Pour les femmes c’est un “leader”’ (Marie-Hélène Lefauchaux to Yvonne Pétremont, secretary of the French delegation to the U.N. Commission on Women, Archive and Research Centre for Women’s History, Cote 4366, Brussels). With thanks to Pascale Barthélémy for sharing this with me from her research.

¹⁰³ Camara was a member of the editorial board, her poetry appeared in the January 1964 issue, and she also contributed accounts of the patient in national and international women’s congresses. The entire run of *Awa* (1964–73) has been digitized by Ruth Bush and Claire Ducournau (‘AWA: an online archive of African magazines’ <<https://www.awamagazine.org/>> [accessed 17 March 2022]).

negritude's newest lyricist.¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately the record trails off at Bâ, but all three hint at differences in self-fashioning between themselves and Yandé Diop, reminding us of Black women's embeddedness in public intellectual life, too. Their engagements and leadership across multiple spaces – in male-dominated congresses, in gender-mixed student politics and in women-only organizations – offer glimpses into how Black women accounted for the exclusions of the public sphere in counterpublics (Figure 4).



Figure 4. A photo from *Présence Africaine*'s archives visualized such counterpublics. From right to left: Suzanne Ursule Diop (Christiane Yandé Diop's sister), Dienaba Bâ, Margeurite Senghor, Virginie Camara. © *Présence Africaine* Editions, Communauté Africaine de Culture, 1956

¹⁰⁴ Camara and Diop divorced in 1957; *Présence africaine* had published the volume that cemented his fame, *Coups de pilon*, the year of the congress. David was Christiane's brother and an official member of the congress's planning committee. Given the status of wives' labours considered here, it may be possible that Camara was unofficially involved in the congress planning too.

A final example allows us to consider how some women proposed conceptualizations of the intellectual on new terms entirely. In a letter of support to the congress, one is signed: 'A Group of Black Women'. It begins, 'In an event as important for the black world as this congress, we could not remain mere observers, because we think that the Black Woman (*Femme Noire*) had and will have an important and weighty role to play alongside men in the edification of their country'.¹⁰⁵ They insisted that Black women were not 'slaves to their husbands and children', but rather assumed 'moral leadership' within their families. This argument appropriated both negritude's feminine symbology from Senghor's famous poem *Femme Noire* and the instrumentalization of motherhood among the 'mothers international'.¹⁰⁶ As an example they cited struggles to enrol their children in school, efforts of which 'those [delegates] who are gathered here' served as the living testament.

They also referenced their 'solidarity with the prisoners of Dimbokoro', a 1949 protest of 2,000 women in Ivory Coast against the French imprisonment of anti-colonial dissidents. Among them some protestors executed a ritual, naked self-exposure, in which mature women exposed their genitals in a feared ceremony of political dissent.¹⁰⁷ These two examples seamlessly integrated battles over social reproduction like education within the same plane as those for global Black power: '[We] were aware not only of combatting local injustices, but also and above all of actively contributing to the recognition of our worth that has been flouted for too long'.¹⁰⁸ They also foregrounded African forms of protest and knowledge production, concluding with a Wolof proverb to illustrate their point.¹⁰⁹

This astonishing text demonstrates a complex engagement with negritude, Black internationalism and feminisms, which reconceptualized the Black intellectual as a category inclusive of social reproduction. As countless scholars have observed, historic social reproductive struggles have often been articulated through maternalist idioms. In this instance, using negritude to make claims about gendered re/production and protest offers a window into intellectual possibilities absent from its famous men. Moreover, by placing mass mobilization within the same conceptual field as that of singular intellectuals, these women abolished the hierarchy between intellectual labour power embodied by the collective and the individual. Even the choice to remain anonymous was a deliberate strategy, a way to augment their message not through individuated public recognition, but rather signal the boundlessness of a Black women's counterpublic.¹¹⁰ Altogether, these women remind us that there existed possibilities for inhabiting the intellectual that break open standard categories of practice and analysis.

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I conclude with a final consideration of the longer arc of negritude's public sphere and its lessons for intellectual history. As noted at the start, there has been a curious parallel

¹⁰⁵ 'Message de femmes noirs', in *Le Ier Congrès*, pp. 398–9, at p. 398.

¹⁰⁶ P. Barthélémy, 'Macoucou à Pékin: l'arène internationale, une ressource politique pour les africaines dans les années 1940–1950', *Le mouvement social*, ii (2016), 17–33. The Women's International Democratic Federation, of which many African women were members (including Cissé, mentioned above), frequently deployed the political idiom of motherhood, as had generations of African nationalists.

¹⁰⁷ The reference to the 'March on Grande Bassam', as the protests became known, would have been unmistakable to an African audience. See H. Diabaté, *La marche des femmes sur Grand-Bassam* (Abidjan, 1975). On naked self-exposure, see N. Diabate, *Naked Agency: Genital Cursing and Biopolitics in Africa* (Durham, N.C., 2020).

¹⁰⁸ 'Message de femmes noirs', p. 399.

¹⁰⁹ 'It is said that the lion is the king of the forest, but the elephant is one, too, because when he really wants to rise to his full size, we realize we cannot move past him' ('Message de femmes noirs', p. 399).

¹¹⁰ S. Newell, *The Power to Name: a History of Anonymity in Colonial West Africa* (Athens, Ohio, 2013).

between the characterization of negritude's salons and a vigorous earlier literature on the significance of salons in the French and African American public sphere. In both literatures, the salon has come to stand in for an institution of intellectual congregation that afforded women feminocentric and sometimes proto-feminist spaces, which vanished in masculinized congresses. The Nardals' *cercle d'amis*, as they called it, was thus the purposefully obscured ancestor to negritude's later boys' club. In a letter to Senghor's biographer, Paulette Nardal confronted this obscuring and how "complete silence was maintained for a long period" about her activities in the 1930s'. She accused both Senghor and Césaire of taking 'the ideas tossed out by us and express[ing] them with more flash and brio ... We were but women, real pioneers – let's say that we blazed the trail for them'.¹¹¹ Nardal's unequivocal indictment fortifies revisionist strategies that restore the intellectual to subjects who have been denied such roles. However, we should also make room for subjects like Yandé Diop who adopted less strident tones, and whose lack of interest in a written legacy make them less assimilable into the genealogy-oriented project of most intellectual history.

According to Brent Hayes Edwards, while Léopold Senghor dismissed the Nardal salon as bourgeois, the use of the term *cercle* should point us towards rather different connotations. He writes, 'The Nardal *cercle* amounts to an argument that *l'internationalisme noir* requires what we might term the institutionalization of reciprocity: the creation of open, informal spaces designed to allow certain kinds of transnational, translinguistic dialogue rather than to voice any particular social doxology'.¹¹² At the 1956 congress, one congress planner and delegate framed its ethos through a Malagasy concept of reciprocity, *fihavanna*. 'An untranslatable term in French', Jacques Rabemananjara told the audience, 'but whose sense would evoke, for every human being, the imperative moral obligation to consider his neighbor... It means partnership in exchange for gifts and ideas, commensalism in conversation'.¹¹³ If this gathering also sought an institutionalization of reciprocity, what then distinguished the *cercle* from the *congrès*?

A social reproductive setting, most notably. As we have seen with *Présence africaine's* production, the unity of re/production was key to preserving certain possibilities of collectivity valued by Rabemananjara and Edwards. Nowhere was this truer than in the most emblematic site of social reproduction: the household. Both the Nardals and Diops maintained collaborative possibilities in their salon-cum-office homes. While we tend to associate salons exclusively with women, in fact they were institutions of gender-mixed sociability.¹¹⁴ As we have seen, the salon as negritude's (and the Black international's) institution of all-gender intellectual congregation continued after the Second World War. Edwards is right to critique Senghor's gendered disdain of the Nardals' *cercle*, but the class associations of both their and the Diops' salons are less easily dismissed. As we'll remember, Yandé Diop acknowledged that members of the *salon* rarely mixed with migrants of the *foyers*. Moreover, one telltale detail from the Nardals also underscores the layers of re/productive partition between, say, the parlour and the broom cupboard. The Nardals' cousin, Louis-Thomas Achille, remembered how 'quickly family life resumed its course' in their home, 'under the vigilant tutelage of journalist Paulette, assisted by efficient cleaning ladies in the neighborhood'.¹¹⁵ There has been no room in scholarship

¹¹¹ Quoted in J. Hymans, *Léopold Sédar Senghor: an Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh, 1971), p. 36.

¹¹² Edwards, 'Feminism and *L'Internationalisme Noir*', p. 156.

¹¹³ J. Rabemananjara, 'L'Europe et nous', in *Le Ier Congrès*, pp. 20–8, at p. 28.

¹¹⁴ Steven Kale has made this argument in the case of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French salons (S. D. Kale, 'Women, the public sphere, and the persistence of salons', *French Historical Studies*, xxv (2002), 115–48).

¹¹⁵ Achille, 'Préface', p. xv.

on the Nardals for a reminder that they cleaned as well as wrote, still less that they paid others to help them clean. Yet putting such a detail into view permits new insights into the Nardals' perceptive writing on Black women, as well as the impossibility of writing without keeping house.

The 'efficient cleaning ladies', meanwhile, confront us with people who always exist at intellectual history's margins. As Keguro Macharia reminds us of a different congregation, the Fifth Pan-African Congress in 1945, asking who 'swept the floors, polished the desks ... operated sound systems ... took shorthand and typed notes' is a pathway to new kinds of questions.¹¹⁶ Ultimately, neither the congress nor the salon were democratic spaces. Each circumscribed access, only in differently gendered and classed ways and to different degrees. Each also demanded distinctive types of re/productive labour, performed by differently situated subjects. By focusing the bulk of scholarly attention upon congresses and to a lesser extent salons, historians have missed the individuals whose contributions cannot be captured in spaces of congregation alone. This enables the appearance that intellectual assemblies are divorced from spaces of intellectual re/production. While adopting a social reproductive lens can prompt a re-examination of the 'Gramscian intellectuals' in *foyers*, too, here it has shown how the Diops' home, as both a salon-like location for debate and an office-like space for *Présence africaine's* production, preserved this gender-mixed community, feminized it and lionized it. Though Padmore devalued such labour and spaces because of their feminization, his own home with Pizer in reality created much the same community, as did the West African Arts Club co-managed by Dorothy Brooks.

The continuity of the salon across the twentieth century asks us to face not lost Black international feminisms in negritude's evolution, which, as we have seen, continued in myriad ways both recognizable (Camara) and less familiar (A Group of Black Women). Rather, it asks us to contend with the divisions embedded between social reproductive sites where intellectual community could encircle all genders, versus public forums still reserved for men. Yet there is a further difference that focusing upon spaces of production allows to come into view: the dynamics of labour. Institutions like the salon were deeply generative of Black internationalist intellectual culture in ways exclusively homosocial congresses were not. However, salons and congresses were more closely aligned than scholars have acknowledged: both emphasized discourse and debate as the hallmark of intellectual life, rather than intellectual re/production, making invisible the labour that made them possible. Conjoined spaces of re/production, on the other hand, could demarcate less between intellectual labour and intellectuals, as such labour was often shared and less amenable to individualized classification.

In an interview about their collaborative writing practice, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten captured the difficulty of conveying collectivity. Their interviewer expanded upon the problem, 'When you pick up a text that's finished ... what you get a sense of is some finished product where the collectivity animating the work that preceded it ... somehow gets lost along the way. How do you negotiate that?'¹¹⁷ By opening inquiries

¹¹⁶ K. Macharia, '1945 & 1948', *Popula*, 10 Apr. 2019 <<https://popula.com/2019/04/10/1945-1948%Ef%BB%BF/>> [accessed 17 March 2022].

¹¹⁷ S. Harney and F. Moten, 'Interview with Stephen Shukatis', in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (New York, 2013), pp. 100–59, at p. 106. One answer to recognizing collectivity has been acknowledgements sections, and yet a list of those critical to the production of this article, for instance, hardly conveys the amount of care and labour they undertook in their suggestions and edits: Tom Arnold-Forster, Freddy Foks, Mimi Howard, Durba Mitra, Roseanna Webster, Ayşe Polat and a workshop among my colleagues at the University of Missouri. For more on the cultural and material capital embedded in acknowledgements sections, see E. Callaci, 'On acknowledgments', *American Historical Review*, cxxv (2020), 126–31.

into intellectual labour, we can begin answering the question of its negotiation among those who identified as intellectuals and those who did not. Perhaps no one more enjoined the necessity of grappling with collective labour than the Group of Black Women. Their message to the congress reproached delegates about the costs of disregarding their political, care and intellectual labour in spaces other than the Amphithéâtre Descartes of the Sorbonne: 'It would be wrong to neglect [it] at the moment the Black World is reevaluating its culture'.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ 'Message de femmes noirs', p. 398.