



ADJI DIEYE GLOSSARY



Aphasia

Aphasia is a medical term used to define a language disorder caused by damage to specific areas of the brain. The affected region in the brain is responsible for the control of language comprehension and expression. Aphasia has an impact on speech, the ability to express oneself through language, writing skills and the understanding of spoken and written language.

As part of her exhibition, the artist Adjie Dieye uses the term 'aphasia' as a metaphor to describe the loss of language and the inability to articulate the past as a result of colonial and **epistemological** violence. European **colonisation** in Senegal led to the imposition of French as the official institutional language and displaced native tongues, such as Wolof. This led to a fragmentation of the historical narrative and a disruption of cultural and social ties.

Archive

documents, writings, acts and other references and testimonies, which are collected, organised, categorised and preserved. For a long time, archives were regarded as sources of objective information. In 1997, scholar Nicholas Dirks called on historians to recognise and acknowledge the archive not just as a body of documents but, first and foremost, as a document of history itself.

Archives, according to Dirks, bear traces of power structures, such as **hegemonic** historical narratives and ideological underpinnings as well as the personal influence of those who are in a position to make decisions. This heralded the 'archival turn', which led to the archive being seen as an imperial instrument used to construct a metanarrative and as a repository and witness of exclusion. The notion of an archive as a static collection of comprehensive, objective and exhaustive sources of knowledge has since been challenged.

Asymmetrical Parallelism

Among other things, Adjie Dieye's video installation *Aphasia* also features architectural elements that reflect Senegal's postcolonial ambitions and its desire to reclaim its culture and identity after gaining independence from French colonial rule in 1960. Senegal's first president Léopold Sédar Senghor – who was also a poet – was determined to use the arts to forge a new national identity for his country, liberated from Western political hegemony, though Senghor was ultimately unable to cut all ties with the Western world, as his modernist vision followed European principles.

Senghor envisioned the formation of a nation grounded in the new concept of African architecture, which integrated poetry and music. To this end, he coined the term 'asymmetrical parallelism' and defined it as 'a diversified repetition of rhythm in time and



space'. The resulting architectural identity consisted of a repetition of similar volumes and forms in an asymmetrical manner.

(source: Jean Francois Lamoureux, Jean-Louis Marin, 'The International Fair of Dakar, Postcolonial Architecture and Identity', in *Senses Atlas*, 20 April 2021, www.sensesatlas.com/territory/the-international-fair-of-dakar)

Colonisation

Colonisation is a term describing the process of establishing economic and cultural control over conquered territories by constructing and developing 'colonies' (from the Latin for 'settlement') and occupying lands. The exploitative era of European colonisation started in 1492 and continued over 500 years through to the end of the Second World War. This expansion of political power went hand in hand with the subjugation of the resident population and the exploitation of their labour and natural resources.

The systematic deportation, enslavement and murder that ensued were legitimised on the back of racist ideologies that categorised people according to a racialised hierarchy based on physiological characteristics such as skin colour and bone structure: these ideologies were used to construct a system of *white* superiority. One of the instruments used in the attempt to 'civilise' the Indigenous population and establish control was the imposition of the language of the coloniser.

All over the world, a key strategy of colonial domination was to dismantle people's different sources of spirituality and deep wisdom about their existence. Colonisation was therefore not just about controlling land and its resources but also about controlling people's ways of speaking and passing on their knowledge and cultural heritage. Although most territorial colonies were relinquished in the second half of the 20th century, colonialism has endured and is enacted in Eurocentric systems of representation and knowledge transmission as well as in cultural institutions and the way history is narrated: this is referred to as **epistemological** violence.

(source: Anibal Quijano, Michael Ennis, 'Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America', in *Neptala: Views from South*, no. 1, issue 3 (2000), 553-580)

Decolonisation

Decolonisation strives towards a plurality of forms for producing, preserving, narrating and transferring knowledge. It can be described as a process that consists of different strategies for deconstructing the superiority and domination of Western and European colonial ideologies. It includes the transfer of sovereignty to the independent states and the dissolution of colonial rule on economic, cultural and ideological levels. Decolonial theories and practices call into question the production of knowledge and narratives built



on Eurocentric perspectives. They acknowledge the present state of colonial modes of knowledge formation and its transfer.

Diaspora

The term originally referred to Jewish people who found themselves scattered in different parts of the world. Today it is used to define people who share common cultural, religious or ancestral backgrounds and are dispersed in different countries. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall created a body of writing on identity and the diasporic experience, which he grounds in the hybridity and heterogeneity of identities. Descendants whose ancestors were displaced or forced to migrate also apply the term diaspora when referring to their multiple identities and sense of belonging.

Epistemology

Epistemology is a philosophical term that refers to the systems of ideas and notions responsible for the constitution of knowledge. It implies certain canons comprising the forms of knowledge and the way they can exist and be transferred. **Decolonial** studies take into focus the epistemological violence that occurred during and after **colonisation**. This violence is located in the hierarchy of Western – and especially academic – knowledge and in the **hegemonic** narration of history and its preservation, which gave no credit to the Indigenous tradition of knowledge generation and sharing.

Hegemony

Hegemony designates the idea of domination based on the overpowering of one group by another and the assertion of the latter's authority. The concept originates from Ancient Greece and the word *hēgemonia*, which translates as 'dominance over'. It indicates the omnipresence of a position and ideas that stem from and are supported by an economic or political ruling class. Certain ways of thinking are imposed by those in government on those who are governed while the dissemination of alternative perspectives is suppressed.

Imperialism

'An imperialist policy is pursued when a state attempts to expand its sphere of influence beyond its borders, with or without the use of force, to control other regions through resource exploitation and asymmetric power relations. Imperialism is a historical term that refers to the competition between European colonial powers and their quest to expand their respective spheres of influence around the world. The struggle for new territories characterised the entire colonial period, from the late fifteenth century until the outbreak of World War I in 1914.



A landmark of (German) imperialism was the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, where representatives of eleven European powers, the United States and the Ottoman Empire met to agree on a free trade policy regarding the Congo River Basin in Central Africa. The conference's Final Act paved the way for the subsequent division of the African continent into colonies.'

(source: glossary as part of the exhibition *HERE AND NOW. Anti-colonial Interventions*, 08.10.2022–05.02.2023, Museum Ludwig, Cologne)

Language Justice

'The term "language justice" is a powerful way to describe individuals' fundamental right to have their voices heard. [...] Language justice is about building and sustaining multilingual spaces in our organisations and social movements so that everyone's voice can be heard both as an individual and as part of a diversity of communities and cultures. Valuing language justice means recognising the social and political dimensions of language and language access, while working to dismantle language barriers, equalise power dynamics, and build strong communities for social and racial justice.'

(source: glossary of *Engaging Collections*, www.engagingcollections.com/glossaryarchive/language-justice)

Nation-building

Nation-building refers to the process of creating a modern state (especially one that has recently become independent) and fixing its borders based on a communal interest in becoming an integrated and politically stable nation. The context of nation-building in African states goes hand in hand with **decolonisation**, modernity and globalisation.

Many African countries had started to gain independence by 1960. From that moment on African states started to dismantle their colonial structures. Driven by nationalist ideologies, nation-building is pursued by new leaders to establish new structures for citizenship, democratisation, religion, territorial boundaries, cultural development and language.

(source: Martin F. Asiegbu, 'African States and Nation-Building in the Context of Modernity, Decolonization, and Globalisation', in *West African Journal of Philosophical Studies*, no. 17 (2015))