

## Popular Culture

Patrick Manning, *A History of Humanity: The Evolution of the Human System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 237–240, 249–254.

### Prologue

Popular culture expanded during the nineteenth century, as people in many parts of the world, seeking models for cultural expression, turned increasingly to people from neighboring groups and not just to their own ancestors. My view of the central role of popular culture in recent social change emerged in my study of the [African Diaspora](#); the work of art historian [Terry Smith](#) expanded my perspective. With shared music, dance, visual art, dress, and poetry, common people acted to open global democratic discourse. Struggles for gender equality, and for recognition of indigenous and colonized peoples, rely on communication through popular culture. This essay consists of selections from my 2020 book, *A History of Humanity*.

### Essay

Today's group-level culture expands well beyond the limits of the ethnicities of old, beyond the great families and elites, because of the new connections and new technology of life today.<sup>1</sup> In an early Anthropocene example that linked popular culture and social movements, anti-slavery movements arose around the Atlantic as a result of ideas arising from inherent ideas of freedom, the experience of participating in the world market, migration and encounters with new communities, and the development of oral and visual media of communication. Two memorable images of that age became iconic in the rise of popular culture: the image of the slave ship "Brookes," showing hundreds of captives chained into place; and the image of a kneeling captive, asking, "Am I not a man and a brother?" These images brought new supporters to the alliance of those in slavery, free blacks, and supportive whites. For a whole century, songs, novels, dances, and oratory summarized the lessons of the slave market, exploitation of slave labor and of slave persons, made the case for a principled abolition of enslavement, and strengthened the communities that became the African diaspora.<sup>2</sup> During this century, enslavement continued and expanded in Africa, Asia, and even the Americas, yet was ultimately beaten back to the level of an uncommon abuse. Meanwhile, the campaign for emancipation ended up strengthening certain Christian and Islamic communities. For instance, in the U.S., the black church became a powerful and continuing socio-political institution.

Literacy became a central impetus to expanding popular culture. Especially in English language but also in many other languages, teachers and expanded schooling dramatically raised the number who could read newspapers. Short stories and serials in the newspapers provided steps toward the expanding market for full-scale novels. The printed word brought entertainment but also brought discussion of local and broader social issues. The trade in books and newspapers expanded steadily; those who were literate read aloud to families and friends. Through colonization and later through the internet, English spread widely as a second language and as a medium of global

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<sup>1</sup> This argument, that popular culture is raising the prominence and relative strength of commoners in society, brings up the question of the relative strength of commoners over time. Is there a way to track this for the last few millennia?

<sup>2</sup> Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Sylviane Diouf, ed. *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003).

popular culture. One advance in the availability of printed texts was the invention in England of the Stanhope hand press, with a series of modified versions beginning in 1800. Nile Green documents the expansion of printing in Qajar Iran from 1820.<sup>3</sup> He traces Iranian men who began active careers of publishing works in Arabic and Persian. Mirza Salih Shirazi traveled to London and Mirza Zayn al-'Abidin traveled to St. Petersburg; each studied printing for years and returned with a Stanhope printer to Tabriz, printing religious and secular texts. More broadly, Green shows that such printing in Arabic characters expanded elsewhere at the same time, as presses were set up in Cairo and Lucknow, India.

Migration, facilitated by steamships, opened new cultural interconnections. European migration shot up with the Irish exodus from the 1847 famine, after which migrants from every part of the continent settled in Europe, the Americas, and elsewhere; millions of Russians, many of them ex-serfs, moved eastward. Almost equal numbers of migrants went from India to Southeast Asia and the coasts of every ocean. Chinese migrants settled in Southeast Asia alongside those from India but also moved west and north on the mainland, and overseas. Migration declined from the 1930s to 1950s (except for immense migrations of soldiers and refugees in wartime), then expanded again but in new directions. For migrants in whatever time and place, music, dress, games, sport, and other dimensions of popular culture accompanied them. Music and dress, which easily crossed the boundaries of language, traveled with particular ease. In the early 1870s, the Fisk Jubilee Singers traveled throughout the U.S. and to England to convey their version of black culture. They joined the ranks of such international celebrities as the Swedish operatic singer Jenny Lind and the African American Shakespearian actor Ira Aldridge. Sport arose from schools and other men's organizations—soccer football, wrestling, and boxing. In an elite and nationalized recognition of the growing importance of sport, the modern Olympic Games were convened in Athens in 1896.

In the twentieth century, cosmopolitan popular culture seized upon a succession of new media. The African diaspora—breaking away from the heritage of slavery and putting down urban roots for claims on equality—continued to play a leading role in developing new forms and in linking those cultural traditions to a determined and ultimately successful campaign for citizenship in nations of Africa and abroad.<sup>4</sup> The musical traditions of jazz and blues arose at the end of the nineteenth century, and the beginnings of recorded music spread the new forms widely from 1900. Telephone, radio, television, portable devices, tapes, CDs, personal computers, the internet, and mobile phones brought endless revolution to communication. With time and the wider audiences resulting from film and electronic media, celebrities gained still greater fame: Pablo Picasso and Charlie Chaplin were among the greatest celebrities of the early twentieth century; the football striker Pele and the boxer Muhammad Ali gained truly global recognition at the end of the century. In film, strong national traditions arose in Europe, Asia, and the Americas in the 1920s, though Hollywood gained an early lead. With time, however, Hollywood led to Bollywood (films from Bombay) and to Nollywood (videos from Nigeria); soap operas, if invented in the U.S., prospered in Mexico, Brazil, and Egypt.

In medium after medium, young people took advantage of their wider contacts to draw on cultural styles from their peers rather than their parents. In dress, dance, music, and speech, young people stretched across the boundaries of family and ethnicity; as a result, the rate of innovation rose, as did the rate of obsolescence of previous fads. Visual art was perhaps as important as music, film, and literature as a medium of expression by common people around the world, but it could not be copied and distributed as easily. The works themselves were of various sizes and media, including large installations. By the twenty-first century, however, electronic images were easily created and distributed, so that images of works could be seen widely, and ideas and appreciations could develop in interaction. Terry Smith has emphasized the twenty-first-century explosion in biennial exhibitions of visual art, by artists who have yet to make sales to major museums but whose work conveys a sense of the

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<sup>3</sup> Nile Green, "Persian Print and the Stanhope Revolution: Industrialization, Evangelicism, and the Birth of Printing in Early Qajar Iran," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30 (2010): 473–90.

<sup>4</sup> Manning, *African Diaspora*, 209–82.

planetary moment.<sup>5</sup> From these artists may come the visual symbols to inspire future generations as they take up new challenges.

In every medium, performers had to share their place and especially their purse with entrepreneurs -- producers, publicists and other sorts of owners. As audiences grew, each medium in popular culture developed a substantial capitalistic dimension. Under some circumstances, the artists maintained the upper hand; in other situations, the marketing team, the producers, or the owners of the firm had the greatest control of the entertainment product and of the earnings. The audience too gained in influence. Consider the changes within music: in the times of live performance, the audience heard what was selected by the performers. In the days of records, the audience could purchase a range of performances by artists of interest. With today's equipment, the audience can shift at will among a wide range of performances.

What is the meaning of this popular culture? While popular culture has its fashions, cohorts, and cliques, it is surely far more open to new stimuli from unfamiliar sources than the culture of the past. One important consequence is that, with greater interchange and familiarity among communities, the fears and hatreds that earlier separated communities into hostile and antagonistic camps declined significantly: for instance, the merciless Pacific warfare of Americans and Japanese gave way to close alliance, not only political and cultural.<sup>6</sup> In this regard, we can distinguish the I-groups of audiences that experience multiple fashions from the we-groups that develop among those devoted to specific cultural expression. Either way, young people make their own cultural choices, rather than accepting molds provided by their parents. Both individualism and group identity took on new forms, nurtured by expanding popular culture.

### **Global Democratic Discourse**

How can local institutions and communities gain the attention of those in a position to make global decisions? One way is to contribute to the hierarchical discussions of which their institutions form a part, for instance in government and religion. Another means of expression is through the network of social movements, in which people sharing common concerns reach across boundaries to make their case in regional and global debate. In the latter instance, social movements circumvent hierarchies. While they are often structured informally rather as the we-groups of social institutions, social movements play a central role in the global interactions of social institutions.

I begin my exploration of global democratic discourse with the example of colonized and indigenous people. Their losses during the last several centuries were severe indeed. Most world regions underwent colonization, beginning at times from the fifteenth to twentieth centuries. All lost their sovereignty, though at varying moments. Some lost their lands as well—especially those in the Americas, Australia, and Pacific islands, and also those enslaved or otherwise recruited for their labor. All were flooded with the impact of the expanding capitalist system, and many were outnumbered by settlers arriving from Europe, Asia, and Africa. In almost no cases, however, did the colonized peoples actually disappear. The Caribbean revival of interest in Taino culture from the 1980s, recognized their continuing presence.<sup>7</sup> In a related but not exactly identical issue, kingdoms and communities, large and small,

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<sup>5</sup> "In the many art-producing centers in the rest of the world outside Euroamerica, a variety of local negotiations between indigeneity, tradition, modernity, and globalization led, first, to the forging of distinct kinds of modern art, and then, in artistic exchanges within nearby regions and with distant centers, the emergence of specific kinds of contemporary art." Terry Smith, "Contemporary Art: World Currents in Transition Beyond Globalization," in *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds*, eds. Hans Beiting, Andrea Buddensteig, and Peter Weibel, 186–92 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 192.

<sup>6</sup> John Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

<sup>7</sup> Rumors of the "extinction" of the Taino and other populations of the Caribbean are greatly exaggerated,

were overrun and incorporated into larger colonial units, especially in Africa during the twentieth century, but earlier as well in Siberia, India, Southeast Asia, and the Americas. When nations were created, in the nineteenth and twentieth century, indigenous peoples were included within them, but usually without granting them full sets of rights.

Despite these centuries of losses, indigenous peoples found ways, with time, to draw on nationhood and international organizations, creating social movements that criticized the oppressive, long-neglected conditions that had restricted them. Small in number and having lost their rights, their land, and many of their children to the great powers that had conquered them, indigenous peoples claimed full recognition of their community, their language, their lands, and their cultural production. Remarkably, they gained significant support from other groups, and began to win concessions. The indigenous people's movement was signaled by the seizure of Alcatraz Island in the San Francisco Bay by the Native American Movement in 1968 and reached a global peak with the Chiapas uprising of 1994. Those who had been the weakest and had lost the most were able to achieve various sorts of formal recognition, as in the creation of a formal negotiating framework between the peoples of the polar region and the national states that governed them. In this and other fashions, popular voices made themselves heard in a way that brought the concerns of communities and other local-level institutions to the attention of others around the world and put pressure on the most powerful institutions to find adjustments that could be made in response.

Such social movements are the organized and active parts of a larger phenomenon that I call "global democratic discourse." This global discourse has arisen from three principal sources: the practice of popular culture for purposes of entertainment, the expansion of both general and specialized knowledge, and the campaigns of movements for social change.<sup>8</sup> I trace the evolution of such a global discourse out of localized discussions, linked in various ways: through connections in commerce that have moved commodities to new lands, migration that has introduced travelers to new communities, communication media that have reached across social lines in text and audio, the formal schooling of the young, and especially the emerging forms of popular culture that have stimulated new feelings through music, dress, dance, theatre, film, and the internet. Global democratic discourse relies on the ancestral culture of each community, but it relies even more on the novelty of reaching beyond the boundaries of home. It encompasses nations, societies, communities, and organizations to sustain a discourse on human priorities. It draws on the long history of local debate and governance, in some cases invoking the well-known Athenian model of democracy.

An implicit premise of new global discourse is the notion of human equality. This vision has gained wide support—perhaps majority support—among the people of the planet. It contests the hierarchy that is so evident in the leading institutions of society. On the other hand, the notion of equality is vague and is not embodied in any effective institutions or any explicit ideology. In contrast, well-organized corporate and financial interests, backed by other institutions and with great influence in governments, argue that their own interests must be attended to first, and that the welfare of humanity is best addressed by ensuring the welfare of the most powerful interests. Special interests of various sorts—corporate, financial, government officials, landed aristocrats, and other big institutions—greedily take care of themselves. For general populations of all sorts, this is clear, but there is no strong basis for developing alternative approaches. The various efforts at popular reform—expanded schooling, consumer protection, environmental protection, assistance for the poor—meet with instinctive and forceful attacks from the established special interests. In between are coalitions of groups seeking to provide valuable

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especially in that many Taino women had children with immigrant men and raised their children with attention to Taino culture.

<sup>8</sup> Kloppenberg's insights on democracy, discussed briefly for the eighteenth century in chapter 8, are worthy of extension for the Anthropocene era. As I see it, the question is whether it will be possible to match, at the global level, those principles that have been helpful at the national level: popular sovereignty, autonomy, equality, deliberation, pluralism, and reciprocity. Kloppenberg, *Toward Democracy*.

social services through alliance with the corporate interests.<sup>9</sup> Still, an ideology recognizing the equality of individual humans appears to gain in support, as seen especially in the growing global connections through popular culture. I argue that we are in the midst of a great shift in human social organization: the emergence of global democracy as a forum for discussion on social priorities. While this is very much a modern and contemporary transformation, it is also important that we compare our current transformation with the biggest social transformations of earlier times. For instance, empires arose as extensions of societies, yet they were commonly oppressive and were unable to expand beyond a regional scale. Nations have arisen recently, also as extensions of societies, and we may ask whether they indicate a return to the societies of old or a step toward global democracy. Nations, for instance, appear to be more open than empires to recognizing both individual and group rights within their borders. Parallels more distant in time but perhaps more comparable in their character were the initial formation of the speaking community and the early-Holocene formation of societies through combination of neighboring communities.<sup>10</sup>

If a global forum is coming into existence, the discourse has many topics and concerns to debate. The Anthropocene era has provoked many crises. Hierarchy and network, already out of balance, have become even more inconsistent. The dilemmas of higher productivity, tighter global connections, capability for war, further invasion of Gaia, and great expansion in knowledge face us all. Grasping elites are of obvious concern—they have sought world conquest, untold riches, and impoverishment of whole continents. Elite determination to govern economy and society from the top down have disrupted the reproduction of the Human System by distorting processes of regulating institutions.<sup>11</sup> What are the processes and opportunities that enable them to act in this way? That is, to treat the elites as scapegoat is to address only part of our problems, as there exist other imbalances in the world of today. The proposal to turn to a world government would impose another level of hierarchy on the existing hierarchies—a step of dubious value unless the deficiencies in intermediate hierarchies can be resolved.

How greatly have social relations changed since the opening of the Anthropocene? One way to consider this question is to compare two great sets of social movements—in the North Atlantic (1789–92) and the planet (1989–92). In one sense there were clear parallels, as social movements arose to contest elite dominance, seeking to establish democratic structures. In the eighteenth century, the French uprising brought revolutionary change for a period of time, though much of it was reversed in twenty years of warfare. Within the same decade, powerful if often unsuccessful social movements for emancipation and governmental reform arose in the Caribbean, North America, Ireland, and Poland; the 1792 anti-slavery petition campaign, in which thousands of British subjects signified their opposition to slave trade, launched a campaign that lasted half a century. In 1989, demonstrators in Tiananmen, Berlin, Cape Town, and many other areas of the world, in contact with one another, claimed recognition of democratic rights. By the end of 1990, unpopular governments had stepped down in Europe, Africa, and others were under pressure.<sup>12</sup> The 1793 execution of the King of France launched invasion of France by European powers; the 1990 seizure of Kuwait by Iraq brought U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. In each case the wars lasted twenty years. Among the differences were that the twentieth-century social movements were in closer mutual contact and were more likely to bring change in government and society. The U.S. was a hegemonic power in the latter case, but not quite a Napoleonic empire.

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<sup>9</sup> Examples include the Gates Foundation, the UN Development Program, and Amnesty International.

<sup>10</sup> Prasenjit Duara, in considering principles for construction of a new world order, suggests that priority be given to the values inherited from religions based in eastern Asia rather than those of Abrahamic religions, which have provided leading global value for the past several centuries. Prasenjit Duara, *The Crisis of Global Modernity: Asian Traditions and a Sustainable Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Gran, *Rise of the Rich*.

<sup>12</sup> For a comparison of transnational social movements of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, see Patrick Manning, “1789-1792 and 1989-1992. Global Interactions of Social Movements,” *World History Connected* 3, 1 (2005) <http://worldhistoryconnected.org/3.1/manning.html> .

The results of great social movements were confusing, in the twentieth century as in the eighteenth. In the eighteenth century, Britain ultimately vanquished France; in the twentieth, the United States vanquished the Soviet Union. The communist regimes of Russia and Eastern Europe fell while that in China reaffirmed its system; in South Africa, the Communist Party became part of the new constitutional government in 1994. The earlier executions by the Jacobin government of Revolutionary France, followed by the extinction of Poland and the crushing of Irish revolt, were more than matched by the later episodes of genocide in Cambodia, Rwanda, and the collapsing Yugoslavia. Antagonism arose in the Islamic world, followed by terroristic attacks—especially the attacks of September 11, 2001 in the U.S. and then more broadly. The United States responded to these tensions, again, by launching war on Iraq in 2003. Yet in the weeks and months before war began, widespread popular demonstrations spoke against warfare. War began, with apparent victory and then long-term struggle, but the war was ultimately renounced by all. More optimistically, one might argue that the first large-scale achievement of global democratic discourse has been the rejection of atomic war: even eighty years after the two bombs exploded over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, no government or army has dared to launch a nuclear weapon. The mechanism is not clear, but it does seem plausible that global popular opinion has been central to restraining the firing of these weapons.

Perhaps one will learn more about global democratic discourse by investigating at a more intimate level, where discussion expanded on divisions within the common people. The many divisive issues that had long existed—racial classification, ethnic identity, gender roles, religious toleration, and justification of violence—were now debated publicly through film, music, and internet comment—no longer limited to private discussions within the family or the ethnic group. Painful issues of violence and sexual exploitation, especially directed toward children and women, were brought into the open in communities throughout the world. At worst, these reports and debates revealed that cruelty and mistreatment remain unexpectedly widespread within humanity. At best, these same reports and debates suggest that people of many groups are gradually developing common understandings and a global discourse that is commonly uncomfortable but nevertheless direct and informative. One of the remarkable institutions to develop out of such debates was the series of “truth and reconciliation” commissions that collected and publicized information on brutal national conflicts in Latin America and then in Africa. These public discussions could not resolve the anger, hatred, and fear that remained in each case, yet they set the goal of some form of reconciliation and perhaps contributed to its achievement. Similarly, global discourse highlights the cost of social inequality—as measured in loss of individual development, social productivity, and in the potential for unleashing new ideas if more people suffered less from inequality—without being able to reduce the level of inequality. South Africa provides a challenging example, where a long struggle to overcome racial hierarchy resulted in a peaceful transition and promises to build equality, but where the passage of a quarter century shows more of the creation of new sorts of inequality than it does of constructing national unity.

The two global-level structures in formation—the framework for popular culture and the global democratic discourse—each result from a level of communication and exchange far exceeding any from earlier times. They provide a basis for coordinating efforts to face the three great crises in social inequality, environmental degradation, and policy for facing the first two. Formation of this global discourse can be seen as analogous to the initial human creation of language. In that early case, people invested deeply in inventing and exchanging words and meaning, resulting in a collaboration that sustained their conversations by creating an encompassing community. For the equivalent discourse of today, I emphasize that these developing structures are more about global debate than about world government. A focus on forming a world government, under today’s circumstances, would lead mainly to expanded hierarchy and further inequality. If there is no pre-existing popular consensus, world government would be open to seizure by special interests that would do more harm than good. In contrast, formulating a global discourse provides a context for the emergence of a consensual social, global social structure. Humanity, in recent times, has made more steps toward creating a global discourse than toward forming a world government, and that is as it should be. Creation in our day of networks unified by popular culture and sharing available knowledge for the common good might be quite a surprise—but it would be a surprise not much bigger than the initial, rapid and imaginative creation of a community of speaking humans, in which individuals and groups brought change to themselves and the world.

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#### INSPIRATION FOR THIS ESSAY:

## Manning, “Black Culture”

Patrick Manning, *The African Diaspora: A History through Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 273–274.

The outburst of twentieth-century creativity and renewal drew on underlying patterns of African culture—in simplest terms, on drums, dancers, and griots—and drew even more on the previous three centuries of struggle with slavery and its consequences. The success of black popular culture is in part a consequence of deprivation. African societies, at home and abroad, lost their elites in the era of slavery. At the dawn of the twentieth century, little black elite culture existed in the countries of the diaspora. On the continent, African monarchies had been weakened, and those that survived had been turned into exploitive, alienating powers by their association with enslavement. So, the great artists in black communities, with no kings or courts to call on them to celebrate the monarchy, played instead to the communities in which they lived. The direct, earthy, ribald, critical, and profound culture of the common people received the creative attention of the best black artists. Their names are mostly lost to us, but the forms and styles of their creations survive to this day in the many works they engendered.

For black communities, the various genres of cultural expression have included statements to sustain the community in slavery, under colonialism, in rural life, and in the transition to urban and industrial life; statements of broad identity that marshaled the community to common action; and statements of the human condition that gained appeal beyond black communities. For individuals, black cultural expression has given voice to the desires and dilemmas in their search for security, love, and acknowledgments; it has elevated the experience of ordinary people to a high level of recognition. The creative artists, in taking advantage of new technology and new social situations, expressed old messages in new, intriguing fashions. In so doing, they spoke to the need for citizenship in figurative and literal terms, for black communities and for others as well. . .

Massive social and political changes in the lives of black people began to mount up at the end of the 1950s: political independence in Africa and the Caribbean, legal victories in the United States and Latin America, and accelerated advance in education and health conditions throughout the black world. There were many casualties, many defeats, and a continuing stream of racial discrimination at every level. Yet by the end of the 1950s, a crucial turn had been made. The ideology of white supremacy had lost its credibility and its primacy, though the reality of its dictates might last for a long time.

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### INSPIRATION FOR THIS ESSAY:

## Smith, “Contemporary Art”

Terry Smith, “Contemporary Art: World Currents in Transition Beyond Globalization,” in Hans Beiting, Andrea Buddensteig, and Peter Weibel, eds., *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds*, 186–92 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 188, 191–192.

What, then are the different kinds of art that coexist in contemporary conditions? As a core *art critical* idea, I argue that three strong currents may be discerned within the extraordinary quantity and seemingly limitless diversity of art made since around 1989. *Remodernist*, *retro-sensationalist*, and *sensationalist* tendencies fuse into one current, which continues to predominate in Euroamerican and other modernizing art worlds and markets, with widespread effect both inside and outside those constituencies. Against these, art created according to nationalist, identarian, and critical priorities has emerged, especially from previously colonized cultures. It came into prominence on international circuits such as biennials and traveling temporary exhibitions: this is the art of *transnational transnationality*. For many of the artists, curators, and commentators involved, it has evolved through at least discernable phases: a reactive, anti-imperialist search for national and localist imagery; then a rejection of simplistic identarianism and corrupted nationalism in favor of a naïve international item; followed by a broader search for an integrated cosmopolitanism, or worldliness. . . .

Each of the three currents disseminates itself (not entirely, but predominantly) through appropriate — indeed, matching — institutional formats. Remodernism, retro-sensationalist, and spectacularist art are usually found in major public or dedicated private museums, prominent commercial galleries, the auction rooms of the “great houses,” and the celebrity collections, largely in or near the centers of economic power that drove modernity. Biennials, along with traveling exhibitions promoting the art of a country or region, have been an ideal venue for postcolonial critique. . . .

Everyone embarking on projects of this kind is acutely aware of controversial precedents, such as “Primitivism” in *20<sup>th</sup> Century Art: Affinities of the Tribal and Modern* (1984). *Magiciens de la terre* (1989) and Documenta 11 (2002). Just as important has been the groundwork laid in exhibitions that have, since 1989, profiled the major changes in art in different parts of the world. These include (to name just one of a number from each continent, with a preference for an exhibition that traveled) *Cities on the Move: Contemporary Asian Art at the 60<sup>th</sup> Turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (1997–1998), *After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe* (1999), *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America* (2004), and *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent* (2005 and 2008). Each of these, along with many others, has asked: what is distinctive about the contemporary art of our region, how does it derive from, break away from, or stand at an angle to, art made during our modernity, and how does it relate to “international” (Western, then transnational) contemporary art? . . .

In the many art-producing centers of the rest of the world outside Euroamerica, a variety of local negotiations between indigeneity, tradition, modernity, and globalization led, first, to the forging of distinct kinds of modern art, and then, in artistic exchanges within nearby regions and with distant centers, the emergence of specific kinds of contemporary art. These developments have been underway since the 1950s in Africa, the 1960s in Latin America, the 1970s in the Central Desert of Australia, the 1980s in Central Europe and China, the 1990s in Southeast Asia, the 200s in India and the Middle East, etc. Taken together (their separate origins connecting into a world current) they amount to a substantial reorientation of the way art is made in the world.