

lineages of recipes that embody an indefinable “style.”¹⁴ This idea sets the stage for understanding how specific foods, particularly *barbacoa*, have become equivalent with fiesta foods (such as mole). Adapon, building upon Gell’s concept of the “halo effect of technical difficulty,” argues that it is not just any dish that can be equated with mole, only ones that entail great technical skill (108-109). In this chapter, Adapon goes beyond an analysis of mole and *barbacoa*’s symbolism, using an understanding of cuisine as an art form to explain why and how *barbacoa* became marked as a fiesta food.

In sum, Adapon provides a distinctive addition to anthropological food studies in her analysis of food as an art form embedded in a particular social context. Pursuing such theoretical analysis and application in other places with similar complex cuisines will no doubt be fruitful. Adapon’s writing is excellent, evocatively describing abstract, complex ideas with ethnographic examples. I highly recommend this book for colleagues in food, art, and gender studies.

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Kobena Mercer, ed. *Exiles, Diasporas & Strangers*. Cambridge, MA: Institute of International Visual Arts/MIT Press, 2008. 224 Pages.

If we consider Kobena Mercer’s latest anthology, *Exiles, Diasporas & Strangers*, in relation to the title of the InIVA/MIT Press series “Annotating Art’s Histories” in which it appears, a potentially productive space opens up between annotation as a practice of adding notes to existing narratives, and annotation as a revisionist methodology that challenges the ground upon which these narratives have structured the histories of modern and contemporary art. In this volume, Mercer makes relevant the question of what happens to art history’s disciplinary frameworks when we take diaspora, exile, and movement as the basis for inquiry.¹⁵ Contributors therefore reveal the

¹⁴ Adapon uses Gell’s concept of art as a “distributed object,” in which a body of art is dispersed temporospatially, although each piece of art has its own micro-history reflecting social relations (*Art and Agency*, 221).

¹⁵ Since the themes of migration and exile are fundamental to this volume’s framework, Mercer (and the contributors) often refers back to the scholarship of thinkers who have conceptualized subjectivity outside the boundaries of the nation-state, including Edward Said, Paul Gilroy, James Clifford, and Georg Simmel.

varying stakes, benefits, and limits involved in the ways we approach the art historical legacies of both modernism and diasporic art practices in light of contemporary forms of globalization.

Exiles, Diasporas & Strangers is the fourth and final publication in the series, which also includes *Cosmopolitan Modernisms* (2005), *Discrepant Abstraction* (2006), and *Pop Art and Vernacular Cultures* (2007), each edited by Mercer. Like the other volumes, *Exiles, Diasporas & Strangers* wants to use multicultural and postcolonial lenses in order to reconsider the historical and stylistic circumstances of modernism and its legacies. Unlike its predecessors, however, it explicitly foregrounds themes of displacement in an effort to open its field of inquiry to subjects, movements, and geographies often excluded from traditional studies. Far from an exhaustive account of the ways in which diaspora, exile, immigration, and emigration are manifested in the visual arts, this collection, according to Mercer, aims to demonstrate “the ‘slow time’ of interdisciplinary translation . . . a holistic practice of rewriting that . . . makes the best use of conceptual innovations originating from outside the field of art history without reducing the objects of study to an ‘illustration’ of theory as an end in itself” (20). The self-styled pace and ambition of the anthology attempts to integrate theory and practice, while using case studies to open dialogues toward future avenues of analysis.

Considered together, the essays indicate the potential advantages and pitfalls of grappling with the dominant narratives of modern art. Ikem Stanley Okoye’s essay “Unmapped Trajectories: Early Sculpture and Architecture of a ‘Nigerian’ Modernity” rejects center/periphery models that chart unidirectional lines of influence, and instead advocates for a “diagram of chaos” in mapping European and African visual practices at the turn of the nineteenth century. However, in his discussion of James Onwudinjo’s Adinembo House in Okrika, and the Igbo sculptural tradition of representing the deity Anyanwu, Okoye reintroduces the irresolvable question of who was more “modern” and who came first among these Nigerian artists and their European counterparts (such as Adolf Loos and Marcel Duchamp). As a result, Okoye upholds rather than upsets the dominant historical and cultural distinctions that have long defined the parameters of “the modern” in architecture and sculpture.

More curious in this vein is Sieglinde Lemke’s contribution “Diaspora Aesthetics: Exploring the African Diaspora in the Works of Aaron Douglas, Jacob Lawrence and Jean-Michel Basquiat.” Much of this anthology strives to demonstrate that the mutual entanglements of diasporas and homelands, minority and mainstream, and

modernism and nostalgia cannot produce a seamless narrative of diasporic or minority artists' varied styles and localized circumstances. Yet in her consideration of these three artists, Lemke invents a narrative case study for "diaspora aesthetics" that progresses from the "roots" of Douglas to the "routes" of Lawrence and the "riots" of Basquiat. In her effort to develop a cohesive aesthetic of diaspora and to chart its development over time, Lemke essentializes rather than seriously considers both the artwork and the scholarship that she cites in her discussion.¹⁶

I find the essays by Ruth B. Phillips ("The Turn of the Primitive: Modernism, the Stranger and the Indigenous Artist") and Steven A. Mansbach ("The Artifice of Modern[ist] Art History") to be more successful in the ways that each addresses the dominant tenets of modernist art history when faced with the realities of transnational movement and collaboration. Phillips mobilizes the figure of the "stranger artist"—European immigrants to North America in the early and middle decades of the 20th century—and the indigenous artists with whom they worked, providing an alternative to the European modernist-primitivist narrative by considering how the mutual deterritorialization of these two groups produced new points of contact and negotiation. With a similar aim, Mansbach historicizes the circumstances in which European émigrés founded the discipline of art history in the U.S. as one of rational iconography, iconology, and stylistic development toward a Hegelian unfolding of increasing abstraction.¹⁷ By reframing art history's disciplinary methodologies, Mansbach reveals how particular experiences of trauma have come to determine what we value as well as what we exclude in modern art. Specifically, he focuses on the privileging of the Bauhaus by the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition program in the 1930s, which he argues came at the expense of other, more politically engaged modernisms such as the Central European avant-garde (104-105). Both of these essays exemplify Mansbach's stated desire to "unearth the lost richness of modern art's original creative complexity," something that becomes visible once we refocus our inquiry to the shifting ground of exile and immigration (107).

¹⁶ Namely, Clifford's formulation of roots and routes, Avtar Brah's concept of diaspora space, and Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's "polycentric aesthetics."

¹⁷ Mansbach draws on Hegel's dialectical model of history as an unfolding progression towards an end goal in order to make the claim for modern art's increasing abstraction and non-objectivity in dominant art historical narratives. This feature of modern art history, Mansbach argues, served as a method by which to avoid the ideological and political functions of art that were at work in Nazi Germany (101).

In his introduction, Mercer foregrounds the extent to which the terms *émigré* and immigrant are based on one's subjective position—or in whose view one comes or goes. Ian McLean's contribution, "Aboriginal Modernism in Central Australia," exemplifies this aspect of Mercer's project by considering the experience of modernism for Aborigines in central rural Australia. Rather than totalize the devastating impact of modernity and colonization on these populations, McLean nuances how we understand native adaptation during and after the colonial encounter by considering the ways in which traditional practices have coexisted with modernity in works by artists like Emily Kngwarrey and Albert Namatjira. McLean's efforts to conceptualize a theory of modernism that accounts for the apparent aesthetic and historical negotiations in Aboriginal painting lead him to claim that "Aboriginal modernism is as much about Aboriginalizing modernity as modernizing Aboriginality" (83).

Perhaps treading on more familiar ground with respect to much theoretical work on diaspora and exile, Amna Malik and Jean Fisher close the volume with essays on contemporary art in Britain. In "Conceptualizing 'Black' British Art Through the Lens of Exile," Malik discusses work by Gavin Jantjes, Mona Hatoum, and Mitra Tabrizian, charting how their visual practices of the 1970s and '80s functioned at the intersections of race, nationality, gender, and poststructuralism. In demonstrating this, Malik shows how structures of power, surveillance, and regulation functioned across multiple categories of displacement to reproduce the boundaries of the nation. In "Diaspora, Trauma and the Poetics of Remembrance," Fisher looks to work by Sonia Boyce, Keith Piper, and Everlyn Nicodemus to explore the ways in which trauma and memory manifest themselves in cultural practice, particularly in relation to testimony, witnessing, and the archive. Mercer's decision to place these essays at the end of the volume indicates the anthology's roughly chronological organization of objects and movements, while simultaneously drawing out larger thematic and methodological relationships between essays. As Fisher writes: "it is *from* the place of diaspora that a uniquely politicized, ethical and poetic language emerged that addresses the universally felt aporias of collective human existence, and in which memory and exile may found new narratives of hope. . . . Diasporic poetics demonstrate—contrary to the claims of modernism—that art never ceases to address the past for the future; it interprets history to disclose the deeper 'truths' of our world historical situation" (210). With this conclusion, she

illuminates the stakes in Mercer's larger project by emphasizing the value of diasporic perspectives and art practices for all audiences.

In addition to these particular essays, the real strength of Mercer's volume lies in his use of alternative, non-spatial forms of exile to suggest future areas of research. In his contribution "Adrian Piper, 1970-1975: Exiled on Main Street," Mercer frames the artist's marginality not in relation to her racial and gender identities, but to her adherence to a Kantian philosophy that metaphorically exiles her from the major trends in poststructuralist theory and contemporary art.¹⁸ By examining Piper's philosophical practice in relation to her *Mythic Being* performances, Mercer seizes an opportunity to, in his words, "re-examine the break-up of modernism as a historical moment of crisis in which certain outcomes gained precedence over others" (148). In doing so, Mercer charts unexpected relationships between Piper's famous series, conceptual art discourse, and the ways in which her practice asks us to formulate links between self and other. This essay highlights key elements of Mercer's framework, encapsulating how the anthology—despite its flaws, and in conjunction with the others in the series—will continue to generate provocative research questions at the intersections of cultural studies and art history.

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Carrie Noland and Sally Ann Ness, eds. *Migrations of Gesture*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2008. 296 pages.

For critics in the arts and humanities, the term "gesture" is a seductive one, suggesting a sensual affinity between aesthetic expression and the variability and subtlety of physical movement. If pressed to explain gesture, many of us would compare it to language, while perhaps qualifying the analogy by noting that gestures are more organic—and more ephemeral—than either speech or writing. *Migrations of Gesture*, a collection of nine essays that range in scope across the visual and performance arts, sets out to undo these

¹⁸ Specifically, Mercer quotes Piper regarding her interest in Kant's metaphysics and epistemology, and discusses her investment in the philosopher's belief in objective knowledge and reasoned truths. For Piper, as Mercer shows, poststructuralism takes away the rights of objectivity and rationality to which all subjects should be entitled (148).